

University of East London

Professional Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology

**Exploring perceptions of school through negative
school experience – what can Educational
Psychologists learn?**

**An interpretative phenomenological study with
young mothers of pre-school children.**

Marie Osborn

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
University of East London for the degree of Professional Doctorate in
Applied Educational and Child Psychology**

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Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted for any degree.

The research is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology.

This thesis is the result of my own work and investigation, except where otherwise stated*. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references in the text. A full reference list is appended.

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Abstract

A body of research has focused on exploring educational attainment and links between outcomes from one generation to the next, with a complex array of factors revealed. One influential factor linked to outcomes is the aspirations that parents have about school for their children. Research to date however has provided only limited insight into the ways parents, or mothers in particular view school for their child, based on their own experiences. This study aimed to understand more about what a negative school experience meant to a group, mothers of children 3 years and under. It also sought to elicit their views about their children's schooling. Through a process of interpretative phenomenological analysis of the semi-structured interviews, this study identified factors that served to help and support them around their school days, and what could potentially help them gain more confidence in their children's education.

The key super-ordinate theme to emerge was the power of their negative experience to cloud what was positive about their school days. What became apparent was the degree to which for three mothers, this centred on persistent, inescapable bullying. Additional factors (and sub-themes) identified included: being ignored and left to get on with learning; not being heard by teachers and parents; and the power of all these negative experiences to undermine confidence, self-worth and future pathways in life. However, an additional super-ordinate theme focused on positive factors that had helped them cope in school. Two further super-ordinate themes identified the conflicting emotions felt about school for their child, and how they had given great thought to the future education of their children. Within these factors emerged a strong desire for them to have a different, more enjoyable experience of school and how they considered their role to be a protective influence in their lives. This thesis offers an insight into the ways educational professionals, including psychologists, can provide support to parents with negative school experiences, helping to build confidence and trust in a positive future for their children in school.

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List of abbreviations

BPS	British Psychological Society
EP	Educational Psychologist
DfE	Department for Education
EBSCO	Elton B. Stephens CO (company)
HCPC	Health and Care Professions Council
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
NELS	National Education Longitudinal Study
NCDS	National Child Development Study
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SES	Socio-Economic Status
US	United States (of America)
UK	United Kingdom

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Dedication

I am dedicating this thesis to my influences in the past; my late grandparents, Joyce and Reg. They never lived to see me complete my studies, but were so proud of all their grandchildren, they valued their education and accomplishments and for Reg, who always referred to me during my studies as 'the professor'!

I also dedicate this to my present and future influences - my children Oliver and Alice; whose future experiences in school and education will hopefully be happy ones.

A note to the reader on voice of the author and terminology

This thesis is a qualitative and interpretative study on the phenomenon of negative school experience. The methodology used and findings are therefore focused on the particular interpretations and processes undertaken by the author. In order to retain this sense of the particular, this thesis will use the first person, passive voice in chapters three and four. Throughout the rest of the thesis, an academic voice in the third person will be used.

Many readers will be aware that educational and other terminology, and indeed the spelling of certain key terms, varies between English-speaking nations. For the purpose of this study, US or other non-UK terminology and spellings have been retained only where directly quoting non-UK authors; in the main text, UK terminology or spelling has been used throughout. Below is a table illustrating comparisons of ages/year group for the UK and US.

UK Year	Ages	School	Key Stage
Nursery	3-4		Early Years / Foundation
Reception	4-5	Infant or Primary	Key Stage 1
Year One	5-6		
Year Two	6-7		
Year Three	7-8	Junior or Primary	Key Stage 2
Year Four	8-9		
Year Five	9-10		
Year Six	10-11		
Year Seven	11-12	Secondary	Key Stage 3
Year Eight	12-13		
Year Nine	13-14		
Year Ten	14-15		Key Stage 4
Year Eleven	15-16	Secondary or Sixth form college	Key Stage 5
Year Twelve	16-17		
Year Thirteen	17-18		

Drawn from Wikipedia article, 3/9/13

Ages	<u>U.S.</u> Grade
Child Care	
3-4	Preschool
4-5	Pre-kindergarten
Elementary school	
5-6	Kindergarten
6-7	First grade
7-8	Second grade
8-9	Third grade
9-10	Fourth grade
10-11	Fifth grade
Middle school	
11-12	Sixth grade
12-13	Seventh grade
13-14	Eighth grade
High school	
14-15	Ninth grade, freshman
15-16	Tenth grade, sophomore
16-17	Eleventh grade, junior
17-18	Twelfth grade, senior

Chapter One: Introduction

1:1 Chapter overview

This study aimed to understand negative school experiences from the perspective of parents, with a particular focus on mothers. It is set within the broader context of research into parental involvement and engagement in the life of their children, in particular with regard to school. The majority of contemporary research from within psychology and education suggests that the role parents play is central to the emotional, social and moral development of their child (Ainsworth, 1989; Kennedy, Landor, & Todd, 2010). Research has also explored the longer-term implications for parental involvement and educational outcomes (X. Fan & Chen, 2001; Messersmith & Schulenberg, 2008). This study is also set within the context of parental support for the child's school-related activity and their role in supporting their development in a more holistic context (Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Ford, McDougall, & Evans, 2009). It is also recognised in some research that experience can be repeated from one generation to the next (Kaplan, Liu, & Kaplan, 2004; Pears, Kim, Capaldi, Kerr, & Fisher, 2013). This chapter will outline the fundamental principles that guided the researcher towards an interest in this area of research, an introduction to the epistemological position adopted, the focus and intentions of this study, and the distinctive contribution it aimed to make.

1:2 Focus of the research – origins and development

This study is set within the broader context of educational and psychological research which explores parenting and the link to young children's early experiences of school. As a qualified Educational Psychologist (EP) the researcher was acutely aware of the broader aspects of child development from within psychological research and also the context and impact that education, and schooling in particular, can have on individuals' lives. The

fundamental principles underlying the role of an applied psychologist must surely be to promote the best possible outcomes for children and their families, through a journey which they take together. For an EP, in particular, the role is broader: to support children and families within the context of their education, working with schools and related agencies to achieve this goal. Recognising the way research influences the development of psychology and at the same time, the ways in which research interacts with a broader socio-political context, is also important. By understanding further how we develop our ideas and thinking as human beings in this social, cultural and political environment, we can then hope to support ways of making positive change happen.

Within contemporary society, schooling and education have been established as fundamental human rights (United Nations General Assembly [UNGA] 1989). For many children the outcomes are enhanced significantly through the experience that school offers them. Charities world-wide (www.sos-schools.org ; www.schoolfund.org) campaign for the rights of all children to gain access to school and an education, safe in the (well-established) knowledge that through this institution change can happen; be that moving themselves and future generations out of poverty or developing a social responsibility and conscience. School may have many broad aims, and research has been undertaken to understand the implications of success in school (Salmela-Aro & Trautwein, 2013). Over recent decades, researchers have also attempted to understand further the complex interaction of factors that are at play when young people do not achieve success in school (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; Kaplan et al., 2004). In particular, and with greater relevance to the area which this researcher seeks to understand better, some studies have examined the interaction of intergenerational factors as they relate to school experience (Kaplan et al., 2004; Miller, Dilworth-Bart, & Hane, 2011; Rätty, 2007).

The geographical context of this study is England where for over a hundred years, schooling has been compulsory; for children up to 10 from 1880, and increasing gradually ever since, with a rise in the 'age of participation in

school or training' this year to 17 and to 18 from 2015 (Education and skills Act 2008). Schools have adapted over the years to meet changes in needs of their population; for example, the increased age of children, the inclusion of children with complex or Special Educational Needs (SEN) within mainstream schools, and the political agenda. In recent years that political agenda has included publication of a paper 'Every child matters' (Department for Education and Skills [DfES] 2003) whereby schools and local authority support services were encouraged to work more closely together, and to recognise and support the needs of all children. This was based in part on the principles of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, and the need to ensure children were properly protected and safeguarded. These principles were embraced by many schools and authorities, and some schools continued to emphasise these underlying principles beyond the change of Government in 2010. Schools also have a significant focus on targets and progression for children, reviewed against the increasingly rigorous inspection frameworks enforced by OFSTED, (Office for standards in Education [OFSTED], 2013). New approaches to supporting vulnerable children with SEN ('Support and Aspiration', Department for Education [DfE], 2012) have also been part of the current Government's move to support parents in making decisions about their children's education. Alongside this have been moves to encourage schools to gain greater independence from local authority influence, such as through the development of academies and free schools.

Conducting further research that could provide evidence of the complex range of influences upon children's time at school may enable a broader approach to supporting children and their families. There is already clear recognition of school-based factors; in particular, supportive and inclusive practice at schools, good and effective teaching, and readiness to encourage, engage with and inform parents. All of these ideas are well-documented (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Hudson, 2009; Rubie-Davies, Flint, & McDonald, 2012; Day et al., 2011; Waters, Cross, & Shaw, 2010) and inspected against by OFSTED. There is also recognition of the family context and other social factors but, as will be established within this and the subsequent chapter, very limited research has given space for parents to

describe and make sense of their own thinking around school, and to consider how their constructs may have formed by reflecting on their own past school experiences.

1:3 Introduction to epistemological underpinnings

This section will briefly outline the choice of an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach within this study; this will be expanded further in chapter three.

An intense curiosity to know more about humans, their relationships and interactions within the world, and the way they use language to convey this individuality, are at the heart of this researcher's approach to psychology. The researcher very much adopts a constructionist view and is therefore approaching this study from within a qualitative research paradigm as opposed to a pure post-positivist and empirical paradigm that considers there are answers to hypotheses raised within science that can be proved or disproved. The ontological perspective adopted therefore accepts that multiple realities and views of the world are possible and are out there to be explored and understood. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was then chosen as the specific research methodology as it suited best the desire to really understand the experience of parents at critical points in their lives; firstly becoming parents, and secondly considering their children going to school. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) explain the choice of this approach, suggesting it offers the following key features:

Focus on personal meaning and sense-making in a particular context, for people who share a particular experience (p. 45).

IPA has at its heart the desire to get to the core of something – it is a flexible but methodical approach to analysis of narrative data that uses psychology as its main thrust and its method of understanding the meanings which participants are trying to convey. It is also idiopathic; this means that it is also specific to the particular focus and experience of these participants. This

study aims to better understand what the experience of school means to a group of parents who have a commonality of experience based on their (often negative) experiences in school. It is also intended that this study focus on younger parents who have relatively recently left school themselves; and this will provide a further aspect to the homogeneity of this group.

Alternative, more quantitative forms of study were rejected; in part because there already exists a foundation of evidence on which to consider the links between parents' views and achievement and those of their children (see for example Messersmith & Schulenberg, 2008; Rätty, 2007, 2011). More particularly, as has been illustrated, the theories guiding the researcher's world view and paradigms would conflict to some extent with this approach. The literature review in chapter two will however consider in depth existing quantitative research findings that have considered the correlation between parent and child outcomes and the intergenerational transmission of experience. It was also considered that a qualitative study would add more depth to the knowledge base that exists by following up the kinds of questions left unanswered within these studies, going beyond a priori categories to understand the experience of school. Other qualitative methodologies were also rejected (as will be discussed in chapter three) as they did not provide sufficient flexibility to understand experiences and to approach the findings in a new way.

1:4 Aims and rationale

To gain an insight into young mothers' experiences of school, in particular where they are negative.

To understand their current thinking about their child's schooling, and to explore ways that their knowledge and experience may be helpful in improving this.

The above statements were constructed to explain the over-arching focus of this study. This section will now illustrate the aims and rationale for this study in more depth through answers to some key questions that will serve also as sub-headings.

1:4:1 Why does the parental role matter?

The researcher considers that the significant body of evidence gathered over a number of decades supports theories on the importance of nurture, attachment and interaction between a parent and child (see for example meta-analysis by Madigan, Atkinson, Laurin & Benoit, 2013). The researcher's knowledge of developmental psychology was obtained through both undergraduate learning from the early 1990s, and postgraduate study since 2003. This academic background, together with consideration of the latest neuro-developmental work, on the whole reinforces that the parental role does matter¹. Whilst it is clearly not the sole influence on child development (e.g. peers, siblings and school also matter), it is critical, particularly when considering the life of the child before school. Two research studies have also been found that considered the ways in which parents prepare their children for school (Brooker, 2003; Taylor, Clayton, & Rowley, 2004).

Brooker (2003) used an ethnographic method to study a small group of parents from the UK and Bangladesh to explore their cultural belief systems with regard to preparing their child for school. Whilst this found interesting cultural differences with regard to play and structures in the day at home, there was less evidence of links in attainment between one generation and the next. Brooker (op. cit.) considered that differences in attainment were more to do with the ways parents prepared their children for school life with those homes having a greater structure conflicting to a lesser extent with the structures and formality in school. Taylor et al. (2004) described this

¹ One notable exception to this is perhaps Harris (2011) who has published the 'Nurture Assumption', sparking great debate within the field.

preparation as 'academic socialisation'. This interaction between the parent and young child is understood (through their theoretical model) to affect the child's ability to "settle" and do well in school. They judge a range of factors, such as the home learning environment created by parents, key to understanding how children are ready and able to settle in school. Academic socialisation they theorise, includes a focus on a number of factors. These include language, interaction and learning-related play; alongside the awareness that these practices could also be influenced by parental experience of, and constructs about, school. Their conclusion serves to illustrate the potential link between this study and their own:

Parents, through their individual experiences, social and cultural characteristics, and behaviors, set the stage for their children's early academic experiences. In our model, intergenerational influences are represented by the way in which parents' own school experiences and cognitions about school shape their parenting behaviors. (Taylor et al., p.174)

Following the child's entry to school, the parental role in supporting the education of children has also been much researched. Jeynes (2003, 2005, 2011) has recently conducted a series of meta-analytic studies (mostly based upon research from the US) that sought to understand and provide evidence for aspects of parental involvement that linked or influenced outcomes for children. The most recent of these meta-analyses was considered as part of a guest editorial on parental involvement (Jeynes, 2011) and suggested that it is in fact the more subtle aspects of parental involvement, such as attitude, communication and aspiration, that have a greater effect on outcomes, than the practical – such as parents going into school or helping with homework. A number of relevant studies and meta-analyses researching parental involvement from the US (W. Fan & Williams, 2010; X. Fan, 2001; X. Fan & Chen, 2001) and UK (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Flouri & Buchanan, 2004) will be considered within chapter two, as they examine these aspects further.

1:4:2 Could parental experiences and expectations interact with those of their children?

This study, in aiming to understand more about the perception parents have of school, is based on the premise that this also *matters* to their children. As indicated in the last section, most of the research found seems to support this argument as the researchers consider that the aspirations and expectations parents hold about school are important to the educational outcomes for their children. Some research also found that the interactions and communication between a parent and child before school entry can also support the ways they settle into school (Barnett & Taylor, 2009). It is not therefore a large leap to suggest that the view a parent has of school for their child may to some extent be clouded by their own experience and recollections of school and that they may in some way, even subconsciously, share these attitudes with their child. Degner & Dalege (2013) conducted a meta-analysis of 131 studies meeting their criteria of exploration of parent-child attitude and found some statistical evidence (based on a correlation coefficient) that attitudes can be shared and repeated across the generations. This finding adds further weight to the research that will be considered in more depth in chapter two concerning intergenerational patterns (Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Kaplan et al., 2004; Pears et al., 2013) and parental recollections or memories of school (Miller et al., 2011; Rätty, 2007, 2011). These studies provide evidence, in many cases through longitudinal data, for an interaction between parental experience and educational outcomes for their children, and also for the effect of parental perceptions on their children's schooling.

1:4:3 Why consider young parents as participants?

This study focuses particularly on the views of younger parents, specifically mothers, for several reasons. Firstly, research on the autobiographical memories of school (Walls, Sperling, & Weber, 2001) suggests that there may be a 'reminiscence bump' as individuals move beyond schooling to the

next phase of life, since there can be a greater recall of details and memories as they engage in a process of reminiscence at this time. By approaching participants who were likely to have left school within the previous ten years it was also hoped that a recency effect may add to their ability to bring their school experiences or recollections to mind. In addition, having a young child starting school within the next few years was felt likely to engage participants more fruitfully in considering the next steps for their child and connect their thinking with what was important and relevant to them about their own schooling. It was also felt more likely that the experience and context of the school they describe could potentially be similar for their own children; in some cases the children may even be attending the same schools as they did. The degree of likely common experience between mothers and children for this cohort was likely to be further strengthened by the National Curriculum introduced in state schools in England in 1988, which although undergoing revision, remains a significant shift from the early teaching experiences of adults now beyond 30 years of age.

An additional rationale for this study's focus on young mothers was that this group have a degree of similarity and common experience by virtue of their earlier entry into adult roles; such as work and parenthood. The last national statistic available suggested the average age of a becoming a mother for the first time was 27.9 years (in 2011), being higher still for fathers (McLaren, 2013). As such their identity as a group with a degree of common experience both from their times in school and by virtue of having a young child who will start school soon, aligns with the aims of the proposed epistemology, that of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). This is because the theoretical underpinnings to IPA very much focus on making sense of and interpreting experience. It is anticipated that the process of engaging with and reflecting upon experience (a process described as the 'hermeneutic') will be stronger when this takes place at the time of something significant in life (Smith et al., 2009). For this group, they not only share a similar experience of school (often negative) but they are likely also to be making

sense of, and reflecting more on, school as they consider their own child growing up and starting school.

1:4:4 Why focus on negative school experience?

As already discussed in this chapter, the focus of this study was not simply about mothers' experience of school, but was to be narrowed to those mothers who recall negative school experience. As a number of the earlier research reviews revealed (Kaplan et al., 2004; Messersmith & Schulenberg; 2008), there may be strong links from one generation to the next in relation to their view and feelings about school, and the outcomes their children might achieve. Understanding in greater detail what the participants consider negative about their own experience may help to inform and illustrate not only exploration of the psychological constructs they now hold, but also serve to guide consideration of whatever future support may be helpful to mediate these negative constructs for future generations.

1:4:5 How could this study make a difference?

Much of the research to date on parents' school experience centres on studies from the US and mainland Europe and is not specifically related to the UK, its school systems, curriculum and socio-political context. This study aims to provide a depth of qualitative knowledge beyond the statistical analysis presented in the majority of related research. It does not seek to find the percentage of parents having a bad time at school, nor the longer-term impact on their academic achievement or those of their children; other studies have done this and already established those links (W. Fan & Williams, 2010; Messersmith & Schulenberg, 2008). The depth of information is intended to understand better what made experiences negative and to understand more about how this experience can potentially interact with mothers' current ideas about school, and their thoughts and feelings towards their child going to school.

Research that has begun to address the issues arising from the apparent repetition of negative experience of school through the generations (such as Kaplan *et al*, 2004) has provided some statistical evidence to confirm that this occurs and that additional support and interventions are needed. This research does not however use the voice of the parents to suggest changes. There is therefore a greater need in research to engage parents in a process of change and to understand the role that extremes of negative or positive experiences can have upon participants' lives. This research is intended to add, in a small but significant way, to research that may contribute to a longer process of trying to alter cycles of intergenerational experience, giving children a positive start in school through the increased confidence and hopefulness of their parents and their teachers, and to encourage greater support and engagement with *all* parents by educational professionals.

1:4:6 What questions does the research seek to address?

Through the process of conducting a detailed literature search and critique and by giving due consideration and reflection to both professional and personal experience a number of key questions became apparent to the researcher. These formed the central question which this study proposed to explore, which was:-

- **What do parents say about their school experience?**

In addition, the research sought to address the following subsidiary and more specific questions:-

1. What concerns do the participants have about their child's schooling?
2. What common themes or ideas emerge about the participants' current constructs of school?
3. What 'best hopes' are expressed by the participants for their children's school experience?

4. What do participants identify from their own experience of school that may be relevant and important to share with their child's school?

These questions framed the methodology undertaken and hence the kind of approach taken within semi-structured interviews with those mothers who were participants in this study.

1:5 Distinctive contribution to research and Educational Psychology

This section will reflect upon the gaps in contemporary research and the ways in which this study will further the work of EPs.

1:5:1 Distinctive contribution

As has already been considered, it is proposed that this qualitative study will offer an original contribution to research by complementing earlier quantitative studies exploring parental recollections of school and by giving greater depth to knowledge about parental perceptions of school. In addition it will add variety to the qualitative approaches used, since to date only a single published example (Miller et al., 2011) has been found that focuses on this area. However, it should be noted that since Miller et al.'s (op. cit.) research focused on a community of mothers from the US, it has limited applicability to the UK context.

The methodology employed within this study is recognized as primarily interpretative and it is hoped that the focus of this study will add relevance, depth and richness to the body of knowledge within the UK and internationally of this under-researched area. It is considered relevant by the researcher, that the process of talking about their experiences of school through participation in research may also be in some way empowering for the participants (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010). In particular, the interview

questions that ask them to consider ways in which knowledge of their experiences could be shared with others to promote change for their own or other children, has the potential to give them a voice and influence for future generations, even in a small way.

1:5:2 Relevance to Educational Psychology

A significant proportion of EP time is spent with schools and other professional and community settings such as children's centres, trying to understand the reasons behind difficulties children may present. This involvement can include consultation, where information is gathered and triangulated from a variety of sources such as home and school, to understand better the nature of a child's difficulties and strengths. It is important, too, to make sense of the context; the experiences and environment within which children live, socialise and learn. The main objective of this research is to contribute evidence that will inform approaches to support parents, schools and other agencies, such as EP services. It is hoped that the study may provide ways of understanding the possible interactions between negative experience of school and the feelings and hopes that parents hold for their children in school. The longer-term potential impact is that by understanding more about what made school difficult for the participants in this study, this research may support change for the future: to make school a more positive and rewarding experience for all; and to raise children's enjoyment of and achievement within school education.

The common themes that emerge in the way that parents think and talk about school for themselves and for their children could ultimately help to inform professional practice with regard to inducting children and their parents into school. Beyond the initial research, it is anticipated that schools and pre-schools may consider further the information they gain from parents and the way they use this to support young children's early experiences of

school, based not only on *the child's* time at a nursery or pre-school but also on their parents' perceptions and experiences of school.

In addition, and in a broader context with regard to the role of EPs, the findings may inform schools' understanding of the importance of how adults can recall and perceive school from their own childhood experiences. It may lead them to review the ways in which they want their school to be remembered by its pupils or students. The EP could therefore become involved in supporting schools to consider systemic and creative ways of thinking about these issues and how they conceive a shared vision for not only their school, but for the ways in which they hope to engage parents in the process of educating their children.

1:6 Reflexive thinking

This section will explore briefly the ways in which the researcher's world-view and experience interact with the subject to be discussed. The researcher made use of a reflective journal (Dyment & O'Connell, 2011) throughout the process of the research. This journal was used from the first stages of developing ideas about the study's focus and aims to the later stages of analysis when reflections were made on the complex interaction between the phenomenological analyst and the participants' stories as represented in the transcripts. By maintaining reflexivity at the start of this study and across the course of this research and within the thesis, an open position as researcher or 'psychologist as interpreter' was maintained (Holliday, 2002). This study retained a grounded sense of the researcher's responsibility for the findings but also acknowledged the degree of subjectivity that this approach had within the final analysis and interpretation.

Through conversation as part of the researcher's role as an EP, a growing awareness developed that parents can at times find the school environment and context very difficult with which to engage. Through this role, ordinarily

the researcher would meet with children and families where there was concern for the way the child was developing within a school or pre-school setting. By trying to understand the complex interaction of factors and systems that surround a child and in light of Bronfenbrenner's work (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), a developmental history was often taken from the parents, school and increasingly incorporating the child's view of the systems around them. As part of this process and in order to understand genetic and inherited patterns of difficulty and achievement, questions are asked about the parents' educational history and experience. Through this process in the earliest stages after qualification, the researcher became aware that children (in particular adolescents) who were disengaging with school and becoming disaffected sometimes had parents who had experienced great difficulty in school themselves. Sometimes this realisation was not immediate to the parent themselves, but by exploring a variety of questions about others beyond the parents (e.g. their siblings, or the grandparents of the child), this element of de-personalisation sometimes allowed them to become freer in the experiences they recalled. The researcher is not advocating that parental factors are the sole influence and way of understanding how a child presents in school. However, understanding these factors, can help the EP and others that support the child and family develop greater empathy for them and an ability to address further support; rather than focusing primarily on within child or apparent medicalised factors.

As an individual, the researcher also acknowledged her own experience of school and ways of perceiving school for her own children. As a 'forces child' (i.e. one with a parent undertaking military service), the researcher attended a number of different primary and secondary schools across the UK. Education was valued highly within the family context and whilst few extended family members had attended education beyond the age of 18, the aspiration that existed both within the family and the societal expectation during the time of entry into school (1970s/1980s) was that one should go as far as possible and achieve one's potential. As a young adult, the researcher also became aware that the ways in which students were encouraged to

achieve their potential differed. Compulsory education beyond the age of 15 had only relatively recently been introduced, and in some areas of the country there remained a segregated two-tier secondary system where the pass or failure of a test at age 11, in many cases determined the course of secondary education. For those who failed, opportunities to study beyond school were often much more limited. The researcher's parents left school in the 1960s aged 16 and 17 respectively due to pregnancy and the need to help support the family by entering work.

Though as a young child, very few of these circumstances were made known to the researcher, the culture and focus on receiving a good education was apparent. Though moving between a number of schools could be disruptive, and at times a significant challenge to happiness and a sense of stability and belonging in a school, this was only really an issue later on in adolescence. Again, the researcher is sure that being encouraged to be confident and sociable from an early age, and being the youngest child in the family, helped in the process of settling after each transition. Being the youngest child also provided older siblings who were role models as they had aspired to keep learning beyond school leaving age. Additional protective factors include the family being willing to offer support and fund an alternative school if it was needed at one difficult point, and this may also have contributed to eventual successful outcomes in school and entry to advanced education beyond the age of 18.

Though the researcher's experience of school and educational outcomes are mainly positive, there are people even within the context of family and friends, who do not seem to have had such positive experiences of school. The curiosity to know more about this and how it could potentially interact with the way children develop their views of the world and their thinking as adults, and in many cases as parents, is acknowledged here as the fundamental motivation of the researcher. The desire to understand more about perceptions of school, and what the phenomenon of having a child

about to go to school is like for those who have had difficult and negative experiences themselves, was driven by this background, by curiosity, but also as a qualified psychologist, by the drive to contribute an original piece of research that could in part support the development of an approach for improving outcomes for such parents.

1:7 Summary of chapter and overview of the thesis

This chapter has provided an overview of this study, from the way in which the idea was conceived to the qualitative methodology to be used. It has addressed the underpinnings of the researcher's world-view from both a personal and professional perspective, ultimately driven from a curiosity to understand more about human thinking and interaction with the world and the value of school.

The thesis will now move on to consider in more depth the nature of existing research into parents' roles within the school context, both from their own personal recollection and the ways in which they support their children in school. Chapter two will also consider the gaps in the literature and current knowledge base which this study aimed to address. In chapter three, the methodological approach described briefly within section 1:3 will be explored in greater depth to include details about the participants, the local context, and analytical techniques. Chapter four will consider the key findings and provide evidence for them with extracts from the participants' accounts and interpretation from the researcher. The study culminates in chapter five by linking the findings to existing research and theories, considering possible limitations, and providing evidence to support new thinking and approaches that may be relevant to EPs and schools alike.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2: 1 Overview and rationale

As introduced in chapter one, this research set out to increase understanding about the meaning of school to a group of mothers who identified with negative school experiences. The research aimed to understand this through exploring the perceptions they have of school for their children, and understanding in more detail what made their school experience difficult or negative. However, much of the research literature in this area focuses on parents' actual involvement or participation in schooling for their child, and the interaction between this and children's academic outcomes. Examples from literature in this area will be explored first. Evidence from these studies suggested ways in which experiences reoccur from one generation to the next, with a large number of studies associated with 'intergenerational transmission'. Though this term is much less used in the UK, at its heart seems to be the notion that experiences and aspirations can often be repeated within families. This chapter will explore a number of studies that focus specifically on intergenerational transmission related to school memories and academic outcomes. In trying to understand more about what theories lay behind this, and how it links to the focus of this research, it is important to place these theories within a wider context. The theoretical underpinnings of this study are illustrated and linked with contemporary research internationally and, wherever possible, in the UK.

2:1:2 Process of literature search

The process of conducting a systematic review of the literature involved inputting search terms into a number of research databases. In the first instance this focused on parental involvement and school achievement/outcomes for children. These terms were inputted into academic search databases on EBSCO using 'PsycARTICLES' and 'PsycINFO' 'educational research complete' and 'academic search complete'.

The original literature search was conducted in 2010 with further reviews completed in 2012 and 2013. In order to prioritise the most relevant studies to review, a number of inclusion and exclusion criteria were then considered. This is illustrated below in Table 2:1.

This initial search included papers with specific terms within their title: 'parent**² or 'mother/father' AND 'involvement'. This initial search produced over 800 papers, so additional limiters were imposed. Using the term 'meta-analysis' produced five papers of which two were relevant. This line of enquiry narrowed the literature search particularly to the link between parental involvement and the attainment of their children. When additional search term limiters were imposed (but not limited to UK only) of 'parent*' AND 'involvement' and 'achievement' 41 papers were found of which three were considered relevant. Using further terms 'educational' AND 'attainment' AND 'parent*' within the abstract produced 50 papers of which five were chosen as most relevant to this study, with two being UK specific studies, one of which led to further research by the same author.

From this initial enquiry emerged questions about the parental influence on outcomes and attitudes to school for their children. A tentative enquiry using the same search databases and criteria in Table 2:1 was then used with the following search terms 'parent*' AND 'influence' AND 'school'. This produced 30 results of which two were of particular interest and relevance, and again led to further related studies to which the same authors had contributed. Inputting a term related to the way experiences may be repeated from parent to child was then tried, applying the US term 'intergenerational' AND 'school'. This search revealed 11 papers, of which three were considered relevant to the literature review for this study.

These papers led to a final research enquiry exploring the ways in which parents recalled school and could potentially transfer this knowledge to their children. Hence using search terms 'parent*' AND 'recollection' AND 'school'

² The symbol '**' is a wildcard used in the search engines to allow for a variety of endings to be used .e.g. parents, parental.

produced one result, which was a paper previously identified, when the 'parent' term was removed however, seven papers were then found, of which one was a repetition, and one a highly relevant paper having a qualitative research approach. An additional search using the same terms was also conducted through the 'Google Scholar' search engine. Although this was mainly confirmatory of the existing research already found, it also identified relevant government papers from the past 13 years on the subject of parental involvement, of which one key paper has been included within the review as it served as a meta-analysis. An overview of the papers found within each key search, and which have been critiqued, is included in the appendices (Appendix 11a and 11b).

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Recency of publication	Published after 2000	Before 2000, unless seminal
Type of publication	Peer reviewed journal or book; UK government paper	Dissertations, newspaper/ magazine articles or reviews
Research focus - participants	Included parents	Focus on children or teachers only
Research focus – topic/theme	Education/ educational psychology related	Health, gender, ethnicity or school subject specific focus in title
Participants	Not limited by specific ethnicity or gender group	Title states specific to particular gender or ethnic group
Search terms	Terms appeared in the title	Terms in title irrelevant to focus or out of context

Table 2:1 **Inclusion and exclusion criteria for literature search**

2:1:3 Definition of terms used

The use of the word 'parent' in the context of this literature search relates to the role of birth parent or key care-giving parent from immediately after birth, if not the birth parent. In the majority of studies found this was the natural or birth mother, though a number also specifically addressed a less-researched area of the role of the father.

Understanding 'parental involvement' has for some time been a key focus of schools and educational researchers (see for example the meta-analysis by X. Fan & Chen, 2001 and Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). Though the ways in which this term is used can vary slightly from one study to another, the broader meaning relates to ways in which parents help or support their children, both as an interaction between parenting styles and approaches, and also with regard to their children's learning. This may range from supporting and encouraging attendance, to helping their children with homework, to coming into school to meet with teachers or even to volunteering within the school. X. Fan and Chen (2001) included a typology of parental involvement types that was taken from earlier research by Epstein (Epstein & Dauber, 1991) and used to frame their meta-analysis; this is summarised below in Figure 2:1.

Underpinning this research is the implicit idea that the parent shares the goals and aspirations of schooling with their child – something less easy to define and evidence through standard questionnaires. For the purpose of this research, the role of parents' hopes and aspirations for their children's future in school, seemed key to understand parental roles in children's education.

Type 1, 'Basic obligations of parents', covering the provision of 'positive home conditions' that support children's learning; establishing a positive learning environment at home;

Type 2, 'Basic obligations of schools', covering a range of 'communications from school-to-home' parent-school communications about school programs and student progress;

Type 3, 'Parent involvement at school' in the classroom and attending events;

Type 4, 'Parent involvement in learning activities' at home, including parent, child, and teacher-initiated projects, and parent and school communications regarding learning activities at home; and

Type 5, 'Parent involvement in governance and advocacy'.

Epstein subsequently extended her typology to cover another type of partnership:

Type 6, 'Collaborating with the community', covering resources and services that strengthen home-school links". (Summarised from Epstein & Dauber, 1991; p.290-291)

Figure 2:1 Typologies of parental involvement in school

A number of terms that will be explored in this review of literature are perhaps more familiar in the US lexicon, but nonetheless are increasingly relevant to studies in the UK. Though the term 'Intergenerational transmission' is used frequently in papers from the US and other nations (less so in the UK) it is less frequently defined by the paper's authors. One author, however, Chi (2013), has explained this as *"the transfer of individual abilities, traits, behaviors, and outcomes from parents to their children"* (p.26). The article also explains how this can be difficult to prove and has limitations around factors such as unreliability of memory and recall of events from the past. Despite these limitations, and the need for robust methodologies to overcome them, several studies (X. Fan & Chen, 2001; Rätty, 2007, 2011) have demonstrated evidence to support the premise that behaviours could be transferred between generations.

A further construct relevant to the research undertaken here encompasses the way parents talk to their children about, and prepare them for, schooling. The term 'academic socialisation' in many research papers relates to the process of encouraging students in college or university towards a more academic approach to learning. In another paper, more relevant to this study (involving parents), the authors use the term in a wider sense (Taylor et al., 2004). Their definition is also cited within other articles, as it proposes a model of academic socialisation:

Academic socialization encompasses the variety of parental beliefs and behaviors that influence children's school-related development. Parents are considered to be the primary agents of child socialization. The process by which parents shape a child's behaviors, attitudes, and social skills so that the child will be able to function as a member of society is broadly encompassed by the term *socialization*. (Taylor et al., 2004, p.163)

These definitions, and the model they proposed, are relevant to be considered further in this literature review because of the way in which the authors recognise the complex interaction of factors related to parents that can potentially influence a child at school. Taylor et al.'s (2004) study also identifies the gaps in the research which this study, it is hoped, will in part address.

2:2 Critique of literature

This section will focus on individual areas most relevant to this study or arising as a direct result of the literature search. The critique will illustrate the journey taken in conducting the search and the ways in which the focus towards an interpretative phenomenological analysis of mother's perceptions of school became pertinent. Appendix 11 summarises an appraisal of the key literature found which met the search criteria identified. The table also provides an over-view of the methodology, findings, and some limitations of each study.

2:2:1 Parental impact on educational outcomes

As was revealed from the initial literature search using on-line databases from EBSCO (since 2000, see criteria 2:1:2), it was apparent that hundreds of research papers have explored the concept of parental involvement, and also what constitutes involvement, and what benefits it can have for children. By narrowing the search initially for a meta-analysis of the available studies on parental involvement and academic achievement for their children, a relevant paper from the US was found providing an overview of the literature to that time.

X. Fan & Chen (2001) carried out a meta-analysis to identify consistency, commonalities and links between educational achievement and outcomes for participants' children. These were chosen as they met their criteria for providing empirical, quantitative data on the links between parental involvement and educational achievements; an element they considered lacking in earlier studies that had a more qualitative research paradigm. Their criticisms of a number of studies were the lack of consistency of definition for 'parental involvement'. This desire to obtain some consistency for their meta-analysis reduced an initial field of about 2000 studies to only 25. They used five elements from the earlier typologies of parental involvement suggested by Epstein & Dauber (1991; illustrated in Figure 2:1) to explore different factors whilst accounting for Socio-Economic Status (SES) and ethnicity. X. Fan & Chen then carried out analysis exploring whether different dimensions of parental involvement were independently related within and across the studies.

They found that each dimension of parental involvement and student academic achievement should be considered separately and hence wider conclusions may be unreliable. Their analysis in one stage controlled for

effect size³ across each study and found a medium sized effect (in relation to parental involvement measures and academic achievement, when a Grade Point Average score was used). X. Fan & Chen consider that, whilst not strongly significant, this was sufficient 'in social science' terms to be considered an important finding. Their conclusions overall were that the meta-analysis suggested parental support in aspects of home learning did not have as great an effect on educational achievement (measured by the US Grade Point Average) as factors that related to educational aspirations or expectations. This conclusion tallied with X. Fan's(2001) individual longitudinal research later that year, and with subsequent studies (e.g. W. Fan & Williams, 2010) to be considered below.

Conducting the wider literature search beyond the EBSCO database also revealed a number of Government papers that serve to highlight parental involvement in their children's education within the UK context. Whilst these did not meet the inclusion criteria of being included within a peer reviewed journal, they serve to provide a context to the socio-political environment, so are worthy of brief mention. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) were commissioned to study "The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievement and Adjustment - A Literature Review". This paper provided a detailed review of the research to that time, within the context of a number of questions, such as 'why is parental involvement important'; 'do parents want to get more involved', and 'does parental involvement vary among different groups of parents'. It also explored the question of 'the impact of parental attitudes and aspirations'. As well as providing an overview of the research up to that time, including some of the authors cited within this section, the paper also draws some conclusions about the aspects of parental involvement that were considered more significant or influential. These included explicit parental behaviours, such as helping in school and with homework, but also implicit aspects of parenting style and values, such as educational aspirations. The paper

³ This is a method of quantifying the difference between two groups commonly used in meta-analyses.

explores some intervention programmes considered in research but concluded that there was not a sufficiently robust evidence base to support these. However, the authors also considered that there was a need for some research-led intervention to support parental involvement further in some groups, such as those from lower socio-economic groups, where children's attainment and parental involvement is often lower than the national average.

The research to be considered next provides further evidence of the conclusions drawn within these meta-analyses related to the more implicit aspects of parental involvement, such as aspiration.

2:2:2 Exploring parental involvement further: the implicit factors

One researcher, X. Fan (2001), conducted a follow up study (to X. Fan & Chen, 2001) that explored whether any specific aspects of parental involvement determined educational achievement through the secondary school years. This later research was focused on understanding the ways parent involvement may influence the academic rate of progress for their children. The research therefore used data gathered from the National Education Longitudinal Studies (NELS) in the US, starting from 1988 with repeated measures and test scores from 1990 and 1992. The author considered this data set had stronger validity as the larger sample size allowed interrogation of different aspects of parental involvement, and from the perspective of student and parent reports. Controlling for lost data sets reduced an original sample of 24,000 students and parents to about 10,000.

Using pre-existing factors for parental involvement (similar to those mentioned within Figure 2:1), the author matched questions asked in the original survey from 1988 on school and education issues. A number of initial statistical analyses to explore types of parental involvement, together with

factors such as SES and ethnicity, were undertaken. A latent growth model (a statistical technique) was then applied to analysis of the data sets. This approach explored factors that could potentially influence the academic growth for a student. The results of the analysis and growth modelling found, unsurprisingly, that socio-economic status accounted strongly for reports of educational aspirations, relating to how far the child said their parent expected them to go in school/education compared with what their parent had predicted from their earlier questionnaires. The most significant finding from the analysis was that 'educational aspirations' had an even stronger correlation with educational achievement than SES. Some dimensions of parental participation (contacting school about grades, behaviour and performance) and supervision (three questions: family rules regarding grades, homework, and chores) even had a small degree of negative interaction with educational outcomes. This may relate to those parents who became more involved in supervision of their children or meetings in school because of negative patterns of behaviour. However, the data set available limited the range of measures available to explore different aspects of educational aspirations to one question about how far through school a parent or child predicted they would go.

The author recognised this limitation alongside their own conclusion that logical causal inferences are not possible from the pre-existing data sets, as it was not possible to understand what led a parent to expect more of their child. Further research should therefore be conducted to consider different factors that may also form part of educational aspiration. For example, those used in the original questionnaires 'talking about school' and 'future school plans' would also seem in some way related to aspiration, but were considered in X. Fan's (2001) study under a separate dimension of 'communication' which did not strongly correlate with educational aspirations. Research would also be helpful to consider in more depth the ways in which parents perceive involvement, such as through interviews or more open-ended questionnaires.

In a more recent paper, W. Fan & Williams (2010) have addressed some of these limitations by using multiple dimensions of parent involvement to understand factors around student self-efficacy and motivation. The authors considered this had potential influence over student achievement in their high school level tests, yet had been given limited research focus. W. Fan & Williams' approach considers social cognitive theory to understand in more depth the environmental and social factors that surround a young person such as the influence of parenting style on their intrinsic motivation to learn and do well. W. Fan & Williams also used a longitudinal data set from a 2002 Educational Longitudinal Study (ELS) which had data from about 15,000 students and parents in their 10th grade at school (that is, close to adulthood and more independence) but drawn only from the first time point in 2002.

The parental involvement measures were similar to those used by X. Fan (2001) and influenced by Epstein & Dauber's (1991) typologies (Figure 2:1). In addition the ELS data set had used several student rating scales for self-efficacy, motivation and student engagement. Their findings suggest that parent-school-child communication could positively interact with student motivation where it was not related to behavioural concerns. The authors also conclude that a number of parenting-related factors with regard to control and boundaries, such as rules for TV and expectation for grade scores, relate to student engagement with and intrinsic motivation in English and maths. Parental aspirations also strongly related to academic engagement and self-efficacy. Again, limitations of this study centre on the use of single report measures for parental aspirations, whereas most other measures had several items with which to give greater internal consistency. Again, this type of analysis is limited to the questions posed by the researcher in their examination of the data and the responses given originally, as no further interrogation is then possible with the participants.

In a more student-centred study than the other US papers reviewed, Cheung & Pomerantz (2012) conducted a study with 825 adolescents aged 12 to 13

years, from the US and China to consider possible cultural differences in parenting practice and involvement. Their aims in the study were to better understand factors that influenced what they term 'parent-orientated' motivation in learning, linked to their parents' involvement and attitudes towards supporting them in school. They considered that where students were keen to gain approval and recognition of their achievement by their parents, this increased their motivation towards success. The students, who either attended school on the suburbs of Chicago or Beijing, completed questionnaires at four time points from entry to a school in 7th grade to the end of the following school year (8th grade). The questionnaires examined student perceptions and constructs about 'parent involvement' (broadly similar to those identified in previous research W. Fan & Williams, 2010; X. Fan & Chen, 2001); 'parent oriented motivation to school' using a 'social approval and responsibility scale' (Dowson & McInerney, 2004), and 'controlled and autonomous regulation to school' using an 'academic self-regulation questionnaire' developed by Ryan and Connell (1989). What the authors identified in their findings was the complex nature of the desire for approval from parents that focused on both positive (e.g. seeking rewards) and more negative (desire to avoid punishment) factors. They also consider that parents' active involvement in helping and supporting their child (for example with homework) also sends a more implicit message to the child that education and school are valued, but this was stronger where parents gave more autonomy and control to their child with regard to their learning. Overall students' academic achievement was enhanced across the two years of the study where students perceived greatest parent-orientated motivation. This study contributed another angle to understanding the positive impact and complexity of parental-involvement factors. It was limited however by using data gathered only from the perspective of the child, without correlating with the parents' or school views on the impact on learning.

A smaller number of papers reviewed related specifically to research conducted in the UK. Flouri & Buchanan (2004) conducted a similar analysis to the US study by X. Fan (2001) by using pre-existing data from the UK-

specific National Child Development Study [NCDS] conducted from 1958 onwards (see www.cis.ioe.ac.uk). The NCDS comprised data from 17,000 children born in one week in March 1958 in England, Scotland and Wales, with longitudinal data from follow-up studies of this cohort, most recently in 2008. This study provided data about birth experiences, mortality and early developmental outcomes for children in the first instance. The longitudinal follow-ups conducted took place when the individuals were aged 7, 16, 23, 33 and most recently in relation to Flouri & Buchanan's (op. cit.) study, at aged 42, although further data is now being gathered for members at age 50. School exam data were also gathered, and future follow-up data are intended to follow this cohort's whole life span. This data allowed subsequent researchers to understand other aspects of development and interactions between factors such as parental involvement and later academic scores and motivation towards school. Flouri & Buchanan (2004) focused on factors around parental involvement and educational outcomes. Whilst the data numbers diminished over time and may not have been fully representative of all socio-economic groups⁴, Flouri and Buchanan's (op. cit.) paper concluded that parental reports of school related involvement with their child aged 7, correlated positively with later educational achievement. The father's involvement was also the most significant predictive factor of educational attainment in late adolescence. The paper recognises many of the limitations of their approach, especially the retrospective nature of the information. Additionally, the research is based upon a limited set of parent-only reports of their involvement and, like the US studies, does not provide a means of triangulating information nor finding any rich qualitative observations from parents, children or teachers at that time.

A later study by Flouri (2006)⁵ again used data from a follow-up of a national study. The researchers explored the data sets from the British Birth Cohort Study [BCS 70]. They analysed data from follow-up studies conducted after

⁴ An example is given that there was a 10% drop off in follow up data from adulthood from those identified as being in financial hardship in their childhood.

⁵ "Parental interest in children's education, children's self-esteem and locus of control, and later educational attainment: Twenty-six year follow-up of the 1970 British Birth Cohort".

26 years and compared data on mother and father's interest in education, internal locus of control, and self-esteem factors at age 10, with educational outcomes. They concluded that father's reported interest in their child's schooling (determined by one 'teacher rating' of a child aged 10) significantly predicted educational outcomes for their daughters, but also predicted outcomes for their sons but only where this correlated to a rise in the mother's interest in schooling. Socio-economic status and mother's educational attainment continued to be a strong predictor of educational outcomes for all children, but the study provided further evidence of the complexity of factors surrounding parental involvement and educational outcomes. Limitations recognised within the article suggest that the measures for 'parental interest' were somewhat subjective as it was based upon a one question indicator completed by class teachers for children at age 10. The study is of interest, but may well have been influenced by social and societal expectations and context at the time of the original study (1970s).

Studies using longitudinal data illustrate a number of advantages and limitations. The studies from the US and UK (X. Fan, 2001; W. Fan & Williams, 2010; Flouri & Buchannan, 2004 and Flouri, 2006) used the data sets from longitudinal studies originally established for different purposes (e.g. the Birth Cohort Study, [BCS 70], explored aspects around impact of birth factors). They do, however, provide a rich source of follow-up data, including the academic outcomes for the child at different time points, earlier ratings or self-reports from parents and teachers, and in some cases self-reports from children themselves. They also have a strong validity for analysis as they are based on large numbers of participants. The data gathered are all quantitative; it is based on completing scaling or rating questions. Each researcher has verified the reliability and validity of their data to their research questions by excluding certain known 'risk factors' with regard to a child's outcomes in school, e.g. socio-economic status or mother's education, in order to focus on the hypotheses they wish to explore. Limitations, in many cases acknowledged by the authors, centre on the level

of attrition with the responses to follow-up studies sometimes being limited to particular groups (e.g. higher educated parents). There is also some acknowledgment that the analysis can be based on very few report scales (e.g. a one-item rating of parental involvement, X. Fan, 2001; Flouri, 2006). Bearing these limitations in mind however, these studies nonetheless provide a relevant backdrop to understanding why parental roles and participation are so critical in educational outcomes for children.

The last section illustrated a sample of the research that has been conducted in the area of involving parents in their children's school and learning. There is consensus that parental factors, such as academic attainment, can influence the outcomes for their children, and that their role is not insignificant, as shown by the meta-analytic studies mentioned (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; X. Fan & Chen, 2001). The empirical papers cited here (W. Fan & Williams, 2010; X. Fan, 2001; Flouri, 2006; Flouri & Buchanan, 2004) have however focused primarily on either closed-questionnaire data from longitudinal studies, or structured questions from short interviews, primarily with parents and teachers. They rely on self-reported behaviours that are suggested to be part of positive parental involvement or participation, such as helping with homework or going to meetings. The studies fall very strongly within a quantitative paradigm, and limited evidence has been found giving more detailed analysis or interpretation of the implicit factors. These implicit factors have included attitudes to school, constructs of parenting, or the ways in which parents' perceptions of school could interact with their beliefs and values about schooling per se.

2:2:3 Intergenerational factors around educational outcomes

Only limited research emerged when a more detailed and targeted search was conducted to explore analyses of parental attitudes and values with specific regard to recollections and memories of school. By using different search terms such as applying American-English terminology (e.g.

'intergenerational factors' with 'school'), several key papers were found, though none of them were conducted in the UK. These will be discussed next.

Kaplan, Liu & Kaplan (2004) explored 'intergenerational factors'. They conducted their research to understand more about the ways in which mothers' own experiences in school may interact with future outcomes for their children in school. In addition they considered whether any mediating factors existed to alter intergenerational patterns. The paper used an existing longitudinal data set from questionnaires with female adolescents from 1971. Follow-up data had also been collected in the 1990s which then additionally included asking their children to complete similar questionnaires to those obtained from their mothers at about the same age. Based on this data set from 1,384 mothers and their children, they proposed a complex model for the transmission of behaviours and attitudes that sought to account for a range of factors and possible influences upon the school experiences from one generation to the next. In particular they proposed that a negative school experience in the first generation could impact on their early adulthood experiences through dropping out of school, consequent low self-esteem or 'psychological distress'. The paper raised significant concerns around the nature of the mothers' own experiences of school, especially where this had been negative. Kaplan et al. (2004) found evidence that the life events individuals experience (such as early entry to adult roles, e.g. marrying, having children when young) can be linked to their dropping out of, or exclusion from, school early. These life experiences, they considered, led to greater psychological distress or reduced future ambitions. Their model proposed that these experiences also led to parents' lowered expectations for their adolescent children in school and significantly related to identification of negative school experience by the second generation (the children of the original participants).

This research provided an interesting new direction in the examination of the literature to date, offering some empirical evidence of the factors surrounding negative school experience and the nature of potential influences from one generation to the next. The study was limited, however, by the questions which related to negative school experiences, which were three items that the individual rated as their perception of school grades, teachers not liking them and receiving sanctions for poor behaviour. It was not clear how this construct of negative school experience related to research evidence from any qualitative discussion with parents that did not focus on imposed categories. In addition, the closed questioning and analysis techniques used do not address the *meaning* that school has for parents, nor indeed whether parents consider that their recollections and perceptions of school are in any way important. In particular, parents' own experiences in school, whether positive or negative, and the ways in which they regard school and discuss it with their children, have received much more limited attention.

Pears et al. (2013) have conducted the most recent study on intergenerational transmission to be found within the literature search. They aimed to understand whether and how school adjustment (measured as academic achievement and positive peer relations) was transferred between one generation and the next and whether there existed any critical time points in the child's development when support or intervention could be offered to mediate these potential pathways. They particularly focused on a sample of working-class fathers and their children. The 110 fathers were already involved in a longitudinal study which had been running since they were in the 4th Grade at elementary school and involved information about their own parents' involvement and expectations of school. The fathers were then engaged in structured interviews and this evidence, along with previous information gathered, was combined with assessments of their 213 children's development (at four time points up to 7 years of age), for statistical analysis.

Pears and colleagues (2013) found that experience of early parenthood was directly associated with poor school adjustment for their offspring. They found that links between the father's attainment and cognitive ability did not however significantly demonstrate links between the generations. In particular they found the father's age at the birth of the child, their income, and their expectation for their child's education all appeared to relate more to their child's development, such as academic achievement. Their findings suggest that the links were more evident when social behaviours from the father's time in school were considered as factors. In some cases however, their findings suggest changes in inter-generational patterns are possible where some fathers may have strived harder for their child to have a different experience of school, compared to their own. The limitation of their research was similar to other studies, in that there were only a limited set of measures for school adjustment (academic achievement and peer relations). They suggested that this may need further research to more widely define school adjustment factors that can be measured. In addition, the measure for the fathers' rating of expectation for their child in school was a one-item measure.

A further line of enquiry, exploring the connection between parental involvement and the way in which experiences and ideas may be discussed or repeated from one generation to the next, led to research on how children first learn about school from their parents. In the US, several researchers have undertaken studies with parents as part of the transition from pre-school to school (Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Taylor et al., 2004). Taylor et al. (op. cit.) explored the existing research into processes of 'academic socialisation', proposing a theoretical model (see Appendix 12) which is referred to in their summary:

Parents, through their individual experiences, social and cultural characteristics, and behaviors, set the stage for their children's early academic experiences. In our model, intergenerational influences are represented by the way in which parents' own school experiences and cognitions about school shape their parenting behaviors. (p.174)

In developing their theory, the paper reviewed research into the perceptions, attitudes and beliefs that parents have about school, and the ways in which these may interact with their involvement in their children's school lives. The paper cites many articles that support the view that increasing parental involvement is linked positively to outcomes for their children. Taylor et al. (op. cit.) also considered intergenerational factors. Whilst acknowledging that there was limited research in this area, they hypothesized that parents' school experiences would link strongly to the ways they talk about school to their children or the behaviours they exhibit in relation to school, which their model described as 'academic socialisation'. Taylor et al. (2004) also hypothesized that having experienced a positive or negative time in school may influence an individual's internal working model of school when they later become parents. In their paper they also consider that later on in a child's school life (adolescence) peer influences may also impact on academic socialisation, but at the earliest stage of entry to school they consider the parental role more influential. They conclude that more research exploring the nature of parents' negative experiences at school would be helpful to understand whether this impacts on their parenting behaviours. Whilst not a systematic meta-analysis of literature nor research based on direct data gathered by them, the model they proposed drew on the available evidence and provided ideas for future research that helped to inspire the focus of this study and led to further relevant lines of enquiry within the literature search.

The second study (Barnett & Taylor, 2009) involved one of the authors of the academic socialisation model (Taylor et al., 2004). Their research aimed to understand more about the ways mothers prepare their children for school (academic socialisation) and whether this interacted with the way they recalled their own experience, both of school and of being parented, in particular in relation to school involvement. Based on a social and ecological model, the authors contend that parenting practices derive from social knowledge (histories or traditions) and environments experienced from one generation to the next. Their research involved structured interviews with 76

mothers recruited from three different US states and 20 different school catchments who were already part of a 'parent-teacher links' study. They considered aspects of the mothers' recollection of school and the 'preparations' they undertook with their children prior to entry to kindergarten. These were described as academic (preparing the child for learning, such as alphabet or colour knowledge) and socialisation practices (readiness for the routines and behaviour requirements in a classroom). The study tried to account for other familial and social factors, such as income, parental education levels, and individual factors, such as self-esteem and efficacy ratings from the mothers.

Within the structured interview which focused on mothers' school recollections, participants' responses to 27 areas of school experience were tape recorded, transcribed and coded for analysis. The authors explain that their analysis was limited to three key areas: teacher relations, peer relations and memory of their own parents' school involvement. The coding also involved a judgement about emotional 'valence' of school recollections, with the coders assigning scores from a range of 'most negative' to 'most positive' experiences. In their findings they were unable to evidence a strong link between the mothers' negative or positive recollections of school and the aspects of academic socialisation and preparation they undertook. Their results did, however, find evidence that parental income, and mothers' recollections of their own parents' involvement in school activities, were statistically significant influences on whether mothers engaged in academic transition preparation. Although Barnett & Taylor (2009) offer some interpretation of their findings, they suggest that more research is needed to obtain data from a variety of sources, rather than a single report (from mothers, in their study) in order to understand the impact of the way a parent prepares their child for entry to kindergarten or school. The research clearly had limitations in that it was difficult to interpret correlations from the findings, but was nonetheless of interest as it revealed a further potential source of enquiry, namely the effect of parental memories of school.

2:2:4 Parents reflecting on their school days

When changing the search parameters in the EBSCO database to memory or recollections of school (such as suggested within the research by Taylor et al., 2004; and Barnett & Taylor, 2009), an example was found within an autobiographical memory research paradigm (Walls et al., 2001). Although not directly relevant to understanding interaction between a parent's memory of school and the school experience of their children, it was of interest in understanding more about school memories.

Walls et al.'s (2001) study aimed to find out more about specific aspects of the way young adults remember different experiences of school. Their stated aim of the study was to gather data that could help inform educators on salient aspects of school life and furthermore identify whether there are gender or other factors that influence these kinds of recollections. This paper examined the nature of 252 undergraduate students' recollections from school, they all attended a large mid-Atlantic University. Their analysis classified the students' school memories according to predefined categories they extracted from prior research. They completed two studies, the first one using more defined (closed) questions and prompts for students, such as asking them to write down a memory from a specific phase of schooling, together with their rating of it as a pleasant or unpleasant memory. The second study, with different students, used more open-ended categories, asking them to write down eight memories from any time across their school grades. Only afterwards were the phase of schooling, and whether they were pleasant or unpleasant memories, identified by the students. The results, once categorised for type and topic of memory, were tested for inter-rater reliability of the coding structure, and statistically analysed. The paper concluded that negative memories were most often recalled from earlier in school and those relating to relationships (both positive and negative) were most prevalent from students' time at High School.

Walls et al.'s (op. cit.) two companion studies provide greater clarity about the potential aims for this study. Firstly, they confirm the researcher's work-related anecdotal evidence (from direct discussion with many parents of children who experience difficulty at school) concerning school-related memories: in particular that difficult social times at high school often remain well-embedded in memory. In addition the students in their study also recalled more negative experience from early on at school. If this was to be replicated for other individuals, it might add further to a parents' worry about their child going to school, if they had a difficult time themselves. Their findings also reinforce the need to investigate further the nature of negative or adverse school experiences for parents. This paper's findings potentially support the focus of this study on younger parents of pre-school children. It is speculated that If there existed a 'reminiscence bump' (Walls et al., 2001) in young adulthood, it may well be that for a group of young mothers, this would be even stronger as they reconsidered and reflected upon their own school experiences whilst thinking ahead to their own child starting school.

Though there were very few studies that considered this interaction between parents' memory of school and their thoughts of their children starting school further, two more recent pieces of research seem strongly relevant in their parallels to this research study. In a paper from Finland (Räty, 2007) entitled "Parents' own school recollections influence their perception of the functioning of their child's school" a large sample of 391 parents, both academically and vocationally educated, completed questionnaires. Räty (op. cit.) analysed parents' ratings of satisfaction for their child's functioning at different stages in their primary schooling. The author then correlated this data with responses to their own recollections of school, which took the form of ratings against five aspects of school life ("the quality of the instruction, the justness and impartiality of treatment of pupils, the giving of encouragement, the usefulness of the learning attained, and taking individual needs into consideration", Räty, 2007, p.391). The findings suggested that there was some interaction of significance between parents' ratings of satisfaction of school for their child in the follow-up part to the study, and their own recalled

experience of school. University educated parents also indicated significantly stronger positive recall about school than the vocationally educated group within the sample. Of the vocationally educated parents, the way they rated satisfaction for their child's school also declined between the child's first and fifth year of school.

Räty's findings were interesting in that they not only found some evidence that parents' recollections could influence their thinking or attitudes about school for their child, but also highlighted the ways in which parents' memories of their own actual experience of school could shift their thinking and aspirations (towards the positive), even if their own experience may have been negative. In common with many of the other longitudinal studies previously cited, the data from parents was limited, in that their school recollections were based only on a five-item scale of pre-imposed categories. Nevertheless these findings are very relevant to this study.

Since the earlier study, Räty (2010, and 2011) has revisited the connections investigated in his earlier work in an attempt to address these limitations and provide more breadth to this under-researched area. In his more recent paper of 2011, he asked participants to give responses to their recollections of school in an open-ended format, rather than pre-imposing too many categories. This study again had a longitudinal design, and used a follow-up questionnaire administered with parents towards the end of their child's time in school. The study found parallels between the experience and outcomes for children and the earlier experience of school for their parents, albeit based on parental reports and interpretations. Again, Räty's (2011) study recognised the importance of not always pre-supposing intergenerational transmission of experience and behaviours. The exceptions, whilst limited, are nonetheless important. In particular, some fathers, citing negative experience at school, actually became more involved and supportive in their child's education as a result.

The final paper to be considered parallels to some extent the approach taken by Rätty, but stands alone as one of very few pieces of recent qualitative research found in this area. Miller, Dilworth-Bart, & Hane (2011) studied “Maternal Recollections of Schooling and Children's School Preparation”. This study was, like many others, undertaken in the US, but used semi-structured interviews with 40 mothers of pre-school children to understand more about the ways in which parental behaviours prepared children for school. The transcripts were coded by a number of researchers in a dynamic and interactive conversation which identified main themes. These were then cross-coded by the research team to ensure inter-rater reliability and validity. Four main themes were identified which they summarised as:

- 1) intergenerational influences, reflecting how they, themselves, were primed for and supported through school, (2) transitions between school settings or grade levels as sensitive periods, (3) school settings, including characteristics of schools they attended and goodness of fit, and (4) diversity, particularly lack of diversity or an appreciation of diversity in their own schooling. (Miller et. al., p.161).

Their findings provide a more in-depth account of a particular group of parents' recollections of school than the quantitative studies cited here; they did not seek to determine cause and effect, but to understand the potential influences upon the child in entering school. Their findings accord with some of the quantitative studies in illustrating the nature of intergenerational experiences, but also evidence other factors which were relevant to this particular group of mothers from one US state, such as the desire for their child to be included in a diverse school community, and the importance of finding the ‘right school’. Whilst the focus of their study was open in approaching parents with a range of educational backgrounds and experiences, it was clear that some participants found the process of talking about their experiences difficult, both by virtue of the emotional impact of their experiences and also perhaps finding the interview situation unusual. As is the limitation of any qualitative study of this kind, the depth of information shared by participants is limited by what they themselves consider relevant or are able to share in this context.

2:2:5 Critique of methods used

Much of this research, with the exclusion of the research by Miller et al. (2011), has used a normative and therefore primarily quantitative design from within a positivist or post-positivist paradigm. Methods used include structured interviews and questionnaires to interrogate parents on their recollections of school and to provide statistical data to explore their hypothesis and assumptions. Whilst this provides a valuable context and a degree of validity to the ideas under consideration within this research, there are limitations in the depth of the data the studies obtained and the evidence base on which the judgements are formed, in particular where significance has been drawn from answers to only a few questions (albeit from a large sample of parents). Where interview or open-ended questions were used in the method, the responses were often coded according to '*a priori*' categories, so that responses were placed in a 'best fit' related to these categories. Whilst this has some parallels to qualitative research with its need for rigorous analysis of the findings and the need to, at times fit 'data' to a form of coding structure, it does not reflect the individual 'narrative' - the story behind the categories that parents may have chosen in a questionnaire. In addition, no UK specific studies have been found on parental recall of school. Many of the studies do however point towards the need for more related research into the area of educational aspirations and the impact that negative school experiences of parents may have on their children.

The final section within this chapter will explore the theoretical underpinning to this study on the perceptions of school from mothers having negative school experiences. In doing so, it will also consider similarities of theoretical positions within those research studies cited so far within this chapter.

2:3 Parental perceptions of school: the theoretical relevance to psychology

2:3:1 Introduction and context

In order to understand the breadth of theoretical frameworks relevant to this study, the last section in this chapter will consider some key theorists and their ideas as they relate to parents' perceptions of school, child development and behaviours in parenting practice. In attempting to make sense of the complex interaction of factors that could lead to a positive school experience for a child, a mind map was drawn to illustrate the broad ideas of positive school experience illustrated in Appendix 13. It served as a top-down method of considering factors emerging from a range of both literature and observation. It is neither comprehensive nor an attempt at a theoretical model such as that proposed by Taylor et al., (2004). It does, however, assist in considering the theoretical positions that led to this research interest. That is, considering what may have been difficult for some in school could potentially aid understanding, assist in the consideration of how things could, by contrast, be improved, and lead to the development of new strategies.

As considered within chapter one and illustrated within the theoretical mind map in Appendix 13, the author's interest in parents' school perceptions, derived from an instinctive accord with elements of humanistic psychology. This theoretical approach to psychology was in part informed by the author's identification with the theories of Maslow (1943), whereby human higher-order thinking and contentment is only truly achieved when we have our most basic human needs met. Maslow's theories make sense within the context of a negative school experience in particular: if a child's basic needs for safety and human warmth are not being met, either in school or at home, then psychologically they would be less able to focus and progress with their learning in school. In addition humanistic psychology is also influenced by the theories of Carl Rogers (1959, 1961), who believed that humans are inherently focused towards actualisation; that is, achieving their potential and

a sense of their own individuality and self-esteem. Similar in part to Maslow's (1943) theories on the 'hierarchy of needs'; Rogers' theories (1959, 1961) contend that humans innately have a drive that can lead to their achieving fulfilment as a 'fully functioning person' (Jarvis, 2000; p. 64); perhaps someone who can cope with all life's trials, the good and difficult times. An over-arching consideration of these principles and theories is particularly relevant when considering the interpretation of human experience and life stories. In the case of this study, there is a primary focus on the phenomenon of how human individuals cope with, and are potentially influenced by, their earlier life experiences in school; in particular, when these have been a challenge to them. Maintaining this theoretical foundation as the guiding principle for this study (influenced subsequently by additional theories to be considered in 2:3:2 and 2:3:3), supported both the rationale for this topic focus and ultimately, as will be considered further in chapter three, the methodological approach adopted. Further theories underpinning psychology will be explored next through those identified within some of the research reviewed so far, from those that are broadly aligned to this study to those that seem most closely associated to the theoretical ideas influencing this study.

When considering further the theoretical foundations of other studies critiqued in this chapter, it was apparent that only a small proportion of their authors explicitly stated this. Of those studies which did clearly identify the theoretical principles and foundations that guide them, they appeared informed from within social, cognitive or behavioural psychology. Within the context of understanding the impact of parental involvement on motivation towards learning, W. Fan & Williams, (2010) explained their theoretical position with regard to achievement motivation. They cite social-cognitive theories such as Bandura (1997):

Because adolescents exist within social systems and are continuously interacting with their caretakers, parents not only influence the development of self-efficacy but also provide observational models that guide adolescents' adjustment of their self efficacy (Bandura, 1997, cited in W. Fan & Williams, 2010, p.53).

Social cognitive theory, in brief, contends that individuals tend to repeat behaviours through observing others within the context of their environment (Bandura, 1986). Similarly, in the government paper reviewing literature on parental involvement, Desforbes and Abouchaar (2003) recognised that theories behind parental involvement may also lie within the social construction of roles and responsibilities for parents with regard to school learning. As critiqued in section 2:2:2, Cheung and Pomerantz's (2012) approach similarly identified with further aspects of self-determination theory, in understanding parental motivation and its link to why parental involvement can enhance learning. Self-determination theory has developed in recent decades prominently by researchers Edward Deci & Richard Ryan (2000), from theories around human internal or intrinsic motivation they describe this in one article:

Self-determination theory (SDT) maintains that an understanding of human motivation requires a consideration of innate psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 227)

In Cheung & Pomerantz's (op. cit.) study using three different questionnaire and evaluation tools with young adolescents, they conclude that children are motivated to do well in a number of complex ways related to expectations they may have taken on board from their parents (such as being rewarded for doing well) and also the parent's desire to encourage self-worth and avoid guilt. This social cognitive approach to understanding parent and child relationships and interactions places a significant emphasis on the parents' role as distinct from the other social influences surrounding a child. It has some relevance to this study in placing direct importance and value on the models and attitudes provided by parents to their children. It is acknowledged therefore that this study will indeed draw on aspects of social cognitive theories; which seek to understand the perceptions and personal constructs that individuals' form in their social worlds (Kelly, 1955; Ravenette, 1988). This has relevance in particular to the constructs that parents (or more specifically, mothers) may hold about school, and also understanding the interaction that those parental perceptions of school (based on their experiences and attitude formation) could have on views of school for their child.

Social cognitive theories do not however address every facet of this study. The theories espoused within some of the parental recollection and intergenerational research do, however, appear even more closely aligned with the position contended in this research (Räty, 2007; Taylor et al., 2004). The foremost of these - the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) will be considered first, drawing in some of the papers already appraised (Flouri, 2006; Pears et al., 2013). This section will then consider other related theories on parental-child attachment relationships and the potential interaction with school factors (for example Barnett & Taylor, 2009).

2:3:2 Family systems, an ecological perspective

The influential theories or research paradigms developed by Bronfenbrenner (1986) incorporate recognition of the wider systems and interaction that take place within a family. The theory, related to family systems, recognises the external factors that can also interact when the child is developing, incorporating within this idea, influences from developmental psychology. Bronfenbrenner developed the terms 'Meso-system', 'exo-system' and 'chrono-system'. 'Meso-system' refers to the other settings in which the child may spend time. The 'exo-system' he used to define the systems which are not directly involved with a child, such as the parent's employment or friends, but which are recognised to have a potential interaction and influence on the child. The 'chrono-system' refers to a more complex interaction and influence of a person's experience of changes over time. In Bronfenbrenner's paper (1986) a theoretical position is established in relation to research to that point in time, but it also sets challenges for future research to consider more than a 'uni-dimensional' approach:

...education appears to be an important source for parents' conceptions of the nature and capacities of both the child and of the parent at successive stages in the child's life. A more complete understanding of the connection between parental schooling and family perceptions is clearly in the interest of both developmental science and of educational policy and practice. (p.736).

This challenge has since been taken-up by a number of researchers that have been included within this literature review. Taylor et al. (2004) contend that their model of academic socialisation is in part based upon ecological theory (see illustration of their model in Appendix 12). They summarise this interaction as part of understanding ‘what parents do’ and ‘who parents are’ under a broader desire to acknowledge and evidence the ways in which multiple influences impact on the child’s academic socialisation. Similarly, in the longitudinal analysis of data in the UK on parents and their children, Flouri, (2006) recognised the relevance of Bronfenbrenner’s model. Their analysis found that a complex range of factors related to the family system, and ‘within-person’ factors influenced parental interest in schooling for their child. In a later paper on intergenerational transmission of school adjustment, Pears, Kim, Capaldi, Kerr & Fisher (2013) also cite an ecological model as underpinning their research exploring the interaction of factors that could potentially influence the ways in which fathers supported their children through school. Miller et al., (2011) consider that the ecological model influenced their research design as it served to support the complex interaction of factors surrounding a mother’s multifaceted school experience and the ways in which she might consider schooling for her child. The ecological model as applied to these research papers focused primarily on the construct that the child does not operate (live) in a single system, or ‘bubble’. Each day, the range of potential influences would appear to grow through their contact with new people and social communication systems such as the media and internet, yet at the centre of all these influences and the outcomes to the research studies considered here, is the constant presence of the parent.

The research conducted for this thesis and considered in this critique, seems to be most clearly aligned to that of Taylor et al., (2004) and Miller et al., (2011) in trying to understand the nature of parental perceptions of school, and thoughts about school for their child. Within this study, the stories will focus on negative school experience and the ways in which parents consider school for their child. There is therefore an explicit acknowledgement that, by

trying to understand the meaning of school for them at this critical life transition point (that of their child going to school); this process of personal interpretation will involve the parent potentially considering a range of influences and dynamic interactions on their memories and attitudes.

2:3:3 Attachment and school factors

In order to consider further the ways in which our experiences in school develop through this complex interaction of systems as children, it is also relevant to consider theories of attachment behaviours. The ways in which we develop positive bonds and connections to others, has been established in research as potential protective factors that can help children develop resiliency and the strength to cope with life's complex and rich tapestry (Karreman & Vingerhoets, 2012; Martínez, 2002; Shepherd, Reynolds, & Moran, 2010). Attachment theories were originally proposed and then developed by Bowlby (1988) and colleagues (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985; Reuther, 2013). Bowlby was interested in the ways in which babies developed their connection to their key caregivers. This connection could be studied and observed in infants when they were content and happy compared to times when this relationship or connection had been disrupted, even for a short period such as observed in a 'strange situation' (Ainsworth, 1989). These theories have been observed and tested since, with their applicability recognised in a number of interventions both within a direct family context (e.g. Video Interaction Guidance approaches, Kennedy et al., 2010) and within a social care and school context, where a parent's attachment relationship can be observed to rate their ability to support and interact with their children (George, Kaplan, & Main, 1985).

As with the ecological models, attachment theories have also been recognised as relevant to the study of parents' perceptions and memories of school in some of the research under consideration (Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Taylor et al., 2004). Educational psychologists in the UK have also

considered the relevance of this theoretical position to the development of practice both in schools and pre-school settings (Randall, 2010). These authors recognise the relevance of understanding and acknowledging attachment styles when considering the ways in which parents may discuss and prepare their child for school and ultimately become a direct participant in their school and educational experience. What lies at the heart of creating a positive school experience appears to be the way in which children develop a sense of belonging to the institution of the school. Where they have already been secure in their attachment relationships at home, they may then find it easier to transfer this to being part of, and attached to, staff supporting them in school, hence supporting them to feel a sense of belonging.

Section 2:3 has explored and considered the range of theoretical foundations and influences on this study and how they align with those clearly identified within the literature considered in this chapter (and illustrated briefly in the mind-map in Appendix 13). The author's guiding foundation of humanistic psychology (Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1961) seemed accommodating of the diverse range of influences that can guide a psychologist when creating and undertaking research. In the case of this study, these included social cognitive ideas about personal constructs (Kelly, 1955) and the perceptions and attitude formation that participants in this study held about school, based on their own memories. In addition, developmental theories such as attachment (Bowlby, 1988), allow for consideration of the connections between a parent and child across two or more generations. The wider eco-systemic model (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) acknowledges the multifaceted nature of human experience as children develop in complex systems that include those closest to them, but also the subtle, complex influence of broader systems such as the school and government policies. As will be examined in chapter three, this foundation also influenced the research methodology adopted.

2:4 Summary of Chapter

This chapter has provided an overview and context within which to understand the research presented in this study. Beginning with research which explores the broader impact of parents' involvement in the school life of their child, the chapter then considered papers that most closely align with this study, such as parent recollections of school and how these can interact or influence the ways in which they consider school for their child. What this literature search and synthesis has illustrated strongly is the paucity of in-depth, qualitative studies in this field. The chapter concluded by illustrating the author's guiding theoretical foundation within humanistic psychology, incorporating the influences of developmental and social psychology such as attachment and eco-systemic theories.

The research to date has predominantly focused on parental ratings of their involvement: their kinds of experiences in school rated against a-priori categories, often cross referenced by the academic scores and outcomes for the child. Though Rätty (2007, 2010 & 2011) has completed a number of in-depth empirical studies into parental recollections that are most relevant, few have provided open-ended opportunities for parents to reveal more about their own experiences in school. This deficiency was to some extent addressed in the one qualitative study found with mothers in the US (Miller et al., 2011). However, this still provided little insight into the UK population and school structures which would make it particularly relevant to practice of Educational Psychologists here. This study therefore proposes to address this gap, by understanding in depth what the experience of school was like for young mothers who identified having a difficult or negative experience. Whilst the empiricists would argue this does not provide sufficient breadth and validity with which to quantify or evidence the relationship, this researcher will argue that by exploring the life-world (Smith et al. 2009) of parents for a while, we can also be guided towards a deeper understanding of what factors hold sway for parents, and what they consider may support them in feeling positive about school for their child.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3:1 Overview of methodology and research questions

This chapter will address how the topic in question was explored, the epistemological and ontological position which frames it, and provide an account of how the research was undertaken from conception to final analysis. As indicated, this chapter and the findings will be written in the first person. This will allow this study to remain consistent with the nature of IPA studies, where the researcher is a significant partner in the process of interview, and where they may engage in the two-way process of making sense of the participants' sense-making (the 'double hermeneutic') in interview, to the later stages of immersion into the transcripts, as the stories from the participants unfold through interpretation and analysis.

As introduced in chapter one, my interest in parents' perceptions of school emerged over a number of years of Educational Psychology practice. Whilst meeting with parents of disaffected or disengaged young people in high school, I found that they could at times seem either hostile to school, or indeed completely unable or unwilling to attend meetings there. In order to understand this better, as part of the initial discussion meeting with parents, I then began to ask them about their own experience in school. The answers in some cases reflected either ambivalence or great negativity to school, based on their recall of feelings towards school. It was a desire to really understand more about their experiences of school and how this interacted with their thoughts about their children's schooling that led to the first principles in the design of this research. Looking back at the kinds of questions I had previously asked parents, I was able to construct a central question which I wanted to explore. Consideration was then given to how best to explore the experiences of participants who had themselves had a difficult time in school, but were now in the position of having a dependent child about to go to school. The research questions that I originally proposed are shown in Figure 3:1.

This research was intended to address the following primary question:-

What do parents say about their school experience?

In addition, the research sought to address the following subsidiary and specific questions:-

1. What concerns do participants have about their child's schooling?
2. What common themes or ideas emerge about the participants' current constructs of school?
3. What 'best hopes' are expressed by participants for their children's school experience?
4. What do participants identify from their own experience of school that may be relevant and important to share with their child's school?

Figure 3:1 Research questions

It is recognised that these questions referred to participants more broadly as 'parents', however as this chapter will consider, the focus narrowed through the availability and selection of participants to mothers.

3:2 Ontology, epistemology and design

As has already been established within chapter two, a number of quantitative studies have sought to provide empirical statistical evidence to demonstrate links between the intergenerational transmission of attainment and academic socialisation between parents and their children (Kaplan et al., 2004; Taylor et al., 2004). This research aims to use a qualitative research methodology, in particular interpretative phenomenology. The research was framed by my interest in the perceptions that parents (in this case mothers) have on school for their children, and the way these could interact with their own recall of their school days. Underpinning this are the psychological theories explored in chapter two and the need to maintain a psychological focus and emphasis with a rigorous and logical structure to its analysis. The research falls within a constructionist, qualitative paradigm, grounded within a humanistic psychology that has as one of its core concerns "human experience in [all] its

richness” (Ashworth, 2003; cited in Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 4) The process I used therefore attempts to understand people in a holistic way, rather than reducing them or their problems to numbers and statistical significance. My primary aim therefore is to understand people’s experience with depth and insight which may in turn contribute to new ways of considering a problem or experience that illuminates new solutions.

The research undertaken adopts an ontological position that accepts that multiple realities may exist – that, being human, parents (and even professionals, though hopefully to a lesser extent) may hold both common and oppositional constructs. The axiological position also incorporates an ethical stance that acknowledges the reflexivity and responsibility required by the researcher in interpreting their sense-making experiences within the context of a semi-structured interview. Within this qualitative and constructionist paradigm, I used a phenomenological approach that engenders a philosophical approach to the study of experience (Smith et al., 2009). Such an approach attempts to interpret, understand and make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them (Shinebourne, 2011). In order to understand further about the choice of IPA in my study, a brief historical context and overview of this theoretical approach to research will be considered next.

3:2:1 The choice of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

IPA has its theoretical roots outside psychology, within the realms of philosophy which Smith et al. (2009) explain

has been informed by concepts and debates from three key areas of the philosophy of knowledge: phenomenology, hermeneutics and ideography. (op. cit., p.11).

In order to understand this and its applicability and relevance to this study, I will consider each of these key areas briefly. Phenomenology, the study of being or experience, has significant influences from a number of

philosophers from the early part of the 20th century. The first of these is Husserl, who developed thinking about the study of human experience and the way in which this could be interpreted through our awareness and perception of experience. Husserl focused on intentionality, the active process of reflection we may go through in becoming aware or conscious of our experiences, those that matter to us (Shinebourne, 2011). Husserl also offered a particular way of considering phenomena, by both bracketing ideas and thoughts and considering them systematically through a gradual reduction or funnelling of what we may understand of something, getting to its core or essence. (Urmson & Rée, 1991).

Other philosophers, including Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty have also contributed further to thinking about phenomenology. Heidegger was interested in the “question of being” (Urmson & Rée, 1991), extending thinking about phenomenology and hermeneutics, the study and theory of interpretation. He considered that there is meaning in existence and that we cannot take a view of a phenomenon or experience without considering ‘being-there’ which we are already part of in the social world. This was also termed ‘intersubjectivity’; “*the shared, overlapping and relational nature of our engagement in the world*” (Smith et al., 2009, p.17). Merleau-Ponty was also influential in the mid-20th Century for his views of phenomenology, sharing some ideas from Heidegger on intersubjectivity through recognition of the ‘body’ being part of human engagement and, situated in real ‘lived experiences’ and ‘collective meanings’ based on our interpretations and personal perceptions of them (Urmson & Rée, 1991).

This process of interpretation is conceptualised as ‘hermeneutics’ which is defined within Heidegger’s philosophy (extended from many earlier philosophers such as Schleiermacher and Gadamer), as setting out a scientific approach with its focus on asking questions and contributing an *interpretation* of an experience (Larkin, 2013). In the case of my research, this understanding is relevant, as the approach will focus on the mothers’ own

views of their experiences at school. The interaction was also prompted by occasional questions to add more depth and to encourage the participants to reflect more and interpret what they experienced. This process is considered as the 'hermeneutic circle' (Smith et al., 2009) where an individual may have a pre-judgement of something perhaps based on their thinking as a whole (e.g. 'all my school times were bad'). Through a process of revision and prompting they may open their thinking to consider other parts of their experience, and in turn come to a revision of their thinking (e.g. 'not all my school days were bad'). As the researcher, I was engaged in the process of initial interpretation with participants through the questions I asked of them. This process was then conceptualised as the 'double hermeneutic' (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The individual is listening to, and asking questions of, the person reflecting (the researcher for example), who is themselves undergoing a process of interpretation of their own experiences. This is considered a circle (or perhaps more specifically a cycle), because none of this could perhaps be the 'final' interpretation but is part of an on-going process. Smith et al. (2009) consider that this process is iterative as, within the process of analysis of data which would then take place away from the participants, the circle of interpretation will carry on.

The final concern of IPA is 'idiography', the study of the particular, or individuals with a "*detailed finely textured analysis*" (Shinebourne, 2011, p.22). From ideas developed by philosopher Wilhelm Windelband in the 19th Century, this approach is considered at variance to many approaches within wider science as they are concerned with the 'nomothetic', finding evidence to make generalisations or 'laws' about larger groups and populations (Mann, 1983). Smith et al. (2009) contend that the focus on the particular is also about trying to make sense of what something means to an individual and what is part of their life-world.

Whilst there continue to be some critics of IPA as a qualitative research methodology (Giorgi, 2011; Willig, 2008) it is gradually becoming a more

popular and mainstream approach to research which as has been illustrated already, has its roots in philosophy and early psychology, but whose appeal now extends to health and education, with particular relevance to educational psychology. The research in this case, focused on the first-hand accounts of parents and their perceptions of school through their own experience. This, therefore, is a way of understanding their reality which as one researcher states “whatever individuals report about their experience should be taken as their interpretation of reality” (Nicholson, 1986, p.146, cited in Smith et al., 2009, p.164). The process within the interview was very much about both their own interpretation and process of thinking about their past but also giving thought to their child and the journey they would all be taking together towards school entry.

Willig (2008) argues that there is a continuum of epistemological positions framing qualitative research where IPA falls between relativism and realism. Realism can be broadly defined as a measurable and objective account of objects and events whereas the relativist epistemological position, considers that there is no knowable truth, that events or experiences can be perceived in different ways. Willig (op. cit.) considers that IPA falls within a relativist ontology, as it is an analysis of how people actually *experience* events. Therefore, whilst this research is positioned within an overarching critical realist ontology (Archer, 1998), there is acknowledgement that the information participants gave during the interviews is subject also to their social interactions over the years and indeed within the interview itself. As this research is focused on the hermeneutic (that is, the participants making sense of the meaning that their experience had for them), I was aware of something of a 'double hermeneutic' throughout both the interview and the analysis of the transcriptions. This double hermeneutic is the process of the interviewer making sense of their stories initially reflecting and checking on the comments made by each participant within the interview and, later on, theorising during the analysis stage. I was aware throughout of the need for sensitivity, reflexivity and acknowledgement of this complex process as I tried

to understand and make sense of the ways in which the participants made sense of the meaning that school had for them.

Some criticisms of IPA (Giorgi, 2011; Willig, 2008) centre upon the limitations that phenomenology has in its theoretical positions and in terms of language. They considered that transcriptions of interviews for example, are more about the way participants explain the experience than the experience in itself. “How successfully are participants able to communicate the rich texture of their experience to the researcher?” asks Willig (2008; p. 67). The suggestion is that the details of interviews are bound by the participants’ use of language, and their ability to both verbally reconstruct and to reflect on their experiences. During the interviews themselves, and the reflections I made within the analysis phase, I acknowledged some of these difficulties. Though at times it may have been difficult to encourage one or two participants to elaborate on some aspect of their thinking, overall my view is that, without exception, they all conveyed the meaning of school to them with great reflection, passion and richness. The evidence for this view is, I believe, quite clear in chapter four.

Other qualitative approaches were rejected as they did not fit both the scope and rationale intended and indeed the research questions established. Grounded theory for example, as originally proposed by Glaser & Strauss (1967), has become very popular in studies seeking to generate new interdisciplinary theories based on participants’ accounts, rather than within psychology alone. Whilst there are acknowledged similarities in these approaches (see Smith et al., 2009; Willig, 2008), a larger number of participants is also required to give this approach validity. The research undertaken in this study limited the number of participants available, because of both the need to identify a group with common experiences and the time available for the research. In addition, the rationale was not to create new theories around negative school experience, but to understand more about the meanings and perceptions that parents had about their school

experience. Additionally, their thoughts on their child going to school were elicited in order to understand more about that experience and the ways in which they may either support their child, or be supported by others to do so, in order to make this a positive event.

3:2:2 Designing the research

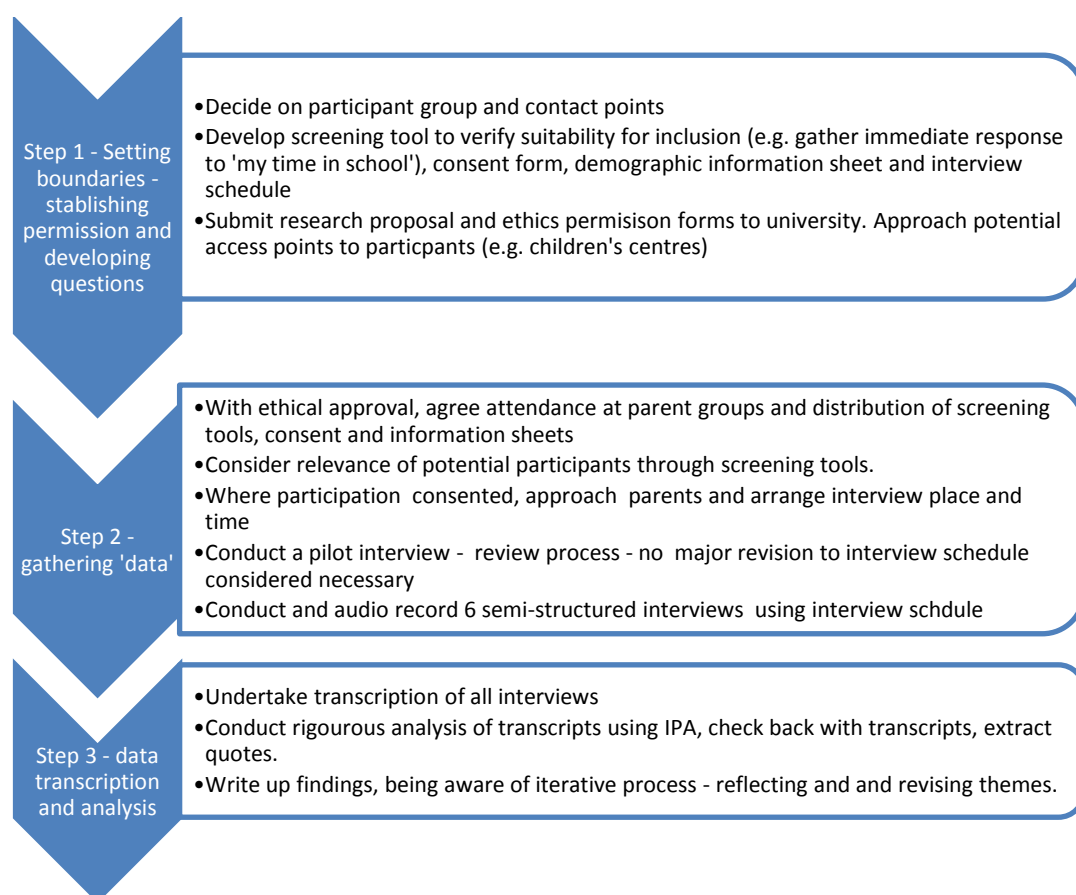


Figure 3:2 Diagram illustrating the process steps involved in the research design

The overall design process beyond identification of the research area is summarised in Figure 3:2. Consideration was then given to how to approach a representative sample of parents. Through my work across different age ranges, I had regular involvement with Children's Centre staff and was aware of the kinds of group activities and contact with parents that they offered. I decided that it would be best to consider the experiences of parents who had

yet to have a child enter school and so to explore how they viewed school before actually having contemporary experience of it (see Table 3:1 for participant demographics). In this way, I theorised that they would be more likely to base their perceptions on something which was relevant and real to them – their own experience of school. Though I had no intention of establishing or proving the influence of one factor on the other by asking about this directly of participants, I was interested in the potential interaction between the two as it emerged naturally in the conscious reflection and interpretation each participant made for themselves within the interview. In particular, it was important to understand more about the way that the participants made sense of this interaction, and also in understanding more about what made school difficult for them in the first place.

A schedule of open-ended interview questions (see Appendix 3) was then devised which linked with the research questions. The choice of open-ended questions and prompts served to establish the focus on the phenomena in question rather than to impose a-priori categories or constructs on the participants. The questions were also developed to allow space for rapport to develop between myself and the participant. The questions and prompts also avoided leading or closed questions (Smith et al., 2009). This schedule was then piloted with a volunteer attending a local children's centre. This volunteer was slightly older than the focus of the participant group for the study but had a child of pre-school age; the pilot interview was in this respect an opportunist sample.

The purpose of this pilot was to explore whether the questions and prompts made sense, and whether they allowed sufficient opportunity to explore the twin areas which were my focus: making sense of school experience, and a parent's thoughts about their child going to school. Though this volunteer had not specifically identified a negative school experience, she reflected that the process of the interview made her consider how difficult some periods in school can be. She also gave considerable thought to her child going to

school. From her comments on the process and my consideration of the content of the discussion, only minor revisions were considered necessary to the interview schedule. The process did however raise my awareness of the need to avoid using the schedule as a 'prop', in order to rely more on my active listening skills developed as a psychologist. This was important to the IPA approach as to understand their interpretation of the phenomenon explored, I needed to engage with what the participants felt was salient to them, attempting as far as possible, not to impose my own thinking on them.

The volunteer also reflected that the experience of the pilot interview was for her quite emotional and unexpected. This reinforced the importance of post-interview debriefing, and the kinds of support I would offer to participants afterwards. For ethical and professional practice reasons, being aware of the impact on the participants was critical. The interview with the initial volunteer participant reinforced the need to offer opportunities to pause or stop interviewing should the interviewee become emotional or touch on subjects which were, for them, particularly raw. (Whilst one or two participants did indeed become emotional at various points, no participant took up this offer and **they said** or **it appeared** that they very much wanted to share their story). The research therefore commenced with the undertaking of six semi-structured interviews. These were recorded, transcribed, and then analysed over the course of about 6 months using the detailed principles established by Smith, et al., (2009). This aspect of the design and process will be examined in section 3:6 and 3:7.

3:3 Context and location of study

The interviews took place in locations accessible to individual participants. For four of them, quiet rooms were booked at their local children's centres. Three of these interviews took place at or after the time when their young parent group was meeting; the other took place in a children's centre room at a time that best suited the participant, when their child was in nursery. Two further interviews took place in the home, with the participants' child either

present or nearby. Of all six interviews, three took place with the child present for a large proportion of the time, a further two when the child was present for at least part of the interview. This factor was interesting from two perspectives, firstly because it may have allowed the participants to reflect more directly when considering questions about their child going to school. Secondly, the attention was occasionally drawn away from the questions to interacting with the child (though the toddler children were all self-contained enough for the interview to proceed relatively unimpeded, and played happily for some time with toys provided). In turn when typing the transcripts at some points, interpreting and recording exactly what was said was occasionally difficult due to background noise (reflected in transcripts notes).

The presence of the child allowed for a more natural (relaxed) setting, whether in a family centre environment or an interview within the home. This was the participants' choice, though where interviews took place at the same time as a group, the children's centre staff had also offered to care for the child for at least part of the interview time, if participants wished. All participants were reminded of their right to withdraw at any time and that all identifying names and places would be anonymised. At the end of the interview, interviewees were debriefed and offered the chance to have further support. The children's centres and participants were also informed that a summary of findings and overview of the research would also be made available after the completion of the doctoral programme.

3:4 Ethical Considerations

In developing the design for the research, I was mindful that the procedures and stages of the interviews adhered to the ethical principles and guidelines established for Educational Psychology practice. This included the guidelines of the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2011) Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC, 2010) and those of my university. Following these guidelines and principles meant being aware of the potential impact and harm to participants through the whole process, from approaching

potential participant groups to the interview and analysis. I was also mindful of the interaction and power relationships that may be both perceived and actual between myself as the interviewer and researcher (and indeed psychologist) and the participant as interviewee. This will be considered further in section 3:6:2. Before they gave consent to participate, I made all potential participants aware of the broad nature of the research and ensured that they were fully aware of what would happen to their personal data. I explained the potential emotional implications of talking about issues related to them and their own experiences. An ethics form was submitted in conjunction with the original research proposal and was approved in May 2011. A copy of the ethics form and ethical approval for the research to proceed is included within the Appendix (1a, b).

The physical environment created for the participants ensured that they were sufficiently comfortable and were familiar with the environment, either because they requested a meeting within their own home or, if it was a children's centre room, with sufficient toys to allow them to relax with their child, if present. Drinks were offered to participants in the children's centre or at home they were free to respond to their own needs. Through the course of the interviews I was able to respond pro-actively to the emotive issues some mothers' raised, as already mentioned from the experience within the pilot interview. The interviews used active listening techniques, but were also responsive to participants' needs; I offered to pause the interview recording and also to stop the interview if they appeared visibly upset by something they had shared. In all cases where this offer was made, the participants stated that they did not want to stop and were able to carry on. Interview tapes were however paused to allow the participants, as parents, to comfort or support their child as necessary when they were present during the interviews.

At the end of each interview there was a short opportunity for debriefing. I reminded participants of the way I would transcribe, anonymise and then

interpret and analyse their stories. This allowed the participants to ask questions about the process if they wished, which one or two did, being keen to understand more about the research itself. There was also a reminder that if the interview had raised any issues or concerns which they wished talk through further, they could do so. This was offered either by contacting me via the children's centre or by raising issues directly with staff at their children's centre. This had been arranged by prior negotiation with those staff, who were offered support from myself if needed. Most participants indicated that they felt happy or 'fine' about the process and others commented that it had been useful to them in helping them to make sense of their time in school. At the end of all interviews, in order to recognise the time they had given up and their co-operation in the process, a small box of chocolates was given to participants.

3: 5 Participants

A set of ideas on how to identify a group of participants for IPA research was proposed in Smith et al., (2009). They refer to this as 'purposive homogenous sampling' (op. cit., p. 49). Within the earlier proposal to this research, I identified that to gain this sense of homogeneity there should be clear characteristics that give the participants a commonality and similarity of experience and background. In the case of this research, the following was proposed.

- Young parents who had left school within the past ten years
- Parents who when asked about school, identified at least some negative school experience
- In addition, they should have only pre-school aged children.

The original intention was to draw all participants from attendees at local children's centre 'young parent' groups, as this offered a sample suited to the purpose of this study; a group that have a number of similarities by virtue of age and likely entry to parenthood. I was aware that I would need to approach about 30 or more parents in order to find at least six who would

both fulfil these criteria and be willing to participate in individual interviews. Although concerted effort was made to achieve this, by approaching managers of children's centres from one town within the authority, they were unable to support the research at that time as their parents had also been part of other recent projects. Children's centres were then approached across several towns in the authority and consent was obtained to attend five groups to share information about the research and invite potential interviewees to participate. (See information sheet, screening tool, and consent form; Appendix 1a, b, c). Due to the timing of the groups and work commitments, I was only able to attend three of the five groups where discussion took place with about 20-25 parents and about 20 completed consent forms and screening tools were gained. Following discussion about confidentiality and the ways in which I would approach potential participants offering to read them aloud if needed, it was agreed that two First Steps to Play workers would also approach parents from their groups on the researcher's behalf. They returned the consent forms and screening tools via Royal Mail directly, in an envelope marked 'confidential' to ensure they would not be accessible to anyone else through usual office postal opening procedures. A further 15 screening tools were thus gained, making a total of 35.

Of the 35 *potential* participants, 16 parents recorded at least one aspect of school as being unhappy or negative. Of these, 11 identified at least one phase (primary or secondary) of their schooling where they 'did not like going to school', and five did not. This difference became the benchmark criterion for inclusion in the research: sufficient to indicate their suitability and the latter five were thus not considered suitable for the purpose of the study. Of the remaining 11 parents, all except one was female. Two either did not leave contact details or indicated they did not wish to participate further. Contact was then made with nine parents, all mothers, five of whom agreed to participate in individual semi-structured interviews. At this point, the pilot interview had taken place and the opportunity was used to ask this volunteer participant if they knew of anyone who may also share similar experiences. Through this opportunistic or snowballing method of sampling, I then became

aware of another potential participant. This was the only participant not drawn from the young parent groups. Though the intended homogeneity of the participants was thus widened slightly, by age and attendance at children's centre younger parent groups, it was however retained and reflected in the following ways:

- Age range of participants – 19 to 30 years
- Age of leaving education – 16 to 19 years
- Method of contact point – five out of six attended young parent groups through the children's centre
- Gender of participants – all female
- Nature of school experience - all identified with a least one area of negative experience, with all ticking 'unhappy/dislike' for 'I liked going to school' at either primary or high school.
- Age of child or children was below school entry age (less than 4 years old)

All participants had left school from the age of 16 onwards; the span of time from leaving school to being interviewed was 2 to 12 years. Additional background information/demography about the participants is summarised in Table 3:1, this was obtained as part of the screening tool and consent forms. The table of demography illustrates further the homogeneity of this group, who whilst drawn from across the south and east of the authority, have a number of common experiences which reflect the starting point of the research.

	Participant pseudonym →	Jo	Clare	Natalie	Amanda	Lizzy	Becky
Demographic information given	Gender	F	F	F	F	F	F
	Age Range	20-24	16-19	25+ (30)	20-24	25+ (26)	20-24
	Ethnicity	White	White	White	White	White	White
	Religion	Christian	Christian	None	None	None	None
	Number and age of child(ren)	1:1-2 yrs. 2:2-3 yrs.	1: 0-1 yr.	1: 2-3 yrs.	1: 2-3 yrs.	1: 1-2 yrs.	1: 1-2 yrs.
	Main occupation	Family ⁶	Family	Family	Family	Family	Part time work
	Age left full time education	16-17	16	18-19	18-19	18-19	18-19
	Qualifications	GCSEs NVQ, A-levels	GCSEs, NVQ	GCSEs, OU credits	GCSEs, NVQ	GCSEs, NVQ	GCSEs, A-Levels

Table 3:1 Summarising participant demography

3:6 Data collection and reflexivity

The interviews were primarily recorded using a university-owned digital voice recorder. This was only available for a limited time period and all data contained on it was deleted before return to the university. The final two interviews were recorded on audio tape with back-up consisting of a digital voice recorder on a mobile device. The digital recordings were then transferred and stored on a secure memory stick, in accordance with

⁶: 'Family' on the screening tool referred to having childcare responsibility, which was explained verbally to participants

university guidelines. Whilst these audios contained limited personal information or means of identifying participants, beyond names of schools or friends (mostly by first names), comprehensive efforts to maintain confidentiality were undertaken. The two interviews on audio tapes (not digital) were transcribed as far as was possible by business support for my employing psychology service. The participants were not identifiable to the typists, who were in any case bound by the confidentiality requirements of their own employment. The tapes were wiped after being typed in accordance with local policy. The longest interview was transcribed by a local audio typist not known to the participants, for which she received some remuneration. She was experienced at research interview typing through work at a university, and hence familiar with the kind of notation used. She also signed a confidentiality declaration with me. Three further transcripts were typed in full by myself. The last two partly-transcribed interviews (from audio tape) were also completed and checked for accuracy by me, using the audio tapes.

All transcripts were then anonymised by changing all individuals' names, places and school names. An attempt was made to maintain consistency of style within the transcription notation, despite having three different typists. This was done through my process of checking the transcripts against the audio a number of times (which also became part of the early stages of analysis). As Smith et al. (2009, p.74) explain, the notation and style while important for consistency, is secondary to the accuracy of recording the content.

The process undertaken within the interviews has been clarified from a practical position; explaining how the participants were selected, the nature of the interview and initial management of the data collected from these interviews. I will now consider the processes which took place within the interview, from the perspective of a psychologist, and the ways in which I addressed reliability and credibility issues raised by some critics of IPA, for example Giorgi (2011). My professional role as an educational psychologist

(that is, someone who frequently interviews parents and children to elicit their views), was felt to be helpful in overcoming some of the potential issues related to the reliability of the methodology used. Care was taken in the initial stages of the interview to build the relationship and rapport to place the participants at ease, and to encourage them to use a language with which they felt comfortable.

At times in the interview, I was aware of the need to rephrase questions and to relate and reflect back to clarify what the participants had said. I was conscious that this process may at times have influenced what the participants said. However, listening to the recording of the interview for the first few times, the typing, correction, and later analysis of the transcripts made clear that what had taken place in most instances (though I acknowledge not all) was part of the double hermeneutic – me making sense of subjects' interpretations. At times, indeed, the interpretative process became very much part of the interview. Where I reflected an incorrect interpretation, or had otherwise misunderstood, the participants in many cases were quick to say 'no', or to reconsider what they had meant. The richness and relevance therefore of their choice of words, and the reflections which the participants themselves made, are central to the philosophical position of the methodology employed: that is, an interest in the *meaning* they extract of *their* own reality and 'life-world'.

After each interview and throughout the process of the analysis (over a number of months), I maintained initial reflections and a reflective journal (for extracts, see appendices 4a & b). This recorded not only my consideration of what to ask, why and how, but also immediate reflections on the overall sense of each interview, from my perspective (Appendix 4a). The reflective diary became particularly important during the process of analysis. In part, this helped to maintain a sense of connection to and coherence of the 'data' when unavoidable lapses of time occurred between the research interviews and subsequent analysis. The diary also logged stages in the process of

analysis where I questioned themes that emerged, or celebrated moments when I considered I had a breakthrough in uncovering the emergent and super-ordinate themes. During the final stages of reviewing the emergent themes across all participants and then linking the super-ordinate themes with quotes from participants, I became aware of the iterative process – moving from each stage of analysis, to the transcript and back to the original audio, towards a more complete sense of the meaning and experience of the phenomenon being explored.

3:6:1 Understanding the power relationships in research interviews

Considering the relationships that are established in any researcher/participant dynamic is key both to maintaining an ethical stance and also to acknowledging the ways in which, as part of IPA, we cannot as researchers be considered entirely objectively removed from the ‘data’ we collect. In one text on qualitative research (Holliday, 2002) one entire chapter is devoted to the ways in which relationships are established in research, and the reflexivity which a qualitative researcher must acknowledge throughout the process. The author comments that:

It is recognised that the presence of the researcher is unavoidable, and indeed a *resource*, which must be capitalised on. (p. 145).

In this way, I recognised that the relationships I established with the participants began on my first meeting with them, which in four out of six cases, was through attending their local young parent groups. At that time, I was introduced to the groups as a student who was undertaking research into school. My qualification as an educational psychologist, whilst not hidden if participants asked about it, became secondary to my role as a student and researcher. I acknowledge that this was a conscious decision on my first meeting with the groups, to allow them to feel a little more comfortable around me and less self-conscious that their immediate response may be ‘analysed’ by a psychologist. This is in many ways different to the way in which I establish relationships with clients within my professional role. There, the first part of any meeting with a parent and child is spent explaining my

role as an educational psychologist, since they have rarely requested my involvement themselves and are likely to have limited knowledge of the role. As a 'student', a role which many of the parents may have experienced, I attempted to establish a different dynamic, in which they may have felt more comfortable in speaking up, disagreeing or indeed in not agreeing to be part of the research in the first place.

During the first conversation before the interviews, I used some of my skills as an educational psychologist to place participants at ease with me. This was in part by interacting with their children when appropriate, holding my distance, offering support or kind words, and also listening to and joining in part of the conversation they had with each other when I had introduced the area of my research focus, which I explained was about their time in school. When I later approached potential participants by phone, I developed a short script to respond to the kinds of questions they may have about the process. I usually referred to this as a 'recorded conversation', as opposed to an interview, as I felt this was likely to reduce some of the anxiety about what an 'interview' may entail, such as unwelcome formality and a power imbalance between 'interviewer' and 'interviewee' in this dynamic.

During the semi-structured interviews I checked that the participants understood the ways in which what they said would be recorded and used, and that they were happy to continue. Sometimes this involved answering in detail their questions about the research, as part of the de-briefing phase. I acknowledge that to participants I was an outsider who held the status of researcher and as such, they may at times have felt restricted in what they said to me or indeed the ways in which they told their stories. This dynamic, whilst evidenced to some extent in the tailoring of their use of local or swear words, often became less apparent as the interview progressed. In most cases a positive rapport was established and they may have begun to see me in the capacity of an inquisitive acquaintance, albeit one they could trust as a result of the confidentiality boundaries initially established. In my

reflective notes made immediately after the interviews, I was conscious of the ways in which, for some participants, the language I had used in my questions had not always made sense, but also that where establishing a connection with the participant was more difficult, the richness of the story told may also have been tempered. This was particularly the case with the first and last interviews (with Jo and Becky). With Jo, I found it difficult to step back from the kinds of prompts or explanations I may give in my role as an educational psychologist and I was also concerned that Jo may have initially been a little reluctant to take part in the interview, despite having seemed willing in the first stage of negotiation, during my phone call with her. However, as the interview progressed, Jo was willing to share at least some of the difficult times she recognised from school and her story tallied with those who also had experienced being bullied or unsupported with learning at school. Becky also, though expressing a willingness to participate, was quiet to begin with, and took some time to relax sufficiently for me to make sense of her own perceptions about her time in school.

By contrast, the other four participants spoke much more freely, and it seemed they had a story they really wanted to tell. Perhaps this was in part to do with my more relaxed approach in the interviews, in establishing the dynamic and purpose and also in my phrasing of questions and prompts. At the end of the fifth interview (with Lizzy), she approached and gave me a hug. I felt that this was at least partly because she had felt able to be open and because I had actively listened and shared some of the emotions which resurfaced as a result of her story. The dynamics of my own role as researcher, and someone who was also a psychologist, may have helped them to feel more at ease with the process of sharing their story, but it was clear that the process of analysis was my own interpretation. One of the limitations of this study which I will consider in my discussion (Chapter five) is that my analysis of the interpretations took place away from their story. Thus, participants were not actively involved in considering whether my analysis and interpretation also fitted with their world view and the story which they were telling. Despite this however, it seems important to acknowledge that

the dialogue within the interview also became iterative, as we moved from their recall and interpretation to my own reflection back of those interpretations. This also provided opportunities for them to agree or reject my interpretation and sense-making, an important part of the process of the double hermeneutic.

3:7 Data Analysis

The process of analysis of the transcripts followed guidance offered by Smith et al., (2009). It was recognised however that whilst it was considered important to follow their process in order to maintain rigour, the guidance itself allowed some flexibility concerning the ways in which the emergent themes were grouped, and the actual interpretations were very much reflective of the individual participants. The detailed analytic process prescribed within IPA also provides for the identification of emerging themes within and across participant descriptions, whilst acknowledging with reflexivity, the researcher's views throughout the process through the use of the reflective journal, as explained in section 3:5.

An over-view of the process is illustrated in Figure 3:3. Whilst this diagram captures some of the cyclic nature of the procedure, it does not fully explain the level of interpretation that it required. Whilst listening to the recording of each interview again, I began the process of making initial notes (stage one – see computer recorded example, in Appendix 5a) including using a highlighter on the printed transcripts as a first stage in identifying key words and phrases which appeared important or were emphasised by the tone of voice of the participant. On the second read through, I then began to consider questions the data had raised in my mind and also to consider broader issues which seemed apparent in the responses to the interview questions and prompts. On the third and fourth readings, I considered the key concepts and ideas and the ways in which participants had phrased their thinking – their use of language. In some cases this gave rise to questions

about the extent to which participants felt at ease in the interview. Indeed, it may have been that some were trying to portray something of themselves to me: for example, in the use of mild swearing or in contrast, metaphor.

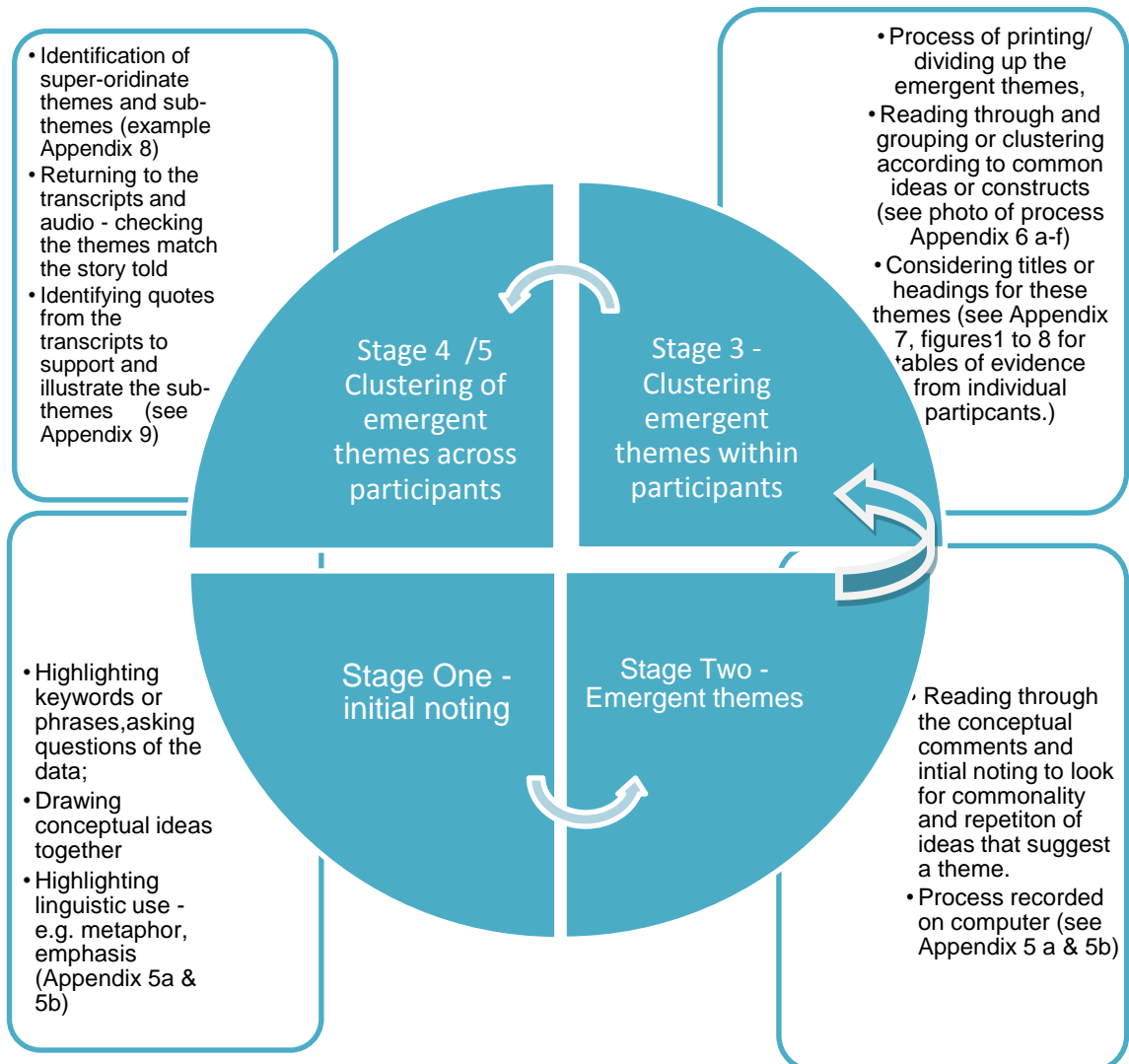


Figure 3:3 Process diagram illustrating the key stages in data analysis

At this stage, my initial notes and highlighting were transferred onto computer files for each transcript. Though this process was a little time consuming, it allowed further engagement with the data and an opportunity to add more commentary notes. I also chose to do this stage of transfer as it fitted more with the way in which I often work (for example, word processing of reports

and creating computer files). Stage two was then undertaken on the computer, working with each participant's interview individually. I explored the initial noting comments and highlighted text within these, searching for any common ideas and themes that seemed pertinent to understanding participants' experiences. It should be noted that this process had limited engagement with the actual transcripts, and represented the more existential nature of the analysis. The resulting notes then formed the 'emergent themes', which were recorded on the left hand column of each transcript (see example in Appendix 5b). This two-stage process of analysis was then repeated for all participants, and culminated in printing the emergent themes column to provide the data for stage three.

At stage three, I took photos (Appendix 6 a-f) to illustrate the physical process where I moved between the emergent themes and the similarities they suggested to me, on reading through. Emergent themes were clustered and re-clustered, which involved framing constant questions about what consideration of the themes was revealing. It also involved a process of 'bracketing' my own experience or interaction with the transcripts. This acknowledged aspect of any qualitative data analysis was reflected through comments I made both in the initial noting phase but also recorded in my reflective diary (see scanned extracts in Appendix 4b). By exploring these clustered themes and understanding what each set had in common allowed for the identification of psychological concepts and constructs. These headings then formed the overview for individual participants as illustrated in tables in Appendix 7.

Within the final stages (4 and 5), I then repeated this process of physically organising and grouping the emergent-themes data for all participants together. As this involved a large amount of data, I used the biggest table available (see photo Appendix 6c) and began to consider categories and constructs which best described each group of emergent themes. Once the final stage four was completed, I then had a complete table of super-ordinate

themes and sub-themes (see chapter four, Table 4:2 for the final version of this). At this point (stage 5) and in readiness for writing the findings, a word document was created with the emergent themes related to each sub-theme for each participant. In addition, relevant quotes were then gathered which related to each theme and the most salient included within the findings. Examples of those quotes not included have been consolidated from super-ordinate theme five into Appendix 9. This final stage drew together the theoretical and existential aspects of interpretative phenomenological analysis with the 'data', the words of the participants. Their words and stories then helped to cement the titles for the super-ordinate themes and illustrate the inductive nature of the analysis.

I consider that the whole process of analysis began with the first words said by the participants during the interviews, and culminated in the preparation for writing the findings chapter. The conclusion of this, and the ways in which I interpret the implications as relevant to an audience of both Educational Psychologists and educationalists alike, will be considered in depth in chapter five. However, readers of this research may also draw their own conclusions or hold their own interpretations of the stories, bringing to them their own constructs and world view.

3:8 Assuring quality within this study

As has been illustrated within this chapter, the methodology chosen demonstrated transparency in the methods used (Meyrick, 2006). This study endeavoured to use the key principles proposed by Yardley (2000) in order to ensure rigor and quality. The first of these principles is having 'sensitivity to context'. This relates to the need to develop a connection and trust with the participants within the study, being sensitive to their circumstances and personal context. When setting up each interview with the young mothers, I was keen to allay potential fears that an 'interview' may present to them. I described the process as more of an extended conversation about school

and offered to meet with them where they would feel most able to relax and be comfortable. For two mothers, this was in their home environment with their children either in the room or nearby. During the actual interview process I was very aware that what they revealed about their own school experiences was often a painful or emotional journey. By exploring my interpretation of their lived experiences, I was constantly aware that this also had to be a sensitive application of psychology, to ensure that the meanings they were conveying were not lost. This is also demonstrated in the following chapter, where each theme has been considered carefully within the context of the participant's story, using extracts from their interviews.

The second principle suggested by Yardley (op. cit.) is that of commitment and rigour. This is demonstrated both through a commitment to the participants themselves and their stories, but also with a strong commitment to the use of IPA. This extended from the first stages of considering the research and interview questions, to the need to remain open and reflexive through the interviews themselves. The purpose of this was to ensure I was aware as far as possible, my own pre-conceptions about what it may mean to have a tough time in school. I also sought to prompt deeper thinking and interpretation of their own experiences, without steering or leading. During the process of analysis, I also followed the structures suggested by Smith et al. (2009). The process of analysis extended over a number of months, from the first stages of transcribing the interviews, when the interview's audios were heard repeatedly and initial thoughts about early themes became apparent. During the stages of initial noting, aspects of the participants' language, content and meanings were considered. There was a further application of psychology when considering emergent, super-ordinate and subthemes within and across participants, in the later process of analysis. This clear structure added to the thoroughness of the process. Supervision also enabled reflection, but also challenged me to demonstrate validity of my interpretations. This often led to revisiting and exploring the data and themes, reconsidering how each theme remained consistent to both IPA principles, but also held on to the substance of each participant's account. This rigour

continued through the writing stage, where each theme was evidenced by quotes from participants.

Overlapping somewhat with the second principle proposed by Yardley (op. cit.), the third principle is that of having transparency and coherence. The process of analysis within qualitative research, it is suggested, should be replicable as far as is possible, with the evidence used in gathering data and analysis being clear and open. The presentation of the key findings that will follow in chapter four are my own view, but with the understanding that the process undertaken was not hidden nor shrouded in mystery, but an attempt to offer clarity linked with the use of extracts and full transcripts in the appendices, so that a 'trail' of evidence is apparent. Though it is unlikely a further researcher would interpret exactly the same themes, the quotes linked to each theme make transparent the way in which I formed these interpretations, from the way in which questions were posed within the individual interviews, to the final analysis.

The final principle of 'impact and importance' perhaps represents the overarching aim of all researchers embarking on academic studies; to offer a new insight and contribute further to a knowledge base. As was exemplified in chapter one, this research was undertaken to extend my knowledge in the area of mothers own school experiences, but also to contribute to a research base which had to date, been primarily based in the US or mainland Europe. The existing research was also principally quantitative, demonstrating patterns of children's educational outcomes from one generation to the next as evidenced through what parents achieved themselves in school but also in the hopes and aspirations they claimed for their children's education. This study aimed to provide a more detailed account of how mothers recalled and interpreted their school experience and in particular the meaning it had for them as they consider their own young children embarking on a journey through school. The findings in chapter four and discussed further in chapter five, highlight that this study has the potential to offer an important

contribution to the research base. This is ascertained by offering new insight to the ways in which our perceptions of school can interact with the behaviours which individuals may adopt in preparing and later supporting their children through school. The impact of the study is difficult to quantify at this stage, at least until published and shared within the wider community of psychologists and educators. However, on a personal level, the impact can be considered through both my own professional practice and that of the participants themselves, who in some cases spoke of an increased sense of power as a result of being involved as a research participant. This appeared to result from being able to share what they had been through, make sense of their experiences, but also simply the opportunity to have their voice heard.

3:9 Summary of methodology

In this chapter, I have related the ways in which the research was undertaken, from establishing this as a piece of research firmly within the qualitative paradigm, to explaining how participants were selected, approached and then interviewed. The process by which the findings from each of the six semi-structured interviews has been considered through examining the ways in which the data were gathered and analysed, whilst acknowledging the power relations and degree of reflexivity that I needed as an active researcher in the process, both within the interview itself and to a significant extent in the process of interpretative analysis of the phenomenon explored. Whilst it would be impossible to replicate the findings of this study as some researchers who favour a quantitative paradigm would extol, the methodology used has been sufficiently clear to understand how the research developed from initial design to final analysis. It is that analysis that will be explored in detail within the next chapter, drawing on the participants' words to illustrate the key findings - the super-ordinate and sub-themes - identified from within the participants' stories.

Chapter Four: Findings

4:1 Introduction to findings

This study aimed to find out *in depth* what perceptions a group of young mothers held about school, in particular as they indicated having had some difficult or negative times in school themselves. Each participant agreed to a semi-structured interview that sought to explore the phenomena of their school experience. This is considered an idiographic approach as it centres the research on individual participants' views and life-worlds – their recollections of life. Through a process of exploration six participants considered, with assistance from me as researcher, how they made sense of their own experience [the 'hermeneutic', a theory of interpretation proposed by phenomenological theorists, and included within the key texts on IPA; see for example Smith, et al. (2009); Giorgi (2011)]. In turn, I aimed to consider the next experience for them, that of having a child about to start out on their own experience through school. As the interviewer within this journey I was aware of how I made sense of their thoughts, acknowledging, sometimes explicitly with the participants, the double hermeneutic or hermeneutic cycle – the process of interpreting what they are interpreting and have experienced.

Their interviews were carefully listened to, transcribed verbatim and then underwent a rigorous process of interpretative enquiry using analysis techniques proposed by Smith et al.(2009). The transcripts were explored on a number of levels, initially noting keywords and ideas, then further looking at the language used and conceptual thinking. Emergent themes from each participant were then identified from these initial and conceptual notes. These themes were then considered as a whole and analysis conducted which sought to find patterns and commonality across the whole interview, a process of abstraction. Tables were then drawn up with each participant's key themes and sub-themes illustrated (see Appendix 7, Figures 1-8). The emergent theme data was then merged for all participants to be considered together, this time revealing patterns and commonality across all participants.

This final process formed the basis of the findings being represented within this chapter.

4:1:1 Consideration of the participant's use of language

Throughout the analysis and presentation of the findings within this chapter, I have considered each theme with pertinent extracts from the participant interviews. Within this process I also considered the way in which the participants spoke of their experiences and in particular, the language they used to describe their experience. As this approach is primarily interpretative, the stories that unfold are based on what each felt relevant to them and important enough to share within the interview. Their use of language, whether descriptive, factual or colloquial also appeared representative of what they wanted to convey to me, as the interviewer. This process is part of the double hermeneutic (Smith et al. 2009), where the participants search for language and phrases to form a representation of their experience, which in turn is interpreted by the researcher to form the themes that tell their story. The use of extracts taken directly from participants' accounts is a further attempt to represent their language and to remain as authentic, or as close to their story, as possible.

4:2 Overview of the participants

Six participants took part in this study. They had all attended schools within the same region of the UK; five out of six participants were attendees at young parents groups at their local children's centre. They were all mothers of a young child or children, who had yet to start school. Each participant completed a consent and screening tool (Appendix 2a & 2b) where they gave contact details and indicated the degree to which they considered all or part of their school experience to have been negative (rated as such on a simple 3 point visual scale). This indicated to me, not only their willingness to take part in the study but also their immediate thoughts about school – whether positive or negative. This then allowed me to approach participants who

fulfilled my research criteria – to research the perceptions of those who had a difficult time at school. The table below briefly summarises their demography and the pseudonym used.

Participant pseudonym	Age range	Age school left	Child(ren) pseudonym	Age of child(ren)
1. Jo	20-24	18-19	Jayden Poppy	1-2 years 2-3 years
2. Clare	16-19	16	Johnny	<1 year
3. Natalie	25+	18-19	Ralph	1-2 years
4. Amanda	20-24	18-19	Alfie	2-3 years
5. Lizzy	25+	18-19	Lottie	1-2 years
6. Becky	20-24	18-19	Lily	1-2 years

Table 4:1: Table of participant demographics

This chapter will now present in detail the key findings from my research supported by analysis, interpretation and pertinent quotes from participants to illustrate and justify their inclusion and relevance. The chapter will also present the findings as they relate to the research questions I proposed to explore.

NOTE: The extracts illustrate the experience for the six participants who were all educated within the same region in England, where there were both two-phase schools (primary and secondary) and three-phase schools (primary, middle and high). Becky experienced only two schools, one primary and one secondary, transferring at age 11. Two participants Natalie and Lizzy experienced a mixture of both through moves in area, so will reference middle school in their accounts. The remaining three participants, Clare, Amanda and Jo, all experienced three school phases.

4:3 Presentation of super-ordinate themes and subthemes

The culmination of the analysis of all the participants revealed five main or super-ordinate themes. Their grouping is illustrated below, in *Figure 4:1*.

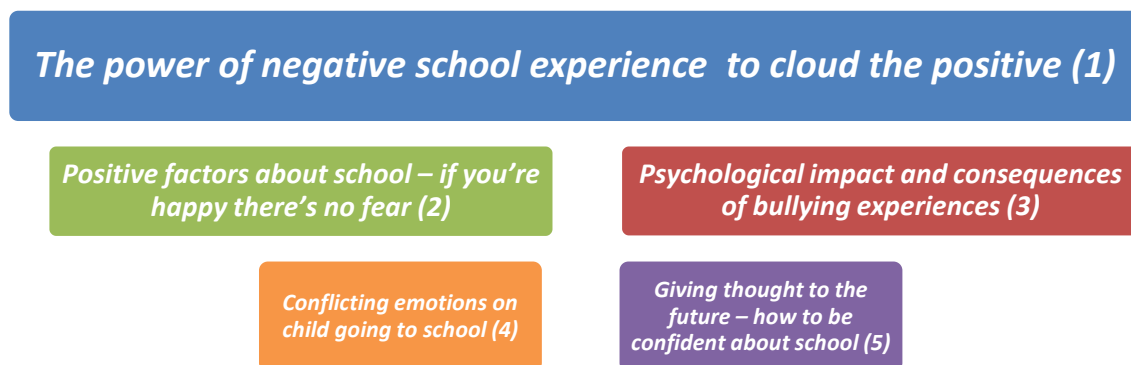


Figure 4:1: Diagram representing the five super-ordinate themes

I will explain further the meaning behind each super-ordinate theme at the start of each section within this chapter, to illustrate how the theme title emerged through identifying commonality across the sub-themes. The process began by further scrutiny of the groups of emergent themes. A number of sub-theme categories were then revealed, as illustrated in a concise form within Table 4:3. The use of colour and later, diagrams to exemplify each super-ordinate theme is intended to provide another means of representing the key findings. I considered that the sub-themes in particular are not linear or in priority order, but cyclical and crossovers are also apparent. A visual representation of the super-ordinate themes, subthemes and relationships is contained within the appendices (Appendix 10). The use of colour was also an element of the metaphor used within one participant's descriptions of school. Although this was not identified as a separate super-ordinate or subtheme, I wanted to recognise how vivid memories were for some of the participants.

Super-ordinate themes	<i>The power of negative experience to cloud the positive (1)</i>	<i>Positive factors about school – if you're happy there's no fear (2)</i>	<i>The psychological impact and consequences of bullying experiences (3)</i>	<i>Conflicting emotions on child going to school (4)</i>	<i>Giving thought to the future – how to be confident about school (5)</i>
Sub-themes	1:1 Overriding thoughts of school are negative	2:1 Primary school as fun: enjoyment in learning	3:1 Impact on mental health: Power of bullying to destroy confidence	4:1 Desire for a different experience to own	5:1 A need to gain trust and be confident about child's school
	1:2 Middle/high school as the worst times	2:2 Importance of friends to belonging	3:2 Sense of justice/injustice and need for control	4:2 Worry and fear of school	5:2 Need for communication with child, school and others
	1:3 Being left to get on with it – not being heard and supported at school and home	2:3 Teachers listening, supporting and motivating	3:3 Inescapable cycle of bullying	4:3 Optimism about school	5:3 Desire to control their child's experience of school/parenting
		2: Supportive role of family			5:4 Responsibility of adolescence and adulthood – dichotomy of taking control
	1.4 Social isolation and pressures – being ostracised from or part of groups led to switching off with learning	2/3:5 Self-determination and strength from adversity			
	1:5 Emotional impact of not doing well – self-doubt/blame				
	1:6 Transitions of school as upheaval				

Table 4:2 Summary table of sub-themes linked to super-ordinate themes across participants

In order to illustrate the reasons for inclusion and importance of each super-ordinate and subtheme, both across and within the participants the following table (Table 4:3) summarises the number of participants for whom I identified that their experience fell within each sub-theme.

	Super-ordinate theme				
Sub-theme	1	2	3	4	5
1	6/6	5/6	4/6	6/6	6/6
2	2/6 (5/6)	5/6	2/6	3/6	5/6
3	6/6	3/6	2/6	4/6	3/6
4	4/6	5/6	-		6/6
5	1/6 (3/6)	2/6 (4/6)			
6	4/6				
	Number of participants I identified within this sub-theme (bracketed numbers represent total number including those with more limited references)				

Table 4:3 Table of occurrence of subthemes for participants

As can be seen for super-ordinate theme one: ***the power of negative school experience to cloud the positive***, all participants' experiences tallied with at least two of the related sub-themes. For super-ordinate theme two: ***positive factors about school: if you're happy there's no fear***: five out of six participants recalled experiences which I identified within at least three of the sub-themes. For super-ordinate theme three: ***psychological impact and consequences of bullying experiences***: three participants spoke in great depth about being bullied at school. This predominance in 50% of the participants justified inclusion as a separate super-ordinate theme and, as is illustrated in Table 4:3 an additional participant also identified with aspects of a bullying experience. Super-ordinate theme four: ***conflicting emotion on child going to school*** and super-ordinate theme five, ***giving***

thought to the future – how to be confident about school have sub-themes I identified as common to all participants in at least one sub-theme. This was not unexpected, being in part because the focus of the research questions and hence issues explored within the interview, encouraged participants to consider precisely these issues. However, it should be noted that some of the sub-themes I identified emerged more naturally throughout the course of the interviews. This chapter will now explore each super-ordinate theme and its related sub-themes, illustrating each with quotes from the participants and providing further analysis to their narrative

4:4 Super-ordinate theme one: The power of negative school experience to cloud the positive

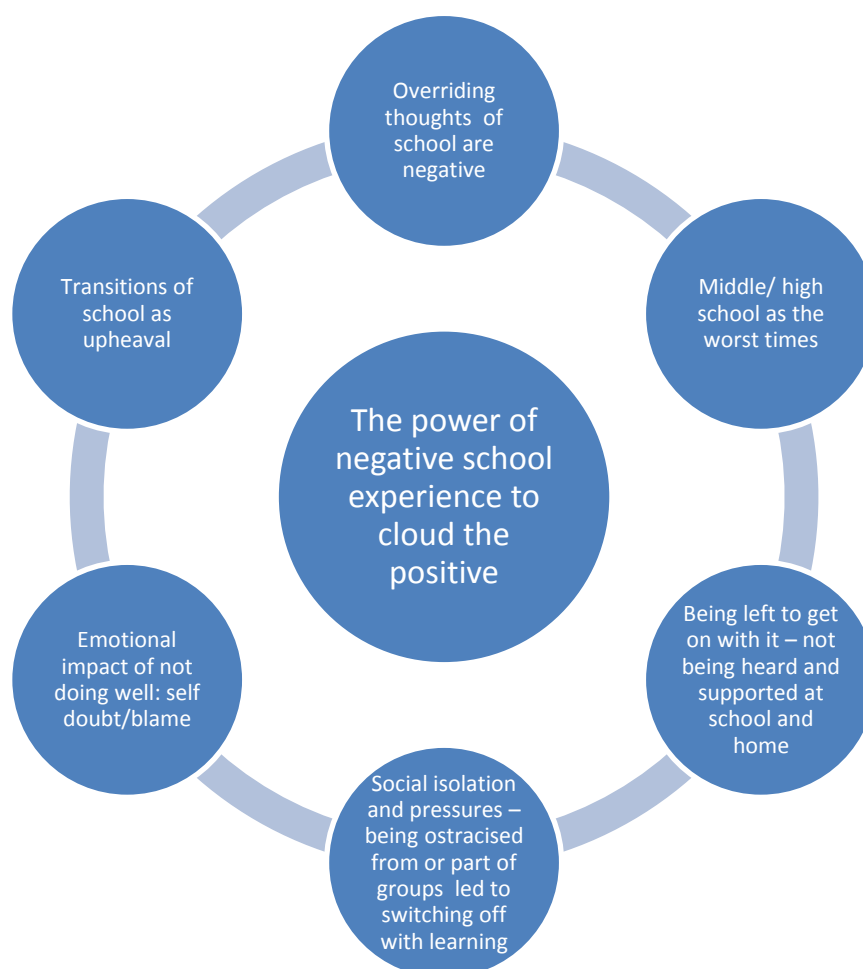


Figure 4: 2 Diagram representing super-ordinate theme one with clustered sub-themes

This diagram represents the over-arching super-ordinate theme and sub-themes I identified. The theme labels encapsulate a holistic view of school drawn from all participants' accounts. I chose a radial diagram in blue to represent these findings as each sub-theme relates both to each other in some way and to the central theme identified. The colour blue often represents cold, which could be thought of as representing their coolness towards school. In the English language, blue also often represents the human emotion of sadness.

The super-ordinate theme title: **the power of negative school experience to cloud the positive** came from the words of the participants themselves – in particular Jo, Clare and Lizzy. The following brief extracts illustrate where I gained this sense and meaning for them and how this then formed a structure and way of understanding their experiences as a whole. When trying to understand what went wrong and what might have been better in school, Jo's comments suggested that she struggled with the idea of identifying any positive moments. The idea that bits of her memory 'were blacked out' not only intimated that the bullying she experienced overwhelmed her but also I interpret, that perhaps as a result she was then only able to move transiently from one experience in school to the next, without always being conscious of what may have been happening to her – even if it was more positive.

Clare: (Quietly) I don't think I can think of any positive times from high school, and if there is of course in the time we've had it's been like, shading over with the like negative (449-451)

Lizzy: I suppose they kind of fade out a little bit don't they because you seem to remember more dread than not if you know what I mean, they don't stick out as much as the rest of the years do because I wasn't concerned about going to school, maybe that is why I always think that all my school time was rubbish. (850-854)

Similarly Clare also struggled in her interview to consider positive times; specifically at High School, considering this period as a whole as opposed to individual time frames. Towards the middle of the interview with Lizzy, having talked about some positive, but many very difficult experiences in school, she

also began to reflect on the way in which her positive memories had faded revisiting this idea several times in this part of her interview. Lizzy characterised her difficult times in school as 'more dread than not'. These difficult times in school are clearly those that are recalled most strongly and become something individuals can tend to hold on to for some time; rather than coming to terms with them and being able to put them behind them, at least during the period of schooling. Although the reason for their selection as participants was because they identified with negative school experience, what became evident during the interviews and later analysis was the *degree* to which the negative experience was over-riding in their memory. In addition, I was also aware throughout, how much their experience remained 'fresh' in their minds; perhaps partly as a result of the 'reminiscence bump', but also because it can be so hard to place events into context, in particular when those events –whether from bullying or boredom in school - can be so firmly etched on the psyche.

4:4:1 Sub-theme: Overriding thoughts of school are negative

I identified this sub-theme across all participants' accounts of school and it was most clearly linked to the super-ordinate theme title: **the power of negative school experience to cloud the positive**. Jo, the first participant I interviewed, characterised her time in school by being bullied and not achieving her goals, such as sufficient grades to enter an apprenticeship. When I completed my introductory explanation on the interview, she immediately commented "*Yeah cause I never had a good time at school*" (Jo: 13). When I checked with her later in the interview, she was consistent in her immediate thinking when she expressed how she did not have a good time at school.

I: Yes so it sounds like that that when you first came in that you were aware, that the first thing you said was like like that oh I didn't like school; school was really hard for me

Jo: Yes school's never really had positive memories (423-427)

Of all the participants, Jo found it hardest to consider what might have been better or positive during her whole time in school, identifying only one event from early on: 'wearing slippers in school' where she considered this was something positive that happened in school. Jo's comments tally with the extracts presented so far, in illustrating how the positive memories fade or become vague in recall when over-shadowed by more recent and difficult experiences. This difficulty in moving on from past experience is what I was largely interested in, to understand how this can shape the constructs and views of school that a parent has for their child.

I consider that Amanda's experience also centred on her negative feelings towards school. When I asked her about school for her son at the beginning of the interview, she immediately began to reflect on what she found difficult herself. This process of moving between the past (her times in school) and present (school for her child) seemed critical to making sense of her experience. Though her experience was different from several participants who identified being bullied, for Amanda the reasons appeared more complex, and it took some time in the interview to move towards an understanding of them. Amanda's experiences seem to centre on a complex home life, an unsupportive family, and low self-regard for herself as a learner. Half way through the interview, when asked, Amanda seemed to link her recall to the emotions that going to school evoked for her.

I: Can you remember what it was like? How did you feel about going into school?

Amanda: Nervous, I remember feeling sick a lot

I: What when you first changed schools and that?

Amanda: No literally from when I first started at that new school and right up and to the end I just didn't want to be going there, and at the start it was cause it was a new school, and then towards the end because I just didn't want to go. I didn't; I went to school; I wasn't one of these kids who never went to school I did go, but err I might as well have not been there [hmm] (400-412)

It appeared that perhaps Amanda did not feel valued or a sense of belonging within her high school, as she reflected 'I might as well not have been there'.

She reinforced the idea that she 'didn't want to go to school' a number of times, perhaps to emphasize the idea that she was compelled to go, despite feeling unhappy and nervous there. Whilst trying to understand this better, I summarised for her my understanding so far, and she made an interesting comment in reply, expressing a dichotomy between 'like' and 'enjoyment' of school:

Amanda: Yeah [but then ..] but I never really liked school , if that makes sense [hmm] I enjoyed it, I went when I was like in primary school [hmm] and in middle school but I didn't like it..But I am not sure any child really does like school, though but I suppose some probably do... (845-849)

Amanda expressed an immediate thought that 'no child would really enjoy school' either, yet reflected perhaps reticently 'I suppose some probably do..'. I interpret that she was torn between holding on to her negative experiences of school and considering that another experience or alternative construct of school could be possible. As has been illustrated within these extracts from Amanda and Jo, the later years at school were identified as much more difficult, and this will be explored further within the next sub-theme.

4:4:2 Sub-theme: High and Middle school identified as the worst times

Clare, Natalie, Amanda and Becky particularly identify their experiences at high school as being most difficult for them, because of inter-connected difficulties with learning and social issues - either explicit bullying or social isolation. As Clare talked through her times at school in a chronological order, this perhaps allowed her time and space to reflect on what was more positive and that an alternative construct to the immediate negativity existed. Her earliest comments, when asked about school for her son, however, illustrated the negative associations she had to high school. She spoke of the need to be settled in school (for her son) which I interpret may mean she was never settled there herself, nor felt that she was a part of the school life.

I: have you begun to even consider school or what you would hope for him at school at this stage?

Clare: Erm I hope he has a more enjoyable time than I did, especially at high school, I hope that we are able to find a nice high school and we are able to you know get him settled far better than I did (35-42)

I: So what was it about the school, what did it mean to you to go to school?

Clare: Erm it was more of drag than a pleasant thing erm I had friends outside of school that I'd met cause erm I did majorettes so I had lots of friends in Southland [hmm] and erm they all seemed to go to really nice schools [hmm] and I was sort of a bit envious of them and that they were able to do all these nice things and I didn't have any of that opportunity and that experience (347-353)

As she comments later on, school became a 'drag' and an unpleasant experience for her. The high school was not a place of enjoyment but somewhere she was, like Amanda, being made to go to. For Clare also listening to different experiences of her friends from outside school created some awareness of how school could be different, though this resulted in envy because it did not apply to her. These experiences, she commented, were denied her. She was aware that other experiences and views of school were possible, but they were unobtainable for her. Within Clare's interview, she also explained how other classmates did not value school and encouraged her 'in the wrong direction'. This, together with being denied better or more positive experiences that she heard about from her other friends, may have contributed further to her low motivation and 'why bother' attitude to high school.

Natalie's recall of school was illustrated very powerfully through use of metaphor and her stronger linguistic content created an image of her time in high school (and the latter half of middle school) where she not only experienced bullying, but also 'dull teaching'.

Natalie: ... [hmm] it sounds really petty [hmm] when I think about it now [hmm] but it's really that grey cold atmosphere I remember it being cold [hmm] a lot at school as well actually um and I think just the teachers generally were probably less enthusiastic but we still had a good history teacher there [hmm] (473-476)

Natalie's expression of a cold, grey atmosphere seemed to encapsulate the lack of warmth and enjoyment she felt in school. She revisited this imagery a

number of times throughout the interview using 'grey' to refer to both the place and people. On transfer to High School she shifted emphasis to its sheer size, which felt intimidating.

Natalie: And I remember noticing when we first, when I first went to this high school which firstly was huge and intimidating because I was coming from middle school [yeah] (559-561)

As Natalie's story unfolded, she spoke of being bullied on a number of occasions in middle and high school, which I am sure added to the way she considered school negatively. In addition, her focus on the dull or grey experiences she had with learning throughout this time (from middle to high school) suggested that the spark and interest in learning was often switched off. It seemed that the experiences did not challenge and motivate her, though her contrasting comments about a 'good teacher' seemed to allude to an ideal which remained unfulfilled. The next sub-themes will illustrate further what aspects of school life led the participants to develop more negative associations within at least a part of their school life.

4:4:3 Sub-theme: Being left to get on with it – not being heard / supported at school and home

This sub-theme emerged consistently through all the participants' descriptions of school and the ways in which they regarded their teachers. All participants gave clear examples of how teachers did not seem to listen, nor recognise the support they needed. Additionally Becky, Amanda, and to a lesser extent Natalie, also talked about the role their parents played (which they argued was unhelpful to them at some point in time).

Jo explained the difficulty she had in being heard and supported by teachers, illustrated through her view that they did not care about the difficulties she experienced with bullying. Their role she reported, seemed to be gathering information from her but, in Jo's perception at least, they took no noticeable action aside from offering advice 'to just get on with'. As her experience of being bullied did not lessen, I interpret that she became more resolved that the teacher's role was uncaring, unsympathetic and led further to her

feelings of desperation.

I: And what, what else can you remember about like the teachers and that?

Jo: (Noise... clatter mmm aaa) Them not actually doing a lot [Mm aaooo inaudible clatter] It's like them not really caring about your problems and things like just get on with it and things like that, if they weren't doing what you wanted then they weren't going to help you in any other way , Things like that. [Clatter] (169-175)

Jo explained how she almost gave up telling adults at school as they did not listen to her, or at least did not take action to resolve her difficult experiences. Her confidence became so low that she later reported being 'ready to commit suicide' (see discussion in 4:6:1). The depth of this desperation in the face of adults in whom she was supposed to trust and put faith, appeared to me to have increased her mistrust of teachers' motives and of their ability to support her and improve her situation. With Clare, this sub-theme very much illustrates to me the core justification for her difficult experiences in High School. These centre on a complex interaction of social friendship issues - the desire to still be popular, set against issues with learning and lack of support from teachers. Though for a different reason, the same theme of teachers not listening or supporting emerged when she spoke about how her behaviours and interest in learning declined at high school. Again, as with Jo, the theme of 'being left to get on with it' was apparent. She did not consider the teachers were supportive and caring, but felt they added to her feelings of dread.

I: Do you think that that was different then when you went to high school?

Clare: Yeah, the teaching style was quite different, it was less of a friendly approach as well, I used to dread the teachers coming over to me, cause I just felt like they were coming to criticise rather than, assist (953-958)

Clare:yeah I think it's important that the teachers are paid to teach and I just didn't feel that I was taught [hmm] that's probably why I did what I did at home

I: Hmm and why you did what you did at school?

Clare: Yeah [yeah] and how I behaved at school, and even if I wasn't sent out I'd have probably chosen to have walked out [hmm] cause I mean a lot of times I'd say if you are not going to help me then I'm

gonna leave and have a little walk or whatever [yeah] it used to just spend my time walking around the corridors or I'd go to the chip shop or go to the petrol station, I mean I just didn't want [hmm] to be there [yeah]. (980-999)

Clare talked about being either sent out of lessons or choosing to take herself away as she did not feel they had anything to offer her, a cycle which once established was clearly difficult to break. It does not appear that Clare was offered mentors to re-engage her in learning and encourage self-belief; instead, the cycle became perpetual as she was also offered what she considered perverse incentives of trips and outings. She considered that the teachers were not doing the job they were paid for; sending her out of lessons or offering criticism, rather than constructive assistance or encouragement.

Becky expressed how she felt about the role her own parents had played whilst she was in school. She referred to the distance that her mum's age had on the way she could not easily identify with her teenage daughter's struggle for independence and identity. I interpret that this could also refer to the lack of connection that existed between mother and daughter, something which Becky was keen to change in her own parent/daughter relationship.

Becky: ...like I am going to be there for her when they do blab her secrets and she's crying about it because my mum was never there for me because she is so much older she never understood like she is so much older than me compared to how I am with Lily I think I am always going to be there because my mum never wore make up or anything and I never did, my mum didn't drive and I blame mum for being such a rubbish driver that I think if I'm driving and like wearing makeup or whatever or actually doing something with my hair Lily is going to grow up like that to do stuff like that [hmm] she will be able to come to me because I will be more younger, I would never talk to my mum about boys.

I: it is important to you that having a parent that she can talk to?

Becky: Yes definitely I think she can talk to her dad as well. (587-605)

This extract illustrates how Becky appeared to reflect on her own experience of parenting and how she also desires to be different for her child. Becky referred to blaming her mother for being a 'rubbish driver' and 'not wearing

make-up', as if the example her mum set for her was not encouraging and confident and was a step removed from the experiences of other teenagers she knew who had mothers who were closer to them in age and social outlook.

This sub-theme clarified the ways in which these participants viewed adults – both teachers and their parents - as key to their experiences of school, whether overwhelmingly negative or, by contrast, when occasionally positive. At worst, teachers instilled fear, dread, boredom and a lack of empathy in their support of students. For Becky, Amanda and to some extent, Natalie, their parents were also reported as not able to listen to their concerns or encourage their learning and social interests. It is to aspects of these social experiences of the participants that I will move next.

4:4:4 Sub-theme: Social isolation and pressures – being ostracised from or part of groups led to switching off with learning

This sub-theme emerged from exploring the grouping of the emergent themes around social factors. Looking in more depth at the emergent themes and linking to the narratives, I was able to see how the category 'social factors' was split into the protective and supportive nature of friendships set against the difficulties caused when being socially isolated. This was particularly evident for some participants, who spoke of being rejected from social groups or finding it hard to form friendships. This therefore added sufficient weight for consideration as a separate sub-theme, which I will illustrate through examples from Clare.

Clare explained further how 'high school was where it all went wrong for her'. Within this extract, Clare expressed a number of factors that appeared key to her, both in the ways her social groups led her away from learning and also in the importance of being liked and belonging within a social group.

I: That was your first year there of high school then?

Clare: Yeah, my first year and they erm, I had several disruptive boys, in year 9 you are with your form group all the time, you do all your lessons (right) cause obviously you're not doing your GCSEs (right) so you don't all have different subjects [hmm] so I was with my form group all the time and the disruptive boys in my class and I had, I was in a quite a big popular group of girls and that also led me in the wrong direction, I was more interested in being with them rather than doing my coursework, doing my homework [hmm] being involved in the lesson. I'd rather have sat there and chatted with them [hmm] so (285-304)

Clare seemed to have lost any intrinsic motivation to learn and stay in school as the social pressure for non-conformity began to take over. Clare then had a change in her status in school from being 'popular' to being 'left on her own' with only one friend who stuck by her. I consider the loss of a face and respect she perhaps previously had within this social group was then lost, almost overnight.

Clare: ...like I said I was in quite a popular group of girls and erm one of the girls erm decided to have a row about one of our birthdays, cause we like had birthdays really close to each other (right) and erm unfortunately she was the ring leader so everyone else fell out with me apart from one of them, so I was sort of left on my own with this other girl, fortunately she stuck by me, but from then on (hmm) I was never very popular at school (hmm) I just sort of had my one friend and then in the occasional friend in each other, bless them, but this girl that was the ring leader was in every lesson I was in (hmm) so that was erm not too pleasant (378-385)

As Clare explained further about this time, though never explicitly recognising being bullied as a major concern to her in school, she refers to the power of one individual to change her popularity and status in school. One girl being 'the ring leader' led her to move from popularity to obscurity by leading others away from her, almost overnight. Though it was clear that her move into high school was blighted by a number of factors related to low motivation in learning as well, these social circumstances, and ultimately the isolation she experienced, contributed greatly to her lack of self-worth and her motivation to learn and enjoy school.

4:4:5 Sub-theme: Emotional impact of not doing well – self-doubt/blame

This sub-theme emerged most strongly through the course of Amanda's interview. Factors around a complicated home life were alluded to:

Yeah.... Yeah I think there was problems at home [hmm] there is always problems at home though [hmm] but yeah I think I kind of concentrated more on that than I did on that. (457-459)

Alongside this was the impact on her school-life. Amanda's time at school was characterised by attending a number of different schools as a result of family moves. She explained how she had to change the way she presented herself to others, her behaviours, in order to be accepted. She was aware of the consequence that being 'new' can have on children's ability to settle into a new school and how this can make them vulnerable to the teasing and bullying of others. In this extract I am trying to understand more about what happened in her new school, reflecting back some of the comments she had made earlier.

I: So can you remember anything more about your, about that time at school, you said that perhaps you were the class clown and that you mucked around and that [yeah] what happened that, what happened during the time at that school?

Amanda: I don't know, my grades just fell bad, fell and fell, and it really got to the point where I just kind of gave up, I think when I was about like year 10, hmm end of year 9, year 10, I kind of gave up and I thought, my grades are so bad there is no way I can pick them back up, so I just kind of P[so your...] just messed about (341-348)

For Amanda, the apparent fear or worry of being alone or socially isolated in school made her try her hardest to be liked. She sought attention in a more negative way as suggested by her likening of herself as the 'class clown', a comment that I echoed back to her within this extract. I interpret that she acted out in order to be liked by others and perhaps to distract from any insecurity she had about being in a new school, but that ultimately, as she was not achieving academically, her sense of self belief fell, and her doubt grew. Whilst I am conscious of my role as interviewer here in influencing her own interpretation of her experiences, she appeared to reflect the tension

between responsibility and the self-doubt this created within her: 'I kind of gave up'. As this part of her interview proceeded, Amanda continued to demonstrate an almost iterative process, moving between her memory of the past and her interpretations of the experience. However, I recognise that perhaps in part this iteration was guided by my own need to make sense of her experience and the psychologist's curiosity to know more.

I: So what was that time like from when you started at school, that new school to when you made your choices, what was that time like – you said your grades started falling?

Amanda: Yeah but I think it was, well I don't really know why, I don't know it did, really...

I: You said that yourself you kind of mucked around [hmm] did that kind of come later on?

Amanda: Yeah, that was kind of end of year 9 beginning of year 10 [okay] so obviously when it hit the, I don't know why my grades fell but obviously when it hit that they were and that I wasn't going to achieve anything out of school [yeah] it just kind of dropped then (376-390)

On my initial noting I recognised the degree of pausing from Amanda and also the use of the words 'it hit', which it appeared she was using to refer to the way in which she became aware of the consequences of her behaviour and experiences on her achievement – her grades falling. She later reflects her internal struggle, citing the locus of control for her difficulty in school within herself and her behaviour. This extract is taken from part of her reflection on her time at college where she is also thinking about her own child.

Amanda:I don't know, I don't know if I have got some sort of behaviour problem, I don't know, cause obviously at the minute I am not like in education or anything so I don't know what it's like now [no] but having Alfie has sort of calmed me down a lot [yeah] but there is definitely some sort of behaviour thing when it comes to my family in general, like all me and my siblings all mucked about apart from my sister and she's still in that not been at high school very long age, I just hope she holds it together. (786-794)

Within this extract, Amanda's continual self-doubt about this is evident in her use of 'I don't know' which appears to be part of this process of moving between the past and present in making sense of what she has experienced. Amanda also reveals how many of her siblings shared some experience of

difficulty in school, only minutes after telling me that her mum had not enjoyed school and had also not given her encouragement by noticing what was happening in school. Though there are insufficient examples to suggest a dominant sub-theme within all the participants' stories in order to make these links between one generation and the next, the participants' role as parent themselves seems to make them more conscious of their role in their children's lives, and to strive to be different to what they experienced.

The next and final sub-theme has to some extent already been illustrated through sub-theme *high and middle school as the worst*. However it served to unpick, for two or three participants in particular, the impact that a number of school moves at unexpected times had on them.

4:4:6 Sub-theme: Transitions of school as upheaval

In the first stage of my attempt to cluster the emergent themes within each participant's transcripts, I became aware of the number of comments about moving between schools. Whilst the clustering of themes within individual experiences was notable, it became less dominant when I analysed further in order to formulate descriptions for these groups of themes across all the participants. I recognised that transitions between schools had an empowering role to play for Lizzy and (in part) Natalie, when it was their choice, but this was framed within their stories as a means to escape bullying. I also recognised the acceptance that all children have to move through phases of schooling in their education. I therefore settled on a sub-theme '*transition as upheaval*' which was evidenced within the narratives for Natalie, Jo and also Amanda.

From listening to Natalie, I was aware at the outset that the schools she progressed through were initially in one place, beginning in the primary and

then moving to the middle school with children she knew. She explained how her family moved house and she hence moved school.

Natalie: Well you're supposed to be there [l: four] four years [l: years five six seven wasn't it?] yeah I don't know we called it the first, second, third [yeah] and fourth year then [yeah] but I left um in the third year because my parents wanted to move to Bridgeford [Right] So I against my will, was taken to Bridgeford... (364-370)

Here, Natalie uses the phrase 'against my will' expressing the sentiment with which she felt this move was unplanned, perhaps regarded as an unnecessary upheaval to her. Certainly I interpret her comments to mean that she was not in favour of this and perhaps considered it was taking away control she had over where she went to school. Though she later explained that she stayed with a grandparent for a while in order to complete the school year there, following this, Natalie moved between two different secondary schools within a few years. The reasons for these moves were explored in more detail as she described difficult experiences of being bullied at Bridgeford, before returning back to the same high school to which she would have originally transferred, had her parents not moved house.

From my analysis of this extract and the story around it, it appeared to me that Natalie may have lost the sense of place and security that she identified within her slightly more positive memory of her primary and middle school. During my analysis of Natalie's transcript (and similarly within the analysis of Amanda's), I made several pertinent reflections that echoed some of my own experiences of moving into schools, in particular changing high school in midyear, when friendship groups had already been established. I empathised with the ways in which the move can make it difficult to form friendships, but at that point was able to separate out my experience from those of Natalie and Amanda, as their difficulty in high school did not resolve after a few months, but became a significant part of their time in secondary education.

When she was considering school for her daughter, Jo was aware that living in the same area meant her children would also be joining the same schools she had attended as a child. The main difference for her, and something of which she showed great awareness, was that her children would only make one school move, from primary to secondary, as a result of the closure of middle schools.

I: And what, do you like the look of it... is it how you feel about it?

Jo: It's a very modern school and they're still operating into key stages [Hmm] So Poppy won't be interacting with the year 6s [Hm] But she'll sort of slowly, gradually introduced to year 6s [Hmm] ... cause I find that quite hard to comprehend that they're going to be letting 3 year olds mix with up to children aged 11 [Yeah] And then letting 11 year olds mix with children up to 19 [Yeah]. (345-349)

I: ...Where you went from the primary then the middle school and am I right from what you were saying then that the middle school years were probably the hardest years for you?

Jo: Yeah, I think they probably were

I: Then the fact that isn't the middle school (aside to baby.. inaudible) The erm, then not having the middle and the time when that was hard for you, do you think that's going to make you feel any different about [I think...] About the children going there?

Jo: I think I am more, relaxed cause there will be less upheaval for her and I'm quite glad about this, in a way for her, knowing this. Cause lots of parents are like Yes, obviously that does concern me about the big age gaps [Yeah]... (350-375)

As Jo expressed her concerns about this change (*'I find it hard to comprehend...'*), I reflected back to her that this change also represented the possibility of a different experience from what may have been her hardest times in school. I realise that this process of trying to make sense of her feelings of the phenomenon most immediate to her now (that of the children going to school) may have influenced the comments which, after a pause, she then made: *'I think I am more relaxed cause there is less upheaval for her'*. This tension between being a researcher and a psychologist made me realise that although I may have unintentionally influenced her view of the meaning school has for her (in the present time), my intervention allowed her to consider further her own view of transition as a potential upheaval.

This section has established a range of factors that the participants revealed through their semi-structured interviews which became key to my understanding of what meaning school had for them. Their perceptions were characterised by an overarching sense that what they experienced was negative, and this clouded or blurred their ability to recall what was positive or good about school. This super-ordinate theme has illustrated a number of the areas (such as ‘social isolation and not being heard or supported’) which overlap with those which will be explored further in a separate super-ordinate theme **psychological impact and consequences of bullying experiences**. By contrast however, I will now move on to the antithesis of the negative experience of school, to illustrate how participants could be encouraged to recall and identify, throughout their narratives, aspects of school that were supportive and protective.

4:5 Super-ordinate theme two: Positive factors about school – if you’re happy there’s no fear

This super-ordinate theme was developed by exploring the clusters of the emergent themes which I labelled with the following sub-theme headings – *primary school as fun: enjoyment in learning; supportive role of family, teachers listening, supporting and motivating; importance of friends to belonging* and a sub-theme *self-determination and strength from adversity* that fitted across this super-ordinate theme and that of **psychological consequences and impact of bullying experiences**. The diagram in Figure 4:3 illustrates this in radial form, using the colour of green to represent more positive emotions connected with this super-ordinate theme.

The theme title emerged from a very reflective comment made by Lizzy during the discussion about her earliest recall about school times which she talked about with some warmth.

I: What do you remember fondly about that early time?

Lizzy: Friends, playing I didn't care about going to school I always had this fear about going to school when I got older, when I started getting picked on and that is probably one of the biggest things I don't suppose I every really thought about it but yes not being afraid to go to school and that is lovely, nice and yes I did have a good time and if I think back it is probably about the same as like when I went to college.. (115-123)

Whilst the title drawn from Lizzy's comment was somewhat tinged with sadness with the phrase - *'if you're happy there is no fear'* this seemed to resonate with the comments made by other participants reflecting the more care and worry free nature of these first few years in school ⁷ which contrasted with the middle and later years of school which were marred with fear - by bullying, isolation and switching off from learning.



Figure 4:3 Diagram representing super-ordinate theme two with related sub-themes

⁷ As has already been established at the beginning of the chapter, the time frame for 'primary school' was slightly different as it represents for Becky the period from about 4 to 11 years and for the other participants in a three phase system ages 4 to about 8 years.

4:5:1 Sub-theme: Primary School as fun: enjoyment in learning

Five out of the six participants strongly identified a number of factors from their earliest school experiences that were positive to them. Clare identified positive elements from her schooling until she was moving up to high school (about aged 13 years). Natalie spoke most positively about her earliest school experiences. However at times even within this, she was able to vividly recall incidents or times that were significant to her in forming her views of some teachers as 'scary' or her earliest memory of being teased and bullied. Lizzy was similarly able to identify many positive times from primary school, as has been illustrated in the introduction to the super-ordinate theme. Becky's view was also very clear cut on the positive to negative times in school – *'loved primary, hated secondary school'* (Becky : 46) . To illustrate how this sub-theme heading emerged and what aspects of the primary experiences were important I will draw on extracts from Clare and Becky.

Following her first thoughts about her baby son, Johnny, going into school we turned to explore her recall from her own time in school and I asked Clare to describe her earlier experiences.

Clare: Erm [baby cries] I quite enjoyed primary school erm I had plenty of friends [baby cries] (156 – 163)

Clare: I liked my teachers, erm, I was happy for my mum to leave me there, I never got upset, I was also quite happy [hmm] erm I enjoyed what we did there, I quite liked the learning as well, and there wasn't any distractions, you just got on with what you had to do [hmm] (191-197)

In these two short extracts Clare revealed some of the key elements for her – having friends and enjoying going to school. Whilst I will explore the importance of friends in a further sub-theme, I am also interested in her references to learning at this time. She perhaps intentionally separates out her more general view of *'enjoying what we did there'*, from her comment on *'I quite liked the learning as well'*. I interpret that perhaps at a young age, the role of play was so important that the elements of teaching and learning

appeared almost secondary in the child's mind. Her final comment from this extract '*there wasn't any distractions, you just got on with what you had to do*' was interesting. Though I regret I did not prompt for further information on this, I surmise that she may mean that there were no other barriers to her taking part in class – such as a difficulty with learning or friendships which became more apparent as she moved through school.

Becky seemed to make a similar reference to Clare with regard to enjoyment of school, but linked it more explicitly to learning. She alluded to the ways in which her enjoyment for learning ceased at high school. This enjoyment of learning for Becky seemed linked both to the ways in which the curriculum was interesting but also the critical relationship between teacher and child.

I: so in primary let's talk about that then first, your first memories or experiences can you remember anything about that time at primary school when you first went to school or anything like that.

Becky: I can't really remember the first years of it, it was just fun I was clever at primary school I used to like being ahead of people [hmm], whereas secondary school there were obviously cleverer people than me but I don't know it was just fun there it was fine all the teachers were nice they want to be your friends there whereas at high school they want to boss you about up there. (46-57)

Becky's extract suggests a genuine enjoyment of primary, introducing for her the elements of fun which she repeats several times as if to emphasise the point. This perhaps also served as a contrast to secondary school where she regarded the teachers as threatening, 'bossy', and not really understanding the children they taught. Becky also expressed how she felt about herself as a learner: '*I was clever at primary school*'. Her time in primary school seemed to give her confidence in her own ability and although she referred to achieving 'some A's' at the end of secondary' (16 years), this confidence had clearly waned by the end as she did not seem to consider she had fulfilled her potential.

Within these extracts from Clare and Becky, I have illustrated the connections they made with their primary or early middle school experiences

as being fun and enjoying learning. They revealed the need for feeling safe and belonging, and also suggested that later on, the learning was perhaps both too much of a challenge or a distraction (as described within 'unsupported learning' in 4:4:3).

4:5:2 Sub-theme: The importance of friends to belonging.

The extracts I chose to illustrate the last sub-theme frequently mention how the participants recalled having friends and other children to play with. For Natalie, as I mentioned within the last section, though her experiences were not unequivocally positive in primary and middle school, when she later moved away from the area (see extracts from section 4:4:7), the friendships she had established over a number of years left her longing to return.

I:...what about your friends at that time you said [I= same] you mentioned a couple of friends

Natalie: Yeah the same same friends [yeah] I kept the same friends all though [yeah] middle school and high school apart from when I went off to Bridgeford and um then I was obviously separated from them [hmm] but I ended up coming back (511-516)

Natalie: I wanted to go back and be with my friends I didn't want to leave the middle school [hmm] although I never liked school I liked the middle school a lot more than [hmm] I liked the school I'd been sent to [hmm] and I wanted to be with my friends [hmm] 530-536)

I interpret that it was the friendships that Natalie had made that led her to take ultimate control over her changes of school. She expressed how, though she didn't like school much (making references to her time in the latter half of middle school as a '*grey experience*'), it was her friends who ultimately made her feel that she belonged there. She referred to being 'separated from them', as if they were her connection or attachment to a place and time when she had felt secure.

Lizzy shared a similar experience of moving back to a school where she had previously enjoyed herself or felt safe from a new school where she had not

done so, and where she experienced bullying. It appeared that Lizzy's positive associations with school centred on her friends, and this remained the case when she had to change school away from them, only to return several years later having once more experienced repeated bullying. Lizzy seemed to engage fully in this process of interpretation and I consider that her choice of words suggests that she had come to an understanding of what her past meant to her. This informed her current view of the elements of school life that will be most important for her to consider for her child.

Lizzy: ...and I didn't go back I went to Marketbridge High School and made more friends.

I: Did you then meet back up with the friends from before?

Lizzy: From Marketbridge Middle so that was nice, going to somewhere where I knew I had friends and I knew there would be people that accepted me... (330-337)

Lizzy: yes I think it was a security knowing that I had friends there and knowing that after talking to the headmaster and his policies on bullying it just seemed safe. You get the odd occasional from the pretty girls the occasional nudge or things like that I think that is basic school kind of banter but yes I think it was a security of having friends around me and knowing that I would have somebody to hang around with and not be sat there on my own so I think that was why I was pleased about going there. (436-444)

Within these two extracts, Lizzy referred to being accepted by friends and the sense of 'security' and belonging they instilled within her, knowing she would not be on her own. This extract highlights the complete contrast to the sense of isolation the participants described within section 4:4:4. Whilst I am not advocating that having friends was the only element that made school positive and gave these participants a sense of belonging, these friendships do appear to have become more critical as they became older. For Lizzy and Natalie, in particular, it was the draw of their old friends that seemed to motivate them to take some control over very difficult situations with bullying, and leave a school. Though the times when they identify having friends in school were not always entirely free of bullying, the friends who cared for them seemed to me to give them the strength and resilience to cope. As I will discuss next, this also applies to those teachers identified as especially caring or sympathetic.

4:5:3 Sub-theme: Teachers listening, supporting and motivating

Clare referred to 'good' teachers and her enjoyment of lessons and, though not an explicit theme within her whole interview, this extract also illustrates how bullying incidents were dealt with positively by some of her teachers. She considered this a contrast to some of her other experiences in that she was listened to by some teachers.

I: Yeah, what were your teachers like what was your experience there?

Clare: I had quite a few nice ones, I enjoyed being, when I was there, and I can't really think of anyone I didn't enjoy having lessons with when I was there

I: And what about other aspects of school then, so the learning was okay?

Clare: Yeah the learning was really good that was actually the best school I've been to [hmm] the middle one was erm the teachers were good, the learning was good erm they dealt with bullying really well, cause I suffered err with bullying when I was at middle school [hmm] they dealt with that sort of nipped it in the bud quite quickly [yeah] You didn't just have to speak to your head of year and that you were able to speak to the deputy head the assistant head [hmm] and the head teacher, rather than just being sort of kept to the head of year (225-254)

Coupled with her enjoyment of lessons, Clare expressed the ways in which her teachers believed her and took action to support her when she had disclosed being bullied. For Clare it seemed important that those in power took notice of her and were able to 'nip it in the bud'; their role of responsibility and power, in this school at least, seemed to reassure Clare that bullying would stop. I infer that this power balance reflected a contrast to her previous experience of the relationship between the bully and victim. Being listened to by senior teachers perhaps gave a greater sense of power and control over the situation.

For Natalie, alongside the significance of her friends being a constant for her in school, she related in some detail the role her teachers played in motivating and encouraging her learning and interest in a subject.

Natalie: ...but to me when it came to learning being in a nice environment and having a teacher that was engaging [hmm] really made a difference to how well I got on with the subject [M= yeah] really did make a huge difference [[hmm] so if I had a [clears throat] (inaudible) in high school, not to jump up too much but we had um well, at middle school actually I loved history [hmm] cos we had a fantastic history teacher (394-399)

Natalie referred here to the 'huge difference' a good teacher made to her ability to engage and be motivated in school. The experience that Natalie described following on from this sounded inspirational and vivid to her. She recalled significant detail about a lesson which had probably taken place at least 10 to 15 years before. This ability to recall something which had been positive and related strongly to a learning experience was, I infer, central to the way in which Natalie's constructs of school developed. Though wanting her child to feel safe and free from bullying in school, I construe that she also considered the role of the teacher and engagement in learning critical to the successful outcomes that could be achieved in school.

Though Jo did not reveal many positive experiences of school in her interview, she did, however, reflect the ways in which she was supported by teachers after a change of school. Though her bullying experience was part of what characterised her difficult time in school, she also explained that she had difficulty with learning at times.

Jo:...They went at a different pace to what we did at the other school [Hmm] But err no with this school the teachers were really good and helped me catch up err the way they taught was a lot easier for me to cope with [Yeah] (320-322)

I surmise that Jo's difficult times in school were linked in part to her low confidence and self-regard as a learner. When she felt unconfident with learning, some of her peers capitalised on this vulnerability and made her life difficult through bullying. By contrast where she was supported more by her teachers, it allowed her to 'cope' with school-life, to 'catch-up' and perhaps feel more equal to some of her peers.

The two sub-themes explored so far within this super-ordinate theme illustrate some of the keys to the participants' positive experience of school - being cared for and having a reciprocal relationship with others. These elements do not seem exclusive to the primary school experience, though no doubt the effect was stronger than in secondary school because of the role teachers played was more personal, being the earliest bridge between home and school. This link to home life and some sense of stability will be explored within the next sub-theme.

4:5:4 Sub-theme: Supportive role of family

For Jo and Lizzy, their parents appeared to play a crucial protective role in supporting them through some very difficult times, related both to their bullying experiences and, for Jo, to difficulties with learning. The extract below illustrates how Jo struggled with learning and being bullied; aspects which seem intertwined in her memory, if not in reality.

Jo: ... Because my mum's a carer and that she works in a children's home and that she was used to dealing with children with additional needs and that she was able to get me the additional help I needed even though the school wouldn't recognise it (bah) err which was a big help she sort of spotted when I was getting really ill and she stepped in at that point..... (345-349)

Jo: Yeah when I started withdrawing and that she noticed that things were going wrong and she was the one who sort of stepped and said no we're going to have to do something... and that (353- 358)

As the interviewer I was uncertain whether the additional help she got related to her being bullied or was about having learning difficulties recognised. Regardless, I interpret that her mum took control of a difficult situation for her; she '*stepped in*' and said '*we're going to have to do something*'. Jo recognised that her mum's job helped in acknowledging the signs of strain and impact on her mental health. She felt that her mother's support for a change of school could have ultimately prevented her from taking her own life.

For Lizzy, her positive connection with her parents was apparent initially through her own reflections on being a parent. *'I hope that I bring my daughter up the way my mum brought me up and be able to talk to me if she has a problem...'* (10-11). Later in the interview, Lizzy seemed to reflect on the importance of this level of communication and unconditional love with her own parents. Like Jo, Lizzy also came to the point of desperation at the lowest ebb of her confidence, which she considered was also a challenging point in her relationship with them. This extract illustrates this tension Lizzy appears to have felt between acknowledging a close and open relationship with her parents, but also how she concealed her intense unhappiness from them. She recognised that she did not always open up to them, but I consider that she also clearly illustrated the strength of the bond and how her parents ultimately became aware of her emotional turmoil.

I: ...What about your relationship with your parents were you able to talk to them about school?

Lizzy: Yes the only time I didn't really open up was at the end of Year 7 when it got really, really bad but me and my parents have always been really close and I have always known that my parents are there for me and if I can't talk to them then there is probably no-one I can really talk to because they love me for who I am and for who I am going to be not for who society think I should be. So yes I could talk to my parents but at the point that it got really, really bad I felt very isolated, I don't know why that was because my parents have always been really open with me we have always had such a close relationship but that time when I wrote that note, I mean my mum still has it to this day, she even took me to the doctors and the doctor said there was nothing they could do and she said well she must be depressed if she is writing notes like that but I don't think I really meant to but it got very close, very, very close, I just stayed in my bedroom and eat and cry and that is all I could do. (362-382)

Her use of the phrase *'because they love me for who I am and for who I am going to be not for who society think I should be'* seemed to me to reinforce the unconditional nature of their love. It appeared to be a phrase she has internalised from them over the years of support. I interpret that her parents' eventual belief in her and rejection of outside professional views (such as the doctor's) ultimately encouraged her to move on and to regain the confidence to complete school.

This super-ordinate theme of **positive factors about school - if you're happy there's no fear** encompassed many polar opposites to those identified within the first super-ordinate theme. In particular, by understanding the difficult experiences that cloud the memory of the positive, it then becomes easier to make sense of what needs to be different to make the experience better (see Appendix 11). The extracts I have chosen here illustrate, within three of the sub-themes, the importance of reciprocal, caring relationships, be that with friends, teachers or parents. Though the participants have experienced some very challenging times, it was important to have someone there who could either encourage their interest in learning, and make school fun (in primaries), or listen and support them (later on), such as friends or parents. Indeed, this seemed central to their ability to move beyond their problems, or even to gain additional strength from their experience that they would not have had if they had not had a negative experience in the first place. It is this factor that I will explore within the last sub-theme, which serves as a crossover between this super-ordinate theme and the next – **the psychological impact and consequences of bullying experiences**.

4:5:5 Sub-theme: Self-determination and strength from adversity

This sub-theme emerged strongly in the stories from Clare and Lizzy, and to a lesser extent within comments made by Amanda and Becky. Both of the latter commented on studying by themselves and achieving something despite their perception of very limited adult support and encouragement, either from home or school. Clare and Lizzy, however, present this concept even more strongly in their narratives, as follows. Clare talked about her reaction to being told by school that she would not achieve success in school. Whether this was sheer brutal honesty by school staff or some attempt at reverse psychology I may never know, but the result was such that

Clare became determined that her difficult few years in high school was not going to hold her back.

Clare: Yeah they were just kind of purely to keep my mum and dad out of prison and that was it – (laughs), I was just going because I knew I had to go [hmm] I wasn't going to learn, so weekends and evenings I'd spend on the computer and on the internet sites, all the revision sites getting into them

I: That's very motivated!

Clare: Yeah, cause if they, err I knew **I was going to prove them wrong** [yeah], I just had to and my brother did the same [yeah] I said to him, you can't let them say this to you otherwise they'll be right and you'll end up doing nothing, you won't get into college, you won't get to do anything nice [hmm] you won't have a good job, so yeah, I'd spend a good 3 hours in the evening then the whole weekend, and I gave up the majorettes when I was doing my exams to make sure that I did it, I did all my coursework at home, cause you used to have course work lessons as well erm but I err.. (602-618)

Clare's comments on the value of school towards the end, was such that it was attending through compulsion to comply with the law: '*keeping my mum and dad out of prison*'. I consider that her observations suggest that school had ceased being somewhere she went to learn and be supported, but somewhere she went to strive to '*prove them wrong*'. These comments seemed very powerful and emotive, reflecting the antipathy that Clare felt towards school. Despite this however, she also commented later that she felt her negative experience at school had proved unexpectedly beneficial:

Clare: ...but I do think in a way those negative experiences have made me a far more determined person [hmm] like if I want to achieve something I will regardless of whether someone says I'm going to fail or not [yeah] I know that I will achieve it (768 – 772)

This extract is powerful in the way it conveyed what Clare perceived she had taken from her difficult times in school: her self-determination and drive. As the youngest participant, the current confidence she portrayed seemed beyond her years, though I consider was perhaps also the result of her new found responsibility as a parent.

The element of strength from adversity was a strong theme within Lizzy's account of school and the bullying she experienced. I considered that her sense of injustice with respect to the perpetrators made her want to 'fight back' in life when she was able to take more control of own her decisions as an adult.

Lizzy:Yes I did have a pretty crap time in school but it made me stronger, made me the person I am today, makes me be able to cope with things that are thrown at me, so yes. (350-353)

Lizzy referred here to 'being stronger... being able to cope with things that are thrown at' her. Within this confident stance also seemed to be an idea that life is to some extent a battle for which she must remain in charge and strong. Lizzy did however also demonstrate her philosophical outlook, and that she had grown as an adult. Even though she had some very challenging times, , she was able to take strength from her experiences. She revisited these ideas of having become stronger a number of times, but towards the end of the interview, there was also more of a hint of the potential for sadness, and a recognition of the personal character that was needed to be able to take this philosophy forward.

Lizzy:it doesn't make you feel any better about it but you can't be sad and bitter all your life because I've seen people who are like that and every time they do something wrong and someone has a go at them for it they would say "yes well I got bullied" and you can't blame your past for how your future turns out you really can't. Me, my sister and brother have all had the same upbringing but I am *nothing* like my brother and sister and that just goes to show you that you have got to take your own attitude and try and be positive and I did try and be positive at school but it just gets you down doesn't it there is only so much one person can take but I try and be positive you've got to be positive and happy and life should just follow you. (995-1009)

Within this extract, she seemed to reflect a tension between holding onto the memory and emotion of what happened, but not allowing this experience to make her bitter or cloud her future. She reflected some of the elements of resilience, so often talked about within the context of children within the care system who have also experienced turmoil and low self-worth. Lizzy seemed to have personal attributes and strength that allowed her to move on from and draw strength from her past, which she herself considered was

something her siblings, and others who experienced bullying, may not have done.

I will now move on to the third super-ordinate theme that ties this sub-theme to the next and which was so dominant across at least three of the participants interviews: **the psychological impact and consequences of bullying experiences.**

4:6 Super-ordinate theme three: Psychological impact and consequences of bullying experiences



Figure 4:4 Diagram illustrating super-ordinate theme three and its related sub-themes

This super-ordinate theme emerged across all phases of my analysis (within and across participants) as a distinct aspect to three participants' experiences of school (illustrated above in Figure 4:4). For Jo and Lizzy it encapsulates the deep unhappiness that led to them consider taking their

own lives as children. Natalie moved between schools as a means to escape a cycle of bullying and unhappy feelings about school. All three were able to reflect on the wider implications for their school life. This was summed up by Natalie in the following extract.

Natalie: Yeah I think primary school was ok but you know I don't know I just it's I think getting picked on can have such a huge impact on a child [hmm] and it can make them so unhappy and it certainly made me very unhappy [hmm] and it can make you feel quite worthless [hmm] (1436-1440)

Natalie's use of the words '*huge impact*' and her recognition of psychological consequences that made her '*feel quite worthless*' indicate the immensity of this negative experience in her life. This led me to some understanding of the ways in which she had subsequently developed the negative attitudes and uncertainty which she expressed towards mainstream schooling as an option for her child.

4:6:1 Sub-theme: Impact on mental health: Power of bullying to destroy confidence

For Jo and Lizzy, it appeared that the impact of several years of being bullied had eroded their confidence to such an extent that they even considered taking their own lives. The ability for Jo and Lizzy to be open about this within the context of a research interview suggested to me that this was a seminal and perhaps cathartic way in which to illustrate how powerful their negative experience in school had been. Jo expressed this twice early on in the interview.

Jo: Well yeah me and their dad were both quite severely bullied to the point where I actually had to move schools and I became sui...ci..dal and (pause) it was absolutely horrific [hmm] being at school for me because at school I was being picked on. (136-139)

And then later:

Jo: Yeah and I would explain everything that happened... [Noise...] And it wasn't until... I first tried to kill myself my parents had gone like right no... this is really quite real and the teachers aren't doing anything about it it wasn't until (noise clatter) we raised it up with the

Headteacher, that teachers were like she had a few problems like yeah (207-212)

Though Jo naturally did not want to share many details about her wish to take her own life, I interpret that she felt she had to make the ultimate show of despair to muster those around her to really pay attention. Her pausing whilst saying '*suicidal*' and her reference to trying '*to kill myself*' present a lucid account that her intentions were 'real' and the pain and anguish she felt still raw, even a number of years later. Jo's reference to her partner is also of interest; the person she settled into a relationship with ('their dad') had a commonality of experience with bullying that perhaps bound them together. Similar negative consequences of being bullied are reflected throughout Natalie's narrative, but the following extract illustrated to me how her confidence was undermined over the years leaving her unable to defend herself or to withstand the emotional damage she experienced.

Natalie:and I think it's per (stutters) perhaps because I'd been picked on before my confidence was low the way I carried myself you know may have looked submissive and the way I spoke may have been quiet [hmm] I think I um cos I was taller than other children as well I tended to walk with my head down and my shoulders sloped and all of those [pause] all of that body language kind of enc... you know invites um bullies I think [I: right] [pause] so I think (706-714)

Even as Natalie reflected on her body language and submissive nature at that time, she seemed to adopt the same hesitancy and insecurity in her expression, signalled by her stutters and pauses in this extract. Natalie considered here how her own behaviours 'invited' bullies; but she later reflected with emotion, how her experience as a target of bullying was "undeserved".

Natalie: Yeah but I didn't deserve it (laughs) do you know what I mean [I= no] no matter how I carried myself I [hmm] I didn't deserve to be picked on by horrible children [hmm] (1423-1425)

Natalie repeated the phrase '*didn't deserve it*' twice in this short extract. I consider that in doing this, despite her assertion to the contrary, she demonstrated how she continued to be vulnerable to the idea that targets of bullying have some responsibility for their own predicament, an idea still unfortunately reinforced through some societal comment and debate. In

addition, through the process of this analysis I was aware that for Jo, Lizzy and Natalie, the impact of these bullying experiences made them more reluctant to talk to teachers in school where they did not feel heard. They were also more isolated from their peers. Whilst these factors do not seem to directly lead them to achieve below their potential (this would be difficult to prove individually), the ways in which they could have viewed their schools as somewhere to learn or achieve, had diminished. Lizzy's views about the strength she now has as a result of her experience are positive, but for Jo and Natalie in particular, they are left with worry and negative associations about school which are difficult to shift, even when thinking about the future and their own child going to school.

4:6:2 Sub-theme: Sense of justice/injustice and a need for control

This theme became strongly apparent in Lizzy's story and was also a theme within Natalie's recall of school. The feelings they clearly internalised through much of their time in school, both a lack of self-worth and a degree of anger, at times seem to spill over. What was suggested from their stories was, however, the injustice they feel about the lack of consequences meted out to children who bullied them, and the even deeper injustice they feel when they had finally stood up for themselves.

Lizzy: ...I got suspended for three days for having a mutual fight with somebody and he got an hour and a half detention for beating me up and I just could not see how they could come to that justice, how we could have a fight and I could get suspended and he could beat me up and he got an hour's detention and that is when I left ...(518-522)

This extract was taken from a longer dialogue from Lizzy that was vivid in its recall of the details of her attack and her fear in trying to escape the bully. In addition she also related her perception of the psyche of the bully as not caring about any consequences to him or the feelings of his target. For Lizzy, I judge that she was left reeling at the perceived injustice resulting from a moment when she considered she was stronger and tried to defend herself.

This sense of injustice was also reflected powerfully in this extract from Natalie where she was left 'staggered' that a teacher could brand her 'a bully'.

Natalie: I remember one particular occasion which left me reeling um there was the head of year, who I really didn't like anyway, he called me and this other girl into his office and said that another girl who had been a sort of friend of mine had accused us of bullying her [hmm] which I just thought *me bully* I couldn't believe it [hmm] I just like well that's just staggering cos I absolutely would never of bullied anyone ... (780-787)

Though Natalie was left 'reeling' at this accusation, I also interpret that her long-standing experience of being a target of bullies herself had perhaps made her less conscious that her own actions (she described ignoring someone) could be understood as bullying by another child. To Natalie, who recounted many years of both physical and verbal taunts and threats, a minor parting of ways in a friendship possibly paled by comparison. Whatever really occurred, this extract served to emphasise her deep sense of injustice after years of taunting and threats and feeling that no-one noticed her own suffering.

These two extracts show that Lizzy and Natalie have many things in common, such as the feelings of injustice, teachers not noticing or listening, and ultimately the need for escape as a means of reasserting control. Natalie reflected later, that she changed her behaviour in order to escape her school. She did this to such an extent that she was on the verge of being expelled from school because her parents would not take on board the enormity of her unhappiness from being bullied. Lizzy also related how she considered the schools she attended had chances to help her but this never helped change her situation.

Lizzy: but I believe that we gave, Burton (school) too many opportunities and I believe

I: To change, to make things better for you?

Lizzy: Yes and that is why I nipped Upwich in the bud that is why well not really because I should have done that as soon as I got beaten up,

but yes I believe that sometimes there is just too many chances it should be sorted out and actually being able to see the change in a child's behaviour over bullying, maybe if my parents had seen that they wouldn't have wanted to send me to another school, maybe they would have kept me at the same school but they could see that I was unhappy they could see that I was depressed and was putting on weight (871-884)

Though to some extent in this extract, I interpreted for Lizzy by saying 'to change or make things better for you', her agreement and focus on telling this part of her story regardless of my comments suggest it had not influenced what she was about to say. I interpret that it allowed her space to clarify and explain how her eating for comfort and being depressed became the external signs to her parents that she needed to move away from that school. Lizzy had perhaps internalised her feelings to such an extent that her parents, with whom she had usually been able to talk, only really took notice of her need to be move schools when she became depressed and overweight.

4:6:3 Sub-theme: Inescapable cycle of bullying

The last extract from Lizzy linked to this sub-theme, where I found clear examples in these three participants' accounts of how they considered bullying almost an expectation and something which was part of a difficult cycle to break. Though the depth of detail from Jo was less overall, this short extract, I believe, also illustrates the longer term inescapability of being bullied.

I: So is that like what you were talking about the bullying issue?

Jo: Yes it was sort of the end of year 3 that the bullying started [Yeah] And that and from that it carried on up until I was about 18 and it wasn't until about when I was 19 that I got to a position that I wasn't in getting bullied [Yeah] and being in abusive relationships and things like that (484-490)

Jo's commentary, I consider, exemplified how a pattern of expectation and low confidence meant that even when she formed romantic relationships as a teenager, these too were characterised by abuse. Lizzy also talked about

the insidious nature of being bullied and how this eroded her confidence, leading to eating for comfort.

Lizzy:because this is the problem you don't have to be fat or necessarily smell or look dirty for people to pick on you, I was in primary school and I was a very slender child until I started getting picked on because I had fleas and I smelt, so then I started eating so then I had fleas, I smelt and I was fat. So it just escalates you try and sort out a problem, I ate to comfort myself, even when I was talking to my parents (76-82)

Though the protective factors, such as supportive family and friends are apparent, when the participants consider individual experiences and time frames, the fact that they were being bullied was overwhelming. Even family support could not help to break a cycle of behaviours that they recognised arose because of their low confidence in themselves, and this added further to the apparent reasons a bully could undermine them.

Though I have primarily focused on the extracts of Jo, Lizzy and Natalie when considering the **psychological impacts and consequences of bullying experience**, there are many parallels within the experiences of Clare and Amanda, too. Their difficulties with friends or learning in school also became somewhat inevitable and inescapable, and the need for control or escape from isolation was apparent. Becky similarly, reflected how at high school the difficult friendships, boredom and an awareness and perhaps fear of being bullied also made her feel low and demoralised by school. Though it was clear that bullying had an intense negative impact on many aspects of the participants' lives, as I have already illustrated, the sub-theme of self-determination and strength from adversity was a powerful positive construct that also emerged for Lizzy and (though for slightly different reasons), also for Clare. Moving beyond this super-ordinate theme however, I will now explore other aspects of the consequences to bullying and negative school experience, through the **conflicting emotions on child going to school**.

4:7 Super-ordinate theme four: Conflicting emotions on child going to school

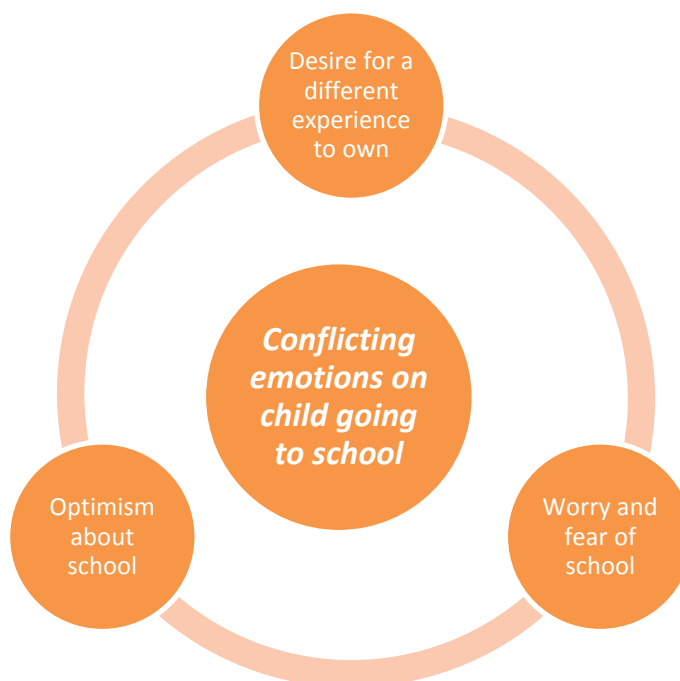


Figure 4:5 Diagram representing super-ordinate theme four with clustered sub-themes

This super-ordinate theme is illustrated above in Figure 4:5. For this diagram I have chosen orange, a secondary colour indicative perhaps of the nature of mixed feelings that the participants expressed about their child going to school. This super-ordinate theme and its associated sub-themes developed through my research questions, and hence the questions and prompts presented to the participants in the interviews. I asked participants at the outset of the interview whether they had given any thought to school for their child. My reason for asking this question at the beginning of the interview was to attempt to capture their first thoughts, before they spoke in more detail about their recall of their own time in school. The findings related to the latter have already been presented within the first three super-ordinate themes in this chapter.

Their first responses linked most to the sub-themes of worry and optimism about school, but the sub-theme I represent at the top of the diagram, desire for different experience to own, seemed different. It linked more to their comments and thoughts from the latter half of the interview, when I asked them to reflect on whether any part of their own stories were relevant to share with their child's school. The title to the super-ordinate theme seemed to characterise the opposites reflected in the sub-theme, with the sub-theme *desire for a different experience to own* representing the balance between the two and the need for reparation for their difficult experiences.

4:7:1 Sub-theme: Desire for a different experience to own

This sub-theme was apparent for all the participants to some extent. They all initially considered their own experiences of school *as a whole* to have been bad or difficult and, not unsurprisingly, seemed to strive for the experience of their child to be different to their own, even if some of what they experienced had been more positive.

At the beginning of the interview with Clare, she explained within the context of a conversation at work, how she did not want her son's experience to be the same.

Clare: Well my colleagues at work have said to me like you know, we know you didn't enjoy school but erm do you hope that Johnny will, or do you want him to have sort of, you know, not enjoy it

I: [Baby cries] so people have asked you about that then?

Clare: Yeah, they do, cause I'm quite open about how much I hated school and I just did not enjoy it in any way [hmm] I just, I don't know really, I just really hope that Johnny doesn't have the same experience [baby cries] as I me really [yeah]. (132-140)

Claire referred to her colleagues' expression that because she '*did not enjoy school*' she may want the same for her son. Whilst I cannot be sure whether this is her own interpretation or their actual words, I infer that her later comment that she hoped it would not be '*the same experience*' demonstrated some optimism and a desire for something different for him. This did however

seem tinged with the fear that a repeat of experience through the generation may actually be possible. Then, towards the end of my interview with Clare, she concluded:

Clare:erm what is important to me is that Johnny doesn't end up experiencing the same things as I did, so I'm gonna try my hardest to ensure that that (baby cries louder) that experience doesn't occur for him [yeah] (1210-1215)

Through the journey within the interview, exploring the difficult experiences she reported from school, and perhaps having a little context that there were some better times, Clare resolved that she did not want this repetition of experience, as was illustrated in her use of the phrase '*try my hardest*'. I consider that within this reflection she had acknowledged the impact that her own role as parent could have on the way her child could experience school and the need to strive and put in effort to make this difference.

Towards the end of the interview with Becky, her child joined us in the interview. I commented on this to Becky at the point where I was asking her again about her thoughts on her child and school. She initially diverted to talk about another parent she knew who had been bullied and who seemed to want a child who would fight back. Becky seemed to desire not only for her daughter's time in school to be different to her own, but also for her parenting to be different from others around her. Within this extract she then went on to consider how a different academic and social experience in school was important for her child.

Becky... I am trying to make Lily more of a geek if anything.

I: so you were saying what you wanted for her out of school is for her to do well,

Becky: Yes, I, but then I want her to have lots of friends as well because it is the friends that you keep isn't it, [hmm] keep them around her

I: So socially, to have friends?

Becky: Yes it's upsetting isn't it when you haven't got friends or if you fall out with your best friend [hmm] which happens all the time but I only had two groups of friends you can't really turn to other people [hmm] can you, I want her to be able to.(682-710)

Becky talked within her interview about doing well academically in primary but switching off to learning towards the end of high school. It appeared that for her, the desire for difference was perhaps linked to making the most of your ability, or *'becoming a geek'*. Alongside this as illustrated in the extract, she reflected on how important friends were to her. In particular, as she had found this aspect difficult to balance in school. She concluded at the end of her interview. *"That's it in the main [Yeah that's fine] I just want to make it better"* (1013-1014). I felt that this final comment by Becky summed up the desire for difference reflected in all the comments of the participants – they *'just want to make it better'*. I infer that by making their child's time in school (and perhaps also being parented) in some way better to their own, they could help them to come to terms with a difficult experience and to repair; to some extent, the damage they felt from school. As introduced, this sub-theme appeared to balance the comments of worry and optimism for their child going to school. It is that worry or fear which I will illustrate next.

4:7:2 Sub-theme: Worry and fear of school

This sub-theme focused on the feelings evoked when I first asked the participants about their child going to school. Whilst it may be natural for any parent to have some worries about their child going to school, for the participants, they express particularly how they fear their child may change. I infer that this is perhaps indicative of the ways they regard their own personalities having changed as a result of their negative experience in school. Jo expressed this in the first part of her narrative.

I: Yeah so have you kind of thought much about her going into school, how you feel about that?

Jo: It scares the life out of me

I: Does it, in what way, can you tell me a bit more about that?

Jo: Just that she's growing up (Urrg mmm from baby) Yeah... changing (35-42)

In this extract, Jo appeared to link her comment that *'it scares the life out of me'* to her child growing up, perhaps being scared of the pace of change for

her child. I interpret that underneath this however, her feelings may also be linked to her readiness (or lack of) for being separate from her child and letting her go into the world alone.

I believe the following short extracts from Amanda and Natalie, at a similar point in their interviews also reinforced this assertion where they considered that their child will inevitably come under the influence of others and this instils in them a worry and uncertainty.

Amanda: Err it worries me a little bit [hmm] because of the influence like other people are going to have, on him I don't really, it does worry me a little bit, because children tend to change quite a bit when they go to school don't they [yeah] cause they have influences from other people [yeah] but

I: So you said worries you, what, in what way?

Amanda: It doesn't worry me but it concerns me [yeah] like that he is gonna be like a different kid once he goes to school [yeah] (16-29)

Natalie:it's also cos I think [I: cough] they can change so much um as soon as start going to school people say you know he was a lovely boy until he went to school and then they change you know unrecognisably (96-100)

Amanda reflected this worry for her child changing on going into school. She reframed this worry as 'concern', as if this word was too strong or could be misinterpreted, but as she continued, she expressed how she felt her child would be somehow different from the young child she had raised since birth. I also consider that placing these quotes together allows the commonality of their concerns to be identified. Natalie echoes Amanda's comments, almost as if they are having a conversation in the same room. Natalie, however, goes further, to emphasise the idea that her child could change in a bad or negative way: '*become unrecognisable*'. I believe that she was at this point reflecting on how she considered she changed through her school experiences. Her interest in learning waned, her confidence diminished and her desire to escape, rather than achieve, was the pinnacle of her time in school.

This particular sub-theme seemed very strongly linked to the trials of parenthood more generally, whether participants had a difficult time at school or not. As I have analysed (and reflected within my own interpretations and in my journal), though the participants' experiences may emphasise their worry and fear about their child going to school, at their core is the shift in this phase of being a parent where their child will be growing up and their connection to them changing.

I will now explore the antithesis to these conflicting emotions, through examples from the participants who retain optimism about their child's experience in school.

4:7:3 Sub-theme: Optimism about school

I chose this sub-theme title as it seemed to encapsulate the hope the participants expressed for their child. They presented clear ideas about what they wanted for their child, such as being happy. Jo seemed to sum up this positive outlook for her children by focusing on the idea that they could potentially enjoy school and actually like going – something which would serve as a complete contrast to her own memory of school.

I: So generally what would you hope out of her education, out of her err time at school even your little boy, both of them?

Jo: Just to enjoy it, to err find something they both like about school

I: Yeah, and do you have any ideas in what way (clatter ooo) what might help them to do that?

Jo: No... well you always have your favourite subject and that [Yeah] and just focusing on that [yeah] And hope that they have a little group of friends and that... (110-121)

I consider from her comments that Jo had recognised that by having a sense of secure friendships and enjoyment for learning her child would then have a greater motivation and willingness to attend, and so increase their chance of doing well in school.

I also interpret that Amanda expressed similar optimism for school through hopes that her child will enjoy it and be able to do their best. For her this was also based on her realisation that schools could be somehow different to her own experience. She used the word '*faith*' in school as if to reflect the belief and trust that was needed to make the experience successful.

Amanda: It's gonna be really different though when, like once he starts school, I'll have been left like, oh god not that long (laughs).....

Amanda: Yeah, but I don't know what I'd say, I think I'd kind of have more faith in schools now, because they do seem to be getting better, so I think I'd have more faith in them that you'd get a better education than when, when I did (702-714)

My reason for approaching participants of pre-school aged children was that they would have yet to experience what school might be like in the present time; hence their thoughts would perhaps be unsullied by actual experience. Amanda reflected a view that schools seemed to be '*getting better*'. During the interview, she explained to me that she was the oldest child within her own family and that her youngest sister was still in school. For Amanda therefore, it was possible that her optimism may also be based on a current context and of schools.

Regardless of this, or other knowledge that any of the participants may have gained of schools in the current time, I consider that what was most enduring and inspiring to me as an Educational Psychologist and researcher was that there was *some* optimism and hope, however much this conflicted with worries and fears based on their own experiences. The participants also all expressed a desire for their child's experience to be different to their own. This aspiration, when their own recall of school was marred with negative associations, was one which I am most keen to understand. Though not possible within the scope of this research, I am keen to understand how enduring this can be and how these participants would be helped to nurture and hold on to this hope. The last super-ordinate theme is therefore the culmination of this desire to understand what makes the participants hold on to their optimism.

4:8 Super-ordinate theme five: Giving thought to the future - how to be confident about school

During one of the last phases of my interpretative analysis, I initially grouped these sub-themes within the fourth super-ordinate theme. During the iterative process of revisiting and reviewing the data, however, I considered that on balance, they deserved to stand alone. This super-ordinate theme linked with my research question in wanting to understand whether there was any way in



Figure 4:6 Diagram representing super-ordinate theme five with related sub-themes

which participants could be supported as their child moved towards school. It also incorporated some sub-themes that participants revealed to do with control and knowledge. The colour purple used in this diagram reflected to me the sense of responsibility that comes with age and parenthood, reminding me of the title (if not the necessarily the substance!) of the poem by Jenny Joseph about wearing purple when one is older.

4:8:1 Sub-theme: Need to gain trust and be confident about child's school

This sub-theme emerged initially from comments made by Lizzy when I asked about whether she had begun the process of thinking about school for her child. Within this extract, Lizzy explored the process that she may go through, needing to arm herself with information so that she may then feel more confident and reassured that what she had been through would not be repeated for her child.

Lizzy: Yes and asking other parents how their children cope if there's a lot of bullying I mean how the teachers cope with it and how they deal with it is also another thing because if they are very strict with it you find that some schools don't have a lot of bullying because they are strict pupils do tell them and then it is dealt with so yes I do like to ask other parents how their children get on. (47-53)

She indicated here the ways she wanted to assess prospective schools through her own experience, such as being sure that the teachers could 'cope' with bullying or with clear boundaries and structures in place: '*being strict*'. Later in her interview she also reflected in more detail about the ways in which she would want to find out about schools' policies, such as on anti-bullying approaches. On exploring some of the comments from other participants again, they seemed to reflect this central idea of being confident and having real knowledge about schools.

I also identified from the participants' accounts the importance of building relationships. Having someone in school who can connect with their child, motivate them in their learning and help them to develop friendships seemed most important to them. The following extract from Natalie shows how she considers school subjects and teaching would have to change to allow her child to develop his strengths:

Natalie: I think actually one of my issues is the fact that um the sub the school subjects are so specific and um I think that children should be able to capitalise on their strengths [hmm] Yeah um but I think even in the younger years they still put more importance on the less

creative things [hmm] but um I think if children grow up like if a child has a particular strength in something whatever that is they should be allowed to capitalise on that maybe spend more time on that subject and so that they can create some sort of level of expertise um rather than being I don't know I mean the things like maths and things I had to spend a lot of time doing those classes but I still never got any better at them cos I didn't feel as though I had enough um help [hmm] or attention (extracted between 1337-1362)

This extract also revealed to me the desire for having the right kind of help and support from school; she expressed this not only as 'someone to motivate you', but also as having '*attention*'. I interpret that Natalie perhaps regards the school system as depersonalising and lacking in the warmth and encouragement she would want for her child. It was clear that, for Natalie to feel confident about sending her child to a local school, she would have to see great change: '*I suppose if I heard or I saw evidence of staggering changes since I was at school...*' (Natalie: 1328-1329). The longer extract above, however, hints at what may have to be different within a school system for her to gain more confidence in school.

4:8:2 Sub-theme: Need for communication with child, school and others

Alongside the need for being confident about their child's school, emerged the need to talk about their experience in school with their child, and perhaps, on reflection, with others too. This second idea was not something which any participant would necessarily have considered spontaneously, but it emerged from another of my research questions, trying to understand what they considered may be helpful to share.

When thinking about how they would discuss school with their child, most participants acknowledged they would need to talk positively but also honestly to them. They recognised the need to be careful in what you may tell your child so as not to scare them. Lizzy's comments illustrate this.

Lizzy: but I just need to be positive for Lottie and make sure that I don't scare her and that is why I don't think I will tell her too much

because I wouldn't want her to think "I really don't want to go to school the bullies might beat me up like they beat mummy up".

I: so do you think that you would be positive in thinking about

Lizzy: Yes I know I wouldn't ever be down on school, I'll try, no I *will* be positive I won't try and be negative because if you look at something with a negative view it can only get worse can't it.so there is no point in putting a downer on her school life before she has even lived it, I just need her to know that if anything happens she has always got us, always, and that is all she needs to know, if she needs someone to talk to she has got us. So yes I wouldn't want her... (Extracted between 1033-1052)

This extract suggested her making sense of her view and reaffirming her thinking: 'I'll try, no I *will* be positive'. This expression of hope and optimism for her child was evidenced through her own show of *strength from adversity*, but I also consider she was aware of the reality and responsibility of parenthood. The need to build a positive, open trust and bond with their child was similarly reflected in comments made by Amanda, Natalie and Becky when considering the way they would communicate with their child. Becky also recognised how important it was to her that her child felt positively about herself, and was able to portray a positive self-image.

When I asked participants if there was anything about their school experience that they would either tell their child's school or would want any support with, for most participants this was something they had not even considered. Towards the middle and end of the interview with Amanda she commented that talking it through within the interview itself had in some way helped her to make sense of her experience.

I: Hmm so is there anything that you think that might be helpful for you to help him in future?

Amanda: I don't know [To feel...] This has probably helped actually to be honest cause it kind of makes you figure things out, that clearly my time at school wasn't great but I know I didn't help myself but I know that no-one else helped me either so no one else is gonna help me if I'm not gonna help myself So yeah (728-739)

I infer that Amanda's comments again reflect the struggle with her self-doubt, though she recognised that she did not have the right help at school, she continued to blame herself in part, for the outcomes. Amanda's confidence and ability to take some strength from her experience was, she considered, aided by the process of talking things through and placing events into more of a context. However, as was clear from her difficulty in releasing herself from this self-doubt, she would need continued reassurance and support to fully understand events, and thus gain strength from what she presented as a difficult set of family and school factors surrounding her childhood.

4:8:3 Sub-theme: Desire to control their child's experience

One sub-theme that emerged when considering the future for their child was the desire of participants to have some control over their child's experience of school. This seemed to be the main aspect of their child's life that they struggled to come to terms with, as I have already considered with reference to their comments that school takes their child away from them. This sub-theme was most apparent for Natalie, but also referred to by Lizzie and Becky.

Natalie: ...I di di I didn't have a very positive experience of school and therefore I really like the idea of home schooling [hmm] I don't think money's going to allow that but the idea of sending him to mainstream school is really deeply unappealing for me [hmm] (92-96)

Within this extract from Natalie, I can appreciate that she seemed to want to hold her child away from school, to change her child's experience of being schooled, so it does not change her child in some way. The idea of sending her child to a local school she may not like was described as '*deeply unappealing*'. I consider that her use of this phrase reflected the profound mistrust she wanted to convey about the education system as a whole, but as she recognised herself, this was strongly embedded in her mind as a result of the negative experiences she had in school. Throughout her interview, this theme re-emerged through her journey in considering a range

of options for school for her child. She reflected how having greater control over choosing teachers may make her more confident, or being able to choose a more creative or alternative curriculum or school may also make her feel happier about her child going to school. I also consider that her strong belief that home education would be the best option also centred on her need to both take control and delay the inevitable separation between parent and child.

Lizzy similarly had considered the option of home-schooling her child. These two extracts illustrate her reflection on this over the course of the interview.

Lizzy: ...so yes it does concern me about her going to school but there is nothing I can do about it unless I think about home schooling and then you're taking your children out of a big group of people which is I think what they need, they need interaction with other children, it is hard and I do worry. (35-40)

Lizzy: Yes and I would quite honestly say that if she gets to middle school and she is that depressed and unhappy with being bullied that much that I would probably take her out of school one of my mates did that and my mum's mate did that she took her out of school. I am still friends with her and she's gone to university, done 6th form she is a very intelligent young lady and she did that with three of her children, so I would probably do that if it came to it. (861-867)

Lizzy's comments on removing her child from the school seem to strike at the heart of her insecurity and fear that her daughter may experience something similar to herself, namely '*becoming depressed and unhappy*'. In contrast to Natalie's more advanced thinking that home schooling was the best option, Lizzy had clearly considered the alternative argument: the need for her child to socialise. For Natalie and Lizzy, their difficult and often horrific experiences of being bullied at school, seemed to have instilled a very deep-seated insecurity and mistrust of school. Though Lizzy shared more optimism for how schools may be different now, their fears clearly cloud the way they feel about school and the opportunities for their child.

Already touched within this and earlier sub-themes, the last sub-theme seeks to understand the changes and challenges one faces both as a teen and then as a parent.

4:8:4 Sub-theme: Responsibility of adolescence and adulthood – the dichotomy of taking control

This sub-theme was a culmination of analysis of groups of themes that did not naturally fit anywhere else. Once examined as a whole, however, a sense of commonality and consensus was more apparent. Through the process of the interviews, the participants seemed drawn to reflect on different aspects of both the lives they recalled from adolescence and also the way in which they aspired to be good parents. For Jo, towards the end of some difficult years in middle and high school, with bullying and unsupported learning, came the knowledge that she did not *have* to be in school after the age of 16.

Jo: My last year of high school was sort of like my first year of sixth form, [Hmm] my only year of sixth form I was like holding down a job at the same time and had boyfriends and helping my mum and various other things were going on and school didn't really seem important, I think there was like only one class I turned up to and like the majority of time when I did turn up for classes there was nothing for me to do [Hmm] ... so I didn't spend a lot of time in school (408-414)

Jo's comments hint at the changes and responsibilities that came at this point in time for her and meant that school was no longer was a priority '*it didn't seem important*'. I also interpret from her comments that school was not motivating her and she could not see the value of education at that point in time when she was also being encouraged to adopt a more adult responsibility, such as '*helping my mum*' or '*holding down a job*'.

Amanda and Becky referred to the difficulty in taking on board more responsibility for their learning as a teenager and not having the right kind of help to cope with this. This following extract from Becky came towards the end of her reflection on the pressures she felt, such as boyfriends, exams

and jobs. These challenges faced her as she moved towards college or sixth form.

Becky: Yeah cause like school is all you can remember, all you're doing there seems to be so much pressure and then you're expected to go back to school straight after, they should let you have a year off, in the real world (1044-1048)

Her comment that '*school is all you remember*' was insightful of the way that research suggests that we lose some of the ability to recall our pre-school memories, so that the school days dominate our thinking. I consider however that Becky also presented here her solution, that being in the '*real world*' (she likened this to a 'gap year' (1041) made her more ready to take on new challenges in learning and more responsible in making these decisions. She also reflected the tension within her idea, however, that the latter half of school as a teenager entailed too much pressure, and actually a balance between fun and readiness was also important. Becky considered the '*gap year*' could be more about having less rather than more responsibility, for a while at least, perhaps allowing one to grow up.

The extracts I chose for this final sub-theme I interpreted to present another side to the difficult experiences the participants had in school: their reflections upon these experiences, making sense of their time in school through adult eyes. Their focus seemed to move slightly away from the bullying or unsupported needs and more on to growing up and the new challenges this brings.

4:9 Summary of Chapter four

Through this chapter, I have presented each super-ordinate theme and its related sub-themes as continuity. After considering the **power of negative school experiences to cloud the positive**, I moved on to their time in school in chronological order, which seemed to allow participants to consider what may have been better and what lay underneath that cloud, such as the glimmers of hope and optimism for school life. For Jo, Natalie and Lizzy their powerful negative experiences seemed best understood through expressing the most difficult times of being bullied in school, the significant impact on their confidence, and the need for justice and control in their lives. In turn, through this journey within each interview, I then encouraged participants to consider how they thought about school for their child. This revealed further consensus within the last two super-ordinate themes, encompassing the desire for a different future and how this might be achieved. The findings illuminate a little-researched area and provide a small window into the life-world of adults some of whom were clear they 'hated school'. This perspective emerged from both understanding and making sense of participants' own interpretations of the here and now of having a child going into school, but also reflecting on and making sense of their past.

The findings provide fresh insight into what can make school a challenge, for these participants at least. But it also allows the similarities to be extrapolated to related research into parents' views of school and the ways in which the parent-child attachment develops and appears so critical in the shift from parents as sole carers (in some cases) to sharing that responsibility with teachers and schools. For educationalists and researchers like me, the findings (in short, the life-stories of these participants) also provide a depth of knowledge about the future, and about what might help them and their child to feel confident about school. It is to the wider implications of these findings and their links to previous research that I will now move on to explore in chapter five.

Chapter Five: Discussion and concluding comments

5:1 Overview of Chapter

This chapter will discuss the key findings presented within chapter four in relation to the research questions posed and the significant literature considered in chapter two. The qualitative research methodology undertaken within this study focused on understanding what the experience of school was like for parents (or more specifically in this study, mothers) who recalled having a difficult or negative time. The approach was one of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) from within a critical constructionist paradigm, acknowledging that multiple realities exist. It sought to provide rich information that could be considered both by focussing on the individual and on a group with similar experiences. Through the process of a semi-structured interview, these participants were encouraged to consider and share this aspect of their experience in order for the interviewer and analyst to understand the essence of their experience; what made their life-world. In addition, they were asked to reflect upon, review, and ascribe meaning to this event within the context of a critical point in parenthood; the stage of their child going to school. Through a rigorous interactive process of interpretation and analysis of the interview transcripts, the researcher identified key themes. These were considered initially within each participant's accounts, and then to provide a cohesion and stronger validity, across all the participants' accounts. This interpretative analysis attempted to gain some sense of the phenomenon in question and to provide greater insight into and understanding of these critical experiences for these participants.

In presenting these key themes from the participants' stories, it was explicitly acknowledged that the findings are the researcher's interpretation of six participants' accounts. Just as the answers research subjects give in questionnaires cannot often be independently verified, their stories are based only on what they recalled, and on what they felt was important and valuable.

Hence, it is their own interpretations which can be considered. Some critics of this approach may judge that this gives the findings less weight or validity (Giorgi, 2011). However, the acknowledged position of 'critical constructionist' taken by the author of this study, and the transparency of the techniques used in analysis (and presented in chapter three), make this a measured, original, piece of research. Statistical significance has not been inferred; rather, it is the richness of detail and interactive process of engagement between the researcher-as-psychologist and participants-as-parents of a young child, which allow for stories to unfold. This epistemological position will be considered again in more detail within this chapter. This chapter will finally consolidate this and consider the broader implications of the participants' experience and examine whether parallels can be drawn from existing research findings undertaken using both different methodologies and larger populations.

5:2 Overview of main findings related to research questions

This study originally proposed a number of research questions it intended to explore. One key research question was identified: **'What do parents say about their school experience?'** In addition, the research sought to address the following additional questions:-

1. What concerns do participants have about their child's schooling?
2. What common themes or ideas emerge about the participants' current constructs of school?
3. What 'best hopes' are expressed by participants for their children's school experience?
4. What do participants identify from their own experience of school that may be relevant and important to share with their child's school?

At the culmination of the interviews, and with the completion of transcripts and detailed interpretative analysis, the main question was sufficiently

understood in relation to the participants' accounts. This has been considered in depth in the last chapter, with evidence drawn from their interviews, and will be discussed next in relation to the research questions and literature. Findings pertaining to the subsidiary questions were also, perhaps to a lesser extent, revealed. The reason for this disparity in depth of information with some questions will be understood best by considering each of the main questions in turn. In addition, this approach will then allow for new, perhaps unexpected, findings to be discussed and their relevance to the overall research methodology justified.

5:2:1 What do parents say about their school experience?

All participants presented stories that shared some common elements that the researcher aligned with the main super-ordinate theme; that their negative experiences clouded the positive in their memories of school. These parents were approached to be participants within this study primarily because they had indicated in a consent and information document (or by word of mouth) that at least some aspects of their times in school were unhappy or negative. The participants spoke of a number of factors that had led to their time in school being characterised by negative affect. These were identified by the researcher as related in part to social systems around them in childhood, such as their peers, teachers and parents. For three participants: Jo, Natalie and Lizzy, their time in school was marred by persistent verbal and often physical bullying meted out by their peers. For the other participants the reasons were complex but involved a combination of lack of support for learning, being ignored by teachers and/or parents, and social problems, from being ostracised by peers to being separated from friends through the upheavals of transition. It appeared also that, because the interview itself encouraged participants to talk through times and memories of school from starting to leaving school, this seemed to allow space to reconsider events and hence elicited some key findings about more positive aspects of school life. For these participants in particular, the earlier years of school often held more positive events in their memory.

What was particularly interesting and illuminating to the researcher, as an applied psychologist, was the candid way in which participants were also able to explain what had been difficult for them. In particular, they identified aspects of middle and high school that dominated their recall. Clare spoke in detail about the consequences of her gradual loss of interest in learning once alienated by her peer group. She expressed how she ‘played up’ in lessons which could be interpreted as a ‘better’ option to cope with her unhappiness socially. She criticised the kinds of approaches used to support her and fellow students in high school. Strategies commonly used in schools, such as rewarding and motivating students with trips and outings, were actually perceived by Clare to be perverse incentives.

Clare: Yeah, yeah, but in another way I thought that this is not good, because the children who are behaving aren’t getting rewarded [hmm] , whereas I’m getting rewarded for not behaving and I think that there’s gotta be like a better solution (515-518)

Similarly, Amanda also spoke of the ineffective strategies used, such as sending pupils out of a class, where they learnt nothing. The issues raised by Clare and Amanda are of interest to those within education, such as Educational Psychologists in particular, as they offer such an insight into young people’s perceptions of behaviour management in school. Additionally, Natalie also spoke in great depth about her perceptions of different teachers, the school environment, and how each could either engage or completely repel her interest in school and learning. For two participants however, Claire and Lizzy, there were some positive outcomes from their experiences as they spoke of a greater self-determination and confidence as adults that they had drawn from their difficult experiences in school. It seemed that for them all, school became somewhere they *had* to go during the difficult times, but in many cases they used strategies to try and disengage them from this difficult reality or to try to escape and move on.

In summary, when considering this research question (‘what do parents say about their school experience?’) the six mothers in this study all identified a

number of consistent features that characterised their school experiences. Despite the focus of the study, these were not all negative. In primary school, they were able to identify more positive times, as they liked their teachers, the learning and had friends; these aspects seemed to add to their sense of security and belonging. As they moved on to relate their journeys through the school system, however, the participants exposed the difficult experiences that had initially seemed to cloud their entire memory of school. These centred on social difficulties: being bullied and ostracised from friends, being unsupported with learning, and not being heard by key adults in their lives. The consequences of these negative experiences through middle and high school, left them low in self-confidence and with limited motivation to engage with learning in school. Although this study did not intend to gather evidence about their ability and achievement, drawing on the evidence from earlier research studies (X. Fan, 2001; X. Fan & Chen, 2001; Kaplan et al., 2004), suggests that the level of education and employment they achieved as individuals may well have been lower than their potential. Though proof of direct causation is neither intended nor possible on the basis of this study's evidence and methodology, it can be inferred that this may have led to earlier entry to adult roles, such as employment and becoming a parent (Pears et al., 2013). Certainly for one participant (Clare), a conscious link had been made between her difficulties in school and what led her to leave college aged 17, and then to become a parent by 18. She even recognised that many of her peers from the same class group at school were also younger parents.

The subsidiary research questions will be considered next. The order of the questions has also been changed slightly from the original to allow a more a natural flow in discussion.

5:2:2 What common themes or ideas emerge about the participants' current constructs of school?

What became apparent in considering the evidence related to this question was the degree to which the participants' own experiences in school interacted with the way they consider school now, even if they had not always made any explicit connection between the two. The evidence related to this question emerged in several parts of the research interviews. At the outset of the interview, participants were asked what they had thought about their own child going to school, and later they were again asked to consider whether their own experiences of school would be helpful to share with others, such as their child's school. For some, however, having friends or siblings still within the school systems perhaps allowed them to see school with new eyes or with the hindsight of knowledge that differed from their own.

These constructs seemed to centre for some on the idea that school would have changed from what they remembered; but for others (Natalie and Lizzy), that they would need to take greater control and responsibility over their child's schooling in order to give them confidence that they would receive a positive education. Revisiting the narratives that informed super-ordinate themes 4 and 5 allowed for the constructs to be drawn together. Rather than themes emerging from the data, for the purpose of this discussion the research questions were re-considered in light of both these super-ordinate themes and the verbatim transcripts. Within IPA this iterative process of construction followed the co-construction (Osborn & Smith, 1998) that occurred within the actual interviews, and hence became an extension of the interpretative process. These constructs about school for their child (see Appendix 9b for evidence of constructs related to specific participants) can be summarised as: school as a place to be happy and enjoy going; school as a place to learn; school as a place to make friends; school as place of fear or worry for the parents; and school as a place where a child can, or will, change.

So what does this tell us?

As is represented in the findings, these mothers' current constructs about school reflect both the best of and the antithesis of their own experiences in school. Their constructs of school also suggest the conflicting emotions they feel about their child going to school and their concern that their child will become different under the influence of others. It would be understandable to assume that this would be the case for any parent considering their child going into school. However, what emerged was their own recognition that their experiences in school appeared to increase their worries for their child, and led to a desire for them to have an experience different to themselves.

This finding regarding current constructs of school for their child represents a degree of hope or optimism that professionals in school, and those supporting school (such as Educational Psychologists) could hold. This group of mothers at least, spoke of their intention to strive hard to ensure that there is not an intergenerational repetition of negative experience in school. This is not to suggest that there would need to be complacency or a lack of support given to parents who had struggled or found school a difficult time. This study found further evidence that substantiates previous research (Miller et al., 2011; Rätty, 2011) showing that help and assistance could also be important to them. Some participants held a view that communication (to their child and others) about their experience, and about school, was important to them. This was reflected in a number of comments about the need to both share information about their school times with their child, but also considering telling them only what was important, and balancing openness with the need to remain positive in their conversations about school.

5:2:3 What concerns do participants have about their child's schooling?

This subsidiary question contained a degree of presumption based on previous research (Miller et al., 2011) and anecdotal evidence from educational psychology practice, that there would indeed be concerns identified by participants. Within the context of this study the use of the term 'concerns' relates not only to potential worries and anxieties about the experience, but to a broader context and interpretation of what *matters* to them about school. The experiences shared about school for their child did not reflect ambivalence from participants, but the degree of conflicting emotion that the impending event of their child going to school could create for them. Several participants reflected a degree of anxious thought about school, expressed as worries and fear. This was interpreted by the author of this study to relate not only to their thoughts on the actual experience of school, but to the way in which their child was growing up and change seemed to come about so quickly.

The concerns for Jo, Natalie and Lizzy appeared to link more significantly to the worry that their child may experience bullying, just as they had done in school. Claire expressed worry that her child could end up having the same behavioural problems as she did, and end up being unsupported by school. All of the participants, whilst not always explicitly expressing it as such, seemed aware of the nature of intergenerational experiences, but a desire for their child to nevertheless experience something different to them. The 'concerns' in many ways could be reflected in the common constructs proposed within the last section. This question therefore can in many ways be considered in combination with the last research question, and the evidence from the six participants' accounts suggests that these ideas appear for them at least, intertwined.

5:2:4 What ‘best hopes’ are expressed by participants for their children’s school experience?

This research question was an attempt to link positive psychology and solution orientated approaches that can take place in the dialogue between an educational psychologist and parent (Cepeda & Davenport, 2006; Gersch, 2009). From this question developed part of the research dialogue within the interviews for this study, asking the participants what their hopes were for their child’s time in school. Many of the participants echoed the question in their responses through their interview. Most participants expressed hope that their children would be happy, that they would experience a more enjoyable time in school than them, and identified that this would be achieved by having a good group of friends, not being bullied, being taught well and listened to by their teachers, and having adults in school who cared about them. These were summarised as a ‘desire for a different experience to their own’. The comments that participants made when asked about their ‘hopes for their child at school’ seemed to represent the antithesis of what they had experienced in school. By asking participants to consider a future time, a projection on an event which had yet to occur for them, it seemed to make sense that they based their hopes on something real and relevant to them; their own experience of school. This form of ideas, based upon embodiment, it would be argued from within phenomenological and existential psychology, is their ‘essence’: what is real and makes meaning and sense to them (Shinebourne, 2011; Smith et al., 2009). The participants also expressed their optimism for their child’s school experience. Though the optimism underlying this was not always immediately apparent (for example, as suggested by Natalie and Lizzy’s comments about home schooling), they all wanted their children to have a positive experience, based on enjoyment and happiness.

5:2:5 What do participants identify from their own experience of school that may be relevant and important to share with their child's school?

This research question was posed in the hope that participants would be able to consider, at the end of the interview process, potential interactions between their own experience of school and the event of their child going into school. As the researcher (and interviewer), this construction centred on the research about intergenerational parallelism (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; Kaplan et al., 2004). Translated into an individual question posed within the research interview, this became a somewhat difficult philosophical proposition for most participants to make sense of. Despite this difficulty, however, they identified a need to be confident in their choice of school. This confidence, some participants identified, would emerge from finding out about a school, from talking to other parents, and from being sure about school policies, such as effective anti-bullying guidelines. These key reflections arose both as a result of participants' consideration of prompts about 'what might help them' in relation to being more confident, and also about 'what it was they may consider sharing with others about their experience'.

The participants also reflected on the ways in which they could talk to their child to prepare them for school and help them be confident about going. This appears to fall into the category of 'academic socialisation' as proposed by Taylor et al. (2004). The participants considered the way they would want to talk through their own school experiences, either with their child, or potentially with professionals, which may include teachers at school. From Clare's responses however, it was evident that she would not want to share her experiences with her child's school at the outset, in case it altered the way in which they regarded or supported her child. She feared they would be 'tarred with the same brush'. Though Natalie initially found it hard to believe

that a school would be interested in what a parent had experienced, she later reflected that teachers may understand her experiences better now that she is able to relate them as an adult. Thus she appeared to hold on to her experience from childhood that teachers would not listen to concerns, such as those concerned with bullying. It could be considered on the basis of these mothers' accounts that, for some parents at least, being able to talk to school and share their experience in a sympathetic environment could be important to their confidence about school, and thus their ability to detach their own experience from the future schooling of their child.

Whilst each of the research questions has been adequately addressed in the findings to this study, the most important findings emerged through the depth and reflection the participants gave when talking about their negative experiences; what had become the essence of their childhood memories of school. Whilst the interview questions were designed with a view to eliciting information based on the research questions, such is the nature of a phenomenological study that the participants were able, in some cases, to direct the story that they wanted to share towards what had most *meaning* about school *to them*. The next section will consider the findings further in relation to literature critiqued in chapter two.

5:3 Consideration of findings in relation to previous research/literature

This section will comment further on the commonality and divergence that this study's findings hold in relation to the relevant literature considered within Chapters one and two. Shifting the focus from the idiographic to the nomothetic allows the applicability and validity of the findings to be considered within the wider research context. Whilst it was relevant to consider longitudinal studies in order to understand why this study was considered relevant in chapter two, the aims of this study were to contribute a

depth of knowledge in relation to parental perceptions of school based on negative school experience. The research that will be considered next will be those that are most relevant to the focus and findings within this study.

5:3:1 Findings in relation to parental involvement literature

X. Fan and Chen's (2001) meta-analysis concluded that parental aspirations, and their expectations for their child, linked more strongly to educational outcomes than the achievement of parents. For the participants in this study, though no causal relationship is possible, the fact that they had positive hopes for their child and what they could achieve in school demonstrated some synchronicity with this evidence. Despite having had some very difficult, negative experiences in school themselves, all the mothers in this study were mostly hopeful that what their child could achieve or how they feel about school may be different (and better) than it was for them. They recognised that their difficult times in school had led to a 'different path' for them in some cases. For Jo, this path may reflect her earlier entry into parenthood and not being able to achieve her goals in entering an apprenticeship after school. For Lizzy however, this 'path' was regarded as a more positive construct as she considered it had led, perhaps sooner than otherwise, to the positive relationship she now had with a child of her own and to a greater sense of self-confidence and inner strength.

A number of the pieces of literature reviewed in chapter two identified potential links between parental attitudes and behaviours towards school and those attitudes and behaviours identified for their children (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Kaplan et al, 2004, Taylor et al., 2004). This interpretative study has found some evidence from the perceptions of six mothers' experiences of school that their concerns about school are important in thinking about school for their children. Having experienced challenges and negative times themselves, they were able to express how this made them

view school for their children, with both hope and trepidation. They expressed hope that their children would be able to enjoy school and do well, but similarly expressed worry that the child may have to experience something like them, for example being bullied, or being left to get on with their learning, unsupported by teachers. For Becky and Amanda, there was a clear desire to 'parent' their children in a way that was different to their own experience; to support their children with school and to build their self-image and confidence by listening and encouraging, or as they put it, by 'being there for them'. What all the participants in this study projected was a hope for positive experiences for their child's time in school. A number of comments illustrated how they considered that being happy and enjoying school could in turn lead to better outcomes for their children, despite harbouring some sadness that their own experiences were difficult and they had not achieved this personally.

I: so being happy in school is important?

Lizzy: Yes very, very because I believe if you're happy then you have got that mind's eye to be able to go out and work harder and not have to worry about if I am studying in the library someone is going to come and whack me over the head with a book... (61-66)

This extract from the interview with Lizzy reflects the impact her experiences have upon her emotions, and her ability to see educational outcomes entangled with what she went through in school. It also reflects her desire for her child to be happy and do well, yet tinged with the fear and recall of what happened to her in school.

5:3:2 Links to research into parental recollections/memories of school and intergenerational transmission

The research considered in chapter two on intergenerational transmission and parental memories of school were most aligned to this study. Though the qualitative and interpretative methodology used in this study differed from the majority of the research considered, the desire to understand more about

parental attitudes to school and the potential relationships to personal experiences was a common aim. The findings from this study tally to some extent with the autobiographical memory research undertaken by Walls et al. (2001) into memories relating strongly to social experiences in high school. Their findings also suggested that students recalled more negative memories from earlier in school. All six mothers in this study were, however, able to identify, through the course of a longer, less structured interview, greater detail and clarity about their negative experiences which occurred during middle and high school (ages 9 to 16). As already considered, the process within the interview of talking through their school years chronologically, perhaps influenced their ability to consider some positive memories, alongside what had been more difficult. Certainly, the depth of recall from their more difficult years, either through vivid account of a bullying incident, or of social isolation or boredom in middle and high school, was greater to them than their recall of what had been more positive.

The key super-ordinate theme '**the power of negative experience to cloud the positive**' seemed to reflect the overriding power of negativity with regard to memory for most participants, even if they were later to consider these forgotten:

Becky:...But I think people forget about things [yeah], cause I have forgotten a lot of things about school already [hmm] and it wasn't even that long ago. (779-782).

It could justifiably be argued that this finding is unsurprising given that the selection criteria for participants was because they had indicated a prevalence of less positive times in school. This is acknowledged, however with the critical caveat that in the majority of the interviews, participants were not made aware of this focus until towards the end of the interview process. Therefore, what participants spoke of first, and were subsequently encouraged by the interviewer to elaborate on, were the memories that were evoked when they were asked to talk about school. Within further research that focused more specifically on parental recollection of school in relation to

their child's experiences in school or parenting behaviours, there are more similarities and variance to consider in relation to this study.

Räty (2007, 2011) conducted a number of studies with parents exploring their recollections of school, and ratings and outcomes from their children's experience in school. Räty's (2007) research found some evidence of interaction between parent recollection of school and their ratings of satisfaction for school for their child. The later follow-up study (2011) found parallels of experience from one generation to the next, but noted that there were potential mediating factors. An example was presented that fathers citing negative experience at school may have become more involved in school activities for their child. Similarly, the research by Pears et al. (2013) on father-child transmission of school adjustment, also found that their role can be critical in the way attitudes can become transferable from one generation to the next, but also how parent roles can mediate to facilitate positive change.

This finding, though related in these pieces of research to fathers, nonetheless has parallels in the aspirations the mothers in this study held for their children's experience in school. This study has demonstrated, to some extent, a degree of internal consistency within the group interviewed with regard to the desire for something different to their own experience. The mothers spoke of the ways in which they intend to support their children through school; a process which could be considered as positively mediating. Certainly Jo and Lizzy, who experienced bullying in school, spoke of an intention to ensure their children are listened to at home. They also expressed how the school they choose, would need to make them feel confident through their policies and actions in dealing effectively and quickly with bullying. Becky also spoke of supporting her daughter to develop a positive self-image and confidence. She explained how she would encourage her to maintain physical appearances, promote her academic strength, and

act as a mother, by sharing in her life to a greater extent than she considered was the case for the relationship with her own mother.

Whilst this study did not seek to provide direct evidence of causality, this finding is nonetheless relevant to discuss. The narrative related to the interpreted sub-themes a 'desire for a difference experience to their own' and 'optimism' (about school for their child) indicate that there may be the potential for the children of these participants to experience something more positive in school, in part aided by the attitudes and determination expressed by their mothers. As Rätty (2011) concludes:

We made the important observation in our study that school memories are not just echoes or scars from the past, but get their significance from the parent's actual situation, in which negative things can turn positive. So, instead of 'present in the past', we could talk about 'past in the present.' (Op cit., 358).

Clare and Lizzy in particular provided strong evidence that was interpreted as self-determination and strength from adversity. Their comments illustrated how, for them, a difficult time in school had made them more determined and stronger as result (*'made me stronger, made me the person I am today'*: Lizzy, 339).

In line with one research study (Miller et al., 2011) several participants in this study seemed to find the process of sharing their stories helped them to make sense of their time in school, and to place events into a meaningful context. This did not devalue what had been most difficult for them, but perhaps made them realise that it was part of what made up their own life and not necessarily what was part of the future school life for their child. In particular this was evident in comments made by Natalie, Amanda and Lizzy when they were considering how they would talk about school to their child. These three participants, considered how they would want to talk positively about school to their child, being cautious about what they were going to share about their own school times.

Emotional impact of experiences

Miller et al. (2011) also found within their semi-structured interviews with a somewhat more extensive groups of mothers from the US, that the process of talking through their memories of school could at times be difficult for them. Within their study, they found great variability in the extent to which the mothers were able to talk in detail about their experiences, perhaps as a result of finding the interview situation unnatural and also potentially related to their own language competencies. An additional implication from their study was the degree to which some mothers found recalling difficult or negative school experiences upsetting. Within this study, the six mothers' interviews lasted between 35 and 75 minutes. In the case of the shortest interviews, the mother's child was present throughout the interview. Whilst it was of interest that their presence (all non-talking babies/toddlers) may have allowed them to consider more directly the prospect of their child going to school, it is also accepted that this may have also been a distraction to them and hence made them less able to talk for longer.

The stories told by the mothers who brought children into the interviews were, however, in no sense less relevant or less insightful of the meaning which school had for them, than the mothers who obtained childcare outside the interview room. They all had a story, and once encouraged to begin a process of self-interpretation and reflection, were all keen to continue with it, even if their child was making their needs known loudly. In line with Miller et al.'s (op. cit.) research, the story and meaning-making which they undertook could be very powerful and emotional for them, and indeed at times, the interviewer. These mothers felt able to share within the context of this semi-structured interview an account of their experiences of school that sometimes touched on events which had created great fear, mistrust and unhappiness in them.

5:3:3 Consideration of theoretical underpinnings

Ecological systems theory revisited

Revisiting aspects of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (1986) in light of the findings again highlighted the relevance of the theory to this study. The findings presented and discussed within this and the previous chapter, suggest the complex nature of parental perceptions of school. For these mothers at least, a number of elements were involved with both factors in school and those surrounding the child outside school. The mothers identified both social and structural factors related to their difficult experiences in school. These included isolation from peers, either through moving away from a school where they felt safe or by being ostracised from their peers as friendships deteriorated or they became targets of bullying. Within the school-based factors, they were also able to illustrate how they felt that teachers often did not support them, and the curriculum and lack of differentiation potentially disengaged their interest in learning and confidence in their own ability. Outside of school, the family system was presented in two ways. For Lizzy, Jo and Clare, this was something which could be interpreted as a protective or supportive factor: having someone stable and secure, who listened and loved them for who they were. For Amanda, Becky, and to some extent Natalie, this family role was potentially detrimental in that they felt unsupported by family in relation to school systems (e.g. offering no help with work, not reading reports), or experienced family moves which involved school changes as unnecessary upheavals.

Considering these factors as a structural system surrounding each mother in their childhood, helps to make sense of the meaning they attributed to these experiences. This, again, supports psychologists' understanding of school experience and provides further evidence that a child's presentation (or, as so often expressed, 'their problems') cannot be considered in isolation. It is essential that practice for EPs and other professionals supporting families continues to adopt a complete, holistic view of a child, based on what each

key player in that child's life brings to a situation; their prior experiences, hopes and aspirations, all of which could potentially influence outcomes for the child (Brewin & Statham, 2011; Fox, 2009; Pellegrini, 2009). A major part of what half of the mothers in this study raised as critical to their negative experiences in school was the significant impact of bullying. This (anti) social behaviour was surprising for its predominance in this study. Whilst it was considered as just one potential negative factor by the researcher prior to this study being undertaken, it was identified as a super-ordinate theme as it impacted to a greater extent on the school experience for three participants and to a lesser extent, for them all. Though not possible within the scope of this study to consider all the complex interaction of factors that underlie these participants' experience of bullying, a piece of research relevant to this issue of bullying was undertaken by Hong and Espelage (2012). Their research illustrates a model of peer-bully victimisation taking into account the levels of ecological systems proposed by Bronfenbrenner, and concludes that many anti-bullying programmes aiming to support students and reduce bullying incidents, nevertheless fail to account for the potential 'exo-systemic' influences, such as those surrounding the school: its locality, local culture and beliefs.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the focus of this study was on parents' perceptions of school (specifically for this study, mothers) contemporary debate has also raised interest in the potential influence of grandparents on outcomes for children (Chan & Boliver, 2013). Though their research was focused on social class and mobility for children as mediating factors (and hence not directly relevant to school and this study's focus), it nonetheless underlies the need to account for a range of systems that include parents' (and potentially also grandparents') experiences as a way of understanding the complex interaction of influences on a child.

Attachment theory and its relevance to belonging

As considered in chapter two, theories around attachment behaviours were also found relevant in related research to this study (Barnett & Taylor, 2009;

Taylor et al., 2004). Terms such as academic socialisation - the ways in which parents prepare children for the transition to school and support their school experiences - have theoretical links to the connection that is formed between an adult and child. This study's findings very much illustrate how, for these participants, their relationships and connection to both their family and peers was central to how they perceived enjoyment of, or negative feelings towards, school. Though, as has been explained, no causal links are possible from this study, there was evidence that having positive peer relationships made them feel safe and secure in school. Where the reverse was true and they felt left out or bullied by their peers, this added further to their unhappiness and to their lack of connection with their learning.

In a recent study by Sancho and Cline (2012) where school children were interviewed about aspects of belonging in school, the authors concluded from their interviews that the relationships at secondary school level were particularly key to children feeling a part of the school. These included connections to their teachers as well as having established good friendships. It would appear from their research, and the findings of this study, that having friendships and positive connection and attachment to their family potentially acted as protective factors, both to children at the time, and to adults recalling their school days (in this study). These protective factors were expressed, for Lizzy and Clare, primarily through the support and encouragement of their parents who saw them through difficult days in school. This perhaps allowed them to develop additional strength and determination from this adversity. Equally, these mothers were also able to reflect on the more positive aspects of school life, even if, on balance, they comment that they had more bad than good times. Though the other participants were equally able to share some positive school memories and to demonstrate their aspirations for their child to have a positive school time, for one participant in particular, negative experiences clouded her view of school so much that she could not easily imagine sending her child to a maintained, 'typical' school, and saw home schooling as the best alternative. For all the participants, the relationships they revealed with their children

seemed positive and important to them. They all however retained some of the fear from their difficult schools years, and this perhaps clouded their view of the inevitable separation and sharing of responsibility that comes from their child going to school.

5:4 Reflections upon the participant's view of school for their child

Within this thesis resilience (Rutter, 2006) and self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2000) have been considered. The findings in chapter four refer a number of times to resilience processes that may have helped some of the participants to cope and move on. There are also references to how some found inner strength and determination to succeed, either in school or their adult lives, against the odds. It is also possible to reflect further, albeit cautiously, on the way in which some of the participants spoke about school for their child and how they conveyed a sense of a desire to be pro-active, or by contrast, how they conveyed a more passive *attitude*.

For one participant, Jo, a more resigned attitude to school for her child was perhaps reflected. When asked about how she hoped school could be for her child, she primarily echoed her fears or aspects of her own experience. For example “hope they don’t end up at the mercy of bullies”, “have friends...not to be plagued with negative feelings” [extracts from across her interview]. In her process of making sense (the hermeneutic), Jo explained she had not made any obvious connection between her own experience in school and that for her child. Although she expressed hope for her children to experience school more positively than she did, she conveyed limited ways in which she could be more confident or ‘active’ in thinking about their likely school experiences. Throughout her account, she expressed overall a very bleak picture of most of her time in school, with the negative events clouding her whole view of school. In this respect, the way in which she spoke indicated a degree of passivity that may have also been characteristic of her

own school years. She appeared to feel that she could hope for the best and for things to be different but that there was little she personally could do to control or change events. Like Jo, Becky also conveyed positive hopes for her child's school experience and the desire for something different to her own. Becky's talk concentrated on the more active role she would adopt as a parent (compared to her own recall of her relationship with her mum).

To a degree in contrast to Jo's account, Natalie had already given a great deal of thought of how she would be active in the schooling of her child. The level of control she desired was such that she considered home education, or perhaps something more 'alternative to the mainstream' in order to feel more hopeful of a positive school experience for her child. Though reflecting a relatively positive primary school experience herself, her extended experience of being bullied in the latter years of school perhaps led her to consider that by taking control over educating her child, she would prevent any repetition of these events. Clare also spoke of a more active role for herself in her children's education. She spoke about the way in which she needed to gain new information about the school, the need to talk confidently about school and to ensure that both she and her child's father were included in choosing secondary schools with their child. Clare also spoke about the ways in which she would talk about school with her child, encouraging them to become confident and independent learners whilst having the potential to realise their own strengths and goals. These aspects of being more pro-active or involved in their children's school lives were most apparent for Clare, Amanda, Lizzy and Natalie. They all spoke of intentions to speak positively about school, to talk to others (e.g. teachers) about their own time in school so that negative patterns were not repeated. They wanted to actively support their child by encouraging their interest in school and learning, and by ensuring that the schools they chose had policies in place that could potentially increase their trust or faith in the school.

Lizzy's account also resonated resilience (e.g. Karreman & Vingerhoets, 2012). Given her determination to ensure a successful future for her child in school Lizzy hinted at her resilience in the past and currently. She spoke actively a number of times about how she was determined to succeed and not to let her past get her down. It was as if the phrases she chose when speaking about these events and the way in which she spoke of her difficult experiences in school with bullying led her to new personal growth. She spoke often about her own parents, whose actions can be interpreted as a supportive factor given that they cared for her, listened to her, and believed her (Bowes, Maughan, Caspi, Moffitt & Arseneault, 2010). These elements of parenting appeared to have encouraged her sense of autonomy and self-determination (Joussemet, Landry & Koestner, 2008). These factors were apparent in her talk about herself, but also through her desire to repeat these parental approaches in communicating with her child, and in supporting and encouraging them to be positive about school.

This section was intended as a cautious interpretation of the ways in which the participants spoke actively about school for their children and how they would play a role in this success. Nevertheless, the degree of more active responses, despite the participants' very difficult school experiences, offers further insight into how individual factors such as resilience and self-determination can potentially buffer and contain negative intergenerational patterns. The attitude of teachers (or other professionals in contact with parents) with regard to these factors, and their promotion and development, are therefore critical in two ways. Firstly, they could use their connection and contacts with parents to explore whether they feel confident and able to promote and convey resilience and self-determination either as an internal construct or ecological process with their children. Whilst this may not be possible with every parent in the first instance, where there are risk factors apparent or the child is already experiencing some difficulty, asking parents (and children) to complete structured tools (e.g. Resiliency scales for children/adolescents, Prince-Embury, 2007) could be helpful for further identification. The next stage would be to support parents by offering advice

and, if needed, parent group work, to promote these skills. In a more preventative way, teachers and other professionals also have a role in supporting the next generation to have more confident and positive experiences in school themselves. This may also be by promoting resilience and self-determination through active participation in school, by giving them strategies to cope with life, and the skills to communicate effectively with others, beginning at home.

This chapter has so far considered the key findings of this study in relation to the research questions, previous research, and theoretical underpinnings. Some new research has also been introduced and its relevance to the key findings considered. This chapter will now conclude by taking a meta-view of the limitations, implications and considerations for the future in relation to this study.

5:5 Limitations and critique of this study

This section will provide a reflection upon the methodology employed in this study. A constructionist and interpretative view of the phenomenon of negative school experience was chosen as the key guiding methodology in this study. The interview transcripts were analysed using a structured interactive process of IPA, in which the researcher engaged fully with the data in a process of a 'double hermeneutic' (Smith et al., 2009), that is, the interviewer making sense of the participants' own sense-making. The findings presented in detail in chapter four and the discussion undertaken thus far is explicitly acknowledged as a subjective view of this data. It did not provide quantifiable data, or statistical significance, or independent verifications for the analysis and interpretations. This study was also idiographic in nature (Smith et al., 2009). Its findings were related to the particular; in this case, six mothers' accounts of negative school experience. It is acknowledged that had another researcher conducted the research,

even with the same participants and asking the same questions, the ways in which they engaged with the participants within the semi-structured interviews may have been different. However, being open about this, and about the sources of the key themes from the original transcripts, and tying the findings to previous relevant research, have, it is argued, illustrated how this study has furthered understanding of this little-researched field. This said, there are a number of limitations which are both methodological and contextual.

This study originally proposed to consider perceptions of negative school experience of younger *parents*; that is potentially interviewing fathers and mothers who were under 25 years. This study ultimately focused only on the experience and perceptions of mothers, one of whom was also above 25 year of age. The reason for this change was that it was also originally proposed that the participants would be drawn from a narrow geographical context, perhaps all within the same town. Due to a lack of consent to approach younger parents groups in one town, and in order to find enough participants who met the criteria (see section 3:5), participants were then drawn from across six young parent groups in two regions within one county. Of the six groups approached, only one had a father in attendance, and the completion of his consent/screening tool did not reveal a primarily negative school experience; he was not therefore approached.

Securing the involvement of five young mothers (aged 25 and under) from these groups meant homogeneity was further established. However, to involve the proposed number of six participants considered appropriate to give this study weight and validity as a piece of original qualitative research (Smith, et al., 2009) meant widening the net slightly further. A sixth participant was then approached via an opportunist sampling method (word of mouth), as she was a mother of a pre-school aged child who had identified a negative school experience. Though this increased the 'average age since leaving school' of the participant group slightly, it did not radically alter the

homogeneity. It is nevertheless acknowledged as a moderate limitation. In further research, obtaining a greater degree of homogeneity would be helpful by asking parents who were attending only one children's centre. In addition a comparative study might then be possible if access to parents of both genders could be secured.

An additional limitation is that of geographical context of this study compared to the vast majority of previous published research in a similar field. When comparing the findings from this study to previous research involving parental recollection of school (Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Miller et al., 2011; Pears et al., 2013; Rätty, 2007, 2011), direct similarities are a little more difficult to contend as they were all located outside the UK, either in the US or Finland, where school structures and systems may vary somewhat, and the broader socio-political context may be different. However, the experience of being a parent and having a child in or about to go to school is relatively similar within the context of a western society, where the expectation and legal framework require children to attend school.

As has been illustrated within the discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions (section 5:3:2), two of the research questions posed were perhaps too repetitive and this presents a further limitation, related to the interview procedures. Gaining greater skills and confidence in IPA methodology would allow future interviews on a similar study to be more open ended, guided more by the reflections and 'sense-making' from the participants as opposed to interruptions and further questions that may have led away from particular insight into their negative school experiences. The questions posed ask more generally about parents/participants, but these should more accurately be phrased as focused specifically on mothers, as has already been discussed. In addition, one of the four subsidiary questions asking about 'concerns' participants raised about school for their child was, in fact, too specific in its scope. The responses suggested from participants, about their "best hopes for school" similarly reflected how they regarded

school. These two questions may therefore have been better incorporated into one: “what do participants say about school for their child”. Furthermore, the final research question, which was incorporated into the interview schedule seeking the participants’ views on how their experiences may be shared with their child’s school, was complex.

In several interviews, the participants found it hard to conceive that their experiences would be of interest to schools (an interesting finding, nonetheless). For another, they had made no conscious link between their own and their child’s schooling (again of interest), and for the remainder, this question was perhaps too focused on a future event that they found hard to project towards. Despite this criticism, the kinds of responses and information shared by the participants provided a rich insight into the ways in which they, or parents like them, may be supported to feel confident about school.

When reflecting upon the choice of interpretative phenomenology, it is possible to assess the limitations of the approach, as has been suggested above. However, it is now relevant to briefly review the earlier consideration and rejection of other methodologies discussed in this thesis. Having a study which was focused on the particular, the experiences of mothers who had a negative school experience, has limited the way the findings can be generalised. In addition no new theories have been generated, such as may have emerged through a process of grounded theory analysis. This would, however, have involved access to a much larger participant group, which was not available with the scope of this study (Willig, 2008). It involved a thorough and extensive period of analysis which has been acknowledged as subjective. However, despite these limitations, for the purpose of this study, IPA remains the most relevant and appropriate methodology. It provided a thorough and systematic approach, grounded in psychology, which fitted the theoretical ideology of the author, who wished to understand human lived experiences, and contribute further insight into an under-researched area.

5:6 Implications for theory and practice

There are a number of ways to consider the implications of these findings, both at the macro and micro-level even though the sample size for this study was relatively small and the focus at the outset was on the idiographic. This has already been illustrated in this chapter by the consensus drawn across the participant group, and indeed the similarity of findings to those from previous studies (section 5:3). The key finding and super-ordinate theme (that negative school experiences cloud or override the memories of what is better or more positive) has implications both for the ways in which school systems are structured to support children, and also for the ways in which students are taught, particularly at the high school level. In the formulation of Government policy concerning the building of aspirations and positive attitudes to school, policymakers need to look not simply at factors such as socio-economic status and deprivation (the known risk factors), but also to consider broader implicit factors that are reflected both in wider research and in the findings from this study: the parents *own* experience of school (Miller et al., 2011; Rätty, 2011).

In the broadest sense, this could have implications for government education policy, where debate should focus on how to make high schools work for all their students, including the less vocal minority. This could be by reviewing the structure and environment of high school (Edgerton, McKechnie, & McEwen, 2011). This sort of approach is already apparent in some high schools, where vertical year grouping has begun to provide more of a family group (TES, 2012). In addition, as was suggested by participants in this study, reviewing curriculum approaches that encourage involvement and interest, rather than alienation, may also serve to re-engage some students in learning (Cozolino, 2013; McCormick & Burn, 2011). At a micro-level, the findings drawn within super-ordinate themes four and five illustrate the need for schools to take the voice and experience of parents seriously, and to help those parents who feel vulnerable or worried about coming into school to feel

more confident and trusting that their child will be safe and happy (Hess, Molina, & Kozleski, 2006).

Bullying, which continues to be debated nationally (Cowie, 2011; Jones, Bombieri, Livingstone, & Manstead, 2012), was also a major theme in this study. Whilst the participants in this study may not have provided 'answers' to address these difficult issues, the narratives that were analysed collectively confirmed that the impact of bullying extends significantly further than at the time of the event. These participants spoke of the impact on all aspects of their lives, undermining their confidence and ability to achieve their academic potential and for some, resulting in a longstanding negative association to school. Whilst this study was not unique in these findings (Conners-Burrow, Johnson, Whiteside-Mansell, McKelvey, & Gargus, 2009; Rigby, 2013), it illustrated the ways in which a second generation (their children) could also be affected, and potentially experience school differently. Their mothers' worry and fear about their child's time in school was centred on the possibility that they may have to experience it the same way as they did. Though all mothers in this study desired for them to have something different in their experience of school, the underlying anxiety could potentially make them more cautious about the freedoms they offer their children in their strong desire to protect them from harm. This finding gives further weight to the need for support for students in school to ensure they are able to share worries about bullying (either within or outside school). It is also important that children feel confident and have faith that their concerns will be taken seriously and acted upon, resulting in a sense of justice that some of these participants felt was lacking. The crucial voice of the child needs to be listened to at an earlier stage, and their perceptions, taken more seriously, to ensure that they are able to establish a sense of enjoyment and belonging in school.

A further implication, based on the findings at the micro-level, is that of hope and optimism about school expressed by the participants and the potentially

positive mediating role that can be inferred that all parents may have for their children. In the case of this study, those that had a bad time in school themselves all expressed, within their thoughts about school for their child, at least some sense of optimism and a strong desire that their child should achieve a different experience of school than they did. They all held strong aspirations that their children should enjoy school and ultimately be supported by themselves and their choice of school to achieve this, hinting at the mediating role that they could play as parents. It is therefore important to acknowledge, at both a school and wider school support service level (for example, educational psychology services) that negative experience is not necessarily always regarded as a significant risk factor at an intergenerational level. This finding is in line with the mediating role that negative experience played for fathers in the recent research by Rätty (2011).

5:7 Suggestions for future research

There are a number of ways in which further complementary research could be undertaken following this study. Whilst this study is original in its focus on negative school experience and perceptions of school for participants' children in the UK context, it is difficult to generalise the findings more broadly to other groups, such as fathers, or parents who had more positive school experiences. In future, researchers may consider approaching fathers who had identified negative school experience. This would allow similarities and differences to be considered across the genders and to reflect the contemporary role that both parents play in guiding children through life and, more specifically, their schooling. Additionally, this may aid more understanding about how parents of both genders share their hopes and aspirations, and also those attitudes that are likely to have been based on their own school experiences and view of the world (Degner & Dalege, 2013).

This study chose to focus primarily on the school experiences of younger parents in the belief that this would provide greater parallels to the school experience for their child. The presumption underlying this approach was the

potential similarity of both socio-political and educational context for parent and child. In particular, these parents, having left school within the previous ten years, would have attended school under the current national curriculum system. Additionally, the political context and approaches that influenced school ethos and support systems, such as the Every Child Matters Agenda (DfES, 2003), would be broadly similar to the current time, at least if their child was to enter school in the next few years. Whilst this focus remains valid for this study, in further research using the same idiographic phenomenological enquiry, it may be best to consider parents of all age ranges, broadening the scope of the research to include a wider range of parents, and backgrounds, and experiences, such as educational experiences beyond school.

An additional follow up to this study could begin by adopting a contrast to this study's focus on negative school experience, by seeking to perceptions of those who felt school was good for them. It could provide a companion to these findings, to add more richness to the ways in which we consider other people's life-worlds, their essence and experiences. If the focus was to consider further what had 'gone right' for parents in school, this could potentially illuminate the positive in school and what parents considered was successful for them. Furthermore, an assessment might be made of whether and how this interacted with how they perceived school for their children. It may not simply show a contrast, but could also provide consensus, in that all parents naturally have some worries and concerns about their child growing up and coming 'under the influence of others'.

5:8 Reflexivity – researcher's position in relation to this study

This study was undertaken with a clear understanding and acknowledgement of reflexivity, in particular, the role of the researcher (Shinebourne, 2011; Smith et al., 2009). This section will therefore return to the first-person narrative as a way of maintaining a commitment to IPA's recognition of the

role and engagement of the researcher. Aspects of the reflexive process within the interviews were considered within chapter three, about methodology. In addition, however, I have also given thought to my role both as a researcher and practising educational psychologist. I was very much aware of the privilege I held in relation to hearing and analysing the stories told by the six mothers. To them, there was no extrinsic value or reward to agreeing participation, yet in doing so, they have helped to further understanding of the worry and fear that school can instil for some individual parents.

I have learnt more about what might make some parents fear and reject schools, and I have tried to convey this throughout chapters four and five. The findings highlight to me the on-going need for early support and intervention when parents or schools become aware of a child disengaging with school or losing confidence in themselves. One further positive outcome from engaging in this research process is an even greater recognition of what I, as a researcher, initially suspected: that parental constructs about school are vitally important, and that it may well be necessary to allow anxious parents more time to recount their own stories, perhaps during a home visit or other place of their choosing. Whilst it is not always possible to engage in active research, undertaking this study has also inspired me to push forward ideas about action research and mini-projects that could involve parents directly. These aspects of the EP role in relation to this study will be considered further next.

5:9 Application to Educational Psychology

Throughout this chapter, reference has been made to the ways in which support services, in particular Educational Psychologists, could potentially respond to the key findings of this study. For the majority of Educational Psychologists, adopting a holistic approach to understanding the presenting needs of a child is undisputed. However, making explicit in a discussion with parents the broader eco-systemic factors which could potentially interact with

a child's experience in school, such as the parental experience, and their hopes and aspirations, may not be. It may be possible, by expanding the Educational Psychologists repertoire of questions to ask parents within their initial meetings, to specifically target discussion about parents' experiences in school. Educational Psychologists are also in an important position of bridging direct engagement with both schools and parents, and as such could potentially influence and engage with further research such as suggested in this study. They could also consider an action-based research, where participants can share their experience, be encouraged to articulate their constructs, and be supported to feel confident about going into school. Two studies illuminate how it is possible to undertake related research involving parents; firstly research to increase parental confidence about school with children with Down Syndrome (Byrnes, 2012); and secondly, an action research project to increase parental involvement in school (Snell, Miguel, & East, 2009).

As has been contended within this study and discussion, the ways in which parents and children are able to establish confidence and positive connections in their own relationships, can have benefits for the ways in which they can in turn be successful in making those connections in school, and ultimately to gaining a critical sense of belonging and their ability to cope with school transitions (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Randall, 2010; Sancho & Cline, 2012; Zaman & Fivush, 2013). Supportive approaches, such as Video Interaction Guidance (VIG) that help them build the connection between themselves and their child in a positive way are also becoming a key part of the Educational Psychologist's role within the community (Kennedy et al., 2010). This work involving Educational Psychologists (and others) could be targeted to those parents who have had difficult school experiences to give them the confidence to respond to their child and recognise the strengths within their own relationships. This renewed confidence may help them to recognise their own strengths and skills, and their inner resilience, and increase their ability to share this self-confidence with their child, potentially

leading to higher levels of confidence for both the child and parent as they move towards school.

Within further research and targeted interventions it would be of interest to explore the longer term outcomes for children in school, by focusing on support of new parents and their children in cases where, say, health workers (for example) have identified that parents have had great difficulty or negative experiences in school. They could offer an opportunity to talk this through in a structured way, to make sense of and place into context their own experiences, so not to taint or influence the school experiences of their child. This in particular was an idea to which several participants in this study alluded: the need to speak positively about school to their child, so not as to pass on that fear or hate. Educational Psychologists could also provide strategies to schools, and other professionals such as family support workers, to engage parents in this early conversation about school. This could focus on eliciting, in particular, their hopes, and in turn, to support parents from an early stage to hold on to the optimism and hopefulness for their child in school, as expressed by participants within this study. It may be that Educational Psychologists could support individuals and families further in their journey to overcome these obstacles. This might be achieved by implementing approaches to support a positive future for them, helping to visualise and map alternatives, for example using person-centred planning and graphic facilitation (Margulies & Sibbet, 2009).

One further key finding with implications for Educational Psychologists was the number of these younger participants who had experienced significant bullying in school as has been considered in detail within chapter four and five. A number of national charities are currently supporting children and their parents in re-gaining confidence after being targets of bullying. One of these is Kidscape, who offer one-day training called 'ZAP' Although the evidence basis for this intervention has to date been limited only to a small study conducted by the charity ("Kidscape - Key findings," 2013) , EPs have also

been involved in programme delivery in some areas, and would therefore be well placed to support further empirical or action research to assess the effectiveness of these and similar interventions.

Whilst the immediate and longer term impact of bullying has been well researched (see for example Fox & Boulton, 2005; Hong & Espelage, 2012; Hutchinson, 2012), the impact on victims' perceptions of their children's schooling has hitherto been less well understood. In this sample of six interviewees (albeit selected on the basis of 'negative views of school'), one or two mothers had had their long-term perceptions of school significantly altered as a result of having been a victim of bullying when they were at school, and that this affected their attitude towards their children's schooling. This ratio suggests that there may be a 'hidden problem', in that many other parents may have similar doubts and anxieties rooted in their own negative experiences, and may have a similar deep-seated mistrust of school processes and authorities. Continuation of EPs role in supporting schools and other settings with anti-bullying approaches (Noaks & Noaks, 2009; Sapouna et al., 2010), work on raising children's self-esteem in general, and encouraging and training schools in developing a more open and supportive ethos for children, all seem key. To these targets of bullying (the mothers in this study), being believed and heard by senior staff in school was central to their belief that it would stop and that things could get better for them. Educational psychologists are well placed within both a school and, increasingly, a community context, to facilitate change, and to support those who lack a distinct voice. The application of psychological approaches, backed by robust research, could make a positive change for them.

5:10 Summary of Chapter

This chapter has presented a summary of the key findings of this study both in relation to the research questions it set out to explore and the previous research on which this study was based, both from an empirical and

theoretical perspective. The limitations the study had in relation to its ideographic scope and focus have been considered, and it has been openly acknowledged that the particular experiences of a small group of mothers who had negative times in school have been the sole source of data. However, the use of IPA also involved a great deal of engagement with this 'data'. The stories and sense-making experiences of the participants, from the point where they began to tell their own stories in the interview, through their interpretations of those stories, to the final conclusions in this thesis, have been thoroughly considered. The chapter concluded by looking at how the interpretation and analysis of the sense-making data could be used in practice. It examined the ways in which Educational Psychologists could support parents, children, and their schools in promoting and developing parental trust in schools. This would help to promote a positive school future for the children of those parents who may, for whatever reason, have not received enough support to enable them to experience school in a positive way themselves.

5:11 Concluding remarks

This thesis has presented, across the past five chapters, an account of an original piece of qualitative research, from its origins within the broader social and political context and comments on the value and interactions between parents, education and schooling, to the ways in which Educational Psychologists can take the findings into the future to facilitate positive change for children and families. These findings were analysed, synthesised and summarised into five super-ordinate themes and their related sub-themes (see Figure 4:1 and Table 4:2 in chapter four) which were presented with reference to detailed extracts from each participant in chapter four, and considered further within this final chapter.

The rich pictures created of school by these participants were salient in their portrayal of how the bad times can cloud what may have been better, be that from being bullied, being ignored, or being left to get on with learning. The impacts were, however, universal for them: lowering their confidence as adolescents and potentially shaping their future paths, which for five of the six participants perhaps contributed to an earlier than average entry to adult roles in work and parenthood. From this cloud, however, emerged for all the participants a strong desire for a different experience of school for their child, a hope that they may be able to find enjoyment there; be safe and find connections with friends and teachers who would engage and believe in them. Though this was not presented without the worry and fear that their child may experience the same troubles that they did, they showed awareness of a desire for patterns of intergenerational experiences not to be transferred. They also offered positive ideas on how they would support and mediate with their child to achieve this; balancing the responsibility of parenthood with the willingness to seek or accept support from others if offered. For two participants in particular, they demonstrated a sense of self-determination and strength that they gained from these adverse times, again offering hope of the potential for positive to emerge from difficult experiences and the optimism that they too would be able to support their children with the help of strong family networks to enjoy and achieve in school.

The thesis has several key messages which can be drawn from all the stories presented by these participants. These will form a short summary for the participants in the first instance, but could also form a short summary to share more widely (see graphics in Appendix 14 and 15). They offer a brief overview of a possible future concerning approaches for supporting and developing individuals' confidence in schools; and increasing the optimism of parents who have suffered negative school experiences. Ultimately, it is hoped that this will affect their children; for it is they who are often the focus of involvement with Educational Psychologists. The messages of the participants in this study may be summarised as:

'Help me to be heard and believed; offer me choices; engage me in learning; support my control over decisions and build my trust'.

To conclude, I repeat the words of the participants themselves, directly expressing their hopes about school for their children:

I want her to be able to go to school and have the opportunity to feel safe and happy. (Lizzy: 932-933)

Just to enjoy it, to find something they both like about school. (Jo: 114)

Erm, I hope that he is able to make plenty of friends and erm learn good social skills, learn good life skills and you know become academic as well... (Clare: 46)

That he wants to go to school... (Natalie: 1168)

That he'll enjoy it [yeah] and that he'll do well and if he doesn't do well it doesn't really matter, cause it's social skills rather than, than yeah... academic... (Amanda: 77-79)

I want her to have lots of friends as well because it is the friends that you keep isn't it, [hmm] keep them around her (Becky: 715-717).

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Appendices

Appendix 1a: Ethics application form

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

APPLICATION FOR THE APPROVAL OF A RESEARCH PROGRAMME INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

Please read the Notes for Guidance before completing this form. If necessary, please continue your answers on a separate sheet of paper: indicate clearly which question the continuation sheet relates to and ensure that it is securely fastened to the report form.

1.	Title of the programme: Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology
	Title of research project (if different from above): Exploring perceptions of school through negative school experience – what can Educational Psychologists learn? An interpretative phenomenological study with younger parents of pre-school children.
	Name of researcher (s) (including title): Ms Marie Osborn
	Nature of researcher (delete as appropriate): (a) staff (b) students (c) others
	If “others” please give full details:
	Student number: u 0212457
	Email: <u>marie.osborn@</u> [REDACTED]
2.	Name of person responsible for the programme (Principal Investigator): Dr. Sharon Cahill Status: UEL Director of Studies and supervisor Name of supervisor (if different from above) 2nd supervisor: Dr. Mary Robinson Status: UEL consultant/ supervisor
3.	School: Psychology Department/Unit: Educational Psychology
4.	Level of the programme (delete as Appropriate): (a) undergraduate basic (b) undergraduate project (c) Postgraduate (taught) (d) Postgraduate (research or Professional Doctorate)

(e)	post-doctoral or staff
5.	Number of: (a) researchers (approximately): 1 (b) participants (approximately): 6 for individual interview ; up to 30 for initial questionnaire
6.	Nature of participants (general characteristics, e.g. University students, primary school children, etc.): Parents of pre-school age children who attend a local group for young parents.
7.	Probable duration of the research: from (starting date): April 2011 to (finishing date): January 2012

8.	Aims of the research including any hypothesis to be tested: <p>To gain an insight into young parents' experiences of school, their current constructs and exploring ways that their knowledge and experience may be helpful to the schooling of their child.</p> <p>The research is set within the context of educational and psychological research which explores parenting and young children's early experiences of school. The main objective of this research is to contribute evidence that will inform approaches to developing parent's positive constructs (thinking about) of school and the ways in which they may talk with their children about school.</p> <p>The approach or methodology employed within this study is recognized as primarily interpretative, but it is hoped that the focus of this study will add relevance, depth and richness to the body of knowledge within the UK and internationally of this under-researched area. If common themes emerge in the way that parents express their thoughts about school and the ways the think the information might be helpful for others to understand (e.g. teachers), this could ultimately inform practice of the induction of children and their parents into school. Beyond the initial research, it is anticipated that schools and pre-schools may consider further the information they gain from parents and the way they use this to support young children's early experiences of school that is based not only on <i>the child's</i> time at a nursery/pre-school but also on their parent's perceptions and experiences of school.</p> <p>This research is intended to address the following primary question:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What do parents say about their school experience? <p>In addition, the research will seek the address the following subsidiary and specific questions:-</p>
----	---

- What concerns do parents have about their child's schooling?
- What common themes or ideas emerge about the participants current constructs of school?
- What 'best hopes' are expressed by parents for their children's school experience?
- What do parents identify from their own experience of school that may be relevant and important to share with their child's school?

Where the term 'parent' is used, for the purpose of this research the participants will be drawn from younger parents (those who left school in the past 10 years) whose eldest (or only) child will enter school within the forthcoming year. The reasons for choosing younger parents are considered to be two fold. Firstly there may be a more recent experience of school experience which may more closely resemble the current school systems and structures for their own children and secondly, the researcher can access specific groups of younger parents that meet through local Children's Centres, whereas a wider sample of parents may be more difficult to access. It is recognised therefore that the participants are a narrow group of parents and it is not intended that conclusions will be drawn nor logically applied to *all* parents of pre-school children.

9. Description of the procedures to be used (give sufficient detail for the Committee to be clear about what

is involved in the research). Please append to the application form copies of any instructional leaflets,

letters, questionnaires, forms or other documents which will be issued to participants:

- Information leaflet about the research shared with groups of young parents attending local children's centres (Appendix one).
- Consent form and Initial screening questionnaire completed with parents attending a young parents group in a Children's Centre (see Appendix two)
- Questionnaire responses to be analysed to identify potential participants for a semi-structured interview – specifically those who identify mainly negative responses to questions about their own experience (recollections of) at school.
- Participants (6) will be invited to take part in a tape recorded semi-structured interview (outline questions including in Appendix three).
- The transcripts of the interviews will be typed and rigorously analysed using principals from interpretative phenomenological analysis detailed in writings by Jonathan Smith (2008 and 2009), to identify psychological constructs and common themes about school which participants may identify during their interview.

10. Are there potential hazards to the participant(s) in these procedures?

~~YES~~/NO If yes: (a) what is the nature of the hazard(s)?

(b) What precautions will be taken?

11. Is medical care or after care necessary?

~~YES~~/NO If yes, what provision has been made for this?

12. May these procedures cause discomfort or distress?

~~YES~~/NO If yes, give details including likely duration:

<p>13.</p>	<p>(a) Will there be administration of drugs (including alcohol)? YES/NO</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">If yes, give details:</p> <p>(b) Where the procedures involve potential hazards and/or discomfort or distress, please state what previous experience you have had in conducting this type of research:</p>
<p>14.</p>	<p>(a) How will the participants' consent be obtained?</p> <p>Participants will give initial consent for the screening questionnaire by agreeing to complete the questionnaire either verbally with the researcher or by returning their questionnaire; in addition they will be asked to sign a consent form (part of Appendix two). Participants agreeing to this initial questionnaire will also be given the opportunity to indicate whether or not they are happy to be approached again to participate in individual interviews by giving further contact details – name, telephone number/email.</p> <p>(b) What will the participants be told as to the nature of the research?</p> <p>This is detailed in the information leaflet (Appendix one).</p> <p>They will be informed that this is a study exploring parents' ideas about school.</p>
<p>15.</p>	<p>(a) Will the participants be paid? YES/NO</p> <p>(b) If yes, please give the amount: £</p> <p>(c) If yes, please give full details of the reason for the payment and how the amount given in 16 (b) above has been calculated (i.e. what expenses and time lost is it intended to cover):</p>
<p>16.</p>	<p>Are the services of the University Health Service likely to be required during or YES/NO</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">after the research?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">If yes, give details:</p>
<p>17.</p>	<p>(a) Where will the research take place?</p> <p>Intended to take place at the local Children's Centre where the parents already attend a group.</p> <p>(b) What equipment (if any) will be used?</p> <p>A tape recorder for the transcription of the interview.</p> <p>(c) If equipment is being used is there any risk of accident or injury? YES/NO</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">If yes, what precautions are being taken to ensure that should any</p>

untoward event happen

adequate aid can be given:

18. Are personal data to be obtained from any of the participants?

YES/NO

If yes, (a) give details:

In the initial questionnaire, parents will be asked to supply their name and a contact number for the purpose of approaching potential participants to take part in semi-structured interviews.

Participants will also be asked to state their gender, age, the age(s) of their child (or children), race and religion, level of qualifications and current occupation – the purpose of this is to be able to identify the nature of the participant group and to provide a fairly homogenous participant group. Individual participants will only be identified in the analysis and write-up of the thesis as a pseudonym and this data is therefore not considered linked to possible identification of individuals.

Other questions in the questionnaire and individual interviews may also unintentionally illicit some personal information as raised by the participants (e.g. the participants saying the name of their child, school or other personal information, although this will not be requested). Pseudonyms will therefore be used in the analysis and write up.

state what steps will be taken to protect the confidentiality of the data?

Contact details and questionnaire responses will be coded and stored on a security encrypted computer [REDACTED] County Council property, but kept with the researcher) being 'backed up' onto a secure memory stick, for the duration of the research.

Paper questionnaires and interview tapes will be stored securely (in a lockable cabinet) at the home of the researcher and shredded/deleted once a final transcription has been recorded on computer.

As soon as the tape recorded data has been typed and transferred to a computer file, the participants will only be identified by a code number or pseudonym.

(c) state what will happen to the data once the research has been completed and the results written-up. If the data is to be destroyed how will this be done? How will you ensure that the data will be disposed of in such a way that there is no risk of its confidentiality being compromised? If the research is published the anonymised published data will be kept securely for a max. 5 years from publication date and then destroyed.

Paper questionnaires will be destroyed in line with county council procedures and shredded via confidential waste collection bins. Interview tapes will be wiped after typing and checked to ensure they are blank. These procedures are in-line with the local authority [REDACTED] County Council) guidelines for data protection.

Personal contact details stored on a computer data files will also be deleted following the initial contact for the research interviews.

**19. Will any part of the research take place in premises outside the
YES/NO**

University?

**Will any members of the research team be external to the
YES/NO**

University?

If yes, to either of the questions above please give full details of the extent to which the participating institution will indemnify the researchers against the consequences of any untoward event:

The initial contact with participants when completing the questionnaire will take place at a local Children's Centre. The individual interviews will also take place in this venue as it will be familiar to them. There are no anticipated risks to participants or the researcher as this venue is one used by participants on a regular basis.

20. Are there any other matters or details which you consider relevant to the consideration of this proposal? If so, please elaborate below:

Whilst the risks to participants is considered to be minimal, there may be unintended emotional distress caused by participants recounting details from their life (in particular their school experiences). If this is the case, participants will be offered details of confidential counselling or support lines that they can access to address any of their concerns further, if they wish. This will be offered through initial debriefing for those participants not invited to individual interviews and also to participants after semi-structured interviews.

**21. If your programme involves contact with children or vulnerable adults, either direct or indirect (including observational), please confirm that you have the relevant clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau prior to the commencement of the study.
YES/NO- CRB disclosure number 001281843951, issued 29 May 2010. Will be available for participants (young adults) or Children's Centre Staff to see if requested.**

22. DECLARATION

I undertake to abide by accepted ethical principles and appropriate code(s) of practice in carrying out this programme.

Personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and not passed on to others without the written consent of the subject.

The nature of the investigation and any possible risks will be fully explained to intending participants, and they will be informed that:

(a) they are in no way obliged to volunteer if there is any personal reason (which they are under no obligation to divulge) why they

should not participate in the programme; and

- (b) they may withdraw from the programme at any time during data collection, without disadvantage to themselves and without being obliged to give any reason.

NAME OF APPLICANT: Signed: (signed copy has already be sent to University, this is an amended version)

(Person responsible)

MARIE OSBORN _____ Date: ____amended and sent by email 4.5.2011

NAME OF DEAN OF SCHOOL: Signed: _____

Date:

ethics.app

[March 2010]

Appendix 1b: Ethics committee approval

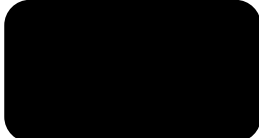
EXTERNAL AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

uel.ac.uk/qa

Quality Assurance and Enhancement



MS MARIE OSBORN



Date: 19 May 2011

Dear Marie,

Project Title:	<i>Exploring Perceptions of School Through Negative School Experience – What Can Educational Psychologists Learn? An Interpretative Phenomenological Study with Younger Parents of Pre-School Children</i>
Researcher(s):	<i>Marie Osborn</i>
Supervisor(s):	<i>Sharon Cahill</i>

I am writing to confirm that the review panel appointed to your application have now granted ethical approval to your research project on behalf of University Research Ethics Committee (UREC).

Should any significant adverse events or considerable changes occur in connection with this research project that may consequently alter relevant ethical considerations, this must be reported immediately to UREC. Subsequent to such changes an Ethical Amendment Form should be completed and submitted to UREC.

Approval is given on the understanding that the 'UEL Code of Good Practice in Research' (www.uel.ac.uk/qa/manual/documents/codeofgoodpracticeinresearch.doc) is adhered to.

Yours sincerely,

Merlin Harries
University Research Ethics Committee
Email: m.harries@uel.ac.uk

Docklands Campus, University Way, London E16 2RD
Tel: +44 (0)20 8223 3322 Fax: +44 (0)20 8223 3394 MINICOM 020 8223 2853
Email: r.carter@uel.ac.uk



Appendix 1c: Interview risk assessment for UEL

University of East London

Professional Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology

Risk assessment for interviews that are being conducted away from UEL.

Title of study	Location(s) of interviews	Name of local contact (if available)	Severity of hazard (H, M, L)	Likelihood of hazard (H, M, L)	Risk (H, M, L)	Approved (Yes/No)
Exploring perceptions of school through negative school experience – what can Educational Psychologists learn? An interpretative phenomenological study with younger parents of pre-school children.	Children's Centres in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Marie Osborn – [REDACTED] [REDACTED]	L	L	L	Y

Student : Marie Osborn (u0212457)
version signed copy to follow)

Signature: (email

Date: 4.5.2011

Director of Studies:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 2a: Information leaflet given to parents

INFORMATION LEAFLET

Are you a parent of a pre-school child?

If so I am seeking your help!

My name is Marie Osborn, and I am a student at the University of East London (UEL). I am completing a doctorate level course in Educational and Child Psychology; I also work for [REDACTED] County Council, Children and Young People's Service.

As part of this course, a detailed research study is completed. In my study, I aim to find out about parent's thoughts and experiences of school.

- The study will first ask questions about school using a short questionnaire. You will be asked if you would like to take part if you are a parent of a child or children who are of pre-school age (less than 5 years).
- After this, some participants (parents) will be invited to take part in an individual discussion to talk in more detail about their understanding and experiences of school.*
- The discussions will be recorded and then typed up, but anonymously – without being able to see names or personal details of exactly who said what. Though you can leave your contact details if you want to see your typed interview**.
- This information will then be looked at carefully to understand more about what parents say and think about school.
- A final report (thesis) will then be written for the university. A summary will also be given to the Children's Centre for you to look at if you wish. The thesis may also be published.

I hope you will be happy to take part in this study, if you have any more questions I can be contacted through email or telephone – [marie.osborn@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:marie.osborn@[REDACTED]) or on [REDACTED]

* You are not obliged to take part and at any time during the research process (questionnaire and individual discussions), you are free to withdraw without further questions or consequences.

** Any personal information and data given will be stored securely and used only for the purpose of this study. Information given will also be made anonymous in any written reports/thesis with personal information destroyed (by deletion of computer files and shredding of paper documents) after individual discussions have taken place. **University of East London, Stratford Campus, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ**

Appendix 2b: Consent form

Consent declaration and Initial screening –

(To be accompanied by information leaflet).

Please tick the boxes if you agree and sign/date at the bottom.

I the undersigned, agree to take part in this research about parent's experience of school. I understand and agree to the following :

- My name and contact details will only be kept for the purpose of contact should I agree to take part in any further research/discussions. It will not be available to anyone other than the researcher. ☐
- My name or those of my children/schools or any other details that would identify me will not be used in any final 'write up' – details will be anonymous. ☐
- Information shared as part of the questionnaires or individual discussions will be treated as confidential as names/personal details will not be used in any final thesis or transcriptions and personal contact details will be destroyed at the end of the research process. ☐
- The information I may give will be used by the researcher to better understand school experiences. If I do not wish to take part I may withdraw from the study at any time, by informing the researcher in writing or by telephone. If I choose to withdraw at any point, my responses and any contact details will be destroyed and not included in the study. ☐
- I am happy to take part in completing this questionnaire ☐
- If I provide a contact number, I am also happy to be contacted to take part in more detailed individual discussions. ☐

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 2c: Screening tool

What follows is a series of general questions about you, your children and also about your thoughts about school. Please indicate your answers by marking or ticking your answer.

The researcher or a member of children centre staff would be happy to read this with you and record your answers. The answers to all questions you give will be anonymously recorded in the write-up from this research.

Name *	Telephone Number or email address *

First some general questions about you and your family

1. Your Gender	MALE		FEMALE				
2. Your Age	< 16	16-19	20 – 24	25+			
3. Your ethnic group (A full list of groups will be shown to you).	White	Black	Asian	Chinese/Other			
4. Your Religion	None	Christian	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Hindu	Other
5. Age(s) of your Child /children	0 – 1 year	1 – 2 years	2 - 3	4-5	5+		
6. Number of children (in each age group)							
7. What is your main occupation?	Looking after my children	Studying	Working part-time	Working full-time	Other		

Now some general questions about your schooling / education

8. What age did you leave full time education?	Before end of year 11	16 (or at end of year 11)	16/17	18/ 19	20 +	Still attend school / college
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Please turn over.....

9. What certificates / qualifications do you have (tick any that apply)?	None	ASDAN / Entry level Award	GCSEs	NVQ	A-Levels	HND	Degree
--	------	---------------------------	-------	-----	----------	-----	--------

Now some more about your time at school.

10. Think about your primary/middle school years (approx. 5-11 or 13 years) and answer the following, rating how much like you they are:-

	A lot like me 😊	A bit like me 😊	Not at all like me ☹
I liked going to school			
I learnt a lot			
I had good teachers			
I had enough friends			
I felt safe			

11. Now, answer the same questions but thinking about your secondary or High School years (approx. 11+ years)

	A lot like me 😊	A bit like me 😊	Not at all like me ☹
I liked going to school			
I learnt a lot			
I had good teachers			
I had enough friends			
I felt safe			

I may like to meet with you again to complete a more detailed discussion about your thoughts on school. If you prefer not to be asked please tick this ☐ box. ***Thank you very much for your time!*** Any personal information will be treated confidentially and used only for the purpose of this research in making further contact. By putting your contact details here, you are giving your consent to participate. You may also withdraw at any time. Your personal details will not be recorded in any final write up and these records will be destroyed after contact has been made for individual discussions.

Appendix 3: Interview schedule

Semi structured interview schedule and Script *(Sub-bullets are prompts to promote discussion).*

Thank you for agreeing to talk part in my research. What we will talk about will be recorded on tape for me to type up and look at in more detail later. No personal details such as your name or any other identifying factors (e.g. where you live) will be used. The only time when I would need to pass on anything about who you are, was if you were to tell me something that might indicate that you or your children were not safe. Have you seen the information sheet about my research and were you happy you sign the consent form? Do you have any questions?

Firstly can you think about your child who will go to school soon.

- What would you hope their school experience would be like.....
 - How have you talked to them about school
 - What questions have they asked about school
 - What concerns/worries about school do you have for them
 - What are you 'best hopes' for their time at school
 - What they will be able to do / learn / achieve, how they will feel about going to school
- Tell me about your time at school – primary ... secondary school.
- How did you find.....
 - The teachers....
 - Lessons/subjects.....
 - Other children.....
 - The place.....
 - Your learning.....
 - Your parents during this time.....
 - In what ways did they help or support you - (With your learning, talking to teachers, with friends, making choices)
 - What went well... Not so well.....
- What is your best / worst memory of time from school?
 - On your questionnaire you indicated that you - liked/didn't like going to school.
 - Can you tell me more about that?
 - What might there be about your time at school that will help / not help you in talking about school with your child
- What might there be about how you found school that you think would be useful for the people who will teach / work with your child to know?
- Is there anything else that we have not talked about, that would help me to understand more about what school was like for you?
- Is there any other information that teachers or the school staff may find helpful to know about parent's thoughts on school or anything else they could help you (or any parent) with (particularly about school)?

Appendix 4a: Immediate reflections post interviews

Reflections on interview 1

The first interview – I was nervous, I felt the parent was also and maybe was reluctant too, they did not arrive when arranged, but did after a phone message, (did they) moved towards wanting to participate as they could have simply not turned up at all.....

The parent was able to talk, but the questions were directive perhaps, not sufficiently open to illicit meaning. Process of talking was sequential, some difficulty (for me esp.) focusing and keeping track of discussion as we were also observing their child...

Developments emerge about her time at school that she had not liked and had been traumatic for her, centre on being bullied, impact on her feelings and emotions. Several key words/phrases I feel that I did not follow up in at that time as they were not part of my order for the interview – esp. the mention of a threat of suicide in her early teens, (the anguish possibly), this was clearly a significant event that she had raised with perhaps a purpose of exploring, not sure then if this was then picked up sufficiently (by me) for her to be able to consider, reflect, make sense of for herself.

Too much focus on order, getting the key questions answered, not then allowing the meaning to emerge.....

Reflections on interview 2

A different experience, on the parents' home turf, baby present, or at least there in the background, a participant who was however very willing, they wanted to talk about the times at school, what had been bad for them, how it makes them feel about school for their child, these were clearly not new thinking for her, she had given it thought, this seemed to show, I she was able to reflect on events and feelings.... Not sure still though did this allow the meaning to be constructed or emerge? Was the questioning again part of what allowed this line of thinking to develop or was it a distraction? Would it have been richer to ask... tell me about your time at school?

Would this have been open enough for this parent to allow free talk and thinking about school, thoughts views?

Her own reflections and interest in the process was however fulfilling, in part because of what she was able to talk about related to the research questions but also because she was encouraging for that in the process itself (the interview) had been helpful to her... placing things in context... that it had not all been bad, that the bad could cloud what could have been good for her... what may be helpful to others with similar experience... i.e. talking about it... gave her something to talk about and share with family at dinner!

First reflection analysis on interview 2

Primary fine, middle fine, all went wrong at high school

Big school got in with the popular crowd disruptive and that

Talks about the teachers expected you to be more independent learners and talk to us like we were sixth formers

Didn't like the school I was at

Meaning – more of a drag than a pleasant thing, had friends outside (form majorettes) they all seemed to go to nice schools, I wasn't having that opportunity and experience

From year 9 it was about the other children and the teachers expected more

Year 10 I was still in the lessons as the boys as I was in the same lessons as the boys the disruptions, one of the girls had a row with me about birthdays but she was the ring leader so took the other with her, then I was only left with one friend, she was in every lessons that I was in, the school didn't pick up on. We looked similar so got called names and everything, upset to start with, initially viewed as an important thing, being popular, changed thoughts and viewed about going to school

About friendships and how the teachers treated me, I was very immature, I didn't think the teachers were listening and helping, I spent most of the time out of the lessons than in year 11.

I didn't respect the teachers cause they aren't sympathetic to our change in friendships, even though I told them.

I used to zone out of the lessons, the teaching and learning was pointless when I was next to F.

I don't think I can think of any positive at high school, if there were any positive times they have been shaded over by the negative times.

Spent time outside lessons, sent out due to begin disruptive, behaved liked one of the boys, they got attention and told how to do it, they got treated differently to me.

They had a group outside of school for being naughty (bowling and stuff) felt that it was wrong that she got rewarded for doing bad things.

Reflective comments after interview 3

This was a long journey to take with her, her memories of school seems so vivid, the colours being used – grey... the nature of teachers and the bullying wonder if this was depressive experience at times going to school? The interview flowed somewhat more than other so far, the process seemed quite easy to her –wonder if she has spent some time talking this through with others since school – parents/friends etc.? The balance felt different from me talking or probing to N speaking in great detail about her experiences. Interesting that there were moments through all parts of school that were slightly better, mostly having friends, enjoying learning, but even in these times, the bad times come in, being picked on by others.

Not sure at the end if the stories could have gone on for so much longer than was possible. This was almost like a stream of consciousness – thinking about school, about her child going to school, and then the alternative – not going into local school, home education, something alternative to what she had...

Reflexive comments, interview 4

P.7 of 27 – talks about starting high school a year late and the impact on her - the way she behaved as a result of trying to settle in, socially

Was fine, made friends but behaviourally acted out more to be liked became the 'class clown'.

Personal reflection that I had started high school a year later than everyone else, I started midyear – socially the settling in period took over a term, unlike for 4 where she comments this settling in took only a few weeks - corrected me when I had commented that it 'took a while' - perhaps this was my own reflection of my experience rather than listening directly to hers at that point? 'Everyone had their groups of friends' really chimed with me.

Interviews process seemed a reflection by participants as 'putting things in order'. Participants vary in the way they feel comfortable using their own language choice, such as moderating swear words, when they relax the true power of their feelings seems to emerge.

Reflections on interview 5

Overall impression was that the parent had wanted to talk through her experience; this was not a difficult process for her.... Some of the questions or constructs may well have been things she had yet to consider, but she was able to approach them and reject hypotheses or reflections...

As with other interviews, I remained aware that my use of psychology may at times have meant that the level of questioning could be hard, or that I may have misunderstood a point, in trying to encourage reflections or exploring meaning... not sure if it was possible to encapsulate *meaning* though talking about experiences,

Process of using a chronological approach to exploring experience meant that for the P she was able to consider that it had not all been bad, does this then make it a helpful process in itself (stop thinking psychological or therapeutic interventions) how did you feel about school before then after the interview.... Could again be another piece of research...?

She reflected that through considering her own bad times, she could consider that it may not be that helpful to talk about it all with her child... so not to cloud *her* judgement or experience of school.

She could begin to consider what a school or teacher may find useful to know about her time at school, but overall one of the considerations or research questions about whether any intervention would be helpful could be difficult to conclude, with parents of younger children/toddlers they had not yet even given it thought, did the actual process of asking this questions impose too much towards the intergenerational transmission – or are the parents acutely aware of this themselves?

Other research angle, may look at how children's centres or even health visitors talk with parents about school – do they – if so how in what ways, what are they aware of?

Reflections on 6.....

Too much talking from me, prompting, checking.....wading...

Questions were too complex at times, participant was distant at times, and then had moments of lucidity – talking positive about primary, my difficulty eliciting feelings... checking process, revisiting.....Once or twice added/imposed constructs that may not have emerged, was this using psychology techniques as opposed to letting flow of experience emerge....

Overall did not *feel* like the process was esp. helpful for her, at times diverged... or maybe not, for this P, appearance feeling good was important in her reflections, difficult to see for her what may be important in future when thinking about own child in school, became more about elements of the relationship, parent – child,

Things emerging

Primary... it was fun I loved it, enjoyed

Secondary – factual based reflections, more than feelings, people, and events

Bit of rebel.....doing drugs, my friends did, could have done better, grades,

Annoys me (doing bad – grades), bunking off lessons, hated PE – they don't care what you think...

Hated practical talking about stuff, answer questions, being made to read aloud, nothing is the same any more...

Coping despite experience?

Some days looked forward; other days dreaded....friends wise...

Teenager want to go out, have fun be with friends.

Couldn't speak to anyone, no trust with other children,

Need time out from school, regrets – 6th forms,

Adults/teachers authority.....set times treatment by teachers – how they are.

Considering alternatives..... giving L choices if she doesn't want to do it (at school)

Hopes – good grades, keeping up so it's not so hard, she's got it up there.

Summing - hard – teachers, learning,

26 min -27 child joins us...

Then begins reflecting on how others are with their children, esp. where they were bullied and trying to make sure their children are different (the bitches)

Being honest about bunking off, coming to me – their relationship, talking and closeness...

Tape runs out 31 mins....

Anything useful or helpful.... No... can't change what you think...

Done rubbish, got bullied for it, done well got bullied,

Not being overweight – bullying, can't recall issue for her – more for friends...

Feeling uncomfortable around some friends...

Appendix 4b: Scanned extracts from reflective journals

8.2.12 Interview 2
Clustering of ET.
Again, whilst on a smaller scale than 1st 3, the details were powerful - 7 the number of Vals Constructs about school experiences were memorable.
Wondering if this will be with 3, 14 or again only be able to reflect the individual.

At the moments I suspect that a need to focus on my R-Q. again may be necessary as I move back to review each of the cluster themes of each interview.

8.2.12 10.30am
Need to go back into the zone to complete my word processing of interview 1. I recall of my last visit to this, it being quite a painful interview for the significance of the bullying that is discussed. Initially this does feel quite emotional as a journey back to. I am also remembering the way she gave me at the end of the process...

I am thinking that these are such significant & emotive issues for the participant that as an ear to their worlds I almost feel I take on some of the pain. The diary and the need to reflect and process this through supervision is important.

9.2.13 Interview 3 Clustering.

7 Clusters emerge.
Tension between how to group ideas / themes that are quite divergent and on say so many different things to me e.g. dichotomy in boys & girls school - boyed with fear - significance of being bullied or the resilience that emerged.

Should have been more explicit about the tension between the two.

3.3.13

A week away from the findings
- gave a little distance -
but getting back to it again
begins to make sense -
Finding subthemes to the superordinate
- then reviewing the necessity
of SO themes - Contrasting them.
||
This, but really seems to make
more sense of the story -
and I begin to see how this
may help to wrap up
findings!
Is that a brutal moment?
Will see!

15.3.13

More time away, but returning to
subthemes for S.O. themes for it 3.

Exploring contrasting my original
SO themes to how ~~these~~
trying to identify where to go
next.

As I move toward contrasting the SO
themes, identifying subthemes the
story seems to emerge

As I move to analysis of subthemes
for 4, reviewing my original
clustering and SO labels I can
increasingly see the commonality
to other interviews -
- sense of isolation, not being
heard.

In re-organising themes as subthemes
- this is about identifying connection
under an overlying cover -
the subthemes detail more of and
the content. - indeed some are
so small (in terms of E.T.s) that
summarising them as subthemes seems
to make sense

Appendix 5a: Sample of initial noting/emergent themes interview 2

Note on Transcription notation used

Symbol/notation	Meaning
[]	Comment made by the other party within the interview – either the interviewer, participant or other sounds audible within the room
(cough)	Comments made in brackets refer to background sounds or pauses made by the person speaking
[...]	Dots with square brackets indicate a pause of up to 3 seconds
I:	Used before an extract of speech refers to the interviewer, as opposed to the participant
....	This indicates extract from within a longer dialogue
I:	Refers to interviewer speaking

<p>Consciousness which having a negative experience can make – awareness of holding on to the feelings of the past (2/5)</p> <p>Hatred for school – overwhelming (2/5)</p>	<p>Erm [...] not really I haven't really thought that far [yeah!]</p> <p>But you have, because you have given it some interesting thought about him going to school and the friends you want him to make and about enjoying [yeah] being there</p> <p>Well my colleagues at work have said to me like you know, we know you didn't enjoy school but erm do you hope that Johnny will, or do you want him to have sort of, you know, not enjoy it</p>	<p>Has discussed school with others- at work –</p> <p>"I hated school "</p> <p>"Didn't enjoy school in any way"</p> <p>Clear views that school was a negative time</p> <p>Hopes for different for her child</p>
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<p>Hope for school to be different for child (2/5)</p> <p>Responsibility for –ve perhaps lay with school (high) (2/5)</p> <p>Enjoyment at primary – friendships important (2/6)</p> <p>Enjoyed school through to middle; - contrast with earlier first thoughts of school (2/6)</p>	<p>[Baby cries] so people have asked you about that then?</p> <p>Yeah, they do, cause I'm quite open about how much I hated school and I just did not enjoy it in any way [hmm] I just, I don't know really, I just really hope that Johnny doesn't have the same experience [baby cries] as I me really [yeah]. But Mike had quite a mixed one</p> <p>That's your partner?</p> <p>Yeah, he went from one high school to another to do sixth form [baby continues to cry] and when he was doing his GCSEs he really enjoyed it, but when in the sixth form he hated it</p> <p>So he had a different experience to you?</p> <p>Yeah he had an enjoyable one for the majority of it then and then he came to the school where I was at, and it changed his mind, I don't want to blame the school, you know [baby cries, but inaudible] he just found it..</p> <p>Well we'll go on to talk about that anyway [yeah] so can you start by telling me a bit about your memories and your thoughts about erm when you were at primary school?</p> <p>Erm [baby cries] I quite enjoyed primary school erm I had plenty of friends [baby cries] sorry about this erm [shh, soothes baby – don't worry about it!](To Johnny – are you tired?)</p> <p>He's not too sure; does he normally have a morning nap?</p> <p>[Yeah. Do you need your nappy changing or something? I think he might need his nappy changing,</p>	<p>Recognises contrasts of partner's experience as more positive – until joining her school. <u>Doesn't want to blame the school but is tinged with thinking that they may be responsible?</u></p> <p>Primary- quite enjoyed – plenty of friends <u>Importance of social</u></p> <p>I think I inferred this...</p> <p>Even through to middle school enjoyed this</p>
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	<p><i>do you mind if I just quickly go and do that?]</i></p> <p>Yes absolutely, shall I pause this while you go and do that then?</p> <p><i>Yeah, sorry Don't worry, it's fine 6.35 – 11.23 away, returns, soothes baby again, takes to cot, then returns [Share a laugh] he might go down!</i></p> <p>Erm we were beginning to think about your experiences of school and you were saying about your time at primary school [yeah] and that had been a bit different compared to your secondary school experience?</p> <p>Yeah I enjoyed that, I had lots of friends, erm, all the way up through middle school as well I enjoyed school erm</p> <p>So you went from primary to middle school then?</p>	
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Appendix 5b: Interview 3, initial noting/ emergent themes

Teacher's showing preferences – not supporting those who did not show interest – excluding (3/5)	Yeah um and also not I mean another issue I had with school I used to feel like if you weren't really good at the subject if you weren't one of the best you were put to the back of the class [M=um] um and the teacher concentrated on the children who were really interested and good at it [M=um] and had them all down at the front and anyone else was sort of back back in the corner and instead of being having extra attention to help them [M=um] understand like when it came to algebra or something [M= um] I completely switched off [M= um] instead of having somebody come and saying you know try and get you interested in it [M=um] they just sort of pushed you to the back	Everyone else was at the back.... Back in the corner No-one helped <u>Link between lack of help and interest to disengaging in learning</u> Pushed you to the back.
Completely switching off to learning (3/5)		
Nursery as more positive “not a problem” (3/5)	Yeah so if you thinking back to your earliest experiences of school I don't know whether you can remember that clearly or not but when you first went to school your first time was it primary school of first school or	
School/education as “problematic” (3/5)	I went to a nursery [M= ur hr] um	
Colourful memories were positive (3/5)	And can you remember much about that [Yeah I do] So you were what three four	
Early schooling allowed you to be free ‘one big playtime’ (3/5)	Yeah I have a lot of really early memories [M= yeah] um I remember laying in my cot actually so I must have been about two then [M= um] so but and yeah nursery I remember that really well I remember quite enjoying that actually [M= um] that wasn't a problem	Some positive early recall – nursery quite enjoying “not a problem”
Buildings significant in memory – representing physicality (3/6)	What what do you remember what makes you feel like you enjoyed it at the time what are your memories I just remember the room was you know brightly coloured and we used to pour sand and water through those twirly you know what [M= yeah] I mean plastic (?) painting and we'd have story time and um it was just like a big playtime I suppose	Use of colour in memory “room brightly coloured” <u>Free?</u>
Contradiction between school not too bad/doing well versus not liking school (3/6)	Um and do you remember much about the adults that were with you	Physicality of the school <u>Contradiction? Between doing well and still not</u>

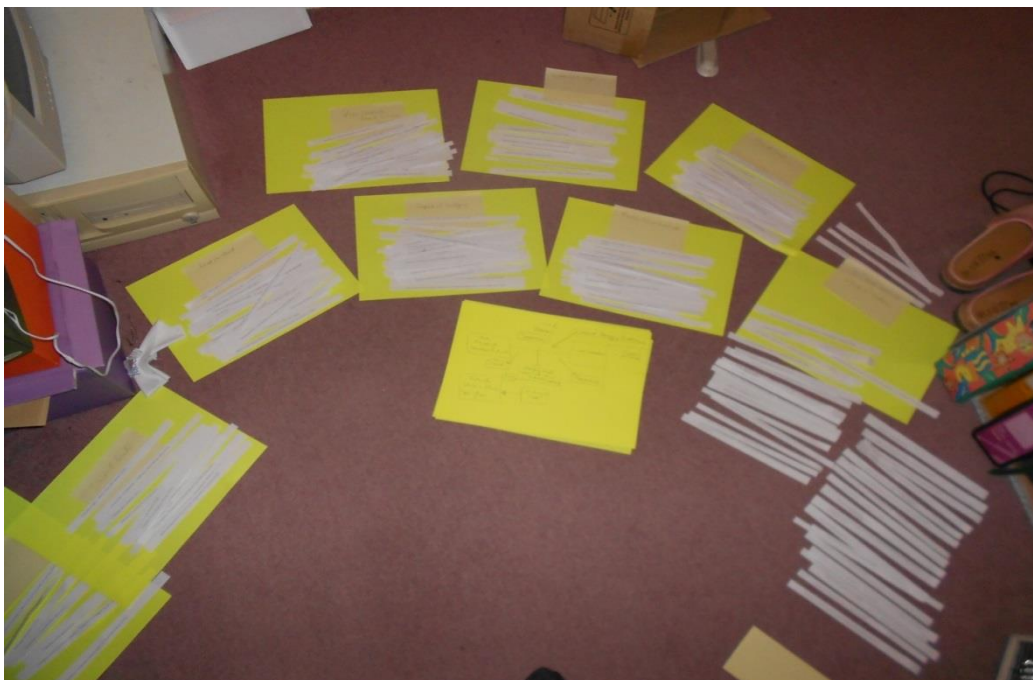
<p>Difficulty in considering and recalling what was more positive – this is less embedded in the memory? (3/6)</p>	<p>then</p> <p>No I don't think I do really no not at that stage</p> <p>And the other children can you remember them as well</p> <p>Yeah I do remember a few of them yeah and a lot of them stayed with me till I reached high school [M= um] actually um I remember probably more about my teachers when I was about five and six [M= um] I remember quite a lot about the school and the layout of the school</p> <p>Um so you remember then going into the main school you went to nursery school then you went to the main primary school</p> <p>The nursery school was at the primary school [M= right] just in a different room</p> <p>Ok so it was like a nursery class and then you went up into the main school class</p> <p>Yeah and actually that school wasn't too bad, I did actually quite well, I never liked school</p> <p>How long were you there [I = mumbling] can you remember how long you were there</p> <p>I left there about nine to go onto middle school</p> <p>Ok ok so you did the three school system Yeah [yeah] But then</p> <p>so tell me about that time at primary school the first school can you remember those first experiences of going from nursery class up to the next class</p> <p>Um not particularly, I don't remember anything specific</p> <p>You said you didn't remember it too bad it was ok</p> <p>No I think think (stuttering) primary school was ok [M= um] I did get bullied at primary school but at primary school it wasn't horrific [M= um] I do remember being</p>	<p><u>liking school</u></p> <p>Early memory – clear later doubted?</p> <p>Primary was ok – 'Bullying not horrific'. <u>Memories are characterised by the extent of the bullying.</u></p>
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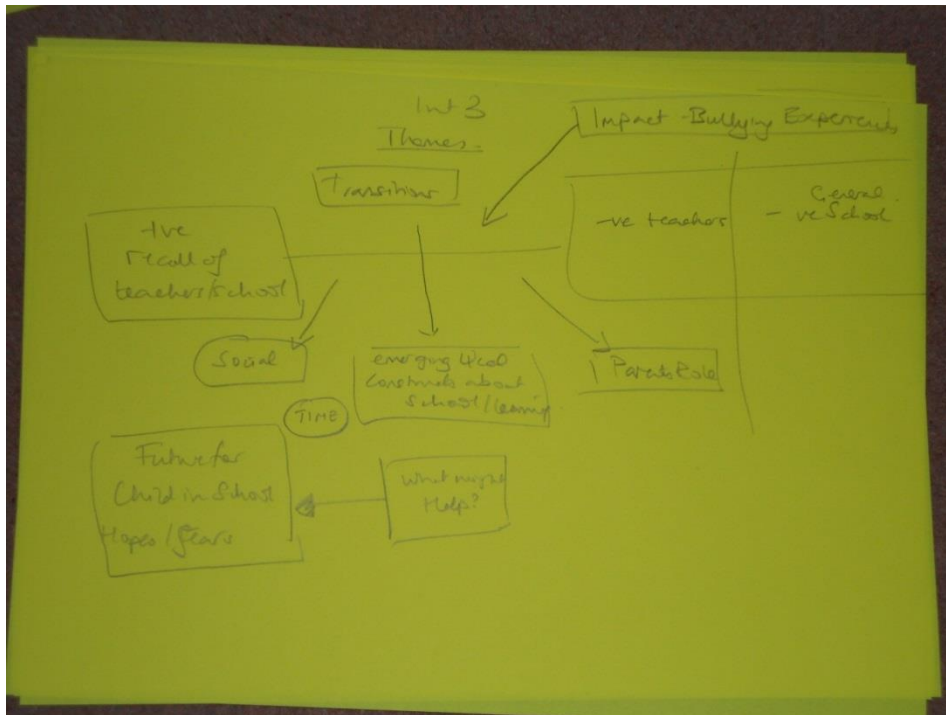
Appendix 6 a-f: Photographs of clustering emergent themes, within & across cases.

6a: Photograph of initial clustering of emergent themes for interview 4



6b/c: Photos of initial clustering and mind-map of theme headings – interview 3



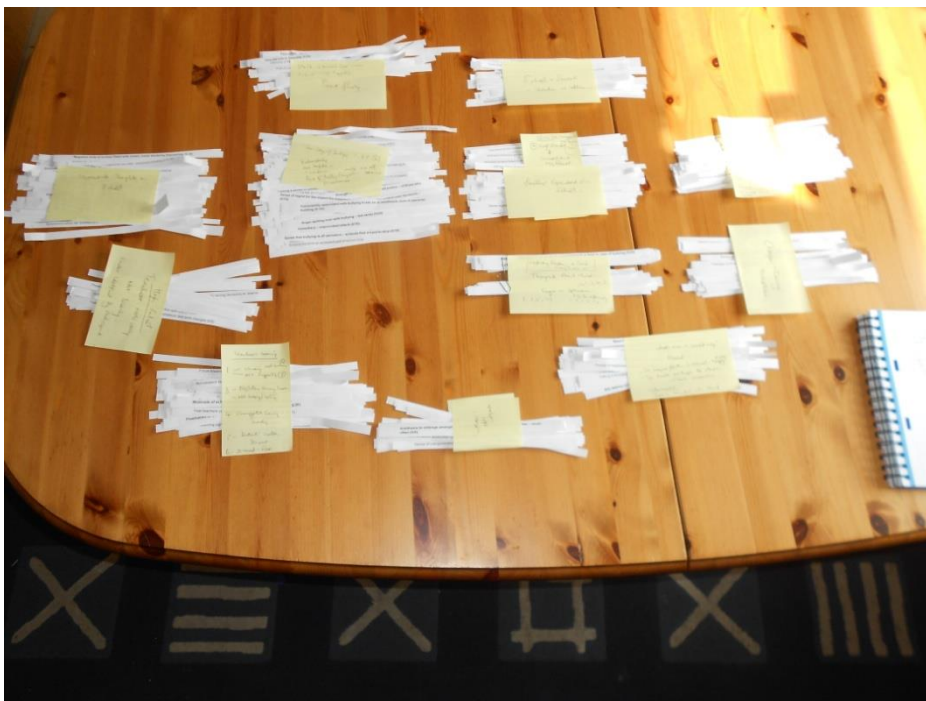


6 d, e, f: Photos of stage 4 and five, clustering of emergent themes across all participants





Emergent themes not naturally diverging into sub-themes at this stage remain separate, but most were later to gravitate to individual sub-themes once the clustered themes were examined again on the computer.



Note the presence of the reflective journal and questions posed on each clustered group; each stage deepened the understanding of the sub-theme and groups of sub-themes then merged to suggest over-arching commonality which led to the development of super-ordinate theme titles.

Appendix 7: Tables of 1st attempt super-ordinate themes /sub-themes across then within participants (figures 1 to 8)

Figure 1: Table of super-ordinate themes across all interviews

INTERVIEW	Super-ordinate themes						
ONE	School factors	Bullying - impact	Feelings engendered by school		Schooling child for	Role of key adults	What helps
TWO	School factors		Psychological impacts of school		Hopes and aspirations for child		What helped / would help
THREE	School factors	Impact of bullying	Psychological constructs from – ve school experience		Thoughts on School for child	Role of parents	What would help
FOUR	School factors		Internal/ external locus control of	feelings associated with school	hopes for child	Parenting Factors	What helps
FIVE	School constructs	Impact of bullying	Psychological consequence of negative school experience		Schooling child – hopes for	Role of parents/ family	What helps
SIX	School factors	Role of social/peers	Psychological constructs of self, linked to school		Thoughts about child	Parental factors	What helps

Figure 2: Table of Links between interviews: clustering of SO and subthemes across participants

Super-ordinate themes	School factors	Bullying	Feelings psychological constructs engendered school / by	Hopes and thoughts on school child	Key adult/ family role	What helps
Sub-themes	Place – early positive	Impact on self/ mental health	Negativity to self/ school	Hope / optimism / enjoyment	Support / care	Talking it through
	Support for learning	Social impact - isolation	Strength from adversity	Fear	Communication: listening	Trust/ confidence in schools
	Care from teachers	Negative association to schools	Control issues	Desire to be different to own		
	Security/ safety		Power in relationships			
	Transitions					
	Friendships / belonging					

Figure 3: Interview One – Table of SO and sub-themes

	<i>Super-ordinate themes</i>						
	<i>School factors</i>		<i>Bullying - impact</i>	<i>Feelings engendered by school</i>	<i>Schooling for child</i>	<i>Role of key adults</i>	<i>Helps?</i>
Sub-themes	1a. streamed teaching	1b. Unsupported learning	1. Mental health	1. negativity	1. hopes	1. Trust	<i>Unsure what helps</i>
	2a. adult support,	2b. Uncaring teachers	2. Social impact	2. diminished confidence and interest	2. emotional response	2. being heard	
	3. transitions				3. intergenerational thoughts		
	4. importance of friends				4. opportunities as a parent		

Figure 4: Interview Two – Table of SO and sub-themes

	<i>Super-ordinate themes</i>				
	<i>School factors</i>		<i>Psychological impacts of school</i>	<i>Hopes and aspirations for child</i>	<i>What helped/would help</i>
Sub-themes	1a. positive relationships	1b. negative peer relationships	1. self determination	1. Enjoyment for learning	1. Better discipline in schools
	2a. enjoyment for learning	2b. unsupported learning/behaviour	2. negativity towards schooling	2. Involvement	2. Talking about experience
		<i>3b. School type-secondary</i>	3. power to block out positive	3. Difference to own	
			4. Impacts on future choices		

Figure 5: Interview Three– Table of SO and sub-themes

	<i>School factors</i>		<i>Impact of bullying</i>	<i>Psychological constructs from –ve school experience</i>	<i>Thoughts on School for child</i>	<i>Role of parents</i>	<i>What would help</i>
Sub-themes	Place		1. -ve self-perception	1. Difficulty seeing positive	1.Containment/ control	1. Communication	1. More effective schools/ teaching
	1a: primary safe	1b. high intimidating	2. –ve association to school life	2. power / relationships	2. Fear	2. Parental control	2. Communicating about experiences
	Teachers		3. nature of bully	3. Resentment	3. Holding on to optimism		
	2a:caring/ engaging	2b: bad/ dreary	3. Resentment	4. Significance of colour			
	3. transitions			5. Not being heard			
	4. role of friends						

Figure 6: Interview Four – Table of SO and sub-themes

	Super-ordinate themes						
	School factors		feelings associated with school	Internal/external locus of control	Parenting Factors	hopes for child	What could help
Sub-themes	Place		1. fear	1. control and influence of others	1. pressures	1. hope/optimism	1. Talking it through
	1a. warmth/belonging (primary)	1b. no sense of place	2. hopelessness/given up on	2. self-doubt	2. uncaring parents	2. desire to do differently as a parent	
	teachers and learning		3. positive when doing well				
	2a knowing you	2b. lack of support					
	3. transitions / time						
	4. social/belonging						

Figure 7: Interview Five – Table of SO and sub-themes

	<i>Super-ordinate themes</i>						
	<i>School constructs</i>		<i>Impact of bullying</i>	<i>Psychological consequence of negative school experience</i>	<i>Schooling for child – hopes and helps</i>	<i>Role of parents/family</i>	<i>What helps?</i>
Sub-themes	1a. Relationships and belonging	1b. Not being heard	1. Erosion of self	1. optimism and strength	1. Fear	1. Communication / trust	1. Honesty and trust in schools
	2a. Happiness	2b. Fear	2. longer term fear/ cycle	2. faith in others/ support	2. optimism	2. Siblings	2. Talking about experience
	3. Transitions – good and bad			3. control	3. gaining trust and knowledge of school		
					4. Talking it through/awareness		

Figure 8: Interview Six – Table of SO and sub-themes

	<i>Super-ordinate themes</i>					
	<i>School factors</i>	<i>Role of social/peers</i>	<i>Psychological constructs of self linked to school</i>	<i>Thoughts about child</i>	<i>Parental factors</i>	<i>What helps</i>
Sub-themes	1. Primary – stability and fun	1. Belonging / identity	1. low self-image	1. Understanding/ empathy	1. Support/ boundary setting	1. Time helps forget
	2. High School – conformity and responsibility	2. Isolation	2. self-control/ responsibility	2. support aspire for different	2. Not being heard as a child	2. Parent's support to child
	3. Role of adults	3. Bullying	3. pressure/ control			

Appendix 8: Example of clustering of sub-themes/emergent themes (Interview one – Jo)

Interview 1 clustered themes

School factors

1. Unsupported learning

Focus towards reason for bullying — unsupported learning needs (1/4)

Non-existent support (1/5)

Learning issues unsupported – just had to get on with it (1/7)

Bullying Impacts on learning capability from bullying experiences - not keeping up, missing school (1/8)

2. Uncaring teachers

Power balance – school still holding her back – responsible for wrong decisions re. exams (1/11)

Teachers didn't seem to care (1/9)

Uncaring teachers, (1/5)

Teachers not listening (1/5)

Teachers not doing anything (1/6)

schools awareness of issues but not longevity of problem (1/6)

3. +ve : adult support and streamed teaching

Teaching methods important (1/8)

Comment on streaming - making it easier to learn (1/10)

Recognised coping with difficulties by school **helped** to boost confidence (1/17)

Importance of caring teachers (1/8)

Early years are positive but vague memories of school (1/12)

4. importance of friends

Importance of friends (1/3)

Importance of friendships leading to stability (1/6)

Importance of social skills on confidence (1/7)

New school gave new opportunities where people did not know you past – away from being the target (1/18)

5. transitions

identifies transitions children make – inclusion? (1/3)

School transition to escape problem (1/6)

Change of school as 'new start' (1/7)

Change of schools - transition led to changes in learning (1/10)

Transitions regarded as upheavals (1/14)

Consistency - fewer transitions as positive (1/16)

Bullying emotional impact

Mental health

Significant impact on life - having to move schools

threatening self harm/suicide (1/4)

Desperation and impact of bullying on confidence/mental health (1/5)

Constantly being picked on - eroded self-confidence (1/6)

Extreme of hopelessness from bullying to attempt suicide (1/6)

Powerlessness of being bullied (?)

impact on low self confidence in all aspects of school (1/7)

Social impact

social impact of bullying - withdrawing (1/9)

Significance of one child bullying (1/6)

bullying began from year 3 ~ continued to early adult hood (1/12)

Target of bullying with peers and in relationships (1/12)

Sense of isolation, (1/5)

Impact of bullying on friends – isolation (1/7)

Being ignored ~ so not talking (1/6)

Psychological - feelings about school

Negativity

school for her as a futile waste (1/15)

Significance of negative experience - blacking out/blurring **memory** (1/10)

immediate negativity towards 'school' (1/1)

School never had positive memories (1/11)

Nothing from memory of school times helped this (1/12)

Power - school has in taking away positive memories **(1/13)**

Reflective process of ordering the times that were hard - middle school years **(1/14)**

Diminished confidence and interest

Low confidence making it hard to speak up when unsure about learning (1/17)

Lost interest in learning in sixth form (1/11)

School becomes less important as adult responsibility takes over (sixth form) (1/10)

Life then took over – 'took a completely different path' (towards family not work?) (1/11)

Without encouragement and belief in her. she gave up with learning **(1/11)**

Schooling for child

Emotional response

Feelings - it scares the life out of me (towards child going to school) (1/1)

Sense of losing your baby as child changes/grows (1/2)

Conflicting emotions — scares . against readiness for separations (?)

Hopes

Positive hopes for child going to school optimism (1/3)

Hopes for child's school more positive than **mine** (1/12)

hopefulness for children's school experience (1/15)

Hopes for them to have positive experience (1/17)

The schools will have changed - no sense that they will be the same as the past(1/13)

Feel differently about children going to school (1/16)

Intergenerational thoughts

Link between adult/child behaviour (1/8)

No sense of link between past and future / parent/child experiences (1/13)

Hope "not to be plagued with negative feelings" (1/17)

Aspirations as intergenerational factors (1/15)

Opportunities as a parent

Aspire to go to college and work (1/15)

Adult learning as exciting - readiness as an adult (1/15)

Role of key adults

1. Supportive

Parents' role in helping (1 /7)

family issues impacting on coping with transitions (death in the family) (1/6)

role of own parents - supportive (1/9)

Need for adults to notice, care, support - take charge? (1/9)

role of parents - supportive as they could be (1/17)

Unsure what might help (1/16)

Getting rid of school buildings (1/13)

hard to comprehend" - Coming to terms with changes in school structures (1/14)

Appendix 9a: Example of quotes linked to sub-themes/emergent themes

(Extracts are from super-ordinate theme 5:

those not used within findings)

Hope that schools deal with discipline better – control children (2/26)

I:....err, that you think might be helpful for his school to know?

Clare: To know that friends, erm it's the quality of your friends not the quantity that matters and erm I think too erm, especially when you get to high school, to try and be a bit more independent and don't expect everyone to hold your hand and even if you do struggle, ask, but you know, be prepared for them to say, I haven't got time to help you at the moment, that's what I struggles with, was the at the 'at the moment' we can help you another time, but that another time never seemed to come [yeah] I think that was when I'd become frustrated (783-795)

For child – important they learn in school – it's what they are paid for (2/31)

For child to appreciate good teaching (2/29)

Need for finding someone to motivate your child –bring out their intelligence (2/3)

I: And looking at him and thinking that as well? [Yeah] it's helpful to consider it when we are looking at you [she laughs]

Clare: But I think he erm will probably be err quite a clever person, cause I mean I'm intelligent but I just didn't use it [baby cries] in the right way and I don't think I was motivated to do that, so I'm hoping he will find someone that will motivate him [hmm] to use you know what he can learn

Need for school to see child as the individual not family (2/34)

Priority of happiness, friends and enjoyment in going to school (4/5))

Recognition of key school subject and own feeling towards them (4/16)

Taking on more responsibility for child – support (4/22)

I: Hmm so is there anything that you think that might be helpful for you to help him in future

Amanda: I don't know

I: To feel..

Amanda: This has probably helped actually to be honest cause it kind of makes you figure things out, that clearly my time at school wasn't great but I know I didn't help myself but I know that no-one else helped me either so no one else is gonna help me if I'm not gonna help myself So yeah

I: But there were people like, your family who, where there was stuff going on for them that didn't help you

Amanda: (talking over) I didn't get any help or support from my mum at school, for school but I think that was because she didn't want to push me too hard so that I'd give up so I think that because she didn't push me and didn't care what was going on then; letters got sent home that she didn't even opened so she didn't really care what was going on with school

I: ... so she didn't, she wasn't able to support you because she didn't know because she didn't open the letters or

Amanda: Because she didn't care... but like she didn't do very well at school so I guess she just kinds of presumed that I wasn't either because I didn't do very sch.. well at school I wanna make sure that Alfie feels like he has got enough support (728-757)

tell school? Hope that schools deal with discipline better – control children (2/26)

I:....err, that you think might be helpful for his school to know?

Clare: To know that friends, erm it's the quality of your friends not the quantity that matters and erm I think too erm, especially when you get to high school, to try and be a bit more independent and don't expect everyone to hold your hand and even if you do struggle, ask, but you know, be prepared for them to say, I haven't got time to help you at the moment, that's what I struggles with, was the at the 'at the moment' we can help you another time, but that another time never seemed to come [yeah] I think that was when I'd become frustrated (783-795)

Want teachers to know to some extent of her experiences – but sense this may be hard for them - no time, money (3/39)

Talking about experiences to teachers would be hard (3/43)

For child – would teach them these skills – assertive (3/41)

I: So you'd begun to think then about your thoughts about Ralph and school and learning [I yeah] and saying that you said you'd like to pick if you could pick his own teachers you'd

Natalie: Yeah if I could pick each teacher he was gonna have that would be different um but at the moment I don't have a lot of confidence I mean people keep telling me the school systems changed a lot but [hmm] but the moment based on my experience I don't have a lot of confidence about his [hmm] (stutters) the experience that he might have at school [hmm]

I: So you said about your hopes for him in terms of school and how he feels about education and learning how he feels positive about it [I-yeah um] um that

Natalie: That he wants to go to school (inaudible) [hmm] I mean I'm quite stunned some of the time when I meet children they say they like school [hmm] I've got to get that out of my mind because I need to (stutters) I need to speak positively about school [hmm] to Ralph otherwise he'll get it I don't want pass on my (hate)

I: do you think that's important then that you speak positively about school to him?

Natalie: yeah I don't want to pass on my negative attitude towards school to him [hmm] that's really important [hmm] cos that could easily happen and then he (probably) wouldn't work very hard like me and [hmm] you know be doomed to failure (laughs) um or almost sort of I don't want him to have any preconceptions about school before he goes that it's bad or it's negative or he's going to be picked on so I've got to be really careful about what I say around he especially when he's old enough to understand [hmm] and take it on at the same time I am really worried about him being picked on [I: um so] and not taken not taught properly and not [yeah] listened to by teachers and things [yeah] (1182-1215)

Need for giving school at chance... (5/29)

help knowing your child is safe, secure, free from bullying (5/32)

Need to build trust and confidence in school (5/33) Need for awareness of child's feelings/response to school in case of bullying (5/29)

Lizzy: but I just need to be positive for Lottie and make sure that I don't scare her and that is why I don't think I will tell her too much because I wouldn't want her to think "I really don't want to go to school the bullies might beat me up like they beat mummy up.

I: so do you think that you would be positive in thinking about

Lizzy: Yes I know I wouldn't ever be down on school, I'll try, no I *will* be positive I won't try and be negative because if you look at something with a negative view it can only get worse can't it. It's like at this point in time me and my husband are struggling a lot with money because his boss is being funny but we've just got to the point where there is just no point in getting angry or upset because there is nothing we can do about it we are just getting angry and upset with each other so there is no point in putting a downer on her school life before she has even lived it, I just need her to know that if anything happens she has always got us, always, and that is all she needs to know, if she needs someone to talk to she has got us. So yes I wouldn't want her... (1033-1052)

Reflection on own parenting – need to develop trust and confidence of your child (3/36)

Offer advice to child – enjoy it, make friends, don't hide problems (5/31)

Powerful dichotomy in the balance of parenting – what to say, when and how – what not say – balance of honesty and optimism (5/31)

Self-aware of need to be positive with child about school (5/34)

Lizzy: I would hate my daughter to feel how I felt going to school, I wouldn't ever want her to feel like that I try to bring her up to be happy and yes maybe I would say to them that I am concerned about her being bullied and ask them to keep an eye on her but I don't know whether I would...

I: To start with or at a particular point do you think?

Lizzy: I don't know maybe because you have meetings don't you before your children start school and I would maybe ask the school on their anti-bullying policy and what that is like and ...

I: Would you use that as a way of starting a conversation with them if you asked them about their anti-bullying policy, do you think that would then?

Lizzy: Yes I don't think I would walk in and go "what is your anti-bullying policy" but I would definitely want to know, yes as to see what they would do if say somebody would hit Lottie round the head with a piece of wood and give her a fat lip, I would want to know what was done, would he get an hours detention? Would he be expelled? Would he be suspended? Personally I believe that when objects and beating up starts I don't think children should be in school. I think they need help when you're beating children up with pieces of wood and inanimate objects I think there is something wrong either in their home life or perhaps they are being bullied and are lashing out at other people so maybe that child would need help. (726-754)

**Need for giving child an open mind – not saying too much to impart fear(5/30)
time helps you forget –talking or counselling not necessary (6/24)**

I:: No is there anything that would help you [right] in reflecting on your time at school, that might help you?

Becky: What like counselling?

I:: I don't know, is there anything that you think that would be useful? Not necessarily for you personally, but perhaps for a parent like you who thinks back to school and thinks they didn't like school.

Becky: Right I don't think people would change their opinion on it [hmm] but I think people forget about things [yeah], cause I have forgotten a lot of things about school already [hmm] and it wasn't even that long ago. (Becky: 768-782).

Becky seems to refer to an idea that counselling would not change people's view of school or their experiences but that time could in some way help them to forget. Though this is perhaps the case for Becky, for other participants, their recall of school as a negative experience was much fresher in their mind.

I know you talk to a teacher and they tell you off then they tell them off and you are getting in even more but it will end sometime, they will get fed up these bullies will get fed up of getting detention after detention, after detention and they will give in, I do believe you should share your experiences because it is always easier to cope, I believe if somebody else has been through the same thing as you. Yes I would tell her even if it's just I don't know...

I: You mean your daughter's,

Lizzy: Yes I would tell her, I don't know because I don't believe that all schools want to know, I don't believe that all schools or all headmasters/mistresses want to really know or have to deal with it because it is such a big problem and it is so difficult to stop

I believe if somebody else has been through the same thing as you. Yes I would tell her even if it's just I don't know...

I: You mean your daughter's,

Lizzy: Yes I would tell her, I don't know because I don't believe that all schools want to know, I don't believe that all schools or all headmasters/mistresses want to really know or have to deal with it because it is such a big problem and it is so difficult to stop

I: So you'd begun to think then about your thoughts about Ralph and school and learning [I yeah] and saying that you said you'd like to pick if you could pick his own teachers you'd

Natalie: Yeah if I could pick each teacher he was gonna have that would be different um but at the moment I don't have a lot of confidence I mean people keep telling me the school systems changed a lot but [hmm] but the moment based on my experience I don't have a lot of confidence about his [hmm] (stutters) the experience that he might have at school [hmm] (1182-1190)

When consider the ways in which she would like greater control for her child, she also considered how controlling children in school, perhaps linking to the sense of justice that she did not see in school herself.

Lizzy:so I think that it is something that they need to think about is discipline and how they discipline children, I am not talking about getting a ruler out and whacking them, we're talking about actually telling them off and getting them to regret what they have done to make them feel like - "I have only got a few laughs out of my mates calling her a fat bitch and punching her and now I've got detention for a week, now I can't do my after school activities, now I can't be involved in fun time or playtime". I mean over there when the children are naughty they are taken out of their playtime, which is brilliant, I think it is a good idea because it is an incentive for children to want to go outside to earn these stickers, to behave and to get their playtime and I think that should be implemented across all schools.(823-836)

For Jo who experienced similar trauma in school, she does not directly link her own experience with that of her child in school, even though her child would be going to schools in the same place, she considers that perhaps schools have changed.

I: What was different about them?

Clare: (Pause) I'm not sure, I think they had erm, they had sort of, forgotten that I wasn't a sixth former, I think they didn't understand that there is a big age difference between a year 9 and somebody who is in sixth form and 18 (hmm) I think there is a bit of maturity level sort of difference

I: So they spoke to you on an adult level you mean or not?

Clare: I think they expected us to be a bit more independent learners (hmm right) and that sort of thing

I: To get on with yourself yes?

Clare: Yeah, rather than I don't know... (319-355)

Aspire to go to college and work (1/15)

Adult learning as exciting - readiness as an adult (1/15)

I: But you, so want them to have, what kinds of experiences, in terms of how would they gain that do you think?

Jo: I think that would be by just watching me and their dad, cause their dad's done an apprenticeship and that's how he gained qualifications [Yeah] Obviously as they are getting older and start school, I'm going to be going back into education [Hmm] And going through the apprenticeship scheme

I: Oh really so you're going to be going back as they go into school?

Jo: Yeah as they, as they go into school, I'm hoping to be going back into education

I: To get some qualifications?

Jo: To get some qualifications I can use, cause at the minute all I've got is GCSEs and that only helps me get more qualifications, it doesn't help me get into a job

I: Yeah (...) Yeah, So how do you feel about that, about that next stage?

Jo: I'm quite excited but I'm just wondering why I had to go through 16 years of school to get qualifications that won't actually get me a job! (clatter) It just seems a bit pointless to me (shared quiet hmm/laugh) (593-619)

Appendix 9b: Examples of participant voice linked to the research question constructs .

Participants' thoughts on school for their child:

School as place to enjoy/be happy

(Jo: 110; Clare: 52; Natalie: 1000; Amanda: 59, 76; Lizzy: 58; Becky: 729)

School as a place to learn

(Jo: 568; Clare: 42; Natalie: 1001; Becky: 422)

School as a place to make friends

(Jo: 116; Clare: 40; Lizzy: 942; Becky: 659)

School as a place of fear or worry for parent

(Jo: 121; Natalie: 1116; Amanda: 64 Lizzy: 41; Becky: 18)

School as a place where your child can or will change

(Natalie: 91; Amanda: 22)

Concerns about school:

(Jo: 121; Natalie: 1338; Lizzy: 1019).

Participants' thoughts on their 'hopes for their child in school and what might help them to be happy about their child going to school':

- Amanda commented in particular that the process of the research interview had been helpful to her.
- Clare echoed this to some extent in the way the interview had made her realise that school had not all been bad for her.
- Identifying and supporting their learning needs (Jo:677; Clare:912)
- Improving strategies to help with behaviour (Clare: 817)
- Offering an appropriate and interesting curriculum to their strengths (Jo:622-624; Natalie: 1457).
- Becky also reflected on both the support family could offer, but the structures in school which can also unhelpful to times in adolescence

that you need a balance between freedom and structures in school (1044-1048).

- Lizzy commented on the ways in which talking through difficult experiences could help (556)
- Lizzy reflected more that arming herself with knowledge about their policies or views from other parents would aid her confidence in the school (735-737).
- Becky's interview did not reveal particular ways in which school or others could help her or her child in school, but centred more on her reflection that as a parent she would have a role in encouraging her daughter's confidence and self-image and supporting and listening to her as a friend (540-544).

Appendix 10: Visual representation of findings: the five super-ordinate themes and related sub-themes



Appendix 11a: Tables illustrating synthesis of research papers							
AUTHOR	DATE	TITLE	AIM	METHODOLOGY	FINDINGS	IMPLICATIONS	LIMITATIONS
Fan, X., & Chen, M.	2001	Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis.	To find greater empirical (they state quantitative) evidence of relationships between achievement and parental involvement using a meta-analytical approach	Quantitative meta-analysis of 25 previous studies, correlation coefficient	Their factor analysis found that parents' aspiration and expectation for achievement had highest correlation to student achievement.	Very few studies were quantitative and studied the relationship between achievement and involvement.	Statistical analysis is unstable in places (as linked to SES) need for clearer definition in future research
Desforges, C. & Abouchaar, A., C.A.	2003	The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievement and Adjustment: a literature review. Research Report No. 433.	Overview of literature into this area	Meta-analysis Of literature			No new evidence provided, but an over-view of past research
Fan, X.	2001	Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A growth modelling analysis.	Assess effect of Parental involvement in student academic growth in the high school years	Quantitative (multivariate) analysis of longitudinal data applying factors from a structural equation model (14 dimensions explored)	Parental involvement involves a number of dimensions, aspiration had positive effect on attainment, no ethnicity differences, Higher SES correlated to higher aspirations	Need to consider a range of factors related to PI. Need for understanding and encouraging educational aspiration above all other factors.	PI data used from parents and students were different. Need for understanding in more detail what the definition and implications of the PI meant. Logical causal inferences difficult. Data was drawn only from high school age students.
The literature survey related to parental involvement, recorded in order of presentation in Chapter two.							

AUTHOR	DATE	TITLE	AIM	METHODOLOGY	FINDINGS	IMPLICATIONS	LIMITATIONS
Fan. W & Williams	2010	The effects of parental involvement on students' academic self-efficacy, engagement and intrinsic motivation	The aim was to understand in more depth the environmental social factors potentially influenced by parenting style, on students' intrinsic motivation to learn.	Quantitative analysis of sample of existing data set from longitudinal study, (ELS,2002) using 15,00 students (US, 10 th Grade) and their parents	Parental aspirations for their child in school significantly related to student engagement and self-efficacy ratings. Parent-school-child communication positively interacted with student motivation except in relation to behaviour.	Demonstrated need for school to be aware of the critical nature of parent-school/communication and its impact on student motivation/self-efficacy. Consideration of a review of approaches and interventions to promote positive communication.	As with similar studies, analysis conducted on limited data set, no triangulation of data possible with school measures.
Cheung, C. S.-S., & Pomerantz, E. M.	2012	Why does parents' involvement enhance children's achievement? The role of parent-oriented motivation.	Cross cultural study into role of Parental involvement in children's learning and to understand whether this linked to child motivation	Quantitative –: questionnaires to 825 students across 4 stages of grade 7/8 about PI. Data from teacher rating of self-regulated learning and student grades.	Children motivated to do well in complex ways: Children's parent-orientated motivation linked to increase in grades and self-regulated learning.	PI could enhance children's motivation and achievement for autonomous and parent orientated reasons, at critical school transition	Child only ratings
Flouri, E., & Buchanan, A.	2004	Early father's and mother's involvement and child's later educational outcomes.	To understand more about the nature of father involvement and outcomes and interaction between the two parents.	Qualitative analysis of pre-existing longitudinal data from national child development study of 3303 individuals	Father and mother involvement aged 7 independently predicted attainment by 20 of child, no differences between gender of parent to gender of child as independent variable	Father involvement may also be a protective factors where other associated risks are higher	Longitudinal data, loss of the data greatest for those from lower SES family

AUTHOR	DATE	TITLE	AIM	METHODOLOGY	FINDINGS	IMPLICATIONS	LIMITATIONS
Flouri, E.	2006	Parental interest in children's education, children's self-esteem and locus of control, and later educational attainment: Twenty-six year follow-up of the 1970 British Birth Cohort.	Investigate long term effect of mother and father interest in child's education at 10; child's self-esteem and locus of control age 10 and at educational attainment age 26	Quantitative, longitudinal data. Multivariate analysis using longitudinal data from questionnaire about child from British cohort study 1970	Internal locus of control predicted educational attainment age 26 for women and men but not via their parent's impact on self-esteem or locus of control, they were however predictors.	Questions impact of knowledge about self-esteem as a valid predictors. Locus of control may be more reliable way of understandings factors.	Parental interest was a one question item, used longitudinal data, open to attrition
*Messersmith, E. E., & Schulenberg, J. E.	2008	When Can We Expect the Unexpected? Predicting Educational Attainment When it Differs from Previous Expectations.	To understand more about the pathways in youth leading to educational achievement	Quantitative analysis of longitudinal data Monitoring the future project (annually from 1975)	Mostly confirms previous research in linking achievement/expectations but Unexpected pathways where students either did not meet expectation or achieved the reverse	Importance of career planning for alternate pathways, need for a person centred approach.	Similar to all longitudinal, attrition bias and the changes in context from current practice as is historical data. Also no way of interrogating the statistics further, no companion qualitative data
* This study was referenced within the introductory chapter, but was not sufficiently related to be included in the final critique.							

Appendix 11b: Tables illustrating synthesis of research papers (parental recollections & intergenerational transmission)

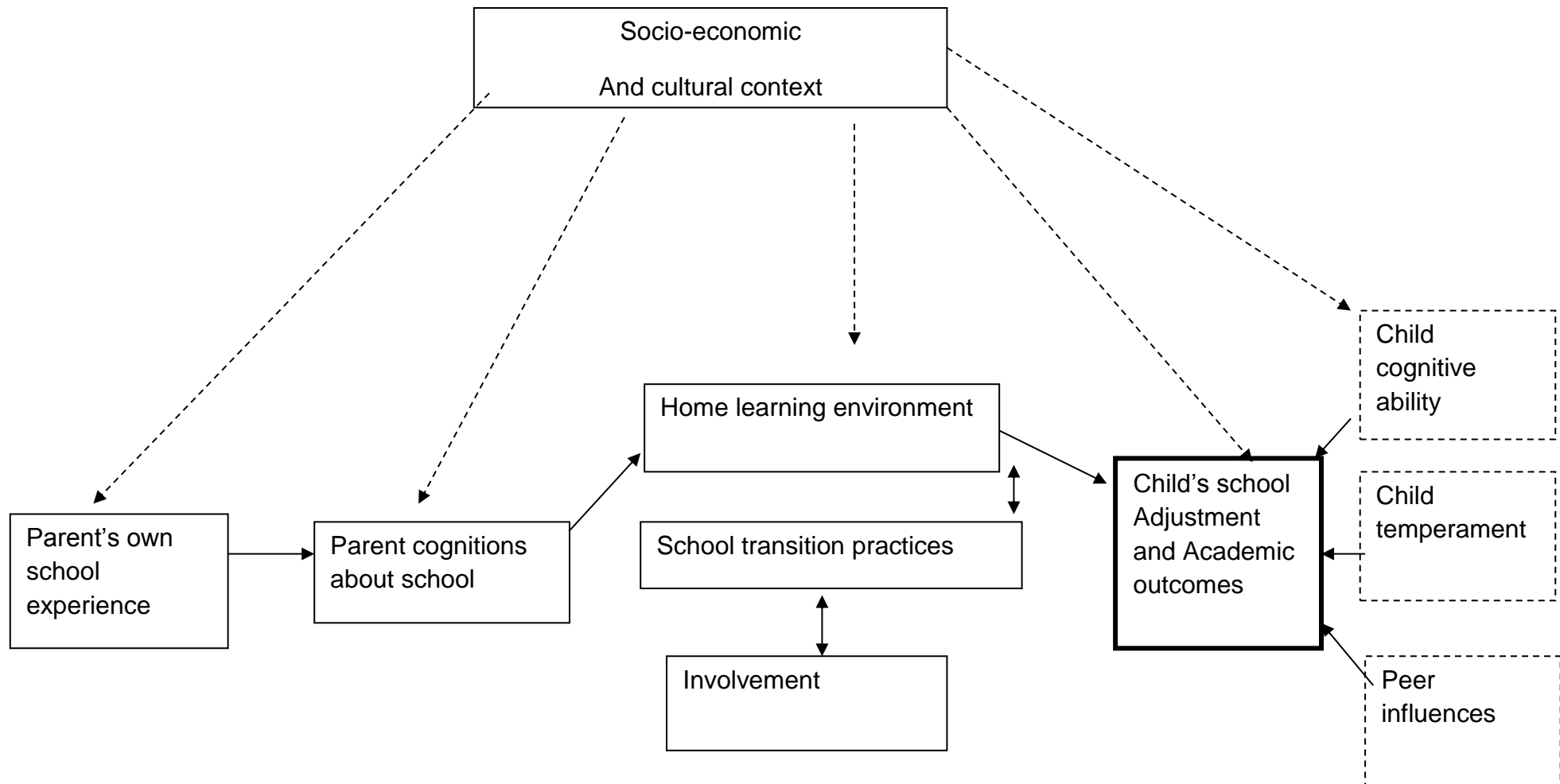
AUTHOR	DATE	TITLE	AIM	METHODOLOGY	FINDINGS	IMPLICATIONS	LIMITATIONS
Kaplan, D. S., Liu, R. X., & Kaplan, H. B.	2004.	Explaining Intergenerational Parallelism in Adverse School Experiences: Mediating Influence of Young and Middle Adulthood Experiences.	To understand the processes involved between mother's negative school experience and that of her child	Qualitative analysis of longitudinal data with 1384 mother-child pairs using complex interaction model to map analysis	Mother's psychological distress and school experience suggested pathways to child's experience in school	Importance of sharing knowledge with schools about experience an encouraging partnership with parents	Only focused on parental transmission not other factors, negative school experience was based on limited criteria
Pears, K. C., Kim, H. K., Capaldi, D., Kerr, D. C. R., & Fisher, P. A	2013	Father-child transmission of school adjustment: A prospective intergenerational study.	To understand whether and how school adjustment is transferred between generations, working class fathers to children.	Quantitative analysis of data from structured interviews and historic data from past study.	Early parenthood directly associated with poor school adjustment for child	Need to be aware of discontinuity – how some children did not follow the pattern of father. Greater support for youths at risk in high school	School adjustment measures based on 2 ratings – academic achievement and peer relations. Expectations also only 1 item scale. Only involved father data.
Barnett, M. A., & Taylor, L. C.	2009	Parental recollections of school experiences and current kindergarten transition practices	To understand the emotional valence of mother's recollections and links to parenting behaviours at school entry	Quantitative - structured interview using pre-existing measures with 76 mothers. Findings coded and statistically analysed	No significant findings between recollections and parenting behaviours but low income mothers spent more time on school preparations. Some potential intergenerational practice identified.	Need for understanding more about parental recollection to support school entry	Type of measures used, self-report only, no richer picture offered

AUTHOR	DATE	TITLE	AIM	METHODOLOGY	FINDINGS	IMPLICATIONS	LIMITATIONS
Taylor, Clayton & Rowley	2004	Academic socialisation: understanding parental influences on children's school related development in the early years	To review extant literature in this area and to build a conceptual model	Analysis of literature	Model proposed about process of academic socialisation, includes process of considering parent constructs of school and outcomes for children.	-	Based on research identified by the authors, is not empirical evidence but theoretically linked modelling.
Walls, R. T., Sperling, R. A., & Weber, K. D.	2001.	Autobiographical Memory of School.	To understand what aspects of school life were remembered most clearly by students	Quantitative analysis of questionnaire data from 252 & 264 university students. 2 studies designed.	Unrestricted, recall of memories: students often recalled events from latter stages of school, overall balance of negative and positive; majority were social, less academic. More negative events recalled earlier in school life.	Discussed use of schools considering the way they would want student to recall their experience. Implications for research into school memories.	Used only undergrad students, not a wider population sample. In study one, memories were pre-organised/categories offered.
Räty, H.	2007.	Parents' own school recollections influence their perception of the functioning of their child's school.	To find out whether parents' school memories tallied with their own rating of satisfaction for their child's school	Quantitative analysis on questionnaires from 574 parents, with follow up at 3 further time points	Relatively positive recollection aligned with more positive initial rating of school for child, this rating declined slightly over child's time	School memories may serve as an attitude to school impacting on feelings towards child's school. Need for school's	Closed nature of questionnaire response related to school memories. May be more representative of educationally orientated parents decline to attrition in follow up response

AUTHOR	DATE	TITLE	AIM	METHODOLOGY	FINDINGS	IMPLICATIONS	LIMITATIONS
					in school.	awareness of this.	
Räty, H.	2011	Past in the present: the way parents remember their own school years relates to the way they participate in their child's schooling and remember his/her school years.	Explore the ways in which parents memories of school for themselves and their child interacted	Quantitative analysis of 326 parents as part of a follow up study at the end of child's time in school	Parental school memories suggest general attitude to education, they relate to parents perception and actions of school	Need for awareness of school memories, not assuming that negative memories always meant lack of involvement (e.g. father's helping with schools tests)	Relevant to school situations in Finland. Findings not significant in evidencing the links between parent memories and child experience.
Miller, K., Dilworth-Bart, J., & Hane, A.	2011.	Maternal Recollections of Schooling and Children's School Preparation.	Explore mother's memories of schooling and how these influence behaviours preparing child for school.	Qualitative study, semi structured interview of 40 mothers of pre-school children	4 main themes from memories: intergenerational influences, transitions as sensitive times, characteristic of schools, diversity or lack of in school.	Need for understanding parental educational histories, strengthen family connections	Limited by how much participants were willing to share in interview, for the US

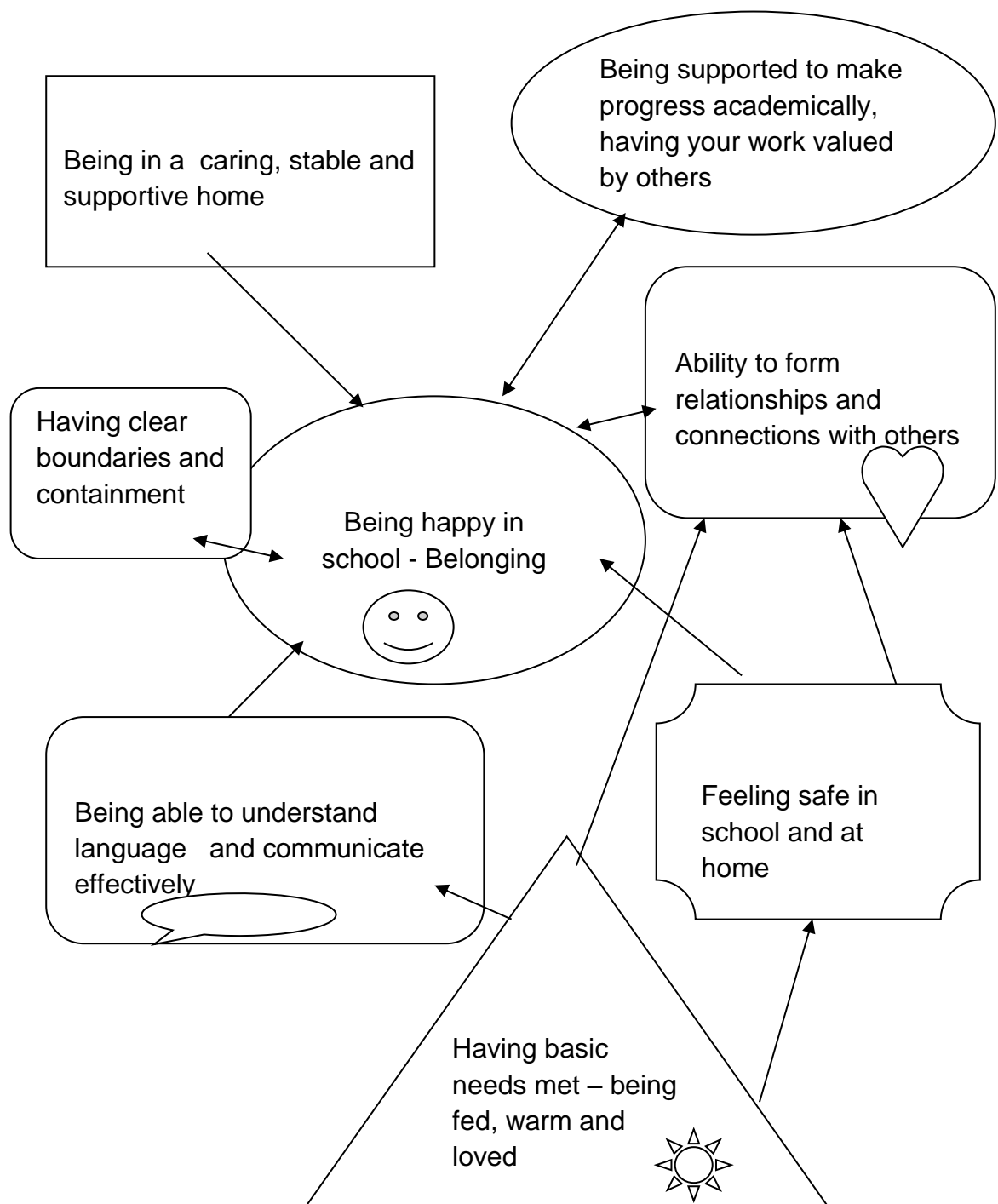
Appendix 12: Diagram of academic socialisation model by Taylor et al. (2004) p.165

Figure One: Conceptual model of academic socialisation. Dashed boxes indicate non-parental factors in academic socialisation.

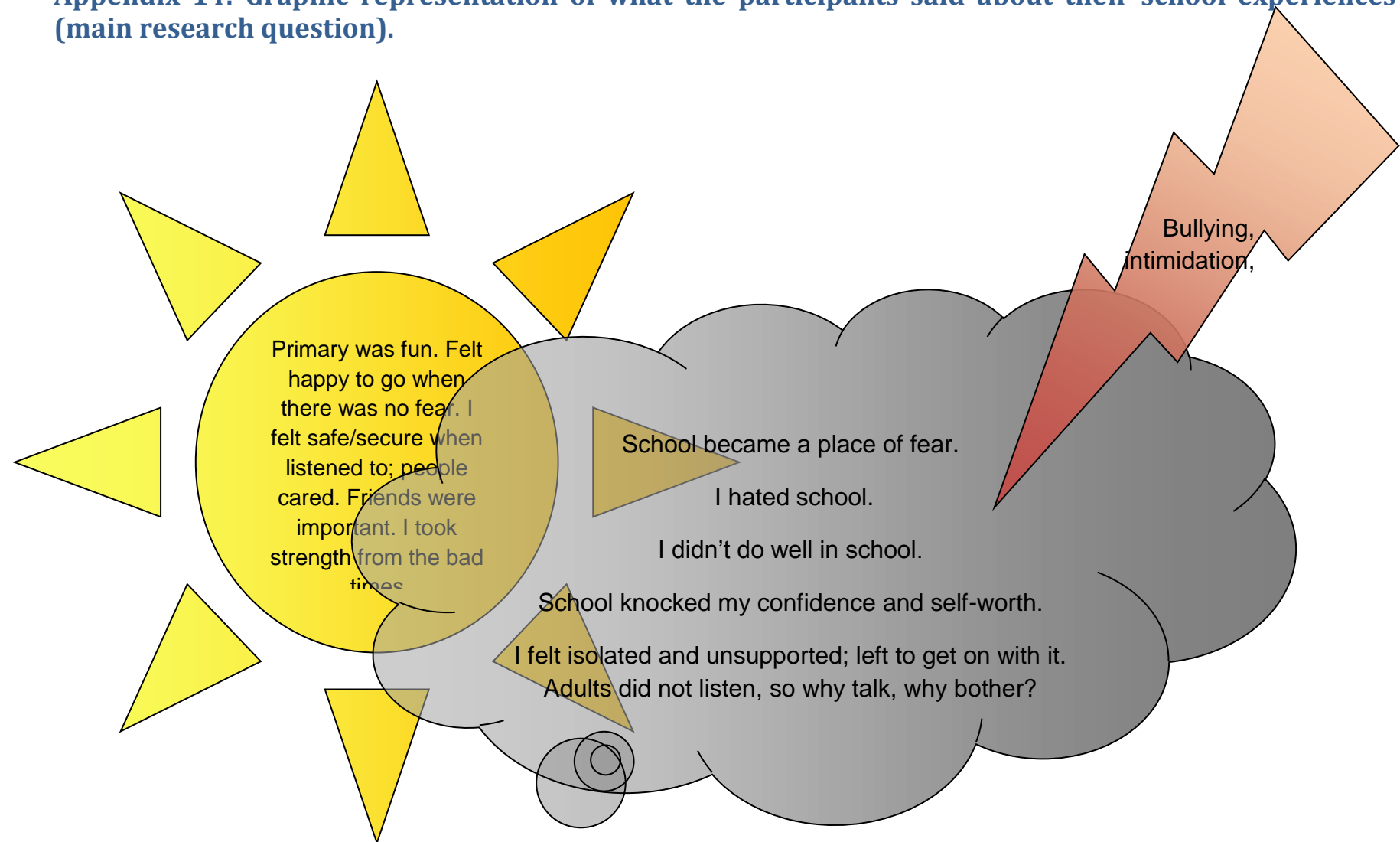


Appendix 13: Theoretical underpinnings to school belonging and happiness – a creative mind-map by the author

Extrapolated from wider research and the findings to the thesis



Appendix 14: Graphic representation of what the participants said about their school experiences (main research question).



Appendix 15: part two of information pack for participants: visual representation of findings; school for child

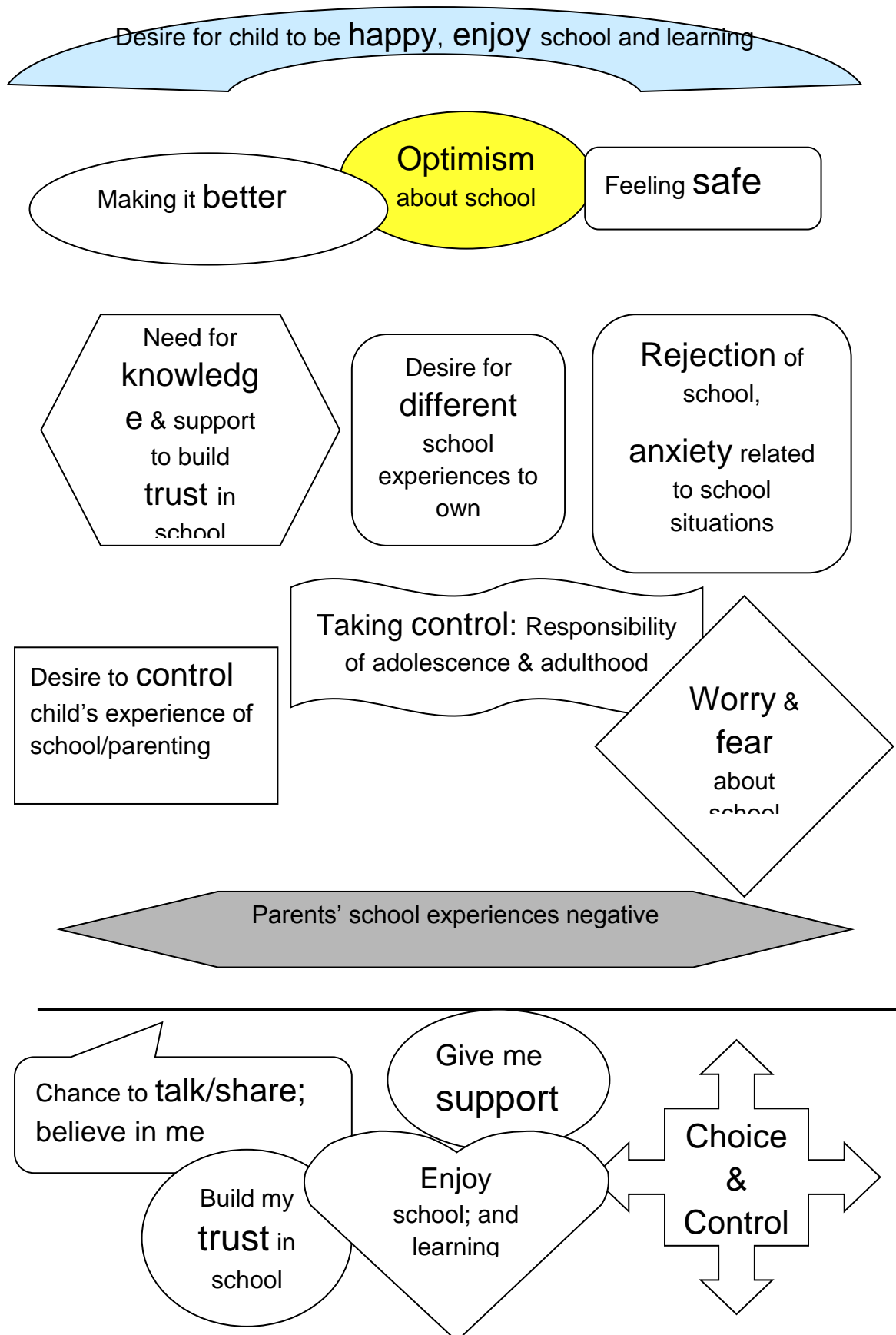
The following poster shows visually what this study interpreted as key issues for the mothers about the future – school for their child.

Some boxes shows the key themes drawn from what was said by all the mothers, some illustrate what was an important factor for only one or two.

What is underneath all these thoughts is the fact that these mothers had some very difficult and negative experiences in school themselves.

The key words under the line, represents the researcher's thoughts of what may help parents with similar experiences in future.

What this study found mothers said about school for their child



Appendix 16: CD-ROM with verbatim transcripts from research interviews (attached)

Appendix 17: Copy of 'Turnitin' results