

**Perspectives of parents and school staff on parental  
engagement with education: A Foucauldian informed  
analysis.**

**A thesis submitted as part of the requirements of the University of East London  
for the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology**

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## **Abstract**

This research explored parental engagement with education in the UK. It used an exploratory paradigm to investigate what schools and parents understand by the term parental engagement, what the perceived purpose of parental engagement with schools is (from the perspective of both parents and school staff) and the Foucauldian themes that emerge from the parents' and schools' constructs. The research was conducted from a critical realist perspective and explored realities through a Foucauldian lens. Ten participants were recruited, and findings were gathered using semi structured interviews conducted on an online platform. Data were analysed using thematic analysis with a deductive, theoretical and semantic Foucauldian perspective. Research questions 1, 2 and 3 used a semantic thematic analysis, and research question 4 was approached using a semantic and latent analysis. Themes and subthemes were identified for each of the four research questions.

Participants constructed a range of meanings and understanding for the term parental engagement, and purposes for engagement, including perceived outcomes for children and parents. Parents and schools identified ways that parents engage with school, many of which are centred around the sharing and receiving of information. Children's academic attainment was identified by both groups as the key purpose of parental engagement with education, and all acknowledged that parents engage because they seek to 'do the right thing' for their child.

Power, and how it operates between people and institutions, was at the heart of the analysis. Two overarching Foucauldian themes were identified: governmentality of parents and Panoptic society. From a broad, societal perspective, parents experience school and the education system as a technology of power which uses divisive practices and governmentality to maintain order and shape governable subjects.

The researcher proposes the use of these findings to influence local policy and practice around parental engagement, removing barriers, and furthering considerations around power and knowledge between parents and schools.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

<b>BPS</b>	British Psychological Society
<b>DA</b>	Discourse analysis
<b>DfE</b>	Department for Education
<b>EEF</b>	Education Endowment Foundation
<b>EP</b>	Educational Psychologist
<b>FDA</b>	Foucauldian Discourse Analysis
<b>HCPC</b>	The Health and Care Professionals Council
<b>LA</b>	Local Authority
<b>OFSTED</b>	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
<b>PCP</b>	Personal Construct Psychology
<b>PE</b>	Parental Engagement
<b>PTA</b>	Parent Teacher Association
<b>TA</b>	Thematic Analysis
<b>TEP</b>	Trainee Educational Psychologist
<b>ToP</b>	Technology of Power
<b>UEL</b>	University of East London
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This research explores parental engagement with education in the United Kingdom (UK). (The terms ‘parents’ and ‘parental’ also includes carers. For clarity and consistency in this research, it will be referred to as ‘parental engagement’.)

The researcher aimed to gain an understanding of how parents engage with education, and ascertain what both parents and school staff say is the purpose of such engagement. The researcher examined the accounts using a Foucauldian perspective and sought to explore issues around power and governmentality.

### **1.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter provides the background to the current research, exploring both the national and local context in which it was undertaken. The theoretical underpinnings of the research will be discussed in relation to parents’ engagement with children’s education, and Foucauldian thought. The researcher will outline their position, and provide a rationale for the current research.

### **1.2 National Context**

Parental engagement is understood by many to be an essential element of mainstream school life in the UK. State maintained schools in the UK are inspected and regulated by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (OFSTED). The present inspection schedule states that inspectors should investigate ‘whether leaders seek to engage parents and their community thoughtfully and positively in a way that supports pupils’ education’ (OFSTED, 2019, p.64). The inspection documentation seeks ‘good practice in parental engagement’ and recognises that having excellent links in place for communication with parents is essential.

In 2011, the Department for Education (DfE) published a ‘Review of Best Practice in Parental Engagement’ covering research on parents of children aged 5-19 and including evidence based findings on interventions to support parental engagement in their children’s learning. The review stated that ‘parental engagement has a large and positive impact on children’s learning’ (Department for Education [DfE], 2011, p.3).

The paper outlined evidence based factors which impact upon ‘good’ parental engagement. For schools, staff training is highlighted as important, particularly offering staff training and coaching to support effective work with parents, ‘particularly when working with parents whose backgrounds are very different to their own’ (p.5), stating that ‘teachers often lack the confidence and knowledge to work with parents’ (p.6). The paper reports that parental engagement with their children’s learning is effectively supported when information received from school is ‘clear, specific and targeted’(p.20), and that schools which engage parents successfully have a ‘broad understanding’ of parental engagement and employ strategies which are in line with the ‘interpretations and values of the parents they are aimed at’(p.20). The paper also suggests that the transfer of knowledge should be part of a two-way process - school to home and home to school.

The paper also offered insight into the outcomes of parental engagement. The research states ‘the more engaged parents are in the education of their children, the more likely their children are to succeed in the education system’(p.4). Specific potential outcomes for parents are detailed including gaining skills and knowledge to manage children’s behaviour, access to additional learning and literacy programmes, and access to parenting support programmes.

Research conducted by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) further supports the position that parental engagement with education is in some way important: ‘Parents play a crucial role in supporting their child’s learning, and levels of parental engagement are consistently associated with children’s academic outcomes’ (Education Endowment Foundation [EEF], 2019). The research offers a more cautionary note, stating ‘there is surprisingly little robust evidence on which approaches are most effective’. Their guidance report suggests that schools should support parental engagement by providing regular feedback, offering advice on improving the home learning environment and running intensive programmes for children ‘struggling with reading or behaviour’. Their findings continue to suggest that few, if any, interventions, had a proven impact upon children’s attainment. In addition, the support that schools might offer covers a broad range of interventions, with seemingly little ‘academic outcome’ focus.

Many of the EEF funded projects considering parental engagement are focused upon programmes to engage parents in workshops in order for them to better engage with school and with their children's learning. In addition, the DfE (2011) review referred to research by Desforbes (2003) stating 'parental involvement in the form of 'at-home good parenting' has a significant positive effect on children's achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation' (p.121).

### **1.3 Local Context**

The current research took place in a large local authority in the South East of England where the researcher is currently placed as a trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) as part of the doctoral training programme. The authority is largely urbanised, and is one of the least deprived counties in the UK. The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) indicates that 10% of the authority's children are affected by income deprivation, although this increased to 40% in certain wards. The authority has named parental engagement as a strategic priority, and has an Education in Partnership programme established to achieve a shared understanding of issues affecting children and education.

The local authority has a family information service, offering advice and information around a broad range of issues affecting children and families, including signposting to authority run parenting courses. The service also offers online parenting guides.

Schools within the local authority do not presently receive specific guidance from the local authority on parental engagement.

### **1.4 Theoretical Underpinnings**

Social learning theory is one of the most influential models of parent-child relationships. Developed by Bandura in 1971, the theory argues that children's real life experiences and exposures directly or indirectly shape behaviour. The social learning framework generated interesting research into children's prosocial behaviour in the 1970s, and makes an important contribution by demonstrating the potential influence of extrinsic factors such as reinforcement. In contrast to sociobiological approaches, it offers a plausible basis for explaining individual differences in prosocial behaviour, and argues that different home and parenting environments are responsible for variations

(Durkin, 1995). Social learning theory is important when considering parents' and children's relationships with each other, but also the values that children develop related to learning and education. If children experience parents engaging positively with education, the theory suggests that they are more likely to engage positively themselves.

Linked to this is self-efficacy theory. Self-efficacy is a person's particular set of beliefs that determine how well they can perform and how likely they are to succeed in a particular situation (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is intimately connected to motivation, as people's judgements of their own capabilities are likely to affect their expectations about their personal behaviour. This research draws on evidence that parent efficacy beliefs may be important in parenting behaviours and the development of values which encourage positive engagement with their child's school (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie, 1992).

Personal construct psychology (PCP) (Kelly, 1955) related to cognitive psychology, offers a psychological understanding of how individuals may interpret the world and how this may affect their beliefs, motivation and behaviour. It suggests that people interpret the world according to their own 'constructs' which are developed through experience, interactions and beliefs. PCP describes that two people in the same situation may view it entirely differently depending on their constructs of the world. The way that parents construct the role of 'parent' may shape how they engage with their child's education. If their construct of parenting prioritises their child's education and learning, then they are far more likely to be positively engaged. It is also interesting to consider parents' constructs around school; if these are negative, challenging or oppositional, parents may be more likely to avoid engagement.

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1988) is a significant psychological theory relating to parenting and child development. Bowlby hypothesised that early attachment was central to development, including the development of behaviour, trust, understanding of the world and confidence to explore the world. A central tenet of attachment theory describes the development of an 'internal working model' which is a cognitive framework which shapes understanding and expectation of the world, self and others, and is based on the relationship with the primary caregiver (Pietromonaco & Feldman Barrett, 2000). It becomes a prototype for all future social relationships and allows individuals to predict interactions with others.

Attachment theory has received criticism for placing the emphasis of parenting on mothers, and critiques suggests that this has a political and historical context relating to World War II, and women in the workplace. In Foucauldian terms, this could be viewed as a political artefact by positioning the difficulties of attachment with mothers and encouraging them to return home in order to free up jobs for men.

Within this research, the focus was not on children's needs relating to attachment or attachment difficulties. Instead, attachment is considered relating to the development of a child's internal working model and developing views, values and a sense of the world.

### **1.5 Foucauldian Thought and Definition of Terms**

To describe Foucault has been noted by many as challenging (Rabinow, 1991). Foucault did not wish to be positioned as a psychologist, theorist or author. He problematised the meaning of authorship, a function, he claimed, which resolved or hid many contradictions (Horrocks & Jevtic, 2014). Foucault described himself as 'transdiscursive', meaning that he is not simply the author of a book, but the author of a theory, tradition or discipline.

Foucault was born in France in 1926, into a wealthy and conservative family. He grew up in a time of unrest and war, when European Fascists and Nazis were beginning to sort their fellow citizens into categories of good or bad, and acting on their desires to control the beliefs, actions and fate of each individual in their societies (Jardine, 2005). On his second attempt, Foucault joined the prestigious École normale supérieure University in Paris. Interestingly, Foucault relied upon parental influence to gain entrance, owing to him ranking outside the top 100 applicants (Horrocks & Jevtic, 2014). Foucault's experiences including institutional psychiatry, (both as an employee and an inpatient), homosexuality (which was at the time considered a form of mental illness), and the climate of political unrest informed the development of his thought and much of his work.

Foucault was interested in the social, political and historical conditions which make discourses and practices possible. He was interested in the influence of government upon policy and practice and how this was made possible by social and institutional practices. He was particularly interested in how practices were made possible rather than why (Rabinow, 1984).



Foucault's terminology when used in educational psychology research requires some definition in order for it to be applicable and meaningful.

In an interview entitled *Critical Theory/ Intellectual History*, Michel Foucault (1926-1984) said:

‘I wish to know how the reflexivity of the subject and the discourse of truth are linked – “How can the subject tell the truth about itself?” (1994, p.128)

This research is interested in parents' and schools' discourses of truth: how do they understand parental engagement and how can they think in the way that they do? To apply a Foucauldian perspective to parental engagement seeks to understand the historical conditions which have led individuals and society to think in the way that they do. Foucault sought to account for the way in which human beings have historically become the subject and object of political, scientific, economic and philosophical social discourses and practices (Horrocks & Jevtic 2014). Subjectivity is produced by knowledge and power through dividing practices; dividing 'good' from 'bad', socially acceptable from socially unacceptable.

### *Dividing practices*

Foucault argued that political technologies have underlying relationships that are unequal, and perpetuate the fallacy of 'equality' created through the law (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). Foucault's work examines how power is reproduced and created in social practices and relationships and holds a key interest in the ways that power flows through institutions (Ball, 2013). Foucault also argues that the classifying and 'ordering' of human beings, as part of a positivist epistemology plays a key role in controlling populations (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). Where power is exerted there is struggle and resistance, otherwise it is obedience.

### *Surveillance and Panopticism*

A key concept underlying Foucault's theory of regulatory control is that of surveillance through Panopticism. Foucault regarded the panoptic as a symbol of the disciplinary society of surveillance. He argued that knowledge makes us a subject because in order for us to make sense of ourselves we must have the ability to refer back to other types of knowledge. However, to be part of a certain system we are also allowing ourselves to

be subject to judgement and surveillance and for our attitudes to be moulded in a certain way (Schirato, Danaher & Webb, 2012). Foucault's (1977) ideas about disciplinary power, its role in subjectification and the way that it promotes the surveillance and governance of others are all relevant to this research.

'The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the social worker-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behaviour, his aptitudes, his achievements.' (Foucault, 1977, p.304)

The subjectification of parents both by themselves and others, the notion of 'good' parents existing (meaning that 'bad' parents must also exist) and schools and the greater societal system operating as technologies of power, all have the potential to influence parents' engagement with education and the purpose that parents and schools say that it has.

### *Governmentality*

Foucault's (2003) concept of 'governmentality' involves consideration of societal and governing policy and practices and how this influences institutional practices (e.g., the institution of education) from a distance. Foucault suggests that certain practices exist to create, regulate and maintain government ideologies. He believed that modern social structures, including the family, schools and workplaces, rely on the disciplinary methods of the modern prison (Kallman, 2017).

Pomerantz (2008) highlights the value of Foucauldian discourse analysis for Educational Psychologists in encouraging reflexive practice to 'understand how we influence the way in which problems we encounter daily within our practice are constructed within the discourses of which we are a part' (Pomerantz, 2008, p.14). The researcher has chosen to apply a Foucauldian lens to the research, which refers to the application of Foucault's principles and perspectives. It should be noted that the researcher has chosen specific ideas from Foucault's work which are relevant to this area of research and it is not a purist or exclusive application of Foucault's ideas. A Foucauldian approach, with its emphasis on the power of language in constructing

objects and subjects, and its implications for social practices, seemed relevant to EP practice and the current research.

### **1.6 Reflexivity: The Researcher's Position**

For 14 years prior to embarking upon doctoral training, the researcher worked in school settings with an interest in parental engagement with education. This included working in a home-school liaison role, and senior leadership roles involving pastoral care, culture and behaviour management.

Through these experiences, the researcher noticed inconsistencies in the ways that parental relationships with school were perceived and understood, and variation in the value and purpose that both school and parents placed on parental engagement. The researcher began to question whether parents and school held the same beliefs around the purpose of parental engagement with school.

Whilst learning on the doctoral training course, the researcher developed an interest in the psychology of constructs (Kelly, 1955) and how an individual's beliefs and experiences can shape how they interpret the world. In addition, the views that people develop of themselves, as well as the views that they have about other people, and institutions in their lives. The researcher also developed an interest in power within society, particularly around Bordieu's (1987) work on social capital, and the work of Michel Foucault considering how society divides and promotes people by categories, and how power operates between people and institutions.

During this work, the researcher embraced a critical psychology perspective, and tried to maintain a curiosity about power within the education system, particularly when considering the engagement of parents in their children's learning and school experience. Foucault defined a critical approach as an exploration of the underpinning assumptions, artefacts and history on which certain thoughts are made possible:

‘A critique does not consist in saying that things aren't good the way they are. It consists in seeing on just what type of assumptions of familiar notions, of established and unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based..... To do criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy’ (Foucault, 1994 [1981], p.456)

As a parent of children within the UK education system, the researcher occupies an ‘insider position’ (Berger, 2015). This positioning is integral to the development of this research and effects how the researcher perceives and interprets information, as well as developing and shaping their own personal constructs relating to the topic. Through the practice of reflexivity, keeping a research diary, engaging in academic supervision and by adopting a critical approach, the researcher has attempted to delineate any bias that they bring to the research, whilst accepting that research of this kind involves some level of subjectivity.

### **1.7 Research Aims and Rationale**

The current national and local pictures suggest that parental engagement is important, and ‘good’ parental engagement is something which should be strived for by both schools and parents. However, it remains unclear what the purpose of parental engagement is at present, as understood by both parents and school staff. There is little clarity or uniformity on what parental engagement with education is, and what form it takes in current school settings.

The current zeitgeist places emphasis upon ‘good’ parenting, and both local and national strategies exist to support parents to better engage with school, and to manage the needs of their children.

This research set out to investigate what parents and school staff say parental engagement with education is, and how it is in the settings that they have contact with. It was also interested in what both groups described as the purpose of engagement; why parents should be engaged in their children’s education, whether schools and parents identify any benefits and whether the benefits overlap.

Finally, the research aimed to discover what Foucauldian themes can be identified through the analytic process from the constructs offered in the discussions with parents and schools. The notion of ‘good’ parenting is highlighted in documents distributed by the DfE, and this research was interested in the governmentality of parenting and the divisive practices that operate in order to categorise parents in that way. Also of interest was the influence of power (and perceived power) in parent and school relationships, and the role that power, including the power of societal expectations, has on influencing parents’ level of engagement and perceptions of school.

## **1.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided an overview of national expectations of parental engagement with education in the UK and how this has led to the current research study. Key terminology has been defined and considered. The chapter has concluded with a summary of the position of the researcher and the aims and rationale for the research.

## **Chapter 2 – Literature Review**

### **2.1. Chapter Overview**

This chapter outlines a review of the existing literature relating to the current knowledge of how parents and schools perceive the purpose of parental engagement with school and any research into parental engagement which offers a Foucauldian perspective. The current research is rooted in critical psychology and maintains a curiosity about the engagement of parents in their children's learning, and how this is experienced. The review follows the process described by Boland et al. (2017) of first defining the question to be asked of the literature, and then critically assessing the available evidence. The systematic process of finding the available evidence, detailing the databases searched and inclusion and exclusion criteria will be recorded, the findings summarised, and conclusions drawn. To achieve this in a coherent manner, the findings have been divided into themes.

### **2.2 Details of Literature Review Process**

The aim of the literature search was to critically review the literature related to this area of interest in order to determine the significance of the intended research. In addition, further attention was given to Foucauldian perspectives surrounding this area of research and any significance that this offers. The review sought to identify articles relating to the purpose of parental engagement with school, and Foucauldian perspectives and themes relevant to parental engagement. This systematic search aims to answer the following two questions:

- (i) What does the literature tell us about how parents and schools perceive the purpose of parental engagement with school?
- (ii) What are the findings from the relevant papers relating to parental engagement which offer a Foucauldian perspective?

#### **2.2.1 Databases**

A systematic literature search was carried out on 02.07.20 to critically review the research and identify gaps in previous research. This included peer reviewed published articles from the following databases: Education Research Complete, ERIC, APA Psych Info, APA Psych Articles and SCOPUS.

### 2.2.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria are detailed in the tables below. Owing to the differing nature of the literature review questions, both have slightly different inclusion and exclusion criteria.

<b>QUESTION 1</b>	<b>Included</b>	<b>Excluded</b>
Date published	2009-2020	Papers published before 2009
Publication	Scholarly, peer reviewed journals	Unpublished thesis, opinion articles
Accessibility	Available in full text English or translated into English	Not available in full text (following all database search and inter library loan request) Not available in English
Classification	Educational Psychology	Papers from other fields of research
Age group studied	Papers which refer to mainstream education settings for children aged 4–18	Papers which refer to children in nursery or kindergarten settings, or post–16.
Community relevance	Studies conducted in the UK, or with generalisability to the UK population.	Studies focusing upon one particular ethnic group, or specific to one global region, not generalisable to the UK population.
Specificity	Papers relevant to general parental involvement or engagement, not specific to engagement with a particular programme.	Papers referring to parent engagement relating to a particular intervention, or programme.

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

<b>QUESTION 2</b>	<b>Included</b>	<b>Excluded</b>
Date published	2009–2020	Papers published before 2009
Publication	Scholarly, peer reviewed journals	Unpublished thesis, opinion articles, newspaper articles
Accessibility	Available in full text English or translated into English	Available in full text Not available in English or translated into English
Relevance	Articles relevant to parents and their relationships with institutions	Articles based primarily on research methods  Articles with little or no Foucauldian perspective.

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

Abstracts of articles were read to determine whether they meet the research criteria, and a PRISMA diagram was used to record numbers of identified articles at each stage (Appendix A).

An initial scoping review was conducted in November 2019 and the researcher was able to complete some useful pre reading around the topic. This review used publication dates of 2009-2019, which was updated for the systematic review to include the most recent articles. Articles pre 2009 were excluded, as experiences of engagement with education from over 10 years ago are likely to be less applicable to parents' lived experiences today.

The decision to only include articles from peer-reviewed journals in the systematic literature review was taken to ensure the studies included had a high degree of rigour, increasing the validity of the review findings. Time constraints and the accessibility of grey literature was also factored into this decision. However, the exclusion of grey literature could have resulted in publication bias, as much research is not disseminated through peer-reviewed journals (Pappas & Williams, 2011).

For question 1, it was important to narrow the classification terms down to 'Educational Psychology' as there is a wide range of research in other fields relating to this area such



as medicine and social care that would not be relevant to this study. The researcher is interested in broadly exploring the relationships and perceptions of parents and schools and therefore excluded studies focusing upon nurseries and pre-school settings or post-16 only settings. Similarly, findings from studies assessing the impact of particular parenting programmes or interventions have been excluded, as the researcher is interested in typical engagements rather than those introduced to bring about a particular outcome, or with a targeted group of parents.

Criteria for question 2 included any articles which had relevance to parents and their relationships with any institution, not just school. There is currently little research applying Foucauldian thought to Educational Psychology, and even less when focusing upon parental engagement. This particular inclusion criteria allows the research to explore the Foucauldian themes surrounding how education operates within a particular political and historical framework. Papers focusing solely upon research methods involving Foucauldian analysis, and those with little or no Foucauldian perspective were excluded.

### **2.2.3 Search terms used**

Search terms were based upon the researcher's ideas about key words and preliminary exploratory and scoping searches of the literature. The researcher consulted the index of search terms to determine the key words to include. Two searches were conducted using the following search terms:

- (i) Parent\* engagement or parent\* involvement or parent\* participation or parent\* partnership AND school or education or classroom AND benefit or purpose or perception
- (ii) School or education or classroom AND parent or parents or parental or mother or father or caregiver or guardian AND Foucault or Foucauldian

After each search, titles and abstracts were read to determine whether articles met the inclusion criteria. With each search, duplicates were discarded. The researcher recorded the results of each search in a PRISMA diagram (Appendix A and Appendix B) and recorded included and excluded articles in a table (Appendix C).

Search term (i) generated 25 articles to be assessed in full text for eligibility, and 10 articles were identified through hand searches and snowballing. Following exclusions, 13 articles were included in the literature review.

Search term (ii) generated 7 articles to be assessed in full text for eligibility, and 5 further articles were identified through hand searches and snowballing. Following exclusions, 5 articles were included in the literature review.

18 articles were included in the critical review of the literature in total.

#### **2.2.4 Assessing study quality**

All 18 papers were assessed using Weight of Evidence (WoE) framework described by Gough (2007), to analyse the quality and relevance of each study included in the critical review (Appendix D). The papers were appraised to consider both the rigour of research design and the extent to which they support answering the questions of this systematic literature review. Papers were assessed against the following criteria:

A: Transparency, accuracy, accessibility of study – Trustworthiness in terms of review questions

B: Purposivity: fit for purpose method – Appropriateness of design and analysis for these review questions

C: Utility and Propriety – Relevance of focus for these review questions

D: Overall rating – Overall weighting in relation to review question, taking into account A, B and C.

Studies included in the review were graded as high, medium, or low against criteria A, B and C. Five papers were assessed to have a high weighting due to their overall relevance to the research questions, and generalisability of findings owing to sample size or population. Three papers were judged to have medium/low weight due to small sample size and lack of clarity around findings and implications.

#### **2.2.5 General characteristics of studies**

Appendix E illustrates the key features of the 18 studies included in the review. The majority of studies were conducted in the USA (n=9), with the remaining studies originating from the UK (n=4), New Zealand (n=2), Portugal (n=1), Australia (n=1) and

Denmark (n=1). 10 of the studies utilised a qualitative research design, 4 quantitative, 1 mixed methods, and 3 reviews of existing literature. It is important to note that the majority of studies included in the review were conducted outside the UK. There may be cultural biases and differences, particularly when considering education systems and parental engagement practices. The researcher remained aware of this when considering generalisability of findings and relevance to UK settings.

### **2.3. Research Findings from the Systematic Review**

The sections below will undertake a critical analysis of the research identified during the systematic search process. The papers were organised thematically by the researcher. Themes were identified by summarising the findings from each of the research studies (Appendix E) and then grouping these into broader themes. The researcher organised the research into the following themes:

- Reasons for parental engagement
- Parent engagement and values
- Parent engagement at secondary school
- Factors impacting parental engagement
- Parent engagement, power and Foucault

Throughout this research the terms ‘parental engagement’ and ‘parental involvement’ are used interchangeably, and to mean the same thing. Some articles offer a distinction between the two terms with different meanings attributed to each one, and where this occurs, it is acknowledged in the review of that work.

#### *Reasons for parental engagement*

Much of the existing research on parent motivation for engagement with education has been guided by the work of Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997). Their work features the psychological characteristics of parents and suggests that specific variables create patterns of influence at critical points in the parent involvement process. A model is presented which outlines this process, identifying five levels of involvement which determine the outcomes for the child. (Appendix F).

The question asked of this literature review focuses upon Level 1 of the model - Parent basic involvement decision. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) extended and reviewed their initial work (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie, 1992) and focused upon the factors

impacting upon a parent's initial decision to become involved in their child's education. Key beliefs were identified, understood to be central to parents' basic involvement decision. Firstly, parents' role construction defines parents' constructs about what they are supposed to do in relation to their children's education and educational progress. The article suggests that this construction is likely to be influenced by general principles guiding their definition of the parental role, their beliefs about child development and child-rearing, and their beliefs about appropriate parental home-support roles in children's education. Because role construction is shaped by the expectations of pertinent social groups and relevant personal beliefs, it is constructed socially, and from parent's own experiences over time related to schooling. This suggests that role construction is not fixed, and subject to change (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005).

The second major construct identified is parents' sense of efficacy for helping their child to succeed; whether parents believe that through their involvement, they can exert a positive influence on children's educational outcomes. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) draw upon Bandura's (1989a) work on self-efficacy and suggest that parents with a stronger sense of self-efficacy for helping their child succeed in school will be those most likely to decide that involvement will bring about positive outcomes for their child. Like role construction, self-efficacy is also socially constructed and therefore subject to change, and the authors suggest that schools and important others 'exert significant influence on parents' sense of efficacy for helping their children'. (Hoover-Dempsey et al. 2005, p. 109)

The model suggests that the third major construct influencing parents' involvement decision involves general opportunities, invitations and demands for involvement – do parents feel that child and school want them to be involved? Hoover-Dempsey et al. identified that invitations from the teacher and head teacher play an important part, particularly as they respond to parents' wishes to know more about *how* to support their children. The article also suggests that invitations from children prompt parental involvement and are particularly important as they activate parents' wishes to be responsive to their child's development needs.

Finally, the authors suggest that elements of parents' life contexts function as a motivator for parent involvement. Socio economic status did not appear to be indicative

of involvement level, although those parents who work longer hours or have significant caring responsibilities were less likely to be involved. The authors suggest that:

‘schools must respect and respond to family culture and family circumstances in order to access the full power of parental support for student learning’. (p.116)

The work by Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler and Brissie (1992), Hoover- Dempsey and Sandler (1997) and Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) provides a valuable starting point in exploring parent motivation for involvement in education, but appears to be most useful when considering important factors for white, middle class families in the USA. Work published in 1995, 1997 and 2005 offers a review of existing literature, the majority of which involves white American families, so transferability may be limited. In addition, many of the measures involved in the studies reviewed are based upon self-report which may not be an accurate reflection of levels of involvement. The authors acknowledge that the findings in the studies are primarily suggestive and correlational and that the key factors of role construction and self-efficacy are social constructs. This is a useful starting point for exploring potential for change and offers a sound platform for further research. However, the research does not address parents’ perception of the purpose of their involvement, other than to generically ‘bring about positive change’.

Park and Holloway (2018) offer further examination on parental motivation or encouragement for engagement and build upon the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model. Their work examined national survey data relating to parents of children across the USA. Findings were broadly in line with those of Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005), and parents’ perceptions of a welcoming school environment and informative home-school communication were positively related to a heightened sense of responsibility to get involved, and in turn, actual involvement. For families living in poverty, the extent to which they felt welcome at school correlated strongly with their construct of parental role, and their perceptions of whether their role was to become involved in their child’s education. Interestingly, parents who were dissatisfied with school were more likely to become involved in school, and felt that their involvement was to compensate for, or protect against, deficits in the child’s experience – the authors suggest that parent involvement is motivated by parents’ perceptions of the need for involvement to offset limitations of what the school can provide.

The study is limited by its use of secondary analysis, although offers a large sample size. As with many papers within this field, the research relies upon self-report which may be vulnerable to exaggeration or social desirability bias. Caution must also be applied when attributing causality from a non-experimental study design. The research was conducted in the USA, and it would be interesting to learn if this behaviour is replicated within the UK education system.

Research by Goldberg and Smith (2014) explored a sense of belonging within the school community as a predictor of school involvement when considering the experiences of same sex parents. Findings indicated that parents who felt that the local community was homophobic were much more likely to become involved in school. The authors hypothesise that this may be due to parents wishing to avoid a negative response to their family within the school, or to ‘establish themselves as valuable members of the school community’ and therefore improve the school climate for all same sex families. Parents who perceived other parents to be unwelcoming were less likely to be involved in the school community – potentially due to a desire to avoid negative treatment or uncomfortable situations. This complements findings by Park and Holloway (2018) suggesting that dissatisfaction with the school, or a need to compensate for or protect against deficits in experience increases the likelihood of parental involvement. Again, this study is limited by the self-report nature of the findings, and limits to attributions of causality. It was conducted in the USA which may limit transferability. This work begins to uncover a perception of purpose for involvement, that of compensating for perceived deficits.

#### *Parent engagement and values*

In a longitudinal study, Cheung and Pomerantz (2015) explored the connection between parental engagement and the value that their children then placed upon achievement and academic attainment. Their work tested the hypothesis that parental involvement leads to children doing well at school, and fosters children’s engagement in school, because children understand that parents view it as valuable, which in turn enhances achievement. The authors explored a ‘perception-acceptance pathway’ (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994), which sets out the way in which parents transmit their values to their children – firstly children must be aware of parents’ values so that they perceive them accurately, and secondly, children must then accept them as their own. This was paired

with an ‘experience value development pathway’ which suggests that when parents become involved in children’s learning, they create experiences for children that directly heighten the value that children place on school achievement. The research discovered that the more that children reported their parents as ‘involved’ in their learning, the more they perceived them as placing value on academic achievement. This in turn influenced the value that children themselves placed upon their achievement grades. The study offers evidence for both the perception acceptance pathway and the experience pathway, and the researchers state that both pathways ‘uniquely accounted for the beneficial effect of parents’ involvement on children’s later academic functioning’. (p.316)

The authors recognise that the study relies upon children’s self-reporting of their parents’ engagement with their learning and does not distinguish between mothers’ and fathers’ involvement. The research is also based upon a model which suggests that parents transmit their values to their children, and the children’s own values were not directly assessed. It is also worth noting that the study was conducted in the USA and China, and findings may not be transferrable to the UK. However, the research poses interesting questions around how parents value education, if and how these values are transferred to their children, and what the impact of those values are. Again, it does not directly address parents’ perceived purpose for engagement but refers to the significance of academic functioning.

Research by Froiland and Davison (2013) examined the associations of parental expectations and parent school relationships with positive outcomes. Data were extracted from a series of national surveys. A moderate positive association between parent expectations for their children’s long term educational attainment and positive outcomes in school was discovered, alongside a strong correlation between positive parent-school relationships and positive school outcomes. This may offer a correlation with the work of Cheung and Pomerantz suggesting the importance of parental values upon academic outcomes. Interestingly, the work also discovered a link between positive parent expectations for educational attainment and student behaviour at school. The authors link this to Bandura et al. (2001) work on social-cognitive theory, suggesting that parents’ expectations are conveyed to children who may then focus their behaviour more diligently on meeting academic expectations.

Like many other studies in this field, it relies upon self-report which can be subject to social desirability bias. It is based on US population, and the results are only transferable within that population. It also only focuses upon parent self-report, and it would be interesting to understand how these views correlate to those of teachers. However, this work offers a unique angle upon the impact of parental engagement on student behaviour, and in its description of this as a positive outcome. This study, like others, infers that the perceived purpose of parental engagement is positive academic outcomes, and begins to explore behavioural outcomes, but does not develop this further.

Anthony and Ogg (2019) explored behavioural factors in relation to learning, and the impact that different types of parental involvement had upon outcomes. The research states that the strength of the association between parental involvement and academic achievement rests upon the specific form of parental involvement being investigated, and divides involvement into three categories: home based interventions, school based interventions, and home school communications. It further hypothesises that parental involvement could indirectly influence achievement through the development of students' attitude to learning. The study used a large sample longitudinal methodology. Findings indicated that school based interventions and home school communications significantly predicted children's reading achievement longitudinally, and positive home school communication in kindergarten successfully predicted reading achievement when the child reached third grade. However, the research found a lack of correlation between parent involvement and student attitudes to learning and suggests that this indicates that there are further important mechanisms to explore.

This study has several limitations, and they must be considered when considering these findings. Categorising 'types' of parental engagement into three categories may be oversimplifying what is a broad area of research. Similarly, 'attitudes to learning' is a difficult measure, and this study focused on specific areas such as organising belongings and paying attention. Attainment in this case was measured with a reading scale, which takes no account for other forms of attainment, and may exclude families with English as an additional language. The research does highlight however, a need to explore the impact of parental involvement on attitudes to learning, and how important an outcome measure that is for parents, schools, and children.



### *Parent engagement at secondary school*

It appears that researchers often assume that levels of parental engagement remain fixed over a child's school life (Feinstein & Symons, 1999). However, research conducted by Skaliotis (2010) highlights evidence from a longitudinal study indicating that half of parents of children in year 9 reported becoming more or less active over a two year period. The study separated data for the involvement of mothers and fathers and suggests that their levels of involvement differ. For mothers of secondary school aged children, findings support the compensatory model previously described by Park and Holloway (2018), and Goldberg and Smith (2014) suggesting that mothers who perceive the school negatively compensate by increasing involvement. In contrast, mothers who are happy with the education their child is receiving subsequently decrease their involvement. The study suggests that their child's behaviour is the major variable involved in changing the involvement of fathers, with fathers becoming more likely to decrease their involvement if behaviour is 'poor'. Interestingly, fathers were significantly more likely to report higher involvement than mothers, which the author suggests may be due to greater social desirability bias, or that fathers have lower expectations of their involvement in their child's education. The study indicates that levels of parental involvement are variable over time, and attitudinal and behavioural variables within the family are strongly associated with levels of involvement in children's education. Although the findings identify associations and not causality, this raises interesting questions regarding the nature of parental engagement with secondary school, and the points at which parents are invited to/expected to become involved.

Research by Costa and Faria (2017) explored further reasons for a change in parental involvement during secondary school. Small scale research was conducted in Portugal using focus group data of parents selected from the PTA. Findings indicated that although the majority of parents assumed a direct correlation between their involvement in school and the chances of success for their child, many found it more difficult to support their child at this level of education. Researchers described parents feeling that children did not accept their help, and that their own knowledge base was not sufficient to offer academic help. Parents expressed that the school did not do enough to motivate parents' involvement, and that teachers make contact 'only to share bad news.' (p.32). This study is limited by both the small scale nature of the research and the selection

criteria of participants. However, it begins to offer insights into parent concerns and challenges when engaging with secondary school.

### *Factors impacting parental engagement*

It is important to consider the factors which are described as barriers to the development of effective parental engagement. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) present a useful model which clarifies and elaborates on barriers to engagement in four areas. Their work considers parent factors (including parental beliefs around parental involvement, life contexts and class, ethnicity and gender), child factors (including age, learning difficulties, gifts and talents and behavioural issues), parent teacher factors (including goals and agendas, language and attitudes) and societal factors (historic and societal factors, political factors and economic factors.). It explores class, ethnicity, and gender of families, offering an interesting view on the rhetoric versus reality of parental involvement. The study suggests that although research around parental involvement offers suggestions of how to overcome disadvantages of social class and ethnicity, it does so from a predominant bias of white middle class values, and suggests that the ‘good’ parent character is one which is shaped by white, middle class values and expectations. The parental involvement rhetoric is a result of differing goals and agendas – the authors describe parents’ goals as:

‘more likely to be focused upon improving their children’s performance, wishing to influence ethos or curriculum within the school’ (p. 44)

Contrasted to government and school perspective of seeing parental involvement as:

‘a tool for increasing school communities and for increasing children’s achievements, or as a cost effective resource and a method of addressing cultural disadvantage and inequality.’(p.45)

The authors conclude that these differences in goals create conflicts which limit the type and success of parental involvement practices.

The article draws upon research conducted internationally and highlights the complex nature of parental engagement, perhaps most importantly encouraging schools to move away from a simplistic understanding of the underlying factors which affect parental engagement. It offers a fascinating springboard from which to develop further research

into the contrast between parent views on the purpose of parental involvement, and those of the school or government.

Baker et al. (2016) offer helpful thought on schools and parents co-constructing solutions to barriers to engagement, and further explores differences in perception. An interesting definition of parental involvement vs parental engagement is offered, suggesting that parental involvement comprises ‘demonstrable actions’, with parental engagement more focused upon families becoming partners with the school and ‘building a foundation of trust and respect’ (p. 162). The study involved a series of focus groups of staff and parents, with participants selected by the school principal, and research questions addressing barriers to involvement and suggested improvements. Findings suggested that although staff and parents broadly agree on barriers, there were significant contrasts in solutions. Parent solutions directly addressed the barriers identified whereas staff frequently offered disconnected solutions reiterating parent involvement (the necessity of parents being present in the building) rather than parental engagement (described as multiple constructions of how parents are involved). Key discourses were extracted from the discussions, with words such as ‘persecuted’, ‘uneducated’ and ‘intimidated’ being used to describe feelings around coming into school, with some staff feeling that parents do not engage because of ‘a degree of apathy’, or ‘lack of value in education’.

This research is limited by a small sample size, and by potential bias in the sample selection. It may be that the divide that the paper introduces between parental engagement and involvement is an arbitrary one which serves to further divide the subject of purpose rather than add clarity. However, the article generates useful discussion points around parental engagement and expectations. The factors involved when considering barriers to involvement are complex and if they are to be addressed, need to be done by all invested parties. It also continues the discussion around power within parental engagement and contrasts in perceptions of teachers/schools and parents.

Meehan and Meehan (2017) further explored the perceptions of teachers when engaging with parents. The authors used questionnaire data and policy documents to gain an understanding of trainee teachers’ perceptions of the role of parents in their children’s education, and more generally, trainee teachers’ perceptions of parents. Findings

suggested that trainee teachers generally approached the relationships with parents with apprehension but valued the potential of having positive relationships with parents. However, the issue of power quickly arises – the authors describe how:

‘teachers wanted to be trusted, accepted and liked, but also have a status or authority’ (p. 1762)

and that trainee teachers have a desire to collaborate but have clear behavioural expectations about how parents should relate to them as teachers, wanting parents to ‘let the teacher do their job’ and ‘trust your professional judgement’.

Although it must be noted that this research was conducted with trainee teachers at the start of their professional journey, it suggests that for many teachers, boundaries are clear from the outset, and are based upon judgements of professionalism, not being undermined, and teachers positioned as experts. Clearly, this appears to be in contrast with the types of relationships that parents wish to have with education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Froiland & Davison, 2013) but perhaps these conflicts arise due to a lack of reflection during teacher training on trainees’ own perceptions about parents, their role and effective partnerships. It also suggests that further research may be beneficial upon the values and perceptions held by teachers further on in their career, and what they perceive the purpose of parental engagement to be.

#### *Parental engagement, power, and Foucault*

Many of the papers already included in this review referenced power as a key consideration in the area of parental engagement. Park and Holloway (2018) referenced Bordieu’s 1987 work on cultural capital, suggesting that middle class families are more likely to have resources that align with schools’ expectations, enabling them to engage in interactions at school more effortlessly. The work continues that higher income parents are more likely to see themselves as of equal status with school and believe that they have the right and responsibility to raise any issues or scrutinise and monitor teaching. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) explored the notion of ‘good’ parents who are typically white, middle-class, married and heterosexual, and who possess cultural capital which matches that of the school. In contrast, parents from communities that are in any way marginalised are less involved, less represented, and less informed.

There is currently very little research applying Foucauldian thought to educational psychology, and even less when focusing upon parental engagement. Foucauldian perspectives relating to educational psychology are more likely to focus upon divisive school management practices such as exclusion, or service delivery models and policy development (Jardine, 2005). The limited articles discovered when conducting this literature search included various countries (notably Australia, New Zealand and Denmark), and include research around ‘Nanny TV’ aimed at ‘improving’ parenting in Sweden (Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2014) and discursive constructions relating to Muslim girls at school in the UK (Hewett, 2015).

Foucault defined the term governmentality as ‘the conduct of conduct’, ‘a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons’ (Foucault et al., 1991, p.2). Keogh (1996) examined Foucault’s notion of governmentality and how it is enacted and can be documented within home school communication. The work explores how across various educational sites, teachers are discursively positioned as ‘school experts’, with parents positioned as ‘home experts’. Through these roles and positions, parents and teachers interrogate each other’s expertise and discursively open up different ‘territories of responsibility’ (p.121). It is these territories and interrogations which form the basis for home and school engagement. A key concept underlying Foucault’s theory of regulatory control is that of surveillance through panopticism. Keogh claims that panopticism is evidenced in home school communication via parents and teachers positioning themselves and each other as ‘agents of surveillance’ (p.121). Parents and teachers negotiate the boundaries of their respective areas in order to regulate and control student bodies in time and space. The author continues that teachers and parents form the panopticon for students, and students are thus positioned as needing to internalise the panoptic gaze and become self-regulatory.

This research offers a valuable starting point for understanding a Foucauldian perspective upon parental engagement. Keogh concludes that it is reasonable to ‘view schools as agencies of regulation and control over homes’ (p. 130).

The work raises questions around the actualities of parental engagement discourses within the UK and offers a useful platform for future research into the realities of home and school relationships.

Bae (2017) continued exploration of the notion of governmentality, with particular focus upon parenting, and government-run parenting programmes in New Zealand. The work describes that through governance, a particular form of reality becomes conceivable and a norm of being is considered more desirable. Those who do not comply with this reality are made to conform by state intervention. The author argues that state-run parenting programmes are part of a 'regime of truth', designed with neoliberal values. In essence, the programme is designed to make 'better parents' who will raise children who will then be 'economically useful' to society, and concludes that the role of teachers and parents is therefore to assist and train the child to be a governable subject, a responsible and productive citizen.

The notion of intervention to produce 'governable subjects' is an interesting one worth examining further. It will be interesting to note whether this is represented within discourse from parents and teachers and extends to schools in the UK, particularly the notion of children becoming 'productive citizens'.

The discourses underpinning parenting programmes are further explored by Cottam and Espie (2013). Their work offers a cautionary note about parenting research invariably being influenced by the cultural norms and opinions of those undertaking it, which can be extended to the authors of parenting programmes. The authors describe how in such programmes, facilitators adopt the role of 'expert' - a position critiqued by Foucault in his examination of the medical profession (1994), suggesting that the 'medical gaze' of professionals dehumanised and oppressed the patient. The research analysed text from six parenting programmes within the UK, and discovered discourses around 'victimhood', institutional salvation, scientism, and collaboration. It is scientism which creates the position of experts where facilitators can adopt strategies to modify children's and parents' behaviour and monitor progress. Foucault (1991) discusses how the 'specific intellectual' with expertise in a particular body of knowledge becomes the 'universal intellectual' whose knowledge becomes universal truth.

It may be that the notions of scientism and 'universal intellectuals' are extended into research surrounding parents and relationships with schools and teachers. Certainly, research reviewed in this paper indicates that teachers wish to position themselves as 'professionals' who should have status or authority (Meehan & Meehan 2017) and that parents look to teachers to welcome and guide them (Hoover-Dempsey et al. 2005).

Research exploring parent and staff accounts of engagement and parent/teacher relationships would be beneficial.

Research conducted by Lavelle (2014) explores ‘governmentality at a distance’ via parent attendance at children’s centres in the UK. The author conducted interviews, focus groups and observations in two Sure Start centres over an 18 month period. Sure Start was a UK government initiative targeted at parents and young children in areas of high deprivation, and offered services to promote children’s learning skills, health and wellbeing development. Lavelle describes the centres as ‘a new type of panopticon’ due to parenting practices being exposed and new knowledge produced. Centres are described as not only instruments of power (through government at a distance) but also a model of power, bridging the gap between the state and the family. The author offers an interesting view on micro-practices within such settings, and how something as simple as a cup of tea can contribute to governmentality. The research suggests that the offer of a hot drink was made to attract vulnerable or hard to reach parents but had an impact upon professionalism; offering tea typically happens in ‘non-expert’ and ‘non-professionalised spaces’. It also highlighted a contrast in the purpose of the space – for parents, an offer of tea represented time for them, and an opportunity to socialise with peers. For centre staff, tea meant that parents were interacting with children less, which undermined the purpose of the centres as determined by government. For staff, it is not enough that parents attend, there is an expectation of what ‘good’ parents should do once they are there.

This highlighted contradictions for staff around what they felt parents needed and what they ought to be providing. Despite staff understanding that time with peers was vital for parents, the ‘regulatory gaze’ described by Foucault (1977) remained in the forefront of centre staff’s thoughts when the need to meet government outcomes was present.

Although this study appears to focus upon a small act, it is clear that it is heavily symbolic and highlights the importance of micro-practices upon those who receive them. Like the other studies in this section of the review, it will be interesting to examine micro-practices relative to parental engagement with school, and to consider how the regulatory gaze of government impacts upon school staff when interacting with parents.

Work by Højholt and Kousholt (2019) offers an alternative view of parental engagement. Their research investigated the purpose of parental collaboration in

Denmark, and how this is conceptualised by parents. The authors suggest that school as a societal institution governs parents, and that parental engagement serves as problem displacement which shifts focus away from the social practices of school and onto parent and family life. Similarly to Park and Holloway (2018), the authors reference Bourdieu's work on cultural capital and conclude that the parenting strategies adopted by middle class parents are more in sync with the standards of dominant institutions, and working class parenting becomes a disadvantage for parents related to school life. In short, parent collaboration can be seen as a new way to govern parents thus exacerbating the inequalities of school life.

In Denmark, parental collaboration is subject to law, which makes the research and findings from this article specific to Denmark. It does, however, offer an alternative view of parental engagement, and raises questions about parental collaboration as a means of governing parents. Again, it will be interesting to see if these findings translate into UK settings.

## **2.4. Literature Review Conclusions**

Although there appears to be a consensus that parental engagement with education is desirable and worthwhile, there remains an array of theories concerning the 'how' and 'what' of involvement. There has been plentiful research into the motivations that parents have for being involved and engaged with their child's education (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler and Brissie, 1995; Park and Holloway, 2018) but little about parents' perceptions of the role and purpose of such engagement other than generic views about bringing about positive outcomes. Much of the research focuses upon parents' values (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2014) and parents' expectations of their child (Froiland & Davison 2013) leading to engagement, with comparatively little investigating parental engagement from a school perspective. Similarly, there is little consensus on what 'useful' parental engagement looks like and how schools might engage parents for the most effective outcomes (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997), whatever those outcomes may be.

The research suggests that there is a gap between the rhetoric and reality of parental engagement with education. Factors which act as barriers to effective engagement remain apparent, and although research around overcoming such barriers exists, it often



comes from a predominant bias of white, middle class values (Hornby & Lafaele 2011), and adheres to a white, middle class model of what ‘good’ parenting is.

The language used around ‘parents and professionals’ positions one as the expert, and yet is often described as a partnership (Keogh, 1994; Cottam & Espie, 2013). In reality, home school relationships appear to be more adversarial and about rights and power (Keogh, 1994; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Research describes a compensatory need for parental involvement (Goldberg & Smith, 2014; Park & Holloway, 2018), whereby parents are more likely to be involved in their child’s education if they are dissatisfied with the school, or need to compensate for or protect against deficits in experience.

The research offers little consensus around what both parents and schools perceive as the purpose of parental engagement, with parents’ goals likely to be focused upon improving children’s performance, and school using it as a tool to address cultural inequality (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Højholt & Kousholt, 2019). The research offers no suggestion as to whether there is any crossover upon which to build.

There is limited research into how parents experience engagement with education in the way that they do, and how governmentality plays a role within home and school relationships. There is some evidence of research into panopticism and the notion of ‘governable subjects’ (Keogh, 1994; Bae, 2017) in the literature, but this warrants further exploration to be relevant to parent and teacher engagement in the UK in the present day.

To address the research gaps, the current study aims to provide a unique contribution to the field of educational and child psychology by considering the perceptions of the purpose of parental engagement from the perspective of both parents and teachers. The research will apply a Foucauldian lens to parents and schools accounts in order to explore conversations around power within home school relationships.

## **2.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided an overview of the current literature around parental engagement with education. The criteria and techniques used within the search were outlined, and rationale for inclusion of articles was explained. The gaps in the research were identified, which formed the basis for the rationale of the current study.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Chapter Overview**

The previous chapters introduced the background to the research (chapter 1) and critically considered the current research base (chapter 2). This chapter details the research aims and questions, and outlines the research design, data collection and data analysis used. It also outlines the researcher's theoretical position and details ethical considerations accounted for.

The methodology used in this research explored parent and school staff discourses around parental engagement with education via a Foucauldian perspective. A qualitative design was adopted which included semi structured interviews with parents and school staff. The data gathered was analysed using a deductive Foucauldian informed thematic analysis.

### **3.2 Theoretical Position of the Researcher**

Researchers must be aware of their own ontological and epistemological position, as this enables reflexivity on their own position, and how this has influenced methodology and analysis of data (Creswell, 2009, p.15).

The researcher began the research process by considering their own philosophical position with regard to parental engagement. Guba (1990) described a paradigm as a basic worldview or belief system that influences all choices made by a researcher. The researcher's position in terms of ontology and epistemology and the beliefs that are held within them, bring philosophical assumptions to the research. These philosophical assumptions feed into how research questions are formulated and thus how the research is conducted (Bryman, 2001).

The research was conducted within an exploratory research paradigm. The field of parental engagement is broad, and the accounts emerging from the findings are yet to be defined.

#### **3.2.1 Ontology and epistemology**

Traditionally, the prevailing view of research posited is that the purpose of understanding was to search for objective truths. This positivist-empiricist stance, and the view that 'scientific claims to knowledge were effectively uncontaminated by

culture, history and ideology' (Gergen, 2001, p.7) was so dominant that it gained the title as the 'standard view of science' (Robson, 2008, p.19).

The orientation of this research is influenced by the way in which the nature of social reality is viewed and, based upon these assumptions, how it is best examined (Bryman, 2001). Ontological assumptions are beliefs held around the form and nature of existence of the world. Epistemology is the way a researcher comes to know the nature of knowledge and its types (Thomas 2017).

The research was conducted from a critical realist ontological position. Within ontology, there are various positions. A positivist view, as previously described, perceives the world as having 'absolute truths' which are measurable and have clear cause and effect. In contrast, constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work, and that meanings are constructed by individuals as they engage with the world that they are interpreting (Creswell, 2009 p.8). Critical realism can be seen as situated between the two positions. It assumes that there are measurable realities influenced by perspectives, constructs and social history, and therefore multiple realities exist. This approach is appropriate for work which views research through a Foucauldian lens, considering constructs and knowledge to be possible due to mediating factors from history, society and politics.

The researcher therefore considers that parents engaging with education exists as a practice, but the meaning and associated labels and values associated with it are socially and individually constructed. Therefore, interpretations given to 'engagement' may differ between people due to their experiences, perceptions and social history.

From a critical realist perspective, epistemology involves investigating the process that causes the event, including being clear about the researcher's own axiology. This fits well within this research, which was interested in the profile of parents' and teachers' interactions and perceptions, and how it is possible for them to construct their experiences in the way that they do.

Foucault argued that political technologies have underlying relationships that are unequal, and perpetuate the fallacy of 'equality' created through the law (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). Foucault's work examines how power is reproduced and created in social practices and relationships, and holds a key interest in the ways that power flows through institutions (Ball, 2013). Foucault also argues that the classifying and

‘ordering’ of human beings, as part of a positivist epistemology plays a key role in controlling populations (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982).

It is worth noting that criticism of Foucault’s work has described his own positioning as controversial (Horrocks & Jevtic, 2014). His work takes an ontological position of denying the existence of an absolute truth, but he has developed his own thoughts and *oeuvres* of how truth can be made possible. However, these ideas do offer an interesting critique of systems of knowledge and power (within which educational institutions exist).

### 3.3 Approaches to Analysing Discourse

Discourse analysis (DA) is described as a ‘whole approach to psychology and knowledge’ (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.187). It investigates which discourses are shared across texts and which constructions of the world they seem to be advocating (Coyle, 2007). Poststructuralist DA is the most ‘macro’ form of DA; it has the widest scope and focus, and pays the least attention to the fine grained detail of the text it analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.189). The table below details different types of discourse analysis (Based on Willig, 2008).

Types of analysis	Critique
<p><b>1. Conversational Analysis</b></p> <p>Focus on small-scale, naturally occurring interactions. Stresses the active role of the person in the interaction. Interested in the strategies used in building accounts and managing interactions. The analysis uncovers the nuance of spoken language, e.g. pauses and emphasis.</p>	<p>Does not allow interpretation of power relations that may be implicated in interactions, and so does not go ‘beyond the text’.</p> <p>Focuses on identifying more or less objectively present features of interaction. Not concerned with reflexivity but with traditional concepts of objectivity, reliability and validity.</p>
<p><b>2. Narrative Analysis</b></p> <p>Life stories describing coherent identities are constructed by tying together past, present and future in autobiographical narratives.</p>	<p>Based upon the assumption that there is a relationship between subjective experience and our personal narratives.</p>

The person is viewed as an active creator of the story.	Takes a realist position, considers a person's experiences and the sense they make in their narratives as being directly expressed through language.
<b>3. Discursive Psychology</b> Analysis of talk in naturally occurring interactions and interviews. Aims to identify the forms or arguments; rhetorical devices used by participants. Concerned with how people build defensible identities, how they construct and present 'versions' of themselves and events as 'factual' and how they legitimate their actions.	Looks at the micro-processes of interactions and not links with wider social, ideological and power relations.
<b>4. Interpretive Repertoires</b> Analytical tool used to identify culturally available 'linguistic resources' and 'toolkits' that speakers use to build their accounts rather than the specific rhetorical moves that they make in an interaction.	Links with discursive psychology, the analysis is micro-smaller scale, examines resources used and not the structures that may impose a certain kind of experience of the world.
<b>5. Critical Discourse Analysis</b> The central concern is the relationship between language and power and exposing power inequalities and ideology. Examines how discourses are struggled against and resisted. Has the ability to expose powerful ideologies transmitted via text.	The focus is on analysis and critique of discourses in public or institutional settings.
<b>6. Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA)</b> Discourses bring with them different possibilities, for what a person is able to do, what they may do to others or what they are expected to do for them. Discourses bring power relations with them. The focus is on	No prescribed process – the procedure is subjective and interpretive.

how language is implicated in power relations. The ways in which discourse produce subjectivity through positioning and practice.	
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*Table 3: Approaches to discourse analysis (Based on Willig, 2008).*

Foucauldian informed thematic analysis was deemed the most appropriate tool for analysing discourse in this research. In line with the research questions posited, this approach enables the exploration of constructs, power relations, governmentality and surveillance. Pomerantz (2008) highlights the value of Foucauldian informed analysis for EPs in encouraging reflexive practice to ‘understand how we influence the way in which the problems we encounter daily within our practice are constructed within the discourses of which we are a part’ (Pomerantz, 2008, p.14). Discourse analysis has been described as a useful tool in enabling EPs to analyse and resist practices of pathologisation (Billington, 1996). Hence a Foucauldian approach, with its emphasis on the power of language in constructing objects and subjects and its implications for social practice seemed relevant to EP practice and the current research.

### **3.3.1 Taking a Foucauldian approach**

There is variability in definitions and understandings of ‘discourse’ even within a particular discipline (Mills, 1997). Considering this, it would seem beneficial to outline Foucault’s position, although it is recognised that he rarely occupied a fixed position.

Foucault’s broad definition of discourse as a ‘general domain of all statements’ (1970, p.80) encapsulates the idea that discourse can be used to refer to all utterances and statements which have meaning and some effect. Discourses are productive and described as ‘practices that systemically form the objects of which they speak’ (Foucault, 2002, p.54). Researchers who adopt a Foucauldian perspective view the world as having a structural reality in terms of power relations and how we understand and talk about the world (Burr, 2003).

To Foucault, ‘....power is everywhere...’ (Foucault, 1979: 93). Discourse is intrinsically linked to power and related to what it is permissible to say, do and be.

‘Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it’. (Foucault, 1978, pp.100-1)

When analysing discourse, the aim is not to describe which discourses are true or accurate representations of the ‘real’, instead, Foucauldian informed analysis aims to describe the mechanisms through which subjects are produced by dominant discourses (Parker, 1994).

### **3.3.2 Challenges of taking a Foucauldian approach**

It is widely acknowledged that Foucault’s writings are contradictory, and his views changed over time. It is therefore important to be cautious about applying his thinking. Foucault recognised that ‘all my books are little tool boxes’ (cited in Patton, 1979, p.115). Therefore, although a rigorous method of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis is not described in his works, researchers have the flexibility to apply his ‘tools’ or approaches as deemed appropriate.

Foucault was extremely reticent to provide details of his own life (Jardine 2005), but it is important to note that he grew up within 20<sup>th</sup> Century Western European systems of thought and systems of power/governance. Horrocks and Jevtic (2014) describe how Foucault was very intelligent, but the object of significant teasing and unkindness from his peers. It is interesting to note that Foucault’s views on education and the systems in which state education operates are produced by someone who was subject to bullying.

### **3.4 Research Aims**

The current research set out to embrace a critical psychology perspective to consider the discourse constructions surrounding parental engagement with schools, and how these constructions were made possible (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). Consequently, the research considered the social, political, historical and theoretical factors relevant to parental engagement and these constructions.

In addition, this research aimed to offer a unique contribution by applying Foucauldian thought to parental engagement, and perceptions of purpose and power. By placing the voices of parents and school staff at the centre, it provided an opportunity to consider the purpose of engagement and any potential issues of power and governmentality that surround it.

### **3.5 Research Questions**

The research explored parental engagement with schools, and perceptions of purpose and power within that engagement. The following research questions were informed by the systematic literature review:

- (RQ1) What is parental engagement with education in the UK?
- (RQ2) What do parents say the purpose of their engagement with school is?
- (RQ3) What do schools say the purpose of their engagement with parents is?
- (RQ4) What are the Foucauldian themes identified from parents and schools' accounts?

### **3.6 Research Design**

This research was qualitative, and data gathered via semi structured interviews. This enabled participant voices to be recorded and allowed participants to provide relevant historical and social information. It is important to note that this research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. The researcher had initially intended to conduct interviews in person, however participant and researcher safety considerations meant that all interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams, and recorded using the 'record' function.

#### **3.6.1 Impact of online interviews**

Willig and Stainton-Rogers (2013) outline the risks and benefits of conducting research online. In addition to easier access to participants and reduction in time constraints, they pose that online interviews make the process more accessible for participants who have mobility issues, caring responsibilities, and long working patterns. Their work cites research suggesting that 'the anonymity of the internet was preferable' and encouraged self-disclosure whilst valuing the opportunity to remain anonymous (p.320). Disadvantages are also outlined, including challenges with technology and sustained internet connection, a reduction in visual and aural clues from the researcher owing to communicating via a screen rather than in person, and the possibility of interruptions due to the researcher having no control over the interview environment. It is worth noting, however, that technologies have developed significantly since this work was published, and video call quality and functionality has improved. Much of the literature relating to online interviews as a research method describe the use of internet



chat rooms, or interviews conducted solely via email. The research was conducted in October 2020, at a time when much of the UK had spent the previous 6 months in lockdown, and video calling became commonplace in many schools and households. This will be reflected upon further in the Ethical Considerations section.

### **3.6.2 Semi structured interviews**

This research examined how it is possible for parents and school staff to construct their experiences in the way that they do. Consideration was given to methods of collecting data to apply Foucauldian thought to data analysis. As previously described, any ‘text’ can be used for such analysis, therefore interviews were conducted with parents and school staff to gather data and ‘text’ (to be transcribed).

While focus groups are considered to be useful in minimising power differentials, it was felt that individual interviews were more appropriate in the current research. Firstly, for ethical reasons, the potentially sensitive and personal nature of the topics being discussed may have caused discomfort in a group context and caused participants to refrain from participating. Secondly, it was felt that group dynamics within a focus group may be an issue as some of the parents or staff may have known each other. This may have affected engagement and the overall dynamic, reducing the participants willingness to speak freely, as well as posing risks to confidentiality.

Considering this, interviews were selected as the most appropriate method of data collection. Interviews are useful when exploring understanding and perception type research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and are best suited to exploring understandings, perceptions and constructions of things that participants have a personal stake in. In order to explore relevant topics in depth, and to allow for a more ‘free flowing’ conversational experience, the researcher selected semi structured interviews as the method of data collection. Robson (2008) describes how semi structured interviews are widely used in flexible, qualitative research designs. This type of research method has pre-determined questions, but allows for the order to be modified based upon the interviewer’s perception of what seems most appropriate at the time. Question wording can be changed, and explanations given, and particular questions can be omitted, or additional ones included if deemed appropriate by the researcher. This was felt to be particularly useful when considering the move from face to face to online interviews, as questions could be modified in order to create greater rapport.

Interviews followed an interview protocol as set out below, as described by Creswell (2009), and Robson (2008):

- Initial welcome and outline of the interview (loosely scripted)
- Ice breaker question
- Approximately 5-8 key topics, formulated as key questions under the headings
- Associated prompts for each question – with time for follow up and time to ask participants to explain their ideas in more detail or to elaborate on what they have said
- Closing comments and thank you statement

Eight key topics were chosen for school staff members related to the themes of the research:

1. Understanding of the term ‘parental engagement (PE) with education’
2. Importance of parental engagement
3. Any benefits of PE
4. The school’s role in developing PE
5. Parental motivation for PE
6. Parental barriers for PE
7. Value of PE in school
8. Staff perceptions of parents who don’t engage

With two additional topics for parents:

1. Personal choice around engagement
2. Changes to engagement level over time

The topic areas were shared with participants at the start of the interview, and open questions were used throughout. Probing questions such as ‘can you tell me more?’ were used where participants needed further support, or where the researcher felt that the point could be expanded upon.

The researcher took both field notes and observational notes to be recorded in the research journal – this supported reflexivity and acknowledged the researcher’s role in the research process.

### **3.7 Validity, Reliability, Generalisability and Reflexivity**

#### **3.7.1 Validity**

Validity refers to the extent to which the measure actually measures what it sets out to, and reliability describes the consistency of the findings obtained (Robson, 2008).

Maxwell (1992) presents three threats to validity in qualitative research. These are description, interpretation and theory.

- **Description** – This refers to providing a valid description of what the researcher has seen or heard. This research was video recorded (using online recording tools built into Microsoft Teams) and fully transcribed by the researcher, with additional field observation notes recorded by hand during the interview. Transcripts were carefully checked after the transcription process was completed for accuracy.
- **Interpretation** – Maxwell describes the main threat to providing a valid interpretation is that of imposing a framework or meaning on what is happening during the data collection rather than this emerging from findings made during the research. The researcher remained mindful of this by using the same semi structured interview protocol with each interview, and using full video recordings. Interpretation took place through the identification of ‘Foucauldian informed themes’ during the transcription process. The researcher ensured that any themes or codes identified were carefully defined, and that there was no shift in the codes’ or themes’ definitions during the transcription process. This was achieved by the researcher making notes on each theme during the transcription process, and checking for definitions and accuracy after transcription.
- **Theory** – This relates to researchers failing to consider alternative explanations or understandings of the phenomena that are being studied. This can be countered by actively seeking data which does not fit with the approach or theory. The researcher remained mindful of this when analysing the data, and sought to consider alternative explanations or understandings of the constructs emerging from the data.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss various threats to the validity of flexible design research such as semi structured interviews, dividing them into three broad headings: reactivity, respondent biases and researcher biases. *Reactivity* refers to the way in which the researcher's presence may interfere in some way with the setting, in particular with the behaviour of the people involved. The current research reduced this threat by interviewing online, which ensured that respondents could participate in the interview from a setting in which they were comfortable, and in a remote way, with no face to face contact with the researcher at any point. *Respondent bias* can take various forms, ranging from obstructiveness and withholding information when the researcher is perceived as a threat, to the respondent providing answers or impressions that they judge the researcher wants. The researcher reduced this threat by offering a full clear description of the purpose of the research before commencing the interview, highlighting the exploratory nature of the research (and that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers) and spending the first part of each interview engaged in welcome and ice breaker questions to help the respondent to feel at ease. *Researcher Bias* refers to what the researcher brings to the situation in terms of assumptions and preconceptions which may in some way affect their behaviour in the research, such as the types of participants selected, the kinds of questions asked in the interview, or the method of data analysis and reporting selected. The researcher reduced this threat by using reflexivity throughout the research, and by keeping a detailed research journal.

### **3.7.2 Reliability**

Reliability in qualitative research refers to 'the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions' (Hammersley, 1992; Cited in Silverman 2003, p.175). Robson (2008) suggests that being 'thorough, careful and honest' when conducting research is vital. During the current research, the researcher kept a full record of activities whilst carrying out the study including transcripts of interviews and field notes, a detailed research journal, and details of coding and data analysis.

### **3.7.3 Generalisability**

Generalisability refers to whether or not the findings generated in one study can be applied to wider or different populations (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Some researchers argue that generalisability is not a meaningful goal for qualitative research because of

assumptions about the ‘context-bound nature of knowledge in qualitative research and an interest in the detail of the phenomenon being investigated’ (p.280). However, Goodman (2008a) offered the concept of flexible generalisation, suggesting that research can be generalised if the researcher can show that a discursive strategy achieves a certain function, and the strategy achieves this function in a range of settings and when used by a range of speakers (existing research can be drawn upon to demonstrate this). A concept frequently used in the ‘flexible generalisability’ of qualitative research is transferability. Lincoln & Guba (1985) refer to the extent to which aspects of the research can be transferred to other groups of people and contexts. They describe that the key to enhancing the transferability of a study is to describe the specific contexts, participants, settings and circumstances of the study in detail so that the reader can evaluate the potential for applying the findings to other contexts or participants. The current research enables this approach by providing detailed descriptions of the necessary categories within this chapter.

#### **3.7.4 Reflexivity**

It is vital for researchers to engage in reflexivity to consider how their position affects the methodology and data interpretation. Reflexivity involves the researcher being aware of their own beliefs, views and history, and how this may impact upon the research.

‘the researcher filters the data through a personal lens in a specific socio-political and historical moment. One cannot escape the personal interpretations brought to qualitative data analysis’ (Creswell, 2009, p.17).

Considering this, it is important for the researcher to be aware of their assumptions about parents’ relationships with schools, schools’ engagements with parents, and any value judgements held within those assumptions. It is also important to keep in mind assumptions about the purpose of the research, intended audience and any hopes and fears. When studying Foucault, it is vital to consider power within the interview situation, and how this may influence responses, and the feelings of the participant and the researcher.

Consideration was given to power asymmetry in the interview process. Foucault acknowledges the importance of understanding the working of power relations within the production of knowledge (Mills, 1997). During the interviews, participants were

encouraged to consider the researcher as curious, interested in understanding the constructions of parental engagement with school.

Researchers sometimes attempt to overcome power relations in the interpretation of findings by involving participants in analysis (Alldred, 1998). Coyle (2007) suggests that this is less appropriate in discourse analysis, as analysis often elaborates the unintended consequences of language of which individuals may be unaware and may therefore disagree, even though this does not invalidate the conclusions. Coyle (2007) proposes that discourse analysts recognise that they cannot make an exception for their own discourse in the findings and acknowledge the personal influences that they will have brought to bear on the data. Within the current research, the researcher maintained a research journal in order to consider their views and position in the research, as well as noting key issues and decisions made. The use of supervision with the researcher's academic tutor to review discourses and reflect upon own influence was important, as this provided challenge and enabled critical thinking. Nevertheless, it is recognised that the findings reflect shared constructions between the researcher and participants. Reading around Foucauldian analysis supported the practice of reflexivity (Willig, 2008). A critical lens was implemented throughout interviewing, analysing and interpretation of findings.

It is worth noting that the researcher is a parent of school age children, living in the UK, and has previously worked in parent facing roles within schools. It would therefore be impossible to avoid holding any relevant assumptions.

### **3.8 Identifying and Accessing Participants**

Participants for the research were recruited through purposive sampling within the local authority that the researcher was placed in as a Trainee Educational Psychologist. This type of sampling was selected as the research was designed to explore the accounts of specific groups.

The research participants included 5 members of school staff from within local authority schools, and 5 parents whose children attend schools within the same local authority.

Inclusion criteria was applied for both parent participants, and school based participants. Parent participants were required to be a parent or carer of a child within a school setting, within the selected local authority. School participants were required to work in

a local authority school, and in some way be involved in parent engagement – either as a head teacher, classroom teacher, Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) or Home School liaison worker (or similar role).

Parent recruitment was initially via school newsletters and school based communications. However, the researcher acknowledged the likelihood that parents who have little engagement with school would be less likely to respond to requests from school to take part in research. Considering this, the researcher also advertised for participants via a local authority ‘family voices’ group, and using online forums. Participant recruitment advertisements are provided (Appendix G).

### **3.8.1 Participants’ details**

Five participants were parents of children attending a school in a local authority. Two participants had children in mainstream primary school, one participant had a child in mainstream secondary, one participant had children in a special secondary school and one participant had children in both mainstream primary and mainstream secondary schools. Three participants were recruited via school newsletters and internal communications, and two were recruited via an online forum.

Five participants were members of school staff. Two participants worked in local authority mainstream primary schools and three participants worked in local authority mainstream secondary schools. Three participants were members of senior leadership teams, and two participants were SENCos.

All five school staff participants were White British Females. Three parents were female and two male. All five parent participants were White British.

Participant details are presented in Table 4 below. It should be noted that participants have been allocated a number to preserve anonymity.

<b>Participant number</b>	<b>Setting</b>	<b>Role</b>
1	Primary	Parent
2	Primary	School SLT
3	Special secondary	Parent
4	Primary	Parent
5	Secondary	School SLT

6	Primary	School SENCo
7	Primary & Secondary	Parent
8	Secondary	School SENCo
9	Secondary	School SENCo
10	Secondary	Parent

*Table 4: Participant details*

Participants were contacted via email and participant packs, including research information sheets (Appendix H) and consent forms (Appendix I) were shared. The researcher reminded participants of their right to withdraw from the research at any time. Participants were given time to read the information, and return the consent forms if they wished to proceed. A mutually convenient time for a video call was arranged.

It was recognised that the interviews may potentially be sensitive, and the researcher informed participants that they would be in a home office with a closed door for the duration of the video call, and would not be interrupted. Participants were encouraged to choose a space and time where they would be uninterrupted and comfortable to speak freely. Participants were reminded that their data would be safely stored and pseudo anonymised by allocating each of them a participant number and removing all identifiable information during the transcription process. Further information is detailed in the research data management plan approved by the University of East London (Appendix J).

### **3.8.2 Piloting the interview and modifications**

The interview schedule, consent forms and information sheets were piloted with a member of staff at a local school. The participant pack was sent in advance, and feedback was offered during a conversation. The interview schedule was tested by holding a mock interview, and the researcher observing and noting responses to the questions. A discussion was held following the interview to gather participant feedback. The participant pack was viewed to be adequate and no amendments were deemed necessary. Following discussions around the interview questions and personal reflections, amendments were made to the interview schedule. Amendments included the wording of questions, breaking longer questions down into more concise, shorter questions, and adding subsidiary questions to explore an area further. The interview schedule is in Appendix K.



An effective way of obtaining detailed and comprehensive accounts from interviews is to express ignorance (Willig, 2008). As a parent of school aged children, and former school employee, it became apparent after the pilot interview that assumptions were made that the researcher possessed ‘inside knowledge’. Hence, for the remaining interviews, it was important that the researcher positioned themselves and take stance of ‘naïve interviewer’. This encouraged participants to expand and further develop the topics raised.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

The data gathered from the interviews was fully transcribed by the researcher, and analysed using thematic analysis with a deductive, theoretical and semantic Foucauldian perspective. Research questions 1-3 were approached using a semantic analysis, and research question 4 used a semantic and latent analysis. Foucault himself was purposely non-prescriptive in how his work could be used. Considering this, a pragmatic approach to analysing the data was decided upon – utilising Foucault’s ideas and perspectives along with a broadly recognised thematic approach.

Thematic analysis is a method for finding patterns in the data by capturing ‘themes’ which are relevant to the research question. In the current research, frequency of themes was not a key factor in determining a theme, instead themes were derived in response to the research questions, and where items relating to Foucauldian thought were identified. A deductive, theory driven analysis was used within this research by applying Foucauldian thought to identify relevant units of information and patterns across the data. Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six stage guide for conducting a thematic analysis (Appendix L) was used. Details of the researcher’s approach to the six stages can be found in Appendix M.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

Braun and Clarke (2013) describe ethical issues in qualitative research as ‘potentially more uncertain, complex and nuanced than with quantitative designs, partly because of the fluidity of research designs’ (p.64). A number of ethical considerations were made during the research. Guidelines from the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2018) and the HCPC standards of conduct (2016) were adhered to. The primary principles of competence, respect, integrity and responsibility were also adhered to when conducting this research. The research was governed by the University of East London professional

doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology guiding principles of social justice, autonomy and beneficence.

No research was undertaken until full ethical approval had been gained from the University of East London Ethics Board. This was amended shortly before the commencement of data collection in order to conduct interviews using online methods rather than face to face, owing to the Covid-19 pandemic. The researcher sought approval from within the local authority in order to undertake the research within local school settings, and the research was discussed with the Principal Educational Psychologist in order to ensure approval and to gain clarity on any additional permissions to be sought. It was necessary to ensure transparency around the research at all times, particularly as it considers organisational systems, societal structures and governance.

An initial letter was sent to headteachers of the participating schools, seeking consent for research to be conducted in their setting, and providing clear information about the purpose of the research, involvement of participants, data management and protection of anonymity. It was also made clear to headteachers that no individual school would be identifiable from the research.

A letter was sent out to all interested parents using school communication channels, similarly detailing the purpose of the research, involvement of participants, data management and protection of anonymity, and also making clear the right to withdraw from the research at any stage.

All potential participants were informed, via an information sheet (Appendix H), what the research sought to investigate, how the data would be analysed and how the findings may be ultimately disseminated. All participants were made aware via the written participant information sheet that they had a right to withdraw from the research at any point, until the data has been analysed, at which point their data would become unidentifiable. It was explained that if participants chose to withdraw, their data would be deleted, including video or audio recordings, transcriptions, or typed notes. Withdrawal from the study did not have any implications for the parents or their children in school, or the professional reputation of the teachers.

Interviews with all participants were recorded via the record function in Microsoft Teams, saved, and transferred onto a password protected and encrypted file which could

only be accessed by the researcher. In line with University policy, data will be kept for 10 years after completing the project. Participants were identified only by a participant number, which was only available to the researcher throughout the research.

A full data management plan (Appendix J) was completed and reviewed by UEL data management teams before any research was undertaken, and amended as methodology was changed to reflect the move to online interviews and the subsequent data storage.

It was possible that participating in the research and the topics covered could invoke feelings of distress in participants. In light of this, the researcher remained vigilant during the interviews for signs of distress and all participants were provided with a debrief sheet detailing the support they could access following the interviews.

(Appendix N)

### **3.11 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has outlined the methodology used within the current research study. The ontology and epistemology were considered before providing the aims and design of the study. The chapter outlined the validity, reliability and generalisability of the research, and explored the researcher's reflexivity. Details on the recruitment of participants and analysis of data were given, and the chapter concluded with a consideration of ethical issues. The following chapter provides an analysis of the data and presents the findings of the research.

## **Chapter 4: Research Findings**

### **4.1 Chapter Overview**

The previous chapter provided an overview of the methodology of the research. It outlined the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher, considered the purpose and design of the research and detailed the research methods including data collection, recruitment and analysis. This chapter presents the findings of the research from the thematic analysis process. Details of the interview participants can be found in chapter 3 and an example of a complete transcript can be found in Appendix O. The themes and subthemes for each research question are presented in a thematic map (Figures 1-13) followed by a description and interpretation of each theme. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the whole data set. In order to maintain the anonymity of the participants and the Local Authority, names of individuals have been replaced by generic terms and anonymised initial letters.

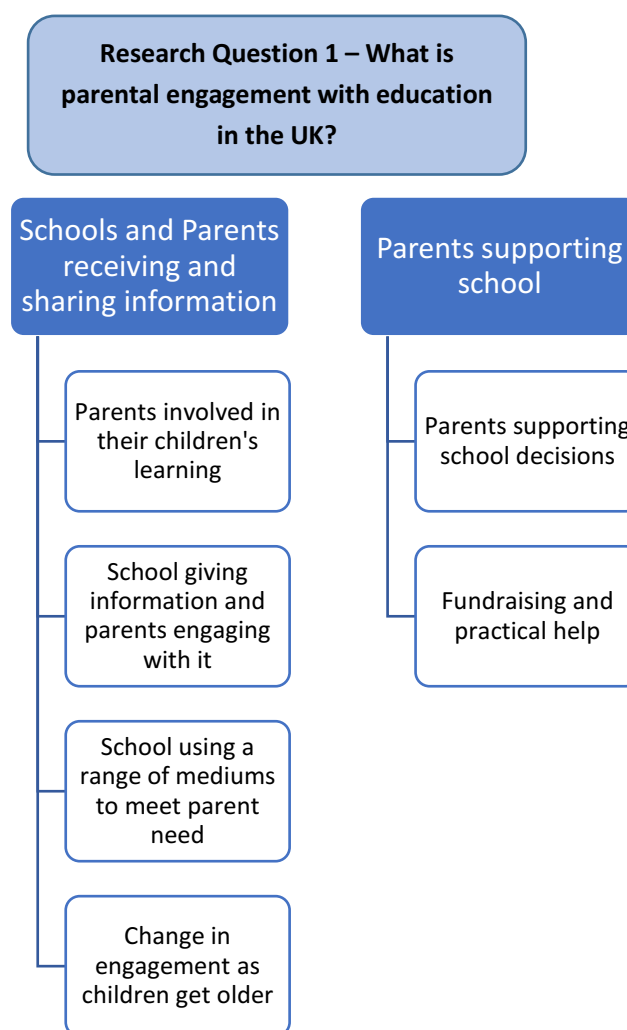
The findings in this chapter are presented with interpretive analysis and without theoretical discussions or reference to the relevant literature. These components will be discussed in the final chapter.

To address the research questions, a deductive thematic analysis was carried out (as described in chapter 3). Transcripts were coded, looking for semantic evidence and latent ideas. Codes were identified as units of meaning collated together to develop themes that describe complex data in the richest possible way. An example of the coding process is provided in Appendix P. The deductive nature of research questions 1 to 3 meant that the researcher extracted codes from the transcripts in a semantic way. However, the Foucauldian lens applied to research question 4 led the researcher to approach this question using a more latent analysis.

Thematic maps were produced for each research question. Maps were revised as the analysis progressed (Appendix Q) and final thematic maps are in Appendix R. As illustrated, a theme sits at the 'top' level and is an umbrella concept composed of themes and subthemes. Themes describe the different patterns and meaning within the dataset and subthemes share the same central organising concept as a theme however they focus on a distinct element (Braun, Clarke & Rance, 2014).

## 4.2 Research Question 1 – What is Parental Engagement with Education in the UK?

Through the use of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), three themes were identified from the dataset. In addition, a number of subthemes were also highlighted. The thematic map for this research question can be found in figure 1 below.



*Figure 1: Research question 1 thematic map*

These themes span the entire dataset and reflect the accounts of both school staff and teachers. The map does not represent the occasionally disparate and conflicting voices of participants, as these are represented in the analytic narrative to follow. Research questions 2 and 3 separate out the data to represent voices of parents and voices of school staff.

#### 4.2.1 Theme 1: School and parents sharing and receiving information

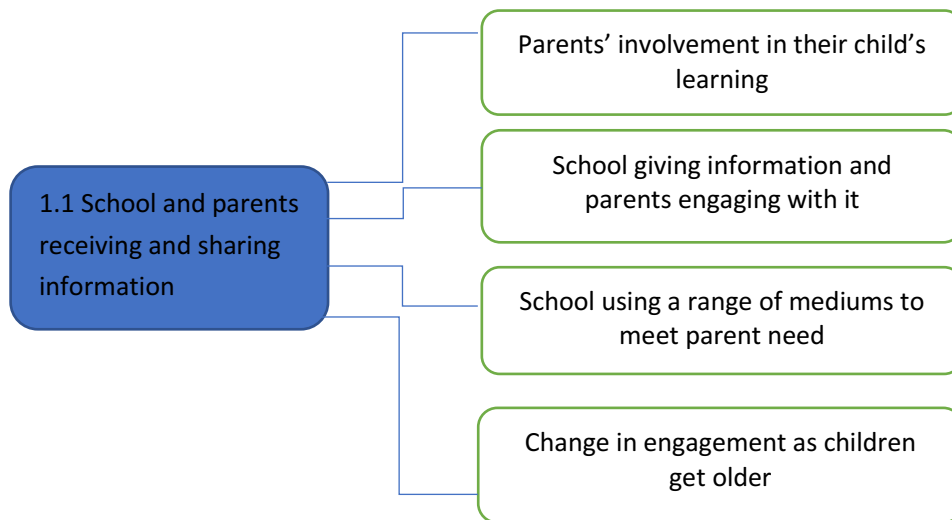


Figure 2: Research question 1, theme 1 map

Sharing and receiving information between home and school was a key theme in the data. Discussions centred on the availability of information, methods of sharing information, and parents' and school willingness or ability to engage with that information once available. Through deeper analysis of the data, these findings were further organised into 4 subthemes.

##### ***Subtheme 1: Parents' involvement in their child's learning***

During the interviews both parents and school staff highlighted parental interest and involvement in their child's learning as an important factor in understanding what parental engagement with education is. One staff participant described it as:

*'a shared responsibility between parents and school to engage their child in learning'*

(Participant 8, lines 18-19)

Parents spoke of a need to continue learning from school at home, and offering additional input:

*'Being involved in day to day supporting them in their education. So reading, doing extra stuff at home.'*

(Participant 3, line 42)

*'It's sort of a 360° approach to learning. So if they're learning stuff in school and you're helping with that at home as well, and it's boosting, you know their ability to sort of get on better at school'.*

(Participant 4, lines 45-46)

One participant highlighted the importance of their child knowing that they were involved to ensure good academic progress:

*'I want her to know that I'm sufficiently interested in what's going on in the school so she can't take any liberties'.*

(Participant 10, lines 141-142)

Parent participants identified the importance of being 'involved' and working in partnership with school and this seems to be perceived as a positive reason. There is also evidence of the use of regulatory language; parents involved in their child's learning but in a way that ensures that children know that their parents are involved and will moderate their behaviour accordingly. This will be explored further in research question 4.

### ***Subtheme 2: School giving information, parents engaging with it***

Some participants described the need for the importance of information sent home from school being engaged with by parents. One staff participant described parental engagement as follows:

*'I suppose the inference of parental engagement is that parents firstly would be engaged enough to read the information sent from the school.... If you push that to the inference of the statement, it is if they [parents] had engaged with what they'd read, so they then acted on it at home, read it to their children, responded to the questionnaire, whatever was required from that information'.*

(Participant 9, lines 11-17)

Several participants described some of the barriers that parents face when trying to engage with their child's education. Both school staff and participants described the challenges of time:

*'I think time constraints are a huge barrier, you know generally at secondary school parents are working. And so I think that's, that's quite an issue'.*

(Participant 8, lines 217-218)

*‘we all live in a very busy busy world now. And we haven’t got the time, me included when my children were in school’.*

(Participant 6, line 126 – 127)

The importance of information coming home from schools is highlighted here, but possibly of more importance is the engagement of parents with that information. School staff suggested that the information is necessary and covers ‘everything that a parent needs to know’, but a parent clarified that in order for the information to be useful or effective, a parent needs to find the time and have the ability to engage with it.

### ***Subtheme 3: Schools use a range of methods to meet parent need***

School staff and parent participants described parent engagement with education taking the form of a number of different methods and means of communication. It should be noted that the research took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, so schools may have relied more heavily upon technology than in a typical time. One staff member stated:

*‘We try lots of different methods to try and engage parents’.*

(Participant 2, line 234)

Two parent participants described their thoughts when describing school communication with parents:

*‘It’s sort of how they engage as well. So is it over more than one platform? Is it just verbal? Do this and that letters, text messages, emails, noticeboards and that sort of thing as well?’*

(Participant 10, lines 15-18)

*‘It’s about schools developing ways of engaging every parent’*

(Participant 7, line 109)

Communication, and staff and parent availability appeared to be important measures of engaging parents. A number of participants spoke about the importance having good or easy communication with school, and of that communication being available whenever necessary. Parent participants spoke about openness and regular opportunities for conversations:

*‘I think it’s openness about, er, at any opportunity to have an interaction with any member of staff at any point’*

(Participant 1, line 15-16)



School staff participants also spoke of regularity of contact, and similarly described a need for parents to be available whenever necessary.

*'parental engagement for me is good communication, regular communication when needed'*

(Participant 5, line 23)

*'it feels so much easier when you know you've got parents you can contact about anything, whether it's positive or negative.'*

(Participant 8, lines 72-73)

Several school staff described schools, via a range of different staff, contacting parents by phone to check pastoral wellbeing:

*'there's school asking tutor groups to ring all of their tutor groups families for a pastoral phone call'*

(Participant 9, lines 226-227)

*'At the point that they don't book a parents evening we usually give them a ring, whether that's through the teacher or the school office and just sort of gently enquire why they haven't booked a slot.'*

(Participant 2, lines 225- 229)

Parents reacted differently to the amount of communication received from the school. One parent participant explained that they sometimes felt overwhelmed by communication from school:

*'Communication from the schools can be overwhelming'*

*'the phone's constantly pinging off with WhatsApp groups and the parents and then all their communications from the school'*

(Participant 4, line 93 and 97-98)

Another parent described that although there is a lot of information, this can be helpful to busy or working parents:

*'we get inundated! They'll tell us on several platforms.....I quite like it though because I'm super busy and it means I definitely get that information.'*

(Participant 7, lines 206-207)

Participants described using a range of methods to 'engage parents'. School staff and parents were clear that it is important that parents are engaged, and suggest that it is schools' responsibility to find successful means of doing so. Parent participants suggested that this is a challenging balance – sometimes school communication can be

‘overwhelming’. Interestingly, some of the extracts suggest a level of checking in on parents rather than children, and using this checking in to gain information; why a parents evening has not been booked for example. This continues the notion referred to in subtheme 1 of school use of regulatory gaze; school are making contact in order to monitor engagement.

Four out of five school staff participants spoke about the need for parents and school to develop relationships in order for parental engagement to be successful. The data suggests that this has two purposes: for parents to feel ‘valued’ by the school, and to develop a positive relationship to make more difficult or challenging conversations easier further down the line. One participant described the purpose of relationships as parents feeling listened to:

*‘it’s about making the families and children feel that I value them as people’*

(Participant 5, line 199)

Two staff participants described the need for schools to develop relationships with parents to help future engagement:

*‘even if it’s as basic as inviting people in a proactive way, before things get bad, you know, let’s get them in before it hits the fan’.*

(Participant 9, lines 250-251)

*‘Making that initial contact and then building that up a little bit. And then, you know, maybe that phone call?’*

(Participant 6, line 541-542)

One staff participant went on to describe the need to forge relationships in order to best engage ‘difficult’ families, and to make engagement easier for other staff members within the school:

*‘Developing relationships with the cohort of kids and their families that are causing us the most trouble really’*

*‘the thinking behind what the role looked like was about forging relationships with the difficult families to, you know, just to smooth the way for people’.*

(Participant 5, lines 185-186 and 204-206)

#### ***Subtheme 4: Change in parent engagement as children get older***

Several participants described a change in parental engagement over time, particularly as the children got older. One parent discussed changes once their children started secondary school, mainly in the type of communication offered:

*‘I’m not offered to engage with secondary school as much, you know, I get information from them but they often don’t want communication from me.’*

*(Participant 7, lines 283-284)*

Secondary school participants may offer some explanation for the change in communication as children get older:

*‘at secondary school kids don’t really want their parents to get involved. “Why are you coming up the school again”, you know?’*

*(Participant 8, lines 220-221)*

*‘secondaries are notoriously bad, there’s not many open mornings or drop ins or those types of engagement things’*

*(Participant 9, lines 253-254)*

These extracts suggest that if parental engagement decreases in secondary school, it is due to resistance from children, and them not wanting parents physically in the school building, but also a reduction in the opportunities available for parents to attend the school.

In contrast, participant 10 describes the change in their own engagement as increasing as their child gets older, describing it as ‘the business end of things’ (line 181) and attributes it to outcomes at secondary being important. The participant appears to indicate that parental involvement will support better outcomes as the child gets older.

*‘So for me it’s got more as she’s got older because I want her to be in the best possible place for the next 18 months.’*

*(Participant 10, line 181 and lines 185-187)*

This may suggest a change in purpose of engagement as children get older – parents are less likely to be engaged for pastoral, or wellbeing reasons, but more likely for supporting academic outcomes.

#### 4.2.2. Theme 2: Parents Supporting School

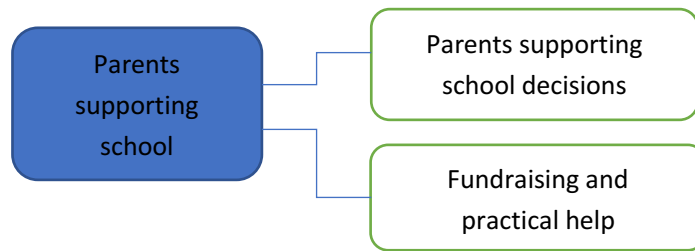


Figure 3: Research question 1, theme 2 map

Within the data, it was evident that both parent and school staff participants understood parental engagement with education to mean parents supporting and helping school in some way. This was summed up by a parent participant as below:

*‘From the simple things – responding to letters, to being involved in fundraising activities because that’s part of school life these days’*

(Participant 3, lines 37-38)

##### ***Subtheme 1: Parent supporting school decisions***

Both parent and school staff participants expressed a view that parental engagement with education meant parents supporting decisions made by school in order for their child to succeed. One school participant went so far as to suggest that parents should consider setting aside their own values to support school:

*‘I’m asking parents to put their own life values and judgements aside a little bit and think about what we’re asking as a school and supporting us’*

(Participant 5, line 26-28)

Two parents described supporting or ‘backing up’ school when they felt it necessary, and in one example so that school could feel that they can be ‘firmer’ with their child:

*‘I will 100% support my school to get the best out of my children’*

(Participant 3, line 46-47)

*‘if the school know that they’ve got the backing of parents in whatever that may be, then they can perhaps be a little bit firmer with the children’*

(Participant 10, line 73-74)

These extracts suggest that participants feel that if school decisions are supported, the outcomes for children will be more positive. Schools are positioned as the decision makers and participants describe how, without resistance from parents, decisions can be further reaching and have a greater impact. The extracts also suggest that participants

expect resistance from parents and there may be a difference in ‘life values’ between home and school.

### ***Subtheme 2: Parents offering fundraising and practical help***

The final subtheme describes parents engaging with school in order to provide fundraising, or to offer practical help of some kind. This was only raised by parent participants when describing parental engagement with education, although one staff participant did describe parents who:

*‘join the PTA just to be annoying’*

(Participant 5, line 263)

Fundraising and ‘helping’ in school appears to be a much greater focus for parents than staff when considering engagement. Four out of five parent participants described some kind of practical help as a way of being involved with school:

*‘if you need anything you can call on the parents, you can get sort of like maybe someone works for a builders merchants.....they can get, y’know, freebies’*

(Participant 7, line 91-94)

*‘Funds are really tight. And if you’ve got parents who are engaged, then you can fundraise’*

(Participant 3, line 301)

It is interesting that although both groups of participants identified ‘helping’ or ‘supporting’ school as a purpose of parental engagement, it is only parents who translated this into fundraising.

### **4.2.3 Summary of Research Question One**

Research question one asked what is parental engagement with education in the UK?

Three themes were identified from the data which were loosely based around the sharing of information, interactions and parents offering support to school. Participants identified that parents’ involvement in their child’s learning is an important element of parental engagement, as well as parents engaging with information that is sent home.

The data indicated that schools use a range of methods to meet parent needs, including a range of means of communication. It was identified as important that parents and school develop relationships, and participants acknowledged that parental engagement

is something that changes as children get older. Parents supporting school decisions was discussed by participants, as was parents offering practical help and fundraising.

#### 4.3 Research Question Two – What do parents say the purpose of their engagement with school is?

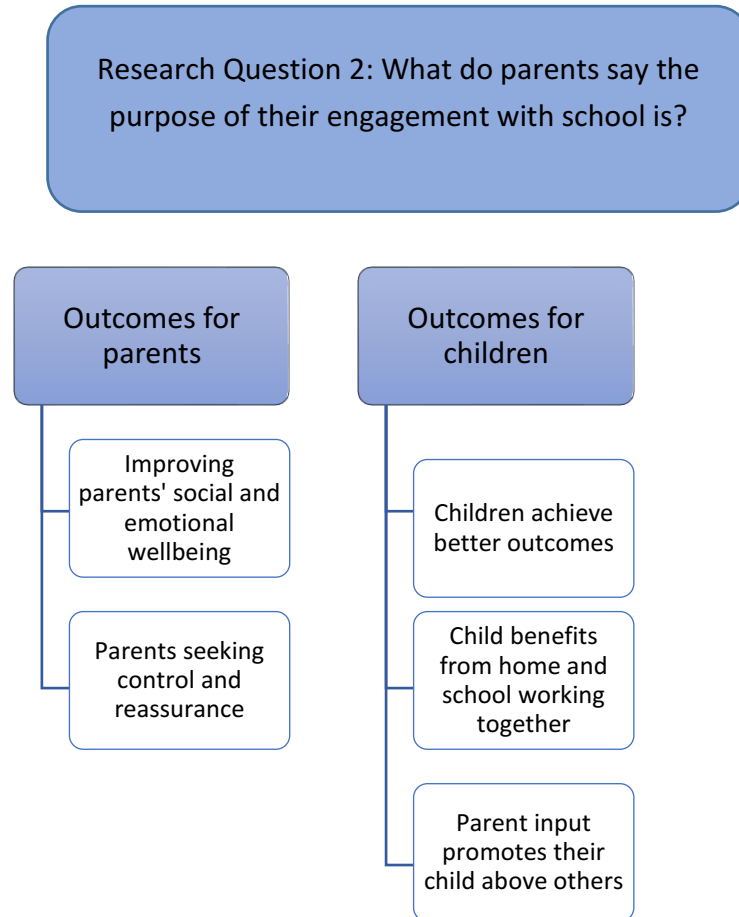


Figure 4: Research question 2 thematic map

Only data gathered from parent participants were analysed in response to this question. A similar question is asked of school staff in research question 3.

##### 4.3.1 Theme 1 – Outcomes for parents

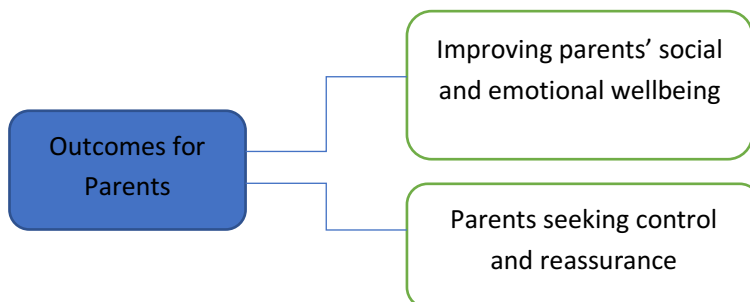


Figure 5: Research question 2, theme 1 map

During the interviews, parents were asked a direct question about what the benefits of parental engagement were, and also if they felt that parents get involved for a reason. As a result of this, participants responded by talking about their own personal engagement, and the engagement and ‘motives’ of ‘other’ parents.

### ***Subtheme 1: Improving parents’ social and emotional wellbeing***

The data informing this subtheme refers to parents engaging with education which benefits them (or others) as parents. Extracts supporting this theme refer to activities or events which will positively impact upon a parent’s social and emotional wellbeing. One parent described how engaging with school can help with the development of key functional skills:

*‘then you’ve got other parents who may be illiterate, perhaps the school can help those’*

(Participant 7, line 67)

Participants discussed how engagement is good for their ego and view of whether they are a ‘good’ parent:

*‘maybe it’s a bit my ego that does it. Because I want to be a good parent, I’m not gonna lie.’*

(Participant 3, line 119)

*‘there is a bit of ego to it, because you want your kids to do well don’t you?’*

(Participant 7, line 126)

The use of the term ego is interesting in these extracts. Parents use it to explain their desire to be engaged. They suggest that it would boost their ego if they are perceived by others as a good parent, and if their child goes on to ‘do well’ academically. This is explored further in chapter 5.

Within the other data identified in this subtheme, parents described the impact on ‘parents’ more broadly, rather than describing their own experiences. These extracts describe benefits to parents’ mental health and wellbeing. Two participants described engagement providing support for those living in challenging circumstances:

*‘Actually, for some parents, the only social communication they get during a day is with people at school’.*

(Participant 7, line 68-69)

*'I'm very aware that there is a million reasons why that parent could be struggling, you know, we don't know if there's domestic violence going on. School can help with that.'*

(Participant 3, line 280-282)

### ***Subtheme 2: Parents seeking control and reassurance***

This subtheme refers to extracts within the data where participants identified gaining reassurance about their child's wellbeing at school, or having an element of control over their child's day as a benefit of parental engagement. One participant described themselves as inquisitive about their child's education:

*'I'm generally quite an inquisitive person. I want to know what's going on. I want to understand how they've been educated'.*

(Participant 1, line 197-198)

Another participant described parents having control over their school day.

*'I think it's a bit of a control thing as well, there's a little bit of element of control over because there's a big jump to let your kids go off and do what they want to do. And you can't control friendships, you can't control what they're doing. They can't control what they're saying. It's hard for someone to let go.'*

(Participant 3, lines 199-201 and 208-211)

These extracts indicate that for some parents, engagement with education is because 'letting go' of their children is difficult. The parent describes the child gaining independence, and parents using school engagement to attempt to regain or maintain some control.

Parent participants described reassurance about their child's wellbeing as a reason for engaging with school. Participant extracts suggest a relationship between knowledge of the school day and reassurance for themselves as parents. Overall, parents described this as gaining insight, reassurance and easing worries about their child when they are in school.

*'I often get photos of my children of what they've been doing in school.....just so I know what they've been doing in school and during the day actually'*

*'It sets parents' minds at rest a little bit'*

(Participant 7, lines 221-225 and 229)

*'It's just child welfare at the end of the day isn't it? You want to make sure that they're alright'*



(Participant 10, line 37-37)

#### 4.3.2 Theme 2: Outcomes for children

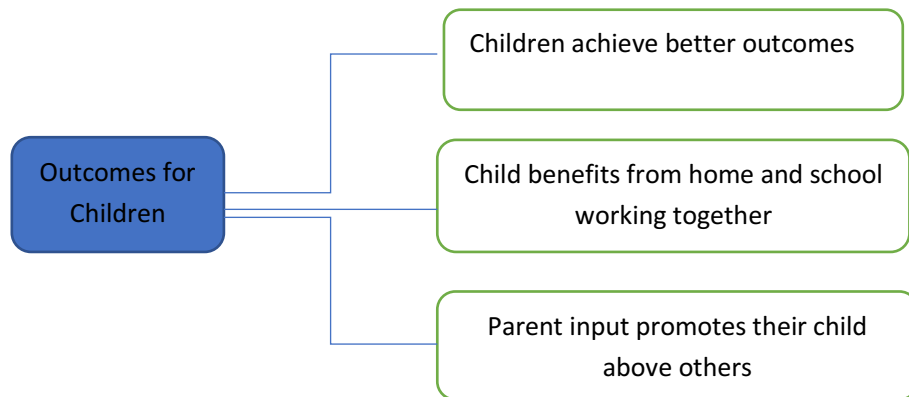


Figure 6: Research question 2, theme 2 map

This theme relates to a significant portion of the data whereby parents broadly describe benefits to children as a purpose of their engagement with education. Parents described their engagement as ‘making school a better place’ (participant 1, line 176), but this is ultimately to bring about better outcomes for children. Parental engagement makes school better, which in turn makes children’s education better.

##### ***Subtheme 1: Children achieve better academic outcomes***

Parents discussed learning at home and spoke about parents supporting academic or homework tasks and the potential benefits that this brought about for their children. The purpose of this was described as ‘*better progress*’ (Participant 7, line 246). Another parent discussed home learning and how this communicated to their child that education mattered.

*‘If I didn’t do the reading at home, if I didn’t talk to him about what he was doing at school, if I didn’t engage with his whole learning, I don’t feel that education would have mattered to him, that would have stopped him going off to uni.’*

(Participant 3, line 94-98)

Parents described their child’s potential for success as a motivator for engagement. The extracts below indicate that parents feel that not being involved would impair or limit their child’s potential.

*‘My motives are because I want [child] to fulfil as much potential as she possibly can within school.’*

(Participant 10, line 115-116)

*'if I don't support them at home, then I think I'll be quashing that potential a bit'*

(Participant 3, line 100)

Parents also described engagement as offering a learning advantage for their children, and suggested that those parents who do engage see better developmental outcomes for their child.

*'developmentally, I would say that the parents that do engage with school, their children do tend to be more developed, you know, develop better all round with even things as simple as speech, communication.'*

(Participant 7, lines 240-244)

### ***Subtheme 2: Child benefits from home and school working together***

Home and school working together, and the described benefits that this has for children was identified throughout the dataset. One parent described this as an important way for school to understand what is happening for children at home, or to understand what home is like. This should be two way collaborative communication – parents engage with communication and academic tasks sent home, but schools should be actively interested in home life.

*'it's important for schools to have an understanding of the home that children come from. And it's important for home to have an understanding of what their child is doing at school.'*

(Participant 7, line 51-54)

Another participant described the ideal relationship as one where the child feels little distinction between home and school, and are encouraged to talk about their day openly.

*'it's not school ends here and home starts there, it's a very gradual, they encourage them, you know to talk about your day at school when you get home with mummy, daddy and your siblings.'*

(Participant 1, line 52-54)

Extracts from the data indicate that parent participants felt it important that their children were aware of the positive and open relationship that they as parents have with school. A range of explanations were offered for this. One participant described children finding the home to school transition easier if they know that there is a positive relationship, and trust.

*'when they see two sets of people interacting, and it's a constructive conversation, and it's positive and happy- I think that deep down actually makes for a very comfortable transition from going from home to school because the child will naturally have a feeling of comfort.'*

(Participant 1, line 144-147)

Participant 3 described the importance of their child knowing that their education matters to her as a parent. This was extended to suggesting that engaging with education was a way of showing her child that they matter to her. For a child, parental engagement translates as 'you matter'.

*'I think it's really important to know that your children, they know that their education matters to you. And they matter to you. Because I don't think you can say your children matter, but then not be interested for six hours a day what they're doing.'*

(Participant 3, line 80-84)

Two parents described the importance of children knowing about their involvement in order to attain better academic outcomes.

*'from a child's point of view, if they can see their parents engaging positively with the school, I would say that child's more likely to engage positively with the school and with learning.'*

(Participant 7, line 55-56)

*'if we know what's going on within classes at school, we can keep pushing, we can make sure of that. It's just a question of letting her know that we're aware of what's happening.'*

(Participant 10, line 151-153)

Parents suggest in these extracts that when children see parents engaging positively, they are more likely to model that behaviour and positively engage in learning themselves.

### ***Subtheme 3: Parent input promoting their child above others***

Participants talked about how some parents that they have experienced view engagement with education as a way of promoting their child over others. None of the participants identified this as something that they had done themselves, however.

Participant 10 described it below:

*'other parents, perhaps do it because they want the school to know, to make their presence known to the school...in order for their children to get some sort*

*of favourable or preferential treatment when it comes to certain aspects of school.'*

(Participant 10, line 120-124)

As described in subtheme 1, the participants identified better outcomes for children as a motivator when becoming engaged in education. Two participants identified in others a desire to have better outcomes for their child, but using their own influence to do this. One described it as a desire for their child to get preferential treatment:

*'I have seen other parents that are really engaged with school, that might have ulterior motives in terms of they think that actually their child will be picked to be Mary in the nativity play, or they think that their child might get preferential treatment if they do engage a bit more'.*

(Participant 7, line 126-130)

Another parent described parents being involved to meet their own 'ego' needs and to promote their child to enable this. They used an interesting phrase 'mummy mafia' to describe a group of parents who dominate the playground.

*'from my playground experience of the 'Mummy Mafia' shall we say, and are definitely motivated for their own ego trip. And it's very important for them to have that kid that's top of the class, top of this, top of that, needs to be seen in the playground involved in everything'.*

(Participant 3, line 178-182)

Participant 10 described their thoughts around this topic, describing children at secondary school being preferentially selected for extracurricular activities due to parental engagement:

*'I think if kids are perhaps heavily involved in after school activities, whether that be sports or drama, or whatever it may be, perhaps if parents are more heavily involved in that sort of thing, it's perhaps going to reflect in the selection of their children.'*

(Participant 10, line 126-130)

The extracts suggest that parents feel parent engagement may not always be beneficial for all children. Instead of 'making school a better place to be', parental engagement is potentially identified as a divisive practice, children's whose parents can and do engage may be noticed or chosen more than those whose parents do not.

### 4.3.3 Summary of Research Question Two

Research question two is interested in what parents say the purpose of their engagement with school is. Participants discussed how engaging with school can bring about benefits for parents' social and emotional wellbeing as well as a boost to their ego if they feel that they are being a 'good parent.' It was also described how some parents engage with education because they are seeking control and are finding it hard to 'let go', or are seeking reassurance that their child is OK.

Parents broadly described their engagement as 'making school a better place' and explained their understanding that children achieve better academic outcomes when parents are involved. Participants felt that children benefit from home and school working together, particularly when children are aware of parents' engagement. Finally, participants identified that engagement is not always beneficial, and that can be used by some parents as a tool to promote their child over others.

### 4.4 Research Question 3 – What Do School Staff Say the Purpose of Their Engagement with Parents Is?

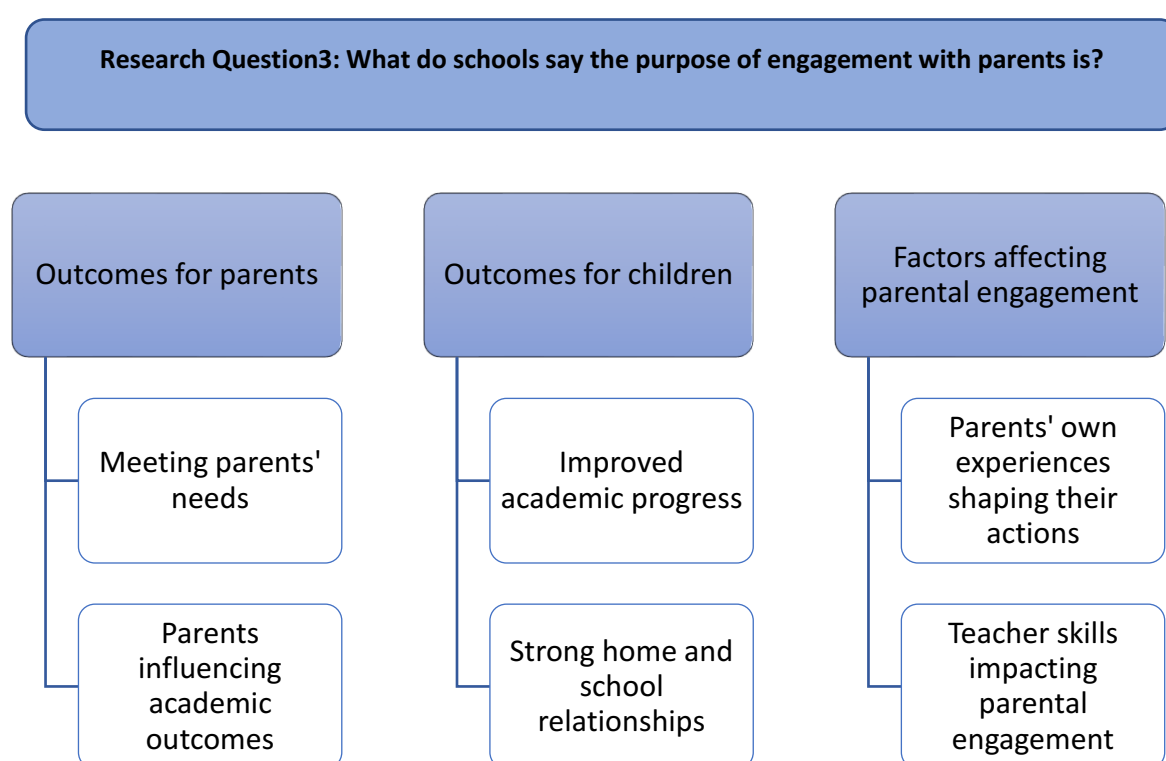


Figure 7: Research question 3 thematic map

Only data gathered from staff participants was analysed in response to this question.

Throughout the data, participants indicated that they felt that parental engagement was important, using words such as *‘pivotal’* (Participant 9, line 25) *‘monumental’* (Participant 2, line 23) and *‘crucial’* (Participant 5, line 45.) The purpose of this engagement falls broadly into two categories – outcomes for parents, and outcomes for children.

#### 4.4.1 Theme 1 – Outcomes for parents

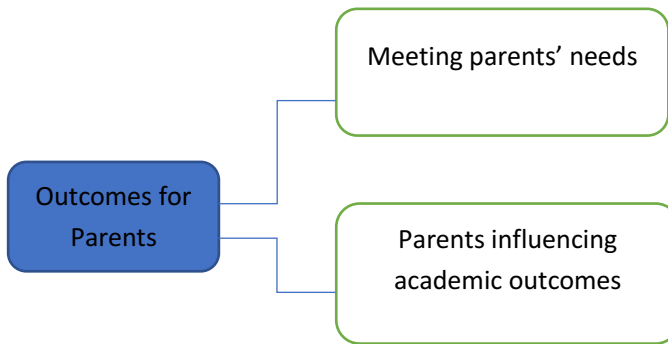


Figure 8: Research question 3, theme 1 map

##### ***Subtheme 1: Meeting parents' needs***

School staff spoke of clear benefits to parents relating to their engagement with school. These included meeting their social and emotional wellbeing needs, improving life at home, and in one example, developing new skills.

Parent wellbeing was referred to by three participants, covering parent anxiety, belonging, feeling noticed and listened to, feeling valued and having a place to talk. School staff identified that parents were able to access support and feel a sense of connection and belonging by engaging with their child's school. This is highlighted in the extracts below:

*‘hopefully them feeling that school is this place where there are people they can talk to’*

(Participant 6, lines 178)

*‘In secondary they have a fear of losing their children, and fear of what they had in primary, definitely. There’s an anxiety. We help with that.’*

(Participant 9, line 117-119)

One participant described how their school has taken steps in the past to support parent skills such as literacy:

*'we've had parents in the past who weren't confident with their own level of literacy, and their own ability to read. And we have supported one parent in particular with becoming more confident and going to adult literacy classes.'*

(Participant 2, line 166-168)

These extracts suggest that school serves a purpose for parents independently of their children. They describe engagement with school, and the services that school provide, rather than parents engaging with their child's education.

### ***Subtheme 2: Parents involved to gain influence***

Participants described their experience of parents whose involvement attempts to bring about influence, or a change in something in school for their child. Participant 9 describes their motives below:

*'I think some try to get involved to direct the school, you know, just think they're gonna have some sort of influence.'*

(Participant 9, line 124-125)

Participant 9 also described the impact of a 'vociferous' parent seeking to gain information relating to their child's learning, and the impact that has on the teacher involved and their knowledge of that child:

*'if you've got a vociferous parent, who is going to be sort of grilling you about this that and the other, you will make sure you know that child's data well.'*

(Participant 9, lines 183-186)

Extracts from the data indicate the possibility that school staff do not always perceive engagement from parents as positive or beneficial for school or children. Participant 9 discussed the example of parents 'over engaging' and this causing pressure on school:

*'you can over-engage, I think, genuinely, to a point of pressure'.*

(Participant 9, line 29)

Other participants described parents getting involved to be 'annoying' or to 'micromanage' their child's day, or to gain influence, as indicated in the extracts below:

*'managers that micromanage their child's day'*

*'those parents who join the PTA just to be annoying'*

(Participant 5, line 259 and 263)

*‘I think some parents get involved because they think if they’re on the PTA....they’ve got a golden ticket’*

(Participant 6, line 316-317)

Parental engagement for influence is a subtheme that was extracted from both parent and participant interviews, and appears to be understood by both groups as a negative, or damaging purpose of parental engagement.

#### 4.4.2 Theme 2 – Outcomes for children

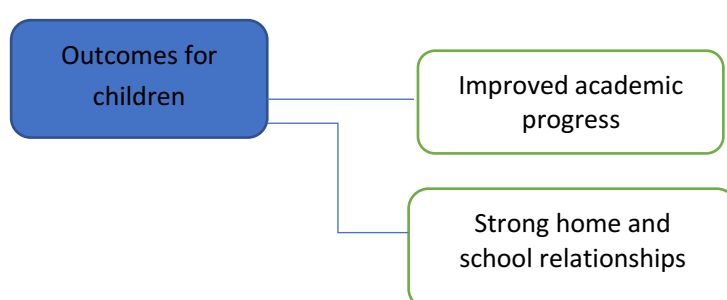


Figure 9: Research question 3, theme 2 map

This theme encapsulates school staff participants’ ideas around the outcomes for children that occur as a result of parents engaging with education. It has two sub themes which discuss children’s academic progress, and strong home and school relationships.

##### ***Subtheme 1: Improved academic progress***

Academic progress and attainment for children was presented throughout the data as a key outcome for children. Two participants spoke about the increased engagement and motivation of children themselves when parents were engaged:

*‘if the parent actually actively engages, then the chances...of the child engaging and being successful are hugely increased.’*

(Participant 9, line 72-73)

*‘from a ground level, I think we know the kids whose parents are engaged with their kid’s education, they’re the ones that actually are more engaged and more motivated most of the time.’*

(Participant 8, line 31-34)



These extracts refer to the importance of parents modelling positive behaviour to children; if children see parents engaging positively with school then they are more likely to do the same. This was similarly suggested by parents.

There was also a sense of parents going above and beyond the requirements suggested by school, and the impact that this has had on learning.

*'if they want to do things like, you know, visit the museum before they do the Egyptians, see the play. They can really up the ante but even at a basic level, they can just understand what's going on and therefore help their child'.*

(Participant 9, line 56-59)

*'I remember visiting one parent and she had almost an EYFS garden, she had all the zones, a writing zone. I knew when that child came to school she would be amazing. I knew she would be able to write her name, I knew she would know all the letters'.*

(Participant 2, line 79-83)

These participants suggest the existence of a 'hidden curriculum' for parents- whilst it is not expected that parents should engage in any way further than directed, or indeed written anywhere, school staff feel that those who do bring about greater academic benefits for their children.

### ***Subtheme 2: Strong home and school relationships***

Relationships have been a prominent theme throughout the entire dataset. School staff described the importance of children being aware of home and school working together, and the impact that can have upon transition between home and school, and school behaviour management. Participant 5 describes this as the importance of home and school '*showing a united front*' (line 28).

Participant 5 spoke of home and school working together to support school behaviour management and the positive impact that can have on a child. They suggest that home and school agreement helps a child feel comfortable with decisions as highlighted below:

*'it gives them the security of knowing that it helps their family agree with what they need to do, and that they have confidence in'.*

*'it means that they [parents] will feel comfortable with a decision and be able to show a child that they feel confident with that decision. So it has a better outcome for that child'*

(Participant 5, lines 60-61 and 84-86)

These extracts suggest that home and school working together, particularly in an area such as behaviour management, may increase conformity for children, and that a lack of conflict between home and school makes it easier for them to comply with the decision. This in turn makes school behaviour management more straightforward.

Participant 5 spoke about the importance of school staff working to ‘*understand the demographic of the community*’ (line 110) and using this information to develop relationships. They went on to describe working with ‘difficult’ families, and how the work in relationship building made life easier for other staff in school:

*‘it’s about forging relationships with the difficult families, you know, just to smooth the way for people’.*

(Participant 5, line 203-204)

In this extract, Participant 5 is suggesting that working with ‘difficult’ families may be more challenging, and that their ‘forging’ a relationship between home and school will make things more straightforward for others.

#### 4.4.3 Theme 3 – Factors affecting parental engagement

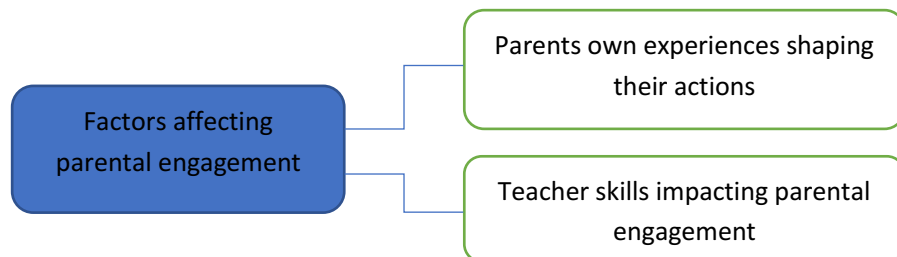


Figure 10: Research question 3, theme 3 map

This theme relates to the factors identified by school staff participants that have an impact on parental engagement, and can be helpful or hindering to relationships. This is divided into two subthemes – firstly, the impact of parents’ own experiences (as perceived by school staff) on their engagement, and the skills of teachers and their impact on parental engagement.

##### ***Subtheme 1: Parents’ own experiences shaping their actions***

All 5 school staff participants spoke about their perceptions of parents’ experiences, and how they have shaped their engagement with their child’s education. Participants 9 and

6 spoke of parents being ‘fearful’ of engaging with education, based on their own experiences:

*‘they are fearful of school from their own experiences’*

(Participant 9, line 152)

*‘there’s still a lot of fear about coming into school for some parents if they didn’t have a good experience’*

(Participant 6, line 135-136)

Staff in these extracts state that parents who have a negative or frightening experience of school have maintained those fears into adulthood, and as a result are less likely to be willing to engage with their child’s school.

In addition, two participants described parents’ ‘understanding’ of school academic language and how that can limit their ability or desire to become engaged:

*‘some people literally, academically for want of a better phrase, are overwhelmed and just don’t really understand what’s expected of them.’*

(Participant 9, line 153-155)

*‘The amount of parents that would sit there and be frightened of what they’re listening to because they don’t understand it’*

(Participant 6, line 390-391)

These extracts suggest that parents who have had a negative experience of education in their own childhood, or parents for whom academic language is challenging are less likely to be able to engage positively with their child’s education. This also impacts upon the behaviours modelled to children. Participant 2 describes the impact that this can have upon children.

*‘I think the children’s reaction to school is certainly influenced by their parent’s opinion of school.’*

(Participant 2, line 145-147)

### ***Subtheme 2: Teacher skills impacting parent engagement***

Secondary school participants spoke about the impact that staff skills can have when developing parental engagement, and all describe it as something that ‘*not all staff get right.*’ (Participant 8, line 250)

Participant 5 acknowledged that for staff, contacting some parents is difficult and explained how this can affect the subsequent conversation:

*'we've all got the parents we dread calling. I think sometimes, unfortunately, because we dread that, we've put our little barriers up and the way we speak to people is probably more formal and less engaging than it would be normally'*

(Participant 5, line 238-240)

Participant 9 discussed assumptions that schools can make about staff and their ability to engage parents in a meaningful way:

*'school has an enormous role to play in enhancing parental engagement. And I think school makes lots of assumptions in its ability to do so'.*

(Participant 9, line 81-82)

They went on to describe how staff receive *'very little training'* (line 96) in engaging with parents, and that schools often have assumptions that staff have *'high emotional intelligence'* (line 87) when this is not always the case. When explored further, they suggested that schools should:

*'train staff in how to make that contact, or to minimise who makes that contact, because bad contact is really damaging, it can make parents feel alienated, humiliated, and that blocks engagement'*

(Participant 9, line 96-99)

#### **4.4.4 Summary of Research Question Three**

Research question three investigates what school staff say the purpose of engagement is. Similarly to parent participants, staff identified that parental engagement meets a need for parents and described support for wellbeing and adult learning opportunities. Staff also explained that some parents engage to try and gain influence in school, and that this is often unhelpful and perceived as negative by school staff.

School staff discussed the benefits for children that parental engagement can bring about, including an increased likelihood of better academic outcomes. Participants suggested that this could be through parents modelling positive behaviour, and offering additional rich learning opportunities at home. Staff also discussed the impact of parental engagement on children's conformity, and how parents supporting school decisions can impact upon children's likelihood to accept sanctions.

School staff also identified potential factors which affect parental engagement. They described how parents' own experience of school have affected their engagement with their child's education, and suggested that parents who have had a negative experience themselves are less likely to engage positively with their child's school.

Staff also discussed the impact of teacher skill on successful parental engagement and explained that many teachers are not trained in working with parents, and do not always ‘get it right’.

#### 4.5 Research Question 4 – What are the Foucauldian Themes Identified from Parents’ and Schools’ Accounts?

Research Question four: What are the Foucauldian themes identified from the parents’ and schools’ accounts?

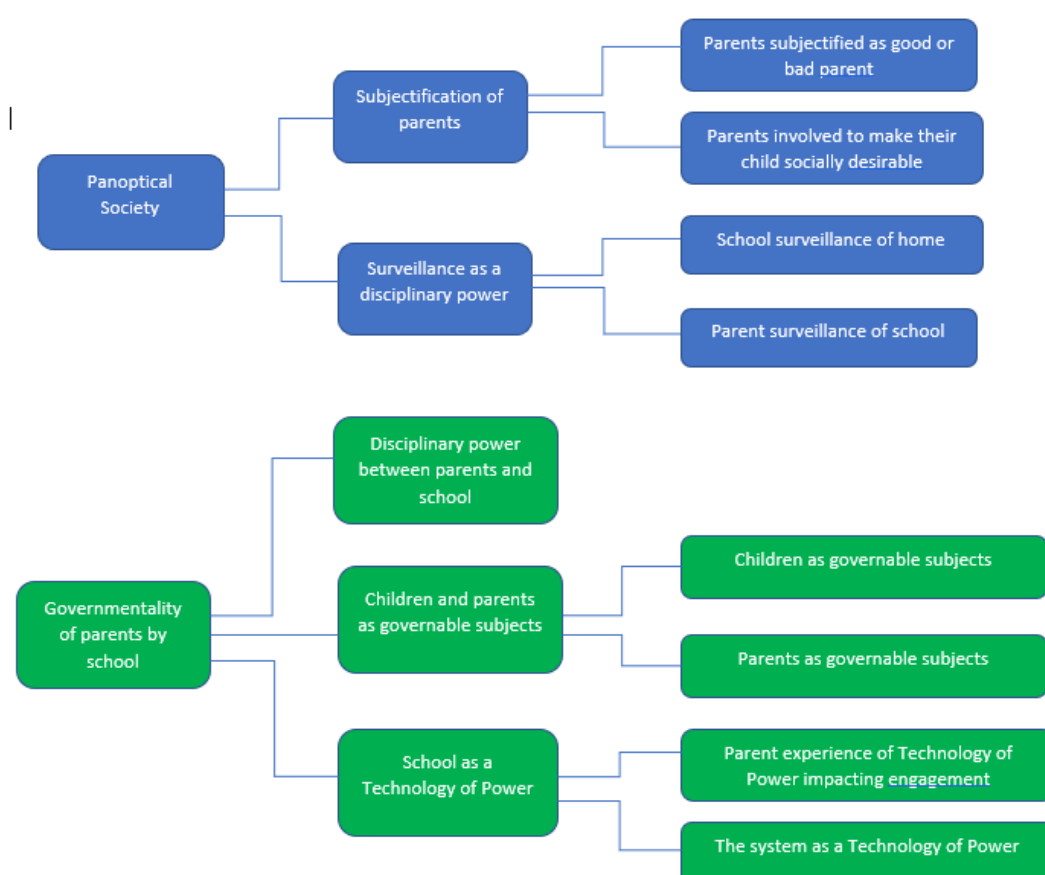


Figure 11: Research question 4 thematic map

Two Foucauldian themes were identified from the dataset, along with five superordinate themes and seven subordinate themes. The superordinate themes were then manipulated to produce an analytic narrative using a Foucauldian lens as a framework for organisation.

The thematic map for this research question can be found in figure 11 above.

The two main Foucauldian themes identified are Panoptical society and Governmentality (of parents by school). These will be tackled individually, along with their superordinate and subordinate themes. As in Research Question 1, these themes span the entire dataset and represent the accounts of both school staff and parents. Again, the thematic map does not represent the occasionally disparate voices of participants, and they are represented in the accompanying analytic narrative.

#### 4.5.1 Foucauldian Theme 1 – Panoptical Society

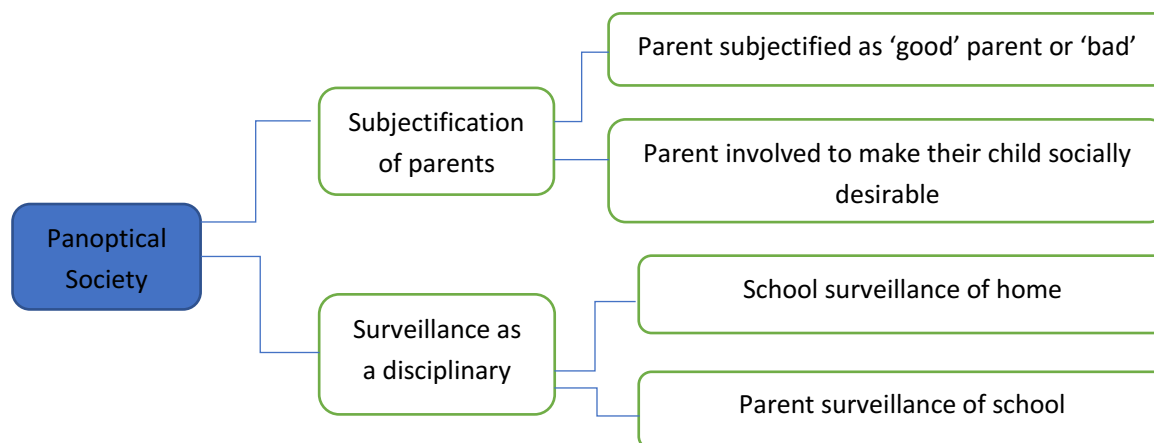


Figure 12: Research question 4, Foucauldian theme 1 map

A key concept underlying Foucault's theory of regulatory control is that of surveillance through panopticism. Foucault regarded the panoptic as a symbol of the disciplinary society of surveillance. He argued that knowledge makes us a subject because in order for us to make sense of ourselves we must have the ability to refer back to other types of knowledge. However, to be part of a certain system we are also allowing ourselves to be subject to judgement, surveillance and for our attitudes to be moulded in a certain way (Schirato, Danaher & Webb, 2012).

#### Superordinate Theme 1: Subjectification of parents

##### *Subtheme 1: Parents subjectified as good or bad*

Within this theme, participants discussed 'good' and 'bad' parents, and described factors which placed them, or others into the good or bad categories. Although data were analysed from across the entire data set, it was only parent participants who described themselves or other parents as good.

From a Foucauldian perspective, the act of subjectification of parents refers to how the regulation of themselves or others constitutes them as subjects (Højholt & Kousholt,

2019). Within the data, two participants described doing things because parents ‘have’ to do them in order to be viewed as acceptable. Participant 1 describes attending a Christmas play:

*‘as abhorrently awful as children’s plays are at Christmas, you know, we will have to go and do these things because it’s, you know, it’s what you do... rarely would you get anybody not going to it.’*

(Participant 1, line 124-127)

This extract offers an example of a parent attending because ‘it’s what you do’ and suggests that it’s also what everyone else does; it would be rare for a parent not to attend. Participant 4 also explored this idea in the extract below:

*‘you don’t have to go, but then in a way you do, because otherwise your child is the one that hasn’t got, they’re looking for their mummy.’*

(Participant 4, line 125-6)

Other parents spoke of their ‘duty as a parent’ (participant 3, line 64) to engage with their child’s education and of their ‘ego’ (Participant 3, lines 119 and 125)- a need to feel that they are doing the right thing.

Foucault (1997) described subjectification as the way the individual turns himself into a subject of health, sexuality or conduct. Subjectivity is produced by knowledge and power through dividing practices, such as the need to separate the good from the bad. Extracts from the data offer examples of parents’ subjectification of themselves or others as ‘bad’ because they are not engaging with their child’s education.

Participant 4 described examples of their own challenging experiences as a parent.

*‘I didn’t even get the photos in once. I had to redo them when it came around again, because I’m so embarrassed.’*

*‘there’s a definite guilt thing as well, with working mums that we feel that we’re not doing a good enough job if we can’t do everything’*

*‘you always feel that...if you don’t make it and everyone else is there, that your child is going to be the one left out’.*

(Participant 4, lines 383-384, 258-259 and 117-119)

These extracts use the words ‘embarrassed’, ‘guilt’ and ‘left out’. The participant talks about their child feeling left out, because everyone else has a parent there – the

behaviour of other parents is causing this parent to identify as 'bad'. The participant appears to be striving to be a socially constructed version of good.

Participant 3 described their experiences of other parents' lack of engagement and the impact that had on children and teachers:

*'I don't think you can say your children matter, but then not be interested for six hours a day'.*

*'then you've got parents who are not interested, and no matter how hard you try, you're never going to get those parents interested'*

(Participant 3, line 82-83 and 143-144)

Through these reflections, particularly describing parents who do not engage as 'not interested', Participant 3 appears to subjectify parents who do not engage as 'bad' parents. The same participant previously described engagement as a 'duty as a parent' (line 64). In essence, parents who engage are doing their duty, parents who do not are not.

Parent participants also discussed their views that school staff subjectify parents as bad when they don't engage – some assuming the perspective of a teacher to offer their views. This is highlighted in the extracts below:

*'she used to look down on people, that maybe weren't present, or there, when they weren't helping with homework'*

(Participant 4, line 242-243)

*'you sort of see that they, they're not really bothered about their children's education, that is the view of a practitioner'*

(Participant 7, lines 257-258)

The participants in the extract identified school staff as subjectifying parents as good or bad based upon their actions relating to their engagement with school. In the last extract, participant 7 appears to state a clear view and follows it by stating that it is the view of a practitioner.

One staff participant spoke of parents' actions, and how they, as a member of school staff view them. In the extract below, they speak of parents' good intentions, and attempts to be a 'good' parent not being viewed as such:

*'what they think might make their lives better is not necessarily what will make their lives better'.*



(Participant 5, line 248-249)

This view is made possible by society and school giving parents particular subject positions, e.g., bad parents do not know what is best for their child.

### ***Subtheme 2: Parents involved to make their child more socially desirable***

Along with parents subjectified as good or bad, participants connected parental engagement with a parental desire for their children to be socially desirable. In striving to be a part of the social norm, parents are attempting to promote their children into a position of desirability. This is summed up by participant 3 in the extract below:

*‘there is definitely part of the parental engagement that is “mine have got to fit, my children have to fit into a certain criteria or box.”’*

(Participant 3, line 188-189)

The same participant spoke of other parents being in the ‘*Mummy Mafia*’ (line 178) and described other parents talking to the headteacher every day to ‘*always have his ear, they always sought him out*’ (line 204), as a means of advancing their children. They describe the parent needing the child ‘*to be seen in the playground, to be involved in everything*’ (line 180). This interpretation suggests a social hierarchy created within the school, and parents behaving in a certain way in order to advance their child to climb the hierarchy.

Other parent participants discussed this when describing the actions of other parents, using phrases such as ‘*make their presence known to the school*’ (participant 10, line 121) ‘*favourable or preferential treatment*’ (Participant 10, line 123), parents ‘*that might have ulterior motives*’ (Participant 7, line 127), and children receiving ‘*preferential treatment if they engage a bit more*’. (Participant 7, line 129).

### **Superordinate theme 2: Surveillance as a disciplinary power**

In his work *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) stated that ‘our society is not one of spectacle but of surveillance’. He described surveillance as a disciplinary power, and one that can be used by any institution. This superordinate theme explores the notion that surveillance of home by school and school by parents is a disciplinary power – a means for home and school to be constantly monitoring of each other in order to produce power and knowledge.

### ***Subtheme 1: School surveillance of home***

Both parent and staff participants spoke of the value of school gaining knowledge of home, and a child's home life. Participant 2 describes their understanding of the purpose in the extract below:

*'it gives you a really valuable insight about the child's home life, it was amazingly eye opening for understanding where a child has come from, what kind of environment they've come from and how chaotic their home life is'.*

(Participant 2, line 74-77)

This extract describes seeking knowledge in the terms 'insight' and 'eye-opening' and 'understanding' the type of home that the child lives in.

Participant 3 appears to support this approach. When discussing parents who do not engage with school, they advocated '*looking behind the curtain to find out why*' (line 277), and stating '*I'm all for looking beyond the obvious to find out what's really going on for that family*' (line 286). This indicates that parents may not invite school 'in' to gain knowledge or insight into their lives. This is further explored by participant 2, who spoke of a need for school to initiate contact with parents:

*'school need to lead it, because not all parents will reach out to the school. Not all parents feel like they should reach out to the school and tell us something that's happening'.*

(Participant 2, line 96-98)

Participant 7 described how a change in a child's behaviour '*could indicate that something has happened at home*' (line 77) and that school should know about it because '*then the school are able to deal with it*' (line 78).

The parent and staff participants identified above appear to have identified school surveillance of home as important to parental engagement, regardless of parents' desire or consent, and a key to child wellbeing.

### ***Subtheme 2: Parent surveillance of school***

Staff and parent participants explored the concept of parents' surveillance of school in order to gain knowledge. In the extract below, participant 3 described it as a need to gain understanding of issues:

*'Because if I know what's going on at school, then it's easier to get to the bottom of issues, it's easier to approach a teacher and ask what's happened.'*

(Participant 3, line 121-123)

Participant 1 described their surveillance at school as down to being inquisitive:

*'I'm generally quite an inquisitive person. I want to know what's going on. I want to understand how they've been educated'*

(Participant 1, line 196-197)

These extracts suggest that parents engage in surveillance in order to gain knowledge. However, participant 3 described a need for parent surveillance to meet their own needs and to use knowledge to gain control or power. This is highlighted in the extracts below:

*'parents just couldn't cope if they didn't know practically every minute of every day what was going on...the thought that they didn't know what that child was doing at a set point, who they were talking to'*

*'it's a bit of control as well, there's quite a big jump to let your kid go off and do what they want to do'*

(Participant 3, lines 199-201 and 208-209)

The extracts describe parents using surveillance of school as a means of gaining knowledge or power.

Two school participants offered thoughts on parental engagement relating to knowledge of the school day, and offer apparently differing opinions. Participant 8 describes it as something that 'most' parents do:

*'I think you'd like to know, generally what your kids are up to, what they're doing and how they're progressing. Most parents I think want to know that'*

(Participant 8, line 56-58)

However, participant 5 offered a differing viewpoint and suggested that close parent surveillance may be not in the best interests of the child:

*'For the managers that micromanage their children's day, they need to go and do something for themselves and let their children get on with it when they're in school'*

(Participant 5, line 529-531)

#### 4.5.2 Theme 2 – Governmentality of parents by school

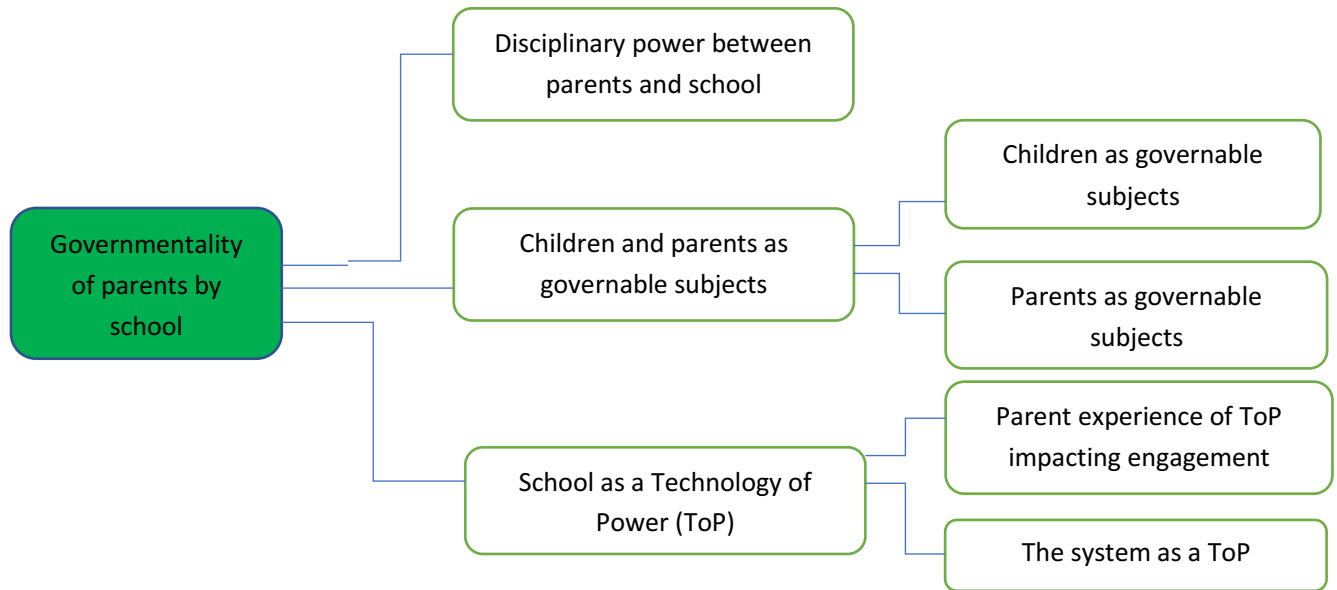


Figure 13: Research question 4, Foucauldian theme 2 map

Foucault's (2003) concept of 'governmentality' involves consideration of societal and governing policy and practices and how this influences institutional practices (e.g., the institution of education) from a distance. Foucault suggested that certain practices exist to create, regulate and maintain government ideologies. Within this research, themes were identified around the governmentality of parents by school, of the disciplinary power operating between home, school and child, and school and the system as technologies of power.

#### Superordinate theme 1: Disciplinary power between school and parents

This theme explores power operating between parents and school. Two participants discussed 'disagreements' between home and school, and the need for those disagreements to be resolved. Participant 7 (parent) described it as a potential for issues:

*'if the school and home disagree on something, I think that's where some issues can come in, actually, the child's in the middle of it'*

(Participant 7, line 37-38)

Participant 5 suggested that disagreements should be kept away from the child in order to present a united front:

*'if we need to disagree on something, I think we should be able to do so constructively but not in the hearing of the child, or the knowledge of the child...because actually we need to thrash out our differences, in a private room and present a united front'.*

(Participant 5, line 30-35)

This extract acknowledges that home and school may disagree but suggests a need for a 'united front'. There is no suggestion that either home or school is right, or holds more power, but a clear paternalistic message that children should not be involved in decision making.

School staff participants used terms such as 'fighting' (Participant 2, line 206) and 'battles' (participant 2, line 206, and participant 5, line 37.) Participant 5 expressed how sometimes engaging parents can be difficult:

*'Some that are just really hard to engage, that are very difficult, sort of almost evasive. And I can see how it would be draining'.*

(Participant 2, line 211-212)

It is interesting to note the terminology used in the extracts above. 'Fight', 'battle' 'difficult' are all terms which describe a power struggle, suggesting that there needs to be a 'winner' or someone who emerges with the power. Similarly, the notion of parent resistance to school engagement; participant 5 describes how with parents perceived to be 'difficult' staff need to be 'more gentle and more human' (Participant 5, line 243) in order to avoid retaliation 'otherwise we're probably going to get a mouthful' (line 244). The battle metaphor continues with both parents and staff competing for power and control.

School staff describe relational, proactive approaches in order to gain disciplinary control later in time. Participant 5 describes this below:

*'catch the kid doing something good in the first place, phone up their mum and tell them they did it...then they will think that lady is a nice lady. When you phone again they will be more willing to listen to you'.*

(Participant 5, line 225-227)

Participant 9 suggests a similar proactive approach of 'inviting people in a proactive way, before things get bad' (line 250). These approaches indicate that school are taking measures to hold disciplinary power through their actions. Although power is operating between parent and school, the ultimate product of the power is the disciplinary control

of the child. School is acting in a particular way now to influence the decisions that parents will make in the future around disciplinary control of the child.

## **Superordinate theme 2: Children and parents as governable subjects**

This theme refers to practices used by school and parents to regulate behaviour and produce individuals who are ‘governable’ both by school, and the government.

### ***Subtheme 1: Children as governable subjects***

Two participants discussed management of children’s behaviour, relating to both school and home. Participant 10 described their role as a parent as someone who needs to encourage their child otherwise *‘she will take her foot off the gas’* (line 118), and to manage their behaviour as *‘if you give a kid an inch they’ll take a mile’* (line 49). They suggest that as a parent they need to maintain surveillance in order for their child to behave in a desirable way. They refer to the child being aware of their knowledge as a parent:

*‘it’s a case of letting her know that we’re aware of what’s happening, you know, if she’s not handed in pieces of homework, or not concentrating in class.’*

(Participant 10, line 52-53)

This suggests that they are in contact with school, and that the two are communicating to regulate the child’s behaviour. The same participant describes supporting school *‘so they know they’ve got the backing of the parents’* (line 71) in order for the school *‘to be a little firmer with the children’* (line 72).

In the following extract, Participant 5 describes school working closely with home to present the previously discussed united front, in order to make the child more likely to comply with a decision.

*‘it takes some of the argument out of their internal battles of shall I, shan’t I – if your mum has said you should then obviously you should because you’ve trusted your mum all your life.’*

(Participant 5, line 68-70)

The extract suggests that children will trust their parent’s decision, and that school can use this to increase the likelihood of compliance.

### ***Subtheme 2: Parents as governable subjects***

This theme explores the notion of parents as governable subjects who are subject to disciplinary power from school staff. Parent cooperation was viewed as necessary for compliance from children; parents are governed by school, in order for them to in turn govern children.

Participant 5 describes this in a range of extracts. Initially, they describe:

*‘asking parents to put aside their own life values and judgements a little bit and think about what we’re asking as a school’*

*‘Sometimes they need to trust us’*

(Participant 5, line 26-27 and line 99)

In asking parents to change or ignore their life values, school are governing the parents’ beliefs in order to gain power over the child’s behaviour. The extract goes on to explain that this helps to give the child security as their parents and school are supporting each other’s decisions.

Participant 5 explains that in their view, parents whose behaviour has not been socially desirable in the past can make life difficult for their children, and in turn difficult to govern in school.

*‘if their life experience has taught them to kick back at authority all the time, which a lot of our parents have, and they sort of allow or encourage their children to do the same, constantly fighting back at authoritarian figures, or people that have control. It means that their lives are always a battle, they’re always fighting.’*

(Participant 5, line 131-136)

This extract, and particularly the terms ‘kick back’ and ‘fighting’ return to the metaphor of a struggle for power and control between home and school. Parents who are easily ‘governable’ show less resistance.

School staff participants described ‘micro-practices’ in order to increase parent compliance with governance. Participant 6 spoke of going into the playground to develop connection before challenging conversations:

*‘going out and saying oh hello, I haven’t seen you for ages, how’s your dog, and making that initial contact, and then building that chat up a little bit.’*

(Participant 6, line 539-540)

Discussing family members was an approach described by participant 5, who described taking the formality out of conversations:

*'I will make sure that I know what their dog's called, and when they last moved, and that granny's sick. And I'll always ask after granny before saying your kid's excluded today'.*

*'I let them call me by first name, even though you don't do that in a school environment.'*

(Participant 5, lines 196-199 and 187)

### **Superordinate theme 3: School as a technology of power**

Technologies of power refer to assemblance of knowledge, instruments, persons, buildings and spaces which act on human conduct from a distance. Data within this theme refer to how school, both the buildings and the staff within it affect human conduct, particularly the conduct of parents.

School is described by many participants as a difficult place for parents to visit.

Participant 6 spoke of parent *'fear about coming into school if they didn't have a good experience'* (line 135). Participant 5 discussed the parents that have the most difficulty returning to school and explained that they are *'often the ones who will have come to this school previously'*. This suggests that their historic experiences of school mean that school acts as a technology of power now.

Participants also described *'getting them [parents] on their own turf'* (Participant 5, line 289) and meeting parents in places such as coffee shops and community centres to make engagement easier and remove the power of the school buildings:

*'I've met parents in Costa if that's what they think helps'*

(Participant 5, line 292)

*'you know, meet them in W community centre or something'*

(Participant 9, line 257)

### ***Subtheme 1: Parent experience of school as a ToP impacting engagement***

All participants discussed their understanding of the impact of a parent's own experience of school influencing the way that they engage with their children's school. Within the data, parents who are perceived to have a difficult experience of school are described as less likely to engage in their child's education. Extracts indicate that



school staff identify a correlation between a negative parental school experience and an unwillingness to return to school to support their child.

*'I imagine if you've had an awful time at school, you'd be less likely to be stepping back inside schools more than you need to.'*

(Participant 1, line 192)

*'I have seen it with my own eyes, the parents who hated school, had a bad experience, they'll run a mile from a teacher.'*

(Participant 7, line 137-138)

*'people who have had a bad time at school, yeah, are fearful of school, really fearful and awfully angry and defensive.'*

(Participant 9, line 138)

These extracts indicate that some parents experienced negativity and school exerting power upon them when they were in school. This in turn has shaped their perception of school as an institution, or even as a physical space. When expected to re-enter these spaces or systems in order to support their own children, parents identify the feelings of power and social control that they experienced in their own childhoods.

### ***Subtheme 2: The 'system' as a technology of power***

Analysis of the data identified that parents experienced a series of systems operating as technologies of power when considering engagement with education. This analysis has already described hierarchies of power and influence for parents and children, and the ways that they operate.

Within the data, a series of 'micro' systems have been identified to operate as technologies of power. These micro systems include culture, social class, academic ability, and access to technology. Put together, they represent 'the system' more broadly, and the power and knowledge that operates within it.

Participant 4 discussed the familiarity of the education system, and how that can impact upon a parent's ability to engage. In the extract below they describe the experience of a parent who was educated outside the UK:

*'one of the mums is Brazilian, and you know she was completely confused about what PE was when they were doing the meetings about the school... she was too embarrassed to ask.'*

(Participant 4, line 184)

Participant 9 discussed confidence in the system relating to social class and success.

*'people tend to think it's just a class thing or success thing. I think some people, you sort of give anyone who's been successful in school and understands the system as being confident in accessing the system.'*

(Participant 9, line 135-138)

These extracts indicate that the system is operating as a technology of power which oppresses those who have not experienced success within it (such as those from a different culture) or are of a lower socio economic group than the general community. The power within the system is divisive between those with success and those without. Participant 1 stated that people who *'have a more challenged upbringing, and have less access to funds have had a harder time learning'* (line 214-215) furthering the notion that those with higher socio economic status have an 'easier' education than those who do not. Perhaps then, social class, and more broadly the class system in the UK is a technology of power which impacts upon parents' ability to engage with education.

A further system is that of literacy. School staff identified that parents require a level of academic understanding, and literacy ability to be able to access necessary information.

This was described by participant 9:

*'the letters are always written in, you know, relatively academic language and actually sometimes quite ambiguous. So unless you understand the system, you're not really sure what's required of you.'*

(Participant 9, line 154-156)

The extract states that if you don't understand 'the system' – more specifically academic language and its nuances, then you cannot access it fully.

Access to technology and school systems of engagement are also identified as a technology of power. A number of participants commented upon the use of technology in parent engagement including emails, virtual parents evenings and events on video conferencing platforms. School using these suggests a level of understanding and knowledge from parents, and also the means to access these platforms. Participant 10 describes how this can be problematic *'if they don't have the means at home to receive an email or whatever it might be'*. (line 159) This suggests that those who don't have the equipment or the knowledge may be excluded or in some way isolated.

#### **4.5.3 Summary of Research Question Four**

Research question four explored the Foucauldian themes that were identified from the data. Two broad themes were identified: panopticism and governmentality. Extracts suggested that parents subjectify themselves as ‘good’ or ‘not good’ and sometimes subjectified others as ‘bad’ parents. Parents in the research identified a desire in themselves and others for their child to be socially desirable and to ‘fit’. This indicates that school is a socially constructed hierarchy where parents behave in a certain way to advance their child. Surveillance was identified within the data as a disciplinary power; school uses surveillance on home as a means of gaining knowledge of children’s home lives, and parents use surveillance of school to gain knowledge. Evidence of governmentality of parents by school was identified in the data. Extracts indicated that schools form relationships early to avoid resistance to disciplinary power when they really need it. Micro-practices such as familiarity with extended family and conversational techniques were described to increase parent compliance.

Analysis of the data identified a complex system of technologies of power impacting upon parental engagement including culture, social class, literacy and parent and child hierarchies.

#### **4.6 Summary of Research Findings**

The research investigated parental engagement with education, and the data generated a range of understanding and rich findings for each research question.

When considering what is parental engagement with education in the UK, participants described it as the following:

- A shared responsibility between parents and school
- Extra learning at home
- School providing information to parents
- Parents engaging with information sent home
- School using a variety of platforms to engage parents
- Openness and availability of both staff and parents
- Regular communication
- Developing positive relationships
- Something which changes as children get older

- Parents supporting school decisions
- Parents offering fundraising and practical help

Participants widely identified parental engagement as academic support which enables children to achieve better academic outcomes. Many of the points above refer to this and outline the ways that this is possible. Participants identified the importance of parental engagement, but described the need for it to be a two way process which requires effort from both home and school.

The purpose of parental engagement was explored in research questions two and three, and sought the perspectives of parents and school staff separately. The analysis organised the responses into similar themes; outcomes for parents and outcomes for children. Parents and staff identified clear benefits for parents including access to support services and opportunities to develop their own skills. Parents went on to describe how engaging with school can impact upon their ego – an understanding that good parents engage with school. Parents also identified that some parents engage to seek reassurance, or because they have difficulty with lack of control of their child's daily life.

Both groups identified academic outcomes for children as a key purpose. Parents and staff indicated that parents modelling positive behaviour and engagement was influential for children's outcomes, and meant that children were more likely to engage positively with school as a result. School staff identified this an increased likelihood of children's acceptance of sanctions if parents were positively engaged, and if the relationship between home and school was positive.

However, parental engagement was not perceived by participants as an exclusively positive endeavour. Parent participants described some parents with 'ulterior motives' who wish to promote their child above others or seek preferential treatment. Similarly, school staff described parents who 'over engage' or those who are 'vociferous' and cause additional pressure on school, as well as those who join the PTA for a 'golden ticket'.

School staff identified potential barriers for parental engagement, including parents own negative experiences of school. Analysis suggested that this could reduce likelihood of parental engagement, and provide negative modelling for children who may be less likely to form a positive relationship with school. Staff also explored the skillset

necessary for ‘good’ parental engagement, and highlighted a potential deficit in training for school staff. Extracts described the potential for negative engagement to cause damage to parent and school relationships, and a need for school staff to have ‘high emotional engagement’.

Power, and how it operates between people and institutions was at the heart of the analysis for research question four. Two broad Foucauldian themes were identified within the accounts of staff and parents: Panopticism and Governmentality of parents by school. Extracts explored how parents subjectify themselves and other parents as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ parents and highlighted a desire in themselves and their children for social desirability. The use of surveillance as a regulatory and disciplinary power was identified, with both school and home using it to gain knowledge, and exert power over others. The analysis also explored technologies of power, and the impact that they have upon parental engagement. Rather than ‘the system’ or ‘the school’ operating as a broad technology of power, extracts from the data suggested a number of interwoven systems with their own hierarchies are in operation for schools and parents.

#### **4.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has outlined the themes which were identified through the thematic analysis in response to the 4 research questions. Each research question was illustrated with a thematic map, and themes then outlined in turn, accompanied by extracts from interviews with participants. The next chapter aims to discuss these findings in line with the research base identified in chapter 2, and provides a critical analysis of the current study. Implications for Educational Psychology practice and further research opportunities are explored.

## **Chapter 5 – Discussion**

### **5.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings in relation to the study's four research questions. For each research question, the findings from the thematic analysis in chapter four will be summarised, and links will be made to existing literature and psychological theory. The importance of these findings in relation to EP practice will be highlighted as well as the limitations of the current study and implications for future research. Finally, a conclusion of the research will be stated.

### **5.2 Reflective Synthesis of the Research Findings**

This research set out to explore the answer to four research questions in relation to parental engagement with education:

1. What is parental engagement with education in the UK?
2. What do parents say the purpose of their engagement with school is?
3. What do school staff say the purpose of their engagement with parents is?
4. What are the Foucauldian themes identified from parents' and schools' accounts?

This section considers the research questions in turn and refers to existing literature and psychological theory.

#### **5.2.1 Research Question One: What is parental engagement with education in the UK?**

##### **5.2.1.1 School and parents receiving and sharing information**

Participants in this research all identified parents' involvement in their child's learning to be a key element in parental engagement with education. Staff described this involvement as a '*shared responsibility*' (participant 8, line 18) which suggests a two way process. This was echoed by parent participants, who described their children continuing to learn at home, and them as parents monitoring progress at home. It is this 'monitoring at home' which underpins much of this theme. The transfer of information from school to home and vice versa was felt to be important by all participants. The level of involvement and the usefulness of the involvement appears to depend upon the quality of the information that school provide to parents. If school are providing

accurate, useful and timely information, and parents are able to receive and act upon that information, then engagement becomes meaningful and useful.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) developed a five point model of parent involvement (Appendix F). Within the model, the researchers describe parental self-efficacy as a key to parents' 'basic involvement decision' - parents with a higher level of self-efficacy for helping their child to succeed in school are more likely to engage. Considering this in light of the current research, it is interesting to explore parental self-efficacy when engaging with the information provided. Participant 9 described a three stage process that parents go through in order to engage effectively: receive information, understand the information, act upon the information. Self-efficacy can be considered as the initial stage; parents need to have a belief that they can effectively support their child before they make the decision to receive, understand or act.

Research by Feinstein and Symonds (1999) found that it is widely assumed that levels of parental engagement are fixed over time. However, most participants in the current research described engagement at secondary school as more difficult: '*they don't often want communication from me*' (participant 7, line 284) '*schools have to work harder to engage parents at secondary*' (participant 8, line 162) '*secondaries are notoriously bad, there's not many open mornings or drop ins*' (participant 9, line 253). Participants described children becoming more likely to reject their parent's engagement with education as they get older '*kids don't really want their parents to get involved*' (participant 8, line 175). Exploring this further, research by Costa and Faria (2017) suggested that children are more likely to reject their parent's involvement as they move into secondary school as they believe their parents' academic knowledge and therefore ability to support them to be lacking. This was also highlighted in Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler's (1997) model, parent skill and knowledge are influential in their decision to get involved. Comments raised by participant 9 referring to '*open mornings and drop ins*' (line 253) suggest that perhaps the type of involvement at secondary level needs to be fundamentally different to primary. If parents' engagement decision is influenced by their perceived self-efficacy in supporting their child, then perhaps a greater focus upon helping parents to understand the curriculum and provide academic support would be more useful than social events.

### 5.2.1.2 Parents supporting school

The first part of this theme refers to parents supporting school decisions. Both groups of participants expressed a view that parental engagement with education meant parents supporting decisions made by school in order for their child to succeed. Within the current research, school appear to be positioned as ‘decision makers’, with parents and school in agreement that in order for children to succeed, the decisions need to be complied with. It should be noted that the sample of parents in this research was small, and all reported themselves to be engaged with their child’s education. Participant 5 described asking parents to put their life values ‘on hold’ in order to support school. By asking parents to suspend their values, school appear to be asking them to ‘model’ a different set of expectations for their child, which will in turn increase their child’s likelihood of success. Research by Froiland and Davidson (2014) examined the associations of parental expectations for educational attainment and student behaviour at school. The authors referred to Bandura’s 2001 work on social cognitive theory and suggested that parents’ expectations are conveyed to their children, who will then change their behaviour accordingly. This finding also relates to attachment theory and Bowlby’s description of an ‘internal working model’; children develop their values and views of the world based upon their relationship with a primary caregiver. If parents are positive and engaged then children will expect the same from school staff and relationships in school. The current research supports these findings; participants describe maintaining positive relationships with school and report that their children are more likely to do the same.

‘Helping’ and ‘supporting’ school was identified by both groups of participants to be an important element of parental engagement with education. Parent participants spoke of fundraising and practical help, and felt that this brought about better outcomes for children as well as broadly making the school a better place for everyone. One participant suggested that the sense of community made *‘parents feel that they wanted to help more’* (Participant 1, line 117) which further supports the findings of Goldberg and Smith (2014) in that a sense of belonging in the school community is a predictor of further involvement. It should be noted that these comments were made by a parent who reports being engaged with their child’s education and experiences a sense of belonging.



This does not necessarily mean that for all parties' involvement with the PTA equates to engagement with education. Research by Baker (2016) found that parents perceived effective intervention as being in school doing 'useful work'. Four of the staff participants did not mention the PTA or fundraising at all, and participant 5 described parents involved in the PTA actually bringing negative consequences: '*joining the PTA just to be annoying*' (line 263). There may be a number of reasons for this – the researcher did not directly ask a question regarding fundraising or PTAs, so it may be that participants did not consider it to be relevant. The staff interviewed may not have any direct experience of or contact with fundraising, particularly in larger schools. However, there is the possibility that school staff simply do not perceive this as an important element of what constitutes parental engagement.

Research by Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) found that many parents who are seen by school as uninvolved are in fact involved but 'in ways that schools do not notice or recognise' (p. 116). The current research identified 11 broad categories of what parental engagement is, but this is by no means exhaustive. Findings identified that parental engagement may differ from school to school and even parent to parent, with different elements valued differently by groups and settings. Parents own descriptions of their engagement may differ from how school understand engagement and this research does not suggest that one is right and one is wrong. These 11 categories have implications for practice, both at a national level when considering overarching policy of what parental engagement 'should' look like, and at a local, school level when designing and implementing plans for parental engagement. This will be described more fully later in the chapter. The next research questions set out to investigate this further and to gain an understanding of the purpose of these engagements from school and parent perspectives.

### **5.2.2 Research Question Two – What do parents say the purpose of their engagement with school is?**

Research by Hornby and Lafaele (2011) described parent's goals of involvement as 'more likely to be focused upon improving their child's performance, wishing to influence ethos or curriculum'. This research question addressed the issue of parents' goals or purpose of involvement.

### 5.2.2.1 – Outcomes for parents

Within the research, parent participants were asked a direct question relating to the reasons that parents engage with their child's education. Parents responded in two ways- firstly describing their own motivations and reasons for engaging, and then offering their opinions on the reasons that other parents might be motivated to engage.

It is interesting to consider the concept of ego, as a number of participants identified it as a motivating factor for parental engagement and used the term in their accounts.

Although parents may not have been using the term in a way that Freud would necessarily recognise, it is useful to consider Freud's definition in this analysis. The researcher notes the challenge of exploring Freud's psychoanalytic approach whilst working within a Foucauldian orientation, but exploring Freud's terminology in this example is of interest. Freud's initial description of the term 'ego' was to mean a sense of self, but this was later revised to mean a set of psychic functions such as judgement, tolerance, reality testing, and synthesis of information. Freud (1923) defined the ego as 'that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world'. The ego is therefore considered to be the 'voice of reason' – there to compromise between the demands of the outside world and the needs of the id. Considering this in light of the current research, parents are stating their ego as a motivating factor for involvement. The demands of the outside world suggest that for them, the need to engage is high, and their internal id (the instinctual, unconscious component of personality, the source of needs, wants and emotional impulses) is seeking fulfilment; in this case feeling good about themselves. Parents describe engagement with their child's education as something which is good for their ego.

Maslow (1943) suggested that we are motivated to fulfil certain needs. We seek to meet these needs in a progressive manner; once we have met a basic need then we are able and motivated to fulfil those at a higher level. Our lowest level need at a particular time will preoccupy us and prevent us from considering higher level needs. Maslow used his 'hierarchy of needs to illustrate this (Figure 14). Maslow did not originally portray his work as a pyramid, but it is often illustrated this way within literature.

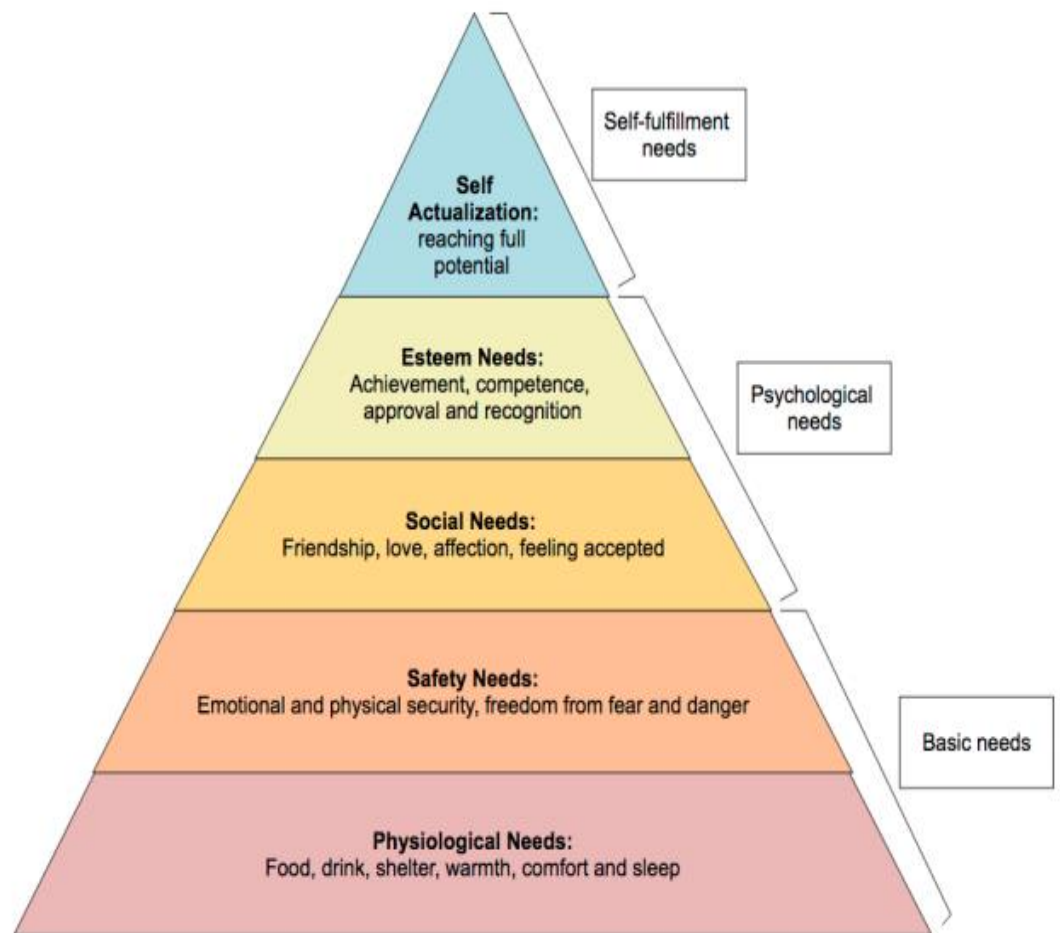


Figure 14: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943)

Motives for engagement spoken about by parents often reflected the needs in Maslow's hierarchy. Parents described meeting social needs, using school as an opportunity to spend time with friends, and also to develop a sense of belonging within the school community, both for themselves and for their children. Esteem needs were also discussed; parents engaging with school in order to feel competent as a parent used phrases such as: *'It's what you do'* (Participant 1, line 125) and *'I want to be a good parent'* (Participant 3, line 119). It is interesting to consider Maslow's self-actualisation regarding parents. Parents within the study described their child's 'potential' as a motive for engagement, but with no direct reference to this meeting their own needs, or realising their potential as a parent. It may be that parents are experiencing their child's potential being reached as a way of fulfilling their own self actualisation needs. Maslow's work is useful when considering parents who report a negative experience of education. Parents who experience feeling fear when thinking about school, or who

have not experienced success in the system may be unable to progress past stage 2 of the hierarchy. These parents will not be able to experience engagement with education as a means of meeting their social, esteem, or self-actualisation needs until they experience a system that they feel safe within.

Parents made clear distinctions about their own reasons for engagement and the reasons of others. Attribution theory explains the interpretive process by which people make judgements about the causes of their behaviour and the behaviour of others. Heider (1958) noted that people categorise the behaviour of themselves and others following a three step process – firstly to perceive or observe the behaviour, secondly to believe that it occurred intentionally and finally to attribute the behaviour to either the situation or the individual. In the current research, when describing themselves, parents were more likely to discuss altruistic reasons for engagement such as helping their child, or helping the school. However, reference to ego suggests that there is an element of meeting the expectations of the system – ‘this is what I am expected to do as a parent’.

Fundamental attribution error describes the tendency of individuals to over emphasise dispositional or personality based explanations for behaviours in others while under emphasising situational explanations. When considering the motives of ‘other’ parents, participants described factors benefitting the parents themselves, such as improving their literacy or numeracy skills, social engagement or seeking safety or support. Participants appeared to attribute this to dispositional factors relating to them needing to meet their own needs, or being people who require additional support (e.g. *‘the only social communication they get during the day is with people at school’* participant 7, line 68). This can also be explained by considering Foucault’s notion of divisive practices – parents categorise themselves and others into ‘good’ or ‘bad’ parents. The current research suggests that parents are more likely to categorise themselves as good and others as bad. This is explored further later in the chapter.

Participants discussed a need for parents to seek reassurance from school. For themselves, this was constructed as a need for reassurance, to *‘set minds at rest’* (participant 7, line 229) and to gain insight into their child’s wellbeing. Parents used nurturing, wellbeing based terms to describe this in themselves. However, when discussing other parents’ involvement in school, participants used more negative terminology – ‘control’, ‘needing to know everything’ ‘difficulty letting go’. It appears

that parents are more likely to attribute altruistic motivations for their own behaviour – making sure that their child is settled and suggesting that good parents seek reassurance. Parents discuss the motivations of ‘other’ parents by describing dispositional factors which indicate a need for control or an inability to let children be independent.

#### **5.2.2.2 Outcomes for children**

Parents in the research overwhelmingly identified outcomes and benefits for their children as their main purpose of engagement with education. Parents discussed academic outcomes as a direct benefit, and explained that their children were more likely to fulfil their potential if they as parents are engaged. It is interesting to compare this to the literature, which suggests that it is more likely that parents’ attitudes to learning bring about positive outcomes for children, rather than the quality of the engagement. The act of helping is more powerful than the help itself. Research by Cheung and Pomerantz (2014) suggests that this is attributable to parental values, and the impact that these values have upon children. They posited that when parents get involved they create experiences for children that directly heighten the value that children place on school attainment. Similarly, Froiland and Davison (2014) found high associations between parental expectations upon children, and the value that they put on education and positive academic outcomes for children. Bandura’s social learning theory (1971) suggests that children imitate behaviour that they observe in others. In this instance, parents are modelling valuing education highly and children are taking on the same views and engaging positively with learning. Parents felt that it was *‘important that children know that their education matters to you’* (participant 3, line 80), and appeared to do this by modelling positive engagement with education. One participant explained their belief that by engaging with school, they are telling their child that they matter.

There remain a number of factors which may impact upon this. As previously mentioned, social efficacy theory suggests that parents with the highest self-efficacy for helping their children will be the most likely to engage with learning. Parents own constructs relating to education will shape the value that they place upon education and attainment. Attachment theory suggests that children develop their sense of the world and expectations from their primary care giver, and therefore parents who engage and view school positively will share this value with their children. Parents taking part in

this research have explained that they value education highly, and are all engaged in some way by responding to an advertisement for study participants. Further research exploring parental engagement across a broader sample would be beneficial.

Participants noted that parental engagement may not always be beneficial for all children. Parents identified in other parents a desire for engagement in order for their child to be promoted or favoured. Phrases such as ‘making their presence known’ and ‘preferential treatment’ were used suggesting that participants felt that these parents engaging could lead their child to be better placed in a selection process than they otherwise might have been, and that the parents themselves are involved to gain influence. Referring to Hornby and Lafaele’s research (2011) on parents’ goals of involvement, this appears to fit, both with ‘improving their child’s performance’ and ‘influencing school ethos’. There is a possibility that attribution theory may be skewing participants view of ‘other’ parents mentioned – suggesting that their motivations are based upon internal dispositional factors, needing their child to do well for personal gain, and at the expense of others.

It is interesting to consider the corollary of this situation. If some parents are engaged to promote their child above others, and parents who value education successfully model these values to their children, it is one interpretation that parental engagement with education is a divisive practice. Research acknowledges that many parents face barriers to engagement (Baker et al. 2016; Goldberg & Smith, 2014) and may have constructs of the parental role which do not value engagement highly (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Does this mean that their children will achieve less success with education or in the system? This area will be discussed more fully in research question 4.

### **5.2.3 Research Question 3 – What do schools say the purpose of their engagement with parents is?**

Data within this research question was arranged into the same broad themes as research question two. It is interesting to compare the accounts of parents and school staff, particularly in light of Hornby and Lafaele’s 2011 research. As previously noted, parent goals were described as relating to gaining influence and improving children’s performance, a view which was largely supported in this research. Of staff, Hornby and

Lafaele noted that goals of parental engagement were related to increasing a sense of community, adding resources and addressing cultural inequality.

#### **5.2.3.1 Outcomes for parents**

School staff identified clear outcomes for parents as a purpose of engagement. Staff spoke of parents using school as a place to talk, to help with anxiety and accessing support for their literacy and numeracy needs. Participants identified that parents use school as a source of support for their own wellbeing, and that school serves a purpose for parents independently of their children. When speaking of their own engagement in RQ2, parents offered a contrasting view, suggesting that any outcomes for themselves were ultimately to benefit their children. This contrast may be again explained using attribution theory – school staff are more likely to view the actions of parents to be based upon dispositional factors, e.g. some parents have personalities which require them to need support, rather than the school situation requiring engagement.

Participants identified a group of parents who they felt engaged with school in order to gain influence. The notion of ego arose again, with participants describing parents promoting their children in order for them to appear to be more successful parents, or to bring about change for their child. There is a clear suggestion of hierarchy within staff accounts. Staff position parents as attempting to gain an unfair advantage for their child, or influence the system themselves. Participants used terms such as *'micromanagers'*, *'just to be annoying'* *'thinking they've got a golden ticket'* which indicates a negative view of these actions in school. Research by Meehan and Meehan (2018) may offer insight; they noted that teachers wanted to be trusted accepted and liked but also to have status or authority. Staff in this research appear to believe that parents who attempt to engage to promote their children are undermining school authority.

#### **5.2.3.2 Outcomes for children**

Staff described their beliefs that most parents engage with education in order to make their children's lives better. This broadly translated to academic progress, data from staff suggested that parents who value their children's education and understand the impact that it will have on their life will share these values with their children who will in turn experience success. Staff attributed this to social learning theory; parents modelling positive behaviour which is then imitated by children.

Two staff participants described parent activities that went beyond school expectations of parental engagement, and the positive impact that this would have on the child's academic engagement. There is much to unpick here. It is interesting to consider how parents would know what additional activities might be useful, in addition to considering how they might implement them. This additional knowledge would be gained from engaging with school to an extent of knowing what the child is learning about, and having sufficient knowledge or experience within the education system to provide additional activities. The research describes this as a 'hidden curriculum' for parents – one which is difficult to engage with without prior knowledge or scaffolding. Such additional activities may also depend upon the parents'3 construct of education, as previously explored. Parents who have experienced success within the education system, who are confident with learning and the curriculum may be more inclined to offer additional learning tasks at home. The notion of a hidden curriculum for parental engagement further highlights the potential for parental engagement to be a divisive practice – those with success in the system, knowledge and confidence are able to provide greater opportunities for their child to succeed academically.

Relationships were identified as a prominent theme throughout the dataset. School staff described the importance of children being aware of home and school working together, and the positive impact that they felt that this had upon transitions between home and school and school behaviour management. Extracts from the data identified parental engagement as a tool used by school to increase conformity in children, and to make it more likely that children will behave in a way that is deemed acceptable by school. One participant explained that if home and school are in agreement, a child will feel more comfortable with a school decision, and have confidence that it is right for them. The same participant described the importance of home and school showing a 'united front' when considering school decisions. This raises an interesting question when considering what might happen if home and school are not in agreement. Extracts from the data offer terms such as 'united front' and 'setting aside values', which indicates that school believe that their decisions are the correct decisions for that child. However, research exploring the development of children's values suggests that parents model their values to children, who in turn then imitate the behaviour (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2014). If parents have values which do not align with the values of the school decision



makers, it appears that school decision makers expect parents to set their values aside in order to align more fully with school, and therefore increase child conformity.

### **5.2.3.3 Factors affecting Parental Engagement**

All of the staff participants discussed their perceptions of parent's experiences with education, and how that has shaped the way that they are able to engage with their child's education. They offered a broad understanding that parents who had experienced fear or negativity when they were in school would be likely to have maintained those fears of school or education into adulthood. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) model (Appendix F) states that parental role construction defines parents' beliefs about what they are supposed to do as a parent. If parents had negative experiences at school, or did not value school highly themselves when they were children, they will construct a parental role which does not value engagement with education highly. However, this represents a fixed view of parental constructs and does not appear to allow for changes to beliefs as parents progress through adulthood. What a parent believes may constitute a 'good' parent is not necessarily solely shaped by their own experiences.

Research by Baker (2016) found that school staff believed that parents did not engage because of apathy, or because of a lack of value in education. The current research reflected these findings in part, with staff participants describing needing to work hard to engage some parents, that some parents are not interested and that some families are 'difficult'. This suggests that staff identified parent apathy and resistance to invitations from school as factors impacting upon parental engagement. However, it is important to note that the current research assumes a cultural expectation – that education and academic success are important. This may not mirror the cultural expectations of all parents within the UK. It is a white middle class centric view (as described by Hornby & Lafaele, 2011) that education is good, school is good and that parents who engage are good. It is easy to assume, as Baker's research suggests, that anyone differing from these views is somehow letting their child or their school down. It is worth remembering findings from Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) which suggest that many parents are involved 'in ways that schools do not notice or recognise.' (p. 116)

School participants discussed the teacher skills necessary for parental engagement. Staff acknowledged that positively engaging parents can be challenging, and is

something that ‘not all staff get right’ (participant 8, line 250). Participants described a lack of training for staff in communicating with parents, and a broad assumption made by school leadership teams that staff are skilled in this area, when that may not be true. It is worth considering staff motivation to contact parents. Research by Meehan and Meehan (2018) found that teachers have a ‘desire to collaborate with parents but also have clear behavioural expectations about how parents should relate to them as teachers’. (p. 1756) The research also found that teachers wanted to be liked by parents, but also positioned themselves as professionals who should have ‘status or authority’. Hodge et al. (2008) offer the suggestion that barriers to effective relationships between teacher and parents arise ‘due to the hierarchies of knowledge that potentially create an imbalance of power’ (p. 638). If school staff are directed to communicate with families whom school categorise as ‘difficult’, this may pose a direct threat to that member of staff’s ‘status or authority’, particularly if they are expecting resistance.

#### **5.2.4 Research Question Four – What are the Foucauldian themes identified from parents’ and schools’ accounts?**

Two major Foucauldian themes were extracted from the data; firstly, the notion of Panoptical society which considers the surveillance of individuals in order for them to be subject to judgement. Secondly governmentality which focuses upon societal and governmental policy and practice and how that impacts upon society from a distance through institutions such as schools.

Throughout the dataset a metaphor of ‘battle’ was clear between parents, school and children. Foucault described such conflicts as ‘immediate struggles’ and explained that people ‘criticise instances of power that are closest to them which exercise their action on individuals. They do not look for the ‘chief enemy’ but for the immediate enemy’ (Foucault, 1982, p. 330). In this instance, individuals such as children, parents and school seek to ‘criticise’ and battle with each other rather than with the ‘chief enemy’ of the government or education system. Power and governmentality are at stake in parental involvement, and regulation takes place in the interplay between the parties involved.

#### 5.2.4.1 Panoptical Society

Foucault (1977) described panopticism as a move from ‘inquiry’ to ‘surveillance and examination’ and focused upon ‘whether an individual was behaving as he should, in accordance with the rule’. Within this research, subjectification of parents refers to how parents’ regulation of themselves and others constitutes them as subjects.

Parents identified what a good parent does through demonstrable actions, and what they identified to be parental ‘duty’. Participants discussed the expectations that good parents have, and the sense of duty to engage with their child’s education ‘*because y’know, it’s what you do*’. (Participant 1, line 125). Parents readily used dividing practices in order to separate ‘good’ parents and ‘bad’ parents and offered examples of bad parents failing to engage, or in some instances simply not behaving in the same way as everyone else. Participants described striving to be a socially constructed version of ‘good’ which exists in that way because all other parents are doing it. Research by Bae (2017) found that through governance, one form of reality or a ‘norm of being’ becomes more desirable and conceivable. Parents within this research describe the ‘norm’ of being a parent and the activities that are expected (attending Christmas plays, returning school photographs, attending school events) and present this as the most desirable way of parenting. Anyone who does not live within this norm is therefore subjectified as bad. Participants described parents who do not engage with education in the way that the good parents have deemed to be the norm as ‘not interested’ and that their children ‘don’t matter’.

It is interesting to consider how the notions of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ parents are formed. As previously described, it is the norm of being which makes one way of behaving more desirable or conceivable. Foucault argues that governmentality, and power operating through institutions such as schools creates this norm in an attempt to shape society into productive and useful citizens. (Bae, 2017). This is supported by Hornby and Lafaele’s research (2011) which stated that ‘good’ parents meet particular expectations, and have a cultural capital that matches with the school. It is school which determines the expectations, and the norm.

Parents’ descriptions of the practice of parents promoting their child above others highlight a hierarchy within social desirability. Within the research, parents connected parental engagement with parental desire for their child to be more socially desirable.

Participants spoke of their child '*having to fit*' (participant 3, line 188) needing to be '*seen in the playground*' (participant 3, line 178) and parents using engagement to '*make their presence known to the school*' (participant 10, line 121). Parents appear to be using parental engagement as a means of increasing their child's cultural capital and so moving up the hierarchy.

Within the current research, surveillance was identified as a disciplinary power – a means for home and school to be constantly monitoring each other in order to produce power and knowledge. Analysis of the data revealed a clear expectation from school that parents should allow school 'in' to gain knowledge of what is happening at home. Staff described gaining an '*understanding of where a child has come from.....how their home life is*' (participant 2, line 77) and '*looking behind the curtain to find out*' (participant 3 277). Research by Keogh (1996) discovered that panopticism is evidenced in home and school communication via parents positioning themselves and each other as agents of surveillance. The study described boundaries that parents and school negotiate in order to regulate student bodies in time and space. The purpose of the surveillance in the current research appears to serve a similar purpose. Parent participants described wanting to know what's going on at school in order to know what their children are learning, but also to maintain an element of control over their child and to know what they are doing at any given moment. School participants described wanting to gain knowledge of home life in order to understand the child better.

Keogh (1996) also explained that teachers and parents have 'territories of responsibility' with each positioned as an expert in their own field – teachers are school experts and parents are home experts. Within the current study, difficulties occur when the boundaries of these territories have become blurred, particularly when a parent has already been subjectified as 'bad' by not adhering to the expected norms of parent behaviour. Participant 5 described how parents who try to 'micromanage' their child's day '*need to go and do something for themselves and let their children get on with it*'. (participant 5, line 531). This indicates a resistance from school, of parents trying to gain additional knowledge or power through surveillance of their child. The extract from school is quite clear that this is crossing the line of what is the 'school territory' of responsibility.

#### 5.2.4.2 Governmentality of parents by school

Foucault (1978) described governmentality as ‘the exercise of political sovereignty by the state over an entire population’. (cited in Faubion et al 1994, p. xxiii) Within the current research, governmentality refers to how institutional practices within organisations such as schools can regulate behaviour and maintain government ideologies from a distance. This theme explores how governmentality operates between home and school.

Within this theme, the terminology of fighting reappears. Participants used phrases such as ‘thrashing out differences’ ‘fighting’ ‘battles’ and families are described as ‘difficult’. School described expecting retaliation and needing to convince others to comply. These terms describe a competition for power and the battle metaphor suggests home and school competing. However, it is interesting to consider the ultimate ‘prize’ – it is unclear whether home and school are battling against each other in order, perhaps, to maintain their ‘territory’ (Keogh, 1996) or whether they are battling to gain power over the child. Participant 7 describes the child as ‘in the middle of it’, but participant 5 speaks of home and school presenting a ‘united front’ to the child.

Linked to this is the theme of governable subjects. Foucault (1991) stated that government operates through decentralised power. Foucault approached the modern governmental rationality as a study of what it means to be governed or governable in a particular society. His work addressed the way in which subjects are constructed by the mechanism of power either as the norm, and therefore economically useful, or abnormal and a burden on society. Ofsted, which can be viewed as a regulatory mechanism of UK government, state that school should engage parents in a way that positively supports a pupil’s education.’ Applying Foucault’s work, this may suggest that parents who engage are inviting and accepting governmentality through school, and are seeking for themselves and their children to fit into the norm and become economically useful citizens.

Within the current study, both parents and school staff described examples of children’s positioning as governable subjects. Parents described needing to monitor their child in case they ‘*take their foot off the gas*’ (participant 10, line 118) and stress the importance of ‘*letting her know that we’re aware of what’s happening*’ (participant 10, line 52). This returns to the concept of the panoptic, regulatory gaze (parents are always

watching) but also describes children needing to behave in a particular, accepted way in order to succeed and adhere to the norm.

The study also explored the suggestion that parents are viewed as governable subjects by school. Foucault described that institutions with hierarchies often position the ‘knower’ with privileged and unchallengeable status. (Foucault, 1980). Because the participants in this research are identified and recognised for who they are in terms of their status in hierarchies and what is expected of them (e.g., teacher/ parent/ child) Foucault suggests that it becomes increasingly challenging for subjects to challenge and resist what is presented to them as the truth by the system. Considering this, when staff participants describe asking parents to ‘*set aside their life values and judgements a little bit*’ (participant 5, line 26), this is made possible by the existence of a hierarchy which positions school staff as those with knowledge. In addition, Foucault (2003) describes the ‘pastor’ role as a tool to maintain social compliance; the ‘pastor’ knows what is best for the individuals within the ‘flock’. In this research, participant 5 (school staff) is acting as a regulatory body (or ‘pastor’) by knowing what is best for the body and soul of the child or parent (the ‘flock’) ‘*what they think might make their lives better is not necessarily what will make their lives better*’. (Participant 5, lines 248-249).

Work by Lavelle (2014) described how the use of micro-practices can contribute to governmentality, finding that something as simple as offering a hot drink can change how a person in an authoritative position is perceived by others lower down the hierarchy. This highlights the impact that micro-practices can have upon those who receive them. The current research identified micro-practices described by school staff when attempting to increase parental compliance with governance. Staff discussed finding out ‘*what the dog’s called*’ ‘*ask[ing] after granny*’, ‘*letting them call me by my first name*’. In isolation, these acts may be viewed as simply being friendly or developing a relationship. However, participants described using these techniques to develop connection before beginning challenging conversations requiring compliance, or to encourage parents to think ‘*that lady is a nice lady. So when you have to phone again, they will be much more willing to listen to you*’ (participant 5, line 227). It is interesting to note that none of the parent participants described micro-practices to increase compliance. This may suggest that because they are already engaged, school do not need to deploy additional ‘tools’ for compliance, or perhaps the micro-practices they experience are so small that they go unnoticed.

Foucault (1979) described how institutional power – the power of schools, the justice system and the construction of knowledge are deeply connected. Together they shape individuals' desires and the way that they understand their place in the world.

Technologies of power refer to an assemblage of knowledge, persons or buildings and how they can affect human conduct from a distance (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 103). The current research was interested in how schools; the buildings themselves, the staff within them and the systems that they represent affect the conduct of parents.

Parents experiencing fear within the school building was highlighted within the current research as something that staff were aware of. Staff described meeting parents away from the school grounds, on what may be perceived as 'neutral ground' in order to reduce the power of the school building. This appears to suggest that for some parents, their historic experience of school means that school acts as a technology of power and can affect their decision to engage with their child's education. Research by Park and Holloway (2018) offers an insight into the 'types' of parents that may be affected. From a cultural capital perspective (Bourdieu, 1987) middle class families are more likely to hold beliefs and experiences which align with school expectations, and are more likely to have had a positive experience within their own education. In contrast, those from lower income families are more likely to have experienced challenge with education and in turn experience negativity when returning.

Analysis of the data identified that parents described a series of 'micro systems' operating as technologies of power. These micro systems were described as affecting the ways that parents are able to engage. Participants identified 'success within the system' as a major factor which determines ability to engage, separated into culture and knowledge of the UK education system, social class, literacy, and access to technology. This again relates to Bourdieu's work, and findings by Hornby and Lafaele (2011) suggesting that the concept of a 'good' parent is shaped by middle class values, and cultural capital. These findings posit that those parents who have not experienced 'success' within the micro systems, or are not conceptualised as a 'good' parent will have significantly greater difficulty with engaging with education.

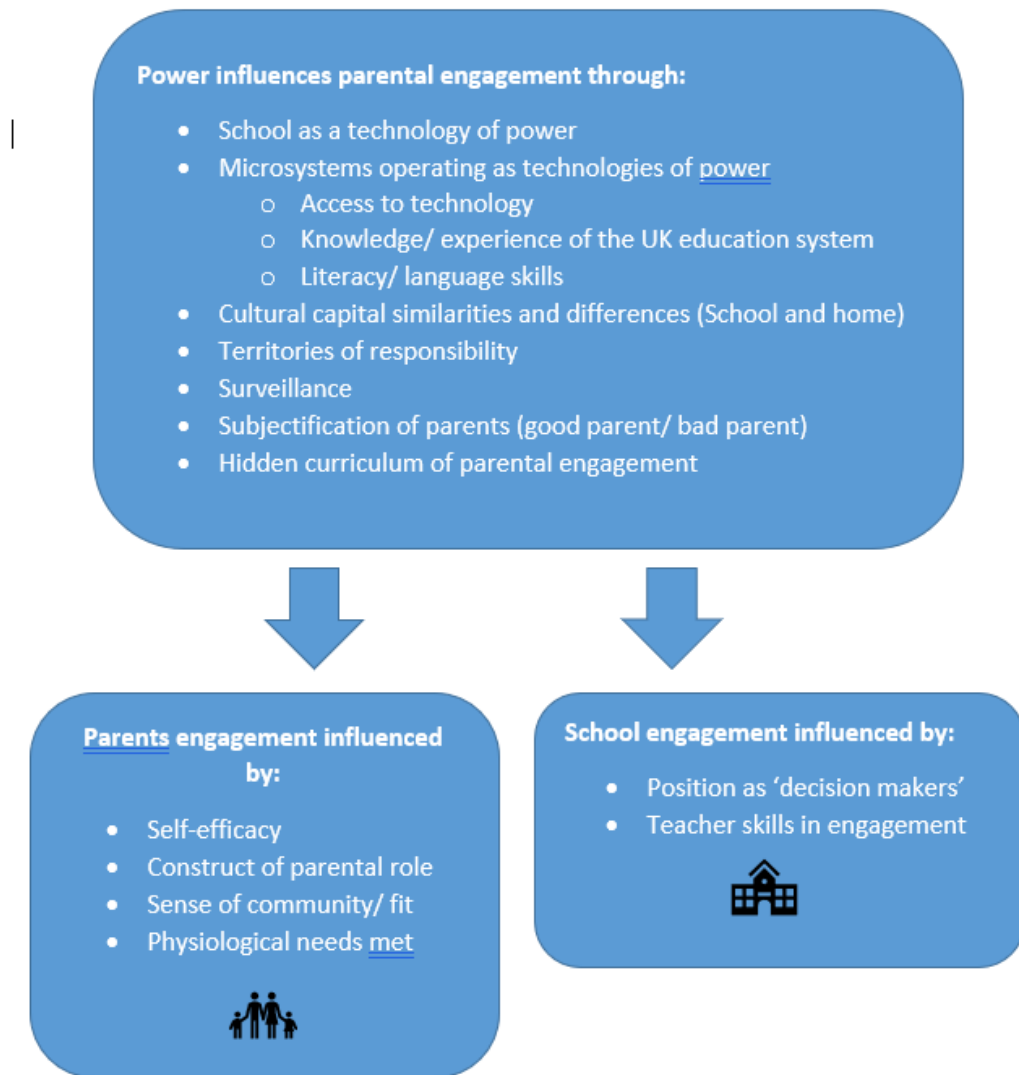
Højholt and Kousholt (2019) offer an interesting view from research conducted in Denmark. Their findings indicated that parental engagement is 'often reduced to

discussions about social background and the intergenerational transmission of parents' disadvantages' (p. 1051) and that 'child-rearing practices' adopted by middle class parents are more in sync with the standards of dominant institutions. Their research continues to state that parental engagement can be seen as a new way to govern parents, thus exacerbating the inequalities of school life. This view, coupled with the current research forms an interesting position, and suggests that the operation of power within parental engagement make it a conflictual social practice.

### **5.3 Implications of the research**

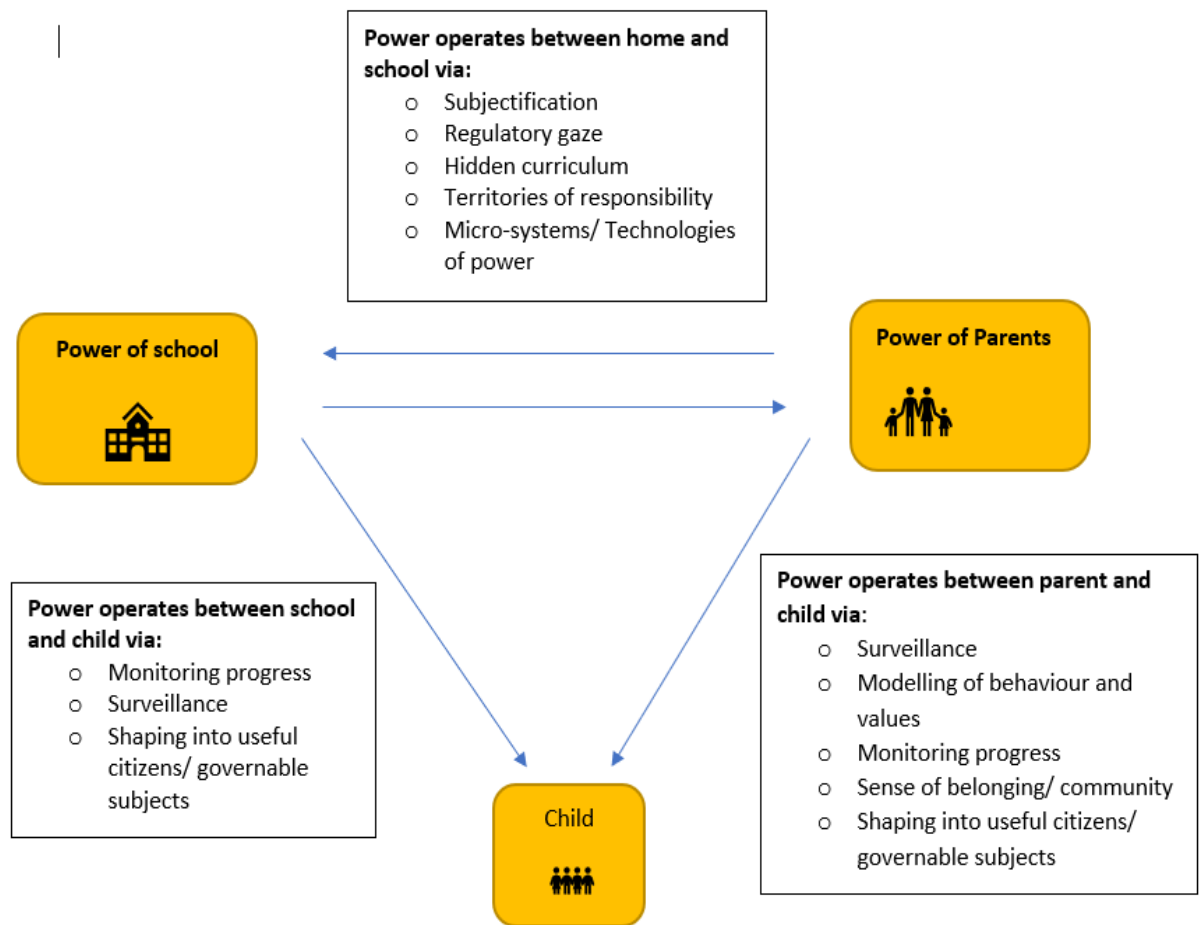
This research described the way that parents engage with education in the UK and explored the influences that affect how parents and schools engage with each other. Figure 15 depicts these influences and how they shape engagement. The top section lists the mechanisms by which power generally influences all home and school engagement; power is exerted on both parents and schools and is relational, operating between the institution and the individual. The lower two sections illustrate how parents and schools experience additional influences which also shape the way they engage.





*Figure 15- Depiction of the influences upon parental engagement.*

Figure 16 is a model of how power operates between school, parents, and the child in relation to parental engagement. It denotes that power is relational between parents and school. The research highlighted a battle metaphor between home and school, and this is depicted in the model with school and parents vying to assert power over the other. The power is two-way, and can change and shift depending upon the individual influences upon each group described in Figure 15. Power is exerted by both parents and school upon the child through the use of surveillance, monitoring, modelling of values and developing a sense of belonging within the school. Appendix S indicates how the depiction and model (Figures 15 and 16) developed from the initial findings and through the use of a rich picture.



*Figure 16: Model of how power operates between school, parents and child in parental engagement*

### 5.3.1 Implications for schools and parents

There is an absence of specific legislation or official guidance on parental engagement, and interventions, leaving plans and strategies to rely upon largely voluntary participation by schools. It is unsurprising that this then leads to uneven practice. (Hornby, 2000). Findings from the current research suggests that parents and school staff value parental engagement highly, and have constructed a broad understanding of what it looks like, and how it should be, but this varies across settings.

It is this 'how it should be' that is an important consideration. Research by Hornby and Lafaele (2011) suggested that social understanding of a 'good' parent is shaped by white middle class values and expectations and that schools are most likely to feel positive about parents who match with the cultural capital of the school. Findings from the current research suggested that schools' rules and inherent values are shaped by a

specific understanding of ‘acceptable behaviour’ and ‘good’ parents are those who adhere to those practices. It may be useful for schools and parents to reflect upon their understanding of how parents *should* be and what parental engagement *should look like*, and consider gaining a fuller understanding of the wider community that they are in.

Children appear to be at the heart of all participants purpose for parental engagement. Parents reported wanting their children to attain academic success, and schools acknowledged that children with parents who are positively engaged are more likely to achieve academic success. However, schools identified that that is more likely to be down to modelling of positive behaviour and values, and engagement with the ‘hidden curriculum’ in primary education, with a greater focus upon parental self-efficacy to offer academic support at a secondary level. Considering this, it may be useful for primary schools to focus parental engagement upon fostering a positive relationship with parents and understanding parental values surrounding education, and for secondary settings to focus upon sharing relevant academic knowledge.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) highlighted parental self-efficacy as a key influence in parental decision making around engagement with education. All parent participants within the current research displayed a high level of self-efficacy for supporting their children, and all reported current and historic engagement with education. It is important to consider the parents who may feel less confident or able to support their children with education. The research begins to explore factors which may affect this, but increasing parental self-efficacy and familiarity within the education system should be a key focus for education policy makers.

Power and how it operates between people and institutions was a key focus of the current research and is highlighted in Figures 15 and 16. Participants used repeated battle metaphors when describing home and school engagements. Keogh (1996) suggests that home and school are ‘territories of responsibility’. Findings from the current research suggested that when the boundaries of the territories become blurred, conflict occurs. This is a challenging area for education decision makers – there is no doubt that parental engagement is valuable, but it should be implemented carefully in order to allow boundaries to be negotiated.

The research findings indicated what parents and schools identified parental engagement is at the present time in the UK. These 11 categories could be used by

schools as discussion points or conversation starters to gain a greater understanding of parental engagement in their setting and to facilitate conversations between parents and school.

- A shared responsibility between parents and school
- Extra learning at home
- School providing information to parents
- Parents engaging with information sent home
- School using a variety of platforms to engage parents
- Openness and availability of both staff and parents
- Regular communication
- Developing positive relationships
- Something which changes as children get older
- Parents supporting school decisions
- Parents offering fundraising and practical help

However this is not a gold standard or a checklist of ‘how it should be’. These findings represent parents’ and schools’ views of ‘how it is now’. The research indicates that a national blanket approach is unlikely to be the most useful. Instead, schools and policy makers should consider the following points for reflection when devising an approach to parental engagement:

- Parental self-efficacy: Do parents feel able and equipped to support learning?
- Parents desire to be a ‘good’ parent
- Parent and community cultural capital vs school cultural capital
- School staff skills in parental engagement
- Potential for tensions when boundaries of home and school ‘territories of responsibility’ become blurred
- Parents own experiences of school shaping their actions and attitudes
- The school building as a Technology of Power
- The impact of ‘micro-systems’ upon parents; language, knowledge of the UK education system, literacy, access to technology
- Potential for parental engagement to become a divisive practice

In addition, parents may consider the following points when reflecting upon their own engagement with education:

- Own constructs of what ‘good’ engagement is
- Teacher skills and experience in working and communicating with parents
- Political and governmental factors determining school engagement priorities
- The potential impact of engagement on their child and other children
- Potential for parental engagement to become a divisive practice

### **5.3.2 Implications for EP practice**

Foucault (1978) described how ‘power is everywhere’ and ‘comes from everywhere’. In this way, there is no one source of ‘power’, instead it is something which is built amongst us and is constantly changing in society. It is important for EPs to consider this throughout their practice, but particularly when considering the interplay between children, families and schools.

Foucault described technologies of power as the ways that ‘persons, buildings and spaces can act upon human conduct from a distance’ (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 103). This research found that these technologies of power, presenting as a series of ‘micro systems’ can impact upon a parent’s ability to engage with school. Educational psychologists should be aware of the impact that holding meetings in school buildings may have upon parents and school staff, and of how this can affect the way in which power operates between the people and the institution. This can become particularly important when working with families who may be perceived by school as having a different cultural capital to that of the school. Billington (2000) describes the impact of EPs undertaking ‘acts of resistance’ such as refusing a cup of coffee upon arrival at school. He goes on to explain that such ‘tiny, seemingly inconsequential’ everyday occurrences can disempower children and families by highlighting the social power relationship that operates between EP and school. It is important for EPs to consider how their ‘micro-practices’ can impact upon power relations and have the potential to further disempower individuals.

Findings from the current research overwhelmingly indicated that parents who engage in their child’s education do so with good intentions for their child. However, EPs must remain aware that parental engagement may be a divisive practice. Parents who are

most likely to engage are middle class, and are likely to match the cultural capital of the school. Those who do not engage may become less connected and increasingly less able to access the system. EPs are well positioned to support parents who wish to engage but have had little experience of success within the ‘system’ or have poor self-efficacy for effective support.

## **5.4 Dissemination**

This research was undertaken within a local authority in the South East of England. Permission to undertake the research was gained from the Principal Educational Psychologist, and the headteachers of the school staff who participated, in addition to the headteacher of the school where the pilot interview was conducted. Each of these stakeholders will be provided with an executive summary of the research following the thesis viva, with a full copy available on demand. This will also be available to all parent and staff participants.

A presentation of the research findings and the implications for EP practice will be shared at a full service development day for the Educational Psychology Service in September 2021 to provide an opportunity to consider how the findings can inform the practice of the EPs within the local service.

The researcher aims to submit a research article based on the research findings following the thesis viva. The findings from this research can contribute to school and local authority guidance on parental engagement with education.

## **5.5 Strengths and limitations of the research**

### **5.5.1 Strengths of the research**

A key strength of this research is that it has gained a view of what parental engagement is in the UK at the present time. It has gained the opinions and observations of parents and school staff and generated a picture of how parents are engaging with education, why parents say that they are engaging and staff views on what parental engagement is for. The research offers a unique Foucauldian perspective on how power operates within parental engagement, and the tools and practices used by school and parents relating to it. The research explores why power is important in parent and school relationships and offers reflective points for schools and policy makers when considering the impact of power.

Semi structured interviews allowed for flexibility for the researcher to explore the views of the participants, and to ask follow up questions to gain relevant information or pursue a line of thought. The research only required a small number of interviews (10) to generate data, and the informal nature of the semi structured interview allowed for a natural, conversational style approach. This helped participants to feel at ease.

## **5.5.2 Limitations of the research**

### **5.5.2.1 Recruitment**

The small sample size in the research, and restriction to one LA limits generalisability to the wider population. Participants were self-selected, and represented the demographic of that particular LA. However, participants were not ethnically or culturally diverse. This means that caution should be taken when transferring the findings of this research to other local authorities.

Parent participants who volunteered for the research responded to an advertisement in school correspondence, or an informal conversation with a member of school staff. This means that these parents are engaging with school, and to a proactive extent enough to respond to an unknown researcher. Their response also assumes a level of language and cultural understanding, in addition to having the means to respond. The research findings cannot be generalised to include the position of parents who do not engage. An alternative method of participant recruitment to include a wider range of parent participants might be considered necessary if the research were to be repeated or expanded upon.

The recruitment of parent participants relied upon interested candidates reading a lengthy advertisement sent out via school newsletters (Appendix G). This required parents to have literacy levels which enabled them to access the text, and therefore excluded some groups of potential participants. In addition, it is interesting to reflect upon the power differential which is assumed within the letter. The researcher's position as 'Trainee Educational Psychologist' is stated, along with the title of the doctoral programme. This language may have positioned the researcher as 'expert' or 'academic' and impacted upon parents' participation decision.

Staff participants responded to direct emails sent from the EPS. Participants may have felt the need to maintain a professional relationship with the researcher (as a

representative of the EPS) and have been considering the possibility of working together in the future. This may have affected the responses offered.

#### **5.5.2.2 Data collection**

The research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore face to face interviews were not appropriate. Data was collected using semi structured interviews over online video conferencing platforms. The pandemic undoubtedly placed increased pressure upon the time and availability of both parents and school staff. Adjustments were made for this as far as possible, and interviews were offered during evenings, weekends and in school lunch breaks. This may have affected the length of time that participants had for the interviews. There is also a possibility that views of parental engagement and school actions may have been altered in light of school and parent responses to the pandemic and home learning.

The use of video technology meant that participants were restricted to those with the necessary technology to access the platform. The research advertisement stated that interviews would be held over Microsoft teams, and this may have discouraged any participants without technology, or lacking in confidence in its use.

The researcher conducted a pilot interview in order to check the validity of the interview schedule and appropriateness of wording of questions. The outcome of this interview encouraged the researcher to position themselves as ‘naïve interviewer’ rather than a professional who holds ‘inside knowledge’ of the education system. However, it should be noted that the pilot interview was only conducted with a member of school staff, and not a parent. This may have resulted in the interview schedule being more suited to school staff participants, and less accessible or appropriate for parent participants.

#### **5.5.2.3 Data analysis**

Through the use of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), it was possible to analyse the quantity and range of data collected during the interviews. However, it could be argued that this approach loses important nuance such as tone of voice, body language and hesitation. In addition, thematic analysis can lead to inconsistency and a lack of coherence when developing themes derived from the research data (Holloway & Todres, 2003). The researcher attempted to balance this by making explicit their



epistemological position and understanding the processes that cause the data to be as it is. This was reflected in the following reflective diary entry:

*'After my tutorial today, it seems really important to familiarise myself with the data and make any initial 'noticings' before even looking for codes. Phrases that stand out might be out of context, it feels important to understand the dataset before taking on any intentional analysis'.*

Reflective diary, 16 December 2020

The researcher used a deductive thematic analysis, and transcripts were coded looking for semantic evidence and latent ideas. The researcher did hold Foucauldian principles in mind whilst devising the questions for the interview schedule and whilst conducting the interviews, but attempted to prevent this skewing the data collected or the coding process by using 'bracketing'. Bracketing refers to the researcher temporarily setting aside their own assumptions in order to avoid them shaping the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). During the analysis, the researcher began with the coding of research question four relating to Foucauldian themes. The researcher felt that the themes relating to power and governmentality had been so prevalent throughout the data, that it was important to record and make sense of them before beginning the analysis of questions 1-3. The reflective diary extracts below describe this process:

*'A really good interview today! Lots of rich data and some interesting thoughts about power between home and school, and spheres of influence. Tricky not to start picking out themes already, particularly the Foucauldian ones, when the data is this interesting! Putting it to one side for now until all of the interviews are done.'*

Reflective diary entry, 12 October 2020

*'I've done phase 1 now and familiarised myself with the data. I'm going to start the initial coding with RQ4 – I think the Foucauldian themes have been a bit distracting up to now. Maybe because I find them really interesting? Once I've picked out the initial codes maybe I'll be able to see the rest of the data more clearly.'*

Reflective diary entry, 6 January 2021

## **5.6 Reflexivity**

It is argued by Sword (1999) that ‘no research is free from biases, assumptions, and personality of the researcher and we cannot remove the self from those activities in which we are intimately involved’. (p. 277) The researcher was aware of this, and as a result practiced a number of reflexive strategies throughout the work to attempt to reduce the impact that they had on the findings.

The researcher maintained a reflective research diary throughout the research process, and used this to consider decision making and personal biases, particularly during the data collection and analysis process. The use of supervision with the researcher’s academic tutor to review discourses and reflect upon influence was important, as was the use of peer review and discussion. As the research progressed, supervision provided time and space to consider the data and how it was organised in addition to discussing Foucauldian thought and its relevance to the research. Time for analysis and reflection was integral to the research journey and helped the researcher to maintain a critically reflective position.

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) stated that most parenting research is influenced by the cultural norms and opinions of those undertaking it. The researcher is a white, educated, parent of school aged children within the UK, and in Foucauldian terms, a successful product of the UK education system. The researcher was aware of this, and used their reflective diary to reflect upon how this might impact the findings.

During the interviews, a non-judgemental and open position was maintained. Questions were carefully considered to ensure that they were ‘curious’ rather than in any way judgemental, and this was checked during the pilot interview. The researcher remained aware of their own positioning as a trainee educational psychologist and the implications that that may have upon the research.

## **5.7 Future directions and further research**

This research gathered the views of parents and school staff regarding parental engagement with education. An obvious next step would be to include interviews with children and young people and gain their views on parental engagement – how do they experience it and what do they say that the purpose of it is. Much of the research referenced in the literature review includes children’s voices, school voices or parent

voices, but there appears to be nothing triangulating the voices of children, parents and school regarding this research topic.

The findings of this research suggest that social learning, and modelling of positive relationships with school appear to impact positively upon children. Future research capturing the child's voice to consider their understanding of their parent's relationship with education, and whether these values had impacted upon them would be valuable.

The researcher acknowledges the small sample of the current research, and the potential biases of the participants included. Exploring the research questions with a broader sample, including parents who do not identify as being engaged with their child's education may offer a more representative data set and generate additional findings around power and engagement.

## **5.8 Conclusions**

The research explored parental engagement with education in the UK. More specifically, the research aimed to gain a greater understanding of what parents and school staff say is the purpose of engagement, and to use a Foucauldian lens to explore issues around power and governmentality.

It was found that parents and school identified a range of ways that parents engage with school. Many of these approaches centred around the sharing and receiving of information, and the development of positive relationships between home and school. Children's academic attainment was identified by both groups as the key purpose of parental engagement with education, and all acknowledged that parents engage because they seek to 'do the right thing' for their child.

Power and how it operates between people and institutions was at the heart of the analysis. From a broad, societal perspective, parents experience school and the education system as a technology of power which uses divisive practices and governmentality to maintain order and shape governable subjects.

From the analysis of the data and reflection, one question remains – is parental engagement in its current form useful? Hojholt and Kousholt (2011) suggest that parental engagement is a new form of governance which 'exacerbates the inequalities of school life'. (p. 1056). Literature suggests that society's understanding of 'good' parenting is based in white middle class values. Findings from the current research

highlighted a division between perceived outcomes for children whose parents engage and those who do not. A 'battle' metaphor was present through the dataset describing some relationships between home and school. Success within the system depends upon parents having the 'right' values, high self-efficacy and a cultural capital which matches that of the school.

The research explored parental engagement and the role that it plays in the current education system. Participants in the study were overwhelmingly clear that parental engagement is important, but perhaps a national, universal approach of what parental engagement *should be* is too broad to be successful. The research study highlights the importance of schools continuing to work to understand their communities, to understand the needs of their children, and to devise an approach that brings about benefits for all parties.

The researcher would like to end by thanking all participants for their valuable contributions to this research.

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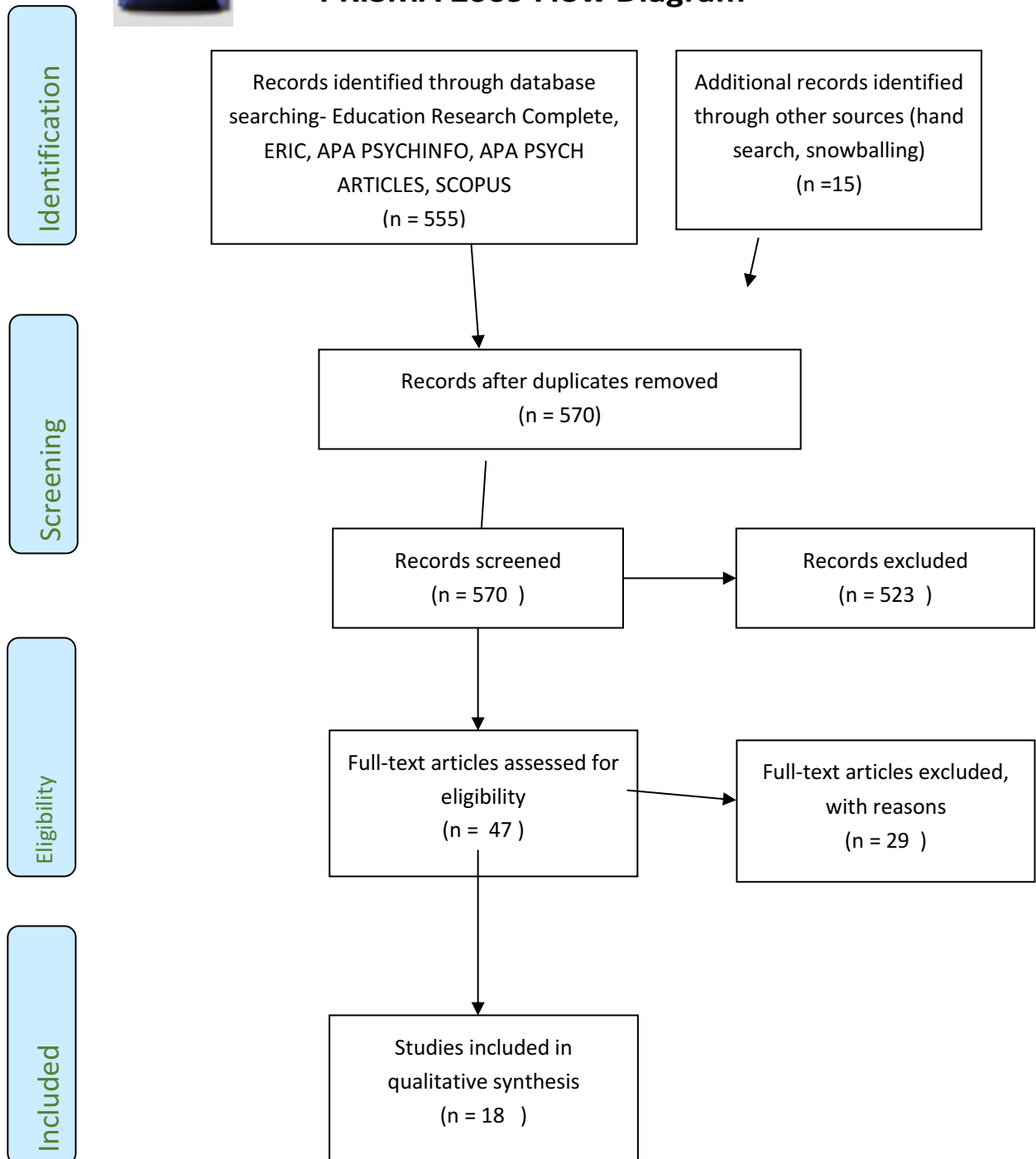
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## Appendix A

### PRISMA flow diagram



### PRISMA 2009 Flow Diagram



## Appendix B

### PRISMA results details

Database	Search term	Initial number generated	Filters	Records identified	Inclusion criteria (screening)	Exclusion criteria (screening)	Records identified through other sources	Full text articles to be assessed for eligibility	Articles excluded with reasons	Total included
Education Research complete, ERIC, APA Psych Info, APA Psych Articles	Parent* engagement or parent* involvement or parent* participation or parent* partnership AND school or education or classroom AND benefit or purpose or perception	12,554	2009-2020  Full text available  English  Classification 'Educational psychology'	63	Articles relating directly to parental engagement and school aged children  Papers relating to mainstream school for children aged 4-18.	Articles not relating to school engagement  Studies based on specific communities not generalisable to UK community  Articles based on a specific time period only (i.e. reintegration after exclusion)	10	32	21	11

						Studies based upon particular school based interventions				
						Papers based in nursery or kindergarten settings				
SCOPUS	Parent* engagement or parent* involvement or parent* participation or parent* partnership AND school or education or classroom AND benefit or purpose or perception	703	2009-2020  English  Social Science & Psychology	327	Articles relating directly to parental engagement and school aged children  Papers relating to mainstream school for children aged 4-18.	Articles not relating to school engagement  Studies based on specific communities not generalisable to UK community  Articles based on a specific time period only (i.e. reintegration after exclusion)	0	3	1	2

						Studies based upon particular school based interventions				
						Papers based in nursery or kindergarten settings				
Education Research complete, ERIC, APA Psych Info, APA Psych Articles	School or education or classroom AND parent or parents or parental or mother or father or caregiver or guardian AND Foucault or Foucauldian	282	Full text available  2009-2020  English	81 (7)	Articles relevant to parents and relationships with institutions.	Articles based upon research methods  Articles with little or no Foucauldian perspective.	5	12	7	5
SCOPUS	School or education or classroom AND parent or parents or parental or mother or father or caregiver or guardian AND Foucault or Foucauldian	175	Full text available  2009-2020  English	84	Articles relevant to parents and relationships with institutions	Articles based upon research methods  Articles with little or no Foucauldian perspective.	0	0 (8 articles already identified )	0	0

## Appendix C

### Assessment of full text articles

	Reference	Location	Research design	Summary of findings	Include/exclude	Reason
1	Anthony, C., & Ogg, J. (2019). Parent involvement, approaches to learning, and student achievement: Examining longitudinal mediation. <i>School Psychology, 34</i> (4), 376-385. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000282">https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000282</a>	USA	Longitudinal Qual.	Evaluation of whether attitude to learning mediates the relationship between parental involvement and student outcomes. 3 types of parental involvement (home based, school based, home-school communication) studied. Only school based involvement and home school communication predicted student reading achievement. Relationship only mediated by attitude to learning for school based involvement.	Include	Meets inclusion criteria, findings generalisable.
2	Baker, T. L., Wise, J., Kelley, G., & Skiba, R. J. (2016). Identifying barriers: Creating solutions to improve family engagement. <i>School Community Journal, 26</i> (2), 161-184.	USA	Qual	Reframing constructs of parent engagement and parent involvement. Focus groups to gain data on perceptions of barriers to family involvement and family suggestions of what could be done differently. Five themes, contrast between parent and school views.	Include	Meets inclusion criteria
3	Ceballo, R., Maurizi, L. K., Suarez, G. A., & Aretakis, M. T. (2014). Gift and sacrifice: Parental involvement in Latino adolescents' education. <i>Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 20</i> (1), 116.	USA	Quan.	Examination of relation between parental involvement and academic outcomes in 223 low income Latino adolescents in USA. Focus on Latino cultural value of Respeto (respect)	Exclude	Not generalisable to UK education system
4	Chen, M. E., Anderson, J. A., & Watkins, L. (2016). Parent perceptions of connectedness in a full service community school	USA	Quan	Examining the effect if school-community collaboration on parent teacher relationships or parent involvement. Devised a model to investigate community service integration and parental involvement as social capital.	Exclude	Based on particular school based intervention.

	project. <i>Journal of Child and Family Studies</i> , 25(7), 2268-2278.					Not generalisable to UK education system
5	Cheung, C. S. S., & Pomerantz, E. M. (2015). Value development underlies the benefits of parents' involvement in children's learning: A longitudinal investigation in the United States and China. <i>Journal of educational psychology</i> , 107(1), 309.	USA	Qual	Examines whether the benefits of parents' involvement in childrens learning are due in part to value development among children. Consideration of children's perception of the value their parents place on school achievement as well as the value they themselves place on it.	Include	Meets inclusion criteria
	Costa, M., & Faria, L. (2017). Parenting and parental involvement in secondary school: Focus groups with adolescents' parents. <i>Paidéia (Ribeirão Preto)</i> , 27(67), 28-36.	Portugal	Qual	Examined parents' perceptions about parenting, parental involvement and family-school partnership. Findings indicated that the establishment of rules, monitoring and support were important to development. PI changed through school, reasons given included demands of level of education, time, adolescents autonomy, teachers communication style.	Include	Meets inclusion criteria,
6	Embeita, C. (2019). Reintegration to Secondary Education Following School Exclusion: An Exploration of the Relationship between Home and School from the Perspective of Parents. <i>Educational &amp; Child Psychology</i> , 36(3), 18-32.	UK	Qual	Investigating the factors in the parent school relationship that facilitate reintegration to secondary school from parents' perspective.	Exclude	Only focuses on relationship to facilitate reintegration, not generalisable.
7	Froiland, J. M., & Davison, M. L. (2014). Parental expectations and school relationships as contributors to adolescents' positive outcomes. <i>Social Psychology of Education</i> , 17(1), 1-17.	USA	Mixed methods	Examined associations of parental expectations and parental school relationships with school outcomes – US middle and high school students. Parental expectations positively related to positive school outcomes.	Include	Meets inclusion criteria

8	Embeita, C. (2019). Reintegration to Secondary Education Following School Exclusion: An Exploration of the Relationship between Home and School from the Perspective of Parents. <i>Educational &amp; Child Psychology</i> , 36(3), 18-32.	USA	Qual.	Identified barriers and facilitators to family engagement in schools implementing school wide positive behaviour interventions and supports. (PBIS)	Exclude	Based on specific intervention
9	Garbacz, S. A., McDowall, P. S., Schaugency, E., Sheridan, S. M., & Welch, G. W. (2015). A multidimensional examination of parent involvement across child and parent characteristics. <i>the elementary school journal</i> , 115(3), 384-406.	USA and New Zealand	Quan	Clarified equivocal findings in the parent-involvement literature and examine novel interactions in a NZ context. Tested effects of school year, parent education, family structure and child gender on parent involvement in elementary school.	Exclude	Not generalisable to UK
	Graham, A., Truscott, J., O'Byrne, C., Considine, G., Hampshire, A., Creagh, S., & Western, M. (2019). Disadvantaged families' experiences of home-school partnerships: navigating agency, expectations and stigma. <i>International Journal of Inclusive Education</i> , 1-16.	Australia	Qual	Considers the gap between rhetoric and rationale for partnership, and the lived experiences that are the linchpin of effective practice. Particularly focuses upon families who are from socio economically disadvantaged backgrounds	Exclude	Small scale, based in Australia. Not generalisable to UK.
10	Goldberg, A. E., & Smith, J. Z. (2014). Perceptions of stigma and self-reported school engagement in same-sex couples with young children. <i>Psychology of sexual orientation and gender diversity</i> , 1(3), 202.	USA	Mixed methods	Explores same sex parents school engagement – particularly the parents' perceptions of openness versus exclusion in the school setting. Parents who perceived their communities as more homophobic reported higher levels of school based involvement.	Include	Meets inclusion criteria, offers an interesting angle on engagement
11	Goldkind, L., & Farmer, G. L. (2013). The Enduring Influence of School Size and School Climate on Parents' Engagement in the School	USA	Qual	Examines direct and indirect associations between school size and parents' perceptions of the invitations for involvement provided by children's school.	Exclude	Based only on data from NY, not



	Community. <i>School Community Journal</i> , 23(1), 223-244.					generalisable to UK Only focuses on school size as a factor
12	Hayes, D. (2011). Predicting parental home and school involvement in high school African American adolescents. <i>The High School Journal</i> , 94(4), 154-166.	USA	Qual.	Predictors of home and school involvement for high school adolescents were examined with 2 groups of African American parents. Home involvement is defined as parent-adolescent communication about school and learning, school involvement as parent attendance at events.	Exclude	Definitions of home and school involvement are narrow.
13	Herman, K. C., & Reinke, W. M. (2017). Improving teacher perceptions of parent involvement patterns: Findings from a group randomized trial. <i>School Psychology Quarterly</i> , 32(1), 89.	USA	Qual	Examined the effects of the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management on teacher perceptions of contact and comfort with parents	Exclude	Based on specific intervention
14	Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Walker, J. M., Sandler, H. M., Whetsel, D., Green, C. L., Wilkins, A. S., & Closson, K. (2005). Why do parents become involved? Research findings and implications. <i>The elementary school journal</i> , 106(2), 105-130	USA	Review	Enhanced understanding of the original Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler Model. Examines why parents become involved in their child's education.	Include	Meets inclusion criteria
15	Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Bassler, O. C., & Brissie, J. S. (1992). Explorations in parent-school relations. <i>The Journal of Educational Research</i> , 85(5), 287-294.	USA	Quan	Examined measure of parent efficacy and relationship to parent involvement. Also examined teacher efficacy and estimates of parental involvement.	Include	Outside date range, but important research in this field.
16	Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1997). Why do parents become involved in their children's	USA		Reviews theory and research critical to understanding why parents become involved in their children's education. Three major constructs – (1) parents role construction (2)	Include	Outside date range, but important

	education?. <i>Review of educational research</i> , 67(1), 3-42.			parents' sense of efficacy to help their child to succeed (3) general invitations and demands for involvement.		research in this field.
17	Hornby, G., & Lafaele, R. (2011). Barriers to parental involvement in education: An explanatory model. <i>Educational review</i> , 63(1), 37-52.	USA		Presents a model to clarify and elaborate on the barriers to involvement in 4 areas. Discussed parent and family factors, parents' current life contexts, parent perceptions of invitation to involvement, and class ethnicity and gender.	Include	Meets inclusion criteria
18	Houri, A. K., Thayer, A. J., & Cook, C. R. (2019). Targeting parent trust to enhance engagement in a school-home communication system: A double-blind experiment of a parental wise feedback intervention. <i>School Psychology</i> , 34(4), 421.	USA		Investigates the effectiveness of a specific intervention on parent -teacher trust.	Exclude	Based on specific intervention
19	Kim, S., & Chin, M. (2016). Gender differences in factors associated with how parents communicate with school in Korea. <i>The Journal of Educational Research</i> , 109(5), 464-477.	South Korea	Qual	Explored factors associated with mothers and father's choice between two forms of parent-school communication. Found gender differences in how parents were motivated to communicate, but more important was perception of positive child-teacher relationship.	Exclude	Not generalisable to the UK
20	Lasater, K. (2016). Parent-Teacher Conflict Related to Student Abilities: The Impact on Students and the Family-School Partnership. <i>School Community Journal</i> , 26(2), 237-262.	USA	Qual	Examines the experiences of parents, teachers and students when parents and teachers disagreed about a student's abilities. Focused on building effective family-school partnerships even in the presence of conflict.	Exclude	College students aged 21-24. Small scale, conducted in USA Not generalisable to UK
21	McDowall, P. S., & Schaughency, E. (2017). Elementary school parent engagement efforts:	New Zealand		Examined engagement efforts of teachers in elementary school in NZ.	Exclude	Not generalisable to UK

	Relations with educator perceptions and school characteristics. <i>The Journal of Educational Research</i> , 110(4), 348-365.					
22	McKenna, M. K., & Millen, J. (2013). Look! Listen! Learn! Parent Narratives and Grounded Theory Models of Parent Voice, Presence, and Engagement in K-12 Education. <i>School Community Journal</i> , 23(1), 9-48.	USA	Qual.	Poses that educators lose opportunities to more fully understand students, particularly when perceptions of parental involvement and home-school-community relationships are not accurate. Developed new model of parent engagement.	Include	Small scale research based upon particular model/ programme Not generalisable to UK
23	McQueen, C., & Hobbs, C. (2014). Working with parents: Using narrative therapy to work towards genuine partnership. <i>Educational &amp; Child Psychology</i> , 31(4), 9-17.	UK	Qual	Focuses upon use of narrative therapy to develop a relationship between parents and professionals.	Exclude	Does not specifically focus upon parent and school
	Meehan, C., & Meehan, P. J. (2018). Trainee teachers' perceptions about parent partnerships: are parents partners?. <i>Early Child Development and Care</i> , 188(12), 1750-1763.	UK	Qual	Surveyed second year trainee teachers regarding their perceptions about parents and the nature of partnership relations. Findings suggest that the challenge for teacher involvement is their own feelings of being qualified.	Include	Meets inclusion criteria
24	Park, S., & Holloway, S. (2018). Parental Involvement in Adolescents' Education: An Examination of the Interplay among School Factors, Parental Role Construction, and Family Income. <i>School Community Journal</i> , 28(1), 9-36.	USA	Quan	Examined the determinants of parental involvement. Found that parents reportedly became involved in their children's education in response to inclusive school practices and to compensate for perceived deficits in children's experiences at school.	Include	Meets inclusion criteria

25	Parr, A. K., & Bonitz, V. S. (2015). Role of family background, student behaviors, and school-related beliefs in predicting high school dropout. <i>The Journal of Educational Research</i> , 108(6), 504-514.	USA	Qual	Purpose to test a parsimonious model derived from social cognitive career theory and expectancy value theory that integrates variables with the goal of predicting high school drop out. Parental involvement predictive of high school drop out.	Exclude	Main focus is not on parental engagement with education.
26	Schueler, B. E., McIntyre, J. C., & Gehlbach, H. (2017). Measuring Parent Perceptions of Family-School Engagement: The Development of New Survey Tools. <i>School Community Journal</i> , 27(2), 275-301.	USA	Quan	Devised a scale to measure family engagement, using survey design process.	Exclude	Main focus is not on parental engagement with education.
27	Shajith, B. I., & Erchul, W. P. (2014). Bringing parents to school: The effect of invitations from school, teacher, and child on parental involvement in middle schools. <i>International Journal of School &amp; Educational Psychology</i> , 2(1), 11-23.	USA	Quan	Focuses on the differential effect of three types of invitation on middle school parents' decision to become involved in their children's school activities.	Exclude	Not generalisable to UK, small scale.
28	Skaliotis, E. (2010). Changes in parental involvement in secondary education: An exploration study using the longitudinal study of young people in England. <i>British Educational Research Journal</i> , 36(6), 975-994.	UK	Qual	Highlights evidence from a longitudinal study that half of parents of cyp in year 9 reported becoming more or less involved in their child's school life over a 2 year period and explores characteristics that change levels of involvement.	Include	Meets inclusion criteria
29	Warren, M. R., Hong, S., Rubin, C. L., & Uy, P. S. (2009). Beyond the bake sale: A community-based relational approach to parent engagement in schools. <i>Teachers college record</i> , 111(9), 2209-2254.	USA	Qual	Presents a community based relational approach to fostering parent engagement in schools. When community based organisations are rooted in community life they can bring schools a better understanding of culture and assets of families.	Exclude	Based upon three small, specific communities in the USA, not

						generalisable to UK. Main focus not parent perception of engagement with education.
30	Yamamoto, Y., Holloway, S. D., & Suzuki, S. (2016). Parental engagement in children's education: Motivating factors in Japan and the US. <i>School Community Journal</i> , 26(1), 45-66.	USA and Japan		Examines factors contributing to parental engagement in Japan and USA.	Exclude	Not generalisable to UK
31	Yamauchi, L. A., Ponte, E., Ratliffe, K. T., & Traynor, K. (2017). Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks Used in Research on Family-School Partnerships. <i>School Community Journal</i> , 27(2), 9-34.	USA	Meta analysis	Investigates theoretical frameworks used to frame research on family-school partnerships over a 5 year period. Half of studies examined did not use a framework, and the remaining studies used 4 most often.	Exclude	Main focus is not on parental engagement with education.
32	Yull, D., Wilson, M., Murray, C., & Parham, L. (2018). Reversing the Dehumanization of Families of Color in Schools: Community-Based Research in a Race-Conscious Parent Engagement Program. <i>School community journal</i> , 28(1), 319-347.	USA		Uses a race and class conscious framework to understand barriers to engagement of parents of color, and reframe parents' role in the school system as advocates who bridge disconnects.	Exclude	Is based on small scale USA research, not generalisable.
1	Bae, S. (2017). Incredible Parenting with Incredible Years?: A Foucauldian Analysis of New Zealand Government Perspectives on Parenting and their Implications for Parents and Educators in Early	New Zealand	Qual	Examines how parenting issues are framed in a particular parenting policy in NZ through a Foucauldian lens of the notions of governmentality and discursive normalisation. Suggests that this particular programme reproduces particular norms/ discourses of	Include	Meets inclusion criteria

	Childhood Education. <i>Global Education Review</i> , 4(2).			parenting which maintains and reinforces particular power relations in society.		
2	Cottam, S., & Espie, J. (2014). Discourses underpinning parenting training programmes: Positioning and power. <i>Children &amp; Society</i> , 28(6), 465-477	UK	Qual	Hypothesises that parent training programmes risk disempowering parents, children, and facilitators. Using Foucauldian discourse analysis, examines six parent training programme manuals. Power relations favouring government and professionals were discovered.	Include	Meets inclusion criteria
3	Dahlstedt, M., & Fejes, A. (2014). Family makeover: Coaching, confession and parental responsabilisation. <i>Pedagogy, Culture &amp; Society</i> , 22(2), 169-188.	Sweden	Qual, case study	Used Foucauldian constructs to analyse a 'Nanny TV' show in Sweden aimed at improving parenting. Explores Foucauldian notions of 'perfect parents' using technologies of self	Exclude	Not relevant to parents' relationships with institutions
4	Desmond, A. M. (2016). A Foucauldian perspective on student experiences of family discourses in post-primary schools. <i>Irish Educational Studies</i> , 35(4), 319-336.	Ireland	Quan	Examines micro-practices involving families to report how family differences are managed. A framework using Foucauldian post structural critical analysis traces family profiling.	Exclude	Focuses upon family discourses, rather than parents' relationship with institutions
5	Fenech, M. (2013). Quality early childhood education for my child or for all children? Parents as activists for equitable, high-quality early childhood education in	Australia	Review	Examines the development of early childhood education in Australia, and the limited role that parents play in the sector.	Exclude	Limited use of Foucauldian analysis,

	Australia. <i>Australasian Journal of Early Childhood</i> , 38(4), 92-98.					main focus on a specific programme. No focus on parents' relationships with institutions.
6	Hewett, R. (2015). Their whole community might be watching them': Teacher and pupil constructions of Muslim girls' aspirations and the role of their families and the community. <i>Educational and Child Psychology</i> , 32(2), 68-78.	UK	Qual	Explores discursive constructions relating to Muslim girls' aspirations and the role of their families and communities. Uses data from teacher interviews and a focus group of Muslim girls. Examined dominant discourses from both.	Exclude	Does not focus upon parents' relationships with institutions (focuses on student-parent relationship)
7	Keogh, J. (1996). Governmentality in parent-teacher communications. <i>Language and Education</i> , 10(2-3), 119-131.	Australia	Qual	Teachers are positioned as 'school experts' and parents as 'home experts'. Panopticism is evident in home and school communication and parents, teachers, and students are seen to actively regulate themselves.	Include	Meets inclusion criteria
8	Lavelle, M. (2015). A Storm in a Tea-Cup?'Making a Difference in Two Sure Start Children's Centres. <i>Children &amp; Society</i> , 29(6), 583-592.	UK	Qual	Explores parental participation in sure start centres, to examine how government operates at a distance. Explores micro-practices as a site of power.	Include	Meets inclusion criteria
10	Van Haute, D., Roets, G., Alasuutari, M., & Vandenbroeck, M. (2018). Managing the flow of private information on children and parents in poverty situations: Creating a panoptic eye in interorganizational	Belgium	Qual	Discusses how the flow of private information about children and families in poverty is managed in organisations and can result in undesirable forms of governmentality.	Exclude	Does not focus on parent relationship with institutions.

	networks?. <i>Child &amp; Family Social Work</i> , 23(3), 427-434.					
11	Vansieleghem, N. (2010). The residual parent to come: On the need for parental expertise and advice. <i>Educational Theory</i> , 60(3), 341-355.	Belgium	Essay – opinion piece	Addresses the notion that parents are addressed as ‘individuals in need of parental expertise’ and that parents feel that they no longer know what is good or bad for their children.	Exclude	Does not focus on parent relationship with institutions
12	Højholt, C., & Kousholt, D. (2019). Parental collaboration in relation to children’s school lives—advanced regulation or an opportunity for solidarity?. <i>International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education</i> , 32(8), 1048-1063.	Denmark	Analysis	Emphasises the conflictual nature of children’s school lives and analyses the social interplay between the involved subjects. Examines the social reproduction of inequality in terms of discrepancies between parental style and the culture of the school.	Include	Meets inclusion criteria



## Appendix D

Weight of Evidence table

	<b>A Trustworthiness in terms of review questions</b>	<b>B Appropriateness of design and analysis for these review questions</b>	<b>C relevance of focus for these review questions</b>	<b>D Overall weighting in relation to review questions</b>
Anthony and Ogg (2019)	Medium	Low	Medium	<b>Medium/Low</b>
Bae (2017)	High	Medium	High	<b>High</b>
Baker (2016)	High	Medium	Medium	<b>Medium</b>
Cheung and Pomerantz (2015)	High	Medium	Medium	<b>Medium</b>
Costa and Faria (2017)	Medium	Low	Medium	<b>Medium/Low</b>
Cottam and Espie (2014)	High	Medium	High	<b>High</b>
Froiland and Davison (2014)	Medium	Medium	Medium	<b>Medium</b>
Goldberg and Smith (2014)	Medium	Medium	High	<b>Medium</b>
Hojholt and Kousholt (2019)	Medium	Medium	High	<b>Medium</b>
Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler and Brissie (1992)	Low	Medium	Medium	<b>Medium/Low</b>
Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997)	Medium	Medium	Medium	<b>Medium</b>

Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005)	Medium	High	High	<b>High</b>
Hornby and Lafaele (2011)	High	Medium	High	<b>High</b>
Keogh (1996)	High	Medium	High	<b>High</b>
Lavelle (2015)	Medium	High	Medium	<b>Medium</b>
Meehan and Meehan (2018)	Medium	Medium	High	<b>Medium</b>
Park and Holloway (2018)	Medium	Medium	Medium	<b>Medium</b>
Skaliotis (2010)	Medium	High	Medium	<b>Medium</b>

## Appendix E

### Summary of article findings

Author and Title	Location	Participants	Design	Data collection	Outcomes	Identified themes	Limitations
Anthony, C., & Ogg, J. (2019). Parent involvement, approaches to learning, and student achievement: Examining longitudinal mediation. <i>School Psychology</i> , 34(4), 376-385. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000282">https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000282</a>	USA	28,500 parents	Qualitative	Interviews and questionnaires	School based interventions and home school communication s predicted reading achievement. No correlation between parent involvement and student attitudes to learning.	Values, approaches to learning	Categorised 'types of engagement' – simplifying? Attainment measured on reading scale, simplistic view of attainment Based on self report
Bae, S. (2017). Incredible Parenting with Incredible Years?: A Foucauldian Analysis of New Zealand Government Perspectives on Parenting and their Implications for Parents and Educators in Early Childhood Education. <i>Global Education Review</i> , 4(2).	New Zealand	N/A	Qualitative – Analysis of policy	Foucauldian analysis of parenting programmes	State run parenting programmes are part of a 'regime of truth' designed to make 'better' parents who will raise children to be economically useful to society –	Parenting, governmentality	Based upon research undertaken in NZ, although widely used programme.

					creation of governable subjects.		
Baker, T. L., Wise, J., Kelley, G., & Skiba, R. J. (2016). Identifying barriers: Creating solutions to improve family engagement. <i>School Community Journal</i> , 26(2), 161-184.	USA	50 parents 76 staff	Qualitative	Focus group	Parents and school staff generally agree on barriers to parent involvement but offer contrasting solutions.	Barriers to engagement, solutions, challenge	Small sample size, potential for bias in selection. Divide between parent involvement and parent engagement feels arbitrary
Cheung, C. S. S., & Pomerantz, E. M. (2015). Value development underlies the benefits of parents' involvement in children's learning: A longitudinal investigation in the United States and China. <i>Journal of educational psychology</i> , 107(1), 309.	USA	825 American and Chinese children	Qualitative	Questionnaire	The more that children reported parents as involved in their learning, the greater the perception of value on academic achievement. Explored perception-acceptance and experience pathways.	Values, value transmission	Based on children's self report of their parents values, no corresponding research with parents. Conducted in USA and China – questions over transferability.
Costa, M., & Faria, L. (2017). Parenting and parental involvement in secondary school:	Portugal	16 parents of secondary	Qualitative	Focus groups	Most parents assumed a direct	Adolescents	Very small scale

Focus groups with adolescents' parents. <i>Paidéia (Ribeirão Preto)</i> , 27(67), 28-36.		school children			correlation between their involvement and chances of success for their child, but found it harder to support their child. Children less likely to accept help.		Parents selected from those who have attended PTA – engagement bias! Conducted in Portugal – questions over transferability.
Cottam, S., & Espie, J. (2014). Discourses underpinning parenting training programmes: Positioning and power. <i>Children &amp; Society</i> , 28(6), 465-477.	UK	N/A	Qualitative – Analysis of documents	Foucauldian discourse analysis of parenting training programme manuals	Parenting training programmes risk disempowering parents by prioritising 'experts' over lay knowledge. Themes discovered including 'scientism' and institutional salvation.	Scientism, experts, power, governmentality	Limited to most commonly used parenting training programmes. No direct observation of programmes taking place – reality may differ from manual.
Froiland, J. M., & Davison, M. L. (2014). Parental expectations and school relationships as contributors to adolescents' positive outcomes. <i>Social Psychology of Education</i> , 17(1), 1-17.	USA	2591 datasets extracted from a National Survey	Quantitative	Statistical analysis using structural equation modelling	A moderate positive association between parent expectations for educational achievement	Parent expectations, values	Based on self report of parents, social desirability bias Only used one set of data, so

					and positive outcomes in school. Strong correlation between positive parent relationships and positive school outcomes. Link between parent expectation for attainment and student behaviour.		impossible to examine causality USA based study
Goldberg, A. E., & Smith, J. Z. (2014). Perceptions of stigma and self-reported school engagement in same-sex couples with young children. <i>Psychology of sexual orientation and gender diversity</i> , 1(3), 202.	USA	68 adoptive couples	Mixed methods	Data from longitudinal study and interview	Parents who felt that the community was homophobic were more likely to become involved in school. Supports a compensatory model.	Reasons for involvement, compensatory	Self report Limits to attributions of causality USA based study may affect transferability
Højholt, C., & Kousholt, D. (2019). Parental collaboration in relation to children's school lives—advanced regulation or an opportunity for solidarity?. <i>International Journal of</i>	Denmark	69 children, 17 parents	Qualitative	Observations and interviews, focus groups and policy review	School as a societal institution governs parents and parental engagement	Governmentality, inequalities	Denmark – parental involvement is subject to law so

<i>Qualitative Studies in Education</i> , 32(8), 1048-1063.					serves as problem displacement. Parent collaboration a new way of governing parents and exacerbating inequalities.		transferability is difficult.
Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Bassler, O. C., & Brissie, J. S. (1992). Explorations in parent-school relations. <i>The Journal of Educational Research</i> , 85(5), 287-294.	USA	390 parents	Quantitative	Questionnaire	Relationships between parent self reported efficacy and indicators of parent involvement.	Reasons for involvement, self efficacy	Date of study Self report data
Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1997). Why do parents become involved in their children's education?. <i>Review of educational research</i> , 67(1), 3-42.	USA	N/A	Review	Reviews theory and research critical to understanding reasons for parental involvement	Developed three constructs central to parents basic involvement decisions; parents role construction, parent self efficacy and general invitations and demands. Suggests a	Reasons for involvement, parent self efficacy	Date of study (although now reviewed and updated) Conducted in USA – most research at the time based upon white US families

					model for practice		
Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Walker, J. M., Sandler, H. M., Whetsel, D., Green, C. L., Wilkins, A. S., & Closson, K. (2005). Why do parents become involved? Research findings and implications. <i>The elementary school journal</i> , 106(2), 105-130	USA	N/A	Review	Review of previous work	Major motivators for parental involvement are based around key constructs; parent role construction, parent sense of efficacy, opportunities and demand for involvement, parent life context.	Reasons for involvement, parenting constructs	Predominantly white American families involved in initial research Based upon self report Findings are primarily suggestive and correlational
Hornby, G., & Lafaele, R. (2011). Barriers to parental involvement in education: An explanatory model. <i>Educational review</i> , 63(1), 37-52.	New Zealand	N/A	Review	Review of existing literature	Develops a model which clarifies barriers to parental engagement in four areas; parent factors, child factors, parent teacher factors, societal factors.	Barriers, rhetoric	Draws upon international research, but would be useful to assess on a UK platform.
Keogh, J. (1996). Governmentality in parent-teacher communications. <i>Language and Education</i> , 10(2-3), 119-131.	Australia	N/A	Qualitative – draws upon 19 parent teacher	Discourse analysis	Teachers are positioned as ‘school experts’ and parents as	Governmentality , panopticism,	Dated research



			interviews and printed documents from 29 secondary schools.		'home experts. Panopticism is evident in home and school communication and parents, teachers, and students are seen to actively regulate themselves.		Based upon Australian data
Lavelle, M. (2015). A Storm in a Tea-Cup?'Making a Difference'in Two Sure Start Children's Centres. <i>Children &amp; Society</i> , 29(6), 583-592.	UK	N/A	Qualitative – Ethnographic methodology	Observations, formal interviews, and focus groups	Sure start centres described as a new form of panopticon. Micro-practices holding power around power and status. Staff positioned as 'experts', governmentality at a distance from government via programmes.	Governmentality, status, panopticism	Focused on a micro practice – lots of inference. Sure Start programme no longer exists in current form.
Meehan, C., & Meehan, P. J. (2018). Trainee teachers' perceptions about parent partnerships: are parents partners?. <i>Early Child</i>	UK	230 trainee teachers	Qualitative	Open ended questionnaire and examination	Trainee teachers approached the relationships with parents	Teachers, barriers to engagement, power/ status	Trainee teachers at the start of their career

<i>Development and Care</i> , 188(12), 1750-1763.				of policy documents	with apprehension but valued the potential. Issues of power, teachers want to be seen as 'expert' and have status.		Based upon self report
Park, S., & Holloway, S. (2018). Parental Involvement in Adolescents' Education: An Examination of the Interplay among School Factors, Parental Role Construction, and Family Income. <i>School Community Journal</i> , 28(1), 9-36.	USA	3248 parents	Quantitative – data extracted from national survey	Statistical analysis	Examined the determinants of parental involvement – found that parents reportedly become involved in their child's education in response to inclusive school practices and to compensate for perceived deficits in experience.	Reasons for involvement, compensatory	Use of secondary analysis Relies upon self report Conducted in the USA – issues with generalisability
Skaliotis, E. (2010). Changes in parental involvement in secondary education: An exploration study using the longitudinal study of young people in England. <i>British</i>	UK	10515	Quantitative – data extracted from	Statistical analysis	Half of parents of children in year 9 changed their level of involvement	Secondary aged children, reasons for involvement, change in involvement	Associations and not causality

<i>Educational Research Journal</i> , 36(6), 975-994.			national survey		over a 2 year period. Mothers involvement linked to compensatory model, with child's behaviour linked to paternal involvement.		
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## Appendix F

### Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995) model of the parent involvement process

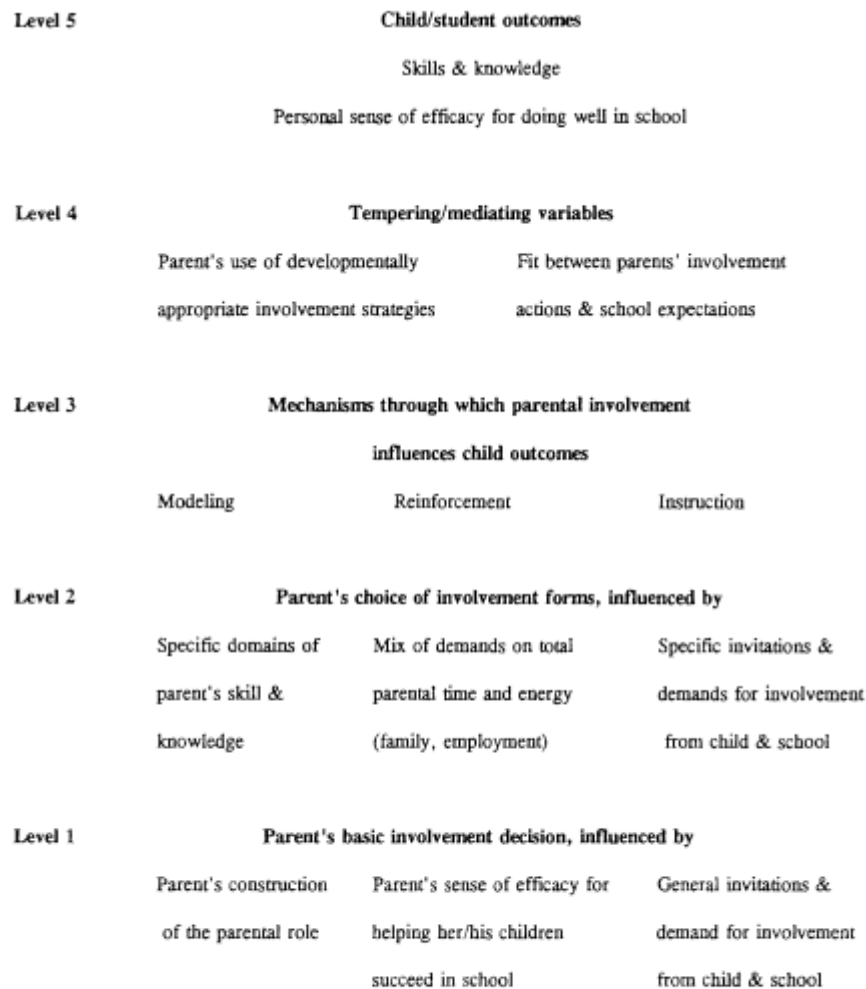


FIGURE 1. *Model of the parental involvement process*

*Note.* From "Parental Involvement in Children's Education: Why Does It Make a Difference?," by K. V. Hoover-Dempsey and H. M. Sandler, 1995, *Teachers College Record*, 95, p. 327. Copyright 1995 by the President and Trustees of Teachers College. Adapted with permission.

## Appendix G

### Participant recruitment advert



#### Calling all Parents!

**Do you have a school aged child?**

**Do you have 45 minutes spare to talk generally about involvement between parents and school?**

**Would you like to participate in a piece of research?**

**If you answered yes (or even maybe!) to those questions,**

My name is Katie Wood and I am final year trainee Educational Psychologist. I am currently studying for a Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology at the University of East London, and as part of my studies I am conducting a piece of research.

**I am interested in learning more about parental engagement with education.** I would like to informally interview parents and members of school staff around this subject to hopefully explore reasons for engagement or non engagement, and whether school staff and parents feel that it is important or beneficial. I am not looking for any particular experiences – any parent of any child in any school can participate!

If you agree to participate you will be asked to take part in an informal interview, which will be conducted virtually, either on Zoom or MS Teams. During the interview you will be asked questions about parental engagement with school, whether you think there are any benefits, and what challenges parents and schools face around engagement. The interview would last for no longer than 45 minutes, and can be arranged for a time that is convenient to you.

Your privacy and safety will be respected at all times. Interviews will be conducted one to one, and all information gathered would be completely anonymous and unidentifiable when my research is written up. At no point will any of the interview data be shared with school staff or the local authority and no names or school names will be included. You would not have to answer all of the questions asked, and you can stop your participation at any time, even if you change your mind after the interview.

Unfortunately, I would not be able to pay you for your time, but your participation would be very valuable in helping to develop knowledge and understanding of my research topic.

If you would like to volunteer to take part, or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at

With very best wishes for the start of term!

Katie Wood

Trainee Educational Psychologist

## Appendix H

### Research information sheet

#### **PARTICIPANT INVITATION LETTER**



You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you agree it is important that you understand what your participation would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

#### **Who am I?**

My name is Katie Wood, and I am a Doctoral student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London and am studying for a Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology. As part of my studies I am conducting the research you are being invited to participate in.

#### **What is the research?**

I am conducting research into parental engagement with education. I would like to explore what schools and parents/ carers understand by the term parental engagement, and whether they feel that it is important. I would like to investigate any perceived benefits, and potential barriers to engagement.

My research has been approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. This means that my research follows the standard of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

#### **Why have you been asked to participate?**

You have been invited to participate in my research as someone who fits the kind of people I am looking for to help me explore my research topic. I am looking to involve parents and carers of children in primary or secondary schools, and school based staff who have a role in working closely with parents (either head teacher, classroom teacher, SENCo or home school liaison officer.)

I emphasise that I am not looking for 'experts' on the topic I am studying. You will not be judged or personally analysed in any way and you will be treated with respect throughout.

You are quite free to decide whether or not to participate and should not feel coerced.

#### **What will your participation involve?**

If you agree to participate you will be asked to take part in an informal interview, which will be recorded on Microsoft Teams. During the interview, you will be asked questions about parental engagement with school, whether you think there are any benefits, and if so what you feel the benefits may be, what barriers you think that parents and schools face around parental engagement. The interview should last no longer than 45 minutes, and can be arranged for a time that is convenient for you. As the research is being conducted online, interviews can be conducted in any place that the participant chooses. The interviewer will always be in a private room without interruptions.

I will not be able to pay you for participating in my research, but your participation would be very valuable in helping to develop knowledge and understanding of my research topic

### **Your taking part will be safe and confidential**

Your privacy and safety will be respected at all times. The interviews will be video recorded and stored securely. Participants will not be identified by the data collected, on any written material resulting from the data collected, or in any write-up of the research. You do not have to answer all questions asked of you, and you can stop your participation at any time.

### **What will happen to the information that you provide?**

The recordings of the interviews will be downloaded and stored securely on the University of East London One Drive. They will be password protected and only accessed by me, or my supervisor if required. The data will be pseudo anonymised, which means that each participant will be assigned a number, rather than using names. The fully anonymised data may be seen by my supervisor, examiners and may be published in academic journals.

After the research has been completed, the data will be stored for as long as is deemed necessary by UEL, but will be stored securely.

Participants have three weeks after the interviews have taken place to be able to withdraw the information they have provided. After this point analysis will have begun.

### **What if you want to withdraw?**

You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. Separately, you may also request to withdraw your data even after you have participated data, provided that this request is made within three weeks of the data being collected (after which point the data analysis will begin, and withdrawal will not be possible).

### **Contact Details**

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Katie Wood

(University of East London)

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor Dr Miles Thomas. School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,

Email: [m.thomas@uel.ac.uk](mailto:m.thomas@uel.ac.uk)

**or**

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Tim Lomas, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.

(Email: [t.lomas@uel.ac.uk](mailto:t.lomas@uel.ac.uk))



## Appendix I

### Participant consent form



#### **UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

#### **Consent to participate in a research study**

##### **Parental Engagement with Education: A Foucauldian Perspective.**

I have read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher(s) involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should I withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use my anonymous data after analysis of the data has begun.

#### **Participant's Name**

.....

#### **Participant's Signature**

.....

**Researcher's Name**

Katie Wood.....

**Researcher's Signature**

.....

Date: .....

## Appendix J

### Research Data Management Plan

## UEL Data Management Plan: Full

For review and feedback please send to: [researchdata@uel.ac.uk](mailto:researchdata@uel.ac.uk)

**If you are bidding for funding from an external body, complete the Data Management Plan required by the funder (if specified).**



Research data is defined as information or material captured or created during the course of research, and which underpins, tests, or validates the content of the final research output. The nature of it can vary greatly according to discipline. It is often empirical or statistical, but also includes material such as drafts, prototypes, and multimedia objects that underpin creative or 'non-traditional' outputs. Research data is often digital, but includes a wide range of paper-based and other physical objects.

Administrative Data	
PI/Researcher	Katie Wood
PI/Researcher ID (e.g. ORCID)	
PI/Researcher email	
Research Title	Parental Engagement with Education: A Foucauldian Perspective.
Project ID	N/A
Research Duration	proposed end date of April 2021
Research Description	The proposed research will explore parental engagement in a local authority. It will use an exploratory paradigm to investigate what schools and parents understand by the term parental engagement, what the perceived purpose of parental engagement with schools is (from the perspective of both parents and school staff) and

	the Foucauldian themes that emerge from the parents and schools' constructs.
Funder	N/A – part of professional doctorate
Grant Reference Number (Post-award)	N/A
Date of first version (of DMP)	25.11.19
Date of last update (of DMP)	24.09.20 – version 2 updated due to change to online research during Covid-19.
Related Policies	N/A
Does this research follow on from previous research? If so, provide details	N/A
<b>Data Collection</b>	
What data will you collect or create?	5 parents/ carers and 5 members of school staff will be interviewed by the researcher. Interviews will be 30 – 45 minutes long and semi-structured. All interviews will be recorded on Microsoft Teams and transcribed by the researcher. Data will be anonymised at the point of transcription. Each participant will be given a participant number (in interview chronological order) and all identifiable information (e.g. names, schools, locations, identifiable scenarios) anonymised in the transcripts. Personal data will be collected on consent forms (names) and prior to the interview (email address and/or telephone number for purposes of arranging the interview, via the researcher's UEL email address). No sensitive data will be collected. No further data will be created in the process of analysing the transcripts.
How will the data be collected or created?	Interviews will be recorded via Microsoft Teams. Audio files of interviews will be transcribed on a computer as a Word document.
<b>Documentation and Metadata</b>	

What documentation and metadata will accompany the data?	Participant information sheets, consent forms, list of guide interview questions and debrief sheet. Audio files and transcripts of interviews.
<b>Ethics and Intellectual Property</b>	
How will you manage any ethical issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written consent will be obtained for all participant interviews.</li> <li>• Participants will be advised of their right to withdraw from the research study at any time without being obliged to provide a reason. This will be made clear to participants on the information sheets and consent forms. If a participant decides to withdraw from the study, they will be informed their contribution (e.g. any video recordings and interview transcripts) will be removed and confidentially destroyed, up until the point where the data has been analysed. I will notify participants that this will not be possible more than 7 days after the interview due to the data having already been analysed.</li> <li>• In case of emotional distress during or following the interview, contact details of a relevant support organisation will be made available in a debrief letter. If participants appear distressed during the interview they will be offered a break or the option to end the interview.</li> <li>• Transcription will be undertaken only by the researcher to protect confidentiality of participants.</li> <li>• Participants will be anonymised during transcription to protect confidentiality. Agreement will be made that no names will be used or any other identifiable information including schools or local authorities.</li> </ul>
How will you manage copyright and Intellectual Property Rights issues?	N/A
<b>Storage and Backup</b>	
How will the data be stored and backed up during the research?	Video recordings and transcriptions will be saved on the researcher's password protected laptop, until transferred onto the OneDrive for Business. The laptop is a personal, non-networked, laptop with a password only known to the researcher. Video files and transcripts will be saved in separate folders. Each file will be named with the participants' initials and the date of the interview. Each participant will be attributed a participant number, in

	<p>chronological interview order. Transcription files will be named e.g. "Participant 1".</p> <p>No list will be kept of participant numbers linked to personal identifying information.</p> <p>Recordings will be stored on Microsoft Stream. They will be saved to UEL storage (OneDrive for Business.)</p> <p>Consent forms will be collected electronically via UEL email and uploaded to a separate folder on the UEL OneDrive for Business.</p> <p>All data will be backed up on the researcher's personal space on the UEL server via an encrypted storage device. Scanned consent forms will be saved in a separate location to other research data. Once data has been backed up on UEL servers it will be deleted from the encrypted storage device.</p> <p>All study data on the researcher's personal laptop will be erased once the thesis has been examined and passed.</p>
How will you manage access and security?	<p>The researcher will transcribe all interviews (removing identifiable information in the process) and only the researcher, supervisor and examiners will have access to the transcripts.</p> <p>Video files will be saved in a separate folder on the researcher's laptop and titled as follows: 'Participant initials: Date of interview'. These will then be uploaded to the OneDrive. In terms of security, all files will be encrypted. There will be password protection for the laptop.</p>
<b>Data Sharing</b>	
How will you share the data?	<p>Anonymised transcripts will be shared with the research supervisor via UEL email. File names will be participant numbers e.g. Participant 1.</p> <p>Extracts of transcripts will be provided in the final research and any subsequent publications. Identifiable information will not be included in these extracts.</p> <p>Anonymised transcripts will not be deposited via the UEL repository.</p>

Are any restrictions on data sharing required?	No
<b>Selection and Preservation</b>	
Which data are of long-term value and should be retained, shared, and/or preserved?	Video recordings and electronic copies of consent forms will be kept until the thesis has been examined and passed. They will then be erased from both the personal laptop and UEL servers.
What is the long-term preservation plan for the data?	Transcripts will be securely stored on a personal laptop. The researcher will erase the transcripts from UEL servers after three years.
<b>Responsibilities and Resources</b>	
Who will be responsible for data management?	Katie Wood (researcher)
What resources will you require to deliver your plan?	N/A
<b>Review</b>	
This DMP has been reviewed by:	
Date:	Signature:

## Guidance

Brief information to help answer each section is below. Aim to be specific and concise.

For assistance in writing your data management plan, or with research data management more generally, please contact: [researchdata@uel.ac.uk](mailto:researchdata@uel.ac.uk)

### Administrative Data

#### Related Policies

List any other relevant funder, institutional, departmental or group policies on data management, data sharing and data security. Some of the information you give in the remainder of the DMP will be determined by the content of other policies. If so, point/link to them here.

#### Data collection

Describe the data aspects of your research, how you will capture/generate them, the file formats you are using and why. Mention your reasons for choosing particular data standards and approaches. Note the likely volume of data to be created.

#### Documentation and Metadata

What metadata will be created to describe the data? Consider what other documentation is needed to enable reuse. This may include information on the methodology used to collect the data, analytical and procedural information, definitions of variables, the format and file type of the data and software used to collect and/or process the data. How will this be captured and recorded?

#### Ethics and Intellectual Property

Detail any ethical and privacy issues, including the consent of participants. Explain the copyright/IPR and whether there are any data licensing issues – either for data you are reusing, or your data which you will make available to others.

#### Storage and Backup

Give a rough idea of data volume. Say where and on what media you will store data, and how they will be backed-up. Mention security measures to protect data which are sensitive or valuable. Who will have access to the data during the project and how will this be controlled?

#### Data Sharing

Note who would be interested in your data, and describe how you will make them available (with any restrictions). Detail any reasons not to share, as well as embargo periods or if you want time to exploit your data for publishing.

#### Selection and Preservation



Consider what data are worth selecting for long-term access and preservation. Say where you intend to deposit the data, such as in UEL's data repository ([data.uel.ac.uk](http://data.uel.ac.uk)) or a subject repository. How long should data be retained?

## **Appendix K**

### **Interview schedule**

#### **Questions**

##### **ALL**

1. What do you understand by parental engagement with school or education?
2. Do you feel that parental engagement is important? Why?
3. What do you think are the potential benefits, if any, of parental engagement to children?
4. What do you think are the potential benefits, if any, of parental engagement to parents?
5. What do you think are the potential benefits, if any, of parental engagement to school?
6. What role, if any, should schools play in enhancing or developing parent engagement?
7. Do you think that parents get involved for a particular reason?
8. In your opinion, does parents own experience of school impact upon the way that they interact with their child's school?
9. Why do you think some parents are motivated to engage with school?
10. Do you think parents face barriers or challenges with engaging with school?
11. Does your school value parental engagement? (Is there a difference between policy and reality?)
12. Do you think that school staff perceive parents who engage and parents who don't engage differently?

##### **SCHOOL**

Are there different approaches used by your school to encourage parents who engage less to become more involved?

##### **PARENT**

Do you choose to engage with your child's school? What are the reasons?

What do you think that school sees as the purpose of parental engagement?

Has your level of engagement changed since your child started school? Reasons?

Could your school do anything to make parental engagement easier, better or more impactful?

## Appendix L

### Braun & Clarke (2006) six phases of thematic analysis

From: Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.

#### Six phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

This should not be viewed as a linear model, where one cannot proceed to the next phase without completing the prior phase (correctly); rather analysis is a recursive process.

- 1) Familiarisation with the data: is common to all forms of qualitative analysis – the researcher must immerse themselves in, and become intimately familiar with, their data; reading and re-reading the data (and listening to audio-recorded data at least once, if relevant) and noting any initial analytic observations.
- 2) Coding: Also a common element of many approaches to qualitative analysis (see Braun & Clarke, 2012a, for thorough comparison), this involves generating pithy labels for important features of the data of relevance to the (broad) research question guiding the analysis. Coding is not simply a method of data reduction, it is also an analytic process, so codes capture both a semantic and conceptual reading of the data. The researcher codes every data item and ends this phase by collating all their codes and relevant data extracts.
- 3) Searching for themes: A theme is a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data relevant to the research question. If codes are the bricks and tiles in a brick and tile house, then themes are the walls and roof panels. Searching for themes is a bit like coding your codes to identify similarity in the data. This ‘searching’ is an active process; themes are not hidden in the data waiting to be discovered by the intrepid researcher, rather the researcher constructs themes. The researcher ends this phase by collating all the coded data relevant to each theme.
- 4) Reviewing themes: Involves checking that the themes ‘work’ in relation to both the coded extracts and the full data-set. The researcher should reflect on whether the themes tell a convincing and compelling story about the data, and begin to define the nature of each individual theme, and the relationship between the themes. It may be necessary to collapse two themes together or to split a theme into two or more themes, or to discard the candidate themes altogether and begin again the process of theme development.
- 5) Defining and naming themes: Requires the researcher to conduct and write a detailed analysis of each theme (the researcher should ask ‘what story does this theme tell?’ and ‘how does this theme fit into the overall story about the data?’), identifying the ‘essence’ of each theme and constructing a concise, punchy and informative name for each theme.
- 6) Writing up: Writing is an integral element of the analytic process in TA (and most qualitative research). Writing-up involves weaving together the analytic narrative and (vivid) data extracts to tell the reader a coherent and persuasive story about the data, and contextualising it in relation to existing literature.

## **Appendix M**

### **Researchers approach to using Braun & Clarke's TA phases**

#### **Phase 1 – Familiarise self with data**

The researcher transcribed all of the video recordings in full, in order to be fully immersed in the data. This involved watching and listening to the videos a number of times, and enabled the researcher to be entirely familiar with the data before coding took place. In addition, the researcher made initial notes in the research journal during the transcription which contributed to the coding phase.

#### **Phase 2 – Coding**

This phase of thematic analysis involved an initial list of 'noticings' from the data. The researcher highlighted phrases and statements of interest in each transcript. The researcher read the transcripts in random number order to reduce fatigue. Following this, the researcher revisited each transcript and transferred initial codes into a table, noting participant number and line number. (appendix X)

#### **Phase 3 – searching for themes**

A theme is a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data relevant to the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This phase involved searching for broader themes and therefore a broader and deeper understanding of how it was possible for parents and school staff to construct their experiences in the way that they did. The codes were then sorted into potential themes by hand. The researcher printed the codes and cut them into individual strips. They were then organised into potential themes. (Appendix x)

#### **Phase 4 – Reviewing themes**

This phase involved checking that the themes were relevant to both the coded extracts and the full data set. Some themes were collapsed.

#### **Phase 5 – Defining and naming themes**

The themes were again revisited and internal consistency was considered. The researcher reflected on whether the themes tell a ‘convincing and compelling story about the data’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and moved around any themes which were lacking in consistency. This phase also considered how themes were located in the broader social, political and historical contexts. The researcher recorded this analysis in the research journal. The codes were then compiled into data tables for each theme and subtheme, with participant number and line number recorded.

#### **Phase 6 – writing up**

This phase was an integral element of the analytic process, and brings together the analytic narrative and data extracts. The write up is presented in chapter 4.

## **Appendix N**

### **Participant debrief sheet**



#### **PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF LETTER**

Thank you for participating in my research study on parental engagement with education. This letter offers information that may be relevant in light of you having now taken part.

#### **What will happen to the information that you have provided?**

The following steps will be taken to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the data you have provided.

- All data (including personal contact details) will be securely stored on the University of East London One Drive, and will be password protected.
- The data will be pseudo anonymised, which means that each participant will be assigned a number, rather than using names.
- The fully anonymised data may be seen by my supervisor, examiners and may be published in academic journals.
- After the research has been completed, the data will be stored for as long as is deemed necessary by UEL, but will be stored securely.
- You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. Separately, you may also request to withdraw your data even after you have participated data, provided that this request is made within three weeks of the data being collected (after which point the data analysis will begin, and withdrawal will not be possible).

#### **What if you have been adversely affected by taking part?**

It is not anticipated that you will have been adversely affected by taking part in the research, and all reasonable steps have been taken to minimise potential harm. Nevertheless, it is still possible that your participation – or its after-effects – may have been challenging, distressing or uncomfortable in some way. If you have been affected in any of those ways you may find the following resources/services helpful in relation to obtaining information and support:

<https://www.contact.org.uk/connect-with-families/parent-support-groups/>

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/>

<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/families/support-and-advice/parenting-courses-and-advice>

<https://sendadvicesurrey.org.uk/>

<https://www.familyvoicesurrey.org/>

You are also very welcome to contact me or my supervisor if you have specific questions or concerns.

### **Contact Details**

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Katie Wood

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor Dr Miles Thomas, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,

Email: [m.thomas@uel.ac.uk](mailto:m.thomas@uel.ac.uk)

**or**

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Tim Lomas, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.

(Email: [t.lomas@uel](mailto:t.lomas@uel))

## Appendix O

### Interview transcript

KW

And my first question, is, what do you understand by parental engagement with school or education?

P2 1:40

That the school is effectively communicating anything that the parents need to know. So whether that's about their academic ability of their child or have anything to do with school trips, or any visits visitors, sort of health wise, any sort of form? So we know anything to do with their medical history, their sort of dietary requirements? And how else do we communicate to parents? Yeah, I think that's pretty much it. Yeah.

KW 2:14

Do you personally feel that parental engagement is important?

P2 2:20

Yes, yeah, I think it's huge. The parents that feel like we're on the same wavelength, you know, we've got really good engagement with, it's brilliant, we have made huge progress with children. When I think about children we've taught in the past. And when parents have become really engaged in the school and the parents work together as a team, the impact that that has made for the children has been monumental, it's been huge. Because I think if only one side of their education is working on it, then it doesn't have the impact as his home is working on it. And, and we're working on it in school, it has just a huge impact on them.

KW 3:06

Fantastic, thank you. Now I'm going to ask you what feels like the same question three times. Okay. It's not I promise, there is a slight difference at the end. So, and you've touched on this



already, but first one is what do you think all the potential benefits, if any, of parental engagement with school to children?

P2 3:26

I think, especially for the ones that find education hard, the fact that they know, I know, I've had kids in the past, say, ooh you speak to mummy, that's really cool. That means that we're working together, and we're a team. And so I think for them, it's really lovely. And I think for children, when we're talking to them about behaviour about how children are coping in school, anything that we can do to help. It's really important because children see that home and school are like a team. And so they can't play us off against one another, which is what we've had some children do in the past where they sort of come into school, and they say, well, mommy says, and then they go home, and they say, well, Miss Johnson says, and, and so you end up with a slightly different version. Whereas if the parents and the school are were talking, then that kind of sort of takes out the equation, we can work together to find a solution that works for them and for us, to help that child cope in whatever situation it is that they're struggling with.

KW 4:20

Excellent. So same question again. And you might have kind of touched on this, but what do you think of the benefits of parental engagement for parents?

P2 4:29

I think it's really important that they feel heard that they feel like we're listening to them as a school, and especially if it's about their academic ability, or it's about their behaviour at home. I know when we've had parents come to us before and they've said, you know, my child's behaving like this at home. It's been a bit of a shock to us as a school to hear that a certain child is behaving in a certain way. But we need to, as a school, make sure that we are hearing them and that we are taking that seriously because it is something they're struggling with. At home that very possibly might be something that we can help with in school, or we can do some learning about in school.

KW 5:07

Excellent. And then same question, finally, for the third time. But what do you think are the benefits of parent engagement for school?

P2 5:13

And I think it gives you a really valuable insight about the child's home life. I know when I taught reception, doing the home visits, was amazingly eye opening for understanding where a child has come from, what kind of environment they've come from, how many people they live with. And you know, how chaotic their home life is how easy they get, and I find it to settle into school. I remember visiting one parent, and she had almost like an EYFS. garden, and she had all the zones and she had like a writing zone. And she had. And so I knew when her child had come to school, I knew he she would be amazing. I knew she would know how to write her name, I knew she would be able to recognise all the letters. And so it just gives you a really nice heads up. And I knew that mom was super on education, I knew that she was and she really valued it. And I know she worked really hard. So that was really key going, when we did sort of events where I wanted visitors to come into school, or I needed volunteers for a school trip. I knew she would always be up for it. I knew, you know, she had that kind of mentality. So that was really nice. Yeah.

KW 6:17

So what role if any, do you think school should play in enhancing or developing parental engagement?

P2 6:26

I think to a certain extent, the school needs to lead it, because not all parents will reach out to the school. Not all parents feel like they can or that they should reach out to the school and tell us something that's happening. And I know, when we've had parents in the past that have had something going on at home, it's often taken a teacher to come forward to a parent and say, you know, your child's acting slightly strange in school, is there anything going on that you want to talk about to, so that we can help you. And that's really opened the door of communication, and it's helped the parent to let go of some of that worry, and some of the

sort of anxiety, and it's helped us to support them. I know, we can put in place, you know, early help. There's a centre in RH that has a lot of parental advice so we sometimes parents there, and, and I think it's just, it's just nice for them to feel heard by somebody and not judged, because we, you know, obviously never judge parents for anything they're going through. But we're just here to support them and to make sure that their children are coping and they are happy. Really?

KW 7:27

Um, do you think that parents get involved for a particular reason?

P2 7:36

Well, I'd like to think they get involved because they value their children's education, and they value the the impact that they will have on their later life. And I know, we've had parents say, well we come to your school because of you know, the field that we've got outside, because we have a Wildlife Area, we can do that kind of thing. And so I've had parents say that sorts of things to us, I've had parents say, we've come to nf because I really wanted to send my child to a village school, I really wanted that atmosphere, you know, all the teachers across the school, I can name every child in the school. And and I suppose that's only really able to happen, because we are a one form entry, because we are quite small. And I imagine if you send I mean, I personally went to much bigger primary school, and I certainly couldn't have named all the teachers, let alone them name all the children. And I guess, parents get involved in a school through that sort of point of view. And but I don't I don't really know outside of that why a parent would sort of be engaged, really?

KW 8:38

Mm hmm. And in your opinion, do you think that a parent's own experience of school and education impacts the way that they interact with their child school?

P2 8:51

Yeah, I think it impacts them hugely. And it's often been quite eye opening for a child, if you have a child in your class, and they're not engaging in school, and they don't seem to prioritise school. And they sometimes have very low attendance. And when we've had a conversation with parents, and they say something like, Oh, yeah, I hated school, when I was a kid, or, you know, I dropped out of school at such and such an age. And I think it can be quite telling and I think the children's reaction to school sort of, not goes down the same path exactly, but certainly is influenced by their parents opinion of school, whereas parents that loved school or you know, you know, really prioritised school for their children, they tend to come bouncing in, and they tend to be quite willing learners. And, and they, you know, yeah, they sort of thrown themselves into education. And but having said that, not always I have had a few children at this school whose parents don't value education, and they say they love school. They always want to come in, you know, they have brilliant attendance. So I guess it depends on the characteristic of the child.

KW 9:53

Yeah. And whether they listen to their parents. Yeah.

KW 9:58

Do you think that some parents face barriers or challenges with engaging with education, we've kind of touched on this a little bit with the last question.

P2 10:07

yeah, I think I know, we've had parents in the past who aren't confident with their own level of literacy, and their own ability to read. And we have supported one parent in particular with becoming more confident and going to adult literacy classes and, and sort of learning to read with her son. And so I think, you know, that's really important to make sure that we're sort of digging down and understanding why parents aren't engaging, and parents aren't as willing to help out as, as they could be.

KW 10:44

Does your school do you think value parental engagement. And also, do you think there's a difference between kind of the policy on parental engagement and the reality of what happens day to day.

P2 10:58

And we do really prioritise parent engagement, we now have, we've set something in place this year, which is the parental forms. So every time a teacher phones a parent, or has to speak to a parent about something, we fill out a form, and that goes straight to the senior leadership team to make sure that everyone's in the know, everyone knows what's happened. And on there are the actions and the next steps. And it means that we're all sort of held to account for what we said is going to happen and make sure it actually happens. And that's working really well so far this year. And, but with regards to it, not working out quite as we've planned, I think when there are certain points in the year that are really, really busy for teachers and for teaching staff, and it is, it gets a little bit chaotic, it gets really hard to manage. So although we say I will get back to you, and we do get back to them, but it might not quite be in the timescale that we had hoped it would be. But we are really lucky here are parents really understanding and and they're very good at coming back to us and saying all did you did you get a chance to look into such and such? Or did you? Did you have a chance to phone somebody or so that they were really good at keeping in contact with us as much as we do with them? Yeah.

KW 12:18

Do you think that school staff and this doesn't have to be in your school, this can be generally perceive parents who are engaged and parents who don't engage differently?

P2 12:29

Yeah, I think it's quite hard as a school to keep fighting the same battles for parents that don't really engage. The parents that don't come to parents evening and don't really pick up the phone are very difficult to grab the pickup and drop off times. It's difficult to keep putting in the same level of enthusiasm and effort, when you know that, either they say yeah, yeah, we'll do that, and then go in and don't do any of that, or that are just really hard to engage that are

very difficult that sort of almost evasive. And I can see how it would be really draining to have to keep having the same conversations after it, you know, over and over again. Yeah. And so yeah, I'm sure it does impact the way that sort of teachers approach parents.

KW 13:18

And the last question, Are there different approaches used by your school to encourage parents who engage less to become more involved? So do you have strategies for those kind of hardest to reach parents?

P2 13:34

we have a lot of events across the year, or Normally, we have a lot of events of the year. And so we have things like sports day, and we invite all the parents to come in and sit and have a picnic with their children. And we've got the art exhibition that we hold in the summer, which is all the art that the children have produced across the year, and we have up in the hall. And so we encourage parents to come in and you know, see their child's work and all the teachers are hovering around the hall. And we catch different parents at different times. And we've got different parents evenings across the year, we send out reports in the summer, and then they all have a slot if they want to phone us to discuss anything. And so we try lots of different methods and to try and engage parents. And but we also have a anti bully anti bullying partnership team, which is fond of some stuff, some students and some parents, which has been a brilliant way of getting parents to engage, because parents that work quite a lot or aren't able to come to some of those of daytime, things that we put on. It's held in the evenings and it's run well it used to be run by our deputy head. And so she used to sort of find a time for those working parents that they could come in and they could really contribute to something that's really important for their children's education.

KW 14:50

If you had parent who hadn't attended, how many parents evenings you haven't a year three, two. So if you if you had a parent that hadn't attended the first parents evening of the year, you haven't really heard from them, say a child minder did pick up or you know, another relative. And then they haven't shown that they were going to come to the second parents

even either. You've got no concerns kind of safeguarding wise, but what what, is there anything you do to try and get that parent involved?

P2 15:17

Yeah, at the point where they don't book a parents evening, we usually give them a ring, whether that's through the teacher or the school office. And just to sort of gently inquire why they haven't booked a slot. And if they couldn't do those days, then we set up another day, we talk about timings that work well for them. And I have time off for those of senco time. And so I've had parents come in and talk to me during that time, if they can do the mornings, and they can't do the afternoons. And so we try and dig deeper as to why they're not coming. And then sort of take away that barrier and trying to find a space where they can come and speak to us and we can talk through their child's education.

KW 15:55

Super. Well. That is all for questions. I can't believe how quick record You're my fastest yet. Well done. And hopefully that wasn't too kind of repetitive or invasive. No, it's fine. Wonderful. I'll stop recording

## Appendix P

### Initial coding process

Figure 1 – Initial coding and noticing

Interview 2

60 academic ability, or it's about their behaviour at home. I know when  
61 we've had parents come to us before and they've said, you know, my  
62 child's behaving like this at home. It's been a bit of a shock to us as a  
63 school to hear that a certain charges behaving in a certain way. But we  
64 need to, as a school, make sure that we are hearing them and that we are  
65 taking that seriously because it is something they're struggling with. At  
66 home that very possibly might be something that we can help with in  
67 school, or we can do some learning about in school.

68

69 KW 5:07

70 Excellent. And then same question, finally, for the third time. But what do  
71 you think are the benefits of parent engagement for school.

72

73 MJ 5:13

74 And I think it gives you a really valuable insight about the child's home  
75 life. I know when I taught reception, doing the home visits, was amazingly  
76 eye opening for understanding where a child has come from, what kind of  
77 environment they've come from, how many people they live with. And  
78 you know, how chaotic their home life is how easy they get, and I find it  
79 to settle into school. I remember visiting one parent, and she had almost  
80 like an <sup>reception</sup> ~~Ever~~ garden, and she had all the zones and she had like a writing  
81 zone. And she had. And so I knew when her child had come to school, I  
82 knew he she would be amazing. I knew she would know how to write her  
83 name, I knew she would be able to recognise all the letters. And so it just  
84 gives you a really nice heads up. And I knew that mom was super on  
85 education, I knew that she was and she really valued it. And I know she  
86 worked really hard. So that was really key going, when we did sort of  
87 events where I wanted visitors to come into school, or I needed  
88 volunteers for a school trip. I knew she would always be up for it. I knew,  
89 you know, she had that kind of mentality. So that was really nice. Yeah.

90

Two way sharing.  
Parent sharing that  
child behaviour is  
difficult at home.

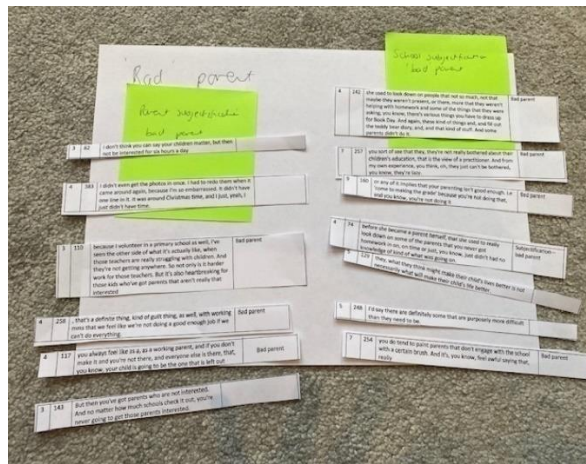
Insight into a child's  
home life  
How chaotic home life is  
is related to how  
well they settle into  
school

Parent putting the  
effort in at home  
means a child will  
do well.

Effort at home equals  
parent valuing  
education  
But also equated  
with being available -  
volunteers, school  
trips etc.



Figure 2 – Grouping codes into themes



#### Outcomes for Parents

##### Meeting parents own needs

6	556	it's a bit more important, a bit more valued a bit more-Just taking notice of because maybe they're the sort of person that nobody usually takes much notice of.
6	178	hopefully them feeling that school is this place where there are people they can talk to, if they're concerned about their child, whether that's to do with their education, their emotional needs, their behaviour, whatever it is.
2	166	we've had parents in the past who aren't confident with their own level of literacy, and their own ability to read. And we have supported one parent in particular with becoming more confident and going to adult literacy classes and, and sort of learning to read with her son.
9	117	In secondary fear of losing their children and fear of losing that what they had a primary definitely, because year seven parents are always like that
2	109	we, you know, obviously never judge parents for anything they're going through. But we're just here to support them and to make sure that their children are coping and they are happy

##### Improving home life

8	61	if you're, as a parent, if your children are engaged at school, and motivated to learn that's got to spill over into your home life as well. So that's got to be a benefit.
2	58	And I think it's really important that they feel heard that they feel like we're listening to them as a school, and especially if it's about their academic ability, or it's about their behaviour at home. I know when we've had parents come to us before and they've said, you know, my child's behaving like this at home. It's been a bit of a shock to us as a school to hear that a certain child is behaving in a certain way. But we need to, as a school, make sure that we are hearing them and that we are taking that seriously because it is something they're struggling with.

##### Parents feeling part of the school community

9	119	anxiety about you know, you've come from that community of primary, if you took part in that that whole standing in the playground activity, and suddenly that is severed quite severely.
9	45	it will ensure that they are part of the community and you know, and fit in and all the stuff that makes life easier, and have a true sense of belonging because the whole family's interested.

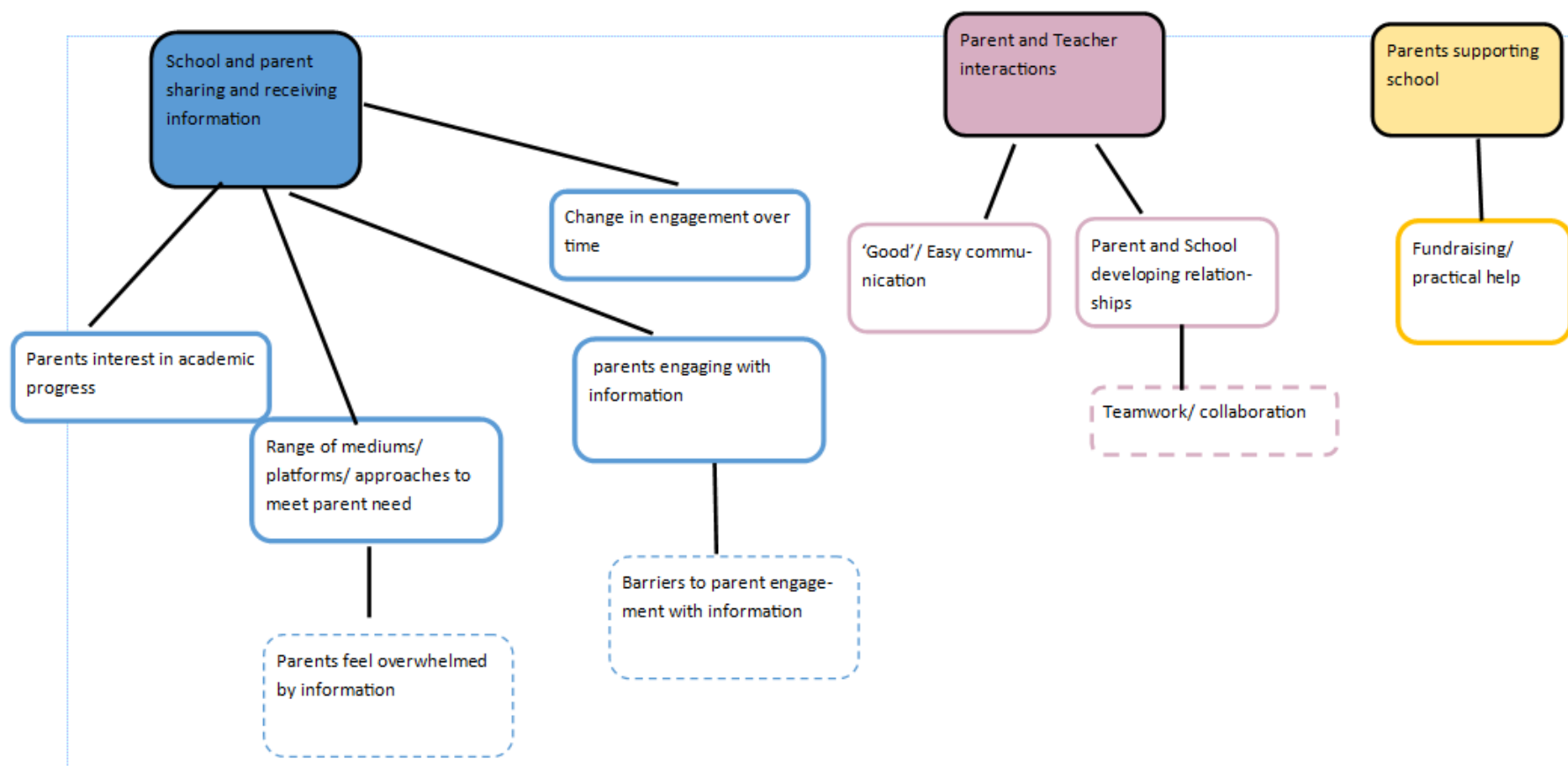
##### Parents try to have an influence on school decisions

9	124	I think some try to get involved to direct the school, you know, just think they're gonna have some sort of influence
9	183	anyone who's honest, will know that if you've got a vociferous parent, who is going to be sort of grilling you about this, that and the other, that you will make sure you know that child's data, well, you know what I mean, should you be required to or prove anything

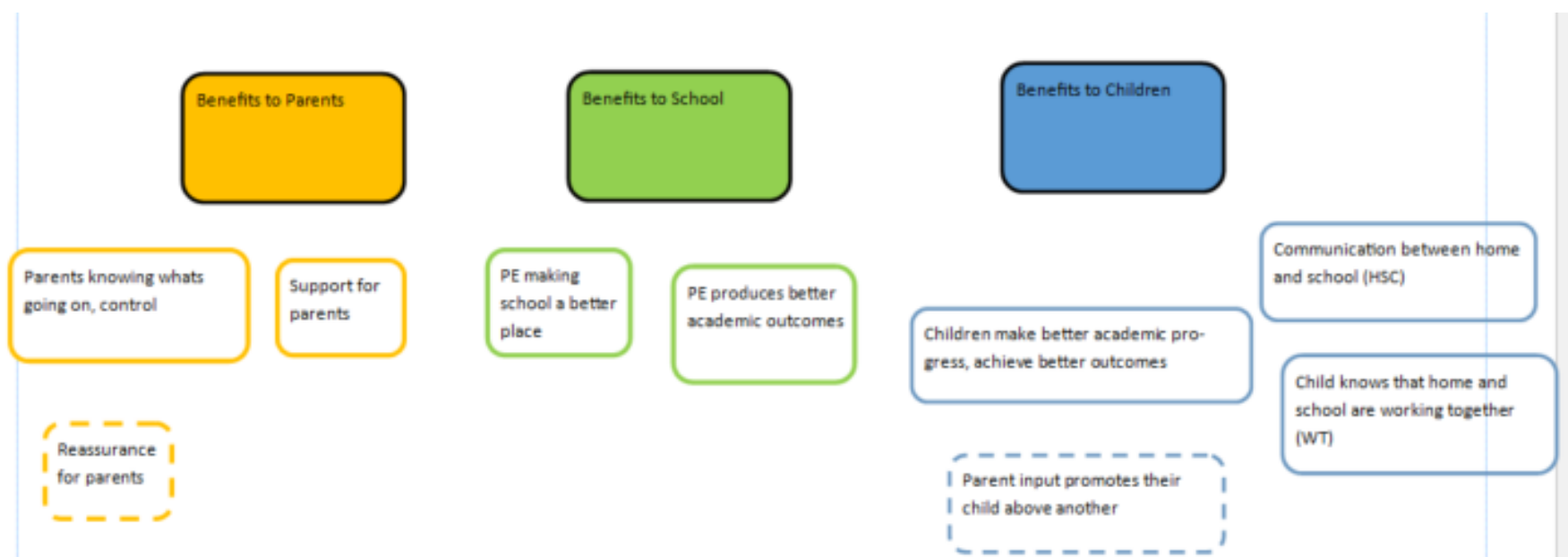
## Appendix Q

### Initial thematic maps

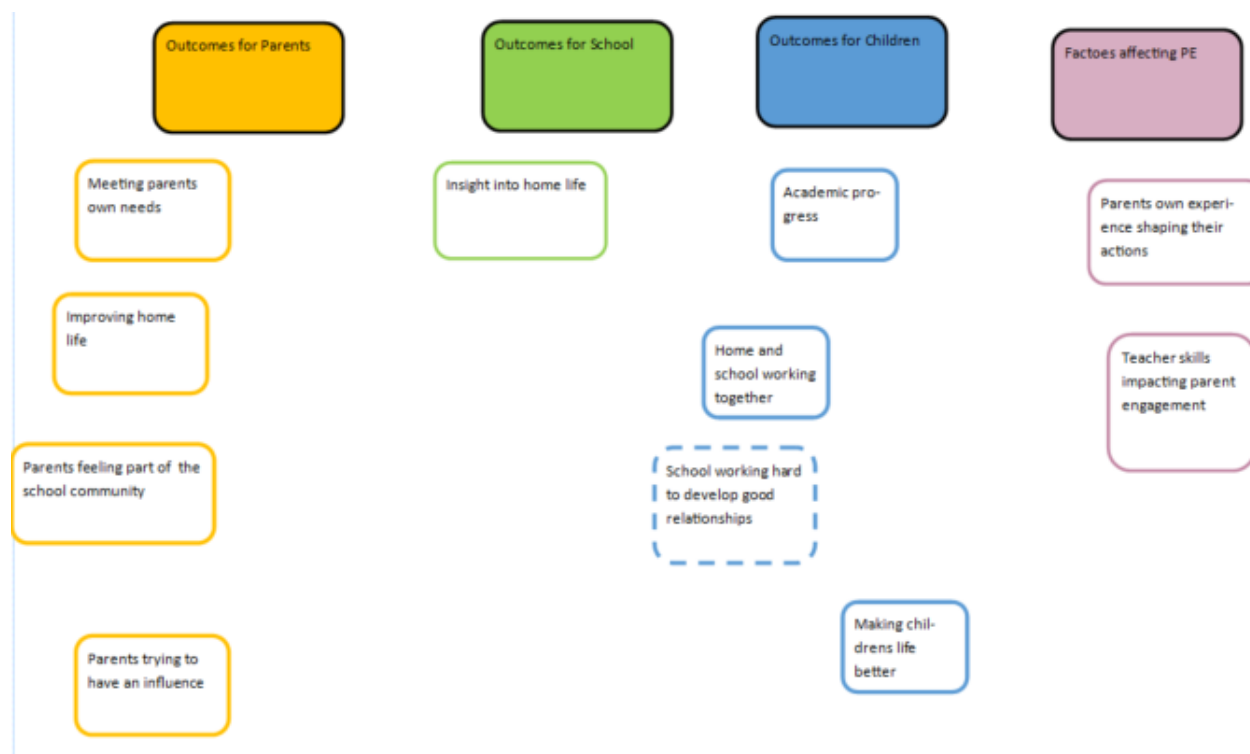
RQ1 Thematic map version 1



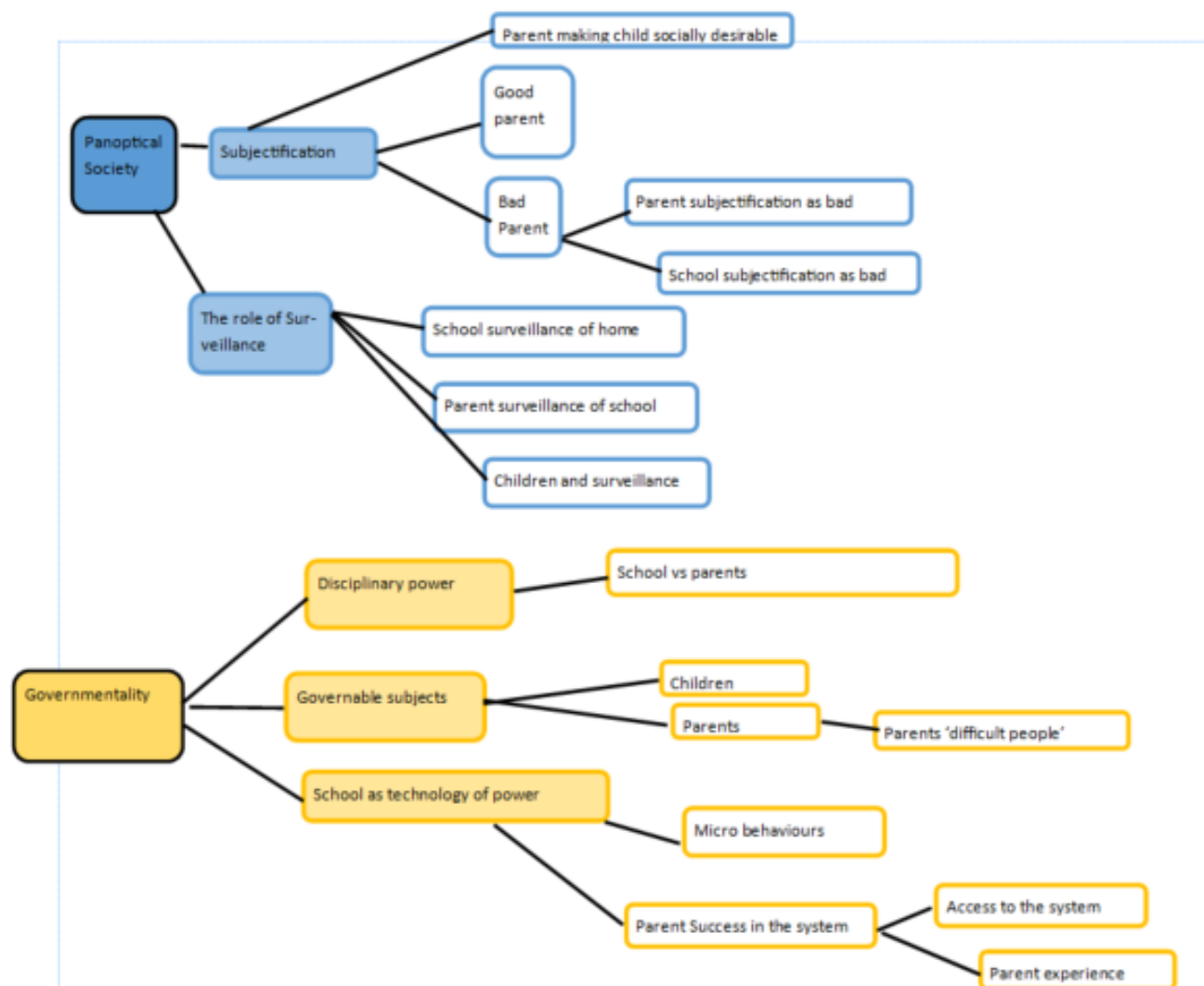
## RQ2 Thematic map version 1



### RQ3 Thematic map version 2

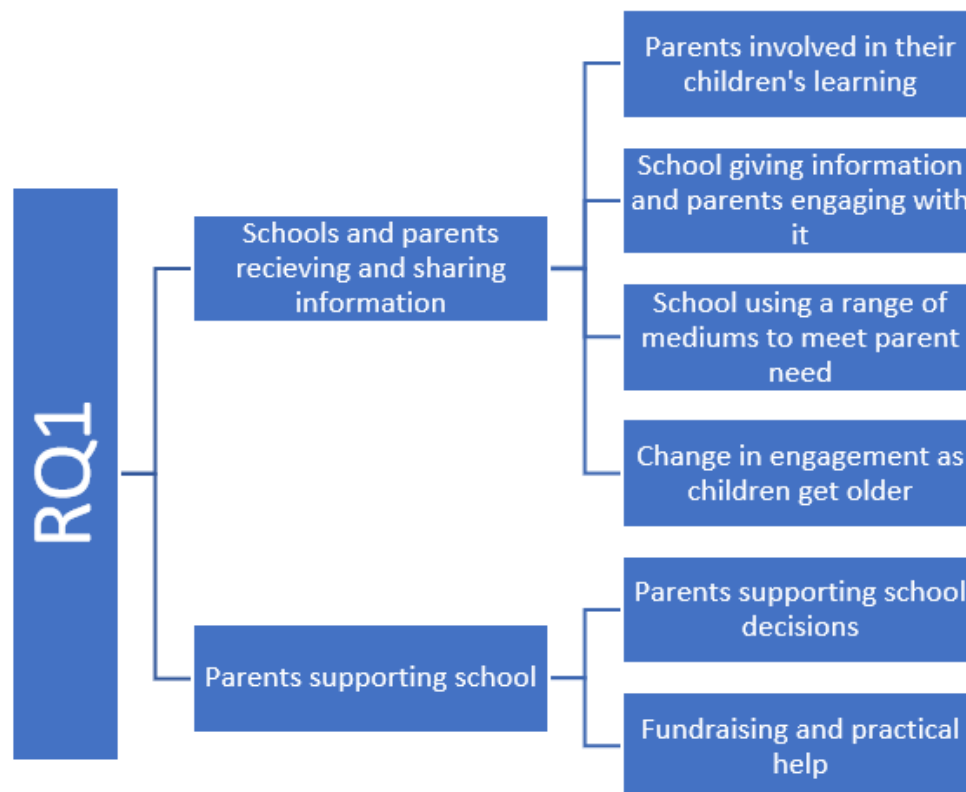


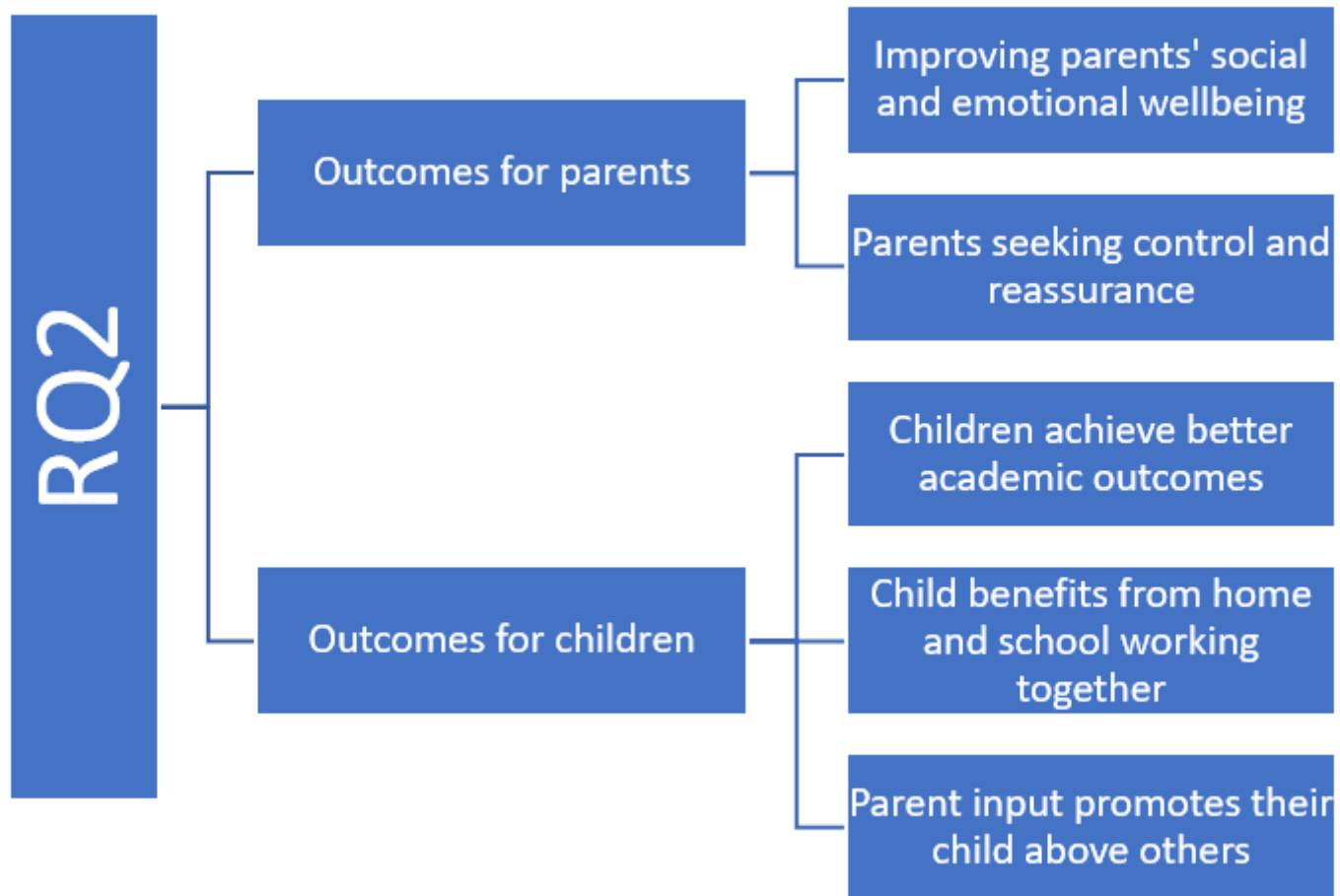
RQ4 Thematic map version 1

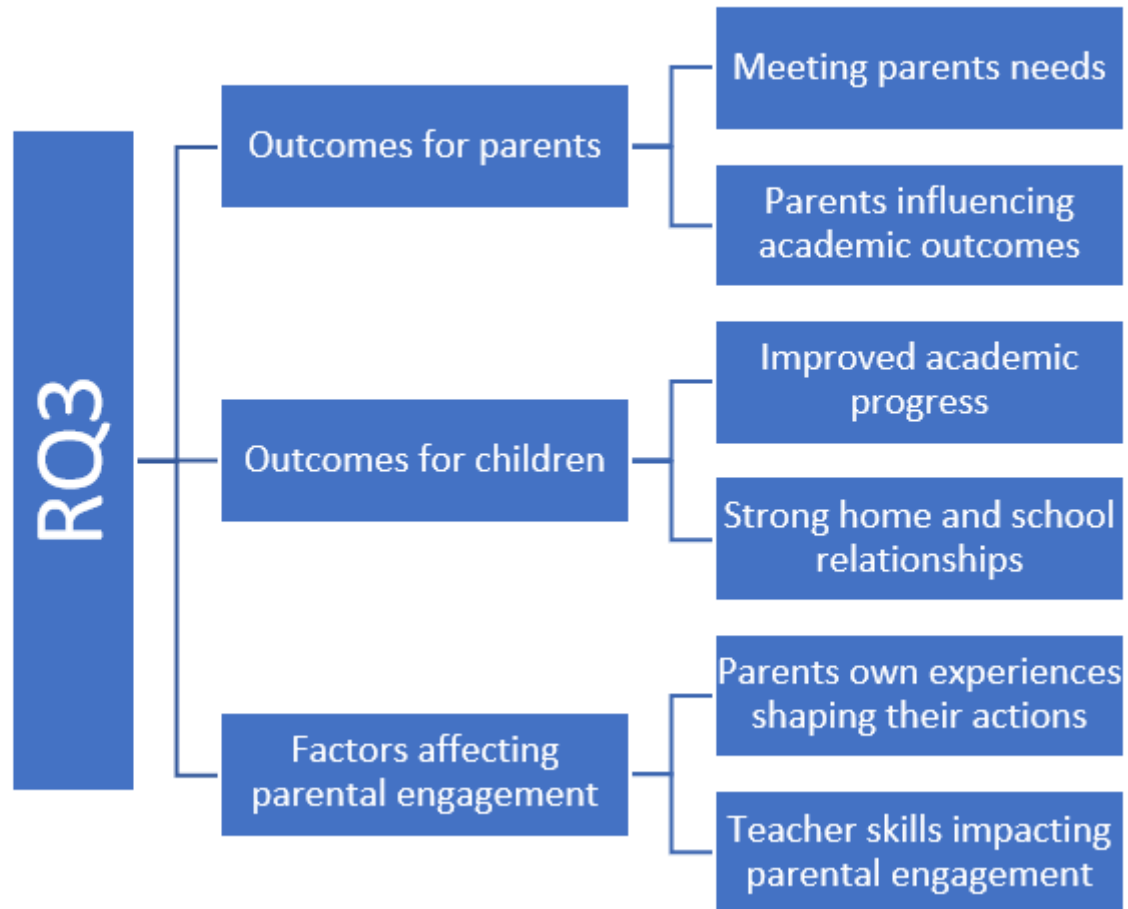


## Appendix R

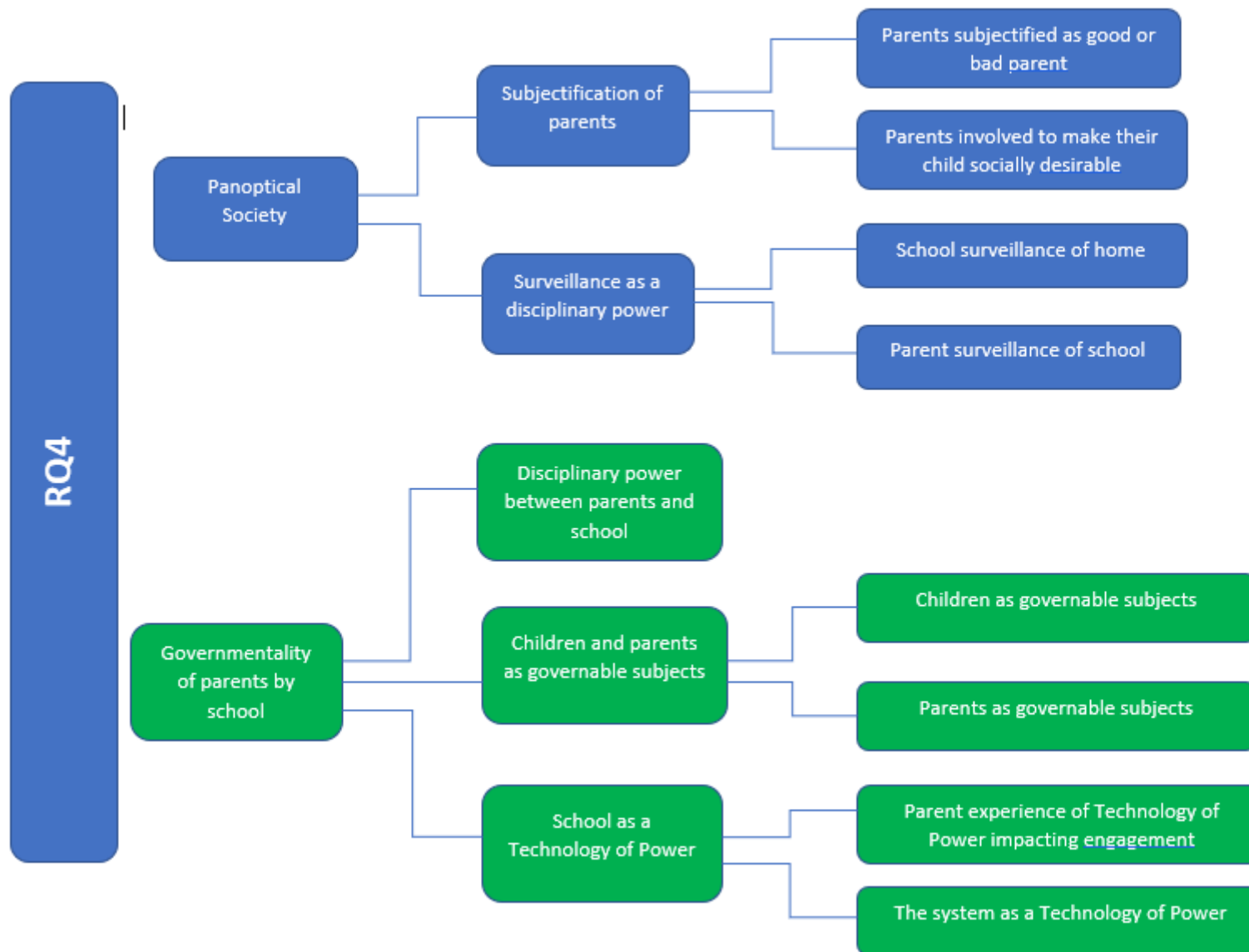
### Final thematic maps











## Appendix S

Rich picture diagram based upon initial findings, used in the development of Figure 15 and 16

