



EXPLORING PARENTS' AND CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF NURTURE GROUPS AND THE WAYS IN WHICH THEY IMPACT UPON PARENT- CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract

There is currently very little research investigating the impact of Nurture Groups on children in their home context, particularly with regard to changes in the parent-child relationship. Where a positive impact upon this relationship has been previously found (e.g. Binnie & Allen, 2008; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007), the underlying processes have received little attention. The aim of this research was to explore both parent and pupils' perceptions of the impact of Nurture Groups on the parent-child relationship.

Adopting a Critical Realist stance, this purely qualitative study used semi-structured interviews to gain the views of parents (n=12), and three focus groups in order to harness the perceptions of the children (n= 11). The data was analysed using an adaptation of Strauss and Corbin's Grounded Theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), resulting in the emergence of two theories.

The key findings included the parents' perception that their children had lower anxiety and increased confidence as a result of the Nurture Group intervention. They also perceived there to be a change in their interactions at home, with the children being more communicative, more affectionate, more independent, and more assertive. The children's views were largely consistent with those of their parents.

The interviews also unveiled that some parents knew very little about the Nurture Groups, their aims, and the expected outcomes. The implications of this for children, Nurture Group practitioners and Educational Psychologists are discussed.

Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	ii
Contents	iii
Abbreviations	viii
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
- 1.1. Introduction	1
- 1.2 Background and Terminology	1
- 1.2.1. What are Nurture Groups?	1
- 1.2.2. Who are Nurture Groups for?	2
- 1.2.3. What do Nurture Groups involve?	4
- 1.2.4. Types of Nurture Groups	4
- 1.2.4.1. 'Classic' model	5
- 1.2.4.2. New-variant Nurture Groups	6
- 1.2.5. How are parents involved in Nurture Groups?	6
- 1.3. Context	7
- 1.3.1. National context	7
- 1.3.2. Local context	8
- 1.4. Researcher's position	9
- 1.5. This study	10
- 1.6. Research Rationale	11
Chapter 2. Literature Review	12
- 2.1. The Role of the Literature Review in Grounded Theory Research	12
- 2.2. Systematic Literature Search	13
- 2.2.1. Introduction	13
- 2.2.2. Review Question and Database Search	14
- 2.3. Critical analysis of the literature	19
- 2.3.1. Introduction	19
- 2.3.2. Parental perspective on the effectiveness of the intervention	20
- 2.3.2.1. Parental views in small scale research evaluating the effectiveness of Nurture Groups	20
- 2.3.2.2. Parental views in large projects evaluating the effectiveness in Nurture Groups	23
- 2.3.2.3. Classic vs. New-variant Nurture Groups	26
- 2.3.2.4. A focus on parental perceptions	28
- 2.3.3. Parental perspective on any changes in their relationship with their child following the intervention	29
- 2.3.4. Parental perspective on any changes in their relationship with the school following the intervention	32
- 2.3.4.1. Primary Nurture Groups	32
- 2.3.4.2. Secondary Nurture Groups	35
- 2.3.5. Summary of the Parental Perspective	36
- 2.3.6. Child's perspective	37
- 2.3.7. Summary of the child's perspective	40
- 2.4. Rationale for current research	41
Chapter 3. Methodology	43
- 3.1. Introduction	43
- 3.2. Ontology and Epistemology	43

- 3.2.1. The epistemological position - Critical Realism.....	44
- 3.2.2. Using Grounded Theory; Epistemological Position.....	45
- 3.3. Research aims/ questions.....	46
- 3.4. Purpose of research.....	48
- 3.5. Design.....	48
- 3.6. Participants.....	49
- 3.6.1. Interviews.....	49
- 3.6.2. Focus Groups.....	51
- 3.7. Strategies for data gathering.....	55
- 3.7.1. Semi-structured Interviews.....	55
- 3.7.2. Focus Groups.....	59
- 3.8. Procedure.....	61
- 3.9. Data Analysis.....	62
- 3.9.1. What is Grounded Theory?.....	63
- 3.9.1.1. History.....	63
- 3.9.1.2. Theoretical Background and Aims.....	63
- 3.9.1.3. Advantages of using Grounded Theory Methods.....	64
- 3.9.1.4. Different approaches to Grounded Theory.....	65
- 3.9.2. Grounded Theory Method in the current research.....	66
- 3.9.2.1. Open coding.....	66
- 3.9.2.2. Axial coding.....	67
- 3.9.2.3. Selective coding	68
- 3.9.2.4. Analytic Tools used in the Coding Process.....	69
- 3.9.2.5. The Model.....	70
- 3.10. Ethics.....	72
- 3.11. Validity and Reliability.....	74
- 3.12. Reflexivity.....	76
- 3.13. Summary.....	77

Chapter 4. Findings.....	78
- 4.1. Introduction.....	78
- 4.2. Qualitative Analysis- Parent Interviews.....	78
- 4.2.1. Attention.....	81
- 4.2.2. Confidence.....	82
- 4.2.3. Attachment.....	83
- 4.2.4. Anxiety.....	85
- 4.2.5. Small group size.....	86
- 4.2.6. Emotions.....	88
- 4.2.7. Attitude to school.....	89
- 4.2.8. Communication and social skills.....	90
- 4.2.9. Relationships.....	92
- 4.2.10. Independence.....	94
- 4.2.11. Assertiveness.....	96
- 4.2.12. Expectations.....	97
- 4.2.13. Attitudes of parents to Nurture Groups.....	98
- 4.2.14. Academic skills.....	101
- 4.2.15. Understanding of others.....	102
- 4.3. Summary of Parent Interviews.....	102
- 4.4. Qualitative Analysis- Focus Groups.....	104
- 4.4.1. Behaviour.....	105
- 4.4.2. Relationships.....	107
- 4.4.3. Fun.....	109
- 4.4.4. Happiness.....	109
- 4.4.5. Small Group size.....	110
- 4.4.6. Maturity.....	111
- 4.4.7. Communication.....	112

- 4.4.8. Confidence.....	114
- 4.5. Summary of Pupil Focus Groups.....	115
Chapter 5. Discussion.....	117
- 5.1. Introduction.....	117
- 5.2. Development of Theory.....	117
- 5.2.1. Parent perceptions of Nurture Groups.....	118
- 5.2.2. Pupil perceptions of Nurture Groups.....	123
- 5.2.3. Drawing the theories together.....	126
- 5.3. Links to existing theories.....	128
- 5.3.1. Attachment Theory.....	128
- 5.3.2. Transactional Model.....	130
- 5.3.3. Social Learning Theory.....	131
- 5.3.4. Theories of Motivation.....	131
- 5.4. Limitations of findings and implications for further research.....	133
- 5.5. Implications for Nurture Groups.....	136
- 5.5.1. Implications for NG staff.....	136
- 5.5.2. Implications for parents.....	138
- 5.5.3. Implications for children.....	138
- 5.5.4. Implications for EPs.....	139
- 5.5.5. Dissemination of Findings.....	140
- 5.6. Reflection.....	141
- 5.6.1. How did I impact upon the research?.....	141
- 5.6.2. What impact has the research had upon me?.....	143
- 5.7. Conclusion.....	144
References.....	147
Appendices.....	158

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Systematic Literature Search 1.....	15
Table 2. Systematic Literature Search 2.....	17
Table 3. Studies included in Literature Review.....	18
Table 4. Details of parent participants	52
Table 5. Details of Focus Group 1 participants.....	53
Table 6. Details of Focus Group 2 participants.....	54
Table 7. Details of Focus Group 3 participants.....	54

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Example of Open Coding.....	67
Figure 2. Example of Axial Coding.....	68
Figure 3. Example of Code Map.....	69
Figure 4. Flow-chart of the adapted Strauss and Corbin (1998) model of Grounded Theory used in this research.....	71
Figure 5. Code Map for Parent Interviews.....	80
Figure 6. Code Map for Focus Groups.....	106
Figure 7. Theory derived from Parental Interviews.....	119
Figure 8. Theory derived from Focus Groups.....	124
Figure 9. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.....	132

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1.	Grid of literature reviewed
Appendix 2.	Approval from the Ethics Committee
Appendix 3.	Permission letter sent to Head teachers
Appendix 4.	Email to head teachers
Appendix 5.	Parent Participant Information Sheet
Appendix 6.	Parental Consent form
Appendix 7.	Script for Interviews
Appendix 8.	Interview Schedules (Interviews 1-10)
Appendix 9.	Permission letter to parents
Appendix 10.	Child participant information sheet
Appendix 11.	Script for Focus Groups
Appendix 12.	Child Consent Form
Appendix 13.	Focus Group Schedules (1-3)
Appendix 14.	Example of Transcription
Appendix 15.	Example of Open Coding
Appendix 16.	Example of Axial Coding
Appendix 17.	Example of Selective Coding
Appendix 18.	Example Code Map
Appendix 19.	Example of Reflective research diary extract
Appendix 20.	Complex representation of Parent Theory
Appendix 21.	Complex representation of Pupil Theory
Appendix 22.	PowerPoint presentation of findings for NG staff
Appendix 23.	Executive summary for Head teachers

CONTENTS OF CD

Transcriptions of all interviews

Transcriptions of all focus groups

Open coding of all interviews (1-10)

Open coding of all focus groups (1-3)

Axial Coding of all interviews (1-10)

Axial Coding of all focus groups (1-3)

Selective coding of all interviews (1-10)

Selective coding of all focus groups (1-3)

Code maps of all interviews (1-10)

Code maps of all focus groups (1-3)

Reflective diary extracts after each interview and focus group

Abbreviations

BIOS	Behaviour Indicators of Self-esteem Scale (Burnett, 1998)
EP	Educational Psychologist
FG	Focus Group
GTM	Grounded Theory Methodology
NG	Nurture Group
SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997)
SEBD	Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
TA	Teaching Assistant

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This study will seek to explore the impact of Nurture Groups on the relationship between the parent and their child. This will be explored through triangulation of the parents' perceptions, and the child's perspective following the intervention. Little is known about the impact of Nurture Groups on the children at home, particularly from the view of the child themselves (March & Healy, 2007). The implications of the findings will be discussed in relation to how Nurture Groups might best involve parents, how parents can support the intervention at home, and how Educational Psychologists (EPs) can best support practitioners.

1.2. Background and Terminology

1.2.1. What are Nurture Groups?

Nurture Groups are small classes that aim to provide a safe, secure environment for children to develop their social, emotional and behavioural skills (Boxall, 2002). The *classic* nurture groups described by Boxall (2002) would involve 10-12 pupils usually in primary school settings, as well 2 members of staff; a teacher and a teaching assistant. The children would spend the majority of their time in this setting within the school, and receive highly structured and supported learning experiences. The children would generally spend around two terms in this provision, as an early intervention to remove the barriers that social, emotional or behavioural difficulties may place upon their academic progress.

Nurture Groups were first developed in the early 1970s by Marjorie Boxall. They aimed to recreate 'the total experience of a normally developing child from babyhood onwards' (p.8), for children who had been described as having been deprived of these experiences. This meant having a very predictable structure so that the child could develop trust in adults, at the same time as learning cooperative, supportive behaviour, as modelled by the Nurture Group staff. One of the key principles behind the groups, was that each child could be responded to in a way that is appropriate for their stage of development. This meant that they would be able to have their needs reliably met, to ensure feelings of trust and safety, and allow them to develop good self-esteem.

1.2.2. Who are Nurture Groups for?

Nurture Groups are widely understood to be an intervention for children with *social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD)*. This term was usefully defined by Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) as;

'an umbrella term incorporating a diverse range of behaviours ranging from 'acting out' behaviours such as aggression, non-compliant behaviour, vandalism and bullying, to 'acting in' behaviours such as social withdrawal, anxiety, depression, extreme passivity, eating disorders, substance abuse and self-harm' (p.13).

According to Boxall (2000), some children are unable to organise themselves, and behave in a way that is appropriate to meet expectations when they first start school. She explained that the reason for this often lies in their early experiences, such as having a mother that was unable to respond sensitively to their needs, perhaps due to their own needs, or the interaction between the parent and child being impaired or disrupted in some way (for example, through

neglect, harsh weaning, or childcare arrangements). She added that some parents may not have the experience or capacity to deal with their child's challenging behaviour; becoming stressed and unpredictable. This can result in children feeling confused, lacking a sense of stability, having minimal trust in adults, and low self-confidence. When these children begin school, this lack of trust in adults can mean that they have difficulty accepting the teacher, and struggle to adapt to the routines of the classroom. These social and emotional skills are essential in being able to learn within the classroom, and therefore for some children, who have not had the opportunity to develop these skills in their early lives, for whatever reason, Nurture Groups seek to provide an environment within which these early experiences can be recreated, and skills nurtured. The aim is to ultimately feed the child back into the mainstream classroom, and therefore links between this and the Nurture Group are maintained throughout the duration of the intervention (Boxall, 2000).

Nurture Groups are now a widely-used intervention delivered at both the Primary and Secondary level for children who have not developed these skills (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005). Children are chosen for the groups by the school staff, and are selected based on behaviours that appear to be linked to deprivation in their early years. For example, children may be reluctant to speak, be very aggressive, or appear to be unhappy. Children's suitability for these groups is usually measured using a Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998).

1.2.3. What do Nurture Groups involve?

The main premise within Nurture Groups is that the staff respond in a way that is akin to that of a mother towards their child. Staff should interact with the child in a way that is appropriate for their developmental age, which is often far below their chronological age. Through following the child's lead, and intuitively providing for them at a level which is appropriate for their development; the child builds self-esteem and the relationship between the practitioner and child is strengthened. Each day in the Nurture Group follows a predictable and slow-moving structure, and behaviour management is positive and consistent, so that the child can develop feelings of security and control. In the Nurture Group, the children are explicitly taught about social skills such as eye contact, they discuss their feelings, and are communicated with through verbal and non-verbal cues, as well as through touch. Through this process, children develop their early learning skills, and are better able to manage themselves and take responsibility for their actions (Boxall, 2000). As part of the routine, the groups eat food together around a table so that responsibilities can be managed, and they have opportunities to cooperate and communicate as a group. The rooms are arranged to look like a home, with soft furnishings, a dining table and a cooking area, and there is always a full length mirror so that children can develop self-awareness and a sense of identity (Bennathan, 2005).

1.2.4. Types of Nurture Groups

With Nurture Groups having been in existence in the United Kingdom since the early 1970's, there have now been adaptations made to the original model.

1.2.4.1. The 'Classic' Model

As previously described, the *classic* Nurture Group model involves 10-12 pupils, with a teacher and teaching assistant (TA) who remain consistent throughout the intervention. The children would only attend their usual class for registration and one afternoon per week, with the remaining time being spent in the Nurture Group. Within a 'classic' Nurture Group, the children would follow a special curriculum which would consist of elements of the formal curriculum, and a curriculum focusing on the development of social and emotional skills. Children would generally spend between two to four school terms in the Nurture Group. In the 'classic' model children are only taken from the school within which the intervention is based, and the children are identified using the Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997).

According to Boxall (2002), there are 4 key principles of a 'classic' Nurture Group. These are as follows:

1. 'The teacher and the TA have very specific roles in creating the nurture group atmosphere
2. The nurture group recreates the process of early learning environment
3. The nurture group is an integral part of the school in which it is located
4. The interdependent partnership of the teacher and TA is essential'

(Boxall, 2002, cited in Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007, p.23).

1.2.4.2. New-variant Nurture Groups

New-variant Nurture Groups are those that follow the key Nurture principles, but differ in terms of the structure or organisation. For example, they may run on a 'part-time' basis in which the children spend anywhere from half a day, to four days per week in the Nurture Group. Also these new-variant groups may involve children from different schools to that in which the Nurture Group is based. However, research by Cooper and Whitebread (2007) showed that whilst these groups were also effective in supporting children with SEBD, the benefits from the 'classic' full-time intervention were greater.

These part-time Nurture Groups are frequently seen as a more feasible compromise for schools, as the children's needs can be supported without them missing as much of the mainstream curriculum.

There are also groups which follow some of the principles, but are run as an extra-curricular group. These would not be classed as Nurture Groups, as is the case with any groups entitled 'Nurture Groups', but which do not follow the key principles.

1.2.5. How are parents involved?

Parental involvement with interventions for the social and emotional well-being of children has been cited as an essential ingredient for positive long-term outcomes (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1997). With this in mind, Bennathan and Boxall (2000) suggest that staff hold consultations with parents before their child's entry into the nurture group. However, according to Boxall (2000), and consistent with the experience of the researcher, parental involvement in

Nurture Groups varies widely, with policies differing between schools. Boxall describes parents as feeling positive and empowered when they have been involved, through coffee mornings for example. Bennathan (2005) explains that parents provide a 'rich resource' (p.5) to Nurture Groups when respected as a partner in the intervention. However, she noted that this is often neglected when parents do not appear to be enthusiastic about this role at the outset. A key part of the Nurture Group training is to not be judgemental of parents, discuss the child's progress with them frequently, and to be positive towards them. Cooper (2005) emphasised that Nurture Groups 'are *not* concerned with blaming parents for their child's difficulties in school' (p.39), but rather with finding a solution to their difficulties.

Bennathan (2005) reported that parents are often able to also benefit from the Nurture Group as they share in the child's success and thus grow in confidence themselves. McKerrall (2005) wrote about her experience as the head teacher of a school with a Nurture Group. The school set up a Parent's Group so that parents felt part of the intervention, could discuss their children's progress, and could learn strategies to use with their children at home.

1.3. Context

1.3.1. National Context

Harriss, Barlow and Moli (2008) identify that a significant number of children in the United Kingdom are labelled as having SEBD. Further to this, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE, 2001) recognise that children labelled as such are at an increased risk of suffering with mental health difficulties in the future. With the British Medical Association (2006) estimating that 20% of children will experience a mental health difficulty during their time in

school, it is essential that SEBD are targeted early through an evidence-based intervention.

Research has shown that Nurture Groups are effective not only in improving the social and emotional aspects of the child, but also in improving their progress in academic work (Cooper & Whitebread (2007). A review by Ofsted (Ofsted, 2011), found that Nurture Groups are a very effective early intervention for children in Primary Schools with SEBD. A recent review by Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education in Wales, also recommended Nurture Groups as an effective intervention to reduce the impact of poverty on educational achievement (Estyn, 2013).

Research has repeatedly shown that parents of children with SEBD can be difficult to engage, due to factors such as past experience of their own schooling, and the negative feedback that they have received from the school regarding their child's behaviour (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007). However, Ofsted (2011) stated that of the 29 Nurture Groups included within their study, those that were most successful worked alongside parents and involved them in their work. Therefore, it may be argued that it is essential for parents' perceptions to be fully understood, so that they can be involved most effectively.

1.3.2. Local Context

This research was conducted in a large county in the South of England.

Nurture Groups have been well established in the county, with 20 Primary School Nurture Groups and 5 Secondary Nurture Groups currently running.

The Educational Psychology Service keep excellent records and monitor the effectiveness of the Nurture Groups using the Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998), and the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire (SDQ;

Goodman, 1997) as both pre and post-measures of the intervention. They also run Nurture Network meetings for all Nurture practitioners in the county three times a year, to provide opportunities to share good practice, as well as providing further training. The quantitative data from the measures have repeatedly highlighted the success of the Nurture Groups in improving the social, emotional and behavioural skills of the children involved. However, there has been little qualitative research undertaken in the Nurture Groups within the county, and little success when parents have been asked to feedback their views. One of the current aims of the Nurture Network within the county is to increase the involvement of parents in the Nurture Groups, and encourage the dissemination of training from the Nurture practitioners to the parents. It is hoped that this piece of research will afford the schools with an opportunity to gain feedback and promote positive change, as well as providing the Educational Psychology Service with valuable feedback on how the Nurture Groups impact the children beyond the classroom. Further to this, the findings will be delivered to the Nurture Network within the county, and the implications for the practitioners will be discussed.

1.4. Researcher's position

As a Trainee Educational Psychologist with a passion for early intervention, Nurture Groups are of great interest to me. I firmly believe that we should aim to work in a preventative way, rather than being reactive, particularly when children are experiencing social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Allowing these difficulties to escalate can result in severe damage to the child's relationships with themselves, as well as with others in their social context (DfEE, 2001). I also feel strongly from both my professional experience and the available research evidence (Ofsted, 2011; Webster-Stratton & Hammond,

1997), that parents need to be supportive of interventions, in order for them to be most effective. When listening to Nurture Group practitioners, I grew concerned that Nurture Groups were functioning very separately from parents. Some practitioners felt that the parents of the target children were often not interested and supportive of the school in general, whilst others felt that there was a stigma attached to the term 'Nurture' and were reluctant for parents to understand the full purpose of Nurture Groups. I felt for this reason that the parent's voice should be heard so that relationships between practitioners and parents could potentially be improved, and parents may be able to have a more active role in the intervention.

1.5 This study

The current research is seeking to explore parent and child perceptions of the impact of Nurture Groups on children in the home context, and in particular the impact upon parent-child relationships.

In order to achieve these aims, this piece of research is an exploratory study, using qualitative methods to collect the data, and a grounded theory approach to data analysis. Data will be collected from parents using semi-structured interviews, and from the children through focus groups, in order to answer the following research questions;

1. How do Nurture Groups impact on the parent-child relationships?
2. How do parents explain any changes in their relationship with their child?

3. How do children explain any changes in their relationship with their parents?

1.6. Research Rationale

This research is of real relevance as it may provide much needed information about the effects of Nurture Groups on children's attachments with their parents. This will be useful to Educational Psychologists in supporting Nurture Group practitioners to develop effective working relationships with parents. This knowledge will also enable Educational Psychologists to have further confidence in recommending Nurture Groups as an evidence-based intervention for children with SEBD. Interviewing the parents will hopefully give them a sense of empowerment, as well as providing useful feedback for the Nurture Group staff. In addition to this, as the researcher undertaking this study, I will also be listening to the voice of the child; a voice frequently marginalised in existing research in this area (Kourmoulaki, 2013). It is also hoped that this research may result in a theory to explain the underlying processes behind any changes in the parent-child relationship that may be caused by Nurture Groups. This may also allow practitioners to target these processes and enhance the positive impact that Nurture Groups may have upon these relationships, ultimately benefitting the children and enhancing their emotional well-being.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. The Role of the Literature Review in Grounded Theory Research

The role of the literature review in Grounded Theory research has been long debated (Charmaz, 2006). It has been argued by some researchers (e.g. Glaser & Strauss, 1967) that a review of the literature should not be done until after the data has been collected and analysed, in order to be truly inductive and allow the theory to emerge from the data rather than allowing analyses to be clouded by pre-conceived expectations arising from the literature. Strauss and Corbin (1998) reiterate this, suggesting that researchers can become 'stifled' and 'constrained' (p.49) by becoming too absorbed in the existing literature.

However, this argument has been countered by those that suggest that this is an unrealistic aim, given that most researchers already have a good knowledge of their field of interest, and therefore even without doing a literature review, are unable to start their analyses as a 'tabula rasa'. To the contrary, Willig (2008) suggests that a literature review can enable the formulation of research questions that have not previously been raised. Charmaz (2006) also claims that a literature review can be vital in providing a rationale for decisions that are made by the researcher at later points in their research. Despite having stated that it is unnecessary, Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest some ways in which the literature can be useful. For example, they admit that the literature can provide a useful 'stepping off point' by giving the researcher ideas for their initial questions, from which new ideas and theories can emerge (p.51). They

add that 'familiarity with relevant literature can enhance sensitivity to subtle nuances in the data, just as it can block creativity' (p.51).

Bryant and Charmaz (2007) consider both sides of the argument and conclude that whilst it may be a realistic ideal for experienced grounded theorists to not consult the existing literature, it is likely to leave novices feeling confused. For this reason, a systematic literature review was conducted prior to the collection of data. In order to be in keeping with the values of Grounded Theory, the purpose of the review was to become acquainted with the literature in order to become more attuned to details raised during data collection, whilst keeping an open-mind about the emergence of new ideas. Findings of previous research were also used to assist in the development of the schedule for the first interview. As stated by Bryant and Charmaz (2007) '*an open mind does not imply an empty head*' (p.20).

2.2. Systematic Literature Search

2.2.1. Introduction

To date there has been very little research directly exploring the impact of nurture groups on parents' relationships with their children. In fact, research into the general experience of parents of children in Nurture Groups has been particularly sparse, with many evaluative studies measuring the child's progress without seeking the parental perspective. This could be due to the inconsistency in the ways in which schools seek to involve parents in the intervention, as acknowledged by Boxall (2000). Unsurprisingly, given the paucity of research in the area of children's voice (Grieg & Taylor, 1999), research exploring the child's own view of Nurture Groups is even more of a rarity. In order to explore the existing evidence base, a critical analysis of the

underpinning research was conducted. The research was selected, read and critically analysed to gain an insight into the views of parents of Nurture Group children, including their perspective on the effectiveness of the intervention, and any impact that the intervention had on their relationship with the child. Research was also explored to unveil the child's perspective on Nurture Groups, and the impact upon them of the intervention.

2.2.2. Review Question and Database Search

What perspectives do parents and their children hold of Nurture Groups and their impact?

The database search engine EBSCOHOST was chosen and systematic key word searches were input using the database Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, PsycINFO and PsycARTICLES. With Nurture Groups being a fairly specialised and under-researched area, simply using the search terms 'Nurture Groups' (all terms search), resulted in only 106 matches in relevant, peer-reviewed, Education, Psychology or Child Development journals. For details of the searches, see the Table 1 and 2. The asterisks after keywords represent searches that include any words with the same letters. For example, searching for 'groups*' would include any articles with the key words 'group' as well as 'groups'.

Following this, inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to systematically identify the most relevant pieces of research.

Table 1- *Systematic Literature Search 1*

Search date	06/08/12
Databases searched	EBSCO Academic Search Complete, PsycINFO, Education Research Complete, PsycARTICLES
Key words used	'nurture' and 'groups*'
Results	N = 1559
Advanced search inclusion criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer-reviewed articles • Relevant psychological journals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -British Journal of Special Education -Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties -Educational and Child Psychology -Reclaiming Children and Youth -Educational Psychology In Practice -Early Childhood Education Journal -International Journal of Early Years -British Journal of Psychology -Contemporary Educational Psychology -Education -Journal of Adolescence -New ideas in Psychology -Attachment and Human Development -Maladjustment and Therapeutic Education
Results	N = 106

The abstracts from the 106 articles were read, and the most useful were selected using the following inclusion criteria;

- Children had received a 'classic' or 'new-variant' Nurture Group intervention (see Introduction chapter for a detailed description of these terms).
- Parents' and/ or children's views on the impact of the intervention were reported.
- Nurture Groups were set up in British Schools within the UK.
- Nurture Groups were based within mainstream Primary Schools or Secondary schools.

This search resulted in ten articles being selected and critically analysed. A hand search was then conducted using the search engine Google and Google Scholar, in order to access other relevant articles that had not been identified in the database search. This resulted in a further two journal articles being accessed, which can be identified in Table 3.

The initial database search was conducted in August 2012. A further database search using the same search terms was conducted in August 2013 to find new articles written between 2012 and 2013, details of which are shown in Table 2.

Despite the search resulting in 20 new articles, after the abstracts were read and the inclusion criteria were applied, only one new article was included in the review (Kourmoulaki, 2013). Table 3 shows the 13 studies that were included in the systematic review of the literature in reverse chronological order.

Table 2- *Systematic Literature Search 2*

Search date	14/08/13
Databases searched	EBSCO Academic Search Complete, PsycINFO, Education Research Complete, PsycARTICLES
Key words used	'nurture' and 'groups*'
Results	N = 1750
Advanced search inclusion criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer-reviewed articles • Only articles between 2012-2013 • Relevant psychological journals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Children and Youth Services Review -Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties -Reclaiming Children and Youth -Journal of Educational Change -Journal of Early Childhood Research -American Psychologist -Pastoral Care in Education -Pastoral Psychology
Results	N = 20

Table 3- *Studies included in Literature Review*

Kourmoulaki, A. (2013). Nurture groups in a Scottish secondary school: Purpose, features, value and areas for development. <i>Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties</i> , 18 (1), 60-76.
Garner, J. & Thomas, M. (2011). The role and contribution of Nurture Groups in secondary schools: perceptions of children, parents and staff. <i>Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties</i> , 16 (2), 207-224.
Taylor, V. M. & Gulliford, A. (2011). Parental perspectives on nurture groups: the potential for engagement. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 38(2), 73-82
Ofsted (2011). <i>Supporting children with challenging behaviour through a nurture group approach</i> . Accessed 6 th September 2012. www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/supporting-childrenchallenging-behaviour-through-nurture-group-approach
Binnie, L.M.& Allen, K. (2008). Whole school support for vulnerable children: the evaluation of a part-time nurture group. <i>Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties</i> , 13(3), 201-216.
Cooper, P. & Whitebread, D. (2007). The effectiveness of nurture groups on student progress: evidence from a national research study, <i>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</i> , 12(3), 171–191.
March, S., & Healy, N. (2007). What is the parental perception on progress made by nurture group children. <i>Educational Psychology in Scotland</i> , 9(1) 2–7.
Sanders, T. (2007). Helping Children Thrive at School: The Effectiveness of Nurture Groups. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 23(1), 45-61

Cooper, P. & Y. Tiknaz (2005). Progress and challenge in Nurture Groups: Evidence from three case studies. *British Journal of Special Education*, 32 (4), 211–221.

Cooper, P., Arnold, R., & Boyd, E. (2001). The effectiveness of Nurture Groups: preliminary research findings. *British Journal of Special Education*, 28(4), 160.

Bishop, A. & Swain, J. (2000a). 'The bread, the jam and some coffee in the morning': Perceptions of a nurture group. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, 5(3), 18-24.

Bishop, A. & Swain, J. (2000b). Early Years education and children with behavioural and emotional difficulties: nurturing parental involvement? *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 5(4), 26-31.

Bennathan, M. (1997). Effective intervention in primary schools: What nurture groups achieve. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, 2(3) 23-29.

Hand Search items

2.3. Critical Analysis of the Literature

2.3.1. Introduction

Despite there being little research directly exploring the impact of Nurture Groups on the relationship between the parent and their child, there has been an increasing number of studies in recent years evaluating the effectiveness of Nurture Groups on children's social and emotional development. Many of these studies have used the Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998), Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997) or teacher reports to track any improvements, without consulting parents or the children themselves (e.g. Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005; O'Connor & Colwell, 2002).

However, with Bennathan and Boxall (2000) emphasising the importance of collaboration with parents, several more recent studies have sought to uncover the parental perspective on Nurture Groups. This literature review will focus firstly on the findings of this research, including parental perspectives on the impact of Nurture Groups on their child's social, emotional and behavioural development, the impact of Nurture Groups on their relationship with their child, and the impact of Nurture Groups on their relationship with the school. Secondly, the literature exploring the child's perspective will be critically analysed.

2.3.2. Parental perspective on the effectiveness of the Intervention

2.3.2.1. Parental views in small scale research evaluating the effectiveness of Nurture Groups

Most pieces of research in this area have not focussed specifically upon the parental perspective, but have sought to gain parents' views as part of their research. One example of this was an article by Sanders (2007), in which she conducted an evaluative study to research the effectiveness of a Nurture Group pilot project in Hampshire. She used a variety of research methods across three schools, including measuring progress across three terms using the Boxall profile, interviewing teachers, parents, head teachers and also interviewing the children themselves. A control group was also used to compare the progress made on the Boxall profile in a similar infant school without the Nurture Group provision. In addition to this, all teachers in the Nurture Group schools (n=29) were asked to fill in a questionnaire, and naturalistic observations were conducted by the researcher on a termly basis. Overall, the parent interviews highlighted that they had generally noticed an

increase in their child's confidence, happiness at school, and behaviour at home. This highlights that the effects of the Nurture Group go beyond classroom behaviour and academic achievement. This study had the advantage of having used a control group so that the contribution of the Nurture Group could be demonstrated. However, although the comparison school was matched in terms of size, level of need, and deprivation; the control group had higher entry level scores on the Boxall Profile than the experimental group, and therefore may not have been an appropriate comparison. The variety of research methods used in this research led to rich data being obtained, particularly through the observations made on a termly basis in which qualitative information was able to support the findings made through the use of the Boxall Profile. Sanders (2007) strived to obtain information from a variety of sources (teachers, parents, children, head teachers), however, the sample of parents were selected on willingness to participate. It is likely that those who are most willing to participate are those who have had the best experiences of the intervention, and therefore more needs to be done to access those 'hard to reach' parents who may usually be less willing to participate, in order to represent parents fairly. This was acknowledged by the author who concluded that further research needs to focus on supporting the parents of children in Nurture Groups more effectively.

Sampling procedures used to select parents in Nurture Group research have been problematic across several other pieces of research in this area. Bishop and Swain (2000a) conducted a qualitative case study about the perceptions of a variety of stakeholders in a Primary School where the Nurture Groups had been closed down solely due to financial reasons. The head teacher of the

school had requested the piece of research to explore the perceptions of the staff, parents and children of the Nurture Group. The participants were the head teacher, the Deputy head teacher, two ex-Nurture Group teachers, two mainstream teachers, two parents of ex- Nurture Group pupils, two ex-Nurture Group pupils and two Governors. These participants were selected using quota sampling, but also purposive sampling, as participants were selected who it was felt could best express informed opinions about the Nurture Group. The perceptions of each participant were accessed through individual semi-structured interviews, to collect qualitative data that was then used to answer their research questions regarding the effectiveness of the Nurture Group. The views were unanimously positive, with one parent claiming that it was so effective for her child that 'it got him sorted' (p.20). The head teacher also commented that parents were so positive about the Nurture Group that they had even reported improvements in the child's behaviour at home. This piece of research can, however, be criticised for many reasons. Firstly, there is a clear agenda for the research as the school were trying to regain funding for the Nurture Group. It was therefore in their best interests to paint the Nurture Group in an unwaveringly positive light. To add to this, there is a possibility that participants may have been 'cherry-picked' in order to do just this. Finally, this study is entirely based on subjective perceptions rather than any more concrete measures, and these opinions are retrospective, further lowering their validity.

More recently, Kourmoulaki (2013) sought the views of parents, as well as staff and pupils, when exploring the purpose and value of Secondary Nurture Groups in Scotland. She conducted interviews with six parents, which were mostly over the phone, with one being face-to-face. She found that whilst

parents valued the Nurture Group and felt that the children had improved in their social skills, friendships and sense of belonging; she also commented that parents seemed to know very little about the purpose of the Nurture Group and what was done there. Whilst this is an interesting finding, these parents were from across only two Nurture Groups, both of which resided in the same school following a merger. Therefore this may well be a criticism of the way in which this school communicates with the Nurture Group parents, rather than a reflection of the feelings of Nurture Group parents more widely.

2.3.2.2. Parental views in large projects evaluating the effectiveness in Nurture Groups

In order to seek a more general consensus of parental views of Nurture Groups, Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001) carried out a large-scale research project to evaluate the effectiveness of Nurture Groups. They aimed to investigate the impact of Nurture Groups on children's academic and social development, parent and child perceptions of Nurture Groups, and also the effects of Nurture Groups on the way that parents relate to their children.

They conducted a longitudinal study over a two year period on a large sample of 342 children. 216 of these were in Nurture Groups, with 64 being matched controls with a similar level of SEBD in mainstream classrooms, and 62 being matched controls without SEBD. These children were taken from 25 schools (23 primary, 2 secondary) across 8 counties, meaning that the sample were diverse in ethnicity, social class and geographical placement. The children's progress was measured using the SDQ (Goodman, 1997), the Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998), National Curriculum data and teacher perceptions.

The parents views were accessed through semi-structured telephone interviews, and the children's views were taken through face-to-face interviews.

This research supported other research in this field in finding a significant improvement in behaviour following the intervention, as judged by the SDQ (Goodman, 1997). This increase was also found to be significant when compared to the SEBD control group, who failed to make such progress in the mainstream classroom. The parents' perceptions of Nurture Groups varied from negative to highly positive. The area that most parents noticed the greatest improvement was in their child's educational progress, with 60% of parents reporting an improvement in this area. 54% of parents also reported an improvement in their child's enjoyment of school, and 51% perceived an improvement in behaviour. This research had the advantage of being on a far greater scale than most other pieces of research in this area, making the sample more representative of Nurture Group children as a population. The research also used a control group that had been matched for age, gender, educational attainment and level of SEBD, making it a more appropriate comparison group than the one used by Sanders (2007). However, the authors warn that, as an interim study, the children had not yet received the full intervention at the time of the research, and therefore only tentative conclusions can be drawn about the effectiveness of the intervention. In addition to this, although telephone interviews may have increased access to a sometimes difficult to reach population of parents, this medium may have prevented the interviewers from being able to build a rapport with the parents. This may have reduced the validity of the perceptions presented of the parents, as they may not have been able to gain a true understanding of their viewpoint without speaking face-to-face.

Cooper and Whitebread (2007) also conducted a national research study to explore the effectiveness of Nurture Groups, using a similar sample and research design to that used previously by Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001). Parents of the children in the nurture groups were given questionnaires at the end of the first term, and also interviewed twice, face-to-face during the period of study. Out of the 84 carers interviewed, 96% admitted that they were satisfied or very satisfied that the Nurture Group had dramatically improved their child's attitude to school. This piece of research has the advantage of having used a variety of methods to elicit the views of the parents, including face-to-face interviews with parents rather than telephone interviews. This would allow for triangulation, and also would be a clearer measure of the parent's views over time as their child experienced the intervention. The sample size for this piece of research is also very large for a study that also sought qualitative data, suggesting that the sample of parents surveyed (n=84) could be said to be more representative of the population than previous pieces of research.

More recently, a study by Ofsted (2011) also sought to explore the views of parents of children in Nurture Groups as part of their wider research. They surveyed 95 parents from 29 schools, and found that the vast majority of parents (95%) were very pleased with the progress that their child had made in the Nurture Groups. Parents were quoted stating *'the change in my daughter is amazing and unbelievable'* and *'I don't know where I'd be if it wasn't for the Nurture Group'* (p. 37).

This research used a wide range of Nurture Groups from urban and rural areas across the country, and the schools ranged from being graded 'satisfactory' to 'outstanding', meaning that the findings can be generalised more widely.

However, as discussed previously, questionnaires may not be the most effective way to collect data on the parent's perceptions of Nurture Groups. For example, the parents may have felt that the school would see their written responses and therefore exaggerated their satisfaction accordingly.

2.3.2.3. Classic versus. New-variant Nurture Groups

Research has shown that parents have not only been impressed by the impact of the classic Nurture Groups, but have also noticed the benefits of new-variant groups, run on a part-time basis (see Chapter 1 for a full explanation of the types of Nurture Group). Binnie and Allen (2008) carried out an evaluation of the effectiveness of part-time Nurture Groups (maximum of four mornings per week), through gathering the perspectives of teachers, parents and head teachers. They used the Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998), the Behaviour Indicators of Self-Esteem Scale (BIOS; Burnett, 1998), and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997), to take pre and post-measures to test the effectiveness of the intervention. The intervention was over an eight month period, and following the Nurture Group, they also distributed questionnaires to collect both qualitative and quantitative data from parents, teachers and head teachers. There were 36 children included in this study (28 males, 8 females), and the average age of the children was seven years two months. The measures were taken by the Nurture Group teachers, except for the SDQ which was completed by the teacher, and also by the parents. The questionnaire given to parents following the intervention comprised of eight questions on a four-point likert scale, and also gave the opportunity for qualitative comments following each item. The questions were focussed upon school-home partnership, the effect that the

intervention had on the child, the impact that it has had on the child at home, and their overall perception of the effectiveness of the Nurture Group.

It was found that there were significant improvements found in the child's progress across all measures, despite only having attended the group for a maximum of four mornings per week. In terms of the parents' views, they reported a significant improvement in behaviour following the intervention, and were less likely to label their child as 'abnormal' on the SDQ. On the parent questionnaires, they found that 97% of parents felt it had a positive impact on the child, and 50% reported that the intervention had a positive impact on their relationship with their child. This shows that even after a relatively small Nurture Group intervention, gains can be seen across many aspects of the child's development, as well as a difference in the way in which the children are perceived by their parents.

Binnie and Allen (2008) was longitudinal and used several measures in order to pin-point the improvements made by the children, increasing the validity of their findings. They also triangulated the information through the use of qualitative and quantitative data, as well as collecting data from more than one source (parents, teachers and head teachers). A positive point about this study was the large response rate from the parent questionnaires, with 30 out of 36 responding (83%). This meant that a representative sample of parental views could be accessed, in contrast to some studies in which this had been difficult (e.g. Garner & Thomas, 2011). Requesting the parents to complete the SDQ as well as the teachers may have also increased the reliability of the data, as the teachers may have felt under pressure to produce data that showed that the children had improved in order to justify removing them from the classroom, whereas parents would not have had this ulterior motive.

2.3.2.4. A focus on parental perceptions

In response to the lack of attention given to the views of parents in several of the large scale evaluation studies of Nurture Groups (e.g. Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005), March and Healy (2007) chose specifically to study parental perceptions of the progress of their children in Nurture Groups. They believed that this study would involve and empower parents, helping them to identify progress in their children. The research involved distributing questionnaires to the 512 parents of Nurture Group children in Glasgow at two different points in the year in order to measure any change in their perceptions. The questionnaires produced predominantly quantitative data, however, they also included a question derived from Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1955), in which parents were asked to describe their children in three words, as well as providing an opportunity for qualitative comments. The researchers found that out of the twenty key factors assessed (skills taken from the Boxall Profile), parents perceived that their child had shown a significant improvement in sixteen of the factors, including academic and social skills. In order to analyse the qualitative data, the researchers both divided the information into core categories and then compared these to ensure inter-rater reliability. They found that 77.5% of the comments were rated as 'positive', with parents perceiving improvements in areas such as confidence, being able to control their emotions, and happiness.

March and Healy (2007) highlighted an area that had been neglected within the evaluations of the impact of Nurture Groups, and provided a rich combination of both qualitative and quantitative data. However, as is frequently the case with questionnaires, the response rate was low, with only 74 out of the 512 parents completing the questionnaire at both points in the year, making their sample

less representative. They also failed to include a control group in their research, meaning that the gains perceived by Nurture Group parents may have been purely developmental, rather than due to the benefits of having been in the Nurture Group. This article also came from a non-peer reviewed publication from the Scottish Division of the British Psychological Society. As it has not been evaluated by other psychologists before publication, there is a chance that the research might be considered less trustworthy than articles which have been subjected to the peer review process.

2.3.3. Parental perspective on any changes in their relationship with their child following the intervention

Parental perspectives on the impact of the intervention on their relationship with their child is a more sensitive and even less researched area. In most research in which an impact has been reported, it has been as a by-product of exploring parental views on the effectiveness of the intervention on their child's development, rather than an explicit aim of the research. For example, the research previously described by March and Healy (2007), sought to explore the views of parents on their child's progress through questionnaires. As explained, most of these questions produced quantitative data, however they were also asked to describe their child in three words, as well as being given the opportunity to give qualitative comments. They were asked to complete this questionnaire at two points throughout the intervention, and found that the words that parents chose to describe their children were significantly more positive at the second assessment than the first. Twenty-one of the comments specifically commented on how the parent felt that the communication and relationship between them and their child had improved, with comments such

as; *'he has been speaking about the group which before he wouldn't tell you anything about school'* and *'he now does much more himself at home.'* (p.7)

This perhaps suggests that Nurture Groups can have a positive impact on the relationship between the parent and their child, and that Nurture Groups may lead to an improvement in the way in which parents perceive their children. It also shows that despite the parent-child relationship not being a key question for exploration, it emerged as an important theme for the parents in their voluntary qualitative comments, and therefore deserves further attention.

Several of the other pieces of research included in this critical analysis, also found evidence of an effect on the parent-child relationship, despite this not being the main aim of the research. For example, Binnie and Allen (2008) found that 50% of parents reported that the intervention had had a positive impact on their relationship with their child. However, there was no comparison group in this research and therefore the improvement in the relationship may be due to factors such as increased competence in communication skills that may develop with age. Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001) also reported 'clear evidence' (p.164) of an improvement in relations, with parents feeling less anxiety and more optimism with regards to their child's development. Cooper and Whitebread (2007) found that some parents reported dramatic improvements in their relationships with their children, with many attributing this change to the improvement of their child's behaviour at school. Both of these studies accessed a large number of parents from a variety of Nurture Groups, suggesting that these findings may be generalised more widely. In support of this, Bennathan (1997) suggested that almost all parents welcome Nurture Groups, particularly when seen as an alternative to special provision outside of mainstream school. She also claims that many teachers observe parents to

begin to value their child more following seeing them being valued by other adults. However, the source of this assertion is not supplied, and therefore cannot be viewed as anything more than anecdotal. For this reason, there is also a risk that this claim may be generalising the views of a relatively small number of Nurture Group parents.

One piece of research with the explicit aim of researching the impact of Nurture Groups on the relationship between the parent and their child was by Taylor and Gulliford (2011). They conducted 26 semi-structured interviews with an opportunistic sample of 15 parents, and 11 Nurture Group staff in two neighbouring counties in the Midlands. The core themes explored by the interviews included the difficulties with Nurture Groups, the impact of the child's difficulties at home and in school, the effect of the Nurture Group on the child, and finally the factors that were perceived to contribute to the success of Nurture Groups. All of the interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and finally analysed for common themes. In terms of the parent-child relationships, they found that the most consistently occurring observation from parents following the Nurture Group was an improvement in communication and interaction at home. The parents commented that they felt less stressed, and felt happier seeing their child happy. Taylor and Gulliford used a Transactional Model to explain the change in the relationship between the child and their parent. They suggested that some parents may feel rejected when their child seems uncommunicative, and therefore when the child comes home and begins to talk about the Nurture Group with their parent, the parent feels less rejected and reacts more positively towards the child. In turn, the parent will give more praise to the child, altering their parenting style, resulting in the child feeling more responsive and secure. However, this explanation was based on a small

sample of parents, therefore the causation of the change in the parents' perception of their relationships with their child warrants further exploration through large-scale quantitative research.

2.3.4. Parental perspective on any changes in their relationship with the school following the intervention

2.3.4.1. Primary Nurture Groups

Taylor and Gulliford (2011) also explored parental perspectives on the barriers and facilitators to effective collaboration between home and school. They found that there was very little collaboration between school and home, with Nurture Group staff rarely even being involved in the initial meetings before the child joins the group. In most Nurture Groups, they had an 'open-door' policy, which they felt parents did not take advantage of, and some staff had also found that parents had seemed reluctant to attend formal meetings. Some parents admitted to feeling helpless and inadequate, and many had negative experiences of school themselves, leaving them with a sense of dread when faced with coming in to school. However, both Nurture Group staff and parents felt that informal social events that parents were invited to, such as tea parties, were much more effective in involving parents in the Nurture Group. This piece of research was an enlightening account of the relationship between parents and their child's school, and highlighted the sometimes missed opportunities to engage parents through Nurture Groups. However, a criticism of this study is that all of the Nurture Groups were 'new-variant', rather than 'classic' Nurture Groups, and therefore may not have followed the recommendations for involving parents as emphasised by Bennathan and Boxall (2000), such as inviting them to visit the group, gathering feedback, and

supplying information to keep them fully informed. This means that the perspectives of these parents may differ from those who have children in 'classic' Nurture Groups following the model used by Marjorie Boxall in the 1970s.

As a follow-up to their research described above, Bishop and Swain (2000b) wrote an article further detailing the relationship between home and school, and the difficulties in engaging parents effectively. The same data was used, but this time focused purely on the views of the parents, and also the staff's perspective on the partnership with the parents. One of the main points highlighted from the parents perspective, was the hope that the Nurture Group provided for them, and their preference for the Nurture Group within mainstream school, rather than their child being placed in a special school. The parents also expressed that the Nurture Group staff made them feel 'part of the team' (p.28), and this led to the teachers' perception that the parents became more involved with the school. The staff noted that at first the parents seemed apprehensive, but then observed that the parents were 'really pleased' (p.28) when they saw the Nurture Group.

It was suggested by the authors that the picture painted by the staff and parents of the home-school relationship is a 'transplant model' (Cunningham and Davis, 1985). This is a relationship in which skills are passed from the teacher to the parent. Although all parties in this piece of research seemed happy with the intervention and relationships built, this model has been criticised by other researchers as it means that the teacher retains the power, leaving the parent feeling uncomfortable (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1997). The article continues to suggest that a 'negotiating model' may be a more

appropriate way to engage parents, rather than the transplant model (Cunningham & Davis, 1985) as previously described. The 'negotiating model' is the term used to describe 'a working relationship where the partners use negotiation and joint decision-making and resolve differences of opinion and disagreement, in order to reach some kind of shared perspective or jointly agreed decision on issues of mutual concern' (Dale, 1996, p.14). Bishop and Swain (2000b) suggest that this may be a more effective model in engaging parents with Nurture Groups. However, a literature search indicates that there has been no research more recently to explore the relative effectiveness of different models of parental partnership within Nurture Groups.

Further evidence for the 'transplant model' is described by Bennathan (1997). Having played a large role in the creation of Nurture Groups, Bennathan (1997) wrote a descriptive paper about the development of Nurture Groups for the journal *'Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties'*, explaining the benefits of Nurture Groups, using both research and anecdotal evidence. Within this paper, she explains the parental perspective from her experience. Bennathan suggests that in subtle ways, the Nurture Group staff model positive behaviour to the child and their parent, resulting in many parents asking for advice and guidance. The sources for these claims are not provided, and therefore do not provide strong evidence for the positive experience of parents with children in Nurture Groups. However, much of the anecdotal evidence has been supported in more recent research in which parents views are elicited more explicitly. For example, Sanders (2007) reported that the Nurture Group staff felt that the parents were more engaged with school following their child's entry to the group, and felt that the group had allowed the negative feedback cycle to

be broken, meaning that parents could come to school without the dread of a difficult conversation with school staff.

This research provides evidence that Nurture Groups can help to establish more effective relationships with the parents of children with SEBD. However, all of the research described above has been conducted on Primary Nurture Groups, and therefore cannot be generalised to the very different environment of a Secondary School.

2.3.4.2. Secondary Nurture Groups

Nurture Groups in Secondary schools have received little attention in research, despite the high risk of mental health difficulties (DfEE, 2001), school refusal (Lund, 2013), and exclusions faced by adolescents with SEBD (Gray & Panter, 2000). A study by Garner and Thomas (2011) sought to rectify this by exploring the perspectives of parents, children and staff on the role and contribution of Nurture Groups. They used three secondary schools with Nurture Groups as their sample, and in contrast to Taylor and Gulliford (2011), they only used Nurture Groups that met the Boxall principles of a 'classic' Nurture Group (Boxall, 2002). Within these three schools, Garner and Thomas set up two focus groups; one for the parents to discuss their perceptions, and one for the mainstream staff and Nurture Group staff. Due to the sensitivity of the information, children were interviewed individually about their perceptions of the Nurture Groups. Following this, the data was analysed using thematic analysis. Overall, it was found that parents appreciated and respected the Nurture Groups, seeing them as a source of guidance. This research triangulates the perceptions of staff, children and parents, increasing the validity of the views expressed. However, it was concluded that further

research was needed to explore the views of parents with children in Nurture Groups. Garner and Thomas (2011) clearly took great care in selecting methods that would allow all voices to be heard in a sensitive manner. However, unfortunately, the parent focus groups were small in size (1-5 parents, as opposed to 5-7 in the teacher focus groups) due to difficulty in accessing the sample. This may mean that the parental perspective expressed is not representative of other parents of children in Nurture Groups. A further problem with using focus groups for parents in particular is that each home situation is different, and parents may not have felt able to express their views in a group in which they may have felt judged by other parents. For this reason, it may have been more appropriate in this situation to interview parents individually to allow them to speak frankly and honestly about their personal experiences.

2.3.5 Summary of the Parental Perspective

The previous research in this area shows that in general, parents welcome Nurture Groups and perceive them to be effective in helping their child in their social, emotional, behavioural and academic development. For example, Binnie and Allen (2008) found that 97% of parents felt that the group had had a positive impact upon their child. Very few pieces of research had focused specifically upon the parent-child relationship, with the exception of Taylor and Gulliford (2011), however, several articles reported an improvement in this relationship as a key finding (e.g. Binnie & Allen, 2008; March & Healy, 2007), illustrating its importance. It was also found that despite some initial apprehension, most parents and teachers felt that the home-school relationship was also improved through the Nurture Group, although alternative models for this relationship have been suggested to give opportunity to further support this

collaboration (Bishop and Swain, 2000b). These positive findings were consistent across a variety of contexts including primary, secondary, 'classic' and 'new-variant' Nurture Groups. The research described also explored parental views in a variety of ways, collecting qualitative and quantitative data, through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and telephone interviews; the advantages and disadvantages of which have been discussed.

2.3.6. Child's Perspective

Out of all of the research on Nurture Groups present in the database search, only six of these studies had consulted the child for their perspective on Nurture Groups and the impact that they felt that it had on them. There was no research found to be specifically exploring the children's perspective on Nurture Groups, however, their views were at times considered in evaluative research of the overall impact of Nurture Groups.

An example of this is the research by Kourmoulaki (2013) on Secondary Nurture Groups in Scotland. Having commented on the lack of research exploring children's views of Nurture Groups, Kourmoulaki emphasised this in her exploration of the purpose and value of Nurture Groups. In addition to parent and staff interviews, she also conducted several group interviews involving 12 current Nurture Group pupils, and 4 former Nurture Group pupils. It was found that the pupils particularly valued the safe, calm atmosphere within the Nurture Room, the sense of belonging, and the support with developing friendships. This piece of research is the only one in this area to employ a research method other than individual interviews with children; using a method which would allow the pupils to feel comfortable in communicating openly with

her. However, Kourmoulaki criticised the use of group interviews, as she felt that the contributions of the pupils had been disproportionate, suggesting that individual interviews may have been more appropriate.

In comparison, Garner and Thomas (2011) explored the child's perspective through individual, semi-structured interviews. This was considered to be more appropriate than the focus groups used to explore the parents' perspectives, due to the sensitivity of the topic as it allowed them to speak openly without the influence or intimidation of the other pupils. Also, it has been well-documented that children with SEBD at secondary school often have underlying speech and language difficulties (Benner, Nelson & Epstein, 2002). Individual interviews would mean that the interviewer could amend the complexity of their language, and pace of the discussion according to the individual needs of the pupil. They interviewed six children in total and found that the children reported the relationships with the Nurture Group staff, the safe haven of the Nurture Room, and the taught sessions all to be beneficial for them. These interviews were conducted with children ranging from Year 7 to Year 9, and therefore it was deemed to be an appropriate method of accessing the children's views, as it was felt that adolescents would be less intimidated than younger children in an individual interview situation.

However, several studies have also used interviews with primary school children in Nurture Groups. Bishop and Swain (2000a) used semi-structured interviews to explore the perspectives of two ex-Nurture Group children in a primary school. The key areas that were covered during these interviews were regarding the effectiveness of Nurture Groups, and the benefits of them. From

the perspective of the pupils, they felt that they benefitted through the support they were given, the activities they were able to partake in, and the respite they had from being in mainstream class. However, these were only the views of two children from one Nurture Group, selected through purposive sampling, and therefore this may not be representative picture of children's views of the intervention as a whole. To add to this, the children had already left the Nurture Group, and therefore these retrospective accounts may lack validity as the children may have remembered their experiences in a biased way.

Sanders (2007) also interviewed children as part of her pilot study exploring the effectiveness of the Nurture Groups in Hampshire. Seven children from the Nurture Groups were interviewed about their perception of school, themselves as a learner, and their friendships. The children were selected for these interviews by severity of need, with those judged as having the most marked needs being interviewed. Sanders found that following the intervention, most of the children reported that they enjoyed school more, having better friendships and more positive self-concepts. Although they used a larger sample than Bishop and Swain (2000a), it may be that as the children were of primary age, the interview situation may have been quite stressful and intimidating for them, and may have resulted in a less valid data than if a focus group method had been employed.

Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001) also conducted face-to-face interviews with the children in their study, despite choosing telephone interviews to gather the parental perspectives. They openly acknowledged that they found it difficult to access the pupils' views in a reliable manner using interviews, fearing that they

may not have understood the requirements of the situation. They also felt that the children may have been worried about being disloyal to their teachers, and therefore gave guarded responses. However, they found that the children were able to talk openly about aspects of the Nurture Group that they found valuable. Frequent responses included their fondness for the Nurture Group staff, the opportunity for free play, the calmness of the environment, and the predictability of the routine.

Finally, a study by Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) also explored children's views as part of an evaluation of the effectiveness of Nurture Groups. The study aimed to investigate the impact of Nurture Groups on pupils in three Nurture Groups in one city in the Midlands. Children were interviewed about their experiences of Nurture Groups, and it was reported that the children seemed to prefer the Nurture Groups, and found it difficult to return to the mainstream classes. However, this article seemed to prioritise the views of the teachers, reporting very little of the findings from the interviews with the children. This may suggest that they felt their views were less important to the research aims, or may indicate that the interviews did not provide them with an effective method of data collection for use with young children.

2.3.7. Summary of the child's perspective

It is particularly interesting how few research studies have investigated the children's perceptions of Nurture Groups, given the general increase in research seeking the child's perspective over recent years (Reid et al., 2010). Where this has been done, other than Kourmoulaki (2013), all of the research has used semi-structured interviews as a method, with the inappropriateness of

this technique for young children being acknowledged by Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001). The review of this literature has also revealed that there has been no research exploring the child's perspective of the impact of Nurture Groups on their lives at home and their relationships with their parents. Given the improvement perceived by many parents in the research discussed, it would be interesting to explore the child's perception of the impact of the Nurture Group on their relationships with their parents.

2.4 Rationale for current research

Very few studies have explicitly focused upon the parental perspective on Nurture Groups and the way in which they affect the relationship between the child and their parent, despite this being repeatedly highlighted by parents as a positive aspect of Nurture Groups (Binnie & Allen, 2008; Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001; March & Healy, 2007). This means that the processes underlying the change in the parent-child relationship have received little attention in the existing literature.

Therefore, the current research will seek to further explore the parental perspective on the impact that Nurture Groups have on their children at home and their relationship with their child. The research will also explore the child's perspective on the parent-child relationship, and how they feel they have changed in the home context, as this is an area that is, as yet, unexplored. The children's views will be sought through the use of focus groups; a method felt by the researcher to be more age-appropriate than using semi-structured interviews, in the hope that detailed and valid data can be gathered and triangulated with the views of the parents. As the research is seeking to understand the processes underlying the change in relationship from both the

parent and child perspective; a grounded theory approach will be used to explore this new area without imposing bias and expectation.

Chapter 3. Methodology and Data Collection

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the epistemological position (Critical Realism) is introduced, followed by a detailed description of the data gathering strategies (semi-structured interviews and focus groups), used to address the research questions.

The approach to data analysis (Grounded theory) is described, followed by a detailed description of the ethical considerations made, and attempts made by the researcher to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of this qualitative piece of research.

3.2. Ontology and Epistemology

Research paradigms sit broadly into two main positions; positivist and interpretivist. The former is characterised by quantitative or scientific methodology, and the latter tending to be qualitative or naturalistic (Robson 2002). Positivists believe that there is one reality, and that objective facts about that reality can be gained through observation and experience. They reject theoretical knowledge that is not based on scientific 'fact', and see scientific study as being value-free (Robson, 2011). Positivists would explore this reality through quantitative methods in order to be able to establish cause and effect, and be able to generalise beyond their sample about universal laws. Interpretivists on the other hand, would suggest that there are no universal laws, and that qualitative methods are best used to understand the subjective reality constructed by the individual (social constructionist), or the reality within the social and historical parameters (critical realist) (Robson, 2002). Social

constructionists would argue that there is no objective reality, and that individuals interpret the world around them in their own way. This type of research acknowledges the values of the researcher, and the role that these play in forming the subjective realities. The aim of this type of research is to gain an understanding of multiple realities, rather than developing universal laws that can be generalised more widely (Robson, 2011). Realists differ from this, as they would argue that there are no scientific 'facts', only theories that are bound by social and historical processes. Evidence can then be gathered to support or dispute these theories (House, 1991). Realist research often seeks to find explanations, and therefore research questions often begin with 'how' or 'why' (Robson, 2011).

3.2.1. The epistemological position for this research- Critical Realism

The theoretical underpinnings of this research are taken from the critical realist worldview. The critical realist perspective suggests that knowledge depends on the historical and social context, and that there are no 'facts', as Positivists would suggest (Robson, 2011). They also suggest that science should be for the purpose of developing theories to explain the real world, and this objective would seem to fit with the aim of this research; to gain an understanding of the perceptions of this group of people, at this particular time, and within these circumstances. Critical realists are more concerned with how and why things happen, rather than what is happening, and this is consistent with the phrasing of the current research questions, and the choice to conduct exploratory research.

Bhaskar (1989) argued that reality exists independently of both ourselves, and our perception of it, therefore differing fundamentally from positivists and

constructionists. He suggested that all events are the result of various mechanisms (e.g. biological, emotional, social etc.); making finding one root cause for events very difficult to pin-point. This fits with the researcher's belief system with regard to the cause of behaviour, and changes within relationships. Any differences that are observed in this research may well be the product of biological maturation, academic development, environmental changes, or family dynamics, to give a few examples. Therefore, it is not the aim of this research to be able to find a cause and effect relationship between Nurture Groups and parent-child relationships so that predictions can be made, as positivists may strive to do. Instead, the aim is to explore the 'quality and nature of experience' (Willig, 2003, p.9) of the process and change in the relationship, as perceived by both the parents and their children. This is one of the fundamental views of the Critical Realist perspective (Robson, 2011).

3.2.2. Using Grounded Theory; Epistemological Position

The Grounded Theory approach to data collection and analysis sits well with the Critical Realist assertion that events are driven by a variety of mechanisms, as by having no pre-existing hypotheses, it allows for the exploration of a range of influencing factors. Glaser (1999, p.840) states that 'grounded theory *is what is*, not what should, could or ought to be', positioning it within the realist worldview. Further to this, Grounded Theory assumes that social and cultural processes have an objective reality, but focuses on how these realities are experienced by individuals.

Grounded Theory sees the researcher as an impartial observer, who must do their best not to impart their assumptions, but to 'ground' the theory in the emerging data, therefore producing findings that represent 'social reality'

(Willig, 2008, p.48). Holton (2007) argues that Grounded Theory is 'epistemologically and ontologically neutral' (p.268), meaning that it can fit with any worldview. There are types of Grounded Theory that are more fitting with the social constructionist worldview (e.g. Charmaz, 1990), suggesting that there is no 'reality', but rather a 'discovered' reality that develops from the interaction between the researcher and the data (Charmaz, 2000, p.524). However, the Strauss and Corbin (1998) school of Grounded Theory used in this study, fits ideally with the critical realist perspective adopted, as they reject the existence of an objective reality, instead stating that 'our position is that truth is enacted' (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p.279). Although Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) did not explicitly state their epistemological position, this suggests that they believe that there is 'truth', but that it is dependent upon context; consistent with realist ontology.

3.3. Research aims/ questions

It was argued by O'Leary (2004) that research questions form an important part of social science research, as they define the aims and boundaries of the research, whilst giving a way to measure the success of the project.

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2006) also suggested that research questions are essential in allowing for the most appropriate research design, methodology, sampling strategy, and method of data analysis to be selected.

The research questions in this study, seek to explore the process of *how* parent-child relationships are impacted through Nurture Groups. As my literature review revealed this to be a relatively under-researched area, Grounded Theory Method (GTM) is an appropriate methodology for analysing the data as there are no pre-existing theories, derived from both parents and

the children's views, available to test (Robson, 2002). Willig (2008) asserts that when using GTM, the research questions should identify the area of interest, without making any assumptions. These must always be open-ended, and generally are 'how' questions exploring a process, rather than 'what' or 'why' questions (Willig, 2008). When using GTM, the initial research questions become transformed by the time that saturation occurs, becoming narrower as categories emerge. Glaser and Strauss (1967) would argue that research questions constrain the research and do not allow the researcher to enter the research with an open mind. Therefore they would suggest not to have a set of pre-determined questions. However, later versions, such as Strauss and Corbin (1998) acknowledge the importance of both the research questions and literature review in focusing the direction of the exploration before data collection.

As a version of Strauss and Corbin's (1998) model of Grounded Theory was used, and as a novice researcher; research questions were essential in focusing the questions that would be asked in the interviews and focus groups. The existing literature provided a 'stepping off point' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.51), which was that parents seem to perceive Nurture Groups as positively impacting parent-child relationships. Therefore the research questions were phrased in an open way so that the process of change could be explored without bias or expectation;

1. How do Nurture Groups impact on the parent-child relationships?
2. How do parents explain any changes in their relationship with their child?

3. How do children explain any changes in their relationship with their parents?

3.4. Purpose of Research

As previously explained, the Critical Realist perspective is concerned with understanding the underlying mechanisms of how and why things occur within a given context (Mertens, 2010). Therefore, the purpose of this research was exploratory. The aim was to explore the perceptions of parents and their children of Nurture Groups, and how they perceived the Nurture Group to have affected their relationship. The purpose of exploratory research is to find out more about an under-researched topic (Robson, 2011). The Literature Review revealed that there is very little research focusing on parental or child perspectives of Nurture Groups, and the impact that they have on the parent-child relationship. Therefore conducting exploratory research was appropriate.

3.5. Design

The research design was entirely qualitative, as the data has been presented verbally without numerical analysis. Qualitative research aims to understand people's experiences and the meaning that they place on those experiences (Willig, 2008). It aims to explain rather than predict, being consistent with the epistemological position in allowing for a focus on the meanings behind the perceptions that parents and children hold of the changes in their relationship. The aim of this research was not to generalise more widely from the findings, but to fully explore the area and generate a theory to be explored in more depth by future research. Qualitative research aims to explore 'how people make sense of the world and how they experience events' (Willig, 2008, p.8). The main aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of experiences from an

individual perspective, rather than establishing a cause and effect pattern that can be generalised more widely (Willig, 2003).

3.6. Participants

3.6.1. *Interviews*

The participants in this research were 12 parents (accessed through 10 interviews) of children (sex- m= 7, f=3) aged between 4 and 7 (mean = 5.9 years) in Nurture Groups in primary schools in a large county in the South-East of England. Saldana (2009) suggests that at least ten interviews are required in order to develop a grounded theory, providing guidance during the recruitment process. However, Strauss and Corbin (1998) state that the theory should continue until a saturation point is reached, at which time no new themes are emerging from the data. It was felt that this point was reached after 10 interviews. The parents were accessed from five different part-time (new-variant) Nurture Groups, selected through opportunity and volunteer sampling. This sampling method was chosen as past research has identified this group as being a difficult to reach population (Garner & Thomas, 2011).

Details of the research were presented at the termly meetings of staff involved in local Nurture Groups, in order to try to recruit schools who might be interested. This information was presented in November 2012, and then again in March 2013. Letters were sent to the head teachers in order to gain access (see Appendix 3), and then parental consent letters (see Appendix 6) were distributed to schools who showed an interest, so that they could hand these out to parents who met the specified criteria. Other schools were contacted through the recommendation of their link Educational Psychologist (EP). The

head teachers of these schools were approached through an email (see Appendix 4), which was then followed up with a phone call. Some of the head teachers also requested a meeting before consenting to letters being distributed. Once access had been gained, the letters were given to parents by Nurture Group staff, and then the reply slips returned to me so that I could contact parents directly to arrange to meet with them.

The selection criteria for the parents were as follows;

- All had children who were currently in the Nurture Group or left the Nurture Group within the last term.
- Children had to be in a classic or new-variant Nurture Group.
- Children must be aged between 4 and 11 years old.
- Children must be in a Nurture Group within a mainstream primary school.
- Children must not have been diagnosed with a developmental or medical condition that may affect their social and emotional development (e.g. Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder).
- The children had to have been in the Nurture Group for at least two terms in order to measure the impact.
- Children must not have been taking part in any other intervention for social and emotional skills whilst in the Nurture Group.
- Parents must not have been taking part in a parenting programme during the time in which their child was in the Nurture Group.

Out of the ten interviews, seven were conducted with the mother of the child, one was conducted with the foster mother of the child, and two were conducted

with both the mother and father together (n=12). The children had all been in the Nurture Groups for between two and four terms, with the average being 2.7 terms. These interviews were carried out either at home, or in school depending on parental choice, and were all conducted between April and July 2013. For details of the participants, see Table 4.

3.6.2. Focus Groups

Focus groups were also conducted with children in three of the Nurture Groups (see Tables 5, 6 and 7). The focus groups each involved four children and were held in three of the schools from which the parents were selected. The five schools that had been previously involved were all contacted, and three felt that they had groups of children with appropriate levels of expressive and receptive language skills to enable them to articulate their feelings and views about the Nurture Group. Letters were once again distributed to the Nurture staff in order for them to seek consent from the parents of the Nurture Group children (Appendix 9). These forms were collected by school, returned to the researcher, before arranging to visit the Nurture Group to conduct the focus groups. One of the focus groups involved children who were all in Year 2, another involved children in Year 4, and a third involved children from Year 1 (average age= 7.4 years). Overall, the views of 12 children were collected (11 of which were analysed), with their ages ranging between 6 and 9 years (6 boys, 5 girls). The children were all receiving the intervention at the time of the focus group, having been in the Nurture Group for at least two terms (average duration of intervention was 3.4 terms); or had finished the intervention within

Table 4- *Details of parent participants*

Interview	Relationship with child	School	Age of child	Sex of child	NG Status	Duration of NG	Location of Interview
1	Mother	A	6	F	Currently in NG	4 terms	School
2	Mother	A	6	F	Currently in NG	2 terms	Home
3	Mother	B	5	M	Currently in NG	3 terms	School
4	Carer	B	7	F	Currently in NG	2 terms	Home
5	Mother and Father	C	4	M	Currently in NG	3 terms	School
6	Mother	C	6	M	Currently in NG	3 terms	Home
7	Mother	B	7	M	Finished at the end of April 2013	2 terms	School
8	Mother	D	7	M	Finished at the end of April 2013	2 terms	Home
9	Mother and Father	E	5	M	Currently in NG	3 terms	Home
10	Mother	E	6	M	Currently in NG	3 terms	Home

the last term (with the exception of child 2 from Focus Group 3 whose data was recorded but not analysed). In two of the focus groups, one of the children was the son/ daughter of the parents involved in the semi-structured interviews, allowing for a direct triangulation of views. In order to measure the impact of the Nurture Group, the children involved were not receiving other forms of therapeutic intervention. These focus groups were all conducted in July 2013.

Table 5- Details of Focus Group 1 participants

Child	Gender	Age	Time in NG	NG Status
1 *	F	6	4 terms	Finished in April 2013
2	M	7	4 terms	Finished in April 2013
3	M	7	4 terms	Finished in April 2013
4	F	7	4 terms	Finished in April 2013

* indicates that the child was a child of one of the interviewees

Table 6- *Details of Focus Group 2 participants*

Child	Gender	Age	Time in NG	NG Status
1	M	8	3 terms	Currently in NG
2	F	9	3 terms	Currently in NG
3	M	9	3 terms	Currently in NG
4	F	9	3 terms	Currently in NG

Table 7- *Details of Focus Group 3 participants*

Child	Gender	Age	Time in NG	NG Status
1	F	6	2 terms	Currently in NG
2	M	6	2 terms	Finished at end of last academic year
3	M	6	4 terms	Finished in April 2013
4*	M	6	3 terms	Currently in NG

(Child 2 not included in analysis)

3.7. Strategies for Data Gathering

Willig (2008) suggests that it is essential that the strategies for data gathering fit with both the research questions, and also the method of analysis, which should be decided beforehand. The research questions all require a method which allows for the experiences of the participants to be fully understood, therefore a qualitative method is necessary, as well as essential in terms of ensuring a comfortable fit with the epistemological position.

Semi-structured interviews were used to elicit the views of the parents, and three focus groups were carried out to enable the children to voice their views. The reasons for these decisions are detailed below.

3.7.1. The Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are face-to-face discussions, in which the interviewer has an interview schedule with prompts or areas to cover, rather than exact questions. This means that the order of the questions can be adapted to fit the conversation, and additional questions can be asked to further probe participants on areas of interest (Robson, 2011).

Semi-structured interviews are the most popular method of qualitative data collection (Willig, 2008). They allow the researcher to gain an understanding of the participant's experiences, in a relatively short time, as well as allowing the researcher to gain access to interpersonal cues, such as body language. The semi-structured interview has the advantage of being less rigid than the structured interview. This means that the researcher can alter the order of the questions according to the flow of information being given by the participant, allowing them to build a better rapport. Despite being flexible, the interview is

driven by the researcher and their research questions, and therefore allow the researcher to tailor the interview to gain the most useful information, unlike a completely unstructured interview. It is useful for the researcher to have access to cues such as body language, as this allows them to modify their line of enquiry depending on the participant's non-verbal cues.

The reason for the use of semi-structured interviews was to enable the researcher to establish a rapport with the participants that might not be possible through the use of questionnaires, or phone interviews. This meant that body language and facial expressions could be used as cues to assist the researcher in empathising with the participant and gaining a valid understanding of their perspective.

The interviews took place in quiet, private rooms, either within school or at home if that was felt to be more convenient for the families involved. The interviews consisted of a set of pre-determined open questions (see Appendix 8), however these were varied according to the findings of previous interviews (consistent with theoretical sampling advocated by the Grounded Theory approach). The questions were asked in a flexible manner, with the order being amended to flow more easily with the participants' line of thought, rather than being too rigid and structured (Powney and Watts, 1987). It was felt that an individual interview would be more appropriate than a group interview, or focus group, as the parent-child relationship may be a personal and delicate topic, and therefore it is likely that parents would feel more at ease confiding in the researcher on a one-to-one basis.

The interview schedule was developed through consideration of several factors; the target audience, the research questions, and pre-existing research. As parents may not have a good knowledge of schools and Nurture Groups more specifically, effort was made to ensure that the questions were phrased in a simple way, without educational terms that could potentially be difficult to understand. The phrasing was also carefully considered so that it was expressing an interest in their experiences, to minimise the chance that it could be perceived as being confrontational in any way. This was guided by the questions used by Charmaz (2006) in her research. She used questions beginning with phrases such as; *'Tell me about..'*, and *'How would you describe....'*, and therefore some of my questions were phrased in this way. Charmaz (2008) advises that questions using 'how', 'what' and 'when' result in rich data being gathered, particularly if participants are encouraged to elaborate through phrases such as 'Could you describe...further' (p.88). The research questions were used in formulating the questions so that they could be explored effectively but with subtlety. Finally, the research findings of Taylor and Gulliford (2011) were used as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998), as a 'stepping off point' (p.51) for the initial interview schedule. As one of their main findings was that parents felt that their children became more communicative following the intervention, a question related to this was included in the initial interview schedule.

It was decided that with the interview schedule constantly evolving through the process of Grounded Theory analysis, and with the target population being sometimes difficult to access, that a pilot interview would not be carried out. However, a 'critical friend' was invited to read through the initial interview

schedule in order to unveil any potential ambiguity, and to suggest changes in the phrasing of the questions to ensure clarity and sensitivity.

There are several difficulties with semi-structured interviews, which had to be overcome. Firstly, there is a need to reflect upon the impact that the researcher may have using a face-to-face technique. It may be that in being a young female, mothers may have felt more at ease speaking to the researcher, and therefore felt more comfortable in sharing their experiences. On the other hand, the age and status of the researcher as a trainee, may have led participants to assume that the researcher did not have children of their own, and therefore may have made them feel that their experiences would not be understood, leaving them less inclined to share their feelings. There is also a chance that the title of 'psychologist' may have made them feel intimidated as they may have felt concerned that they were being analysed and judged in their ability to parent their child.

In order to overcome these barriers, it was ensured that clothing worn was smart, but not too formal. Time was also invested before the start of the interview questions to build a rapport with the participant, to develop trust and make them feel more comfortable. The questions asked at the beginning of the interview were purposefully those that were less personal, working up to those that were more personal so that the participant felt more at ease.

In order to try to overcome any anxiety caused by the presence of the dictaphone, a copy of the transcript was offered to the participant, and sent following the interview if requested. The transcriptions included all of the

words, and pauses, however, some of the finer details (e.g. intonation), were omitted as this was not necessary for the Grounded Theory analysis.

3.7.2. Focus Groups

A focus group is described by Morgan (1997) as being similar to group interviews, but with 'the reliance being on interaction within the group, based on topics that are supplied by the researcher who typically takes the role of a moderator' (p.2). This was used as a means of understanding the children's views of the impact of Nurture Groups on the parent-child relationship. Greig and Taylor (1999) have suggested that focus groups are a good research method for eliciting the views of children as they can give confidence to individuals within the group, and provide an easier way to build rapport with children, particularly if they are anxious. As these children were selected for Nurture Groups based on social and emotional difficulties, this seemed to be a more appropriate method than an individual interview. There were four children within each of the three focus groups, all aged between six and nine years. However, as suggested by Grieg and Taylor (1999), the age range of each focus group was small (no more than one year). Morgan (1997) suggests that if there are under six individuals within a focus group, it can be difficult to keep conversation going. However, unfortunately, in each focus group there were not enough children who met the criteria and for whom consent had been obtained in order to reach this figure. In order to counteract this potential pitfall, it was ensured that there were a large number of questions on the initial interview schedule to fuel discussion. Three focus groups were used as Morgan (1997) stated that three to five focus groups should be carried out as a 'rule of thumb' (p.43) in order to reach saturation.

The children were given an explanation of the purpose of the group at the outset (Appendix 11), and asked for informed consent (Appendix 12). The children were asked to answer and discuss open questions (Appendix 13) that were explained in a straight-forward manner, and each focus group took place within the Nurture Room, in the school setting. The Nurture Group context was chosen in order to help the children to feel relaxed, as well as assisting their memories of the Nurture Room and how it made them feel, particularly if they had finished the intervention prior to the focus group. The focus groups took between 20 and 30 minutes so that the children were able to remain focused, and the information was recorded on a dictaphone before being transcribed.

The initial focus group schedule was developed in a similar way to the parent interviews, and included similar questions, although these were phrased in a way that was deemed to be more appropriate for children. Again, due to the difficulty in accessing the groups and the flexibility and evolution of the questions as the analysis progressed, a pilot focus group was not conducted. However, a small group of non-Nurture Group children were asked to listen to the questions in the initial schedule and highlight any that they felt were confusing or difficult.

The advantages of using a focus group were that the children could interact with each other, with the hope of providing a wealth of rich and valid information. The children were also very young, and therefore a written method of data collection would not be appropriate. However, focus groups can be

difficult to manage, with some participants dominating the group and others being reluctant to speak. It was crucial that this interaction was managed appropriately, and having been a teacher previously, the researcher felt confident in handling the group dynamics effectively, encouraging equal contributions from the group. A 'talking stick' (a stick passed around the group, which allows the one in possession to speak) was used when deemed necessary to help the children to take turns in speaking and not speak over one another.

The information from the focus groups was recorded on a dictaphone and later transcribed. To make this process easier, the children were asked to introduce themselves at the start of the tape, so that voices could be cross-checked during transcription.

3.8. Procedure

In general, qualitative researchers are not overly concerned about reliability, as the aim is not to generalise more widely from the findings. However, researchers such as Silverman (1993) argue that even in qualitative research, the same data, should result in the same findings, regardless of the researcher. Therefore, it is important to detail the procedures followed in order to ensure some level of reliability.

The procedure was as follows;

- 1) Approach schools to gauge interest in the research through presentation at Nurture Group days, email to head teacher (Appendix 4), and follow-up phone-calls.
- 2) Send out permission letters to schools, to gain access through the head teachers (Appendix 3).

- 3) Send out participant information sheets (Appendix 5) and consent forms to parents of the children in the Nurture Groups (Appendix 6).
- 4) Contact parents to arrange to interview them for 45 minutes either within the school setting or at home if more convenient.
- 5) Conduct interview and record using a dictaphone.
- 6) Transcribe and analyse interview data using a Grounded Theory approach.
- 7) Amend interview schedule accordingly.
- 8) Repeat steps 4-7 with each parent participant.
- 9) Choose 3 schools at which to conduct focus groups.
- 10) Send out permission letters to parents and gain consent (Appendix 9).
- 11) Gain consent from the children (Appendix 12).
- 12) Conduct the focus group of children within the Nurture Group setting.
- 13) Analyse data from the focus group using grounded theory.
- 14) Amend interview schedule accordingly.
- 15) Repeat steps 10-14 for remaining two focus groups.

3.9. Data Analysis

The qualitative method of analysis chosen was Grounded Theory, a choice informed by the Critical Realist approach adopted.

3.9.1. What is Grounded Theory?

3.9.1.1. History

Grounded Theory was originally developed by the sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The method emerged from their studies on people who were dying in hospitals, in which they took lengthy qualitative notes and developed systematic methodological strategies for analysis. They observed how and when doctors and their patients knew they were dying, focussing on how patients coped with the realisation. In the process of analysing the notes from their observations, Glaser and Strauss developed a systematic strategy to the analysis of qualitative data, known as Grounded Theory.

3.9.1.2. Theoretical background and aims

Grounded Theory analysis aims to generate new theory, and therefore there is a requirement for the researcher not to be driven by their hypotheses. As Glaser and Strauss state, 'generating grounded theory is a way of arriving at theory suited to its purpose', (1967 p.3) and 'most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data in the course of the research' (1967 p.6).

Grounded Theory can be seen as both a method, and a theory. Willig (2008) explains that;

'Grounded theory as method provides us with guidelines on how to identify categories, how to make links between categories and how we establish relationships between them. Grounded theory as theory is the end product of this process; it

provides us with an explanatory framework with which to understand the phenomenon under investigation'. (p.35)

Stebbins (1938) explained that *'exploration and inductive reasoning are important in science, in part, because deductive knowledge alone can never uncover new ideas and observations'* (p.8). Grounded Theory uses inductive reasoning to do this and is therefore an appropriate method for an exploratory piece of research aiming to gain understanding of an under-researched area. Induction is 'a type of reasoning that begins with study of a range of individual cases and extrapolates from them to form a conceptual category' (Charmaz, 2006, p.188). In other words, moving from detailed descriptions, to a more general theoretical conceptualisation. Grounded theory involves a process of moving between emerging analyses and empirical data, allowing the researcher to consider many theoretical explanations for the findings, making conclusions more valid. There is a requirement for the researcher not to be driven by prior assumptions or hypotheses, in order to derive a theory which is objective. However, this is difficult in practice and remains a criticism of the approach, as 'the researcher does not approach reality as tabula rasa' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.3). This means that the researcher has their own pre-existing knowledge, expectations, and biases, and therefore despite efforts to the contrary, interpretations of data can be influenced.

3.9.1.3. Advantages of using Grounded Theory Methods

Strauss and Corbin (1998, p.12) argue that 'theory derived from data is more likely to resemble the 'reality' than is theory derived by putting together a series of concepts based on experience or solely through speculation. Grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance

understanding and provide a meaningful guide to action'. In addition to enabling more objective understanding, grounded theory also encourages creativity and innovation in the way that the data is handled. The approach promotes flexibility, rather than demanding researchers to follow a rigid set of rules.

3.9.1.4. Different approaches to Grounded Theory

Glaser & Strauss (1967) encouraged their readers to adapt grounded theory strategies 'flexibly in their own way' (Charmaz, 2006 p.9). As a result of this, new models have been adapted from the original, leading to Grounded Theory Method (GTM) sometimes being referred to as a 'family of methods' (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007), including the Glaserian school of GTM, the Strauss and Corbin school, and the constructivist school, pioneered by Charmaz (2005). Urquhart (2007) suggests that despite the differences between the schools, all schools of GTM follow guidelines. These are suggested to be;

- Doing a literature review initially for orientation.
- Coding theoretically, rather than for superficial themes.
- Keeping theoretical memos.
- Building a theory through consideration of other theories.
- Clear procedures and audit trail.

Following criticisms of the difficulties of objectivity, Charmaz (1990) developed a constructionist school of grounded theory suggesting that researchers can have a viewpoint from which they form their analysis, but must avoid merely 'applying' it to their data.

3.9.2. Grounded Theory Method in the current research

The Strauss and Corbin (1998) model was used in this research due to the very structured, systematic approach that is prescribed to the analysis of the data.

As a novice researcher, the prescriptive, structured nature of this approach was appealing, as well as fitting with the epistemological position of Critical Realism.

Strauss and Corbin's coding paradigm suggests categories be explored in relation to 'process' and 'change'. It was felt that this fitted well with the research questions, which sought to explore the experiences of parents and children during the Nurture Group (process), and also the impact that it has on the parent-child relationship (change).

3.9.2.1. Open coding

As the interview data was collected, it was analysed for conceptual categories through open coding. These categories were descriptive, rather than analytical, and emerged from the data rather than being pre-determined as in other methods of qualitative data analysis (e.g. deductive thematic analysis).

This coding analysed the data line-by-line, applying descriptive labels to events. Line-by-line coding was vital during the early stages of the research to make sure that the theory was emerging from the data rather than researcher expectations, and to ensure that subtle features were not overlooked.

However, Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested that as the interview process continued and as the researcher became more familiar with the emerging categories, line-by-line coding was no longer essential, and therefore after the fifth interview, sentence-by-sentence coding was used at times as an alternative. As well as resulting in descriptive labels for phenomena within the data, some low-level categories also emerged through open-coding. An

example of the line-by-line coding strategy used during open coding is shown in Figure 1. For a more comprehensive example, see Appendix 15.

Line no.		Initial Coding	Memos
1	First question is, could you tell me a little bit about X before he joined		
2	the group?		
3	He was....I don't think he had a great transition into school. I think	Difficult transition	
4	inevitably it just changed things at home because we were very anxious	Parents anxious	
5	about him being anxious and we expected him to love school, and for it to	Child anxious	Some self-blame here as she talk about her anxiety and how he may have fed off her
6	be something he would want to do and somewhere he would want to go.	Expectations not met	
7	So we found that quite hard....and I think they inevitably feed off you, so I	Blame	
8	think his first year at school was tricky and it was towards the end of that	Difficult year	
9	first year when the nurture group was suggested to us as an option for	NG as solution	
10	him. So he's been in the NG for all of this year, and I think he attends it	Uncertainty	Some uncertainty again about the number of sessions attended. Suggests she may not have been fully informed?
11	twice a week most weeks. Sorry remind me the question again?	Part-time NG	
12	Just how was he before he went into the group?		

Figure 1- Example of Open Coding

3.9.2.2. Axial coding

The relationships between these categories were then established through axial coding, resulting in analytic categories rather than descriptive ones. At this point, the researcher also explored the dimensions of emerging categories through linking them with subcategories (Creswell, 1998). This was done using a coding paradigm, with Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggesting the researcher develop analytical categories through looking for 'process' (action or interaction over time in response to an event), and 'change' (change over time) in the data. The labels for these categories were 'in vivo' where possible, using phrases used by participants, rather than terms taken from existing theories in order to avoid contaminating the emerging theory. From the Axial Coding, code maps were produced after each interview to show the emerging categories. An

example of the axial coding strategy used is shown in the right-hand column of Figure 2, followed by an example code map (Figure 3). For a more comprehensive example, see Appendix 16.

Line no.		Initial Coding	AXIAL CODING
1	Could you tell me a little bit about X before the NG?		
2	D: Hmmmm.....it what way?		
3	Well were there any concerns that you had, or what were the reasons		
4	that he entered the NG? Did you know?		
5	M: I would say no...we didn't know why he was selected for the NG, what	Confusion	School view <u>vs</u> parent view
6	it was about his <u>erm</u> demeanour, his attitudes, behaviour, whatever his	Uncertainty	
7	learning, there was never anything specifically said as to why he had been		
8	selected for the NG.		
9	Oh okay		
10	D: So the end of his first year whatever they call it...		
11	Reception		
12	D: Reception....the class teacher was saying things like she wasn't overly		
13	happy with his, his <u>erm</u> behaviour from time to time....but she gave no	Behavioural difficulties	Behaviour at home vs. behaviour at school
14	indication that it was either abnormal for his age or something that	Normal	

Figure 2- Example of Axial Coding

3.9.2.3. Selective coding

Selective coding was then used to establish the core conceptual category (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). It is described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as 'the process of integrating and refining the theory' (p.143) through the joining together of the main categories derived through open and axial coding. It is suggested that following axial coding, a core category (or central category) must be selected, which represents the main theme in the research and links to other categories. One technique advocated by Strauss and Corbin (1998) in order to clarify this core category, is by writing a descriptive story of what is

happening within the data (see Appendix 17). This was done after each interview, and then the core categories from each interview were linked using a final code map once theoretical saturation had been reached (Figure 5 and 6, also see Appendix 18). From this, a theory was developed, with the help of memos kept throughout the coding process.

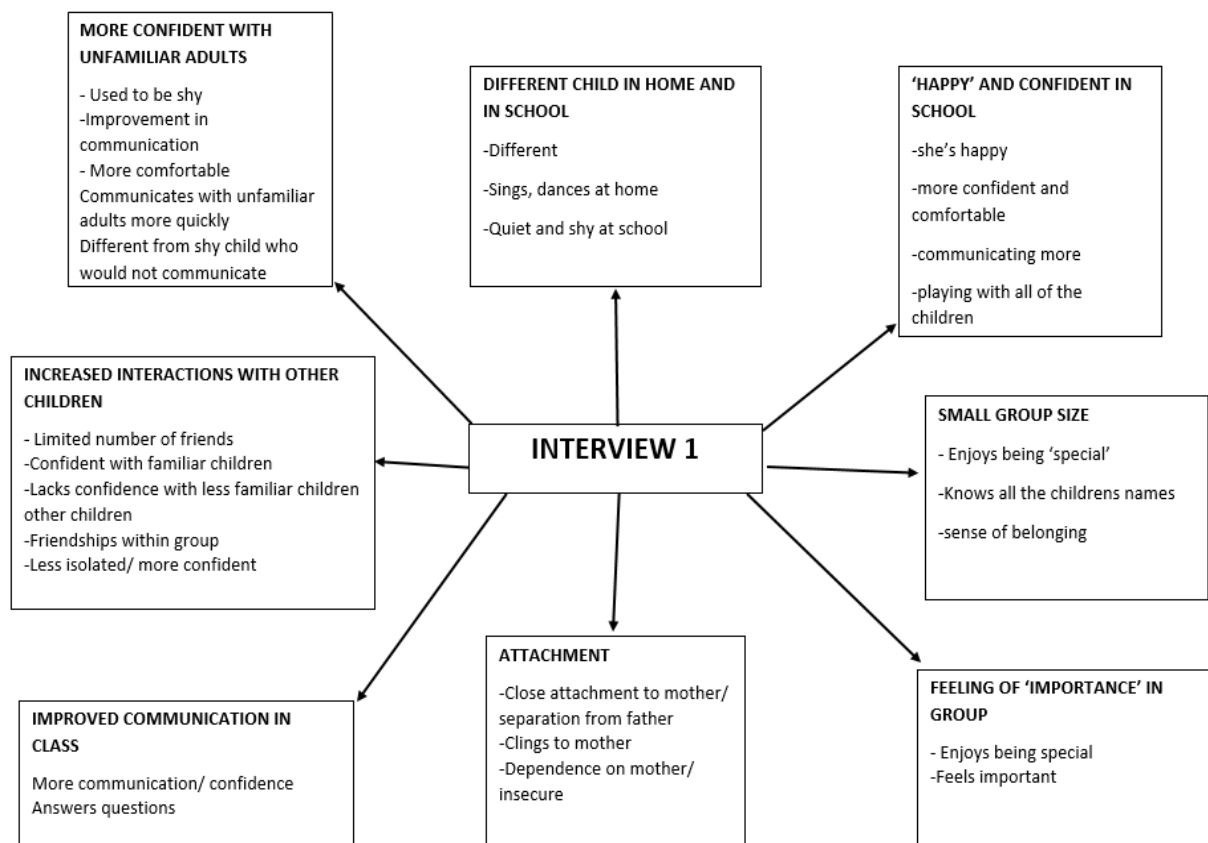


Figure 3- Example of Code Map

3.9.2.4. Analytic Tools used in the Coding Process

Coding was done after each interview, and prior to the next, so that the theory could be developed and tested gradually through theoretical sampling.

Constant comparative analysis is a key part of GTM, as it allows for the researcher to constantly look for similarities and differences in the categories that are emerging. This allows for the 'full complexity and diversity' of the data

to be recognised (Willig, 2008, p.36). Negative cases analysis is another tool used by Grounded Theorists in which they look for cases that do not fit with emerging categories in order to check the validity of the theory. This was used throughout the coding process to aid analysis, as well as constant questioning of the data in order to ensure theoretical sensitivity.

3.9.2.5. The Model

As encouraged by the authors themselves, the Strauss and Corbin model has been adapted for this piece of research (see Figure 4). In summary, the data was first collected through interviews with the parents. Open coding was then used to label segments of the data to understand their meaning. Through this, categories were identified and theoretical propositions reached. Throughout the Grounded Theory process memos were kept, in which ideas and thoughts were noted as categories emerged and comparisons made.

Following the initial coding, axial coding was used to interconnect the categories, before the use of selective coding in which the story was pieced together, in order to develop core categories. These core categories were then used to adapt the interview questions, so that the developing theory could be tested further with the next participant. This process was repeated until theoretical saturation had been achieved. This is the point at which no new categories could be identified, and new variations in categories stop emerging.

This process was exactly the same for the focus groups, so that two separate theories emerged separately; one theory derived from the parents, and one theory from the children. These two theories were then triangulated to establish similarities and differences. The research questions were reflected

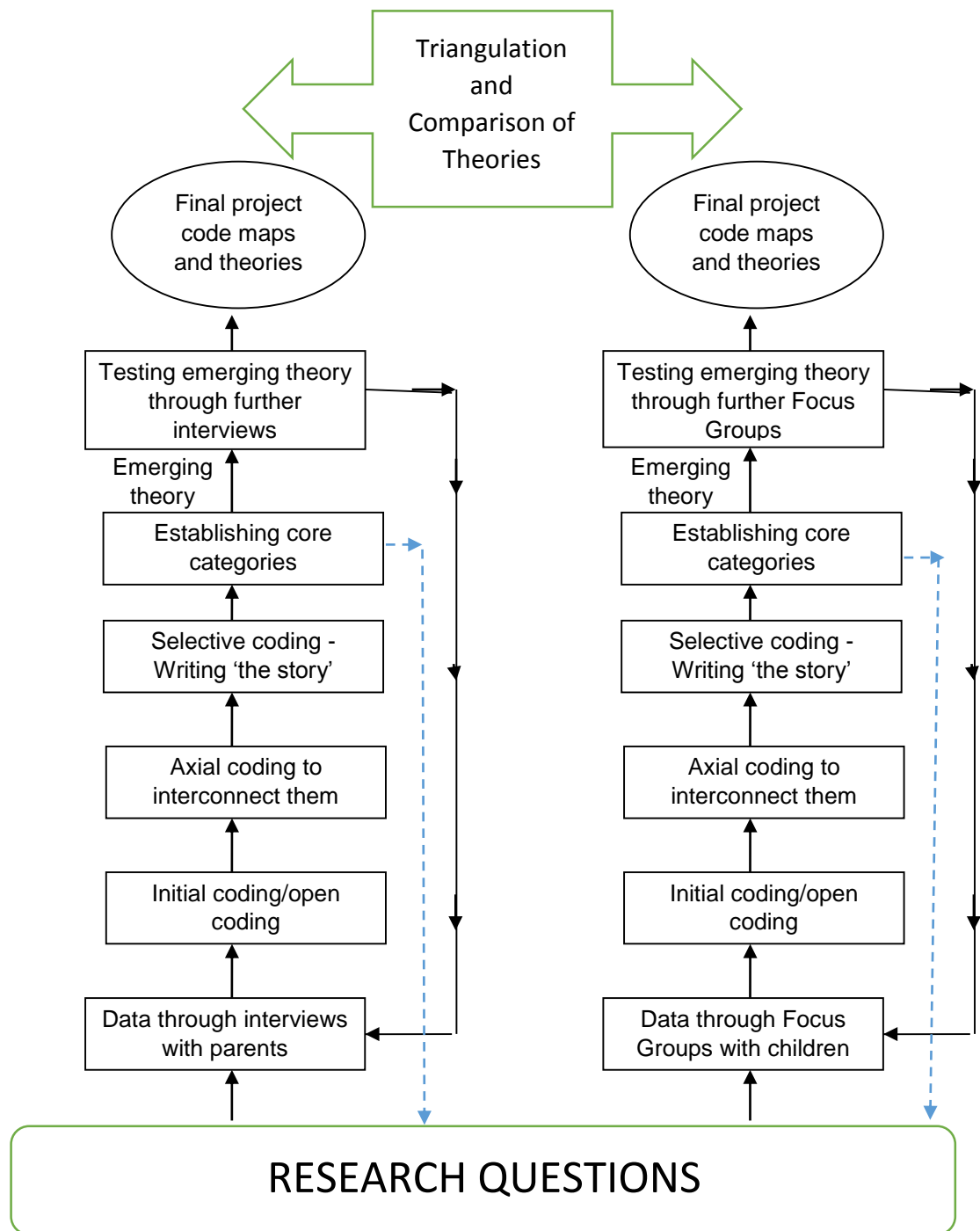


Figure 4- Flow-chart of the adapted Strauss and Corbin (1998) model of Grounded Theory used in this research.

upon and altered if deemed necessary throughout the research process in order to ensure that they were not hindering the emergence of themes.

3.10. Ethics

Brinkmann and Kvale (2008) suggest that qualitative research is particularly vulnerable to ethical issues because 'human interaction in qualitative inquiries affects researchers and participants, and the knowledge produced through qualitative research affects our understanding of the human condition' (p.263). This suggests that protecting the participant's emotional well-being and anonymity is particularly important, after gaining such an insight into their experience.

This research was carried out in accordance with the ethical guidelines set out by the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2006), as well as those set out by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC, 2008). Participants received an information sheet (Appendix 5 and 10) explaining the research and intentions without any deception, therefore allowing them to give informed consent (Appendix 6 and 11). Due to the age of the children, parental consent was sought (Appendix 9). However, informed consent was also requested from the children so that they were aware of the aims of the research and how the information would be used (Appendix 12). Consent was sought from the school before any data was collected (Appendix 3). Verbal/ written consent was gained from the Nurture practitioners, as well as formal written consent from the head teacher of the school. An email was sent to the school (Appendix 4), and followed up with a phone-call, as well as the permission letter, so that the consent was fully informed. Before the interviews and focus groups, the script was read to the participants (Appendix 7 and 12), so that they had the

opportunity to ask any remaining questions, and could confirm that they would like to take part.

It was made clear in the consent letter, and the script that all of the participants were able to withdraw at any point before the data had been analysed (Appendix 6 and 7). In order to minimise any negative emotional effects, questions were phrased sensitively (Appendix 8 and 13) and participants were fully debriefed afterwards. It was ensured that should parents have become upset, there would be a full debrief with the researcher and an adult from the school with whom they felt comfortable. Should they have continued to feel upset, details of local counselling services and the referral route for involvement from a clinical psychologist known to the school via the local CAMHS service would have been provided. It was ensured that one of the Nurture practitioners was present during the focus group to minimise any upset that the children may have felt. Had they become upset, it was ensured that there was a safe place within school where they could sit with a member of staff, and they would have been fully debriefed by the researcher. Their parents would also have been informed and details of further support from counselling services made available as appropriate and if deemed necessary.

In order to protect the identity of the participants, the interview scripts were labelled with a number, with the key for the personal information being kept separately. Also, all of the participants in the focus groups were anonymised from the outset. Participants were assured of their anonymity and that any audio files would be wiped following the research. Throughout the duration of the research the scripts were kept in a locked cabinet and electronic data was

encrypted to ensure privacy. In addition, transcription was undertaken by the researcher, so that the raw data remained confidential.

Participants were assured that their views would remain confidential, unless the children revealed any information that led the researcher to suspect that they may be a danger to themselves or others, in which case, a duty of care would necessitate the need to follow child protection procedures.

There were some emotional risks to the participants as it was felt that it may have been difficult to reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of relationships with loved ones. For this reason, participants were also given the contact details of the researcher, should they have felt the need to discuss their situation further. However, the research would not have been undertaken if it was felt that the potential benefits did not outweigh the risks. Based on positive findings from previous research, it was hoped that through requiring the parents and children to reflect on how things have changed at home during the intervention, that the experience would be positive and empowering for both the parents and the children.

3.11. Validity and Reliability

Qualitative research methods have been frequently criticised by those who believe that they lack reliability and objectivity (Kvale, 1996). Lincoln and Guba (1985) have used the term 'trustworthiness' to analyse reliability and validity in qualitative research.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) describe how four factors can be used to judge the trustworthiness of research; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility is similar in concept to internal validity, and relates to

the confidence one has in the truth of the findings. In order to ensure credibility, informal member checks were conducted at the end of each interview, by summarising the views that were perceived from the interviewees. It is also important to reflect upon and challenge one's own constructions. This was done through keeping a research diary, as well as discussing thoughts and feelings with a peer debriefer; encouraging them to challenge the researchers thinking. The findings from the parental interviews were also triangulated with the findings from the children's interviews; further ensuring the credibility of this research.

Transferability relates to the concept of external reliability in positivist research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This is the extent to which findings are context-bound. Being able to generalise to the wider population is of no concern, however, transferability is the idea that research needs to be detailed enough for the reader to make judgements when comparing a situation to their own. Yin (2009) suggests that transferability can be claimed through the use of multiple cases. Twelve parents were interviewed, as well as three focus groups consisting of 11 children, therefore it would seem that this research can claim transferability.

Dependability refers to the reliability of the conclusions reached by the researcher. This was ensured through the consistent and transparent approach to data collection, as well as the structured interpretation and coding of the data. It was also assured through the use of a Psychology Assistant in checking the codes and providing inter-rater reliability.

Confirmability is a concept similar to objectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This was assured through asking a peer to conduct a confirmability audit to ensure that data can be traced to the original source transcripts.

3.12. Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an integral part of qualitative methodologies (Willig, 2008).

Nightingale and Cromby (1999) claim that reflexivity allows us 'to explore the ways in which the researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research' (p.228). It necessitates an awareness of the impact that the researchers own biases and experiences will have on the interpretation of data, and throughout the process of the research (Willig, 2008).

Willig (2008) describes two types of reflexivity; personal reflexivity and epistemological reflexivity. The former involves reflecting on the ways in which our experiences, assumptions, and beliefs may impact upon the research, and also how the research has affected us. Epistemological reflexivity, on the other hand, requires us to reflect upon the assumptions that we have made during the research process, about the nature of knowledge for example.

It was essential to reflect upon participants' experience of the researcher.

Discussing family relationships, particularly those between parents and children, can be a delicate area that needs to be approached with sensitivity.

In order to make parents feels comfortable and to build rapport, the researcher was careful to try to establish a trusting relationship at the outset by assuring the participants of confidentiality. As a young, middle-class female, without children, the researcher was aware that the parents may not feel that she would be able to understand or empathise with their position. In order to

overcome this, the researcher used appropriate body language to ensure that parents felt listened to, and understood (e.g. turning my body towards them, and nodding to show that I was actively listening to their experiences).

From undertaking the literature review before embarking upon the data collection, there was an awareness of theoretical models linked to previous research, with the link to attachment theory being particularly well-documented. Having chosen GTM as the method of data analysis, it was particularly important to ensure reflexivity so that pre-existing theories and expectations did not impact on the emergence of new data. A reflective diary was kept throughout the research process in order to record reflections on how the research was impacting upon the researcher, and what impact the researcher's beliefs, experience, and knowledge might be having on the data (see Appendix 19).

3.13. Summary

This chapter sought to provide a full explanation and justification of the methods of data collection and analysis used in this study exploring parent and child views of the impact of Nurture Groups in the home context, and upon the parent-child relationship. The epistemological position of Critical Realist was declared, and the research design described in detail. The location and sample for the research have been specified, as well as an in-depth explanation of the Grounded Theory approach being used to analyse the data from the interviews and focus groups. Due to the qualitative design, attempts to ensure the reliability and validity were discussed, as well as the essential ethical considerations necessary for this research to be undertaken safely.

Chapter 4- Findings

4.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to highlight and illustrate the key themes that emerged from the qualitative data collected. The details of the participants can be found in Chapter 3, and the transcriptions referred to throughout this section can be found on the accompanying CD (see Appendix 14 for an example). As described in the previous section, a code map of themes was produced for each interview and focus group, based upon the axial coding. In order to pool the data, the themes from these were combined to produce two code maps of the key themes that emerged; one for the interview data (Figure 5), and one for the focus group data (Figure 6). These were analysed separately in order to establish distinct emerging theories for the parents and children. Therefore, in this chapter, the findings from the parent interviews will be described, followed by the findings from the focus groups with the children. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the key findings from the whole data set, and the findings from the two groups will be compared in the discussion chapter. Please note that in order to protect the anonymity of the participants and the schools involved, the names of the Nurture Groups frequently quoted by participants (e.g. Rainbow club, etc.) have been changed to 'Nurture Group'.

4.2. Qualitative Analysis- Parent Interviews

Figure 5 highlights the fifteen key themes that emerged from the ten parent interviews. These were as follows;

1. Attention
2. Confidence

3. Attachment
4. Anxiety
5. Small group size
6. Emotions
7. Attitude to school
8. Communication and social skills
9. Relationships
10. Independence
11. Assertiveness
12. Expectations
13. Attitudes of parents to Nurture Groups
14. Academic skills
15. Understanding of Others

These themes will now be described in turn in detail, with quotations from the interviews to illustrate the views of the parents.

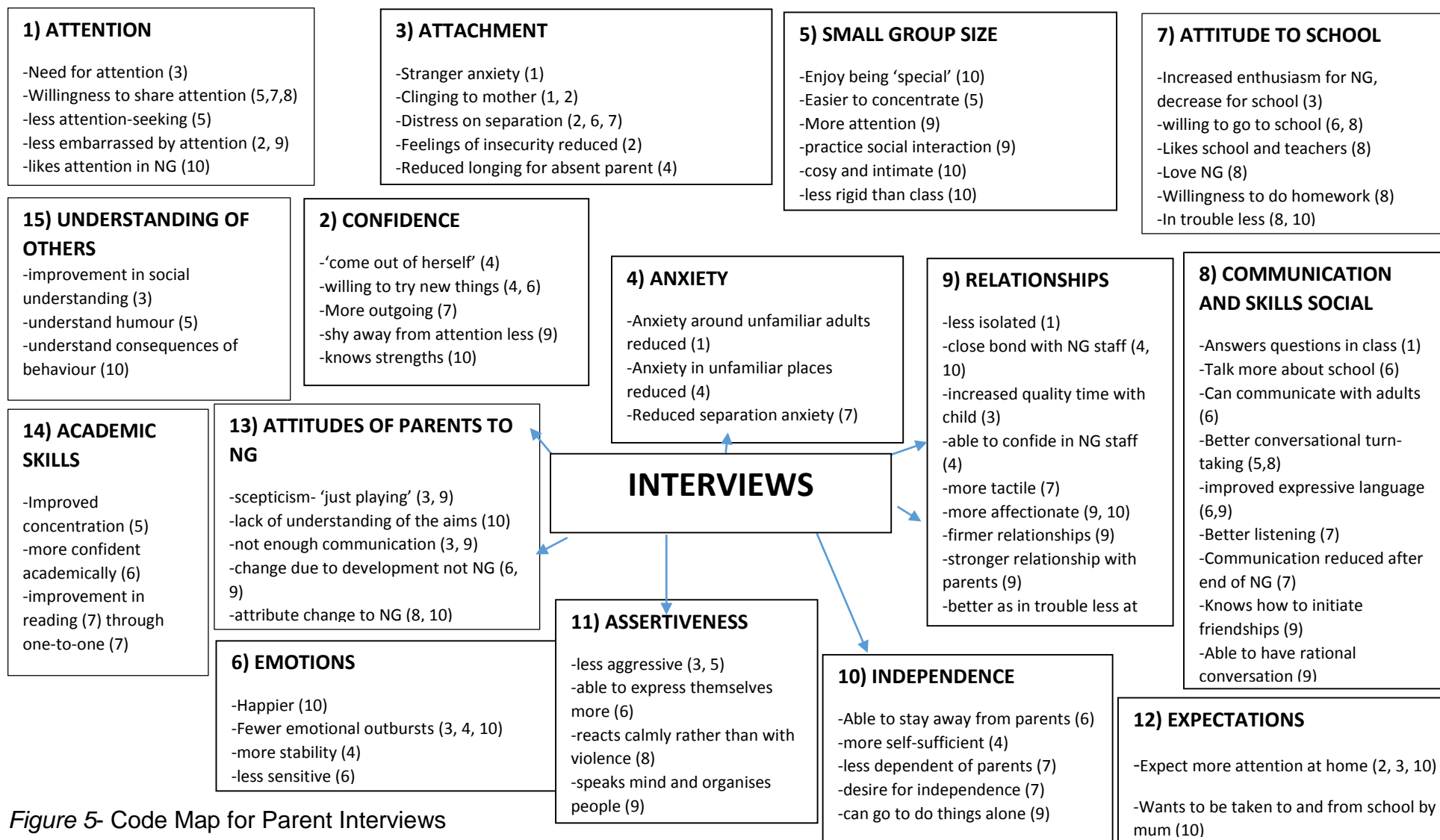


Figure 5- Code Map for Parent Interviews

4.2.1. Attention

A theme that repeatedly emerged in the data analysis was that of ‘attention’. Many of the children were described as being very shy before the Nurture Group and avoided attention particularly from their parents or peers, becoming very anxious especially when in front of an audience (see section 4.2.4), whilst others sought attention in ways that were considered to be negative. Following the intervention, some parents commented that they had seen an improvement;

‘Yeah at home, yeah definitely less attention-seeking’

(Interview 5, p32, line 4)

A particularly frequent issue with both the children who sought attention, and those who were shy, was a difficulty in sharing their parent’s attention. Most of the parents were able to reflect and notice an improvement, suggesting that the children were more able to share the attention of their parents with other children following the intervention.

‘,...not as frequent but there’s times when he just wants it all on him’. (Interview 5, p34, line 5-6)

‘It has got less, he’s definitely not so jealous’ (Interview 5, p34, line 8)

‘Every morning....arguing, but not anymore, he does sit and play, so yeah, yeah...you’re making me think now!!’ (Interview 8, p61, line 21-23)

4.2.2. Confidence

An increase in confidence was one of the most commonly observed positive impacts of the Nurture Groups. Most of the parents noticed that their children were now more confident in speaking in public, trying new activities, or performing in front of an audience.

One child had been a selective mute before taking part in the Nurture Group, and was now able to talk to others, even those who were unfamiliar to her.

‘6 months she didn’t say anything. Now she’s different’

(Interview 1, p2, line 2)

Another child was able to accept her mum’s attention in public and perform in front of an audience, where she had been unable to previously.

‘...she performed and then she cried at the end and went and sat back down again, but that is a change because she let me come. She invited me over, and she did it so that was an achievement for her.’ (Interview 2, p8, line 25-27).

Several parents commented that their children were now more outgoing, as they had the confidence to try new things that they would not have attempted before the intervention.

‘I think she does feel a bit more confident about doing it whereas probably before, she probably wouldn’t have even thought about doing it at all’ (Interview 4, p25, line 1-2)

‘Before it was like he would clam up and say he just wants to go, ‘take me home, I want to go, I don’t want to do this’, so now he is able to give things a try, whatever it is he will, anything

*new, he would like to try now with a bit of encouragement still,
but he will do it, whereas before I suppose he would clam up.'*

(Interview 6, p40, line 23-26).

Most parents attributed positive changes to the small group size in the Nurture Groups that allowed the children to feel more special. However, one parent suggested that her child's confidence had come from realising that there were other children who shared her anxiety about school.

*'I think now she's confident because she knows there is a few
more children that are like her, she's not the only one.'*

(Interview 2, p7, line 15-16).

'I think he just loves the whole thing, I think he feels special.'

(Interview 10, p 79, line 28-29)

4.2.3. Attachment

Attachment is one of the key theories associated with Nurture Groups, and therefore it came as no surprise when themes linked to attachment started to emerge from the data. Parents repeatedly described separation anxiety, with their children being so dependent on their parents that they would show excessive distress upon separation from them.

*'If I tell her that I was going somewhere, she would get really,
really upset.'* (Interview 2, p6, line 22)

'He just wouldn't stay at anybody's house, he just didn't want to, whether or not it was family or whatever, he wouldn't want to leave me. He was just very stuck to me, and very sort of close' (Interview 6, p41, line 31-32)

One parent also described how that separation anxiety was not exclusive to the mother-child bond, but also the child would become distressed when separated from the teacher also.

'If the teacher would like, walk out of the classroom, she'd get upset, she'd start crying' (Interview 2, p6, line 10)

However, following the Nurture Group, parents noticed that their children became more secure, and less distressed upon separation from them.

'...she would say 'If you're going, I'm going', but now I can leave her there for a couple of hours, she'll be fine.' (Interview 2, p12, line 31-33).

'I can just go and I don't have to worry about him screaming and fighting....so that has got better' (Interview 7, p50, line 32-33)

This signals an interesting and significant impact that the Nurture Group may have had upon the parent-child relationship.

4.2.4. Anxiety

Many of the parents described their children as being anxious in certain situations prior to the Nurture Group. One described the anxiety that her son felt when separated from her, as discussed in the previous section.

'Before there was no way that..., he would sit there and twiddle his hair and pull it out, and things like that, but there's none of that now, so I think over the last year and a bit it's....yeah, no, he's actually fine, he doesn't get stressed at all when he has to leave me now.' (Interview 6, p42, line 24-27)

The anxiety described by parents during the interviews manifested itself in many ways, including the child being unable to speak, hiding behind their parents, toileting issues, hair pulling, running away, and crying. A recurrent cause seemed to be when the children were faced with unfamiliar adults, or children.

'He used to, well he wouldn't sit at the lunch table, I think he was a bit shy of the older children sat there...' (Interview 5, p37, line 6-7)

Most of the parents had noticed a big improvement in this as their children became more confident during the course of the intervention.

'If somebody asking her something, she's quiet but she's looking and she answers. So, before, she wouldn't have said even one word' (Interview 1, p4, line 10-11).

‘...even here with my neighbours and everyone, she never used to say hello or anything to them. Now, if I want her to go and give something, she’ll go running ‘can I go and do it?’
(Interview 2, p7, line 7-8).

4.2.5. Small group size

The main component about Nurture that parents felt was the key to its effectiveness was the small group size. Parents felt that this benefitted their children for a variety of reasons. Some suggested that their children enjoyed the additional attention;

‘Mum: I think it’s more one-to-one, small group doing things together instead of a big class.

Dad: He gets more attention’ (Interview 5, p37, line 12-13).

Others felt that the small group assisted the development of social skills as it gave them chance to practice in a safer environment.

‘...because it’s a small group so they are getting more individual attention, but at the same time, I think what the group is trying to teach them is about the way in which they interact with others, so it’s a lot easier to manage that sort of interaction in a small group.’ (Interview 9, p72, line 5-7).

Some parents felt that being in a small group helped their child to be less distracted than they would be in the whole class setting.

‘...once he was in the smaller group I think he was able to focus a bit more I’d say.’ (Interview 5, p31, line 11).

‘...he does work better in small groups because he does listen more rather, because he is easily distracted in a class of 28, he’s just lost.’ (Interview 7, p55, line 12-13).

Overall, most of the parents thought that the exclusivity of the Nurture Group helped give their child a sense of importance; raising their self-esteem and providing a feeling of belonging.

‘She say she like to go there, just feeling like she’s more important in the class because she going there’ (Interview 1, p3, line 11-12)

‘I think it makes her feel a little bit important going into the X, because not everyone’s invited, just a few children’ (Interview 4, p23, line 23-24).

‘I think he just loves the whole thing, I think he feels special.’ (Interview 10, p75, line 28-29)

It was interesting that being part of a small group was the main aspect of Nurture Groups that the parents felt was having an impact. This could perhaps be due to the seemingly small amount of knowledge that parents have about the running of the Nurture Groups and the underlying philosophical and psychological underpinnings, evidence base and rationale for this type of intervention.

4.2.6. Emotions

With Nurture Groups being an intervention designed for supporting the development of social and emotional skills, it is unsurprising that emotions emerged as a key theme. A word that was frequently used by the parents to describe their children's emotions was 'outbursts'. For some children these outbursts were of anger, and for others, they tended to become upset very easily. Most parents had observed a reduction in the frequency of these 'outbursts' following the intervention.

'I suppose in a way, over the last year or so, his outbursts have decreased' (Interview 3, p16, line 6-7).

Some of the children were labelled as being 'emotional' or 'sensitive' children, based on their reactions to seemingly minor difficulties or situations. It was suggested that perhaps the children have become less emotional due to an increased understanding of social situations. This could perhaps be one of the ways in which Nurture Groups help to support the emotional needs of children.

'...she is quite an emotional child anyway but that's getting a lot better, I mean some days I didn't think there was anything that she wouldn't cry over' (Interview 4, p22, line 20-21)

'...he's a lot easier, he does understand and he doesn't get so upset from situations, but I still say he's just a very sensitive child.' (Interview 6, p43, line 2-3).

Some of the male children were described as having frequent angry outbursts, which were also triggered by relatively small causes or triggers. Parents described their children as reacting more calmly, and being less volatile. This

may suggest that the Nurture Group equips children with the communication skills to resolve problems more calmly and effectively.

'Yeah he's not as...he used to bite at everything...but he's more calm now and he'll just 'humph!'.... Yeah he used to just hit anyone that would upset him, he'd just hit them' (Interview 8, p60, line 19-20)

'Yeah actually, things don't go flying anymore. He used to, when he was in a stop the chair would go flying or something...but he doesn't do that anymore so thinking about it, it must have done something good!' (Interview 8, p61, line 6-8)

This last comment suggests that whilst the parent attributes the improvement in behaviour to the Nurture Group, she is unsure of what they are doing that has impacted on the child. Given the positive impact, this confirms the importance of close communication between home and school so that the positive impact can be optimised and maintained following the Nurture group intervention.

4.2.7. Attitude to school

Due to the children's enjoyment of the Nurture Group, their attitude towards school also improved. Some of the children had been reluctant to attend before the Nurture Group started, but showed increased positivity towards other aspects of school following the intervention.

'He does say what he's done more...says what's good about it. He never used to like school really, said it was boring.'
(Interview 8, p57, line 15-16).

'He adores the Nurture Group. He'd get really upset if there was a reason why he never had it. His Monday and Wednesdays were what he lived for' (Interview 7, p48, line 31-32)

This change in attitude towards school may also have led to the children communicating more positively and openly about it to their parents.

4.2.8. Communication and social skills

As well as communicating more openly about school, the children also seemed to communicate more positively about their friendships.

'He talks more about his friends, I'd say.' (Interview 5, p32, line 19).

'He's more confident with children and he's socialising with children of his own age, and he's coming home and talking about friends and things' (Interview 6, p38, line 35-36)

A possible reason for this could be that the Nurture Group supported the children in their social interactions, and assisted them in initiating and maintaining relationships with their peers. The children were sometimes described as using ineffective strategies to make friends and join in with other children.

'He's being less aggressive with other children and things like that' (Interview 5, p36, line 7-8)

'He was quite happy to play on his own, but....that's a difference- I mean, now when I take him to the park, he'll play

with anybody, he wants to get in there' (Interview 6, p41, line 13-14)

'That's not the way to introduce yourself to the group by being very bouncy, very enthusiastic, look at this I've got a fantastic thing...and it's wrong. That's why I think now, he's learnt that a) he doesn't need to do that and b) he's more selective and choosy about who he plays with and therefore he's more confident playing with his friends.' (Interview 9, p73, line 2-5).

These parents described not only a change in their social skills, but also a change in their perceptions of friendship, and confidence, meaning that the children felt content and secure in the friendships that they had.

Parents also noticed improvements in the skills that the children used when communicating with them. For example, one parent felt that the Nurture Group had supported her child to improve his speech and language skills, whilst others commented on an improvement in conversational turn-taking.

'His pronunciation of words, erm his sentencing has been better....' (Interview 6, p39, line 29)

'Before he used to butt in and if he couldn't talk he'd get in a strop...now he'll just stand and wait his turn' (Interview 8, p57, line 29-30)

'I think he's more patient now and he will wait his turn to talk' (Interview 5, p32, line 16).

In addition to the impact that parents had noticed in the children's communication at home, they also were able to acknowledge the difference

that it had made to the children during school. It would seem that through being in the small group, the children's confidence at expressing themselves had increased, and their anxiety at speaking in front of others decreased.

'Yes she's now different! The teacher, she said that she put her hands up, she talk, whatever she ask her, she answer'

(Interview 1, p1, line 26-27)

4.2.9. Relationships

Overall, when asked directly whether their relationship with their child had changed, most of the parents insisted that there was no change. However, during the interviews several changes indicated that perhaps their relationships had changed in small ways. For example, most parents reported their child to be less dependent on them, suggesting a change in the relationship. Several parents acknowledged that they were less negative with their child following the intervention.

'I don't shout at him as much, that's about it. Not moaning at him as often.' (Interview 8, p61, line 28)

The catalyst for this change was unclear. However, one parent claimed that she had learnt to control herself better, and therefore perhaps indicated that there had been a change in parenting style.

'I do shout at him less, yes, definitely, because I have to learn to control that as well.' (Interview 3, p20, line 1)

Another parent explained that whilst her child was getting into trouble at school, it was difficult to then stop the negativity coming into the relationship at home through having to discipline him constantly. She reported that his behaviour

had improved since starting the Nurture Group, and therefore their relationship was able to be more positive.

‘...he’s better at school, so all that negativity isn’t there anymore, which makes it a bit easier’ (Interview 10, p81, line 19-20)

The children had also become more tactile and affectionate since starting the Nurture Group. It is unclear whether this is as a result of modelling, a change in the relationship with their parent, or perhaps an increased ability to express themselves. Whatever the reason for the change, this increased affection may possibly also evoke reciprocal affection from the parent, and therefore could be an important factor in helping the children to feel more confident and secure.

‘...he has become very touchy-feely (laughs), which I think he’s become a bit more touchy-feely than he was...’ (Interview 7, p47, line 1-2)

*‘I think he’s always been affectionate, but he’s sloppier now’
(Interview 9, p71, line 17)*

‘I came home from work the other day and he came out of the room to give me a hug and told me that he loved me, which doesn’t happen a lot, but he does that. I suppose that didn’t happen last year.’ (Interview 10, p80, line 32-34)

In addition to improvements in the relationship between the child and their parent, the close bond between the children and the Nurture leaders was frequently mentioned. One parent explained that the Nurture leader was

another adult in their child's life whom she felt she could trust and confide in. This then assisted the parent in understanding the feelings of their child.

'...it's quite good as well because I confer with (Nurture leader)

and X will tell her stuff that she won't mention to me so...'

(Interview 4, p22, line 16-17).

The findings suggest that Nurture Groups may help children to form close attachments with the adults in the Nurture Group, which may act as a safe base from which they can feel more secure and confident in showing their affection towards their parents. It also may be the case that the relationships between parent and child become more positive due to improved behaviour, or perhaps changes in parenting style suggested or modelled by Nurture staff.

4.2.10. Independence

As previously explained, many of the children were described as having a very close attachment with their parents, meaning that they became anxious and distressed when separated from them. Most of the parents felt that, as a result of the Nurture Group, their child had become more independent.

'I think she has got more independent as well since she's been

here.....I'm sure the group has helped' (Interview 4, p28, line

32-33).

'...he's not as 'stay with me' as he was.' (Interview 9, p68, line

21-22)

This was particularly evident when considering the child's behaviours when staying away from the parent at night. Although not specifically enquired about, many of the parents raised this as having been an issue before the Nurture

Group. Some of them explained that the children were unwilling to stay anywhere without their parents, whilst others described their child as needing them to be present whilst they fall asleep. However, without exception, they reported that their children were now more independent and able to stay away from their parents at night.

'I've noticed the fact is that, before, he wouldn't leave my side, and wouldn't spend one night away from me. Erm, and erm, my other two children went to my mums because I worked and things, and X would never do that, but now he does.' (Interview 6, p41, line 22-24)

'But it was always I had to stay with him until he was ready to go to sleep because he didn't want to be left, but now....I can turn round and say, okay I'm going, I'll see you later.' (Interview 7, p50, line 16-18)

As reported under previous headings, the parents described the children as now having the confidence to do things alone (e.g. going to an ice-cream van, delivering a letter). This seemed to provide the parents with a sense of relief, whilst enabling the children to feel proud to be able to do things for themselves.

'I mean when we went on holiday he would go up to the bar, because we were all inclusive, he would go up to the bar and order his own drink, so yeah, that is something that he would never have done before.' (Interview 7, p51, line 17-19)

4.2.11. Assertiveness

Upon starting the Nurture Group, many of the parents commented that their children presented as being anxious, quiet, and lacked confidence. It would seem that the increase in communication skills, confidence, and feelings of security induced by the Nurture Group also helped the children to speak their minds.

‘...he is quite a bit more assertive to situations of what he wants and when he wants it, yeah, I would actually say that he’s not, he’s more forthcoming with that, he’s not shy with saying what he wants, you y’know...if he’s not happy with something...so yeah that has been a change.’ (Interview 6, p43, line 35-p44 line 2)

‘Yeah he’s not bossy, he probably has got a little bit more assertive.... ‘You take a seat!’ (Interview 9, p70, line 23)

In some instances, the parents seemed to suggest that this change had made their child more outspoken, and less likely to blindly follow instructions. Interestingly, this was described as a positive trait by all of the parents.

‘I’ve noticed that she’s come out of herself a bit more and is speaking a bit more, saying what she wants to do rather than sort of taking instructions’ (Interview 4, p22, line 28-30).

‘But now she’s more ‘no, you can’t tell me what to do’ (Interview 4, p25, line 32).

4.2.12. Expectations

There were very few negative issues that parents felt had arisen as a result of the Nurture Groups. However, one parent described the following difficulty;

'I feel like because she is getting the one-to-one at school, the teachers giving her all ears, she expects that at home and I can't do that at home all the time. And then she feels a bit pushed back. Which I feel is the negative side of this.'

(Interview 2, p7, line 30-32).

Several parents commented that their children's expectations of them had increased, and that they now demonstrated a stronger desire or expectation, for quality time with their parent.

'I've noticed a lot recently is that he doesn't understand why I have to go to work and why I can't take him to school every day and drop him off and he asks me that quite a lot, well actually most days now, he's like 'can't you take me to school?' so that's one of his expectations of me that I can't physically deliver' (Interview 3, p20, 19-22).

It is unclear whether there was an increased expectation due to the additional adult attention that the children received at school, or whether the children became more able to communicate their feelings and therefore felt more able to do so with their parents. It could also be that the children felt more confident in asking their parents for attention rather than seeking it in less appropriate ways.

‘...he sometimes says that y’know he wishes I dropped him off at school, or picked him up a bit more’ (Interview 10, p77, line 29-30)

It is particularly interesting that all of the parents who reported this increased desire for their company, perceived it as being negative. There was a real sense that this was an inconvenient by-product of the Nurture Groups, and that consequently, pressure on the parents had increased. The children’s pleas seemed to cause parents to feel guilt and some frustration as they felt that providing additional quality time with their children was not in their control due to other commitments. This may be an area in which Nurture leaders could usefully support parents, in planning small ways in which they can adapt their routine so that the children feel they are having their needs met, and the parents’ sense of guilt and frustration might subsequently be reduced.

4.2.13. Attitudes of parents to Nurture Groups

Parent’s attitudes towards the Nurture Groups and their effectiveness were very varied. One of the biggest issues seemed to be that parents often did not understand the reason for the child being in a Nurture Group, what the aims were of the Nurture Group, and what activities they used with the children during the sessions.

‘I have no idea what they’re actually sharing and what they’re talking about and how their time is spent, so it would be really good for me to know that and then I might be able to understand if it is actually helping.’ (Interview 3, p21, lines 1-3)

‘So one of the issues we’ve got with it, the whole process, was that it wasn’t really explained to us why and what it was that

*made him a candidate for the Nurture Group.’ (Interview 9,
p63, line 18-20)*

There was some suggestion of collusion by the schools, with parents reporting that they were never given a full explanation of why their child had been chosen, leaving them feeling that they were being purposefully kept in the dark. This gave rise to growing suspicion and scepticism about the real value of the intervention for some parents.

*‘...he’ll say yes I love the Nurture Group, but he also loves
playing football, so he might be loving the Nurture Group
because it’s a dossy place to go for all I know.’ (Interview 9,
p63, line 28-30)*

Other parents were equally as confused by the concept of Nurture, but remained positive, having been able to see obvious positive outcomes.

*‘I don’t know, they just seem to play and things, but...I don’t
know...I don’t know what they do...I don’t know what the
teacher does, but she’s done something!!’ (Interview 8, p61,
line 31-33)*

For others, it had been difficult for them to notice positive outcomes, as they were unaware of what the child’s difficulties were to begin with, and what changes they could or might expect to see.

*‘I think it’s because we weren’t really told what the reasons
were for him going in, it’s difficult to benchmark what changes
have taken place that they are specifically looking at when they
took him into the Nurture Group.’ (Interview 9, p64, line 19-21)*

During the interviews, parents frequently were defensive at first, often suggesting that the Nurture Groups had not had an impact on their child. This was particularly the case where the parents did not see the same behaviour at home, as the staff in school were noticing. There was a sense on several occasions that parents were only expecting to see changes in poor behaviour, as opposed to changes in confidence or self-esteem, for example. This left confusion and disgruntlement when parents did not perceive their child to have any behavioural issues at the outset of the intervention. It was noticeable in many of the interviews that parents were only just realising quite dramatic changes in their children that they had not considered or attributed to nurture previously.

‘...you’re making me think now!!’ (Interview 8, p61, line 23)

Some parents were also unwilling to attribute positive changes to the Nurture Group, as where changes had been noticed, they had often perceived them to be due to the child’s age and stage of development.

‘...where she’s growing up, she’s different as well, so I don’t know exactly what has made her different’ (Interview 1, p4, line 26-27)

However, yet others had noticed positive changes, and were convinced of the role of the Nurture Group intervention in effecting this change.

‘...it’s the best thing that happened to him’ (Interview 10, p74, line 26)

The key implication from the interviews was that all of the parents had noticed changes. However, due to differences in their knowledge of the aims of

nurture and the possible outcomes, many changes had not been celebrated, or attributed to the Nurture Group. Therefore clear and honest communication between school and parents is key in enhancing the positive impact of Nurture.

4.2.14. Academic skills

Several of the parents commented that they had noticed improvements in their children's academic attainment, especially reading.

'His reading has improved a lot, so they're very impressed with his reading' (Interview 7, p47, line 19).

Some parents cited possible reasons for this. One suggested that the Nurture Group input resulted in the child receiving increased one-to-one time to support them academically, whilst another suggested that the Nurture Group provided them with the confidence to thrive academically.

'I think the one-to-one with the Nurture Group has helped him academically definitely.' (Interview 6, p39, line 14-15)

'So with his reading skills, they've given him the confidence to do that, and now he knows he can do it, he wants to do more' (Interview 6, p45, line 12-14)

It is interesting that several parents suggested that the children continue with their normal classroom academic work whilst in the Nurture Group. This may be indicative of a lack of understanding about the aims of Nurture on the parent's part, or potentially could signify the 'classic' Boxall model has been adapted significantly.

4.2.15. Understanding of Others

The final theme that emerged is one of an increased understanding of the social world. According to some of the parents, the children seemed to have become less egocentric, and more able to understand the views and needs of others.

'I think he understands a little bit more now and so when I say to him 'okay we need to leave' and telling him 'you need to do this' he actually understands, okay, we need to leave so I better do this or I'll get in trouble' (Interview 3, p20, line 8-11)

'Well he's more rational in conversation and more understanding of someone else's point of view. I think you can have a rational conversation where you couldn't before' (Interview 9, p71, line 29-30)

This change is an interesting observation as it suggests that children are becoming more considerate and empathetic as a result of the Nurture Group intervention. This may be due to the adults modelling effective interactions, and explicit discussion of feelings and consequences in social relationships.

4.3. Summary of Parent Interviews

Overall, the parents spoke favourably about the Nurture Groups, despite knowing little about the aims or expected outcomes. For some parents, this made it difficult for them to pin-point improvements, however, all of the parents had noticed positive changes in their children. Some parents were keen to attribute all of the changes solely to the Nurture Group, whilst others were more sceptical, feeling that biological maturation also had a large role to play in the

improvements. Over the ten interviews, there were many shared experiences, supporting the emergence of theories, and all of the themes from the code map were experiences shared by several, and in some cases, all of the parents. The most noticeable differences seemed to be in lowering anxiety, and increasing confidence and independence. Several of the children were particularly reluctant to be away from their parents, especially overnight, before the start of the intervention. However, they all remarked that this was no longer an issue and that the children had become more content in being left with other people. The majority of children had become more confident; some were now able to speak in front of others, some no longer hid behind their parents when in the presence of unfamiliar adults, and some were now able to perform in whole school assemblies. Parents felt that the children had fewer emotional 'outbursts' following the intervention, and were able to communicate more effectively, rather than seeking attention in inappropriate ways. Parents reported that the children were now able to express themselves more assertively, which was unanimously perceived as being positive progress as the children had previously been passive and anxious. The children's attitude towards school had also become more positive, resulting in the children talking to their parents about school when they came home. Although most parents insisted that their relationship with their child had not changed as a result of the Nurture Group, many of the interviews highlighted subtle ways in which their relationships may have been enhanced. For example, many parents commented that their children were now more affectionate towards them, and more able to understand their parents feelings; adapting their behaviour accordingly.

The parents all felt that the key to the success of Nurture Groups was the small group size, as this allowed for their children to receive more attention, provided an opportunity for safe interaction, and additional one-to-one support. This was certainly felt to be the key reason for the academic improvement noticed by some parents. However, many parents were unaware of the other characteristics of Nurture Groups, and this may have been the reason that they were unable to comment on their respective effectiveness.

Some parents commented on one negative aspect of Nurture Groups. It was felt that after receiving additional attention at school, the children had raised their expectations of such attention in the home context, making demands of quality time from their parents that they did not feel could always be met due to other commitments. This will be a key area of interest when considering the implications for Nurture practitioners, and the Educational Psychologists working with them.

The views of the pupils from the focus groups will now be considered in detail, before being compared to those of the parents in Chapter 5.

4.4 Qualitative Analysis- Focus Groups

Figure 6 highlights the eight key themes that emerged from the three focus groups with Nurture Group children. These were as follows;

1. Behaviour
2. Relationships
3. Fun
4. Happiness

5. Small Group size
6. Maturity
7. Communication
8. Confidence

These themes will now be described in turn in detail, with quotations from the interviews to illustrate the views of the children.

4.4.1. Behaviour

One of the key findings that emerged from the data was that the children almost unanimously felt that their behaviour had improved. Even the very young children in Focus Groups 1 and 3 could recognise improvements in themselves.

*‘I was naughty...I don’t get naughty at all’ (Focus Group 3, p26,
line 31)*

‘Less naughty’ (Focus Group 1, p7, line 5)

*‘...now I feel like I’m kind of a goodie-goodie’ (Focus Group 2,
p16, line 14)*

The older children in Focus Group 2 were able to elaborate more fully upon how and why they felt their behaviour at home had improved. They felt that it was the skills that they had been taught in the Nurture Group that had allowed them to behave better at home. Children identified that they were now more respectful and listened better to their parents.

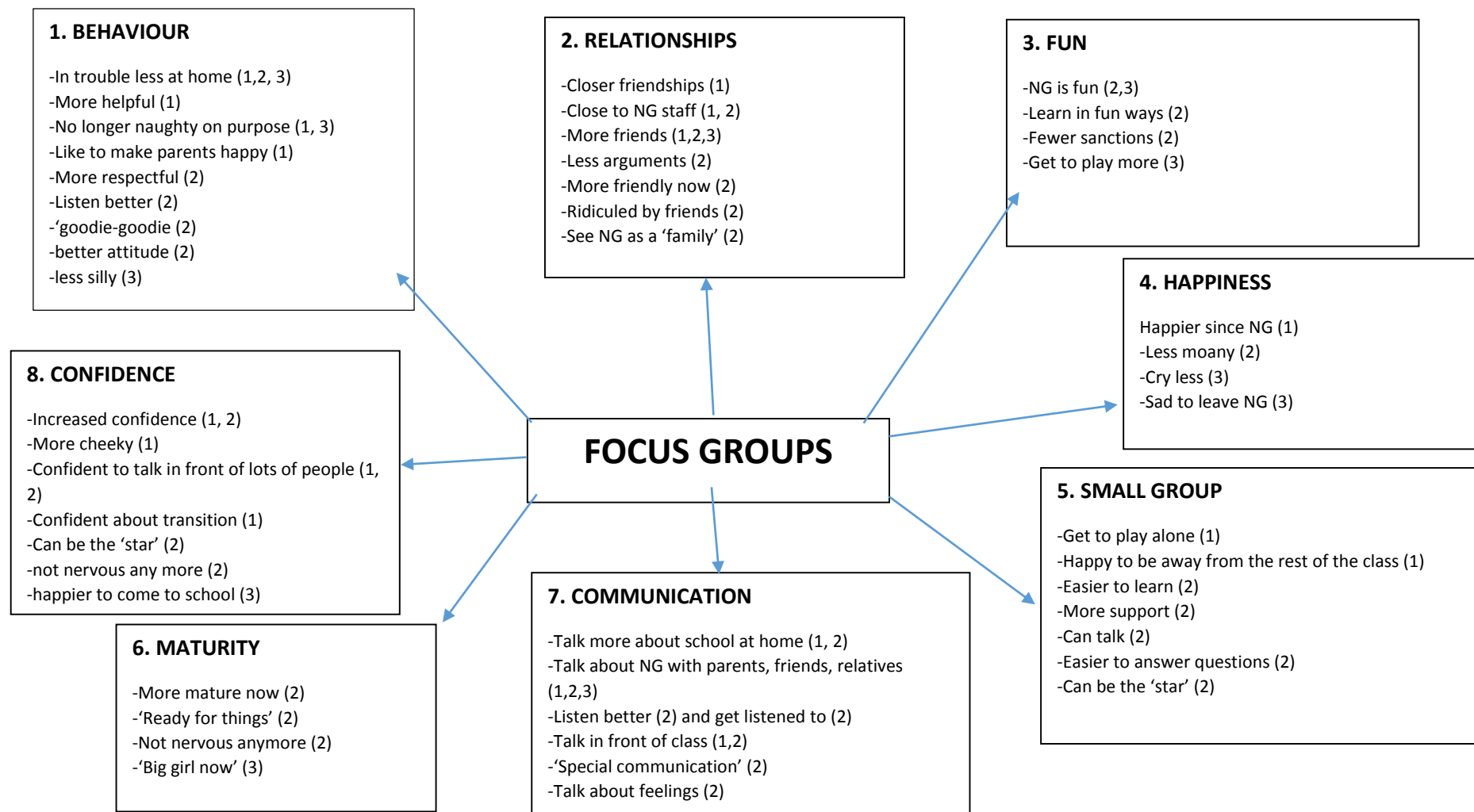


Figure 6- Code map for Focus Groups

‘...now I learnt a lesson and they’ve taught me to show respect and show more respect and take care of other children, and respect them how you would, and that’s taught me how to respect my mum and be good for her.’ (Focus Group 2, p16, line 3-5)

*‘Because the Nurture Group says that you should listen more, because I’m not being told off now because I listen to my mum’
(Focus Group 2, p16, line 8-9)*

The final statement links in with some of the comments that the adults made about them shouting less at their children. This child perceived that he was being told off less because he had learnt to listen better. This is another example of how the parent-child relationships may be being impacted upon by the Nurture Group intervention.

4.4.2. Relationships

Friendship was a theme that was repeated across all of the focus groups, with the children commenting that they now have more friends. They attributed this in the main, to their access to the Nurture Group intervention.

‘I’ve got more friends’ (Focus Group 1, p10, line 14)

One of the children was able to reflect on her role in this and suggested that she is friendlier now. This may be as a result of the safe opportunity for social interaction provided by the group. It may also be due to the increase in self-esteem and confidence that the children appear to have experienced.

‘Well I think I’ve changed in the way that I’m more like friendly to people, whereas, not like I was really bad and horrible but

like, erm, I just think that I'm more like friendly and I'm not so moany no more.' (Focus Group 2, p14, line 34-36)

The bond between the children within the Nurture Group was also commented upon. It would seem that being in a small group with other children had meant that they had all formed close friendships within the group. One child even described the group as being 'like a family'. This was a strong expression of one of the key aims of nurture; that these children felt so close, comfortable and loving towards each other that they would describe themselves in that way.

'Well, it's changed my friendships in the Nurture Group because when I was not in Nurture Group, some of them weren't my friends, but now they're all my friends' (Focus Group 2, p17, line 13-14)

'...this sounds weird but we're like a family' (Focus Group 2, p13, line 25)

When asked about whether they had changed at home, as well as their behaviour, several of the children felt that they were now more helpful to their parents. Whilst this is not an explicit reference to a change in the parent-child relationship, their desire to please their parents appears to be something that has grown as a product of the intervention, and may have an effect on the interactions between parent and child.

'I help and my little brother tries to do the hoover and when my mum comes in and says 'let me do it' then I do it and I tidy up'
(Focus Group 1, p5, line 24-25)

4.4.3. Fun

It was clear from the focus groups that one of the main aspects about Nurture Groups that appealed to the children was that they found it fun in comparison to whole class learning. This is not to say that the children find it easier, but rather one claimed that it makes learning more fun.

*‘...when I walk out, I think I’m going to go to Nurture Group
and I’m going to have really good fun’ (Focus Group 2, p14,
line 13)*

‘...they help us learn in a fun way’ (Focus Group 2, p15, line 4)

‘It’s just fun’ (Focus Group 3, p22, line 19)

The children even went beyond this by reporting that not only is the Nurture Group fun, but also it enhances their enjoyment of school as a whole. This perhaps links in with the changes in attitude to school observed by the parents.

*‘It makes school more fun for me.’ (Focus Group 2, p12, line
16)*

4.4.4. Happiness

To support the idea that the children’s attitude to school has changed, they reported feeling happier following the intervention, commenting that it helped them to enjoy school more.

‘Like school more’ (Focus Group 1, p10, line 28)

*‘I felt happy because I like the Nurture Group’ (Focus Group 3,
p21, line 7)*

'I used to cry, now I don't' (Focus Group 3, p24, line 5)

This seemed particularly true for those who had found the transition into Reception difficult. Several of the children reported that they had previously not enjoyed school, being frequently upset. However, they no longer had those feelings and saw school as a positive place. Some of the children explained that one of the things that they liked about the Nurture Group was that they had a chance to play alone, or be away from the other children in the class. Perhaps for some of the children the whole class environment was overwhelming, and Nurture Groups helped them to feel safe and happy at school.

'Well I feel quite like happy because I like get away from other people who don't listen to my ideas and I can say anything and share my feelings' (Focus Group 2, p14, line 19-20)

4.4.5. Small Group size

As well as the parents holding the small group size in high esteem, the children also felt the benefit of this. They were able to elaborate upon the reasons for this, and explained that they felt less shy, and were able to answer questions more easily.

'I like coming to the Nurture Group because it's a smaller group and the people are my friends and I like learning new skills, but sometimes in class I get shy when I speak' (Focus Group 2, p12, line 23-24)

It would seem that the children, as suspected by the parents, enjoyed the extra attention that they received in the Nurture Group, commenting that it's easier to

get attention and that they get listened to more. This could provide an explanation for the decrease in attention-seeking behaviour noticed by the parents, as the children are no longer having to compete with others for attention.

'Yeah, well I think coming to Nurture Group changes being in class because I get listened to more because there's less children.' (Focus Group 2, p13, line 13-14)

'...it really helps me being in a small group because I can easier answer questions, but when I'm in a whole class, I mean a big class, it's hard for me to get the teachers attention because there's thirty of us.' (Focus Group 2, p12, line 18-20)

However, not all of the children saw the exclusivity of the Nurture Group as a positive attribute, with several children explaining that whilst they enjoy Nurture, they miss the other children in the class while they are there.

'I like looking for frogs, but I miss my friends.' (Focus Group 3, p23, line 12)

4.4.6. Maturity

The children seemed to show signs that they had changed in the way that they perceived themselves as a result of accessing the Nurture Group. They seemed to now view themselves as more outgoing, brave and mature. The children described themselves before as being nervous and easily upset, but felt that they had now become more grown up and mature.

'I was quite nervous and well not really used to things like this, like having to learn in a small group, and also erm, and also, well I got told I was a bit mature now, but I felt like I can be grown up now, and can be ready for things.' (Focus Group 2, p14, line 26-28)

'Why don't you cry anymore?'

'Erm, because I'm a big girl' (Focus Group 3, p24, line 6-7)

'I know it might sound a bit weird, but it's made me grow up a little bit more, so I'm not more grown up but I feel like I'm a few weeks older than I am' (Focus Group 2, p17, line 7-8)

This may be linked to the increase in independence and confidence, and decrease in anxiety observed by the parents. It is interesting that they may perceive this independence as maturity, and also that they can recognise this in themselves. However, in describing herself as a 'big girl', the child may merely be repeating an observation that has been made of her by an adult, in which case, this idea of maturity may be an echo of the adult's perception, rather than that of the child themselves. Despite this, the majority of the children clearly saw this as a source of great pride, and it was a change that they felt was important.

4.4.7. Communication

The children reported that they now talk more about school to their parents than they had done prior to the intervention.

'I think I talk more about school now' (Focus Group 1, p8, line 10)

Interestingly, they were able to highlight possible reasons for this. Many of the parents seemed to suggest the change may be due to the children enjoying school more. Whilst this is a likely factor, one of the children also explained that he now talks to his parents to tell them that he has been well-behaved.

'I talk to my parents and tell them that I've been good at school'

(Focus Group 1, p7, line 17)

This suggests that the impact of the Nurture Group on the child's behaviour, may then be having an effect on the child's self-image. They may now see themselves as being well behaved and are proud to inform their parents of their success. Another child highlighted that she feels able to talk about the Nurture Group when she goes home, and because it is new and different, she feels that her parents would be interested.

'I really like the feeling when I go home because when I say something like new every time, like, or like when I said I have toast and stuff, I feel like because like, I feel like my parents haven't done that when they were little like these kind of stuff, so they could be interested in it.' (Focus Group 2, p15, line 27-

29)

As well as changes in the way that the children felt they communicated at home, they also felt that they could communicate more freely with their peers within the group, and relished the opportunity to openly discuss their feelings.

'...we always seem to have a special communication with each other because I know that I can trust and talk to them and share how I feel' (Focus Group 2, p13, line 36-37)

4.4.8. Confidence

Confidence was one of the assets that the children felt they had developed through taking part in the Nurture Group. For some of them, this meant being able to speak in front of the class, or in front of an audience. This was something that they now felt that they could do.

'I think confidence means that you can stand up in front of the whole school and you could be in your class assembly, and tomorrow is our class assembly.'

'Do you think you've become more confident?'

(Nods) (Focus Group 1, p9, line 10-15)

'Well, biggest difference in me is that I feel a lot more confident now to speak with a big group.' (Focus Group 2, p17, line 11)

The children elaborated and reported some reasons for their increase in confidence. They explained that they felt free to express themselves in the Nurture Group and that others listened to them, giving them the confidence to speak more in class.

'Well I think I've changed because I don't feel so nervous when I'm in class because when I'm in the Nurture Group, I can say what I want and get listened to a bit more.' (Focus Group 2, p14, line 31-32)

There was also a sense that some of the children felt a bit lost and unnoticed when in the larger class with all of the other children. It seemed that for them it was sometimes difficult to earn praise and compete with so many other children

in the class. However, the small group setting allowed them to feel that they were progressing and achieving, and they were able to be given praise in a way that they may not in the whole class setting, thus boosting their confidence and self-esteem.

*'I like when we learn and write because sometimes I can be,
sometimes like I'm the star of the group sometimes' (Focus
Group 2, p14, line 1-2)*

4.5. Summary of Pupil Focus Groups

Despite the young ages of the pupil participants, they were all able to consider their experiences of the Nurture Group and reflect upon ways in which they had changed both at home and in school. From the three focus groups, there were many consistent themes that contributed to the emerging theory. The children spoke very positively about their experiences of Nurture, feeling that being in a small group had enabled them to be listened to, praised, and establish strong bonds with their peers. Some of the children described their relationships within the Nurture Group as being 'like a family' as they felt that they had a 'special communication' together, where they could share their feelings. This meant that the children felt more confident, mature, and 'ready for things'. The children's overwhelming impression of the intervention was that it was 'fun', and this seemed to enhance their view of school overall, prompting them to discuss school more at home. It also gave the children interesting and different experiences that they felt would engage their parents and spark their interest. The children also felt that they learnt social skills such as respecting others, and listening, which had meant that they were behaving better at home, and getting in trouble less with their parents.

With the next chapter, a comparison of the views of the parents and children will be presented, prior to an exploration of the implications of these findings for parents, Nurture Group practitioners, and Educational Psychologists.

Chapter 5- Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter will initially describe the development of a theory derived from the parents' data, followed by a theory derived from the children's data. These will be fully explained and linked to current psychological literature and theory.

Following this, the methodology of the research will be critiqued, and the implications for future research in the area discussed. The section will conclude with a thorough consideration of the implications of this research for Nurture Group staff, parents, children and Educational Psychologists, and finally a reflection of the research process itself.

5.2. Development of Theory

The analysis of the data presented in Chapter 4 allowed for key concepts to emerge and links between them to be established, creating two theories (one for the parents and one for the children). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), developing a theory 'entails not only conceiving or intuiting ideas (concepts) but also formulating them into a logical, systematic, and explanatory scheme' (p.21). Throughout the data collection and analysis process, memos were kept to assist in developing and exploring the emerging theory. As suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998), extraneous data that did not appear in more than one interview was 'trimmed' away from the final theory. In order to validate the theory, the researcher returned to the raw data to support the relationships between concepts that had emerged to ensure that they were not a product of expectancy or bias. A theory is described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as 'a set of well-developed concepts related through statements of

relationship which together constitute an integrated framework that can be used to explain or predict phenomena' (p.15). The concepts were described in Chapter 4, and the relationships between those is demonstrated in Figures 7 and 8. (Also see Appendix 20 and 21 for more complex representations of the relationships between concepts, which contributed to the development of these more refined theories).

5.2.1. Parents Perceptions of Nurture Group

The first model (Figure 7), derived from the parent interviews, sought to answer two of the initial research questions. The theory will be described with reference to these questions.

1. How do Nurture Groups impact on the parent-child relationships?

Some parents were able to clearly identify how their relationships with their children had changed whilst the children were in the Nurture Group. Several commented that they now shout at their children less. Some felt that this was because the children had developed more understanding of their parents' demands; others reported that as their behaviour at school improved, it meant they could be more positive with their children in the home context, as identified in research conducted by Cooper & Whitebread (2007); whilst one other said that it was something that she herself had identified as something she needed to control. This suggests that perhaps the Nurture Group may have impacted upon the parenting style, similar to the findings of Bishop and Swain (2000b) who found that parents learnt parenting skills from the Nurture Group staff (the transplant model).

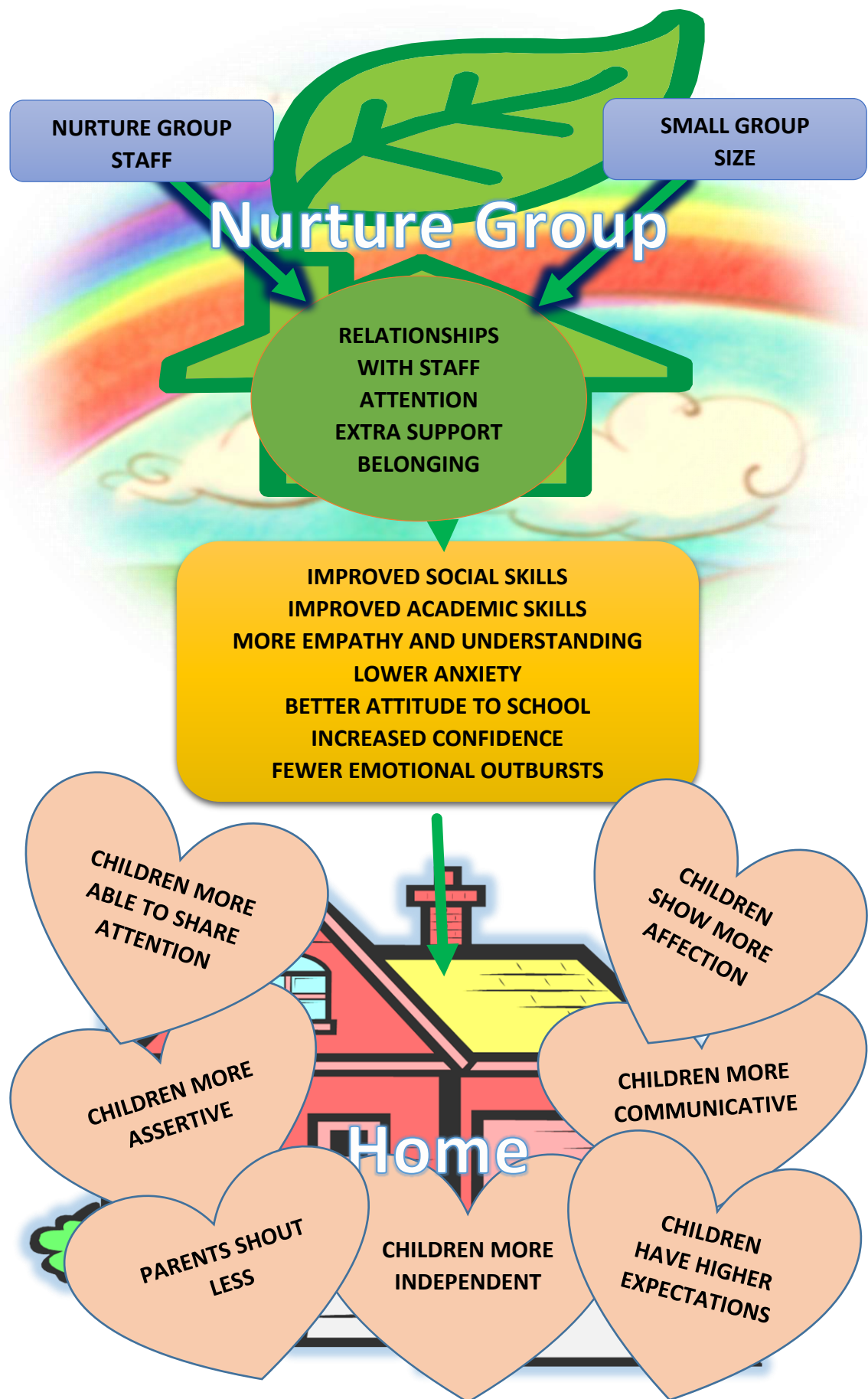


Figure 7- Theory derived from parental interviews

Another parent commented that his relationship with his child had changed because the child had become more tactile and affectionate. This may then have impacted on interactions, by making parents feel less rejected, and therefore more positive towards the child, as suggested in research by Taylor and Gulliford (2011).

When asked directly about how their relationships had changed, most parents denied changes, and seemed defensive, perhaps due to the sensitivity of the topic. It could be that they interpreted the question as challenging their feelings towards their child, rather than identifying differences in their interactions. It also may have been the way that the question was phrased, as an improvement in the parent-child relationship has been found in other research (e.g. Binnie & Allen, 2008; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007; and Taylor & Gulliford, 2011).

If a change in relationship is interpreted as any changes in parent-child interactions, many of the changes identified by parents have a clear impact on this. Some parents described being able to leave their child to go out in the evening now without them crying and clinging to them, whilst others reported their children as openly telling them that they love them in a way that they had not done previously. Parents described their children as being more communicative; expressing a desire for quality time with their parents more frequently. Despite this desire, the parents observed that the children were more able to share their attention following the intervention. The children were also described as being more understanding, and as having fewer emotional outbursts, arguably making parent-child interactions easier. The theme of a reduction in emotional outbursts is one that has been replicated by several

pieces of literature discussed in Chapter 2, including that of March and Healy (2007).

2. How do parents explain any changes in the relationship with their child?

It was clear from the data that parents saw two main attributes of Nurture Groups as being responsible for the changes that they saw in their children. These were, the small group size, and the relationships that the children had with the Nurture Group staff. The parents felt that these factors allowed the children to be given more attention, which often benefitted them academically. It was also expressed that the exclusivity of the Nurture Groups made the children feel special, boosting their confidence and giving them a sense of belonging. However, the increased attention was also seen as a drawback, as it frequently meant that the children were more demanding of their parents and expected more time and attention from them; something that they were often unable to provide. There seemed to be a sense of guilt and resentment that accompanied this, as many of the parents went on to describe the other demands placed upon their time such as work, or younger siblings requiring care. This is a finding that has not been raised by previous research and therefore warrants further exploration. Another benefit identified of the small group size, was that parents felt that it provided their children with a way to learn and practice their social skills in a safe environment with a small number of other children.

There was a reluctance at times to attribute changes in the children to the Nurture Group, with parents often finding it difficult to discriminate between changes that occurred due to the child's age and stage of development, and

changes that were as a result of the Nurture Group. At times this seemed to be due to a lack of understanding about the function, aims and expected outcomes of the Nurture Groups; with parents focusing upon problem behaviour, rather than social and emotional development. This supports the findings by Kourmoulaki (2013) who found that parents seemed to know very little about Nurture Groups and what the children did during their time there. The implications of this for practitioners will be further discussed.

Despite this, all of the parents noticed differences in their children. The majority of the parents cited their children as being more confident and more independent, as also found by March and Healy (2007) and Sanders (2007). The majority of parents highlighted a reduction in anxiety, particularly towards unfamiliar adults. There was also a reduction in separation anxiety, with some of the children being able to stay the night away from their parents for the first time. Many of the children had become more communicative, speaking more freely about school and the Nurture Group to their parents. Some of the children had also become more assertive, and several of them were showing more affection towards their parents following the intervention. Some parents described their children as being more understanding following the intervention, resulting in fewer emotional outbursts, and a reduction in the parents shouting at the children. This provides further evidence for the transactional model described by Taylor and Gulliford (2011), which suggested that positive interactions initiated by the children may be the catalyst for further positive interactions from the parents.

In summary, parents explained the changes in their relationships with their children as being due to;

- Pupils getting into trouble at school less, allowing parents to be more positive at home.
- Parents shouting less at their children.
- Pupils being given opportunity to practice social skills and gain understanding of the views of others.
- Pupils becoming more affectionate.
- The small group size improving their confidence and lowering anxiety.
- Pupils building trusting relationships with Nurture Group staff.
- Pupils becoming more communicative.

5.2.2. Pupil perceptions of Nurture Groups

Figure 8 demonstrates the links between the key concepts that emerged from the focus groups undertaken with the Nurture Group pupils. The theory will be described with regard to the appropriate research questions.

1. How do Nurture Groups impact on the parent-child relationships?

Most of the children admitted that they were better behaved at home following the intervention, meaning that they got into trouble less with their parents.

They felt that this was mainly due to being taught to listen in the Nurture Group, and also because they were now more helpful at home. The children also felt that they were more communicative, and that they were more likely to talk to their parents about school. One child elaborated upon this, explaining that being in the Nurture Group gave her something to talk about that her parents might show an interest in.

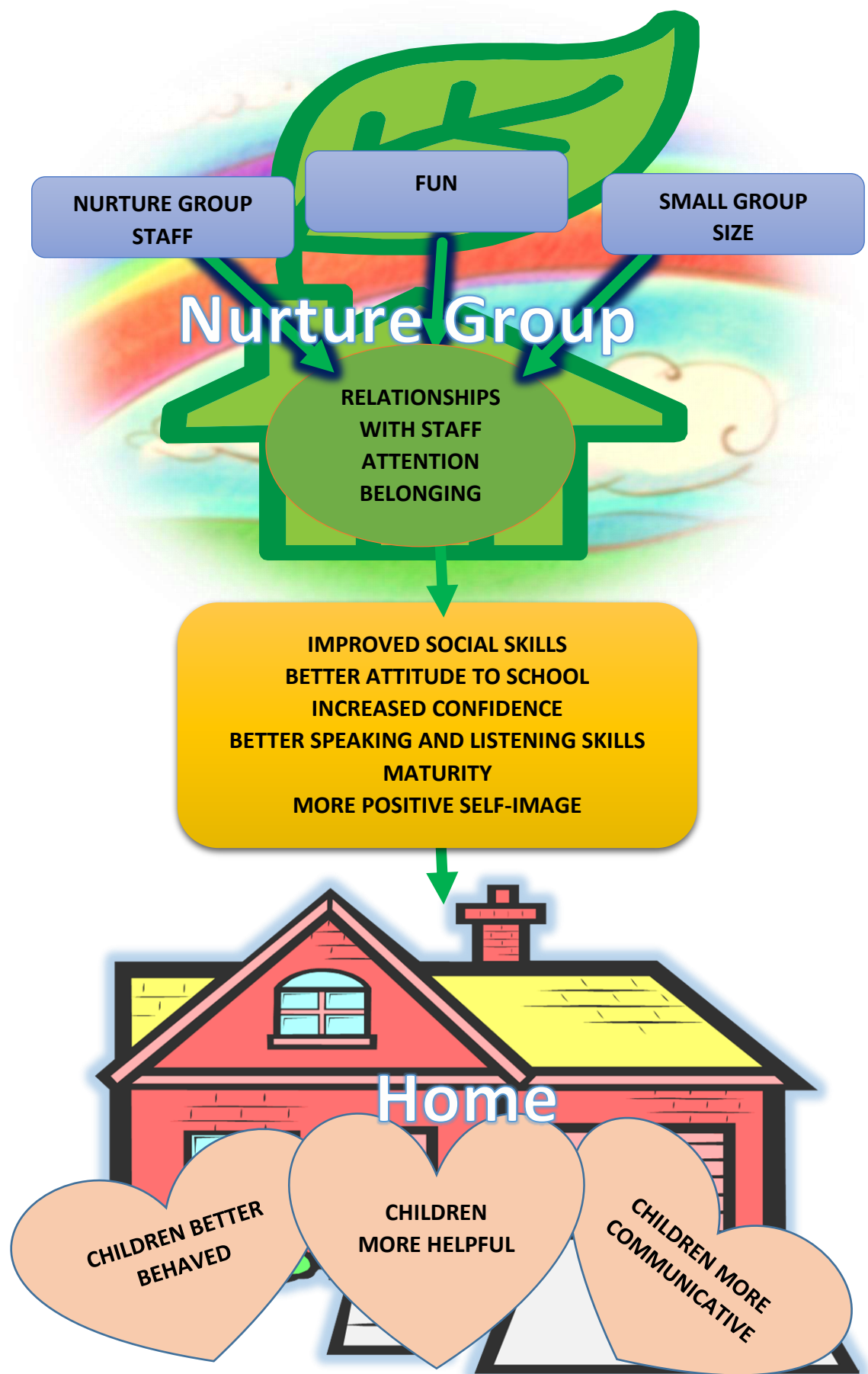


Figure 8- Theory derived from Focus Groups

This supports the transactional model described by Taylor and Gulliford (2011), but adds a twist, suggesting that as the pupils become more communicative, the parents reciprocate because it is of interest to them, rather than being because they feel less rejected, as originally suggested by Taylor and Gulliford (2011). Some of the other children commented that they were more communicative because they now had positive feedback to share with their parents, suggesting an improvement in self-image following the intervention.

3. How do children explain any changes in the relationship with their parents?

As can be seen in Figure 8, the children felt that there were three key factors which had contributed to the effectiveness of the Nurture Group. One was that it was fun which made them enjoy school more and increased their overall feelings of happiness when at school; the second was the relationship that they had with each other and the staff (as found by Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001; Sanders, 2007; and Kourmoulaki, 2013); and the final one was the fact that it was a small group. This seemed important to them as it allowed them to gain the confidence to speak and the ability to listen to others. They particularly liked that they were given attention in the small group and were listened to. This allowed them to learn valuable speaking and listening skills which they felt impacted upon their relationships with their parents, as they were able to listen more carefully to avoid getting into trouble, and were more confident in speaking about school, particularly as they had enjoyed it so much. The small group size is not a factor that has been specifically raised in past research, however factors such as it being a 'safe', 'calm' environment have (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001; Kourmoulaki, 2013). This highlights the possibility that

these are the attributes of the small group which allow the children to develop their speaking and listening skills, and to feel more confident. Many of the children also felt that they were more helpful at home following the intervention, having learnt about respecting others.

5.2.3. Drawing the theories together

Overall there are some striking similarities between the two theories (pupil perception vs. parent perception). Both the parents and children highlighted the small group size and Nurture Group staff as being of key importance in the progress that was made. They both mentioned the impact of the relationships built with the staff, and also that the increased attention was a benefit. Parents were aware of this aspect of the Nurture Group intervention and felt it was very beneficial to their children in terms of their social, emotional and academic development. For the children, there was much less emphasis upon academic skills, and more upon the confidence and sense of belonging developed through being in a small group. It is interesting that the 'fun' aspect that was so important to the children, did not emerge from the parent data. One parent actually expressed concern at the fact that they just 'played' in the Nurture Group. This aspect is clearly of less value to the parent group, and perhaps indicates a lack of understanding of the role of a Nurture Group in providing early learning opportunities through meeting the child at their developmental level.

In terms of the skills identified in the children following the intervention, there were three that both the children and their parents highlighted; improved confidence, better attitude to school, and improved social skills; all factors which also emerged in the previous research in this area. The parents also

identified that the children were less anxious and that they were more understanding. Whilst the children did not use this term, they explained that they were now more helpful at home and listened better, which may be interpreted by their parents as them being more understanding. The pupils also considered themselves to be more mature, which is consistent with the aim of Nurture to provide missed opportunities to support emotional, social and academic well-being. This was mentioned by several of the focus groups, but not once by the parents. With some of the parents preferring to attribute progress to biological development, rather than the Nurture Group, perhaps this maturity underpins all of the progress made, and may be more to do with experience of the Nurture Group rather than biological development, as believed by the parents.

Overall, the parents were able to identify a broader range of ways in which the parent-child interactions had changed following the intervention. The children only identified three, but two of those overlapped with changes that the parents had noticed. Both parents and their children identified that the children were more communicative and willing to talk about school following the intervention. The children also felt they were better behaved, and whilst the parents did not identify this directly, they recognised that they now shouted less.

Another key difference is that the children saw very few drawbacks of the Nurture Groups and unanimously admitted that it had impacted on the way in which they interact with their parents. However, several parents identified the drawback that the children now had higher expectations of their parents. It would be interesting to look into this more deeply with the children to find out if this is a perception that they share, and to explore the reason behind the increase in the demands made of their parents.

5.3. Links to existing theories

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), after data collection, literature should be used to support findings, and the findings can also be used to question the validity of existing literature. There are several existing theories that link with the findings of the current research, and their relevance will be discussed.

5.3.1. Attachment Theory

Attachment Theory is the idea that good social, emotional and cognitive development, comes as a result of attentive nurturing care during the early years (Bowlby 1969). According to Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), children are born with an innate tendency to attach to the person who is most sensitive to their needs; usually the mother (Schaffer & Emerson, 1964). This attachment usually happens at between seven and ten months of age, and forms a template for our future attachments. Bowlby argued that there is a 'critical period' of three years, within which we need to be provided with consistent, nurturing care from our primary caregiver in order to develop good social, emotional and cognitive skills. If for any reason, the care that we are given is not consistent, nurturing, and predictable, children may develop less adaptive attachment styles (Ainsworth, 1978), resulting in children who may be overly passive, or aggressive (Bennathan & Boxall, 2000).

The rationale behind Nurture Groups is based upon Attachment Theory (Bennathan & Boxall, 2000). The aim is to provide the child with the opportunities for nurture that may have been missed during their early years. According to Bennathan and Boxall (2000), the Nurture Group staff should interact with the child in a similar way to that of a mother and child, keeping

them close emotionally and 'allowing them to be and helping them to do' (p.21). This gives the child the opportunity to develop a consistent, predictable relationship with an adult, in order to provide a secure base from which to discover the world, allowing them the opportunity to develop socially and cognitively. Ainsworth (1991) provides a definition of an attachment relationship as a relationship within which there is adequate safety and comfort, so that the individual can move confidently away from the safe base to explore their environment. She suggests that this need not be the parent, but the role could instead be provided by 'parent surrogates', similar to the role played by Nurture Group staff, as described by Bennathan and Boxall (2000).

Both theories developed in the current research have clear links to Attachment Theory. Both parents and the pupils acknowledged the importance of the close relationship built with Nurture Group staff. According to Attachment Theory, this nurturing, predictable relationship provides a safe base to explore surroundings, supporting children's social and cognitive development. This may explain why the children felt more 'mature', as they had been provided with the missed nurturing opportunities that they needed in order to develop those skills. The parents commented that the children had lower anxiety, particularly in relation to unfamiliar adults, and also lower separation anxiety. Both of these concepts (stranger anxiety and separation anxiety) are characteristic of an insecurely attached child (Ainsworth, 1978), suggesting that the Nurture Group may have helped the children to become more securely attached to their primary caregiver or caregivers. This may be the process by which the children became more independent and more affectionate towards their parents.

5.3.2. Transactional Model

A transactional model may provide a way in which to explain some of the changes in interactions between the children and their parents. Transactional processes are part of the eco-systemic approach suggested by Christenson (2004), and were used to explain the improved parent-child interactions in the research by Taylor and Gulliford (2011). A transactional model is the idea that a change in the behaviour of the child can act as a catalyst for further positive interactions between the child and adult. Taylor and Gulliford (2011) used the model to explain how an increase in communication can lead to a parent feeling less rejected, meaning that they then react more positively towards the child.

In the current research, this model would provide a useful way to explain the changes in the interactions between the parent and child. For instance, the children became more communicative, perhaps as one child suggested, because they had something to discuss that they felt would interest the adult. The parents then felt more positive towards the child as they were able to engage in mutually interesting conversation. This may have led to the children feeling less rejected, therefore behaving better through being given attention in a more constructive way; meaning that the adult shouted less and responded to the child more positively. Finally, this may have led to increased affection from the child due to the improvement in the relationship, and a desire for more time together.

5.3.3. Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) is a behaviourist theory that suggests that children can learn through observing and then imitating others. This could provide an alternative explanation to the Transactional Model, to explain the changes in the children following the intervention. A Nurture Group always has two members of staff so that they can model good social behaviour. The children felt that being in the group meant that they behaved better at home because they had learnt to listen better in the Nurture Group. The parents also felt that the children had learnt to be more empathetic and understanding, which had resulted in a reduction in the frequency of their emotional outbursts. A key part of the Nurture Group is the exploration of feelings through role play and discussion, with the adults often modelling emotional responses (Bennathan & Boxall, 2000). Therefore, Social Learning Theory provides a possible explanation for the improved understanding, reduction in emotional outbursts, and improved listening skills observed in the children.

5.3.4. Theories of Motivation

Several of the pieces of research discussed in the review of the literature used Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory of motivation to explain the impact of Nurture Groups on children (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Garner & Thomas, 2011). This theory suggests that in order to feel motivated, we need to have certain needs met. See Figure 9.



Figure 9- Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow (1943) argued that in order to reach the self-actualisation stage, in which we are able to use creativity and problem-solving skills to master the environment around us, we must first have our physiological and safety needs met. We must also feel a sense of belonging, which then allows us to develop self-esteem. The parents described the children as being less anxious and insecure following the Nurture Group, indicating that the group may have met their safety needs. The parents and children both remarked that the group also provided them with a sense of belonging, with the children describing it as being 'like a family'. Finally, the majority of the parents and children identified an increase in confidence, and the children also reported that they had a more positive self-image following the intervention. This suggests that the intervention may also have supported their self-esteem needs, allowing them to reach self-actualisation; being able to reach their potential socially and cognitively.

With relation to the current research, Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory of motivation also seems to provide an appropriate explanatory framework. Deci and Ryan (1985) explain that in order to feel intrinsically motivated, children must feel that they have autonomy (choice and self-agency), competence (feelings of capability and effectiveness), and relatedness (a feeling of belonging). In terms of the findings of this study, it would seem that as a result of the Nurture Group, the children became more motivated to behave better at home and to be more helpful. As well as this, both parents and the children themselves noted an improved attitude towards school. Whilst in the Nurture Group, the children were able to work at their own developmental level often doing activities of their own choosing (providing autonomy), they were also in small groups where they felt they were able to 'be the star' (Focus Group 2, p.14, line 1-2) (providing competence), and the small group and close relationships with the staff and each other, may have provided feelings of relatedness. Therefore, it may be that the changes seen in the children's behaviour and interactions are due to an increase in their intrinsic motivation, due to the Nurture Group providing feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness.

5.4. Limitations of findings and implications for further research

The main limitation of these findings is the small sample size, making it impossible to generalise to other Nurture Groups. However, as discussed, with other research supporting the current findings, it is likely that a large scale quantitative study would be useful in investigating these findings more widely. This would be especially useful to test the reliability of findings that have not

appeared in the previous literature, such as the increased expectations that children may have of their parents following the intervention.

In addition to this, there were some methodological issues that may have impacted on the validity of the findings. Firstly, it was decided that in order to allow the children to feel safe and comfortable, the Nurture Group practitioners would be invited to remain in the room during the focus group with the children. This may have impacted on the answers that the children gave, particularly as they were asked about their views of the Nurture Group staff. Therefore, their views were portrayed more positively than they may otherwise have been if the staff had not been present. However, the data from the parents did support that the children perceived the Nurture Group staff very positively, and not allowing the Nurture Group staff to be present may have made the children less comfortable and less willing to talk. For this reason, it could also have been criticised as being unethical.

A further criticism is of the sampling technique used. Parents were accessed through schools, and those who volunteered were chosen to be interviewed. It was felt that this sampling technique was necessary as the group have been difficult to access in previous research (Garner & Thomas, 2011). However, this may have meant that those parents who agreed to take part in the research were those that had experienced a good outcome from the Nurture Group intervention. Also, it is likely that the Nurture Group staff would only have asked those parents who they knew would portray the Nurture Group in a positive way. Therefore, there is a chance that the findings of the research may have a positive bias. For this reason, in future research a random sampling technique would allow for a more representative sample to be drawn,

in which the Nurture Group staff are not responsible for the selection of participants.

Focus groups were chosen as a methodology that would be suitable for primary school children, so that they would not feel uncomfortable and intimidated in speaking alone to a stranger. This methodology allowed the children to express their views openly, however, with the youngest group (aged 5-6 years) in particular, there was little interaction between the children, and they looked to the researcher constantly to facilitate. Researcher input was also necessary frequently to involve pupils who were less involved than others, and the methodology posed a particular challenge to those children who experienced language and communication difficulties. In the future, focus groups would still be an appropriate methodology to engage the pupils in a relaxed manner around the table in the Nurture room, however, more explicit instructions may need to be given to encourage them to discuss each question amongst themselves, as it is likely to be a new experience for them. Alternatively, for the younger pupils, a group interview may be more appropriate as it would provide the more adult-led format with which they are familiar, as well as scaffolding their speech and language needs.

Finally, during the data collection, it became apparent that for most of the families there were many other factors that may have been impacting upon the children's social, emotional and behavioural skills other than just the Nurture Group. For example, one child had speech and language difficulties and was receiving speech and language therapy. Therefore, it may have been this that improved his confidence and communication skills, rather than the Nurture Group. Another child had just been adopted into a stable family environment after having been in Foster Care, meaning that this also may have had a huge

impact. In other families, mothers spoke of their new partners and step-children and the difficulty that their child had had in adapting to the new situation, as well as other families in which new siblings had been born in recent months. All of these factors are examples of events that are common in children's lives and likely to impact upon their social, emotional and behavioural skills. Therefore, it is very difficult to separate the impact of the Nurture Group, from the impact of other life events during the time of the intervention. In addition to this, many of the parents were keen to point out that the children were all a year older than they were when they entered the intervention, and therefore this may have impacted upon their communication skills and independence, for example. For these reasons, a large scale piece of research is needed, in which factors such as speech and language difficulties and home situation are controlled for, and in which there is a matched control group, to separate the impact of the Nurture Group from the effects of biological maturation.

5.5. Implications for Nurture Groups

As a qualitative piece of research, with a small sample size, the aim of this study was not to make generalisations to Nurture Groups on a wider scale. However, there were some findings that if supported by larger scale research, may have implications for Nurture Group staff, parents of children in Nurture Groups, and also Educational Psychologists.

5.5.1. Implications for NG staff

One of the key implications of this research for Nurture Group staff is with regard to their communications with parents. Overall, parents knew very little

about Nurture Groups, their aims, the activities that the children do, or the expected outcomes. This meant that the Nurture Groups were sometimes perceived with suspicion and negativity as parents felt excluded. Very few of the parents knew what the Nurture Groups set out to achieve and therefore were sometimes unwilling to attribute the changes that they had noticed to the Nurture Group. Although this may not be generalizable to other Nurture Groups, it supports similar concerns raised by Kourmoulaki (2013), and highlights the importance of communication with parents. Nurture Group practitioners need to communicate sensitively, but also openly and honestly with parents, so that they are fully informed about the principles of the Nurture Group intervention, the aims, and the expected outcomes. This will mean that they are aware of the expected outcomes and can look out for such behaviours as well as reinforcing them when they occur. Some of the parents suggested that they had changed the way in which they parent following the child starting the Nurture Group, and therefore Nurture Group practitioners should be aware of this so that they can pass on their skills to greatest effect through modelling good practice (as also suggested by Bishop & Swain, 2000b). Ideally, Nurture Group practitioners should involve parents throughout the intervention, through inviting them to visit and meet other parents. This is of particular importance at the beginning of the intervention so that parents have a full understanding of why their child has been recommended to participate in the Nurture Group. This also means that if the parent agrees that it may be of benefit, they will be invested and involved with the programme from the start, and are less likely to harbour resentment and suspicion.

5.5.2. Implications for Parents

One of the main implications for parents of this research is that there may well be an impact of Nurture Groups on the parent-child relationship. If parents are fully informed, they will be able to recognise these changes and encourage them. Also parents need to be aware that the changes will not just be behavioural, but also social and emotional, and to monitor changes carefully, informing Nurture Group staff of any changes observed. Parents should also be encouraged to spend quality time with their child each day, and perhaps be for-warned that the children may start to demand this more after experiencing it in the Nurture Group. Parents also need to pay special attention to children when they communicate, modelling good listening, to reward children for communicating and raising their self-esteem by making them feel interesting and listened to.

5.5.3. Implications for Children

Given the acknowledged importance of listening to the child's voice, it is essential that implications of this research for children are considered. This study is part of a small minority in the field to have considered the views of the child, and demonstrates that children are able to reflect effectively upon their experiences and even identify changes in themselves. Therefore it is hoped that further research exploring the effectiveness of Nurture Groups will empower young people by involving them, and will therefore be more valid for having taken their views into account. It is hoped that as a result of this research, Nurture Group practitioners and parents will better understand the ways in which the intervention can impact upon the dynamics in the home, and can therefore reward children by acknowledging small improvements in

confidence and independence, for example. It is also hoped that given this understanding, parents will be able to be more sensitive to their child's needs (e.g. needing more attention), and therefore the parent-child relationship will develop further, resulting in children feeling more secure and nurtured at home, as well as in school.

5.5.4. Implications for Educational Psychologists (EPs)

EPs have a role in educating Nurture practitioners in the importance of involving parents and communicating with them openly. Where parents are being excluded, or there is dishonest practice (e.g. calling Nurture Groups, 'social skills groups' and not discussing the true aims), the EP should act as a critical friend, promoting ethical practice, to ensure that parents are treated fairly. EPs could achieve this through supporting Nurture Group practitioners in developing information leaflets about Nurture Groups for parents so that they are fully informed in a diplomatic and sensitive way. EPs also have a key role in informing Nurture Group practitioners of the evidence base and the types of changes they are likely to see in the children, so that they can support the parents in doing the same.

In addition to supporting staff, there is an important role for the EP in working directly with the parents of children in Nurture Groups. For example, this research indicates that parents would like to know more about Nurture, and therefore it could be that parents are invited to attend a Nurture session, followed by a consultation with the EP. During this consultation, the EP could discuss with the parent what they noticed about their child in the Nurture Group, how this compares to the child in the home context, and how the parent could incorporate the Nurture Group principles at home. Given the importance

of the nurturing relationship between the parent and child, it would be likely to be most effective if this was followed by a review meeting with the EP at the end of the intervention, together with the Nurture leader and class teacher, to discuss their progress, and how the child could be most successfully supported at home and in school, during their transition out of the Nurture Group.

In some cases, it may be that the parents of children in Nurture groups are also vulnerable, and would benefit from a nurturing intervention themselves. The Estyn report (2013) exploring the impact of poverty on children in Wales, highlighted a case study in which a school had set up a 'family nurture room', where the family also attended the Nurture Group several times per week. Running the intervention in this way would inform and involve parents, whilst educating them in the principles of Nurture, and supporting the parent-child relationship.

Finally, one of the most important implications is that Nurture Groups may well have a large impact on not just the child, but also their family, and therefore EPs should praise, reassure and support NG practitioners in the important job that they do.

5.5.5. Dissemination of findings to stakeholders

In order to feedback the findings to the schools involved in the research, an Executive Summary was written and posted to the head teachers (see Appendix 23). The findings were also disseminated to Nurture Group practitioners through presentations (Appendix 22) at both the County Nurture Network Day (July 2013), and also the training day for new schools setting up Nurture Groups (January 2014).

After having submitted this thesis, the researcher aims to write up the research as a study for publication, as well as writing a book for parents of children in Nurture Groups. The purpose would be to inform parents fully of the aims of Nurture Groups, and the theory behind them. It is envisaged that it would be a publication containing practical resources that parents could use with their children to facilitate them spending quality time together, as well as reinforcing the skills that are developing through the Nurture Group intervention.

Finally, in order to communicate the findings to other EPs, the research will be presented at the Annual Research Conference at the University of East London in July 2014.

5.6. Reflection

As stated in Chapter 3, when undertaking any piece of qualitative research, it is essential to be reflexive, acknowledging the impact that one's own biases and expectations may have on the research. A reflective diary was maintained throughout the research process, and reflections were written following each of the interviews and focus groups to help me to process my ideas and reflect upon the impact that I may have had. This section will begin with an exploration of the impact that I may have had on the research, and conclude with a reflection of the ways in which I have been impacted by the research. In contrast to the previous sections of the thesis, it felt appropriate to write this section in the first person.

5.6.1. How did I impact upon the research?

As a Critical Realist, I acknowledge that whilst it is important to attempt to be impartial and unbiased, an element of bias is almost unavoidable. Therefore it

is crucial to reflect on these biases throughout the research process in order to increase the validity of the analysis and interpretations made of the data.

Being a young woman working in education, with a trainee title, may have impacted upon the research in several ways. For example, the parents that were interviewed may have assumed that I am not a parent myself. This may have meant they felt distanced from me and that, in their view, I may not have understood fully the challenges of parenthood. I feel that it must have been something about me, or the way that I asked the questions that made the parents so defensive in talking about the changes in their relationship with their children. Despite obvious changes that were disclosed in all of the interviews, very few of the participants were prepared to admit that their relationship had changed. On reflection, using the term 'interactions' rather than 'relationship' may have been more effective in eliciting their views. Perhaps also the title of 'psychologist' made parents feel judged, and knowing that I work for the local authority, the parents may have been suspicious that I would feed back to schools, or maybe even Social Services.

As well as my characteristics and title, my existing knowledge may have impacted upon the data analysis. Having been a teacher previously, and having researched Attachment Theory, I knew the well-established link between Nurture Groups and Attachment Theory. Therefore, whilst I would like to think that having used Grounded Theory methodology, the theory emerged purely from the data collected, I must acknowledge the bias that I may have imposed. For example, in considering how the intervention impacts the parent-child relationship, one could argue that my research questions were informed by Attachment Theory from the outset. I was aware of this potential bias throughout and made sure that I was not explicitly looking for links to

Attachment in the data. However, the fact that I used the term 'separation anxiety' in my coding, a term linked to Attachment Theory, suggests that some bias may have crept into my analyses. Perhaps an 'in vivo' code would have been more appropriate here to ensure that the theory could emerge in a more organic way.

5.6.2. What impact has the research had upon me?

Using a Grounded Theory approach has had a large impact on me as a researcher and psychologist. It has highlighted to me the dangers of bias within qualitative research and allowed me to develop techniques to avoid potential bias where possible. I found it exciting to see the theory emerge and it felt exhilarating to be creating new knowledge. It has even provided me with a framework for practicing as an EP, in which I try to disregard pre-conceived ideas, and ground my ideas in what service-users tell me, rather than searching for information to feed theories that I have developed from the outset of the casework. This systematic approach helps me to listen and gain an understanding, allowing hypotheses to emerge from the various stakeholders, and allowing me to adapt the questions that I ask throughout the process, in order to gain a valid, holistic understanding of the presenting issues.

In addition to this, the main legacy that this research will leave me with is the importance of being transparent with parents in the work that we do and the interventions that we use, so that they can support the children appropriately at home. It has also highlighted the bi-directional interaction between the parent-child relationship, and social, emotional and behavioural needs; and the important role for EPs in supporting this vital relationship.

5.7. Conclusion

Previous research exploring parental perceptions of Nurture Groups has frequently found there to be a positive impact of the Nurture Group intervention upon parent-child relationships (e.g. Binnie & Allen, 2008; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007). However, very little research had investigated the processes underpinning this change, and the views of the child had been somewhat neglected. For this reason, the aim of this research was to explore both parent and pupils' perceptions of the impact of Nurture Groups upon the parent-child relationship; exploring how the relationships changed and what they felt had driven the changes.

The current research used an adaptation of Strauss and Corbin's Grounded Theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to analyse data from ten semi-structured interviews with parents of Nurture Group children, and three focus groups of primary school children who had recently been part of a Nurture Group. This resulted in the emergence of two key theories (one demonstrating the parent perceptions of Nurture Groups, and one demonstrating the pupil views).

Overall, there was considerable overlap between the two theories, with both the parents and their children seeing the relationship with Nurture Group staff and the small group size, as being instrumental to the changes that they observed. Both the parents and children felt that this extra attention allowed the children to grow in confidence, improve their social skills, and improve their attitude to school. The parents also identified that their children were less anxious, their academic skills had improved, and they were more understanding; whilst the

children considered themselves to be more mature as a result of the intervention.

Although few parents were prepared to acknowledge a change in the parent-child relationship, all of the parents and pupils were able to identify ways in which the parent-child interactions had altered. Both parents and their children felt that they were now more communicative, with the children being more prepared to communicate about school. The children also felt that they behaved better, whilst the parents felt that they were more positive and shouted less. The parents also felt that their children were more affectionate, assertive, and independent. However, some parents expressed a negative effect of the Nurture Group, as they found that their children now expected more quality time with them, which they were sometimes unable to provide. The children also felt that as a result of the Nurture Group they were more helpful to their parents. Based upon these findings, links were drawn to Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), the Transactional Model (Christenson, 2004; Taylor & Gulliford, 2011), Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Another key theme that emerged out of the data, was that although the majority of parents were positive in their views about the intervention, very few of them understood the aims and expected outcomes of the intervention. This resulted in some suspicion, scepticism, and an unwillingness to attribute positive outcomes to the Nurture Group intervention.

This research highlights the impact of the Nurture Group intervention, on not only the child but also their families. The findings suggest that the intervention has a range of benefits upon the interactions between the parent and their

child. The theory derived from the parent interviews suggests that parents perceive Nurture Groups to result in children being more independent, more assertive, more affectionate, and more communicative. Parents also felt that they shouted at their children less as a result of the Nurture Group, and that children expressed a desire for quality time with their parents more frequently. The theory derived from the focus groups with the pupils suggests that children perceive Nurture Groups to result in them being better behaved at home, more communicative with their parents, and more helpful.

The research has implications for the way in which Nurture Groups involve parents; suggesting that parents need to be fully informed and involved throughout the intervention so that they are aware of the expected outcomes and can support this development in the home environment. Finally, it is proposed that EPs have a crucial role in supporting Nurture Group staff to inform and involve parents in a sensitive, but transparent and empowering way.

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APPENDICES



Contents

Appendix 1.	Grid of literature reviewed
Appendix 2.	Approval from the Ethics Committee
Appendix 3.	Permission Letter sent to Head teachers
Appendix 4.	Email to Head teachers
Appendix 5.	Parent Participant Information Sheet
Appendix 6.	Parental Consent form
Appendix 7.	Script for Interviews
Appendix 8.	Interview Schedules (Interviews 1-10)
Appendix 9.	Permission letter to parents
Appendix 10.	Child participant information sheet
Appendix 11.	Script for Focus Groups
Appendix 12.	Child Consent Form
Appendix 13.	Focus Group Schedules (1-3)
Appendix 14.	Example of Transcription
Appendix 15.	Example of Open Coding
Appendix 16.	Example of Axial Coding
Appendix 17.	Example of Selective Coding
Appendix 18.	Example Code Map
Appendix 19.	Example of Reflective research diary extract
Appendix 20.	Complex representation of Parent Theory
Appendix 21.	Complex representation of Pupil Theory
Appendix 22.	PowerPoint presentation of findings for NG staff
Appendix 23.	Executive summary for Head teachers

Contents of CD

Transcriptions of all interviews

Transcriptions of all focus groups

Open coding of all interviews (1-10)

Open coding of all focus groups (1-3)

Axial Coding of all interviews (1-10)

Axial Coding of all focus groups (1-3)

Selective coding of all interviews (1-10)

Selective coding of all focus groups (1-3)

Code maps of all interviews (1-10)

Code maps of all focus groups (1-3)

Reflective diary extracts after each interview and focus group



APPENDIX 1



	Study	Sample	Description	Design	Measures	Reported Findings
1.	Kourmoulaki (2013)	2 Secondary school NGs in one school following a merger of the two schools (12 current NG pupils, 4 former NG pupils and 6 parents)	Aimed to explore the purpose, characteristics and value of secondary NGs, as well as emphasising pupil voice.	Qualitative Phone interviews with parents Focus Groups with staff Focus Groups with pupils and ex pupils	-	Transitions were smoother, friendships and social skills improved. All valued NG but parents had little knowledge about them.
2.	Garner & Thomas (2011)	3 Secondary school NGs	Explored perceptions of Secondary NGs.	Qualitative Focus Groups with parents and staff Interviews with children Analysed using thematic analysis	-	Children happier and more confident Helped them to develop relationships with adults Parents felt NGs supported them in parenting
3.	Taylor & Gulliford (2011)	15 parents 11 teachers Opportunistic sample Midlands, UK	Exploration of parental perspectives on NGs.	Qualitative Semi-structured interviews, analysed using grounded theory	-	Parents felt less stressed after NG Changed approach to parenting Children happier made parents happier.
4.	Ofsted (2011)	29 Nurture Groups 379 students 95 parents/ carers	What makes NG provision successful? What is the impact on students and their families?	Face-to-face survey of parents	Parents Survey	95% parents expressed appreciation for the NGs

5.	Binnie & Allen (2008)	6 Nurture Groups, 36 children (28 male, 8 female) 30 parents	Evaluation of part-time NGs	Within group repeated measures (8 months apart) Parents questionnaires (quantitative and qualitative)	Boxall Profile, SDQ (parent and teacher) Behaviour indicators of self-esteem scale (Burnett, 1998) Parent questionnaire	97% parents felt NGs had a positive effect on their child
6.	Cooper & Whitebread (2007)	359 students in NGs and 187 matched controls in 4 comparison groups 11 Local Authorities	Explored how NGs impact on the whole school.	Longitudinal (2 years) Quantitative and Qualitative data through interviews with parents Parent questionnaires	Assessed through SDQ and Boxall Profile	96% parents said that they were satisfied or very satisfied that the NG had dramatically improved their child's attitude to school.
7.	March & Healy (2007)	58 Nurture Groups in Glasgow 74 parents	Exploring parents views to involve and empower them. Looking for change in perceptions.	Quantitative and Qualitative 2 questionnaires for parents at different points in a year.	Questionnaire	Children described more positively by their parents at 2 nd measure
8.	Sanders (2007)	3 Nurture Groups 17 children in NGs	NG pilot evaluation in Hampshire	Mixed Methods Data over 3 terms 7 children interviewed 8 teachers, 6 NG staff and 3 Head teachers interviewed.	Pre and Post assessment through Boxall Profile Questionnaire for school staff	2/3 staff identified academic gains Parents noticed increased confidence in their children

				All staff in 3 schools completed a questionnaire. Parents interviewed. Termly observations		
9.	Cooper & Tiknaz (2005)	3 Nurture groups 28 students	Perceptions of staff (nurture staff and mainstream) and children regarding NGs	Mixed Methods Data from measures and interviews with teachers and children	Progress recorded against scores on SDQ and Boxall Profile.	Children seemed to prefer the Nurture Groups, and found it difficult to return to the mainstream classes.
10.	Cooper, Arnold & Boyd (2001)	25 Schools (23 primary, 2 secondary) 342 pupils (216 in NGs, 64 matched SEBD controls, 62 matched controls without SEBD)	National longitudinal study (2 years) on the effectiveness of nurture groups	Qualitative and Quantitative 2 matched comparison groups Progress measured and compared. Interviews with children Telephone semi-structured interviews with parents	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), Boxall Profile, interviews, National curriculum levels.	NGs significantly improved on SDQ compared to controls Academic improvements Parents perspectives varied widely
11.	Bishop & Swain (2000a)	1 Nurture Group Purposive quota sampling	Case study to assess effectiveness of NG	Qualitative evaluation of 1 NG Semi-structured Interviews with Head teacher, Deputy head teacher, 2 ex-NG staff, 2 teachers, 2 NG	-	Parents saw improvements in children's behaviour after NG

				pupils, 2 parents and 2 governors		
12.	Bishop & Swain (2000b)	1 Nurture Group Purposive quote sample (same NG as previous study)	Exploration of issues around partnership with parents. Follow-up study from Bishop and Swain (2000a).	Qualitative evaluation of 1 NG Semi-structured Interviews with head teacher, Deputy head teacher, 2 ex-NG staff, 2 teachers, 2 NG pupils, 2 parents and 2 governors	-	Parents said they felt part of the team Teachers reported that parents visited the school more after the NG.
13.	Bennathan (1997)	-	Review of Nurture Groups based on existing evidence	Qualitative description and evaluation of NG provision	-	Most parents welcome NGs Parents often grow to value their children more



APPENDIX 2



ETHICAL PRACTICE CHECKLIST (Professional Doctorates)

SUPERVISOR: Tina Rae

ASSESSOR: Sharon Cahill

STUDENT: Alison Pyle

DATE (sent to assessor): 22/01/2013

Proposed research topic: Exploring parents' perceptions of Nurture Groups and the ways in which such interventions impact upon parent-child relationships

Course: Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Will free and informed consent of participants be obtained? | YES |
| 2. If there is any deception is it justified? | NA |
| 3. Will information obtained remain confidential? | YES |
| 4. Will participants be made aware of their right to withdraw at any time? | YES |
| 5. Will participants be adequately debriefed? | YES |
| 6. If this study involves observation does it respect participants' privacy? | NA |
| 7. If the proposal involves participants who's free and informed consent may be in question (e.g. for reasons of age, mental or emotional incapacity), are they treated ethically? | YES |
| 8. Is procedure that might cause distress to participants ethical? | NO |
| 9. If there are inducements to take part in the project is this ethical? | NO |
| 10. If there are any other ethical issues involved, are they a problem? | NO |

APPROVED

	YES, PENDING MINOR CONDITIONS	
--	----------------------------------	--

MINOR CONDITIONS:

Appendix 1 delete “impressed with your school”

Appendix 9 change “nice” to easy to answer

REASONS FOR NON APPROVAL:

Assessor initials: SC Date: 22nd Jan 2013

**RESEARCHER RISK ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST
(BSc/MSc/MA)**

SUPERVISOR: Tina Rae

ASSESSOR: Sharon Cahill

STUDENT: Alison Pyle

DATE (sent to assessor): 22/01/2013

Proposed research topic: Exploring parents’ perceptions of Nurture Groups and the ways in which such interventions impact upon parent-child relationships

Course: Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

Would the proposed project expose the researcher to any of the following kinds of hazard?

1 Emotional NO

2. Physical NO

3. Other NO
(e.g. health & safety issues)

If you've answered YES to any of the above please estimate the chance of the researcher being harmed as: HIGH / MED / LOW

APPROVED

YES		
-----	--	--

MINOR CONDITIONS:

REASONS FOR NON APPROVAL:

Assessor initials: **SC** Date: 22nd Jan 2013

For the attention of the assessor: Please return the completed checklists by e-mail to ethics.applications@uel.ac.uk within 1 week.

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dean: Professor Mark N. O. Davies, PhD, CPsychol, CBiol.

UEL
University of
East London
www.uel.ac.uk

School of Psychology Professional Doctorate Programmes

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to confirm that the Professional Doctorate candidate named in the attached ethics approval is conducting research as part of the requirements of the Professional Doctorate programme on which he/she is enrolled.

The Research Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, University of East London, has approved this candidate's research ethics application and he/she is therefore covered by the University's indemnity insurance policy while conducting the research. This policy should normally cover for any untoward event. The University does not offer 'no fault' cover, so in the event of an untoward occurrence leading to a claim against the institution, the claimant would be obliged to bring an action against the University and seek compensation through the courts.

As the candidate is a student of the University of East London, the University will act as the sponsor of his/her research. UEL will also fund expenses arising from the research, such as photocopying and postage.

Yours faithfully,



Dr. Mark Finn

Chair of the School of Psychology Ethics Sub-Committee

Stratford Campus, Water Lane, Stratford, London E15 4LZ
tel: +44 (0)20 8223 4966 fax: +44 (0)20 8223 4937
e-mail: mno.davies@uel.ac.uk web: www.uel.ac.uk/psychology



The University of East London has campuses at London Docklands and Stratford
If you have any special access or communication requirements for your visit, please let us know. MINICOM 020 8223 2853





APPENDIX 3



Dear (Head teacher's name),

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study in the Nurture Group at (school name). I am currently employed as a Trainee Educational Psychologist with X County Council, and am in the process of writing my Doctoral Thesis. The study is entitled 'Exploring parents' perspectives of Nurture Groups, and the ways in which such interventions impact on the parent-child relationship'. It is hoped that the research will help to develop the collaboration between Nurture staff and parents, and maximise the benefits to the children.

I am hoping to interview parents from several Nurture Groups in X, and would love to use your Nurture Group in my sample. I hope to interview between one and four parents from (school), and the information will be recorded and then transcribed anonymously. All data will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Any parents who are willing to participate will also be given consent forms to be signed and returned to me. The data will be pooled for the thesis project and individual results of this study will remain absolutely confidential and anonymous. The pooled data will be fed back to you, and provide you with further evidence of the impact that your Nurture Group is having on the children and their families. If for any reason you should later decide not to take part, you may withdraw at any point up until the data has been analysed.

I am also hoping to put together a focus group of children from one of the Nurture Groups, to ask for their views on topics raised in the parent interviews. Consent will also be sought from their parents, as well as the children themselves.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with a telephone call next week and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at that time. You may contact me at my email address c-apyle@bucksccl.gov.uk.

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

Yours Sincerely,

Ali Pyle

Trainee Educational Psychologist

CONSENT FORM

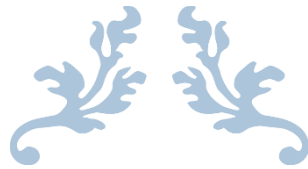
	YES	NO
I have read the attached information and understand what the research will entail		
I understand that I can contact the researcher at any time throughout the research through X Educational Psychology Service		
I understand that consent will be sought from all participants and data will be kept according to the Data Protection Act 1998		
I understand that the school can withdraw without explanation at any point up until the data has been analysed.		

I am signing to give consent for the above research to be conducted at (school name)

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed name _____

Position held _____



APPENDIX 4



Dear _____,

I am currently undertaking a piece of doctoral research, in collaboration with the X Educational Psychology Service, into the effectiveness of Nurture Groups, and your link EP, _____, suggested that you might be interested in taking part?

Ofsted highlighted in their review of Nurture Groups in 2010, that Nurture Groups were most effective when there were high levels of parental engagement, but there has been very little research up until now focusing on the parents of children in Nurture Groups. We know from the evaluation data that you kindly collect each term that your Nurture Group has a positive impact on the children within school, but the aim of my research is to explore whether Nurture Groups also have a positive impact on the child at home as well. It is hoped that this will help Nurture Group practitioners nationally in targeting behaviours that are identified as making a difference to the families, and also that taking part in this research will help to engage parents by highlighting the positive contribution that the Nurture Group is making to their child.

The research will involve conducting individual interviews with any parents that would be willing to be involved. There would be no burden on the Nurture Group staff other than distributing information letters to appropriate parents.

I would be very grateful if you could let me know if you would be willing to take part. As well as engaging parents with the work that you are doing, hopefully the extra evaluation data will be useful to you in demonstrating the positive impact that your Nurture Group is making. I have attached a letter which gives additional information, but if you wish to discuss the research in any more detail, please let me know when would be a good time to contact you and I will answer any further questions that you have.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Best Wishes,

Ali Pyle



APPENDIX 5



INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Dear Participant,

You are invited to take part in a research study to explore the impact of Nurture Groups on children at home, and on the parent-child relationship. This research is part of a Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology, at The University of East London.

What will I be asked to do?

The purpose of this research is to explore your experiences as a parent of a child in a Nurture Group. I would like to ask questions about any impact that you have noticed on your child, and more specifically whether the Nurture Group has had any effect on your relationship with your child. I am also seeking to speak to some of the children in a small group about their experience of the Nurture Group and how they feel it has affected them in the home setting. If you would rather I did not speak with your child about this, please indicate this on the consent form.

How will my taking part help other people?

The information gained from this research will be used to make recommendations for best practice, and allow the parent and child voice to be heard. The results of the study may also lead onto further studies into the area.

What happens if I change my mind and don't wish to take part?

You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue. If you are upset in any way by the interview and feel you would like some additional support, I will leave you my contact details and be able to advise you on who you may wish to contact.

What will happen to the information afterwards?

The interview will be recorded on audio tape and then transcribed verbatim on to a computer. The audio tapes will be stored in a locked secure place at all times and the computer data will be password protected. The audio tapes will be destroyed at the end of the study. Your views will be confidential and you will not be identifiable in the research. You can request a copy of the interview transcript if you wish. The interviews will be transcribed by me alone to protect your anonymity.

How do I get started!

If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep, and will be asked to sign a consent form. You can change your mind and withdraw from the study without giving a reason, at any point up until the data is analysed.

Yours Sincerely,

Ali Pyle (Trainee Educational Psychologist)



APPENDIX 6



Parent Consent Form

To be completed by participants independently, however statements may be read to them if appropriate.

	YES	NO
I have listened to the explanation of the project, and read the participant information sheet informing, and I understand what will be asked of me if I take part.		
I know that I can contact the researcher at any time through X Educational Psychology Service to request any further information about the research.		
I understand that it is my choice whether I take part, and if I wish to withdraw at any point that I can without giving any explanation, up until the data is analysed.		
I understand that X Educational Psychology Service will receive a copy of the project report, but all of the data will be anonymous and I will not be identifiable.		

I agree to take part in the research described on the participant information sheet.

Signed _____

Date _____

Print Name _____

- ☐ Please tick here if you would consider allowing your child to be part of a small discussion group based on the findings of the research with parents



APPENDIX 7



Introductory Script for Interviews with Parents

Thank you very much for agreeing to meet with me. My name is Ali Pyle, and I'm a Trainee Educational Psychologist currently working for X County Council. As part of my training, I am doing some research and my area of interest is Nurture Groups.

I am currently working on a study to investigate the impact that Nurture Groups have beyond the classroom, and whether they have any impact on the child at home. There has been some research in which parents have reported an improvement in their relationship with their child following the Nurture Group, and so I am really interested to explore this to see if we can uncover the reasons behind any changes you might have noticed.

I would like to hear about your experiences so that any findings can be used to help maximise any positive effects that Nurture Groups might be having beyond the school setting, and to support Nurture Group staff in working most effectively with parents. Once the interviews have been analysed for common themes, some of the children will be asked in a small group for their views on the topic.

In order to record your views accurately, I am proposing to use a tape recorder, and later transcribe the interview so that key themes can be identified. All of this information will remain entirely confidential and stored securely. Only first names will be used so that you cannot be identified, and at the end of the project the documents will be shredded.

If at any time you feel that there is anything that you do not wish to answer, or that you'd like to withdraw completely, you can do this at any time up until when the data has been analysed.

Thank you very much in advance for agreeing to take part. I will read through the questions so that you know what they are, and give you a consent form to sign to say that you are happy to take part, having been fully informed. You will also be asked whether you would be happy for your child to be involved in the subsequent focus group.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?



APPENDIX 8



Interview 1 Schedule

- Tell me about your feelings about x joining the group when you were first told about it?
- How do you feel about the group now?
- How involved have you been in the group?
- Have you noticed any differences in x since they started in the group?
- If so, what have been the biggest differences for you?
- How has the Nurture Group impacted on you and your parenting?
- What motivated this change?
- Have you noticed any differences in how x communicates with you since the start of the group?
- How would you describe the relationship between yourself and x?
- Would you say that this has changed at all since the start of the group?
- Do you have any ideas what it is about the group that has driven the changes (if any) that you have seen at home?
- Is there anything that you would change about the group and the way in which they work with parents

Interview 2 schedule

- What were your feelings about x joining the group when you were first told about it?
- Have your feelings changed at all?
- Tell me about x before they joined the group.
- Have you noticed any differences in x since starting the group?
- How involved have you been in the group?
- Has the NG impacted on your parenting?
- Have you noticed any differences in the way that x communicates since starting the group?
- Does x talk much about school? Has this changed?
- How does X cope with unfamiliar situations?
- How does X interact with unfamiliar adults? Has this changed?
- How would you describe the relationship between X and everyone at home? Any changes?
- Do you have any idea what about the group drove the changes?
- Is there anything about the group that you would change?

Interview 3 schedule

- What were your feelings about x joining the group when you were first told about it?
- Have your feelings changed at all?
- Tell me about x before they joined the group.
- Have you noticed any differences in x since starting the group?
- How involved have you been in the group?
- Has the NG impacted on your parenting?
- Have you noticed any differences in the way that x communicates since starting the group?
- Does x talk much about school? Has this changed?
- How does X cope with unfamiliar situations?
- How does X interact with unfamiliar adults? Has this changed?
- How would you describe the relationship between X and everyone at home? Any changes?
- How does X respond to being given attention from you in public? E.g- assemblies etc.
- Is X happy to share your attention?
- Does X become distressed when separated from you?
- Would you describe X as independent?
- Have you seen any changes in X's confidence?
- Would you describe X as being easily upset?
- Does X shy away from attention?
- Have you noticed any differences in X's expectations of you since the start of the NG?
- Do you have any idea what about the group drove the changes?
- Is there anything about the group that you would change?

Interview 4 schedule

- What were your feelings about x joining the group when you were first told about it?
- Have your feelings changed at all?
- Tell me about x before they joined the group.
- Have you noticed any differences in x since starting the group?
- Has the NG impacted on your parenting?
- Have you noticed any differences in the way that x communicates since starting the group?
- Does x talk much about school? Has this changed?
- How does X cope with unfamiliar situations?
- How does X interact with unfamiliar adults? Has this changed?
- How would you describe the relationship between X and everyone at home? Any changes?
- How does X respond to being given attention from you in public? E.g. - assemblies etc.
- Is X happy to share your attention?
- Does X become distressed when separated from you?
- Would you describe X as independent?
- Have you seen any changes in X's confidence?
- Would you describe X as being easily upset?
- Has there been any change in the frequency of emotional/ angry outbursts since the start of the NG?
- Do you feel that there has been any change in the way that X understands your needs when asked to do something, for example?
- Does X shy away from attention?
- Have you noticed any differences in X's expectations of you since the start of the NG?
- Has there been any change in X's want for one-to-one time with you?
- Do you have any idea what about the group drove the changes?
- Is there anything about the group that you would change?

Interview 5 schedule

- What were your feelings about x joining the group when you were first told about it?
- Tell me about x before they joined the group.
- Have you noticed any differences in x since starting the group?
- Has the NG impacted on your parenting?
- Have you noticed any differences in the way that x communicates since starting the group?
- Does x talk much about school? Has this changed?
- Do they ever speak about the NG staff?
- How does X cope with unfamiliar situations?
- How does X interact with unfamiliar adults? Has this changed?
- How would you describe the relationship between X and everyone at home? Any changes?
- How does X respond to being given attention from you in public? E.g. - assemblies etc.
- Is X happy to share your attention?
- Does X become distressed when separated from you?
- Would you describe X as independent?
- Have you seen any changes in X's confidence?
- Would you describe X as being easily upset?
- How would you describe X's friendships?
- Does X ever seem anxious?
- Has there been any changes in X's assertiveness?
- Has there been any change in the frequency of emotional/ angry outbursts since the start of the NG?
- Does X shy away from attention?
- Have you noticed any differences in X's expectations of you since the start of the NG?
- Has there been any change in X's want for one-to-one time with you?
- Do you have any idea what about the group drove the changes?
- Is there anything about the group that you would change?

Interview 6 schedule

- Tell me about x before they joined the group.
- Have you noticed any differences in x since starting the group?
- Has the NG impacted on your parenting?
- Have you noticed any differences in the way that x communicates since starting the group?
- Have you noticed any difference in your child's ability to take turns in conversation, or any other difference in their social skills?
- Does x talk much about school? Has this changed?
- Do they ever speak about the NG staff?
- How does X cope with unfamiliar situations?
- How does X interact with unfamiliar adults? Has this changed?
- How would you describe the relationship between X and everyone at home? Any changes?
- How does X respond to being given attention from you in public? E.g. - assemblies etc.
- Is X happy to share your attention?
- Does X become distressed when separated from you?
- Would you describe X as independent?
- Have you seen any changes in X's confidence?
- Would you describe X as being easily upset?
- How would you describe X's friendships?
- Does X ever seem anxious?
- Has there been any changes in X's assertiveness?
- Has there been any change in the frequency of emotional/ angry outbursts since the start of the NG?
- Does X shy away from attention?
- Have you noticed any differences in X's expectations of you since the start of the NG?
- Has there been any change in X's want for one-to-one time with you?
- How have the changes that you've noticed in X impacted on your relationship?
- Do you have any idea what about the group drove the changes?

Interview 7 schedule

- Tell me about x before they joined the group.
- Have you noticed any differences in x since starting the group?
- Has the NG impacted on your parenting?
- Have you noticed any differences in the way that x communicates since starting the group?
- Have you noticed any difference in your child's ability to take turns in conversation, or any other difference in their social skills?
- Does x talk much about school? Has this changed?
- Do they ever speak about the NG staff?
- Have you seen any change in their ability to concentrate?
- How does X cope with unfamiliar situations?
- How does X interact with unfamiliar adults? Has this changed?
- How would you describe the relationship between X and everyone at home? Any changes?
- How does X respond to being given attention from you in public? E.g. - assemblies etc.
- Is X happy to share your attention?
- Does X become distressed when separated from you?
- Would you describe X as independent?
- Have you seen any changes in X's confidence?
- Would you describe X as being easily upset?
- How would you describe X's friendships?
- Does X ever seem anxious?
- Has there been any changes in X's assertiveness?
- Has there been any change in the frequency of emotional/ angry outbursts since the start of the NG?
- Does X shy away from attention?
- Any difference in patience?
- Have you noticed any differences in X's expectations of you since the start of the NG?
- Has there been any change in X's want for one-to-one time with you?
- How have the changes that you've noticed in X impacted on your relationship?
- Do you have any idea what about the group drove the changes?

Interview 8 schedule

- Tell me about x before they joined the group.
- Have you noticed any differences in x since starting the group?
- Has the NG impacted on your parenting?
- Have you noticed any differences in the way that x communicates since starting the group?
- Have you noticed any difference in your child's ability to take turns in conversation, or any other difference in their social skills?
- Does x talk much about school? Has this changed?
- Do they ever speak about the NG staff?
- Have you seen any change in their ability to concentrate?
- How does X cope with unfamiliar situations?
- How does X interact with unfamiliar adults? Has this changed?
- How would you describe the relationship between X and everyone at home? Any changes?
- Is X happy to share your attention?
- Does X become distressed when separated from you?
- Would you describe X as independent?
- Have you seen any changes in X's confidence?
- Would you describe X as being easily upset?
- How would you describe X's friendships?
- Does X ever seem anxious?
- Has there been any changes in X's assertiveness?
- Has there been any change in the frequency of emotional/ angry outbursts since the start of the NG?
- Does X shy away from attention?
- Any difference in patience?
- Have you noticed any differences in X's expectations of you since the start of the NG?
- Has there been any change in X's want for attention from you?
- Have you noticed any changes in the way that X shows their affection?
- How have the changes that you've noticed in X impacted on your relationship?
- Do you have any idea what about the group drove the changes?

Interview 9 schedule

- Tell me about x before they joined the group.
- Have you noticed any differences in x since starting the group?
- Has the NG impacted on your parenting?
- Have you noticed any differences in the way that x communicates since starting the group?
- Have you noticed any difference in your child's ability to take turns in conversation, or any other difference in their social skills?
- Does x talk much about school? Has this changed?
- Do they ever speak about the NG staff?
- Have you seen any change in their ability to concentrate?
- How does X cope with unfamiliar situations?
- How does X interact with unfamiliar adults? Has this changed?
- How would you describe the relationship between X and everyone at home? Any changes?
- Is X happy to share your attention?
- Does X become distressed when separated from you?
- Would you describe X as independent?
- Have you seen any changes in X's confidence?
- Would you describe X as being easily upset?
- How would you describe X's friendships?
- Does X ever seem anxious?
- Has there been any changes in X's assertiveness?
- Has there been any change in the frequency of emotional/ angry outbursts since the start of the NG?
- Does X shy away from attention?
- Any difference in patience?
- Have you noticed any differences in X's expectations of you since the start of the NG?
- Has there been any change in X's want for attention from you?
- Have you noticed any changes in the way that X shows their affection?
- How have the changes that you've noticed in X impacted on your relationship?
- Does X behave differently with you than with other people?
- Do you have any idea what about the group drove the changes?

Interview 10 schedule

- Tell me about x before they joined the group.
- Have you noticed any differences in x since starting the group?
- Has the NG impacted on your parenting?
- Have you noticed any differences in the way that x communicates since starting the group?
- Have you noticed any difference in your child's ability to take turns in conversation, or any other difference in their social skills?
- Does x talk much about school? Has this changed?
- Do they ever speak about the NG staff?
- Have you seen any change in their ability to concentrate?
- How does X cope with unfamiliar situations?
- How does X interact with unfamiliar adults? Has this changed?
- How would you describe the relationship between X and everyone at home? Any changes?
- Is X happy to share your attention?
- Does X become distressed when separated from you?
- Would you describe X as independent?
- Have you seen any changes in X's confidence?
- Would you describe X as being easily upset?
- How would you describe X's friendships?
- Does X have any difficulty initiating friendships?
- Does X ever seem anxious?
- Has there been any changes in X's assertiveness?
- Has there been any change in the frequency of emotional/ angry outbursts since the start of the NG?
- Does X shy away from attention?
- Any difference in patience?
- Have you noticed any differences in X's expectations of you since the start of the NG?
- Has there been any change in X's want for attention from you?
- Have you noticed any changes in the way that X shows their affection?
- How have the changes that you've noticed in X impacted on your relationship?
- Does X behave differently with you than with other people?
- Do you have any idea what about the group drove the changes?



APPENDIX 9



Permission Letter for Parents/ Carers

Dear Parent,

My name is Ali Pyle, and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working with X County Council. I am currently working on a piece of research exploring the impact of Nurture Groups on children at home, and on the parent-child relationship. This research is being commissioned by X Educational Psychology Service (EPS), and is part of a Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology, at The University of East London.

I am seeking to speak to some of the children in a small focus group about their experience of the Nurture Group and how they feel it has affected them in the home setting. I will be specifically asking for their views on their behaviour, communication, and happiness. The information gained from this research will be used to make recommendations for best practice, and support Nurture Group staff in working collaboratively with parents. The results of the study may also lead onto further studies into the area. It is hoped that the experiences of Nurture Groups for both children and their parents will be enhanced through this research.

The focus group will be recorded on audio tape and then transcribed verbatim on to a computer. All of the information will be collected and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. At the end of the project all of the data will be destroyed. If for any reason you decide that you would prefer your child to not be involved, please let me know, and this will be possible right up until the time when the data is analysed. I will also be requesting consent from your child to ensure that they are happy to take part, and will explain to them that they can also withdraw at any time if they do not wish to continue.

If you would like any more information about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,
Ali Pyle
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Please cut and return to the Nurture Group directly, or send to: Ali Pyle, Educational Psychology Service, Council Offices, King George V Road, Amersham, HP6 5BY

CONSENT FORM

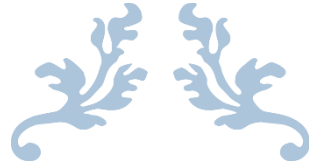
Please tick as appropriate

	YES	NO
I have read the attached letter which explains the research and what participation will involve		
I know that I can contact Ali Pyle at X EPS at any time for further information		
I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that they will be allowed to withdraw at any time		
I understand that X EPS will receive a copy of the report, but none of the participants will be identifiable.		

I agree to my child _____ (name), taking part in this research if they wish.

Signed _____ Date _____

Print name _____



APPENDIX 10



How have you changed over the last year?

Hi! My name is Ali. I am an Educational Psychologist, which means that I work in lots of different schools trying to make school even more fun for all of the children. Here is a picture of me so that you know who I am and can say hello when I come to visit:



To help me to know what makes children happy, I need to ask children like you about how school is for you. I would really like to know about your Nurture Group and I think you might be able to help me....

Your teacher has said it is okay for me to come and speak to you all together so that you can tell me all about your Nurture Group. I will record what you say so that I can remember all of your ideas. If you change your mind and don't want to take part anymore, just tell me or your teacher and you will be allowed to go.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!



APPENDIX 11



Introductory Script for Focus Group

Some of you may recognise me from when I have come to visit the group, and I also came in to talk to some of your mums and dads over the past few weeks. My name is Ali, and I'm an Educational Psychologist, which just means that I work with children in lots of schools to look at the good ways that they are learning and try to help to make things even better for them. That's why I have been working with your parents, because I'm really interested in hearing all about how the group has changed things for you when you go home so that we can learn from that and make things even better for all of the children in groups like this.

So, today I would really love it if we could all talk around this table about the group, and I'm also going to ask you about how things were for you before the group, and how things are now. I will ask some questions and then you can all talk to me about what you think. We're going to use this speaking stick so that we can make sure that everybody gets a chance to speak and that we listen to everybody too.

Everything that we talk about in here will be tape-recorded so that I can remember what you said, but no-one else will know who said what to me, unless you tell me something that makes me worried about your safety, and then I will have to speak to someone else who cares about you.

The questions should all be easy to answer, but if at any point you don't want to be in the group anymore then please tell me or your teacher and you can stop straight away.

I've got some sheets that I need you to sign, just to say that you know all about what we'll be talking about, and that you are happy to take part today. We can read all of the sentences together, and if you agree, you just need to put a big tick in each box, and then write your name at the bottom.

Does anybody have anything they'd like to ask before we get started?



APPENDIX 12



Child Consent Form

To be completed by participants independently, however statements will be read to them and further explanation offered if appropriate.

	YES	NO
I have listened well to Ali and I know what I am being asked to do.		
I know that I can ask Ali anything I want to if I am feeling confused or worried		
I understand that I don't have to talk to Ali and if I want to stop I can at any time I like		
I understand that I can say things and that no one will know what I said unless it is something that makes Ali worried and then she might need to tell someone		

MY NAME-

TODAY'S DATE- _____





APPENDIX 13



Focus Group 1 Schedule

- I'd be really interested to know how you feel about school. How do you feel about coming to school?
- What are the best things about school?
- How did you feel when you were asked to be in the group?
- What are your favourite things about the group?
- How do you feel about coming to the group, when some other people in your class don't come?
- What is the best thing that you have learnt about so far?

- What makes you really happy at home?
- I'd really like to know if you have changed at all at home since starting the group?
- Do you ever get into trouble at home?
- I'd be really interested if you could think back to before the group, did you get into trouble more or less then?
- Do you have any ideas why you get into more/ less trouble now?
- Who is the first person that you talk to when you get home?
- What kinds of things do you talk about?
- Do you talk to your mum and dad about school?
- Have you always spoken to mum and dad about school, or do you think you talk them more about it now?

- If you can think back to how you were before the group, what do you think is the biggest difference in how you are now?

Focus Group 2 Schedule

- I'd be really interested to know how you feel about school. How do you feel about coming to school?
- What are the best things about school?
- How did you feel when you were asked to be in the group?
- What are your favourite things about the group?
- How do you feel about coming to the group, when some other people in your class don't come?
- What is the best thing that you have learnt about so far?
- Do you think you have changed at all since starting the NG?
- Has the NG helped you in any way?
- Tell me about the teachers who run your NG?
- What makes you really happy at home?
- I'd really like to know if you have changed at all at home since starting the group?
- Do you ever get into trouble at home?
- I'd be really interested if you could think back to before the group, did you get into trouble more or less then?
- Do you have any ideas why you get into more/ less trouble now?
- Would you say that you are quite helpful at home? Has this changed at all?
- Who is the first person that you talk to when you get home?
- What kinds of things do you talk about?
- Do you talk to your mum and dad about school?
- Have you always spoken to mum and dad about school, or do you think you talk them more about it now?
- Have you noticed any changes in your friendships since you started the NG?
- If you can think back to how you were before the group, what do you think is the biggest difference in how you are now?
- How do you feel about leaving the NG? Have you ever found changes difficult in the past?
- Has the NG changed how you feel about school?
- Has the NG changed how you feel about yourself?
- If the NG has changed you in any way, what is it about the NG that has made that difference?

Focus Group 3 Schedule

- I'd be really interested to know how you feel about school. How do you feel about coming to school?
- How did you feel when you were asked to be in the group?
- What are your favourite things about the group?
- How do you feel about coming to the group, when some other people in your class don't come?
- Do you think you have changed at all since starting the NG?
- Has the NG helped you in any way?
- Tell me about the teachers who run your NG?
- At toast time, what kinds of things do you talk about?

- I'd really like to know if you have changed at all at home since starting the group?
- Do you ever get into trouble at home?
- I'd be really interested if you could think back to before the group, did you get into trouble more or less then?
- Do you have any ideas why you get into more/ less trouble now?
- Do you do anything at home to help your parents? Has this changed at all?
- Do you talk to your mum and dad about school?
- Have you always spoken to mum and dad about school, or has this changed in any way?
- Have you noticed any changes in your friendships since you started the NG?

- If you can think back to how you were before the group, what do you think is the biggest difference in how you are now?

- How do you feel about leaving the NG? Have you ever found changes difficult in the past?

- Has the NG changed how you feel about school?

- Has the NG changed how you feel about yourself?

- If the NG has changed you in any way, what is it about the NG that has made that difference?



APPENDIX 14



1 **Interview 10**

2 **First question is, could you tell me a little bit about X before he joined the group?**

3 He was....I don't think he had a great transition into school. I think inevitably it just changed
4 things at home because we were very anxious about him being anxious and we expected him
5 to love school, and for it to be something he would want to do and somewhere he would
6 want to go. So we found that quite hard....and I think they inevitably feed off you, so I think
7 his first year at school was tricky and it was towards the end of that first year when the
8 nurture group was suggested to us as an option for him. So he's been in the NG for all of this
9 year, and I think he attends it twice a week most weeks. Sorry remind me the question again?

10 **Just how was he before he went into the group?**

11 I think you get a good idea that he had a difficult first year, I think his behaviour in Reception
12 wasn't great, I think the days were very unstructured, even in comparison with nursery, and
13 we didn't have any problems with him at nursery, and so I think he just really I don't think he
14 really understood what he was meant to be doing, and I think he was surrounded by a lot of
15 children who already knew each other from the local nursery, and he made friends, he didn't
16 have a problem making friends, but I think he just felt the newness of it all really, and just
17 struggled from that point of view. So, we were towards the end of year one, we had a
18 meeting with the school, and they were quite anxious about his behaviour, and actually
19 suggested he attended a PRU (Pupil Referral Unit) so they wanted him out of the school one
20 day a week there, it was in Amersham, and we really weren't happy about that. He had his
21 brother who was about to come up behind him, we didn't know how we were going to explain
22 any of this stuff to both of them. My husband's a head teacher and that made it hard actually
23 for us, because puts more pressure on in terms of expectations. So we met the school and
24 said we don't want that, we'd just like to ensure he has some kind of support in the classroom
25 if that's appropriate, when he goes into year 1, and then this is what they did they told us
26 about the NG, and I suppose it completely changed him. I know Year 1 is different and more
27 structured than Reception, but it's the best thing that happened to him. I don't know if that's
28 an intro into the rest of your questions. I mean, he really needed something, and I feel like
29 this was the perfect intervention, it's been fantastic.

30 **So you said that he was quite anxious- was that right from the beginning?**

31 Erm, I think it probably was. I mean, not anxious in an upset sense, he would mask it I think
32 and get angry if anything. He was just, I think he just felt a bit lost. Just comprehending more
33 about the world at that age and nursery's one thing, but he's been there for several years, and
34 then it's just a change and I don't think he could cope with the change very well, despite what
35 we did, but there you go.

36 **And what kind of behaviours was it that he was showing at school that they were worried**
37 **about?**

38 He was aggressive, violent, he would hit children. I think he was generally defending the
39 friends that he had from other kids. Erm, he would say unkind things, he could be quite
40 disruptive in the class as well. I did feel like they just didn't know how to control him, or
41 couldn't find strategies all the time maybe even, to control him. I mean I think some of it was

1 probably attention based and I think he was a little bit bored, so I think he was doing a lot of
2 things

3 **And did you notice any of those kind of behaviours at home as well?**

4 Erm, he's got a brother so they fight a lot anyway. They...yeah they fight at home, but y'know
5 it's easy to manage your own sons obviously, they would still blow up and have little spats but
6 y'know you can structure their day a bit better, and you can provide the routine, and you're
7 also providing the attention, so erm yeah I think he was worse at school than he was at home,
8 yes.

9 **Okay so I think I know the answer to this one, but have you noticed any differences in him**
10 **since starting in the group?**

11 Yes. I think he loves the NG, I think he loves it for a lot of reasons. He's made friends with the
12 other boys that attend the group, he's quite close to them I think, and now tells me about
13 when they're naughty. I still think he's occasionally naughty but nothing like what he was in
14 terms of how the school categorised that. I think he's learnt to modify his behaviour. He
15 understands what good behaviour is in school. I don't know if that's an objective of the
16 group, but he understands that there are expectations because he's told us that it's quite hard
17 work being at school in that sense because he knows he has to do things in a certain way. He
18 knows he gets praise and he knows it makes people happy, but I think he'd just rather be
19 himself. He loves the teachers, he loves the NG teachers. He loves what they do. I think he
20 just loves the whole intimacy of the atmosphere because he's quite a serious boy, and he likes
21 to read and I think he does like to talk to his friends, so I think he'll just take that into the
22 classroom then. He's got a great class teacher who has really encouraged him with his
23 reading, and I think understands him perhaps a bit better than the teacher he had in
24 Reception. She's just got more of a connection with him, and so that coupled with the
25 structure in the day has just meant that I think he just enjoys it all a lot more. He looks
26 forward to the NG though, I'd say he loves NG more than he loves school, which is part of my
27 concern actually about the NG, I don't know if we're going to get on to that? I'll stop there.

28 **Okay, that's great. So you were talking about him coming home and talking about the NG.**
29 **Does he come home and talk about the NG quite a lot?**

30 Only if I prompt him, if I ask him. So he'll talk about the time on the carpet and the stories and
31 they put slippers on, they put these little sock slippers on and they make toast so it's all very
32 cosy, and they're in a little cottage round the side of the school. I think he just loves the whole
33 thing, I think he feels special. So he will tell me about y'know how many pieces of toast he
34 had, but I have to say 'how was the NG today?' and that's what we kind of get, he talks about
35 the nice bits like the bits I just described, and err...I think those are his favourite days of the
36 week when he goes.

37 **Have you noticed any change in the amount that he communicates with you about school**
38 **since he started the NG?**

39 Yeah, he will talk about school more, the children at school, and his relationships more. He
40 wasn't, that first year of Reception, when it wasn't going well, he didn't talk about school at all
41 so I think he probably expected conversations to be quite negative because they were around
42 his behaviour y'know you had to be a bit careful with that. Just you wanted school to be a

1 positive experience and it seemed to feel that lots of the conversations were about poor
2 behaviour and what we're going to do and why is this happening y'know.....

3 **Would you say that since starting the NG, that it's had any impact on the way that you are**
4 **with him at home?**

5 Erm, I think we're just the same probably with him at home. Yeah I can imagine him being
6 similar but if you sit together on the sofa he's a similar boy to how he probably is in the NG
7 when he's got that bit of down time, and little close community and he's reading or whatever,
8 or watching a bit of TV. But he's.....no because I think most of, a lot of the issues he had were
9 quite school orientated.

10 **Thank you, have you notice any difference in X's ability to take turns in conversations, or**
11 **any other differences in his social skills?**

12 I think he's probably a bit more communicative. I don't think he had an issue with taking turns
13 in a conversation. He quite likes a bit of an argument, he likes a discussion, so I think he
14 likes...he understands how the framework around that, he knows how it works, it's just I
15 suppose it's a bit mood based whether or not he feels like talking, sometimes he doesn't really
16 want to talk much. But no, he's probably the same.

17 **Okay, thank you. Have you noticed any differences in his ability to concentrate?**

18 It's hard to know what might be as a result of the NG, whether it's his age, or whether it's just
19 his interests, it's just yeah he reads a lot and he will pay attention to tasks he's enjoying like
20 stickers, sticker books, or a puzzle book, or Lego. He's not so, you do draw comparisons you
21 can't help it, he's not so interested in writing. His brother practices his writing and X doesn't
22 really practice, he doesn't like his writing which I think is part of it but y'know, so he does do
23 plenty of tasks where he concentrates, but only the ones he enjoys. Not the ones we're trying
24 to make him get on with as well.

25 **So there's not been any real change in the amount that he can concentrate and pay**
26 **attention?**

27 He probably watches less television than he used to, and when I say that, I try to manage it a
28 little bit but then quite often I find he comes home from school and they're completely
29 exhausted, especially if they've done some kind of club afterwards, and they just want to
30 watch a bit of TV, have some dinner and then have a bath, so y'know they do watch a bit of
31 TV, they used to watch more and I think, I wondered if that was zapping some of his
32 concentration. But he's doing less of that, and probably more concentrating on things that
33 have a higher value in terms of helping his education and helping him to learn.

34 **Thank you. How would you say that X copes with unfamiliar situations?**

35 I think he's fine generally. He doesn't y'know, given all that happened in his first year at
36 school and how I've described him and his behaviour y'know, I would expect to put him in a
37 situation with lots of kids he doesn't know and he would struggle, but he doesn't struggle with
38 that. He's quite happy to talk to children he doesn't know and to make friends. Does that
39 answer your question?

40 **Yeah it does, that's absolutely fine, thank you.**

1 Yeah he's quite sociable.

2 **Okay, would you say that with what happened when he first started school, had you seen**
3 **anything like that in him before where he's been anxious about starting something new in**
4 **an unfamiliar situation?**

5 No, I mean, I don't know if he's felt it and doesn't talk about it because I'm not sure he's very
6 open about how he feels until he blows. I think he bottles things up and it goes off...there's a
7 tipping point, but no not particularly.

8 **How would you say that he interacts with unfamiliar adults? Is he quite happy or does he**
9 **tend to cling to you, or...?**

10 He's not clingy, I think he will...I think like a lot of children they work the grown up out quite
11 quickly and if he thinks they're not interested he's not interested. There are definitely adults
12 that he's got good relationships with who I think are interested in him and talk to him but I
13 think he just hasn't. He'll work out whether they're worth spending time with and go from
14 there really.

15 **So he's not shy?**

16 No, I don't think so, no.

17 **Lovely thank you. How would you describe the relationship between X and everyone else at**
18 **home?**

19 Erm good. I think he's got good relationships with his parents. His dad definitely wears the
20 trousers. I won't say its 'wait til your dad gets home' but that's what K thinks I say. But K is a
21 head teacher and I think X understands what that means, so it's like having a head teacher at
22 home. Well it was quite interesting when his behaviour wasn't so good at school. That was
23 an interesting time. I think he's got a normal relationship with his brothers, he's quite loving
24 to his baby brother, but y'know they like to argue and fight as well, so it's probably quite a
25 healthy, regular boys types relationships.

26 **Thank you. Is X quite happy to share your attention?**

27 Share it?

28 **Mmmm.**

29 Yes. I spend inevitably, you spend a lot of time with the baby and my 18 month old still isn't
30 walking and doesn't talk much, so he is still quite a baby, and I still put the baby to bed, so bed
31 time is quite often, they don't see me that much so I think yeah, he's used to me holding P
32 and him being around, so he's quite happy.

33 **Brilliant, thank you.**

34 **Does X ever become distressed when he's separated from you?**

35 Again, not that I would recognise particularly. He kind of, he sometimes says that y'know he
36 wishes I dropped him off at school, or picked him up a bit more, or...but then I will make the
37 effort to go to their assemblies or see them play football, and I do pick them up from school
38 occasionally, and I will kind of explain that that's the plan for the day, and they're excited
39 about that, so I think he realises why I don't do it all the time, because I'm at work, but I think

1 he's a bit sorry about that, but so am I so I sort of say 'I'm sorry I can't, I'd like to but I can't do
2 that this week, or until Thursday or whatever and he's quite understanding about that.

3 **With him asking you about that, has that been a recent thing?**

4 Yeah, I think it's probably quite recent, and probably yeah and because we have an au pair as
5 well, so I think for the boys it's quite straight forward, it's like well, she comes, why can't you
6 come. Y'know until you explain but they understand, they're pretty good about it most of the
7 time. They don't really, they don't freak out about it or get really cross or upset, they just sort
8 of...okay.

9 **Other than that, would you say that X's expectations of you, or the demands that he makes**
10 **of you have changed in any way?**

11 No...no, I mean he's quite mature in that sense I think he understands there are swings and
12 roundabouts and that we try and do our best for them, and we always talk to them about why
13 things are the way that they are, so it's pretty grown up like that.

14 **Thank you, how is he with staying overnight at other people's houses? Does he ever do**
15 **that?**

16 No, I'm sure he'd quite like to actually. We haven't done that no, we're not overly protective
17 at all. They've not been away from us in 6 and a half years, we haven't had a night away from
18 them...and we have been talking about when will we do that because it would be quite nice
19 for us, and so erm, no. They've stayed away from home with friends, but we've been there, as
20 it's been more of like a family occasion, so no he's not had sleepovers like that.

21 **Right thank you. Would you describe X as quite independent?**

22 Yeah

23 **And has he always been?**

24 Err.....I'd say no. I'd say up until the age of about 4, I don't think...he would always cry at
25 nursery drop off, he never really got used to that. And then he did all of a sudden, erm, but I
26 thought he didn't look very happy about it. He never kind of skipped into nursery. But yeah,
27 he is fine, but I'd say early on no he was quite clingy when he was younger.

28 **And did that continue when he was anxious in Reception?**

29 No he...no he didn't cry in Reception, I think he just as I said kept it in and bottled it up, but
30 even when it came out, he was more angry than upset.

31 **Alright thanks, have you seen any changes in X's confidence?**

32 He probably articulates more about how he feels about doing things well, or what he is doing
33 and what he can do. I mean, we do do a lot of maths verbally, and of course the other brother
34 joins in, and phonics verbally, so they end up sparking off each other, and not like a test but
35 we test their understanding whilst learning is fun try and capitalise on that, so we do a lot of
36 that kind of things and he's quite quick and confident with that, and he will talk about the
37 things he can do and will definitely not want to focus on the things he's not quite happy doing.
38 So his confidence I'd say is pretty high.

39 **And has there been any change in that?**

1 Yeah more confident, because it's about realising that he's got skills and can do things even if
2 its things his brother can't do, which he will draw his attention to, y'know, he is a bit more
3 confident. He can definitely talk about what he can do.

4 **Okay thank you. Would you say that there's been any changes in X's assertiveness?**

5 I think he's always been quite assertive. Yeah. Well, and that's the difference isn't it, to be
6 assertive and not aggressive. I think he can, I think he flies off the handle a bit too quickly,
7 even still, so he's still assertive and not assertive in the best way, which is all part of what
8 they've been I suppose looking at in the NG and what we constantly work with at home, so
9 no, always been quite assertive.

10 **So still assertive, but maybe less aggressive now?**

11 Yes.

12 **Okay thank you. Would you say that X ever seems anxious, other than in the first year of**
13 **school?**

14 No not really, other than some of the things we already talked about, around perhaps he'd
15 like me to take him to school, or he'd like me to pick him up and sometimes that comes out,
16 but I think no generally, he wants to go to the after-school club, he wants to have play dates
17 with his friends, he wants to do most things, so I don't think he feels that anxiety.

18 **Okay brilliant, so just something that happened in Reception, but now not anymore.**

19 Not anymore, and I do think that the NG has had a huge beneficial impact, yeah.

20 **Lovely thank you. How would you describe X's friendships?**

21 I think he's got, he's quite close to a smaller number of friends rather than...he hasn't got a
22 great big gang, and I think that when he plays its one-to-one, maybe one-to-two. There in a
23 smaller group. There's some talk about a best friend, but he talks about several friends, but I
24 think he compartmentalises them, y'know I think he likes one-to-one, which I think
25 demonstrates itself in every area of his life really, he quite likes a close relationship.

26 **Okay thank you. Has he ever had difficulty that you know of initiating friendships?**

27 No

28 **Lovely. Would you describe X as easily upset?**

29 No. No not at all, that's his brother. No not him

30 **Right, have there been any changes in the frequency of angry outbursts since the start of**
31 **the NG?**

32 Much less. Yeah much less. I think he sometimes gets out of bed the wrong side. He does
33 have bad days I think. It's like adults do, and y'know a lot of the time he's fine.

34 **Okay, and is there anything that triggers the angry outbursts or might have done before?**

35 I don't know, I mean we always think it's kind of, a lot of the time, he just hasn't had enough
36 sleep. He's one of those classic babies who didn't sleep very much and we still think he's

1 tired. But I would say, yeah the quality and the amount of sleep he's often had the night
2 before has often got a lot to do with the next day.

3 **So the angry outbursts even though they're potentially tiredness related, they have**
4 **decreased.**

5 Yeah, yeah.

6 **Okay thank you. Does X ever shy away from attention?**

7 Erm, I think sometimes he struggles to know how to handle the praise sometimes. Not all the
8 time, but sometimes, and I think y'know, because inevitable after Reception, I started to read
9 loads of things about behaviour, and I didn't really appreciate that praise is quite often better
10 given in private than in public, and I think the assumption that praise, tell everybody if
11 someone's fantastic, tell everybody, but it doesn't always work that way so....When he is
12 great, I'll tell him privately and he takes that a lot better than he does when its public. So I
13 think it might depend for him on what kind of praise it is and where it's being given because
14 yeah, I think sometimes he doesn't know really how to handle some of that.

15

16 **Okay so have you seen any changes in that since September in his ability to handle praise**
17 **publicly?**

18 He's a bit, I just think he's a bit, he looks like a teenager about it all when you start down that
19 road, you just get the kinds of 'alright, god...' and walk out the room, y'know. So it's not
20 terrible reaction, but it's very different to his brother who is quite happy to hear all of it, so I
21 suppose there just different.

22 **Okay, thank you. Have you noticed any difference in his patience?**

23 I don't know if that isn't a bit sort of mood dependent, sometimes he doesn't seem to have
24 much at all, but it's probably a bit like concentration, sometimes he can be patient, and then
25 y'know he's not very patient with himself, talking about the writing, trying to get him to
26 practice, he's got no, he won't tolerate his own y'know progress, if its slow or if you ask him to
27 have another go, I don't think he's kind of got a lot of patience generally. Depending on the
28 situation, he'll do his best, but I don't think he's naturally patient no. He's quite quick, y'know
29 he runs everywhere, and I just feel that actually he won't have a lot of time for that kind of
30 thing.

31 **Okay, and has there been any change in that, or has he always...?**

32 No I think he's always been like that.

33 **Okay thank you. Only a few more now. Has there been any change in X's want for**
34 **attention from you? Has he been any more attention-seeking at all? Or less?**

35 No, about the same. I mean I think he's, I think both of the older boys do, are pretty good
36 considering how much time I end up spending with the baby, they're quite good, so I think
37 they understand. So no.

38 **Have you noticed any changes in the way that X shows his affection?**

1 Yeah he can be quite loving. I came home from work the other day and he came out of the
2 room to give me a hug and told me that he loved me, which doesn't happen a lot, but he does
3 that. I suppose that didn't happen last year I don't think, so I just feel that that's a bit more
4 about some confidence maybe, or just about the relationship and how he's growing up, and
5 some of the things around he doesn't see me that often, or I don't think he does in
6 comparison with some mums, but...so yeah...

7 **Have you noticed any other changes in the way that he communicates and expresses**
8 **himself?**

9 I think he will either...you have to I suppose, he won't volunteer how he feels, you're putting
10 two and two together from his behaviour and you have to ask him what's wrong. He's
11 probably always been like that though to be honest, and as I said before it does seem to
12 depend on his mood. However he is in the morning is it for the rest of the day pretty much.

13 **Okay. Would you say that X behaves any differently with you than he does other people?**

14 I think he's quite well behaved with other people. With his parents he's a bit more
15 challenging, yeah. With them, I'd suppose I'd rather it was that way round, but when he'll go
16 for tea somewhere and everyone will say how lovely he was, and how great it was to have
17 him, which is all you want to hear really isn't it, you don't want to hear a load of disaster
18 stories. So, no I think he probably pushes his boundaries a bit more at home.

19 **They probably all do don't they.**

20 Mmmm

21 **Would you say that the changes that you've noticed in X have impacted on your relationship**
22 **with him? Like his confidence and him getting into trouble less at school, and being more**
23 **affectionate?**

24 (Pauses) Errr....I don't know really how to answer that because I think as much as his first year
25 at school upset me, I was trying to stay a bit positive about how we could handle it and
26 y'know I mean it did happen, of course it did, that he would have a bad day at school and all
27 he's had is bad feedback all day, negative feedback, and then he comes home and he gets it all
28 again. I used to try quite hard to not do that, but yeah it didn't always happen, so I think
29 inevitably, he's better at school, so all that negativity isn't there anymore, which makes it a bit
30 easier and perhaps he just feels better about the whole thing as well. I mean I think he does,
31 as I said to you before, he knows that there are benefits for him in behaving well, and perhaps
32 beyond the obvious ones. But he is working at it, I don't think it comes naturally to him, but
33 he's doing it so that the most important thing, so I think we just keep talking about it as
34 positively as possible, and well....just hope it continues really. My concern is that the NG,
35 when NG stops....how it will work out, but y'know he's going to be going to another school
36 never mind another class with no NG element in it, so I think we're just going to have to wait
37 and see what's around the corner really.

38 **Okay thank you. Are there any other changes that you've noticed that I haven't asked**
39 **about that you feel are important?**

40 Errrr.....no I don't think so. No.

1 **Okay great, last question then. In your opinion, if it's the group that's impacted on any of**
2 **these changes, from your perspective, what would you say it is about the group that's made**
3 **the difference to him?**

4 I think it's probably coming out of the classroom, how that happens I'm not sure, I don't know
5 how and how it's talked about I'm not too sure. I don't know if those children feel particularly
6 special or selected and I don't know how that works in comparison with the other kids that
7 aren't in the NG. So I think he does feel different because of it and because he enjoys it, that
8 obviously makes him feel special, so I think it's definitely got something to do with the one-to-
9 one time and attention. He's probably spending time doing things he really enjoys rather than
10 having to just do the tasks that were assigned to all of the children in the class on that day.
11 And well the whole slippers and toast thing I think is very clever because they just y'know,
12 they all kind of, that's when they switch off and socialise a bit. So I just think it's
13 helped...they're doing the same learning in the NG group that the school children would do,
14 but then that socialising element that comes in has just kind of made it. I don't know, it's
15 quite real world in a grown up sense, it's not so rigid like a classroom might be, and I just think
16 he finds it, just nicer. But I think it's probably the, yeah I think there's 6 boys in there with
17 two teachers. I mean if every kid could get that kind of attention at school, I'm sure
18 everybody would be better off but I know it's not possible, but I think that's got a lot to do
19 with it.

20 **Thanks very much**



APPENDIX 15



Example of Open Coding - Interview 10

4/7/13 at 11:00am in the family home. Mother of a 6 year old boy in Year 1, who has been in the NG for three terms.

	Initial Coding	Memos
<p>First question is, could you tell me a little bit about X before he joined the group?</p> <p>He was....I don't think he had a great transition into school. I think inevitably it just changed things at home because we were very anxious about him being anxious and we expected him to love school, and for it to be something he would want to do and somewhere he would want to go. So we found that quite hard....and I think they inevitably feed off you, so I think his first year at school was tricky and it was towards the end of that first year when the nurture group was suggested to us as an option for him. So he's been in the NG for all of this year, and I think he attends it twice a week most weeks. Sorry remind me the question again?</p> <p>Just how was he before he went into the group?</p>	<p>Difficult transition</p> <p>Parents anxious</p> <p>Child anxious</p> <p>Expectations not met</p> <p>Blame</p> <p>Difficult year</p> <p>NG as solution</p> <p>Uncertainty</p> <p>Part-time NG</p>	<p>Some self-blame here as she talks about her anxiety and how he may have fed off her</p> <p>Some uncertainty again about the number of sessions attended. Suggests she may not have been fully informed?</p>

<p>I think you get a good idea that he had a difficult first year, I think his behaviour in Reception wasn't great, I think the days were very unstructured, even in comparison with nursery, and we didn't have any problems with him at nursery, and so I think he just really I don't think he really understood what he was meant to be doing, and I think he was surrounded by a lot of children who already knew each other from the local nursery, and he made friends, he didn't have a problem making friends, but I think he just felt the newness of it all really, and just struggled from that point of view. So, we were towards the end of year one, we had a meeting with the school, and they were quite anxious about his behaviour, and actually suggested he attended a PRU (Pupil Referral Unit) so they wanted him out of the school one day a week there, it was in Amersham, and we really weren't happy about that. He had his brother who was about to come up behind him, we didn't know how we were going to explain any of this stuff to both of them. My husbands a</p>	<p>Difficult year</p> <p>Behaviour</p> <p>Little structure</p> <p>Unexpected</p> <p>Lack of understanding around transition</p> <p>Isolated</p> <p>Good friendships</p> <p>'Newness'</p> <p>Struggled with change</p> <p>School were anxious</p> <p>Behaviour difficulties</p> <p>Schools wishes</p> <p>Parents reluctance for PRU</p> <p>Concerned about how children would understand PRU</p>	<p>She seems to have a really good insight into her child and seems confident in explaining his behaviour...or is she being defensive?</p> <p>The fact that the child's father is HT came up several times. It</p>
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<p>head teacher and that made it hard actually for us, because puts more pressure on in terms of expectations. So we met the school and said we don't want that, we'd just like to ensure he has some kind of support in the classroom if that's appropriate, when he goes into year 1, and then this is what they did they told us about the NG, and I suppose it completely changed him. I know Year 1 is different and more structured than Reception, but it's the best thing that happened to him. I don't know if that's an intro into the rest of your questions. I mean, he really needed something, and I feel like this was the perfect intervention, it's been fantastic.</p> <p>So you said that he was quite anxious- was that right from the beginning?</p> <p>Erm, I think it probably was. I mean, not anxious in an upset sense, he would mask it I think and get angry if anything. He was just, I think he just felt a bit lost. Just comprehending more about the world at that age and</p>	<p>Expectations of parents Embarrassment</p> <p>Pressure on parents</p> <p>Wanted support</p> <p>Appropriate support</p> <p>Different child</p> <p>More structure</p> <p>Perfect intervention</p> <p>Pleased with impact</p> <p>Anxious from the start</p> <p>Angry rather than upset</p> <p>Lack of understanding of the world</p>	<p>suggests that perhaps there is some embarrassment, and shame that they feel about having a child who has been having difficulties with behaviour, and that this reflects on them as parents and professionals.</p> <p>High praise for the NG- She calls the 'perfect' intervention and that it's the 'best thing that happened to him'. This is a contrast to the other parents who were less willing to attribute the changes in their child to the NG.</p>
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<p>praise and he knows it makes people happy, but I think he'd just rather be himself. He loves the teachers, he loves the NG teachers. He loves what they do. I think he just loves the whole intimacy of the atmosphere because he's quite a serious boy, and he likes to read and I think he does like to talk to his friends, so I think he'll just take that into the classroom then. He's got a great class teacher who has really encouraged him with his reading, and I think understands him perhaps a bit better than the teacher he had in Reception. She's just got more of a connection with him, and so that coupled with the structure in the day has just meant that I think he just enjoys it all a lot more. He looks forward to the NG though, I'd say he loves NG more than he loves school, which is part of my concern actually about the NG, I don't know if we're going to get on to that? I'll stop there.</p>	<p>Feels he is no longer himself</p> <p>Relationships with staff</p> <p>Intimacy of atmosphere</p> <p>Serious nature</p> <p>Enjoys socialising</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Big impact of class teacher</p> <p>Good relationship</p> <p>More structure</p> <p>Enjoys school</p> <p>Loves the NG</p> <p>Concerned about transition out of NG</p>	<p>Relationship with teachers is a theme that has been repeated</p>
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<p>Okay, that's great. So you were talking about him coming home and talking about the NG. Does he come home and talk about the NG quite a lot?</p> <p>Only if I prompt him, if I ask him. So he'll talk about the time on the carpet and the stories and they put slippers on, they put these little sock slippers on and they make toast so it's all very cosy, and they're in a little cottage round the side of the school. I think he just loves the whole thing, I think he feels special. So he will tell me about y'know how many pieces of toast he had, but I have to say 'how was the NG today?' and that's what we kind of get, he talks about the nice bits like the bits I just described, and err...I think those are his favourite days of the week when he goes.</p> <p>Have you noticed any change in the amount that he communicates with you about school since he started the NG?</p> <p>Yeah, he will talk about school more, the children at school, and his relationships more. He wasn't, that first year of Reception, when it wasn't</p>	<p>Communicates about school when asked</p> <p>Talks about NG</p> <p>Feels special</p> <p>Not spontaneous conversation</p> <p>Talks about nice things</p> <p>Favourite days</p> <p>Increased communication about school</p>	
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<p>going well, he didn't talk about school at all so I think he probably expected conversations to be quite negative because they were around his behaviour y'know you had to be a bit careful with that. Just you wanted school to be a positive experience and it seemed to feel that lots of the conversations were about poor behaviour and what we're going to do and why is this happening y'know.....</p> <p>Would you say that since starting the NG, that it's had any impact on the way that you are with him at home?</p> <p>Erm, I think we're just the same probably with him at home. Yeah I can imagine him being similar but if you sit together on the sofa he's a similar boy to how he probably is in the NG when he's got that bit of down time, and little close community and he's reading or whatever, or watching a bit of TV. But he's....no because I think most of, a lot of the issues he had were quite school orientated.</p>	<p>Avoiding negative conversations</p> <p>Wanted school to be positive</p> <p>Too much emphasis on negative aspects of school</p> <p>No impact on behaviour management at home</p> <p>Difficulties limited to school</p>	<p>Distances issues away from the home</p>
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<p>Thank you, have you notice any difference in X's ability to take turns in conversations, or any other differences in his social skills?</p> <p>I think he's probably a bit more communicative. I don't think he had an issue with taking turns in a conversation. He quite likes a bit of an argument, he likes a discussion, so I think he likes...he understands how the framework around that, he knows how it works, it's just I suppose it's a bit mood based whether or not he feels like talking, sometimes he doesn't really want to talk much. But no, he's probably the same.</p> <p>Okay, thank you. Have you noticed any differences in his ability to concentrate?</p> <p>It's hard to know what might be as a result of the NG, whether it's his age, or whether it's just his interests, it's just yeah he reads a lot and he will pay attention to tasks he's enjoying like stickers, sticker books, or a puzzle book, or Lego. He's not so, you do draw comparisons you can't help it, he's not so interested in writing. His brother practices his writing and X</p>	<p>More communicative</p> <p>No change in social skills</p> <p>Likes discussion, good social skills</p> <p>Communication based on moods</p> <p>NG or development</p> <p>Good concentration</p> <p>Not interested in writing</p>	<p>Again it is raised about how to discriminate between the effects of the NG and the effects of development</p>
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<p>Thank you. How would you say that X copes with unfamiliar situations?</p> <p>I think he's fine generally. He doesn't y'know, given all that happened in his first year at school and how I've described him and his behaviour y'know, I would expect to put him in a situation with lots of kids he doesn't know and he would struggle, but he doesn't struggle with that.</p> <p>He's quite happy to talk to children he doesn't know and to make friends.</p> <p>Does that answer your question?</p> <p>Yeah it does, that's absolutely fine, thank you.</p> <p>Yeah he's quite sociable.</p> <p>Okay, would you say that with what happened when he first started school, had you seen anything like that in him before where he's been anxious about starting something new in an unfamiliar situation?</p> <p>No, I mean, I don't know if he's felt it and doesn't talk about it because I'm not sure he's very open about how he feels until he blows. I think he</p>	<p>Deals well with unfamiliar situations</p> <p>Good social skills</p> <p>Good friendships</p> <p>Sociable</p> <p>Not communicative when unhappy</p> <p>Has outbursts</p>	
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<p>Erm good. I think he's got good relationships with his parents. His dad definitely wears the trousers. I won't say its 'wait til your dad gets home' but that's what K thinks I say. But K is a head teacher and I think X understands what that means, so it's like having a head teacher at home. Well it was quite interesting when his behaviour wasn't so good at school. That was an interesting time. I think he's got a normal relationship with his brothers, he's quite loving to his baby brother, but y'know they like to argue and fight as well, so it's probably quite a healthy, regular boys types relationships.</p> <p>Thank you. Is X quite happy to share your attention?</p> <p>Share it?</p> <p>Mmmm.</p> <p>Yes. I spend inevitably, you spend a lot of time with the baby and my 18 month old still isn't walking and doesn't talk much, so he is still quite a baby, and I still put the baby to bed, so bed time is quite often, they don't</p>	<p>Good relationships at home</p> <p>Disciplined by dad</p> <p>Strict at home</p> <p>Difficult for parents when behaviour was problematic</p> <p>Healthy relationship with brother</p> <p>Happy to share attention</p>	
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<p>see me that much so I think yeah, he's used to me holding P and him being around, so he's quite happy.</p> <p>Brilliant, thank you.</p> <p>Does X ever become distressed when he's separated from you?</p> <p>Again, not that I would recognise particularly. He kind of, he sometimes says that y'know he wishes I dropped him off at school, or picked him up a bit more, or...but then I will make the effort to go to their assemblies or see them play football, and I do pick them up from school occasionally, and I will kind of explain that that's the plan for the day, and they're excited about that, so I think he realises why I don't do it all the time, because I'm at work, but I think he's a bit sorry about that, but so am I so I sort of say 'I'm sorry I can't, I'd like to but I can't do that this week, or until Thursday or whatever and he's quite understanding about that.</p> <p>With him asking you about that, has that been a recent thing?</p>	<p>Has to share with younger siblings</p> <p>Happy</p> <p>Not obvious separation anxiety</p> <p>High expectations of mums time</p> <p>Defends effort made</p> <p>Given attention</p> <p>Pre-warn of routine</p> <p>High expectations of mums time</p> <p>Guilt about time</p> <p>Understanding</p>	<p>This is very interesting as this has come up before. NG may have let child to raise their expectations of adults or be more assertive about what he wants, or more able to communicate what he wants in relationships?</p>
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<p>Yeah, I think it's probably quite recent, and probably yeah and because we have an au pair as well, so I think for the boys it's quite straight forward, it's like well, she comes, why can't you come. Y'know until you explain but they understand, they're pretty good about it most of the time. They don't really, they don't freak out about it or get really cross or upset, they just sort of...okay.</p> <p>Other than that, would you say that X's expectations of you, or the demands that he makes of you have changed in any way?</p> <p>No...no, I mean he's quite mature in that sense I think he understands there are swings and roundabouts and that we try and do our best for them, and we always talk to them about why things are the way that they are, so it's pretty grown up like that.</p> <p>Thank you, how is he with staying overnight at other people's houses?</p> <p>Does he ever do that?</p>	<p>Higher expectations</p> <p>Lack understanding</p> <p>Understanding</p> <p>Accepting</p> <p>Mature</p> <p>No change in expectations</p> <p>Understanding and accepting</p>	
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<p>No, I'm sure he'd quite like to actually. We haven't done that no, we're not overly protective at all. They've not been away from us in 6 and a half years, we haven't had a night away from them...and we have been talking about when will we do that because it would be quite nice for us, and so erm, no. They've stayed away from home with friends, but we've been there, as it's been more of like a family occasion, so no he's not had sleepovers like that.</p> <p>Right thank you. Would you describe X as quite independent?</p> <p>Yeah</p> <p>And has he always been?</p> <p>Err.....I'd say no. I'd say up until the age of about 4, I don't think...he would always cry at nursery drop off, he never really got used to that. And then he did all of a sudden, erm, but I thought he didn't look very happy about it. He never kind of skipped into nursery. But yeah, he is fine, but I'd say early on no he was quite clingy when he was younger.</p>	<p>No opportunity</p> <p>Not protective</p> <p>Always with parents</p> <p>Independent</p> <p>More independent</p> <p>Separation anxiety</p> <p>Less clingy now</p>	<p>Clinginess is another theme</p>
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<p>And did that continue when he was anxious in Reception?</p> <p>No he...no he didn't cry in Reception, I think he just as I said kept it in and bottled it up, but even when it came out, he was more angry than upset.</p> <p>Alright thanks, have you seen any changes in X's confidence?</p> <p>He probably articulates more about how he feels about doing things well, or what he is doing and what he can do. I mean, we do do a lot of maths verbally, and of course the other brother joins in, and phonics verbally, so they end up sparking off each other, and not like a test but we test their understanding whilst learning is fun try and capitalise on that, so we do a lot of that kind of things and he's quite quick and confident with that, and he will talk about the things he can do and will definitely not want to focus on the things he's not quite happy doing. So his confidence I'd say is pretty high.</p> <p>And has there been any change in that?</p>	<p>Not upset</p> <p>Angry</p> <p>More confidence More positive communication</p> <p>Work at home</p> <p>Sibling competition</p> <p>Fun learning</p> <p>Confidence building</p> <p>Reluctant to talk about difficulties</p> <p>High confidence</p>	<p>Or is it?</p>
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<p>Yeah more confident, because it's about realising that he's got skills and can do things even if its things his brother can't do, which he will draw his attention to, y'know, he is a bit more confident. He can definitely talk about what he can do.</p> <p>Okay thank you. Would you say that there's been any changes in X's assertiveness?</p> <p>I think he's always been quite assertive. Yeah. Well, and that's the difference isn't it, to be assertive and not aggressive. I think he can, I think he flies off the handle a bit too quickly, even still, so he's still assertive and not assertive in the best way, which is all part of what they've been I suppose looking at in the NG and what we constantly work with at home, so no, always been quite assertive.</p> <p>So still assertive, but maybe less aggressive now?</p> <p>Yes.</p>	<p>More confidence</p> <p>Realising skills</p> <p>Confidence</p> <p>Positive about self</p> <p>Good self-esteem</p> <p>Always been assertive</p> <p>Differentiation between assertive and aggressive</p> <p>Developed through Nurture and home</p> <p>Partnership between home and school</p> <p>Less aggressive</p> <p>No difference in assertiveness</p>	<p>Mum recognises here the difference between assertive and aggressive and identifies that the child has become less aggressive, being assertive instead.</p>
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<p>Okay thank you. Would you say that X ever seems anxious, other than in the first year of school?</p> <p>No not really, other than some of the things we already talked about, around perhaps he'd like me to take him to school, or he'd like me to pick him up and sometimes that comes out, but I think no generally, he wants to go to the after-school club, he wants to have play dates with his friends, he wants to do most things, so I don't think he feels that anxiety.</p> <p>Okay brilliant, so just something that happened in Reception, but now not anymore.</p> <p>Not anymore, and I do think that the NG has had a huge beneficial impact, yeah.</p> <p>Lovely thank you. How would you describe X's friendships?</p> <p>I think he's got, he's quite close to a smaller number of friends rather than...he hasn't got a great big gang, and I think that when he plays its one-to-one, maybe one-to-two. There in a smaller group. There's some</p>	<p>Higher expectations of mum</p> <p>Generally not anxious</p> <p>Out-going and sociable</p> <p>Not anxious</p> <p>Less anxious since NG</p> <p>Huge impact of NG</p> <p>Few close friends</p> <p>Prefers to play in a small group</p>	<p>This need for one-to-one comes up several times through the interview, and even at the end is one of the things that she identifies to have made a difference</p>
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<p>talk about a best friend, but he talks about several friends, but I think he compartmentalises them, y'know I think he likes one-to-one, which I think demonstrates itself in every area of his life really, he quite likes a close relationship.</p> <p>Okay thank you. Has he ever had difficulty that you know of initiating friendships?</p> <p>No</p> <p>Lovely. Would you describe X as easily upset?</p> <p>No. No not at all, that's his brother. No not him</p> <p>Right, have there been any changes in the frequency of angry outbursts since the start of the NG?</p> <p>Much less. Yeah much less. I think he sometimes gets out of bed the wrong side. He does have bad days I think. It's like adults do, and y'know a lot of the time he's fine.</p>	<p>Likes one-to-one with friends</p> <p>Likes one-to-one closeness</p> <p>No difficulties with friendships</p> <p>Not easily upset</p> <p>Fewer angry outbursts</p> <p>Random anger</p> <p>Mostly calm</p>	
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<p>Okay, and is there anything that triggers the angry outbursts or might have done before?</p> <p>I don't know, I mean we always think it's kind of, a lot of the time, he just hasn't had enough sleep. He's one of those classic babies who didn't sleep very much and we still think he's tired. But I would say, yeah the quality and the amount of sleep he's often had the night before has often got a lot to do with the next day.</p> <p>So the angry outbursts even though they're potentially tiredness related, they have decreased.</p> <p>Yeah, yeah.</p> <p>Okay thank you. Does X ever shy away from attention?</p> <p>Erm, I think sometimes he struggles to know how to handle the praise sometimes. Not all the time, but sometimes, and I think y'know, because inevitable after Reception, I started to read loads of things about behaviour, and I didn't really appreciate that praise is quite often better</p>	<p>Angry when tired</p> <p>Sleep affects mood</p> <p>Fewer angry outbursts</p> <p>Struggles with praise</p> <p>Mum became anxious</p>	<p>Not liking attention publicly has come up before, although slightly differently.</p>
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<p>given in private than in public, and I think the assumption that praise, tell everybody if someone's fantastic, tell everybody, but it doesn't always work that way so....When he is great, I'll tell him privately and he takes that a lot better than he does when its public. So I think it might depend for him on what kind of praise it is and where it's being given because yeah, I think sometimes he doesn't know really how to handle some of that.</p> <p>Okay so have you seen any changes in that since September in his ability to handle praise publicly?</p> <p>He's a bit, I just think he's a bit, he looks like a teenager about it all when you start down that road, you just get the kinds of 'alright, god...' and walk out the room, y'know. So it's not terrible reaction, but it's very different to his brother who is quite happy to hear all of it, so I suppose they're just different.</p>	<p>Change in parenting</p> <p>Private praise over public</p> <p>Prefers private praise</p> <p>Struggles with public praise</p> <p>Embarrassed by praise</p> <p>No change</p> <p>Comparison to sibling</p>	
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<p>Okay, thank you. Have you noticed any difference in his patience?</p> <p>I don't know if that isn't a bit sort of mood dependent, sometimes he doesn't seem to have much at all, but it's probably a bit like concentration, sometimes he can be patient, and then y'know he's not very patient with himself, talking about the writing, trying to get him to practice, he's got no, he won't tolerate his own y'know progress, if its slow or if you ask him to have another go, I don't think he's kind of got a lot of patience generally. Depending on the situation, he'll do his best, but I don't think he's naturally patient no. He's quite quick, y'know he runs everywhere, and I just feel that actually he won't have a lot of time for that kind of thing.</p> <p>Okay, and has there been any change in that, or has he always...?</p> <p>No I think he's always been like that.</p>	<p>Patience inconsistent</p> <p>Not very patient</p> <p>Inconsistent patience</p> <p>Little perseverance</p> <p>Dislikes not being good at things</p> <p>Little perseverance</p> <p>Impatient</p> <p>Can be patient if needed</p> <p>Always rushing</p> <p>No difference</p>	
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<p>Okay thank you. Only a few more now. Has there been any change in X's want for attention from you? Has he been any more attention-seeking at all? Or less?</p> <p>No, about the same. I mean I think he's, I think both of the older boys do, are pretty good considering how much time I end up spending with the baby, they're quite good, so I think they understand. So no.</p> <p>Have you noticed any changes in the way that X shows his affection?</p> <p>Yeah he can be quite loving. I came home from work the other day and he came out of the room to give me a hug and told me that he loved me, which doesn't happen a lot, but he does that. I suppose that didn't happen last year I don't think, so I just feel that that's a bit more about some confidence maybe, or just about the relationship and how he's growing up, and some of the things around he doesn't see me that often, or I don't think he does in comparison with some mums, but...so yeah...</p>	<p>No change in attention-seeking</p> <p>Tolerant and sharing</p> <p>No increased expectations</p> <p>Loving</p> <p>Affectionate</p> <p>Infrequent</p> <p>More affectionate</p> <p>Confidence in the relationship</p> <p>Misses mum</p> <p>Change in affection</p>	<p>This is a big recurring theme, and is very obvious change in this case</p>
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<p>Have you noticed any other changes in the way that he communicates and expresses himself?</p> <p>I think he will either...you have to I suppose, he won't volunteer how he feels, you're putting two and two together from his behaviour and you have to ask him what's wrong. He's probably always been like that though to be honest, and as I said before it does seem to depend on his mood. However he is in the morning is it for the rest of the day pretty much.</p> <p>Okay. Would you say that X behaves any differently with you than he does other people?</p> <p>I think he's quite well behaved with other people. With his parents he's a bit more challenging, yeah. With them, I'd suppose I'd rather it was that way round, but when he'll go for tea somewhere and everyone will say how lovely he was, and how great it was to have him, which is all you want to hear really isn't it, you don't want to hear a load of disaster</p>	<p>Doesn't verbalise feelings Shows feelings through behaviour</p> <p>No change</p> <p>Inconsistent mood</p> <p>Challenging at home</p> <p>Polite and well-behaved in public</p>	
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<p>just feels better about the whole thing as well. I mean I think he does, as I said to you before, he knows that there are benefits for him in behaving well, and perhaps beyond the obvious ones. But he is working at it, I don't think it comes naturally to him, but he's doing it so that the most important thing, so I think we just keep talking about it as positively as possible, and well....just hope it continues really. My concern is that the NG, when NG stops....how it will work out, but y'know he's going to be going to another school never mind another class with no NG element in it, so I think we're just going to have to wait and see what's around the corner really.</p> <p>Okay thank you. Are there any other changes that you've noticed that I haven't asked about that you feel are important?</p> <p>Errrr.....no I don't think so. No.</p>	<p>Understand benefits of behaviour</p> <p>Making an effort</p> <p>Remaining positive at home</p> <p>Concern about transition</p> <p>Worries for the future</p> <p>No other changes</p>	
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<p>Okay great, last question then. In your opinion, if it's the group that's impacted on any of these changes, from your perspective, what would you say it is about the group that's made the difference to him?</p> <p>I think it's probably coming out of the classroom, how that happens I'm not sure, I don't know how and how it's talked about I'm not too sure. I don't know if those children feel particularly special or selected and I don't know how that works in comparison with the other kids that aren't in the NG. So I think he does feel different because of it and because he enjoys it, that obviously makes him feel special, so I think it's definitely got something to do with the one-to-one time and attention. He's probably spending time doing things he really enjoys rather than having to just do the tasks that were assigned to all of the children in the class on that day. And well the whole slippers and toast thing I think is very clever because they just y'know, they all kind of, that's when they switch off and socialise a bit. So I just think it's helped...they're doing the same learning in the NG</p>	<p>Out of classroom</p> <p>Uncertain of details about NG</p> <p>Special</p> <p>Feels different</p> <p>Special</p> <p>Enjoys NG Loves one-to-one</p> <p>Enjoys activities more</p> <p>'Switch off' Sociable Academic learning</p>	
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<p>group that the school children would do, but then that socialising element that comes in has just kind of made it. I don't know, it's quite real world in a grown up sense, it's not so rigid like a classroom might be, and I just think he finds it, just nicer. But I think it's probably the, yeah I think there's 6 boys in there with two teachers. I mean if every kid could get that kind of attention at school, I'm sure everybody would be better off but I know it's not possible, but I think that's got a lot to do with it.</p> <p>Thanks very much</p>	<p>Sociable</p> <p>Real world and adult</p> <p>Less rigid</p> <p>Small group</p> <p>Attention</p>	
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APPENDIX 16



Interview 10- AXIAL CODING

	Initial Coding	AXIAL CODING
<p>First question is, could you tell me a little bit about X before he joined the group?</p> <p>He was....I don't think he had a great transition into school. I think inevitably it just changed things at home because we were very anxious about him being anxious and we expected him to love school, and for it to be something he would want to do and somewhere he would want to go. So we found that quite hard....and I think they inevitably feed off you, so I think his first year at school was tricky and it was towards the end of that first year when the nurture group was suggested to us as an option for him. So he's been in the NG for all of this year, and I think he attends it twice a week most weeks. Sorry remind me the question again?</p> <p>Just how was he before he went into the group?</p> <p>I think you get a good idea that he had a difficult first year, I think his behaviour in Reception wasn't great, I think the days were very</p>	<p>Difficult transition</p> <p>Parents anxious</p> <p>Child anxious</p> <p>Expectations not met</p> <p>Blame</p> <p>Difficult year</p> <p>NG as solution</p> <p>Uncertainty</p> <p>Part-time NG</p> <p>Difficult year</p> <p>Behaviour</p>	<p>Expectations vs. reality</p> <p>Parent anxiety vs. child anxiety</p>

<p>unstructured, even in comparison with nursery, and we didn't have any problems with him at nursery, and so I think he just really I don't think he really understood what he was meant to be doing, and I think he was surrounded by a lot of children who already knew each other from the local nursery, and he made friends, he didn't have a problem making friends, but I think he just felt the newness of it all really, and just struggled from that point of view. So, we were towards the end of year one, we had a meeting with the school, and they were quite anxious about his behaviour, and actually suggested he attended a PRU (Pupil Referral Unit) so they wanted him out of the school one day a week there, it was in Amersham, and we really weren't happy about that. He had his brother who was about to come up behind him, we didn't know how we were going to explain any of this stuff to both of them. My husbands a head teacher and that made it hard actually for us, because puts more pressure on in terms of expectations. So we met the school and said we don't want that, we'd just like to ensure he has some kind of support in the classroom if that's appropriate, when he goes into year 1, and then</p>	<p>Little structure</p> <p>Unexpected</p> <p>Lack of understanding around transition</p> <p>Isolated</p> <p>Good friendships</p> <p>'Newness'</p> <p>Struggled with change</p> <p>School were anxious</p> <p>Behaviour difficulties</p> <p>Schools wishes</p> <p>Parents reluctance for PRU</p> <p>Concerned about how children would understand PRU</p> <p>Expectations of parents</p> <p>Embarrassment</p> <p>Pressure on parents</p> <p>Wanted support</p> <p>Appropriate support</p>	<p>Structure vs. unstructured</p> <p>Local nursery established friendships vs. different nursery no friends</p> <p>PRU vs. NG</p> <p>Good parents vs. bad parent</p>
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<p>this is what they did they told us about the NG, and I suppose it completely changed him. I know Year 1 is different and more structured than Reception, but it's the best thing that happened to him. I don't know if that's an intro into the rest of your questions. I mean, he really needed something, and I feel like this was the perfect intervention, it's been fantastic.</p> <p>So you said that he was quite anxious- was that right from the beginning?</p> <p>Erm, I think it probably was. I mean, not anxious in an upset sense, he would mask it I think and get angry if anything. He was just, I think he just felt a bit lost. Just comprehending more about the world at that age and nursery's one thing, but he's been there for several years, and then it's just a change and I don't think he could cope with the change very well, despite what we did, but there you go.</p> <p>And what kind of behaviours was it that he was showing at school that they were worried about?</p>	<p>Different child</p> <p>More structure</p> <p>Perfect intervention</p> <p>Pleased with impact</p> <p>Anxious from the start</p> <p>Angry rather than upset</p> <p>Lack of understanding of the world</p> <p>Change of routine Unable to cope with change</p> <p>Feeling helpless</p>	<p>Structure vs. unstructured</p> <p>Angry vs. upset</p> <p>Settled at nursery vs. new school</p>
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<p>Yes. I think he loves the NG, I think he loves it for a lot of reasons. He's made friends with the other boys that attend the group, he's quite close to them I think, and now tells me about when they're naughty. I still think he's occasionally naughty but nothing like what he was in terms of how the school categorised that. I think he's learnt to modify his behaviour. He understands what good behaviour is in school. I don't know if that's an objective of the group, but he understands that there are expectations because he's told us that it's quite hard work being at school in that sense because he knows he has to do things in a certain way. He knows he gets praise and he knows it makes people happy, but I think he'd just rather be himself. He loves the teachers, he loves the NG teachers. He loves what they do. I think he just loves the whole intimacy of the atmosphere because he's quite a serious boy, and he likes to read and I think he does like to talk to his friends, so I think he'll just take that into the classroom then. He's got a great class teacher who has really encouraged him with his reading, and I think understands him perhaps a bit better than the teacher he had in Reception. She's just got more of a connection with</p>	<p>Enjoys NG</p> <p>Friendships</p> <p>Talks about friends</p> <p>Less naughty</p> <p>Learnt to change</p> <p>Better understanding of context</p> <p>Uncertainty about NG</p> <p>Difficulty adapting to rules</p> <p>Feels he is no longer himself</p> <p>Relationships with staff</p> <p>Intimacy of atmosphere</p> <p>Serious nature</p> <p>Enjoys socialising</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Big impact of class teacher</p> <p>Good relationship</p>	<p>Less 'naughty' after NG vs. more 'naughty' before NG</p> <p>Understanding of good behaviour vs. less understanding before</p> <p>Being himself vs. behaving well</p> <p>Intimacy in NG vs. less intimacy in classroom</p>
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<p>him, and so that coupled with the structure in the day has just meant that I think he just enjoys it all a lot more. He looks forward to the NG though, I'd say he loves NG more than he loves school, which is part of my concern actually about the NG, I don't know if we're going to get on to that? I'll stop there.</p> <p>Okay, that's great. So you were talking about him coming home and talking about the NG. Does he come home and talk about the NG quite a lot?</p> <p>Only if I prompt him, if I ask him. So he'll talk about the time on the carpet and the stories and they put slippers on, they put these little sock slippers on and they make toast so it's all very cosy, and they're in a little cottage round the side of the school. I think he just loves the whole thing, I think he feels special. So he will tell me about y'know how many pieces of toast he had, but I have to say 'how was the NG today?' and that's what we kind of get, he talks about the nice bits like the bits I just described, and err...I think those are his favourite days of the week when he goes.</p>	<p>More structure</p> <p>Enjoys school</p> <p>Loves the NG</p> <p>Concerned about transition out of NG</p> <p>Communicates about school when asked</p> <p>Talks about NG</p> <p>Feels special</p> <p>Not spontaneous conversation</p> <p>Talks about nice things</p> <p>Favourite days</p>	<p>Good relationship with teacher vs. no connection with previous teacher</p> <p>Loves NG vs. loves school less</p> <p>Cosy in NG vs. less so in class</p> <p>Special in NG vs. not special class</p> <p>Enjoys NG vs. enjoys school less</p>
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<p>Have you noticed any change in the amount that he communicates with you about school since he started the NG?</p> <p>Yeah, he will talk about school more, the children at school, and his relationships more. He wasn't, that first year of Reception, when it wasn't going well, he didn't talk about school at all so I think he probably expected conversations to be quite negative because they were around his behaviour y'know you had to be a bit careful with that. Just you wanted school to be a positive experience and it seemed to feel that lots of the conversations were about poor behaviour and what we're going to do and why is this happening y'know.....</p> <p>Would you say that since starting the NG, that it's had any impact on the way that you are with him at home?</p> <p>Erm, I think we're just the same probably with him at home. Yeah I can imagine him being similar but if you sit together on the sofa he's a similar boy to how he probably is in the NG when he's got that bit of down time, and little close community and he's reading or whatever, or watching a bit</p>	<p>Increased communication about school</p> <p>Avoiding negative conversations</p> <p>Wanted school to be positive</p> <p>Too much emphasis on negative aspects of school</p> <p>No impact on behaviour management at home</p>	<p>Talks about school more since NG vs. talked less about school before</p> <p>School negative place vs. school as a positive place</p>
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<p>doesn't really practice, he doesn't like his writing which I think is part of it but y'know, so he does do plenty of tasks where he concentrates, but only the ones he enjoys. Not the ones we're trying to make him get on with as well.</p> <p>So there's not been any real change in the amount that he can concentrate and pay attention?</p> <p>He probably watches less television than he used to, and when I say that, I try to manage it a little bit but then quite often I find he comes home from school and they're completely exhausted, especially if they've done some kind of club afterwards, and they just want to watch a bit of TV, have some dinner and then have a bath, so y'know they do watch a bit of TV, they used to watch more and I think, I wondered if that was zapping some of his concentration. But he's doing less of that, and probably more concentrating on things that have a higher value in terms of helping his education and helping him to learn.</p> <p>Thank you. How would you say that X copes with unfamiliar situations?</p>	<p>Some rivalry?</p> <p>Concentrates on activities he enjoys</p> <p>Watches less TV</p> <p>Restricted viewing at home</p> <p>Passive activity when tired</p> <p>Watching less TV</p>	<p>Concentrates when he enjoys task vs. not when he doesn't like the task</p> <p>Watches less TV since NG vs. more before</p> <p>Less TV vs. more education</p>
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<p>I think he's fine generally. He doesn't y'know, given all that happened in his first year at school and how I've described him and his behaviour y'know, I would expect to put him in a situation with lots of kids he doesn't know and he would struggle, but he doesn't struggle with that. He's quite happy to talk to children he doesn't know and to make friends. Does that answer your question?</p> <p>Yeah it does, that's absolutely fine, thank you.</p> <p>Yeah he's quite sociable.</p> <p>Okay, would you say that with what happened when he first started school, had you seen anything like that in him before where he's been anxious about starting something new in an unfamiliar situation?</p> <p>No, I mean, I don't know if he's felt it and doesn't talk about it because I'm not sure he's very open about how he feels until he blows. I think he bottles things up and it goes off...there's a tipping point, but no not particularly.</p> <p>How would you say that he interacts with unfamiliar adults? Is he quite happy or does he tend to cling to you, or...?</p>	<p>Deals well with unfamiliar situations</p> <p>Good social skills</p> <p>Good friendships</p> <p>Sociable</p> <p>Not communicative when unhappy</p> <p>Has outbursts</p> <p>Not anxious in general</p>	
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<p>He's not clingy, I think he will...I think like a lot of children they work the grown up out quite quickly and if he thinks they're not interested he's not interested. There are definitely adults that he's got good relationships with who I think are interested in him and talk to him but I think he just hasn't. He'll work out whether they're worth spending time with and go from there really.</p> <p>So he's not shy?</p> <p>No, I don't think so, no.</p> <p>Lovely thank you. How would you describe the relationship between X and everyone else at home?</p> <p>Erm good. I think he's got good relationships with his parents. His dad definitely wears the trousers. I won't say it's 'wait til your dad gets home' but that's what K thinks I say. But K is a head teacher and I think X understands what that means, so it's like having a head teacher at home. Well it was quite interesting when his behaviour wasn't so good at school. That was an interesting time. I think he's got a normal relationship with his brothers, he's quite loving to his baby brother, but y'know they like to</p>	<p>Not clingy</p> <p>Analyses adults</p> <p>Gets on well with adults who show an interest</p> <p>Not shy</p> <p>Good relationships at home</p> <p>Disciplined by dad</p> <p>Strict at home</p> <p>Difficult for parents when behaviour was problematic</p>	<p>Dad strict vs. mum less so</p>
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<p>excited about that, so I think he realises why I don't do it all the time, because I'm at work, but I think he's a bit sorry about that, but so am I so I sort of say 'I'm sorry I can't, I'd like to but I can't do that this week, or until Thursday or whatever and he's quite understanding about that.</p> <p>With him asking you about that, has that been a recent thing?</p> <p>Yeah, I think it's probably quite recent, and probably yeah and because we have an au pair as well, so I think for the boys it's quite straight forward, it's like well, she comes, why can't you come. Y'know until you explain but they understand, they're pretty good about it most of the time. They don't really, they don't freak out about it or get really cross or upset, they just sort of...okay.</p> <p>Other than that, would you say that X's expectations of you, or the demands that he makes of you have changed in any way?</p> <p>No...no, I mean he's quite mature in that sense I think he understands there are swings and roundabouts and that we try and do our best for them, and we always talk to them about why things are the way that they are, so it's pretty grown up like that.</p>	<p>High expectations of mums time</p> <p>Guilt about time</p> <p>Understanding</p> <p>Higher expectations</p> <p>Lack understanding</p> <p>Understanding</p> <p>Accepting</p> <p>Mature</p> <p>No change in expectations</p> <p>Understanding and accepting</p>	<p>Work commitments vs. parenting</p> <p>Higher expectations of mum since NG vs. lower before</p>
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<p>Thank you, how is he with staying overnight at other people's houses?</p> <p>Does he ever do that?</p> <p>No, I'm sure he'd quite like to actually. We haven't done that no, we're not overly protective at all. They've not been away from us in 6 and a half years, we haven't had a night away from them...and we have been talking about when will we do that because it would be quite nice for us, and so erm, no. They've stayed away from home with friends, but we've been there, as it's been more of like a family occasion, so no he's not had sleepovers like that.</p> <p>Right thank you. Would you describe X as quite independent?</p> <p>Yeah</p> <p>And has he always been?</p> <p>Err.....I'd say no. I'd say up until the age of about 4, I don't think...he would always cry at nursery drop off, he never really got used to that. And then he did all of a sudden, erm, but I thought he didn't look very happy about it. He never kind of skipped into nursery. But yeah, he is fine, but I'd say early on no he was quite clingy when he was younger.</p>	<p>No opportunity</p> <p>Not protective</p> <p>Always with parents</p> <p>Independent</p> <p>More independent</p> <p>Separation anxiety</p> <p>Less clingy now</p>	<p>More independent vs. less independent before</p>
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<p>attention to, y'know, he is a bit more confident. He can definitely talk about what he can do.</p> <p>Okay thank you. Would you say that there's been any changes in X's assertiveness?</p> <p>I think he's always been quite assertive. Yeah. Well, and that's the difference isn't it, to be assertive and not aggressive. I think he can, I think he flies off the handle a bit too quickly, even still, so he's still assertive and not assertive in the best way, which is all part of what they've been I suppose looking at in the NG and what we constantly work with at home, so no, always been quite assertive.</p> <p>So still assertive, but maybe less aggressive now?</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>Okay thank you. Would you say that X ever seems anxious, other than in the first year of school?</p> <p>No not really, other than some of the things we already talked about, around perhaps he'd like me to take him to school, or he'd like me to pick him up and sometimes that comes out, but I think no generally, he wants</p>	<p>Confidence</p> <p>Positive about self Good self-esteem</p> <p>Always been assertive</p> <p>Differentiation between assertive and aggressive</p> <p>Developed through Nurture and home</p> <p>Partnership between home and school</p> <p>Less aggressive No difference in assertiveness</p> <p>Higher expectations of mum</p> <p>Generally not anxious</p>	<p>Less aggressive vs. more assertive</p> <p>Higher expectations of mum vs. lower before NG</p>
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<p>to go to the after-school club, he wants to have play dates with his friends, he wants to do most things, so I don't think he feels that anxiety.</p> <p>Okay brilliant, so just something that happened in Reception, but now not anymore.</p> <p>Not anymore, and I do think that the NG has had a huge beneficial impact, yeah.</p> <p>Lovely thank you. How would you describe X's friendships?</p> <p>I think he's got, he's quite close to a smaller number of friends rather than...he hasn't got a great big gang, and I think that when he plays its one-to-one, maybe one-to-two. There in a smaller group. There's some talk about a best friend, but he talks about several friends, but I think he compartmentalises them, y'know I think he likes one-to-one, which I think demonstrates itself in every area of his life really, he quite likes a close relationship.</p> <p>Okay thank you. Has he ever had difficulty that you know of initiating friendships?</p> <p>No</p>	<p>Out-going and sociable</p> <p>Not anxious</p> <p>Less anxious since NG Huge impact of NG</p> <p>Few close friends</p> <p>Prefers to play in a small group</p> <p>Likes one-to-one with friends Likes one-to-one closeness</p> <p>No difficulties with friendships</p>	<p>Less anxious since NG vs. more anxious before</p> <p>Fewer quality friends vs. big gang</p> <p>Likes one-to-one vs. less happy in big groups</p>
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<p>Okay thank you. Does X ever shy away from attention?</p> <p>Erm, I think sometimes he struggles to know how to handle the praise sometimes. Not all the time, but sometimes, and I think y'know, because inevitable after Reception, I started to read loads of things about behaviour, and I didn't really appreciate that praise is quite often better given in private than in public, and I think the assumption that praise, tell everybody if someone's fantastic, tell everybody, but it doesn't always work that way so....When he is great, I'll tell him privately and he takes that a lot better than he does when its public. So I think it might depend for him on what kind of praise it is and where it's being given because yeah, I think sometimes he doesn't know really how to handle some of that.</p> <p>Okay so have you seen any changes in that since September in his ability to handle praise publicly?</p> <p>He's a bit, I just think he's a bit, he looks like a teenager about it all when you start down that road, you just get the kinds of 'alright, god...' and walk</p>	<p>Struggles with praise</p> <p>Mum became anxious</p> <p>Change in parenting</p> <p>Private praise over public</p> <p>Prefers private praise</p> <p>Struggles with public praise</p> <p>Embarrassed by praise</p>	<p>Prefers private praise vs. embarrassed by public praise</p> <p>Embarrassed vs. angry</p>
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<p>Okay thank you. Only a few more now. Has there been any change in X's want for attention from you? Has he been any more attention-seeking at all? Or less?</p> <p>No, about the same. I mean I think he's, I think both of the older boys do, are pretty good considering how much time I end up spending with the baby, they're quite good, so I think they understand. So no.</p> <p>Have you noticed any changes in the way that X shows his affection?</p> <p>Yeah he can be quite loving. I came home from work the other day and he came out of the room to give me a hug and told me that he loved me, which doesn't happen a lot, but he does that. I suppose that didn't happen last year I don't think, so I just feel that that's a bit more about some confidence maybe, or just about the relationship and how he's growing up, and some of the things around he doesn't see me that often, or I don't think he does in comparison with some mums, but...so yeah...</p> <p>Have you noticed any other changes in the way that he communicates and expresses himself?</p>	<p>No change in attention-seeking</p> <p>Tolerant and sharing</p> <p>No increased expectations</p> <p>Loving</p> <p>Affectionate</p> <p>Infrequent</p> <p>More affectionate</p> <p>Confidence in the relationship</p> <p>Misses mum</p> <p>Change in affection</p>	<p>More affectionate vs. less affectionate before</p>
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<p>I think he will either...you have to I suppose, he won't volunteer how he feels, you're putting two and two together from his behaviour and you have to ask him what's wrong. He's probably always been like that though to be honest, and as I said before it does seem to depend on his mood. However he is in the morning is it for the rest of the day pretty much.</p> <p>Okay. Would you say that X behaves any differently with you than he does other people?</p> <p>I think he's quite well behaved with other people. With his parents he's a bit more challenging, yeah. With them, I'd suppose I'd rather it was that way round, but when he'll go for tea somewhere and everyone will say how lovely he was, and how great it was to have him, which is all you want to hear really isn't it, you don't want to hear a load of disaster stories. So, no I think he probably pushes his boundaries a bit more at home.</p> <p>They probably all do don't they.</p> <p>Mmmm</p>	<p>Doesn't verbalise feelings</p> <p>Shows feelings through behaviour</p> <p>No change</p> <p>Inconsistent mood</p> <p>Challenging at home</p> <p>Polite and well-behaved in public</p> <p>Pushes boundaries at home</p>	<p>Well-behaved with other people vs. pushes boundaries with parents</p>
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<p>Would you say that the changes that you've noticed in X have impacted on your relationship with him? Like his confidence and him getting into trouble less at school, and being more affectionate?</p> <p>(Pauses) Errr....I don't know really how to answer that because I think as much as his first year at school upset me, I was trying to stay a bit positive about how we could handle it and y'know I mean it did happen, of course it did, that he would have a bad day at school and all he's had is bad feedback all day, negative feedback, and then he comes home and he gets it all again. I used to try quite hard to not do that, but yeah it didn't always happen, so I think inevitably, he's better at school, so all that negativity isn't there anymore, which makes it a bit easier and perhaps he just feels better about the whole thing as well. I mean I think he does, as I said to you before, he knows that there are benefits for him in behaving well, and perhaps beyond the obvious ones. But he is working at it, I don't think it comes naturally to him, but he's doing it so that the most important thing, so I think we just keep talking about it as positively as possible, and well....just hope it continues really. My concern is that the</p>	<p>Uncomfortable?</p> <p>Positive at home</p> <p>Negative at school</p> <p>Tried to remain positive at home</p> <p>Less negativity at home now</p> <p>Relationship easier as he's happier</p> <p>Understand benefits of behaviour</p> <p>Making an effort</p> <p>Remaining positive at home</p>	<p>Positive at home vs. negative at school</p> <p>More positive relationship now vs. more negative before</p>
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<p>NG, when NG stops....how it will work out, but y'know he's going to be going to another school never mind another class with no NG element in it, so I think we're just going to have to wait and see what's around the corner really.</p> <p>Okay thank you. Are there any other changes that you've noticed that I haven't asked about that you feel are important?</p> <p>Errrr.....no I don't think so. No.</p> <p>Okay great, last question then. In your opinion, if it's the group that's impacted on any of these changes, from your perspective, what would you say it is about the group that's made the difference to him?</p> <p>I think it's probably coming out of the classroom, how that happens I'm not sure, I don't know how and how it's talked about I'm not too sure. I don't know if those children feel particularly special or selected and I don't know how that works in comparison with the other kids that aren't in the NG. So I think he does feel different because of it and because he enjoys it, that obviously makes him feel special, so I think it's definitely got something to do with the one-to-one time and attention. He's probably</p>	<p>Concern about transition</p> <p>Worries for the future</p> <p>No other changes</p> <p>Out of classroom</p> <p>Uncertain of details about NG</p> <p>Special</p> <p>Feels different</p> <p>Special</p> <p>Enjoys NG Loves one-to-one</p>	<p>Special in NG vs. less special in class</p> <p>Enjoys NG vs. enjoys school less</p> <p>Attention one-to-one vs. less attention in class</p>
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<p>spending time doing things he really enjoys rather than having to just do the tasks that were assigned to all of the children in the class on that day.</p> <p>And well the whole slippers and toast thing I think is very clever because they just y'know, they all kind of, that's when they switch off and socialise a bit. So I just think it's helped...they're doing the same learning in the NG group that the school children would do, but then that socialising element that comes in has just kind of made it. I don't know, it's quite real world in a grown up sense, it's not so rigid like a classroom might be, and I just think he finds it, just nicer. But I think it's probably the, yeah I think there's 6 boys in there with two teachers. I mean if every kid could get that kind of attention at school, I'm sure everybody would be better off but I know it's not possible, but I think that's got a lot to do with it.</p> <p>Thanks very much</p>	<p>Enjoys activities more</p> <p>'Switch off'</p> <p>Sociable</p> <p>Academic learning</p> <p>Sociable</p> <p>Real world and adult</p> <p>Less rigid</p> <p>Small group</p> <p>Attention</p>	<p>Choice vs. control</p> <p>Sociable vs. less sociable in class</p> <p>Less rigid in NG vs. more rigid in class</p>
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APPENDIX 17



INTERVIEW 10

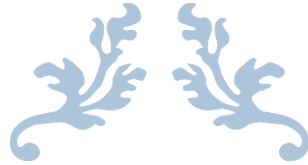
SELECTIVE CODING

WHAT THE AXIAL CODING TELLS US...

Before the NG, X was in trouble a lot at school for being aggressive and disruptive. Mum felt this was due to the anxiety that he felt on transitioning into a new setting where he was separated from his friends from nursery. Since starting the Nurture Group, he has gained confidence, become assertive rather than aggressive, become more independent, is happier at school, and therefore has got in trouble less. This has meant that home interactions are also more positive and X has become more expressive with his affection for his mum. He also is more communicative about school, particularly the things that he is good at, and his voices his desires more for mum to take him to and from school rather than the au pair. Mum felt that the changes in him had been driven by him feeling special, being able to get more one-to-one attention, as well as the intimacy and cosiness of the Nurture room. However, she also voiced that she was unsure of the amount of time that he spent in Nurture and what the aims of it were. Despite this, she was very vocal in her views that the Nurture group had had a positive impact on her son.

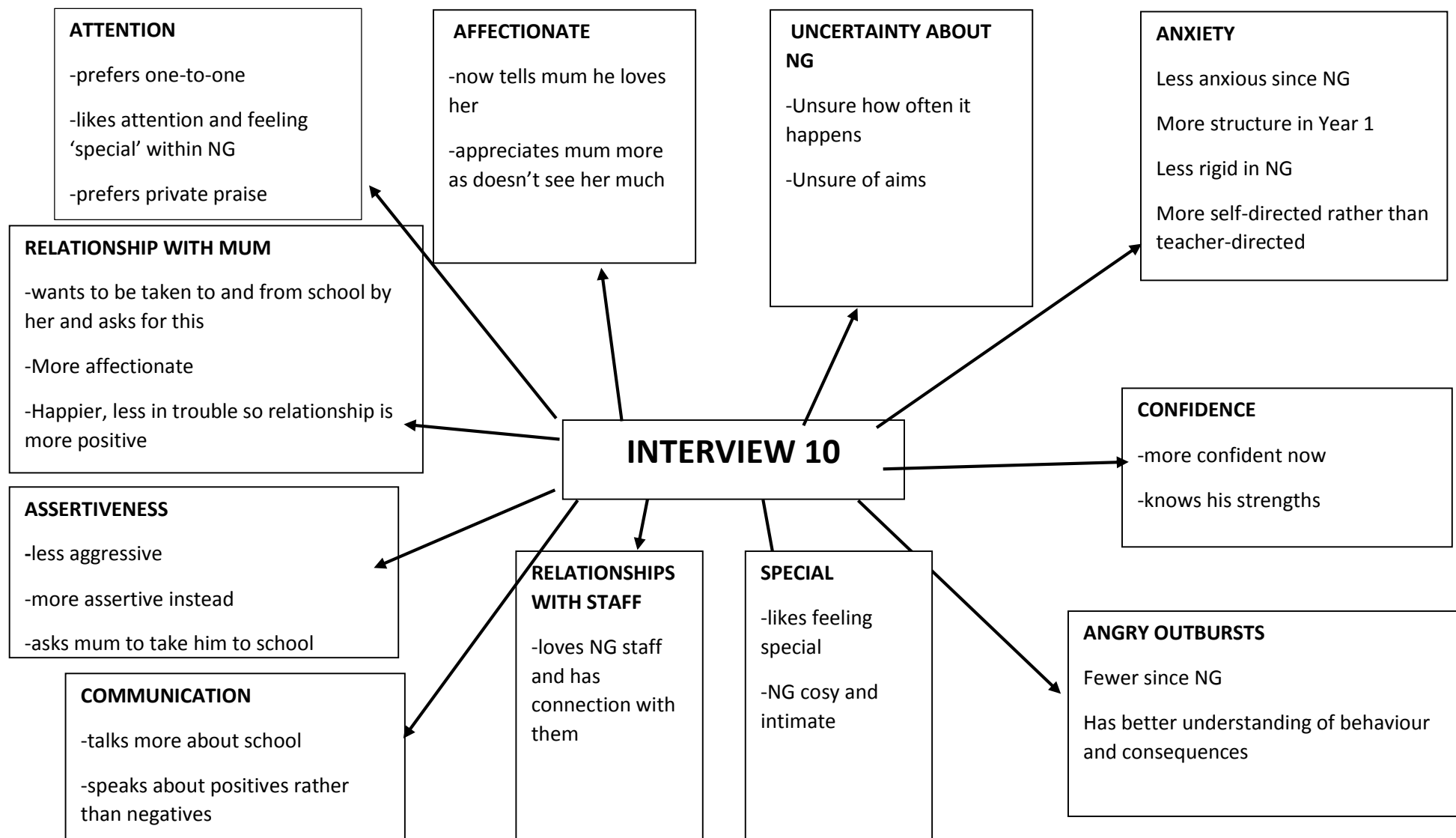
CORE CONCEPTUAL CATEGORY

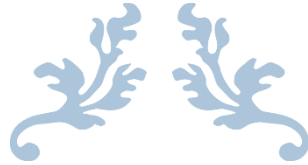
Nurture groups make children feel more confident in their relationships with their parents, making them more affectionate and allowing them to communicate their expectations of their parent. NGs also reduce negative behaviours in class, allowing interactions at home to be more positive.



APPENDIX 18







APPENDIX 19



Interview 10- Reflection

This interview was conducted in the morning with the mother of the child. The mother had been very enthusiastic about taking part and the NG leader was eager that she be involved as she had already fed back to them how pleased she was with the NG.

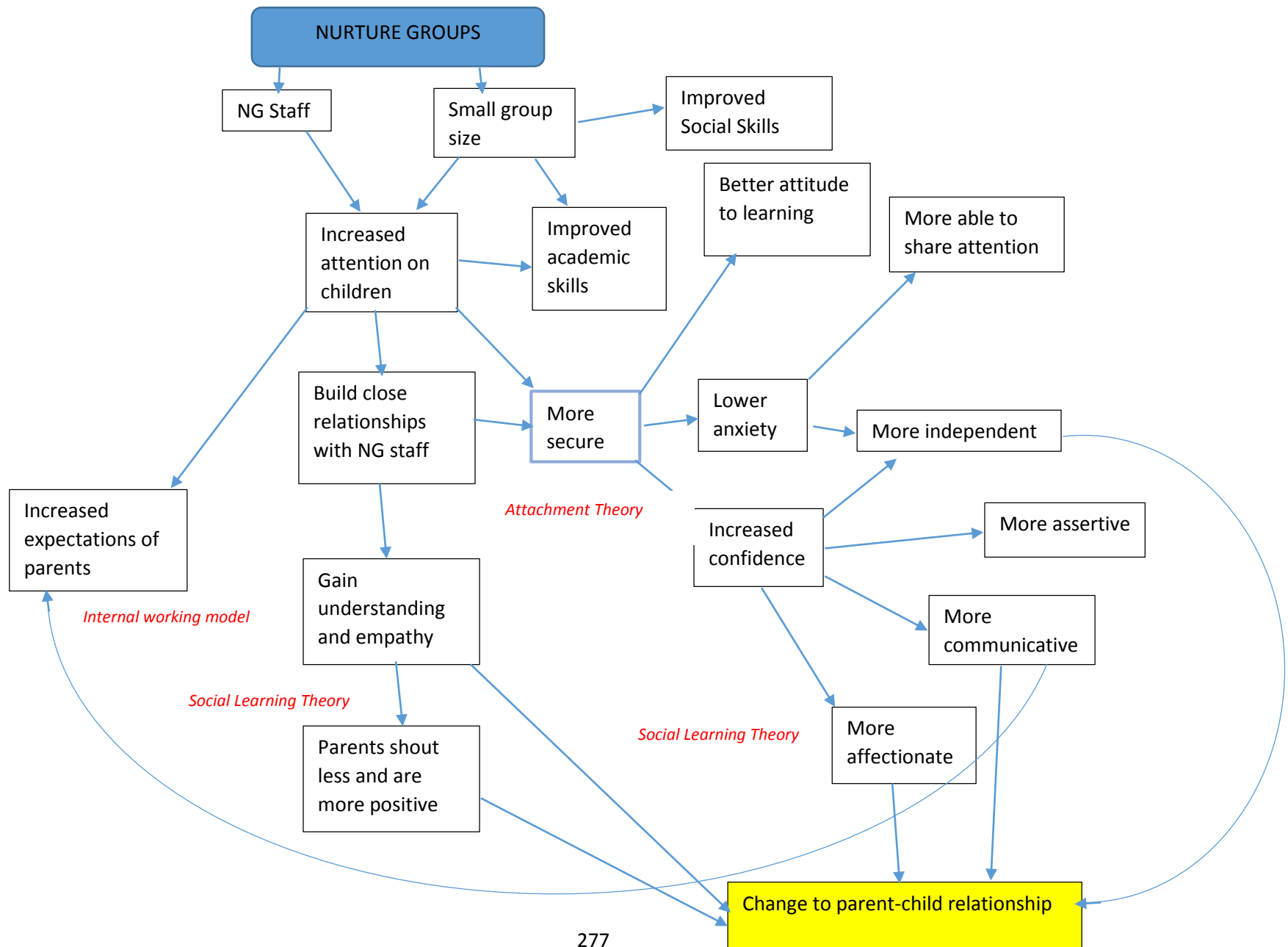
The mum spoke very eloquently and gave a lot of information very freely- she seemed to talk very frankly and honestly to me. She admitted that they had felt pressure about the behaviour issues because of her husband's role as a head teacher, however it was clear from the way that she spoke that she kept the best interests of her child at heart.

It particularly interested me that again the child was requesting that mum take him to school more. I wondered whether this was something to do with expectations, or being more communicative about what they want, or more confident in the relationship and feeling closer to mum?



APPENDIX 20

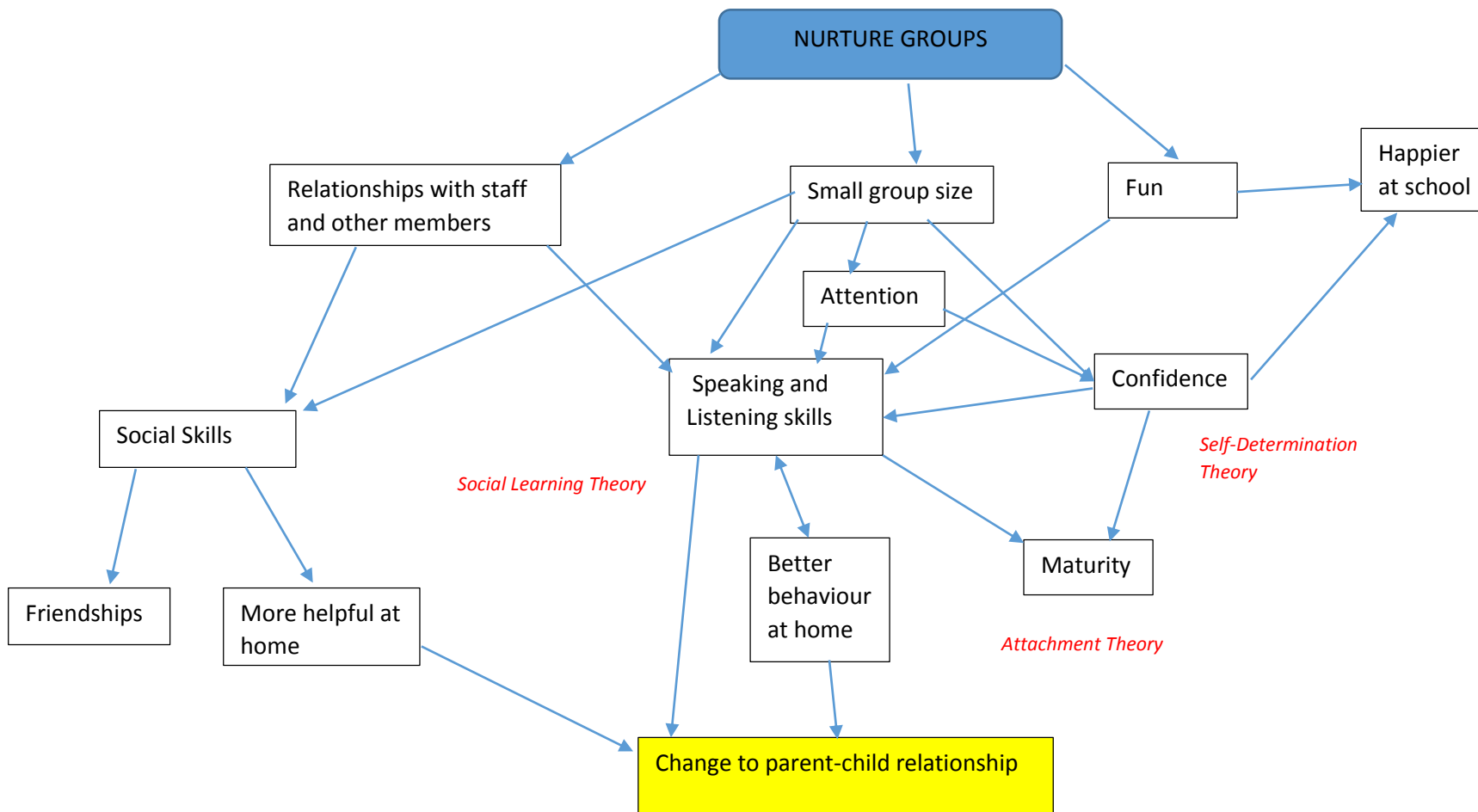






APPENDIX 21







APPENDIX 22



Nurture groups and parents

ALI PYLE (TRAINEE EP)

1

Parents

Interventions such as Nurture are most effective when parents are involved and on-board

Challenges to this...

Parents not fully understanding the purpose of nurture

Parents not aware of the desired outcomes of nurture

The term 'nurture'...

2

What do parents think of Nurture?

To date there has been very little research looking at parents perceptions of Nurture, and the changes that they notice in their children as a result of Nurture.

My research...

How do Nurture Groups impact on children at home?

How do parents explain the changes in their child?

How do parents explain the changes in their relationship with their child?

How do children explain changes in themselves and their relationship with their parents?

3

What is the research?...

Interviewed 10 parents from NG's in Y (inc. 2 from x)

3 Focus Groups (1 of which was with the Year 2's at x)

4

What have I found out so far...?

Improvements noticed by parents include....

- Less anxious
- Less easily upset
- More open/ outgoing
- Less upset by confrontation
- Lower stranger anxiety
- More confidence
- More assertive
- More communicative

5

What have I found out so far...?

Changes in their relationships...

Fewer outbursts

Children were less clingy/ more independent

Children expected more one-to-one time

6

What have I found out so far...?

How parents explained the changes....

Relationships with NG staff

Feeling exclusive and special

Having a sense of belonging and acceptance

Increased attention

7

Conclusions

Parents LOVE Nurture!

Many parents were only looking for the B in SEBD...they need to know what to look for so that it can be supported at home

Parents ALL saw huge differences in their children

Nurture creates happier, more secure children and this has an impact on the whole family

8



APPENDIX 23



Executive Summary of Research

Exploring Parents' and Children's Perceptions of Nurture Groups and the ways in which they impact upon Parent-Child Relationships

Dear _____,

Thank you very much for your schools participation in this research in the Summer term 2013, undertaken by Ali Pyle (X Educational Psychology Service), as part of a Doctoral Thesis undertaken at the University of East London. It is my pleasure to share the findings with you and it is hoped that this will assist you in demonstrating the effectiveness of your Nurture Group, and the impact that it is having not only on the children, but also on their families.

Introduction

This study sought to explore the impact of Nurture Groups on the relationship between the parent and their child. This was explored through triangulation of the parents' perceptions, and the child's perspective following the intervention. Prior to this research, little was known about the impact of Nurture Groups on the children at home, particularly from the view of the child themselves. The implications of the findings were considered in relation to how Nurture Group staff might best involve parents, how parents can support the intervention at home, and how Educational Psychologists can best support schools with this process.

Methodology

Ten parents were selected from five Nurture Groups from across X. These parents were interviewed, and the data was analysed for emerging themes. In addition to this, three focus groups were held at three different schools with groups of Nurture Group children. The parents and children were both asked questions about their views of Nurture Groups, how they feel it has impacted on them/ their child, and how it has changed the parent-child relationship.

Findings

The main findings are summarised below;

- Overall, parents and children spoke positively about the Nurture Groups and their impact

- The parents perceived their children as having better social skills, improved academic skills, lower anxiety, being more empathetic and understanding, increased confidence, and a better attitude to school, following the intervention.
- They also perceived there to be a change in their interactions at home, with the children being more communicative, more affectionate, more independent, and more assertive.
- The only negative effect, as some of the parents were concerned, was that it meant that the children expected more quality time with their parents at home, which they felt was not always possible.
- The children also felt that they were more mature as a result of the Nurture Group, and better behaved at home.
- Both the parents and children highlighted the relationship with the Nurture Group staff, and the small group size as being the key factors in the success of the Nurture Group intervention. The children also identified the fun that they have in the Nurture Group as being important.
- The interviews also unveiled that some parents knew very little about the Nurture Groups, their aims, and the expected outcomes. This meant that some of them were unwilling to attribute changes in their children to the intervention because they were unaware of the purpose of the groups.

Implications

This research shows that the parents and children involved in your Nurture Group hold the intervention in high regard and have perceived there to be changes not only in their child, but also the interactions between the parent and child.

The main implications of this research for school staff, is the importance of working with parents to promote these changes at home, as well as in school. In order to do this effectively and to fully appreciate the impact of the Nurture Groups, it is essential that parents are fully informed about the aims of the intervention and the changes that they can expect to see. Ideally parents should be involved at the initial planning stage to form a collaborative relationship before starting the group. It may be helpful at this stage to also ensure that all of the likely outcomes of the intervention are highlighted in the information leaflet given to parents. Following this, parents should be encouraged to monitor the progress that they see at home, so that this can be communicated with school and any small successes celebrated together.

Dissemination of Findings

The findings have been written up anonymously for a thesis project for a Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology at the University of East London. They will also be disseminated anonymously in the following ways;

- To Nurture practitioners through presentations at both the County Nurture Network Day, and also the training day for new schools setting up Nurture Groups.
- At the Annual UEL Research Conference in July 2014
- The research will be written up as a study for publication in an appropriate journal.
- It is also an aim to write a book for parents of children in Nurture Groups, based upon this research and other research in this area. The purpose would be to fully inform parents of the background and aims of Nurture Groups, as well as the theory behind them. It is envisaged that it would be a book containing practical resources that parents could use with their children to facilitate them spending quality time with their children, as well as reinforcing the skills developing through the Nurture Group intervention.

Thank you once again for your involvement in this piece of research. I hope that it reassures you of the fantastic job that you are doing and the impact that your Nurture Group is having on the families involved.

Yours Sincerely,

Ali Pyle