The University of Sheffield
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Thesis for Doctor of Educational and Child Psychology Course

The Impact of Nurture Group Interventions: Parental Involvement and Perceptions

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to explore parents'[1] experiences of part-time nurture groups within three primary schools in a large urban authority in the North of England. Six parents were interviewed using a semi-structured narrative approach, to explore their experiences, perceptions, expectations and feelings about the nurture group intervention. A discussion of the findings using interpretative phenomenological analysis offers insights into the nature of relationships between parents, nurture group staff and children, and the impact of the intervention and its influence on parents' behaviour. Key themes which emerged from the data concerned the parents' relationships with nurture group staff. They perceived staff to be friendly, caring and trustworthy. They were encouraged by the individual, personalised attention given to their child and felt positive about the holistic, caring nature of the intervention. The gains that parents perceived their child had made included a positive attitude to school, engagement with learning and the development of constructive relationships with school staff and children. Key areas of concern centred on aspects of withdrawal/re-integration and limited information sharing with parents, and communication between nurture group staff and teachers. Findings were related to the theoretical notion of 'educational attachment' and collaborative models of parent partnership. The study concludes by identifying ways in which schools could further develop effective collaborative practice with parents of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Future research issues are also highlighted.

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[1] Throughout this study 'parent' means any adult who has the legal responsibility of looking after the child

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

The interest in nurture group provision has advanced steadily over the last ten years. The current resurgence of interest in nurture groups can perhaps be accounted for by perceptions of the rising number of social and emotional behaviour difficulties and mental health problems among children and young people. Added to this are the effects of pressures of standard assessment test results, league tables and conflicting values of inclusive education. Such circumstances could be likely to exacerbate the difficulties which are experienced by children with social, emotional and behavioural needs, some of whom may also be at risk of exclusion and require an innovative approach to early intervention.

Education reports such as Learning Behaviour: Lessons Learned (Steer 2009, p.51-2) have recognised the effectiveness of the nurture group approach and more recently, OFSTED (2009, p. 20-22) highlighted nurture groups as a successful strategy for reducing exclusions in young children. The success of nurture groups has also been featured in the media, in the Channel 4 television documentary Dispatches (Willis 2009) and newspaper articles such as TES Cymru (Healy 2009) and The Independent (Wilce 2007).

Background to the research proposal

My personal interest in the nurture group intervention came about during my first year of training as an Educational Psychologist (EP). I worked with children who were involved in the 'Rainbow Room' nurture group and met the nurture group staff and some of the parents. I was keen to learn about the approach and saw first hand how staff implemented nurture group principles. I became curious as to what parents' felt about their child being in the group, what they knew about the intervention and whether it impacted on their relationship with their child. I wondered about the extent of their participation and the effect that it may have had on their parenting skills. This was the beginning of my interest in the nurture group approach for children who were at risk of exclusion and the starting point for the research proposal for this doctoral thesis (see Appendix 1).

Thesis chapters

The review of the research literature on nurture groups in chapter two presents a critical perspective on a number of key studies in the area. There is also consideration of current government policy on parent participation in schools. The comparative lack of evidence concerning the involvement of parents in the key research studies cited, motivated me to collaborate with parents using a qualitative approach, to explore the intervention from a parental perspective.

The key research issues and questions are outlined in chapter three of the thesis. This includes what parents felt about the referral and the decision making process; what they knew about the intervention; what their expectations were and the impact it had on their child and family. Furthermore, I was interested in finding out whether parents felt that they had been supported by school staff or other professionals and how this could be improved.

The methodology chapter details the rationale for using in-depth interviews with six parents from three schools, to elicit their views in detail. The semi-structured narrative approach which was used to collect data facilitated opportunities for parents to tell their story, including what they felt to be important, with prompts derived from the key research questions.

Given the research questions that I wanted to explore and the logistics of time and work load, I think that the methodological approach that I took was 'fit for purpose'. Yet I acknowledge that there were issues of equity in the interviewing relationship and that they were affected by my social identity and the relationship that I had with the participants. I acknowledge this formally in the 'reflexive notes' which are written in italics and are presented in boxes to separate them from the text.

The analysis of the findings in chapter five, presents my interpretations of the meanings that parents have for their experiences. This includes the superordinate and subordinate themes which emerged from the data. Direct quotes from the transcripts support the analysis and interpretations that I construct.

In the discussion in chapter six I consider the interpretation of the findings in relation to theoretical models of attachment and parent partnership. I discuss the implications for practice and outline ways in which nurture group staff and other professionals could support parents.

In chapter seven areas for further research are then considered in light of the limitations of this study. Finally, the closing words conclude the thesis with my personal reflections on the research.

A fundamental part of this research study was my reflective and reflexive approach. I thought carefully about how I engaged and communicated with the participants and how I wrote about them. The qualitative nature of the study, which details my personal reflexions and the impact of my theoretical position, necessitated writing in the first person. A more academic third person literary style is used elsewhere.

My reflexions demonstrate how my background, prior knowledge, motivation and previous experiences impact on the interpretations of the data. The reader is then free to make informed decisions as to whether they value the interpretation, based on their own constructions of what they have read in the report.

CHAPTER TWO: Review of the Literature

Introduction

Research studies have evaluated many of the recent nurture group projects in various local authorities in England and Scotland e.g. Cooper and Whitebread (2007), Sanders (2007), Scott and Lee (2009) and Gerrard (2005). These studies confirm the effectiveness of the intervention and describe many of the key factors which contribute to its success. Researchers have attempted to look at different aspects of the intervention by focusing on using quantitative and qualitative measures with staff, children, and parents, to determine the success factors and highlight proposals for future research into nurture group provision.

The parents' contribution to the body of research on the nurture group intervention has been limited, perhaps due to the educational context of the intervention. Studies have tended to be evaluative and within-child focused, and use quantitative measures such as the Boxhall Profile (Bennathan 1998), the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman 1997), self-esteem and self-rating scale questionnaires.

There are very few research studies which specifically address the involvement of parents in nurture groups, although all the literature pays lip service when stating how fundamental good home-school links are to the success of the intervention. This literature review will analyse the research in order to evaluate the literature, highlight current issues and offer suggestions for further research to extend current knowledge for effective nurture group practice.

Nurture Groups: A Historical Perspective

Nurture groups were first set up in the 1970's by Marjorie Boxhall (Bennathan and Boxhall 1996), an EP who worked in the Inner London Education Authority. She introduced the intervention in response to what she saw as the growing number of children who were unable to work at an age appropriate level in school. In this respect

the concept was simple: devise an appropriate educational environment which was matched to the child's level of functioning, rather than expecting the child to be ready to work at the teacher or educational organisation's expectations of where they should be. This response was not a comment on the structure of the educational system per se, but rather a response to those children who were on the 'fringes' of the mainstream school; children who seemed unable to cope with the demands of mainstream schools and who are now classed as having social and emotional behaviour difficulties (SEBD).

Boxhall believed that it was possible to recreate constructive experiences in school which would enable the child to build up the necessary social and psychological foundations for learning. She wanted to create environments that would facilitate the learning of the social and emotional skills which are necessary for success at school. She sought to meet the child at the developmental level that they entered school and adapt the learning environment, so that children would have an enriching experience of cooperating with adults and children, of being accepted and understood and being able to develop trusting relationships within a predictable and secure setting.

Nurture Groups in the Present Day

In its current use the nurture group has not changed a great deal since its inception by Boxhall. It is still designed to be a therapeutic approach to early intervention for children in mainstream settings who have SEBD. The intervention is part of the whole school approach to managing behaviour which is designed to be positive and recognises that in order for children to be able to learn effectively at school they need to have the necessary social and emotional skills. It aims to be inclusive and preventative, intervening with children at risk of exclusion or those who may have been referred for a specialist placement.

The provision includes a nurturing 'homely' environment with a teacher and support assistant, up to ten carefully chosen children and predictable structured routines. This provides a balance of learning and play experiences to support the social and emotional growth and cognitive development of each child by meeting their needs at the appropriate developmental level. There is an emphasis on language development,

communication and group participation through focused intensive interaction with the adults and children in the group. Information on the Nurture Group Network (NGN, 2010) website highlights the importance of social interaction:

> 'Nurture groups teach children how to make good relationships with adults and with each other and so contribute to good mental health in the future'

> Nurture Group Network website, Further Information Links (February 2010).

Opportunities for social learning and play are provided and interspersed with more formal national curriculum tasks. Activities are manageable with lots of repetition and ritual and clear frequently rehearsed rules. Children remain on the roll of their mainstream class and usually spend at least one afternoon a week with their class (or everyday in part-time nurture groups) and this may increase if there is a phased period of reintegration following the intervention, which can usually last two to four terms.

Theoretical Principles of Nurture Groups

Attachment theory

The theoretical underpinnings of nurture groups have been rooted firmly in the importance of early nurturing care and John Bowlby's psychoanalytic theory of attachment (Bowlby, 1969). Bowlby proposed that very young children make bonds and form a 'secure base' with a significant attachment figure. The quality of the attachment is a function of how well the caregiver is able to recognise and respond to the child's needs for proximity and contact, with associated feelings of comfort, security and safety. These feelings can be transformed into language by thought and understood by other individuals. This lays the foundations of emotional intelligence. It is the first stage of a developmental process which the child learns to share and take turns, interact and feel concern and empathy for others.

According to attachment theory, a child who has experienced an attachment which is 'secure' possesses an internal working model of attachment figures as being available, helpful and responsive. Therefore, the child has a complimentary model of themselves as potentially valuable and lovable. Consequently, they are likely to make close lasting

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relationships and have a positive sense of self, and when faced with potentially fearful situations are inclined to ask for help in tackling them (Bowlby, 1988). Conversely, a child who has experienced unsupportive attachment figures will develop a model of self which is unworthy, unlovable and results in low self-esteem, general mistrust and unresolved needs for nurturing.

It is clear however that attachment theory cannot be rigorously tested in terms of scientific notions of finding 'absolute truths' about the human condition. Internal working models are a hypothetical concept and it is impossible to have a concrete understanding of the processes which may be involved in converting the qualities involved in early relationships into individual characteristics (Rutter 1995). Hence, there is a lack of empirical research into attachment theory.

Other limitations of the theory emanate from the fact that the social and political environment today is very different to when Bowlby first introduced the concept of attachment and the 'strange situation', in which the child's reaction to separation from their mother is measured. Feminist researchers (Cleary 1999) have critiqued attachment theory on the basis that it decontextualises situations with the child and mother and does not take account of individual separation histories, therefore limiting our understanding of the influences of culture and ancestry.

Researchers in Japan (Nakagawa, Lamb and Miyaki (1992) have also questioned the cross-cultural validity of the concept of the strange situation. In Japan in ordinary circumstances, infants are rarely separated from their mothers, which suggests that results of the strange situation may not be a valid representation of the infant-mother interaction within this culture and that different children may have different meanings for these situations.

Educational Attachment

Other researchers have applied Bowlby's model of attachment to a wider range of relationships (Barrett and Trevitt 1991, Geddes 2006). The model of 'educational attachment' recognises that children are capable of relationships with significant others they encounter in an educational context and in addition to their early care givers.

Barrett and Trevitt regard the teacher as the attachment figure in the classroom, particularly for anxious children and suggest that this has consequences for the process of developing interpersonal relationships and effective learning at school. Geddes describes patterns and profiles of behaviour in response to the teacher and to the task and this has had implications for classroom and nurture group practice.

Applying the notion of educational attachment to children with these behavioural profiles, nurture group provision can be understood as a learning environment in school which is designed so that the nurture group staff can provide an 'educational bridge' for the child to return back to their classroom on a permanent basis.

In other words, the focus can move from the 'within child' explanation of insecure attachments to looking at the quality of the 'developmental pathways' (a concept constructed by Waddington 1957, quoted by Slater 2007), which are affected by the interactions of children with their siblings and their attachment figures within the social context of school.

It is this 'organisation of experience' (a term that Cooper and Tiknaz (2007 p.18) use in their book), which describes the processes that children give to attending, participating, becoming involved and engaging cognitively with their peers and teachers at school. Thus, successful learning takes place through this social engagement with others. Therefore, the key to the nurture group concept is to create socially inclusive and emotionally supportive environments which support the notion of resilience in children and the development of schools as potentially therapeutic environments.

Socio-cultural theory of learning

There is a good deal of research which emphasises the need for all pupils to develop social and emotional skills and healthy self-esteem, to self-regulate their behaviour and understand the language of emotions in order that they can become successful learners (Goleman 2005; Weare and Gray 2003; Izard et al 2001). The socio-cultural theory of learning, (Vygotsky 1987) expounds on the importance of social interactions in developing effective cognitive strategies for learning. The individual is helped to move into their zone of proximal development by a more competent other who needs to give

direct support for the learner and guide them by 'scaffolding' and providing appropriate learning experiences.

In the case of children with SEBD, the socio-emotional components of trust and the ability to form productive relationships and demonstrate pro-social behaviours needs to be established within a social context, so that they are able to sustain attention, self-regulate and engage in organised, productive work. Engaging in effective learning would help to develop efficacy and a healthy self-esteem and positive self-concept.

By utilising a psychological understanding of child development with respect to attachment, emotion, cognition and the links between school learning, thoughts, feelings and behaviour; it is possible to understand the anxieties which some children face at school and support them to feel more secure, safe and comfortable in social learning situations. Educationalists now ask questions about how we can intervene to support children and families to promote resiliency and positive mental health (Hartley-Brewer, 2001). In conjunction with this, current government policy aims to develop good mental health and emotional well-being in all children, but particularly those described and is currently employing Psychologists to train school staff in the 'Targeted Mental Health in Schools' initiative (DCSF 2009b).

Nurture Group Research

Research into nurture groups has focused on evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention (Binnie and Allen 2008, Cooper and Whitebread 2007, Sanders 2007, Reynolds and Kearney 2007). These studies have utilised a range of methodology and involved quantitative and qualitative data collection to attempt to measure the changes in children's behaviour before and after the intervention.

O'Connor and Colwell's evaluative study (2002) exemplifies much of the research on nurture groups, as it collates pre and post intervention quantitative data, using the Boxhall Profile to measure children's behaviour. The design was longitudinal and involved children with at least two years of mainstream reintegration. The study found that children's SEBD were significantly reduced after they left the nurture group and

that this improvement was consistent with a 'developmental catch-up' interpretation. The researchers asserted that teacher's can exert a powerful influence on the development and behaviour of children, 'despite continuing negative influences from home' (O'Connor and Colwell 2002, p.98).

However, this statement is misleading because the study did not investigate the home life of the children and no mention was made of whether the children changed their behaviour at home. The assumption seemed to be that the Boxhall Profile data is enough to suggest that their home lives were difficult or disadvantaged.

Additionally, the researchers stated that the nurture group aimed to bring together the home and school environment and that parental support was encouraged. Yet there was no mention of how parents were involved or supported in any way or whether in fact the children's home circumstances had changed from what they had been prior to the intervention. This raises the question as to whether parents had noticed that the behaviour of their children had changed and whether this affected their own behaviour towards their children and if so, what impact this may have had.

Many of the research studies provide empirical evidence for the importance of social relationships and pro-social behaviours such as cooperation, trust, sharing and group participation. In their large scale study involving 546 children and 34 schools in the University of Leicester Nurture Group project, Cooper and Whitebread (2007) summarised what they considered to be important in effecting a positive change in the children's behaviour.

They hypothesised that the key features included,

> the high level of individualised interaction that takes place between staff and pupils across a range of social and academic activities, the small group size and relative simplicity and predictability of the daily routine.

(Cooper and Whitebread 2007, p.188)

This assertion also underlines the importance of claims that children need to form healthy social contacts in school, in order that they can access a high level of

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interaction, thereby building significant trusting relationships. In accordance with this
Hartley-Brewer (2001) maintains that providing 'security, significance and connection'
(p.10) for children is a key principle for fostering good mental health and helps to
develop a sense of agency and perceived self-efficacy.

Critique of evaluative research studies

In the research which has evaluated the effectiveness of nurture groups, the main tool
which has been used to measure changes in the children's behaviour is the Boxhall
Profile. This measure provides a range of numerical scores on different aspects of a
child's social and emotional behaviour upon entry and exit to the nurture group.
Although this is the recommended way of measuring children's behaviour in order to
decide whether they should be included in the group, it is limited because the manner
that it is used in schools (ratings given by the class teacher) doesn't always give a
holistic picture of the children's behaviour in a variety of contexts. There are different
interpretations of a child's behaviour from nurture group staff and class teachers and
parents.

The researchers acknowledge that there is scope for subjective interpretation in the use
of the Profile, and that bias may exist, for it reflects the aims of the person who
administered it and doesn't account for different relationships between the child and
other teachers, often based on personal characteristics and teaching/learning styles.

Furthermore in the research studies which used quantitative measures, the 'voice' of the
participants was often absent, including the perceptions of parents and children. In
Cooper and Whitebread's (2007) large scale study the authors' state that their
perceptions are to be addressed in a future research article. However this would appear
to neglect the holistic nature of the child by focusing on pre-determined phenomena
which is usually measured by school staff using the Boxhall Profile or the SDQ.

Research with parents of children in nurture groups

A more detailed but much smaller scale study involving three part-time nurture groups
in a pilot project in Hampshire was undertaken by Sanders (2007). The sample had 40
participants and she used a mixture of methods to collect data, including semi-structured

interviews with parents, staff and children, Boxhall Profiles, assessment forms and naturalistic observations.

Sanders investigated the benefits of the nurture group intervention and identified many specific areas in which the children made gains; such as improved attendance, academic performance, motivation to complete academic tasks, working independently, taking more risks with learning and regulating their behaviour. Concentration and attention, purposive play, interest in academic tasks and the way in which the children and the staff interacted also improved.

Children reported that they had better friendships, liked school more and had improved self-images in terms of their learning ability. Staff thought that the part-time nurture group helped to facilitate inclusion and mentioned that they adapted their teaching approaches and tried to engage the children more actively in their learning. It was recognised that children needed to feel secure and benefited from teaching staff and parents working closely together.

However, details about this partnership were restricted due to the all-encompassing nature of the study which attempted to use a variety of methods to collect data. Sanders did highlight the need for further research into effective support for parents of nurture group children, which is an area that has been overlooked in many other research studies.

Another aspect of the study which was limited was the research design. Children were assessed immediately after leaving the nurture group and weren't followed up at a later stage to see if the gains were maintained. Other researchers (Cooper and Whitebread 2007) suggest that gains may not be immediate and that research needs to focus on progress in the longer term. However, Sanders acknowledged this and identified the need for further research to explore strategies into maintaining behaviour into lunchtime and playtimes and to consider whether there were differences for younger and older children.

A Scottish study which included the parents' evaluation of the intervention was conducted by Binnie and Allen (2008). This study highlighted the success of nurture

group provision in terms of changing children's behaviour both at school and at home. The design incorporated both qualitative and quantitative feedback from staff and parents, using the Boxhall Profile, the SDQ, measures of self-esteem and questionnaires and allowed eight months between the pre and post intervention test. With respect to the questionnaires, 83% of parents responded and 97% of parents agreed that the intervention had a positive impact on their child. All other ratings such as confidence, self-esteem, academic progress, enjoyment and impact at home, were positive and ranged from 81% -100% of parents who agreed their child had improved in these areas.

The only low positive response was found for parent-child relationship, as 50% of parents agreed that the intervention had improved their relationship with their child. This suggests that about half of the parents perceived that the 'within child' factors had improved but that there was little impact on how well the parent and child had interacted together. It may be productive to explore this phenomenom and look into the support which parents received and whether they had access to the 'parents programme' which apparently was provided by staff. However, no other details were given about this programme and it would be helpful to try to assess what it entailed and to explore how it was viewed by parents.

Other criticisms could be levelled at this research for being too deterministic in giving parents 'pre-set' ratings to score. Had these not been suggested by the researcher, parents may not have mentioned factors such as confidence, self-esteem, enjoyment etc. The parents who wanted to cooperate may have perceived positive effects for the intervention as a whole, which was then assigned to the factors researchers gave them to score.

Another study which looked at parents' perceptions of nurture groups in Scotland in much greater depth was conducted by Reynolds and Kearney (2007). In addition to Sanders (2007) and Binnie and Allen (2008), this is one of the few research studies which gave a serious voice to the parents and included details about their thoughts on their child's behaviour and their opinions on nurture groups in general.

It was constructed as a parallel research study, running alongside the main evaluative research. Researchers looked at how parents perceived their children after nurture group

intervention by asking them to rate their child over twenty core skills and write three words to describe their child. Parents were also asked to comment on any aspect of nurture groups in an open unstructured way. The ratings and constructs which parents' gave were very positive, particularly in the areas of paying attention, listening and controlling temper. However there was no description or interpretation of the parents' less structured comments. This information may have provided other insights into the nurture group intervention and specific details with regards to the type of parental support which was valued or deemed to be effective.

A limitation of this study was the method of data collection on parents' views, which was via postal questionnaires and only 50% of 233 parents responded. This may have been because the views were peripheral to the main research findings. However, arguably, the results could be skewed in favour of positive responses as the parents who were very pleased with the intervention may have been predisposed to answer the questionnaire. Semi-structured interviews or other qualitative methods which would have enabled parents to say what they thought was important and which may have uncovered more details about their relationships with their child, could reveal other insights, although the sample size would have to be considerably reduced.

Aspects of 'nurturing' and the parental role

A decade ago, Bishop and Swain (2000a) conducted a qualitative research study which looked at the perceptions of twelve individuals involved in a nurture group. They specifically highlighted the role of parents. Data was collected through the use of semi-structured interviews which reflected comments and perceptions from all those who were involved with the group.

Parents were reported to be pleased that the attendance in the nurture group had lessened the possibility of exclusion from school or placement in a special school. One grandparent believed that the group was letting her child feel like an individual and that it helped them because they were lost in the class. However, although parents were interviewed this comment was the only 'voice' given to parents in the written report and the rest of the discussion reflected the teachers and pupils views. This study celebrated the success of the nurture group, but is critical of the concept of what the authors

consider to be a deficit model of parents and families, even though the nurture group was viewed as effective from a variety of viewpoints, including teachers, pupils and parents. They maintained that although co-operation between parents and schools is seen as crucial, nurture group provision highlights some contentious issues. Interestingly, these issues have been largely ignored by subsequent research studies.

The main concern is that by nurture group staff taking on a nurturing role which would usually be fulfilled by parents, there could be potential conflicts between home and school. This may take the form of parents feeling judged by staff and therefore constructing a defensive position. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) propose that individuals employ defence mechanisms and consciously or unconsciously choose not to address judgements that others may be making. The reason for this is that to recognise the negative opinions of others may mean that their constructed view of themselves as good parents could be challenged and may cause upset or pain.

Related to this is the concept of 'positioning', in which parents' position themselves or are positioned by researchers within the research interview or other social interaction. Positioning theory (Harre and Moghaddam 2003) is a social constructionist perspective on how the unfolding storyline in any social encounter is a function of the positions that are adopted or imposed on individuals. Thus, the social meaning of what is said is limited to the loosely defined set of rights, obligations, logical and socially appropriate actions expected within the interaction. There may appear to be inconsistencies and contradictions as the parents' position is dynamic and changing, as the circumstances or context changes.

Hence, it may be possible to explain parents opinions by the way that they have positioned themselves or that they have been positioned by the researcher. How they are positioned or position themselves will depend on their own social constructions of the nurture group, the function of the research interview, their parental identity and ultimately will be a function of the power differentials within the interview.

Opportunities for further research

It would be possible to add to Bishop and Swain's study by taking account of these phenomena and exploring parents' identities and roles and the relationships between home and school. Additionally more detail about the kind of improvements that parents said that they had found at home would have extended the findings and contributed to the body of knowledge about nurture groups. A more balanced reporting of the perceptions of the nurture group by all parties could have been undertaken, particularly given the assertions about the negative aspects of the transplant model. Two parents were interviewed and the rest of the participants were six teachers, two governors and two nurture group children. This did not reflect all the experiences in the group and no mention is made of why others were not interviewed.

Furthermore, it would have been useful to know exactly how much information was given to parents and how they were consulted and included in the nurture group. What form did it take? Were parents involved in the sessions within school / out of school and if so what did this entail? How far did the 'training' conform to theoretical models of parent partnership and were any barriers between schools and parents encountered?

Using the 'transplant model' to involve parents in the nurture group

A key issue which Bishop and Swain raise concerns the relationship which is fostered between home and school. The role of the nurture group staff is supposed to involve modelling and discussion techniques for behaviour management within the nurture group environment. This approach utilises the 'transplant model' (Cunningham and Davies, 1985) in which the 'expert' skills of the staff are passed onto parents, so that the work of the nurture group is extended back into the home.

Bishop and Swain criticise the transplant model because they perceive that it is a deficit view of the child and family. They also consider that it is not a full partnership and it ignores the differences in family relationships, parenting style, resources, values, culture and wider social and economic issues (Jones 1998). However, this refutes many of the assertions of evidence-based theories on effective parenting such as Webster-Stratton and Herbert (1994) and Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg and Dornnbusch (1991) which transcend culture, values and socio-economic issues.

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However, research by McGrath (2007) on engaging 'hard to reach' parents in parenting skills programmes suggests that programmes need to be culturally sensitive and need to involve parents in all stages of the design and implementation. This collaborative model attempts to engage parents to work alongside families within their communities and is consistent with the 'parent partnership' model which is proposed by Davis and Meltzer (2007).

Involving Parents in their Child's Education

Contemporary practice in education acknowledges the importance of parents working in partnership with school staff, particularly in tackling SEBD and with children who are at risk of exclusion. Co-operation between both parties is seen as crucially important and many current policy documents now reflect this.

A fundamental principle of the Code of Practice (DFE 1994) was that parents have a significant role to play in supporting their child's education and the working partnership between parents and professionals is critical to this success. The documentation clearly stated that parents need to be seen as 'the partners in the educational process and have unique knowledge to impart' (DFE 1994). The guidance went further and noted:

> Professional help can seldom be effective unless it builds on parents capacity to be involved and unless parents consider that professionals take account of what they say and treat their views and anxieties as intrinsically important.

(DFE 1994, p.12)

This is supported more recently in other government documents which stress the importance of a parent's role in their child's learning and progress at school. The Steer Report (2005) on learning and behaviour devotes a chapter to parents and states,

> It is extremely important that parents are involved in their child's education ... parents are experts on their children and school staff have much to learn from them that will help in their pupils' education at school.

(Steer 2005, p.69)

The National Healthy School Standard report (DFES and DOH 2004) details a range of strategies for engaging parents and community groups, because proactive work with parents was identified as one of the key features of schools which successfully promote emotional health and well-being. The extended schools agenda and other programmes such as Family SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning, DFES 2005) also promote the importance of developing a healthy working partnership between school staff and parents.

Policy documents such as 'The Changing Context of Parenting'. (The Innovation Unit 2008) and 'Supporting parents to engage in their child's early learning' (DCSF 2008) both highlight the importance of parents in their child's learning. The new 'Parent Guarantee' (21st Century Schools White Paper, DCSF 2009a) pays special attention to the role of parents in schools and lists the ways in which they should be involved in school life. OFSTED (2009) underline the importance of working alongside parents and expect nurture group staff to consider how they involve parents 'to ensure a continuity of approaches between school and home' (p.8). Therefore, school staff now have a duty to demonstrate how they are working with parents, particularly with parents of children with SEBD.

Conclusion

Much of the nurture group research which has been conducted over the last decade has attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention and tease out the factors which contribute to its success. These research studies have focused on evaluating the intervention by measuring children's social and academic progress whilst in the Nurture Group. The results have generally shown that nurture groups are a highly promising form of provision for children with SEBD and that they make significant gains both in behaviour and learning.

However, whilst the research generally acknowledges the significance of a supportive relationship between staff and parents, the evidence base for the approach that school staff take in their relationship with parents is limited. More recently. researchers in the

field have acknowledged the importance of parental involvement and agree that efforts should be made to engage positively with parents.

These studies discuss the importance of good home-school links, yet in many cases these appear to be pieces of research which were 'tacked on' to the main findings, rather than systematic evaluations in their own right. Generally, researchers have not talked to parents in any detail, to find out about the nature of relationships between home and school or to describe what parents thought and felt about the intervention or what their expectations were. Additionally, the studies neglect to look at what constitutes effective support for parents of children in nurture groups.

Hence, there is still comparatively little known about parental involvement in nurture groups and the way that the intervention may change their thoughts and constructs of their child, their own identity as a parent and the effect that this may have on the child's behaviour at home and school. There is also a lack of firm evidence about what constitutes effective support for parents, even though all the information concerning the setting up of a nurture group highlights this collaboration as an important factor in its success.

Therefore I believe that this is a promising area of original research, particularly as many local authorities have established nurture groups or are in the process of setting them up, both in primary and secondary schools, and within specialist provision in some LAs. Against this context the current political climate stresses the importance of involving parents in their child's learning and organising services around the child and family.

Policy documents (The Steer Report 2005; The Innovation Unit 2008; 21st Century Schools White Paper DCSF 2009a, OFSTED 2009) state that parents have a vital role as partners in the educational process as they have a unique knowledge to impart and co-operation between parents and school staff is fundamental in tackling SEBD. Therefore, it is essential to involve parents in research, to determine their views and to look at the processes involved in creating successful home-school partnerships, particularly with respect to parents of children in nurture group provision.

CHAPTER THREE: Key Research Issues and Questions

Key Research Issues

The research issues were intentionally broad and facilitated an exploration into parental roles and identities with respect to their children who were in Nurture group provision in mainstream primary schools. I wanted to look at what parents felt about their child being in a nurture group, what they knew of the intervention and what they perceived to be their role in it. I was also interested in finding out about their level of involvement in the Nurture Group and the support they may have had and how this may have affected their perceptions and feelings and their subsequent relationship with their child.

To explore these issues, some of the background questions I identified were:

- How can the voice of the parents (in particular those who may be marginalised or have little power or whose children are at risk of exclusion) be heard?

- Should parents be actively involved in all stages of problem formulation and resolution and share in resolutions for the outcome? If so how could this be facilitated?

- What support can school staff offer to parents of children at risk of exclusion or who require placement in a Nurture Groups?

- How far are parents actually involved in decisions with regards to their child being placed in a Nurture Group intervention and do they have a right to be involved in processes which involve decision making about their children?

- How do nurture group staff work with parents and what is the extent of their influence on parent behaviour?

- Is the concept of true 'partnership' with parents possible or is it rhetoric? (as questioned by Wolfendale 2008).

Key Research Questions

In view of the current literature and my own interest with regards to the impact that the nurture group intervention has on parents, the background questions were summarised to address two key areas. Hence, the key research questions became:

<u>Key Research Question One</u>
What were parents' experiences of their child being referred to a nurture group intervention?

<u>Key Research Question Two</u>
What do these experiences highlight about parents' perceived involvement and the impact of the intervention?

In addition to gaining insights into parents' perceptions, attitudes and feelings about the intervention, I hoped that the research would be empowering for parents and that it would develop my research-practitioner skills. I also wanted the research to be applied, so that it might lead to some sharing of ideas to promote good practice within nurture groups in the LA in which the study was conducted.

CHAPTER FOUR: Methodology

Introduction

It is important to adopt an open and analytical approach to the research and justify all the decisions which ultimately shape my study. These decisions emanate from my own constructions about what constitutes useful educational research; therefore I need to be personally reflexive as well as epistemologically reflexive, in considering my theoretical position and the impact of this on the study.

My epistemological stance has informed my decisions about methodology. Therefore, I start by illuminating my thought processes with regards to decisions I made about positioning myself as a qualitative interpretative researcher. This chapter will proceed with a critical rationalisation of the use of semi-structured narrative interviews and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as appropriate tools in gathering, analysing and interpreting data pertinent to the focus of my study, as opposed to other qualitative methods.

Following this, I explore the impact of my pilot study and detail the procedures which I followed in recruiting participants, collecting the data and conducting the thematic data analysis. Throughout this discussion I critically appraise my methods, procedures and ethics by being personally reflective and reflexive and state my positionality and the impact on the interpretative analysis in the 'Reflexive Note' boxes. These comments include personal thoughts, experiences, prejudices and reflections and the effect of the research on my practice as a professional EP. These reflexive notes continue in later chapters.

Epistemology and Ontology

In terms of my own ontological position, I believe that it is impossible to try to capture the 'essence' of the world as absolute truths, because any social reality that we may try to measure or objectively quantify will always be essentially 'unknowable', because it is socially constructed, contingent and ultimately subjective.

The qualitative paradigm

As a social science researcher, I think that it is useful to focus on an individual's experience or narrative; to explore their complex 'reality' as it exists for them, with a focus on their psychological constructs which are interpreted by the researcher, within their own framework of lived experiences. I accept that there may not be a simple, transparent relationship between their beliefs and what is actually said to the researcher, for I recognise that these meanings are negotiated within a historical and social context.

Underpinning this perspective is Social Constructionism (Burr 2003, Jenner 2007), which could be described as a meta-theoretical approach which encompasses an awareness of socio-political practices and the dominant discourses which exist within our practice as EPs (Moore 2005). Within this qualitative framework there is a fundamental belief that the social world is constructed through people's actions and through their efforts to make sense of it and navigate their lives within it.

There is a diversity of interpretations which can be applied to phenomena and these will change depending on intra-personal and inter- personal processes and social context. The perspective highlights the significance of the researcher within the research process. Both the researcher and participant negotiate and construct mutual knowledge, which is the sum of their joint interpretations, created by language and the social reality which is constructed within the context of the research interaction.

Within the qualitative paradigm, there are a number of methodological approaches that can be utilised; all of which have diverse historical backgrounds and use different ways of collecting and analysing data. In choosing the most suited to my study, I thought carefully about the research aims and key research questions as well as my own epistemological stance, rather than being committed to a particular method for its own sake (Hollway & Todres 2003).

Reflexive Note

After reading about various methodologies and considering my epistemological
stance, the options for this research study became clear. My approach to psychology
is essentially humanistic and my outlook social constructionist; thus, coupled with my
research aims it was clear that an open ended qualitative paradigm would be
appropriate to this study.

As I believe that there is no external, objective reality that can be searched for, found
and explained by way of hypothetic-deductive, reductionist methods which seek to
manipulate variables and attempt to obtain some kind of neutral 'objectivity' and
reliability in experimentation; I concur with Norwich (1998) who suggests that:

> ...the presumed objectivity of positivist science is revealed as a social
> construction reflecting a particular historical context and set of social
> interests....educational and human phenomena are conceived in singular and
> particular terms, not as representing some generality of process or characteristic.

Norwich (1998, p.12)

The positivist paradigm is therefore inappropriate for my ideographic approach and
desire to address human individuality and gain insights into participants' complex
psychological and social worlds. Positivist methods do not consider the process of
research as representing a form of social interaction, which involves a relationship
between the researcher and participant. Hence, there is little emphasis on the importance
of reflexivity and the researcher's role and the function of power within the relationship,
and the potential influence on the participant and consequently the research findings.

One of my objectives in this research was to work with parents and view the nurture
group from their perspective, precisely so that professionals could be encouraged to
consider their practice, in relation to the partnership between staff and parents and the
limitations, strengths and opportunities which abound. In order to examine these issues I
needed to look at parents' perspectives and co-construct a textured picture of their
experience. The positivist approach precludes the use of a more collaborative and
reflexive model of inquiry to highlight the 'voice' of the participant as an important
research aim. A qualitative approach could arguably be more complex and time

consuming, however, methods taken from the qualitative paradigm are more suited to enabling the voice of the participant to be heard.

Rationale for using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

One of my fundamental aims was to conduct a systematic and thorough inquiry, which would be credible and of potential use to myself and other practitioners working in educational settings. I intended to yield substantiated insights into naturalistic interpretations of phenomena (nurture groups) in terms of the meanings these have for the individuals (the parents) whose children experience them.

Having considered various suitable methodologies, the most appropriate for these research aims was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The theoretical underpinnings of IPA will be discussed in conjunction with an outline of Discourse Analysis and Narrative Analysis which may have been suitable but were not chosen for this study. The rationale for this will be explained in the ensuing discussion.

Introduction to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPA is a comparatively new and distinctive approach to qualitative research, which has a theoretical basis in phenomenology and is concerned with lived experience and the meanings that individuals have for these experiences. Most IPA research uses flexible open-ended interviews to capture data which is analysed and interpreted systematically by the researcher in order to elicit key experiential themes which emerge (IPA website, Birbeck University of London, accessed on 24.6.2009).

The approach is traditionally used in health and social psychology research (Smith, Jarman and Osborn 1999, cited in Murray and Chamberlain 1999, p.218-240) because it is committed to understanding an individual's personal perspective and as the researcher interprets and makes meanings out of the findings, there is the possibility of constructing research which can inform, challenge and support actions or policy.

Phenomenological psychology

IPA has its theoretical roots in phenomenological psychology as it is concerned with understanding what an individual thinks or believes about phenomenon. Phenomenology is traditionally concerned with accessing cognitions and describing participants' experiences from their subjective viewpoint. The founder of Phenomenology, Husserl (1970, quoted in Laverty 2003, p.3) believed that it was possible to 'bracket' off one's own experiences and preconceptions and to describe 'essences' about people's lived experiences from their subjective viewpoint.

However, not all phenomenologists agreed with that perspective. Heidegger (1962, quoted in Laverty 2003, p.7) maintained that it was not possible for individuals to bracket but that they should become aware of their assumptions. The belief was that it enabled an interpretation of experiences of shared meanings and practices in specific contexts.

The Interpretative process

Taking this view of phenomenology and adding an interpretative dimension; IPA acknowledges that it is not possible to start without bias or preconceptions. IPA recognises that an individuals thoughts, behaviour and affect cannot be accessed directly as it is dependent upon the interpretative analysis of the researcher.

Therefore, an important theoretical construct for IPA is hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation (Willig, 2008). It is this key element of IPA which makes it well suited to my research issues, for the researcher's interpretation attempts to offer insights into the participants' world. Their perceptions are viewed as dynamic and fluid and constantly forming and reforming, in their efforts to make sense of their experiences and articulate them to the researcher. The interaction between the researcher and the participant is perceived as a co-construction as it emerges from the in-depth engagement and analysis of the data (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin 2005).

However, in their comprehensive and systematic review of 52 IPA studies Brocki and Wearden (2006) suggest that:

> ...authors do not always explicitly recognise either the theoretical preconceptions they bring to the data or their own role in interpretation ... this is a vital facet of IPA and one which ensures its accessibility and clarity.

(Brocki & Wearden 2006, p.101)

The significance of the personal-professional-researcher role is sometimes unrecognised in research (Thompson 2009), therefore, this study has 'reflexive notes' embedded in the text to address this aspect of IPA research. This fits with my theoretical allegiance and facilitated my decision to take a narrative approach to interviewing which is a collaboration between both the researcher and participant. IPA also enabled a systematic application of data analysis procedures combined with creative interpretative skills in an endeavour to understand the participants' experiences.

Reflexive Note

In terms of positionality, my own personal worldview and the relationship which I hoped to establish with each participant, I recognise that the relationship exists in a social context and is fundamental to how the data is interpreted. My own professional background is within education and I have worked as a primary teacher in a variety of schools for approximately 14 years; four of those part-time, as I have two children. I know that parenting it is not an easy job particularly if there are demands of work, family difficulties, relationship break down and economic pressures. More so than ever, there seem to be definite expectations as to how children should be parented and this is present within the wider social discourses in the media, from the government, in schools and communities.

In this respect I am empathetic to the difficulties and complexities faced by many parents, some of which may be out of their control. I would probably feel judged as a parent myself if a teacher suggested that my child needed to go into a nurture group as they needed more 'nurturing' from someone else who wasn't their parent. However, I realise that for many this may well be a positive intervention and I am open and interested to see what other parents think and feel and aim to remain open and non-judgemental.

IPA and Discourse Analysis

IPA recognises the significance of language and discourse within the interaction and is concerned with how participants attempt to articulate their thoughts and experiences. Like Discourse Analysis, IPA asserts that phenomenon can be constructed in different ways. However, Discourse Analysis focuses on the way in which the multiple forms of meaning emerge through talk and text that can become ideologically embedded within society or culture (Potter & Wetherell 1987).

Deconstructing spoken discourse may preclude the construction of interesting themes about parents' lived experiences, both within the participant's story; their thoughts and feelings, and the commonalities which may emerge between participants. As this research study is particularly concerned with the meanings that parents and carers attach to their experiences, the participant's personal description of experience is valued and the detailed interpretation and analysis is therefore more suited to IPA's ideographic and inductive approach.

Within Discourse Analysis there is a willingness to accept that the language used by the participant has captured their own meaning of their experience, although this is still considered as a construction within the interview itself. This conceptualisation of language could be a criticism of IPA (see Willig 2007), as language can be viewed as essentially constructive rather than representative. Nonetheless, IPA researchers believe that it is possible to make cautious interpretations, based on participants' perceptions and having an awareness of aspects of culture and social context (Osborn 2003).

Narrative Forms of Research

At its most basic level, the narrative is the individual's story or account of experience of people and events. It may have a sequential or disjointed time frame and can vary in how much of the personal experience is described and how much it is explained or interpreted. Thus, narrative can enable individuals to be culturally grounded and the approach is based on the view that the experience of life events as we experience them

becomes a story, which the human mind, with its infinite capacity for creativity, orders and constructs (Elliott 2005).

Historically, traditional narrative research has offered an emancipatory aspect to research, with participants as co-collaborators and their 'voice' at the forefront of the tale; their story taken at face value and described with extensive quotations and an absence of interpretation or the researcher's voice. However, the post-modern perspective on the constructive aspect of narrative enables the researcher to make more of an interpretative leap and emphasises reflexivity; with a focus on how the researcher interacts, listens and responds to the narrator and the meanings that they ascribe to the narratives. This perspective requires a detailed transcription of narrative data and a recognition that systematic analysis needs to be conducted (Atkinson & Delamont 2006).

Narrative analysis

Within the narrative analysis, attention is given to sequential mechanisms, the roles which are taken, and the socio-historical context which attempts to represent the complexity of the participant's life and their changing identities (Blumenreich 2004). As participants re-tell their stories to participate in the construction and maintenance of their identity, this performative aspect could be used to look at parental roles and the construction of their identities in relation to the wider discourse on parental responsibilities and the impact of their child being placed in a nurture group. Therefore, it could potentially offer a useful way of exploring the parents identity in relation to their role within wider society (Crossley 2000).

However, in terms of interpreting descriptions of parents' stories, each semi-structured narrative interview would need to be described and analysed holistically, so that the construction of the narrative could be revealed. Although this type of analysis could potentially offer insights into perceptions of the parental role, it would result in a series of case studies which would provide interesting insights to individual parent's perceptions, down to the minutiae detail, but ultimately would limit the research study as the original key research questions would not be fully addressed.

Specifically, the key issues concerning parents' expectations of the nurture group intervention and ideas about how they could be supported by nurture group staff, could not be analysed across the data set and could therefore not be interpreted in terms of superordinate themes. This is an aspect of the research which I believe makes it interesting to the research community and educational professionals alike, in terms of emerging ideas about working with parents which are grounded in the data and have more of a pragmatic use in the locality of schools in which the research was conducted.

I wanted the research to identify themes within each parent's interview and also across the interviews so that I could look for commonalities into significant support mechanisms which parents may have, both external and internal, and the potential impact on their relationship with school staff and their own child. IPA has more potential to be used in this type of applied research; to integrate practice with theory and illuminate parents' experiences, using a more semi-structured interview format. It is therefore more suited to both exploring parents' lived experiences and answering the key research issues, some of which are derived from the literature on nurture groups, (Cooper & Tiknaz 2007).

Reflexive Note

Research supervision enabled me to see that my initial thoughts to use a narrative approach to data analysis needed to be justified and critically examined. I decided that using IPA could offer a similar approach to Narrative Analysis, but would enable me to look more specifically at how parents were or could be supported, as well as exploring other themes which emerged.

In conjunction with this, an attempt at analysing the pilot study interview data using IPA showed me that IPA was more suitable as it offered a way of reducing the complex data systematically and enabled me to address my research questions. I was sensitive to the possibility of losing sight of my original objectives for the research and I wanted to be able to see genuine patterns within the data set, so that I could produce a rigorous, well organised account of themes which emerged from the key research issues.

Rationale for using Semi-Structured Narrative Interviews

Narrative style open-ended interviews were utilised to collect data about parents' experiences in detail and in depth. A narrative oriented approach to data collection focuses on the importance of the sequence of lived experiences and views individuals as actively engaged with meaning making. Therefore, as a phenomenological approach it is well suited to IPA.

This approach was designed to encourage the participants to have opportunities to become active subjects within the research process and select what they considered to be the most salient information. Graham (1984) suggested that story-telling is less exploitative and safeguards the rights of participants to participate as subjects rather than 'objects' in the construction and re-construction of knowledge, and allows researchers to establish a more equal and reciprocal relationship with both participant and researcher as active agents in the process. In open ended interviewing, the interview context is significant and the talk is viewed as social, with the researcher viewed as an active participant in the interaction (Rapley 2001).

One of my intentions was to elicit the often unheard voice of the parents of children who attend nurture groups. I wanted the research to be empowering for the participants, so that they could tell their own preferred story in relation to the discussion topics I introduced. Hence, I designed the interview so that it would be collaborative as I hoped to facilitate the co-construction of the parents' own narratives as much as possible, within the constraints of the key research questions. In eliciting stories constructed by the parents, they chose what mattered to them; therein they were more empowered by being active participants within the research.

Reflexive Note

My decision to use a collaborative interviewing approach was informed by my belief that giving individuals minimal prompts within an open, 'naturalistic' interview, would enable them to talk more openly about their experiences and feelings in a relaxed, supportive environment. I also felt quite strongly that I wanted to collaborate with parents as one of my aims was to empower the parent to tell their story.

Learning from the pilot study

A pilot study was undertaken with one parent of a child attending a nurture group in a setting not used for the main study, to try out the questions and to develop my self-confidence in interviewing; recommended by Kvale (1996). The practice of interviewing was further refined by thinking carefully about the social context and the impact of this on the outcome by engaging and motivating the participant, creating rapport and listening actively. The pilot study was successful as a good deal of data was elicited and the participant talked for over one hour, with little interruption. Therefore, the narrative approach to interviewing was considered to be effective in this instance, as much of it related to the mother's life and was relayed chronologically and was context bound.

However, when this transcript was discussed during research supervision, a limitation of the use of narrative interviews generally came to light. The fact that the participant was very good at generating narratives did not mean that all future participants would be so articulate. The participant in the pilot study was very motivated, articulate and relatively well-educated and wanted her opinion to count. Other participants may be less articulate and it was acknowledged that there could be differential abilities in terms of participants' abilities to verbalise thoughts.

This discussion provoked further reflection on the wording and prompts used in the interview to facilitate data collection. To facilitate articulation and recall of biographical narratives with some of the participants, the approach was altered so that specific narratives could be elicited, which were related to specific areas of the research focus.

The interview questions were changed to facilitate the construction of narratives which were more specific to the key issues. The approach I adopted is termed the 'episodic' interview by Flick (2000, 2009) and is a useful technique to use when the researcher aims to interpret how participants make sense of their experiences (Bates 2004). Episodic interviewing includes situational probes as follow ups, to help to elicit narratives about contexts and concrete events. This approach does not rely on the effectiveness of narrative constraints as it combines different forms of narrative: semantic knowledge (abstracted generalisations) and episodic knowledge (more

concrete, linked to particular circumstances and experiences) (Flick 2009, p. 185). The style of narrative-probe facilitates access to the construction of realities as it helps the participant with their narrative competence.

Reflexive Note

Salmon (2003) explored the way in which the scientific community judged research and one of the points he made is that research has to matter to others and should not be 'a self-indulgent activity for the researcher' (p.26). In conjunction with the outcomes of the pilot study, this applicability of the 'real life' research was also a factor in changing the interview schedule from being an exloration of parents identies which may suit a more open-ended 'life story' narrative approach to a more structured topic focused interview combined with open questioning.

Procedures

Interview procedure

The interview schedule was designed to elicit narratives and specific lived experiences from participants which related to the key research areas. The aim was to obtain the 'insights of the experts' (Reid et al 2005, p.20); the parents whose insider perceptions would reveal cognitions, attitudes, feelings and actions.

Therefore, prior to the interview, all participants were told that it was their story that was of interest and there were no right or wrong answers, whatever they thought was important was of interest (see pre-interview checklist, Appendix 2). Participants were asked to 'tell' about various specific aspects of their life experiences in relation to their family, their child and the nurture group staff.

If the questions were too open or did not stimulate preferred narratives then other probes about 'typical' situations or descriptions were used as follow up questions, using the episodic narrative technique. These prompts followed a similar format but were sometimes paraphrased or given at a different point in the participant's narrative to keep the conversation as naturalistic as possible.

The interview prompts were designed to be open and follow on logically within the conversation, so that the participant was able to choose to recount whatever they felt was important to them. There was careful consideration of my language and it was consciously modified when appropriate, to match the participant's frame of reference and to help them to communicate their thoughts, perceptions and feelings. The interview prompts which were used in the study are presented in Appendix 3.

Reflexive Note

I found the actual process of collecting the data the most interesting part of the research. I was able to utilise my past experiences as a SENCO and Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) in which I have developed my interpersonal skills: engaging parents, creating rapport, listening actively and being genuine and interested in what they have to say. I enjoyed meeting a variety of parents and was curious as to how they viewed the nurture group intervention and felt somewhat privileged to be hearing their stories.

As the interview process continued I felt that I became more confident and honed my interview practice. As a result of this I became much more comfortable and better at engaging parents. I was aware that parents may have felt quite vulnerable about disclosing aspects of their personal lives, and that they may have found some aspects difficult to talk about. I tried to be empathetic and non judgemental and hoped that the experience had some use for them. I was constantly reminded of the ethical issues which came alive, particularly the issues of ongoing informed consent.

Participants

Inclusion criteria

The participants were parents of children who had been placed in a nurture group intervention in three mainstream primary schools in a large urban Local Authority in the North of England. The sample was chosen on the basis that participants were caring for a child who was currently in a nurture group in one of the identified schools, which had part-time nurture groups that had been established for at least eighteen months. I felt that it was necessary for the groups to have been established before it would be fair to explore their practice. The sample of participants is presented in Table I (see Appendix 4).

Recruitment

The purposive sample of parents was accessed through the schools that had established nurture groups in the Nurture Group Network (NGN) within the Local Authority where I practice as a TEP. Staff who were involved in the NGN listened to a presentation of my research proposal and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) who had nurture groups in their schools and indicated their interesting taking part at that meeting.

The aim was to recruit up to six participants, which Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) suggest is a suitable sample size for a study of this type. However, the actual number used depended on availability and were chosen from the participants who expressed an interest in becoming involved.

Gaining informed consent

In order that participants felt comfortable about being approached, they initially met with nurture group staff in schools, so that they understood something of the aims of the research and how it would be conducted, prior to deciding whether they wished to become involved. Preliminary consent was established with the SENCO and the personal details of participants who then expressed an interest in participating in the research were passed onto myself as the researcher. Potential participants were then contacted via a telephone call to outline further details about the research interview. If

participants indicated that they were still interested a date and place was agreed for the interview.

Interviews took place in either the nurture group school or the participant's home, depending on their preference. Participants were informed in writing about their rights with regards to confidentiality, their access to a summary of the written study and their right to withdraw at any time during the process (see Appendix 5). Consent forms were signed after they had read this information and discussed it with myself (see Appendix 6).

Ethical issues

I aimed to create rapport with participants, to engage them and create a safe context, in which issues of respect and empathy were fundamental; in part so that they would feel relaxed and if necessary feel that they could re-negotiate the issue of consent at any point in the process.

Prior to the interview, participants were given the same information in the pre-interview checklist, concerning the nature of the research, the interview process and the de-brief session (see Appendix 2). At the outset of the interview, I made it clear to participants that they did not have to tell me anything that they didn't want to and that they could have a break or stop at any point. They were also told that they would have an unrecorded debrief session at the end of the interview to facilitate 'closure' to the research interview.

To elaborate further on ethical considerations, issues which were discussed in the interview had the potential to evoke distressing memories and participants were encouraged to talk about sensitive matters associated with their parenting. There was recognition of the potentially intrusive nature of the interview and the encounter was handled sensitively, with an awareness of the vulnerability of the participant and the possibility of less positive outcomes. The research study gained appropriate ethical approval from Sheffield University ethics committee and ethical considerations outlined in my University ethics application were adhered to throughout (see Appendix 7 for the letter which gives ethical approval for the study).

Generalising the research findings

The research study was designed to explore the thoughts, feelings and attitudes of individuals within a particular group of subjects in a local context, so there was no attempt to generalise the findings to the population of parents whose children attend nurture groups. Social phenomena can be considered too context-bound to enable generalisation and the interpretative analysis sought to establish themes which are limited to the subgroup of parents of children in nurture groups in the locality.

As discussed earlier, IPA was chosen to analyse interview data for individual participants and across the data set. The ideographic focus, with a close analysis of data using a relatively small sample, was useful in offering insights into the inter-subjective meanings which were shared by the parents of children who had a placement in a nurture group.

However, it was thought that the reader could identify with some of the personal characteristics of participants and emerging themes; with the potential to relate them to other parents of children in similar circumstances and the practice in other nurture groups. Indeed the proposal is that some of the ways that parents have felt supported will be identified and these positive thoughts and feelings can be used to stimulate and support good practice within the Nurture Group Network in the Local Authority.

Process of Data Analysis

Field notes

Immediately after the interview, field notes were taken. A general summary of the interview and the researcher's reactions to the interview were recorded as field notes after the conversation ended. This was done so that my interpretations were based not only on systematic analysis of the transcripts made but also on what was observed or noticed during the interview. Any relevant contextual factors or general aspects of the interview which were notable such as non-verbal communication, was recorded (see Appendix 8 for the field notes for Participant Two).

Transcription

Transcriptions were written to relay the actual narratives as closely as possible. Written conventions such as full stops, commas, question marks were used to make sure that the dialogue was readable but preserved the meaning. Pauses, emphasised words, sighs interruptions, laughs were all shown in the key (see page 1 of the interview transcript for participant two, Appendix 9).

To reduce the time taken for transcription, voice recognition technology was utilised: the software package 'Dragon Naturally Speaking Preferred, Edition 10' (Nuance Communications 2008). The software was trained to recognise my voice and each interview was heard individually and the dialogue was repeated verbatim to the computer. Caution was exercised because the voice recognition system made errors with common homonyms and words with similar sounds. Therefore, the copy of voice-recognised text was reviewed and re-checked at the time of input. Line numbers were written on the left hand side of each transcript to ensure that direct quotations could be recorded and easily accessed. Preliminary comments and emerging subordinate themes were labelled and recorded in the margins (see Appendix 9).

Reflexive Note

The transcription process was challenging as it was very time consuming, even with the speech recognition software, but re-living the experience by hearing the conversation was extremely useful for analysis. I found many interesting insights into meanings by hearing how things were said as well as hearing repetitions, displacement, contradictions, pauses and voice inflections.

This was in part, incorporated into the data analysis however, my interpretations of the meanings which parents had for their varied experiences formed the main focus of the analysis. These interpretations were shaped by my thoughts and impressions about the participant and their identity and the context of the interview itself. Therefore, the relationship that we formed within the research interview will have inadvertently prejudiced my view of what was said and my interpretations of how it was said and what I thought was meant.

Notation choice

The aim was to produce a written translation of the spoken dialogue so that it was readable and appeared to be as natural as possible, as suggested by Smith et al (2009). The conventions of written language were used to express questions and pauses: exclamations and full stops were used to punctuate the ending of spoken dialogue. Italics were used for the researcher's dialogue. Bold text was used to show the research prompts. Words which were emphasised were written in capital letters and sighs, laughs, interruptions and longer pauses and other utterances were written in brackets. so that the meaning was kept but the dialogue was still legible.

Thematic Analysis

The analysis adhered to the systematic IPA structure of making sense of the data (Smith et al 2009), which involved recording conceptual themes for each transcript in turn then establishing shared commonalities across the data set. The analytic stance which was taken during the interview was of being 'facilitative' and the transcription included all the talk that was produced in the collaboration, so that it was possible to view how the talk was co-constructed. Watson (2006) elucidates how the participant 'selectively accesses, reflects on and constructs knowledge in a way that is dependent upon the self-assigned role adopted' (p.369) and this positioning of the participant formed part of the interview interaction itself and was, therefore, part of the interpretation of the data.

Analysis of the data

Each participant's interview was transcribed and analysed separately. The transcript was read once with the digital recorder on to check that the spoken words matched the written word. It was then re-read as a whole, to enable the researcher to become 'immersed' in and reflect upon what was said and the general manner in which it was said: noting pauses, sighs, laughs, questions, sarcasm, in order to get an essence of the meaning.

The transcript was then read in sections to record initial thoughts (shown as 'comments' in the margins). Following this, the initial comments were summarised into themes (shown as 'constructed themes' in the margin). Whilst these initial thoughts and constructed themes were being written, there were constant checks back to what the participant actually said to ensure that the meaning wasn't reduced or lost, but summarised and represented. Analysis moved from interpretative to the descriptive and back again, and included noting distinct as well as common themes running through the transcript.

Afterwards, the constructed themes from each transcript were listed in chronological order in a separate word document and sorted into similar colour coded categories (exemplified using the transcript from participant two, in Appendix 10). Similar themes were abstracted and a label was constructed for each category. These were then tabulated and formed the subordinate themes for each participant (see Tables II- VII. in Appendix 11-16 inclusive). Associated key words or quotes showing the corresponding page and line number were included in the tables to enable key words to be identified.

These subordinate themes were then subsumed and integrated into thirteen shared subordinate themes, which were assigned appropriate labels to represent the collective commonalities across the group of participants. Polarisations and exceptions were also detailed. An underlying premise at the integrative stage was making sense of the data in a manageable form but always ensuring that the emerging subordinate themes reflected what was in the data. These subordinate themes were then clustered under four over arching superordinate themes for the study, which were categorised and labelled to reflect the subordinate themes (see Table III in Appendix 12 for an example of themes from participant two).

The subordinate themes from each participant's transcript were highlighted in a master table for each of the four superordinate themes, to aid analysis across the data set (see Tables IX-XII, in Appendix 18-21 inclusive). The written analysis interpreted direct quotes from the participants and these supported and argued for the importance of the constructed superordinate themes.

The interpretative aspect of the analysis was aided with reference to positioning theory (Harre and Moghaddam 2003) to explain how individual participants were positioned or positioned themselves within the unfolding conversations in the interviews. The importance of the social and cultural context and the shifting power balance was discussed in the reflexions and interpretations, as it was fundamental to the dynamic and unfolding narratives that were constructed.

Reflexive Note

The ongoing process of data analysis made me more conscious of the interpretative as well as the phenomenological aspect of IPA. I was aware of the impact of my thoughts, feelings and intuitions which emanated from my background and personal life experiences, and how these affected the position I took within the conversation and the position(s) that the participants took, either consciously or unconsciously.

Hollway and Jefferson (2000) refer to interpreting 'psychosocial subjects' (p.77) who are motivated by 'unconscious investments and defences against anxiety' as well as being positioned within social and cultural contexts. In terms of data analysis, the implication of this is that I need to have understood the notion of a 'defended subject' in my interpretation of what the participant has chosen to say and what they have not said, within the whole encounter.

Patterns and contradictions may have occurred throughout the dynamic conversation and this will have emerged through detailed systematic analysis of the interview transcript.

Quality control and credibility checks

As a means for checking quality and dependability, the research study adopted a number of criteria which have been suggested as guidelines for qualitative research by Yardley (2000), in the context of health psychology. The guidelines recommended were: to conduct rigorous and systematic data analysis; to demonstrate sensitivity to the context; to ensure that the write up is coherent and plausible and that the research has utility and impact. These criteria will be discussed in relation to this study.

The data collection process and analysis was thorough and systematic. with time given

to the methodical analysis and interpretation of the complex data. Rigour was achieved by a commitment to collecting enough data from participants to generate information which addressed the key research issues.

In terms of being sensitive to the broader socio-context of the study, the interpretation of what was said in the research interview was always viewed with an awareness of the significance of cultural, linguistic and socio-economic influences. These are fundamental to the wider discourse within society and formed the backdrop to my interpretation of the interactions and conversations which were co-constructed.

In the writing up stage, the insights were presented in a coherent and plausible manner, with a commitment to ensuring transparency for the reader. The procedures are clearly described and the reader can see how the study was conducted, how the data was collected and the analysis undertaken. This information is detailed in the Appendices.

The reflexive notes written within the boxes show how I interpret the data. The reader is free to construct their own interpretation of the way in which I responded emotionally and intellectually to the participant, based on the information given. They can then make informed decisions as to whether they accept or value the interpretation and this forms part of the decision regarding the credibility and trustworthiness of the research.

Impact of the study

The study was designed to be applied and to have an impact on the practice of nurture group staff within the locality, to increase the awareness of the parents' perspective and to challenge and improve existing practice, particularly for schools that are in the process of developing a nurture group within their school setting. Significantly, in feeding back the insights gained from this study within the local context, in future this may impact on how children are referred for the nurture group intervention and how parents are informed and included in this process. Therefore, at a later stage, the intention is to present the summary of the findings to interested parents and teachers within the Nurture Group Network in the Local Authority.

CHAPTER FIVE: Analysis of the Findings

Introduction

Analysing and organising the data

Six interview transcripts were analysed using the thematic coding procedures in IPA. Each interview was systematically analysed in its entirety. To aid transparency, the full transcript of the interview with initial comments and emergent themes for participant two is given in Appendix 9.

As detailed in the 'procedures' section of the Methodology chapter, the emergent themes that were constructed for each participant were colour coded and sorted into categories which created the 'subordinate' themes (exemplified in Appendix 10 and Appendix 11). These subordinate themes included polarised and oppositional relationships. This type of relationship refers to themes which emerged from transcripts which appear to contradict what parents have said within the same interview e.g. in Stacey's transcript a subordinate theme emerged which concerned problematic relationships within the group. However, another theme which emerged in the transcript concerned the positive aspect of improved relationships. As these two subordinate themes opposed each other, they were classed as having a 'polarised relationship'.

The subordinate themes for each participant were compared and commonalities and shared experiences between the participants were identified across the data set and were refined or re-categorised and integrated to form thirteen subordinate themes. Following this, similar subordinate themes were abstracted into clusters and each clustered theme was given a label which captured its essence (exemplified in Table III, Appendix 12). These formed the four 'superordinate' themes in the study: superordinate theme A: 'Nature vs. Nature Attributions', superordinate theme B: 'Narrow Expectations', superordinate theme C: Holistic Gains, superordinate theme D: 'Parents as Partners'.

In the written analysis, each of the four superordinate themes were examined separately and the subordinate themes which pertained to them were described and interpreted (see

Master Tables IX, X, XI and XII for the appearance of subordinate themes across the data set in Appendix 18,19,20 and 21). Shared commonalities, differences, exceptions and polarised themes which contradict the general pattern were also noted and interpreted.

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Reflexive note

As I became more experienced at data analysis, it became easier to code transcripts. I was aware that I didn't want to categorise each participant's responses into pre-set categories as I felt that this would mitigate against creativity and not be true to IPA methodology which aims to create subordinate themes which emerge from the data. However, I recognised that they were always going to be my own constructions of what was said.

</div>

Key to tabulated number references

The key to the number references with the subordinate themes in the tables are as follows: page number: line number. In the written analysis, direct quotes from participants are detailed as follows: (participant number: page number: line number) to ensure a systematic approach and consistency. To aid interpretation and discussion of the data in the analysis of the findings, emphasis is drawn to words in quotes by underlining them.

Presenting the Findings

In the analysis chapter the data is presented in a number of forms:

1. A summative web diagram of all four superordinate themes across the data set is presented in Figure 1 'Experiences of being a parent of a child in a part-time nurture group'.

2. Each of the superordinate themes is then presented through web diagrams (Figures 1.1 to 1.4 inclusive), which show the shared subordinate themes across the data set.

Personal Reflexivity

The constructed data and field notes taken by the researcher revealed a number of interview effects which are significant and enter into the interpretation of the data in all of the superordinate themes. Therefore, to demonstrate the researcher's awareness of these effects, reflexions concerning the analysis and interpretation of the data are included where pertinent and are discussed within the 'reflexive note' boxes.

Reflexive note

It would have been possible to take the constructed subordinate themes back to the participant to share them and explore their views on my interpretation; however, I actively made the decision not follow that course of action.

The reasons for this were:

(i)   as the researcher I wanted my interpretations to form the main part of the analysis as I had co-constructed the interview with the participant

(ii)   ethically I decided that this was not appropriate due to the sensitive nature of the discussions. I felt that it may have done more harm than good.

Figure 1: Summative Web Diagram of Superordinate Themes

A. Nature vs Nurture Attributions

B. Narrow Expectations?

Experiences of being a Parent of a Child in a Part-time Nurture Group

C. Holistic Gains

D. Parents as Partners?
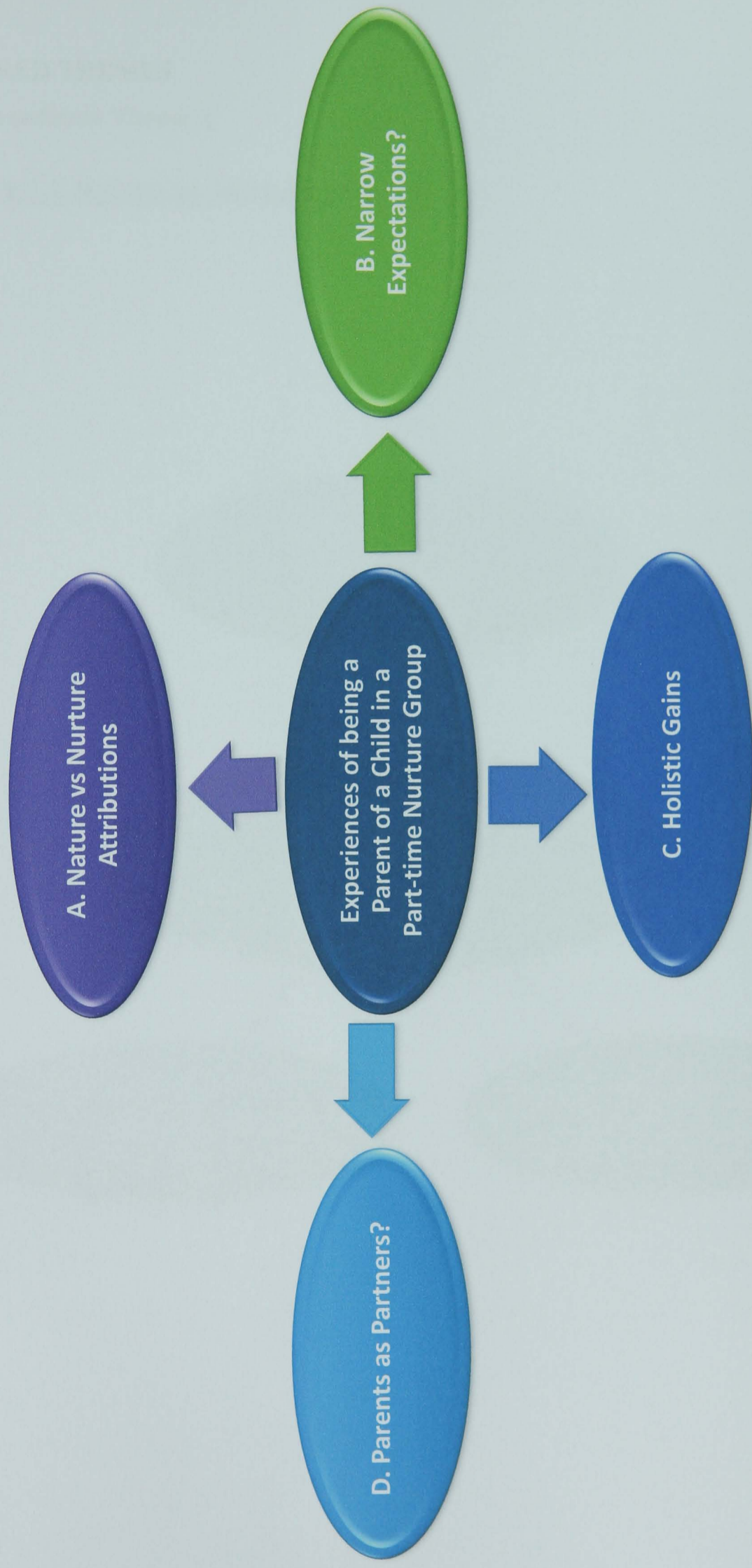
SHARED THEMES

Superordinate Theme A

Figure 1.1 Nature vs. Nurture Attributions

SUBORDINATE THEME:

1. Parental blaming and disclaiming

SUPERORDINATE THEME A:

Nature vs Nurture Attributions

SUBORDINATE THEME:

3.Adapting to School Experiences

SUBORDINATE THEME:

2. Delayed development
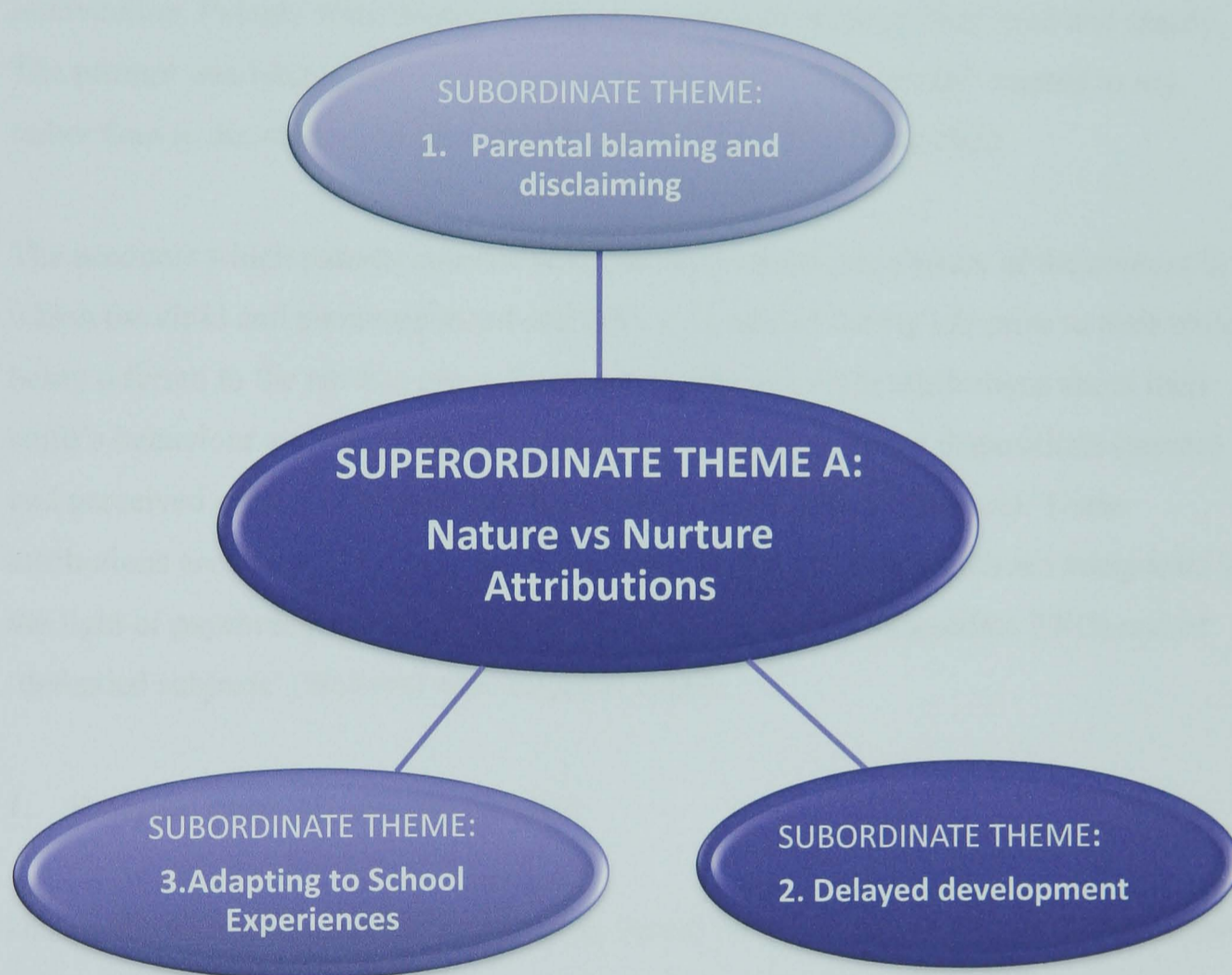
Nature vs. Nurture Attributions

Superordinate Theme A

Introduction

This theme describes parents' experiences of family life with their child before they started school and the child's experience of school prior to the nurture group intervention. Parents were invited to talk in general terms about their child and family. The prompt was intentionally left open-ended; to elicit what parents' wanted to say, rather than to direct them to give specific information about their child.

The accounts which parents constructed painted an interesting picture of the context in which the child and parent operated and gave a flavour of family life prior to their child being referred to the nurture group intervention. Parents made attributions about their child's behaviour and talked about the perceived effects of innate dispositions (nature) and perceived effects of the environment: families and schools (nurture). These attributions are described in terms of shared and distinct themes which are interpreted in the light of psychological theories of positioning (Harre and Mogaddam 2003) and of 'defended subjects' (Hollway and Jefferson 2000).

1. Parental blaming and disclaiming

During the interview, parents attempted to search for meaning as to why their child had difficulties and made reference to an aspect of the child's life or context in which the behaviour occurred. This was not specifically asked for; however, constructions were made about phenomena, as parents attempted to make sense of their experiences.

The information that each of the parents gave about their family established that three of the participants were legal guardians of their child because their birth mothers had been unable to cope with looking after them. Of the three who were legal guardians, their situations were similar in that a parent was absent when the child was younger, and

there were incidents of neglect in these cases. However their circumstances all had distinct elements.

Della had been a friend and neighbour of her child's mother and had initially looked after him temporarily as Children's Social Care were involved, due to neglect. This led to the legal adoption of Peter and his twin brother Paul, when they were 15 months old. The twins did not see their parents or siblings and Della paints quite a disparate picture of the children's family life. She repeatedly draws attention to what Peter and Paul are 'meant' to do and the tone of her account speaks volumes about how she feels the birth family have let the twin brothers down:

> **Della:** They are <u>meant to</u> see him, well their dad, their alleged dad; they don't have nothing what so ever to do with him. Mum, they are <u>meant to</u> see on a monthly basis but she never turns up. They are <u>meant to</u> go over to their grandmas but she hasn't seen them. ... (5:2:21-4)

Christine was the other parent who was a legal guardian of Karl who attended the same nurture group as Peter. She was a neighbour of Karl and his family and also his mother's cousin. Christine told me that Karl was taken into the family when he was four years old because his mother couldn't look after him by herself.

> **Christine:** ... she was too young and couldn't cope with him and she had locked him in his room (laugh) (6:1:18)

Children's Social Care was involved in this case due to neglect and again there was a lack of contact with the birth parents, who had separated and moved elsewhere. Similarly Christine paints a negative picture of abuse and neglect, blaming Karl's birth mother who she felt wasn't able to cope with the demands of looking after a small child. Christine felt that Karl's difficulties began when he lived with his birth mother and she attributed his inability to speak, aged three, to the neglect that he suffered as a baby and toddler:

> **Christine:** We just think that she didn't talk to him, (laugh) so he was just left to his own devices we think (laugh) (6:2:45-6)

Similarly, Della recounted her experiences when the children first came to live with her:

> **Della**: ... they couldn't walk, they couldn't talk-if they had a mouthful of tea they wouldn't know what to do with it (5:3:62-3)

However, she also stated that their mother had problems with school learning and attributed it to an innate disposition which may have been inherited:

> **Della**: Their mum has got learning difficulties but she seemed to manage up to certain extent and then you know I don't know what went wrong before I got them (5:3:65-7)

Stacey was the other parent who became the legal guardian of her child, Kirsty. Kirsty's birth mother, Ruby, was not able to care for her so Stacey adopted her. Ruby and Kirsty's father had separated and there were allegations of neglect.

Stacey perceived that this had caused some of Kirsty's emotional difficulties:

> **Stacey**: She obviously had the emotional upset (pause) but actually she had to deal with parents coming and going first of all together then not and then being separated and then not seeing her mum for quite some time (2:9:256-258)

She talked about the effects of being under stimulated by her birth parent when she was very young, in part because of the family circumstances and nurturing that she didn't receive:

> **Stacey**: ...so although from being all babbly and dancing around she then went very quiet and I think that she was very under stimulated (2:3:82-3)

Yet Stacey was able to comprehend that it wasn't so easy to tease out the reasons for Kirsty's complex difficulties and she acknowledged the possible impact of Kirsty's 'innate' or 'natural' ability which she inherited from her parents, who both had learning difficulties:

> **Stacey**: We need a better understanding I think and 'cos people thought she's immature ... and she's had all this upset and she's immature and we were saying YES SHE IS but actually we think we are not sure what level of ability, innate ability, I know that's not set, I'm not saying that it is but there is still a level of ability and that needs to be understood (2:22:711-716)

These parents may not have felt as judged or directly responsible for the child's socio-emotional and behavioural difficulties and it may have been easier for them to accept within-child 'nature' explanations that had occurred before they had the child and therefore feel less under scrutiny or to blame themselves.

However, there was an inferred criticism towards the professionals in Stacey's account, as she believed that the full picture regarding her innate ability wasn't fully explored and needed to be 'understood'. This re-emerges later on in the interview when she commented on the impact of the intervention and other aspects of learning which she felt that the nurture group couldn't address.

Reflexive Note

Stacey was a very confident and assertive parent who obviously felt at ease talking to a professional. On reading the field notes I made after the interview (see Appendix 8), it was apparent that she was very different in this respect and the 'power play' was distinct compared to many of the other parents. Stacey was able to offer insights into her family situation and the referral process. She felt at home discussing technical aspects such as the assessment tools used and the developmental stages that she felt Kirsty needed to re-visit in the nurture group.

My interpretations of our co-constructions were made with this in mind and reminded me that although the parents were all part of a purposive sample, a homogenous group with regards to having a child in the nurture group; they all had very different experiences, backgrounds and expectations of the intervention and the interview process itself.

In contrast to the parents who were legal guardians of their child, another participant Rachel, was separated from her child's birth father. Jason, her son, had contact with his father at weekends. The family circumstances differed in that Rachel had not been married to Jason's father and Social Care weren't involved with the family. Yet there were differences between the parents as to how Jason should be cared for.

Rachel's comments can be interpreted using positioning theory (Harre and Mogaddam 2003). She positioned herself as the parent who was involved with Jason's schooling and education. This became evident as she talked about how involved she was with the school and continued to state how his father wasn't:

> **Rachel:** I have never lived with Jason's dad <u>but</u> he still goes to there in the week, so you know we do a lot of school work with him and was and things like that <u>but</u> when he is at his dads, he's got a quad and stuff like that so it's all physical and all you know learning stuff here." (3:1:8-13)

The 'but' in her comment may have been unintentional, or it may have been a disclaimer for herself to place the blame on Jason's father for his disinterest in learning and school work. In her mind this may have created somewhat conflicting values and styles of parenting, which she perceived to have an adverse effect on Jason's behaviour.

However, as Rachel continues the interview, she begins to question her own parenting, when she wonders about why Jason wasn't 'normal' and had difficulties at school:

> **Rachel:** I don't know at first I thought you know well what's wrong with him (*yes*) you know why isn't he _normal_? What have I done wrong- why doesn't he do this and why doesn't he do that? (3:6:264-7)

Rachel found it hard to think about him struggling and then wondered if it may have been inherited or if her parenting was to blame:

> **Rachel:** … they were saying he is struggling with this and struggling with that and I have always tried my best you know I mean I'm not brilliant myself at English. I thought to myself you know is it because I haven't been doing it properly with him or because I haven't read enough with him or you know (3:6:275-80)

The other two parents, Julie and Anya, were exceptions to this theme as both were with their husbands and again, there were no incidents of neglect or involvement with Social Care. Initially they appeared more defensive, perhaps as they had brought their children up from birth. Anya was of Asian heritage but was born in the United Kingdom and spoke English fluently. Her husband had emigrated from Pakistan and spoke very little English, Mainly communicating in Punjabi.

At the start of our interview, Anya immediately questioned what was behind the opening prompt, by asking why the question was being posed:

> **Researcher:** *So I'd like to get some background information about Nita and your family; if you can just tell me some general information about Nita and your family, when she was younger, from wherever you want to start*
>
> **Anya:** Is that the main reason why you think she went into nurture group? (4:1:1-4)

Reassurance was given to allay any anxieties which Anya may have felt; perhaps she perceived that the research would be somewhat judgemental and would question her behaviour or the family's way of life. However, the sense of her attempting to seek an explanation as to why this may have happened to her child permeated her dialogue and continued through out the interview.

Anya explained that she felt 'unhappy' when she was initially told about the nurture group because it was perceived as an attack on her parenting skills and she felt somewhat to blame for Nita's behaviour.

> **Anya:**.. I wasn't happy with it at first to be very honest with you, if I'm honest. because I thought I was going somewhere wrong as a parent. I thought what am I doing wrong and even if I had time and everything you know I thought what is going on? (4:8:253-6)

Anya repeatedly talked about the time she spent working, describing this in great detail. She justified the time she did spend with her daughter, stating that she hadn't 'neglected' her and questioning if that was the reason for her difficulties and why she had to go into the nurture group.

> **Anya**: I can't say I've <u>neglected</u> her in that way but then when I did decide to go back to work then it was full-time. I <u>had no other option</u> but to work full time and it was a bit too much for Nita as well and that's when I realized-that's when she was in reception then there were a few problems

> *Researcher: Mmm- so what got a bit too much for her do you think?*

> **Anya**: me working I think full time, because I used to drop her off... but still at the same time, problems I thought what if it is because of that … (4:2:27-42)

Later on she continues with this thread:

> **Anya:** …and then slowly, slowly, I thought what if the problem was related to that? And then someone said…

> *Researcher: Related to?*

> **Anya**: With me going to work (4:3:70-3)

The socio-cultural aspect could be a factor in her sense of blame for many Asian families traditionally spend a good deal of time in the home as the homemaker, alongside their mother-in law and other extended family. This was true of Anya's husband as she told me that he tended to mix within the Asian community because he did not speak any English. Anya may have felt critical of herself and the amount of time she spent with Nita, compared to how she had been raised or to other more traditional

Asian families. Or she may have felt that extended family members and professionals (like myself, the Psychologist) judged her and this led to guilt and self-blame.

Additionally Anya may have felt guilty about the lack of time or nurturing that Nita had. As Sommerfield (2006) suggests, western society still has the belief that mothers should in the main be responsible for child care. Anya may have felt that she had to justify her decision to work by stating that she had 'no option'.

Reflexive Note

The interview with Anya was particularly interesting because of her obvious attempts to search for an explanation regarding Nita's behaviour and rationalise what had happened. This made me more aware of the social nature of the interview process. It highlighted the importance of the context, power play and the relationship we constructed.

Anya was of British Asian heritage and I considered the possible effect that her family and the Asian community may have had on the position she took. The Asian culture traditionally having a strong sense of family and community and regard for professionals may have heightened the sense of being judged and wanting to present an impression of being a 'decent family'. I was conscious of accounting for this in my interpretations of what she said to me.

I had a distinct feeling that Anya saw me in my role as a TEP rather than researcher as many of her comments suggested this. Did this interview reflect some of the interactions that Anya and other nurture group parents had, with other professionals?

I would admit to feeling somewhat dismayed (but not totally surprised) that she had perceived that I was there as an 'expert' to give answers or to be critical or judge her, given the 'nurturing' aspects of the intervention.

Julie continually attempted to defend herself against this perceived mother blame by talking about the family as a positive force for her son, Sam. She continually gave unasked for evidence for the nurturing that Sam had received as a young child. It was apparent that she did not want to entertain the idea that there may have been any aspects of parenting that may have contributed to Sam's difficulties. It is possible to interpret

Sam's behavioural difficulties in light of attachment theory, as a child with unresolved insecure ambivalent attachments (Bowlby 1988). However Julie emphasised that Sam never had any problems early on and was 'never naughty'. She repeatedly re-framed his difficulties and talked in very positive terms about his early care:

> **Julie**: ...erm (pause) he's always been <u>mischievous</u> he was you know from being you know, crawling he's always had this <u>little mischievous streak.</u> He was never ever naughty or anything like that ... erm but erm yeah he was a lovely child really YEAH a pleasure...

> **Julie**: Yeah he <u>never had any problems at all</u> yeah he used to take him out to the park he used to do all that kind of thing with him and look after the house as well and yeah he <u>never had any problems at all</u>, he LOVED it. (1:1:13-27)

Julie positioned herself as a parent who was very caring, supportive and family oriented, even to the extent of removing him from the nursery so that he would be 'nurtured' by his grandparents.

> **Julie**: I mean grandparents are fantastic for looking after children, I'm all for it me! I think it's BRILLIANT erm they've got all this knowledge and there's the <u>nurturing</u> you just know that your child is going to be secure and that they're going to be looked after appropriately (1:3:76-80)

Julie repeatedly attributed blame on the lack of nurturing within the school system and from the professionals who were involved in caring for her child. Her tone of voice was quite emphatic and the language she used is indicative of how she felt:

> **Julie**: ... They weren't doing anything you know they were <u>just</u> leaving him to his own devices, erm, (pause) he <u>just</u> wasn't mixing with the other children and he wasn't ENCOURAGED to mix with the other children either and err...

> **Julie**: I wasn't happy about him in reception. To be honest I wasn't happy with the teacher there I was constantly at <u>loggerheads</u> with them... (1:5:118-120)

Yet later on in the interview she constructs an oppositional version of events. On a contradictory note she repeats the notion of feeling like a 'complete failure' (1:8:224) and talks in candid terms about her relationship with school staff and professionals alike.

Julie felt that her identity as a parent was called into question:

> **Julie**: It is just so easy to feel like a <u>failure</u> as a parent and you feel as if they are <u>judging</u> you, you feel as though you have to prove that you live in a <u>nice</u> house and have <u>nice</u> things and you're a <u>nice</u> person and you feel like you have to really sort of SELL yourself as a parent, it's AWFUL. It's very draining (1:13:403-7)

Interpreting Julie's interview; she constructs a defence against the staff and professionals who she feels have positioned her in this way, to try to protect her against her conflicting feelings regarding her identity as a parent and the significant nurturing aspects of that role. An explanation which doesn't attack her preserved self-identity is that the staff didn't manage her son and another is that the family aren't good enough in materialistic terms. Julie may have deployed defensive mechanisms', positioning herself as someone who did all she could for her child, rather than consider other possible explanations, such as difficulties with socialisation or early attachments.

Reflexive note

Julie's interview was distinct within the data set because she was initially very reluctant to accept that her son had social and emotional behavioural difficulties. I felt that as her child was still young (aged six) she hadn't had a lot of time to accept and come to terms with the difficulties which Sam experienced and was in the process of trying to make sense of all of these experiences during the interview.

Julie had extremely contradictory views and the experience of Sam being referred to a nurture group intervention was very emotional, describing it as a 'roller coaster' ride (1:19:600). I think that the process of being interviewed helped her to come to terms with these thoughts and she found the experience cathartic. However, as a practising EP, I am aiming to engage parents sensitively, so this would have been in my mind as I deconstructed the transcript.

The fact that Julie articulated her beliefs through the shared talk was also important for me to experience as a researcher using IPA and semi-structured interviews. It gave me a useful perspective on how participants may be constructing and re-constructing their experiences during the interview as opposed to recounting them.

2. Delayed Development

Many parents thought their child was delayed in their development and this was particularly noticeable when they started the formal process of schooling. The implication for some of the parents was that their child wasn't ready for school but that this was not taken account of and they still had to conform to the system.

Some of the children may have needed more experience of secure care giving relationships at home to develop their internal models of attachments figures as helpful and trusting. Further more, they may not have developed the language and emotional intelligence with which to express their thoughts and feelings. This may have affected their attachments to the care givers at school and exacerbated the difficulties which the child experienced.

Stacey talked about Kirsty's delayed development when she was in private nursery:

> **Stacey**: …she was very behind the other children, we always said that she was at least a year behind the other children (2:8:236-7)…I thought my goodness she'd start in the January and so when we found out she had to go in the September and it was quite a shock 'cos I thought she needed another good six months really (2:10:319-21)

Della also thought that the twin boys were behind in their general development, when they came into her care. This was more pronounced as the boys had been neglected and Social Care had been involved:

> **Della**: When I first got them they were that far behind I mean I have put a lot of hard work and effort into them to sort to try and get-they are still behind (5:3:55-6)

Similarly, Karl had difficulties when he first started nursery, even though Christine had talked to staff about how hard he was to manage at home:

> **Christine**: We got him just before he started at school…we told nursery what he was going to be like… he wasn't as bad as he was at home but (laugh) they were expecting worse (laugh) (6:4:91-4)

3. Adapting to School Experiences

When parents talked about their child's experiences at school, they often discussed the reasons for the difficulties that they had. Many of these difficulties involved adapting to the social nature of school. The majority of parents related that their child had social communication difficulties and talked about the issues that they had with interacting with other children and how this impacted on their ability to make friends, conform to school life and make progress in learning.

Julie acknowledged that her child did have difficulties in socialising with other children, but this only seemed to become a problem when he started nursery school. Like Nita, he was the only child at home and when the context changed i.e. mixing with other children outside the family home, his behaviour became an issue. Julie reported that she became aware of Sam's problems when he started formal nursery and school and she emphasises that he wasn't hard to manage at home. She re-framed the problems as 'just little things' which 'cropped up'.

> **Julie**: Oh no, it wasn't <u>difficult at HOME</u>; no it wasn't <u>difficult at home</u>. Like I say he went to the private day care nursery when he was 13 months old and that was the starting point of <u>not problems</u> but just <u>little things</u> that were cropping up... (1:2:43-46)

Interestingly, this did change part way through the interview as Julie articulated to herself what had happened and perhaps came to a realisation that the pattern of events involved her blaming a variety of different professionals rather than accepting that there were difficulties with Sam in a variety of different contexts. There were examples of polarisation of themes in Julie's constructions and attributions of his behaviour. One of these occurred when she indicated that Sam was part of the problem and that staff weren't entirely responsible for the difficulties:

> **Julie**: He wanted to be in control of everybody and now and again he was hurting people... he wasn't cooperative with teachers and the nursery nurses there (1:4:90-94)

Anya also relayed the problems that her child had with other children at school and attempted to explain them by relating it back to what happened with her niece when they played together as toddlers.

> **Anya**: …and she was hitting her (Nita), she probably thought I can't hit her back, I'll try and look for someone else (4:5:138-9)

This explanation may have been more palatable to Anya as a reason for Nita's behavioural difficulties, rather than her being absent and spending little time with her. Throughout her interview Anya discussed taking Nita out and mixing with other children on twelve separate occasions. An interpretation of this as a defence mechanism and positioning herself as a 'good parent' meant that her constructions protected her against potential criticism, conflict and pain:

> **Anya**: …err the other thing is like I say with mixing in with other children I don't because I try to take her out a lot …we do spend a lot of time as a family together… (4:4:98-101)

> **Anya**: We were always going there that were on a Tuesday and a Friday I never missed that because I go that's when they start interacting with other children…

Rachel appeared to accept what the teachers told her about how Jason didn't want to mix with other children when he first went to school:

> **Rachel**: When he first started you know they'd say right lets get into a group and Jason would just say 'I don't want to do that-I just want to do it on my own'. He didn't really want to get involved with anybody else he just wanted to sit on the table on his own and just get on with it (3:1:17-21)

She sought to understand why he didn't adapt well to school and talked about how Jason was different at home.

> **Rachel**: I didn't know why he was like that though 'cos when he was with me he seemed right confident (*yes*) you know, really confident, he'd talk to anybody and then when he were at school he were this person who just kept his self to his self. I don't know why he were like that… (3:2:55-9)

Stacey, Della and Christine all stated that their child had social interaction difficulties at school because of their problems with speech, language and communication. The

children were all working with Speech Therapists. Christine shows the extent of Karl's communication difficulties and emphasises how challenging it was when he first went to live with them, aged three.

> **Christine**: Yes it was very <u>hard</u> because he was just very disruptive and he didn't know how to talk and that's was even <u>harder</u>, he just squealed a lot (laugh) (6:2:39-40)

Stacey repeatedly talked about the extent of Kirsty's issues with speech:

> **Stacey**: When she came to me she wasn't speaking she got about two words which was 'me' and 'baby' which was her sister (2:7:187-188)

She goes onto discuss how this affected her confidence and learning in class and the impact on her social communication skills and friendships in school:

> **Stacey**: She clearly has got the answer right she's not confident that it is the right answer so she won't say anything (2:7:216-7)

> **Stacey**: I was worried about her not really; you know she didn't have friendships really in school (2:13:412-414)

SHARED THEMES

Superordinate Theme B

Figure 1.2 Narrow Expectations

SUBORDINATE THEME:
1. Uncertainties

SUBORDINATE THEME:
2. Personalised attention

SUPERORDINATE THEME B:

Narrow Expectations

SUBORDINATE THEME:
3. Learning, Social and Emotional and Behavioural Skills
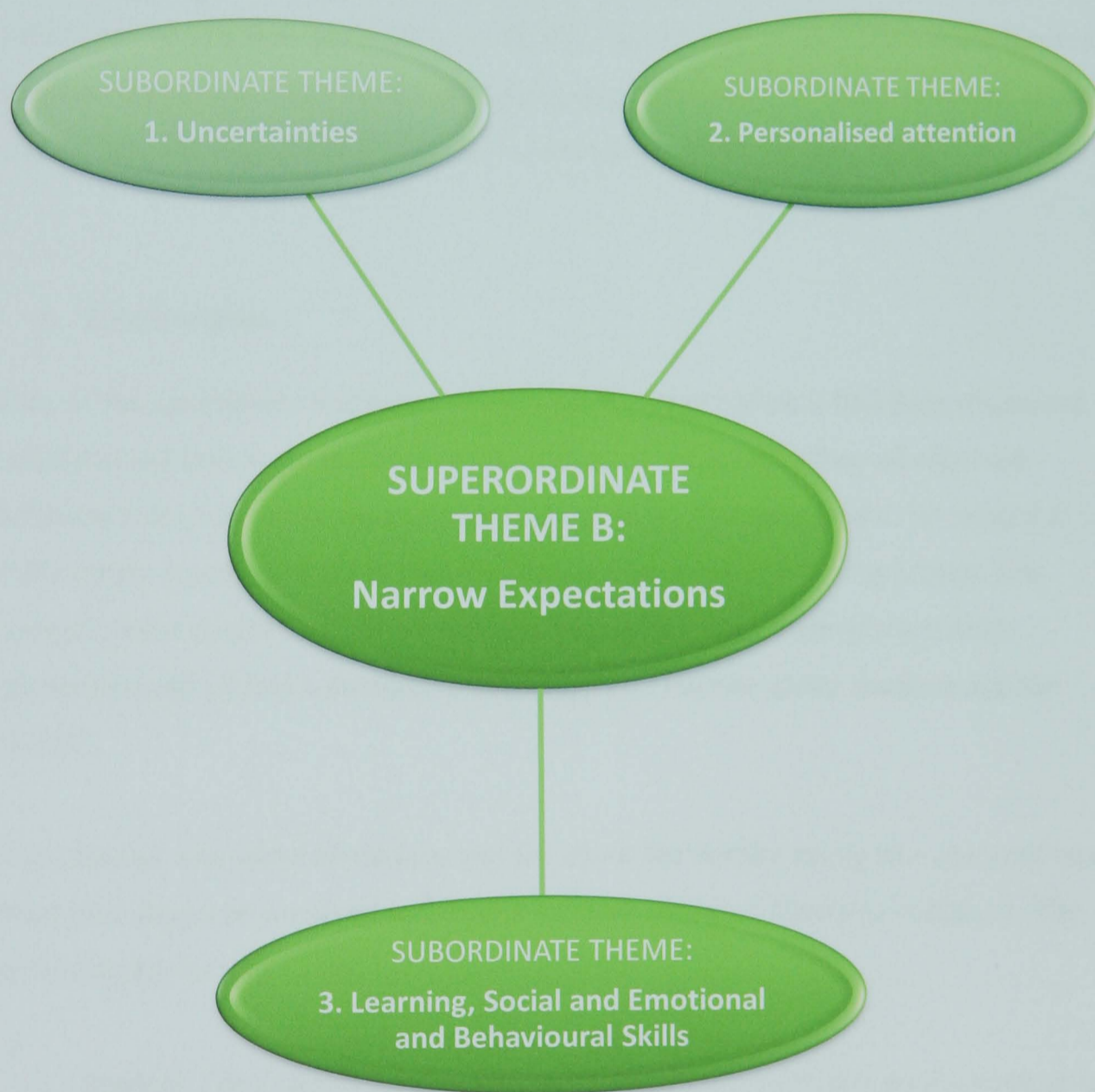
<u>**Narrow Expectations**</u>

Superordinate Theme B

Introduction

This theme is concerned with how parents' felt about their child going into the nurture group, what they thought the intervention would involve and how they perceived that it would work in practice. Most of these beliefs were narrow as they were quite limited, in the sense the parents were unsure of what to think and weren't really informed about the intervention, but hoped that it may have a beneficial effect on their child.

1. Uncertainties

None of the participants had heard of the nurture group before it had been discussed with them and they were uncertain as to what it would entail. They all received differential degrees of information from school staff. This appeared to be related to what staff thought parents needed at the time, rather than a standardised approach. For example, some parents were shown the nurture room, some were given written information and all had a meeting or meetings with nurture group teachers and the SENCO.

When Rachel was asked about how she felt about the nurture group she was confused about what might be involved and used a medical model of illness to explain it. She perceived that he might need to be made 'better':

> **Rachel**: I don't know really I felt a bit I don't know a bit is it gonna work or is it you know, will he just sit there and play. Is it going to make him better or is it going to make him less... (3:10:518-521)

Other parents' seemed pleased that the school was doing something to intervene and attempt to help their child.

For example, Della said that she trusted the school and wanted to give anything a go.

> **Della**: I don't know really I don't know what I expected. I didn't know whether it would help them or not. I'd give anything ago really... (5:9:260-1)

Christine was happy for Karl to experience something that 'would help him come on' (6:11:318). She thought that it was better not to have any expectations and appeared to trust the school to try to help him, as she had experienced his behaviour at home and had expected school to find him difficult to manage.

Similarly Stacey hadn't heard anything about nurture groups. Stacey wanted 'something to be done'(2:12:400).

The general consensus from the parents was that it was better for the school to do something positive, even though little was known about the intervention. This was personified by Rachel and Anya who both talked about current practice of schools trying to intervene with children:

> **Rachel**: I just think that it is really good that they do that you know rather than when I was at school well, he doesn't want to learn so let's just forget about him and carry on with the rest of the class sort of thing. Whereas now they are noticing children and they are helping them rather than just saying well I can't be bothered and just leaving them ... (3:13:652-8)

> **Anya**: …because extra time can make a difference to a child it's a lot better than rather than them not getting the attention at all (4:16:519-521)

However, when they were asked how they felt about the nurture group, half the parents expressed some concerns around their child being withdrawn out of their usual class and worries about re-integration when the intervention came to an end. This is exemplified by Stacey:

> **Stacey**: …as I say one of the issues that I was concerned about other children perceive her coming out of class …'cos I was worried (2:24:805-08)

Although she did mention Kirsty being 'pulled' out of class on a number of occasions, she did appear to come to terms with this later on in the discussion by explaining that she only missed games which wasn't 'a big thing' (2:25:823)

Other parents' concerns about being withdrawn from their class were allayed somewhat due to the fact that the intervention was part-time and children either spent the morning or the afternoon in the nurture group, and the other part of the day in their class with their peers.

> **Christine**: I did wonder if it would affect his school work you know coming out of class and everything ...but then he is learning the social skills that he needs so...it doesn't bother me now about him missing the learning because I know that's fed to the main bits in the morning (6:309-22)

Julie talked about how staff told her that Sam would not miss out on the academic side:

> **Julie**: ...and they were going to be focusing on social interaction and manners and good behaviour whilst sticking to the curriculum you know like the literacy and the numeracy (1:7:185-88)

Rachel was also pleased that Jason would be continuing with his work:

> **Rachel**: I thought when they first told me that they would take him of his class you would know just to play all day you know and they won't do owt ... what I didn't realize that they took the work out of the class into the group (3:4:198-202)

However, concerns with integration of the part-time group were also mentioned by two parents:

> **Rachel**: Once he goes back into the normal class how is he going to react? (3:10:520-1)

> **Anya**: ...she was going from a small group to a big group in the afternoon... it took her a little bit of time to settle down (4:15:490-2)

Class teachers and nurture group staff played a key role in this. When there was felt to be a good relationship between the staff involved, particularly when the class teacher was interested in the intervention and met with parents and staff from the nurture group, any fears were reduced and the positives were seen.

2. Learning, Social, Emotional and Behavioural Skills

The key focus of the intervention was perceived by parents to be helping children with their learning behaviour. Most of the parents thought that the intervention would also improve their child's social and emotional well-being. Some parents associated these phenomena when they mentioned how their child felt about school and the relationships that they had with staff and other children.

However, most of the parents weren't sure what to expect when they were told about the nurture group. For example initially Della was unsure as to what to say about her expectations but when probed, she stated:

> **Della**: I hoped that it might improve their behaviour towards each other and hope that they might get on a little bit better together (5:9:265-6)

Similarly, Christine thought it would help with Karl's behaviour but seemed pleased that she was given realistic expectations by nurture group staff, so that she wouldn't think that it would be a quick 'fix':

> **Christine**: ...they did say that it wouldn't happen overnight it could take a few months or it could take longer. They did say that it is not going to be a magic wand (laugh) that makes it all right (laugh) (6:6:167-9)

Julie said that staff had also told her similar things:

> **Julie**: ...they also said that they didn't want to be like a sticking plaster, to be just like a temporary thing ... (1:7:219-223)

Other aspects of behaviour which parents said that they expected to change were concerned with relationship building. For instance Stacey commented on this aspect of work in the nurture group and hoped that her daughter would increase her self-confidence and apply what she had learned to other situations:

> **Stacey**: Well I suppose the expectation was in terms of helping her to get more ready for work... and formulate relationships with the group then you know within the nurture group which hopefully would transfer out (2:21:693-701)

3. Personalised Attention

Having greater access to the teacher's attention was perceived to be one of the most significant positive aspects of the nurture group intervention. This was certainly highlighted to parents as being beneficial by nurture group teachers. In terms of what parents expected it was significant in that they all felt that the group's size and ratio of teachers to children was one of its successful features. Parents' talked about the benefits of being in a small group and how the child would be more visible and would have the time and space to be supported.

> **Rachel**: ...and instead of it being one teacher to 30 there's two teachers to six, so if they ARE struggling, they've got time to sit down with him and explain you know what he's struggling with (3:5:203-5)

> **Anya**: They would get more one to one you know (yeah) it would be a smaller class and more one to one (4:15:498-499)

Della and Christine both perceived that their children needed extra attention from staff and less distractions from other children:

> **Della**: He needs one to one attention I think that is what it is (5:5:116)

> **Della**: ...if it is the whole class then they can't handle it then obviously as not many children in here so if it's a smaller group than the boys can handle that (5:8:232-3)

Similarly, Christine felt that the nurture group would give staff the opportunity to spend time with Karl:

> **Christine**: ...because it is only a small group in here so they can spend more time with him whereas in the classroom he would just be in a big group and did not listen (6:6:157-8)

Spending time with the child was felt to be more of an opportunity to give more tailored and direct instruction or explanation on aspects of their behaviour or work. Parents liked the fact that their child would receive more attention and not be left to struggle or be 'lost' within a busy mainstream classroom environment.

SHARED THEMES

Superordinate Theme C

Figure 1.3 Holistic Gains

SUBORDINATE THEME:

1. Forming caring relationships

SUPERORDINATE THEME C:

Holistic Gains

SUBORDINATE THEME:

3. Academic progress

SUBORDINATE THEME:

2. Educational Engagement

<u>**Holistic Gains**</u>

Superordinate Theme C

Introduction

The 'Holistic Gains' superordinate theme relates to parents' perceptions of the intervention and the effect that they thought it had. All of the parents believed that the intervention had made a difference to their child, however the extent of these gains was dissimilar across the data set.

For two of the parents it was hard to tease out whether there were any changes and there was a sense that they hadn't considered this before and found it hard to be specific about what the effects had been, if any. The other four parents were much more positive and they shared many commonalities with regards to the impact that they thought had occurred, in terms of communication skills and relationships, academic attainment and engagement in their child's learning.

1. Forming Caring Relationships

A common theme about the success of the intervention in parents' eyes concerned the forming of relationships with nurture group staff and the way that the staff were interested and cared about their child, in a holistic sense. This related to the 'close' nature of the group and the attachments which could be formed with the nurture group staff, which was perceived to be distinct to what would be possible in a class of thirty children and one teacher.

Christine summarised what she believed to be responsible for the improvement in Karl's behaviour:

> **Christine**: ...I just think the closeness of it
>
> *Researcher: the closeness to do with...*
>
> **Christine**: The teachers and the children (6:10:261-3)

Rachel gave an example of this caring approach when she told me about the staff noticing that Jason was unwell and subsequently recommending that she take him to the family doctor. This was perceived as positive rather than intrusive and was dependent on the trusting relationship that the staff had built up with Rachel.

Although Jason has now left the nurture group, he was still 'cared' for by key nurture group staff and encouraged to visit the room if he felt that he needed to.

> **Rachel**: ...he said that if I'm struggling or if I need to talk to them then I can just go and knock on the door or he can go and talk to Mrs. Haigh (3:11:562-5)

There was a sense of cooperation between the nurture group staff and parents and all of the parents felt that their child liked the staff and felt comfortable in the group. This often extended to how they felt about coming to school generally.

> **Christine**: he loves coming in here and he's happy at school (6:1:27)

> **Stacey**: She is very positive about nurture groups and ...she would look forward to going into the nurture group.... she is REALLY positive about nurture group and the home corner ((2:4:440-444)

> **Stacey**: I think she's better with the teachers in nurture group as well. She's very comfortable in nurture group (2:16:529-530)

> **Stacey**: She's happy, you know she's happy to go she's never reluctant to go into school...we've never had one minutes problem about her going into school, never (2:22:734-6)

Della thought that the small group helped to calm down Peter. She also mentioned caring for the pets which seemed to have a therapeutic effect:

> **Della**: The guinea pigs and stuff like that it is showing them how to look after animals, you know they'll come home and they'll say well I've done this and...

> *Researcher: mmm and what do they seem to value about the nurture group?*

> **Della**: I don't know I think it's because there's just a small group of them and they get on brilliant with their teachers (5:319-322)

All of the parents thought that this was a significant outcome of the intervention and that their child had benefited in terms of their social relationships, since attending the nurture group.

Stacey believed that Kirsty made more connections and friendships with other girls in school. She thought about why she was able to have 'a normal relationship' (2:14:467) and she attributed this to the improvements in Stacey's confidence and her speech, language and communication skills.

> **Stacey**: Well possibly confidence and that fact that she's able to make more connections, she speaks more clearly, 'cos it's a give and take (2:15:467-468)

The interrelationships between the adults was prevalent throughout parents' interviews. All parents felt that they had positive relationships with nurture group staff. They believed that staff were reassuring and spoke to them regularly, on an informal basis, about their child was progressing.

Rachel and Anya both demonstrated how they felt reassured her when they questioned their own role in their child's difficulties:

> **Rachel**: Once I have spoke to you know the staff in the nurture room they said no it's not that (mum's fault), it's just that he just needs the help you know from other people at school (3:6:290-2)

> **Anya**: ...she goes (the nurture group teacher) that's not it, you know some children need a bit more attention than other children don't they ? (4:8:258-9)

When Julie realised that the staff cared, listened to her and were on her side, she describes it as a 'turning point':

> **Julie**: I felt as though it was a BIG turning point because they <u>cared,</u> this woman actually <u>CARED</u> about him you know, and <u>what he was all about</u> whereas nobody had asked me before... but this was a <u>BIG</u> thing (1:6:173-7)

2. Educational Engagement

One of the aims of the nurture group is to teach children the skills to express themselves and engage with school learning. Parents gave specific examples of their child becoming more motivated and engaged in schoolwork and learning to apply the socio-emotional skills which underpin successful learning.

Christine felt that the intervention had improved her child's attention and concentration:

> **Christine**: well he can sit on his own in the class now and actually do some work whereas before he wouldn't be able to do it (6:9:255-6)

Julie told me how she thought Sam had settled down in class and was less attention seeking, which could be indicative of a resolved insecure ambivalent attachment:

> **Julie**: He doesn't like to be at the forefront of attention now... we've seen a big improvement and like I say his academic skills are really starting to shine now because the fact his behaviour is not so much of a big issue (1:16:515-21)

She continued with the theme of motivation and engagement with learning, repeating the word 'actually' as if she can hardly quite believe the change in Sam:

> **Julie**: ...so now they are able to see can <u>actually</u> sit down now and start writing his sentences. And he has <u>actually</u> starting to show an interest in topic work in the afternoon and put his hand up and he's <u>actually</u> started to question things as well. He is <u>genuinely</u> showing an interest in what he's learning (1:18:583-7)

Parents who were familiar with the work done in the nurture room talked about the importance of learning how to articulate and to talk about (and manage) their feelings, which is part of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) work, often utilised in the nurture groups. Rachel was very knowledgeable about SEAL as she had been involved in Family SEAL in school. She talked about how Jason's behaviour, and consequently his learning, had improved as a result of being able to talk about his feelings rather than get angry, frustrated and upset.

> **Rachel**: He never used to talk about how he was feeling ...whereas now you know he'll tell you what is wrong with him rather than bottling it up and then getting angry or upset or... (3:5:223-8)

Rachel: I don't know he used to get angry right easy as well you know lose it and he seems pretty calm now you know he seems to control it a bit more (3:9:428)

The social communication difficulties that the children appeared to have when they started to interact with other children were prevalent across the data set. Parents were able to articulate this and their comments on the outcomes of the intervention highlight the importance of socialisation and social inclusion in the nurture group intervention.

3. Academic Progress

Parents highlighted the importance of the academic curriculum and the intervention wasn't just perceived as concentrating exclusively with behaviour:

Julie: They were going to be focusing on social interaction and manners and good behaviour whilst sticking to the curriculum you know like the literacy and the numeracy (1:7:18-7)

She was pleased with the improvements that she thought that Sam had made because of his improving behaviour:

Julie: ...I think because his behaviour's improving erm they are able to SEE what he's capable of now... and I feel as proud as punch (1:10:307-17)

Rachel and Anya also underlined the significance of continuing with the curriculum whilst in the nurture group and the positive effect that has had:

Rachel: ...and his READING! He gets spending money at the end of the week and he'll go and buy his self a book. Whereas BEFORE he wouldn't have touched a book he wasn't interested at all...and he enjoys writing you know if he is writing a card 'Oh let me write it, let me' (3:8:414-423)

Anya: ...and yesterday Mrs. Fishwick went you know her writing was really brilliant. She was amazed - she goes I must show you I can't believe it (4:12:372-3)

This was thought to be an important feature of the part-time nurture group, in that the children could more easily continue with the academic aspects of the curriculum during

either the morning or afternoon and then 'touch base' and join their usual class for the other half of the day.

SHARED THEMES

Superordinate Theme D

Figure 1.4 Parents as Partners?

SUBORDINATE THEME:
1. Consulting

SUBORDINATE THEME:
2. Maximising support

SUPERORDINATE THEME D:

Parents as Partners ?

SUBORDINATE THEME:
4. Influence on parents' behaviour

SUBORDINATE THEME:
3. Participation
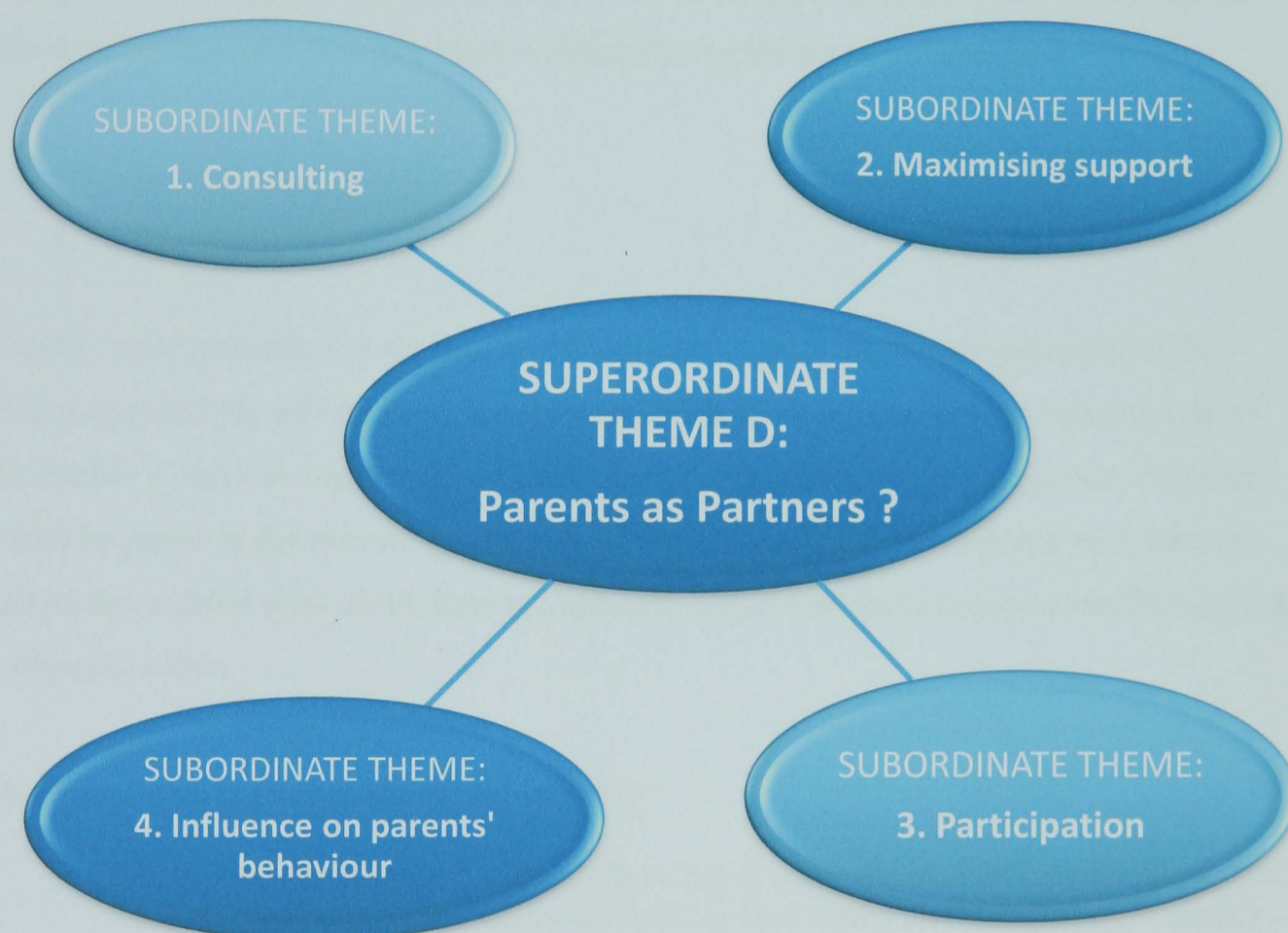
<u>**Parents as Partners ?**</u>

Superordinate Theme D

Introduction

One of the key superordinate themes involved the inter-relationships that existed between class teachers and nurture group staff, children and parents. This related to how school staff consulted with parents, how well parents participated in the intervention, the support that they felt they received and the impact on their behaviour.

1. Consulting

At the initial consultation meetings with parents', school staff were perceived to be reassuring and the information that they received about nurture groups was thought to be useful. A critical feature of how well a parent responded to the suggestion that their child be paced in the nurture group was related to how staff collaborated with parents; asked them about their child, listened and negotiated with them and how staff consulted with each other.

Nurture group staff consulting with parents

> **Anya**: … it was like they told me that this is what we are thinking and they said what do you think ? Obviously we had consent forms and everything, it works both ways doesn't it (4:14:457)

> **Rachel**: I think it was like a consultation with the teacher and the teacher sat me down and she said to look we have noticed this with Jason he is struggling and you know he's not mixing … (3:4:163-5)

She continued:

> **Rachel**: They said it would be up to us if we wanted to keep him still in the class then we could have done that, but it would be more beneficial for Jason to go into this group (3:4:191-3)

In more formal meetings, with outside agencies, there was the potential to feel 'tokenised' and not a part of the process:

> **Julie**: ...the first meeting that we had to follow like a spare part because I felt like they were all talking the teacher talk around me and I felt really crowded ...I wasn't really listened to, it was dismissed it was like just a formality of me being there (1:13:397)

However, Julie was an exception. Other parents felt more included or did not feel the need to be as involved as Julie. Stacey felt that staff tailored the approach to her child. For example they asked her about Kirsty's extra-curricular interests and involved her in the assessment process with the Boxhall Profile.

> **Stacey**: Mrs. Smith said that we've done the Boxhall Profile so she went through that and that wasn't surprising you know we already knew we talked to the school, but it obviously put it into some sort of context (2:12:365-368)

Nurture group staff consulting with class teachers

The relationship between the class teacher and the nurture group staff could potentially be a source of conflict: Julie, Rachel and Anya all highlight an important point about the way that school staff consult with each other:

> **Julie**: Like I say the nurture group teacher and the year group teacher have to have a really good team relationship and you can tell it's working now it's brilliant (1:10:297-9)

> **Anya**: the class teacher and Mrs Theakston - they both used to know what was going on in both classes not only one (4:7: 217-8)

> **Rachel**: They mentioned that they were going to get Mr Dawson (class teacher) into the nurture room to have a snack with them so he can understand what goes on in there you know so he knows what Jason's doing and why he's doing it (3:11:577-82)

However, Stacey contradicted this theme, as she felt that it wasn't as positive with Kirsty's class teacher.

> **Stacey**: And I suppose. I think the thing for me is what, how much cross over there is going on ...there's the class and then there is the nurture group and she

(the class teacher) couldn't tell us, she would say well I'm not sure how she is in nurture group which didn't seem quite knitted together enough really (2:19:615-621)

This underlines the importance of the 'joined up' whole school approach and commitment of all school staff to the principles of the nurture group.

2. Participation

This theme relates to how parents participated in the nurture group and the effects on their child. All parents were invited into the nurture group and said that felt welcomed by nurture group staff. Half the parents had been in to see their child and spent time in activities such as snack time and hand massage.

Involvement in School

This was extremely successful in Rachel's case as she became even more involved in school as a result and she obviously enjoyed participating in the group. More importantly it appears to have had a positive effect on Jason and his perception of and engagement with school in its entirety; the social as well as the academic aspects of learning.

> **Rachel:** He feels right proud you know he'll be telling all the teachers you know my mum is coming in today into the nurture group you know and when I'm there he's like have you seen this mum or this is what I did mum or you come and help me mum and you can join in with him with everything and see everything and what goes on and...(3:7:355-60)

There is a sense of enthusiasm in her account of Jason's dialogue, which is very different from her initial comments about his lack of engagement with school and feelings of isolation, poor self-efficacy and inconsistent behaviour.

Rachel also talked about being involved in his IEP review and target setting:

> **Rachel:** When it came to the reviews they say well he's got this one so we will put a new one down for next time and see if he can reach that goal (3:10:495-8)

Similarly, Julie liked to be very involved in school life and emphasised the importance of the 'power' relations with parents and school staff:

> **Julie**: ... I might just give her advice on what she could've done a little bit differently and she listens to me you know (laughs)... it's not like me telling them how to do her job I wouldn't do that you know! and she's given me advice how to deal with them so it's like a two-way thing and it's brilliant and I completely respect that (1:11:351)

She appreciated the fact that she was valued and was able to look round the room that her son was going to be in:

> **Julie**: The Head actually showed us round! (1:7:215)

Other ways in which she participated involved the use of home-school books and informal meetings with nurture group staff:

> **Julie**: We have had home-school diary which is like an exercise book and the nurture group teacher will write in it and then I'm free to put my comments so that is a nice bit of dialogue that we've got going (1:11:330-3)

> **Julie**: I'm very welcome to go and visit whenever I want to. They've got like this open door policy so I can just sort of pop in if I want to ... I've got some good dialogue going on with the teacher and if anything does crop up we'll have a little meeting about it. (1:8:245-50)

Feedback to Parents

Other ways in which parents participated in the nurture group concerned the feedback which came from school in the form of certificates and awards.

> **Rachel**: They send letters home and say things like they have got ten stars in the nurture room to the children have chose to do this as a treat ... just to let you know what is going on (3:10:498-500)

> **Anya**: ...she were doing really well even gold awards, she even won the Gold award you know for her reading and writing (4:7:205-6)

> **Della**: They are coming home with stickers and Peter got one yesterday for helping a little boy that had bellyache (6:8:237-8)

3. Maximising Support

One of the aims of the research was to try to identify ways that parents could feel more supported and thereby improve practice in schools. This study found that there were a number of ways in which parents received positive feedback about their child's behaviour from nurture group staff. However, there were also ways in which parents could have been supported more effectively, to clarify what the intervention involved.

With regard to the initial discussions when their child was first considered for the intervention, three parents indicated that a more written information and a brief indication of the assessment tool used, would be beneficial.

> **Stacey:**…it would be nice if someone could do a little leaflet about what it's all about? and some of the research, you know what I mean…something fairly basic actually 'cos I've not heard about it and as I say we looked into it on the internet about it but that's fairly limited I suppose (2:17:544-548)

Another parent wanted to be even more informed by having a presentation evening:

> **Julie**: …maybe an open floor question and answer type thing. Just for an hour and then you get to know the basic background thing of it (1:19:609-19)

However, other parents like Christine and Della thought that they had enough information and school staff did appear to tailor what they said to the needs of the parent concerned. However, different aspects of the intervention were mentioned differentially to parents and the majority thought that they would have benefited from more information about the intervention.

Julie emphasised the importance of the physical environment and being warm and nurtured:

> **Julie**: : You want to be sat at a table a nice round table. Round each other you know (1:13:413-4)

> **Julie**: .. it is a physical thing it's being made to feel welcome it's the room and like having a nice warm drink (1:14:429-30)

In terms of continuing the working-partnership with parents, there was significant importance attached to being able to come into school, participate in school life and see their child enjoy school and see them in a more positive light e.g. in assemblies and shows:

> **Anya**: They did an assembly - it were brilliant - they each did their own things each individual child. It were brilliant you know because you know all the parents were invited and the assembly was held in front of the whole school and it were amazing (4:9:286-9)

Parents liked hearing about their child's successes and enjoyable aspects of the nurture group. For instance Christine was happy to talk about how Karl enjoyed the time he spent as a 'rainbow ranger' and had responsibility for helping out at snack-time (6:10:270-2).

Julie thought that it might be beneficial to have parents of children in the nurture group working together and supporting each other informally, but was unsure of the format or how that would work in practice.

4. Influence on Parents' Behaviour

This theme concerns the effect that the nurture group intervention had on parents' behaviour and perceived changes in how they interacted with or managed their child at home. It relates to the impact of the intervention and also described aspects of the parenting role and identity and the relationship that the parent had with their child.

Parent-Child Relationship

It is not an easy task to discover whether participants have altered their behaviour as a result of any intervention. Indeed the participants may not be consciously aware that they have changed their behaviour. Parents may have effected a small change in their relationship with their child that was unacknowledged, perhaps aspects of their relationship that they hadn't considered or articulated before.

Julie illustrated this with her comments on how her relationship with Sam hadn't changed:

> **Julie**: It's pretty much the same to be honest it hasn't really affected it much. He gets a lot more <u>praise</u> now and they have a lot of <u>praise</u> going on in the nurture group. So when I pick him up from school now he's got certificates and all kinds of things them so in that respect he is getting a lot of positivity from us, a lot more than he was getting before (1:9:258-63)

Although Julie acknowledged that the positivity has increased, she didn't see any differences in the way she interacted with her child and their relationship. Yet she then went on to explain the improvements on family life in general. Interpreting this, it is not so much that she is contradicting herself, more that through her use of language she constructs her opinions and views and later on gives examples of how it has had an impact on her behaviour:

> **Julie**: ...so he's been getting these certificates for doing the right thing, sat on the carpet and not fidgeting and all that kind of thing. So it is having a knock on effect on family life (1:9:275-78)

Reflexive Note

Julie constructs her thoughts as the interview progresses. Her perceptions are dynamic and constantly forming and reforming, in her efforts to make sense of her experiences and articulate them to me. In this way her language shapes her thoughts and experiences rather than merely representing or describing them, because she is a source of what Frosch and Baraitser (2008 p. 358) term 'a meaning-making agency' and uses the research situation to re-construct her consciousness from moment to moment.

What I said to Julie (and what she said to me) changes what both of us 'know' and this shifts throughout the interview, through this interchange of responses. Hence, using language to communicate parents' lived experiences in an interview brings about other epistemological issues regarding a view of language as 'constructive' rather than 'descriptive'. My awareness of the notion that the words that a parent chooses to use actually constructs a particular version of that experience, rather than the experience itself, has meant that I accept that I never have direct access to their experiences and am interpreting their interpretation of events.

Parents' Strategies to manage children's behaviour

Anya, Stacey and Rachel all told me about the ways in which they used different parenting strategies as a result of the nurture group approach. Stacey talked about doing circle time at home with Kirsty and her partner Roy. She had enjoyed this when she visited the nurture group and wanted to encourage Kirsty to talk about things she had done in circle time, in the hope that it might improve her social interaction skills.

> **Stacey**: We do circle time, that's what we do, we do circle time at home. Yeah so she'll say 'I want to do circle time' and we'll do it between us, me Roy and her and that's a good thing (2:23:780-782)

Stacey frequently mentioned Kirsty's lack of application, self-belief and persistence at school and the discussion she had with the nurture group and class teacher about this. Consequently, she believed that as parents, they had to try hard to achieve a balance between being positive but not being too pressured as that could have a detrimental effect:

> **Stacey**: It is getting the balance you know you want to be oppressive to her but at times you do have to be quite tough with her, you know, no we ARE going to do that and we DO want you to do it and you CAN do it (2:24:789-792)

They have thought carefully about how they approach working at home with Kirsty:

> **Stacey**: We rarely sit down at night time and do it because she's tired. When we'll do it is when she goes to school in the morning and she's much more receptive and she enjoys doing it now she'll write or she'll do her words (2:23:747-750)

Rachel was clear about how the nurture group intervention had affected many of the ways in which she related to her child. Rachel believed that she was now 'more relaxed' with Jason and used different ways of talking to him and breaking down the work:

> **Rachel**: You just say right we will have 10 minutes and then we will try again instead of saying then is the book you've GOT to read that and you've got to do it now and the same with his homework... rather than giving him it all at once and he thinks 'oh my God!' So I sort of break it up a bit for him (3:8:365-73)

Interpreting this change from Jason's perspective, his mother became involved in tackling the work jointly, with a collaborative, empathetic approach, thereby demonstrating to him that she cared and valued his feelings.

Rachel also changed practical aspects of her life, for example taking Jason into school earlier so that he could play football with friends, thereby improving his social skills.

> **Rachel**: It has changed especially with him socialising with other children now... he will go and join in a football game with other children...when asked before he just sit next to me and wait until it was time to go in (3:8:403-10)

Finally, she describes the way in which she felt supported and considered alternative ways of parenting, whilst in the Family SEAL group which she went to as a result of Jason being in the nurture group. Rachel demonstrated a relaxed attitude as she laughed about the difficulties that parents share:

> **Rachel**: ...You find out about how other people do things as well, you know instead of thinking they are doing this...oh my God you know is mine the only child that's doing this (laugh) and you get to meet them and they said well if my child were doing that, if it were my child, I'd do this and I'd do that and then you think oh yeah I'd never thought about doing it that way...(3:12:632-7)

Rachel was clearly the most positive parent and focused on how her behaviour had changed as a result of Jason being in the nurture group. Additionally, she was the only parent who had been pro-active and became involved with the family SEAL intervention at school, because of her involvement with the nurture group. I believe that this had an effect on how she perceived the intervention and the change in her behaviour.

However, exceptions to this were Della and Christine. Christine did not appear to have many strategies for managing Karl's behaviour. She mentioned using a timer for time out as the way in which she used strategies from the nurture group to help her to calm Karl down (6:7:198).

Likewise, Della also believed that she had tried several behavioural strategies but gave up because the beneficial effects were intermittent.

> **Della**: But what we have found is that what might work today for them won't work tomorrow so you have got like the naughty step but you can't just do that because it might work today but tomorrow it won't work (5:7:174-6)

> **Della**: We've tried charts sticker charts... the first few days were all right and then it was just they lose the novelty.... (5:10:296-8)

Della's beliefs hadn't been challenged further as, unlike Rachel, she hadn't been involved in any other support groups at school such as Family SEAL. Della was also quite negative about affecting any change in both Peter and Paul's behaviour. Her attributions for the behaviour centred around a lack of appropriate early nurturing experiences and she may have felt that this was 'fixed' and that there was little chance of change. Della had resorted to time out as a punitive measure and also appeared to attempt to resolve the issue by stating that they were 'hyperactive'.

> **Della**: I do do timeout that is about the only thing (5:7:190) ... well they do tend to be hyperactive I think (5:7:196)

Interpreting these attributions to external events outside her control and 'medicalised' notions of hyperactivity, Della may be attempting to disown their behaviour and justify her failure to make any lasting change.

Changing behaviour is not an easy task, particularly if individuals don't have the resources to change it or do not see that it needs to change. Parents like Della and Christine could themselves be very resistant to change, perhaps not having the inner resources, desire or knowledge to make the necessary commitment to change their parenting strategy and their relationship with their child. Although the nurture group staff were friendly, liked and trusted by these parents, neither had visited the nurture group or had changed with respect to altering their parenting and in that sense appeared to be quite 'hard to reach'.

CHAPTER SIX: Discussion of the Findings

Introduction

The discussion section relates my interpretations of the parents' experiences to the literature and to notions of defended subjects (Hollway and Jefferson 2000) and positioning theory (Harre and Moghaddam 2003). Other theories which are applied to explain parent's thoughts and perceptions are attribution theory (Kelley 1971), social constructionism and personal construct theory (Kelly 1955). The socio-cultural theory of learning (Vygotsky 1987), attachment (Bowlby 1988) and educational attachment (Geddes 2006) are related to the rationale of the nurture group intervention. The issues concerning parents and their role in nurture groups are examined in the light of these psychological models.

The research questions which were posed are outlined and the superordinate and subordinate themes which relate to them are detailed. The discussion concludes by considering the implications of these findings in relation to practice for schools, the Educational Psychology Service, and other professionals who work with children, schools and families. These are explored in the light of the social constructionist perspective, attachment theory (Bowlby 1988) and models of parent partnership with schools (Wolfendale 1992, Dale 1996, Davis and Meltzer 2007).

Generalising the research findings

The aim of the study was to explore the identities, thoughts, feelings and perceptions of individuals within a particular sub-group of parents, so there was no attempt to generalise my findings. The aim of my research was not to identify general principles of human behaviour, rather to use IPA to analyse and categorise the data into similar themes across individual participants.

However, readers may identify some of the personal characteristics of participants and relate them to other parents of children in similar circumstances. It may also be possible for the reader to generalise some of the themes which emerge from the study to other nurture groups. Indeed it is intended that some of the ways that parents have felt

supported will be identified and these can be generalised to support good practice within schools and the Nurture Group Network.

Key Research Questions

Each research question will be considered in relation to the shared superordinate themes which emerged from the data.

Key Research Question One

What were parents' experiences of their child being referred to a nurture group intervention?

(i) Parents' Experiences of their Child's Difficulties: Superordinate Theme (A) Nature vs. Nurture Attributions

Blaming/Disclaiming

When parents talked about their experiences, their articulations helped them to construct and make meaning and sense of them. Kelly (1955) proposed that individuals are engaged in sense making and actively construct models to explain and give meaning to their world. This sense making means that they actively seek to understand why a person behaves as they do. The 'attributions' (Heider 1958) which they make are driven by emotion and motivation. Key themes which emerged from the interviews were categorised and labelled as 'blaming' and 'disclaiming'.

Many parents had external attributions, for they looked to attribute blame for their child's SEBD on external sources such as school staff or the family environment. Others perceived that it was a direct result of innate inherited learning difficulties or due to a lack of stimulation in the early years or neglect. This was different for each parent depending upon their circumstances and their own locus of control.

One parent felt that her child had inherited her difficulties and had a difficult start because of this. Another two parents attributed their child's difficulties to early neglect from their birth families. Another parent continually stated how nurturing the family environment was, thereby disclaiming that the nurturing aspect of their parenting was at

fault. This was reinforced by externally attributing blame onto nursery and school staff. Interpretations of this were that the parent was perceived as 'defended' (Hollway and Jefferson 2000), and therefore it is possible that she chose, consciously or unconsciously, not to address the judgements that others may be making. To recognise the negative opinions of others may have been to cause pain or upset by challenging her constructed view of herself as a 'good parent'.

In contrast to this, one parent had internal attributions, as she blamed herself and repeatedly mentioned how much time she was currently spending with her child, perhaps to make up for working full-time and being unable to provide the 'nurturing' that was perceived to be needed. There was also the possibility that she felt judged by me as a professional and the nature of our discussions and she either positioned (Harre and Moghaddam 2003) herself or felt positioned as an ineffective parent and needed to defend against feelings of hurt or conflict. Thus, she may have purposefully used discourse within her narrative to adopt her position or to reinforce or change the position that she felt was imposed on her during the interview encounter.

The concept of 'nurturing' is interesting as the implication of the nurture group is that the child can develop their learning skills after receiving the care and attention that they needed. Therefore it could be perceived as having negative connotations. The lack of nurturing experiences and delayed development could be explained by attachment theories (Bowlby 1988) and many research studies use this hypothetical construct to explain the difficulties that the child has (Bennathan 1997, Cooper et al 2001, O'Connor and Colwell 2002, Gerrard 2005). It is possible to apply this hypothesis to some of the families in this study. However it is not the full story for all parents.

Indeed, Bowlby's original attachment theory (1969) has traditionally been at the heart of Bennathan and Boxhall's (1996) nurture group rationale, as well as many other child care initiatives (such as Sure Start and practice in Social Care and Adoption). However, attachment theory has been criticised because of the 'kind of hopeless fatalism' which McNab (2005, quoted in Slater 2007, p.206) refers to when he discusses the effects of early trauma and suffering. This militates against the concept of resilience and can be detrimental to the expectations which professionals have regarding children who have faced adversity in their life, particularly if causal attributions are made.

Nurture group researchers (Cooper and Tiknaz, 2007; Geddes 2006; Binnie and Allen 2008) effectively shift the emphasis from Bowlby's original concept of attachment and stress the importance of educational attachment. Rather than viewing the child's difficulties as a within-child disorder, they are re-framed in terms of looking at how children with SEBD can be understood better to effect successful interventions within school.

Adapting to school

In this study, parents told me about their child's social interaction difficulties and problems in settling into the school institution in the early years. It may be that there are aspects of the ways that schools are organised that make it hard for some children to adjust to as they make the transition from home to school. The nurture group is set up to develop the child's social and emotional skills which underpin successful learning (Weare and Gray 2003) and engage children at their developmental level.

Notions of social inclusion and social engagement which Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) refer to are also useful concepts for applying approaches which are more solution oriented, in understanding and intervening with children who have SEBD. Using this perspective, school staff would look for exceptions to a child's inappropriate behaviour and use a positive approach which focused on their strengths and abilities within a social context, to build up their self-esteem and develop a positive self-concept.

Delayed development

When parents' described their child's difficulties at school, the majority believed that they had delayed development and therefore they weren't ready to start formal schooling. In half of the cases the child may not have had the early experiences and relationships within their family due to neglect and trauma.

All parents stated that their child had social communication and/or speech and language difficulties when they started school. The self-esteem and behaviour of children with speech and language difficulties is well documented in the literature (Lindsay and Dockerell 2000) but this may not necessarily be recognised with regards to the nurture group assessment and referral processes. This has implications for staff training and the

use of specific communication activities in the nurture group which offer a more holistic and therapeutic approach, to target the factors that mediate behaviour such as language, literacy, self-esteem and general academic performance as proposed by Law and Sivyer (2003).

The social interaction difficulties that parents often described could be explained by applying Vygotsky's (1987) socio-cultural theory of learning, in conjunction with the aforementioned theories of educational attachment. Vygotsky referred to cognitive learning strategies as an internalisation of functions which are first experienced during social interaction. Adults and other children need to interact with the child to help them to access experiences that will develop their learning skills, as well as their abilities to manage their feelings and interact with other children.

This study has found that it is not possible to generalise about parent's experiences, as family circumstances, individuals and their attributions are different and diverse. Although the six parents are a sub group, in that they all had a child in the nurture group, there are points of difference as well as similarities in their stories. Professionals should not assume that all children are in nurture groups because of attachment difficulties and a lack of early nurturing experiences in their family.

(ii) Parents' Experiences of the Nurture Group Intervention: Superordinate Theme (B) Narrow expectations

Uncertainties
The parents in this study had not heard of the nurture group intervention prior to their meeting with the SENCO and class teacher to discuss the possibilities of referring their child to the nurture group. They all had a degree of uncertainty about the placement and they reported that there were differential degrees of information given to them. Parents' expectations of what nurture groups could achieve were generally informed by the information that staff had given them about the intervention. All but two of the parents thought that the information that they received was sufficient and although consent was requested, it is questionable as to whether this was 'informed' consent. This does raise

issues about what school staff consider that parents should know and how far the parent 'collaboration' with school staff should extend.

Many parents were concerned about aspects of withdrawal and re-integration. The potential disruptions to friendship groups and academic work were mentioned. However, the fact that the placement was part-time alleviated some parents concerns. Scott and Lee's (2009) study of part-time nurture groups neglected to address this aspect of the intervention, as, like many of the previous research studies, they focused on evaluating the progress that children made using staff perceptions or a variety of quantitative measures.

Other significant factors which helped to ease parents concerns were good communication between nurture group staff and class teachers and taking a holistic view of the child in terms of both their academic and social and emotional needs. Another factor which was mentioned was friendships and the positive role models that they wanted their child to have access to. One parent was concerned that her child was exposed to 'unhelpful' friendships and role models in the nurture group. Again, the part-time aspect of the placement enabled these anxieties to be reduced.

Personalised attention

One of the key findings regarding parent's perceptions and expectations about the intervention was the quality and frequency of the interactions between both the nurture group staff and the child and the staff and parents. Children need to develop healthy relationships in school, in order that they have opportunities to speak with adults and build up safe, supportive relationships with them. The fact that their child was perceived to have access to individualised or small group support was perceived as positive and this was balanced against the potential difficulties which parents thought could arise from being stigmatised and withdrawn from their usual class every day.

A successful feature of the nurture group approach was the capacity for nurture group teachers to extend the small group 'close' relationship building to parents and the construction of positive trusting relationships was enabled when there were frequent, informal meetings with staff.

Learning, social, emotional and behavioural skills

Parents generally seemed to understand the need for support for their child's additional behavioural needs but they did not want this to affect the access that they had to an academic curriculum and being part of everyday school life. Some parents thought that their child had made progress in core subjects which is supported in the literature (Scott and Lee 2009). However, this did not appear to be the main focus of parent's interest, perhaps as they felt that other behavioural aspects had been emphasised by school staff. In conjunction with this, it may have been that parents were keen to take a more holistic view of their child and therefore they looked at how happy and engaged their child was with school and learning, and what relationships they had with staff and their peers.

Key Research Question Two

What do these experiences highlight about parents' perceived involvement and the impact of the intervention on their child?

(i) The Impact of the Intervention:
Superordinate Theme (C) Holistic Gains

Relationship between nurture group staff and the child

The Nurture Group Network (NGN) emphasises the importance of forming relationships on its website:

> Nurture groups teach children how to make good relationships with adults and with each other and so contribute to good mental health in the future

(Nurture Group Network 2009)

Parents recognised the importance of this holistic approach to learning and said that they appreciated the 'closeness' that their children enjoyed, particularly with nurture group staff, with whom they formed trusting relationships. Sanders (2007) obtained similar findings in her study.

The friendly, caring approach which staff worked hard to establish was thought to be a key feature of the approach and all parents made reference to this. They were particularly pleased at the tailored aspect of the intervention, the fact that the staff knew and cared for their child in a holistic sense and that they had space and time to talk to them, even when the intervention had ended.

Social learning theories (Bandura 1977 and Vygotsky 1987) explain the importance of these relationships. They emphasise that learning occurs between the children in the groups, as their learning depends on social interaction and the level of development that can be achieved with adult guidance and peer collaboration.

Relationships between the parent and child

In terms of the parent's relationship with their child some parents perceived that it had changed for the better. Other parents did not recognise any gains or were reluctant to acknowledge that there were any. This may be explained by the difficulty in seeing a change in one's own behaviour or it may have been an unconscious defence against admitting that the relationship needed to change. Some parents may not have thought that they needed to change aspects of their parenting, perhaps viewing the intervention as educational rather than related to the child's home life.

Educational engagement

A key aim of the nurture group intervention is social engagement which relates to the concept of educational attachment. Parents gave several examples of how their child had improved in their attitudes to school and learning. They thought that the relaxing, fun aspects of the group and play based environment had all helped their child to re-engage with school in a more positive way. Their social and emotional skills were also thought to have improved: such as articulating their feelings, talking rather than 'acting out', cooperation and turn talking. This was found in other evaluative studies with parents (Sanders 2007, Binnie and Allen 2008) and when staff perceptions were recorded anecdotally (Scott and Lee 2009).

Making academic progress

Parent's perceived that some academic gains had been made in literacy and numeracy, although this was not the case for all parents. These gains tended to be related to the child's improved engagement, motivation and enjoyment of school. The research evidence in the literature generally focuses on the academic gains that the child made; often utilising other records such as teacher assessments and triangulation of the data with Boxhall profile or SDQ comparisons (Cooper and Whitebread 2007, Gerrard 2005, Scott and Lee 2009, Binnie and Allen 2008, O'Connor and Colwell 2002). Qualitative findings have generally been tacked onto the main study and in-depth interviews have not been systematically analysed or interpreted.

This study aimed to focus on parents' experiences and no attempt was made to use information on academic levels of achievement or other numerical data. Rather than determine whether these academic gains were significant it was felt that a qualitative approach would capture a distinct and different type of data; traditionally lacking in the aforementioned research studies.

(ii) Parents' Perceived Involvement:

Superordinate Theme (D) Parents as Partners?

Forming relationships

The importance of informal, frequent meetings with nurture group staff was emphasised by parents and this created a feeling of trust and empathy in the relationships which built up over a period of time. This kind of relationship is ideal for a transplant model of working (Cunningham and Davies 1985), where staff model skills to parents and it is hoped that the work of the nurture group is passed on back home. Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) still recommend the use of this model to 'facilitate the non-professional's ability to make good choices' (p.140).

However, there are a number of problems with this model. Firstly I believe that it still upholds the notion of the 'expert' helper (Davis and Meltzer 2007), though Cooper and Tiknaz contend that this is not the case. In the transplant model, staff are perceived as

the specialist holders of the knowledge and by default parents are de-skilled and disempowered as they are positioned as being in need of this expertise. The expectation may be that they do not have to take an active role in solving their own problems. Secondly, professional advice may be ignored or rejected and the model assumes that parents will have ready access to nurture group staff for social learning to occur.

In this study, the two parents who both admitted that they had not taken up the offer of visiting the nurture group were the same parents who lacked behaviour management strategies and stated that they found it very difficult to manage their children at home. Using a more collaborative model may be beneficial for these parents, who may live in difficult economic circumstances or who could be described as hard to engage.

The summary report on Learning Behaviour (Steer 2009, p.3) emphasise the importance of engaging parents who are 'hard to reach' or 'disaffected'. Some parents of children in nurture groups may be classed as difficult to reach, though this study demonstrates that it should not be assumed that all parents fall into this category.

Consulting

The majority of parents had limited information about the referral process and the intervention itself. They believed that they would have benefited from more information about the intervention and they had interesting ideas about how this may work in schools. For instance one parent talked about the importance of involving parents at the assessment and referral stage and another parent mentioned a presentation evening with accompanying literature.

However, another parent felt that the decision for the nurture group placement for her child had been more of a negotiation and she had been involved with target setting and other aspects of the intervention. Consequently, this parent became more involved in other family programmes in school in a parent support group (Family SEAL, Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning, DFES 2005). She actively changed her behaviour and was able to articulate what she had done and the positive outcomes for her child and family. There was a sense of empowerment and genuine partnership with this parent and the school.

All parents in this study had been consulted as part of the nurture group referral process and had given their consent, even though they thought that the information available to parents about the intervention was limited. This aspect of information sharing with parents is important in today's political climate. The rights of parents' to have access to information about their child, about how to support them and advice about parenting is enshrined in policy documents such as 'The New Parent Guarantee' 21st Century Schools White Paper (DCSF 2009a).

Maximising support

Previously, research studies have neglected to detail how parents were supported by school staff or to determine what parents would find supportive. This study attempts to redress that balance by considering what they have found useful and how they could be supported more effectively.

The differences between the six parents in this study alone demonstrate that not only have they had varied levels of input from school staff and had a diverse set of expectations, but in reality they may want and require differential levels of information and support.

There were examples of effective practice where parents felt included and felt that staff tried to build supportive relationships with them. Even though some parents had initial feelings of self-blame, the willingness of some school staff to negotiate about the referral process and offer reassurance about the differential needs of children, helped the parents to have awareness of their child's difficulties and become more involved in the intervention.

Good practice was achieved when four of the parents came into school and spent time in the nurture group and had regular, informal access to nurture group staff, in meetings which weren't always pre-set or dictated by school systems and timetables. An 'open door policy' where nurture group staff were perceived as welcoming and accessible was thought to be helpful for many parents.

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Some schools enabled parents to build up successful relationships by chatting at the end of the day or giving informal feedback on how their child was progressing at regular intervals during the week. This also had the effect of heightening the parent's awareness of the child's needs but also effectively offered a two-way channel of communication about school and the value of the nurturing approach.

Examples of parent participation included invitations to children's assemblies and puppet shows where children experienced public success and parents shared in the schools pride in their achievements. Other creative approaches to building relationships with parents, included involving them in circle time, working with children in the nurture room and going on trips out of school. Some of this was extended back into the home, fostering the pride, success building and personal self-efficacy of both the parent and their child.

Influence on parents' behaviour

The majority of parents gave examples of how they had changed how they worked with their child on school based tasks at home. The approach they took was different because they had an awareness of their child's additional needs. Parents talked about being more positive, using behaviour charts and changing the language that they used. Three parents changed the strategies that they used at home and one parent altered the time she came into school so that her child could access social activities in the playground. It was apparent that this intervention raised awareness and enabled parents to notice and value what their child did at school and if necessary, to adjust their behaviour.

However, this was not the case for all individuals. Two parents in this study could be characterised as more passive in their approach, as they considered the teachers as 'experts' and both appeared not to expect that they would become involved in the nurture group or learn from nurture group staff. The strategies they tried at home were often punishments such as time out or a 'naughty' step and these weren't applied consistently. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, they were the parents who were perhaps 'harder to reach' as they didn't expect to be involved as equal partners in their child's education and they did not have the knowledge or resources available to the other parents.

However, they would have benefited from more pro-active support from nurture group staff to encourage them to participate and to value what their children were doing in school. This would not only benefit the parents and children but the school community too. However, Gill (1998, quoted in McGrath 2007, p.188) found that some parents had such entrenched beliefs and attributions that they 'were resistant to cognitive re-structuring' and continually rationalised why they should do nothing and were unable to turn negative beliefs around (p.187-8).

Hence, the differential approaches to involving and supporting parents were evident, with some schools perhaps focusing their efforts on relationship building with parents and enjoying a greater degree of success. It is questionable as to how far school staff generally felt that they needed to include all parents as genuine partners, for example sharing power by negotiating with decision making at the assessment and referral process stage. This may be even more significant with those parents who school staff might classify as 'hard to reach' or 'disengaged' and it would be interesting to consider how the 'deficit family' label may impact both on school staff and on parent discourses.

Bishop and Swain (2000a) acknowledge that a successful partnership which relies on 'a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise' is more challenging in areas of deprivation and poverty. For schools that are situated in these areas, there may need to be a different approach, for example additional input from parental involvement staff and support from external agencies such as the community groups and the Educational Psychology Service. Alternatively access to programmes such as 'Mellow Parenting' which is designed for very disadvantaged families, has been shown to be successful in engaging hard to reach parents, to empower and support them and to help them make changes in their relationship with their child by 'being heard and not judged' or coerced into changing their behaviour (Puckering 2004).

Conclusions

Introduction

Nurture group research has traditionally focused on evaluating outcomes for children usually with quantitative measures, to determine the progress that they make after integrating into their mainstream class. Perhaps because it is perceived as an educational intervention, there has been little information about the effects of the intervention on parents, in terms of their perceptions, feelings and behaviour.

This study aimed to focus exclusively on parents experiences, in order to enable the parental voice to be strengthened and to consider the impact of the intervention by looking at their discourses within the social and cultural context. Qualitative in-depth interviews were utilised to elicit parents' views and IPA employed to interpret them, within a social constructionist perspective which underpinned my position as the researcher.

Parents' perceptions and attributions

Interpretative analysis of the data revealed insights into the mix of thoughts and feelings which parents held. The process of articulating their beliefs and experiences through constructing language in the interview process meant that parents looked to make sense of their experiences, contradictory views were stated and perspectives changed. They attributed different meanings for events and phenomena, sometimes defensively; wanting to arrive at satisfactory explanations as to why their child was placed in a nurture group. The attributions which they made allied with their own identity as a parent and with the positionality that they took within the interview situation.

Themes which emerged involved disclaiming and blaming: their parenting, genetic influences, the school systems, school staff, or a mix of these and there was an element of feeling judged and criticised. Yet the diversity of their own personal experiences and backgrounds revealed that there are complex reasons why children are classed as having SEBD and there were a number of possibilities as to why children react differently within a school context, for example, having suffered neglect or abuse or difficulties

with speech or socialising. All of these experiences emerged as key to parents'
attributions.

Whilst it is possible to look to theories of attachment to better understand the child's
behaviour, it is not the only explanation, and professionals should not assume that all
children who enter nurture groups have attachment issues. There may be generalised
delayed development, learning, speech, social interaction difficulties or a combination
of these which account for the social and emotional needs that the children experience.

Impact of the intervention

In terms of the perceived impact of the intervention, although initially parents had
somewhat limited expectations (not having much information about nurture groups)
many parents were very positive about the changes that their child had made after they
had been in the intervention. They thought that the way that the child engaged with
school learning and school staff and their friendships with other children had improved.

Academic gains were believed to have been made in relation to the improved
motivation to learn and enjoyment of school. However, academic attainment was not
perceived to be the priority for parents: they had more of a holistic approach and
considered that their child was happier and better motivated and adjusted to school life,
with improved social relationships, and this was important to them.

Parents also appreciated the caring approach that the nurture group staff had and this
extended to their own relationships. They felt that their child was well supported in the
nurture group and in some cases the transition back to their own class was excellent,
though this differed across the three schools.

Some parents were concerned about aspects of withdrawal and believed that this could
potentially be detrimental to their child as relationships between nurture staff and class
teachers weren't always felt to be constructive, though this was not experienced by all
parents. The part-time aspect of the nurture groups offers greater opportunities for the
whole school approach to the intervention.

Involving parents

In terms of participation, the majority of parents had been involved with nurture group staff on a day to day basis. There was evidence that some parents had been successful in changing various aspects of their behaviour as a result of being involved with the group. There was a sense that parents valued what staff were trying to do for their child and in turn the caring relationships that were established with children, extended to the parents. Although there were some concerns about friendships in the group, on the whole it was perceived to be a valuable resource that had many gains for children, including social and emotional, as well as academic.

The majority of parents were consulted about their child's placement in the nurture group, however, some school staff were more pro-active in this respect. The two parents who may have been perceived to have been more passive in their approach, who tended to leave school staff to be the 'experts' and expect not to be involved, were the parents who did not believe that their parenting had made a difference to their child's behaviour.

These parents said that they had tried various strategies to manage their child's behaviour at home without success. They had not spent time in the nurture group, though they had formed trustworthy relationships with the staff. In terms of supporting these parents, there is the opportunity to effect a change in their behaviour, in order that they feel empowered and are able to take a more active role in working with their child and with school staff.

Working in partnership with parents

Involving parents as partners in education is now firmly embedded in government policy. Mainstream services within local authorities are delivered with the strong message that parents should be consulted and involved, with the emphasis on early intervention. Parental involvement in education is no longer a desirable feature of school life but is expected.

The government (DCSF 2009b) and OFSTED (2009) underline the importance of working alongside parents and expect school staff to consider how they involve parents of children in nurture groups 'to ensure a continuity of approaches between school and home' (p.8 Inspecting Behaviour: Supplementary guidance for section 5 inspections,

OFSTED 2009). Local authorities and schools cannot pay lip service to such documents and have a duty to demonstrate how they are working with parents.

The implication of this is that nurture group staff will need to define new ways of working with parents. They will need to be even more pro-active in terms of supporting parents with their children's challenging behaviour when this is appropriate, though not all children will have attachment difficulties and not all parents will require help with their parenting skills.

The 'transplant model' of working with parents which Bishop and Swain (2000b) referred to a decade ago in their nurture group study is no longer a viable option. Being friendly, offering advice and modelling approaches which school staff think are helpful is supportive but does not necessarily change parent's behaviour. Moreover, this approach limits the rights of parents to take a more pro-active approach to their child's schooling and militates against true empowerment and partnership.

However, the difficulty with this type of work is motivating a diverse group of parents who have different social constructions about their role within schools, as highlighted by this study's findings. Within the group of six parents, there were very different backgrounds, views, abilities, styles of parenting and expectations about the nurture group intervention and this needs to be accounted for when school staff consult with parents and attempt to establish working relationships.

There may be a lack of information, knowledge and resources for particular subgroups of parents within the community. There could be delayed development or attachment issues within families, as this study confirmed. Mental health or social deprivation and poverty could also impact on the processes of establishing supportive relationships with parents. Families could be reluctant to work with professionals even when they accept that their children have difficulties, perhaps perceiving them to be threatening.

Bishop and Swain (2000b, p.27-30) maintain that the 'rhetoric of partnership' for such families is challenging and inherently problematic as it can ignore underlying values, culture and leave parents feeling 'criticised and inadequate'. They suggest that models

of partnership which offer to transplant expert advice may not be possible and need further critical evaluation.

The evidence suggests that involving vulnerable parents and trying to effect a change in their behaviour is also fraught with professional-parent power relations (Bishop and Swain 2000b). The importance of trying to ensure that parents are not sidelined or tokenised, particularly in decision making and in formal meetings with professionals is underlined in this study.

I concur with Bishop and Swain's sentiments and suggest that the 'negotiating model of partnership' which Dale (1996) proposed and which is aligned with the Family Partnership Model (Davis and Meltzer 2007) is a possible way forward. These models foster negotiation and a resolving of differences and opinions to reach jointly agreed decisions.

The 'partnership' that Wolfendale (1992) proposes to empower parents, is not a static term but:

> more of a process- learning to work together and valuing what each partner can bring to the relationship

> Wolfendale 1992, p.52

Thus, the concept of a 'parent partnership' can be viewed as a set of constructions between the parent and the school staff in which both parties come to an understanding of their role and how they will work together. This is in direct opposition to the 'expert model' as it avoids the implicit assumptions which can be made about families and the sort of intervention that is required. In the partnership model, the processes in helping involve shared power, negotiation, open communication, mutual respect, genuine trust and participation (Davis and Meltzer 2007, p.23).

Within the LA in which this study was conducted, there are definite beginnings of a partnership with parents. There are examples of shared trust, open communication participation and effective working relationships between nurture group staff and parents, but this needs to be developed and strengthened. Some of the initiatives concerning the integration of Family SEAL and 'Family Nurturing' programmes

certainly look to be an innovative and productive way forward to develop aspects of consultation, shared power and negotiation, using a collaborative model of working with parents.

The focus on evidence-based outcomes for nurture group interventions are helpful and can establish their value. However, as Davis and Meltzer (2007) suggest, they do not look at the processes of change and what will help to effect that change. This is precisely where I believe that the findings from studies like this could potentially support the parent partnership process, so that school staff better understand the diversity of parents' needs, thereby enabling them to become more engaged and involved with their child's education. This will help to establish pathways in working towards a genuine, respectful and collaborative partnership between families and schools, given that there is widespread agreement that this is a laudable aim.

Implications for Practice

Introduction

It is important to consider the implications of these findings because I wanted this study to be applied and make a useful contribution to Educational and Psychology practice; to make a difference to children and their families.

I believe that there are a number of recommendations for schools which have nurture groups and for Educational Psychology Services which support these schools, to work towards a more effective parent partnership. It should be possible for parents to have greater responsibilities to support their children and to use their expertise to empower rather than de-skill, thereby sharing some of the information and decision making in schools, for the benefit of the children. In relation to this research study this pertains to:

- the information about the nurture group intervention which is available to parents

- the meetings which are held with class teachers and other professionals who work with parents

- the contributions that EPs working in the community could make to working with parents and families

- the contribution that multi-disciplinary work and the Common Assessment Framework (C.A.F.) could make to the initial referral process and the support which parents and families receive

Finally, I consider the effects of the research study on my personal practice as an EP, coming to the end of the third year in doctoral training and the implications for further continuing my professional development within the Educational Psychology profession.

Information available to parents

Although there was a diverse mix of attitudes and feelings about the intervention across the data set, most parents indicated that they did not know very much about the intervention and were unsure as to what the outcomes would be. If they had had more information then they would be in a better position to make informed consent decisions about the referral.

Some parents suggested written information, with research evidence and information about assessments, while others wanted an informal presentation with a tour of the room, with accompanying refreshments (reinforcing the school's nurturing approach). The approach taken in schools was very disparate and I believe that more could be done to address this issue.

Certainly it is impossible to cater to all needs but a more standardised approach with a pack of information (a CD Rom available for parents with literacy needs), including a mixture of simple definitions, photos of the rooms, current research evidence, information on the NGN website and pointers for parent's involvement and participation, would have been helpful at the initial point of contact. This would set the tone for an expectation of participation and support, which in itself may have changed parents' expectations, feelings of cooperation and shared ownership in the 'problem' and sense of agency.

Consultation and meetings with parents

The quality of the informal and formal meetings that parents had with nurture group staff and other professionals was a key part of the relationship which parents formed with school staff. Although the parents had very different expectations and attitudes about their own participation, as a significant point of contact parents seemed to formulate opinions about how active school staff expected them to be, what their role actually was and the extent of their ability and expertise to support their child.

Therefore, it is important to set the right tone for such meetings, to consult with parents, to share information and expect them to take an active role. Some nurture group staff

did this and obviously understood the benefits of shared ownership and shared responsibilities. However, this was not the case in all schools.

The more passive and disengaged parents tended to leave it up to school staff and had not become involved with the group and were resistant, unable or unwilling to turn negative beliefs around. They were the 'yes-but' parents with entrenched beliefs and attitudes, who often did not believe that they could manage their child's behaviour or that the rewards and incentives didn't really work consistently.

In these cases I believe that there could be a productive role for the school's link EP to play, by supporting parents in meetings with school staff to facilitate a sharing of responsibilities; to value, listen and consult with them and to try to foster outcomes for 'independent and self-supporting individuals and families' in the community (Wolfendale 1992).

The EP's contribution

Some of the parent's comments made me aware of the lack of involvement of external agencies, particularly the Educational Psychology Service, when it came to the nurture group referral process and ongoing support and training for nurture group staff in this particular LA. Most of the parents had not met the school's link EP and had no opportunity to be supported whilst their child was in the nurture group.

The EP is in a good position to empower parents in a genuine way, not only by enabling their voice to be heard, but also, more importantly by making sure that they are consulted effectively (rather than tokenised) and expect to be involved in the referral meetings and in subsequent decision making and follow up meetings which shape their children's lives.

There is great potential for collaborative work between the EP, parents, SENCOs and teachers in all stages of the intervention process, from the referral stage, to information giving, to effecting positive changes in relating to the child and finally. in evaluating the interventions. Information could be shared and parents consulted at the point of referral and afterwards to ensure that they are included in a genuine partnership.

This includes encouraging class teachers to collaborate with nurture group staff. to take an interest in the child holistically, so that the parent knows that shared thinking and communicating is happening at the grass roots level. This has particularly important implications for children who attend part-time nurture groups.

Another contribution could be in training nurture group staff on the importance of consulting with parents, applying the 'Family Partnership Model' (Davis and Meltzer, 2007) of working with parents. This could form part of the Quality Standards which the NGN proposes for good practice with parents: to create warm, nurturing non-judgemental partnerships.

Multi-disciplinary working and the Common Assessment Framework (C.A.F.)

There is also the potential for collaborative working with EPs, parents, SENCOs, teachers and other external agencies such as Housing and Social Care, the Social and Emotional Behaviour Difficulties Team, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, the Speech and Language Therapy Service and other relevant Health Services. This multi-disciplinary work could take place at the time of referral, with the use of a C.A.F. which could identify the different agencies involved and their role in the family's life. The process would improve the potential for support for the family and may enhance parents' feeling of being empowered as the point of contact for the team.

This kind of referral could utilise the Boxhall Profile, SDQ or other teacher assessments but the measures could be used as a basis for discussion, rather than the only tool. Hence, the decision would not rest on the teachers assessments alone but could be open for discussion among other professional and the parents. Effectively, this would be a process of negotiation, with parents being able to give proper informed consent, based on written assessment information and opinions and information about the nurture group intervention.

Wolfendale (2008) talks of 'power sharing'(p.19), as parents who are experts on their own family; clients who have a right to be directly involved in decision making about their children. She believes that true partnership and empowerment of parents lies in

community education. The future within the Educational Psychology profession for Community Psychologists may well be in working with parents and other external agencies in such interventions to achieve genuine partnerships between families and schools.

My Practice as an EP

The qualitative methodology which I used was very effective for shaping up the consultation skills which are fundamental to my practice as an EP. I thought carefully about the ethics of what I did and said, by considering the two-way relationship, the power play, the social context, the dialogue and how I interpreted what was said.

I developed in my role as an active listener; I engaged parents and created rapport by being genuinely curious and empathic in the use of my prompts and confirmations. I learned valuable lessons into ways of engaging, power sharing and gaining insights, through being reflexive in the process of consultation and my role in this process.

Reflexive Note

I believe that the dialogue which the participant and I created together in the interview situation was a strength of the study. I learned that giving space and time, being open and reflective and not overly interrupting or questioning enables greater participation and will ultimately yield more insights.

Most of the parents had not spoken to an EP about their child and had not had the opportunity to talk at length about what they considered to be important. I think that being able to direct the talk was in itself an empowering and therapeutic experience for many of the participants, in part because they were positioned as the knowledge holders and their opinion was valued. Additionally, they were given an opportunity to articulate and construct how they felt about the intervention.

This was invaluable experience for me personally, particularly as there are currently many interesting opportunities for working with parents within the Educational Psychology profession. This research has already had a positive impact on my practice. In a lesser way but nonetheless still significant, I have been much more systematic in

the evaluation of training and intervention programmes, by thinking critically and considering the importance of planning, organisation and the effectiveness and impact of the work which I undertake. This is especially important in the current political climate, with the advent of commissioning within Educational Psychology Services.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Limitations of the Study

Introduction

This research study has a number of limitations; some of which became apparent early on and others as the process unfolded. Attempts were made to avoid these, however some were inherent in the methodology used and others were a result of constraints on time, word count and the participants available within the LA in which I worked. These points will be outlined with accompanying explanations. In some cases the ways in which they could be rectified in a future study will be featured in the 'Suggestions for Further Research' section.

Limitations of IPA Methodology

IPA seeks to determine how individuals have experienced life events and my epistemological position is aligned to the belief that it is possible to construct the meanings that participants have constructed for their experiences, through the medium of language in interviews, as a co-construction between the researcher and the participant. However, like all methodologies this process has limitations, which were encountered on the journey through the process of interviewing and analysing the data.

Using language to communicate lived experiences

The first difficulty is pragmatic and concerns the nature of communication and the extent that participants are actually able to verbalise and articulate their thoughts about their experiences. Two of the participants in this study weren't particularly comfortable with being interviewed, although efforts were made to engage them and use accessible language. The difficulty was attributed to the nature of the emotional and sensitive questions and prompts and unfamiliarity with verbal communication and being recorded. This translated into a lack of recall of actual events and a difficulty in processing and articulating thoughts.

The use of language in in-depth interviews could be viewed as representative, however, throughout the process of analysing the dialogue from one interview there have been examples of thoughts being constructed through the use of language, during the interview process itself. So this challenges whether the research is actually accessing real 'lived experience' directly or rather the participants constructions of it with the researcher at that time. The implications of this may mean that a different methodology, such as discursive psychology, could be used in future studies.

Interpreting the dialogue

A further criticism and potential limitation of this methodology is the 'Interpretation' aspect to the phenomenological analysis and what is termed 'double hermeneutics' (Smith et al 2009). This relates to the concept of the researcher as an interpreter of the participants own interpretations of the experiences which they choose to talk about. A final layer of interpretation is then added as the reader then constructs their own ideas about the research.

To be as transparent as possible and show the researcher's positionality, it is essential that personal reflexivity is a central tenet of the analysis and interpretation of the findings. This is why reflexive notes have been added throughout, in an attempt to demonstrate my thoughts and belief system, to help the reader to make their own interpretations of what I present.

The subjective nature of the interview relationship:
(A Social Constructionist perspective)

Within the interview itself, power, social relationships, the defended subject and the political context all play a role in the complex interplay of what is actually said and how it is interpreted. It has to be recognised that other researchers would have had entirely different relationships with the participants and different interpretations of the interview transcripts.

The findings are context bound and apply to this particular group of parents and the researcher and no claims to generalisability can be made. This is clearly stated in the study. Hence, there are no assertions to being 'objective' stating the 'truth' or finding 'knowledge' about this group of parents, which may be problematic to researchers who value the traditional positivist paradigm.

It may have been possible to ask other researchers to check the themes which emerged from the data, in an attempt to triangulate or make it 'trustworthy'. However this idea was rejected on the basis that: (i) it would complicate the findings and add yet another layer of interpretation onto the analysis, without the benefit of reflexive notes from other researchers (ii) the time frame for the research mitigated against this.

The data was not taken back to the participants to check and interpret, for ethical reasons, on the grounds that the sensitive nature of the subject matter may be conflicting and in some cases, harmful to the psychological well-being and identities as parents.

Constructing themes in IPA

Although IPA necessitates a structured, logical approach which enables emerging themes to come from the interview transcripts of each participant and then across the data set, the process of constructing these themes could be critiqued. For it may be that some themes may have not been illustrated or were subsumed into others, (to keep within the word count) and others which were constructed could have become lost within the large amount of data which was yielded from the interview transcripts.

Reflexive note
I was conscious of this when I analysed the transcripts and tried to keep as much pertinent detail in as I could, without it becoming unmanageable. I also referred back to the transcripts at all times during the analysis process, to check what participants had actually said and the context in which it was said. Although time consuming, I found this process a necessary part of the analysis, interpretation and writing process.

The Sample Group

The access which I had to parents was controlled through the SENCOs of the schools that had nurture groups which had been established for at least 18 months. This restricted my sample and although I chose the three schools on the basis of the length of time that they had a nurture group, it was not possible for me to directly approach parents within the schools and initial contact details were supplied by the SENCOs at each of the schools.

The implications of this were that parents of children who had been in a nurture group in the one of the three schools within the LA in which I worked and who were interested in the study were the ones who agreed to take part. This sample of parents was purposive, in the sense that I actively chose parents on the basis that they had a child in a part-time nurture group within a mainstream primary school. However, as they were interested in taking part, they may have been more likely to be positive about the intervention and the schools/staff and may also have had a vested interest in the study, perhaps perceiving that their child may benefit in some way.

Although the sample was purposeful and the parents were chosen on the basis that they had children in a part-time nurture group, all the participants were female. This might have limited the study in terms of looking at the perceptions of fathers or exploring gender differences.

Established Nurture Groups

This relates to the aforementioned limitation concerning the type of participants who were available for the research. Within the LA in which I worked, there were a number of nurture groups that had been established for at least18 months, but most were in the embryonic stages.

Due to these constraints, it was not possible to talk to parents of children who had been in a nurture group which had been established for at least two years or more. Research (Cooper and Whitebread 2007) suggests that it takes two years or more for these groups

to be properly established. A group which had been established for a longer period of time may have had time to implement alternative ways of effectively communicating with parents as partners.

Related to this aspect of the research, it may have been productive to talk to parents after a period of time had elapsed following their child's re-integration into their mainstream class. This would have enabled parents to have had more time to observe changes in their child and this might have meant that they felt differently about the intervention. Hence, the findings of this study have to be seen in the time frame and context in which they were conducted.

Suggestions for Further Research

Introduction

This study has raised a number of useful questions concerning aspects of parent partnership and the effects of the perceived participation of parents and the impact of the nurture group intervention on their child. The suggestions for further research which emanate from the findings and limitations of this study are listed below.

- One of the limitations of this research study which has been highlighted was the time frame in which it had to be completed. This dictated the sample of parents who were interviewed just after their child had been in the nurture group for 3-4 terms. A research study which had a longer time frame and interviewed parents about the impact of the intervention over a period of time after the child had returned to their usual class, may have yielded different findings.

- Another constraint was the type of nurture groups in the locality in which the study had to be completed. A research study could replicate this one and use a sample of parents of children in nurture groups that have been established for a greater period of time; with a minimum of two years.

- The LA in which this study was undertaken are currently using resources based on a 'Family Nurturing Group' which links in with small group work in SEAL and is aimed at developing parenting skills using a solution focused approach. A quantitative research study which evaluates this programme could give evidence of its value by comparing the progress that children make when completing the programme with a control group of children in a different school who do not access the programme.

- Considering the positive effects of participation in the nurture group and Family SEAL by one of the parents in this research study, it would be interesting to determine whether there any long term gains for children when their parents have had greater involvement in such programmes and support by nurture group staff.

- Related to the aforementioned study, it may be possible to use a purposive sample of parents of children whose school used a collaborative, negotiating style of working with parents and this could be evaluated in terms of its effectiveness.

- It would be interesting to undertake a qualitative study with nurture group staff using a methodological approach such as IPA to look at the training that nurture group staff had access to and determine whether this influenced their belief systems and the psychological paradigms they used (if any). As a qualitative study it could explore how staff perceived the intervention and the effects on their interactions with children and parents.

- School staff that assess children for the nurture group in the LA in which this study was undertaken, currently use the Boxhall Profile and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (recommended by the Nurture Group Network). An interesting research opportunity would be to determine whether parental involvement in the decision making at this point in the process would enhance the involvement in the group, and subsequent parenting skills, particularly for 'disengaged' or 'difficult to reach' parents.

- Most of the research concerning nurture groups has been with primary schools and the intervention is associated with young children in primary schools. Binnie and Allen (2008) found positive gains for younger children but not for those in Key Stage 2, which may relate to entrenched working habits and patterns of behaviour. However, there are a number of nurture groups or centres being established within Secondary schools in the LAs in the North of England. It would be useful to explore how school staff involve parents in the secondary school with older children, particularly as parental participation is traditionally often established more readily within primary schools rather than secondary schools.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Closing Words

Reflexive Note

The personal journey that I have taken as both an emergent researcher and Trainee Educational Psychologist has been challenging and not without the highs and lows which have served to both excite and exasperate in equal measures! I am nearing the end of my journey as I write these closing words and attempt to sum up my thoughts and feelings and assess what I have learned in the process.

In one sense this feels quite intimidating as it has been such a changing experience that I have undergone, trying to juggle work, life, family and my research. At times it has felt like my personal resilience has been stretched. The sand has felt like it has continually shifted underneath my feet and just as I've felt certain of what I was doing and had the time to do it; events have changed again and I've had to alter my approach and cope with a different set of obstacles.

In this sense, whilst still primarily being an intellectual challenge, the research has tested my personal skills of self-discipline, organisation, persistence, determination, level headedness, tenacity and resilience. Some of these skills I have had to develop as the journey has unfolded. There has also been an element of vulnerability, of exposing myself to a degree of scrutiny in the personal reflexions to the unseen audience who will read the words which I've chosen to represent my work.

On balance, the positives are certainly worthwhile. I am aware that I have made great progress in my skills as a researcher and I feel comfortable discussing methodology and a number of other interesting issues and debates. On the whole I am pleased with the qualitative route that I took, particularly when I discuss the methods of data collection and analysis and the paradigms behind the methods I've used with colleagues who have taken different approaches.

As being a competent research-practitioner is part of my professional role, it was important for me to consider a variety of research methods and their 'fitness for purpose' within an educational setting. Therefore, conducting and evaluating my own research project with supervision, has given me an understanding of the processes which need to be undertaken in any research study.

It has been worthwhile to explore the parent's perspective in relation to the nurture group intervention as it is directly applicable to the work I am doing with schools, children and families. EPs working in the community are in a unique position to empower and hear the marginalised parent or carer, who may feel excluded or may have negative perceptions about school.

I have attempted to redress that balance and have actively encouraged professionals to hear the parental voice, by using research methods which are collaborative and embrace their constructs and perspectives. As a professional I now have a greater understanding of and insight into the narratives around the parent and consequently am in a better position to collaborate with parents and encourage school staff to develop the skills to work with parents as partners.

The study may encourage other professionals to think about the experiences of parents whose children are at risk of exclusion and challenge assumptions about their background and their relationships with school staff. Indeed one of the unseen outcomes of the research has been a spotlight on parent participation in nurture groups within the LA in which I work. I hope that there is further impact within the local nurture group network, in terms of how children are referred for the intervention and how parents are informed and included in this process.

The research has certainly changed the way in which I practise as an EP, as well as opening up other ways of perceiving, on a meta-cognitive level: of reflecting on how I think and what I consider to be my values and ethics. That has definitely been valuable for me. I would like to think that the parents I met felt appreciated and empowered by the process. I only hope that this journey has also been informative for the reader and that they share my interest in the research and find their own constructions of it worthwhile.

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APPENDICES

Table of Appendices

Appendix 1 Initial Web Diagram of Research Proposal

Interventions:

Experiences / Interest in NGs during Year 1 TEP experience

LA Initiatives in NGs and SEBD team.

Recent Initiatives in Glasgow, University of Leicester, books, dispatches TV programme, resurgence of interest (attachment theory).

Aims of Research:

Applied research useful for NG staff, solution focused

Empowering for parents and ultimately child(ren), gives a 'voice' to parents not mentioned much in other research

Can be therapeutic, focus on ethics

Useful for LA, sharing good practice for emerging NGs in LA and for the current work in involving parents in education.

Pilot Study Aims:

Interviews with one parent at their home to practice using narrative inquiry and try out proposed discussion points for parents.

Ethical review for EPS to be used prior to this interview to ensure appropriate participation from researcher.

Key Areas of Concern:

What are parent's feelings about their child being in the nurture group?

What information did they receive about the intervention?

How does their involvement affect their own views of their roles as parents? And on their perceptions of/behaviour towards their child? Parent/Child identities

What have parents found valuable (or what would they) in terms of being

involved and supported?

Methodology:

Combined approach so that research achieves both objectives:

1. Nature of the study is best suited to an interpretative approach- understanding parent's views and feelings, open-ended semi-structured interviews with up to six parents from two schools.

2. I also want to find out specifics of what parents think it would be useful to know about the intervention / how they can best be supported by NG staff and EPT.

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN NURTURE GROUP INTERVENTIONS

<u>**Appendix 2**</u> **Pre-Interview checklist**

Draft research title:

'An exploration of the experiences of parents with children in a part-time nurture group in a mainstream primary school'

Checklist for discussion with researcher and participants prior to the narrative interview:

- **I'm interested in your story about what it has been like for you as a parent with a child who has had a placement in a nurture group in school. So I will be asking you to tell me your story to help me have a better understanding of what it has been like for you. To help you I will ask you to give me some examples of particular situations which you can remember.**

  There are no right or wrong answers as I'm more interested in your experiences and what you think is important. Whatever you think is important is of interest to me.

  Just let me know if you want to stop at any time or if you want a break.

- **So I'll record our discussion on the tape but it will all be anonymised and it won't be possible to identify you or the school or the local authority. If there's anything which you'd prefer not to have on the tape then you can tell me at the end when we'll have a 'de-brief' session which is to talk generally about the discussion we've just had and the aims of my research. You can ask me any questions or just talk about anything you'd like to, to make sure you're comfortable with what we've discussed and the stories you've told. This bit won't be recorded. Is that ok?**

  <u>De-brief</u>

- **Thanks for that discussion, it was very interesting and I hope it will be helpful to other parents whose child will be in a nurture group.**

- **You'll have the right to look at the recorded information if you want to see it and a full copy of the written research report.**

- **How was the discussion for you? (participants well-being: follow up on points)**

Louise Walker (Trainee Educational and Child Psychologist)
Address and Phone number

<u>**Appendix 3**</u> **Interview Prompts**

- **To get some background information about (child's name), please can you give me some general information about him/her and your family.**

- **Can you tell me about what life was like for you and (child's name) before s/he went into the nurture group.**

  Tell me about a typical situation...

- **If you look back can you tell me what you knew about nurture groups before (child's name) went into the group?**

  Describe your feelings about the nurture group...
  Extent of your involvement with nurture group staff...

- **What has life has been like for you as a family and how is your relationship with (child's name) since s/he went into the nurture group.**

  Tell me about a typical situation at home ...
  Tell me about a typical situation at school ...
  Tell me about his/her progress at school

- **Are there other ways that you would've liked to have been more involved in the nurture group or ways that you feel that you could have been better supported.**

  Can you give me an example(s) of that...

- **Tell me about what you expected from the nurture group intervention**

  Examples of how these expectations were met...

- **Is there anything else that you feel is important or that you would like to tell me about?**

Appendix 4 Table 1: Sample of Participants

Number Order	Parent *	Carer	Child *	Child's Age	External Agency Involved	School	Part-time Group
One	Julie	Parent	Sam	6	SALT & SEBD	A	am
Two	Stacey	Grandparent and legal guardian	Kirsty	7	SALT	B	am
Three	Rachel	Parent	Jason	7	NONE	B	am
Four	Anya	Parent	Nita	6	NONE	A	am
Five	Della	Auntie (legal guardian of child)	Peter	5	SALT	C	pm
Six	Christine	Adoptive Parent	Karl	6	SALT	C	pm

KEY:

* Pseudonyms are used throughout the study to protect identity

SALT (Speech and Language Therapy)

SEBD Team (Social and Emotional Behavioural Difficulties Team)

Appendix 5 Letter to Parents to Confirm Participation

Research into Parents and Nurture Group Interventions 8th July 2009

Dear parent,

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist with Education Bradford and as part of my doctoral course at Sheffield University I am investigating the views of parents whose children are currently in a Nurture Group setting.

Your views are very important and I am interested in finding out what you think and feel about the Nurture Group and the impact of the intervention on your child and your family. I am also going to be looking at the support that may be useful for parents.

To carry out this research I would like to have an informal discussion with you about some of these issues. I am interested in your opinions and you can tell me as much as you would like to, it is not a 'questionnaire' and there are no wrong answers. One of the aims of the research study is to help to improve the process for other parents in your situation.

All the information which you give me will be confidential and you will not be identified as all names will be changed in the written report. School staff will know which parents expressed an interest in taking part in the research but they will not know the outcome of individual interviews as all data will be made anonymous.

You will receive a letter of consent for you to sign to state that you have given your informed consent. If you change your mind and decide that you do not wish to take part you will be free to withdraw from the research *at any point in the process.* All parents who choose to participate will have access to a copy of the written report and will be invited to a presentation of a summary of the findings at one of the Nurture Group Network meetings in Education Bradford.

There will be an opportunity for you to ask me any questions about the research when I contact you shortly after you receive this letter. Please jot down any thoughts or questions that you may have and I am happy to discuss these before the research interview. I look forward to speaking with you on the telephone to see if you are willing to take part. If you would like to participate then I can visit you at home or in your child's school at a convenient time.

Thank you.
 Yours sincerely,

Louise Walker
Trainee Educational and Child Psychologist

Contact Details

Contact Details of Research Supervisor.
Dr Kathryn Pomerantz, Sheffield University School of Education, 388 Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2JA

**LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS
IN THE DOCTORAL RESEARCH INTO PARENTS AND NURTURE GROUPS**

I give my informed consent to participate in the research into Parents and Nurture Groups.

I understand that I can withdraw this consent at any time if I decide that I no longer want to be involved in the research.

Signed...

Date............................

Researcher: Louise Walker (Trainee Educational and Child Psychologist)

Contact Details

Louise Walker,

Contact Details of Research Supervisor
Name & Address: Dr Kathryn Pomerantz, Sheffield University School of Education, 388 Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2JA

Appendix 7 Sheffield University Ethics Letter
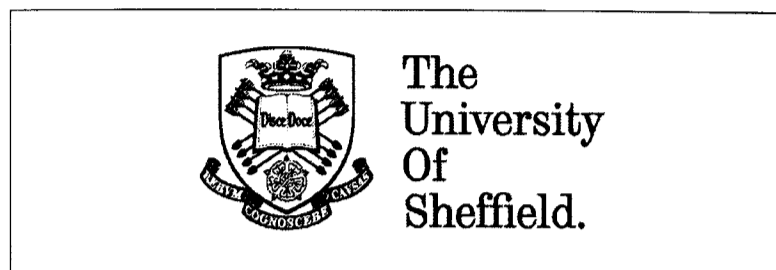
The University Of Sheffield.	The School of Education

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4 June 2009

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Dear Louise

Re: Doctor of Educational Psychology (DEdCPsy) The Role of Parents in Nurture Group Interventions

The above project has now been ethically reviewed and has been approved (please see attached ethical reviewers' comments forms).

This is also subject to receipt of a signed hard copy of Part B (Declaration) of the School of Education Research Ethics application form which is available at http://www.shef.ac.uk/education/ethics.
Yours sincerely

Lucy Thomas

Lucy Thomas Programme Secretary

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Field Notes: Extracts recorded in research diary: Impressions after interview with Stacey (24.8.09)

- Stacey was very much in control of the interview, confident, very articulate and used to dealing with this sort of information because of her job. She had also worked with EPs before and I detected that she engaged in a period of 'sussing me out' at the initial stages of our meeting.

- She appeared keen to do the interview and was very motivated and helpful, going into lots of detail. She spoke very quickly and used technical terms (e.g. concept of attachment) and let me know that she understood many of the aspects of this kind of work (she had done some research of her own). She positioned herself very much as a professional, an equal, intelligent and in control of the situation.

- At certain points in the interview I had the impression that she wanted to introduce her own agenda e.g. (1) wanting to know about further assessment of Kirsty's learning by an EP and (2) trying to demonstrate how one of her daughter's had achieved: comments about academic achievements (doing two degrees), linking this up with her early adoption-she hadn't been affected by any attachment issues (my interpretation).

- When certain questions or prompts were more uncomfortable, she quickly interrupted or deflected the answer to something else or said something which she preferred to talk about e.g. picking up on smaller details which weren't asked, such as the dates that Kirsty joined the nurture group. This was done in a very subtle manner and it wasn't always obvious-she controlled her body language well. But it was very closed and defensive at times-crossed arms over her body, lots of self-comforting and soothing by touching herself.

- Stacey wanted to demonstrate to me that she was a very capable carer and was able to talk to Kirsty, provide appropriate experiences and ensure her happiness: felt judged perhaps and somewhat defensive? Whenever Kirsty came into the room she allowed her to stay for a while (I turned off the tape) and she talked to her, tried to get her to engage in interesting play experiences and seemed to give Kirsty a lot of leeway, e.g. negotiating rather than telling her. This was in direct contradiction to her recounting how structured and firm she was.

- Stacey did not need reassurance about any aspects of what she had said during the de-brief. Perhaps she had spoken many times before and was comfortable with the subject matter (her job) but mainly because she was in control of what she had said and was very sure of herself.

- In the de-brief session, Stacey was interested in my perceptions but when I told her about what I thought was interesting: that there was an impression of parallels of her caring for Kirsty to the time when she cared for Kirsty's own mother, she obviously hadn't seen the parallels and didn't seem to like the comparison. She immediately rejected it by saying that they were very different (although she had been comparing them and drawing similarities throughout the interview). I surmised that she may not want to see Kirsty ending up in a similar situation to her own mother and that she wanted to break the cycle, rather than continue it.

An interview with Louise, the researcher and Stacey, the grandmother and legal guardian of a child named Kirsty[1]

Time: 61.56 minutes

KEY:	
Bold type	prompts from interview schedule
CAPITALS	emphasised words
......	unfinished sentence left hanging, unfinished
(laugh) asides e.g. laughing, sighing, pauses	
!	exclaims, raises voice
Italics	researcher's speech

Themes constructed

LOUISE: so the first part is just to get some background information other than what we've got already, about Kirsty and you know what you want to tell me and some general information about Kirsty and your family as a starting point, to get comfortable and into the discussion.

1   STACEY: Oh so just the family then right

2   *LOUISE: your family yeah*

3   STACEY: erm, well Kirsty is my granddaughter. I live with my husband Roy

4   we've been together a long time we've got four daughters between us *(yeah)*

5   and Kirsty's mum Ruby is my eldest who's now 26 so Kirsty has lived with us

6   since she was three when there were issues surrounding her at home so

7   she came to live with us while investigations were carried out and then it was

8   felt that we were the best place for her and she continued to see both

9   parents. But mum wasn't around much and didn't turn up for appointments

10   but now she has established a period of contact every other weekend and

11   she goes. Her dad picks her up from school one afternoon a week and the

12   weekend and she sees her mum on the other weekend. She comes to our

13   house but she doesn't stay have staying contact and she doesn't go to her

14   flat. So in the house is my youngest daughter who's 24 post-degree and

15   working to do another degree in America so....

16   *LOUISE: excellent, okay*

17   STACEY: so yes so that's who's in the house but yes she's got she's very

18   close to Roy's two girls: Chris who's 28 and Libby who's 25. So she likes

19   them and she sees both of them and then the other person then I suppose.

20   Roy's not her granddad she has granddad Mark, that's my two girls dad but

> **Comment:**
> Issues at home so K had to live with grandparents

Lack of early contact with parents

> **Comment:**
> K sees her mum and dad consistently, but they don't have staying contact

---

[1] All names have been changed to protect identities

1

21 she doesn't see a lot of him now. I mean he's local but she doesn't see him a

22 lot. She sees her dad's mum occasionally, she's local as well but his father

23 and stepmother have gone abroad, that's soon after she came to live with us

24 *LOUISE: mmm*

25 STACEY:so that's her extended family and she is very fond of her great

26 grand that's Roy's dad. My parents are dead so and they don't see their

27 grand parents very much, they are very elderly so I don't think they have

28 seen Kirsty, well maybe once, so great grand as it were is the grandparent

29 figure to us.

Extended family
relationships

Comment:
Extended family relationships
occasional for Kirsty

30 *LOUISE:mmm*

31 STACEY: that's who's in the family and my two daughters are actually

32 adopted so her mum came to live with those when she was four

33 *LOUISE: who came to live with you?*

34 STACEY: that was Ruby Kirsty's mum...

Comment:
K's mum was adopted too, by her
gran, repeated pattern

35 *LOUISE: right thank you for that. So **just thinking back about erm before***

36 ***Kirsty went into the nurture group she went in year two didn't she?***

37 STACEY: yeah some time in year two

38 *LOUISE: **can you just tell me what life was like before she actually***

39 ***started in the nurture group***

40 STACEY: yes because I got contact with her before

41 *LOUISE: yes before she started in the nurture group what was it like?*

42 *Anything that you think was important..?*

43 STACEY: you mean before starting school or her life as a child?

44 *LOUISE: probably starting earlier,as early as you can think*

45 STACEY: well when she was a baby we supported her from being a baby

46 *(mmm)* because my daughter had learning difficulties herself and had

47 special educational needs *(right)* and her dad's also not terribly bright I think

48 so they needed a lot of support although they weren't always willing to take

49 that, so I was worried about how was worried if she got pregnant fairly early,

50 for her she did well I think

Parent with
learning difficulties

Comment:
K's mum had learning difficulties
and needed support herself

51 *LOUISE: yeah*

52 STACEY :the sort of kid she was she did well not to get pregnant earlier.

53 Erm so we were very involved with Kirsty coming to stay with us, at the

2

54   weekend, not every weekend but Friday to Saturday, though she was a

55   lovely little baby

56   *LOUISE: is that when she was born?*

57   STACEY:yeah yeah, she had a wicker basket in our bedroom and all that

58   sort of thing so we were very familiar. I took her to the seaside for the very

59   first time WITH mum and dad, she was crawling around going on the sand

60   so we've been very involved with her throughout her life so it was natural,

61   well we brought her here when the incident happened. They were just living

62   down the road from us and so that she stayed with us ever since. But before

63   that we were very involved with her, they came on holiday in Spain, we had

64   a cottage and she came with us WITH her mum and dad so we were very

65   familiar adults to her all of us.

66   *LOUISE: and how did Kirsty present as a baby*

67   STACEY: she was a LOVELY baby and she was a very HAPPY baby she

68   loved music and she was in a car seat and dancing around to the music and

69   seemed to have a really good rhythm.

70   (Kirsty enters the room)

71   STACEY: well make some lunch for both of us and then bring it in

72   *LOUISE: (laughs)*

73   STACEY: and she liked singing and music

74   KIRSTY: me? why are you talking about me?

75   STACEY: well we are just talking about what you as a baby and what you

76   are like as a big girl now

77   KIRSTY: Oh

78   STACEY: that's all right?

79   KIRSTY: yes (she left the room)

80   STACEY: so, yes, but she didn't speak so she walked about average...

81   *LOUISE: when she was expected to ?*

82   STACEY:so although from being all babbly and dancing around she then

83   went very quiet and I think she was very under stimulated

84   *LOUISE: Oh right*

85   STACEY: so I think my daughter didn't get up and I know she hadn't woken

86   up and it would be about 10-11 o'clock and so we suspect, it changed when

3

Themes constructed

Comment:
The 'incident' mentioned again but no elaboration

Early babyhood happy no difficulties perceived

Comment:
S thought K was lovely and happy as a baby

Comment:
K interested in music and singing as a baby

Understimulated as a baby (speech development)

Comment:
Hypothesis as to K's lack of speech development

		Themes constructed
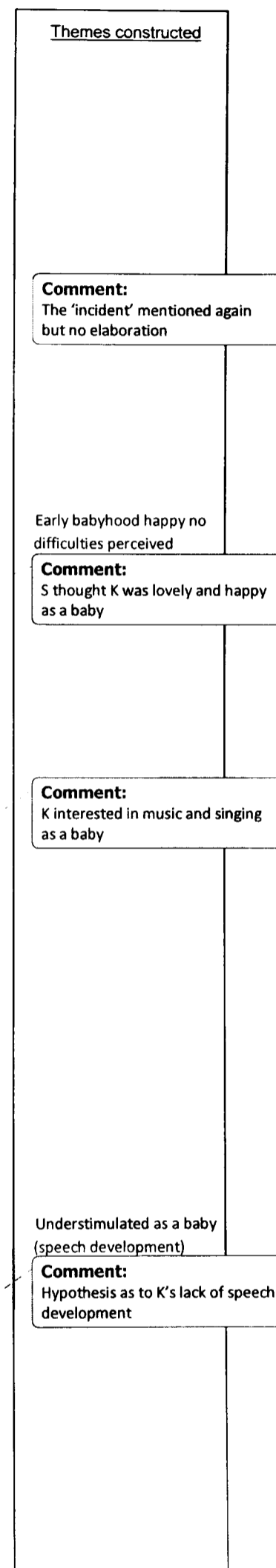
87 she was working but that's what happened. Ruby has struggled with her
88 speech she had speech therapy

89 *LOUISE: Yes*

90 STACEY: and she still struggles to express herself, er, she is still very basic,
91 and language, she could read and write she did well you know but she still
92 struggled in that area and with social communication

93 *LOUISE: yeah*

94 STACEY: so I suppose I think walking, well she was a bit delayed well, NO
95 within easily within the average band, it wasn't a problem but the speech
96 wasn't coming

97 *LOUISE: whether there any other agencies involved at that point?*

98 STACEY: she was supposed to be involved with sure start, my bone of
99 contention, but I think Ruby took her to nursery there once or twice and the
100 speech therapist saw her there and I was with her once when she saw her
101 but she didn't take her regularly and they didn't follow her up

102 *LOUISE:No*

103 STACEY: you know I don't think it was encouraged enough and involvement
104 for a long time enough because you know she'd never go to a parents and
105 toddlers group because she'd be OUT of it, you know it's with who should
106 feel comfortable with, she would've felt comfortable but she needed much
107 more encouragement and stuff so I think they sent her leaflets and stuff but
108 you need much more follow through and that...

109 *LOUISE: so how old was Kirsty then?*

110 STACEY: I suppose from about 18 months - two because it was just before
111 it happened in the May and she was three in the June, so I suppose it was in
112 that year. But actually we thought things were much more settled because
113 where they lived was in a really grotty place, there was a LOT of heavy stuff
114 went down there was a LOT of difficult people where they lived before and
115 someone that she lived with wasn't right and he actually had a fight with
116 Ruby, so she was VERY unsettled and you know when you're taking her
117 back you're thinking I don't really want to go back really and it wasn't a very
118 good scene there. It wasn't child protection although I think they had a visit
119 from social services at one point but she did, it was much more (unintelligible
120 word) when they moved up here things got appeared much better but they
121 struggled with keeping the house clean and...

122 *LOUISE: so did they move from that other house to...*

4

Side annotations (Themes constructed):

Parent: social communication difficulties

Comment: Speaking was an issue when she was younger, social communication difficulties

Mum social interaction

Comment: No follow up for speech therapy

Comment: K not given an environment conducive to good speech development due to her mum's own social communication difficulties

mental health difficulties

unsettled early childhood

Comment: Very unsettled early childhood- difficult people around K, possible mental health issues around her mum

Parental separation early on

123 STACEY: into private rented which I sorted out *(yeah)* but when they split
124 up after this. When they split up that went obviously, SO she was it was
125 speech and you'd notice so she was sitting in a high chair HERE and you'd
126 say which one do you want the red one or the yellow one and she'd go tight
127 and she wouldn't indicate, say she was very resistant to speak

128 *LOUISE: but there wasn't any assessment at that point?*

129 STACEY: no I mean NO I think they felt No I can't remember as I say I
130 think that they were going to watch her in nursery Sure Start. Ruby said she
131 would take her and Ruby said she'd put her name down but I don't think she
132 had, well maybe she had for the school nursery but ...

133 *LOUISE: so she didn't go to sure start then, so what was your experience*
134 *then before she went nursery*

135 STACEY: she was at home and then when it happened soon after she was
136 three I put her in private nursery, so I stayed in work

137 *LOUISE: so in between 18 months to three she was living in private*
138 *accommodation...*

139 STACEY: yeah

140 *LOUISE: and as you said there were a few other issues social sort of issues*
141 *at the rented house which you feel may have impacted on her speech and*
142 *language development*

143 STACEY: Well I think Ruby would say well I am talking to her mum but she
144 didn't talk to her like we do you know, like if they're baking NOW it's not you
145 know what number is it on, its they'd play happily together, they love doing
146 that together but it's not a constant talk all the time you know that you would
147 do normally.

148 *LOUISE: so in a sense although you felt, well I don't want to put words into*
149 *your mouth, but I'm getting the sense that Kirsty's mum through not really*
150 *any fault of her own has tried to bring her up how she perceived that it*
151 *should be done you know, but your idea of that as a grandparent or*
152 *someone else looking in with slightly different...*

153 STACEY: (interrupts) yes absolutely (pause) she wouldn't (pause)
154 (unintelligable) I think that's she struggled with isolation as well clearly the
155 relationship with dad, well he hadn't left they were still together and
156 everybody thought that they were all right but clearly they weren't but she
157 never spoke about that and was clearly leaving Kirsty with this lad several
158 times a week for the whole day, so ...

5

Themes constructed

Comment:
K's parents split up due to difficulties experienced

Comment:
Resistant to speak, cause not established

Comment:
K's mum didn't take her to sure start to help her development

reference to incident

Within parent : speech difficulties

Comment:
Gran believes that speech wasn't encouraged early on by mum and her own difficulties in that area

Comment:
Researcher judgemental towards gran=her reaction is quite assertive, interrupts to get point across and justify by mentioning the incident which meant she was removed from mum's care

Interruption (defensive) perception of attack/judgement from researcher? (tone of voice)

159 *LOUISE: okay*

160 STACEY: and he just used to leave in front of the telly I think I bought her a
161 high chair and a mat and they just never used it so it was that...

162 *LOUISE: yes, so this was the babysitter was it or..*

163 STACEY: (interrupts) yeah, well we don't know if it was the babysitter on
164 WHO it was, there was a police investigation but it was inconclusive

165 *LOUISE: and was mum working or...*

166 STACEY: (interrupts) OH NO she's never had a job up to that point, after
167 she left after she got was actually the lad she'd met- went off with - he was a
168 security guard and actually he was all right and, he got her into security and
169 we'd have never said that she'd go into security. She did the gigs and the
170 festivals and all that sort of stuff, and she LOVED it even though she
171 wouldn't normally look you in the face you now she struggled to (pause) we
172 had a 21st Party here, so Kirsty would be what two, and she was hopeless
173 and it just reminded me of how far she hadn't come she couldn't manage
174 and it was only a small group of relatives and friends she couldn't engage
175 with most people so she couldn't say thank you for her present or anything,
176 to her cousins, you know

177 *LOUISE: and is that part of her learning?*

178 STACEY: (interrupts) I can't remember it's a long time ago isn't it, she
179 certainly had speech difficulties and social interaction (pause) I mean I think
180 there's aspects about her that were missed probably

181 *LOUISE: yes things change don't they...*

182 STACEY: it's a long time ago yeah she's got, has she got parts of aspergers,
183 she's not bright I think well she has a learning difficulty, I think is it dyslexic
184 and it wasn't she was tested for that, I'm sure that some of this is attachment
185 stuff from her own past as well

186 *LOUISE: mmm. Mmm, you said she was adopted -how old was she...*

187 STACEY: four when she came to me she wasn't speaking she got about
188 two words which was 'me' and 'baby' which was her sister and er no

189 *LOUISE: what did you know about her past*

190 STACEY: everything, well as much as anybody else knew

191 *LOUISE: yeah, (pause) it's quite an interesting history*

Themes constructed

Issue of neglect (early

Comment:
Question mark as to what had happened to K when left with the babysitter – neglected all day?

Comment:
Social communication difficulties? ASD spectrum

social communication difficulties as a child(mum)

Comment:
Realisation that probably there were other aspects to mum's development which were missed and could be attributed to other 'conditions'

Comment:
Mentions attachment of parent as she was adopted and didn't speak when she came to live with gran

attachment difficulties from own past (adopted)
Unable to nurture herself

192 STACEY: it is, she's very like her mum and her personality is very like her
193 mum, she's quite stubborn

194 *LOUISE: yeah*

195 STACEY: very resistant that is how Ruby was when she was a little one,
196 very resistant, she is really resistant and they will tell you that at school

197 *LOUISE: (laughs) digs her heels in?*

198 STACEY: (laughs) oh yeah in a very passive resistant sort of way I mean
199 Ruby got much more stroppy when she was older but yes she's quite
200 determined in her own sort of way

201 *LOUISE: mmm, that can be a strength....*

202 STACEY: (interrupts) it CAN be a strength yeah, like well for instance now
203 she'll talk about, they say her speech is still indistinct but actually I think what
204 she does is she talks like this you know with a mouth in one position? and er
205 I think we said something and Roy said say it in a sentence, we didn't
206 understand she was saying 'i'm not, I don't want to say it in a sentence', you
207 know what I mean and she'd dig her heels in

208 *LOUISE: yeah*

209 STACEY: some of its sense of failure I think, like at school here she'd be in
210 doubt or something, if she was practicing of words you have to be quite
211 tough on her. Mrs. Williams is quite tough with her and she felt awful about it
212 and I said no you have to be because she's classic major avoidance
213 sometimes

214 *LOUISE: yeah she feels that she might not...*

215 STACEY: (interrupts) oh yes, even if you can see sometimes that she
216 clearly has got the answer right, she's not confident that it is the right answer
217 so she won't say anything. So when she was three she went to the private
218 nursery across the road. I was worried about leaving her with the nursery
219 full-time but actually it did her world of good. Lovely small group nursery
220 with other children, 'cos she had had very little contact with other children
221 and just the stimulation and things

222 *LOUISE: and you felt that stimulation...*

223 STACEY: (interrupts) oh yes I mean it didn't although she was still quiet she
224 wouldn't speak for ages at nursery to the teachers or to the children for ages

225 *LOUISE: did she speak at home?*

7

Themes constructed

Comment:
K is like her mum in some waySTACEY:speech difficulty, music loving, stubborn, resistant

Child taking after parent

Comment:
Gran perceives that K is passive-resistant

Interruption

Comment:
Gran tried to encourage her but K was stubborn and didn't elaborate in her speech

Comment:
Gran perceives that K avoids difficult stuff if she can. Teachers encouraged to be tough with K

Within child: lacking confidence, avoidance, poor self-efficacy

Positive experiences of nursery (stimulating)

Comment:
K helped when she attended a nursery, had stimulation and contact with other children

Comment:
K still found it hard to speak to other children and teachers, confidence in social situations as she spoke at home

difficult to interact with others (social communication)

226   STACEY: yes she did speak home

227   *LOUISE: yes okay, so she went to the private nursery, making progress in*
228   *some respects but not speech and language ?*

229   STACEY: she made progress in some respects but she was very behind the
230   other children we always said that she was at least a year behind the other
231   children

232   *LOUISE: okay and did this staff at the nursery understand the situation?*

233   STACEY: Yeah the staff were lovely, the school club that she goes to now
234   they pick her up from school it's the same staff so some of the staff, the
235   managers knew her

236   *LOUISE: continuity... good..*

237   STACEY:yeah

238   *LOUISE: did she relate well to the staff do you feel apart from talking, you*
239   *know I mean socially*

240   STACEY: yes she did, she did I was quite surprised as to how well she took
241   to it because I was thinking that she would really struggle

242   *LOUISE: and with you and the family*

243   (tape turned off as Kirsty entered the room)

244   STACEY: that's what we were very keen to bring in learning support 'cos
245   the issue for us was I think people would say she would catch up and
246   immature and it's the past, we were thinking it's not just that it is her own
247   intellectual ability. We think that very clearly, well both parents have got
248   learning difficulties, dad's much the same, how he thinks things through,
249   tackles things, he manages I mean I know its not automatic but this is how
250   she presents as well as what has happened to her

251   *LOUISE:Mmm, so going back to the time when she started nursery and it*
252   *was before school, what I'm trying to think about I suppose is how she was*
253   *as a child in terms of the way she was emotionally, and the things you've*
254   *talked about before she started school*

255   STACEY:Well as I say she was slower in her speech and that continued
256   (pause) erm she obviously had the emotional upset (pause) but actually she
257   had to deal with parents coming and going first of all together then not and
258   then being separated and then not seeing her mum for quite some time, so it
259   was hard

8

Themes constructed

Parents difficulties
inherited by child (nature
difficulties)

Comment:
Gran's hypothesis that K has
learning difficulties (inherited) and
has had some early neglect too-
emotional upset

Absent parent: separated
parent:
chaotic lifestyle,
emotional upset

Comment:
K didn't see her mum for some
time, chaotic environement –
impact on her development?

260 *LOUISE: that's when she was with you and when she was with you and as*
261 *a baby how did it manifest?*

262 STACEY: well most of the time she's fine with us you know she's an easy
263 child to manage, it's easier than going back to one, its a piece of cake
264 (laugh). Ours are very strong characters all of them and very different, so
265 erm, she was much easier than my two were I suppose, so she was a very
266 easy child. I'm not saying that she was totally biddable all the time but she's
267 easy, happy to, you know do lots of things. But very, very wary and
268 frightened, you forget you know she wouldn't go out into the garden she
269 hated being in the garden, any fly or anything, we took her to the butterfly
270 thing *(mmm)* she screamed when a butterfly was near her so she was very
271 fearful, very fearful child

272 *LOUISE: was that just butterflies or things flying in general or...?*

273 STACEY: mainly things flying in general and loud noises, she hated any loud
274 noise erm, she still doesn't like flies in the room even, so but she seemed
275 very very sensitive to noise. We've had her hearing tested and they said no
276 she's fine

277 *LOUISE: and her eyes, did she wear glasses then?*

278 STACEY: NO we'd no idea her eyes were a problem until she was tested at
279 school. She appeared to be able to read really well, you know to see really
280 well but actually her eyesight is very, very poor. I mean its come on since
281 she has had the glasses, she can't see but she has to wear them all the
282 time, so they said if they didn't correct they said it might not be good enough
283 for her to drive so it was that serious, but there is no sense of that when she
284 was little at all. Erm, what else didn't she like, she didn't like water, in terms
285 of going to the seaside. I know and its massive, I mean little puddles, she
286 screamed, she wouldn't put her feet in, she screamed, so she is quite a
287 fearful little one really in some situations

288 *LOUISE: was she alright in different situations I mean she had a lot of*
289 *seeing her mum and then coming back here..*

290 STACEY: no she here then (interrupts) that was later and then, no she was
291 fine here most of it took place here some of it was at the family centre as
292 well but she wasn't, she has never been reluctant to go, she was never
293 reluctant to go to nursery and to part from me, the normal SLIGHT clinginess
294 but you know none of the screaming rigidity. She took to nursery really,
295 really well

Themes constructed

Comment:
K is easy to manage, no behavioural difficulties

Easy temperment as a young child

Comment:
K is easily frightened and over-sensitive to noise and her eyesight is poor (some health issues)

over sensitivities
Withdrawn, speech underdeveloped

Fearful in certain situations (sensory)

Comment:
Was ok at leaving gran and going to nursery
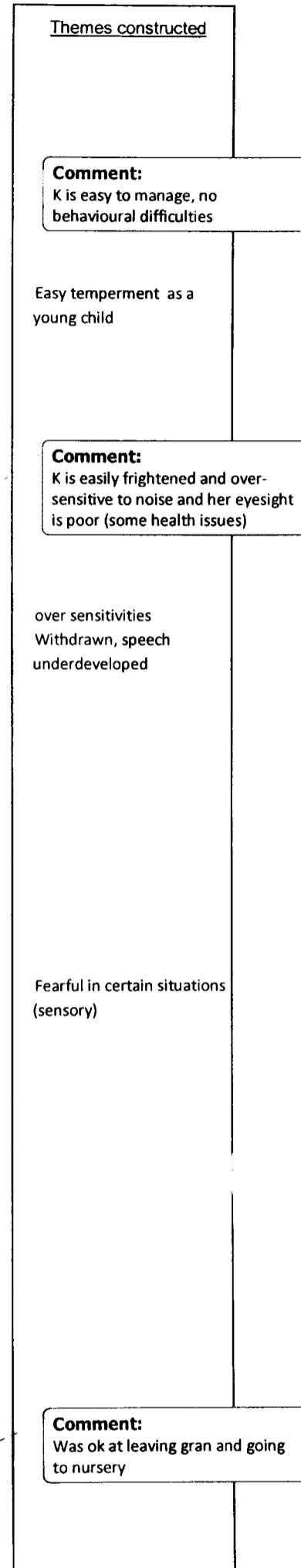
296 *LOUISE: that's good so did she make progress with the other children, the*
297 *staff?*

298 STACEY: And close relationships will with other children. I know it sounds a
299 bit of a (unintelligible) but I think she is a bit indiscriminate and still slightly
300 over familiar. She can swing from being over familiar to being over nervous.
301 Yes 'cos when we took her to the doctors I suppose she was about four-ish
302 maybe a bit younger and erm she just went up to this guy who was just
303 sitting next to me on the sofa and started leaning on him, do you know what I
304 mean *(yes)*

305 STACEY: so that had to be watched really erm and I think that she was
306 bored as there was lots of masturbatory and that's one of the things that
307 concerned us to start with. I think that it was possibly boredom but that's
308 been an issue actually in school, touching herself when she was tired and
309 things, she doesn't do that a great erm deal now, so I think it was all part of
310 the comfort or boredom or whatever

311 *LOUISE: yes, ok, this was before she went into school so she started at*
312 *nursery. Was there a nursery at the school?*

313 STACEY: no this was the private nursery and she was only four and a bit.

314 *LOUISE: when is her birthday?*

315 STACEY: June, so for her I thought my goodness she'd start in the January
316 and so when we found out she had to go in the September and it was quite a
317 shock 'cos I thought she needed another good six months really

318 *LOUISE: but she started school in September in reception. And how was*
319 *she when she stared school?*

320 STACEY: well she was fine from our point of view and again she went in
321 easily, she had us worried cos she had a double moves 'cos she had to be
322 picked up after school and go somewhere else as well, go to the kids club
323 after school. I think the staff managed that really well, but again she seemed
324 to manage that fine we didn't have any problems but I think she's very very
325 quiet, very timid in school and doesn't speak to anybody and that lasted, well
326 its still around really although she speaks to the teachers now I gather and
327 they were worried about her touching herself and there was quite a lot of that

328 *LOUISE: did they bring that to your attention*

329 STACEY: yes (pause) yes 'cos that continued up to the second class as
330 well

331 *LOUISE: Year two?*

10

Themes constructed

Comment:
Can be inappropriate around men, not know how to act

inappropriate social behaviour, touching herself

Comment:
Masturbated a lot, gran perceived as boredom or comfort-concerned at school

Readiness for school behind in early development

Comment:
Wanted K to have more time in nursery, wasn't ready for school, behind in her development

Social interaction an issue

Comment:
K was very quiet at school, has made progress in speaking to teachers now

332 STACEY: Year one

333 *LOUISE: and how about academically when she managing?*

334 STACEY: no I mean she was still struggling with it and that she was clearly

335 struggling in Ash class in year one. That's when we have the first, no it was

336 in even in Oak class when we discussed her on the special what do they call

337 it when you do the pre-SEN stuff? Independent learning profile

338 *LOUISE: IEP*

339 STACEY: yes and IEP all that stuff as well

340 *LOUISE: so she was at school action that was in reception and then it came*

341 *to the point where the nurture group was introduced.* **Can you tell about**

342 **when you first came across the nurture group, you know what you felt,**

343 **what you were told about it**

344 STACEY:(pause) We've been raising concerns about her anyway suppose

345 we felt more needed to be done for her. She went to speech therapy for

346 quite a long time and then she got her eyes as well so (pause) we were

347 pushing really saying she that really needed extra help and I think to be

348 perfectly frank, in year one, I wasn't really happy because I felt, well they are

349 large classes I think there wasn't enough attention given to her there was not

350 enough individual attention and still she drifted off, she'd start touching

351 herself than I thought she was just too near the back of suppose right at the

352 front and the class management I wasn't really very happy with. The teacher

353 was nice enough...(pause)

354 *LOUISE: did you get the IEP then which addressed it?*

355 STACEY: it was okay I suppose it was fairly basic stuff, it was okay she

356 wasn't making progress and we have to do things that on the other you know

357 all the usual things really on things that she was stuck on like she wouldn't

358 speak in class. She didn't speak in a circle time in year two either. She won't

359 say anything that she's done at home or at the weekend she won't say

360 *LOUISE: would she have been like that home?*

361 STACEY: no no

362 *LOUISE: so it's particular to the school context*

363 STACEY: yes absolutely so, yes, we had all the IEP stuff and then

364 *LOUISE: so that was year one*

365 STACEY: and year two and I think this is soon into year two that Mrs. Smith

366 said that we've done the Boxhall Profile so she went through that and that

11

Themes constructed

Problems in school early -
IEP

Parents unhappy with
school environment
- large class sizes
- sat at back of class
- perception of poor
  class management
- within child: immature
  behaviour

Comment:
Gran not happy with class sizes in
year 1, not individual attention, K
touching (early developmental
behaviour and lack of theory of
mind, other kids/teachers
perceptions of her)

Within child: Lack of social
speech in school context

Comment:
Wouldn't speak in circle time-
confidence? Ability?

Information given to
parents : Boxhall Profile

367 wasn't surprising you know we already knew we talked to the school, but it
368 obviously put it into some sort of context. They didn't give me a copy of that
369 they were going to and then they didn't so she started in the nurture group

370 *LOUISE: did they explain what the Boxhall Profile was for and that it was an*
371 *assessment of Kirsty in school? How was introduced to you on parents*
372 *evening or...*

373 STACEY: no, no, not at parents evening then she asked us to come in
374 specially to go through it with me because we as parents had asked to see
375 our IEP's going on and all the sort of a thing

376 *LOUISE: so how did you feel about the profile*

377 STACEY: I thought it was a good, because I'm used to seeing tests having
378 worked in the area but I mean I hadn't seen that one

379 *LOUISE: it's particular to nurture groups*

380 STACEY: yes, so I did not know it or anything but a lot of it made sense to
381 ME I thought it was good to see the difference with the scores you know
382 some of it's not the same at home. So that's what they said therefore she
383 could go into nurture groups, not a lot about the history about it the number
384 of terms that children went in and the research that showed the development
385 and how they felt that she needed to go back and why it was a group as
386 opposed to one to one so the attachments wouldn't be individually but they
387 would be within that sort of group setting

388 *LOUISE: And Mrs Smith explained that to you on a one to one?*

389 STACEY: yes so I haven't actually heard anything about nurture groups I just
390 had a look on the internet

391 *LOUISE: mmm, so what did you find about the nurture group network?*

392 STACEY: I can't remember, there didn't seem to be a lot of information
393 about it from what I could find, I didn't find the network

394 *LOUISE: so did you feel that you had enough information at that point?*

395 STACEY: oh yes cos we wanted something to be done, it wasn't that

396 *LOUISE: and would you say your feelings were quite...(pause)*

397 STACEY: they were quite positive about it that, it was helpful

398 *LOUISE: and what was the next step then after you had been told about it?*

399 STACEY: then she started I think, fairly quickly

400 *LOUISE: when was that?*

Comment:
K's needs identified/justified by Boxhall Profile at a special meeting-went through with parents

Parent told about attachment with respect to group/other children (not adults)

Comment:
Group attachments emphasised rather than one to one with support assistants

Comment:
Gran looked on the internet to find info on the ng and wasn't told about the length of time in the intervention or the history (poss to change the attachment focus)

researching own information

Parents feelings prior to intervention: Positive feelings about nurture group

12

401 STACEY: I think probably she started it early on in year two I can't

402 remember what month it was

403 *LOUISE: Yeah*

404 STACEY: Is it four terms that they usually have are we talking half terms.

405 Yes so I think probably she started early on in year two. I think the only thing

406 that I was worried about was her coming out of class and what it would seem

407 to others like you know because she was already and I don't think she was

408 aware, but I was aware, there are actually very few girls in that class and

409 some of them are very bright and there's one who isn't he's difficult, well he's

410 not difficult but well he's not achieving and not as slower and but actually

411 they are not a good influence together, well they weren't at the time and not

412 at the time she was always getting told off not to pull hair and I think I was

413 worried about not really you know she didn't have friendships really in

414 school. You know she plays with children she still does play with other

415 children she's got a second cousin, my nieces little boy is there

416 (Kirsty enters the room, tape switched off)

417 STACEY: And in Mrs Smiths class there was, actually, I thought she was a

418 student but she's doing an NVQ on 3 she has a lovely, lovely manner, an

419 absolute natural and I think that she was brought in for her because I think

420 she should've had a support assistant, earlier really

421 *LOUISE: working with her on a one to one*

422 STACEY: definitely definitely I think they were sent they thought she was

423 catching up in the nurture group but now you know they said that now trying

424 to bring in the special needs teachers in from education you know to assess

425 her, because before they said that she had to work on her emotional stuff

426 but I don't totally agree with that well she DID, but you can't wait because of

427 how well her life is, its how her life is...

428 *LOUISE: so she started in the nurture group then in year two and **what was***

429 ***it like for you as a parent since Kirsty started into the nurture group**?*

430 STACEY: yes and I think she's made progress. I think she went in at

431 Christmas time and she was maturing she was more like herself she seems

432 to have spurts of when growth comes. I don't just mean physical growth I

433 mean emotional development erm sometimes it's just like three steps

434 forward and two steps backwards, I can't remember what month it was I

435 suppose it was roundabout just after Christmas

436 *LOUISE: so she went in part time did she, in the morning?*

Themes constructed

Parents concerns:
- Being withdrawn from class
- Friendships in school generally

Comment:
Gran worried about K coming out of class, being 'withdrawn' and friendships generally how this was managed

Perception about one to one support within class

Comment:
Perceived that K should have had 1-1 support earlier on

Concerns about outcome o intervention:
emotional issues were addressed but not learning

Comment:
Gran's perception that K's emotional issues were addressed but not the learning difficulties

Outcome of intervention:
gradual progress made- emotional development

Comment:
Emotional development progressing, associated that with ng, K maturing

437   STACEY: usually in the morning there is nobody younger than her there is
438   nobody from year one as it was then

439   *LOUISE: does she talk much about it*

440   STACEY: she is very positive about nurture groups and she'll say oh I'm
441   going to the nurture group and she would look forward to going into the
442   nurture group. Friday she doesn't go and I think that is the only day that she
443   doesn't go in think its most mornings and one afternoon and she is REALLY
444   a positive about nurture group and the home corner. Yeah so she'd talk
445   about that.

446   (Kirsty enters room, chats about what she's made then leaves room)

447   *LOUISE: so we talked about Kirsty being positive very positive about*
448   *nurture groups. I think you said its some steps forward and some steps*
449   *back. It's not always straightforward*

450   STACEY: No it's not always straight forwards but she clearly has developed
451   I mean I think that she's more, just more of her age really

452   *LOUISE: yeah specifically things that improved?*

453   STACEY: I'm just trying to remember, well her speech had improved. She
454   was more with other children I think (yeah) she began to think that she was
455   more related to other children

456   *LOUISE: in the group, or in her class?*

457   STACEY: I'm not sure if it carried over to outside well possibly in the
458   summer, perhaps it did, because obviously I notice when I take her into
459   school, there is more connection between her and the other children, you
460   know the girls which she's really pleased to see

461   *LOUISE: the girls in the nurture group?*

462   STACEY: no the girls in her class, the bright, there's a couple I'm thinking
463   that's nice, that looks like a normal relationship,

464   *LOUISE: a friendship?*

465   STACEY: cos I mean I thought that she was isolated before

466   *LOUISE: yeah and what do you attribute that to .. what improvements...*

467   STACEY: erm well possibly confidence and that fact that she's able to make
468   more connections, she speaks more clearly, 'cos it's a give and take. She'
469   played a lot with an older girl in the nurture group which wasn't a very
470   positive thing 'cos she wrote on her arms a few times with this indelible pen.

Childs feelings about group
Very positive, enjoys

Comment:
K very positive about the ng and liked the home corner (able to re-vist early development?)

Improvements noticed:
- speech
- Interaction and connection with other children in class
- Self-confidence

Comment:
K's speech improved and ability to relate to other children

Comment:
K relates better to girls in her class

Comment:
Gran worried about K being isolated, speaks more clearly now and so can integrate and socialise better

negatives in group:
relationships with one child

14

		Themes constructed

471　They played chase but what Kirsty would do was when it was her place to
472　chase she couldn't, she didn't take turns

> **Comment:**
> Some relationships within the ng not positive

473　*LOUISE: no she didn't have the strategies to know how to...*

474　STACEY: She didn't have the strategies for a give and take in a normal
475　relationship, it was quite striking. I know it's a simple thing but its important

> **Comment:**
> K needed to develop strategies for give and take in social relationship (within child or due to early environment its not clear or possible to say

476　*LOUISE: yes its important isn't it*

477　STACEY: but she loved being chased but you know she couldn't do it back

No reciprocity in a relationship

478　*LOUISE: so she started to do things like that*

479　STACEY: Yes the simple things, the more social things. I think its just in her
480　own maturity you know of her, how she is with us, more settled and likes to
481　play by herself a bit, more appropriately

482　*LOUISE: Mmm*

Able to re-visit early stages of development,

483　STACEY: She loves her dollies and I mean she was very much in the home
484　corner a LOT in the nurture room, playing mummies and daddies and dollies
485　and all that so she had that in nurture group. And she loves her music here,
486　and we did a lot of playing on the stage

> **Comment:**
> Able to re-visit early development and pay in the ng, eg in the home corner not possible in the year 2 classroom

487　(Kirsty enters room, tape is switched off)

488　*LOUISE: so you were talking about how she had improved and made*
489　*progress in social skills really in playing with other children. How about the*
490　*relationships with staff and adults...*

491　STACEY:It was fine in the nurture room but it didn't always transfer out

> **Comment:**
> K didn't always appear to apply what she'd learned in the nurture group e.g. speaking in circle time and talking generally within whole class

492　*LOUISE: that's quite interesting*

493　STACEY: her in particular her speech at circle time

494　*LOUISE: yeah, so for example can you tell me about a situation in the class*
495　*that would be different to...*

Skills not always transferred out into class setting

496　STACEY: circle time, sharing information yeah and she'd still struggle.
497　She'd do it more but even so that had to be encouraged at carpet time

498　*LOUISE: so was there any improvement in class, not just speaking out but*

Concentration & attention improved but still resistant

499　STACEY: her attention a bit more and it is a little bit more concentration and
500　individual work time, but she's still resistant

> **Comment:**
> Attention is improved and concentration a little but gran feels K is still resistant

501　*LOUISE:yeah so some things transferred over, you feel some things*

502　(Kirsty enters the room)
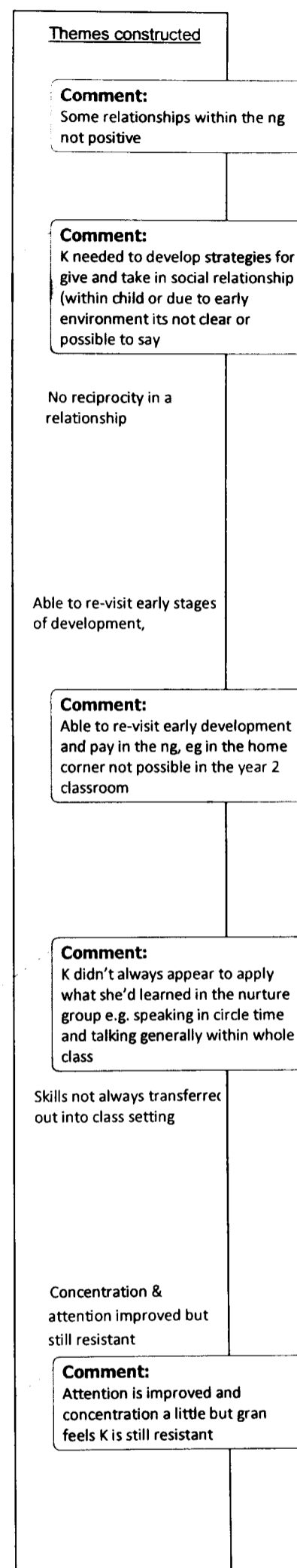
503   STACEY: Kirsty do you think that you could please just go and play by
504   yourself 'cos every time you come in, you know we have to stop and start
505   again, please...you don't need to sit there to eat your grapes do you? What
506   would you like to do? Would it help if I put the high school musical on and
507   you watched that?

508   (Tape turned off until Kirsty left the room)

509   *LOUISE:we were talking about her situation at school*

510   STACEY: and although she would talk in circle time now she still has to be
511   encouraged, she's still quiet so they'd talk about a time to Mrs Smith and it
512   didn't transfer back into school, in the circle time then and so we'd talk about
513   circle time and it would be 'I don't want to' but you see the one who's just
514   gone out, with the degree, Lisa talked non stop at home. She came to me
515   when she was two, they both came together and she would not speak in
516   school and I remember when she was about five-ish you know what have
517   you been doing at school afterwards and I'd say she'd never talk about it and
518   she'd say 'what has it got to do with them' (both laugh) and honestly and
519   we'd talk about it now and she'd say 'what's it got to do with them?' and
520   they'd say she's quiet you know at home and she's NOT quiet at home and
521   as a little one, she's just the same and she would hate us to say that, but
522   you know it's a real characteristic

523   *LOUISE: yeah, mmm*

524   STACEY:and her resistance in that way shows and she's still not confident
525   and what Mrs Smith would say about her, she can't work, she's not
526   motivated and she can't appear to be bothered you know, so she still needs
527   a huge amount of individual stay on task

528   *LOUISE: to try to encourage and motivate her*

529   STACEY: you know I think she's better with the teachers in nurture group as
530   well. She's very comfortable in nurture group

531   *LOUISE:I suppose it's part of the aim isn't it to make them think like that*

532   STACEY:Yes it does exactly, it makes them think they're more confident and
533   open and things she's better at but its not directly transferred

534   LOUISE: *and there may be a time issue, most interventions are not...*

535   STACEY: Non, no, so I mean the thing that it's about whatever she needs

536   LOUISE: *Yeah, yeah so we've talked about some of the situations like circle*
537   *time at school where she's not really transferred the skills and there's some*

Themes constructed

Importance of context:
Not quiet at home

Comment:
Other sister of K's mum talked a lot at home but not at school, K still resistant at school

Comment:
K's teacher describes her as not confident or motivated

Positive aspect:
comfortable with teachers in group

Comment:
Ng environment enabled K to feel comfortable with adult interaction, open and confident but she doesn't feel that it is directly transferred

still not motivated
not directly transferred

538 *situations where she has and areas that you know she clearly needs more*

539 *work on you know like her motivation (yeah) and things like that. So the*

540 *next part is thinking about erm the involvement that you've had with*

541 *the nurture group and how you've felt that you've been involved or not*

542 *or in what sort of ways...*

543 STACEY: well basically we can go in at any time so I suppose I think to be

544 honest, that it would be nice if someone could do a little leaflet about what its

545 all about? and some of the research, you know what I mean 'cos I think that

546 that would be really nice, something fairly basic actually 'cos I've not heard

547 about it and as I say we looked into it on the internet about it but that's fairly

548 limited I suppose. So I think that that would be quite nice thing 'cos we were

549 involved with it, I mean then if it was fed back

550 *LOUISE: you're involved with it at the point when Mrs Crawshaw spoke to*

551 *you*

552 STACEY:yes, and then I think probably half way through and I said you

553 know how's it going, you know January time or something? and then at the

554 end of school term we were thinking about it and Mrs Smith came in and I

555 met her, I think Roy met her and they said they wanted us to go in. I think

556 I've been in nurture group once, I mean I could have gone in a lot more if I'd

557 had the time but I mean actually its picked the worst time for work for me its

558 been really busy so I did go in one morning. I was going to go in one

559 morning and I did go in one other morning so they were very encouraging of
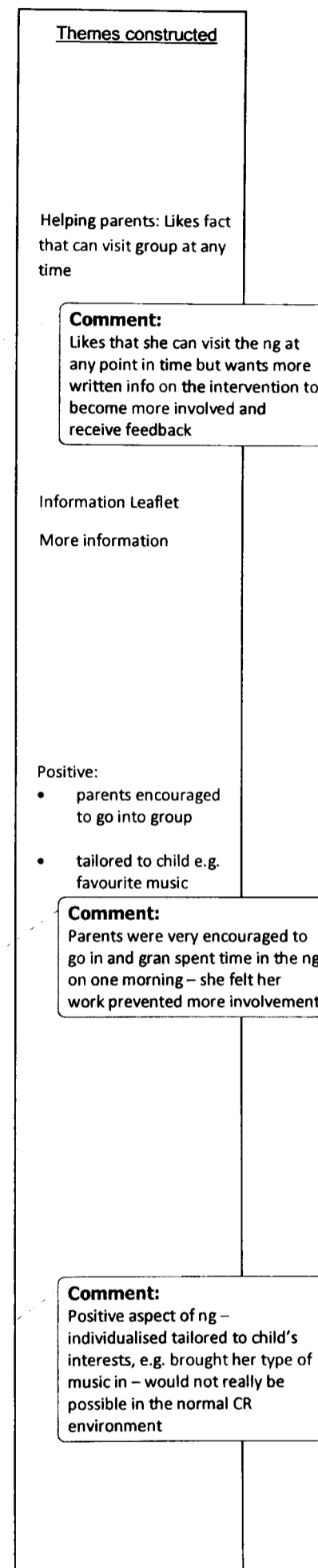
560 parents to be in.

561 *LOUISE: yeah, you could just choose when you went in and it was ok*

562 STACEY: oh yeah it was fine and it was very open the room and everything

563 but as I say I could have come in more and it did encourage 'cos we said

564 she loves music I mean the heavy rock music, she plays the guitar, I mean

565 we're into the Stones I suppose (laughs) and she loves it, and well we

566 haven't pushed that on her that's just what she has chosen so high school

567 musical age-ish but no she loves music and she likes really heavy stuff and

568 there's something came on the radio and she's a RIGHT head banger, she

569 loves it, so we taped, we said we'd bring some of her music in

570 *LOUISE: so they specifically encouraged her to bring in something from*

571 *home?*

572 *STACEY:* they did, something she liked and they had music on quite a bit so

573 *LOUISE: and what else did you do there then she said something about*

574 *making breakfast*

17

Themes constructed

Helping parents: Likes fact that can visit group at any time

Comment:
Likes that she can visit the ng at any point in time but wants more written info on the intervention to become more involved and receive feedback

Information Leaflet

More information

Positive:
- parents encouraged to go into group
- tailored to child e.g. favourite music

Comment:
Parents were very encouraged to go in and gran spent time in the ng on one morning – she felt her work prevented more involvement

Comment:
Positive aspect of ng – individualised tailored to child's interests, e.g. brought her type of music in – would not really be possible in the normal CR environment

575 STACEY: I think they said for snack time and I stayed for snack time so its
576 nice to see and circle time so I took part in the circle. I mean I've done that at
577 work so we used to do it years ago around preparation for children and
578 young people before they were fostered so we did a LOT of floor work with
579 kids and emotional stuff so that for me I mean if you might feel really
580 uncomfortable about it but it was REALLY nice to be doing that really and it
581 was quite nice to see the teachers doing it. I suppose the only thing that I did
582 have concerns about was the other two, not Mrs Smith, the nurture group
583 assistant and Mrs Haigh who is actually the mother to this girl so that's the
584 ONLY thing that I felt a bit difficult about

585 *LOUISE: Yeah*

586 STACEY: I mean I didn't talk to them about it because I thought I'd just let it
587 pass (unintelligible), you know that seemed a bit close you know what I
588 mean, I'm not sure about that really 'cos if I had an issue about that child I
589 think that would have been a bit difficult. I mean I think that they were aware
590 of it 'cos we'd spoken to the teacher before she went into nurture group. I
591 think that it was acknowledged that that wasn't a great relationship between
592 the two of them. Not a helpful relationship I suppose.

593 *LOUISE: between Kirsty and the other child?*

594 STACEY: no no they are the same age and in the same class

595 *LOUISE: Oh I see, right*

596 STACEY: that's a little girl in class where supposedly they've both got
597 difficulties

598 *LOUISE: Oh that's the one you mentioned earlier?*

599 STACEY: Yeah she's called Norah, well actually they are both called Norah,
600 but the older one, I think, I don't know what year she'd be in, five I think.

601 *LOUISE: so your concern was...(pause)*

602 STACEY: so I just thought there was a little bit of an issue about erm,
603 clearly she knew more about Kirsty than she needed to do you know
604 because her daughter was in the same class and there had been a few
605 issues between them. That wouldn't have felt so comfortable knowing that
606 she was so close to Kirsty as a teaching assistant

607 *LOUISE: mmm, so you been invited in at any point and is there any other*
608 *things that you've done or ways that you've been involved...*

609 STACEY: No, like what?

18

Themes constructed

Parent enjoyed joining in circle time with staff and children

Comment:
Gran enjoyed opportunity to do circle time in the ng and seeing the teachers doing it with the chn

incorporated it into home life

relationship with child in the group

Comment:
Difficult relationship with one of the other girls in the ng whose parent was an assistant in the ng- conflict of interests

610 *LOUISE: any informal meetings with the teacher, I suppose did she go to*
611 *after school club (unintelligible)*

612 STACEY: No I mean I think one of the things when we went for meeting the
613 teacher at the first parents meeting, I suppose it'd be the first term wouldn't it
614 erm it didn't seem, she knew how she was in class but she didn't know how
615 she was in the nurture group. And I suppose, I think the thing for me is what,
616 how much cross over there is going on and should we not have seen both
617 teachers on the parents evening that would have been better really 'cos I
618 wasn't sure you know that Mrs Whitehead was you know, there's the class
619 and then there is the nurture group and she couldn't tell us, she would say
620 well I'm not sure how she is in nurture group which didn't seem quite knitted
621 together enough really

622 *LOUISE: yes, that's interesting, mmm (pause) So have you experienced*
623 *any other agencies working with the nurture group?*

624 STACEY: No I just know that the Ed Psych goes into school and talks to
625 them about it on a termly basis. I don't know who else goes in. Does
626 anybody else go in? I think they said somebody had been in recently...

627 *LOUISE: You've mentioned a little bit about this but **is there any other***
628 ***ways in which you could have been involved or better supported....you***
629 *mentioned about the teachers not crossing over more that was one thing.*

630 STACEY: Yeah that one, I just think that that was down to me I don't feel
631 UNSUPPORTED-if I'd have wanted to find something you know then. I think
632 it was, they were encouraging to go in...

633 *LOUISE: Yeah, so the opportunities were there?*

634 STACEY: oh the opportunities were there, yes

635 *LOUISE: and you mentioned about a leaflet, I mean for you personally that*
636 *would have been useful...*

637 STACEY: Yes I do and I mean I went on the internet and I suppose I mean
638 I'm more familiar with because of work, about the contexts of working with
639 children with emotional development, but I think for other parents and for ME
640 as well, 'cos I hadn't heard about it. It'd be nice to have something about
641 what nurture groups are in writing 'cos Roy wasn't there. He hadn't seen the
642 Boxhall profile and I didn't get a copy to start with, you know what I mean, so
643 I think that that's important

644 *LOUISE:yeah*

645 STACEY: 'cos we couldn't both be there at that sort of time

Themes constructed

Comment:
Issue of teacher not knowing what was going on in the ng and it didn't seem knitted together-lack of interest, knowledge from class teacher

Negative:
- Lack of cross over between teacher and ng teacher
- Relationship with clas. teacher and ng staff
- Ct lack of interest and knowledge about ng
- Not together at parents evening

Helpful to parents:
Opportunities to participate

Ways to support parents:
Information in writing

Comment:
Gran would have appreciated written info about the nurture group, not having to go on the internet – the leaflet – and a copy of the Boxhall Profile, didn't get one

646   *LOUISE: at the meeting with the SENCO initially*

647   STACEY: yeah

648   *LOUISE: did you have any further progress meetings other than that?*

649   STACEY: yeah oh yeah we've had one at the end of last summer with the
650   SENCO and the teacher and the teacher from the nurture group and in fact
651   yeah the assistant came in as well and that was very productive *(yeah)*. So
652   we went through the Boxhall and they were both there *(yeah)* and we
653   compared the two

654   *LOUISE: so what is your concept of nurturing then in terms of the nurture*
655   *role I mean, what do you understand by it having looked on the internet?*

656   STACEY: erm well it's about who may need to erm...areas of their life
657   where they are not well developed well nurturing or for her it was forming
658   close relationships but not necessarily with one person cos they weren't
659   encouraging that one to one with the teacher, it was more of a group
660   situation that is why it was a group erm in terms of developing confidence or
661   going back through certain aspects of their lives I suppose- stages I should
662   say, *(developmental)* yes developmental stages, that was for HER. I
663   suppose for other children who have behavioural problems and they are
664   given an opportunity to talk about that and work with them in that sort of way
665   *(mmm)*. I mean when I was in the group and there was a little boy and he
666   wanted he had clearly not had not had a good time and she picked up on
667   that and said well do you want to talk to me about it and clearly she gave
668   him space to do that obviously away from everybody else *(yeah)* I suppose
669   that's my concept of it really

670   *LOUISE: yeah so they have got the space and time to talk to an adult*

671   STACEY: yeah and work on particular bits of whatever for that child which
672   hopefully transfers and then that enables them to pick up on the learning

673   *LOUISE: (interrupts) in class?*

674   STACEY: yes with her learning in class that's right

675   *LOUISE: we talked about the IEP a while ago have you seen any for Kirsty*
676   *and the targets in the nurture group. Have you got anything written down*
677   *about those*

678   STACEY: not on the targets in the nurture group I suppose only, well it's
679   encouraging the educational nature of tasks I mean how many words and
680   things like that at school I mean it's the same from the nurture group through
681   to the class I suppose it's what they are encouraging her to do. I mean if we

information given to
parent:

- assessment
- Meeting with ct,
  senco and nurture
  group teacher helpful

Comment:
Productive to have a meeting
comparing the two Boxhall Profiles
and SENCO + class teacher + ng
assistant in the meeting

- Concept of group
  nurturing
- Developing close
  relationships within
  group
- Space and individual
  attention
- Tailored to individual
  child's need

Comment:
Ng different things to differet
children – behaviour problems
and like K with developing
confidence and re doing early
developmental steps perhaps
missed

Comment:
Tailored to individual child,
depending on their need with the
outcome of improving their
learning

682 said she'd come on in her reading and word recognition, numbers seem to

683 be a problem so we can't get that feedback and then they'd also say oh yes

684 that's what we'd noticed in that nurture group out how they were going to

685 concentrate in class so there was that feedback I'm not saying there wasn't

686 *LOUISE: was that at a meeting?*

687 STACEY: yes it was the second meeting towards Christmas I think

688 *LOUISE: that leads quite nicely on to one of the other questions I think,*

689 *which were your expectations of the nurture group going right back when it*

690 *was first talked about with Mrs.Crawshaw (SENCO).* **what did you expect**

691 **from the intervention and have your expectations being sort of**

692 **realized? (pause) I know it's not quite finished yet but...**

693 STACEY: well I suppose the expectation was in terms of helping her to get

694 more ready for work, to facilitate, to give her the things she needed to help

695 her access, such as building up her confidence you know, closer safe

696 relationships if she meant it to play out I suppose time in the home tent you

697 know if she had the time to do that in the nurture group. So that would

698 obviously help build her confidence and help her go through the

699 developmental stages so she was more able to access her education

700 *(mmm)* and formulate relationships with the group then you know within the

701 nurture group which hopefully would transfer out

702 *LOUISE: mmm so those were your expectations and how do you feel ?*

703 STACEY: I think it's helped a lot but I do think it needs now to be

704 supplemented with input into her education in the classroom

705 *LOUISE: in a one to one?*

706 STACEY: yes in a one to one I know I've been through it with her Ruby her

707 mum. It was when she was nine, it wasn't until she went, I suppose it was

708 the middle school system then and last year was good but people kept

709 saying over should catch up and oh she's behind and I said no she's got

710 more specific needs than that and she was getting lost and that's what I

711 think. We need a better understanding I think and 'cos people thought she's

712 immature and that's what the first two years of school and she's had all this

713 upset and she's immature and we were saying YES SHE IS but actually we

714 think we are not sure what level of ability, innate ability, I know that's not set,

715 I'm not saying that it is but there is still a level of ability and that needs to be

716 understood I think they were more optimistic than we were about that

717 *LOUISE: with Kirsty?*

Themes constructed (margin notes):

Feedback given

Comment:
Expectations = K to build confidence, go through developmental stages and develop social interaction and relationships which would transfer out

Expectations of nurture group:
- To build confidence
- Go through developmental stages
- Formulate relationships that transfer out to class

Comment:
Thinks the ng can only do so much and now learning needs in the CR need to be addressed

Mixed feelings:
Immaturity recognised but not learning issues, not investigated enough (innate ability)

Comment:
K's immaturity recognised but gran questioned how much she was able to learn – learning difficulty not targeted enough? Felt she might not catch up so easily, e.g memory difficulties

718   STACEY: yeah I think that they were more optimistic and actually that given
719   time she'll catch up and she'll make progress but I think she'll make progress
720   but I'm not sure that she'll catch up. But they did say actually they did say
721   and I was quite surprised I mean she's not with the least ability in the class is
722   children who are much slower than she is erm (pause)

723   *LOUISE: so how do you feel about that then?*

724   STACEY: well I was quite surprised really which I suppose indicates how
725   much of IS it her personality and the emotional side of it but I think she's
726   complex *(mmm)* because we've all said she seems to have got something
727   and then it's gone again. Her memory is not there you know she doesn't
728   know memorize things or things stick with her, now whether that's a problem
729   that with her development or whether its emotional I don't know and I think
730   that's why she needs to be seen really *(mmm)* I mean we've both been up to
731   school I mean in terms of that

732   *LOUISE: and how do you manage to get your opinions across (pause)*

733   STACEY: and the thing is I suppose for us we didn't want to push her too
734   much because she's happy, you know she's happy to go she's never
735   reluctant to go into school, so although she doesn't talk in school we've
736   never had one minutes problem about her going to school, never. She's
737   positive about school so you want to keep that going (yeah) yeah you don't
738   want too much pressure 'cos it wouldn't you know what I mean, so that's
739   what we are most bothered about, you know we want to keep her on an
740   even keel and we're quite tough with her sometimes you know doing her
741   homework on a Saturday because she can get out of it if she could
742   sometimes and we don't want to. I mean we do extra things with her I don't
743   know whether the expectations are high but they say do something every
744   day with her while she's at kids club

745   *LOUISE: the school have said that?*

746   STACEY: yes yes they all get the words and for some children perhaps it's
747   easy but it is not for her and we rarely sit down at night time into it because
748   she's tired. When we'll do it is when she goes to school in the morning and
749   she's much more receptive and she enjoys doing it now she'll write or she'll
750   do her words but sometimes (pause) she's not careful enough with her
751   copying or should be fairly resistant to do anything. We do them on a
752   Saturday morning and Roy will sit with her. But sometimes you've got to be
753   quite tough with her we are going to do this and yes you can do it *(yeah)* and
754   even if she gets her books because she gets stickers for them, it doesn't

Parents beliefs / values that she'll make progress

Comment:
K is happy to go into school, she doesn't want to push her or over pressure her

Pressure from parents, get balance right

Comment:
Gran and husband do homework with her and encourage but try to get the tough-lenient balance right with her

22

755 always pass over to the next time *(yeah)* I mean sometimes it does we
756 would during one on holiday and she was quite good

757 *LOUISE: so the way that you work with her and think about her and the*
758 *stickers and the rest of it presumably you've always been like that with her,*
759 *you've always had that sort of approach? Is there anything that you do*
760 *differently or anything that you've said to them or...*

761 STACEY: (interrupts) with the nurture group?

762 *LOUISE: anything that you said to them*

763 STACEY: can't think of anything (pause) no, not with the nurture group

764 *LOUISE: is it mainly with the music that you took in?*

765 STACEY: well yes the music, well and we talked to them about what she's
766 like at home and that she's not as quiet and what she likes doing and...

767 *LOUISE: was that before she went into the nurture group or as part of...*

768 STACEY: what they asked me about? Oh I can't remember

769 *LOUISE: is its ongoing?*

770 STACEY: its ongoing I suppose and it's also about what we talked to them
771 about before she went in to nurture group to help with her feeling confident
772 about speaking you know we've had she went through a phase when she
773 was in Oak class or maybe it was in the first year anyway it started when she
774 would play schools and do the register and say 'yes miss' you know what I
775 mean *(mmm)* yeah with the microphone to shout out to encourage the sort of
776 noisiness not that they can't be noisy at home but you know to encourage
777 the shouting out...

778 *LOUISE: Yeah*

779 STACEY: so what I learned from nurture group? What have they passed
780 on? I don't know. I can't think of anything. We do circle time that's what we
781 do we do circle time at home. Yeah so she'll start 'I want to do circle time'
782 and we'll do it between us, me, Roy and her and that's a good thing, yes so
783 she's brought that into her

784 *LOUISE: yes so she's happy to do that in a small group but is not*
785 *particularly happening in the big class?*

786 STACEY: no no

787 *LOUISE: mmm*

23

Themes constructed

Parent's encouragement at home, with homework

Parent gave input to staff before going into the group

Comment:
Talked to the ng staff before K went in to help her feel more confident about speaking - gave their input

Application of nurture techniques/principles

- Circle time

Comment:
Ng has given them an idea to do circle time at home and gran experienced this directly in the ng

788 STACEY: Mrs White said she'd had to be quite firm with her one time and I
789 said no its fine because she will, it sounds awful because it is getting the
790 balance you know you want to be oppressive to her but at times you do have
791 to be quite tough with her, you know, no we ARE going to do that and we
792 DO want you to do it and you CAN do it

793 *LOUISE: to sort of force her into it?*

794 STACEY: Otherwise she'd..

795 *LOUISE: she'd avoid it?*

796 STACEY: absolutely avoid it

797 *LOUISE: is there anything else that you feel is important that you*
798 *haven't mentioned or that you want to tell me about to do with anything*
799 *of what we've been talking about?*

800 STACEY: I don't think so. I hope I think she needs to continue, as I say one
801 of the issues that I was concerned about other children perceive her coming
802 out of class but there's another child whose I've done it if he's in as often or
803 not but that doesn't seem to have been an issue. 'Cos I was worried. But
804 that is always an issue isn't it about pulling other children out but that doesn't
805 seem to be an issue.

806 *LOUISE: so there's another child in her class who goes to nurture group?*

807 STACEY: yes I don't know if he goes for the same amount of time oh there is
808 two of them, at least two. I'm just trying to think of who is in nurture group...

809 *LOUISE: so you thought that might be an issue but it's not really?*

810 STACEY: three of them, three boys and she's quite friendly with one of
811 them. I mean and they did notice this bit of over lovely dovey stuff between
812 them. I mean nothing, not touching them or anything like that but nurture
813 group took a line that they weren't allowed in the tent together they face up
814 to what was appropriate and you know they didn't let things go far so I think
815 that helped, there was quite a few other children coming out

816 *LOUISE: yeah*

817 STACEY: but then that's not been an issue the only thing was she's missed
818 out on not doing games but then that wasn't big thing I mean the other thing
819 that it is trying to develop skills in other areas. She didn't want to go
820 swimming she didn't like it but she's going to gymnastics. She enjoys
821 gymnastics and she is actually got quite good at, she's on the school

Comment:
Important to get the balance right with tough and telling K that she will do it and can do it so she doesn't avoid trying things

(Leading question)

'pulling' for withdrawal

Concern:withdrawal

Concern about being pulled out of her class and missing other lessons, but rationalised

Comment:
Gran ok with K missing some things in the CR as they weren't as important to K's development

24

822 climbing frame and she's quite a child that I mean hanging up and down and
823 that has developed her confidence

824 *LOUISE: it's good to have things like that...*

825 STACEY: so it's developed inner strengths

826 *LOUISE: so you were hoping that it's going to carry on as it is now within*
827 *nurture group?*

828 STACEY: yes but I do think as well that the nurture group can do it all 'cos I
829 don't think its just that but I DO think that she needs assessments and we
830 need that to know what, how best to direct her really

Assessment for learning

Comment:
Ng can't do it all perception that
assessment of learning is required
so she can be directed
appropriately

831 *LOUISE: so your hopes then for the future with Kirsty?*

832 STACEY: in what sort of way? Well I hope she goes to nurture group I hope
833 she gets some more help in class (mmm). I think that's the biggest thing for
834 me is that she gets her social relationships and friendship networks she can
835 survive probably you know. I'm sure she'll get there to do some basic

Importance of social
networks

836 reading and numbers but if you don't sort your social skills out there it
837 doesn't really matter you know what to mean that will be my experience of
838 Ruby as she has struggled emotionally. The school that she went to did a
839 wonderful job, they were brilliant 'cos they took a very different approach to
840 special-education, they didn't pull her out but actually they managed it

Comment:
Wants K to sort out her social
skills, doesn't want her to struggle
emotionally (as her mum did) and
managing the outside world

841 brilliantly. Never once feeling that she was out of class- they took a very
842 strong line about this. They were fabulous they really were they got her

Pull her out (mother)

843 through her GCSE's, I didn't even think she'd sit them, but the fact is she got
844 six GCSE's and socially she got friendships but she still struggled with how
845 she managed the outside world and that's the thing that I'm more concerned
846 with Kirsty

847 *LOUISE: Yes, well thank-you very much I'll turn that off. That was very*
848 *interesting, thanks.*

849 Tape recorder switched off
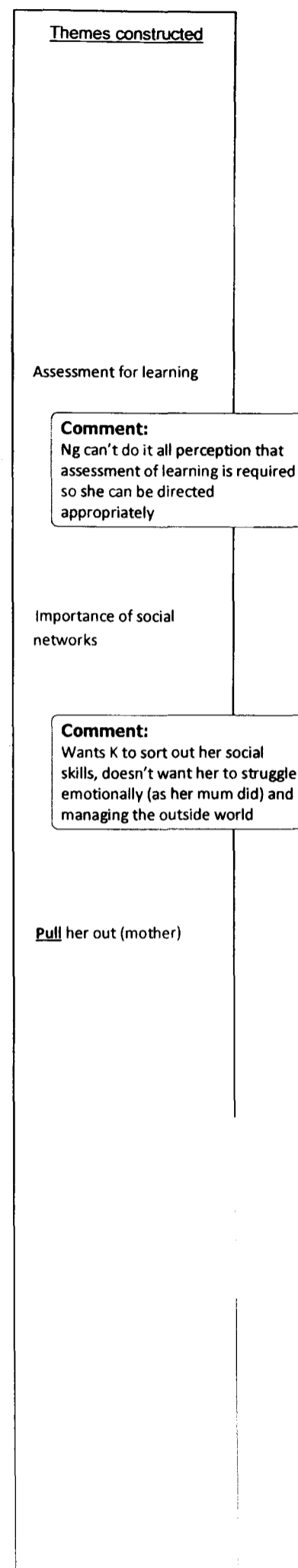
Appendix 10 Colour highlighted categories (Participant Two, Stacey)

CATEGORIES which formed the SUBORDINATE THEMES:

Attributions: within parent difficulties

Attributions: developmental/school difficulties

working with parents

Expectations

Holistic gains/outcomes

- Lack of early contact with parents
- Extended family relationships
- Parent with learning difficulties
- babyhood happy no difficulties
- Under stimulated as a baby (speech development)
- Social communication difficulties
- Parental separation early on
- Nurturing environment not provided
- Within parent speech difficulties
- Issue of neglect (early nurturing)
- Social communication difficulties as a child
- Attachment difficulties from own past (parent adopted)
- Unable to nurture
- Child taking after parent
- Lacking confidence, avoidance, poor
- Positive experiences of nursery
- Difficult to interact with others (social communication)
- Parents difficulties inherited by child
- Absent parent: separated parent:
- chaotic lifestyle, emotional upset
- Early development: over sensitivities
- Withdrawn, speech underdeveloped
- Inappropriate social behaviour, touching herself
- Readiness for school: behind in early development
- Social interactions an issue
- Problems in school early on
- Parents unhappy with school environment
- Large class sizes, poor class management
- Immature behaviour
- Lack of social speech in school context
- Information given to parents : Boxhall Profile
- Parent told about group attachment
- Researching own information on internet
- Positive feelings about nurture group
- Concerns at being withdrawn from class
- Concerns at friendships in school generally
- Perception about one to one support within class
- Concerns about outcome of intervention
- Emotional issues were addressed but not learning
- Gradual progress made in terms of emotional development

- Child's feelings very positive, enjoys aspects of it (home corner)
- Improvements noticed in speech
- Improved: Interaction/ connection with other children in class
- Negatives in group: relationships with one child
- Reciprocity in a relationship, play skills
- Able to re-visit early stages of development
- Skills not always transferred out into class setting
- Concentration & attention improved
- Importance of context: not quiet at home
- Motivation not always directly transferred
- Negative aspects: being 'pulled' out of class
- Positive aspects: comfortable with teachers in group
- Helping parents: likes fact that can visit group at any time
- Information Leaflet would be useful
- Not have to look up on internet
- Parents encouraged to go into group
- Tailored to child e.g. favourite music taken in
- Parent enjoyed joining in circle time with staff and children
- Directly transferred this and incorporated it into home life
- Relationship with one of the girls in the group
- Lack of cross over between teacher and nurture group teacher
- Relationship with class teacher and nurture group staff
- Class teacher's lack of interest and knowledge about nurture group
- Helpful to parents: opportunities to go into nurture group there
- Ways to support parents: information in writing, Information given
- Concept of group nurturing-developing close relationships within group
- Tailored to individual child's need
- Expectations of nurture group : to build confidence
- Go through developmental stages
- Formulate relationships within the group that transfer out to class
- Immaturity recognised but learning issues not investigated
- Pressure from parents, concerned to get balance right
- Parent's encouragement at home, with homework
- Parent gave input to staff before going into the group
- Application of nurture group techniques/principles : Circle time
- Concerns at intervention: withdrawal
- Concern about being pulled out of her class
- Belief that nurture group can't do it all

Polarisation of emergent themes Participant Two (Stacey)

positive	negative
- Improved concentration and attention - Improved social interaction with other children - Play skills improved	- Motivation not always applied in class - Problematic relationship with some other children in nurture group - Learning issues not always addressed
- Would miss some lessons (rationalised)	- Pulled from class
- Parent gave input in meeting with nurture group staff prior to intervention - Information given on Boxhall Profile, justify need for intervention	- Had to research own information on the internet - Information leaflet would have been useful

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Appendix 11 Table II: Abstraction leading to the development of Subordinate themes (Participant Two, Stacey)

Subordinate Themes	Page : Line	Key words from transcript
Early development		
▪ Immature, behind in early development ▪ Not ready for school ▪ Underdeveloped speech ▪ Parent unable to care for child-adopted by grandparent	8:229-30 10:317 4:96, 8:231 6:164 2:23, 3:61	Very behind other children She needed another 6 months really Struggled with social communication, a year behind There was a police investigation, she came to live with us, when the incident happened
Attributions of difficulties, blame/disclaim (nature)		
▪ Parent's own attachment issues ▪ Under stimulated, neglected as a baby ▪ Absent parent, separation, inexperience of nurturing by own parent ▪ Conditions (genetic) may have been inherited: social communication difficulties	6:185 3: 83, 4:119 5:123, 8:257 2:48,6:179, 7:198, 8:254, 4:92 7:192, 10:325, 11:358, 21:714	Attachment stuff from her own past Under-stimulated, visit from social services Split up, parents coming and going, needed a lot of support Mum has SEN herself, she couldn't Struggled...with social communication she's very like her mum slower in speech, wouldn't speak in class, didn't speak in circle time , Innate abilities
Attributions of difficulties (nurture)		
▪ Positive experiences of foundation ▪ Lack of individual attention at school, one to one support unavailable ▪ Concerns over class management ▪ Touching herself	7:219-221 11:350, 13:419 11:359, 11:349 10:308	Lovely small group nursery, Stimulation Not enough individual attention, should have had a support assistant earlier Large classes, wasn't enough attention, Touching herself, part of comfort
Expectations / Perceptions		
▪ confidence ▪ developmental stages ▪ formulate relationships ▪ Able to re-visit early stages of development ▪ Individual attention could be given	21:695 22:719 21:695/700 15:484, 20:662 20:671	Building up her confidence Catch up and make progress Closer safe relationships , formulate Plays mummies and daddies and dollies, developmental stages Work on particular bits ...hopefully transfers
Uncertainties		
▪ Would miss some lessons ▪ Class withdrawal ▪ Learning issues not investigated fully, nurture group can't do it all	13:406, 24:804 24:804 13:426	Doesn't seem to be an issue, 'pulling' other children out Not knitted together enough really Work on emotional stuff don't agree
Gains made: social and emotional		
▪ Child enjoyed experience (play) ▪ Emotional ▪ Speech improved ▪ Tailored to child's needs (e.g. favourite music played) ▪ Play skills improved	14:444 13:433 14:468, 14:453 15:485, 17:572 15:481,15:481	Really positive about nurture group I mean emotional development Speaks more clearly, her speech had improved She loves her music here, they had her music on quite a bit Plays more appropriately by herself, the social things

Subordinate Themes	Page : Line	Key words from transcript
Gains made: engagement in learning • Improved concentration and attention • Motivation /confidence not always applied	15:499 16:524,16:533	A little bit more concentration, attention a bit more… but still resistant she's still not confident, not directly transferred
Gains: Relationships • Problematic relationship with some other children in nurture group, friendships • Improved social interaction with other children • Relationship with girls • Good relationships with (adults) • Nurturing concept: concept of group nurturing	13:413,14:470, 18:592 15:474, 14:459 14:455 16:529 20:658	Didn't have friendships, wasn't a positive thing, not a helpful relationship Cos I thought she was isolated before, speech has improved, connection More related to other children better with the teachers forming close relationships
Consultation • Information given on Boxhall Profile, justify need for intervention • Parent gave input in meeting with nurture group staff • Aims of intervention discussed (group attachment) •	11:366 12:374, 20:652 23:770 12:384, 387	Went through Boxhall profile specially to go through it went through the Boxhall , talked to them before she went into nurture group Research, attachments wouldn't be individually... within a group setting
Participation • Encouraged to spend time in nurture group • Enjoyed participating in circle time • Had to research own information on the internet • Information leaflet would have been useful	17:555, 17:560 18:575, 576 18:580 19:637 19:641, 17:544 about what its all about	they wanted us to go in, encouraging of parents to be in snack time, I took part in the circle really nice to see I went on the internet Nice to have some information about nurture groups in writing, a little leaflet
Influence on parent's behaviour • Did circle time activity, as a vehicle to encourage speech development • Homework: help given but noted balance between pressure and encouragement • Awareness of activities to aid development, baking and child centred play	23:780 22:747, 22:738 24:791 22:752, 22:742	...don't know...can't think...We do circle time at home Its not (easy) for her...an even keel and we're tough with her sometimes We ARE going to do it..And you CAN do it Roy will sit with her, we do extra things with her

Appendix 12 Table III: Integration leading to the development of Superordinate themes (Participant Two, Stacey)

SUPERORDINATE THEME CONSTRUCTED	SUBORDINATE THEMES		
A. NATURE VS NURTURE	Delayed development	Attribution of difficulties: Parental (blame/disclaim)	Attribution of difficulties: Adapting to school experiences
B. NARROW EXPECTATIONS	Expectations / perceptions	Uncertainties	
C. HOLISTIC GAINS	Social and emotional	Engagement in learning	Forming relationships
D. PARENTS' AS PARTNERS?	Consultation	Influence on behaviour	Participation

Appendix 13 TABLE IV: Abstraction leading to the development of subordinate themes (Participant One, Julie)

Subordinate Themes	Page: Line number	Key Words
Early development experiences ▪ No difficulties experienced at home, before starting school ▪ Child not 'naughty' or mischievous ▪ Re-framed in positive light - wanting to be important ▪ Took out of private nursery and nurtured by grandparents ▪ Controlling behaviour, uncooperative	2:24 1:13-14 1:9, 1:19 3:70-81 4:91-96	Not difficult at home, never had any problems at all Always had a mischievous streak Likes to be important, very prominent, a lovely child Looked after by grandparents, used to take him out, nurturing
Attribution of Child's problems ▪ Difficulties when child started private nursery school ▪ Staff didn't give enough attention, not encouraged to mix ▪ Child's behaviour attributed as poor treatment from staff ▪ Child not achieving homogeneity expected by staff (individual differences in behaviour)	2:34, 2:45, 4:91 3:58 3:57 3:55 16:497	Very hard going when started nursery, problems crop up They weren't doing anything, Leaving to his own devices Weren't happy with the way they were dealing with him The expectations are too much for different ages
Perception of Nurture Group ▪ Not heard of ▪ Room perceived as magical ▪ Look of the nurture room, personalised caring environment	6:180 6:183 7:197 7:195	No questions asked Mystical, magical room Lovely room Blown away
Impact – gains made ▪ Progress made in fitting into demands of CR life with lots of others ▪ Academic improvements demonstrated: reading, writing, numeracy, science ▪ More relaxed at school ▪ Less attention seeking behaviour ▪ Interest shown in learning generally ▪ Importance of social friendships in nurture group ▪ Now conforms to social norms ▪ Parent's realisation of what progress he's made	16:515 10:318;11:32 1;16:494-502 10:303;16:51 9 16:521 18:587 17:555-560 19:595 18:583	He doesn't like to be at the forefront of attention now Happy with progress He's really improved academic skills shine More relaxed now Sitting down and writing, showing an interest in learning He's made some friendships They can apply the skills they've been learning His work wasn't getting done and that's changed to some extent

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Subordinate Themes	Page: Line number	Key Words
Impact (negatives) ▪ Wanted faster impact: timescale, some disappointment apparent ▪ Staff lack of trust in parent's, disbelief and lack of faith in parent's knowledge ▪ Underpinned learning, basic skills (horse work)	17:526, 17:539 18:576 18:589	They think he needs more time, expecting a faster turnaround We knew that nobody would believe us Force them to sit down and write
Relationships (positive): ▪ Significance of relationship building by staff, importance of caring ▪ Importance of informal meetings, relationship of parents with staff ▪ Importance of positive relationship between class and nurture group teacher (p/t) ▪ Reciprocity of power important, knowledge is valued ▪ Equality of relationship, feeling there are no barriers, explained , flexibility ▪ Shown around nurture room personally by head teacher, reaction to room	6:168, 174 6:153 10:298 8:249 8:252 7:202, 7:206-213 7:195/215	She cared for him, nobody asked me before, she had a bond An important meeting, asked me questions, wanted my input Have a really good team relationship, its working now I've got some good dialogue going on, we'll have a little chat Really flexible with it, tell me what the aim was Personalised, I was completely blown away by it
Relationships (negative): ▪ Parent's own perception of child versus professionals ▪ Parent -staff in conflict, reciprocal mistrust of parent and staff (reception) ▪ Parent's feeling lack of power, failure, at mercy of professionals ▪ Having to prove self to staff (assume bad parenting) ▪ Perception of being criticised by professional ▪ SEN label confusing	5:128 4:111, 5:120 4:104, 5:128, 8:224 13:405 6:160, 8:237	So its as if they knew best I sort of, I trusted them...I was constantly at loggerheads as if they knew best, weren't listening, didn't get support, felt a failure at 1st,She 'did' a report on you have to prove you live in a NICE house...nice things she was still very critical She was still very critical of him How the SENCO is worded as well
Parent's participation (positive aspects) ▪ Being listened to, importance of two way nature of relationship ▪ Staff accepting of advice from parent ▪ Significant turning points: warm, informal meetings with nurture group staff ▪ Feeling valued, important, respected, not sidelined ▪ Inclusion in meeting, being listened to ▪ Opportunity for support network between parents	12:258 11:351 11:329, 15:488 11:342 20:629	Its a two way thing, its brilliant home-school diary, get to put my I might give her advice on what Have regular meetings, depends on the teacher, I could approach the nurture group teacher Its important...have to think about moving him. Have a get together, nice to known each other

Subordinate Themes	Page: Line number	Key Words
Parent's participation (negative aspects)		
▪ Equality of relationship, respect, being judged at meetings ▪ Power play between staff and parent, not being able to speak out ▪ Knowledge not valued ▪ Presence tokenised at meeting ▪ Perception of being dealt with, clinical, cold vs. warm nurturing ▪ Not part of the intervention, unattached, added on, not valued, tokenistic ▪ Nurture group staff not asked parent for input/ strategies used at home ▪ Useful to have presentation evening to inform parents at start	13:410 14:439 12:373 12:376, 13:395 12:386, 13:397, 14:427 15:460, 5:469 19:606 19:610-621	Its like me and them, at each end of the table Have more dialogue, not getting these papers out Formality of me being there Horrible room, language was stiff, maybe they legally have to ask I felt as though they weren't listening to me, not attached They haven't asked me what I use at home, not shown an interest Wish I had more information, a presentation evening would have been great
Influence on parent's behaviour		
▪ Praise in nurture group noted by parent's and passed onto home environment ▪ Improved communication with teachers at school (informal meetings after school, book) ▪ Positivity in nurture group environment ▪ Home-school relationship is important: passed on specific strategies for praise, diary ▪ Certificates and jigsaws for reward charts	9:261 9:259 9:262 9:275 11:331 9:284	He's got certificates now from school They've got a lot praise going on More positivity from us, a lot more than before Getting certificates Home-school book We have a jigsaw, he gets to bring it home, it could be trivial to us but he's getting praised for it

Appendix 14 TABLE V: Abstraction leading to the development of subordinate themes (Participant Three, Rachel)

Subordinate Themes	Page : Line Number	Key Words
Early development ▪ brought up by step dad since three ▪ sees dad weekends- physical activities ▪ argued constantly with brother at home	1:7 1:11 2:40	Step-dad Quad bike Constant arguing
Attribution of difficulties: Parental ▪ Parent separation: difference in attitudes to parenting and schoolwork	1:10-13	When he's at his dad's its all physical there and he's learning stuff here
Attributions: Difficulties experienced at school ▪ Problems with social interaction at school (not home) ▪ Uncooperative with teachers ▪ Lacked motivation, persistence ▪ Refused to do work at school and home ▪ Particularly found literacy / speaking and listening very difficult	2:56 2:74 3:102-3 3:97 2:58, 2:89	With me he seemed confident, then at school he kept to himself He argued with teachers Not going to try, pushed it away Homework sent home and he'd be like: I'm not doing it. At school he..he just kept himself to himself, he wouldn't read a book, Class work were a big problem, English
Expectations ▪ Will it work? ▪ Will child be playing all day? ▪ React back in normal class ▪ Child able to talk about his feelings calmly, rather than acting out his frustrations and anger **Academic skills** ▪ Motivation to learn improved ▪ Motivated to read and write	10:518 4:199, 10:519 10:521 5:227-8 8:414 9:421-3	Is it gonna work? Take him out of class to play all day, will do whatever he wants to do If you ask what's wrong he'll tell you rather than bottling it up, rather than getting angry, upset They are like : hiya Jason, before he doesn't speak to them, play together, play football, joins in He'd go and buy himself a book he seems to be all right with it, Oh let me write it, reads to himself
Gains made ▪ Whole child cared for, not just academic ▪ Sensitive re-integration back into class, given lifelines ▪ Talks to other children ▪ Improved social skills with other children e.g. playing football	9:467 11:564 11:578 5:239/244/ 247, 8:403	Jason has a bit of a cough, I thought I'd just let you know He can talk to Mrs Haigh Have a snack with class teacher Not speak before Socialising with other children

Themes	Page : Line Number	Key Words
Participation		
■ Decision for child to go in the nurture group was negotiated between parent and teachers ■ Flexibility of nurture group staff, sensitivity, availability for informal meetings ■ Parents involved in targets for child's behaviour ■ Inter-relationship between class teacher, nurture group staff, SENCO and parent critically important ■ Mum involved in nurture group activities: hand massage, snack-time, looking at child's work, valuing school activities ■ Parent consultation when child re-integrated back into mainstream class	4:176-180, 4:191 6:290-308, 7:322 10:495-498 11:576-582 7:332, 355-360 12:594, 601-603	Gave me information about what it did, benefits, come back let us know what you want to do, up to us You can come in see what we do, any questions, just ask, I speak to them, really flexible This is what his goals are, we'll see he can reach that goal Mr d goes into the room at snack-time, he can understand what goes on, he knows what he's doing Being involved, having snack, massage, he's like have you seen this mum, you can join in with everything, see what goes on Have consultation with class teacher then nurture group teacher, the nurture group teacher and SENCO too
Impact on parent		
■ Brought child into school earlier in morning to interact socially to play football with other boys ■ Learned to give child space and time ■ Used different approach to learning: broke homework up with fun activities & used different language with child at home ■ Opportunity for relationship between nurture group staff and parent ■ Participation in nurture group gave opportunity for child's work to be seen and valued by parent ■ Parent became involved with family seal at school	8:408 8:373, 368 6:302 7:355-360 6:307 12:631 - 637	He has chance to play in the playground with his friends before school, joins in a football game Rather than giving it him all at once, so I sort of break it up a bit for him, instead of saying you've GOT to read that Any questions just ask and I just used to go in and speak to them My mum is coming in today And I see them and ask how he's got on in the day Find out how other people do things, is mine the only child doing this!, yeah never thought about doing it that way

Appendix 15 TABLE VI: Abstraction leading to the development of subordinate themes (Participant Four, Anya)

Themes	Page : Line	Key Words
Early childhood		
▪ Mum working full-time	1:18	Only part-time, 2 days
▪ Not neglected as a child	2:35	Neglected, working
▪ Spent time with mum after changing work patterns	2:30	More time, family business
Difficulties at School		
▪ Problems started in reception class	2:37	A few problems
▪ Mum blamed herself	2:49	What if it is because?
▪ Questioned amount of time spent with Nita	2:36	No option, worked full-time
▪ Hurt other children	3:66	Pushing other children
▪ Destroying books	3:67	Ripped a book
▪ Pushing others	6:158	Mainly pushing and other things
▪ Hair playing	6:161	Busy with hair and stuff
▪ Hard to mix in class	6:182	Hard to mix in
▪ Easily distracted	6:183	distracted
Attribution of Problems (parent blame/disclaim)		
▪ Related to working/no time Family time together	4:101 3:78-90	Family together Pushed her around
▪ Cousin pushed Nita around, socially learned behaviour	4:115	Used to take her to alphabet zoo
▪ 'evidence' presented good parents: Opportunities to mix	4:99 5:124	Try to take her out a lot Sending letters to go to the church
▪ Evidence for 'good' parenting		
▪ No siblings	4:109; 9:263	An only child
Relationships		
▪ Informal chats	8:226	Had a quick chat with me
▪ Nurture group teacher actively approached parent if problems	8:228; 7:222-3	About homework, is everything ok? Some children need more attention
▪ Teacher reassured her about needing more attention	8:259	Knew what was happening in both classes
▪ Spoke to parent with class and nurture group teacher	10:316	Make sure thumbs up They need our support as well
▪ Important lots of little contact, close	16:535	Willing to give you that support
▪ Partnership: 2 way relationship	14:467	
▪ Home and school need to work together	16:527	
Influence on parents		
▪ More opportunities to mix socially	3:59-63	We have tea and everything
▪ Changed her schedule/more time	11:355	I'm finishing work
▪ Gave her boundaries	12:397	You need to say sorry
▪ Told her off	12:391	It's a bit early to tell them
▪ Parent change behaviour: Homework	13:432;13:435	I spend time on homework
Perceptions/uncertainties		
▪ Initially not happy, blamed herself	8:255	I thought: What am I doing wrong?
▪ Worried about what nurture group	8:253	I wasn't happy with it to be honest
Attention		
▪ Good ratio of staff to children	10:296; 14:499	Two teachers to eight children
▪ How to mix/talk with others	15:501	intervene with others

Themes	Page : Line	Key Words
Outcomes		
▪ Felt could ask staff about problems	7:212	Ask the teacher if there was a problem
▪ Didn't want child to go back in	14:475	Might not have to go back in there
Academic Gains		
▪ Writing	12:373; 13:440	She goes I must show you
▪ Easily distracted	12:379	She gets easily distracted
▪ Reading	13:407	With her reading and sharing
▪ Concentration still an issue	15:487	She finding it a bit hard to concentrate
Relationship with other children		
▪ No difficulties with niece now	9:278	They share a lot
▪ Sharing with other children	17:563	She even bought something for my
▪ Family time emphasised	3:60	niece
▪ Dad's relationship	5:150	We haven't been at home
▪ Talk to her one to one	5:151	Her dad knows, will chat to her
		Talk one to one
Participation		
▪ Information shared with parent: Certificates given	7:204	Certificates out
▪ Gold awards for reading and writing	7:206	Gold award for reading and writing
▪ Helped about homework	7:213	If there was a problem-talk to teacher
▪ Parent invited in to see puppet shows	7:214	Class assembly for whole school
▪ Help with how they worked with child	10:304	Watched in nurture room
▪ Class assembly in whole school		
▪ Told about nurture groups, negotiation, consent forms given	9:284 14:457	This is what we are thinking-what do you think?

Appendix 16 TABLE VII: Abstraction leading to the development of subordinate themes (Participant Five, Della)

Themes	Page : Line Number	Key Words
Development		
▪ 3 years behind, not walking or talking	3:55	Still far behind, put a lot of effort into
▪ Birth mum unable to manage	3:62	them, couldn't walk, couldn't talk
▪ Hard to manage at home	3:80	Other people needed help more
Attributions: Parental Difficulties		
▪ Children's social care involved	1:8	Social care, approved foster carer
▪ Absent parents	2:22	Alleged dad, nothing to do with him
▪ New family	2:40-4	With dad for 1st 14 months
Attributions: Difficulties at school		
▪ Bad language, bring out of shell	103	cos the language...quite bad
▪ Messing about	140	Can't mess about
Attention		
▪ Prior to going in perceived he needed more one to one attention	5:116	Needs one on one attention
▪ Smaller group than whole class	8:230	Child could handle a smaller group
Relationships	5:121	Meeting...said what do you think?
▪ negotiated with group staff		
▪ Change in routines	5:133	Change...does sometimes throw them
▪ Flexibility of staff, good communication with carer	5:136	One day a week at 1st then increase it
Perceptions	6:160	Like me to come in and sit with them and see the work they do
▪ Perception of nurture group: asked to come in to help out	8:228	Fantastic job, come on in leaps and bounds,
▪ Perception of nurture group: Excellent		
Relationships		
▪ Staff-child positive	9:255	Fantastic relationship with them
▪ Staff-child Positive, helped them to improve	11:312	Staff absolutely fantastic
▪ Staff-child relationship	11:321	Get on brilliant with the teachers, size
▪ Improved their relationship together	10:275	Will now watch telly together
▪ Less fighting, shouting & arguing	6:171	(brothers)Not bawling
Expectations of nurture group		
▪ None, gave it a go, hoped fighting would calm down	9:265-6	Hoped it would improve behaviour towards each other, get on a bit
Relationships with parents'		
▪ Close, speak informally to staff	6:147	See the people in the group a lot
▪ good communication with carer	5:136	Told about the routines
▪ difficult to manage - hyperactive, tried to control his behaviour	7:178	Make him stand in a corner...hates that...take television off him
Progress made		
▪ Inconsistent behaviour	6:174-176	One minute fine and next shouting, what
▪ Progress made: Calming down gradually, Progress slow	7:202; 11:322	might work today wont Head teacher said calming down
▪ Slow academic progress		
▪ Hopes for boys to interact more	8:217 9:242	coming on with writing, it is just slow They are trying to get them to interact
Influence on parent behaviour		
▪ tried to use sticker charts, inconsistent	10:296-301	Tried sticker charts and stars
▪ Time out strategy used	7:190	I do time out that is the only thing Paul
▪ Ambivalent	9:247-8	(brother) doesn't care

Appendix 17 TABLE VIII: Abstraction leading to the development of subordinate themes (participant Six , Christine)

Subordinate Themes	Page : Line Number	Key Words/Phrases
Early development		
▪ Mother figure absent	1:9	Calls me 'auntie'
▪ neglected as a young child	1:18	locked him in his room
▪ Disrupted speech (squealed)	2:41	squealed, didn't know how to talk
▪ Overactive	3:70	touching everything he could
▪ Lacked care with toys	3:73	doesn't look after things
▪ Early child development: no friends	4:79	doesn't like sharing with brother
Attributions: Parental difficulties	2:45	didn't talk to him, left own devices
▪ Neglected, not stimulated	3:51	tried everything, got into a routine
▪ tried to use reward charts with him		
Attributions: School difficulties		
▪ Overactive	4:97	Would be everywhere
▪ Difficulties experienced at school: not sharing	4:98	Not sharing or anything
▪ still caring, loving	4:99	In class very caring
Expectations		
▪ help with behaviour	7:172	Thought it would help his behaviour
▪ Realistic, told take longer to change	6:168	No magic wand
▪ happy he's in the group	11:318	Owt that would help him
Gains made		
▪ Can articulate his feelings	7:184	He knows what he is feeling
▪ Work improved-average, Sit independently in class	9:255	Can sit on own in class, actually do some work
▪ Responsibility given	10:272	Rainbow ranger
▪ Sitting, Concentrating for longer	12:327	Sitting down, concentrating for longer
Perceptions		
▪ Perceptions of nurture group: Feelings,	5:127	The feelings chart
▪ Perception of nurture group: being 'close' is effective	10:261	The closeness of it
Relationships		
▪ Parent-staff relationship: informal meetings	9:232	Gets on same bus as Karl
	9:240	IEP meeting
▪ Parent-staff relationship: Formal meetings: IEP targets, reviews	8:205	Go t rewards, got bored of that one
▪ Further nurture group staff input:	7:193	No it's the same
Sharing of concerns/inconsistent application of strategies used at	10:263	Teachers and children
home/Family SEAL opportunity	7:190;	Sharing a lot and talking more
▪ Parent-child relationship: No difference	9:246	
▪ Other children		
Influence on parent behaviour		
▪ Parent strategy used: Time out	7:198	Timer to help calm him down

Appendix 18 TABLE IX : Master table of themes for the group of participants

SUPERORDINATE THEME A: NATURE VS NURTURE ATTRIBUTIONS			
Subordinate Themes	Parental blaming and disclaiming	Delayed development	Adapting to school experiences
PARTICIPANT ONE- JULIE:	no	yes	yes
PARTICIPANT TWO- STACEY:	yes	yes	yes
PARTICIPANT THREE –RACHEL	yes	yes	yes
PARTICIPANT FOUR – ANYA	yes	Yes	yes
PARTICIPANT FIVE – DELLA	yes	yes	yes
PARTICIPANT SIX – CHRISTINE	yes	yes	Yes

Appendix 19 TABLE X: Master table of themes for the group of participants

SUPERORDINATE THEME B: NARROW EXPECTATIONS			
Subordinate Themes	Uncertainties	Personalised attention	Learning, social and emotional and behavioural skills
PARTICIPANT ONE- JULIE:	no	yes	no
PARTICIPANT TWO- STACEY:	yes	yes	No
PARTICIPANT THREE –RACHEL	yes	no	Yes
PARTICIPANT FOUR – ANYA	yes	yes	yes
PARTICIPANT FIVE – DELLA	no	yes	no
PARTICIPANT SIX – CHRISTINE	no	yes	yes

Appendix 20 TABLE XI: Master table of themes for the group of participants

SUPERORDINATE THEME C: HOLISTIC GAINS			
Subordinate Themes	Forming caring relationships	Educational engagement	Academic progress
PARTICIPANT ONE- JULIE:	yes	yes	yes
PARTICIPANT TWO- STACEY:	yes	yes	no
PARTICIPANT THREE –RACHEL	yes	yes	yes
PARTICIPANT FOUR – ANYA	yes	yes	yes
PARTICIPANT FIVE – DELLA	yes	yes	no
PARTICIPANT SIX – CHRISTINE	yes	yes	no

Appendix 21 TABLE XII: Master table of themes for the group of participants

SUPERORDINATE THEME D: PARENTS AS PARTNERS?				
Subordinate Themes	Consulting	Maximising support	Participation	Influence on parent behaviour
PARTICIPANT ONE- JULIE:	yes	yes	no	yes
PARTICIPANT TWO- STACEY:	yes	yes	yes	yes
PARTICIPANT THREE –RACHEL	yes	yes	yes	yes
PARTICIPANT FOUR – ANYA	yes	no	yes	yes
PARTICIPANT FIVE – DELLA	no	yes	no	yes
PARTICIPANT SIX – CHRISTINE	no	yes	no	yes