

Locked down during the COVID-19 pandemic: the experience of mothers living alongside their child with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) special educational needs, a psychosocial approach

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ABSTRACT

Between March and September, 2020, the U.K. government enforced a nationwide lockdown to protect citizens against Covid-19. Children with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) special educational needs and their parents stayed at home, and parents were responsible for home schooling their children with variable support from the schools they attended. Emerging global qualitative research and articles from news outlets in the U.K. reported the significant negative impact the lockdown was having on family dynamics, including rises in mental health difficulties.

Orientated to psychoanalytic theories of SEMH needs, an impetus developed for exploring the impact of lockdown on the relational dynamics between mother and child. A review of literature found a gap in research exploring experiences of parents home educating primary aged children with SEMH needs as separate case studies. A psychosocial methodological approach was taken, orientated in psychosocial ontological and epistemological positions.

Three mothers were recruited from a specialist primary SEMH provision where their son attended, and they were interviewed using Free Association Narrative Interviewing (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013) on two occasions. Participant experiences were analysed using thematic and psychosocial analysis. Findings suggested the mothers experienced the lockdown as emotionally straining to lesser or greater extents according to their personal circumstances and past experiences. All mothers struggled to home-school their sons, feeling anxiety for differing reasons. The relational dynamics between the mother-child dyads intensified due to being forced together with limited breaks from each other, leading to emotional challenges and several unconscious processes to be enacted, including splitting, projection,

rationalisation, and humour. The research was justified as useful for educational psychologist (EP) practice as it elucidated the experiences of parents of SEMH needs, the relationship dynamic within families during lockdowns, and insight for EPs working with parents who are forced to home educate their children in the future.

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ABBREVIATIONS

SEMH – social, emotional and mental health

WHO – world health organisation

COVID-19 – severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)

EP – educational psychologist

SEN – special educational needs

EHCP – education, health and care plan

ONS – Office for National statistics

FANI – free association narrative interviewing

IPA – interpretive phonological analysis

GDPR – General Data Protections Regulations

BNIM – biographical narrative interview method,

CYP – children and young people

QIA – quote in appendix

(from literature review onwards)

No SEN parents - Parents /mothers/ fathers living with children without SEN

Parents of SEN - Parents/mothers/fathers living with children with SEN

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter overview

This chapter outlines the context within which the research is carried out, both at a national/global and local level. Emerging research exploring the experiences of parents during lockdown and home-schooling are discussed. The decision to approach the research using a psychosocial approach is explained and the subsequent adoption of psychosocial ontology and epistemology to guide resulting methodological decisions is explored. Psychodynamic theory is outlined as it pertains to social emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs in children at school. The research is finally justified with reference to participant choice and relevance to the practice of educational psychologists (EP).

1.2 Current Context

1.2.1 National and global Context

1.2.1.1 Covid-19 Pandemic

1.2.1.1.1 *Timeline of events*

On the 21st January 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) released a statement reporting 44 cases of pneumonia with unknown aetiology in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China (WHO, 2020). In the months that followed, cases began spreading, first across neighbouring countries and then eventually engulfing the world in a global pandemic. The disease was named coronavirus (COVID-19) and the associated virus it caused was named 'severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2' (SARS-CoV-2) (WHO, 2020). On 23rd January the Chinese government imposed a strict lockdown on Wuhan City to prevent travel in and out of

the city (Yuan et al 2020) and on the 30th January the WHO declared the situation a “Public Health Emergency of International Concern” (WHO, 2020).

On the 26th February, in a spoken statement to parliament, the U.K.’s health secretary Matt Hancock outlined his four-point plan to respond to the coronavirus outbreak; contain, delay, research and mitigate (Department of health and social care, 2020) and only eight days later the first death in the U.K. was reported. Three days later the Coronavirus Act 2020 was passed by the U.K. parliament (Coronavirus Act, 2020). On the 18th March, parents across the U.K. were told in a televised speech that their children’s schools would be closing on the coming Friday for most children and the following Monday, 23rd March, the U.K. prime minister Boris Johnson made a further televised speech announcing a nationwide lockdown for the vast majority of the population. The lockdown measures were amended by government over time in response to reported numbers of deaths from COVID-19 increasing or decreasing. Figure 1 outlines the timeline of lockdown restrictions as they relate to U.K. families in particular.

Figure 1

Timeline of lockdown restrictions



Temporary legislative amendments were made to the special educational needs (SEN) code of practice (2015) in May 2020 to guide professionals and families with regard to education, health and care plan (EHCP) arrangements. These were

primarily related to timescales when EHCPs were legally required to be written by, considering how the lockdown measures might make it impractical to carry out certain assessments or meet with relevant professionals. Children with SEN and their families therefore waited longer to receive an EHC needs assessment and subsequent plan over the lockdown period.

1.2.1.1.2 Experiences of lockdown for families

Several researchers have explored the experiences of parents across the world who were locked down with their children between March-September 2020. Although some authors explain how families can benefit from lockdown, as families have more time together to bond and connect (Rogers et al, 2020, Bhamani et al, 2020,), parents also found the experience fraught with emotional distress, particularly considering the abrupt nature of the change to family life (Asbury et al (2021, Toran et al, 2021, Zhang et al 2021, Schejtman, 2021). The experience of parents is discussed further in the literature review.

Research has shown that the enforced lockdown because of Covid-19 has negatively impacted the mental health of adults and children around the world. According to the Office for National statistics (ONS, 2020), between 20% (men) and 34% (women) of U.K. parents reported that home schooling was negatively impacting their mental health. The percentage rose to 43% of parents saying that the home schooling was negatively impacting the mental health of their children (ONS, 2020). A rapid review by Brooks et al (2020) found quarantine to have a negative psychological impact on the people experiencing it. According to a survey conducted by Korajlija and Jokic-Begic (2020) of over 2000 Croatian adults, being a parent, especially a mother, was a significant risk factor for increased concern over Covid-19 and increased disposition for health-conscious behaviour change.

Considering the variation of professional, economic and social circumstances people are living in, the averages above cannot elucidate the broad range of lived experiences. Qualitative research is therefore explored below. Blackman (2020) wrote of her experiences as a psychodynamically-informed therapist over the lockdown period. She reported that parents in Wuhan have been screaming at their children and shared an anecdote about one patient of hers wanting to 'kill her children'. Blackman conceptualised the patient's perception of being in lockdown as like 'prison' because she could not bear the guilt she felt about harbouring such negative feelings about her children. When describing the situation for parents in hard hit Italy, Fontanesi et al (2020) specifically warned of the added pressure for parents of children with 'behavioural problems' as the children are not receiving the additional necessary educational provision they would usually receive while attending school. In the survey (of 1,126 parents) participants with children who have a mental or physical disability were found to have significantly increased levels of 'burnout' symptoms. These parents also noticed a significant shift in their child's behaviour, for example lower levels of concentration, and have responded by adapting their parenting to include more "verbal hostility" and "authoritarian style" of parenting. Fontanesi et al called for urgent research and dissemination of information to stem the impact of the potential traumatic effects of lockdown.

Of further importance to consider is the difference in mental health outcomes for families according to their household income. In an article, Scott and Gilbert (2020, The Telegraph) described vastly different lockdown experiences for the "haves and have-nots" across the British population, broadly speculating that the families in society with lower socio-economic status were struggling to a greater extent. In a narrative review, Fegert et al (2020) spoke to past research around child

maltreatment during challenging societal upheaval, such as recessions, and expressed concern for children in high-risk families/situations over lockdown. They also call for research on the experience of such vulnerable families, particularly on the effects of social isolation. In an editorial by Jefsen et al (2020) the authors actively encourage mental health professionals to ask the parents of children with previously reported mental health disabilities about their experiences, due to concerns about their wellbeing during lockdown.

Findings from large surveys above and calls for research in the literature provide an impetus for exploring parents' experience of lockdown further. There were several generalised statements that attempt to explain the feelings and behaviour of parents during lockdown, which appear to be lacking appropriate research to support them.

1.2.1.1.3 Home-schooling during lockdown

From 23rd March parents were expected to begin home schooling their children (ONS, 2020). According to the ONS (2020), 87% of parents were home schooling their children over the lockdown period (March – September 2020). For children aged between 5 – 10 years they found they were spending on average 10 hours a week on home learning, with only 13% of children using interactive real-time learning platforms. 52% of parents reported their children were struggling to complete schoolwork over lockdown, with the vast majority citing 'a lack of motivation' as the reason. According to a survey of 4559 school-aged children contracted by the Children's Commissioner (2020), 96% of U.K. primary aged

children¹ were being provided work by their school, however the quantity of resources provided to parents during this time was inconsistent between primary schools. The survey also revealed only a third of pupils were getting their work marked by teachers, which brought into question the quality of schooling children were receiving at home over lockdown. In a report by University College London it was found that during lockdown U.K. children were completing on average 2.5 hours of school work per day. For the most vulnerable children on free school meals only 11% were doing home-schooling for more than 4 hours a day and 20% did not have access to a computer at home (Green, 2020).

From an anecdotal perspective, U.K. journalist Gavandra Hodge from The Guardian described her experiences of home schooling her children during lockdown as a process of cultivating an “entirely new relationship with my children” (Hodge, 2020) through periods of despair and joy. She describes getting angry with her children, and immediately feeling ashamed at her lack of patience, as well as spending bonding time together as a family making each other laugh. According to Blackman (2020), arguments were forming in households in Wuhan over children not studying and parents are using shame to encourage their children to study. She conceptualises this technique as an expression of their unconscious fear of death from Covid-19.

The Education Endowment Foundation (2020) rapidly synthesized the current evidence to predict the outcome of school closures on the attainment gap between the most disadvantaged in the U.K. and the least. They concluded that school

¹ My focus narrowed to primary schools at this point due to them being the pool I recruited participants from.

closures have widened the attainment gap by an estimated 36%, wiping out the progress made towards closing the gap since 2011. They stress that this figure is an estimate, and they have noted credible evidence that considers the widening to be both minimal (11%) and extremely concerning (75%).

The emerging research on the negative impact of lockdown for vulnerable families from a mental health and academic attainment perspective highlights a rationale for carrying out research into the experience for parents of children with SEN.

1.2.1.2 Government legislation relevant to SEMH needs

The Children and Families Act (2014) outlined several new legal requirements for children with SEN and their families. These new requirements were introduced due to concerns surrounding the inadequacy of the system at the time allowing some vulnerable children and young people (CYP) to not receive the support they needed. Statements of SEN were replaced with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). These are designed to bring all professionals working to support the CYP and their family together across multiple disciplines to provide the CYP with an educational plan that integrates information from all facets of their life experience. The introduction of EHCPs also extended support for CYP with SEN from 18 years old to 25 years old. Furthermore, the act meant local authority professionals must privilege the families of CYP with SEN in contributing to decisions about their CYP's education, including the act making it a legal requirement for all communication about the CYP that families will need to read and understand to be in an accessible format that is easy to read and understand. SEMH needs is described as a broad

area of educational special need in the SEN code of Practice (2015) manifesting as either/both externalising or internalising behaviour (full definition in appendix 1).

1.2.2 Local Context

The social demographics of the borough from which the participants were recruited is relevant to note when considering the context of the current research. According to the 'Index of Multiple Deprivation', which compares seven measures of deprivation (including income, health and education) between small geographic areas across the U.K., the borough is within the top ten most deprived areas in England (Domman, 2019, London Councils) suggesting the relative vulnerability of the families who participated.

1.3 Psychosocial Orientation

Following an exploration of both academic literature and news articles, as well as listening to intuitive assumptions borne from my continuing EP practice, when setting out to research parents' experiences during lockdown I first sought to orient the research within an approach that fundamentally acknowledges the emotional and relational impact the lockdown experience would have had.

The psychosocial approach was developed by Hollway and Jefferson (2013). They developed the approach from psychodynamic theory around the defended participant, with the fundamental assumption that when people are interviewed about their experiences, they will not necessarily be able to access the full depth of their emotional reaction due to unconscious defence mechanisms pushing it from conscious view. This defensiveness is more likely if the experiences being described brings the person emotional discomfort. With the 'defended participant' as an implicit assumption, decisions around ontology, epistemology and methodology follow,

whereby procedures and data analysis work to uncover a participant's complex and holistic experience and ultimately, it is argued, a truer picture of the participant's experience. Contradictions, avoidances, changes in tone and hesitations within participant narrative are not ignored, but they are sought out as 'keyholes' into more authentic belief systems, which may have developed long before the actual experience being explored.

Hollway (2008) makes several claims about the superiority of taking a psychosocial approach. She particularly recommends this approach for the type of qualitative research that aims to explore human experiences more likely fraught with internal conflict, contradictions in identity creation and emotional discomfort. She argues it leads to a richer exploration of identity, which encompasses more authentic depictions of the contradictory beliefs and sometimes disturbing emotional reactions that underpin human existence. Furthermore, through abandoning the dualistic ontological assumption that 'truth' can either be objectively known or subjectively known, she believes that the researcher's subjectivity can be utilised as a sharper instrument of objective knowing. The combination of holistic participant narratives and use of the researcher's subjectivity contributes to, according to Hollway, greater adherence to ethical practice.

The following quote is taken from Hollway's (2008) psychosocial study into the identity formation of women as they become mothers:

"The mothering identity is perhaps the most relational of all identities."

Hollway (2008), p2

Throughout lockdown several facets to family life changed; parents did not spend (much) time apart from their children, families were 'forced' together without physical

breaks, (in some circumstances) parents were shoehorned into a novel 'teacher' identity, parents were not allowed to have physical contact with other friends and family members, and most parents did not travel outside the home to work or outside the country for travel. It is therefore assumed that the nature of the parenting identity was altered, and that this had an impact on the relationship between the parent and their child. Considering the claims outlined in the quote above and the nature of the experience being explored, a psychosocial approach to the current research was justified, as the approach facilitates the exploration of identity and relationships with these concepts specifically threaded through its core principles.

1.3.1 Psychosocial Ontology

Hollway (2008) states that psychosocial ontology is neither realist nor relativist, but a way to conceptualise knowledge in an entirely different way. It does not portray that knowledge exists separate to people's external realities, nor that all reality is moderated/created through the subjectivity of people's own perception. It acknowledges the complexity of the participant experience by allowing their experience to be thought of as a product of both their internal psychological processes and the external social interactions with society and, during a research encounter, with the researcher. It understands that the individual and separate subjectivity of both the participant and the researcher work together, through intersubjectivity, to create a previously non-existent distinct psychic 'space', which further impacts the participant's creation of narrative. The creation of psychic 'space' is in constant flux due to the tension between the individuality of each person in the researcher-participant dyad and their intersubjectivity. Reality is therefore known within this intersubjectively and objectively can be borne from the exploration of it.

1.3.2 Psychosocial Epistemology

The psychosocial conceptualisation of creating knowledge is to know through a relationship between two irrational beings, each taking the role as either the container or the contained, where the contained 'uses' the container to learn (Hollway, 2008). Hollway (2008) applied Bion's theory of the container-contained relationship, how infants use their mother (object) as a tool to know themselves and their experiences, to the process by which knowledge is created in psychosocial research. Like a mother and her infant, the researcher does not try to become the participant, but, through the subjective recognition of psychodynamic processes such as transference and projection felt through their own affective state, the researcher identifies with the participant. The researcher's identification with the participant is how the experiences become known to both of them.

1.3.2.1 Defended participants and a defended researcher

When considering the researcher and the participant, and the dynamics that are created when they interact, Hollway and Jefferson (2013) introduce Klein's theory of unconscious defences against anxiety and the creation of knowledge of the self through intersubjectivity between two 'defended' people. Assuming a participant is defended has ramifications for interpretation of their discourse. Defended participants are assumed to be irrational in their explanation for their experiences. Lowe (2014) further argues that 'thinking' can happen from feeling you're in an emotionally safe relationship and self-reflection springs from feeling consistently 'held in mind' by a trusted other. This is particularly relevant when discussing topics that might stir up uncomfortable emotional states. By attempting to embody the

'container' position during the interviews, it becomes less likely participants react to uncomfortable emotions stirred up by difficult topics by 'splitting'.

1.4 Psychodynamic theory applied to SEMH needs in the classroom

Psychodynamic approaches acknowledge the impact of infant and early childhood relational experiences in personality development and assume that these experiences contribute to the pupil's belief system they bring to their learning in the classroom (Cooley and Cooper, 2017). A theoretical understanding of SEMH needs through a psychodynamic lens is relevant for the current research as the researcher worldview is psychosocial. A psychodynamic lens sees the relational experiences the pupil had with their parent/primary caregiver as a significant contributory factor to the SEMH needs they present with in the classroom, hence an exploration of the experience of mothers of children with SEMH needs being of theoretical importance for the compendium of qualitative studies (Yardley, 2000). Therefore, as the current research is primarily interested in the experience of parents and how lockdown impacted the quality of their relationship with their child with SEMH needs, I will summarise psychodynamic approaches to emotional development with an emphasis on the dysfunctional social and emotional development that is seen with CYP identified with SEMH needs (SEN code of practice, 2015).

1.4.1 Psychoanalytic Theory

Psychoanalytic theory has also provided explanations for the difficulties in emotional functioning we see in children with SEMH needs at school. Wilson (2010) explains how children who have not had sufficient emotional containment from their family in early life struggle to cope in school. He postulates that the experience of being both affirmed and disciplined within a stable family environment in childhood

allows a child to accept the social restraints of the classroom and act within their own internal ethical framework. Children exposed to a non-containing environment in early life, that being one where they are left to integrate overwhelming fears and anxieties without the containing presence of their caregiver, are less likely to trust in the emotional security provided by a classroom and teacher, and therefore act in opposition to the social norms established there. Barrows (1984) describes the link between an infant's early experience of having a primary caregiver that contains both the overwhelming negative feelings projected into her by the infant, *and* the overwhelming positive ones. She postulates that the child thrives in a learning environment if, in infancy, their primary caregiver has protectively identified with the child's overwhelming positive feelings by taking, not only an optimistic view of the child's future, but also an invigorated interest in the child itself throughout these moments of their overwhelming awe and wonder. Through this process the child learns that their thoughts have value and purpose, and they can use their "gifts and imagination" to learn, their gifts being the curious and intelligent nature innate to varying extents between different children. If the 'gifts' an infant is born with are not accepted by their primary caregiver, through a process of projective identification, they cannot be used to form the child's imaginative capacity and can mean the child experiences learning difficulties from an emotional standpoint. Bibby (2018) describes how important the initial connection between mother and infant is in the child embracing their instinct for imagination and creativity, and Winnicot (1946), discussing the roots of delinquent behaviour, explains how, without a loving and psychologically reliable home environment, a child may mistrust their thoughts and their emotional development is arrested. Writing from psychoanalytic tradition, the authors above provide some clarity as to how the cause for things 'going wrong' in

the classroom for certain children could be rooted in their early relationship with their primary caregiver.

1.4.2 Attachment Theory

Hopkins and Philips (2010) describe how attachment theory was borne from psychoanalytic theory, as it was Bowlby's response to the field of psychoanalytic theory focusing tightly and exclusively on a person's internal experiences to explain emotional dysfunction. He aimed to draw attention to the possible impact that one's early environment, specifically a fraught relational environment, can have on psychodynamic processes later in life. Whilst acknowledging that, to explain emotional dysfunction in childhood, attachment theory focuses primarily on the interpersonal and psychoanalytic theory focuses primarily on the 'intrapsychic', Fonagy (2004) provides an integration of attachment theory and psychoanalytic theory by outlining four ways that the two theoretical standpoints conceptualise the social environment's impact on child development similarly (appendix 2).

John Bowlby initially developed attachment theory through three seminal texts called 'Attachment' (1969), 'Separation' (1973) and 'Loss' (1980). It describes how an infant's initial attachment to their primary caregiver can impact on their emotional development and social functioning going forward into their subsequent relational experiences. Through attentive and sensitive care, an infant's primary caregiver(s) shows the infant that they are a secure and reliable base that can meet their physical and emotional needs in a consistent manner and to an adequate extent. Through this attuned relationship, the infant learns that they are 'safe' and 'thought about'. The infant can begin exploring their environment away from the person(s) they have attached to, confidently knowing that they can return to their caregiver if they

encounter 'uncertainty', a process through which they can develop a robust self-awareness and resiliency in future emotionally challenging situations.

To a lesser or greater extent, all CYP encounter emotionally challenging life events. Attachment theory explains how children with a secure attachment to a primary caregiver(s) unconsciously rely on their internal belief system (that they are 'safe' because they are 'held in mind') to successfully work through distressing events. These children can utilise thoughts and words, such that the distress does not transform into trauma, and therefore does not significantly impair their ability to learn in the future (Geddes, 2017).

Bolby (1969) named this internal belief system one's 'internal working model'. Children who formed an insecure attachment to their primary caregiver(s) struggle with the emotional component to learning due to a maladaptive 'internal working model' (Geddes, 2017). Geddes (2017) explains how children with insecure attachment can appear in the classroom as CYP with SEMH needs. The CYP cannot explain their distress using words nor rationalise/resolve their distress through thoughts, and therefore must communicate it through their behaviour, mostly by mediating the attention drawn to him/herself. The way three types of insecure attachment behaviour manifest in classroom functioning are outlined in appendix 3 (Geddes, 2017).

1.5 Justification

1.5.1 Why do experiences of parents in the current context need to be heard?

As described above, there were multiple studies emerging about the negative impact on the mental health of parents living within a lockdown context. This emergence justifies the exploration of experiences of parents in more detail. There were also

some qualitative studies that reflect mixed experiences of lockdown for parents, of good and bad experiences existing alongside one another, a phenomenon that deserved closer scrutiny. Furthermore, a pandemic of such scale to shut the majority of the world's global population within their homes is an unprecedented event in history. The impact this has had on 'parents' as a group, a somewhat universal human positioning, is therefore considered of particular interest due to its socio-cultural significance (Yardley, 2000).

1.5.2 Why should the parents of primary pupils with SEMH needs be the participants?

It is important to explore the experiences of vulnerable parents in 'high risk' scenarios, such as living with children with SEMH needs, to better understand how the limited resources in local authorities could best be allocated to support families effectively. Holmes et al (2020) calls for research from mental health professionals, with specific reference to 'psychologists' and 'lived experience'. The authors primarily look to future pandemics as the reason behind the call for research and call for policy-related research that would help prevent negative impacts of lockdown in the future. EPs are uniquely placed to conduct research with such families, as they have direct contact with such vulnerable families, ones that can be hard to reach without a previous relationship having been established.

1.5.3 Relevance to future EP practice

Mothers and their children being involuntarily confined together in their home relates to multiple scenarios EPs might be involved in. For example, children who have been excluded, school-refusing children, or children who home-school due to long-term/chronic illnesses. Therefore, exploring 'what happens' on an unconscious

level to the relationship between the mother and her child is deemed relevant and helpful to our understanding of such casework. Exploring the experience of parents during lockdown can also mobilise EPs to support families in a pandemic lockdown in the future.

1.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the timeline of events for parents between March and September 2020 as it pertained to the government's 'stay at home' order. It outlined emerging research exploring the adverse impact of lockdown on the mental health for parents, especially vulnerable parents in more challenging circumstances, and exploring the challenges of home-schooling. The decision to approach the research from a psychosocial ontology and epistemology is justified due to the assumed emotionally challenging nature of the lockdown experience and theorising this would lead to a defended interviewer and interviewees. Psychodynamic theory and attachment theory is outlined as it pertains to the development of the symptoms of SEMH needs in children at school, such that the early and ongoing relationship with the child's primary care giver has a significant impact. The exploration of the experience of mothers in lockdown with their children with SEMH needs is further justified in relation to EPs' unique access to these 'hard to reach' families and the relevance to EP practice.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter aims to synthesise relevant existing global literature up to 18/08/2021 that had an espoused purpose to explore the experiences of parents living with a CYP with SEN in the first lockdown between March and September 2020. A systematic literature review was conducted to explore the experience of parents living with CYP with SEN in lockdown and dominant/subordinate themes from these paper were gathered. Findings from scoping searches informed one systemic search of literature to find peer-reviewed qualitative research papers exploring the experience of one participant group in lockdown; parents of children with SEN². The papers were hand sorted according to inclusion and exclusion criteria and synthesised into dominant and subordinate themes. Papers were compared and critiqued as a group to inform the methodological choices for the current research.

² For ease of reading, the following abbreviated terms are used for the remainder of the thesis write up:

Parents/mothers/fathers living with children with SEN - Parents of SEN

2.2 Approach

2.2.1 Aims

The aim of the current review was to gather all global literature describing the qualitative experience of parents living with a CYP with SEN (parents of SEN) during the Covid-19 pandemic on 18/08/21. Gathering and synthesising literature on this scale aimed to identify gaps in participant group and gaps in methodology.

Experiences of interest included lifestyle changes, opportunities and challenges, mental health and wellbeing effects, and experiences of home schooling. These experiences were of interest as they were deemed an exhaustive list of topics assumed to emerge from interviews with participants in the current research study.

2.2.2 Review questions

The question for the current review is therefore:

What does the existing literature tell us about the experiences of parents living with a CYP with SEN during the Covid-19 pandemic around the world?

2.2.3 Scoping Literature Review

A scoping literature review was conducted to explore the experience of parents living with neurotypical children in lockdown. This review was conducted to provide a point of comparison for the experiences of parents of SEN and provide further rationale for exploring their experience as a participant group with unique experiences (appendix 4).

2.3.3 Search strategy

2.3.3.1 Scoping searches

Three scoping literature searches (appendix 5) were carried out to explore the wide reach of published papers. These searches uncovered several findings that impacted the final search strategy used and supported the construction of inclusion and exclusion criteria (table 1).

Table 1

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Qualitative study or some qualitative results ³	Quantitative data collection and analysis only
EITHER Investigation of impact of lockdown/quarantine OR Investigation of home-schooling experiences in particular	Investigation of parenting practices
Focus on experiences of parents	Focus on experience of children
Global	
Explored experiences of first lockdown (March – July 2020)	
Parents of school-aged children	
Peer reviewed journal article	

³ Some studies presented qualitative results in a quantitative format, for example frequency of codes or percentage of participants 'experiencing' a certain phenomenon. These studies were included due to the qualitative nature of their findings.

2.2.3.2 Systematic Searches

One search was conducted on 18/08/21 using the databases APA PsycInfo, APA PsycArticles, PEP Archive, Education Source, ERIC, APA PsycExtra and Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection.

The search gathered literature exploring the experience parents of CYP with SEN during the Covid-19 pandemic. Table 2 outlines the search terms used to gather relevant papers.

Table 2

Search terms

<i>Subject key word</i>	<i>Parents</i>	<i>SEN</i>	<i>experience</i>	<i>Covid-19</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
<i>Synonyms</i>	parent OR parents OR mother OR mothers OR father OR fathers OR carer OR carers	special educational needs OR developmen tal disability OR OR intellectual disability OR OR behavioural difficult* OR behavioural difficult* OR challenging behaviour OR challenging behavior	experience* OR perception* OR attitude* OR feeling* OR perspective* OR view*	covid-19 OR coronaviru s OR "covid 19"	39 (search with AND)

		OR social emotional mental health needs			
<i>Results</i>	928,901	174,989	4,050,004	42,824	11 reviewed (after hand searching for inclusion/exclu sion criteria)

2.2.4 Critical Evaluation Tool

Aveyard (2014) proposes the use of a tool specifically designed to assess the quality of qualitative research from The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP). CASP offers tools that have been specifically designed for different types of research study. Long, French and Brooks (2020) revised the CASP tool for qualitative research to include a question relating to study's theoretical underpinnings. This addition was deemed desirable for use in the current literature review due to the current research's attempt to thread a crystallised theoretical perspective throughout the entire research process. The papers have been evaluated using the revised CASP tool (appendix 6). Yardley (2000) developed a tool that allows for qualitative research to be critiqued along agreed principals (appendix 7) which was used in addition for discussions of each study's limitations as well as the description of their findings.

2.3 Review of literature

2.3.1 Type and style of review

A narrative review of the literature, as opposed to a meta-analysis, was selected due to varied nature of research methodology and analysis found within the reviewed studies (Baumeister, 2013). A thematic analysis of the entire collection of literature, outlined by Aveyard (2014), was deemed appropriate for the qualitative and broadly thematic nature of the findings within the studies. Descriptive qualities of each paper are laid out under the headings researchers/context, participants, aim(s), methodology, and data collection and analysis in table 3. The papers are synthesised into their overarching dominant and subordinate themes for each category, outlined in tables 4 and 5.

2.3.2 Papers reviewed

Eleven papers have then been sorted into three categories (figure 3).

Figure 2

Papers included in literature review - The experience of parents of SEN during the Covid-19 pandemic

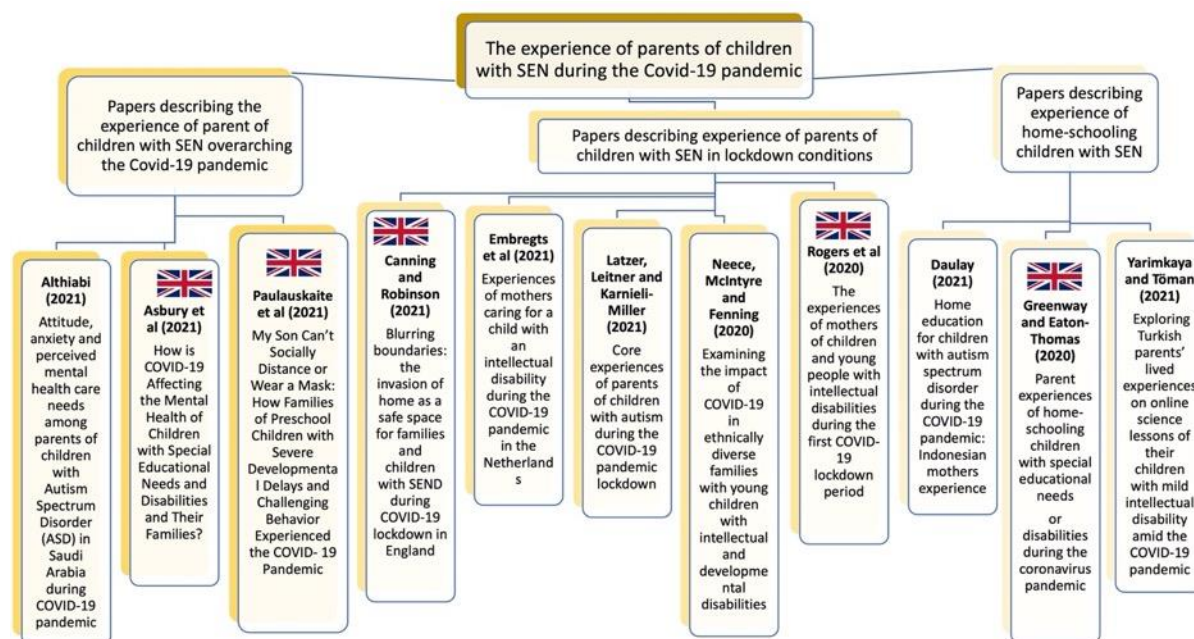


Table 3

Outline of papers

Sub-category	Authors, context	Participants	Aim(s)	(Theoretical viewpoint) Methodology	Data collection and analysis
The experience of parents of SEN overarching the covid-19 pandemic	Althiabi (2021) Saudi Arabia	211 mother and fathers of children with ASD	Empirically explore mental health of parents of children with ASD during the pandemic	Empirical research, online questionnaire of both survey questions and open-ended questions,	Quantitative statistical analysis
	Asbury et al (2021) UK	241 parents of children with a broad	Explore how the Covid-19 pandemic is impacting the mental health of	Qualitative, one free response question,	Data coded for overarching categories

		range of SEN (including ADHD, sensory processing needs, visual impairment, etc)	families with SEN		
	Paulauskaite et al (2021) UK	88 parents of pre-school children with moderate to severe developmental delay and challenging behaviour	Investigate the impact of the pandemic restrictions on family wellbeing and explore the challenges faced	Qualitative, survey of closed-ended and multiple-choice questions	Inductive content analysis for themes/sub themes
The experience of parents of children with SEN in lockdown	Canning and Robinson (2021) UK	Eight families with either one or two children with SEN/ASD	Uncover the participants' subjective lived experiences	Social phenomenology, qualitative ethnographic narrative design, telephone and online interviews,	Thematic analysis based (Braun and Clarke, 2013) was used to build themes and subthemes

conditio ns				collated comments from a social media group within with the families interacted	
	Tokatly Latzer, Leitner and Karnieli- Miller (2021) Isreal	31 parents of children diagnose d with ASD	Explore experiences of lockdown for parents (understand the complexity phenomenon) and infer potential implications for support	Qualitative, open-ended questions in semi- structured interview	Immersion/cry stallization narrative method to identify emerging themes
	Neece, McIntyre and Fenning (2020) California and Oregon	77 parents (ethnically, linguistically and socioeconomically diverse) of pre- school children with either an intellectu	Investigate parental perspectives on impact of lockdown	Qualitative, open-ended questions in semi- structured format	Interviewer notes and answer transcripts were coded for themes

		al disability or ASD			
	Embregts et al (2021) The Netherlands	Five mothers of a child with an intellectual disability	Explore the experience and needs of parents	Qualitative, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions.	Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to build themes and subthemes
	Rogers et al (2020) UK	Eight mothers of children with intellectual disabilities	Investigate how mothers coped during the lockdown to inform support for potential further lockdown	Qualitative, semi-structured interviews with open and closed ended questions	Content analysis was conducted (Halcomb and Davidson (2006) method), themes were identified
The experience of home-schooling children with SEN	Daulay (2021) Indonesia	Five mothers of children with ASD	Explore lived experiences and coping methods of mothers implementing home-schooling with their children	Phenomenological qualitative, in-depth interviews	Thematic analysis (Braun and Clark, 2006) data was synthesised into themes and subthemes
	Greenway and Eaton-	238 parents home-	Explore experiences of parents home-	Mixed methods, online survey	Content analysis for

Thomas (2020) UK	schooling a child with SEN	schooling their children	with nine open-ended questions yielding qualitative data	frequency of coded data
Yarimkaya and Töman (2021) Turkey	16 parents of children with mild intellectual disability	Explore lived experiences of parents home-schooling children in science	Phenomenological qualitative, semi-structured phone interviews	Inductive coding was carried out on the transcribed interviews and themes/subthemes recorded

2.3.2.1 Synthesis of themes

A thematic review was done on the eleven papers to determine common experiential themes across their parent participants. Table 4 outlines the dominant themes found in the literature (found in seven or more studies) and table 5 outlines the subordinate themes found in the literature (found in four or more studies.) Presenting the number of times the dominant and subordinate themes occurred across the studies demonstrated the commonality of the themes across studies and was deemed helpful in understanding how dominant the various discourses were.

Table 4

Dominant themes in the literature

Themes	No. of studies found in /11	Explanation
--------	-----------------------------	-------------

Lack of external support	9	Parents struggled to cope without usual support from external professionals (sense of abandonment)
Positive feelings from no school attendance	8	Parents felt better without pressures associated with child having to attend school (tight structure, costs, refusal, anxiety, unsafe space for child)
Overwhelmed with competing responsibilities	8	Parents struggled to manage all responsibilities (childcare, home-schooling, family mental health, needs associated with child's SEN, housework)
Difficulties managing child's challenging behaviour	7	Parents found their child's behaviour deteriorated (sleep, feeding, aggression) and did not feel able to cope with the change
Poor mental health	7	Parents described finding their mental health suffering (stress, low mood, fear, worry, anxiety)

Table 5**Subordinate themes in the literature**

Themes	No. of studies found in /11	Explanation
Closeness	6	Parents relished and enjoyed spending more time with their children, saw improvement in relationship
Self-reliance	5	Parents found sense of pride in their ability to cope without support and appearance of resilience
Loss of beneficial routine	5	Parents lamented the loss of daily structures/processes that their child responded well to

Need for respite	5	Parents struggled to cope without any time alone or break from their child
Difficulties from child's lack of understanding	4	Parents found it difficult to explain the restriction to their child, which led to poor adherence to rules/restrictions
Dissatisfied with online learning	4	Parents found the new remote learning environments did not adequately support their child's education (reduced teacher support, poor differentiation/quality of lesson, technical challenges, lack of social/emotional support)
Fear of future	4	Parents worried about lockdown's lasting impact of their child's future (academic attainment, social life, mental health)

2.3.2.2 Summary of findings

For each study the findings are summarised below and then studies are subsequently critiqued and compared in subsequent sections.

Asbury et al (2021⁴) had the largest sample size of the eleven studies (214 participants) and collected data from parents with children diagnosed with a wide range of SEN. Parents in the research study felt worried across several dimensions. The researchers noted that the worries shared by parents in their study appeared specific to the daily life with SEN children, for example difficulties with eating and restricted diet. The parents described their reactions to such situations, and the researchers noted that these seemed disproportionately anxiety inducing compared to what they would expect of parents of neurotypical children. Parents in the study

⁴ Title: How is COVID-19 Affecting the Mental Health of Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Their Families?

worried about how the pandemic might have hindered their educational attainment even more and blamed this on their lack of ability to support their child during the lockdown. They also worried about who could care for the child with SEN if they died from Covid-19.

On the topics of loss, the authors felt that the loss of external services were felt more keenly in the participants compared to parents of neurotypical children. The parents also explained how their child's SEN meant they struggled to explain such restrictions or losses, amplifying the difficulties even further. The quote below is particularly pertinent to the current research questions, as the three participants in the current study are lone parents:

“Lone parent SEND families appear particularly vulnerable in the current situation... who are isolated with a child who displays very challenging behaviour without access to any of the support and respite that usually helps them to fulfil their parental role effectively.”

Asbury et al, 2020, p5

A significant minority of parents found taking on the care of their SEN child in its entirety, with no respite or physical support from external professional, stressful, exacerbated if they had other children in the family to care for in addition. The researchers felt that, although low mood was likely experienced across parents in the U.K., it was likely experienced more profoundly in parents of SEN. Parents further outlined situations where their child's behaviour would become challenging because they could not understand why their life had changed and why they were now restricted in certain ways.

There were some positive descriptions of lockdown. Parents expressed positive feelings around the lockdown experience when their children had previously

struggled with school and saw home as a safer place. The period without the stress of school attendance was relatively calm and relaxing for the whole family.

Two further studies had similar large sample sizes. Greenway and Eaton-Thomas (2020⁵) spoke to 238 parents and Althiabi (2021) spoke to 211 parents. In the study by Greenway and Eaton-Thomas, primarily focused of experiences of homeschooling, participants reported that they found a lack of differentiation for their child with SEN, the work was not adapted for the needs of their child, they did not have enough time with their child's teacher, they had difficulties with understanding the task they were meant to support their child complete due to lack of guidelines, and they found there was too much work to complete for their child. The vast majority of parents did not feel they had adequate support for their child's "psychological needs" as it pertains to home schooling. Participants also felt underconfident in their ability to home school and their knowledge around the topic areas, they found it difficult to balance work and home schooling tasks, they worried they were failing their children due to their inadequate teacher skills and worried their children might fall behind academically because of them, and they were concerned at their child's lack of engagement in learning and their ability to manage this behaviour. They also saw a change in their behaviour, irritability and frustration due to the anxiety caused by home-schooling, they noticed a negative impact of their relationships with other family members, and they felt guilty for not providing supportive enough educational experiences for their child. Some parents enjoyed the

⁵ Title: Parent experiences of home-schooling children with special educational needs or disabilities during the coronavirus pandemic

experience of homeschooling as they were able to spend more time with their children and this had a positive impact on their wellbeing.

Althiabi (2021)⁶ spoke to parents with children diagnosed with ASD and had a mixture of quantitative results and qualitative results. The qualitative findings were that a significant minority of participants (41) reached out to professionals that they would have had access to prior to the pandemic for support. These professionals included psychologists, behaviour specialists and teachers. They also sought help from family and friends. The top-rated need during the pandemic was 'psychological support', with 'financial support' coming next. Mothers in particular felt psychological support was something they needed. Both mothers and fathers wanted more direction around behaviour management at home, especially help with their child's temper tantrums.

Daulay (2021⁷) also conducted interviews with mothers of children with ASD. However, their interviews were in-depth and with only five participants, the smallest sample size within the group of eleven studies. Mothers found it challenging to adapt to the changes in the pattern of their daily life. They felt the burden of motherhood weighing heavier on their shoulders, as they were now required to balance many more aspects of childcare than before lockdown. The added weight of homeschooling was stressful as they had to deal with lack of engagement and their own knowledge deficit. The lack of engagement contributed to wider negative changes in

6 Attitude, anxiety and perceived mental health care needs among parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Saudi Arabia during COVID-19 pandemic

7 Title: Home education for children with autism spectrum disorder during the COVID-19 pandemic: Indonesian mothers experience

their children's behaviour; mothers found their child's challenging behaviours increased, such as poor engagement in learning and irritability. They also felt there was a lack of support from external professionals. As a result, mothers felt and thought negatively about home-schooling, describing "anxiousness, anger, annoyance, and stress...", especially when interacting with their children.

The mothers described ways in which they coped. A community group of parents also living with a child with ASD provided support to mothers in the study. They found the support helped them cope and embolden them psychologically, whilst also providing practical tips to care for their child on their own. Mothers were positive about the support they received from schools, and all participants reported that their child's teacher helped them. Prayer and alone time was used by mothers to bring their destructive and angry feelings back to a calmer place. They described using patience also to help reduce feelings of stress they felt from home-schooling.

Embregts et al (2021⁸) also carried out interviews with a small sample of five mothers, however their children did not have ASD but had an intellectual disability. The authors reported several findings related to the experience of their participants. Mothers held a tight control of their children's activities due to a fear about their child becoming dangerously ill with covid-19. They found the "invisible and unpredictable nature" of the virus particularly terrifying, and this exacerbated their ongoing worry that their children could die from it. They also found it difficult to ensure their child was protected from the virus and following all safety precautions, whilst also maintaining a fulfilling family life, and all sacrificed any contact with people outside

⁸ Experiences of mothers caring for a child with an intellectual disability during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Netherlands

the family home. Mothers relished remote schooling as they saw it as creating structure for their children in their day and fulfilling opportunities for achievement and felt positive about their children's teachers and found them supportive. The majority of mothers said that existing relationship strengths, such as ability to work well as a team and feelings of bondedness, meant they could cope with the new stressors of family life. Conversely, mothers felt they suddenly had a lot more on their plate to manage, task that previously could be shared with external professionals and time when their child was being cared for by other people. They felt that as a result they had very few moments for themselves. The mothers worried that the medical system in the Netherland would not be able to save their child if they became ill with covid-19 as they were too over-stretched. They compared themselves to other families and reflected that they might have more or less challenges to overcome than them in different ways, and reflected on feeling pleased with how their child was coping. Some participants enjoyed the reduced pressure to socialise or engage with activities outside of the home. These mothers described family life as feeling calmer as a result.

Yarimkaya and Töman (2021)⁹ also interviewed a small sample of parents of children who have an intellectual disability. They specifically explored home schooling their children within their science lessons. The researchers found most parents supported the government's decision to close schools as they worried about the threat of illness and death from outside their home. A minority of parents described being scared of going about their daily errands. Parents were pleased to

⁹ Title: Exploring Turkish parents' lived experiences on online science lessons of their children with mild intellectual disability amid the COVID-19 pandemic

find that the costs associated with school attendance, for example food or transport, were reduced, but parents generally did not feel that the online model of learning suited their children as there was inadequate teacher support.

Like Daulay (2021), Tokatly Latzer et al (2021¹⁰) also interviewed parents of children with ASD. Parents were concerned about how missing the specialist intervention their child gets in a school setting would impact their future development. They described their children as being agitated by being in a small area without the space to “expend energy” and spoke about the psychological suffering that comes from having to stay in a small space. Difficulties with their child’s feeding and sleeping habits were exacerbated during this time, and parents suffered without their usual support in the community and from professionals. Parents felt helpless to support their child without the knowledge and support of external professionals.

Some parents relished the new absence of need for structured routine, and found rewarding opportunities within the newly opened up time. Conversely, others were bored by the monotony and found lockdown life tedious as a result. Some parents worried that without time at school they will be losing skills and what the future looks like in terms of regaining that skill. However, some parents found skills to be solidified with newly found time in their day for practice, and spending more time with their child meant they continued to uncover delightful new things about their personality and abilities. Parents found they needed to accommodate their lifestyle to suit their child’s needs but found the lack of social interaction for their children concerning.

¹⁰ Title: Core experiences of parents of children with autism during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown

The majority of parents found that lockdown brought undesirable changes to their children's behaviour, behaviours that in some cases "frightened" the parents. A significant minority found that more involvement in family chores led their children to flourish and display better behaviour than before the pandemic. Some families experienced it as an opportunity to heal and have constructive conflict, whereas others felt desperate and weary over the increasing number of battles between siblings.

Parents exposed their children to varying amounts of news about the pandemic, with some children understanding the situation fully and some not comprehending due to the severity of their SEN needs.

Two studies explored the experiences of parents with a child with 'ASD or another form of SEN'. Canning and Robinson (2021¹¹) found that parents thought home-schooling was challenging. They felt that the specific difficulties that come with home-schooling a child with SEN was not acknowledged and subsequently supported by schools. They felt that the expectation for engagement in online learning was unfairly high as the type of learning delivered was the same as it had been in a classroom and their child found it difficult to meet these demands. The parents did not feel that the online educational platforms were a suitable replacements for the face-to-face interactions their children would have been receiving at school. They thought that such interactions are particularly important for a child with SEN. Furthermore, they felt there was not enough appropriate differentiation for their child with SEN. The introduction of technology into the home

¹¹ Title: Blurring boundaries: the invasion of home as a safe space for families and children with SEND during COVID-19 lockdown in England

was a problem for families to solve over lockdown. The parents needed to make adaptations to the work being sent through to suit their child's needs and used creative strategies to do so. Despite their attempts at ingenuity, parents found it stressful to incorporate technology into their already utilised living spaces. They found they had to juggle time and schoolwork. The parents found that learning was more fruitful when it emerged spontaneously from daily activities than set schoolwork. The schoolwork set by teachers largely caused their children stress and upset.

As the lockdown stretched on, a proportion of parents described feeling empowered enough to allow their child not to complete certain school tasks that they felt were unreasonably challenging without the type of support outlined above. They saw it as their role to protect their child from unreasonable and unsupported demands.

Whereas another proportion of parents continued with school work, despite how challenging they found it, to keep their child connected to their class.

Additionally, they described how interacting with external agencies through remote platforms at home was confusing for their child with SEN/ASD as the physical home space, which existed before the pandemic with a particular function, had changed purpose. This upset the children in the families as it was confusing to change their behaviour in relation to their once known space. Families felt abandoned by the government and left without the support they were told was available. Parents described feeling a sense that supporting their child's needs was solely their responsibility. Adding/organising school-based activities into their already full routine and then encouraging their SEN child to engage fully was stressful. Families felt that balancing time, work, mental wellbeing and school tasks was hugely pressuring, and that, because these pressures were new and unknown, they were mostly unsuccessful. This particularly impacted relied upon household routines that, before

the lockdown, helped their children maintain their wellbeing. Changes in such routines meant home went from a safe and familiar place to somewhere with newly carved unfamiliar dynamics. Families were left feeling a sense of failure, but also a feeling that these pressures were insurmountable and impossible from the start without the support they deserved.

The other study that explored the experiences of parents with a child with 'ASD or another form of SEN' was Neece, McIntyre and Fenning (2020)¹². They found that parents were challenged by a number of factors, most commonly feeling unable to leave their house and feeling stuck. They found balancing work, psychological support for their family and care for their children difficult, alongside the changes this brought to routine. They struggled to find activities that would ensure their children did not grow bored. The parents spoke of the difficulties that came from having reduced services available for support, but a small minority spoke of services growing for them during lockdown. Alongside multiple challenges, parents reported benefits such as having more time as a family, enjoying a slower pace of life, seeing developmental gains in their child, experiencing community support and learning to be more patient with their child. The participants spoke about coping strategies they used, such as taking breaks from each other, meditation, actively seeking out time to spend with or apart from their family, or attempting behaviour management systems in the home. A small minority said they had no coping mechanisms. Parents shared their worries for the long term impact of the lockdown on their families, across areas

¹² Title: Examining the impact of COVID-19 in ethnically diverse families with young children with intellectual and developmental disabilities

including psychological health, financial security, academic attainment, social changes and employment.

Rogers et al (2020¹³) carried out semi-structured interviews with a significantly smaller sample of eight mothers of children with an intellectual disability. Participants felt they did not receive adequate support from external professionals and as a result felt abandoned. The mental health of most mothers in the study declined, with participants describing loss of interest in life, helplessness, anxiety, with some resorting to medication. These mothers felt that outside attitudes towards their child with intellectual disabilities became increasingly negative. They described living in a constant “state of fear” for their physical safety due to the violent tendencies of their child, with home feeling like a volatile and entrapping environment. The most significant challenge was mothers finding no respite from the challenging care of their child. They described being drained of energy as a result. The constant potential for their child’s behaviour to become challenging and violent, in a space they could not escape, left mothers feeling powerless and forced to relinquish control.

Conversely, some mothers described the lack of pressure that usually comes with getting ready for school, and daily tasks associated with that, was a relief. They found their children were better behaved and less challenging, which led to an improvement in their own mental health. A significant minority of mothers found the increased time spent with their child, and the subsequent slower pace of life, a positive experience. They saw a benefit for the whole family and were able to reflect

¹³ Title: The experiences of mothers of children and young people with intellectual disabilities during the first COVID-19 lockdown period

as a result of less daily stressors, particularly the worry that comes with their child being away from home. Mothers described developing strategies to alleviate some symptoms of poor mental health, feeling like they grew in resilience and perseverance.

The experience of mothers appeared to be both positive and negative, with challenging themes outnumbering the positive themes by double. The mental health of the mothers in the study declined due to increased expectations on their time and challenging behaviour from their children, exacerbated by no rest or space for them to recharge their energy stores. Unlike Asbury et al (2021), Neece, McIntyre and Fenning (2020), Embregts et al (2021) Greenway and Eaton-Thomas (2020) and Tokatly Latzer et al (2021), but as with Dauley (2020), the positive experiences broadly lay in feelings of resilience over a tough situation, not in descriptions of objectively happy experiences.

Finally, the only study that spoke to families with children who were specifically described as having ‘challenging behaviour’, similar to the parents within the current research, was Paulauskaite et al (2021.)¹⁴ Parents spoke about the mental health of themselves and their family suffering during lockdown, due to lack of support and social contact. This led to increased tension within the family home. They also described significant disruption to external services outside the home, and the subsequent lack of support/resources they felt, as well as resources within the home.

¹⁴ Title: My Son Can’t Socially Distance or Wear a Mask: How Families of Preschool Children with Severe Developmental Delays and Challenging Behavior Experienced the COVID- 19 Pandemic

Parents spoke about the difficulties in understanding and following the guidance on government mandated Covid-19 measures, practically and socially.

Finally, parents had concerns about the future. They worried that they would not receive the appointments that had been postponed throughout the pandemic, about a regression of development/progress for their children throughout the pandemic, that they would not find employment after the pandemic, and/or that their employers were not going to be equipped to safely manage the threat of Covid-19.

2.3.2.3 Comparing and contrasting the studies

The findings across all studies are discussed in comparison with each other below. Participants across almost all studies struggled with new challenges throughout the pandemic without the external support they were used to and experienced a subsequent decline in their mental health to a lesser or greater extent.

A difference between findings appeared in the contrasting positive themes.

Participant's positive experiences were either distinct 'good times' with their children that had come from more time together (Rogers et al, Asbury et al, 2021, Tokatly Latzer, Leitner and Karnieli-Miller, 2021, Althiabi, 2021, and Neece, McIntyre and Fenning, 2020), or the positive themes came only from the emboldening experience of resilience against succumbing to the desperation of their situation and coping with the stress of having only 'bad times' (Daulay, 2021, Embgrets et al, 2021.)

In studies with parents who reported 'good times' with their children, they were represented as a distinct group, or a 'significant minority'; the participants either could or could not report positive experiences, instead of feeling like their experiences were both good and bad at the same time. Without individual case analysis of each participant the reader is left wondering whether the participants who

reported 'good moments' were either able to 'think differently' about their lockdown experience, or they had an actual more favourable context to their experience (less challenging behaviour from their child, closer outdoor space, more remote contact with support systems, etc). Tokatly Latzer et al (2020) concluded that the parents' perspective being generally optimistic/positive impacted their perception and ability to cope with significant adversity, however this assertion did not appear based on evidence. This lack of clarity has implications for how we assign resources and tailor support to such families in future inevitable pandemic conditions.

Furthermore, knowing that positive experiences were felt by a distinct group of participants in the studies above, instead of by all participants, was found through in-depth reading of the papers and is not made clear by the list of overarching themes and subthemes from each study. Collating themes together to represent the participants as one 'identity' means the subtlety of whether all parents had good and bad experiences, or some parents had good experiences and some had bad, was lost. This further supports an initial case study design for exploring parent's lived experiences of lockdown, followed up by a comparing/contrasting of such experiences if deemed desirable.

Three studies only spoke to mothers individually (Daulay, 2021, Rogers et al, 2021 and Embgrets et al, 2021), Althiabi (2021), Greenway and Eaton-Thomas (2020) and Yarimkaya and Töman (2021) spoke to both mother and fathers and Tokatly Latzer et al (2021) spoke to some parents in a pair when practical. Although being interviewed as a pair may have impacted the findings in Tokatly Latzer et al (described below), all studies above can reasonably claim they were interested in the experiences of parents only. Asbury et al were interested in both the experience of parents and the experience of children, meaning some of the themes related only to

the experience of the children were omitted from the current review. Paulauskaite et al (2021), Canning and Robinson, (2021), Neece, McIntyre and Fenning (2020) was interested in the impact on families as a whole, parents and children. Being aware that the researchers were interested in the children's experiences as well as their own may have been an impact on the parents' interview content, perhaps making them wary of being too self-serving or concerned with their own wellbeing above their children's. This may have skewed the findings towards being less self-reflective, and therefore presenting an unreliable picture of the parents' actual lived experiences.

The national context of the studies appeared to impact their findings. Rogers et al and Asbury et al were both conducted in the UK, and there was a clear common finding between their findings. They both found that parents found lockdown a more relaxing period because they no longer had to take their children with SEN to school, describing school attendance for their children as stressful and home as a relative 'safe space'. This does not reflect favourably on the experience of schooling for mothers of SEN in the UK.

The studies from Israel, UK and Indonesia (Tokatly Latzer et al (2021) in Israel, Canning and Robinson (2021), Greenway and Eaton-Thomas (2020) in UK, and Daulay (2021) in Indonesia) all report stress specifically originating from home-schooling their child, disappointment in the resources they were provided by schools, and subsequent worry for their future academic attainment. This does not reflect well on the provision provided to the parents in these contexts, again specifically the system in the UK. There was a notable juxtaposition between the findings of Embgrets et al (2021) from The Netherlands and the other studies, as they found parents to be happy with their home-schooling experiences and grateful for the

support received by their child's teachers. This reflects well on the school system in The Netherlands and brings into focus how important the national context is for the enjoyableness of parents' experiences of lockdown. Participants across all studies complained to a greater or lesser extent about the loss of external services, apart from the only study from the group of eleven that was conducted in Saudi Arabia. Althiabi (2021) found that parents sought out the help of external services and had available support such as psychologists and behaviour specialists.

The parents in a few studies did not report feeling a desperate need for 'alone time' or 'respite' away from their child. It appeared that in Daulay (2021), in its place was the theme 'religious coping', explained as the parents using the private and meditative experience of prayer to cope with emotional challenges. No other studies mentioned religion in their findings as a way to cope. The participants also discussed use of a community group to share experiences with, which was not mentioned in any other study. The parents from Saudi Arabia in Althiabi (2021) also spoke about receiving support from specialists in the community. The comparison led to reflections on how Indonesian and Saudi Arabian culture impacted the participant experience, versus the arguably individualistic cultures within the most of the other studies' western contexts. It was speculated as to whether Daulay's results reflected how religious practice and group worship/gathering are prioritised or considered of higher importance in Indonesia, compared to the other countries.

Tokatly Latzer et al (2021) justified the use of qualitative methodology as to uncover the complexity behind parent experiences in lockdown, and the subthemes identified by the researchers did have a distinct quality. Oppositional experiences were described by parents within four of the eleven subthemes. In 'functional factors' parents either found the newly discovered abundance of time with their child difficult

or rewarding, in 'family influences' they found that being forced to stay together over this period of time changed dynamics between them for better or worse, in 'new routine' some parents liked the absence of structure and some did not, and in 'behavioural attributes' parents found their child either grew more or less challenging. The themes in the other studies did not reflect these oppositional experiences but had separate subthemes to outline each 'experience' distinctly. Although this did go some way to achieve the level of complexity Tokatly Latzer et al were hoping to uncover, reporting subthemes in this manner meant that the reader could not ascertain whether there were generally positive/resilient families, who could relate to every positive aspect within each oppositional theme, or all parents felt a mixed sense of good and bad feelings around lockdown in different areas (for example, parents may have enjoyed the 'new routine' but found their child's 'behavioural attributes' more challenging.) It follows that the analysis of participant experience of lockdown through separate case studies is further supported to validly represent the complexity of lived experience of lockdown.

Of the studies, Embgrets et al (2021) and Yarimkaya and Töman (2021) were the only studies within which fears of illness were discussed prominently within interviews. For the parents in Yarimkaya and Töman (2021), their fear led to them having practical thoughts around supporting the closure of schools. However, it was expressed in Embgrets et al as more emotionally affecting, within subthemes 'Is my child worth saving?' and 'A constant health threat'. Mothers here found the threat of Covid-19 ever-present and frightening, and worried that the health system could not cope with their child if they fell ill. Upon considering these reasonable fears, the lack of discussion surrounding the real threat of illness from covid-19 in the nine other studies was apparently disarming. Upon further analysis, alongside these themes,

the subthemes in Embgrets et al also had a uniquely grateful quality to them not found in other studies. Participants were grateful of the spaciousness of their dwellings or availability of outdoor space, grateful for the support of teachers, and felt they were in a better position than other families. Furthermore, the participants in Embgrets et al were one of the only groups not to report their child's behaviour becoming more challenging or aggressive.¹⁵

I wondered how much 'gratitude' acted as a cognitive reframing mechanism that allowed participants in the study to face the actual threat of death from covid-19 in a consciously held place. Whereas in most other studies, the ever-present 'fear of death from Covid-19' was transformed unconsciously into other stressors, such as worry for their child's future academic success or played out in dysfunctional familial dynamics, perhaps leading to their child's challenging behaviour. Examples from Rogers et al are the subthemes 'stigma', reflecting the mothers' experience of paranoia that external opinions on their child's disability became more negative, or the subtheme 'fear', reflecting their experience of their child's aggressive behaviour as 'terrifying' and their home as an 'entrapping environment'. Both themes contain painful emotive content that have the potential for being unconsciously defended against. The tentative hypotheses outlined give some impetus for exploring experiences of lockdown, and the way relationships between mothers and children with SEN changed during lockdown, from a psychodynamic perspective, such that unconscious processes can be explored.

¹⁵ The relative social equality and affluence of the Netherlands compared to the national context for the other studies must be considered as a possible reason for the participants' more gratitude inducing experiences.

The small sample size was listed as a limitation by Embgrets et al (2021), Canning and Robinson (2021) and Tokatly Latzer et al (2021) due to subsequent difficulties extrapolating the findings. However, arguably it meant participants were likely given more time as individuals than in studies with more participants, which potentially led to the rich narratives with poignant and meaningful content. This meaningfulness of theme/subtheme content was seen in the other three studies with small sample sizes (Rogers et al, 2020 and Daulay, 2021). The experiential themes/subthemes for Embgrets et al appeared especially more consciously held and grateful, which suggests they were able to construct their narratives with their interviewer in a less defensive, more positive, manner. Perhaps with fewer participants the researcher/interviewer can dedicate a greater proportion of their attention to each participant, appearing more authentic and interested, and therefore is able to be a more containing presence for the interviewee. Assuming resources are limited during any research project, this review finding provides an impetus for conducting exploratory research into lived experiences with a smaller sample size.

2.3.2.4 Critique of papers and implications for current research methodology

Five papers were deemed most relevant to the current research methodology and of highest quality according to CASP critique of good quality qualitative research (Long, French and Brooks, 2020). The studies were Embgrets et al (2021), Rogers et al (2020), Daulay (2021), Asbury et al (2021) and Tokatly Latzer, Leitner and Karnieli-Miller (2021). Tables of their themes and subthemes are included in appendix 8. These research studies were deemed of highest quality due to their continuity of aim, methodological choices (participant group, size, procedure, etc) and data

analysis/reporting. These factors impacted the determination of their trustworthiness compared to the other studies (Yardley, 2000).

The methodological procedure of some of the remaining six studies did not align with the researcher's aim to qualitatively explore lived experiences from the perspective of the participants, for example by utilising closed-ended questioning (Paulauskaite et al, 2021), questions that appeared to force participants into dichotomous thinking, (Yarimkaya and Töman, 2021¹⁶) or encouraged participants to frame their experiences in a specific positive/negative light according to the researcher's agenda (Neece, McIntyre and Fenning, 2020¹⁷).

Studies of otherwise high quality presented findings as 'domain' themes and subthemes, in other words, the name of the themes/subthemes did not hold meaning without requiring the reader to further read into the content of them; they were 'topics' of interest rather than themes. This is a common problem with reflexive thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2020). For example, the findings of Canning and Robinson (2020) were presented as themes 'Schoolwork demands', 'Interactions with others' and 'The use of technology', each one giving little indication of the meaning beneath the description. The style of findings of such studies were deemed as not demonstrating strong methodological competence (Yardley 2000). For a significant minority of researchers their aim to 'explore experiences' of lockdown was not matched by appropriate methodological choices or a coherent

¹⁶ For example 'What are positive and negative opinions of parents about online science lessons of their children with mild intellectual disability?'

¹⁷ For example 'Have there been any benefits or surprising silver linings for your child or your family during this pandemic?'

theoretical viewpoint. Some studies aimed to explore subjective experiences, but utilised closed-ended questions that either led participants to view their lockdown within dichotomies, for example 'what were the challenges and what were the chances?' (Canning and Robinson, 2021) or encouraged them to view their experience in a certain way, for example asking, 'How did you cope?' or 'What silver linings did you find?' (Neece, McIntyre and Fenning, 2020). These types of questions were technically exploratory in nature, however they sought to explore aspects of participant experience that the researchers had pre-loaded as holding higher value. It is therefore important to closely scrutinise one's choice of interview technique, to ensure the quality of data produced is valid in representing the experience from the participants' perspective.

Other studies sought qualitative data through open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews, but subsequently analysed the experiential content quantitatively (Althiabi, 2021, Greenway and Eaton-Thomas, 2020). In these cases, researchers gave greater significance to 'codes' or themes that were more frequently mentioned by participants, sometimes as a percentage of responses. The introduction of quantitative findings (and in a few cases, quantitative analyses) seemed to jar with the practical standpoint that qualitative research typically abides by, whereby it is not the researcher's job to uncover the 'quantity' of people experiencing a certain feeling/thought/phenomena, but to elucidate the 'quality' of the experience for the individual or group. I wondered if complexities were lost when experiences were quantified in this regard. In the current research, a coherent theoretical viewpoint will thread throughout the methodological choices to produce rich qualitative data that allows for thorough analysis. Subsequently, the research

aims to produce findings that authentically represent the experiences of participants from their perspective.

Overarchingly, the literature highlights that families had an emotionally challenging time, but in almost every study, there were always a significant minority of parents who spoke about how they reached for internal stores of resilience and the resulting emotionally uplifting impact that had for them. I was left wondering - 'what meant that these parents could rise above the insurmountable challenges, and other parents who could not?' As all studies intended to find commonalities across the participant groups, and no researcher delved deeper into the experience for each participant as a distinct entity, this question was left hanging. Tokatly Latzer, Leitner and Karnieli-Miller (2021) concluded that parents who had a 'more positive outlook' were better able to cope, which goes some way to explain the differences within the participant group. However, it is noted that there was only one study (Yarimkaya and Töman, 2021) that narrowed the parameters of type and severity of SEN the children had been identified with enough to determine whether some parents had an objectively higher 'workload' than others and could therefore more easily reach to a positive outlook. For the current research parents will be sampled who have children with SEN in the same diagnostic category to help minimise the critique outlined above. Some studies (Asbury et al, 2021, Neece, McIntyre and Fenning, 2020) presented 'overwhelming stress and worry' as a theme alongside 'positive feelings' as another theme, leaving the reader wondering if participants experienced both phenomena at the same or different time points. This was just one example of how presenting distinct themes/sub themes shared across participants in 'list form' was reductive; the way in which these experiences interacted was not made clear through this strategy of presentation. Furthermore, it was suspected that, to present the richly

diverse experience of the participant group as a whole, themes become purely categorical (or 'domain themes', Braun and Clarke, 2020) and subthemes were utilised to represent the meaning behind the themes. The current research will therefore seek to uncover experiences of each participant distinctly and present findings in a way that elucidates the complexity of how participants' positive and negative experiences interact. Themes will hold meaning 'within their name' and the reader will not be required to read further into the subthemes to uncover their content, in line with high quality reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2020). One aspect of some of the studies was that the participants were interviewed as two parents together, on occasion where it was practical. Arguably this altered the conditions for data collection and could have created a distinct dynamic during the interview process, for example their narratives may have been skewed by social desirability affects or gender-based dynamics within their relationship. This brings into question whether the accounts of participants interviewed as a pair can be reasonably compared and then collated with the accounts for participants interviewed alone.

There themes found by Tokatly Latzer et al (2021), Asbury et al (2021), Althiabi (2021), Paulauskaite et al (2021), Rogers et al (2020) and Daulay (2021) were similar. All studies found parents to be overwhelmed with the burden of constant caregiving and housework tasks, and this resulted in stress, worry and mental health decline. One unique theme found in Tokatly Latzer et al (2021) was that the parents found the amount of news their children were exposed to had a proportionately negative impact on the children. Participants in the other studies did not refer to news enough for the topic to hold significance. They also described how some children could understand the situation and some could not due to the severity of

children's SEN. It follows that the children in the study, and most others, had broad and differing needs, which could have impacted the difficulty their parents had with caring for them, leading to objectively higher demands and potentially a more stressful environment. This brings into question whether experiences should be synthesized into overarching themes for all participants, as the parents may not have belonged to the same contextual group.

Finally, there were no studies exploring experiences of parents of SEMH needs only, within which 'challenging behaviour' is a common behavioural attribute. Paulauskaite et al (2021) spoke to parents of children with challenging behaviour, but they also had moderate developmental delay alongside their challenging behaviour. As 'Difficulties managing child's challenging behaviour' was a dominant theme for the studies above, it is pertinent to explore the experiences of parents of SEMH needs as a distinct group.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter synthesised relevant existing global literature up to 18/08/2021 that had an espoused purpose to explore the experiences of parents of SEN in the first lockdown between March and September 2020. The review found that parents of SEN had similar and different experiences compared to no SEN parents. Both groups found lockdown to be a stressful time and experienced a decline in their mental health. This was due to increased workload, worry about their child's future and changes in family functioning (routine, behaviour, home-schooling etc). Both groups reported positive themes around a renewed sense of resilience and 'coping through hard times' with their family. Distinctly, parents of SEN felt abandoned without external professional support, saw an increase in their child's challenging

behaviour, and struggled without respite from relentless caregiving responsibilities. Comparison and critique of the papers exploring the experience of parents of SEN only found an impetus to research a small sample of parents of children with tightly defined SEN as individual case studies using a psychosocial approach.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter outlines the aims of the current research and explains how the research questions were answered. Research questions are borne from gaps/critiques in literature identified in the literature review and psychodynamic theories of relational dynamics between mother and child with SEMH needs outlined in the introduction. The resulting selection of an exploratory purpose achieved through a qualitative research design is explained. Participant selection and recruitment is outlined, including justification of inclusion and exclusion criteria. Free Association Narrative Interviewing (FANI) is explained and justified as the chosen procedure and the potential ramifications of conducting the interviews remotely via online platform are explored. Subsequent inductive thematic analysis of interview data is explained, which aimed to answer research questions 1 2 and 3. The choice to include additional deductive thematic analysis of interview data and psychosocial analysis is explained to answer research question 3. Issues around the trustworthiness of the qualitative data analysis are explored. Finally, consideration over ethical issues pertaining to the current research are explored and strategies are outlined that were attempted to address such issues.

3.2 Findings from literature review

A review of published literature exploring the experience of parents of SEN during the first lockdown garnered several findings. Research that explored the experiences

of parents of children with SEN were synthesised, the findings from which were compared. The experience of lockdown with their children was mostly described as a difficult and stressful time. Papers found participants felt overwhelmed with the number of daily tasks they were now responsible for and saw their mental health suffer. A prominent worry was how the physical and social constraints of lockdown would impact the future for their child, academically and emotionally. Parents had some positive experiences in lockdown, broadly related to spending more time with their children being an enriching experience. Parents of SEN found the time to be relaxing to an extent as they were not required to engage in the rigmarole of taking their child to school. Parents experienced a sense of pride in their ability to cope and lockdown brought to the surface stores of welcome resilience. Two prominent themes in the literature were feeling abandoned and need for respite and a large proportion of studies found that parents of SEN were struggling with challenging behaviour from their child, which emerged or worsened during lockdown.

The critique from the literature review gave impetus to explore the experiences of parents of SEN during lockdown further. The literature review identified relevant gaps in existing literature that informed the current methodological choices. It was noted that there were no studies specifically looking at experiences for parents of children with SEMH needs, and that the description of 'SEN' within most papers was vague and imprecise. Upon further scrutiny, the data analysis for a significant minority of studies did not appear to thread neatly from a sturdy theoretical viewpoint; despite claiming to be qualitative research, these studies utilised closed-ended/multiple choice questions and quantitative analysis/reporting. There were no studies that had a psychosocial ontological/epistemological grounding, which is a theoretical research viewpoint ideally suited for exploring inherently distressing

subject matter such as one's experience of lockdown. Finally, there were no studies that presented findings for each participant as separate case studies. It is argued below that giving the analytical depth to each participant individually is a vital first step to be able to extrapolate experiences to a wider group of mothers and therefore inform EP practice in more helpful manner.

3.3 Research questions

In line with the findings from the literature review, in accordance with the national/global context, and with reference to psychodynamic theories of SEMH needs, the research aimed to answer the questions as follows:

RQ1. How did mothers¹⁸ of primary-school aged children with SEMH needs experience lockdown?

RQ2. How did lockdown impact the mother's identity in relation to their son¹⁹?

RQ3. How were unconscious processes enacted within the mothers during lockdown?

3.4 Purpose

In consideration of the research questions outlined above, the purpose of this research was exploratory. An exploratory purpose was deemed appropriate as no

¹⁸ 'Mothers' as opposed to 'parents' was chosen here to reflect the eventual participant group of only women being recruited. This selection of only women was not deliberate but ended up being the participant group that was available for interview.

¹⁹ 'Son' as opposed to (the gender neutral) 'child' was chosen here to reflect the eventual participant group, that of mothers living with male children only. This selection of only 'sons' was not deliberate but ended up being the participant group that was available for interview.

previous research was available to draw testable hypothesis from due to the uniqueness of the context. The research explored the experiences of U.K. based parents during the government issued 'lockdown' period from the 23rd of March 2020 to the start of September, when their children returned to school. During this time, the U.K. government required all families to stay inside their home, only socializing with their household occupants and allowing minimal venturing outside of their home for either exercise or shopping for essentials. The research aim was to understand the experience of the participants during this time and represent their experience from their perspective.

The research sought to explore the experience of parents who lived with a primary-aged child with SEMH needs. This was justified due to emerging evidence from literature showing that parents of SEN had a uniquely challenging experience and no research had isolated SEMH needs in particular. The research assumed that the parent participants each had a unique experience of lockdown, but this experience was linked together by the contextual commonality of living through lockdown with a child with SEMH needs. The research aimed to explore the uniqueness of the participants' lockdown experiences through thematic and psychosocial analysis.

The research assumed that each mother would have had a unique experience in lockdown due to the physical and social constraints imposed onto them that changed their context. Psychodynamic theory suggests that changes in context and circumstance can impact the relational dynamics created between parents and their children (Salzberger-Wittenberg, 2013). Therefore, the research also aimed to explore the relational dynamics between the mother and child under the exceptional circumstance of lockdown, represented in their interactions, behaviour and feelings

towards their child during that time, and aspects of their mothering identity.

According to the underlying psychosocial ontology and epistemology, psychodynamic theory was then employed to understand how the lockdown context could have led to these dynamics being created.

3.5 Method

3.5.1 Design

A qualitative methodology was chosen to answer the research questions outlined above. Angen (2000) explains how certain aspects of the human experience, if explored only through quantitative means, would lead to reductionist findings. An understanding of parents' experiences during lockdown was deemed to be an example of such and therefore most suited to qualitative exploration. Qualitative methodology was also chosen due to its suitability for exploratory research aims (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Multiple qualitative research designs have been put forward to explore lived experiences, including interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA, Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Although both IPA and the psychosocial approach are designed for researching significant lived experiences of their participants, IPA is primarily interested in how the participant has made sense of their experience and aims to illicit the participant's perspective free from the interference of others (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). The psychosocial ontology and epistemology underpinning the current research believes that participants are defended against uncomfortable thoughts/feelings/beliefs and so their accounts should not be taken at 'face value'. It claims that it is necessary to apply psychodynamic theory to participant narratives, which are explored through the researcher's subjective experience of their

relationship with the participant. As IPA relies on the participants to be consciously aware and knowing of their own feelings and experiences, it was deemed inappropriate for the current research.

Furthermore, according to the research orientation, it was important to apply psychoanalytic theory to participant accounts to uncover the unconscious processes behind the experience of mothers in lockdown, not solely accessible from semi-structured interviews but more accessible from FANI. IPA does not originate from a psychodynamic tradition, so I further deemed it inappropriate for the current research.

3.5.2 Participants

3.5.2.1 Selection

The emerging research looking into the psychological impact of lockdown suggests that the isolation from other people and disconnection from one's typical daily routines could have led to significant mental health difficulties in a proportion of the U.K. population (ONS, 2020). Considering this, there was impetus to explore the experiences of families who had been battling with SEMH needs before lockdown was implemented, as it was suggested by that existing mental health difficulties were likely to be exacerbated further during lockdown (Brooks et al, 2020). Furthermore, due to my existing relationship with the primary-aged SEMH provision, I was uniquely placed to carry out research with the chosen participant group due to my access.

The intention for the research was to explore participants' experiences over lockdown in considerable depth as three separate case studies. This depth was facilitated by utilising data analysis from multiple dimensions. The sample size is

small due to the depth of analysis required to reach meaningful conclusions using a psychosocial approach (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013). The number of participants at three was thought to be a manageable number so as not overwhelm the scope of the research constraints, but enough to provide the ‘psychological space’ needed for comparison that does not lead to polarisation nor lapsing into dichotomic thinking.

The aim of the research was to explore the experience of mothers and the relational dynamics that emerge between a mother and her child in the unique circumstance of lockdown. As ‘being in lockdown’ is defined by, amongst other features, tight social restrictions and the disruption to normal social behaviour, it was deemed appropriate to exclude families that had regular visitors into the family home. This was deemed to threaten the specific social dynamics under exploration between mother and child, and potentially create a distinct atmosphere from one that can be defined as ‘being in lockdown’.²⁰

Table 5

Inclusion/exclusion criteria for participant recruitment

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternal care giver for child on roll at Caterpillars²¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is evidence that other family members or friends have been regularly and intermittently

²⁰ For Coral, her son Ryan intermittently left her home on the weekend to spend time with his birth mother, Coral’s sister. This circumstance was deemed not to exclude Coral for participation because, although his birth mother was a familial relation, she did not enter the family home. Therefore, the experience of Coral and the relational dynamics between Coral and Ryan could be deemed as created whilst in lockdown together and subsequently explored for the current research.

²¹ The name of the provision has been changed to protect anonymity.

	visiting the family home of the participant throughout the lockdown period
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living with the child for the duration of 'lockdown' (mid-March 2020 – September 2020) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mother periodically left the family home to work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child has had minimal attendance at school or any other educational provision outside of the home throughout this period 	

3.5.2.2 Recruitment

3.5.2.2.1 Procedure

The participants were recruited from parents of children attending a short-term educational provision called Caterpillars, a small provision for up to 16 primary-aged children. The children who attend Caterpillars have been identified by their mainstream school as having SEMH needs that cause challenging behaviour too severe to be managed in the mainstream setting. The placement of the children at Caterpillars is through application from their mainstream school, who are required to provide evidence for the child's challenging behaviour and evidence that reasonable adjustments have been made prior to application to accommodate the child's SEMH needs within the mainstream setting. The applications are collected centrally and placement at Caterpillars is decided by the local authority SEN panel. The children's attendance at Caterpillars was deemed appropriate evidence of their SEMH needs. The children all have EHCPs (either fully instated or in the process of being agreed.)

I had an existing working relationship with the majority of the children, parents and staff at Caterpillars as the provision had been assigned to me whilst training on

placement in the local authority. I had shadowed a parent play workshop that parents had attended and led intervention work with a large proportion of the children. I had carried out individual play-based intervention work with two out of the three participants' children, attended the annual review for one of these children, and spent some time with the third participant and her son during a play workshop outside of case work. I was therefore known to a greater or lesser extent by all three participants prior to interview.

The provision manager agreed to send out an email to all parents containing my information sheet. She advised me that, from her experience, the parents prefer to be contacted by telephone and she was not certain that email was the best way to reach them. She offered me their telephone numbers, which I politely declined due to the ethical implications of freedom to participate and withdrawal from the research. She suggested I could recruit participants by visiting Caterpillars at 'pick up' time at the end of the school day and ask for their phone numbers if they felt they wanted to participate. I did this on three occasions. Each parent was asked privately by the provision manager, as they arrived for pick up separately, if they wanted to speak to me about participating in my research project and, if they agreed, were directed over to me on the other side of the courtyard. I was then able to give a brief description of the research aims/requirements and hand them an information sheet (appendix 9) in person. This process was completed in the time taken for their son to be collected from class by the provision manager, which took no more than a few minutes. I asked if they would be happy to be contacted by phone and called roughly a week later to arrange consent forms (appendix 10) to be filled in and a suitable date/time for the two interviews. Seven parents initially showed interest in participating in person, I collected the phone numbers of five parents on paper (that I promptly

destroyed once their numbers had been transferred onto my password protected device) and three parents eventually were formally recruited as participants. The rest of the parents either told the manager they were not interested or indicated to me across the courtyard that they were not interested.

3.5.2.2 Ethical Implications

It is recognised that the participant group recruited could be considered vulnerable and hard to reach. A method of recruitment based on consideration of such unique characteristics of this participant group was appropriate, and it was necessary for me to flexibly amend my recruitment procedure with changing information and advice given to me by the provision manager, someone who had built a trusting relationship with these parents and who knew their preference for communication style.

Haverkamp (2005) argues that, within qualitative traditions, decisions around recruitment design should be “fluid” (page 147) and open to amendment on a “case-by-case” (page 147) basis according to a continuous process of ethical decision making. It was ethically inappropriate to receive their phone numbers directly from her; the parents had not consented for such personal information to be given out and, even if they had, ‘cold calling’ somebody to recruit them for a research study is, in my opinion, tantamount to intrusive and coercive recruitment practice. However, employing an approach whereby potential participants could meet me in person and be greeted by a ‘friendly face’ that they could be assured is trusted by another professional they know, could be described as relational in nature. This could be considered a more culturally responsive and sensitive approach better suited to a vulnerable and hard to reach demographic. Furthermore, as it is more culturally considered, this approach therefore ensures fairer access to participation than if I

had disregarded the advice from the provision manager and adhered to my original method of recruitment of sending them an email.

A critique of the recruitment approach is discussed in further detail, as it relates to dynamics of power between the EP researcher and participant, in section 3.8 Ethics.

3.5.3 Procedure

3.5.3.1 FANI

Due to the psychosocial epistemology and ontology of the current research, FANI was deemed the most suited method of capturing data. FANI is distinct from other qualitative interviewing methods, and it was developed by Hollway and Jefferson (2013) from biographical interpretive methods (such as the biographical narrative interview method, BNIM). Narrative interview styles (BNIM and FANI) put the interviewer not into the role of 'questioner', but of 'active listener', by bringing to the interview a few, open questions, which aim to elicit stories from the participants. The interview purposely holds little constraint or structure to it (Clarke and Hoggett, 2019). The interviewer encourages the interviewee to elaborate further by listening closely to their specific choice of language/phrases and building 'questions' off these throughout the interview, with the aim of becoming a "facilitating catalyst" (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013, p.34) to the creation of their own story. The need for exploration of meaning behind the actual words used by the participants stem from the belief that the researcher cannot assume a shared meaning of such words between the researcher and participant (Hollway and Jefferson, 2008). This style of questioning was designed to produce data devoid of rational and logic-driven descriptions of experiences.

BNIM was considered for the current research as an interview method as it is psychoanalytically informed and shares a similar fundamental premise and purpose as FANI; that being to allow interviewees to construct their own narrative based on their unique agenda (Hollway and Jefferson, 2008). However, the key development from BNIM is the introduction of free association. Hollway and Jefferson argue that if interviewees use free association to arrive at narrative accounts, instead of being asked to give accounts that have narrative structures or adhere to narrative 'rules', the interviewer is more likely to reach participant rhetoric driven by "unconscious logic" (p34) rather than conscious logic. In accordance with the epistemological belief that knowledge is created between a defended researcher and defended participant, an interview method that aims to access unconscious lines of thinking was deemed most suitable.

The epistemological position that participants are 'defended subjects' ties into foundational belief in psychosocial research that participants are not the authority in their own experiences and have psychic parts to themselves unknown to their conscious awareness (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013). Participants are encouraged to follow spontaneous lines of narrative association as a means of bringing emotively motivated content to the interview, as opposed to more conventional or logically informed narrative content that might skim the surface of their experience as a whole. The researcher is then better able to access richer self-reflective insights from the participants that are more likely to reveal unconscious defence mechanisms.

The overarching premise for FANI is that relational interaction between the researcher and participant is relevant to the data produced. It was developed on the principle that establishing a rapport between the interviewer and participant produces more fruitful data. In their study on 'fear of crime', Hollway and Jefferson described

how participants shared more in-depth information about their past experiences due to feeling "...interesting, relevant and valued." (pp. 41), which was actively facilitated by the researcher through a relational style of interviewing designed to build trust.

3.5.3.1.1 *The first interview*

To define the context of our interview, the interview started by exploring the physical limitations of lockdown for the participant to establish the context of their experience.

Questioning was as follows:

- During the national lockdown between the end of March and beginning of September when (child's name) went back to Caterpillars, tell me about your living arrangements, including how many other people you saw/spoke to and how many other people your son spoke to/saw.
- How often did you leave your home?
- Which rooms did you stay in?
- Do you have any pets?

This starting question was designed to establish a rapport and show my interest:

- As I don't know (child's name) very well, tell me a bit about them.

The interview prompts were as follows;

- Tell me your experience in lockdown with (child's name).
- Tell me about your relationship with (child's name) during lockdown.²²

The themes, events or experiences the participants brought to the interview that I directed participants to explore further were the ones related to their experience interacting (physically or mentally) with their child or ones related to relational

²² Supplementary questions in appendix 12.

dynamics between them and their child. I also explored relational experiences with other people in their household or social circle as it pertained to their experience with their child. These relational experiences were related back to the context of being in lockdown, namely exploring how the physical and social restrictions led to the relational dynamics that ensued.

3.5.3.1.2 The second interview

The second interview took place a week after the first interview. It explored initial hypotheses I held about the participants' experiences with them through constructed questions unique to each participant. The questions were constructed from themes, experiences, feelings and opinions that arose during the first interview. There was particular focus on areas that appeared to bring participants some internal conflict or where their account held some tension, as, according to psychodynamic theory, it was within these moments the participant might become defended against the psychic discomfort and project such feelings into me (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013). Evidence for areas where they held internal conflict or tension came from my both my empathic and affective experience of the interview (evidenced in my research diary, through psychosocial supervision and listening back to the interviews) and "contradictions, avoidances, or hesitations" (Hollway and Jefferson, p.40) within the interview transcript.

Questions were arrived at from themes, which were constructed following immersion in the data through repeated relistening to the interviews. I arrived at the themes through supervision and used index cards (appendix 11), writing down themes as they arose and adding to the card throughout the interview as more

evidence contributed to the theme.²³ If a theme did not have enough significant interview content associated with it by the end of the interview it was discarded, unless it was felt to hold significance or that the line of conversation was being 'avoided' for reasons associated with psychodynamic defence.

Although the interview questions were written ahead of the interview (unlike the first interview) the core principles of FANI interviewing were still upheld once participants were answering the questions. These principles included exploring the language used by the participant only, prioritising rapport between us and encouraging free association by asking participants to continue with their line of thought. The interviews were therefore supplemented with the same questions as from the first interview (appendix 12). Questions were also posed around how the participants past experiences had impacted their experience of lockdown:

- Have you heard that from anyone else in your past?
- Where do you think that opinion come from?
- Have you used that coping strategy in the past?
- Did you ever feel that way before lockdown?

Questions were also posed to explore how specific elements of the participant's experiences compared with their experience before lockdown:

- Was that better or worse before lockdown?
- Did you feel that way before lockdown?

²³ For Coral, the same process was used, but I used a word document instead (appendix 11).

3.5.3.2 Remote online video-call interviewing

The interviews were conducted whilst the Covid-19 pandemic was ongoing in the U.K. Therefore, social distancing was required between anyone from different households. Due to this government guidance, all interviews took place remotely via the online video-call platform 'Zoom'. Jowett, Peel and Shaw (2011) argue that interviewers need to consider how they will present as an empathic and sincere person whilst conducting remote qualitative interviews via an internet platform, as this is more difficult to achieve without specific consideration. They suggest multiple meetings to support the building of rapport between remote interviewers and interviewees. Lo Lacono, Symonds and Brown (2016) also discuss the 'problem' of building rapport via an online platform, but firmly state that it does not need to be a problem if there is an established relationship with the interviewee beforehand, as in the current research, and potentially can be preferable with interviewees who find in person contact difficult to cope with.

All three participants easily used the zoom link sent to them the day before the interview and had very few technical difficulties with their internet or video/sound functions of the platform. Fortunately, the participants were recruited *in person* from Caterpillars and, due to having worked in Caterpillars as their allocated EP, the parents either knew me personally or their son knew me from individual work. Therefore, I found that establishing a relationship and rapport with participants over zoom straightforward.²⁴

²⁴ One difficulty was encountered during Emma's second interview. Due to a slow internet connection, there was a slight time delay for Emma's speech to reach me. This made it difficult to establish the

Although I felt rapport was established between myself and the participants, and the building of rapport was somewhat mediated by meeting on two occasions (Jowett, Peel and Shaw, 2011), I wondered whether in person interviews might have produced a closer connection and deeper relationship. This is because we could have taken in each other's whole body, associated body language, sensory feedback from in person contact, and been able to have eye-contact with each other, increasing the 'three dimensionality' of our encounter (Lo Lacono, Symonds and Brown, 2016). Lo Lacono, Symonds and Brown (2016) recommended in person interviews for subjects that might induce uncomfortable emotions as they have found responses to such intimate topics to lack depth. According to psychosocial epistemological beliefs, all participants in any interview context are defended against such uncomfortable emotions, so Hollway and Jefferson (2013) stress that emotional containment of the interviewee is essential to illicit true and complex participant accounts in FANI methods. This containment may have been more difficult for the participants to experience via Zoom. Furthermore, the extent of the rapport established between the interviewer and interviewee significantly impacts the production of fruitful narrative content (Hollway and Jefferson), which leads me to consider the transcript content that might have been lost due to the remoteness of our contact.

flow of conversation as on occasion I inadvertently 'interrupted' her as I didn't know she had started speaking again.

3.6 Data analysis

It was decided that two stages of analysis would be most appropriate for the current research; thematic analysis based on the procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013) and psychosocial analysis based on the methods outlined by Hollway and Jefferson (2013) and Clarke and Hoggett (2019). Two types of analysis were utilised to build a richer portrait of each mother's unique identity and to honour the complexity of the participant experiences.

3.6.1 Thematic analysis

An inductive approach to thematic analysis was taken with regard to the participants' descriptions of their experience, contextual factors and aspects of their mothering identity. This was deemed appropriate due to the exploratory purpose of the research. However, with regard to developing themes/subthemes to explore unconscious mechanisms in response to the mothers' experiences, it was recognised that certain verbal cues were sought out as evidence (contradictions, avoidances, or hesitations etc) and psychodynamic theory was held in mind whilst analysing the data. I argue below that the weight of this pre-determined lens through which the data was analysed amounts to a deductive approach.

3.6.1.1 Inductive thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is justified in qualitative research as it can be used as an inductive 'bottom-up' approach (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Inductive coding is a process where the codes originate from within the data. Analysis of themes for each mother based on Braun and Clarke's systematic six phase approach was used to answer RQ1 and RQ2.

3.6.1.2 Deductive thematic analysis

According to Braun and Clarke (2013), it is impossible to be entirely inductive when coding data, as the researcher's subjectivities mean there is always meaning brought to analysis from them that has not been entirely 'found' in the content of the data. This assumption is also a foundational aspect of the psychosocial research approach overall, namely that the researcher's subjectivities contribute to meaning making at both the data production and analysis stages. It was therefore important within this research to have the opportunity to take both an inductive and deductive approach with the data. This was important for three reasons; to honour the importance of a systematic content-driven process that respects the participants' chosen rhetoric (inductive), an appreciation that the researcher's subjectivity contributes to meaning making, and to provide the opportunity to apply a psychoanalytic lens to the data in line with the theoretical underpinnings of psychosocial research (deductive).

By spanning across both inductive and deductive approaches to data analysis, semantic and latent levels of meaning were reached. Clarke and Hoggett (2019) describe the intention of data analysis within psychosocial research as to go "beyond the discourse" (p.19), that being to reach the meaning behind purely what the participant says. However, the authors warn against 'wild analysis' that relies too heavily on the researcher's subjective meaning making and ends up straying far from the participant's conscious intended narrative. By carrying out both inductive systematic thematic analysis and deductive psychoanalytically informed thematic analysis, I aimed to protect against this risk and ultimately improved credibility of the findings.

Deductive thematic analysis was used to uncover the participants' unconscious experience of lockdown. Repeated patterns of discourse that hinted at defended content (for example contradictions, avoidances, hesitations, flawed/illogical reasoning, sudden changes in tone, use of platitudes, laughter, etc) were looked for and coded as evidence of certain defence mechanisms theorised within the literature (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013). These codes were subsequently grouped into subthemes and then overarching themes. Further detail of the analysis procedure is outlined below. Combined with the psychosocial analysis, outlined below, this deductive thematic analysis contributed to answering RQ3.

3.6.1.3 Procedure

Thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013) was carried out through six distinct stages. Both inductive and deductive thematic analysis was carried out simultaneously to answer all three RQs. Outlined below are the analytical stages that were applied to the data.

Stage one – Familiarisation with the data

The process began with the transcription of the interview content from audio and visual recordings (transcription sample in appendix 13). It was important for the familiarization process that I completed this myself. In accordance with the methodological design, both the words the participant used and the body language/speech patterns/vocal tone were included in the transcription. A transcription key was used to outline these moments in the transcription, such as underlining words that the participant stressed or putting words in speech marks when they were appearing to mimic what another person had said. Familiarisation also included several readings of the transcripts, alongside watching the video

recording of the interviews several times. No formal coding was started until this process was completed. Notes were added to my research diary during this stage if thoughts/feelings emerged whilst familiarizing myself with the data.

Stage two – Generating initial codes

The online data analysis software NVivo 12 (2020) was used to code the transcripts. According to the recommendations of Braun and Clarke (2013), all meaningful segments of speech content in the transcripts were coded for possible underlying significance to either the participant's experience in lockdown or their mothering identity or evidence for unconscious processes. Inductive codes were generated as they appeared in the transcripts of participant accounts. Evidence of defensive verbal patterns were coded deductively to inform the production of themes/subthemes relating to the mother's unconscious experience as well. Some text had multiple codes. Contextual factors were also coded, including descriptions of son's personality, espoused parenting practices, helpful/unhelpful environmental factors, current circumstances, and past experiences. Both interviews for each participant were coded one after another, and the coding for each participant was finished in its entirety before moving to the next participant. To increase trustworthiness of code generating, a sample of coding was sent to my research supervisor to review and once codes had been generated for all six interview transcripts the codes were reviewed to check nothing had been missed. Figures 7 - 14 show examples of how transcripts from Emma's first and second interview were coded. These examples were codes that collated to form the subtheme 'being with you drains me of energy', which contributed to the theme 'drained of energy to cope with parenting' within the 'Experience of Lockdown' section of her narrative.

Figure 3

Codes 'being with son being effortful' and 'being with son feeling draining'

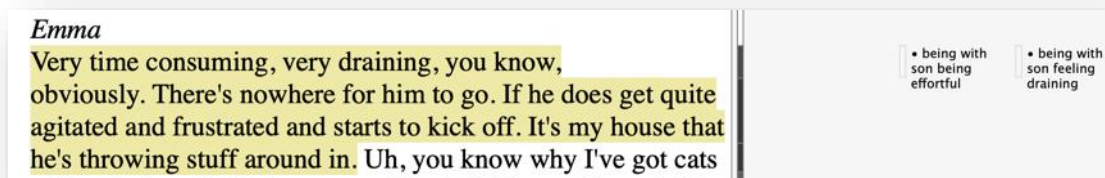


Figure 4

Code 'feeling drained that son's anger has to stay in her house'

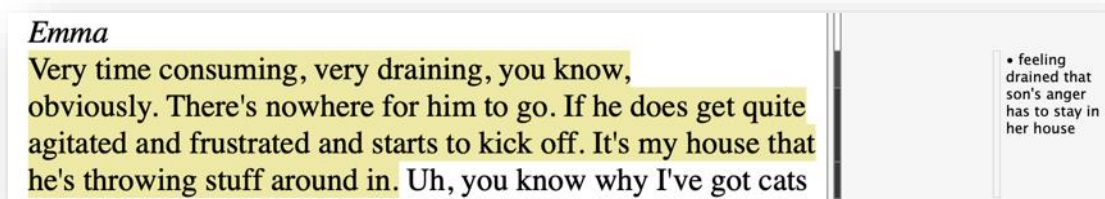


Figure 5

Code 'feeling tired during son's angry outbursts'

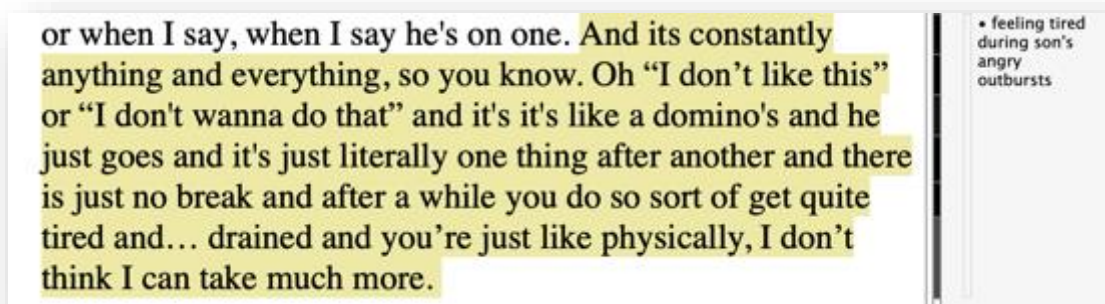


Figure 6

Code 'having no break from son's anger causing her to feel physically drained of energy'

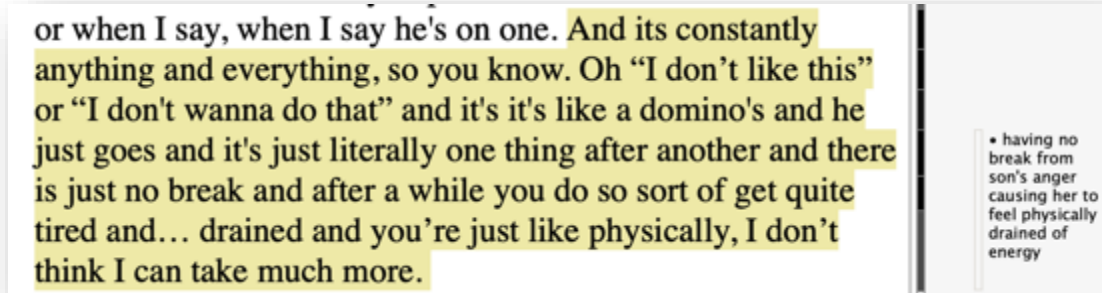


Figure 7

Code 'crying away from son helping her to muster the energy to be with son again'

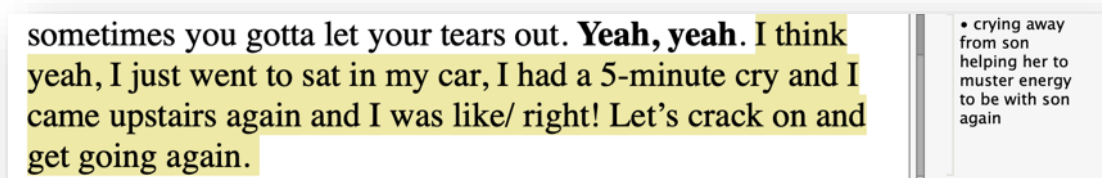


Figure 8

Code 'releasing her tears making her feel energised enough to return to son's anger'

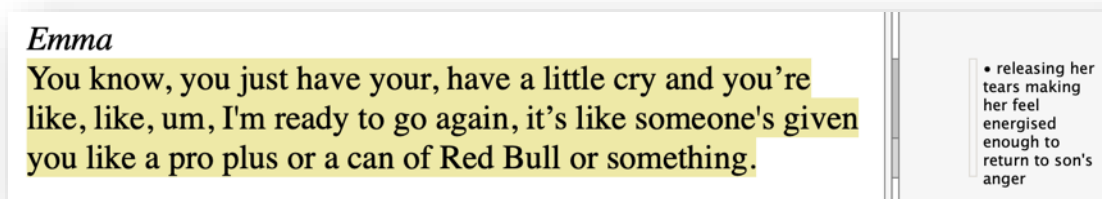


Figure 9**Code 'regaining the energy to fulfil her obligations to her son'**

positive, **OK** like, I can, I can calm him down, I can sort it out, I can get back on track. I can, you know, just get back to what needs to be done. And not be so stressed.

• regaining the energy to fulfill her obligations to her son

Figure 10**Code 'being with son feeling draining'**

going. After a while it is literally like... (puts hands up to face) It's just like your head (hands up to face, gesturing), just too much like it's like you've got a headache but you haven't got a headache. It's like. Very just draining, I don't even know

• being with son feeling draining

Figure 11**Code 'son being hard work'**

feel that she's like neglected or she's left out or I don't care as much. That's not the case, just obviously. You know Bailey is a bit hard work, but now things are, everything's sort of

• son being hard work

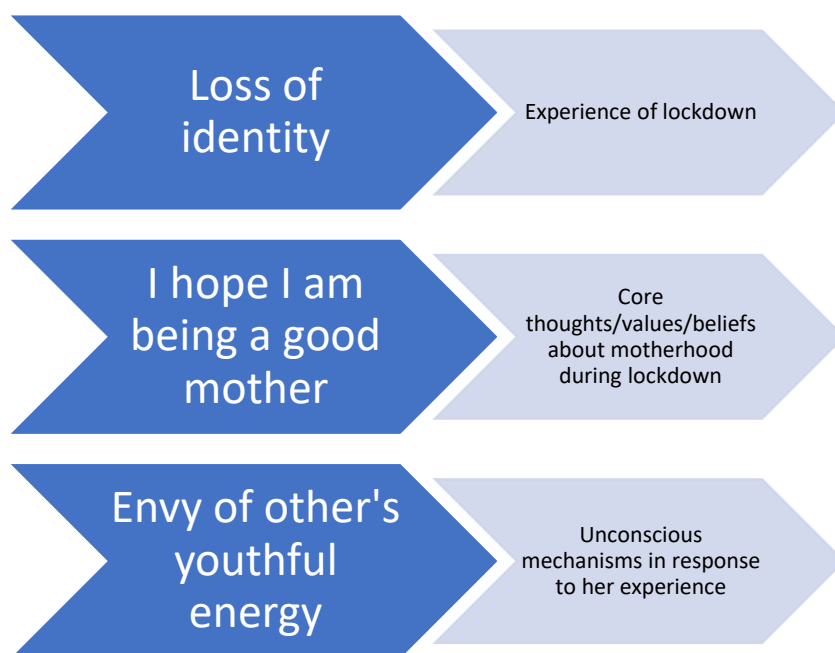
Stage three – Searching for themes

Codes across each participant accounts that shared a similar or unifying underlying meaning were grouped into clusters around a theme. Some codes applied to multiple themes. Once searching for themes had concluded, themes had emerged that related uniquely to each participant. These themes were organized into their appropriate category according to meaning and answering of specific research

questions. Three examples of themes that emerged from Liz's interview transcripts and the subsequent section they were organised into are outlined in figure 16 below.

Figure 12

Where themes were organised into different sections of Liz's tree



Stage four – Reviewing themes

The themes were reviewed to check for relevance and quality. This was achieved by reading all coded parts of the transcript assigned to each theme to see whether they were felt to be appropriately placed within that theme. Furthermore, the interview transcripts were read again with themes alongside them to establish that the themes felt appropriate for the interview content as a whole.

Stage five – Naming themes

Themes were finally named and briefly described as to content of the coded segments of transcript that they were borne from.

Stage six – Reporting

The findings of the thematic analysis were reported in the results chapter of the thesis. The findings are presented as three lists of themes and subthemes answering RQs 1, 2 and 3, and an additional descriptive account of the psychosocial analysis to further answer RQ 3.

Allocation of words within the current write up will be heavily skewed towards the findings chapter, with subsequently fewer words than expected allocated to the discussion chapter. This is due to the inherent discursive quality of reflexive thematic analysis, such that the themes and subthemes will be discussed for meaning and content after being introduced (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2020) recommend researchers allocate a greater word count to reporting the results of thematic analysis, compared to other forms of qualitative data analysis, because “quality expectations and contextualisation, research reflexivity and illustrating findings with data extracts demand more manuscript pages” (Braun and Clarke, 2020, p19). They warn that when researchers are constrained to limited word counts this can lead to poorer quality conclusions. Additional supporting quotes have been included in appendix 14 out of ethical ‘respect’ (explained further in 3.8.5) to the participants’ experiences.

3.6.2 Psychosocial Analysis

Frosh and Young (2017) argue that applying psychoanalytic theory to a participant’s interview content can enliven the content and bring the interpretation of their narrative more depth. This is because the method allows the researcher to explore the conscious and unconscious reasoning behind the participant’s chosen freely associated rhetoric. Deductive application of psychoanalytic theory to the data

in the current research aimed to unpick the complexity of each mother-son dynamic, and to deepen my understanding of how the social context (lockdown) interacted with the internal psychology of the participant to construct their narrative.

Hollway and Jefferson (2013) promote data analysis that maintains a picture of the participant experience as a 'whole', assigning the term 'gestalt' to describe what psychosocial data analysis aims to reach. The 'gestalt' is the holistic impression of the participant that has not been deconstructed into fragmented parts. The process consists of considering how the participant is constructed in one's own mind from the multiple access points collected during the data production period. The access points in the current research were the interview transcripts, video recordings of the interviews, my thesis diary, accounts of feelings/thoughts coming up before and after each interview, and reflections during supervision.

Transcripts consisted not only of the actual verbal content, but they also contained body language, change of tone, hesitations, changes of pitch, use of a 'dramatic' voice, laughter/tears and any reactions to environmental disturbances. During the transcription process I wrote notes in my research diary with emotional reactions to the interview content, my own behavioural reactions during the interviews and personal memos to contribute to the analysis. This further stratum of data brings the researcher closer to the participant's 'gestalt' as, according to Hollway and Jefferson (2013), it can highlight the participant's internal conflicts, unresolved thoughts, irrational explanations or faulty logic, and points of emotional tension/discomfort. These defended elements of participant experience are seen as windows into unconscious internal processes; they point to what has been left 'unsaid' due to unconscious defensive strategies. My emotional reactions and notable behavioural changes gave insight into unconscious projection from

participants and indicated projective identification between us (Hollway and Jefferson).

3.6.2.1 Psychosocial supervision

One further way of gathering evidence towards the conclusions I drew from the qualitative data gathered is through psychosocial supervision. This form of supervision was provided in addition to research supervision and was facilitated by a different Tavistock and Portman tutor. The aim of this psychosocial supervision, distinct from research supervision, was to discuss my emotional response to the interaction with the participants and explore possible unconscious process that could be underlying this. This psychoanalytically informed exercise was necessary when considering the psychosocial ontology/epistemology grounding the research, that participants' discourse may leave out explorations of certain topics due to unconscious defence mechanisms, which the researcher can only uncover through an exploration of psychoanalytic communication in the form of projection and transference. The psychosocial supervision I received was in service of understanding the participant's experience of lockdown in greater depth and complexity.

3.6.2.2 Procedure

A whole day was spent immersing myself in the access points for each participant. I repeatedly read through all transcripts, watched the video recordings of the participants, recollected supervision reflections and read through diary entries. Throughout this process I noted themes that emerged relating to potential unconscious process between the mother and son dyads, and I collated the

evidence for those themes. Themes were noted that pertained to thoughts/feelings about/towards their son, interactions between them, experiences with their son and experiences with others that participants felt connected to their son in some way. This immersion culminated in the writing of a 'pen portrait' for each participant, which was a rich account of the participants relational experience in lockdown as a whole, including previous/childhood experience that they felt had impacted their experience of lockdown. This collation of themes and the 'pen portrait' was used to write the parts of the results chapter relating to the psychosocial data analysis. At this point, psychoanalytic theory was applied to the themes and content in the 'pen portrait', as a form of deductive 'top-down' analysis. The individual case analysis of themes based on Hollway and Jefferson's (2013) psychosocial approach contributed to answering RQ3 in conjunction with the deductive thematic analysis (outlined above).

3.6.2.3 Combining the thematic and psychosocial

Both types of analysis of each mother's data were brought together to form an encapsulating sentence written at the start of each of their sections. This sentence introduced each mother's narrative and supported the formation of each mother's 'gestalt'.

3.6.2.4 Psychoanalytic Theory

As outlined in the introduction, the research is viewed through a psychosocial ontology and epistemology. Several psychoanalytic concepts were used as the lens through which the researcher experience was conceptualised, and the data produced by participants was viewed.

3.6.2.4.1 *Defence Mechanisms*

Defence mechanisms are coping strategies people unconsciously use to protect their psyches during intolerable emotional experiences, such that, during these (short or long term) moments of despair the feeling is 'defended against' and 'not felt' consciously (Bibby, 2010). Examples of defence mechanisms are splitting and projection.

3.6.2.4.2 *Splitting*

Klein (1935) theorised that, due to an infant's intense feelings of vulnerability to both physical (hungry, cold, tired) and emotional (alone, forgotten, frustrated) threats to their survival, and with their entire survival dependent on an external object (mother/primary caregiver), the infant manages this situation by entering into paranoid-schizoid frame of mind, whereby the objects in their world are either all good or all bad. Waddel (1998) described how people can move into paranoid-schizoid positions in times of stress or emotional discomfort.

3.6.2.4.3 *Projection*

Projection is the process by which somebody unconsciously feels overwhelmingly intense negative emotions that they are not able to integrate into their conscious awareness, and so 'projects' these feelings towards another person who acts as a vessel. The process is initially seen in the 'splitting off' of the undesirable parts of oneself as an infant towards the mother's 'bad breast' (Klein, 1935). *Projective identification* occurs when the vessel identifies with the emotions, such that they behave according to the emotions the projection contains (Holmes, 2015).

3.6.2.4.3 Containment

Bion (1962) labelled projective identification between mother and infant as a 'container-contained' dynamic, describing the process of the mother's projective identification with her infant as how the infant learns to integrate overwhelmingly negative emotions into their sense of self, and increasingly feel emotionally 'safe' in her company. Containment of emotions can be facilitated throughout a person's life. Notably, later in life, containing figures such as a therapist, teacher or interviewer can emulate the containment of emotions first experienced by somebody from their mother (Henry, 1999).

3.6.2.4.4 Transference

Klein (1952) extended the work that Freud began on identifying the phenomenon of transference. Kleinian transference broadly refers to how relational conflicts you have experienced in your past are brought forward (or 'transferred') onto relationships in your present. More specifically, Klein (1952) describes how unresolved feelings towards key relational figures in one's early life can colour how you perceive interactions with figures that stir up similar conflicting feelings. *Counter transference* is enacted when the figure onto which those transferred feelings land has an emotional reaction to them, a reaction that cannot rationally be attributed to the objective quality of the interaction (Salzberger-Wittenberg, 2013).

3.6.3 Compare and contrast analysis

Eventually, at the discursive point in the research process, experiences of all the mothers will be looked at as a whole. According to findings from the literature review, there is a need for transferable research findings highlighting contextual factors that either mitigated or worsened the negative psychological impact for

mothers locked down with children with SEMH needs. Although the group level findings were not produced to be generalisable to all families in a similar situation, it is hoped that the identification of a universal quality of experience across participants can go some way to open discussions around what might have happened for other families and ways they can be supported in the future (discussed further in Relevance to EP practice). However, to respect participant narratives on both ethical (discussed further in Ethics) and intellectual grounds (according to the orientation of the research), applying psychoanalytic theory to understand the unique experiences of each individual separately was also an imperative.

3.7 Trustworthiness

Angen (2000) describes how interpretivist-leaning research within qualitative methodologies should consider alternative measures of legitimacy than ones that have their roots disguised within a positivist ontology. According to Angen, research methodology does not need to be built under the constraints of 'certainty through validity' to ensure rigor. She therefore proposes alternative paradigms for assessing trustworthiness of research, other than validity, reliability and generalisability, as outlined below.

3.7.1 Credibility

How to produce valid and reliable knowledge is a debated issue in qualitative research. Within quantitative traditions, ensuring objectivity of the researcher, so as to prevent researcher bias when analysing data, is deemed one way to protect the validity of the research findings (Angen, 2000). However, within the psychosocial epistemology it is believed that the participants' 'thinking about' their experience is created within the container-contained interaction between them and the researcher.

Hollway (2008) argues that, although this belief around the creation of knowledge appears to align with constructionist ideology (that 'objectivity', in the realist sense, cannot be obtained, as no knowledge exists apart from the person who created it to objectively observe (Guba and Lincoln, 1994)), objectivity from a psychoanalytic perspective can be arrived at by utilising the subjectivity of the researcher as a tool for the elucidation of truth. Furthermore, whilst the researcher is immersing themselves in the data during psychosocial analysis, the aim is to try to access the participant's experience by moving psychically closer to them and allowing them to overwhelm your conscious and unconscious thoughts.

In psychosocial research, rather than attempting to remain a separate entity to the participant and retain the ability to study them without impacting them (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), the researcher's objectivity is defined as the ability to separate their *own experience* from the *experience of the participant* (Hollway, 2008), which can be achieved through both ethical safeguards (3.8), but chiefly an awareness and responsibility for projective identification that occurs between the researcher-participant dyad. As described above, this was explored during psychosocial supervision, within which I brought extracts of my research diary and interview transcripts to reflexively explore. Supervision is deemed an essential aspect of data analysis in psychosocial research to protect against the findings being purely a projection of the participant's experience from the researcher's perspective (Clarke and Hogget, 2009).

Member checking is the process by which initial hypotheses around the participant's experiences are presented back to the participants for clarification that the researcher has understood them correctly (Creswell, 1998). It allows participants to confirm or reject the researcher's interpretation of their narrative so as to increase

the credibility of final conclusions drawn. The second interview acted as this to an extent, as I was able to present initial developing hypotheses back to the participant for them to either embrace or reject. Furthermore, although credibility was sought through the measures described above, when analysing the data, the emerging hypotheses were not viewed as indisputable certainties. Instead, they were seen as contextual and therefore open to alternative explanation, in accordance with the inherent role that my subjectivity played in their formation.

3.7.2 Relevance to EP profession

For qualitative research to be considered legitimate, the extent of its relevance to the current context should be considered (Angen, 2000). In the current research, the sample was small, and it was not intended to represent the whole population of parents who lived with primary pupils with SEMH needs during lockdown. Therefore, once the thesis has been disseminated to a wider audience, the findings are not intended to be generalised to experiences of other parents in a similar scenario. The findings from psychosocial analysis aimed to provide an in-depth picture of each participant's experience as separate case studies (Clarke and Hoggett, 2019) according to their unique contextual circumstances. Therefore, the intention of 'transferring' their experiences to other parents of children with SEMH needs in lockdown could be considered inappropriate.

However, I argue that without dedicating the significant amount of time and resources to each mother separately, and therefore allowing the complexities and ambivalences within the gestalt of each one's narrative as separate entities to emerge, the universality of lockdown's impact on all three mothers could not have been uncovered. The findings were eventually compared between all three participants in the discussion and I present universal themes, one which could be

transferred to wider populations of parents in a similar scenario and tested for generalisability in further research by EPs. To consider the universal themes/trends between participants holds relevance for the practice and research of educational psychologists (EPs). Practicing EPs could consider the emotional and lasting impact of the lockdown on families containing a child with SEMH needs and adapt their practice accordingly, and furthermore, they could consider the experience of parents in lockdown for extrapolation to parents of SEN in other 'locked down' scenarios (such as school refusal, exclusion etc.)

3.8 Ethics

When ensuring the research was conducted ethically, there were several ethical issues to consider pertaining uniquely to the research being a qualitative study (Haverkamp, 2005). Ethical approval was granted by the ethics committee of the university I attended (appendix 15). Permission was granted by the principal EP in the local authority the research took place in (appendix 16).

3.8.1 Participant information

Participants were provided with an information sheet (appendix 9) upon recruitment that contained information about the aims of the research, the requirements of participation (interview structure etc.), anonymity of their names and identifiable characteristics, how their data will be protected, and assurance on their right to withdraw from the research at any point. Participants signed a consent form (appendix 10) that asked them to initial that they understood all the information above and were asked to consent to the interview being video and audio recorded via the integrated 'Zoom' function. This information was reiterated at the start of each

interview. The purpose of providing participants with this depth of information about the research was to ensure that their consent was as informed as possible.

The phrase 'as informed as possible' is used above to represent the contradiction inherent in applying this ethical principle to qualitative research (Haverkamp, 2005), and more specifically psychosocial research. Attempting to fully inform participants of what the interview might be like for them could be considered futile, as the methodology is based on the epistemological belief that they will be defended against anxieties and therefore will have unconscious feelings/thoughts about the process unknown to them. Furthermore, the purpose of eliciting free association is to prevent interviewees entering down descriptive paths according to what they think the researcher wants to hear about (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013). Therefore, it was important to keep any initial description of the study the participants received upfront as brief as possible, but therefore possibly reducing their access to robust information about my research questions or aims. Hollway and Jefferson (2013) argue that this withholding of information up front is in service of the psychosocial methodology, which ultimately produces better insights into the participant experience, therefore affording them a greater level of respect (3.8.5).

Considering this, it is important in such research to ensure that participants are afforded the appropriate 'duty of care' throughout the process, from recruitment all the way to dissemination. A thoughtful recruitment process must be employed and amended flexibly in line with emerging pertinent information about the participant group, which considers the imbalance of power inherent in the researcher-researched dynamic and prevents against participants feeling any sense of pressure or coercion to participate. Furthermore, results must be reported sensitively back to

participants in a non-judgemental manner that protects against their distress upon reading.

3.8.2 Confidentiality

Any identifiable characteristics of the participants or participant context were changed to pseudonyms to protect the participants' identity. As the interviews were conducted via the remote online video-call platform, 'Zoom', participants were also advised to find a 'confidential space' in their home to have the interview.²⁵

3.8.3 Data protection

Participant data, including interview transcripts, video/audio recordings and documents with identifiable characteristics, was stored on password protected and encrypted devices and destroyed once the thesis was submitted. Data was handled in accordance with guidelines outlined in the Data Protection Act 2018. Data produced through the remote online video-call platform Zoom (used for interviews) is compliant with General Data Protections Regulations (GDPR).

3.8.4 Duty of care

Ensuring care is taken for the participant's wellbeing should thread through all aspects of one's methodology (Clarke and Hoggett, 2019). For the current methodology, providing a containing environment not only contributes to the formation of knowledge (1.3.2) but also works to ensure participants feel supported whilst sharing some potentially quite uncomfortable thoughts and feelings associated

²⁵ Emma's first interview was sporadically carried out in the presence of her son, Bailey. She was asked whether she would prefer if the interview was rearranged for a time when she could be alone but decided to continue to be interviewed under those circumstances.

to their experience in lockdown. Hollway and Jefferson (2013) describe how containment within the interviewer-interviewee relationship contributes significantly towards more authentic expressions of the participant's emotional experience, often emotional expressions that are profoundly painful. As in the relationship between a psychoanalyst and patient, with sufficient containment, the interviewee is able to explore uncharted lines of thinking that were previously inaccessible to them due to historic defence mechanisms (such as splitting).

In the current research, containment was pursued by employing active listening during the interviews. Active listening encompassed several strategies; endeavouring to 'stay with' participants' descriptions if they became upset by not changing the subject or attempting to reassure, summarising and clarifying participant narratives using their language/phrasing, using open non-verbal signalling at the start of the interviews to build rapport and trust, and reacting authentically to participant accounts with facial and verbal expression. On a practical level, participants were asked at the end of each interview whether they required a list of further support services and participants were contacted a month after the final interview to check on their wellbeing.

Duty of care also includes ensuring the participant's experiences were not misrepresented in the findings or conclusions by the researcher, which can be achieved by them recording their emotional reaction to interviews to decrease the likelihood that their reactions cloud true interpretation. Clarke and Hoggett (2019) promote the use of reflexive field notes, a strategy used in the current research in the form of a research diary. Measures taken to ensure the credibility of research findings (3.7) also contributed to decreasing the chance participant's experiences were misrepresented. However, Hollway and Jefferson argue that by taking a

psychosocial research approach, as in the current research, the research can produce findings that moreover encompass the complexity of human experience. By their reasoning, this complexity leads to accounts that are “truer” (p.144) depictions of experience and therefore more representative than accounts arrived at through methodology that takes the participant’s rhetoric ‘at face value’.

3.8.5 Honesty, sympathy and respect

The ethical principles considered pertaining specifically to psychosocial research are described by Hollway and Jefferson (2013) to be honesty, sympathy and respect. Honesty is the commitment to apply the same analytical techniques consistently across all parts of the data, regardless of how much or little they confirm or deny developing hypotheses. It also means ensuring there is appropriate and substantial evidence for any claims made regarding the participant’s experience. Sympathy is ensuring the researcher’s conclusions about a participant’s experience are grounded in compassion, empathy and understanding. Ensuring ‘sympathy’ in psychosocial research means not applying harsh and overly critical judgements to participant accounts but using our understanding of the complexity and inconsistency of human identity to guide conclusions drawn. From my understanding, being ‘sympathetic’ towards my participants does not mean feeling sorry for them or pitying them, which relates to the ethical principle of respect.

‘Showing somebody respect’ whilst presenting uncomfortable truths about their behaviour or emotional reaction back to them may at first appear to be contradictory actions. However, Hollway and Jefferson (2013) argue that it is in the spirit of representation (of participant experience), recognition, and authenticity (of researcher) that the true nature of participant narrative is upheld. Maintaining the integrity of the research is therefore posed as the ultimate marker of respect towards

the participant, and not falsifying their experiences to fulfil selfish psychological needs of the researcher.

The current research upheld these three principles by using rigorous data analysis techniques consistently across all participants' interview content, using supervision appropriately to check my findings were driven from compassion and understanding, and endeavouring to present accurate hypotheses even if they ran the risk of causing some discomfort for myself or the participants to hear.

3.8.6 Recruitment

According to the BPS code of ethics and conduct, "Awareness of responsibility ensures that ... the power of influence is properly managed," ((BPS, 2021, page 7) within the psychologist and service user dynamic. Recruitment of participants in the current research needed to be sensitively conducted to ensure that the imbalance of power between myself (the researcher and EP) and the parents who I approached did not manifest in their feelings of pressure or obligation to participate, particularly considering the prior relationship we had. A recruitment process whereby potential participants are approached 'in person' (at pick-up time for their child), and are therefore compelled to interact with a decision making process, may have meant some parents felt more pressure to participate, so as not to offend me or to appear disagreeable towards a professional with perceived powerful influence. Conversely, an 'in person' recruitment procedure may have lessened the impact of the power imbalance and have suited other parents more than an impersonal email approach. These parents may have felt hesitant to contact me to participate in research they wanted to engage in without establishing a relationship with me first, a relationship that, arguably, in my professional experience works to break down the rigid and harmful dynamics inherent in the power imbalance.

The importance of fair access to participation is especially pertinent in such groups that we might deem vulnerable and hard to reach. Haverkamp (2005) implores researchers to apply their “profession’s knowledge base” (page 152) to make judgements when deciding upon recruitment design. Applying such professional knowledge meant a relational-based approach to recruitment was chosen. Up front, to attempt to protect against parents worrying about how their participation or not might impact our ongoing professional relationship, I included a paragraph in the information sheet (appendix 9) that outlined clearly that the research would not impact any prior or subsequent work I may undertake with their child. Right to withdrawal at any stage of the research process (from their introduction to me at pick-up time to after the second interview) was stressed upon recruitment. Evidence that this message was received clearly was bolstered as the vast majority of parents I approached chose not to participate, and some apparently felt comfortable enough to withdrawal when they had initially shown interest and provided me with their phone number.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter began by outlining the most appropriate research orientation to study parental experiences during lockdown. A psychosocial approach was chosen, which was underpinned by a psychosocial ontology and epistemology. Research questions related to mothers’ experience with their sons in lockdown, in particular questioning the relational experience of mothers living with children with SEMH needs, were justified. Ontological and epistemological beliefs around the defended participant/defended researcher dyad and the importance of free association to bring out participant’s ‘unconscious logic’ during interviewing impacted the methodological

decisions made subsequently. An exploratory design with FANI was chosen as the most appropriate research method, and the options of utilising alternative exploratory research approaches (IPA) or narrative interview methods (BNIM) were considered and rejected. Data analysis on the individual level through reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2009) and psychosocial analysis (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013) were explained and justified, as well as the procedures undertaken for each one. Issues of trustworthiness were discussed to ensure credibility and relevance of research findings, and the ethical guidelines followed throughout the research process were outlined.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Chapter overview

This chapter outlines the findings of thematic analysis, which explored the participant data and aimed to answer the three research questions. Findings from each mother's interview were analysed and reported separately. Each section begins with the mother's 'gestalt sentence'. Some additional information about each mother is used to introduce their narrative. Themes and subthemes that emerged from the data were discussed in the three sections to answer the three research questions respectively, and relevant quotes from the interview transcripts were chosen to support or exemplify the theme/subtheme being discussed. Additional quotes, arguably just as meaningful and relevant, are in appendix 14 marked by abbreviation 'QIA'. The three sections provide answers to the three research questions as follows:

1. How (mother) experienced lockdown
2. How lockdown impacted (mother's) identity in relation to (son)
3. The unconscious coping mechanisms enacted during (mother's) lockdown

Each mother's tree of themes, subthemes and contextual factors is then presented, designed to be electronically zoomed into to access the text written into the parts.

This chapter also explores the participants' experience of lockdown with attention to unconscious defence mechanisms and psychodynamic processes. This

psychosocial analysis aimed to answer RQ3 in greater depth and is approached through my experience of the interviews.

4.2 Liz²⁶

Liz never wants to be like her abusive mother, and she is proud of the patient mother she has become, but sometimes Cody's behaviour makes it really hard.

Liz is a single mother who lived only with her son, Cody²⁷, during lockdown. Cody is in key stage two and, according to Liz's description, has complex SEMH needs, including difficulties regulating his behaviour in school and possible neurological damage from epileptic seizures throughout his life. Liz has multiple physical disabilities, including arthritis, so she lives in a disability assisted house. To the interview Liz brought descriptions of the past physical and emotional abuse she had suffered at the hands of her mother in childhood and her eldest son, Liam²⁸, as he grew into his teenage years. Liam had left the family home just before lockdown to live with her mother due to an incident of domestic violence against Liz and some criminal activity. Liz suffered the bereavement of her aunt during lockdown due to unknown causes unrelated to the Covid-19 virus. Liz is of white-British ethnicity.

²⁶ Name has been changed to protect the anonymity of the participant.

²⁷ Name has been changed to protect the anonymity of the participant.

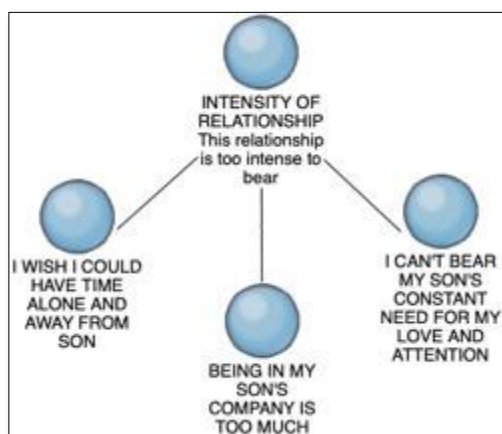
²⁸ Name has been changed to protect the anonymity of the participant.

4.2.1 How Liz experienced lockdown

Table 7 - Themes/subthemes for Liz RQ1

Theme	Subtheme
Intensity of relationship - <i>This relationship is too intense to bear</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being in my son's company is too much - I wish I could have time alone and away from my son - I can't bear my son's constant need for my love and attention
Lack of control - <i>I wish I could control my son's behaviour</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Your behaviour makes it hard to home school you - Your talking feels relentless - Your capability with computers feels threatening
Loss of identity - <i>I can't do the things that make me who I am</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I don't like the parent I have become - I have no freedom because you are always around - I have no privacy or personal space

4.2.1.1 Intensity of Relationship - This relationship is too intense to bear



Liz described how Cody's 'clinginess' increased substantially during lockdown, to an extent where she found it emotionally challenging to tolerate. He wanted to be physically with her at all times, saying he missed her and expressing fear that she might run away if he does not check on her,

“(Cody says) “But I want to be with you.” But sometimes it’s so intense it’s like I have to take a deep breath. I’m thinking, ooh calm down...”

“Like even if I go upstairs and [...] I bolt my door, so he can’t come in, so I can have like, say... I’m that frustrated I have to have a cry.”

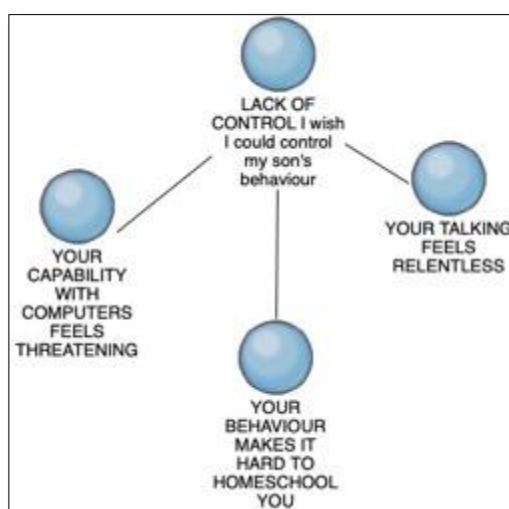
She coped by thinking forward to when Cody would go to sleep, his capacity for sleeping soundly being something she was grateful of, when she could have physical and emotional space to breathe again. In those moments of intensity, she described internally telling herself to calm down, perhaps to push away the bubbling anger she did not want to offload onto him.

She also described how he began demanding his repeated expressions of love to be reciprocated by her, demands she found exasperating and was therefore resistant to fulfil,

“It’s like sometimes I just want to scream. Because you know he does get on my pips, sometimes, because constantly “I love you…” I’m like okay darling, [...] and then five seconds later he’ll do it again. On a loop.”

The use of the phrase ‘on a loop’ suggests the intense irritation led her to perceive them as never ending.

4.2.1.2 Lack of Control - I wish I could control my son’s behaviour



Liz spoke about her frustration with Cody’s constant narration of his experiences and the world around him,

“...I want to scream at him because of like, he goes on and on and on and on and on. But I think yeah, it’s not his fault, I know that it’s not his fault...”

These expressions of frustrations frequently came with the caveat that this was an aspect of his character or a possible side-effect of Cody’s SEN he couldn’t help, which absolved Cody of blame and left nowhere for her frustration to land. There was an undercurrent of guilt about trying to stop him, hence the feeling she had no control and was forced to tolerate it.

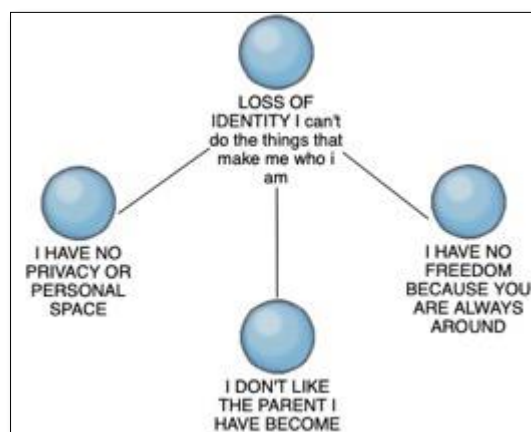
With Cody’s increasing competence with technology came his insistence to help her with her computer, keen to demonstrate his new-found prowess. He would also

perform actions on her computer without her knowledge that she would be distressed to discover at a later date. When describing Cody's insistence to help her with her computer,

"It's like give me five seconds to breathe. Let mummy do it first. [...] "yeah but I know how to do it." Yeah, I know, but let mummy do it first... Just go away for five seconds! ... (Laughs) For God sake! (Said in angry tone)."

My attention was drawn to how these discoveries appeared to induce a state of panic in Liz and how angry she felt describing her lack of control to stop him. I wondered whether she saw Cody's growing confidence with a skill she felt insecure about as a threat to her authority and a worrying sign on Cody's developing independence.

4.2.1.3 Loss of Identity - I can't do the things that make me who I am



Connected to Liz's desperation for time away from Cody was the resulting loss of identity that came from having no time by herself. Cody's interference meant she could not complete the long awaited and difficult task of sorting clothes that would never fit her again due to weight gain,

“...and he’s like “oh mummy that’s pretty, oh mummy that’s nice...” and I’m thinking, please disappear, let me just sort this out (puts hand to face) ...”

Over lockdown she lost the freedom to carry out daily tasks, which, although ordinary, appeared to be connected to her self-expression. She described not being able to complete household chores because of his constant demands for attention. After sharing incidents of Cody demanding his love to be reciprocated by her,

“I’ve always been a patient person, I’m always a patient person, but sometimes... it gets to the last of your nerve, and I’m like, ooh (vocalisation, frustrated) ...”

Cody’s relentless need for demonstrable love and attention from Liz, leading to an intensity in their relationship that she found hard to bear, meant the patient and loving parenting style she coveted was increasingly difficult to maintain. She saw his relentless talking and constant need for attention as aspects of his character possibly related to neurological damage from epileptic seizures. However, she also seemed to perceive his demands for demonstrable love with great affection. Therefore, I wondered whether this led to her being trapped in an internal battle; ‘I am frustrated, but I shouldn’t be because it is not fair on my son, so I feel guilty for feeling this way’. It seemed that having no partner and not being able to see anyone over lockdown exacerbated this cycle of tormenting thoughts, as there was no one to offload onto.

4.2.2 How lockdown impacted Liz’s identity in relation to Cody

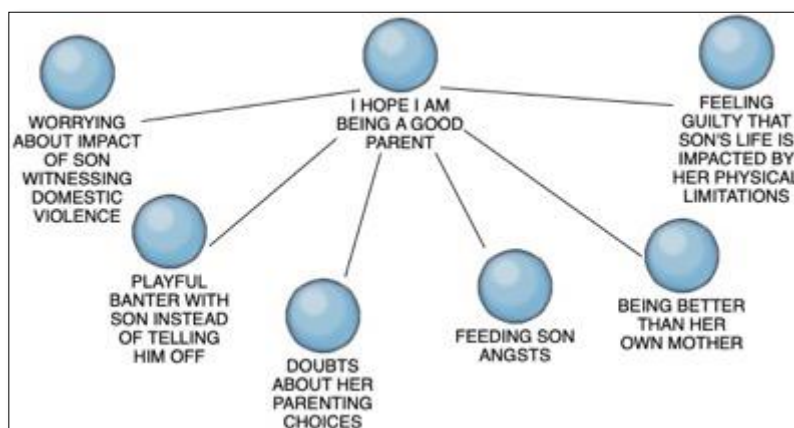
Table 8 - Themes/subthemes for Liz RQ2

Theme	Subthemes
I Hope I Am Being a Good Parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BEING BETTER THAN HER OWN MOTHER - DOUBTS ABOUT HER PARENTING CHOICES - FEEDING SON ANGSTS

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FEELING GUILTY THAT SON'S LIFE IS IMPACTED BY HER PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS - PLAYFUL BANTER WITH SON INSTEAD OF TELLING HIM OFF - WORRYING ABOUT IMPACT OF SON WITNESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
I Fear You Growing Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DON'T BECOME SMARTER THAN ME - DON'T GET FAT - DON'T GROW UP - DON'T LEAVE ME - FEAR OF SON GROWING TO RESEMBLE ELDEST SON
It's Just Us Two Now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I AM PROUD OF MY SON - I SEEK SUPPORT FROM MY SON - I TAKE PLEASURE IN MY SON'S GOOD BEHAVIOURS - WE HAVE A CLOSE BOND - WE HAVE FUN TOGETHER
My Son is Special so He Needs my Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AFFECTIONATE FEELINGS TOWARD SON'S ATYPICAL BEHAVIOUR - NEGATIVE OPINIONS FROM OTHERS OF SON - POWERLESS OVER SON'S DIFFICULTIES - PROTECTING SON FROM IMPACT OF ELDEST SON'S BEHAVIOUR - STAYING PATIENT WITH SON'S CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR
Your Special Needs Are Difficult for Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FREQUENTLY QUESTIONING OF SON'S SPECIAL NEEDS - I'M EMBARRASSED BY YOU IN PUBLIC - UNPREDICTABILITY OF BEHAVIOUR - YOUR SPECIAL NEEDS FRUSTRATE ME
I Shouldn't be Picked On	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SHOCKED AND UPSET BY SONS' UNKIND BEHAVIOUR - SONS TREATING HER UNKINDLY

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - STRUGGLING TO ESTABLISH HER AUTHORITY AS A PARENT - WANTING HER SONS TO BE DIFFERENT
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4.2.2.1 I Hope I Am Being a Good Parent



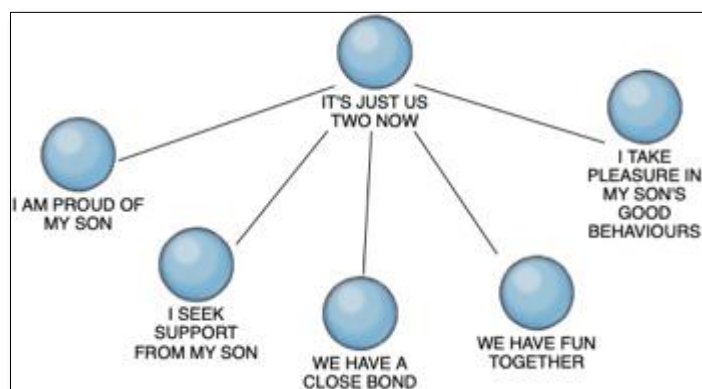
Liz had a fervent insistence that she would never treat her son like her mother treated her. This meant she had excluded criticism, demonstrative anger and physical discipline from her parenting toolbox. It was important to her that she was patient and frequently expressed her love and approval. This made it difficult for her to grapple with how frustrated she was with Cody's behaviour, with even internal negative thoughts and feelings bringing guilt. After explaining how she smacked Cody's hand away from an electric socket when he was an infant,

"(Inhaling breath) Oh! And I felt guilty afterwards, I smacked my baby, I shouldn't be doing that. And [...] I cuddled him and I was crying, because I felt that guilty. And I was like I'm never going to do that again, never ever! Thinking, how can I do that? That's what my mum did to me, and that psychologically damaged me. I think, I never wanted to do that to my children."

Her fear of recognising her mother in herself seemed to paralyse her in a state of helplessness and reluctant acceptance of her emotional state.

She also described how difficult it was not having a partner to share these aspects of parenting responsibility with. The intensity of their relationship, seen in their anxious 'go away, come back' dynamic, could have been exacerbated by the dyadic nature of their experience of each other, with her eldest son departed and no third person in the home with them to relieve the single-directional tension. Liam leaving the family home caused Cody significant emotional distress and Liz worried about the potential impact of Cody witnessing her eldest son's abuse towards her (QIA). Liz felt she had to lie for Liam, telling Cody that he was not visiting them because he was busy, underneath knowing it was because he was uninterested in seeing them again. Through these conversations she was managing her son's pain, but her pain was side-lined and denied. The incident appeared to have brought a difficult dynamic to their relationship, whereby Cody began frantically checking on his mother, perhaps unconsciously to check she was neither in danger nor leaving him as well. Liz both understood his reaction and behaviour, and was exasperated by it, so actively chose to hide her frustration from him. Liz appeared conflicted as to the extent to which Cody had been affected, wondering out loud about his behaviour and whether he might be experiencing post-traumatic stress, but then being reassured that the related behaviour was sporadic. I wondered whether this denial came from defending against the guilt that she could not protect Cody from witnessing the incident.

4.2.2.3 It's Just Us Two Now



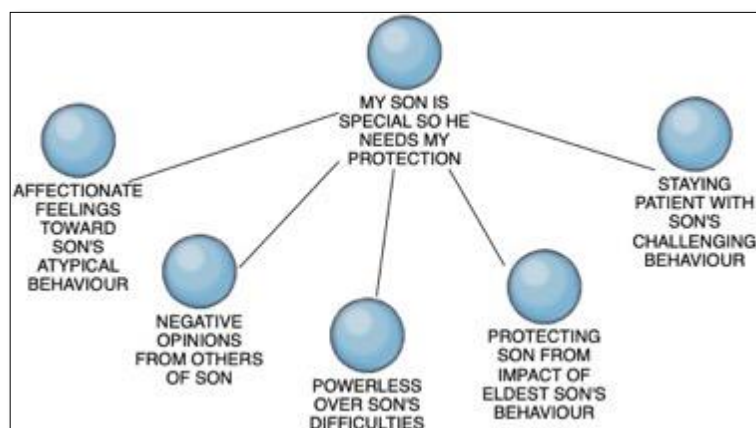
The tender intimacy between Liz and Cody was threaded strongly throughout her narrative of their relationship. They frequently shared playful banter,

"...joking about with him, he's like "mummy, you are funny!" (Laughs) I'm like, yeah, I'm hilarious, that's where you get it from."

She also proudly described the bedtime routine she had established with Cody (QIA.) She frequently shared her pride at what a good boy she thinks he is; him being kind to other children and helping her around the house. She shared playful daily interactions with Cody during lockdown, which clearly brought her soothing joy. It appeared outwardly displaying pride in her son and praising him explicitly was an important aspect of her mothering identity.

Liz spoke about times where she would tell Cody she was in pain from her disabilities or ask him for help when she was having a bad day (QIA). Pertinently, she persisted in telling him despite how frustrated she found his subsequent questioning and worrying that she might die soon. This made me wonder whether the need to share came from a compulsive place. Perhaps through lockdown, with limited contact with others and her eldest son leaving the home, Cody became her only source of immediate support, altering their relational dynamic.

4.2.2.4 My Son is Special so He Needs my Protection



Throughout lockdown, Liz worked hard to stay patient with Cody's sensitivity and clinginess. She used multiple techniques in those scenarios where she felt her frustration or annoyance beginning to bubble over, such as breathing deeply or self-talk. Whilst internally irritated and suffocating from his relentless physical presence, outwardly she spent her time explaining upsetting situations repeatedly to help him understand and feel better (QIA). Her strongly held conscious ethics of motherhood appeared to assist her in feeling confident she was doing the right thing for him. She also chose to hide her emotional distress about Liam leaving the home from Cody, which was her way of protecting him from the negative impact it had on their family,

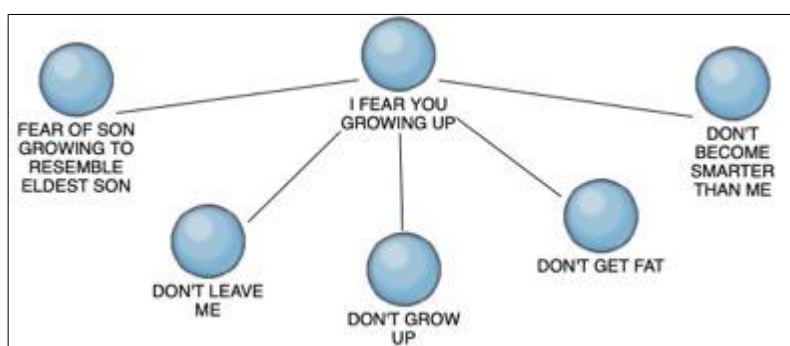
"But in the lockdown, I cried when Cody wasn't around. I didn't want him to see me get upset. I didn't want him coping with that as well bless him. Oh, I know he can be sensitive sometimes, and loving."

Considering Liz's tendency to seek support from her son, perhaps she avoided revealing her painful feelings to Cody because, on a subconscious level, she was worried that he would not be able to contain her emotional pain alongside his own. This is evidenced by the quote below, where she describes Cody having a seizure or

missing his brother and says she feels powerless to stop his pain and this leads to her becoming upset,

“It hurts me because I can’t do anything to stop the seizures, I can’t do anything to take away his pain, like it upsets me when he’s crying because I’m thinking I can’t do anything to... try to stop him feeling, what he’s feeling...”

4.2.2.2 I Fear You Growing Up



Liz talked about telling Cody to stay physically close to her when they were in public, for fear she would lose him or would not be physically able to keep up with him,

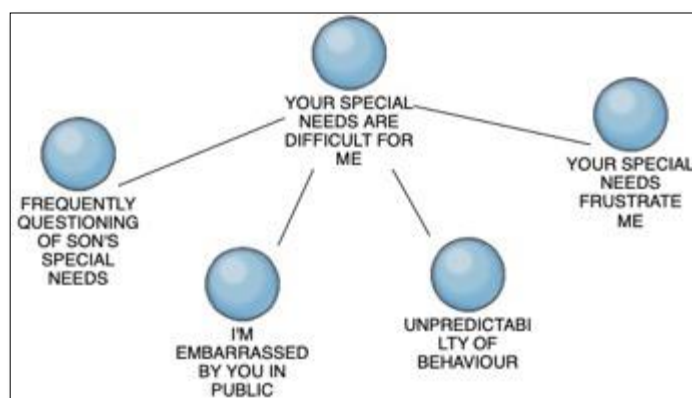
“Most parents would let their children play outside on their own, I don’t, [...] if he gets to a certain spot and he goes past it I’m like shouting for him to come back... I can’t run after you.”

Liz frequently spoke about how tall Cody was getting, appearing dismayed by how quick and sudden his growth seemed. Her shock and dismay perhaps revealed her subconscious wish that he would not grow to become stronger and taller than her, and then be physically violent towards her like Liam. She described times when she would suddenly realise how much he had grown and ‘jokingly’ ask him to stop growing,

“One minute he’s alright, next minute he’s had a growth spurt and it’s just like, where’s it come from, I’m like, can you stop growing? ... But you’ll be the same size as mummy soon...”

I wondered whether her physical vulnerabilities contributed to perceiving her son’s growth as a threatening experience, so she worked to restrict his distance from her, keeping him close to prevent him growing up. On one occasion, when describing a conversation with Cody, she accidentally swapped the names of Cody and her eldest son, Liam, a verbal slip that felt meaningful (QIA). As described above, this relates to how she experienced her son’s developing competence with computers as threatening, describing him as “too clever” and therefore “cheeky” within the same breath. I wondered whether this unconscious fear was transformed into anger, which she directed towards him by seeing his innocent drive to use technology as naughty.

4.2.2.5 Your Special Needs Are Difficult for Me



Liz questioned how Cody’s SEN related to the behaviours she noticed in him throughout lockdown, with her pondering mostly occurring after she had described an aspect of his behaviour that she found frustrating (QIA). Her rationalisation might have been indirectly protecting him from her frustrations by justifying his actions, or even protecting herself from becoming overwhelmed by her own angry feelings. Her

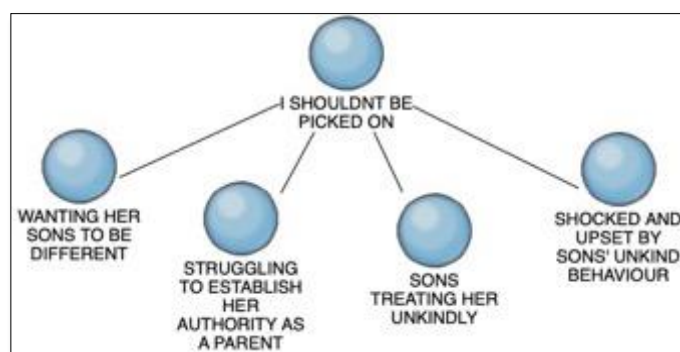
confusion caused her distress as she could not understand why the sweet-natured child she sees at home turns destructive and aggressive once at school.

Liz's frustration with Cody's relentless talking, and her conflicted feelings and thoughts about her right to control it, was heightened in public. Cody's social clumsiness combined with his relentless talking led to him reveal intimate details about their personal life to relative strangers,

"And like we went to Lidl's once and this woman went "oh you're a good boy helping your mummy with the shopping" and he went "oh yeah I'm a good boy, Liam naughty boy, Liam doesn't live with us, he lives with nanny." I'm like please shush up, you're gonna be telling everybody who he is, (puts hands to face) ..."

She seemed intensely embarrassed by him in these scenarios, but at the same time felt neither able nor entitled to stop him.

4.2.2.6 I Shouldn't be Picked On



Whilst describing an exchange between Cody and his teacher, Liz seemed shocked and hurt that Cody would doubt her authority. These strong feelings translated into her using a somewhat derogatory term to describe him (QIA). This was unusual for Liz during our interview, even when she was describing behaviours from Cody that were frustrating or undesirable. I wondered whether her attack was rooted in unconscious fear - his lack of respect for her authority in this scenario reminded her

of the authority she struggled to establish with Liam, which she saw as ultimately leading to his delinquency and choosing to leave home. Occasionally Cody would clumsily call Liz fat,

“Sometimes..., I don’t want my baby to say that to his mum. I don’t get upset about it, I just think he shouldn’t be saying that to me, I’m his mummy, he shouldn’t be saying nasty things. Then again, [...] with his special needs he probably doesn’t mean it hurtfully [...] anybody else you just shake it off. But then it’s like, I’m his mum! He shouldn’t be saying that to me.”

This extract above is full of contradictory thoughts. Liz seems resistant to succumb to the thought that her ‘innocent’ infant has grown up to deliberately hurt her, perhaps because it is too painful to reconcile with her pride in their close and loving relationship. Her insistence that she is not upset, that he cannot help it due to his SEN and that all children behave the same, all appear to be defending against shame. However, underlying the statement there is indignance about his hurtful comments, that her unique status as his mother should prevent her from having to endure the criticism.

4.2.3 The unconscious coping mechanisms enacted during Liz’s lockdown

Table 9 - Themes/subthemes for Liz RQ3

Themes	Subthemes
Envy of others’ youthful energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attacking son's energetic nature - Comparisons between her and others' youthful energy
Hiding emotions from other people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emotional fragility from prior abuse - Her son should not see her frustration with him
Laughing when in pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As a reaction to difficult situations - To minimise the seriousness of her situation

4.2.3.1 Humour

During lockdown there emerged an intense ‘push-pull’ dynamic between Liz and Cody, whereby they both craved time and space away from each other to exist within their independent identities, but at the same time struggled to cope apart from each other. For Cody, his separation anxiety was expressed more explicitly by following Liz around the house, demanding her attention and reciprocated expressions of love. Conversely, Liz’s feelings around her desire to separate from Cody appeared to be conflicting in her unconscious. It was hinted at through her descriptions of the ‘funny’ banter back and forth between her and Cody throughout the interview (additional QIA),

*“I just joke about with him, I just say **no I found you in a bush, in a rose bush garden**, “no you didn’t!” I went, **no you keep following me home, you won’t go away will you?** He’s like “no I’m not, I’m your son, you’re my mummy!” I’m like yeah okay (laughs).”*

In these moments, where the unresolved fear of both unbearable closeness and potential separation was triggered, she appeared to use sarcasm to deflect from confronting her true feelings. Her sarcasm went over Cody’s head in the instances described in the quotes above, with him seeming to respond in panic and neediness. I questioned whether she unconsciously wanted to induce this state in Cody, so she felt needed by him and that he did not want to leave her.

4.2.3.2 Attacking Cody

Throughout both interviews, Liz continually insisted that she tries hard to be a kind and patient mother, even worrying at one point that she was being horrible for enjoying time apart from Cody,

“(mimes breathing out) yeah it is intense sometimes because I don’t, like I’m not being horrible but sometimes when he goes to school I’m like yes! I can breathe, I can do housework.”

However, Cody’s behaviour did lead to Liz feeling intensely frustrated and angry with him. She described a particularly fraught moment in lockdown, where she was becoming intensely exasperated by Cody’s relentless attention seeking, and explicitly referred to wanting to kill him,

“And it’s like argh! (grunts, irritated) “So mummy how long are you going to be in the shower?” I’m like when I’m finished [...] “so I’ll sit here and talk to you then” I’m like no go and watch cartoons go [...] “yeah but I miss you, I love you.” I’m like ‘please leave me alone.’ Under my breath I’m like, argh! I’m going to kill you!”

Not only did Liz make more explicit expressions of attack, on occasion through derogatory language, but there were some underhand attacks. For example, Liz’s intentional or inadvertent inducing of panic in Cody could be characterised as a form of attack against him, or her calling him fat, as in the quote below,

“... the only thing that upsets me is when he says “mummy you are fat! But I still love you” I’m like Coo ... that’s being cruel, ... I’m like but you’re a bit podgy too aren’t you, he’s like “no I’m not” but you’re getting like mummy though ain’t you “no!” Okay fair enough (laughs).”

Her underhand attacks were in juxtaposition to the parenting values she espoused, of not criticising him like her mother criticised her. It showed how much the comments hurt her, but it appeared that any hateful or aggressive feelings towards Cody were too painful for her to tolerate and integrate into her consciousness, lest she recognises her own mother’s abuse towards her and her anger spirals out of control into physical chastisement.

4.3 Emma²⁹

Emma thinks it is wrong to think this, and she sees her son as loving sometimes, but her life felt easier before Bailey was born because she had more freedom.

Throughout lockdown Emma lived with her son, Bailey³⁰, her teenage daughter, Charlotte³¹ and her boyfriend. Bailey is in early key stage two and Charlotte has additional learning needs. According to Emma's description, Bailey's emotional regulation is developmentally delayed, and he displays externalising behaviour such as verbal and physical aggression. In the interview Emma explained how she was a victim of domestic violence from Bailey's father and was subsequently made homeless after fleeing from their shared home and not being given refuge from her local authority. During lockdown she lived in a small flat with no garden or green space near and some distance from any friends or family. She visited her mother during lockdown who lives in a larger house with a garden and green space close by. Emma is of white-British ethnicity.

4.3.1 How Emma experienced lockdown

Table 10 - Themes/subthemes for Emma RQ1

Theme	Subthemes (sub-subthemes)
Drained of Energy to Cope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BEING WITH YOU DRAINS ME OF ENERGY - I CAN'T MOTIVATE YOU

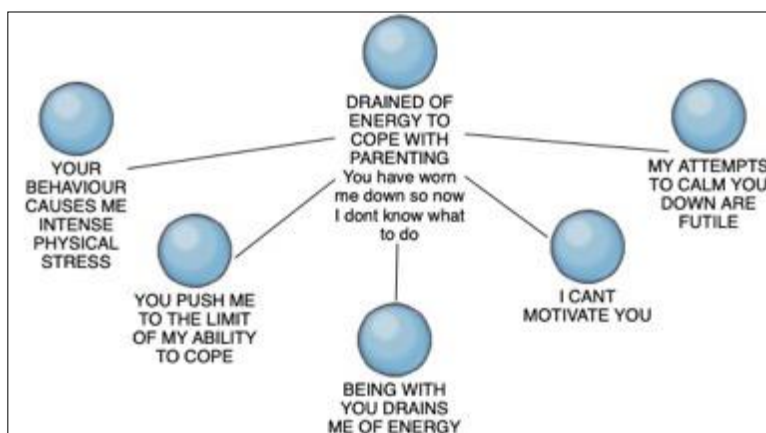
²⁹ Name has been changed to protect the anonymity of the participant.

³⁰ Name has been changed to protect the anonymity of the participant.

³¹ Name has been changed to protect the anonymity of the participant.

<p>with Parenting - <i>You have worn me down so now I don't know what to do</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MY ATTEMPTS TO CALM YOU DOWN ARE FUTILE - YOU PUSH ME TO THE LIMIT OF MY ABILITY TO COPE - YOUR BEHAVIOUR CAUSES ME INTENSE PHYSICAL STRESS 	
<p>Suffocating from Forced Proximity - <i>I am desperate for space away from you so I can breathe</i></p>	<p>INTENSITY OF RELATIONS HIP WITH SON</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am desperate for time without you - I can think when I have time away from you - I can't be with you when you're behaving badly - Separating from you makes me feel better - You need me to parent you all the time - You restrict my freedom
	<p>TRAPPED INSIDE HOME</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You restrict my freedom - I can't escape from the difficult parts of you - I hate being stuck inside - My children need space and variety - Visiting my mum was good for our relationship - You destroy my home
<p>Abandoned and Isolated - <i>There is no one around to help me with my son</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HIS SCHOOL LET ME DOWN - IT IS DIFFICULT TO LIVE SO FAR FROM MY SUPPORT SYSTEM - THE GOVERNMENT DESERVE MY ANGER - THE SCHOOL IS UNFAIRLY ATTACKING ME 	
<p>Overwhelmed by Uncertainty - <i>I would feel better if I could be certain about you</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I DONT KNOW WHY HE COULDNT GO TO SCHOOL - I DONT UNDERSTAND YOU - I WISH I COULD BE SURE YOU LOVE ME - YOU ARE DIFFERENT FROM MOMENT TO MOMENT - YOU MIGHT ERUPT IN ANGER AT ANY MINUTE - YOUR ANGER IS LIKE A RUNAWAY TRAIN, I CANT STOP IT 	

4.3.1.1 Drained of Energy to Cope with Parenting - You have worn me down so now I don't know what to do



Throughout lockdown, Bailey frequently had angry meltdowns. According to Emma these outbursts were unpredictable and for reasons Emma saw to be unjustified, such as making mistakes in his schoolwork, his food or toys being ‘broken’, or in response to ‘non-threatening’ instructions from her.

Bailey’s sedentary behaviour frustrated Emma,

“Like he really didn’t have much respect or anything like that. He didn’t really care. ..., he’d just sit around all day and... Watch TV and play on the Switch and do nothing ... you’re trying to get him to do stuff and obviously he doesn’t wanna do it, so then he’s kicking off...”

She spoke about this frustration particularly in relation to not being able to motivate him to do his schoolwork, and she presented as panicked when describing that he might have fallen even more behind academically during lockdown. However, the underlying source of her frustration seemed to stem less from the lack of academic application, and more from his ‘laziness’. This could be a character trait she felt uncomfortable seeing in her son, but one she felt powerless to change, as any attempt to entice him away from his sedentary behaviour induced an angry

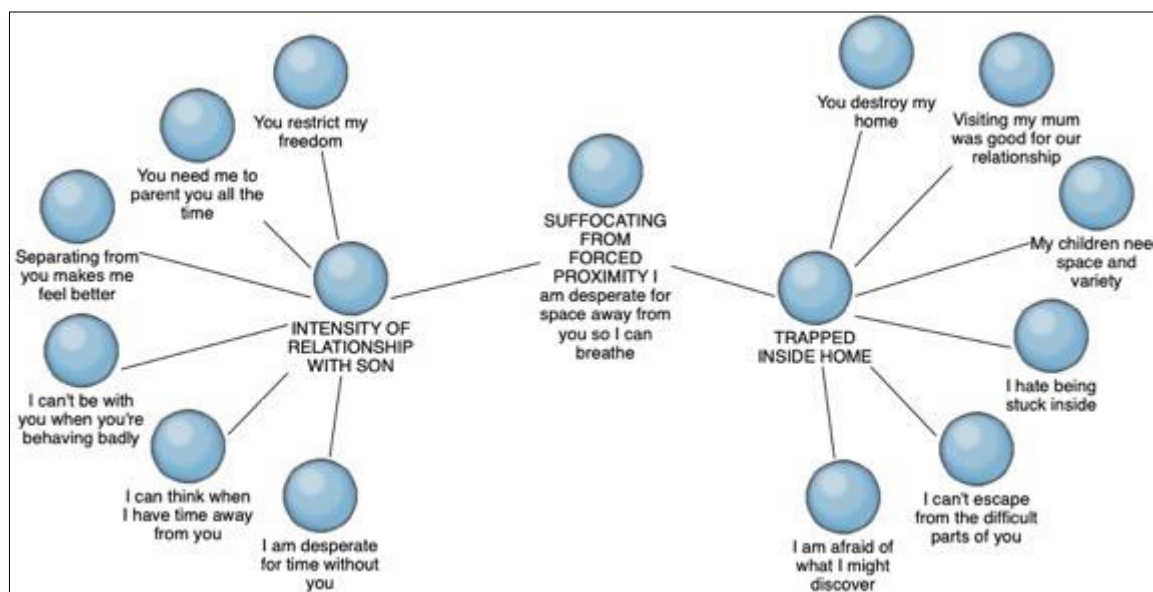
meltdown. Perhaps his laziness particularly grated on her as it was a symbol of her limited agency, reflecting his lack of gratitude for her mothering efforts (4.3.2.4). This meant this particular behaviour was seen as a personal attack against her and his lack of 'respect'.

When having an angry meltdown Bailey swore and said hurtful things to Emma, destroyed objects around the home, expressed suicidal thoughts, and was violent towards her. When discussing her experience of these angry meltdowns (additional QIA),

"...it's like a domino's [...] it's just literally one thing after another and there is just no break and after a while you do so sort of get quite tired and... drained and you're just like physically, I don't think I can take much more."

Emma said she found this behaviour difficult to deal with before lockdown, but in lockdown her capacity to cope emotionally during his angry meltdowns was pushed to the limit, as she was forced to stay inside her home with his anger, unable to escape it. Emma gave the sense that within those moments she worked hard to try and calm Bailey down, frequently by meeting his relentless demands, but found his anger would continually spiral to increasing extremes despite her sincere efforts. At one point she compared her experience to "hitting my head against the wall", suggesting the mental anguish she felt at the repeated attempts to halt her son's spiral of anger being futile, and a state of learnt helplessness that nothing she does can change the situation. On a few occasions she fervently expressed the desire for Bailey to leave her alone because she could not tolerate his anger any longer.

4.3.1.2 Suffocating from Forced Proximity - I am desperate for space away from you so I can breathe



4.3.1.2.1 Intensity of relationship with son

When the intensity of her interactions with Bailey became too emotionally overwhelming, usually when he was within a spiral of negativity that Emma felt powerless to stop, she described taking time physically apart from him (additional QIA),

“What was it like in your car? It’s peaceful, and I actually sat there and had a cry, (laughs) if I’m honest. I was like ‘I can’t do this anymore.’ (said dramatically, laughing) But I think sometimes you gotta let your tears out. [...] I had a 5-minute cry and I came upstairs again and I was like/ right! Let’s crack on and get going again.”

In those moments she said she was finally able to breathe again, suggesting that the intensity between them induced a feeling of suffocation. She also described a peaceful clarity overcoming her in those moments of separation, where she regained her energy, strength and self-belief in tackling the situation. Those peaceful

moments helped her think more strategically about how she could support her son to calm him down.

Although taking physical space away from Bailey helped Emma cope, she described how this was a lot more challenging to achieve than before lockdown. She explained that the regular breaks she got from dealing with Bailey's emotional needs when he was usually at school felt restorative, and it was hard to cope without them. Even if she tried to separate from Bailey within the home, he would eventually start following her, a stressful experience for her. I wondered how the experience of Bailey restricting her freedom and having such limited time away from 'being his mother' impacted her sense of self, that perhaps not having moments where she could exist away from her mothering duties meant she felt a loss of her identity separate from him, which was part of why it felt so difficult for her.

4.3.1.2.2 Trapped inside home

Emma frequently described aspects of her own home as like a prison, using language such as 'confinement' to describe her and her children's experience of it, as in the quote below,

...do you know I think people, it sounds crazy, but you know [...] I think the people that have coped very well through lockdown are the people probably that are actually in prison. Because they are used to being stuck in in small spaces, aren't they? Mentally! Mentally.

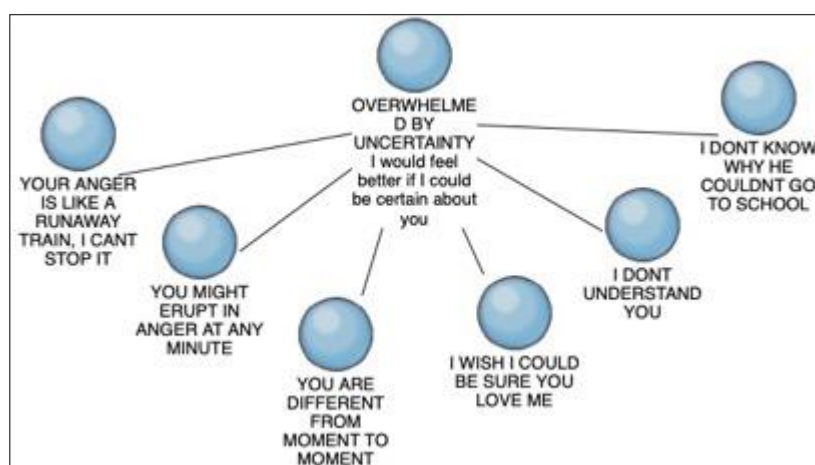
I suspected that Emma's feeling of her home being too small was exacerbated with her strongly held perception that it was unfair she had to live there. The unbearable nature of her small housing led to her decision to take Bailey to visit her mother when she was at breaking point. She described the visit idyllically, where she could walk around the neighbourhood anonymously and where Bailey had woodland to run

in when his temper began to fray. Her relationship with Bailey improved over this time. She described her perception of Bailey changing,

“...I found him to be a lot more... calmer.”

I wondered whether the combination of being with her mother, having access to the emotional support, and the larger living space relieved some of the intensity that had built up between them whilst trapped inside the small home.

4.3.1.4 Overwhelmed by Uncertainty - I would feel better if I could be certain about you



Emma’s experience of her relationship with Bailey during lockdown existed at the extreme ends of a spectrum, which she referred to as their ‘love-hate relationship’. She described moments of physical affection and demonstrable love between them, where he would shower her in heart-warming praise, affection and tell her she was the ‘best mum in the world’. She then described moments where Bailey was cruel and spiteful towards her, saying he wished she never gave birth to him and she was the ‘worst mum in the world’, moments she found hard.

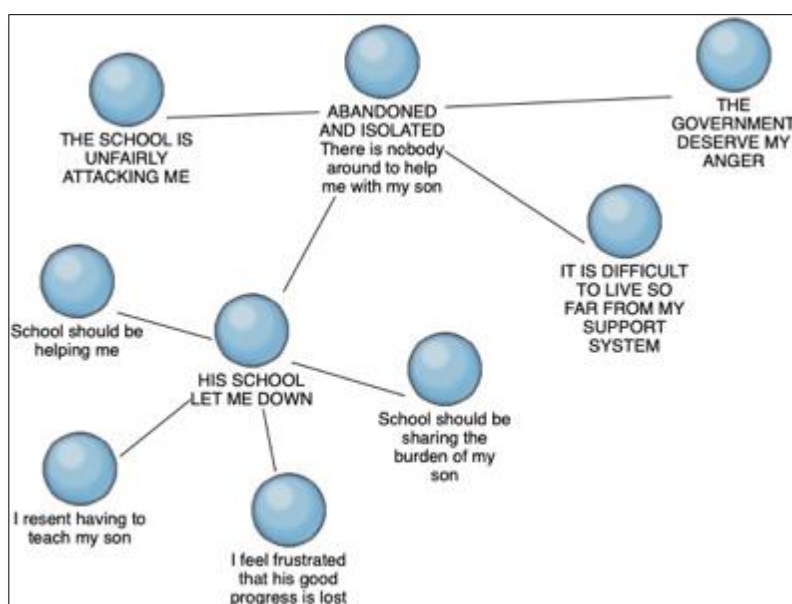
“He’ll be like Hackle and Jive [sic, Jekyll and Hyde] he’ll be like (hand gesture hand up and down) like he can be absolutely fine one minute. [...] and then it can be the littlest thing. Just anything [...]. And he would just completely switch to the other scale.”

Emma found this pattern of switching difficult and described him as having two differing personas. She was baffled by it and could not predict what would cause him to switch into the unpleasant persona, the persona she found it hard to be around. She described waiting anxiously in another room, listening to him becoming increasingly angry, nervous of how far he will push it or how much will he destroy her home this time. She described existing within a constant sense of low-level anxiety,

“You gotta be very careful, like treading on eggshells, 'cause you don't want him to switch to go the other side like... [...] you just gotta be very careful...”

This uncertainty, of how long the meltdown will last, how angry he will get or how much or little she will be able to curtail him, appeared to be an additional element of her experience that exacerbated Emma’s anguish.

4.3.1.3 Abandoned and Isolated - There is no one around to help me with my son



In the quote below Emma equated having a break from Bailey to a supportive mechanism, akin to quality time with a loved one,

“...so, then he's kicking off and for me obviously I am on my own in {place of residence}, I don't have any sort of family or support network or anything like that, so for him being at school is my only break.”

Living far from her family and friends over lockdown was difficult for Emma. The pain of her aloneness stung keenly due to how deeply unfair it felt to her, as it was brought on by having to move away from Bailey's violent father. She saw her housing authority as to blame for her housing situation.

She also felt alone in relation to the lack of support from her children's schools (QIA). She felt she was entitled to their support, considering, according to her, it was them who had both proclaimed Bailey had SEN and told her she now had to teach him. Emma flirted with the idea that his school's apparent abandonment of her was because they did not care but would appear uncomfortable with that thought as soon as it emerged (QIA). Her sense of mistreatment by school interacted with Bailey's poor attitude to learning. Her difficulties trying to motivate him appeared to develop into a simmering resentment that she was expected to teach him during lockdown, all the while having to endure his anger and refusal,

“You know, obviously Bailey doesn't sit down in class on the best of days. So, what is the difference with him being at home and obviously being in school, so he's not really- if he doesn't sit down in school, he's not really going to sit down at home either, is he? ... You know it's more of his own comfort and confined space, so he's like ‘well I'm at home. So why am I going to do work?’”

The quote above subtly hints at her reluctance to teach Bailey at home, possibly because she subconsciously sees it as unfair on him. Emma also shared her intense frustration that the good progress Bailey had been making whilst attending his

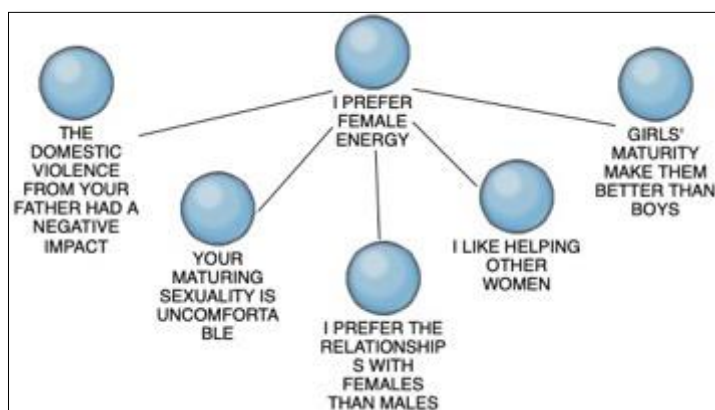
special school was being lost. The sense of balance between them had been lost over lockdown with schools being closed and refusing to allow him to attend.

4.3.2 How lockdown impacted Emma’s identity in relation to Bailey

Table 11 - Themes/subthemes for Emma RQ2

Theme	Subthemes
I Prefer Female Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GIRLS' MATURITY MAKE THEM BETTER THAN BOYS - I LIKE HELPING OTHER WOMEN - I PREFER THE RELATIONSHIPS WITH FEMALES THAN MALES - THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FROM YOUR FATHER HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT - YOUR MATURING SEXUALITY IS UNCOMFORTABLE
Being Your Mother is Hard for Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I DON'T WANT TO BE JUDGED - I SHOULD KNOW WHAT TO DO - MY DAUGHTER IS SUFFERING BECAUSE OF YOU - YOUR BEHAVIOUR IS HARD TO DESCRIBE
I Am a Good Mother, I Don't Deserve How You Treat Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I DONT MAKE YOU GO TO SCHOOL - I ENTERTAIN YOU - I FULFILL ALL YOUR DEMANDS - I MAKE A LOT OF EFFORT - I TRY NOT TO GET ANGRY WITH YOU
Children Should Treat Their Mothers Kindly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I SHOULD BE SPECIAL TO YOU - LOVE IS SOMETHING YOU DEMONSTRATE THROUGH ACTIONS - YOU DON'T APPRECIATE MY EFFORTS - YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT ME

4.3.2.1 I Prefer Female Energy



Emma said she had gained the opinion of men as ‘clueless’ from listening to statements from her father and previous relationships with men,

“Whereas I just think [...] women are very more organized, and let's just get it done and get on with it. Whereas I think men are just like, oh I'll do it in a minute. I'll do it later.”

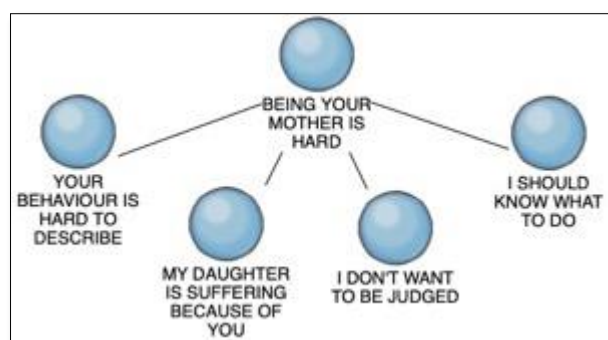
“I think women should run the planet. (laughs) Honestly do, I think women should run it.”

Emma did not explicitly link her apparent preference for females over males to her abusive relationship with Bailey’s father, nor did she explicitly blame Bailey’s father for having to leave her home. However, her experiences at the hands of him had an objectively devastating impact on her life, leaving her homeless, forced to call a different hostel each night (with a young child) and eventually landing her far from her loved ones. It could possibly follow that she may have some residual resentment towards ‘him’, transforming into resentment towards ‘maleness’. I wondered how this could negatively impact the dynamic between her and her son and if she connected the fear from Bailey’s father’s violence to fear of Bailey’s violence (4.3.3.3.1). This was suggested in her need to avoid and separate from Bailey during those times

when she felt his anger was out of control, which she rationalised as a preferable way to ‘deal with him’. It could be a defensive reaction to her unconscious fear of him when in that angry state.

Her experience of domestic abuse might have had an impact on her strong ‘panic’ reaction towards repeatedly discovering Bailey masturbating around the house during lockdown (QIA). The ‘panic’ might have been a manifestation of unconscious fear that Bailey’s maturing sexuality means he is growing up to resemble his abusive father (5.4).

4.3.2.2 Being Your Mother is Hard for Me



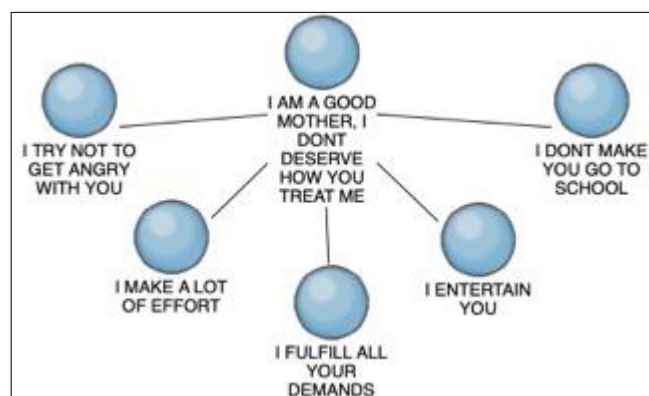
When Emma described her experience of the times Bailey was having an angry meltdown, in public and at home, she frequently described feeling confused, thinking that she did not ‘know what to do’,

“To be honest, I find it easier to be more patient with him at home than out on the street, 'cause if he starts kicking off [...] it's quite embarrassing. [...] people staring at you. You're not really sure on, what to do or what to say, so, you kind of have you try to be patient, but in the same sense you're just like, 'You really need to sort yourself out, like everyone staring at us.'”

She also described occasions where she had been called into school by Bailey's teachers and described her thought processes in those interactions as being 'what am I supposed to do?' I got the sense that Emma felt pressure in these moments to know what to do, as though there was a correct way to behave or support Bailey at those times that was out of her reach, and everyone was watching her closely to see if she does the right thing. This might have contributed to her self-consciousness about being judged harshly by others, increasing her anxiety and subsequently the intense suffocating feeling she experiences when Bailey is angry. It would follow that she would want his meltdown to end with urgency.

Emma described finding it upsetting to see her eldest daughter in distress after Bailey was born, because she now has less time to spend with her (QIA). She described a close and loving relationship with Charlotte before Bailey was born, where she had the freedom to spend quality time with her daughter and she did not have to share her attention between two children. I got the sense Emma felt guilty about having to spend less time with Charlotte. I wondered whether the resentment she subtly referenced towards Bailey for being so attention needing, and therefore stealing her time away from Charlotte, was a displacement mechanism for the painful guilt she was unconsciously defending against.

4.3.2.3 I Am a Good Mother, I Don't Deserve How You Treat Me

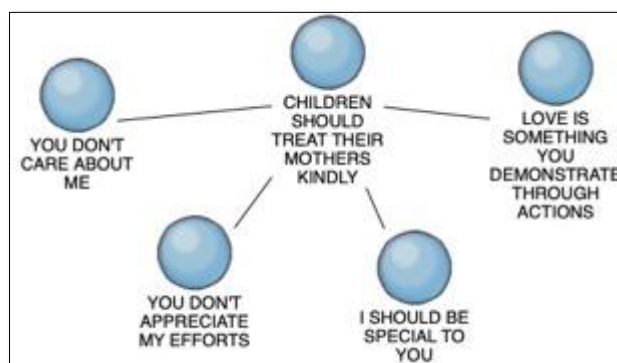


Emma described making a sincere effort not to get dragged into her son's negativity during his angry meltdowns and described being helped by parenting classes, where she learnt not to retaliate. She espoused responding to Bailey's undesirable behaviour with either ignoring him or expressions of love and positivity (QIA),

*"I just sit there and I think, 'You ungrateful child, like I really don't like you at the moment.' Obviously, I don't tell him I don't like him! [...] Usually, he swears at me or tells me to f*** off or something, I just turn around and go, I love you too!"*

Considering Emma's efforts to be a good parent, she found it deeply troubling ("heart-breaking") to hear Bailey swearing at her or saying cruel things to her (QIA). Emma described a pattern between her and Bailey whereby she compulsively fulfilled his demands (especially when he was angry, and she was desperate for him to calm down) and was then confused as to why it did not lead to him being grateful and loving towards her. It appeared she seemed indignant that her sincere efforts to be a good mother, like not responding to his anger with her anger or giving him everything he might want, were not being rewarded by Bailey's kind treatment of her.

4.3.2.4 Children Should Treat Their Mothers Kindly



Emma described the occasions when her and Bailey were together, existing on the 'love' end of the spectrum together,

"... he could be really really loving towards me, where will give me cuddles and kisses and tells me he loves me and [...] he's never gonna leave home and [...] he's gonna be a mommy's boy forever. You know, it's like, and I sit there and think, you melt my heart."

The way Emma described 'love' during her interviews felt like it had to be demonstrable to be believed. Following on from the sub-theme "I wish I could be sure you loved me," she was reassured when Bailey explicitly demonstrated his love to her and she seemed insecure of his love for her otherwise. The belief was further highlighted in her confusion around why her consistent fulfilling of all Bailey's demands did not lead to him showing her love in return, and perhaps why she felt most happy to be with Bailey when he was explicitly demonstrating his love for her. The quote below hints at one of the underlying reasons Bailey's hurtful words towards Emma stung so deeply,

"And sometimes the way that he behaves and the way that he speaks to me is absolutely disgusting. Like he, he would speak to me like I'm a random person on the street."

Combined with Emma’s apparent loving relationship with her own mother, her words suggest she has built subconscious narrative around motherhood that mothers are special and should be treated as such. The way Bailey treats her leaves her feeling anonymous and departed from the mothering identity she appeared to take pride in with her daughter, before Bailey was born.

4.3.3 The unconscious coping mechanisms enacted during Emma’s lockdown

Table 12 - Themes/subthemes for Emma RQ3

Theme	Subthemes	
Suspicious of others’ intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DOUBTS ABOUT WHETHER SCHOOL WANTS TO HELP - GOVERNMENT AGENCIES DELIBERTAEY WANTING TO MISTREAT HER - SON WANTS TO HURT HER - SON'S BEHAVIOUR IS WITHIN HIS CONTROL 	
Struggling to accept her ‘wrongdoing’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AT LEAST I WASNT THAT BAD - EVERYONE IS JUST AS BAD AS ME - IT IS DIFFERENT FOR ME 	
Believing everyone suffers like her	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ALL CHILDREN BEHAVE AS BADLY AS HER SON - ANY MOTHER WOULD BE AS UPSET AS HER - NO CHILDREN RECIEVED SUPPORT THE NEEDED OVER LOCKDOWN 	
Denial of strong feelings	Her own	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assertiveness - Caring about others' opinions of her - Frustration - Guilt - Uncertainty - Vulnerability
	Her son’s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Denying legitimacy of son's suicidal thoughts - Son's complaints being unnecessary - Trivialising son's anger

4.3.3.1 Denial of strong feelings

At time when Emma started becoming particularly frustrated or upset recalling her experiences, I noticed she would use a series of techniques for suddenly minimising the strength of her feelings. In the quote below she spoke about her frustration that she felt let down by government agencies who were supposed to be helping her,

“I was just very frustrated. I mean, if I could have got a big microphone and gone to the council and shouted at the Education Department I would have done. (laughs) 'cause I'm probably not the only mom that felt like that.”

In the instance above she appeared to use laughter followed by extending her personal pain to all other mothers as well, depersonalising the pain she was feeling. This pattern repeated itself throughout the interviews; almost becoming overwhelmed by her emotions, then suddenly laughing, abruptly stopping talking, or extending the discomfort out to all other children or mothers feeling the same as her. I wondered whether she minimised her assertiveness in the case above due to past traumatic experiences of being powerless to assert herself against the housing authority's decision making. Past experiences such as these, combined with the fear she consciously described about losing herself in a spiral of negativity and sadness, might have meant that Emma found it too painful to sit with/tolerate strong emotions (detailed in sub-theme 'her own') and these behaviour patterns were used as strategies to defend against them.

Her difficulty sitting with uncertainty came through when she described her panic around waiting for her children to choose between options at the shops (QIA). It echoed in her experiences at home with Bailey, listening anxiously from another room while he gradually ups the ante of his destructive behaviour until she feels

compelled to pay him the attention he is seeking, which combines with her fear of what she will discover once she gives in to her anxiety and stops what she is doing to attend to him. The sense of urgency I felt whilst she recalled instances at the shops might be a reaction to wanting to bring any uncertain feelings into order as quickly as possible, lest the situation spirals out of her control.

4.3.3.2 Splitting

The way Emma described her relationship with Bailey and her perception of his mindset over lockdown was that it existed as a series of dichotomies; love-hate, Jekyll-Hyde, sedentary-raging. I wondered whether the stress of lockdown had pushed her into the paranoid-schizoid position, unable to relate to him or perceive him through a depressive lens, therefore experiencing lockdown with Bailey as split between heaven and hell and seeing him as either angel or devil. Furthermore, this could reflect how Emma's forced confinement with Bailey with no breaks led to a regression in their relational dynamic, back to when Emma was newly thrust into motherhood and her identity was sacrificed to the relentless needs of her infant. Combined with the memories this might have brought from the domestic abuse she suffered when Bailey was a baby, she had no time where her own needs could be fulfilled, nor time she was not considering Bailey's emotional state. Considering these unconscious dynamics help to explain the turmoil she suffered during lockdown.

4.4 Coral³²

Coral is proud of the predictable home she has created for Ryan³³, but sometimes it feels like it's all up to her, and she is scared for the future when she is not around.

Coral lived with her foster son, Ryan, during lockdown in a flat. Ryan is her sister's biological son and she took over as primary care giver when he was two years old. Ryan struggles with emotional regulation and used to have frequent angry meltdowns, which Coral says have dissipated significantly over the years of living with her. Ryan spent the weekend with his biological mother on a few occasions during lockdown. They also lived with Coral's two other older biological daughters of whom she also had home-schooling responsibility for. During lockdown Coral suffered the death of two close family-like friends, one who she described as being like 'a mother figure'. During her interview Coral referred to experiences of witnessing domestic abuse in her household when she was a child and taking on caring responsibility for her other siblings from the age of nine years old. Coral is of black-British ethnicity.

4.4.1 How Coral experienced lockdown

Table 13 - Themes/subthemes for Coral RQ1

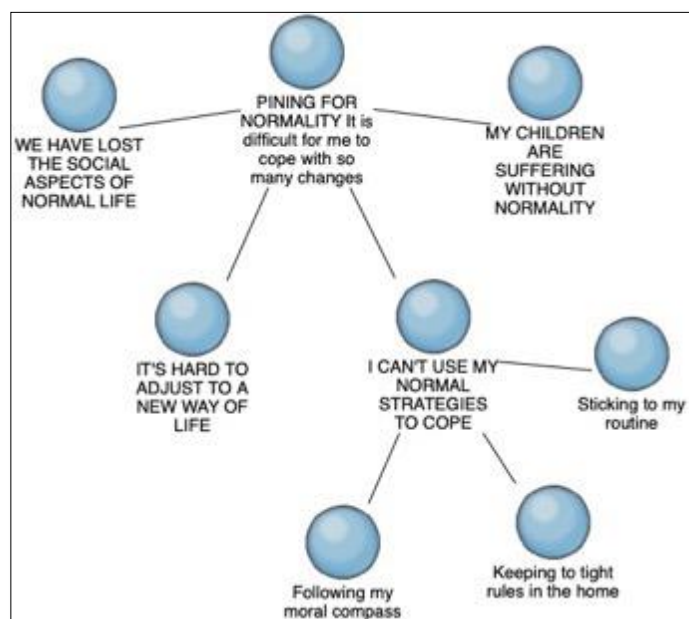
Theme	Subthemes (sub-subthemes)
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³² Name has been changed to protect the anonymity of the participant.

³³ Name has been changed to protect the anonymity of the participant.

<p>Closeness – <i>More time together came with costs and benefits</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I SAW PLEASING CHANGES IN YOU - IT CAUSED MORE DISAGREEMENTS - IT WAS NICE TO SPEND TIME TOGETHER 	
<p>Intensity of Home-Schooling – <i>Home-schooling filled me with doubt and anxiety</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I FEEL INADEQUATE - I FEEL OUT OF CONTROL - I'M TRYING MY BEST - YOUR WORK AVOIDANCE FRUSTRATES ME 	
<p>Looming Threat of Illness and Death – <i>I can't stop thinking about the risk of Covid-19</i></p>	<p>I AM FACING MY OWN MORTALITY</p>	
	<p>I WAS IN TURMOIL WHEN I COULD NOT BE CLOSE TO MY DYING FRIENDS</p>	
	<p>I WORRY ABOUT MY FAMILY COPING WITHOUT ME</p>	
	<p>THE THREAT OF COVID IS PRESENT IN MY MIND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am compelled to follow the Covid-safe guidelines - I am scared to leave the house - My doubts cause discomfort
<p>Parenting Ideals at Risk – <i>It is hard to maintain my strongly held principles</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I AM NOT AS ATTENTIVE - I FEEL GUILTY ABOUT YOUR VIDEO GAME ADDICTION - I HAVE RUN OUT OF WAYS TO ENTERTAIN YOU - I MISS MY FREEDOM - I NEED A BREAK FROM YOU TO FEEL BETTER 	
<p>Pining for Normality – <i>It is difficult for me to cope with so many changes</i></p>	<p>IT'S HARD TO ADJUST TO A NEW WAY OF LIFE</p>	
	<p>MY CHILDREN ARE SUFFERING WITHOUT NORMALITY</p>	
	<p>WE HAVE LOST THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF NORMAL LIFE</p>	
	<p>I CAN'T USE MY NORMAL STRATEGIES TO COPE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Following my moral compass - Keeping to tight rules in the home - Sticking to my routine

4.4.1.1 Pining for Normality – It is difficult for me to cope with so many changes



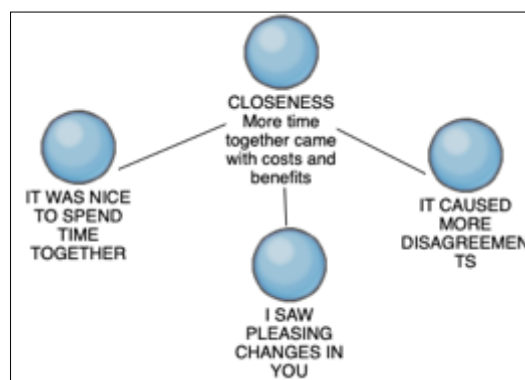
Feeling helpful and connected to the people in her community appeared to give Coral her sense of self-worth. Including these socially cohesive tasks into her daily routine helped her feel like she was following her moral compass (QIA). When lockdown brought these social routines to a halt it meant she had fewer ways to cope with the niggling doubts, finding it increasingly difficult to quieten the internal critical voice saying, “Am I living in the right way?” In relation to Ryan, Coral fervently insisted that he thrived on routine and predictability throughout our interview. Despite the restrictions of lockdown being out of her direct control, she repeatedly expressed feelings of guilt that lockdown meant their normal routines had to change. She worried that Ryan had to continuously adapt, something he found challenging, and that this must have been impacting him negatively (QIA),

The quote below elucidates the way Coral copes with the inevitable stressors of life as Ryan’s parent. She described ‘needing’ life to feel normal, which suggests a compulsive element to her routine setting and having her days all look the same.

This theme was strongly threaded through her narrative and is discussed further as it relates to her possible unconscious defence mechanisms.

“... it’s not normal because it’s not something that we do... I don’t know in my mind I need it to be normal. I need it to be right this is what we do on a daily basis, so that you can get out of that space of it being an abnormal thing, this is not a normal thing, standing away from people, it’s not normal. Wearing a mask is not normal but now it needs to become normal...”

4.4.1.2 Closeness – More time together came with costs and benefits



Threaded through Coral’s interview were warm-hearted descriptions of the added time her and Ryan had to spend together. The quote below is just one example of her describing these moments,

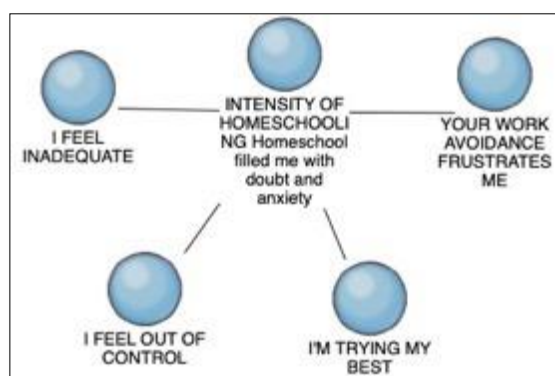
“Like I said before because he was going to bed later than he normally would, it gave me an extra hour to 2 hours where you got something, time to spend together, so that was nice to be able to do that. Different from outside of the norm obviously.”

There was a sense that this time was special to her and somewhat luxurious, as there was nothing else to do apart from enjoy each other’s company. She related this added special attention Ryan received from her to him enthusiastically helping her around the home more, helpfulness being a quality she appeared to value highly. I

was interested in her moderating statement at the end of the quote above, that it was “outside of the norm,” as it hinted at the continuing preoccupation she has with how her circumstances/experiences are measuring up with her tight and predictable routines.

Although Coral’s narrative surrounding having more time with Ryan was mostly positive, she did notice that children “*bickered*” with each other more often than before lockdown. She attributed the bickering to not having enough space (QIA), perhaps meaning either physically in her flat, or psychologically, not being able to take breaks from ‘thinking’ about each other. I wondered whether the forced physical proximity stirred up a psychological feeling of oppression, as the children had no choice about spending time together and then no break to relieve the building tension.

4.4.1.2 Intensity of Home-Schooling – Home-schooling filled me with doubt and anxiety



Coral found the home-schooling aspect of lockdown challenging and frustrating. She said she was “panicking inside” throughout. The quote below suggests that her discomfort came from trying to play two roles simultaneously, one she felt sure of and one she did not,

“And then obviously like I said because you do feel like a headless chicken because then you’re like right I’ve got to be a parent, a teacher, all at the same time, like I’m okay with the parent bit, but the teacher bit I’m not.”

Her conjured image of being a ‘headless chicken’ suggests she felt detached from her rational thinking head during these experiences, as though her body was in control. Coral’s sense of certainty about what to expect, in this scenario being certain of what was expected of her in a certain role, appeared an important coping mechanism in maintaining Coral’s sense of psychological safety.

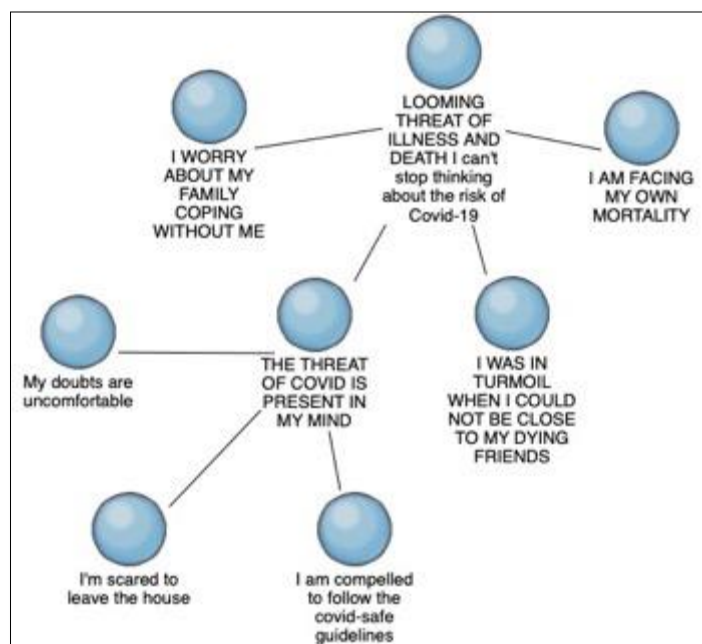
Coral related the recurrent theme of ‘this does not feel normal, and therefore it feels unpleasant,’ to her home schooling experiences also,

“...it’s in a heightened feeling for me because you’re put into a situation that you’re not normally in as a parent.”

The use of the word ‘heightened’ suggested that her feelings felt more intense than usual and perhaps this magnification of emotion contributed to a sensation of being out of control.

While she helped her children with their schoolwork, she described how doubts over her academic ability from her school days were newly brought to focus. This experience appeared to stir up latent feelings of anxiety. I was struck by her descriptions (QIA) as she appears to work through the idea that her externalised frustration during home-schooling could have been the manifestation of defended shame at not being a good enough pupil, and now guilt at being an inadequate teacher.

4.4.1.3 Looming Threat of Illness and Death – I can't stop thinking about the risk of Covid-19



The threat of catching covid-19 brought Coral's mortality into focus for her. She discussed how much her family relied on her and worried what would happen to them if she died. Upon discussion, she appeared to have explored all possible eventualities in her mind and then practically prepared contingency plans for every possible scenario, including writing a will for the first time. Her comprehensive planning appeared to be a strategy for managing the anxiety she felt due to her physical vulnerability as a smoker with sickle cell disease.

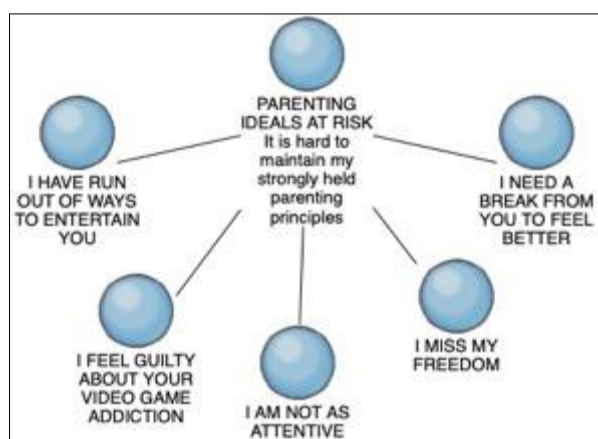
Coral appeared to find this looming threat of covid-19 and her potential vulnerability so unbearable that she expressed fantasies of catching the virus. In the longer quote below she outlines her reasoning in a repetitive loop of rationalisations that almost feel manic,

*"I guess it's like you want to catch it..... **You want to catch it?** In a sense, to see if you can fight it. In another sense you're like I don't want to catch it in case you're like*

you can't. Right. Right, so there's you've got the turmoil of the two. If I catch it, it's probably better my body can fight it. But at the same time you're like if I catch it and my body can't take it then what? (laughs) I might have a chance to come through it or I might not have a chance to come through it. Because you do all these things so that you don't catch it. But... You're in turmoil because... Really, I think to myself, I'm doing all these things is it going to make me not catch it? Probably not."

I wondered whether these fantasies temporarily soothed her intense discomfort as, in her mind at least, it meant she could bring back the sense of predictability about her life, a strategy she seemed to defensively rely on to cope with anxiety.

4.4.1.4 Parenting Ideals at Risk – It is hard to maintain my strongly held principles



Coral described how important time away from Ryan was to her before lockdown. She described the time she had apart from Ryan as time to 'recharge her energy', a break she needed to feel better so she had the energy to manage his complex needs in the manner she knew worked for him,

"There's not a lot of people in his life at the moment that can deal with Ryan like that. So you know I think it is important that you get that, time away from him where it allows you to just be really, in yourself, ready to take on whatever it is that you need to take on (laughs) ...in the nicest way possible (laughs)."

I got the sense that she had established a good parental identity in relation to how much she had helped him and that she was proud of her achievements in this regard. She alluded to how no *physical* time apart from Ryan meant he was constantly present *in her mind* also, and how this constancy was somewhat uncomfortable for her (QIA).

From feeling confident about her parenting and proud of her abilities with Ryan’s complex needs, during lockdown Coral felt forced to adapt her normal routines/rules. She expressed psychological discomfort and she appeared to experience it as a threat to her parenting identity. The quote below provides evidence of this phenomenon, as though she experienced it as a sense of loss of identity (additional QIA),

“You got so many things you have to do you kind of become good cop bad cop... Mum you’re the miserable one, you’re the one that tells us off all the time, and you know inside I feel bad because you know I’m not that person actually (laughs).”

I wondered whether the discomfort came from the involuntary nature of this change, and the subsequent lack of tight control that she usually relished.

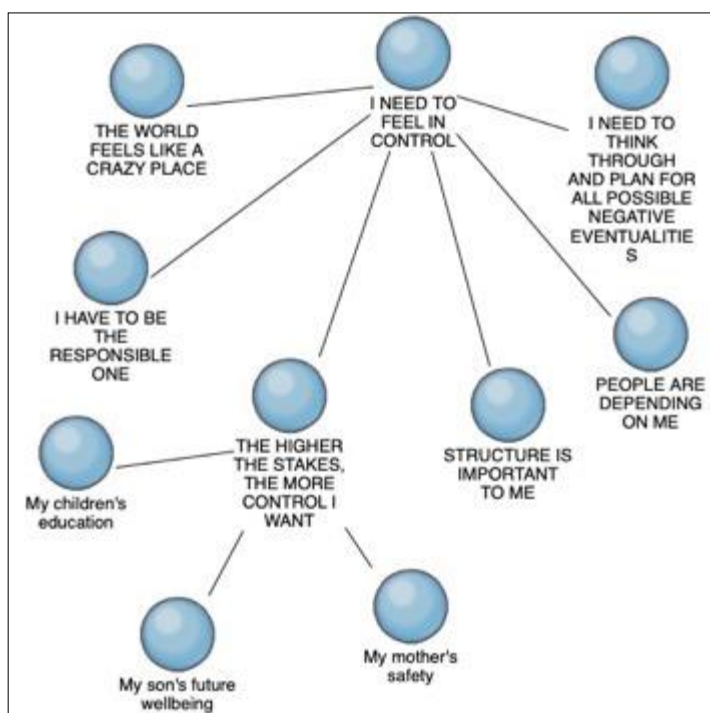
4.4.2 How lockdown impacted Coral’s identity in relation to Ryan

Table 14 - Themes/subthemes for Coral RQ2

Theme	Subthemes
Being both your auntie and your mum is complicated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I'M UPSET TO CONSIDER HOW YOUR MOTHER'S PARENTING CHOICES IMPACTS YOU - ITS HARD HAVING TO SHARE CONTROL - YOUR MOTHER CAN'T SEE HOW HARD YOU'RE TRYING - YOUR MOTHER DOESN'T KEEP YOU SAFE
I need to feel in control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I HAVE TO BE THE RESPONSIBLE ONE

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I NEED TO THINK THROUGH AND PLAN FOR ALL POSSIBLE NEGATIVE EVENTUALITIES - PEOPLE ARE DEPENDING ON ME - STRUCTURE IS IMPORTANT TO ME - THE HIGHER THE STAKES, THE MORE CONTROL I WANT - THE WORLD FEELS LIKE A CRAZY PLACE
I parent you in the right way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I AM A ROLE MODEL IN SOCIETY - I MAKE SURE I AM THE ADULT IN OUR RELATIONSHIP - I NEVER LIE TO YOU - I TRY TO SEE THINGS FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE - I WORK HARD TO ADAPT FOR YOU
Your future feels more uncertain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HOW WOULD YOU COPE WITHOUT ME? - I REALISED HOW LONELY YOU ARE - I WORRY ABOUT YOUR FUTURE - I WORRY THAT I FAILED YOU AS A TEACHER - WHAT IF NORMALITY NEVER RETURNS

4.4.2.3 I need to feel in control



Coral 'pining for normality' during lockdown spoke to her subconscious need to feel in control of her life. Prior to lockdown, and during lockdown as much as she could, she used predictability, routine and structure to manage life's stressors, her top priority stressor being maintaining Ryan's wellbeing (QIA).

While speaking to her I got a sense that she held a core belief about the world that it was inherently unpredictable, and therefore threatening, demonstrated by the quote below,

"... obviously within the world there's just too much negative things that goes on, there's just so much craziness, do you know and if everyone could just do what they're supposed to do as human beings be nice to each other, and do the right thing, you know I think we would be better off in the long run, but you know unfortunately it's not like that..."

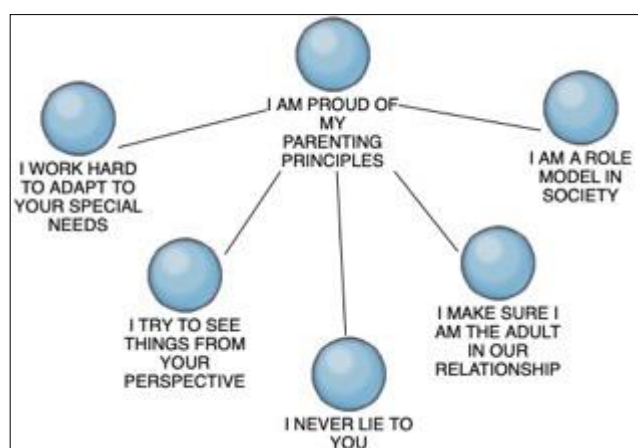
She described her method of coping with the inevitable difficult situations she might encounter in the future by tightly controlling her narrative of future events in her mind, as in the quote below,

"...I'm thinking about everything, and I'm looking at everything you know and I like to ... travel down each, it's like a tree when you've got the branches, I like to go down all the branches, where does that lead me, where is the end of that. [...] what will happen at the end of that, so you end up going and thinking [...] if you see a problem or an issue that you think might be, it might not even be one but you know, you calculate that it might be an issue. What can I put in place there so it's not an issue. [...] So, it's exactly the same for the Covid you just you know... it's a new way of life it's a new way of thinking."

The image of a tree is pertinent here as it is both natural and free flowing, but also, in Coral's imagination, the long branches can collate to appear cage like and concealing scary possibilities. I discuss below (4.2.3.1.2) my feelings of lethargy

during her interview, wondering whether her mental gymnastics might feel tiring for her. She even worried about how she was going to control the actions of her loved ones from beyond the grave (QIA).

4.4.2.2 I am proud of my parenting principles



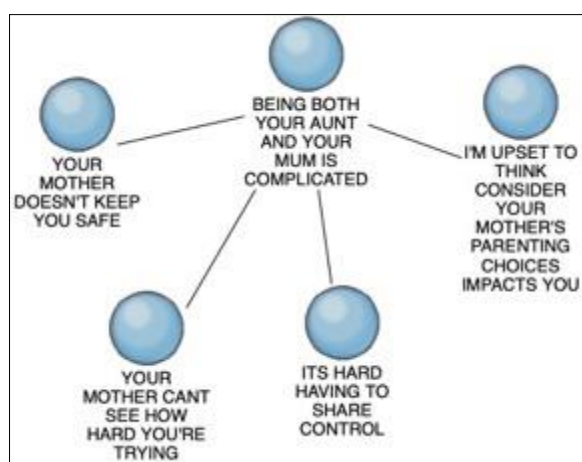
Throughout her interview Coral weaved in her firmly held principles when discussing the parenting choices she had made during lockdown. These beliefs were thoroughly reasoned through out loud to me. She believed strongly that parents should tell children the truth and related this belief to her being lied to by her own mother when she was a child (QIA).

There were several instances Coral demonstrated how she works hard to stay empathetic to the needs of Ryan and her other children, despite feeling frustrated herself,

“Oh! (Hands to head) you argue about a shower, that’s what I feel like in my brain, you lot are arguing about a shower, it’s nothing, you know (laughs) why are you arguing about a shower? It’s ridiculous. But at the same time, for them it means something. You know for them that mean something...”

As discussed further in the conclusion, I wondered whether having regular breaks from Ryan while he spent time with his birth mother (however fraught these meetings could be) contributed to her capacity to be patient and have empathic responses.

4.4.2.3 Being both your mother and your aunt is complicated



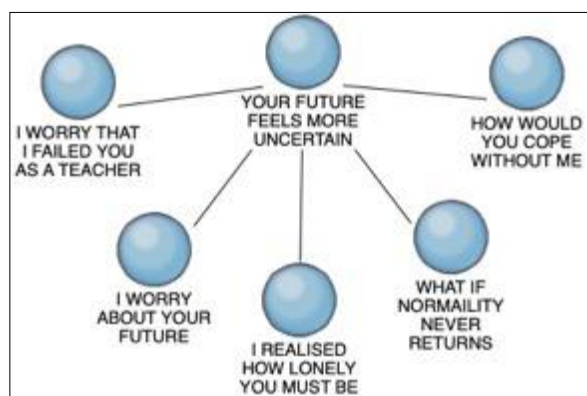
During lockdown Coral found it even more difficult to reconcile her differences with the way Ryan's birth mother, Coral's sister, looks after him. His birth mother did not 'believe' in covid-19 and therefore was not following restrictions. Coral saw this as highly irresponsible and she felt Ryan was, not only in physical danger, but that he found it difficult to understand the competing perspectives and subsequent parenting choices. She explained how confusing it must be for Ryan, again trying to stay empathetic to Ryan's experience of lockdown (QIA). She also described the difficulties in power and decision making between them, expressing deep seated frustrations over how his birth mother chose to take care of Ryan and how she did not stick to the predictable daily routines that she felt Ryan thrived on. I wondered whether the fantasies about going to court and keeping Ryan permanently helped Coral with these intensely troubling worries by, again, allowing her to take back control of the situation, albeit only in her mind. At one point, while Coral described

her mental anguish surrounding the situation, saying how Ryan “tries his hardest”, I had to hold back my own tears,

“...how long do you want to give these people before you draw a line and say enough is enough. [...] it will affect Ryan when he’s older, so I think we got to that stage where I said, if you’re not going to get on board with it, forget it. Just forget it. I thought, well I’ll see you in court or whatever you want today. If you want to go down that route (laughs) you know it’s not going to work I can’t keep on, and you know Ryan is trying his hardest, you know I think that’s the hurtful thing about it is, Ryan tries his hardest to be the best Ryan he can be (starts crying) and when you’ve got someone who can’t see that he’s doing that, because he’s not normal, [...]you’ve got to understand he is putting 100% effort in.”

I think the emotion behind her support for Ryan felt authentic and, in a rare moment for her interview style, it was empty of defensiveness. I got a true sense of how difficult it must be to watch your foster son be underappreciated and feeling powerless to change the situation.

4.4.2.4 Your future feels more uncertain



Coral’s difficult experiences with home schooling Ryan left her with worries and guilt that she had not done enough to make sure he kept up his academic attainment and this fed into uncertainties around the future,

“It’s a long time and you’re like I hope that what I’ve done has been able to keep them where they need to be so that when they actually do go back to school you know they haven’t lost any time where they got to catch up.”

She also described a persistent worry she had around his future adult life, taking a negative route to prison or struggle to find healthy relationships (QIA).

Throughout Coral’s interview her need for a sense of certainty, and her tendency to predict and problem solve future difficulties as narratives in her mind, came through as a way she copes with life stressors. Therefore, I speculated that not being able to reach a sense of sureness when considering Ryan’s future must have been particularly troubling for her.

4.2.3 The unconscious coping mechanisms enacted during Coral’s lockdown

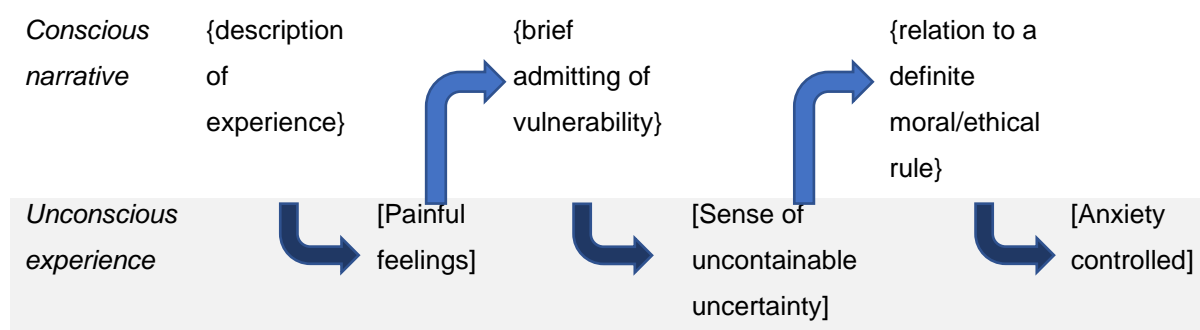
Table 15 - Themes/subthemes for Coral RQ3

Theme	Subthemes
Rationalising away her worries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HALTING ANXIETY - REACHING TO KNOWN FACTS AND PRINCIPLES - WEIGHING UP BOTH SIDES INSTEAD OF FEELING
Need to live within certainties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - COPING BETTER WITH CERTAINTY AND PREDICTABILITY - DISCOMFORT WITH FUTURE BEING UNCERTAIN - FOLLOWING STRICT GUIDLINES TO STOP SPIRALLING WORRIES - HARD TO TOLERATE FEARS ABOUT HER CHILDREN - OVERWHELMED BY UNCERTAINTIES - STRUGGLING TO KEEP WORRIES AT BAY
Vulnerability	

4.2.3.1 Morality

Coral’s narrative was richly threaded through with ethical beliefs on how she, and others around her, should behave. Her ‘moral compass’ appeared to help her defend

against emotionally painful topic areas, areas which may have some ambiguity or uncertainty around them. For example, when talking about Ryan’s experience of school, she brought up his lack of friends. This was clearly a distressing subject matter for her, however she quickly brought the topic to a close, and reigned in her anxiety, by stating firmly how important it was for ‘everyone to have friends’. Her answers quickly became predictable, following the following structure;



The quote below hints that this coping mechanism might have come from aversive experiences in her childhood and her conscious choice to behave differently to the adults around her,

“I am well just going through life experiences when I was younger, I lived in like an abusive, my mum had an abusive husband. [...] I think, made me really strong as a person. You know definitely 100% I can say that [...] I don’t take rubbish from anybody, I treat people how I want to be treated [...]. To make sure that [...] I really want to be a good citizen in society and you know whoever I come into contact with make sure it’s a positive experience for them...”

4.5 Presentation of themes, subthemes and contextual information

After attempting to sort Liz's codes into a list of themes, the complexity of her experiences became clear. Upon immersion into the transcripts and recordings of Emma and Coral's interviews, presenting the participants' experiences and relationships as themes/subthemes/sub-subthemes only in list form began to seem reductive. In representing the themes and subthemes for each participant and research question I sought a way to demonstrate how their conscious experiences were intrinsically fed by both their core beliefs about their mothering identity and connected to past experiences and unconscious coping mechanisms. I also sought a way to show how the holistic nature of each mother interacted with external helpful or unhelpful forces out of their control (contextual factors).


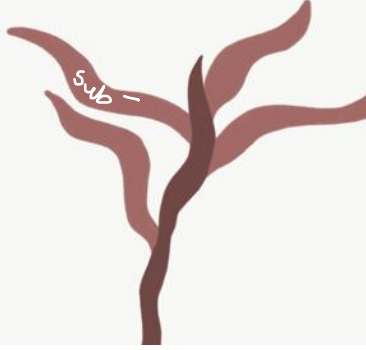
The themes and subthemes from the three participants' interviews have therefore been represented within different parts of a tree, the helpful and unhelpful factors that emerged through lockdown are represented as good and bad weather, and additional contextual information has been included in the tree branches and soil. The unconscious processes exist underground in the roots of the tree, not known by the participant, and past experiences exist within the soil surrounding those roots, feeding the development of the unconscious defensive thoughts/behaviour. Their subconscious core beliefs about their mothering identity in relation to their son throughout lockdown are represented by the tree trunk, both supporting their conscious experience of lockdown, and straddling the participant's unconscious world and their conscious awareness. The participant's experience of lockdown is held within the leaves of their tree, as the leaves are the visible part showing us the health of the tree's root system, the soil quality, the strength/stability of its trunk and the interaction with a helpful or unhelpful climate around the tree. The branches of






the tree, that feed the leaves, represent the contextual information associated with espoused parenting values, aspects of their son’s personality, and additional circumstances they were in during lockdown that were relevant to their experience.

Table 15 is a key to the different sections of the tree. Themes/subthemes/contextual factors in list form in appendix 17.. The trees are included below the key.

Table 16

Key of visual representations for each participant’s tree of themes/subthemes

Part of tree	Visual representation	Aspect of participant’s life and experience	Themes/subthemes OR contextual information	Location in psyche
Leaves		Experience of lockdown	Themes/subthemes	Conscious
Branches		Espoused parenting values	contextual information	

		<p>Aspects of son's personality or behaviour</p>	<p>contextual information</p>	
		<p>Current circumstances for mother and son</p>	<p>contextual information</p>	
<p>Trunk</p>		<p>Core thoughts/values/beliefs about motherhood during lockdown</p>	<p>Themes/subthemes</p>	<p>Subconscious</p>
<p>Roots</p>		<p>Unconscious mechanisms in response to her experience</p>	<p>Themes/subthemes</p>	<p>Unconscious</p>
<p>Soil</p>		<p>Experiences before lockdown</p>	<p>contextual information</p>	



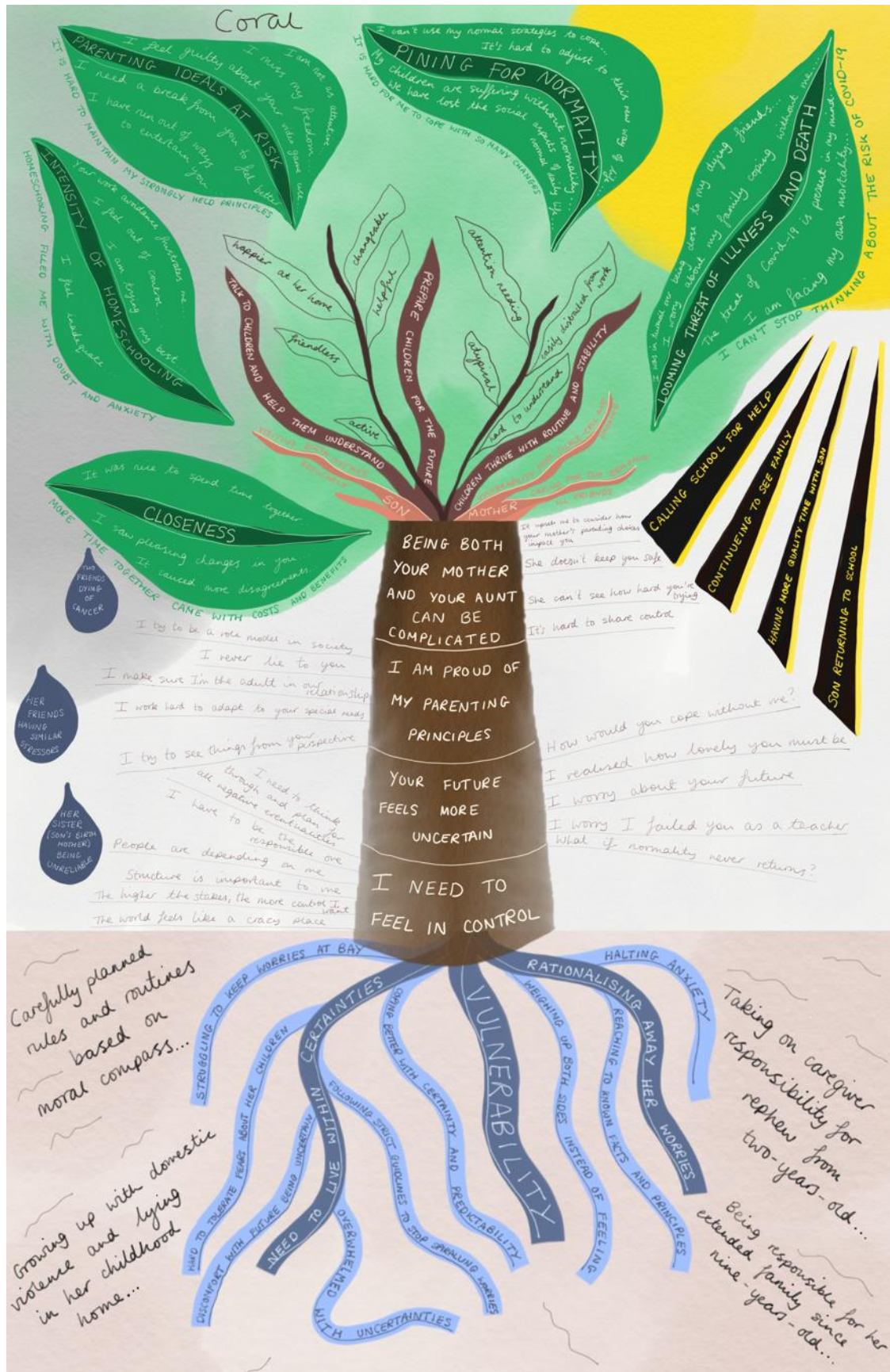
<p>Rain drops</p>			<p>Environmental factors that were unhelpful during lockdown</p>	<p>contextual information</p>	<p>External</p>
<p>Sun beams</p>			<p>Environmental factors that were helpful during lockdown</p>	<p>contextual information</p>	

Figure 13

Liz's tree



Figure 15
Coral's tree



4.6 Unconscious processes revealed through my experience of the interviews

4.6.1 My experience of Liz's interview

4.6.1.1 Impatience

I felt impatience towards Liz during our first interview and this was expressed in quote from my research diary,

Felt a sense of urgency with Liz at first today, her insistence that everything Cody does is funny and not admitting any negative feelings, and veering off into long lists on topics such as foods he would or wouldn't eat.... Why could I not stay patient with her? Why did I have a sense that our interview time was being wasted?

Thinking about my sense of urgency with her, I wondered whether this was a manifestation of my unconscious anxiety about conducting my first interview and feeling apprehensive that I obtain interesting findings. Reading back over transcripts, I kept pushing her to 'admit' to negative feelings about Cody (QIA). I appear to be trying repeatedly to pull her back to what I deem an authentic narrative, as I remember feeling there was an aspect of her experience she was hiding from me. I reflected on emerging themes in supervision; Liz repeatedly described holding back her true annoyance with Cody's behaviour, staying patient in exceptionally difficult circumstances, and her guilt if any such annoyance 'leaked' out into their exchanges lest she behave cruelly towards him as her mother did to her. I wondered if Liz projected her unconscious feelings of annoyance towards Cody onto me, feelings I identified with and transformed into a frustration. At first, she found these feelings unbearable to acknowledge in the interview and therefore they were defended against. However, as my ability for containment as an interviewer grew, Liz

increasingly felt capable to admit her authentic negative feelings towards Cody, and my strong feelings dissipated alongside.

4.6.1.2 Sadness

Liz's experience of lockdown sounded stressful and challenging. Her account was also punctuated with harrowing descriptions of the physical and emotional abuse she had suffered from her mother and Liam. However, looking back on my reflective journal, the moments in the interview where I felt a wave of sadness and tearfulness were, to my surprise, during descriptions of moments of intimacy and closeness between Liz and Cody where she described their every-day routines (QIA). Perhaps the moments where she expressed genuine affection towards Cody were devoid of defensiveness that usually served to push away her guilt. There was no topic avoidance, retreating to safe emotional reactions and rehearsed joking. It was in these brief moments where the well-rehearsed verbal barriers came down and the harrowing sadness of her experiences was suddenly allowed to flood into my consciousness.

4.6.2 My experience of Emma's interview

4.6.2.1 Fear

For our first interview Bailey was home from school due to illness. He followed Emma around their flat as she spoke to me, trying to garner her attention. At one point he started getting angry and, in Emma's words, "*trashing the living room.*" For the last ten minutes of her interview, she sporadically left the conversation to check how much damage he was causing to her living room. Looking back at reflective journals, I describe feeling nervous to continue to press her on certain issues

throughout this first interview, like there was an angry undertone behind her words or a boiling point in close range.

I feel like she was angry with me for most of the interview, like I was poking my nose into her private business. The more I pressed her for details on things... it felt like she was becoming frustrated with me.

Upon reflection in supervision, I realised - she scared me, that it was fear I was feeling throughout the first interview. Considering where the fear came from, I wondered whether Bailey's Jekyll and Hyde persona and uncontrollable angry rages unconsciously scared her, perhaps because Bailey reminded Emma of his violent father and triggered a fear response. During the interview it's possible that I protectively identified with her fear and as a result experienced *her* as on the edge of an angry meltdown, as she was managing from Bailey during our interview.

4.6.3 My experience of Coral's interview

4.6.3.1 Distracted

Through psychosocial supervision following Coral's interview I explored why I felt distracted during Coral's first interview. I felt guilt for admitting it, and I also felt confused; why did Coral's inherently interesting experiences leave my mind wondering on other things? My rational justification was that the rigidity of her narrative led to her explaining away any complexity or intrigue in her experience, making her answers feel predictable and repetitive. She left no loose ends for me to ponder; I had no purpose as a researcher as she had explained everything for me. My supervisor however offered an alternative explanation. He wondered whether the

feelings came from me feeling a disconnection with Coral, that she was perhaps holding me at arm's length to prevent me uncovering her vulnerability. Explored further, we discussed how this projective identification with Coral might have revealed how she uses rational narratives and maintains a rigidity of ethical boundaries to stay disconnected from her own experiences. Upon further delving into her transcripts, I found multiple instances of her explaining her way of thinking, for example the quote below,

“My way of thinking is obviously that type of process, where does that go to? What does that do? You know, how is that going to affect this thing on that thing? ... I have to do for myself, go down each route, to make sure for me that it's covered in my mind everything is covered, which helps me to relax. Then I'm okay myself...”

4.6.3.2 Breathless

Upon immersion in Coral's interview recordings, I felt a sense of breathlessness, like I was being pulled deeper and deeper into the well trod series of possible awful occurrences in her mind. Her description of experiences felt almost suffocating in their infinite possible negative outcomes and I felt tired listening to her. I felt a strong urge to stop her and allow us both to take a break, as though I could rescue her from her runaway train of spiralling negative thoughts. Towards the end of the interview, she described her childhood,

“I've done it since I was younger. [...] I'm the oldest so so I always say within black families, that there is something about the oldest child that has to look after, you know you look after your mum, you look after your dad, and then it follows if it you've got siblings you have to look after them, [...] from the age of nine, I've been looking after my siblings, and then it's just continued up to now, I've never stopped doing it (laughs) I'll probably never stop doing it, I think you just, it makes up a piece of you.”

When describing arguably the scariest and most stirring of subject matters – one’s own death – she defends against the difficult feelings by rationalising that other people need her and denying her own vulnerability,

“With emotional support, it’s more geared towards other people making sure they’re alright. And I think that’s just because I know myself quite well, I am I’m very strong inside, so you know I don’t really need to concentrate on that (fear of death) as such with myself, just make sure that everyone else understands what’s going on, for myself I think I’m quite strong, it doesn’t really come into it...”

I think my feelings were projective identification of her exhaustion; potentially she has not been able to fully ‘relax her guard’ even from as early as childhood. As described above, this constant requirement to look after everyone else extends to managing her sister’s (Ryan’s birth mother) parenting, a battle she continues to fight nobly. I wondered whether this particular battle against uncertainty and powerlessness in her life leads her to tightly control other parts, using strict routines and tight moral boundaries.

4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter outlined the findings of reflexive thematic and psychosocial analysis.

The three research questions were answered in summary below.

RQ1. How did mothers of primary-school aged children with SEMH needs experience lockdown?

All three mothers found lockdown challenging and enjoyable to differing extents. Liz and Emma found lockdown difficult in relation to being forced together with their sons and longed for respite. They experienced it as emotionally intense and overwhelming, losing their identities. Coral found lockdown difficult, but for

different reasons. She found home-schooling personally confronting and the fear of illness from Covid-19 weighed heavily on her mind. All three mothers described enjoying some positive and happy moments with their sons, with Coral finding the times together especially enriching for their relationship.

RQ2. How did lockdown impact the mother's identity in relation to their son?

Lockdown impacted the mother's identities in relation to their son in different ways. Liz grew doubtful of her ability to stay patient with Cody's annoying behavioural tendencies and worked to suppress any sign he was growing up. She also experienced a tender closeness with Cody and felt protective over him. Emma's preference for feminine energy intensified with Bailey's frequent angry outbursts and sedentary behaviour. She felt increasingly adamant that the cruel treatment by him was unfair considering how tirelessly she mothers him in a way she feels is loving, causing the 'love-hate' nature of their relationship to be further polarised. Coral found being out of control during lockdown emotionally disorientating and mourned the loss of the parenting practices she was proud of. She also struggled to juggle the tumultuous relationship with Ryan's birth mother and found it hard to assert her authority in a time of great uncertainty.

RQ3. How were unconscious processes enacted within the mothers during lockdown?

Discussion of my feelings during the mothers' interviews in supervision revealed several possible unconscious processes linked to their lockdown experiences. Liz used defensive humour to suppress her sadness, both to relay lockdown scenarios and within thinly veiled hurtful 'banter' between her and Cody. Emma quickly

suppressed any strong feelings during the interview by minimising her agency in the situation. There was also evidence that she feared Bailey during angry outbursts, fear which was defended against and led to her psychodynamically splitting. Coral's compulsive rationalising and rigid moral frameworks were defensive strategies against feeling out of control and facing her own mortality, evidenced by my distractedness during her interview and the sense of disconnectedness she seemed to have from her own narratives.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Chapter overview

The research aim was to explore the unique experience of lockdown for three mothers quarantining with a child with SEMH needs, through both thematic and psychosocial analysis of qualitative interview data. Across the three mothers' experiences of lockdown, consciously held experiences as described from each mother's unique perspective were explored, core beliefs about their mothering identities were uncovered, and unconscious defensive strategies influenced by past traumatic experiences were elucidated.

In summary, the three mothers had emotionally difficult and rewarding experiences in lockdown to greater or lesser extents, with their physical and psychological context driving the experience they had. Their core beliefs about motherhood in relation to their son were drawn out of their subconscious awareness and had varying levels of certainty and anxiety underpinning them. Their core beliefs were fed 'from below' by a rich unconscious defence system and traumatic past experiences, all containing some form of domestic abuse, and moulded 'from above' by the context of being locked down, unable to escape their son's presence and the quality of challenging feelings that were exposed in this scenario.

The discussion chapter below will comment on the findings in more depth; I discuss the universal quality to the mother's experience, how this universality could inform further research and the implications for EP practice. I self-reflect on my journey working with the psychosocial methodology, the ethical implications inherent within the power imbalance of researcher and participant, my future professional choices to

hopefully carry out more research using the methodology, and my experiences of becoming a mother whilst completing my professional doctorate. I discuss the dissemination of findings, including the inclusion of the research in a chapter 'Locked Down with Troubled Children' (Lewis and Barrett, 2022) in the already published book, 'Children in Lockdown'.

5.2 Discussion of findings

5.2.1 The experience of lockdown

The chosen psychosocial methodology allowed for in-depth analysis into each mother's experience and affectively teased apart each mother's complex identity as separate entities. The sentences from the perspective of each mother at the start of their separate findings sections aimed to encapsulate the ambivalent nature of their feelings, and represent the gestalt of their experience (4.2, 4.3, 4.4) Each mother's reflection on their experience of lockdown contained a myriad of positive and negative elements. These elements interacted to create complex narratives, filled with uncertain conclusions, contradictory behaviour patterns and strong emotional reactions. For all mothers, their expressed mothering identities contained loss; loss of the hard-fought harmony that existed in their home before lockdown, loss of their sense of pride in their parenting skills, loss of progress they had made in being a competent mother to their troubled son, and a sense of uncertainty around how this loss will manifest in a lasting impact. Lockdown stirred up deep-seated anxiety in all three mothers, anxiety that was uniquely influenced and formed by their reaction to traumatic past events, and that had laid dormant within the mothers' unconscious psyches since.

The process of uncovering the participants' 'gestalts' unexpectedly led to inferences about "what lockdown did" to all three participants universally. In other words, although I began with the aim to represent the experiences from each mother's perspective, intentionally without trying to find what was the same about their experience, a commonality of relational dynamic seemed to emerge within each mother and child dyad. Lockdown forced each mother to be in 'parent mode' constantly; mothers were continually attuned to their son's emotional experience and responsible for their wellbeing. In effect, the relational dynamic regressed back to the interaction between new-born infant and mother, where mothers are in a perpetual reciprocal interaction with their baby (Hollway, 2008). However, mothers in lockdown experienced this reciprocal interaction not as a new mother of a helpless bonny baby, with the post-natal physiological and psychological drivers that support this exhausting interplay, but as a mother of a primary school aged boy with significant behavioural challenges during a global pandemic. Their hard-fought freedom was taken away and the entrapment meant they lost their identity separate from their son. This phenomenon was reflected in the themes 'loss of identity' for Liz, 'suffocating from forced proximity' for Emma, and 'parenting ideals at risk' for Coral.

Having delved deeply into the experience of each mother separately, I found it led me to a connection between their narratives, that being - having regular *physical* space and time apart from their son with SEN allows them to cope with the overwhelming emotional burden and stress that comes from caring for them. During lockdown, the more 'space' the mothers had from the child the more pleasant their experiences appeared to be, and more space meant their recollection was held on a higher level of conscious awareness. This ranged from Liz having her evenings to herself as Cody was a 'good sleeper' to Coral having some weekends physically

apart from Ryan while he spent time with his birth mother. Emma had neither time apart from Bailey while he slept nor accessible outside space, until they spent some time with her mother by a large woodland. This relief experienced when allowed space from their child was demonstrated differently in each mother's narrative:

- For Liz, she happily recounted times when Cody was asleep, when she could have time to herself away from him. She could authentically describe their bedtime routines with genuine affection, a palpable tenderness lingering in her narrative. Her fondness for Cody seems to be related to soon having time apart from him.
- For Emma, when she described spending time with her mother in a larger house with airy woodland close by, she described it as an almost heavenly relief. I felt it gave her the sense of space from Bailey and I also suspect her mother's presence provided a physical 'buffer' of space between them to relieve the building tension.
- For Coral, I hypothesised whether she was able to stay the most empathetic to Ryan's needs because she was the only mother to have a few weekends apart from him, while he spent time with his birth mother.

I theorise that, for parents of SEN, 'spending time away from your child' could be considered a mature and necessary defence mechanism, as it effectively dissipates the uncomfortable feelings that build up between the parent and child over time.

Hugger (2009) describes seeing feelings of "guilt, sadness, shame, failure, and embarrassment" in parents of SEN due to the lack of reciprocity between them and their children that would usually result in the infant thriving and the parent believing themselves 'a good parent' in return. At the core of this 'build up' of painful feelings parents of SEN work to defend against could be a sense of grief for the idealised

child they wished for (Hugger, 2009) and feelings of shame associated with these thoughts.

This theory also relates to Winnicott's (1971) 'good enough mother', one who starts by tending to their infant's needs entirely and then gradually allows her infant to experience moments of frustration without her, within which the infant's sense of their external world develops. This measured separation between mother and child is hypothesised as beneficial to the infant as they are allowed to move from a state of magical thinking and oneness with the mother (all my needs magically are met by 'myself') to a state of agency, sociability and selfhood (my needs are met by mother when I indicate them). Effectively the mother becomes 'less perfect' and fails in service of her baby's learning (Bibby, 2018). The current thesis posits that these moments of separation, gradually increasing in length over time, not only benefit the infant's development, but they also nourish the mother/child relationship and positively benefit maternal wellbeing. This theory is discussed further in section 5.3 when I self-reflect on my experiences of early motherhood, where I found the drive for physical closeness to my baby matched by an unmeetable need for time by myself. The theory could also begin to explain why, in Blackman et al (2020), a parent in lockdown described wanting to kill her son in reaction to the maddening effects of cabin fever; perhaps the fantasy that he was no longer present satisfied her desperate unconscious need for any sense of separation from him.

5.2.2 The relationship between mother and son

In considering the second research question, concerned with the mother's relationship with their son and represented by themes in the trunk of the mother's tree, a further phenomenon appeared to impact each mother differently. As discussed above, a healthy dynamic for parents and children is that they exist

separate then together, rhythmically and predictably, within the routine ebb and flow of school, play dates and extra-curricular activities. Before lockdown, an important component of 'normal life' for the mothers in the current study was that their son went in and out of focus, in and out of the mother's line of sight, in a pattern of apartness and togetherness. In between caring for their son, the mothers had time to gather themselves and the freedom to choose where they placed their attention. Stripping away this rhythm of life, with and without their child, lockdown appeared to force the mothers to look unabashedly at their child and encounter them whole heartedly, not allowed to avert their gaze. What they saw reflected the previously unknown 'reality' of their relationship with them. For Coral, this involuntary clarity brought strong feelings of fondness and affection for her son, as the reality reflected a healthy attachment and feelings of parental capability, present before lockdown. However, for Liz and Emma, the experience of confronting their relationship with their child, and the core beliefs/feelings that come with it, was profoundly disturbing and uncomfortable. These uncomfortable feelings were defended against and led to the unconscious coping strategies and mechanisms explained in detail within the findings chapter.

I found it helpful here to describe the process analogously. Brought to mind was the image of the mothers driving a car. 'Driving a car' represents them managing family life, with its ongoing and predictable flow, as an agent in their life with their child. I saw the closed hood of the car's bonnet out in front of them, the bonnet defending against them seeing the inner workings of the car. Once the car is brought to a halt and the hood is removed, the internal systems of the car are exposed, and the driver can see the true condition of the mechanisms inside. During lockdown, once the normal flow of family life stopped, the defensive strategy to 'keep the bonnet closed'

and 'keep moving' could not be utilised and they were confronted with the uncomfortable truths associated with their relationship.

Uncomfortable truths are present in the relationship between parents and their neurotypical children, but they are heightened in reaction to the experience of parenting a child with SEN (Hugger, 2009). In the current study, SEN specific painful feelings included *resentment* of their dependence, *fear* of their anger, *shame* of parental inadequacy, *grief* for the child you imagined, and *embarrassment* of their behaviour in public. Even further, if we consider the theory that the development of an insecure attachment between mother and child in early life can lead to the expression of SEMH needs in the child's future (Bibby, 2018), forcefully confronting their relationship with their son, analogously looking 'under the hood', for these mothers could be experienced as especially painful.

I hypothesise that in life before lockdown these emotions were effectively defended against through regular periods of separation between mother and son. Removing the familiar defensive process, each mother's resulting experience with their son was confronting to lesser or greater extents according to how much of the mothering identity cause them pain and how much they were defending against daily. For each mother their experience wavered between unbearable and enriching; the confronting reality of their parenthood bringing both troubling and welcome truths.

Furthermore, for each mother, their unique past experiences played into this process. For Liz, having Cody around constantly brought feelings of frustration, as his SEN manifested in persistent and uninhibited talking. Instead of being able to confront this annoyance, she felt compelled to suppress it, lest she recognise her own maternal identity as confounding with that of her own angry and abusive mother. This suppression led her to drive her anger internally where it transformed into

unconscious aggression towards Cody, for example telling him he is also fat or baiting his fear of separation by threatening to jump out the window. For Emma, being unable to escape Bailey's externalising angry behaviour, such as destruction and violence, unconsciously triggered her recollection of previous domestic abuse and the fear that came with it. Alongside this fear, 'being afraid of her son' was too painful an identification to integrate into her capable sense of self and so was defended against, which caused her to psychodynamically split across multiple dimensions. For Coral, not adhering to her tight routine was challenging, as she had previously used this as a defence against the chaos of an uncertain future and 'uncontrollable' people she had to manage throughout her teenage and adult life. However, this loss of defensive strategy was not transformed in her relationship to her child; Coral's relationship with Ryan grew in fondness and they became closer with more time together, quite opposite to Liz and Emma. According to the working theory that lockdown revealed the inner working of the relational dynamics between the mothers and their sons, it was found to be based on stable foundations and secure connection free from damaging defensive mechanisms. Coral appeared confident within her mothering identity and had cognitive/behavioural strategies to consciously manage the anxieties inherent in parenting a child with SEN.

5.2.3 The impact of visually presented themes

Presenting the findings within a visual format brought a visceral quality to each mother's narrative and presented the reader with their narrative gestalts on another, more emotive, level. This meant that one could incidentally compare the visual quality of each participant's tree, which brought some further interesting comparisons between their experiences and identities to light. Below the three trees are lined up next to each other, where colours, shapes and structures can be compared:



- Liz's tree trunk is taller than Emma and Coral's, and it contains more core beliefs about motherhood. Viewing the trunks next to each other gave me a sense that holding her values in the forefront of her mind must be an important support strategy for Liz in managing the significant life challenges she faces. She also has noticeably fewer leaves on her tree, suggesting she has transferred less of her experience into her conscious awareness (through perhaps thinking about it, reflecting on her actions, or mulling over her experiences).
- The fullness and complexity of Emma's roots system, compared to Liz and Coral's, perhaps brings the richness of her unconscious life to one's awareness. This fullness may have been because Bailey was present during the first interview and demonstrates the resulting defensiveness he invokes in her when he is present.
- The climate surrounding Coral's tree being the only one skewed towards sunshine over rain, and her tree having more leaves, reflected in Coral's account of lockdown being more consciously held than Liz and Emma's. Her

tree felt grateful, as though she had rationally explored the positive forces in her life consciously to help maintain her wellbeing.

Representing the participants' experiences as interacting parts of a tree meant nothing was lost attempting to oversimplify the stories I had heard. Themes and subthemes presented in list form, that I had seen in the existing literature, were attempting to present complexity on two levels; to simplify each participant's multifaceted lockdown experience and additionally to amalgamate all the individual complex narratives into one. Upon review I found most of these lists of themes/subthemes to be reductive and lacking depth/meaning. Moreover, producing 'listicle themes' in general for research aiming to explore experiences jars with the psychodynamic theoretical framework threaded through the current research. If challenging experiences lead people to utilise defence mechanisms to suppress the uncomfortable emotions they cause (Bibby, 2010), there will be elements of their experience that they have defended against and will be unknown to their conscious recollection. Furthermore, their perception of the experience, and any relational dynamics that shift during an experience, would be impacted by their past experiences (childhood, traumatic events, familial relationships, immigration status, etc) and individual context (severity of son's SEMH needs, housing, support system, disability, etc). In other words, arguably 'an experience' cannot be encapsulated in a list of themes, but should ideally be represented as a schema, system or process, depending on the quality of experience being researched.

5.3 Self-reflection

Halfway through embarking on this thesis, just weeks after finishing the final interview with Coral, I fell pregnant. Due to an extended period of sick leave, I was

compelled to defer completing my thesis write up until after my maternity leave ended. I therefore write this chapter in a rare moment away from my ten-month-old son. With the subject matter of the current research being so intertwined with motherhood, and with an acknowledgment of the importance that subjectivity plays in a psychosocial methodology, I take the next paragraph to reflect on my experience of early motherhood and whether it played into my interpretation of the participant data and subsequent development of cohesive conclusions.

The all-consuming tidal wave of emotions when caring for a new baby is something one must feel to believe; all at the same time I felt overwhelming connectedness, joy and wonder, and deep-seated fear, loss and despair. The strong drive to remain physically close to my son was countered by a desperation to have time to myself, to regain some perspective of the person I was before having him. The quote below describes the experience of new mothers from Hollway's (2008) psychosocial research into early motherhood, and resonates with me strongly,

“At one end they could embrace being mothers with fervour, like an identity project, and at the other desperate to get their lives back, while feeling responsible, sometimes painfully so, for their babies’ welfare.”

Hollway, 2008

As I finally crawl gratefully towards some semblance of ‘life apart from my son’, with work beginning in a few months and events planned where he will be looked after by his grandparents, I reflect on how it might feel if I were forcefully launched back into the powerful experience of new motherhood and one’s healthy yet intense enmeshment with their new-born. I think I can now have an additional layer of

compassion for parents who, either were forced back into this psychological state due to the oppressive constraints of lockdown or have never been granted freedom from this state due to the nature of their child's SEN (5.7).

Furthermore, I noticed how much I would push my desire to be apart from him away, believing that a 'good mother' would not crave time away from their child. My lived experience gave me a deeper insight into Emma's experience of psychodynamic splitting during lockdown, as holding such polarised thoughts at the same time (I adore my baby, I want to be away from my baby) is not a comfortable sensation nor easily integrated together. The ambivalent quality to the mothers' narratives in the current study suddenly rang true, that you can feel contradictory thoughts all in the same moment. These questions provide a backdrop to possible further research. Carrying out this research study has further brought to my awareness the importance of considering and continuously accounting for the power imbalance inherent between myself and the service users. This was especially important to consider when recruiting participants and whether the approach was ethical according to current guidelines. The relational approach to recruitment I chose meant I contacted them in person and they were already known to me professionally, which may have impacted the participant's feeling of pressure or coercion to participate in the research. However, conversely, the relational approach may have encouraged hesitant parents to come forward, who otherwise would not feel able to put themselves up for the opportunity. These parents have had their voices heard and their experience have subsequently been included in the public narrative of lockdown, published and concreted in historical transcript. The process taught me that addressing this power imbalance in my practice is a delicate line to tread, that it should be carefully and flexibly considered at all points of our contact, and my

actions should be constantly amended to reflect the unique characteristics of each service user to ensure I maintain ethical practice at all times.

5.4 Further research

I compare my use of psychosocial qualitative methodology, underpinned by psychodynamic theory, to the archetypal 'loss of innocence' experience; once I had used a psychosocial methodology to explore lived experiences, with its free associative narrative interviewing, reflexive thematic/psychosocial analysis and potential for schematic representation of findings, I can never retreat back to the safety of less personally demanding qualitative research. In closer detail, methods for eliciting one's qualitative data that now feel authentic are ones that allow participants to follow their own 'train of thought', where the interviewer becomes a facilitator of meaning making rather than imposing their narrative choices onto the participant's experience through pre-determined interview questions. Furthermore, I now deem the two rounds of interview, inherent in FANI, as fundamental to qualitatively uncovering the participant's narrative gestalt; the qualitative researcher cannot fully untangle and simplify the richness of a person's experience without returning to clarify their tentative hypotheses with them. Without this two-step process the findings risk not ringing true upon dissemination.

Reaching further, perhaps a series of interview rounds would be beneficial. This could take the form of analysis of interview content being presented back to the participants in an exhaustive cycle of data retrieval, analysis, clarification, and amendments, which occurs until the researcher and participant fully align on a mutually agreed conclusion.

Although methodologically sound, this expansion of the FANI process may come with ethical challenges. Psychosocial epistemology assumes that both the participant and researcher are defended during the interviews, which leads the subsequent task for the researcher to be exploring how each person's defensive systems are interacting during the interview and use this as a lens with which to explore parts of the participant experience that are unconscious and unknown to them. Alongside the practical concerns to the exhaustive interview cycle, including the participant tiring and subsequent sample attrition or weaker findings, the researcher would be compelled to present aspects of their analysis directly back to the participant that contain potentially painful/unknown/confronting truths about their unconscious defensive psychological systems. Different from the one-way exchange of purely disseminating the finished findings back to participants, the researcher and participant would then engage in a dialogue around these themes. The ethical risk here that the 'researcher' could transform to 'therapist', a type of exchange that participants might neither welcome nor have consented to.

In my professional life I plan to bring this methodology forward to study more phenomena. With their histories of domestic violence, I was interested in the evidence that both Emma and Liz had unconscious fears of their sons growing into men. These fears revealed themselves through Emma's apparent preference for 'female energy' and disgust at Bailey's maturing sexuality, and Liz feeling threatened by Cody's growing technological competence and her horror that he was getting taller. Perhaps the relationship between mothers who have experienced domestic violence at the hands of their male family members are perpetually tainted with unconscious and defended fear, a fear that erodes the maternal connection and impacts their relational dynamic for the worse. I would be interested in exploring

these hypotheses further, and psychosocial methodology seems the ideal qualitative choice due to its ability to fare well with traumatic and sensitive subject matter.

In the world, to an extent 'after Covid-19', my husband was able to work from home throughout the early months with our son being with us. His involvement in his son's early life is likely exceptional in history, both due to his working from home and importantly the increasingly flexible accepted gender roles. I am sure the same scenario played out for many new fathers in the UK. Having such direct lived experience of how impactful his role was and how deep his connection to our son remains, I began thinking that placing the 'experience of motherhood' on a proverbial 'research pedestal' is no longer appropriate, considering the changing nature of societal and familial structures towards equal caregiving. Further research is therefore imperative that explores the experience of fathers in their early fatherhood.

5.5 Limitations

Pondering possible directions for the psychosocial methodology, and swiftly drawing back from some, led me to consider one significant limitation to the psychosocial methodology that comes from the dissemination of eventual findings back to the participants studied. As I write, I find myself dragging my heels to get back in contact with my participants to do this. As discussed above, the draw of psychosocial research is its capacity to uncover both parts known and unknown to a participant's lived experience. I think my reluctance stems from the expectation that the previously unknown parts of the participant experience will not land favourably; my findings may inadvertently impose a 'loss of innocence' experience for them, with all of the discomfort that comes with that. I worry that the mothers, who kindly gave up their precious time to help me with my research, will be angry/upset/confused about

the more dissonant aspects of my conclusions. Furthermore, the extracts from my research diary and notes from psychosocial supervision discuss my experiences of interviewing Liz, Emma and Coral, which include feelings of annoyance, fear, and boredom respectively. I would be aghast to give them the impression that I was not wholeheartedly grateful for their participant and overall enjoyed spending that time in their company.

I suspect a 'reluctance to disseminate' back to the participant is frequently felt by researchers using this methodology, as dissonant findings come with the methodological territory. One might also dread the possibility that participants return a verdict on their findings that they were wrong, that they have inferred too far and that the findings had offend them, or worse, upset them. This is ethically questionable, not only because researchers are compelled not to cause harm to their participants but furthermore, arguably, participants could never fully provide informed consent to receive findings of such an emotionally challenging nature. As dissemination is an integral part of the research process, anxiously anticipating this eventual scenario playing out may hinder, consciously or, more detrimentally, subconsciously, data analysis being carried out in a trustworthy manner.

The enriching role of the researcher as container and the illuminating quality of their subjectivity is an inherent part of psychosocial research. My lived experience as a new mother, and the subsequent tumultuous changes to my personhood, is therefore considered a welcome shift to my reasoning and analytical process within the psychosocial tradition. It could be argued that bringing one's personal identity to research is as a driving force behind the rich quality of the findings one is able to gather from the type of research (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013) However, I argue that, placing such pressure on the researcher to be a containing presence for

interviewees may make for a dangerous foundation to the methodological process; to garner trustworthy findings, assumptions made about researcher's competence are subsequently underpinning the stability of the entire eventual thesis. As discussed in the findings chapter, I theorise that my growing confidence as an interviewer led to a more established ability to contain Liz's uncomfortable feelings, and therefore my ability to collect meaningful data improved as the interview went on. It could be argued that all psychosocial research projects should therefore have a pilot phase, where the interview techniques are practiced and honed, and that psychosocial supervision should be presented as a fundamental aspect to the research process, without which one's subjective theories cannot be 'checked' and could risk becoming 'wildly' (Clarke and Hoggett, 2019) inaccurate. The current study did not have a pilot phase, which could be considered a key limitation to the trustworthiness of the interview data produced.

5.6 Contribution and implications

The existing literature synthesised in the Literature Review found many of the same findings that I did. Table 17 and 18 compare the experiential themes for parents in the existing literature with the most related experiential **themes** or *subthemes* found for mothers in the current research.

Table 17 and 18

Comparison of themes in current and existing research

Experiential theme from parents in existing literature		Related theme from current research		
Without SEN	With SEN	Liz	Emma	Coral

	Lack of external support		Abandoned and isolated	
	Difficulties managing child's challenging behaviour	<i>Your behaviour makes it hard to home-school you</i>	<i>I can't motivate you, my attempts to calm you down are futile, your anger is like a runaway train – I can't stop it</i>	<i>Your work avoidance frustrates me</i>
	Loss of beneficial routine			Pining for normality
	Need for respite	Intensity of relationship, I have no freedom because you are always around	Suffocating from forced proximity	<i>I miss my freedom, I need a break from you to feel better</i>
Struggling with multiple identities		Loss of identity		
Worry about too much screen time				<i>I feel guilty about your video game use</i>
Relationship worsening		<i>I can't bear my son's need for constant love and attention</i>	<i>My relationship with you is too intense</i>	
Isolation			Abandoned and isolated	<i>We have lost the social aspects of normal social life</i>
Inadequacy of teaching ability				Intensity of home-schooling

Poor mental health		Drained of energy to cope with parenting, <i>Your behaviour causes me intense physical stress</i>	<i>I worry about my family coping without me, I was in turmoil over being close to my dying friends</i>
Closeness			Closeness
Fear of future		<i>You might erupt in anger at any minute</i>	Looming threat of illness and death

Themes from existing literature that did not appear in the current study	Themes from the current study that did not appear in the existing literature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overwhelmed with competing responsibilities, - Dissatisfied with online learning, - Too many new demands, - Resilience/problem solving, - Change in routine, - Positive feelings from no school attendance, - Overwhelmed with competing responsibilities, - Self-reliance, - Difficulties from child’s lack of understanding, - Dissatisfied with online learning, from samples of parents of SEN. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liz <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Lack of Control - Emma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Drained of the energy to cope with parenting - Coral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Parenting ideals at risk

Emergent themes found within the experiences of Liz, Emma and Coral were located in existing literature on numerous instances. Emma's experience of stress due to feeling abandoned by external professional services was seen across the results of many studies (Althiabi, 2021, Paulauskaite et al, 2021, Tokatly Latzer, Leitner and Karnieli-Miller, 2021, Neece, McIntyre and Fenning, 2020, Rogers et al, 2020, Daulay, 2021 and Yarimkaya and Töman, 2021). Studies also found that, like Emma, a lack of external support meant they struggled to follow the health seeking government guidelines around Covid-19 safety (Paulauskaite et al, 2021 and Embregts et al, 2021). The dichotomy found in the current research, whereby mothers either reported that more time with their son led to negative experiences (Liz, Emma) or positive experiences (Coral), was found in three existing studies also (Althiabi, 2021, Tokatly Latzer, Leitner and Karnieli-Miller, 2021 and Rogers et al, 2020). Participants in these studies either revelled in more time with their children or felt that the being forced together under lockdown conditions was stressful and their relationship suffered. Emma's feelings of powerlessness over Bailey's increasingly challenging behaviour was reflected in several existing studies (Asbury et al, 2021, Rogers et al, 2020, and Daulay, 2021). A hypothesis posed by the current research was around the benefits for parents having time away from their children on their wellbeing, and that the participants' wellbeing was directly proportional to the time they had 'apart' from their child. This hypothesis was reflected in existing literature, such that studies either found that no respite was stressful for parents (Althiabi, 2021 and Rogers et al, 2020) or parents spoke specifically about how much 'alone time' supported their mental wellbeing (Daulay, 2021.) As with Coral's experience of homeschooling, several studies found that parents thought they had 'failed their children' due to knowledge gaps in their academic skills (Daulay, 2021, Canning and

Robinson, 2021, and Greenway and Eaton-Thomas, 2020.) Two existing studies found that parents experienced a constant state of fear around the threat of illness (Rogers et al, 2020, and Yarimkaya and Töman, 2021), as was found in the current research from Coral. Emma's descriptions of her coping mechanisms and her capacity for resilience was also spoken about by parents in existing literature (Tokatly Latzer, Leitner and Karnieli-Miller, 2021, Rogers et al, 2020, and Daulay, 2021.)

Mapping the themes from existing literature in comparison to the themes from the current study reveals several ways in which the current research can contribute to existing knowledge. Observing the significant crossover of themes between existing and current research provided evidence for the credibility of the current research study. Most notably, for all three mothers, the theme 'difficulties managing child's challenging behaviour' was found in their subthemes, and the theme 'need for respite' was found in their themes and subthemes. This suggest that these two themes are especially significant for the current demographic of participant and provides further impetus to support them in particular ways. It suggests that children with SEN can present with challenging behaviour at home and parents can find this behaviour difficult to manage. As EPs have direct access to such parents, they are uniquely placed to support parents by providing them with strategies to help. The theme 'need for respite' was keenly felt by all three mothers and therefore explored in greater depth above in section 5.2.1. Combining findings from existing literature and the current study provides evidence that supports respite care as an important intervention and gives local authorities the impetus to improve the availability of these services for parents of SEN. Implications of a robust offer of plentiful respite

care in local authorities could be wide reaching and positive for the wellbeing of families living with SEN.

Furthermore, through multiple levels of data analysis and an exploration of psychodynamic processes, the current findings were able to present the 'both, and' to the parenting in lockdown experience that previous literature had not succinctly achieved. Examples of competing dichotomies for mothers in the current research included that they were *both* enjoying renewed closeness with their son *and* in desperate need of their own space, they were *both* proud of their parenting ability *and* doubtful of their decision-making, and they were *both* protective of their son's fragile nature *and* frustrated with elements of their SEN they could not manage. I argue that, to present findings from research that has the expressed purpose to explore the profound and life-affirming 'experience of parenthood', without attempting to encapsulate such contradictions in thought/feeling/behaviour, could be considered devoid of humanity and therefore has the potential to be futile.

The synthesis of each mother's unique experience into one complex yet clarified phenomenon, that being 'it is hard when you can't have time apart from your child', can be applied to further reaching scenarios. I reflected outwards on all mothers of SEN, not placed in extraordinary circumstances but in 'normal' daily functioning. I considered how much the separation that comes over time between a mother and their child, a natural and encouraging sign of mature development, is dependent on the child's capability to look after themselves and function independently from a caregiver. Mothers of children who may not be able to live independently from them, whether that is due to emotional, cognitive or physical disabilities, might struggle to find their distinct identity again after having a baby and be trapped in a psychological lockdown of perpetual reciprocity with their child.

5.7 EP practice

This understanding of the ‘mother of SEN’s’ experience has implications for EP practice, as a ubiquitous aspect of our work is consulting with parents of SEN. The enmeshment found in the findings of the current research could impact a mother’s capacity to cope with the demands of parenting. Without further research it is impossible to be specific what the overarching effect might be, however, to speculate, it might impact their capacity to think productively, act rationally or even behave in the best interests of their child. It may also impact rates of mental health difficulties in this cohort. Acknowledging this subconscious driver within their relational dynamic with their child would hopefully bring deeper levels of understanding, patience and compassion for the plight of the families we work with. There are other ways these findings could tentatively be applicable to EP practice going forward. The profoundly uncomfortable enmeshment that emerged during lockdown between mothers and sons in the current study led to thoughts on other times parents and their children are ‘forced together’, sometimes not out of choice. If physical space from one’s child is indeed crucially important to relational functioning, the choice to exclude a child, which is effectively sending them into forced confinement with their parent, might be reconsidered. It is assumed that the child in question would likely already have been identified as struggling with emotional regulation and mental health difficulties (encapsulated within SEMH needs), hence a forced confinement has the potential to exacerbate an already emotionally fraught situation and risks the dynamic between mother and child growing in frustration or even building to hostility and contempt. Exploring the experiences of more mothers at home with their children with SEMH needs would be useful to hone this fledgling hypothesis, or mothers trapped in other home confinements with their children, such

as children suffering at home with long-term illness, school refusing children or home-schooled children. With this in mind, the focus for EPs in schools could be in supporting school staff to rebuild their relationships with CYP at risk of exclusion to try and minimise the chances, or if exclusion is inevitable, working to 'close the gap' of time between children's placements to prevent the potentially stagnating period at home without school.

It might also be helpful for EPs to consider the potential enmeshment that builds between parent and their school refusing CYP during their time at home. Further research could be carried out to explore the phenomenon in greater depth and inform EPs as to how such relational dynamics might be exacerbating the cycle of school refusal.

Anecdotally, from my own experience, CYP who have SEMH needs that cause them to be a physical danger to themselves and others frequently are isolated at times during the school day in 'intervention rooms' with one teaching assistant. It might be informative to conduct further research from a psychosocial perspective to explore how relational dynamics cultivate in these scenarios; 'what happens' on an unconscious level to the relationship between teaching assistant and CYP in these extended stretches of time? And how do these dynamics work for or against the CYP being integrated back into mainstream teaching? Findings from such studies could support EPs in their advice giving for such situations.

5.8 Dissemination

There are several audiences that could benefit from thorough and meaningful dissemination of the findings from the current research; other EPs, the research participants and staff from the school they were recruited from, decision makers in

local authorities, and other mothers of children with SEMH needs. The paragraphs below explain why and how I will attempt to disseminate the findings to these audiences.

As described in more detail above, the findings from the current research are applicable to EP practice on several levels. Knowing the difficulties 'mothers of SEN' experienced during lockdown and reflecting on the lasting impact these difficulties might have had in relation to their functioning and mental health going forward could impact how we work with them. For example, a compassionate understanding can be brought to our work, with a prioritising of nurture and trauma-informed interactions. Additionally, the potentially devastating relational impact of forced confinement of children at home with the parents could impact an EPs decision to align with exclusion or not, and provide a deeper insight into the dynamics between school-refusing children and their parents. At the time of writing, the research has been published through the form of a chapter in an edited book called 'Children in Lockdown; Learning the Lessons of Pandemic Times'. The chapter entitled 'Locked down with troubled children' is an account of the current research, put together by the supervising EP, Richard Lewis. It is hoped that practicing EPs will take an interest in the book and learn from the chapter I have contributed to.

Mentioned above in more detail, it is ethically imperative to disseminate the findings from the current research back to the participants in a form they could access and understand. I will point them towards the book, which is available for anyone to purchase. Additionally, I will offer to send them their individual trees via email and offer them a phone conversation to discuss any parts they are unsure of. For the school from which they were recruited, I will offer an inset presentation to feedback my findings and allow discussion/questions about the content.

It could be argued that external SEMH needs are uniquely intertwined with the parent's 'parenting ability' within the psychological community, in comparison to other forms of SEN that are more frequently associated with genetic predispositions or neurological factors outside of the parents' control. As a result, when mothers are having to manage very challenging behaviour at home, the undercurrent of blame in our thinking surrounding the scenario might mean we unknowingly place the responsibility for change too heavily onto the mothers themselves. Society's message to these parents becomes "Good parents would know how to make their child 'behave desirably' so it's your fault they are struggling with SEMH needs." Relating the same logic to other forms of SEN, the reasoning quickly falters. These messages undoubtedly get tangled in a sense of the parent's own responsibility and could cause embarrassment and shame, as seen in Liz and Emma's account of public life with their son being a struggle. These difficult emotions provide fertile ground for damaging defensive mechanisms to thrive, and the shame could result in a reluctance to seek support. Rustin (2010) describes how the shame some parents feel from needing help with their child can hinder the development of a fruitful and proactive relationship between an external professional and parent. I would hope that other mothers experiencing the same difficulties could absorb the findings and feel less isolated in their struggles, potentially helping to break the cycle of shame and resulting unhelpful self-sufficiency.

Dissemination of the findings from the current research, and other research exploring similar lived experiences, is also vitally important to raise awareness of the impact of SEMH needs on familial functioning, especially within the groups of people who have power to support such communities and assign the appropriate resources to them. Delving back into the past experiences of all three mothers, you can find traumatic

familial experiences. Relating to the local context within which the research is placed, during these times in the mothers' pasts when they were in an especially vulnerable position, they were arguably let down by the surrounding community and systems, such as social services, disability support or police; as a mother managing multiple disabilities and a son engaging in criminal behavior (Liz), as a woman relocated away from her support system following domestic abuse (Emma), and as a child witnessing domestic abuse towards her mother from her partner (Coral). Effective dissemination of findings from the current research to the powerful decision makers within the local context may positively impact how vulnerable adults in the community are treated. Furthermore, the findings would provide tentative evidence that a robust offer of respite, discussed in more detail above, could be an effective intervention to prevent familial breakdown.

5.9 Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore the experience of lockdown for three mothers of children with SEMH needs. Mothers found the sudden removal of physical space apart from their son suffocating and exhausting. They all mourned for before lockdown when they had time for themselves to think and express their identity separate from their son. Liz and Emma describing time away from their sons as like 'being able to breathe again' felt hauntingly pertinent in the time of Covid-19, a respiratory virus that itself causes the sufferer shortness of breath. In their relationship with their sons, they all found themselves powerfully regressing back to the time when their son was a vulnerable infant, when they had to surrender their hearts, bodies, and minds entirely to the pursuits of meeting their needs, all the time. This process, for Liz and Emma, brought hidden relational dynamics related to early

attachment back to the surface, and held them up to the light for scrutiny. What was revealed was profoundly uncomfortable and both mothers unconsciously worked hard to shield them from these uncomfortable truths. Home-schooling was challenging for all three mothers, but for Coral it was a more deeply troubling reminder of past academic failures and pushed her out of her comforting and assured parent role.

By allowing the mothers to follow their own train of thought, freely associating from one thought to the next, the interview data gathered was rich and meaningful. By becoming the containing vessel for their unprocessed emotions, each mother was able to reach into their memories and share difficult stories authentically. My duty as researcher became to construct and present themes that honoured this richness, and to self-reflect on my emotional experience during the interviews, sometimes revealing shameful thoughts and feelings I found difficult to admit to as a researcher. It was this subjectivity that uncovered the unconscious defensive coping strategies each mother utilised whilst sharing painful aspects to their narratives.

There are undoubtedly many more stories from mothers of SEN who experience similar emotional turmoil and overwhelming challenges like the ones presented in the current research. I hope by collecting three I have provided a window into a hidden and perhaps tormenting world of SEMH needs manifesting within homes, where motherhood can be fraught and difficult. Sharing these stories has hopefully further shown the need for authentic, understanding and accepting EP practice with such parents. I wonder whether our EP mindset, when working alongside parents with challenging home lives could shift; instead of handing out advice and sending the message "You could do better, if you only knew how," we could support mothers to work out solutions for themselves by giving them the psychological space to think

clearly. Perhaps our role moves from 'advice giver' to 'space giver', psychological space through thoughtful consultation, and practical space through advocating for their right to respite care.

Words: 39949

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Definition of SEMH in SEN code of practice

“Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties, which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour. These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other children and young people may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder.” (p.98, SEN code of Practice, 2015)

Appendix 2

Ways by which psychodynamic and attachment theory converge

- They both assume that social experiences are modulated through the infant's internal frame of reference, on both unconscious and conscious levels,
- They both privilege the early life of the infant for providing insights into subsequent social and emotional development,
- Both theories hypothesise that caregiver attunement to the infant's internal psychic state is crucial to the child's development of a robust sense of self and productive emotional functioning,
- And they both work from the assumption that infants are born with a desire to form relationships, a desire distinct from the desire to survive by having their physical needs met.

(Fonagy, 2004)

Appendix 3

Attachment styles in the classroom

- The *insecure avoidant* pupil avoids building a relationship with the teacher and focuses on the task, not able to accept help when they need it. In 'positively' framed scenarios, these CYP are perceived as independent and studious, however if the presented learning task is too challenging for the insecure avoidant CYP they will refocus their energy onto a different 'task' unrelated to the desired learning outcome from the teacher. According to attachment theory, this pattern of behaviour results from a lack of attuned caregiving in infancy in response to powerful and unbearable emotions, unconsciously teaching the CYP for future experiences that adults cannot be trusted to provide a secure and comforting base.
- The *insecure ambivalent* pupil is relentlessly attention seeking towards the adults in class. The pupil will continuously work to be actively noticed by the adults, sometimes to the detriment of whole class functioning or even the treatment they receive from the teachers themselves, who can often feel exasperated by the pupil's incessant neediness. According to attachment theory, this pattern of behaviour is reflective of the CYP's initial relationship with a primary caregiver who had prioritised their own emotional needs above the CYP's needs, resulting in the CYP using such 'attention grabbing' techniques with them to protect against being 'forgotten' or not properly cared for. The pupil then enacts this relationship with their teacher to ensure they feel 'held in mind' by them.
- The *insecure disorganised* pupil presents with extreme socially disruptive behaviour, including verbal and physical aggression. Their behaviour is indicative of severely disorganised early care giving, including neglect or abuse. They experience the world as being constantly threatening and therefore live with a heightened sense of danger and hypervigilance, perceiving seemingly neutral requests or task as profoundly alarming. Counter to the insecure attachment styles above, these pupils cannot tether themselves to either their task or their teacher to help maintain emotional stability, which makes it very challenging to engage them in traditional classroom learning.

Appendix 4 Pilot Literature review exploring experiences of parents of neurotypical children in lockdown

The search gathered literature exploring the experience of parents living in lockdown/quarantine with neurotypical CYP. Table 1 outlines the search terms used to gather relevant papers.

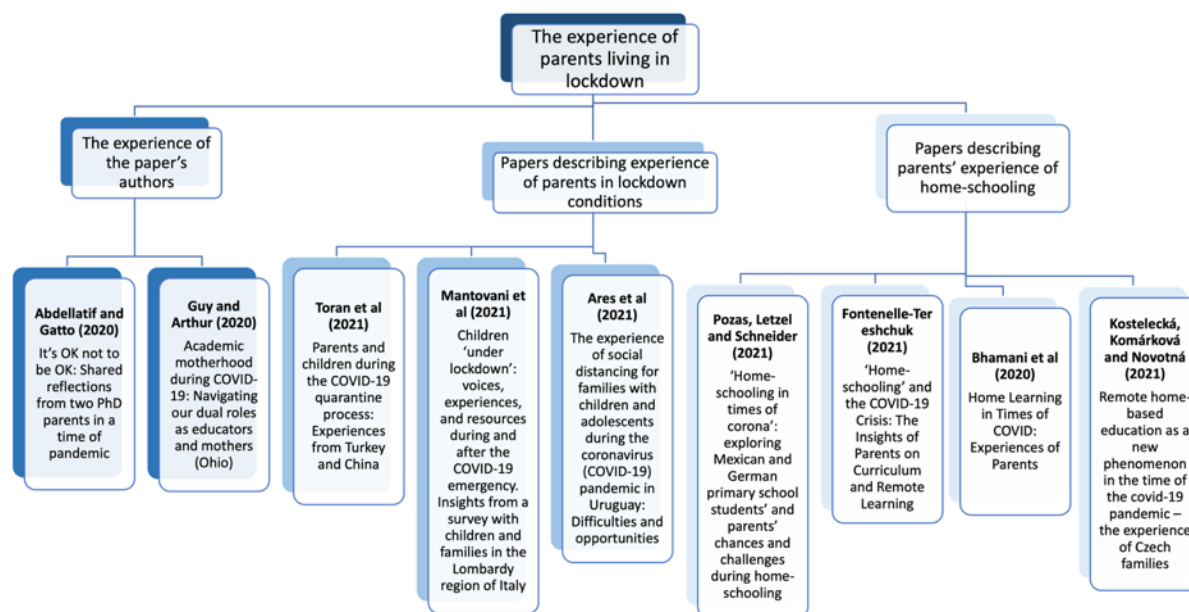
Table 1

Search terms for search

<i>Subject key words</i>	<i>Parent s</i>	<i>lockdown</i>	<i>experience</i>	<i>Covid-19</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
<i>Synonyms</i>	parent OR parents OR mother OR mothers OR father OR fathers OR carer OR carers	lockdown OR isolati* OR quarantin e OR "stay at home order" OR stay-at- home order'	experience* OR perception* OR attitude* OR feeling* OR perspective * OR view*	covid-19 OR coronaviru s OR "covid 19"	180 (search with AND)
<i>Results</i>	928,901	80,108	4,050,004	42,824	14 reviewed (after hand searching for inclusion/exclusion criteria)

Figure 3

Papers included in first category – The experience of parents living in lockdown



The experience of 'no SEN parents' living in lockdown/quarantine

Table 3 gives a broad outline of each paper included in the review for this first category of papers.

Table 3

Outline of papers in first category

Sub-category	Researchers, context	Participants	Aim(s)	(Theoretical viewpoint) Methodology	Data collection and analysis
The experience of the paper's authors	Abdellatif and Gatto (2020) UK	Themselves	Explore their own lived experiences of quarantining with their children, compare experiences between two PhD students with intersecting identities	Intersectional feminist, shared autoethnography	Presentation of lived experiences thematically through shared analysis of their reflective journals

	Guy and Arthur (2020) Ohio	Themselves	Explore their own lived experiences of quarantining with their children, including insights into their dual identity of mother and professional	Relational-cultural, autoethnography	Critical dialogue, experiences examined
The experience of parents in lockdown conditions	Toran et al (2021) China Turkey	Parents of 3–6-year-olds, 11 from China, 13 from Turkey	Investigate accounts of lockdown from parents in two countries for analysis and comparison	Socio-cultural, qualitative	Semi-structured interviews, inductive/deductive coding, thematic analysis
	Mantovani et al (2021) Italy	3443 parents of children up to 10 years old	Explore changes to daily life they experienced, the behaviour of their children and any areas of difficulty that may provide evidence for possible interventions	Mixed methods	Questionnaires (closed-ended questions and one open-ended question), quantitative analysis on closed questions, inductive coding and thematic analysis on open question
	Ares et al (2021) Uruguay	1725 parents	Explore the experiences of families with	Mixed methods	Online questionnaire (closed and

			children and adolescents (under 18 years old) during the coronavirus pandemic, compare experiences of low and middle SES families		open-ended questions about their family life), open questions inductively coded for content analysis
Parents' experience of home-schooling	Pozas, Letzel and Schneider (2021) Mexico and Germany	Seven parents	Investigate reports that the experience of home schooling over lockdown had been challenging for parents and children, compare experience of parents in Mexico (4) vs Germany (3)	Qualitative	Semi structured interviews, qualitative content analysis (mixed methods approach)
	Kostelecká, Komárková and Novotná (2021) Czech Republic	Eight mothers	Explore parents' experiences of home-schooling	Grounded theory, qualitative	In-depth interviews, coding and memo writing to develop theory drawn from "logical conclusions"
	Bhamani et al (2020) Pakistan	19 parents (from an urban area of	Explore parents' experiences of home-schooling	Qualitative	Three open-ended questions answered through google doc, thematic analysis on data, word frequency

		Pakistan)			was used to grasp themes initially
	Fontenelle- Tereshchuk (2021) Canada	Ten parents	Collect participants' perception of events during lockdown	Case study, qualitative	Facilitated focus group with three open-ended questions, questionnaire, sorted and colour coded for themes using wall map

2.3.3.1 Synthesis of themes

A thematic review was done on the nine papers to determine common experiential themes across their parent participants. Table 4 below outlines the dominant themes found in the literature (found in six or more studies) and table 5 outlines the subordinate themes found in the literature (found in three or more studies.)

Table 4

Dominant themes in the literature for first category

Theme	No. of studies found in /9	Explanation
Overwhelmed with competing responsibilities	8	Parents found their time was crowded by too many tasks, including professional, childcare, home-schooling and household chore commitments
Dissatisfied with online learning	8	Parents found the new remote learning environments did not adequately support their child's education (reduced teacher support, poor

		differentiation/quality of lesson, technical challenges, lack of social/emotional support)
Poor mental health	7	Parents found that their mental health worsened (anxiety, stress, depression, fear)
Closeness	6	Parents relished and enjoyed spending more time with their children, saw improvement in relationship
Struggling with multiple identities	6	Parents struggled to integrate their new identities (parent/teacher/professional) in one confined space
Worry about too much screen time	6	Parents thought their children had too much screen time, especially with contribution of online learning

Table 5

Subordinate themes found in literature for the first category

Theme	No. of studies found in /9	Explanation
Fear of future	5	Parents worried about lockdown’s lasting impact of their child’s future (academic attainment, social life, mental health)
Too many new demands	4	Parents felt they were failing at managing all of the new demands that lockdown life brought
Resilience/problem solving	4	Parents found sense of pride in family’s resilience, creative solution finding and comradery in face of hardships
Change in routine	4	Parents had to adapt their routines to living in lockdown (for the better, worse or indifferent)
Relationship worsening	3	Parents saw more arguments and tension between themselves and their child

Isolation	3	Parents missed the previous connection with their communities and social circle
Inadequacy of teaching ability	3	Parents worried they had failed their children due to not being good enough teachers/having inadequate knowledge of subjects

Description of differences between experience of parents of SEN and no SEN

parents

There were several findings that threaded strongly across the papers in both categories that sought the experiences of parents. The experience of lockdown with their children was mostly described as a difficult and stressful time across both groups. The first most common theme for no SEN parents was that they felt emotionally overloaded by the dramatic increase in tasks they were now responsible for, tasks that involved their child and tasks related to household/family life. Most studies found that parents found it difficult to balance their professional and family demands. This was a dominant theme in the papers exploring the experiences of parents of SEN, but of slightly lower significance. Interestingly, the tasks cited by this group of parents related more to the child/rest of the family's wellbeing than professional responsibilities.

Both groups described their mental health over lockdown suffering, including experiencing anxiety, depression, fear and stress. Fear was felt in both groups of parents about the lasting impact that the lockdown restrictions might have of their child's academic attainment and social skills, but it was more pronounced across the no SEN parents. Changes in routine was felt differently for each group. For parents of SEN, the change was seen as a difficult loss, as routine appeared to enhance their and their children's sense of calm in the home before lockdown, whereas for no

SEN parents the theme was described more in relation to being adaptive and flexible, without an obvious positive or negative weighting.

Several positive themes were reported for both groups for different reasons. For non-SEN parents they relished the increased time spent with each other and felt they became closer as a family as a result, as though the lockdown brought 'additional joy'. For parents of SEN the positive feelings also came from closeness, but this theme was less significant. The more significant positive feelings came from not needing to take their children to school, a daily task that it appears causes the families to feel stressed. In other words, the positive feelings came from a 'reduction of stress' as opposed to an 'increase in joy'. The difference gives us an insight into parents of SEN's experience of life before lockdown.

Researchers found that both groups of parents experienced a sense of coping during the lockdown. Non-SEN parents framed their coping as using their stores of resilience and problem-solving abilities to cope better. They reported that the use of internal resilience stores across the family brought them closer and they saw a comradeship build between the family members. However, coping for the parents of SEN was framed more as pride in their self-reliance, suggesting their support system was something more important to them before the pandemic restrictions were introduced, demonstrated in the most dominant theme 'lack of external support'.

There were some pronounced differences between the experience of parents in both groups worth noting. The most cited theme for parents of SEN was feeling distressed at the lack of support from people outside of the home. The word 'abandoned' was used frequently to describe the experience of suddenly not having access to key professionals with the expertise to help them with the daily care and education of the child. The subordinate theme 'need for respite' perhaps stemmed from this

experience, with parents feeling that the entirety of their child's care was suddenly all their responsibility, and they therefore had no break or time to themselves. Neither theme was dominant or subordinate for no SEN parents. Interestingly, a subordinate theme for these parents was 'isolation', arguably just as emotionally difficult, but of an almost opposite quality to the feeling of never having time to oneself.

The second most common theme for no SEN parents were that they were disappointed by the quality of education their children received during lockdown. This was due to the overarching difficulties presented by remote online learning, but also due to a feeling of dissatisfaction with the support provided by teachers. However, for parents of SEN, concerns around quality of home-schooling were only reported in one theme by a small proportion of studies, indicating there were other concerns or prevalent feelings that were more significant for them.

It is interesting to compare the content of the themes found in two thirds of studies for each group. The no SEN parents were struggling to integrate their new roles, of parent and teacher, into a coherent sense of self. In contrast, parents of SEN were responding to their children's increasingly challenging behaviour and finding it emotionally draining to cope. Perhaps the difference was because the no SEN parents it appeared had the 'psychological headspace' to be self-reflective and look inward to find answers as to why they were struggling to cope. Whereas, parents of SEN were overwhelmed with the daily practicalities of life with a child with SEN now that their once integral support system had been abruptly removed, reflected in the themes 'need for respite' 'self-reliance' and 'difficulties managing child's challenging behaviour'.

Summary of findings for sixteen papers

Papers describing the experience of the paper's researchers (2 papers):

Two papers explored the experience of lockdown from the perspective of the researchers with an autoethnographic methodology. Abdellatif and Gatto (2020, *It's OK not to be OK: Shared reflections from two PhD parents in a time of pandemic*) were both studying gender in the workplace for their PhDs in the United Kingdom (UK) during lockdown, but their experiences diverged on their identities relating to gender (female/male), nationality (Egyptian/British) and parenthood (single/married). Mark Gatto is married to an NHS worker and Amal Abdellatif is an international student and single parent. The content of their reflective diaries was organised three overarching experiential themes.

'Intersectionality and identity' explored how their identities brought stressful experiences that overlapped between one another and were different, according to the intersectional aspects of their identities, including balancing the work as a parent and PhD student. They also both felt a closeness to their families during lockdown as a response to the dark outside force of covid-19. 'Masculinities, emphasized femininities and feminism' explored Amal's experiences as a single mother at home and how her femininity felt emphasised, whereas Mark, alone at home while his wife went out to work, had a renewed sense of alternative masculinity. 'Time pressure, vulnerability and self-care' related to their shared sense that they did not feel they had much time for themselves as they were overwhelmed by competing work and homelife pressures. To conclude, Amal and Mark described feeling connected to each other on a more profound level. Overall, Amal's identity was broadened significantly, and she was pushed in multiple roles at once (parent, teacher, chef, carer...), whereas Mark's identity was deepened and galvanised into a new form of masculine caregiver. They felt they had been granted valuable access to the experience of another person who had overlapping

and separate intersectional identities, a unique perspective that they feel will impact their life going forward.³⁴

Guy and Arthur (2020, Academic motherhood during COVID-19: Navigating our dual roles as educators and mothers) organised their findings into two broad themes; 'Academic motherhood' and 'Mental health'. Within 'academic motherhood', the subtheme 'navigating dual roles' related to them feeling guilty and anxious that neither their mothering nor professional role was being given the energy they would have wanted as they existed in the same physical space, and the subtheme 'loss of productivity' related to not feeling capable enough to work to the standard they usually kept before the pandemic. Within 'Mental Health', the subtheme 'Mental Health Challenges' related to renewed feelings of anxiety from either past mental health difficulties or an embarrassment over under performing at work and at home, and 'Coping with Trauma' related to the mothers' contemplations on how a lack of physical connection to others during lockdown impacted them negatively.³⁵

Both studies found their participants managed difficult feelings around juggling two identities within one physical space, and the workload that came with that. I wondered about the relatability of this dilemma to all mothers however, as the choice and ability to work plus from home represents only a small stratum of mothers. Guy and Arthur (2020) discussed their mental health struggles to a richer extent, but this related primarily to a resurgence of past diagnosed mental health disorders of one of the

authors. It demonstrates the difficulty extrapolating findings from such a small sample, but it is still interesting to note how the lockdown conditions induced mental health struggles acutely only if the participant had previously experienced them. Guy and Arthur appeared to have a social justice agenda, that being to highlight the damaging inequality between the genders, whereas Abdellatif and Gatto (2020) discussed the differences in gender through the lens of their intersectional identities between one another, and how it related to masculinity and femininity. Both studies found meaningful and valuable insights, and they both appeared to have a rigorous methodological thread throughout. The findings therefore were grounded in the context of their lived experiences, providing rich and vulnerable insights into lockdown life.

Background

Abdellatif and Gatto (2020) shared their reflective diaries so that similarities and comparisons could be made in their experiences. They

Intersectionality and Identity

A key question asked was where were their individual identities privileged and where were they disadvantaged during lockdown. This led to reflection on the difficulties of their situation but at the same time they both appreciated that they do not have it as bad as others, and Mark thought he did not have it as bad as Amal. Mark reflecting on the intersectionality of the other being the reason why he has it relatively easier than Amal.

Both describe stressful experiences:

- Mark felt like he did not have enough time,
- Amal was alone in a country without support from family who abide in Egypt. Amal describing it as a shock and comparing it to her experiences in Egypt where she felt no fear because she was not alone.
- Both struggling to separate and protect time spent in their two roles: PhD student and parent.
- Amal finding people assume she is not living alone, assume she has support for childcare and in emergencies.
- Amal taking time off to dedicate time to spend with children, acknowledging the reason behind her wanting to complete a PhD being her desire to be somebody they would like to emulate.

While they both also identified closeness of experiences in differing ways:

- Mark finding solace in the love of his family in face of “existential threat” and gaining clarity on what’s most important. Amal feeling closer and happier with her children every day. Both describe a darkness or threatening object outside of the home that brought them closer to their loved ones within.
- Mark acknowledging his projective feelings of anxieties onto his 13-month-old, decided to stop reading news. Amal putting on a ‘brave face’ for children to protect them against her fears about the world. Both acknowledge their role to shield their children against the anxiety of the pandemic.
- Mark knowing son on different level from becoming primary caregiver while wife works as NHS doctor, through immersive play with him.

Masculinities, emphasized femininities and feminism

Both Mark and Amal found their diary reflections discussed issues of femininity and masculinity. Mark discussed taking on the typically feminine household role compared to his wife, and Amal discussed resisting the 'emphasized femininity' within her role as a single mother:

- Mark reflected on how the pandemic has offered him time to take the primary caregiving role, seeing his new role as an 'inversion of masculinity'. Amal describing her disgruntled feelings about the assumptions placed on her as a woman that she will be the homemaker and caregiver.
- Amal seeing gender dynamics in her children, each child telling the other what they can and cannot do based on how their gender usually performs in society.
- Amal felt lack of consent afforded her to bring her home life into the public sphere, rebelled by not using her camera in teaching sessions. I think as she felt a loss of control.
- Mark felt that he wanted others to grow in empathy for parents who cannot outsource their childcare. He wanted to learn about the 'embodied experiences of parenting'. He described it as separate from him.
- Amal describe living as either a fighter or survivor, when a fighter she can celebrate others achievements. Sharing her experiences with a fellow parent in Mark energised her.
- Mark felt that his experiences playing with his son are "self-indulgent" compared to the slog that his wife experiences, but he comforts himself by seeing his role to provide her with a comforting base to return to. It is a comforting thought to him.

Mark then describes how his wife's brave effort fighting on the front line of the crisis is privileged over his caregiving role, as it is a masculinised role.

- Amal described worrying about sanitising her groceries, and then comparing her life to NHS workers or the families of NHS workers who have to manage these worries more frequently and more acutely. Both Mark and Amal managed to rationalise their individual situation as better than the other.

Time pressure, vulnerability and self-care

Both Amal and Mark shared diary reflections on how time to work and play (self-care) were 'squeezed' to different extents during the pandemic, with moments of intensity and challenge emerging from trying to find time.

- Amal described struggling with the constant juggling of childcare and work and keeping a home, attributing it to being alone, describing everyday life as a battlefield and 'tsunami' with no time for self care. Mindful moments feeling like a 'win' As she struggled to meet requirements for multiple identities.
- In comparison Mark had chunks of time, but felt like he could not replicate nursery play experiences, becoming increasingly fearful and worried as a slow "chipping away" at his once robust exterior was now gone.
- Amal was losing her sense of time, which she connects to losing people to covid-19. This brought a loss of interest in the outside world and her choosing time for herself over sleep.
- Mark and Amal both found they must squeeze in time for work later in the evening as it is impossible to work while children need their attention.

Guy and Arthur (2020) Academic motherhood during COVID-19: Navigating our dual roles as educators and mothers

Academic Motherhood

Navigating Dual Roles

Through part time work at the office, Sheva and Brittany had found a balance between their two identities: professional and mothering. The pandemic meant the two identities were existing in the same physical location and therefore they found it difficult to keep them separate. For Brittany this led to “anxiety, sadness and frustration” while both experienced guilt and felt unprepared. The guilt came from not feeling they could give their usual energy to each role to maintain their high standards. Brittany described it as “internally devastating.”

Sheva was pleased that her sons were seeing her modelling how the traditional prioritising of ‘men’s work’ over ‘women’s work’ did not exist in her household. Brittany felt pleased she could model being a hard working professional woman to her son, but also felt it was important to project to others that it was challenging. Sheva echoed the sentiment, realising that having her infant daughter appearing on video calls reminded her colleagues of what she was “juggling”.

Loss of Productivity

Brittany and Sheva lament their loss of productivity over the pandemic. They both describe themselves as losing the ability to perform at work at the standard they would usually like to. Sheva describes finding it very difficult to, as an overachiever, “let go of productivity and survive on doing the bare minimum,” and Brittany

describes the pandemic as time when she was forced to recover from perfectionism. Though techniques for maintaining productivity, included keeping to a routine, making to-do lists, and setting time boundaries.

Mental Health

Mental Health Challenges

Brittany described how previously she used her perfectionism and resulting high work standards to gain validation and connection to colleagues. Without the capacity to “perform” this part during the pandemic, she felt “embarrassed” and “ashamed”. She felt vulnerable to losing the respect she has earned so far in her career. Sheva related to these feelings also. However, Brittany further describes surrendering to the idea that her constant need to appear perfect was not possible during lockdown and how she grew in her appreciation of the joy she finds in both her professional and mothering roles.

For Sheva, having to stay at home over lockdown meant she saw a resurgence of mental health symptoms related to her generalised anxiety disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder. She has struggled with the lack of control lockdown restrictions caused for her and described feeling “unglued.”

Both Brittany and Sheva spoke about upholding their physical image on video calls with colleagues, out of the fear they would be ‘found out’ as struggling with their competing demands at home. For Brittany this led to anxiety at not being able to show an authentic picture of reality to her colleagues, until her feelings of isolation were quelled once colleagues began sharing their struggles .

Coping With Trauma

Sheva reflected on the collective trauma humanity will experience because of the Covid-19 pandemic and considered how a lack of connection could be partly to blame. They both reflected on ways they actively and purposefully tried to stay connected with other people over the lockdown. Brittany noted that, although she described herself as introvert and Sheva as extrovert, they still both needed connections as much as the other. She used the term “stir-crazy” to describe her feeling on being alone in her house for such a long time, but then looked further out to how all humans stuck inside are suffering like her.

Both Sheva and Brittany felt that being in lockdown meant they explored their thoughts and feelings to a deeper extent and learnt new truths about themselves.

Toran et al (2021, Parents and children during the COVID-19 quarantine process: Experiences from Turkey and China

Description of home quarantine

A substantial proportion of parents (7) described quarantine at “psychologically difficult and boring.” Some (3) managed to find adaptations to deal with feelings of “stress and anxiety” by the end. A small number of parents (2) described their quarantine time “as a new experience”. The same number found The majority of parents saw a change to their normal routine, with 15 parents saying this change was towards “more flexible eating, sleeping and waking schedules”.

Relationship with children before and after quarantine

Half of the parents spent more time with their children, with five parents enjoying this additional time and a “reduced the pace of life”. Until work commitments eventually “limit(ed) the levels of closeness they could have with their children”, seven parents said their relationship with their children felt closer during the quarantine. However, a substantial minority of parents (6) found them and their children to be more stressed and aggressive over quarantine. Discipline felt more difficult for two fathers as their parent/child dynamic seemed to shift to “friends” and they struggled to assert their authority.

Positive experiences during quarantine

Activities that parents undertook together with their children were described as positive by 17 parents. They included “playing, cooking, painting, reading, watching films/TV, singing and physical activity”. Eight parents found the improvement in their relationship with their child and all family members to be positive. Only two parents could not recall any positive memories of quarantine.

Negative experiences during quarantine

Some parents (6) found their children’s tantrums challenging, with five describing the discipline strategies they used (“shouting at the child, using corporal punishment, or leaving the child alone.”) Three parents found changes in everyday routines and they parental role as a negative experience. Some parents did not like the closeness that developed between themselves and their children over quarantine. Parents spoke about being on their own during quarantine, with some (4) spoke about the

difficulties of working and caretaking on your own and some (3) felt isolated. Four parents were concerned about their children's increased exposure to "electronic screens."

Papers describing experience of parents in lockdown conditions

Three papers aimed to explore the experience of parents in lockdown conditions. Toran et al (2021, Parents and children during the COVID-19 quarantine process: Experiences from Turkey and China) analysed their interview data into four core themes. 'Description of home quarantine' related to changes in the family's routine and subsequent feelings of stress and anxiety they tried to cope with. They found their work commitments crowded out time they would have preferred to spend with their children. 'Relationship with children before and after quarantine' contained polarised descriptions of intimate closeness and bonding, with increased aggression from children and difficulties with discipline. 'Positive experiences during quarantine' related to enjoying home-based activities with their children and most parents seeing an improvement in their relationship with their children. 'Negative experiences during quarantine' related to difficulties with discipline and feeling isolated.

Critique

Not aimed to generalise the findings to larger population, so why do a comparison? The parents were grouped by the similarity of their description of their experience, which, in some cases, differed drastically between groups. This seems to work well.

Mantovani et al (2021) Children 'under lockdown': voices, experiences, and resources during and after the COVID-19 emergency. Insights from a survey with children and families in the Lombardy region of Italy

(Data pertaining to the closed questions and children's experience was omitted from review.)

Systemic resilience in families

Parents were asked 'How did you feel during the lockdown period?' Parents fit into three categories as to how positive they felt on reflection of their lockdown experience. Roughly a quarter of parents expressed exuberant relief ("We have made it!"), two thirds of parents described employing resilience and experiencing 'ups and downs', and a significant minority (14.5%-19.7%) said they felt at the end of what they could cope with ("I can't stand it anymore!") "Systemic resilience", or feelings of connections and camaraderie, were enacted between roughly 60% of parents. Almost half of parents thought their relationship with their child had improved over lockdown.

Key areas of vulnerability

Parents expressed an ambivalence about their experience, both feeling pleased with how well they had coped during an unprecedentedly and uniquely challenging time, but also concerned with how the experience might impact their child's education in the future, for example, worrying about how much electronic screen time their children had participated in over lockdown.

The online learning experience

Some parents of younger children (~42%) worried about their excessive screen time their children had during lockdown, feeling both guilty and concerned they might “become addicted to digital technologies”. A similar percentage saw the experience as positive overall and 20% saw the experience as negative. A similar percentage of parents with older children rated their online learning experience as “satisfactory”, but stated issues such as “too little online interaction with their teachers”, the remote nature of school being “demanding on parents” and children were given “too much homework”.

What about the future?

Table ... show the list of themes that emerged from analysis of data in response to the question, ‘What worries you the most right now about your child?’

Concerns about children’s social lives (put on hold during the lockdown),
Going back to school/day care
Uncertainty on the part of the children concerning rules and routines
Health and wellbeing
The use of digital technologies
Fears concerning potential delays in development or learning as a result of the lockdown,
Worries about discipline
Dietary behaviours
(Excessive) television viewing

The most frequently expressed worries about the future were “what school is going to be like [post-lockdown]” and “social relationships with peers.” Parents were concerned that the lack of social contact over lockdown might have impacted their ability to develop socially in the future, with some parents (~4%) stating that they had already seen a developmental “regression” in their children. Concerns about the health risks of Covid-19 were the least cited category (7%) and 8% of parents had no concerns about the future.

Research limitations:

8% of parents went out to work and the child was looked after by external carer. It is reasonable to assume that these parents would have had a distinctly different experience than the rest of the sample and therefore attempts to form overarching themes are flawed. Open and closed ended questions seem conflicting in theoretical underpinnings. Qualitative data is organised in a quantitative manner which could misrepresent the findings.

Ares et al (2021) The experience of social distancing for families with children and adolescents during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in Uruguay:

Difficulties and opportunities

Moods and emotions

Most participants reported negative moods and emotions since the implementation of social distancing measure, these were mainly; worry, fear and anxiety. Some were able to identify the motives underlying their feelings, being: worries about the health of their

family, their employment and economic situation (self and country). There was a minority who in contrary reported a more normal mood or more positive moods and emotions of; feeling good, hopeful, calm or positive. A social economic divide evident in how those who “felt bad”, had “mood changes” and “economic aspects” were significantly more frequently mentioned from low SES than medium SES. On the contrary, participants from medium SES reported having felt “un- certainty” or “ups and downs” more frequently than those from low SES.”

Changes in daily routines

There was an understandable frequent response that staying at home was a change to the daily routine, with ninety five percent reporting changes in their daily routines. However, this also encompassed participants referring to four key types of changes: job loss, unemployment insurance or special vacation due to the coronavirus situation, impossibility of working due to the social distancing measures or changes in child-care arrangements and working from home.

Participants reported washing their hands and cleaning their house more often, with some being described by Ares et al as having obsessions about cleaning and hygiene. The changes related to education impacted participants and their children’s education, with difficulties accessing online classes and the closure of educational institutions creating the need to stay with their children at home and this impacted their relationship.

Changes in parent's relationship with children

Forty-one percent of the participants reported having experienced changes in the relationship with their children. Most of the changes were positive as participants mentioned 'spending more time together', 'familiar bond', 'more communication' between family members, and doing 'more family activities' together. On the contrary, a small proportion of participants referred to negative changes in their relationship, such as 'less physical contact' to avoid the risk of contagion, tense family relationships due to 'stress and fear', and 'more arguments and fights'."

Research limitations:

Some of the qualitative data was presented quantitatively, i.e./eg. what/the proportion of participants who reported specific change, which could misrepresent the nature of the findings.

3.3.1.3 Papers describing parents' experience of home-schooling (4):

Pozas, Letzel and Schneider (2021) 'Home-schooling in times of corona': exploring Mexican and German primary school students' and parents' chances and challenges during home-schooling

In exploring the experience of home schooling, with the focus on chances and challenges, there was a clear difference in that the Mexican sample identified more chances (n = 58) than challenges (n = 49) to home-schooling, whereas the German sample expressed more challenges (n = 98) than chances (n = 25).

Deductive Categories	Inductive Categories	Description
<i>Chances</i>	Digitalisation	Statements of how students and parents perceive the use of including digital media and tools as a means to continue and support home-schooling.
	Structure	Statements of how student and parents organise their home-schooling routines during the COVID school lockdown.
	Socio-emotional opportunities	Statements of how students and parents try to strengthen their family interaction, social relationships and to prioritise issues of care, empathy and emotional support despite the COVID-19 crisis that involved school closures and social distancing.
	Inclusive education	Statements of how students and parents perceived the use of DI as a means to support students with and without SEN.
	More time	Statements of how students perceived having more time to work on their tasks during home-schooling.
<i>Challenges</i>	Organisational difficulties	Statements of how students and parents experienced difficulties organising and establishing home-schooling during school closure.

	Inequality	Statements of how students and parents perceived e.g. lack of DI as a means to support students with and without SEN, and social, economic, and overall educational divide.
	Social distancing	Statements of how students and parents experienced not being able to see, meet, and be in contact with their friends, peers, school teachers, and general school environment.
	Pedagogical difficulties	Statements of how parents were confronted with taking over an educator role.
	Number of tasks	Statements of how students perceive the number of tasks they received in home-schooling during the COVID-19 school lockdown.

Mexico

Chances of home-schooling

Parents described spending more time together as a family, which they felt “strengthened... (their) sense of togetherness.” The bonds they felt between family members grew because of the increased time they had to spend with each other.

They further describe finding new solutions to the social distancing restriction to maintain social connections with others outside of the home.

Challenges of home-schooling

Parents found that, despite the creative solutions utilised to maintain connections with friends/family outside the home, they lamented the loss of real face-to-face interaction.

Parents perceived home schooling to exacerbate the existing inequalities associated with students with SEN, who did not receive adequate differentiated learning content, and students from low-income families, as they lacked the appropriate technology to access the learning.

Germany

Chances of home-schooling

German parent's experience of home-schooling did not reflect any "barrier(s) to differentiation and inclusive approaches". They felt there was adequate differentiation for student across the ability spectrum. They were also pleased to see their children learning "to work appropriately digital tools" as they recognise the importance of digital learning in their future.

Challenges of home-schooling

Parents felt "overwhelmed" and confused by their new expectation to step into the teacher role. They did not feel confident in their ability to teach nor did they feel there was adequate feedback from teachers as to whether they were doing the right thing with their children or not. Furthermore, balancing the demands of household management alongside their new teaching responsibilities caused parents substantial stress.

Research limitations:

For the most part, the examples of interview questions were closed. Interview question examples appeared majority closed, which will not illicit/ elicit rich qualitative data. Deductive sorting of data into challenges and chances might have reduced findings, does/and did not take into account 'feeling two things at once'. It is doubtful such a small sample be used to generalise, let alone compare.

Kostecká, Komárková and Novotná (2021) Remote home-based education as a new phenomenon in the time of the covid-19 pandemic – the experience of Czech families

Background

Home-based in the Czech Republic learning was mandatory and families were required to follow the school's curriculum closely.

Factors that influenced mandatory home-based learning (how it was tackled by families)

School's approach

- Parents' satisfaction with the communication they had from schools regarding home learning expectations differed. In cases where the parents felt the communication was satisfactory, home schooling was reported as more effective,
- During the spring term, parents had to provide a lot more teaching to their children than in the autumn term as there was no "synchronous online learning tools" up and

running the autumn term, parents felt that schools were better prepared and so felt there was less of a “burden” on them,

- When synchronous online learning was more widely used by schools, some parents were pleased, while for others it presented with additional problems. Children in the early years of school and with special educational needs struggled to engage with the learning style.
- some children struggled to maintain focus when the school day’s timings were replicated online, leaving the lessons too long and complicated.
- Some parents felt that the online platforms left teachers unable to effectively differentiated their lessons to suit the needs of different pupils,

Other factors increasing the challenging nature of home schooling from the parents’ perspectives:

- Number of children in the family,
- Younger ages of the children,
- The families’ lower social economic status and resulting lack of control over working hours and commitments,
- Perception of poorer teaching skills,
- Practical considerations and stressors from catching, or trying to avoid catching, the Covid-19 virus.

Strategies that helped parents cope with the situation

- Parents wanted to ensure their children did not miss out on their education over the lockdown and also wanted to support them in their wellbeing,
- Parents adapted their working arrangements to make this possible,
- Parents reported spending time assisting their children in their education by helping them with the technical demands of online learning and providing resources additional to ones given by the schools. These additional resources included their own time teaching and motivating their children on top of their work commitments,
- Parents attempted to plan alternative leisure activities for their children in the space of reduced social contact,
- Parents felt there were some benefits to their time home schooling their children, such as a later wake up time, more awareness of their children's learning abilities, greater independence, and a growth in their appreciation of teachers' contribution and skills.

Critique

Assumptions of study included the assumption that parents educational level impacted/affected their home schooling experience, and the assumption that qualitative methodology yields more in-depth insights. Grounded theory meets well with aims.

Factors and strategies are reductive – where are the mothers' experiences? Journal of pedagogy? Grounded theory sits well with the aims of this study although many factors and strategies are reducting; where are the mothers' experiences, for example.

Bhamani et al (2020) Home Learning in Times of COVID: Experiences of Parents

Theme 1: Impact of Covid on children's learning

- (a) Impact on daily routine

School routine being disturbed impacted children's development of good work habits. Some parents thought that routine supported their child being disciplined in their work. The children's lives are lacking the routine of sports, exams, school and friends. Hygiene routines being followed well was a positive.

- (b) Difficulty shifting to online mode of education

Difficulty maintaining seriousness and discipline of formal learning online, without physical presence of a teacher. Teachers were perceived as ill-equipped to deliver learning in this way and children's learning suffers, additionally without the option of peer learning.

- (c) Impact on social development

Parents worried about their children's lack of access to social interaction, at parks and libraries etc, and how this would impact their social and emotional development, particularly the parents of younger children. Not being able to attend school was seen as detrimental on a "deep level" as it is a well-suited environment to hone/practice social skills. Parents noted that children missed the physical interactions between them and other peers, which further supports concord in friendships.

Theme 2: The support given by schools

- (a) The role of online classes

Parents found teachers were providing online resources and learning spaces to good effect. They felt that the resources helped their children maintain a steady flow of educational opportunities throughout lockdown. Teacher had been stressing the importance of play and outdoor activities alongside formal online learning.

- (b) The responsibility of schools in spreading COVID-19 awareness

Schools provided children with information about the virus, ways to stay hygienic and safe, and strategies to support their mental health.

- (c) Challenges faced in the execution of remote learning.

Parents were concerned about the technical challenges of online/remote learning, more specifically the detriment to learning if their child could not get online, and this was felt more keenly by parents with more than one school aged child in their home needing to access the internet. Due to the nature of online learning, parents felt that children were not as able to ask for help from the teacher, meaning the helping role shifted to parents more than usual. Parents lamented this additional time spent helping children with homework as they were also busy with their own work commitments.

Theme 3: Strategies used by caregivers at home to support learning

- (a) Maintaining a strict schedule

Due to concerns about routine disruption, parents implemented their own schedule of waking, sleeping and activities for each school day. This was to prevent excessive computer time and help their children stay “productive”.

- (b) Engaging in creative activities

Parents planned creative activities for their children outside of formal schooling hours to fill up the endless empty time lockdown brought. This included crafting, singing and cooking. They described these times as positive for both themselves and their children.

- (c) Difficulties faced in keeping children busy

Some parents commented that their children saw the time out of school as a holiday, and therefore they struggled to motivate them to do schoolwork over watching television or playing computer games. They worried how the lack of schoolwork would affect their long term development, particularly physically and academically.

Research limitations:

This paper was overly descriptive and lacked deep analysis.

Fontenelle-Tereshchuk (2021) 'Home-schooling' and the COVID-19 Crisis:
The Insights of Parents on Curriculum and Remote Learning

Parents as Partners: A Failed Communication Approach

Parents felt that schools did not communicate effectively with them and this resulted in feelings of exhaustion and frustration. They expressed a desire to have better and more frequent feedback from teachers.

Balancing Work Responsibilities and 'Home-schooling'

Parents found it overwhelming to support their children with the academic and emotional aspects of schooling whilst also engaging in their own jobs, or for some,

job hunting. They felt it was unfair to expect parents to home school their children as school should have supported them more.

Underestimated Parental Support Needed

Parents felt they were too heavily relied upon by schools to support their children with home schooling, despite not having the adequate experience, skills or knowledge to teach.

Myths About Remote Learning: “The Older Children Versus Younger Children”

Parents did not find their older children required less motivation and support to engage with their learning than their younger children all the time. Other factors came into play, such as special educational needs, subject preference and emotional connection to school/the learning process.

The Perceptions of the Experiences of Parents with Language Instruction

The Parents’ Language Role

Depending on the level of French spoken by the parent, they felt less or more able to support their child with their French learning. Some parents who did not speak French worried for the losses their children might experience in French over the lockdown, whereas parents who spoke French said that their children’s French speaking improved.

The Lack of Language Support

The parents who did not speak French thought that there was a scarcity of opportunities for them to receive support from teachers, especially considering they had work commitments during the times when support was offered.

The Perceptions of the Experiences of Parents with Curriculum and Remote Learning

Teachers and Curriculum: Misunderstandings of Technology Purpose

The parents saw the potential in remote teaching to be an adequate method of delivering lessons, however they felt that the teachers were not always equipped to use the technology effectively. Sometimes they felt teachers over relied on the technology instead of utilising their actual teaching skills to ensure the social and emotional aspects of teaching were maintained alongside academic aspects.

Parents felt teachers unhelpfully assumed that the children were capable of paying attention whilst using an online platform without needing additional in-person support to do so.

Curriculum Design: Disconnected 'Chunks' as Opposed to a Wholly Integrated Learning Plan

Parents described how learning content was broadly delivered in large packs content did not feel individualised to the learning needs of their children and was missing vital pedagogical elements such as clear learning intentions, assessment resources, or methods of delivery outside of simply lists of instructions. The style of delivery

added to the pressure on parents; and gave the parents the additional teaching responsibility due to the lack of 'face to face' teaching time.

The 'Disconnection' in the Use of Technology Tools for Teaching and Learning Purposes

Parents were frustrated at teachers' limited proficiency with technology and the resulting limited technological features they utilised in their lessons. They felt that teachers underestimated how much support their children needed to access the lesson content they provided.

The Inadequacy of Supporting Resources

Parents noticed that the majority of learning tasks and resources provided were not made by teachers but were perhaps generic and therefore not designed intentionally to suit the differentiated needs of the children across the classes.

The Perceptions of the Experiences of Parents on the Importance of Social Interaction

Mental Health

Parents were worried about the impact of lockdown on their children's mental health.

Critique

The triangulated findings revealed by the interviews and focus group, both qualitative methodologies, worked well. *The case study design worked well with theoretical underpinnings, aimed to uncover collective unique experiences.*

Appendix 5

Scoping searches

Databases:

- APA PsycInfo
- APA PsycArticles
- PEP Archive

- Education Source
- ERIC

Limiters:

- Between 2020-2021

Inclusion criteria:

Qualitative study

Either mention of lockdown or quarantine

OR Investigation of home-schooling experiences in particular

Focus on experiences of parents

Exclusion criteria:

Focus on experience of children

Quantitative data collection and analysis only

Investigation of parenting practices

Pilot 1:

'Search with AND'

S1 AND S2 AND S3 AND S4

View Results (31)

lockdown OR isolati* OR quarantine OR "stay at home order"

View Results (71,077)

experience OR experiences OR "experience of"

View Results (1,230,078)

covid-19 OR coronavirus OR "covid 19"

View Results (36,466)

TI parents OR TI parent OR TI carer OR TI caregiver* OR TI carers OR TI mother
OR TI mothers OR TI father OR TI fathers

View Results (211,782)

Pilot 2.

Removing 'caregiver*' – due to bringing up too many dementia related articles

Removing obligation for parent/carers to be in title only – due widening search

Adding experience* or perception* or attitude* or view* or feeling* or perspective* -
missing things

(215) results

Pilot 3:

'Search with AND'

lockdown OR isolati* OR quarantine OR "stay at home order"

View Results (71,077)

experience OR experiences OR "experience of"

View Results (1,230,078)

TI parents OR TI parent OR TI carer OR TI caregiver* OR TI carers OR TI mother
OR TI mothers OR TI father OR TI fathers

View Results (211,782)

special educational need* OR developmental disability OR intellectual disability OR
developmental disorder OR (social emotional or mental health need) OR (social
emotional or mental health needs) OR (social emotional and mental health need)
OR (social emotional and mental health needs) OR behavioural difficulties OR
behavioral difficulties View Results (123,232)

16 results

No new studies of relevance.

Pilot 4:

'Search with AND'

experience OR experiences OR "experience of"

covid-19 OR coronavirus OR "covid 19"

parents OR parent OR carer OR caregiver* OR carers OR mother OR mothers OR
father OR fathers

special educational need* OR developmental disability OR intellectual disability OR developmental disorder OR (social emotional or mental health need) OR (social emotional or mental health needs) OR (social emotional and mental health need) OR (social emotional and mental health needs) OR behavioural difficulties OR behavioral difficulties

(59) results

Findings of scoping searches

- Researchers gathered data to reflect either experiences of lockdown/quarantine at home specifically or experiences overarching across the whole Covid-19 pandemic period. Therefore, literature in category 3.2 was grouped into either 'living in lockdown/quarantine' or 'during the Covid-19 pandemic' to reflect the difference in research questions posed by the studies,
- Papers that utilised the term 'caregiver' when being found during the search were all discussing experiences of people caring for elderly people, frequently people with dementia. Therefore, the term 'caregiver' was removed from the search terms,
- To widen the search and capture all relevant literature, the obligation for the search terms related to 'parent/carer' to be in the title of the paper was removed, and the addition of the terms 'perception* or attitude* or view* or feeling* or perspective*' were added to terms related to 'experience',
- Papers were found that explored the experiences of children during the pandemic from the perspective of their parents, or that outlined parenting

strategies that parents utilised. The content of these papers informed the exclusion criteria when hand-searching,

- A wider breadth of literature was found when excluding the requirement for papers exploring the experience of parents of SEN to be only gathering data from during a lockdown/quarantine period, as opposed to data gathered during the entirety of the Covid-19 pandemic period.

Appendix 6

Revised CASP by Long, French and Brooks (2020)

1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?
 - What was the goal of the research
 - Why it was thought important
 - Its relevance
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?
 - If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants
 - Is qualitative research the right methodology for addressing the research goal
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?
 - If the researcher has justified the research design (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use)
4. Are the study's theoretical underpinnings (e.g. ontological and epistemological assumptions; guiding theoretical framework(s)) clear, consistent and conceptually coherent?
 - To what extent is the paradigm that guides the research project congruent with the methods and methodology, and the way these have been described?
 - To what extent is there evidence of problematic assumptions about the chosen method of data analysis? e.g. assuming techniques or concepts from other method (e.g. use of data saturation, originating in grounded theory) apply to chosen method (e.g. Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis^{39,40}) without discussion or justification.
 - To what extent is there evidence of conceptual clashes or confusion in the paper? e.g. claiming a constructionist approach but then treating participants' accounts as a transparent reporting of their experience and behaviour.
5. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?
 - If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected
 - If they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study
 - If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part)
6. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?
 - If the setting for the data collection was justified
 - If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.)
 - If the researcher has justified the methods chosen
 - If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews are conducted, or did they use a topic guide)
 - If methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why
 - If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc.)
 - If the researcher has discussed saturation of data
7. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?
 - If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) formulation of the research questions (b) data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location
 - How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design
8. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?
 - If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained
 - If the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e.g. issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study)
 - If approval has been sought from the ethics committee
9. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?
 - If there is an in-depth description of the analysis process
 - If thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data
 - Whether the researcher explains how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process
 - If sufficient data are presented to support the findings
 - To what extent contradictory data are taken into account
 - Whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during data analysis and selection of data for presentation
10. Is there a clear statement of findings?
 - If the findings are explicit
 - If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments
 - If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst)
 - If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question
11. How valuable is the research?
 - If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g. do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research-based literature)
 - If they identify new areas where research is necessary
 - If the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used

Appendix 7

Yardley 2000 list of considerations for good qualitative research

Table 1 Characteristics of good (qualitative) research. Essential qualities are shown in bold, with examples of the form each can take shown in italics.

Sensitivity to context

Theoretical; relevant literature; empirical data; sociocultural setting; participants' perspectives; ethical issues.

Commitment and rigour

In-depth engagement with topic; methodological competence/skill; thorough data collection; depth/breadth of analysis.

Transparency and coherence

Clarity and power of description/argument; transparent methods and data presentation; fit between theory and method; reflexivity.

Impact and importance

Theoretical (enriching understanding); socio-cultural; practical (for community, policy makers, health workers).

Appendix 8

Tables of the themes of five highest quality studies.

Findings from Asbury et al (2021)

Theme	<u>Subthemes</u>
Worry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worry for self <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Anxiety for self ○ Fear for self • Worry for others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Anxiety for others ○ Fear for others ○ Concern for child’s future • General worry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ General fear ○ General anxiety
Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of specialist input <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School input ○ Loss of specialist support • Loss of routine

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Change in routine ● Financial Loss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Finance
Mood, emotions, and behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feeling down <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Low mood ○ Distress
Knowing what is going on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive implications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Self-efficacy ○ Good communication ● Negative implications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Uncertainty ○ Poor communication
Overwhelmed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Too much <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Total responsibility ○ Competing responsibilities ○ Overwhelmed ○ Always together ● Stressed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stress
Minimal or positive impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive emotions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Positive emotions ● Minimal impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No/low impact

Findings from Daulay (2021)

Theme	Subthemes
Mothers' experience in implementing home education	Adaptability
	The burden of caregiving
	Emerging negative emotions

The constraints in home education implementation	Increased maladaptive behaviours in ASD children
The efforts to alleviate barriers	Problem-focused coping
	Religious coping

Findings from Tokatly Latzer et al (2021)

Theme	Subthemes
Shutting down of special education systems	Fearing the implications
	Lacking the tools needed
Crude logistics of a pandemic-induced lockdown	The need for speed (and space)
	You are what you eat (and how you sleep)
	New routine
Chronicles of regression and evolution	Functional factors
	Social interactions and communication
	Behavioural attributes

Coping strategies	Accommodation of needs
	Exposure to information
	Family influences

Findings from Rogers et al (2020)

Theme	Subtheme
Carrying the burden	Abandoned
	Carer mental health
	Stigma
A time of stress	Fear
	No break
	Powerlessness
Embracing change and looking to the future	Less pressure
	'Foot off the gas' – now and in the future
	Resilience

Findings from Embregts et al (2021)

Theme	Subtheme
We need to stay healthy	A constant health threat
	Struggling with the balance of infection risk and a manageable family life
We make it work	My child with an intellectual disability should have a good day
	We are in this together
	Space to breathe
My child's and family's place in the world	Is my child worth saving?
	Feeling the same but different

	Fewer expectations
--	--------------------

Appendix 9

Information sheet



My name is Emily Barrett and I am training to become an Educational Psychologist.

I am the designated Educational Psychologist for ***.** I may have run intervention work with your son at ***** and you may recognise me from workshops or annual reviews.

Below is an information sheet regarding the **research** I intend to carry out as part of my training.

Locked down at home during a pandemic; the experience of mothers/caregivers isolating with their children with social, emotional and mental health needs

I am interested in the **experiences of mothers/caregivers** who have been living at home with their children during the 'lockdown' (from roughly March 2020 to the present) that is being enforced by the British government as a protective measure against the spread of Covid-19 in the United Kingdom. I want to **hear the stories** of mothers/caregivers who have been living with their son and who would like to be **interviewed about their experiences**. I am specifically interested in mothers who have been in 'lockdown' with their sons who are in the special educational need category: Social, Emotional and Mental Health.

You will take part in **two interviews** roughly a week apart, most likely via an online video platform:

1. An open interview where you will have the *opportunity to talk freely about your experiences* in response to only a few open questions. The interview will be roughly an hour and half in length, with a chance at the start to talk through anonymity and your right to withdraw at any time.
2. An interview tailored more to *your unique experience* in accordance with the content of your first interview. In this interview we will talk in more depth about your experiences. The interview will be roughly an hour in length, but *timing is flexible* according to how long you wish to speak for.

It is entirely your choice as to whether you would like to participate and not taking part will *not* effect or impact on ongoing or future work that may take place with your son at *****. Be assured that you have the **right to withdraw** from the research at any point throughout the process, up until data becomes anonymous and can't be separated out; this will happen a month after the second interview has taken place. All the information you share with me will be published **anonymously** and your **data will be protected** according to the legal regulations set out by the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. Note that there may be limitations in confidentiality where disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others has or may occur. The information shared with me during your interviews will *not* be taken into consideration during any subsequent work I might undertake with your son at *****. Audio-visual recording of the interviews will be taken via the recording feature on the online meeting platform.

The interview must take place in a confidential space. If the interview is through an online meeting platform, this confidential space could be in your home or the home of a friend/relative.

This research has been approved by the *Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee (TREC)*.

For further information or if you would like to participate, please contact me at ebarrett@tavi-port.nhs.uk or call me on **07*******

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the researcher or any other aspect of this research project at any point throughout the process, you can contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk) at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust.

Appendix 10

Consent form

Consent Form

Research Title:

Locked down at home during a pandemic; the experience of mothers isolating with children with social, emotional and mental health needs

Please initial the statements below if you agree with them: **Initial here:**

1. I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the chance to ask questions.	
2. I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and I am free at any time to withdraw consent or any unprocessed data without giving a reason.	
3. I agree to a video and audio recording of my interview.	
4. I understand that my data will be anonymised so that I cannot be linked to the data. I understand that the sample size is small.	
5. I understand that there are limitations to confidentiality relating to legal duties and threat of harm to self or others.	
6. I understand that my interviews will be used for this research and cannot be accessed for any other purposes.	
7. I understand that the findings from this research will be published in a thesis and potentially in a presentation or peer reviewed journal.	
8. I am willing to participate in this research.	

Your name:

Signed.....

Date...../...../.....

Researcher name: Emily Barrett

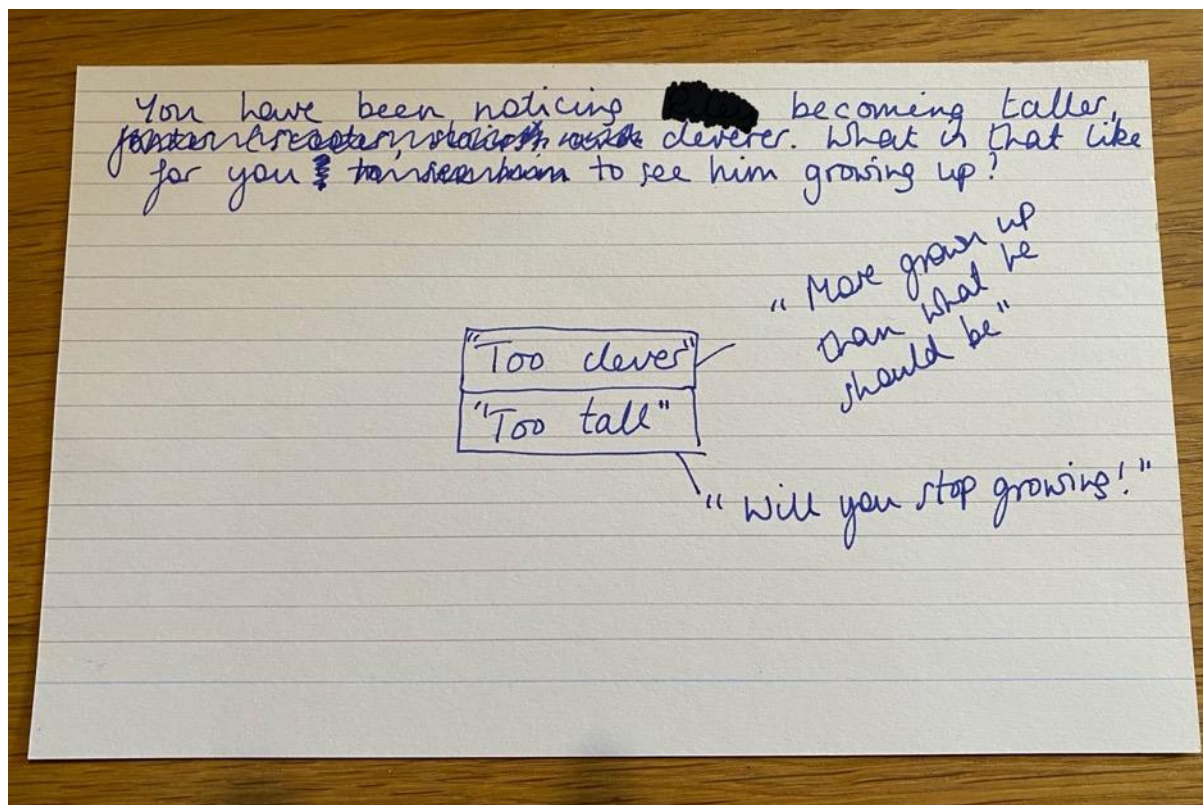
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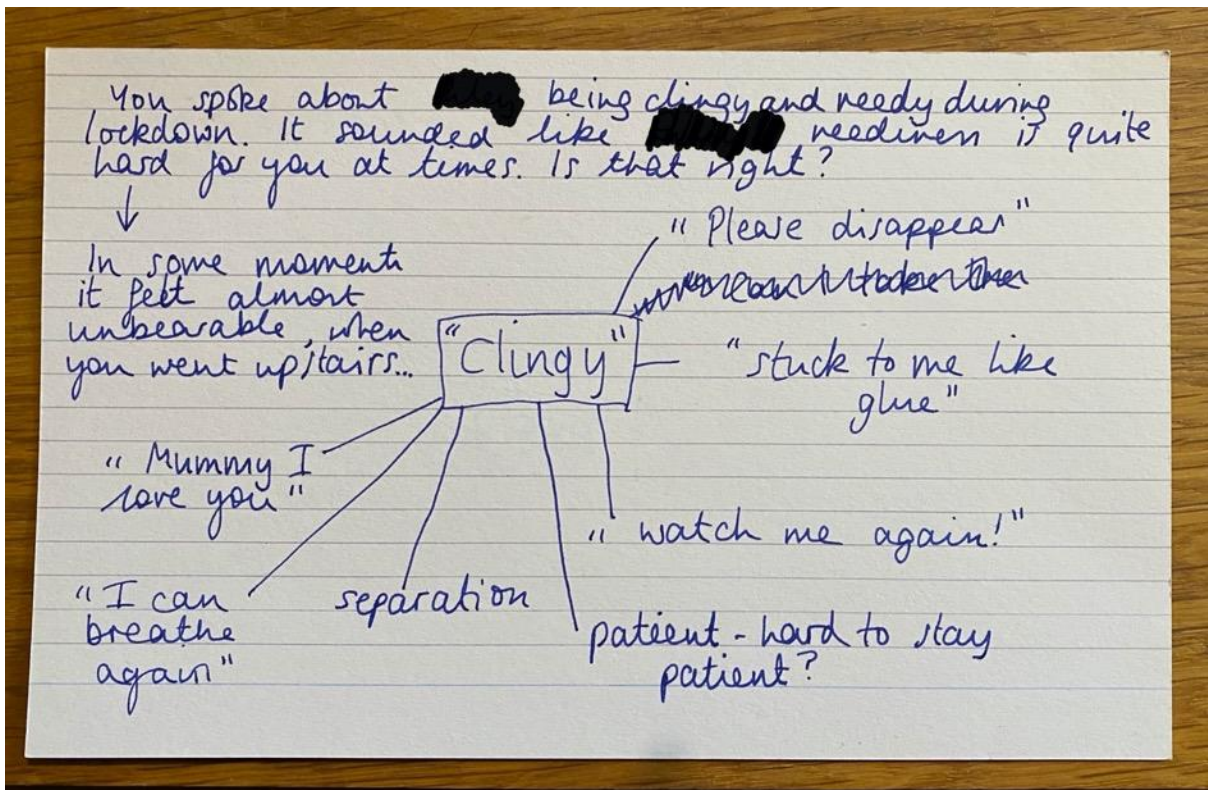
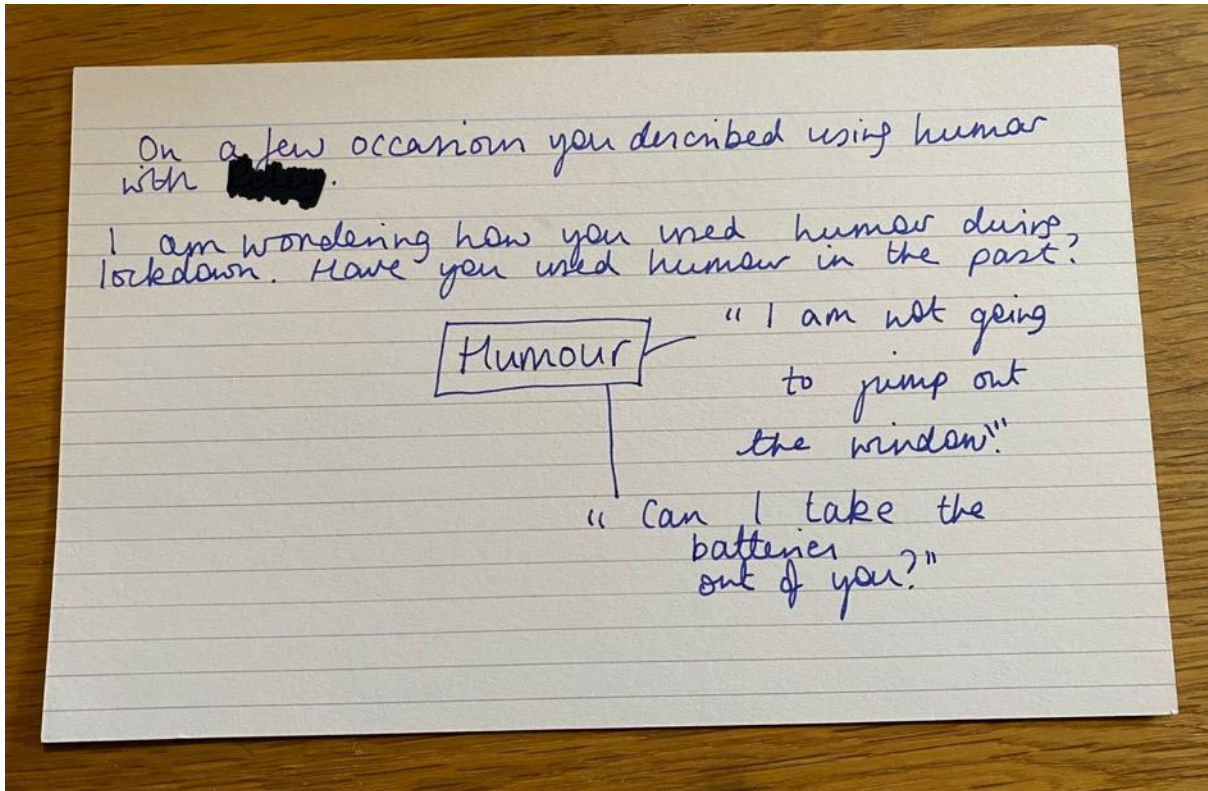
Date...../...../.....

Appendix 11

Questions for second interview

Liz questions





X You spoke about having conversation with [redacted] about his behaviour at school and not knowing whether he is trying to 'get out of stuff'. Do you ever feel that as a conflict in your mind?

"Blowing the anger into the air" to [redacted] Does that ever help you? In the past?

Understanding and patience with [redacted] disability

hurtful
Calls you ^ names like "fat" "slow" "old"

What is it like to have to 'hold in' that frustration?

At these times you sound like you feel quite frustrated with [redacted] but don't always feel you can show it because of his SEN.

You told me about your sticks and how you can have difficulty walking because of your arthritis. I wondered if that affects how you feel seeing [redacted] dart about on his scooter, up the stairs, or running away from you in the shops?

Physicality

"Trying to be clever"

School work

fidgeting climbing

What does this mean to you? Have you heard this from anyone else in the past?

It sounds like [redacted] leaving had a big impact on your life [redacted] life with [redacted]. Am I right in saying that?

Its reasons [redacted] "too tall" getting

* Jordan powerlessness

When [redacted] is crying about [redacted],

I got the sense "It upsets me when he's crying about [redacted]"

that you might feel powerlessness to stop it. Does that connect with you?

Have you felt poweren before with anyone else?

You described a few occasions when [redacted] would tell members of the public things about your private life. It sounded like these moments were quite uncomfortable for you.

Am I right there? Is that how you experience it?

Social pressure/embarrassed

"yapping" in the queue at lego land.

Did this happen more/less in lockdown?

Tell people about [redacted]

social worker convo

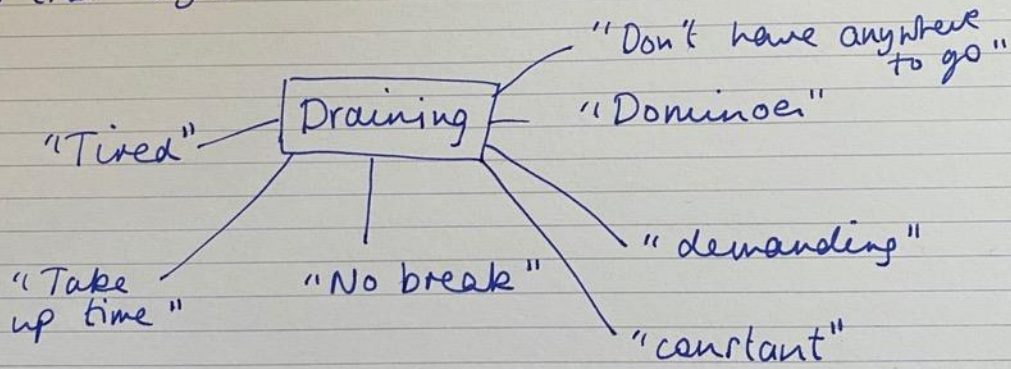
Emma Questions:

④
Did this get worse over lockdown?
You mentioned that [redacted] can be really loving or really and give you cuddles, or he can be quite rude. Like you go between two ends of a spectrum?
Is that right?
Is there a middle ground?
"Never gonna leave you"
Love/hate
"Please go away from me? I've had enough."

②
You mentioned how, when [redacted] is 'on me' you try to stay calm, but it ~~is~~ ^{would be} ~~like that~~ must be difficult for you, especially when he is saying you're 'a bad mum' or being 'ungrateful'.
Is that right?
Staying calm.
calming down.

③

You described lockdown as being with [redacted] as draining, no break, demanding.
 When you're with him it's hard to think clearly.
 Is that right?



⑧

Considering the interview was about you and your experiences, what was it like for you when he was kicking off during the interview. Not wanting to play with the car after you built it.

[redacted] shouting

When I was watching ~~the~~ you set up his toy.

⑦

You described a few instances when school has called you to speak about things, it sounded like on the one hand you don't care but on the other hand "you'll get mummy in trouble". ↓ "That right?"

"here we go again"

"You'll get mummy in trouble"

Being embarrassed / worrying about what school thinks

"embarrassed" playing with himself

"Attendance"

"

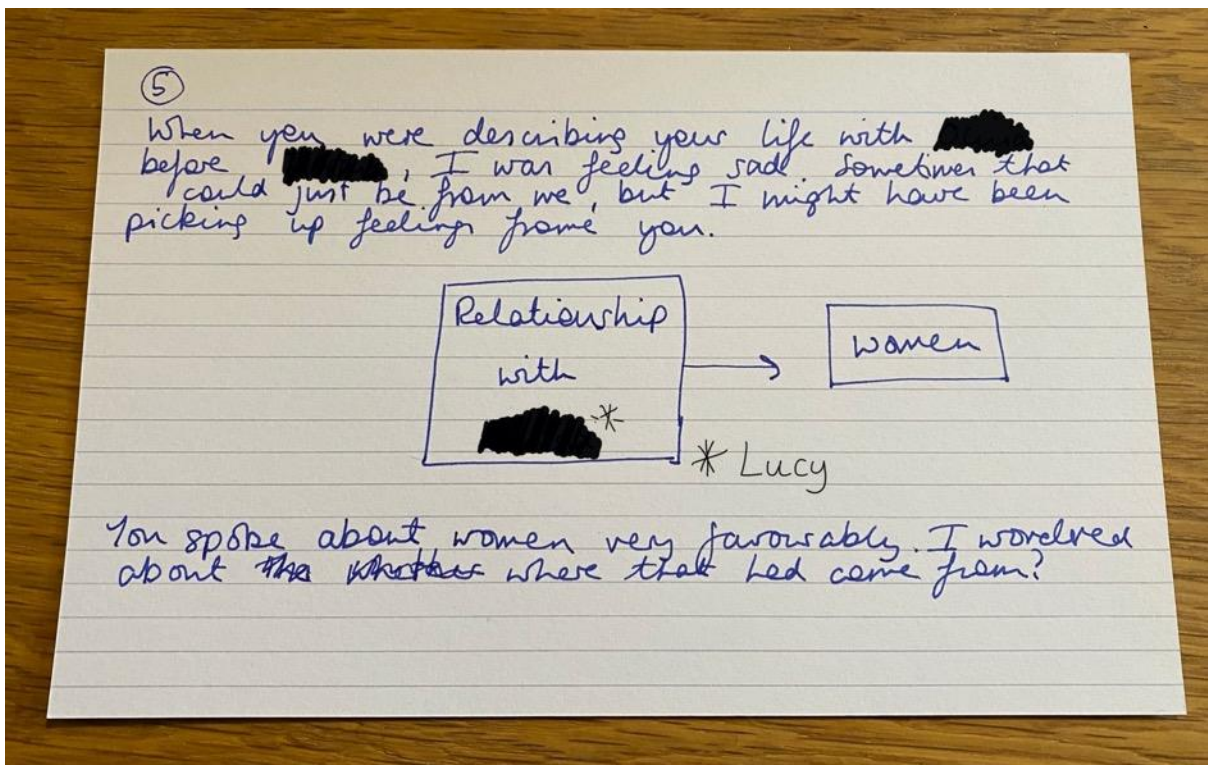
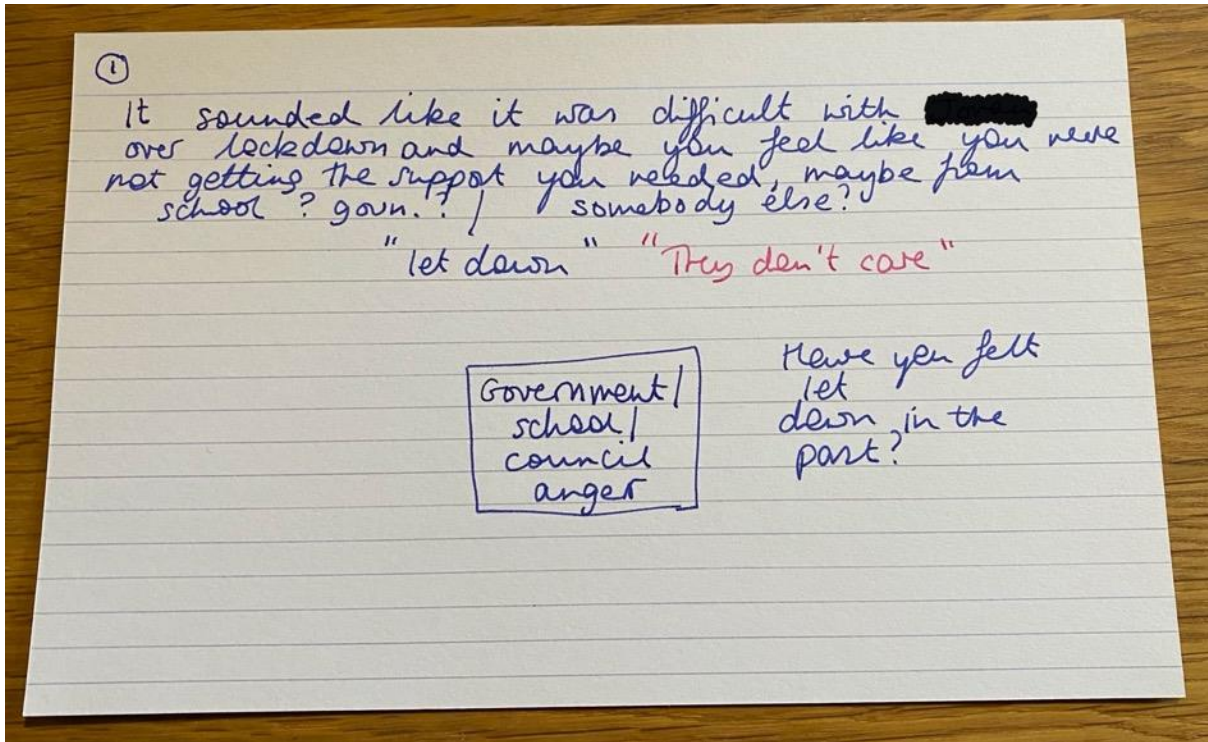
Saying sorry to me also, when you had to be firm with [redacted].

⑥

I noticed that you used humour with [redacted] at times, maybe when he was 'on one' or saying 'he wishes he didn't have a sister'. You also described scenarios in a really humorous way.

Do you use humour often to deal with maybe difficult things?

Humour



Coral questions

Ryan:

You described Ryan as being 'calm' over lockdown with you and you two getting closer, spending time together. You said it was nice. Tell me more about this experience for you.

How did it feel for you when Ryan went to spend the weekend with his mum? Tell me about your experience when he leaves.

You talked about finding it scary to think about Ryan's difficult childhood experiences impacting his future as an adult negatively. I was wondering how strongly you held this fear over lockdown? I wondered where these worries had come from? Perhaps your own childhood?

On a few occasions you compared your daughters experiences to Ryan's experience. Can you tell me more about what it is like to think about their differing life experiences?

Ryan went back to school for the month... before the end of term? It sounded like you were happy for him to go back to Acorns? Is that right?

Managing life with Covid:

It sounded like the uncertainty about the future during lockdown was difficult for you because usually you can plan for all eventualities (Described your thought process like travelling down the branches of a tree, exploring all the possibilities). Is that right?

When you spoke about the hygienic demands of lockdown life you spoke about how you understood why you had to do it and wanted to keep yourself and other people safe, but at the same time you questioned the 'severity' of COVID, and felt a bit 'stupid' and wanted to touch your loved ones. I was wondering how you experienced this lack of 'sureness' over lockdown.

You described how managing the demands of Covid whilst you were looking after too very close people in your life who were very ill and dying as "Stressful". You also said "there was so much going on" and gestured towards your head. Can you tell me about this experience for you?

It sounded like feeling like lockdown life was 'normal' was important to you. Is that right?

Teaching:

You spoke about how nice you found it being able to spend more time with your children over lockdown, but then described the times when you were 'teaching' them as 'the flip

side'. It sounded like the two experiences were very different for you. Can you say a bit more about that?

“Failed them” “panicking”

You described teaching as being like a ‘headless chicken’, I wondered if this feeling was something you haven’t experienced before? That it was a new experience?

You said you put in a lot of effort and it was quite frustrating to teach Ryan. You also said he would have ‘tantrums’ and your other children would find it unfair. Can you tell me more about that experience?

What was it like to see Ryan teaching your other children?

Family:

I noticed that you put a lot of effort into looking after all the people in your life, including your children and your family members. Am I right in saying that?

I noticed that you had lots of empathy for everyone else in your life. I wonder how much you got to think about yourself over lockdown?

Death:

Over lockdown you thought about what might happen if you died, knowing that you are in a risky category and how important you are to your family. Can you tell me more about that experience?

You also made a plan for what would happen for Ryan and your children to 'Not make it emotionally negative' - I wondered whether sticking to plans, routines, being regimented, has helped you manage difficult things in your life in general or before?

Parenting:

It sounded like being a good parent to Ryan is important to you, but perhaps over lockdown there were some important aspects of parenting you had to put aside. You spoke about feeling guilty. Is that right?

You spoke about how not 'lying' to your children was important to you, For example about Covid, about death, and how it didn't feel right to you to make excuses for Ryan's mum. I was wondering if that belief had come from your experiences in the past? Maybe when you were a child? Tell me if I am wrong.

You said that seeing Ryan play on his device too much was the most distressing part of lockdown for you. You talked about feeling like you "supported that". Why did you use that word 'distressing'?

You said that now you barely have any incidences of Ryan going into crisis anymore. You said this was because you know him so well and you'll pick up on it. I wondered whether it made you feel happy to think about is progress?

Appendix 12

Examples of supplementary questions for interview

- Tell me more about (identified theme/event/experience brought up by participant)
- How did you experience (theme/event)?
- What was (theme/event) like for you?
- What were your thoughts/feelings during (event)?
- Tell me about (theme/event/experience) from your perspective.
- Tell me more about your choice of the word (...)

Appendix 13

Extract of interview transcript

Researcher

Tell me more about him getting taller.

Liz

Oh! One minute he's alright, next minute he's had a growth spurt and it's just like he's where it come from I'm like *can you stop growing?* and he's like "I can't do that!" But you'll be the same size as mine is in and he says "I know I can reach it now look I can get it" I'm like yeah okay, but he's just so tall now it's like he's only eight he shouldn't be that tall at the minute, but he does try bless him when we went on holiday, I went in a caravan and like the car had to be parked away from the caravan because you can't park on the dirt so I was bringing the shopping through the caravan door and telling him to pull that bag back so I can put the next bag in, and I said to him right I'm going to lock the caravan door and just go and park the car and come back, which was literally five minute walk from the caravan, so I did that and when I got back bless him he put stuff that was in the fridge the shopping bag in the fridge or in the cupboard or on the table, I'm like well done darling and he went so why did you do that he said "because I wanted to I wanted the caravan to look nice and tidy" I went why don't you do that at home he said "because it's a mess" and I go *but you're the one that makes a mess!* He says yeah I know, I just think it was so funny.

Researcher does he make a mess at home?

Liz

Yeah he does make a mess at home I'm like can you put that in the bin he's like I'll do it later and I'm like no do it now *"oh okay then"* and like you put things on the floor and doesn't pick it up and I'm like can you pick that up now, but now he's got in the habit he does do it now without even thinking which is a good thing, it's like we eat dinner at the table, I've got a foldaway table in my

front room because the front room is tiny, but every time we have dinner we sit on the table and he likes that, he prefers that.

Researcher

Does he?

Liz

Yes. Even in the caravan he's like come on mummy will have dinner at the table now yeah okay we will do that anyway, so it was quite = **tell me about**. So he loved all that.

Researcher

So tell me about having dinner with him what's that like?

Liz

Oh it's alright, he sits there but then he can fidget quite a bit, if you give him like his favourite meal which is like spaghetti Bolognese, he will make a mess on the floor (unintelligible) mess on the floor because I call him my little mouse because I've got an electric TeFal cheese grater, because I've got arthritis, so all you've got to do is press the button and the cheese goes down and grates it itself, so he comes out and helps me before dinner he has some of that we will sit at the table and eat and like every time we have a meal now we sit at the table and eat together, which is nice as I said his favourite meal is spaghetti Bolognese but if you put anything with vegetables on his plate he won't eat it I've tried every vegetable going, sweetcorn no don't like it peas don't like it he used to like baked beans but he's gone off of them now. So it's like spaghetti hoops and other stuff, I do him chicken, he loves a roast dinner as well so... that's another one of his favourites but again he'll only eats the chicken and the Yorkshire puddings and about two or three carrots, but he won't eat roast potatoes or any other veg I put on there like broccoli or cabbage or any other veg, he'll just eat the carrots, he will move everything else aside.

Researcher

And when he's not eating his vegetables what are you thinking when when he's not...

Liz

Im thinking he needs to eat because it's like he needs them so I've got like vegetables (laughs) vitamins and supplements for him because sometimes he looks very white in the face. He's like withdrawn kind of colours and I think was it because I'm not giving him enough vegetables? But he loves his strawberries he loves bananas and he loves apples the only thing with apples is that he won't eat them hole they've got to be diced in like like a rectangle kind of shape, where the cool comes out so you've got segments of them. He will only eat them that way, he's just a funny fart (laughs) and he loves his houmous, he does love his houmous **Really? You said he's** = when he had it yesterday = **when you say**.... sorry.

Researcher

No no no please don't say sorry I'm listening keep going keep going (laughs laughs)

Liz

(laughs) As I said it's funny when he comes to his houmous he will eat the the houmous with his dipsticks or it's just his finger, he'll just eat it on its own (laughs) it's like eats healthy that way and then sometimes it's like you need to eat that but I don't like it, it's like the other day he cried his eyes open because I got him Minion chicken burgers. And he was like *"I don't wanna eat them I'm going to kill him"* no you're not there chicken burgers shaped like it. *"No I can't eat them I'm killing them"* and like (laughs) bless him he's so funny, so now what I do is I put it in a bun with a bit of cheese on top, oh it's a chicken burger now so he doesn't, so he just eats it whole, or I cut it in half so he ate half of it and then he is the other half, but again I tried to put peas on his plate but he won't eat them, everything I do I try to put veg with it because I'm on slimming world so I do everything with veg. Everything else I'm trying to make myself lose weight so I'm gonna make him do that but he like nah! But he does like the fakeaway donna kebab, so he'll eat that with cucumber but he doesn't eat tomatoes or other veg he's just a funny kind.

Researcher

So when he gets... when he got emotional about the minion burger, what was that like for you how did you...

Liz

I was like "But it's a chicken burger, it's chicken burger in crumbs!" "no it's not it's it's a minion" but I'm like look it's a chicken burger "no it's a minion" I'm like oh okay then I tried cutting up he's like "no you killed it now" well okay then.

Researcher

How are you feeling at that point?

Liz

Oh I just think it's funny thinking like crying over a chicken burger which looks like a minion, I'm like why do you think it's sad to I cry Cody, I'm like why do you think we're going to kill it "because it's 1 million" I said but it's not a minion it's a chicken burger it's chicken covered in breadcrumbs "no it's a minion I love minions" I'm like okay then we will leave them aside do you want to eat something else "*yeah okay then*" and I just let him raid the fridge which he had like he had chicken burger I think he had spaghetti hoops and French fries, he had the French fries and the spaghetti hoops and then he just reads the fridge, like I call it chicken set, sachets, set, sachets, it's like chicken on a stick I call it for him so they're in the fridge, or there is little pieces of cheese, Dairy Lea cheese strings and things like that so if he's that hungry he'll have that then he's like okay then or yoghurt, he eats, he loves yoghurts, that's another thing he doesn't mind eating.

Researcher

See you saying that he likes to raid the fridge, did that happen over lockdown at all?

Liz

Yeah always he opens the fridge it and mummy there is nothing in here well that's because you eaten it all, so we have to get likes strawberries again, or the dairy Lea snack pots which is the cheese and ham in them and then houmous it's got its got to be in there all the time and then um he's got to have the Yoghurts and the cucumber, we usually cut that up so he can put it in the

housmous to dip with just give him varieties like carrots I've tried cutting them up with it he's like no he prefers the breadsticks or his fingers, like at Caterpillars it was always like breadsticks (laughs). I don't mind doing that he has one packet of crisps a day because I don't want him getting too chubby bless him, but when lockdown was here, and it was summer, he would go out in the garden he would go on the trampoline. play out there on. about all the time. he's always been like that always jumping on there gets himself excited. like "mummy are you washing up" yes darling "watch me do this flip" oh wow "no I did it wrong watch me again" It's like I'm trying to wash up okay yeah that's fantastic "no you didn't see me do it's properly" (rolling eyes) okay then I'll just stop what I was doing and it was like "watch this watch this watch that watch how I done that bit" I'm like wow that's fantastic that's super oh you're getting so clever at that bit okay I've got to go and wash up now "okay then" and he'll get bored and then come in again.

Researcher

you'll have to stop what you're doing and go and see him?

Liz

Yes, always, I have to all the time, it's like he doesn't let you have a bit of time to yourself to do anything- he's like even when it's the front room it's like he's watching um... Paw Patrol "mummy look what PAW Patrol is doing!" yes darling I'm just Getting something out of the oven "but look look look!" but Cody I am getting your dinner out of the oven I'm going to burn myself so it's like "okay then." Like before he was really bad if I was in the kitchen, he would be right next to me, so at least when I'm cooking, he's not that bad, but it's just the rest of the time if I want to go toilet he's like "where are you going?" I'm going to the toilet "oh okay" and it's like he will follow me and say "why have you got the toilet door shut?" because I need my privacy, "okay then"- because I've got a wet room it's like if I have a shower, it closes half off so the shower curtain is here (gestures with hand) the toilets there kind of thing, so if he opens the shower curtain he has to pull it back that way, so it goes like that kind of square. And it's like argh! (grunts, irritated) "So mummy how long are you going to be in the shower?" I'm like when I'm finished okay then "so I'll sit here and talk to you then" I'm like no go and watch cartoons go and watch your telly for a minute I'll be out in a minute "yeah but I miss you, I love you." I'm like *'please leave me alone.'* Under my breath I'm like, argh! I'm going to kill you! But you know, just calm down, just like wait a couple more hours bedtime, bedtime, bedtime.

Researcher

So you're waiting a couple more hours until bedtime.

Liz

Yes I'm like *ah come on come on roll-on* I'm thinking like so I can have a bit of peace and quiet to myself. Like sometimes you try to get- like this morning he was down here watching a program like I had to go upstairs... to, why did I have to go upstairs for... I had to go upstairs for something, to get some pennies I think for shopping and I sat on my bed, because I've got arthritis I can't um put my clothes on properly, so I have to sit at certain angles to do things, so I went upstairs to try and put my trousers on and like I'm on the bed fiddling around about trying to do it and like, I thought ok I'll put my feet under the blanket just to keep my toes warm, while I'm sitting, so I thought right I'll watch the rest of the Covid stuff and Boris and all that on the TV until it's time to go to school. Next minute he's upstairs like "what are you doing up here? I miss you" okay, then it's like he's jumped on the bed and I'm like why are you on the bed for he went "I miss you I want to sit next to you" I'm like Cody you was watching your program "yeah but you wasn't down there" I'm like *Ro!* I'm like come on get off the bed, I said, lets go downstairs "oh okay then" And he's downstairs quicker than a flash rabbit and because I'm like on a stairlift and it goes really slow and he's like "come on mummy, you're a slow coach" and I'm like yeah I know. "Because you're old!" and I'm like yes I know.

Researcher

When he says that, when he says that you said he said you're a slow coach is that right?

Liz

I'm a slow coach. He says I'm a slowcoach because you're old, I'm like thanks. He's like he goes "why are you old?" because I'm old... like when I say to him *oh!* this morning I couldn't get my scooter out of my car because I had a sharp pain in my back so I had to walk with my crutches today from the car to his classroom. Well his classroom is nearly the end of X school so, from where the car park is to the classroom it would probably take someone about five seconds to walk it, it takes me literally 5 to 10 minutes to walk it from there to there because I'm slow on my

sticks. And then it's like, I'm like (breathing in and out) because I'm asthmatic as well he's like "why are you slowing down?" I'm like because I'm old "but why are you so old?" because my arthritis is hurting "why have you got arthritis?" because I'm old "well stop being old then." (laughs) Fair enough. It's like it makes you laugh bless him the things he comes out with.

Researcher

How does it feel when he...

Liz

Oh I just think it's hilarious, bless him. It's like- the only thing that upsets me is when he says "mummy you are fat! But I still love you" I'm like Roo that's not a nice word to say to people, that's being cruel, he says "but I'm not I'm just telling you the truth!" you know what kids are like they do tell you the truth. I'm like but you're a bit podgy too aren't you, he's like "no I'm not" but you're getting like mummy though ain't you "no!" Okay fair enough (laughs).

Researcher

So you said it upsets you when he when he talks when he says stuff like that.

Liz

I know, yeah, when he tells you that you're fat, no one wants to be told that they're fat don't they really, or ugly or whatever people do, but I just tried to laugh it off and say to him don't say things like that, I said because it hurts mummy's feelings. "Oh well it don't hurt mine" and I said yeah but it hurts mummy and then he's like "okay then I'm sorry but I love you but you are fat though." Sometimes you just have to laugh it off the way he comes out with it, I don't get too upset (laughs). I don't get upset with him with it, "but it hurts mummy's feelings, you've got to understand that when you say things like that to people it does hurt them." I said like if you said to somebody at school that they're fat, that's not nice is it. So it's like on holiday bless him, his mouth won't run away with him before his... his head got in gear. A little boy was half cast and of course his hair was all puffed out, like where the mum probably was using, um an Afro comb and it's all puffed out, he said "mummy he looks like he stuck his finger in a socket, didn't he?" I'm like

Cody behave! Cody shush up! That's probably what how he wanted it, I said look he's handsome, look at him, he's a beautiful little boy. "He is but he does look like he's had his finger in a socket, like he's had an electric shock." I'm like Cody shut up... (rubs forehead.)

Researcher

And what's it like for you and that happens

Liz

I went to her I'm so sorry. She said "That's alright, it was funny." I thought, to me, it was like, no you've got to understand, if you're going to be nasty keep the words inside "but I didn't say it to his face" but I said it loud enough for the whole café could hear you. And then there was a boy who look like um he had mental health issues, he was a man but he had the helmet on his head so he was like, he wanted dinner but everything after that was like "poo I want everything with poo Coke with poo", and Cody went "why is he saying that?" I went because God made him that special, I said he made him... so he made him like that but I said you still got to be nice have a new "oh okay". I'm like trying to explain to a kid that he's got mental health issues and it's like he doesn't understand things himself. But like when he was with down syndrome kids when he was at X school in... Feb they took him out for the day for like um an activity class, they said that when he was with Down syndrome children and babies he was good and very polite and helpful and things like that, and he does love little kids and every time he sees them he's like "oh why are you crying? Oh aren't you cute." And it's like, he's really good with little ones, bless him. Sometimes he doesn't know how to express his emotions, it's like why are you being naughty at school. "I don't know." Why did you do that? "I don't know!" Like lately/ I don't swear at home/ but last time he kicked off he told a teacher "I know what I was effing doing" I'm like sorry where did you get that word from? "I don't know but I was angry so I told them that" and I said but you're not meant to swear are you? Mummy doesn't swear at home, mummy said oh fiddles or fudge sake or fiddlesticks or butterflies, the only time I swear under my- I've tried not to under my breath, it's when someone pulled out in front of me in the car and I go *you stupid pillock!* or eff this. And he goes "mummy and I know that's the wrong word and I won't say it" and I'm like, he knows they're wrong but when he's angry he's in that mode of like I don't care, kind of thing (laughs) but he hasn't sworn for the last couple of weeks, thank gosh, but it's like oof! But you don't swear "I

don't know why I swore" and I'm like but you're still not meant to say are you? He's a monkey I suppose.

Appendix 14

Additional quotes to support findings

Liz

4.2.1.2 Lack of Control - I wish I could control my son's behaviour

"It was frustrating, like come on I'm sitting here helping you and you're like, you're moving off the chair and you're underneath the table, you're climbing in between the

chairs and you're not sitting still. It was like a nightmare, I was like come on! I've got other things to do..."

4.2.2.1 I Hope I Am Being a Good Parent

*"...So I feel guilty because I can't teach Cody how to ride a bike. **You feel guilty?** Yeah, because it's like I've done that with the eldest, but I can't do that with a little one."*

"I said do you think it might be [...] trauma, ... do you think he might need counselling, ...because like he hasn't- but some days he can be really good at school!"

4.2.2.3 It's Just Us Two Now

"Oh it was funny, in lockdown, when it's bedtime I go fee, fi, fo, fum, I'm going to come and bite Cody's bum, so Cody hides under the covers, so I go into all the rooms trying to find him, and then he's like, you can hear him giggling under the quilt cover and then I go and get him and I'm like, I got you now and he's like "no you didn't. I wasn't there, I was hiding." Like playing with him, it's hilarious..."

The quote below references how Cody would help her after she had a day where her pain was bad,

"Yeah [...], you ask him to do something and he was doing it, like you'd ask him to help me with the dishwasher, if I had a bad day, I'll be like can you come and help me and he's like, "Oh okay then," ..."

4.2.2.4 My Son is Special so He Needs my Protection

When describing how Cody disturbs her during household tasks,

"...sometimes I think oh you're getting on my flipping nerves, just blooming leave me alone. And then I think no bite your tongue [...]. So in the end it's like, okay

sweetheart, let's do something else, or mummy's got to go in the kitchen, it's like, just to do something..."

4.2.2.5 Your Special Needs Are Difficult for Me

When expressing concerns about Cody's poor academic ability,

"So, I'm wondering if Cody does it because his brain damaged, [...] because of his epilepsy, his brain can't connect the bits that need to be connected. So, I'm wondering if that's another thing for him to do..."

4.2.2.2 I Fear You Growing Up

"I keep like trying to sugar-coat it as well. Well darling, Cody can't come and see you because Cody probably hasn't got now credit on his phone, like Cody- Liam can't come and see you because he's got college ..."

4.2.2.6 I Shouldn't be Picked On

Referring to Cody's teacher relaying Cody's reaction to being told of for a behaviour incident (when Cody was able to return to school),

"So, the teachers went, "Well if you don't do what you're told, we'll tell mummy and you know mummy is going to take your Nintendo switch off you," and he said, "Well I don't care, I know my mum is going to give it to me." And I was like, no I flipping ain't! Cheeky beggar!"

4.2.3.1 'Banter'

*"Okay then, next minute I'm on the stairlift, which goes like 2 miles an hour, he is there! And I'm like ow! I'm only going upstairs sweetheart. To put the washing away. "But I miss you!" Yes I miss you too. But it's like sweetheart, I'm only going upstairs. Go back down and watch the telly. "But you might run away" **I can't go out the window can I? I'm not going to jump out the window. I'm not going to go to the***

pub! *“But you might.” I might hurt myself. I’m just trying to make a joke of it all the time.”*

*“So, it’s clicked, he’s like getting that (staying close by her in public) into his head now, because of like too many nutcases out there now... [...] so I get worried if he’s not near me, if I see him- like the other day we’re in farm foods and he ran off [...]. I went **oi! If you’re going to run away from home, take your suitcase and pocket money with you and I won’t have to pay you!** He went “I don’t wanna run away! [...]” Well stay with me then (laughs) it’s like jokes, joking about with him...”*

4.2.3.3.1 Annoyance and impatience

So tell me about having dinner with him what’s that like?

And when he’s not eating his vegetables what are you thinking when when he’s not...

So when he gets... when he got emotional about the minion burger, what was that like for you?

How are you feeling at that point?

And what’s it like for you and that happens...?

4.2.3.3.2 Sadness

“So he comes out and helps me before dinner, [...] we will sit at the table and eat, and like every time we have a meal now we sit at the table and eat together, which is nice...”

Emma

4.3.1.1 Drained of Energy to Cope with Parenting - You have worn me down so now

I don’t know what to do

“Some days I just sat there and I thought, I was like please go away from me, I’ve had enough...”

“I try and just talk, sort of take 5 minutes to myself, but then even then you know he’s still kicking off in the background so you just... I don’t know, you just sit literally. I feel like sometimes I’m just hitting my head against the wall.”

4.3.1.2.1 Intensity of relationship with son

“Yeah, you just... breathe. And just try and rethink things.”

4.3.1.2.1 Intensity of relationship with son

“In lockdown, you didn’t really have anywhere to go. [...] At the moment, Bailey’s at school, so this is my break from him. [...] You don’t have not a single break, so it’s from the moment he gets up to when he goes to bed that you’re having to deal with it, [...] you can’t keep disappearing like for five minutes, [...] ‘cause eventually they’ll start following you.”

“...I found it a lot more difficult to deal with.”

4.3.1.4 Overwhelmed by Uncertainty - I would feel better if I could be certain about you

“Yeah, but he’ll completely switch. And just go from yeah, it’s literally from one into the other like... I just don’t get it.”

When sharing her thoughts during times of angry meltdown,

“... ‘cause you just like going round in circles and there’s just no end.”

4.3.1.3 Abandoned and Isolated - There is no one around to help me with my son

“...so obviously it is quite frustrating ‘cause you know you’re saying [...] they’ve got to do work and [...] (you) try and give him as much education as you can through the whole lockdown, like still try and educate your children, [...] so they don’t fall so far behind, but when you don’t have anyone that you can actually physically call and say right, look, we’re having trouble [...] There’s no real support there to help with the children.”

“Quite frustrating, quite annoying, ...you just kind of sit there and think well they don't really care themselves, you know... Obviously they do! But you think that they don't because obviously there's no support whatsoever...”

4.3.2.1 I Prefer Female Energy

When discussing Bailey's emerging masturbatory habit,

“So obviously, with that I'm like, I'm his mum, [...] it's very uncomfortable...”

“...when I found that out, I've caught him a few times, [...] I had that fear. I don't really want him in my bed. In case he does anything like that. I would have a full-blown meltdown and a freak out like, it just can't happen.”

4.3.2.2 Being Your Mother is Hard for Me

“I just never want her to feel that she's like neglected or she's left out or I don't care as much. That's not the case, just obviously, you know, Bailey is a bit hard work...”

4.3.2.3 I Am a Good Mother, I Don't Deserve How You Treat Me

“...he's just chewed the TV control. [...] So, you know, like I was quite annoyed by it, but I'm just like yeah, you have to just try and sort of like humour it off a little bit. [...] I said you're supposed to be my son, not a dog, only dogs chew. He said, “I'm not a dog!” Well stop chewing my stuff then!”

“It's a little bit like heart-breaking for me, 'cause obviously I'm his mum, so, and I raised him, I do everything for him. You know, I'm there when he's sick. You know, I try and do the best that I can, give him the best life that I can.”

4.3.2.4 Children Should Treat Their Mothers Kindly

“So, when he's like that... I do [...] think oh like, why do you talk to me like that? Obviously, I'm your mum. You shouldn't even be speaking to me in that sort of way...”

4.3.3 The unconscious processes enacted during Emma's lockdown and how they revealed themselves during Emma's interview

"... 'cause I used to do it with Charlotte, do you want this, or do you want this? And then they're standing and you're like, well come on now we haven't got all day!"

Coral

4.4.1.1 Pining for Normality – It is difficult for me to cope with so many changes

"...then on the other side maybe you feel a little bit of guilt because you are outside of what he (Ryan) normally does, and you know how is he taking it, how is he feeling about it, it's a readjustment again."

"I want to make a positive impact than a negative impact, I don't want to do things that hurt people or harm people. [...] so you know I knock on my neighbours doors, I'll go in and have a cup of tea, [...] I still pop in to see if they're alright, do you need anything? Things like that. Just so you feel, you know that you're contributing..."

4.4.1.2 Closeness – More time together came with costs and benefits

"Yeah and they started to get on each other's nerves, because you haven't got that space..."

4.4.1.2 Intensity of Home-Schooling – Home-schooling filled me with doubt and anxiety

"And obviously like I said with the schooling aspect, you know like some things I'm not good at, so that, that becomes difficult. Yeah, difficult to do, so it's a bit frustrating. Again, you can feel that guilt of, am I going to let them down because I can't, you know, I don't know how to do this piece of work..."

4.4.1.3 Looming Threat of Illness and Death – I can't stop thinking about the risk of Covid-19

But I faced with that fact, you know I might not be here, you know made me question what are they going to do if I'm not here?

4.4.1.4 Parenting Ideals at Risk – It is hard to maintain my strongly held principles

So, you know for me I think that was probably the most distressing bit of it because I don't really agree with watching and playing games that much. And to me I I really did feel that, that, that they watched they did watch too much telly, they did play too much games.

“Yeah, your mind is constantly going there's not really a time where, during the covid time, where you get that space.”

4.4.2.3 I need to feel in control

... I like everything to be organised, everything to be on time, I have a routine, I stick to the routine. I don't really like going outside of it. Where possible, where possible. That obviously is upsetting, to have to think of those type of things you know and then obviously also think about you know what about if I die, and these people don't want to do it the way I've said (laughs)...

4.4.2.2 I am proud of my parenting principles

I think telling the truth is really important ... because it comes down to emotions doesn't it? ... sometimes we want to keep things positive (but) we have to go through that feeling, maybe a negative feeling, you know upset, angry or scared, fear... for you've got to go through those to be able to say well actually that fear, although I can still feel do you know scared and frightened or something, actually there is a flipside to it because that makes it stronger in this area.

4.4.2.3 Being both your mother and your aunt is complicated

... when you've got the lockdown, you know you get that mixed, well my mum is telling me I can go out, but my aunts telling me I've got to stay in. So it's confusing.

Do you know do I have to stay in or don't I have to stay in? Do I have to do my shoes, because I do it here but I don't do it there. You know or I wash my hands here and use hand sanitiser when I'm out, but I don't... [...] Definitely difficult for Ryan in that aspect.

4.4.2.4 Your future feels more uncertain

It's scary because you don't know what route he's going to take. So [...] you've got the, [...] negative route, which is he would end up in prison, you know struggle to find a job and obviously relationships, if he had a partner, friends, erm so it's, it's rounded, it's quite rounded with Daniel. The amount of different things that are scary. And then you've got the other side where he might just come up and be as 'normal' [...] as other children and other adults are, so you just don't know.

Appendix 15

Ethics approval

The Tavistock and Portman 
NHS Foundation Trust

Quality Assurance & Enhancement
Directorate of Education & Training
Tavistock Centre
120 Belsize Lane
London
NW3 5BA

Tel: 020 8938 2699

<https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/>

Emily Barrett

By Email

13 August 2020

Dear Emily,

Re: Trust Research Ethics Application

Title: Locked down at home during a pandemic; the experience of mothers/caregivers isolating with children with social, emotional and mental health needs

Thank you for submitting your updated Research Ethics documentation. I am pleased to inform you that subject to formal ratification by the Trust Research Ethics Committee your application has been approved. This means you can proceed with your research.

Please be advised that any changes to the project design including changes to methodology/data collection etc. must be referred to TREC as failure to do so. may result in a report of academic and/or research misconduct.

If you have any further questions or require any clarification do not hesitate to contact me.

I am copying this communication to your supervisor.

May I take this opportunity of wishing you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

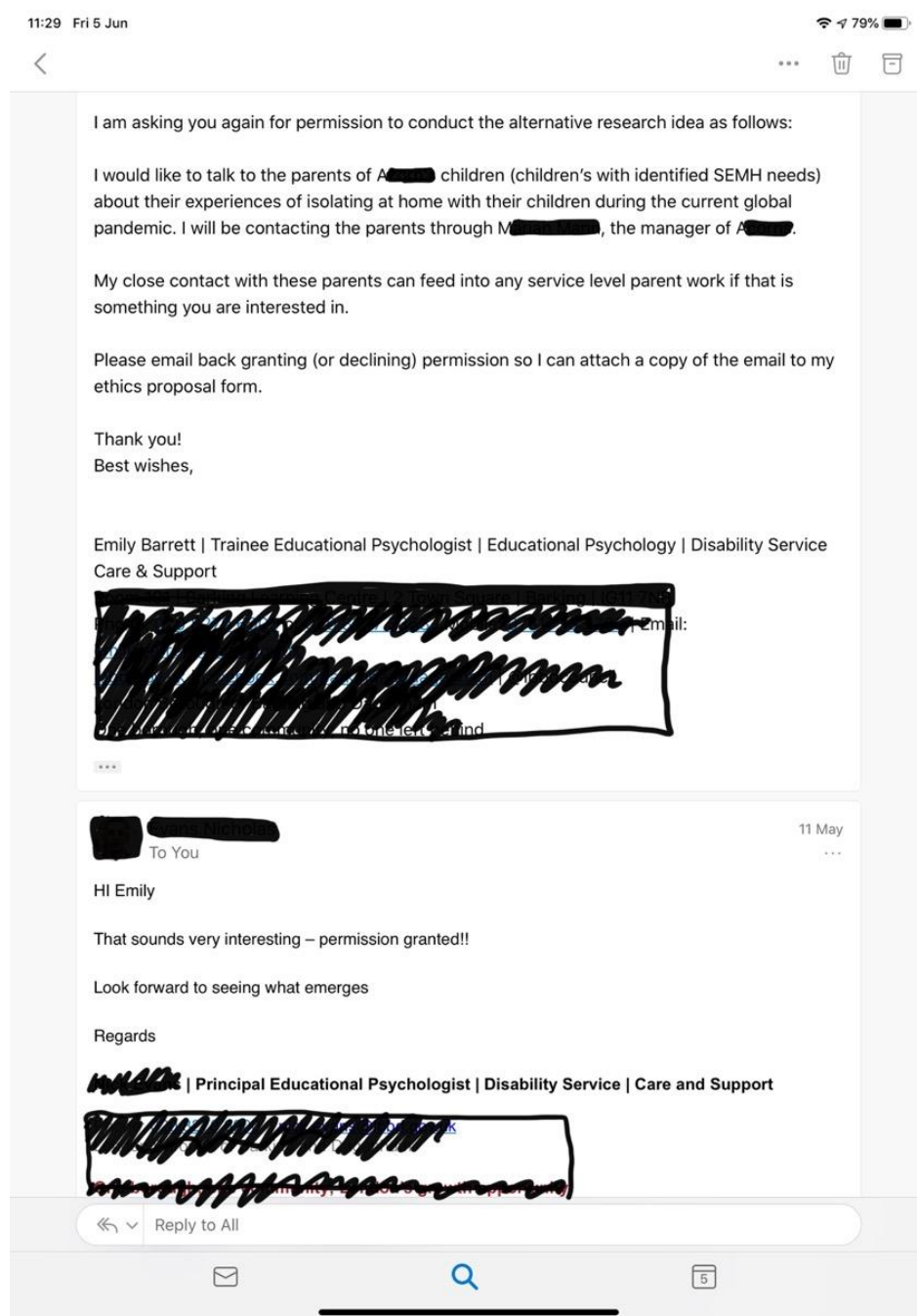


Paru Jeram
Secretary to the Trust Research Degrees Subcommittee
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E: academicquality@tavi-Port.nhs.uk

cc. Course Lead, Supervisor, Research Lead


Appendix 16

PEP consent










Appendix 17


Themes, subthemes and contextual information for all three participants


Participant	Part of tree	Themes	Subthemes (and further subthemes)
Liz	Leaves 	Lack of Control - <i>I wish I could control my son's behaviour</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Your capability with computers feels threatening - Your behaviour makes it hard to home school you - Your talking feels relentless
		Intensity of Relationship - <i>This relationship is too intense to bear</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I wish I could have time alone away from my son - Being in my son's company is too much - I can't bear my son's constant need for love and attention
		Loss of Identity - <i>I can't do the things that make me who I am</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I have no privacy or personal space - I don't like the parent I have become - I have no freedom because you are always around
	Trunk	I Hope I Am Being a Good Parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BEING BETTER THAN HER OWN MOTHER - DOUBTS ABOUT HER PARENTING CHOICES - FEEDING SON ANGSTS



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FEELING GUILTY THAT SON'S LIFE IS IMPACTED BY HER PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS - PLAYFUL BANTER WITH SON INSTEAD OF TELLING HIM OFF - WORRYING ABOUT IMPACT OF SON WITNESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
		<p>I Fear You Growing Up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DON'T BECOME SMARTER THAN ME - DON'T GET FAT - DON'T GROW UP - DON'T LEAVE ME - FEAR OF SON GROWING TO RESEMBLE ELDEST SON
		<p>It's Just Us Two Now</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I AM PROUD OF MY SON - I SEEK SUPPORT FROM MY SON - I TAKE PLEASURE IN MY SON'S GOOD BEHAVIOURS - WE HAVE A CLOSE BOND - WE HAVE FUN TOGETHER
		<p>My Son is Special so He Needs my Protection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AFFECTIONATE FEELINGS TOWARD SON'S ATYPICAL BEHAVIOUR - NEGATIVE OPINIONS FROM OTHERS OF SON - POWERLESS OVER SON'S DIFFICULTIES - PROTECTING SON FROM IMPACT OF ELDEST SON'S BEHAVIOUR - STAYING PATIENT WITH SON'S CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

		<p>Your Special Needs Are Difficult for Me</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FREQUENTLY QUESTIONING OF SON'S SPECIAL NEEDS - I'M EMBARRASSED BY YOU IN PUBLIC - UNPREDICTABILITY OF BEHAVIOUR - YOUR SPECIAL NEEDS FRUSTRATE ME
		<p>I Shouldn't be Picked On</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SHOCKED AND UPSET BY SONS' UNKIND BEHAVIOUR - SONS TREATING HER UNKINDLY - STRUGGLING TO ESTABLISH HER AUTHORITY AS A PARENT - WANTING HER SONS TO BE DIFFERENT
<p>Branches</p> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PRIDE IN HER PARENTING - WANTING TO BE DIFFERENT TO HER OWN MOTHER - CHECKING SON FOR SEIZURE - ENSURING SON FEELS LOVED AND WORTHY 	
<p>Branches</p> 	<p>Mother</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BEING OVERWEIGHT - PHYSICAL DISABILITY 	
	<p>Son</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GROWING UP AND GETTING BIGGER - LOSING HIS BROTHER 	
<p>Branches</p> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ATTENTION SEEKING - CHEERY - CONSTANT TALKING - EASILY CONFUSED - IMMATURE FOR HIS AGE - INTERESTED IN COMPUTERS - LOVING - OVERLY SENSITIVE 	


		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ROBUST SELF ESTEEM - SOCIALLY CLUMSY
<p>Roots</p> 	<p>Envy of others' youthful energy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attacking son's energetic nature - Comparisons between her and others' youthful energy
	<p>Hiding emotions from other people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emotional fragility from prior abuse - Her son should not see her frustration with him
	<p>Laughing when in pain</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As a reaction to difficult situations - To minimise the seriousness of her situation
<p>Soil</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DETERIORATION OF RELATIONSHIP WITH ELDEST SON - EMOTIONAL ABUSE FROM MOTHER AND OTHERS - PHYSICAL ABUSE FROM MOTHER AND ELDEST SON 	
<p>Rain drops</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BEREAVEMENT FROM AUNT - HOMESCHOOLING SON - NO PARTNER FOR SUPPORT - ONLY PLAYING IN HOME - SON BECOMING MORE EMOTIONALLY NEEDY - SON USING HER COMPUTER MORE - SON WANTING TO BE WITH HER CONSTANTLY 	
<p>Sun beams</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SON SLEEPING WELL - SUPPORT FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES 	
<p>Emma</p>	<p>Drained of Energy to Cope with Parenting -</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BEING WITH YOU DRAINS ME OF ENERGY - I CAN'T MOTIVATE YOU




	<p>Leaves</p> 	<p><i>You have worn me down so now I don't know what to do</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MY ATTEMPTS TO CALM YOU DOWN ARE FUTILE - YOU PUSH ME TO THE LIMIT OF MY ABILITY TO COPE - YOUR BEHAVIOUR CAUSES ME INTENSE PHYSICAL STRESS 	
		<p>Suffocating from Forced Proximity - <i>I am desperate for space away from you so I can breathe</i></p>	<p>INTENSITY OF RELATIONSHIP WITH SON</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am desperate for time without you - I can think when I have time away from you - I can't be with you when you're behaving badly - Separating from you makes me feel better - You need me to parent you all the time - You restrict my freedom
			<p>TRAPPED INSIDE HOME</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You restrict my freedom - I can't escape from the difficult parts of you - I hate being stuck inside

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - My children need space and variety - Visiting my mum was good for our relationship - You destroy my home
		Abandoned and Isolated - <i>There is no one around to help me with my son</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HIS SCHOOL LET ME DOWN - IT IS DIFFICULT TO LIVE SO FAR FROM MY SUPPORT SYSTEM - THE GOVERNMENT DESERVE MY ANGER - THE SCHOOL IS UNFAIRLY ATTACKING ME
		Overwhelmed by Uncertainty - <i>I would feel better if I could be certain about you</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I DONT KNOW WHY HE COULDN'T GO TO SCHOOL - I DONT UNDERSTAND YOU - I WISH I COULD BE SURE YOU LOVE ME - YOU ARE DIFFERENT FROM MOMENT TO MOMENT - YOU MIGHT ERUPT IN ANGER AT ANY MINUTE - YOUR ANGER IS LIKE A RUNAWAY TRAIN, I CANT STOP IT
	<p>Branches</p> 	Don't get dragged down into son's negativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CHOOSING NOT TO RETALIATE - NOT SHOWING SON HE UPSET HER - STAY POSITIVE





			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - THINKING IT IS MORE HELPFUL FOR SON
		Feeling responsible for son's healthy development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ACCESS TO SUPPORTIVE EDUCATION - STAYING RELAXED AND HAPPY - STOP SON MASTURBATING
	Branches 	Mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DISATISFACTION WITH HOUSING - MANAGING ADDITIONAL NEEDS OF DAUGHTER
		Son	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DIFFICULTY SLEEPING - GROWING IN SEXUAL MATURITY
	Branches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AGGRESSIVE - ANGRY - ARGUMENTATIVE - CANNOT COPE WITH IMPERFECTION - DEMANDING - DESTRUCTIVE - LAZY - LOVING - REJECTING OF HER - RUDE TO SISTER - UNGRATEFUL - WANTING TO DIE - WORK REFUSAL 	
		I Prefer Female Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GIRLS' MATURITY MAKE THEM BETTER THAN BOYS - I LIKE HELPING OTHER WOMEN - I PREFER THE RELATIONSHIPS WITH FEMALES THAN MALES

	Trunk 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FROM YOUR FATHER HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT - YOUR MATURING SEXUALITY IS UNCOMFORTABLE
		Being Your Mother is Hard for Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I DON'T WANT TO BE JUDGED - I SHOULD KNOW WHAT TO DO - MY DAUGHTER IS SUFFERING BECAUSE OF YOU - YOUR BEHAVIOUR IS HARD TO DESCRIBE
		I Am a Good Mother, I Don't Deserve How You Treat Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I DONT MAKE YOU GO TO SCHOOL - I ENTERTAIN YOU - I FULFILL ALL YOUR DEMANDS - I MAKE A LOT OF EFFORT - I TRY NOT TO GET ANGRY WITH YOU
		Children Should Treat Their Mothers Kindly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I SHOULD BE SPECIAL TO YOU - LOVE IS SOMETHING YOU DEMONSTRATE THROUGH ACTIONS - YOU DON'T APPRECIATE MY EFFORTS - YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT ME
	Roots 	Suspicious of others' intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DOUBTS ABOUT WHETHER SCHOOL WANTS TO HELP - GOVERNMENT AGENCIES DELIBERTAELY WANTING TO MISTREAT HER - SON WANTS TO HURT HER



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SON'S BEHAVIOUR IS WITHIN HIS CONTROL 				
		Struggling to accept her wrongdoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AT LEAST I WASNT THAT BAD - EVERYONE IS JUST AS BAD AS ME - IT IS DIFFERENT FOR ME 				
		Believing everyone suffers like her	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ALL CHILDREN BEHAVE AS BADLY AS HER SON - ANY MOTHER WOULD BE AS UPSET AS HER - NO CHILDREN RECIEVED SUPPORT THE NEEDED OVER LOCKDOWN 				
		Denial of strong feelings	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Her own</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assertiveness - Caring about others' opinions of her - Frustration - Guilt - Uncertainty - Vulnerability </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Her son's</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Denying legitimacy of son's suicidal thoughts - Son's complaints being unnecessary - Trivialising son's anger </td> </tr> </table>	Her own	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assertiveness - Caring about others' opinions of her - Frustration - Guilt - Uncertainty - Vulnerability 	Her son's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Denying legitimacy of son's suicidal thoughts - Son's complaints being unnecessary - Trivialising son's anger
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Her son's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Denying legitimacy of son's suicidal thoughts - Son's complaints being unnecessary - Trivialising son's anger 						
	Soil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DISCOVERING SON'S MASTURBATION - LET DOWN BY HOUSING AUTHORITY - PARENTING ADVICE FROM OTHERS 					


		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SON'S BEHAVIOUR IMPROVING FROM ATTENDING SPECIAL SCHOOL 	
	<p>Rain drops</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NO SUPPORT FROM SCHOOL - NOT HAVING ENOUGH SPACE - SON NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL - STUCK INSIDE HOUSE 	
	<p>Sun beams</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CONTINUING TO SEE LOVED ONES - DAUGHTER COPING WELL - LOVING MOMENTS WITH SON 	
Coral	<p>Leaves</p> 	<p>Closeness – <i>More time together came with costs and benefits</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I SAW PLEASING CHANGES IN YOU - IT CAUSED MORE DISAGREEMENTS - IT WAS NICE TO SPEND TIME TOGETHER
		<p>Intensity of Home-Schooling – <i>Home-schooling filled me with doubt and anxiety</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I FEEL INADEQUATE - I FEEL OUT OF CONTROL - I'M TRYING MY BEST - YOUR WORK AVOIDANCE FRUSTRATES ME
		<p>Looming Threat of Illness and Death – <i>I can't stop thinking about the risk of Covid-19</i></p>	I AM FACING MY OWN MORTALITY
			I WAS IN TURMOIL WHEN I COULD NOT BE CLOSE TO MY DYING FRIENDS
			I WORRY ABOUT MY FAMILY COPING WITHOUT ME

			THE THREA T OF COVID IS PRESE NT IN MY MIND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am compelled to follow the Covid- safe guidelines - I am scared to leave the house - My doubts cause discomfort
		Parenting Ideals at Risk – <i>It is hard to maintain my strongly held principles</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I AM NOT AS ATTENTIVE - I FEEL GUILTY ABOUT YOUR VIDEO GAME ADDICTION - I HAVE RUN OUT OF WAYS TO ENTERTAIN YOU - I MISS MY FREEDOM - I NEED A BREAK FROM YOU TO FEEL BETTER
		Pining for Normality – <i>It is difficult for me to cope with so many changes</i>	IT'S HARD TO ADJUST TO A NEW WAY OF LIFE	
	MY CHILDREN ARE SUFFERING WITHOUT NORMALITY			
	WE HAVE LOST THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF NORMAL LIFE			
	I CAN'T USE MY NORMAL STRATEGIES TO COPE		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Following my moral compass - Keeping to tight rules in the home - Sticking to my routine 	

	<p>Branches</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CHILDREN THRIVE WITHIN ROUTINE AND STABILITY - PREPARE CHILDREN FOR THE FUTURE - TALK TO CHILDREN AND HELP THEM UNDERSTAND 	
	<p>Branches</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active - Attention seeking - Atypical - Easily distracted from work - Friendless - Happier at home - Hard to understand - Helpful - Unpredictable 	
	<p>Branches</p> 	<p>Mother</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CARING FOR TWO TERMINALLY ILL FAMILY FRIENDS - VULNERABILITY FROM SICKLE-CELL AND SMOKING
		<p>Son</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - VISITING BIRTH MOTHER REGULARLY
	<p>Trunk</p> 	<p>Being both your auntie and your mum is complicated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I'M UPSET TO THINK CONSIDER YOUR MOTHER'S PARENTING CHOICES IMPACTS YOU - ITS HARD HAVING TO SHARE CONTROL - YOUR MOTHER CAN'T SEE HOW HARD YOU'RE TRYING - YOUR MOTHER DOESN'T KEEP YOU SAFE
		<p>I need to feel in control</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I HAVE TO BE THE RESPONSIBLE ONE

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I NEED TO THINK THROUGH AND PLAN FOR ALL POSSIBLE NEGATIVE EVENTUALITIES - PEOPLE ARE DEPENDING ON ME - STRUCTURE IS IMPORTANT TO ME - THE HIGHER THE STAKES, THE MORE CONTROL I WANT - THE WORLD FEELS LIKE A CRAZY PLACE
		I parent you in the right way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I AM A ROLE MODEL IN SOCIETY - I MAKE SURE I AM THE ADULT IN OUR RELATIONSHIP - I NEVER LIE TO YOU - I TRY TO SEE THINGS FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE - I WORK HARD TO ADAPT FOR YOU
		Your future feels more uncertain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HOW WOULD YOU COPE WITHOUT ME? - I REALISED HOW LONELY YOU ARE - I WORRY ABOUT YOUR FUTURE - I WORRY THAT I FAILED YOU AS A TEACHER - WHAT IF NORMALITY NEVER RETURNS
	<p>Roots</p> 	Rationalising away her worries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HALTING ANXIETY - REACHING TO KNOWN FACTS AND PRINCIPLES - WEIGHING UP BOTH SIDES INSTEAD OF FEELING

		<p>Need to live within certainties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - COPING BETTER WITH CERTAINTY AND PREDICTABILITY - DISCOMFORT WITH FUTURE BEING UNCERTAIN - FOLLOWING STRICT GUIDLINES TO STOP SPIRALLING WORRIES - HARD TO TOLERATE FEARS ABOUT HER CHILDREN - OVERWHELMED BY UNCERTAINTIES - STRUGGLING TO KEEP WORRIES AT BAY
	<p>Soil</p> 	<p>Vulnerability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR EXTENDED FAMILY SINCE AGE OF NINE - CAREFULLY PLANNED ROUTINES AND RULES BASED ON MORAL COMPASS - GROWING UP WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND LYING IN HER HOME - TAKING ON CARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR NEPHEW FROM TWO YEARS OLD
	<p>Rain drops</p> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BEING RESPONSIBLE ONE IN THE FAMILY - BIRTH MOTHER BEING UNRELIABLE - DAUGHTER MISSING SCHOOL - FEELING LIKE FRIENDS HAVE SIMILAR STRESSORS - TWO CLOSE FRIENDS DYING OF CANCER - UNABLE TO RELY ON CHILDRENS' NORMAL ROUTINE

	<p>Sun beams</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BEING ABLE TO CALL SCHOOL FOR HELP - CONTINUEING TO SEE FAMILY AS A SUPPORT BUBBLE - HAVING MORE TIME WITH SON AT HOME - SON HAVING QUALITY TIME WITH BIRTH MOTHER - SON RETURNING TO SCHOOL
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