Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School: A Qualitative Study

Remy Hayes

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

Department of Health and Human Sciences

University of Essex

Month of submission: April 2023

Acknowledgements:

I would like first to thank everyone who participated in this study. It was a privilege to hear their stories and be able to give voice to their experiences.

I would also like to thank my thesis supervisor, Professor Susan McPherson, for her unwavering support during the completion of this thesis.

Finally, I want to thank my family and friends for their continued love and support throughout clinical training and during the completion of this project.

Contents

Abstract

Boarding schools have a long history of having shaped the development of some of the most successful people in the UK. Attendance has long been associated with privilege and opportunity. More recently, prominent figures in the field of psychoanalysis have suggested boarding schools can limit the emotional and psychological development of their students. Despite these claims, there are many ex-boarders who report deeply valuing their boarding experience and who often send their own children to boarding school. Developments within the field of positive psychology have delineated the concept of post-traumatic growth, a period of meaningful and life-enhancing psychological change that can follow a traumatic experience. A systematic literature review and meta-ethnographic synthesis produced a theoretical model of the development of children's resilience following highly distressing events.

This study aimed to examine the experiences of individuals who attended boarding school and who viewed it as having had a positive influence on their lives.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight male and six female participants who reported having had a positive experience of boarding school. The data were analysed using Braun and Clark's (2021) thematic analysis methodology. This was conducted in an inductive manner and was rooted in a critical realist epistemology.

The analysis produced four key themes: 'family relationships: contrasting perspectives'; 'having power, control and making the choice to board'; 'development of interpersonal skills and individual strengths'; and 'developing life-long resilience and independence'.

The findings illustrated that many factors contribute to having had a positive experience of boarding school. A particularly important one was how well the boarder was able to establish new close relationships. This appeared to influence the form of adaptation each child took to the boarding experience.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter discusses the historical and socio-political context of UK boarding schools. Major psychoanalytical theory regarding the impact of boarding school on children's development is critically discussed and juxtaposed against its proposed benefits. Positive psychology and post-traumatic growth theory is then examined alongside contemporary understandings of the impact of trauma on development, in the context of boarding school experiences. Theories regarding contributors to individual resilience and happiness are explored. These topics are discussed in terms of their possible application within clinical practice and their place within contemporary safeguarding and educational policy. The chapter includes a systematic review of the literature examining children's perspectives on contributing factors to resilient adaptation to traumatic and highly stressful events. It then concludes by describing the aims of the current study.

The Long Shadow of Boarding Schools

In the United Kingdom boarding school has long been associated with social and economic privilege. These institutions are often seen as almost magical places where society's elite children are shaped to stand atop of national and international hierarchies (Beard, 2021). Fuelling this perception are the many portrayals of boarding schools in popular media such as Enid Blyton's Malory Towers books (e.g. Blyton, 2022) or the Harry Potter novels (Rowling, 2015), which particularly reflect the cultural fantasy of magical events taking place in these institutions. Thus, boarding schools are often portrayed as a somewhat fairy-tale adventure (Schaverien, 2011). However, due to the opaque façade boarding schools tend to present to outsiders, the reality of the boarding school experience has remained somewhat obscured (Beard, 2021), especially from empirical research.

Chronic bullying, physical assault and sexual abuse have been reported both historically and in contemporary boarding schools (Schaverien, 2011). Relatedly, there has been a growth over the last 30 years of literature exploring narratives of traumatic experiences at boarding school (e.g. Partridge, 2013) and studies highlighting the increased levels of shame and anxiety this can create in adult relationships (Carlisle & Rofes, 2007). These explorations of the reality of boarding school experiences are important as many individuals in positions of

national and international power are shaped by these institutions and continue to powerfully influence the day-to-day experiences of society (Beard, 2021; Duffell, 2016).

The Positives Aspects of Boarding

Boarding schools can provide academic, social and sporting opportunities that are not accessible in the public sector (Schaverien, 2011). Ex-boarder Richard Beard (2021) argues the purpose of UK boarding schools is to equip boarders with the social etiquette, belief systems, relational styles, resilience and social credentials to indoctrinate them into the social upper class. A common cultural expectation is that boarding schools lead to better academic results (Beard, 2021). However, Behaghel, De Chaisemartin and Gurgand's (2017) recent study found that although boarders enjoy better studying conditions than non-boarders, they tend to experience lower levels of emotional wellbeing, only outperforming public school students after two years of admission. Even then, this effect mostly comes from the strongest students.

Pierre Bourdieu (2020) argued that the social world is divided into forms of capital. Capital can manifest as either economic (material assets that can be directly converted into money, such as property ownership), cultural (educational qualifications, internalised cultural aspects or the consumption of cultural goods such as art) or social (the network of relationships an individual holds and the groups they are a part of). Bourdieu (2020) argued that all forms of capital are determined by class and social location, are convertible to other forms of capital, and are transmissible between individuals and groups, for example between the generations of a family. Importantly, Bass (2014) found that boarding schools successfully increased both their students' social and cultural capital. This was particularly beneficial for boarders from relatively unsupportive homes.

Psychoanalytic Perspectives

Nick Duffel (2016) argued that boarding schools do a psychological disservice not just to boarders but to societies, by producing future leaders who appear more competent that they actually are, especially with regards to the emotional development needed to sustain relationships (Esmael, Mosavi & Iravani, 2012). He theorised that this phenomenon is related to

boarders' separation from their families and thus from access to the love that is fundamental for healthy psychological development (Rohner, 1998). Duffel (2016) argues that these 'wounded leaders' tend to overvalue work, achievement and rationality and have a low ability for affection or empathy. He portrays these individuals as having a strong ability to remain unaware of their shortcomings, leading to their holding a false confidence. Duffel (2016) argues this results in leaders who are unable to rise above their own interests, see the bigger picture or relate to non-boarders. From a psychoanalytic perspective this emotional immaturity is likely to increase the risk of these individuals acting out (McWilliams, 2011) their unresolved relational and intrapsychic dynamics (Jacobs, 2017) in their positions of power.

Joy Schaverien (2011) posits the existence of 'boarding school syndrome', a constellation of traits she depicts as typifying ex-boarders. She argues these children left alone without their families are unable to effectively process their emotions and so develop a psychological barrier to protect themselves, obscuring their true selves from consciousness and leaving an apparently emotionally unaffected and self-sufficient veneer. They no longer recognise their need for intimacy and learn to depend on no-one. Repressed memories of the aspects of life they lost and the associated anger only surface later, often within adult romantic relationships. Schaverien (2011) argues this unconscious pattern often distorts emotional development and adult relationships, leaving their lingering distress a well-kept secret both from themselves and others. Ex-boarders may appear socially confident but find intimacy threatening and can be emotionally illiterate.

Attachment Theory

Psychoanalytic theory and attachment theory are related but distinct. They share a similar understanding of the origin of psychological difficulties and there are conceptual similarities between attachment theory and object relational psychoanalysis (Gullestad, 2001). However, attachment theory has a greater focus on the interpersonal and traumatic origins of psychological distress, whereas psychoanalysis places greater emphasis on individual fantasy (Gullestad, 2001).

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

Attachment theory was developed by John Bowlby (1998). It proposes that babies are born with an instinctual drive to develop an ongoing relationship with at least one caregiver. A proposal now supported by contemporary neuroscience (Solms, 2021). Bowlby (1998) emphasised the importance for every child of forming a safe, consistent, warm, and dependable relationship with a primary caregiver for their emotional development. This he termed secure attachment. Where children are only able to obtain this kind of relationship unpredictably, or not at all this leads to characteristic forms of 'insecure attachments'. The attachment style an individual develops impacts on their view of self and others, and their ways of behaving within relationships (Stein et al., 2002), often at an unconscious level (Bowlby, 1998). Insecure attachment has been consistently linked with a greater likelihood of experiencing psychological distress in later life (Wallin, 2007). Furthermore, these childhood attachment styles tend to last across an individual's lifespan (Kobak & Madsen, 2008).

Traditionally, children started boarding between 6 and 8 years-old, with some starting as young as 4 years-old (Schaverien, 2011). However, in the last 20 years there has been a significant reduction in the number of children boarding below the age of ten. Currently only 6% of contemporary attendees are junior boarders (Independent Schools Council, 2022). Interestingly, Bowlby himself had an unhappy stay at boarding school and was a staunch critic of their practices (Schaverien, 2011). Schaverien (2011) describes how boarders suffer a sudden, and often traumatic, loss of their primary attachment figures, which often repeats each term. Intimate and loving relationships are lost and, for some, abuse from peers or staff can lead to new attachment figures being seen as unsafe. It is possible therefore that early boarding may disrupt the attachment process. This is important as more recent studies (Schore, 2002) indicate that attachment disruption can negatively impact neurological development in the right cerebral hemisphere, contributing to ineffective emotional regulation.

In line with the possible impact of attachment disruption on boarders' emotional wellbeing, studies in both Malaysia (Wahab et al., 2013) and Australia (Mander & Lester, 2017) have found relatively low levels of depression but high levels of anxiety in boarders. It is not clear why anxiety is raised but not depression in these groups. However, it is possible that the focus on only these two attributes missed other expressions of psychological distress (McWilliams, 2011), especially where there was an interaction with the surrounding culture

(Kirmayer, 1989). Supportive of this are findings that Turkish boarders did not have higher anxiety or depression levels but had increased dissociative symptoms (Mutluer et al., 2021).

Boarding schools are an example of Erving Goffman's (1961) concept of 'total institutions', closed social systems where life is organised by strict norms, rules and schedules determined by an authority and their staff. They are separated from wider society, remove barriers between home, leisure and work, and foster internal similarity where identities are swapped for those given by the institution. In this way, boarding schools can be seen as designed to hold a structure that is likely to disrupt secure attachments. Children are separated from their caregivers, family and community and these relationships are replaced by enforced deferential relationships to powerful others. These new relationships may be more likely to foster insecure attachments (Bowlby, 1998) and a higher risk of future emotional distress (Wallin, 2007).

In terms of ex-boarders who report having had a positive boarding experience, Schaverien (2011) argues this may be due to starting at more psychologically mature age, a result of the repression of painful boarding memories and emotions, or because boarding school offers a sanctuary from unpredictable, insecure, neglectful or abusive home lives. It is important to note that Schaverien (2011) and Duffel's (2016) concepts are based on extrapolations from similarities in psychotherapy clients, who may have been more adversely affected by their boarding experience. Questions remain therefore of whether boarding school leads to individuals who are truly happy and whether these individuals are suitable for positions of power.

Only one previous study has examined the benefits of a UK boarding school (Beames, Mackie, & Scrutton, 2020), finding reported gains in confidence, self-belief, leadership skills, sense of identity, ability to remain calm and determination. This study was funded by the school in question raising the possibility of bias in these findings. Even so, the reported benefits could still be seen as part of the protective shell developed within Schaverien's (2011) boarding school syndrome. It is not clear therefore whether these findings reflect true happiness. Consequently, there is a need for an independent study exploring the perspectives of UK ex-boarders who report having had positive experiences of boarding school.

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

Can Trauma Lead to Growth?

Post-Traumatic Growth

Viktor Frankl (1985) described, after his survival of a Nazi concentration camp, how some survivors experienced aspects of growth despite enduring horrific trauma. Following this, in 2004 Tedeschi & Calhoun described their concept of Post-Traumatic Growth. They defined this as a sense of personal development that many trauma survivors report in the aftermath of a traumatic event. They hypothesised that the trauma shatters fundamentally held beliefs about self, others and the world. Though deeply painful, in the aftermath surviving beliefs are kept and one's sense of reality is updated (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Many past boarders' reports of school experiences include arguably traumatic events, such as beatings by teachers, parental abandonment, bullying and public humiliations (Beard, 2021). The experience of starting boarding school likely shatters many boarders' prior beliefs. It is therefore possible that boarding school could, for some, allow post-traumatic growth.

The potentially devastating impact of trauma on emotional wellbeing has been well known since Freud's early writings (Freud, 1955) with more recent work expanding the field of impact to include the body (Van der Kolk, 1994). Judith Herman (2015) wrote of the characteristic element of a person finding themselves in a helpless state contributing to the negative impacts of trauma, where attempts at fighting or fleeing from the threat are thwarted. She posits that it is in this helpless overwhelmed state that individuals tend to defensively dissociate leading to the fragmented aspects of the psyche that later affect emotional wellbeing (Herman, 2015). Perhaps boarders who report positive experiences of boarding school found ways of fighting off or escaping from otherwise overwhelming events.

Tedeschi & Calhoun (1996) describe the typical domains of post-traumatic growth as including greater life appreciation, changed priorities, more intimate relationships, more confidence, recognition of new possibilities and spiritual development. Previous research has found that some children do remain psychologically healthy despite very difficult life circumstances (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). Perhaps post-traumatic growth may go some way to explaining these findings. Tedeschi & Calhoun (1996) argue that supportive others can help facilitate post-traumatic growth through joint creation of new narratives, which can then be integrated into an individual's belief system. Trauma survivors are more willing to integrate

the perspectives of other trauma survivors into their belief systems (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1993). This makes sense, after having one's fundamental understanding of self and the world shattered, looking to create meaning with others who have had a similar experience is likely to lead to the creation of a belief system based on more trustworthy sources. Perhaps positive ex-boarders developed supportive relationships with other boarders, potential sources of a trustworthy new narrative, and new attachment figures (Freeman & Brown, 2001). Indeed, ex-boarders report that acclimatisation to one's peers is fundamental to adapting positively to boarding school (Beard, 2021).

Resilience

One of the commonly heralded benefits of boarding schools are their ability to foster resilience in their students (Beard, 2021). An often somewhat vague term, resilience has been defined as an individual's ability to manage any disturbance that threatens their functioning, or development (Masten, 2014). This is quite a mechanistic view. Windle (2011) defines resilience as a process of effectively adapting to significant sources of stress or trauma, using internal and environmental resources to 'bounce back' in the face of adversity. Herrman et al.'s (2011) definition of resilience maintains this aspect of positive adaptation to adversity, but further emphasises the ability to maintain or regain emotional wellbeing. The aggregated elements of these definitions then suggest that resilience is an individual's ability to adapt to significant stress or trauma, using both internal and external resources, in a manner that allows them to continue functioning with a sense of emotional wellbeing. This is how resilience is defined within this paper.

Resilience as a concept has been critiqued as something that has been reduced to a buzzword, lacks conceptual rigor, and implies a condition rather than a process and so side-lines calls for social justice and transformative political action (DeVerteuil & Golubchikov, 2016). MacKinnon and Derickson (2013) argue that the resilience concept maintains existing social systems in the face of external disturbance, avoiding critical scrutiny of their normative desirability, and allowing social divisions and inequalities to be glossed over. Whilst Andres and Round (2015) argue the term allows 'needy' groups to be cast off under the pretence that they are resilient. This avoidance of responsibility leaves disadvantaged communities with fewer resources or stocks of cultural and social capital (MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013). However,

DeVerteuil and Golubchikov (2016) argue that though these critiques must be taken seriously, they do not require the concept of resilience to be rejected, only critically engaged with. They highlight that the concept was not created to serve neo-liberal agendas, but has been co-opted in that way.

Both Anna (e.g. Freud, 2018) and Sigmund Freud (e.g. Freud, 1900) examined the development of resilience in children in the aftermath of the second world war (Masten, 2014), noting that children rarely developed post-traumatic symptoms when a caregiver was consistently available to them (Freud, 2015). Considering the potentially traumatic events that attending boarding school has often entailed and with separation from a caregiver being an essential aspect (Beard, 2021), we might expect boarders to be more vulnerable to developing emotional difficulties. Indeed, traumatic childhood experiences have been consistently linked with increased risk of later psychopathology (Masten, 2014). However, most children do significantly recover from traumatic experiences over the long-term (Korol, Kramer, Grace, & Green, 2002) suggesting resilience might be the norm. In line with Anna Freud's (2015) observations, McFarlane and Van Hooff (2009) found that children separated from their caregivers recover significantly less well from trauma. The resilience demonstrated by some of these children may be reflective of their capacity for post-traumatic growth, and the requirement for a supportive other. Positive ex-boarders may have found substitute attachment relationships in peers and developed resilience through mutual post-traumatic growth. During typical development, by the teenage years support from friends tends to become a more important determinant of resilience than parental support (Chen, 2019). It is unclear therefore whether peer support would be sufficient for younger boarders. Perhaps positive ex-boarders started boarding at a later age.

In line with the theories of Bowlby (1998) and Bourdieu (2020), Marsten (2014) has suggested that alongside close relationships, gathering knowledge and aspects of cultural belief and tradition contribute to children's resilience. Individuals exist within a particular cultural and historical context (Dallos & Draper, 2015), yet there appear to be cross-cultural similarities between the attributes of resilient children. These include respect for cultural and community values and having strong connections to community support (Theron, Theron, & Malindi, 2013). Perhaps positive ex-boarders were those who developed both new attachment

relationships and these forms of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2020) as part of their overall resilience.

Happiness

Feeling happy with one's life can foster resilience (Webb, Veenhoven, Harfeld, & Jensen 2019). But like resilience, happiness is a nebulous and difficult to define concept. Aristotle felt that happiness was the emotional indication that one was living a virtuous life (Aristotle, 1984), whilst Epicurus believed that happiness was the state that resulted from being untroubled by worries (Annas, 1993). Griffin (2007) defines happiness as a sense of subjective satisfaction or contentment, though arguably this only replaces one subjective term with two. There is overlap here though with Webb et al.'s (2019) definition of happiness as a satisfaction with life and an enjoyment of one's life overall. These authors argued that happiness is the combination of both a cognitive appraisal of how one's current quality of life compares to one's standards, and the ratio of positive to negative feelings one experiences. There is empirical support for this argument, as individuals who experience positive emotions more frequently than negative ones do report higher happiness levels (Diener, Sandvik, & Pavot, 2009). Individuals who live in positive living conditions tend to experience more positive than negative feelings (Fredrickson, 2013). Perhaps the relatively affluent lifestyles many adult ex-boarders experience following their boarding school education (Beard, 2021) goes some way to explaining positive perceptions of boarding school.

However, Laynard (2006) points out that although the populations of the West have seen a large increase in their economic prosperity over the last fifty years, they are no happier. He suggests a possible explanation, that when others around them become wealthier individuals tend to become less satisfied with what they have. This aligns with Webb et al.'s (2019) emphasis on life satisfaction in their definition of happiness. Furthermore, in accordance with their model, Laynard (2006) highlights that the ratio between an individual's income and their income-aspiration influences their happiness. Of course possible contributing factors to the lack of an increase in western populations' happiness (Myers, 2000) include changes in the socio-cultural context, as geographical and cultural environment, age, gender, and ethnicity impact happiness levels (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005).

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

Easterlin (2003) describes how increases in economic capital do not bring lasting increases in happiness, as individuals become used to their new economic status and continue to make detrimental comparisons to those around them. Non-financial relational life events such as marriage or divorce have lasting impacts on happiness (Easterlin, 2003) and there is no evidence people become habituated to positive relationships, but there is less time for these when people work more (Layard, 2011). As people tend to underestimate how much adaptation and social comparison will undermine expected financial increases in happiness, they often allocate more time to chasing income increases than to the non-financial relational aspects of life. This reduces happiness (Easterlin, 2003). Ex-boarders often do end up in high responsibility jobs that are likely to be time-consuming (Beard, 2021). Perhaps for positive ex-boarders the loss of family connections or gaining of peer friendships led them to particularly value relationships and emphasise them in their lives.

In contrast to Schaverien's (2011) reports of long-term negative outcomes for boarders, there are some who report living happy lives (Beard, 2021). Sigmund Freud (1955) held the, perhaps rather pessimistic, view that the best anyone can hope for is to achieve 'ordinary unhappiness'. It is possible he was referring to hedonic adaptation theory, the tendency for an individual's long-term happiness level to return to a set baseline after any increased period (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Perhaps positive ex-boarders start with a different temperament, have more effective psychological adaptations (McWilliams, 2011), or experience significant post-traumatic growth.

Many researchers argue that the capacity to feel reasonably happy with life is central to positive mental health (e.g. Taylor & Brown, 1999). Happier people also tend to have longer-lasting romantic relationships, have more friends and social support, richer social interactions, a higher income and more energy (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2004). So if some positive ex-boarders really are experiencing increased happiness it may be helpful to examine why, with possible applications in educational reform and social wellbeing.

Achieving and making significant progress towards goals consistently predicts increased happiness (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005), especially when goals are in line with one's values (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). Goal progress appears to lead to longer-lasting happiness than making circumstantial changes, indicating it may overcome hedonic adaptation to a happiness baseline (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Ex-boarders report that part of the purpose of boarding

schools are to shape boarders' developing values (Beard, 2021). Perhaps the social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2020) boarders gain through their education (Bass, 2014) better equip them to make progress towards valued goals.

Pursuits that foster feelings of competence and connection with others appear to sustain long-term increased happiness (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). It is perhaps unsurprising that these attributes are similar to concepts within 'Behavioural Activation', a technique within Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Here, to improve mood, individuals are supported to maintain activities that are social and provide a sense of mastery (Beck & Beck, 2020). CBT is currently the principal psychological intervention recommended for those struggling with low mood in the UK (NICE, 2022). Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) argue that activities involving belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 2018), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) or autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000) bolster happiness as they meet universal human needs. It is noticeable that each of these are specific objectives reported to be foci of boarding school tasks (Beard, 2021). Perhaps successful internalisation of these values informs positive ex-boarders goal choices, leading them in the direction of happiness.

Arguably there is a tendency in the work of researchers such as Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) to focus on present factors, such as an individual's daily behaviour rather than examining potential influences from an individual's past on their current happiness. This is despite the many psychological theories suggesting its importance (e.g. Mitchell & Black, 2016). This focus on the immediate is reflective of the contemporary NHS culture (NHS, 2019). But perhaps as we are struggling with deteriorating national mental health (Daly, Sutin, & Robinson, 2022), this present-focused culture is not fully meeting our emotional needs.

Clinical and Policy Context

Goal-based Interventions

Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) proposed a 'happiness intervention' where individuals are supported to develop and work towards goals that fit their individual values. Their pilot of this approach found goal attainment did lead to increased happiness. This type of intervention

is an application of positive psychology, which focuses on building positive emotions and personal strengths rather than on reducing or coping with negative emotions or pathology (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). It remains to be seen though how many people in our contemporary fast-paced western societies (Serageldin, 2000), where many are working long (Burke & Cooper, 2008) or unpredictable hours (Martens, Nijhuis, Van Boxtel, & Knottnerus, 1999) will have the time, resources or ability to access value-congruent activities.

Gratitude-based Interventions

Evidence suggests regular expressions of gratitude increase one's subjective happiness (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005), and wellbeing more generally (Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010). The regular practice of gratitude has long been integral to Zen Buddhism (Hanh, 2001) and has recently been integrated into western mental health interventions. These include Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (Linehan, 2018), an approach which appears to have the power to significantly improve mood (Harley, Sprich, Safren, Jacobo, & Fava, 2008).

Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) developed a second intervention focused on supporting individuals to reinterpret negative life experiences, a concept similar to reframing in systemic therapy (Robbins, Alexander, Newell, & Turner, 1996), through greater appreciation of their more positive life circumstances. Wood et al.'s (2010) review found promising early evidence for the impact of gratitude-based interventions on happiness and wellbeing. Perhaps positive ex-borders have a stronger ability to experience gratitude for the positive attributes of their lives.

Explorative Interventions

A recent study explored what adult ex-boarders attributed as being helpful aspects of the psychotherapy they had received (Emerson-Smith, McPherson, & Cavenagh, in press). These individuals expressed that processing repressed emotions and having them validated by another, and developing emotional literacy, confidence and a more integrated sense of self were the attributes of therapy they found most helpful. They reported that the psychotherapy helped them improve their wellbeing and develop healthier relationships. This extended to them then allowing their children to express emotion rather than shutting this down. These findings suggest that explorative approaches may go further than gratitude or goal-based

interventions in not just improving present wellbeing but also relationships, and may even have the potential to interrupt the transmission of inter-generational trauma (Fraiberg, Adelson, & Shapiro, 1975).

These ex-boarders' initial position of shutting down their children's emotion is in line with Alice Miller's (1987) theory that caregivers negatively impacted by their own childhoods tend to unconsciously require their children to behave in particular ways to maintain their emotional equilibrium. These children will intuitively adapt themselves to the caregiver's need to secure "love", losing themselves in the process. However, Emerson-Smith et al.'s (in press) findings suggest psychotherapy has the potential to disrupt this process. Of note, some participants felt it was essential for their therapist to have a strong understanding of boarding school to manage the defences they had developed (Emerson-Smith et al., in press). It was unclear, however, how many participants had received this specialised intervention. It is also questionable how widely such a specialism can be realistically available in community mental health settings.

Are these different forms of intervention separate pathways towards developing happiness? Or does psychotherapy allow those who found boarding school traumatic to heal, and perhaps return to something closer to their hedonic baseline? Perhaps cognitive and behavioural strategies would further increase happiness in these individuals. Making more sense of this is likely to be helpful for better tailoring interventions to individual need. It is also likely to be important so as to avoid attempts at healing trauma through interventions that are unlikely to be sufficient.

Mental Health in Schools

Safeguarding

The Department for Education's (DFE; 2022a) Keeping Children Safe in Schools guidance states that all school staff members should be considering what is in the best interests of each child. However, the guidance is somewhat unclear whether 'best interests' are defined by the child, their caregivers, or the school. Providing safeguarding is in every child's best interest

and the DFE (2022a) clearly states this is the school's responsibility. One might imagine keeping on top of safeguarding issues is particularly difficult in boarding schools where children spend more time together than under adult supervision (Beard, 2021). Where safeguarding issues are raised the DFE (2022a) reminds school directors of the importance of making referrals to external agencies where required. However, boardings school have historically been insular (Beard, 2021) with a reputation to maintain and a potential financial benefit in doing so. These factors may be potential barriers to boarding schools making external referrals.

The DFE's (2022b) National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools guidance states, to safeguard their boarders' welfare, boarding schools should identify a person, independent of staff, whom boarders can easily and comfortably access. This appears a positive step in lieu of parents. However, no recommendations are given on the level of training this individual will need, or on how to ascertain whether boarders feel it is 'easy' or 'comfortable' to approach these individuals. The DFE (2022a) also instructs that educational staff should be able to effectively support victims of abuse when they report this. But with many boarding school staff being ex-boarders themselves (Beard, 2021), how many will effectively recognise abuse, have felt experience of how to manage it, or be able to resist unconscious replication of their own boarding traumas (Fraiberg et al., 1975).

Student Outcomes

The DFE (2022a) underlines the importance of schools ensuring all children have the best outcomes. But is again unclear who decides what these are, i.e. the child, parent, school, or socio-political culture. It is also unclear what should be prioritised in terms of academic results, occupational outcomes, emotional health, relationships or happiness. The lack of clarity here may make these recommendations difficult to implement. Despite this, the DFE (2022a) places significant responsibility on schools for their students' mental health and general development. It is therefore important to examine empirically the impact of boarding schools on these outcomes to support more effective implementation of these recommendations.

Relationships with Students

The DFE (2022a) emphasises the importance of educational staff building trusting relationships that facilitate communication with students. These recommendations could be taken still further. Verschueren & Koomen (2012) concluded that teachers can serve as attachment figures, providing a safe haven and secure base, especially where the teacher is sensitive to the children's needs. As the security of a child's attachment influences their educational success (Bergin & Bergin, 2009), boarding schools have a vested interest in providing the opportunity for these relationships. Secure attachment is associated with higher grades, better emotion regulation, higher social competence and lower levels of delinquency (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). But with the higher student to staff ratios at boarding schools (Beard, 2021) it is questionable how realistic it is that teacher-student relationships that can replace a 'good enough' (Winnicott, 2016) parent could be created for every boarder. Furthermore, although the DFE (2022b) recommends boarding schools maintain all possible continuity of staff so borders' relationships are less disrupted. It is questionable how much boarding schools can really control this. Therefore, even if secure attachments are developed with teachers there is still the risk of a repetition of abandonment trauma (Stubley & Young, 2021).

A Psychologically Nourishing Environment

HM Government's (HMG; 2021) Promoting Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing policy emphasises schools' need to deliver a curriculum that promotes resilience, supports social and emotional development and results in happier, more confident children. They recommend that this should include teaching students what they are feeling and why, helping them develop emotional literacy and to recognise nascent emotional difficulties (HMG, 2021). The teaching of these social and emotional skills is also likely to be helpful whilst boarders are still at school to help them to form secure attachment relationships with their peers (Seibert & Kerns, 2009) . The DFE (2022b) emphasises how provision should extend beyond teaching, with boarding schools providing a 'homely' environment where boarders feel safe, secure and comfortable. According to arguments put forwards by therapists and 'survivors' (e.g. Duffell, 2016) boarding schools may be falling short on the attributes proposed here as necessary for a psychologically healthy environment. However, these arguments have so far been based solely on case studies and anecdotal evidence. There

is currently little empirical evidence that allows conclusions to be drawn with any certainty that boarding schools are unable to provide a psychologically healthy environment.

Systematic Literature Review – Children's Experiences of Resilience Building Following Stressful Events: A Meta-Ethnographic Synthesis

There is limited qualitative research examining the experiences of children who have experienced stressful and adverse childhood experiences, especially with regards to factors they perceive contribute to the development of resilience. Those existing studies have not been previously subjected to a synthesis. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to create a systematic review and synthesis of the existent literature on this topic.

Method

This review was conducted according to the recommendations of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA; Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff & Altman, 2010). Every aspect of this review was conducted by the author alone. A preliminary search was conducted to identify relevant articles, ensure the validity of the research question and topic, avoid duplication of previous research, and confirm that sufficient articles were available for the review. The author ensured that no duplicate reviews were registered on PROSPERO.

There has been a steady growth in the number of approaches to synthesising qualitative research over recent years (Campbell et al., 2012). Gough, Thomas and Oliver (2012) argue that a primary area of difference between qualitative synthesis approaches is their epistemological position. Meta-ethnographic method is underpinned by objective idealism, which resides between the constructivist and scientific-realism epistemological positions. Objective idealism is interpretative in nature, and thus holds an element of constructivism. However, it does not require the constructivist recognition of multiple realities. The emphasis instead is on examining commonalities across accounts and producing an outcome with strong explanatory power.

Critical realism is the epistemological position underpinning the data analysis of this thesis. It holds an assumption of reality that is less interpretative than objective idealism but the two positions hold many similarities (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Synthesis methods informed by a critical realist position are based on those underpinned by objective realism and hold many similarities such as data interpretation, seeking commonalities, exploring discrepancies and placing accounts in context.

Despite thematic synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008) being the main synthesis approach informed by the critical realist epistemological position, meta-ethnography rather than thematic synthesis was chosen to conduct the present literature synthesis. This was because thematic synthesis was developed to address questions relating to intervention effectiveness (Thomas & Harden, 2008), whereas meta-ethnography is more appropriate for research seeking to understand individual experiences of wellbeing (Campbell et al., 2003). A meta-ethnographic approach was therefore deemed more appropriate for a synthesis of research examining children's perceptions of resilience development.

Meta-ethnography was originally developed by Noblit and Hare (1988) to facilitate the combining of ethnographic research in education. The approach has since developed and been successfully applied to large numbers of studies, including non-ethnographic studies (Atkins et al., 2008; Britten et al., 2002; Campbell et al., 2003). During a meta-ethnographic synthesis individual study components are organised to form a holistic representation (Noblit & Hare, 1988). Both the original study material and interpretations made in primary studies are collected as data. Key concepts are then translated across multiple studies to produce a synthesis (Noblit & Hare, 1988). If these concepts are judged as being comparable they are combined to produce a line of argument synthesis (Noblit & Hare, 1988). Noblit and Hare (1988) outlined seven phases to their meta-ethnographic method (Table 1.1.). Their methodology was used to guide the present synthesis.

Table 1.1.

The Stages of a Meta-ethnography (Noblit & Hare 1988)

Phase	Description
1	Getting Started
2	Deciding what is Relevant to the Initial Interest
3	Reading the Studies
4	Determining how the Studies are Related
5	Translating the Studies into One Another
6	Synthesising Translations
7	Expressing the Synthesis

Phase 1: Getting Started

Here a research question is developed, typically informed by previous relevant literature (Atkins et al., 2008). Qualitative research examining children's perspectives on the contributors to resilience development following distressing events has not been previously subjected to a synthesis. Examining this topic in greater depth will expand the literature regarding the development of childhood resilience. This is likely to be useful for educators, CAMHS clinicians, relevant policy makers and researchers interested in fostering or studying childhood resilience.

Phase 2: Deciding what is Relevant to the Initial Interest

Selection Criteria. The second stage covered Atkins et al.'s (2008) recommendations of defining the focus, locating relevant studies, making inclusion decisions and quality assessment. This synthesis aimed to include all published, peer-reviewed articles that used

qualitative methodology to examine children's perspectives on contributors to the development of resilience following stressful events. Qualitative methods were defined as studies involving data collection from participant interviews, focus groups or text followed by in-depth analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Search Strategy. As individual databases can be selective with the journals they include (Mertens, 2010), three electronic databases (PsychARTICLES, MEDLINE and CINAHL) were accessed via EBSCO host. These databases were selected as their subject scopes were relevant to the research question. These databases were searched in January 2023. The research question was deconstructed into keywords and synonyms of these to form search terms. Searches of the four keyword categories were performed and combined using the "Search with AND" Boolean operator within EBSCO host. The search was externally evaluated and feedback was collected and implemented. Thus published journal articles were sought using the search: resilie* AND (child* or adolescent or youth or teen* or young) AND (experienc* or perceptions or attitude* or view* or perspective*) AND (stress* or advers* or *trauma*) AND (qualitative or interview* or focus group). When limiters were applied (discussed below) this retrieved 515 articles.

Exclusion Criteria. Exclusion criteria were stated in advance to reduce author bias (Tawfik et al., 2019). Articles were restricted to those that were peer-reviewed to ensure included studies were of adequate quality, to those focused on child participants (0-18 years-old; Arnett, 2007) as this was the review's focus, and to articles published in English language as translation services were not available within the timeframe. Studies were also excluded if there was not sufficient focus on children's perspectives on resilience development following stressful events. Due to differences in long-term outcomes (Schneider et al., 2012), studies where participants had sustained lasting physical injury were excluded (n=2). Finally, as this review was focused on qualitative studies employing child participants, quantitative studies (n=10) and those using adult participants (n=26) were excluded.

Study Selection. A total of 515 articles were identified via the electronic database search. The title and abstract of these were screened against the above exclusion criteria. If the title or abstract suggested relevance or provided insufficient information the full-text article was retrieved and assessed for eligibility. 503 records met the exclusion criteria and were excluded.

Thus, 12 articles were identified for inclusion (Bowden, Reed, & Nicholson, 2018; Cheetham-Blake, Family, & Turner-Cobb, 2019; Harazneh, Hamdan-Mansour, & Ayed, 2021; Hatala, Njeze, Morton, Pearl, & Bird-Naytowhow, 2020; Jennings & Caplovitz, 2022; Levey et al., 2016; Lowe, Kelley, & Hong, 2019; Matzka & Nagl-Cupal, 2020; Tozer, Stedmon, & Dallos, 2019; Vivian, Chewning, & Flanagan, 2022; Woods-Jaeger et al., 2020; Yablon & Itzhaky, 2021). Citation searches of the final included studies were performed to check for additional relevant research. No further articles were identified (Figure 1.1.) Table 1.2. displays the characteristics of the included studies.
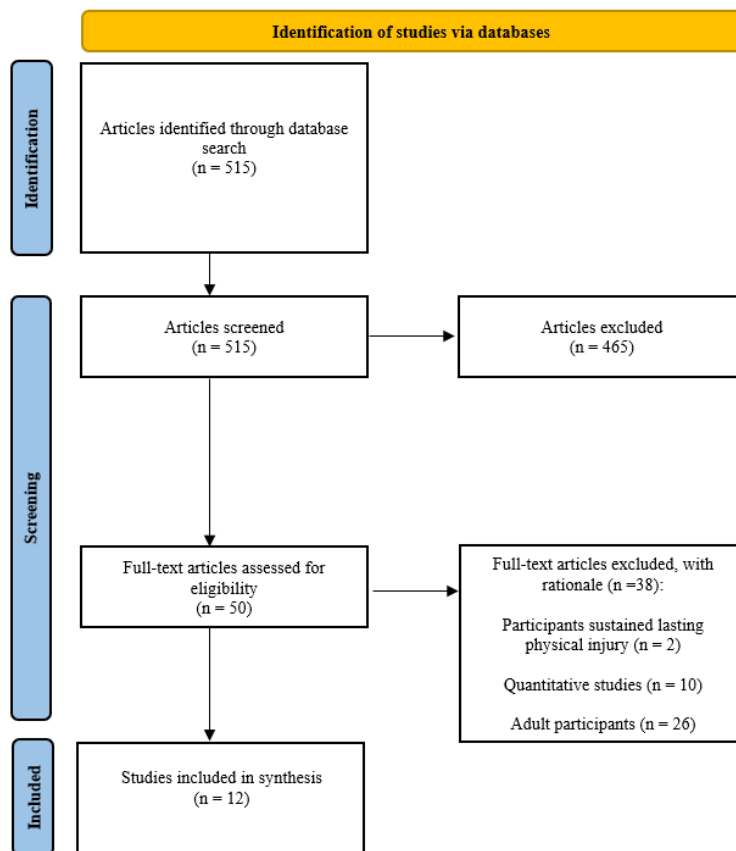
Figure 1.1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Study Selection Process

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

Table 1.2.

Study Characteristics

Study Author(s)	Vivian, Chewning & Flanagan	Harazneh, Hamdan-Mansour & Ayed, 2020	Yablon & Itzhaky, 2021	Matzka & Nagl-Cupal, 2020	Lowe, Kelley & Hong, 2018	Woods-Jaeger et al. 2020	Pearl & Bird-Naytowhow, 2020	Hatala, Njeze, Morton, Stedmon & Dallos, 2019	Tozer, Reed & Nicholson, 2018	Bowden, & Turner-Cobb, 2019	Cheetham-Blake, Family Levey et al, 2016	Jennings & Caplovitz, 2022
Purpose	Examine how protective factors promote resilience from a child's point of view	Explore resilience among Palestinian children exposed to trauma due to detention experiences	Investigate the contribution of schools to the resilience of students exposed to terror-related homicide	Identify psychosocial resources used by young carers	Examine Native American children's experiences of stress and coping strategies	Examine resilience following African American youth's lived experience of community violence	Explore urban indigenous youth's perspectives about health and resilience within an inner-city Canadian context	Explore how attachment, resilience and trauma influences children's experiences of their mother's cancer	Explore how participation in occupation contributes to children's resilience	Explore children's experiences of stress, adversity, and coping	Identify factors contributing to resilience among youth in post-conflict Liberia	Explore young people's life situations, media use, worries and coping strategies

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

Setting	U.S.A.	Israel	Israel	Austria	U.S.A.	U.S.A.	Canada	United Kingdom	New Zealand	United Kingdom	Liberia	U.S.A.
Sample	33 (F: 23, M: 10; aged 9-14)	18 (F: ND, M: ND; aged 12-18)	25 (F: 13, M: 12; aged 13-16)	10 (F: 4, M: 6; aged 9–17)	179 (F: 103, M: 76; aged 13-18)	39 (F: ND, M: ND; aged 13–18)	28 (F: 16, M: 12; aged 16-18)	10 (F: 6, M: 4; aged 10-18)	8 (F: 4, M: 4; aged 11-13)	38 (F: 16, M: 22; aged 7–11)	75 (F: 38, M: 37; aged 13–18)	36 (F: 17, M: 19; aged 9–14)
Data Collection Method	Qualitative interview	Qualitative interview	Qualitative interview and quantitative measures	Qualitative interview	A qualitative narrative approach	Focus groups	Qualitative interview	Qualitative interview	Qualitative interview and a focus group	Qualitative interview	Qualitative interview	Qualitative interview
Data Analysis Method	A summative content analysis using a resilience	Grounded theory	Mixed-methods	Directed qualitative content analysis using the theoretical	The consensual qualitative research (CQR) approach	Generic analysis	Grounded theory	Thematic analysis	Thematic analysis	Thematic analysis	Grounded theory	Generic analysis

framewor	lens of
k.	resilience

N.B. **M = Male, F = Female, ND = No Data; aged = years**

Quality Appraisal. Whether quality assessment criteria can be usefully applied to qualitative research is still contested, with no consensus yet reached on whether this should be part of practice and, if so, which criteria to use and how to apply these (Long, French, & Brooks, 2020). Contemporary meta-ethnographic method generally involves quality assessment (e.g. Atkins et al., 2008). Often employing adapted applications of the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme tool (CASP; CASP, 2022).

Atkins et al.'s (2008) adapted version of the CASP was chosen for use in this study. The CASP was designed to appraise qualitative studies, is the most commonly used tool for quality appraisal in qualitative syntheses and is endorsed by the Cochrane Qualitative and Implementation Methods Group (Long et al., 2020). The adapted CASP includes 13 questions that assess aims, methodology, design, recruitment, data collection and data analysis. A table displaying each study's outcome on the quality assessment is presented in Appendix A.

Given there is no internationally accepted or empirically tested methodology for excluding studies from qualitative syntheses on the basis of quality (Daly et al., 2007) the current meta-ethnography included all articles regardless of quality allowing the reader to reflect on these data, a contemporary approach to meta-ethnographic methodology (e.g. Atkins et al., 2008).

The research question was clearly stated in eight studies. This allows the reader to have greater confidence that the methodology was guided by the study aims in these projects (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Nine studies used a methodology that was clearly appropriate for addressing the research question. This meant the reader could be more certain these studies had the capacity to effectively examine the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Ten studies clearly described the context, a particular strength of qualitative approaches (Bryman, Stephens, & Campo, 1996), allowing contextual influences on the data analysis and results to be considered (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The researcher's role in the research was clearly described in only seven studies. This makes it difficult for the reader to ascertain which aspects of the remaining five projects any reported biases may have influenced (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The sampling strategy was clearly appropriate for the research question in nine studies, meaning the samples collected could be reasonably expected to provide valuable insights into the research topic in these projects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The data collection method was appropriate in ten studies, allowing greater confidence that these projects collected data that could realistically address the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2013). However, only five

studies were judged to have clearly used an analysis method appropriate for answering the research question. This is concerning as inappropriate data analysis methodology may produce results lacking in validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Nine studies were judged to have made claims supported by sufficient evidence. Supporting claims with evidence is essential for allowing the reader to judge the merit of the author(s)' interpretations. This is especially important where clinical decisions may be based on the results (Kearney, 2001).

Phase 3: Reading the Studies

This stage involved the author thoroughly reading the chosen studies, familiarising themselves with the content and beginning to identify the main concepts. Important study details were noted at this stage to provide context for the later explanation and interpretations of each study (Atkins et al., 2008).

Phase 4: Determining how the Studies are Related

During the fourth stage the 12 studies were reviewed, determining common and recurring concepts. A table was developed displaying this data (Britten et al., 2002). The emerging concepts were acceptance; supportive others; culture; emotion regulation; cognitive features; knowledge; changing oneself; personal traits; environment. Contextual methodological details and study authors' 'second-order' interpretations, the sense the researchers made of the data (Britten et al., 2002), are also reported. This allows the reader to place the results in their context. Table 1.3. provides an example of how the table data was organised.

Table 1.3.

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

Example of Tabulated Study Details and Key Concepts

Study Author(s)	Levey et al. (2016)
Key Study Details	
Purpose	Identify factors contributing to the resilience of post-conflict Liberian youth
Setting	Liberia
Sample	Seventy-five young people (aged 13–18; F: 38, M: 37)
Data Collection	Semi-structured interviews
Data Analysis Method	Grounded Theory
Key Concepts	
Acceptance	
Supportive Others	Stable supporting figures helped coping with difficult memories
Culture	Traditional beliefs and moral codes of behaviour provide a system of meaning
Emotion Regulation	A balance of work and play, suffering and joy allows one to withstand difficult experiences
Cognitive Features	Thinking creatively about problems allows identification of adaptive solutions
Knowledge	Children learning in school function better
Changing Oneself	
Personal Traits	An internal sense of control and agency reinforces self-esteem and optimism
Environment	
Explanation, Theory and Second-order Interpretations	Relationships impact the development of the individual factors that support resilience, including emotion regulation, cognitive flexibility, agency, social intelligence and meaning-making

Phase 5: Translating the Studies into One Another

This stage involved completing the data extraction from the included studies, preserving original terminology, and organising it in the table (Britten et al., 2002). For all included study data see Appendix B. Checks were then made to ensure that all relevant concepts held in original papers were represented within a key concept (Britten et al., 2002). Table 1.4. displays a cross-comparison of studies by concept.

Table 1.4.

Cross-Comparison of Study Concepts

Key Concept	Vivian et al., 2022	Harazneh et al., 2020	Yablon and Itzhaky, 2021	Matzka and Nagl-Cupal, 2020	Lowe et al., 2018	Woods-Jaeger et al., 2020	Hatala et al., 2020	Tozer et al., 2019	Bowden et al., 2018	Cheetham-Blake et al., 2019	Levey et al., 2016	Jennings and Caplovitz, 2022
Acceptance									*	*		
Supportive Others	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Culture		*	*		*	*	*				*	
Emotion Regulation	*			*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*
Cognitive Features		*		*						*	*	*
Knowledge	*					*		*	*	*	*	
Changing Oneself						*			*			
Personal Traits		*			*	*		*			*	
Environment			*				*	*				

Phase 6: Synthesising the Translations

Next, the meta-ethnography proceeded to a 'higher-order' interpretation which distilled the first and second-order concepts into a synthesis. To develop the overarching synthesis model the extracted themes were listed in a table, juxtaposed with second-order concepts. An overarching model that linked together, and generated hypotheses regarding, the first and second-order concepts across papers was developed to produce a 'line of argument' synthesis (Atkins et al., 2008).

A re-reading of the extracted concepts revealed commonalities between study findings and that these relationships were reciprocal not refutational, meaning a line of argument could be developed (Britten et al., 2002). The key concepts were synthesised into four broader concepts: The Surrounding Context, Social Support and Resources, Personal Resources, and Moving Forwards. This process is presented in figure 1.2. Following this, the key concepts, broader concepts and interpretations were linked to produce a line of argument synthesis (Atkins et al., 2008; Figure 1.3.).

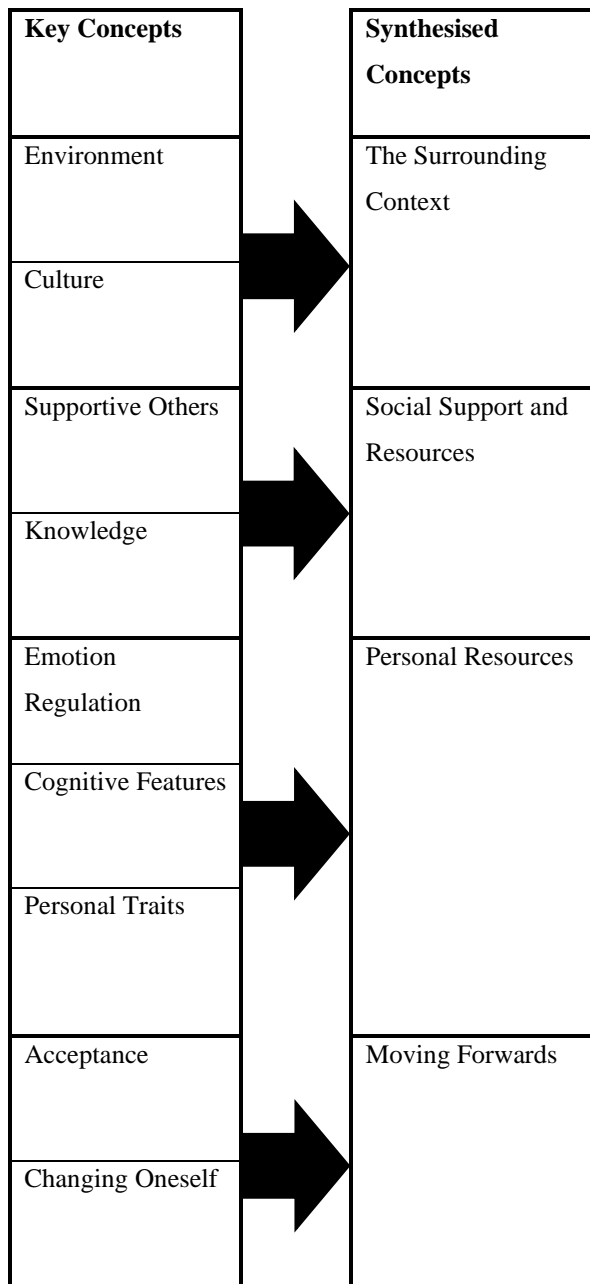| Key Concepts	Synthesised Concepts
Environment	The Surrounding Context
Culture	
Supportive Others	Social Support and Resources
Knowledge	
Emotion Regulation	Personal Resources
Cognitive Features	
Personal Traits	
Acceptance	Moving Forwards
Changing Oneself	

Figure 1.2. Overview of Key Concepts and Synthesised Broader Concepts

Phase 7: Expressing the Synthesis

There have been different approaches to expressing the results of a meta-ethnographic synthesis, dependant on the audience and most appropriate form of synthesis (Noblit & Hare, 1988). Here, the synthesis is presented below with each of the four wider concepts described

in detail. Once the reader is introduced to the concepts and their data these are linked to form a line of argument synthesis.

Noblit and Hare (1988) give no clear guidance on whether to use primary data or author quotes to illustrate the results of a meta-ethnography. However, the use of primary data rather than author quotes is advocated by Thomas and Harden (2008) in their discussion of qualitative synthesis methodology. Therefore, this approach was used in the below reporting of results.

Results

The Surrounding Context

Environment. Children across many studies described how important being able to access a physical space that felt safe was after a highly stressful event. These spaces were essential for allowing the processing of the event to begin. For some children this safe space was their school (Yablon & Itzhaky, 2021), for others, youth centres (Hatala et al., 2020). Yablon and Itzhaky (2021) hypothesised that children's post-traumatic growth and resilience development following a traumatic event was related to the sense of connectedness they held towards their school environment. Schools enhanced resilience by providing a sense of both psychosocial and physical safety. Tozer et al. (2019) described the importance of these environments having a strong sense of structure and routine, allowing the children to feel held whilst they made sense of what had happened to them.

For the 28 inner-city indigenous Canadian children interviewed by Hatala et al. (2020), despite their contemporary urban lifestyles, being embedded in and connected with a natural environment was essential to their well-being and sense of strength. They described how nature reduced their distress, was seen as protective, and fostered feelings of well-being, hope and inner strength. Interestingly, many of these children were able to recognise metaphors in natural processes that helped them adapt resiliently within their own lives. These included new beginnings, overcoming challenges and the normality of change. Hatala et al. (2020) concluded that these connections between young people and nature may be a source of

resilience that is typically hidden and poorly understood in contemporary capitalistic, neo-liberal and post-modern societies.

Culture. Hatala et al. (2020) understood that for the indigenous Canadian children nature was not just superficially experienced. It was seen as endowed with sacred and spiritual meaning. Trees, plants and animals were seen as highly personal beings which formed part of the young people's social and spiritual world and taught them essential life lessons. The importance of the children's culture was a concept present in many studies.

Across studies children described the importance of their cultural values for maintaining resilience following distressing events. These tended to be values that were potentially adaptive in their current environment, such as developing political awareness in the context of political unrest in Palestine (Harazneh et al., 2020) or African American children's sense of communalism and self-determination in the context of exposure to community violence (Woods-Jaeger et al., 2020).

Many children who came from communities with long histories of cultural tradition drew upon this to maintain their resilience and wellbeing. Native American children described how holding their cultural heritage in mind during difficult times helped them remain strong (Lowe et al., 2019). Whilst for young people in post-conflict Liberia, their traditional beliefs provided a system of meaning through which they were able to make sense of what had happened to them (Levey et al., 2016). These cultural aspects appeared to influence other domains of resilience. For example, Lowe et al. (2019) concluded that the Native American children's cultural beliefs and values of responsibility, discipline, seeking truth and making connections influenced their choice of adaptive coping behaviours. Furthermore, Hatala et al., (2020) saw the indigenous Canadian children's culturally-rooted beliefs as serving as an important function in allowing them to rebuild their sense of identity and hope after distressing events.

For those who held religious beliefs this was often a source of strength in difficult times. Prayer could help to soothe distress (Lowe et al., 2019), create feelings of empowerment and optimism, and reinforce children's beliefs that their lives mattered and they were loved (Levey et al., 2016).

Social Support and Resources

Supportive Others. The profound importance of the support of others for children's resilience was reflected across all studies. The children spoke of how this allowed them to have a safe interpersonal space to express, and be helped to cope with, their feelings. They were able to receive advice and no longer feel alone with their problems. The children spoke of how feeling supported by others meant they felt they had the resources to tackle life's challenges. They described not just the importance of feeling listened to, understood and reassured, but also how essential receiving physical affection was for their sense of strength and well-being. Levey et al., (2016) concluded that it was positive relationships that allowed the development of the individual factors, discussed below, that support children's resilience, such as emotion regulation and cognitive attributes, social intelligence and a sense of agency.

Family support, and parents in particular, was often cited by the children as critical for their management of difficult periods. Parents created environments that were comforting and felt safe. They could explain to the children what was happening and help them to make sense of it (Harazneh et al., 2020). In this way parents were often the children's main confidantes and principal source of support (Matzka & Nagl-Cupal, 2020).

Vivian et al. (2022) theorised that when children's home environments are nurturing and supportive, internal assets such as self-esteem, confidence and coping skills are strengthened, allowing them to overcome environmental adversities more easily. They concluded that parental support acts as a form of protection against potential risks in children's lives, such as peer bullying, increasing the likelihood of more resilient outcomes (Vivian et al., 2022).

Children described being able to further bolster their resilience through garnering support from their wider community. This support frequently came from teachers but could also come from neighbours or community elders (Jennings & Caplovitz, 2022), depending on the child's cultural context. Yablon and Itzhaky (2021) concluded that the community of a school can enhance children's resilience through the support and connection that teachers provide in their relationships with students. Connecting with their community helped the children to begin re-building their trust in others and was often experienced as creating stability. Harazneh et al., (2020) concluded that for their Palestinian children participating in their communities strengthened their sense of identity and belonging and their social support

networks. This fostered the development of internal resources that supported their wellbeing and resilience.

It wasn't just adults that children could go to for a sense of holding and understanding. Other children were often a source of support that heavily contributed to the children's resilience. Across studies many children described how friends could provide a space to "get things off your chest" (Bowden et al., 2018). Spending time playing with friends could also help distract from painful thoughts, memories and feelings. The Austrian children in Matzka and Nagl-Cupal's (2020) study described how connecting with other children who had similar experiences helped normalise what they had gone through and often led to new supportive friendships.

Matzka and Nagl-Cupal (2020) conceived of children's social support as being their 'interpersonal resources'. They concluded that how available this resource was and how well the children were able to make use of it was a major contributor to their ability to resiliently adapt to life's challenges. Vivian et al., (2022) concluded from their work that children's social resources contribute to their resilience not just through the provision of support but also through creating a sense of belonging.

Knowledge. Many studies described how information gathering following a distressing event was a common response and an integral part of what allowed children to adapt resiliently to the situation. Gathering information helped the children to develop an understanding of what had happened, and often a new world view to incorporate this. Many children spoke of how this learning from adversity, and the new understanding it developed, helped lift feelings of anxiety (e.g. Tozer et al., 2019). The increased sense of awareness the children developed through their acquisition of knowledge helped them feel better prepared and more able to manage future stressors. Particularly if the knowledge was gathered from sources of comfort (Cheetham-Blake et al., 2019).

Personal Resources

Emotion Regulation. Children across studies described how important feeling they had some control over their emotional experience was for adapting to the fallout of distressing events. In many studies children reported that getting involved in activities helped them remain

resilient. Activities helped provide distraction, created feelings of connection, happiness and enjoyment, allowed emotional expression, forgetting reality and escapism. One young person described how: "A balance of work and play, suffering and joy, allows you to withstand difficult experiences" (Levey et al., 2016).

Many children described how creative outlets, such as craftwork, drawing, dance, music and photography allowed emotional expression, relived distress and created a sense of calm (e.g. Lowe et al., 2019). For others, exercise or playing sports served as an emotional outlet, a distraction and an opportunity to build friendships (e.g. Woods-Jaeger et al., 2020).

The use of media to manage strong feelings and maintain emotional wellbeing was commonplace. Listening to music, reading and watching TV bolstered resilience by reducing stress. Mediums such as video games, social media, instant messaging or video calls allowed the children to connect with others, experience positive feelings, express emotion and unwind (Jennings & Caplovitz, 2022). For some, playing with pets helped them maintain a sense of strength and well-being. One young person described how: "riding horses calms me down and helps me feel safe and happy." (Jennings & Caplovitz, 2022). Across the various activities they engaged in the children particularly emphasised how helpful the element of distraction was for maintaining their well-being (e.g. Lowe et al., 2019). Bowden et al. (2018) proposed that children's occupations contribute to their resilience through creating enjoyment, building friendships, providing distraction and allowing emotional expression. They hypothesised that these aspects allow children to use four coping strategies: letting go, fostering support, creating distraction and generating positive feelings.

In line with Bowden et al.'s (2018) perspective, expressing emotion through cathartic action, such as through crying or releasing anger physically was described by British children as stress-reducing and something that helped them recover from distressing experiences (Cheetham-Blake et al., 2019). Other coping strategies that helped children manage their emotions in resilient ways included finding ways to self-soothe and to delay gratification (Levey et al., 2016).

In some studies children showed evidence of employing psychological defences to help them cope with their experiences. For example, the ten British children whose mothers had cancer in Tozer et al.'s (2019) study displayed repression of stressful memories, as well as denial and minimisation of stressors and their emotional impact. In Levy et al.'s (2016) study of young people in post-conflict Liberia several children had developed fantasies of becoming

powerful and only needing to provide help for others, whilst having no need for support themselves.

Cognitive Features. Across studies the children described a variety of cognitive attributes that helped them cope resiliently with distressing situations. For some Palestinian children normalising the traumatic situations they had experienced as those that many others in their community had also undergone was helpful (Harazneh et al., 2020). Children in some studies (e.g. Cheetham-Blake et al., 2019) described problem-solving skills as essential for coping resiliently. These allowed the children to construct realistic plans of action and so not feel as overwhelmed. These problem-solving skills were supported by the ability to think creatively and so identify adaptive solutions, which helped the children to maintain hope and confidence in their ability to manage difficult situations (Levey et al., 2016). Children in multiple studies routinely reframed what had happened to them in a more positive light. This helped them cope more resiliently and in some cases contributed to post-traumatic growth. For example, the Palestinian children in Harazneh et al.'s (2020) study viewed surviving trauma as noble and something to be proud of. Many children described the importance of having space to reflect on their experiences (e.g. Matzka & Nagl-Cupal, 2020). This improved their ability to manage difficult feelings and maintain inner strength. Reflection allowed the children to put their experiences into perspective, realistically appraise their situation and develop effective ways of managing it (Cheetham-Blake et al., 2019).

Personal Traits. Children across studies described a variety of traits that had helped them resiliently adapt to difficult life circumstances. These included determination in the face of obstacles (e.g. Levey et al., 2016), remaining disciplined, having a drive to support and maintain connection with others (Lowe et al., 2019) and holding a sense of hope and optimism. One young person described the hope they maintained that: "once it is over everything will be back to normal" (Tozer et al., 2019). The children that had survived conflict in Liberia (Levey et al., 2016) described the importance of their social skills (empathy, supporting others and the ability to connect) for allowing them to form supportive relationships in their communities.

Many children spoke of the importance of having a sense of agency and control over their lives and of holding the belief they could influence their environment and future. Especially as this reinforced their sense of optimism and self-esteem (Levey et al., 2016). Children who felt this sense of agency were able to take more responsibility, and often saw their participation in the world as being important for their community. This perspective supported their wellbeing and helped maintain resilience (Harazneh et al., 2020). In their paper, Vivian et al. (2022) hypothesised that when children can find healthy coping strategies and therefore feel in control of their emotional state this contributes to the sense of having agency and control.

Moving Forwards

Developing Oneself. In multiple studies children described how they had spent time developing themselves to help them better adapt in future. They described how becoming a "new person" helped them meet challenges more resiliently (Woods-Jaeger et al., 2020).

Many children described resilience as being a process that happens to you, rather than something you're born with. They described becoming stronger through the adversity, that it facilitated growth and led to becoming a new person with more confidence and ability to bounce back. As one young person put it: "Resilience is going through something and becoming a better version of yourself. So knowing what to do next time." (Bowden et al., 2018).

Acceptance. The children spoke of how important developing acceptance of what had happened to them was for coping resiliently with it. For some, the simple passing of time allowed them to move on from the distressing experience (Cheetham-Blake et al., 2019). Allowing the letting go of painful feelings, like anger and sadness, created a space where the children could reflect on how to manage their feelings and accept their situation. For many this led to feelings of calm and a greater sense of resilience (Bowden et al., 2018).

Line of Argument Synthesis

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

The purpose of a line of argument synthesis is to discover a whole among a set of parts (individual study findings). An interpretation is constructed that reveals features that are hidden within individual studies (Noblit & Hare, 1988). This incorporates all studies included in the synthesis, creating an additional level of conceptual development (Figure 1.3.).

```
┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
│     The      │      │              │      │              │      │              │
│  Surrounding │ ───▶ │Social Support│ ───▶ │   Personal   │ ───▶ │   Moving     │
│   Context    │      │ and Resources│      │  Resources   │      │  Forwards    │
│              │      │              │      │              │      │              │
└──────────────┘      └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘
```
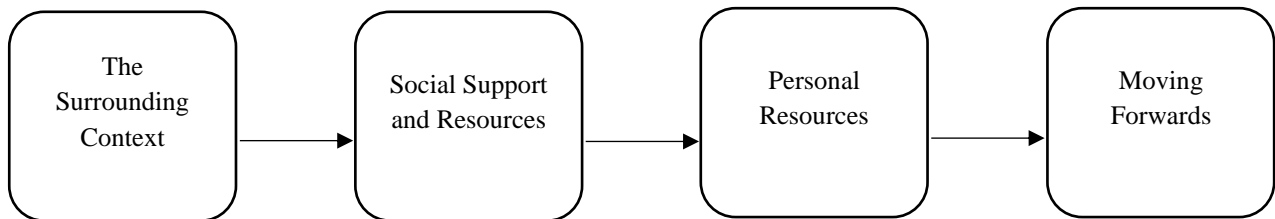
Figure 1.3. Line of Argument Synthesis: Children's Perceptions of Resilience Development

What emerged from the synthesis was the need to find a physical space that felt safe following traumatic and distressing events. Here the children were able to take time, regain their composure, reflect and make sense of what happened to them. These spaces fulfilled the children's basic needs for shelter and for psychosocial and physical safety. The most healing spaces provided structure and a sense of holding. It was from their physical secure bases that the children could consider how to restructure their lives in ways that allowed their other psychological needs to be met. In this way, safe physical environments reduced distress and fostered the feelings of strength that allowed a blossoming of hope for the future.

When a safe physical space was established the children could then heal within the embrace of supportive relationships. The more sources of relational support (community members, family members, friends) the children had the more interpersonal resources they could draw upon. Within these relationships the children were able to express and make sense of their feelings and be supported to manage distress using methods passed down through generations. Thus, the children were able to begin rebuilding their trust in others. It was these relationships that strengthened their sense of identity and belonging and allowed them to feel confident they had the resources to re-engage with the world.

The children were inextricably linked with their community and cultures, often feeling held within a web of connections with tradition and the ancestral past. The children's cultures provided a repository of knowledge they could draw upon, thus integrating the cultural values

that had helped their ancestors make their way through life. Tradition and cultural beliefs provided ways of making sense of what had happened to them, allowing a new world view to be constructed from the beliefs shattered during trauma.

With their acquisition of knowledge, sense of physical safety and feeling of belonging in supportive relationships the children felt more able to develop and use their own internal resources to better adapt to their world. This allowed them to feel more prepared and hopeful for the future. Being able to manage their emotions allowed the children to feel more in control and to believe they would be able to adapt effectively to future situations. They were able to use a variety of individual skills and attributes to maintain connection with others, express their emotions, reduce negative feelings and create positive ones. These individual resources allowed the children to think through problems creatively and construct realistic plans of action. This approach bolstered their confidence and ability to manage difficult situations and so maintained their hope for the future. Having these internal resources fostered a greater sense of agency, allowing the children to feel they had the ability to influence their current and future lives. This also fostered a greater sense of responsibility and desire to participate socially. The children were then able to give back to the communities and relationships that had supported them.

Finally, once an understanding of what had happened to them was developed and a process of personal growth started, the children were able to let go of painful feelings, such as anger and sadness, that were related to the traumatic experience. They could then develop acceptance for the situation, allowing them to move on with their lives.

This model proposes that within communities and cultures there is a repeating cycle. When children undergo distressing and traumatic events, the process of healing begins by finding a safe physical space. Here they can be helped within supportive relationships to make sense of what happened, develop a new world view and to process and manage their feelings. This post-traumatic growth allows the children to accept what happened, let go of distressing feelings and re-join their community. From here these stronger, more resilient, individuals are able to give back to the communities that supported them, potentially supporting future generations in their adult lives.

Discussion

This meta-ethnographic synthesis of 12 qualitative studies produced a model proposing a common process through which children develop resilience following distressing and traumatic events. This process consists of four elements: the surrounding context, social support and resources, personal resources, and moving forwards. The findings illustrate that although the journey towards developing resilience may be unique for each individual child there appears to be a common cross-cultural process underlying it. The four areas of the model developed by this synthesis suggest potential focal points for clinical and social interventions aimed at improving children's post-traumatic resilience, as well as for the development of relevant policy initiatives.

Strengths and Limitations

A strength of this synthesis was its focus on children's perspectives on what contributes to their resilience, rather than sourcing this information from adult observers. This allowed for the exploration of the meanings children had made and highlighted contributing factors to resilience that adults may have overlooked. Additionally, this vantage point allows for any psychosocial interventions developed from the findings to be presented in a manner more concordant with a child's world view.

A further strength was its use of studies situated in a variety of geopolitical and cultural contexts. This allowed the generation of a model suggesting a common cross-cultural process may underlie the development of resilience in children. Furthermore, this approach may allow for any practical implementations of the findings to be less limited to any one participant group than a single study typically allows.

Due to resource and time limitations only one researcher conducted the synthesis. As with any qualitative approach, the analysis is inevitably influenced by the subjective perspective of the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The use of a reflective journal (Appendix C) helped the researcher to maintain awareness of how their subjective perspective may have influenced the analysis. Furthermore, efforts were made to ensure the analysis process was well documented

for readers. Methodological rigour was enhanced through using a systematic and transparent approach, informed by Noblit and Hare's (1988) seven-step procedure.

The quality assessment was based on Atkins et al.'s (2008) adapted version of the CASP quality checklist. Currently there is a lack of rationale for the adaptations made by Atkins et al. (2008) and contemporary meta-ethnographic method does not provide guidance for the weighting of study contributions based on quality. The assessment of the included studies did suggest their quality varied widely and it is not clear what influence this may have had on the analysis or results. Studies aimed at improving quality assessment in qualitative syntheses is therefore recommended.

A potential limitation of meta-ethnographic method is the emphasis on producing a 'line of argument synthesis'. Though this approach appeared appropriate for the current meta-ethnography, making this standard practice may limit researchers' focus to the construction of a linear narrative. This in some cases may be artificial, obscuring other perspectives or more complex interlinking between concepts.

Finally, a limitation which is not limited to meta-ethnography is the general lack of weighting in qualitative syntheses. Little attention is given to the amount of participants within a particular study presenting a particular concept, nor to the differences in sample sizes between included studies. Thus, the included concepts tend to be presented with equal weighting. Key information regarding the relative importance of the concepts included in the synthesis is therefore lost.

The Current Study

The meta-ethnography presented above led to the development of a hypothetical model of the major contributing factors to children's resilience development following highly stressful events. Currently this model is only theoretical and has not been explored within the context of a primary study. Research thus far has also tended to focus on how children adapt to a single stressful or traumatic event rather than ongoing distressing situations.

It appears there would be value in conducting an in-depth exploration of the contributing factors to resilience development in children who successfully adapted to an ongoing distressing situation, including how well these factors map on to the model proposed above.

For ethical reasons, this would need to involve examining the impact of a historical situation that was highly distressing for children in an ongoing manner. As indicated in the meta-ethnography it would also be important that participants have had time to reflect and make sense of their experience. Examining the perspectives of ex-boarders who report having had a positive experience of boarding school, a chronic situation which is increasingly being recognised as having been highly distressing for many of those who attended (Schaverien, 2011), would fit these criteria. An examination of how these individuals resiliently adapted to this experience may shed light on internal and systemic contributors to children's resilience development more widely.

Considering the current long waiting lists for children's mental health services in the UK (Smith, Kyle, Daniel, & Hubbard, 2018). developing a greater understanding of what contributes to children's resilience may support the development of services, interventions, prevention initiatives and policies that improve children's mental health. Furthermore, if elements that were lacking from the experiences of adult ex-borders who were negatively impacted by boarding are identified, this study may suggest areas of focus for psychosocial interventions with this client group. Finally, communicating to schools the importance of any identified contributors to childhood resilience may give contemporary students a better chance of positive emotional development.

Research Aim

Therefore, this study has the following aim:

To explore the narratives of ex-boarders who describe having had a positive experience of boarding school.

Chapter 2: Method

This chapter discusses the theoretical underpinnings of the study. It provides a rationale for the choice of qualitative methodology and describes its conductance. The sample is described alongside the procedure for its recruitment and the manner in which data was collected. Ethical considerations and quality assurance are then discussed.

Theoretical Background

Quantitative and Qualitative Methodologies

Empirical research has for some time been divided into qualitative and quantitative methodologies, with more recent attempts to merge these as 'mixed-methods' (Braun & Clarke, 2013). A significant aspect of difference between these two major approaches is their typical reliance on discrete epistemological and ontological positions (Yanchar & Westerman, 2006).

Quantitative methodology is typically premised on a positivist epistemological stance, and the attempt to gain an objective understanding of reality. The assumption within positivist epistemologies is relevant knowledge can be gained through the use of experimental methodology to examine relationships between variables, with the belief this measures cause and effect (Robson, 2002). Quantitative research typically aims to construct statistical models which purport to explain what is being observed, with the aim of developing and classifying new constructs (Jones, 2002).

For some time a belief has held that quantitative approaches are more rigorous and robust than qualitative approaches, that their use of statistics allows findings to be more accurately replicated and generalised to wider populations (Boutilier, Rajkumar, Poland, Tobin, & Badgley, 2001). The popularity of this belief within the social sciences has led to the outcomes of quantitative studies being given greater weighting in the research literature than qualitative outcomes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This may be unfortunate, given arguments that the apparent generalisability of quantitative outcomes is often a false conclusion, failing to

sufficiently take into account aspects of social difference and differing perspectives on ontology (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Qualitative research methodologies provide robust, theoretically-informed frameworks allowing the in-depth exploration of subjective experiences in a manner not possible within quantitative methodologies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Authors such as Robson (2002) argue that it is not possible to know objective reality. Instead it is the role of the researcher to shed light on the multiple socially constructed (Burr, 2015) meanings that individuals make of their experiences. Thus, to understand a phenomenon it is essential to study it in its context (Robson, 2002). This approach is in sharp contrast to quantitative methodologies (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Many researchers have also noted that the increased flexibility of qualitative approaches allows for a greater range of real-world applications of the research findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Rational for a Qualitative Design

There are few published research papers examining the contributors to resilient adaptation to boarding school. The results of the above meta-ethnography demonstrated how wide the contributors to resilience can be, and how important not just the specific factor but the meaning made by the individual was to achieving a resilient outcome following highly stressful and traumatic events. As quantitative methodologies focus on trying to develop an understanding of a single 'objective reality' (Robson, 2002), their use would be inappropriate for trying to capture the many subjective and idiosyncratic meanings made by ex-boarders of their experiences, including those they feel contributed to their resilient adaptation to the boarding school environment. Instead a qualitative methodological design would be more suitable for achieving this aim (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Therefore, a qualitative methodology was chosen for this study, which allowed the development of an in-depth understanding of the factors ex-boarders felt contributed to their resilient adaptation to boarding school.

Epistemology and Ontology

Choosing an Approach to Knowledge and Reality

A positivist epistemology sees knowledge as fact-based and value-free (Sayer, 1999). This view emphasises the feasibility of measuring phenomena objectively, being able to control variables and predict outcomes. There is an emphasis on studying phenomena within the controlled environment of a laboratory (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001). However, understandings of knowledge acquisition become more complex and dynamic in social contexts where meaning-making and interactions between subjective perspectives lend an additional layer of hermeneutics to empirical research (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Thus, the validity of positivist epistemological stances are becoming increasingly questioned, especially where the research is conducted within social contexts (Robson, 2002).

Epistemological positions are often conceived of as being on a spectrum, with positivism on one end and relativism on the other. Within a relativistic approach there is no external and objective reality independent of the mind (Robson, 2002). Knowledge and knowledge-production is seen as being relative to context and so the search for a single truth is viewed as nonsensical. Instead the existence of multiple truths is posited. In line with this understanding, relativism does not view people as passive, simply moulded by the world, but as purposive agents that actively create their social realities. These social realities are constructed through encapsulating perception within language and exchanging differing views of reality through discourse (Robson, 2002).

In the centre of the spectrum between positivism and relativism is the epistemological position of critical realism. From the critical realist position reality and the knowledge individuals hold about reality are separate, as each person experiences different aspects of the whole. Critical realism therefore values the contributions different perspectives offer but recognises these provide only a partial account of a phenomenon (Joseph, 2004). Like relativism and in contrast to positivism, critical realism does not hold that one can ever achieve an objective view of reality. However, unlike relativism, critical realism does not view reality itself as socially constructed (Burr, 2015), but that individual's understandings of the reality 'out there' are socially constructed (Bhaskar, 2013).

Bhaskar (2013) highlights the intricate relationship between knowledge and reality. Therefore, gathering knowledge through empirical research without disclosing the researcher(s)' perspectives on reality has little meaning. The various epistemological and ontological positions are philosophical in nature (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Arguably therefore there is no one 'correct' position for any particular study. But it is the author's responsibility to declare the ontological and epistemological position they took in understanding the data, allowing the reader to make sense of the study in this context. For this project, the primary researcher held a critical realist position, meaning they held the assumption that there was or had been a reality 'out there' that ex-boarders described in their narratives, but that these narratives were only a partial, and socially influenced, perspective on a whole.

Research Methodology

The above literature review produced a hypothetical model positing a possible cross-cultural process through which children develop resilience and experience post-traumatic growth following traumatic and distressing events. There has been no previous research examining the experiences of those who recall having had an overall positive experience of boarding school. However, there has been substantial theoretical writing in the psychoanalytic field suggesting the boarding school experience is often traumatic (e.g. Schaverien, 2011). The current study aimed to fill this gap in the research literature and provide the opportunity for exploration of the validity of the hypothetic model. A qualitative methodology was chosen as these approaches are designed to develop richer and more in-depth insights into participants' experiences and meaning construction than quantitative methodologies (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Approaches to Qualitative Data Analysis

Many data analysis methodologies aim to develop thematic patterns from qualitative data. These include grounded theory (GT; Charmaz, 2014), interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith, Flower, & Larkin, 2009) and thematic analysis (TA; Braun & Clarke, 2021). The relative merits and drawbacks of these methodologies for analysing this study's data are discussed below.

IPA aligns to a phenomenological epistemology, meaning it focuses on developing understandings of individuals' subjective experiences in an attempt to gain an understanding of the target phenomenon (Smith, Flower, & Larkin, 2009). This approach was deemed to be less appropriate for this study due to its dual focus on both participants' individual characteristics and on patterns of meaning across participants (Smith, Flower, & Larkin, 2009). As there is a lack of previous research on positive experiences of boarding school, it was judged to be a better contribution to the research literature at this stage to utilise a larger sample and focus on thematic patterns across participants.

The aim of GT is to systematically examine qualitative data in a way that leads to the generation of a theoretical explanation of the phenomenon in question. (Charmaz, 2014). It does have the ability to provide detailed accounts of contextualised social processes (Charmaz, 2014), but its goal of theory production is not in line with the study aims. Similarly to the rationale against IPA use, the generation of explanatory theory would limit the development of a broader understanding, which is a more useful contribution to the evidence base at this stage where no previous research has been conducted on the topic.

Thematic Analysis

TA is a widely used methodology for analysing qualitative data. Its original version was developed by Braun and Clark in 2006 but was recently refined by these authors. The newer approach includes a greater emphasis on adopting a reflective stance throughout the process (Braun & Clarke, 2021). TA, unlike GT and IPA, has the advantage of not being fundamentally linked to a particular epistemological or ontological position. This means it can be applied in a manner that is congruent with the researcher's perspective on knowledge and reality, allowing a strong fit between the data analysis method and the author's worldview. Given TA methodology's more recent emphasis on the researcher adopting a reflective stance and systematically declaring arising biases throughout, it has become a particularly powerful way of analysing qualitative data in the necessarily subjective manner of all qualitative research, with the added transparency of allowing the reader to gain a view of how this subjectivity influenced the analysis and results (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Additionally, this focus on transparency allows other researchers to obtain a clearer view of the project's processes. This can be particularly helpful for those wishing to conduct related studies in future (Braun &

Clarke, 2021). The flexibility of epistemological and ontological approach allowed the author to conduct the study in line with a critical realist position.

The TA conducted in this study maintained coherence between its overall epistemology, ontology, methodology and data analysis. This allowed the study to develop a deep, meaningful and rich description of ex-boarders' perspectives on their time at boarding school, and what contributed to this being seen in a positive light (Patton, 2014). In line with Braun and Clark's (2021) approach, the analysis was data-driven, meaning it centred on each participant's idiosyncratic account of boarding school, rather than trying to create an objective account of the boarding experience. The analysis focused on content both at the semantic and latent levels. This meant it collected and analysed data both in the form of what was explicitly said and what was implicitly communicated by participants, providing a more holistic picture of the multiple layers of discourse (Braun & Clarke, 2021). As there is a lack of previous literature concerning positive experiences of boarding school, the TA took an inductive rather than deductive form, meaning data analysis was driven by the data content rather than being shaped by existing theoretical concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2021). To summarise, the TA took an inductive approach to data analysis, focusing at both the semantic and latent levels, and was underpinned by a critical realist ideology.

Participants

This study was part of a wider mixed-methods project with a sample of 26 participants. The wider project administered six additional survey questionnaires, the hospital anxiety and depression scale (HADS; Zigmond & Snaith, 1983), the experiences in close relationships questionnaire (ECR; Fraley, Heffernan, Vicary, & Brumbaugh, 2011), the Egna Minnen Beträffande Uppfostran questionnaire (EMBU; Muris, Meesters, & van Brakel, 2003), the childhood trauma questionnaire (CTQ; Bernstein, Fink, Handelsman, & Foote, 1998), the post-traumatic stress disorder checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5; Blevins, Weathers, Davis, Witte, & Domino, 2015) and the brief resilience scale (BRS; Smith et al., 2008). Individuals who participated in the research interviews of the current study were a self-selected sub-sample of this wider sample. The current study concerns the qualitative part of the project only. A purposive sampling strategy was used. This meant that those individuals who met the

inclusion criteria and were deemed likely to provide rich data for analysis were selected for participation (Patton, 2014).

Those that reported they had an overall positive experience of boarding school were selected for this study. 14 individuals gave consent and participated in the interviews out of the total sample of 26. This sample size is within the range commonly used in qualitative research as it allows the development of rich, nuanced and representative themes to be developed (Braun & Clarke, 2013). All included individuals gave informed consent to participate (The British Psychology Society, 2021; BPS; Appendix D).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Individuals whose English language ability was insufficient to allow them to fluently take part in an interview were not eligible for the study as the research team did not have access to translators. Failure to overcome researcher-participant language barriers can severely impact the credibility of qualitative research results (Squires, 2008).

As the study was focused on the perspectives of adults, all participants were over the age of 23, with no maximum age limit. The age of 23 was chosen to ensure participants had had enough time to reflect on their boarding school experience and any longer-term impact, including how they felt it may have impacted their further education or occupational life. No maximum age limit was set as claims on the impact of boarding schools (e.g. Schaverien, 2011) have referred to the influence of an ongoing institution, not events restricted to a particular time period. As there can be great variation in the emotional outcome of boarding schools in different countries (Mander & Lester, 2017; Mutluer et al., 2021) the participants were only those who had attended UK boarding schools.

Recruitment Procedure

To increase the likelihood of recruiting a representative sample (Braun & Clarke, 2013) a study advertisement poster (Appendix E) was circulated on social media platforms requesting potential participants follow a weblink to the participant information sheet, which provided a

description of the project (Appendix F), consent form (Appendix D) and online demographics questionnaire (Appendix G).

Participants were informed in the social media advert that they could close the webpage if they did not wish to complete the questionnaire. If they wished to complete the interview but not questionnaire they were provided with a researcher's contact details where they could arrange this. At the conclusion of the questionnaire potential participants were asked to indicate whether they wished to take part in an interview. The option to ask further details before consenting was included. Individuals potentially interested in participating further were asked to provide their contact details. A researcher then contacted these individuals to discuss interview participation and collected consent where appropriate. Potential participants were also provided with a researcher's contact details should they wish to make contact themselves.

As participants lived in many different geographical locations, all interviews were conducted via video conferencing software. Interview conductance via video conferencing software is rated as a highly effective and secure form of data collection by both researchers and participants (Archibald, Ambagtsheer, Casey, & Lawless, 2019).

Data Collection

To allow the study findings to be discussed in the context of the participants' demographics, allow readers to determine the potential transferability of the findings and allow comparisons to be made with previous research (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Hammer, 2011), participants completed a demographics questionnaire (Appendix G), collecting data on age, gender, cultural and ethnic background, relationship status, children, educational history and occupational history. These areas were selected as they commonly arise in literature related to boarding school syndrome (e.g. Schaverien, 2011) and adult wellbeing more generally (e.g. Dush & Amato, 2005).

The data were generated through 14 interviews. A topic guide, developed by the researchers, was used to facilitate the interviews (Figure 2.1.). The documented areas for investigation topic guides provide enhances the consistency of data collection and ensures relevant issues

are systematically covered, whilst allowing the researcher to flexibility pursue idiosyncratic detail from participants (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013).

The topic guide was developed based on literature relevant to the impact of boarding school on wellbeing and the experience of three previous boarders in the research team. This ensured that the data collection was not unduly influenced by the research team's agenda, but was sufficiently informed from an experiential perspective, and relevant topic areas determined the direction of enquiry during interviews. It included five topic areas. Each topic included prompt suggestions and directions for exploration. Open-ended, neutral prompts (e.g. "Can you tell me more about that?") were also used to facilitate the interviews whilst minimising the influence of the researcher (Ritchie et al., 2013).

Positive Experiences of Boarding Topic Guide

- School context/background
  - location, when & why, did they want to go
  - how they found school
  - key positive/negative aspects of school they remember

- Family background/relationships in family (as a child)
  - prior to going to BS
  - while at school
    - did relationships change? How?
    - how was contact with/support from family (enough/not enough)

- Current context – work/family/relationships (how do they characterise their current wellbeing/happiness)
  - how do they relate current wellbeing to school life
  - how do they relate current wellbeing to early family life

- Resilience
  - thoughts on own resilience/where does this come from (e.g. school/family/other?)

- o if do not describe themselves as resilient – any thoughts on why not
- o any other particular personal strengths/characteristics they think come from having gone to boarding school

- Looking back
  - o pleased to have gone? Regrets?
  - o would they send own children?

Figure 2.1. Topic Guide

Method of Data Analysis

The data gathered via interviews were transcribed, coded, and analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The data analysis methodology employed was Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021), which develops, organises, analyses and reports themes within a qualitative framework (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Spiers & Riley, 2018). This analysis method was chosen as it is widely used, theoretically flexible, offers a wide breadth of analysis and provides rich, detailed account of the data. Thematic Analysis can also provide pragmatic findings that have the potential to inform clinical intervention and policy development (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Spiers & Riley, 2018).

Thematic Analysis

The Thematic Analysis followed six phases in a recursive manner to develop an understanding of the experiences of ex-boarders who reported a positive experience of boarding school (Cooper et al., 2012).

Phase One: Familiarising Yourself with the Data

Immersion with the data began during the transcription process. Each transcript was read multiple times to familiarise the researcher with the content. Initial ideas for potential codes and themes were noted during this process (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Phase Two: Generating Initial Codes

In this phase initial codes were generated from the data. These were the 'building blocks' of the analysis, where data potentially relevant to the research question were identified and labelled (Cooper et al., 2012). These were then organised into meaningful groups, developed and refined (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Coding was conducted systematically throughout the dataset. As the analysis was data-driven, the codes were derived from the data rather than pre-existing theory (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

To support the management of the large amount of qualitative data, improve efficiency, flexibility and validity, the software programme NVivo (QSR International, 2021) was used to organise the coding and later theme development process (John & Johnson, 2000).

Phase Three: Searching for Themes

Next, codes were organised into initial themes within NVivo, with all coded extracts being collated within these themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). During this process the researcher remained mindful of potential relationships between codes, themes and levels of themes (Cooper et al., 2012).

To limit bias and increase the credibility of both the data collection and analysis (Smith, 2006), a reflective journal of the researcher's decision-making processes and reflections was kept (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This detailed the author's presuppositions and the potential influence of these on the research process (Appendix C).

The reflective journal covered the author's thoughts on how the division of labour in the research team may have impacted each researcher's perspectives on the data, how the researchers' educational history may have affected their interactions with participants and with the data, and the possible impact of the shifting external socio-cultural context. The professional backgrounds and social graces (Burnham, 2018) of the researchers are also

considered, including how these may have impacted researcher-participant dynamics and understanding of the data. Finally, the use of video-conferencing software for data collection, and the necessarily idiosyncratic selection of theoretical lenses for interpretation is reflected upon, including how the resulting outcome may influence inter and intra systemic change. These areas are discussed in greater depth in the discussion section.

Phase Four: Reviewing Themes

In this phase the themes were refined. Patton's (2002) concepts of 'Internal Homogeneity' and 'External Heterogeneity' (i.e. that data within themes should meaningfully cohere and there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes) were used to review the collated extracts for each theme, thus ensuring they formed a coherent pattern. Next, the validity of each theme in relation to the entire dataset was examined. Data that had not been included within appropriate themes in previous stages were then added (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Phase Five: Defining and Naming Themes

Each theme was further defined by determining what aspect of the data it captured and constructing encapsulating theme names. Subthemes were developed, named and defined within each main theme where appropriate, and a table of themes drawn up (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Phase Six: Producing the Report

The findings were written up into a report. Here each theme was presented, supported by data extracts indicating its prevalence within the data. Areas of similarity, contradiction and difference within the dataset where then discussed in the context of previous research literature (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the University of Essex Ethics Committee prior to data collection (Appendix H).

Informed Consent

Participants were informed about the study's purpose and procedure, the possible disadvantages, risks and benefits of participation, the information which would be collected, the data storage and confidentiality arrangements, and what would happen to the research results via the participant information sheet (Appendix F). Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. Written informed consent was collected from all interested and eligible participants via a participant consent form (Appendix D) prior to starting data collection.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The confidentiality of all participants and their social circles was maintained throughout via anonymisation and secure storage of the data. The data was accessible only to the members of the research team. Each participant was allocated a reference code which preceded the audio recording of their interview to avoid these being identifiable by name. Audio recordings were initially stored on a password-protected digital recorder before being uploaded to a password-protected cloud file on the University of Essex computer network. At this point the recordings were deleted from the recorder. All information was kept in a digital format within the password-protected cloud file. This included audio recordings, completed forms and questionnaires, interview transcripts and a participant reference code list.

Transcription of the recordings was conducted by a third-party professional transcription service operating under strict confidentiality agreements. The interview transcripts were anonymised by replacing identifiable information, such as names and places, with pseudonyms. Additionally, care was taken when selecting longer interview excerpts during the reporting of the findings that these maintained the anonymity of the participant and their social circle.

Participant Safety

Research interviews can involve discussion of sensitive topics that have the potential to provoke emotional responses in participants (Richards & Schwartz, 2002). To mitigate the risk of distress the information sheet (Appendix F) made participants aware of this. It also informed them that participation in the study was voluntary and they could withdraw at any point, without penalty or needing to provide a reason. Participants were also given details of supportive organisations they could access.

In line with BPS (2021) guidelines on ethical research conductance, following the interview participants were given the opportunity to ask questions, and a debrief and brief summary of the study was offered. Participants were informed that if they expressed significant emotional distress the principal investigator would stop the interview. It was explained that if they disclosed information which suggested they could be a risk to themselves or others then steps would be taken to maintain safety, including relevant information being discussed with appropriate professionals (e.g. their GP) where necessary. No such difficulties were encountered during data collection and none of the participants requested a debrief.

Researcher Safety

All interviews were conducted via video-conferencing software. Another member of the research team was always available if required.

Quality Assurance

The quality of research is important if it is to inform clinical practice (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Indeed, for qualitative research to have practical use, the quality of the study must be legitimised by criteria that are meaningful for the individuals that the research is intended to benefit, whether that be clients, policy makers or health professionals (Yardley, 2000). For this reason, Yardley's (2000) qualitative research evaluation criteria were used to guide this

study as these are open, flexible and theoretically 'neutral' (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Each of the four criteria are discussed in more detail below.

Sensitivity to Context

The researcher remained sensitive to context by holding participants' socio-cultural environments in mind during data analysis. They held the study design and findings in the context of the relevant theoretical understandings of previous investigators (Yardley, 2000) and endeavoured to remain open to alternate interpretations of the data outside of the researcher's subjective perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In addition, the study was grounded in the philosophical tenets of the theory underlying thematic analysis and while theory naturally influenced the interpretation of the data, the researcher ensured the analysis also remained sensitive to the content of the data itself. Thus, theoretical predictions and discriminations were corroborated with empirical evidence and unexpected findings that conflicted with the researcher's understanding of the topic were actively sought and accounted for (Yardley, 2000).

Commitment and Rigour

Commitment and rigour were demonstrated through thoroughness of data collection, adherence to the methodology, and the researcher's in-depth engagement with the topic and the data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Yardley, 2000). Rigour was further demonstrated through gathering a sample that supplied sufficient data for a comprehensive analysis (Yardley, 2000). In addition, Braun and Clark's (2021) 15-point criteria checklist was used to ensure the quality of the thematic analysis conductance.

Some previous authors (e.g. Lincoln & Guba, 1985) recommend 'member checks' to avoid data misrepresentation. Here the study results are evaluated by either the participants or members of the same research population. However, this method holds the implicit assumption that there is one reality that can be accounted for by the researcher and confirmed by those in the population group and so is based on a positivist epistemology (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This

study's epistemological position centred on critical realism, where individuals are seen as experiencing differing aspects of reality and thus can only provide a partial account of any phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Therefore, any refutations to the study findings would create an impossible bind regarding whose partial account of the phenomenon should be given more weight by the researcher. This may place the researcher in an inappropriate position of power (Foucault, 2019), especially considering the potential for research findings to influence policy development and clinical practice (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In addition, although narratives often do relate to wider social processes, individual narratives shape and are shaped by the context they are produced in (De Fina, 2008). Participants re-considering their narratives from a new contextual position are therefore likely to understand the content in a new way that does not necessarily invalidate their initial perspective. For these reasons, member checking was not used in this study.

Transparency and Coherence

Maintaining transparency was important as this allowed the decision-making process throughout the research to be auditable by the reader (Yardley, 2000). Coherence and transparency were demonstrated by striving to maintain clarity in the analysis; maintaining an appropriate fit between the research aims, theoretical framework and data analysis methodology; providing a transparent account of the methodology, data collection and analysis, including the presentation of data extracts; and by making the data available to other analysts (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Yardley, 2000).

Transparency was also demonstrated by disclosing the researcher's reflections regarding how their assumptions, intentions and actions may have affected the research, including the experiences and motivations that led the researcher to undertake this particular study and consideration of how the research was influenced by external pressures and constraints (Yardley, 2000).

The author of this paper joined the research team after data had been collected and so did not conduct the participant interviews. This task was undertaken by two other members of the team. Both were female clinical psychologists with experience administering qualitative interviews. One researcher had attended boarding school, the other had not. The author of the

current paper did not attend boarding school. All researchers endeavoured to remain mindful of any preconceived beliefs they had developed regarding the boarding school experience throughout the data collection and analysis (Yardley, 2000). A topic guide was used to maintain some uniformity in concepts examined during interviews (Ritchie et al., 2013). The researchers remained mindful of their relative power as clinical psychologists during the interviews (Yardley, 2000) and how their experiences as clinicians may have influenced their interpretation of, and response to, participants' narratives (Thompson & Russo, 2011). The researchers also strived to ensure participants were aware of their non-interventionist role as a researcher, to avoid expectation of therapeutic intervention (Thompson & Russo, 2011).

Thematic Analysis is itself a systematic and transparent methodology (Cooper et al., 2012) and its application in this study was grounded in an epistemological position in line with the research aims. This minimised the likelihood of data misinterpretations (Yardley, 2000). To further enhance transparency, evidence of decision-making made throughout the research was kept, offering an audit trail of the research conductance (Yardley, 2000).

Impact and Importance

If it is to have any real-world significance, it is essential to evaluate the usefulness and potential impact of research (Yardley, 2000). The results of this project may be practically applicable both to policy makers and professionals working within educational departments and children's mental health services. It may also suggest avenues of intervention for adults suffering the aftermath of traumatic events, including ex-boarders. This study has the potential to have a positive socio-cultural impact if it contributes to social change for boarders or for other children facing highly distressing events (Yardley, 2000). For example through contributing to changes in boarding school environments or to the development of cultural perspectives on trauma. The study also adds to theoretical understandings of resilience, happiness and the impact of boarding school in the research literature.

Chapter 3: Results

This chapter presents the findings of the study. It introduces each of the themes developed and provides a summary of each major theme, indicating its scope and boundaries. The

themes are then discussed in detail, presenting the concepts held within and giving examples of their presence within the primary data. The study sample can be situated using Table 3.1.

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

Table 3.1.

Participant Demographics

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Relationship Status	Children	Age Started Boarding	Highest Qualification	Current Occupation	Parental Boarding History	Ethnicity
Rupert	Male	59	Married	6	ND	Degree	Company owner	Neither attended	White British
Jenny	Female	69	Married	5	13	A Level	Retired	Neither attended	White British
Elizabeth	Female	45	Co-habiting	0	11	PhD	University Professor	Neither attended	Other
David	Male	29	Married	0	8	Degree	Insurance Broker	Both attended	White British
Jay	Male	28	Co-habiting	0	8	Degree	Marketing	Neither attended	White British

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

Richard	Male	58	Married	3	11	A Level	Energy Company Director	Neither attended	White British
Suzanna	Female	60	Married	1	11	Degree	Museum Development	Both attended	White British
Andrew	Male	78	Married	3	13	Masters	Retired	Neither attended	White British
Georgia	Female	57	Married	3	11	Degree	Charity Fundraising and Development Manager	Both Attended	White British
Michael	Male	85	Married	4	6	A Level	Retired	Both Attended	White British
Rachel	Female	54	Married	3	8	Masters	Counsellor	Father Attended	White British
Daniel	Male	53	Married	3	ND	Masters	Retired	Father Attended	White British

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

Robert	Male	28	Married	0	10	Degree	Media Production Manager	Neither Attended	White British
Penelope	Female	65	Married	4	5	Masters	Psychologist	Neither Attended	White British

N.B. **ND = no data**

Study Sample

The sample was comprised of 14 ex-boarders who self-identified as having had a positive experience at boarding school. Participants' ages ranged between 28 and 85, with a mean age of 55. Eight participants were male, six female. All but one participant were from a White British background. Twelve participants were married and two co-habiting. The age of first starting boarding ranged between 5 and 13, with a mean starting age of 10.

Findings

Four main themes were identified, and nine sub-themes. These were collated and ordered to try to develop an understanding of the common factors that may have contributed to participants recalling their time at boarding school as being a positive experience. Each theme and sub-theme is presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2.

Themes and Sub-themes

Theme	Sub-themes
1. Family Relationships: Contrasting Perspectives	Escape from the Family
	Valuing Contact and Support from Family
2. Having Power, Control and Making the Choice to Board	
3. Development of Interpersonal Skills and Individual Strengths	Extra-curricular Activities Build Confidence and Individual Strengths
	School Values, Culture and Environment
	Living with Others Strengthens Social Skills

	Importance of Personality Fit with Boarding School
	Maintaining Friendships after Boarding School
4. Developing Life-long Resilience and Independence	Instilling of Responsibility, Resilience, Confidence and Determination
	Transition to Adulthood and Parenthood

Theme One: Family Relationships: Contrasting Perspectives

This theme encapsulates how the boarders' family backgrounds influenced their boarding experience. For some boarding provided the chance to escape from difficult family environments. For others, boarding school presented the opportunity for parents to demonstrate how much they cared. Where parents were unable to visit as much as boarders may have liked, many were still able to hold an understanding of this which maintained the belief that they were loved.

Escape from the Family

Many participants described growing up in families characterised by relational patterns they found difficult to cope with. The dynamics of each family differed but crucially did not seem to suit the temperament of the respondent. For Rachel her strict family context where feelings could only rarely be spoken about conflicted with her natural curiosity and desire to express herself.

> *It was also quite old fashioned in the stiff upper lippy type sense, you didn't talk about your feelings much and as long as you did what you were supposed to do, everything was fine but if you stepped out of line there was my mother's wrath on you. (Rachel)*

For Georgia, her ability to experience and express 'negative' feelings was compromised in her family home meaning there were only certain aspects of herself she was able to embody there.

> *For my parents the idea of sort of being depressed or upset or under the weather was not something they could really tolerate for very long. (Georgia)*

It was palpable in many respondents' narratives how desperate they were to escape from the scenarios they faced in their families of origin.

> *My parents were dysfunctional, they argued all the time. Psychologists would have a great ball with my parents, because, no, there was shouting matches every single day. I mean just, just nothing enjoyable about that. (Rupert)*

> *My father worked away. My mother was depressed for quite a lot of the time, and I think an alcoholic looking back on it. (Michael)*

It was boarding school that gave these individuals the opportunity to escape from the elements of their family lives that were making them unhappy.

> *In my case, it gave me an opportunity to opt out. It was fine, it gave me that choice, and I took it. (Rupert)*

For those who had had a difficult upbringing boarding school was often able to provide what was not received at home. These borders were often able to form relationships with staff members who could fulfil a more nurturing parental role. These participants often felt school was better than their home life.

> *At least when I was at school I could be more myself, whereas you know, and be silly and whatever it was. I had more freedom from her judgement whereas if I'd been at home... It allowed me to escape from it and go off and do things that my parents sort*

of wouldn't have approved of. She wanted me to marry a doctor or live just down the road. (Rachel)

For many participants boarding school provided the stability and consistency that had been missing from their early lives. It provided a stable base for much of their formative years. Rachel described how it was the certainty of this stable base that allowed her to explore, grow and develop.

Going to boarding school gave me that sort of solid base that I knew I was going to be there for four years and that allowed me to develop my sense of independence and confidence. (Rachel)

It was clear how much Penelope valued the stability that boarding school provided her having not experienced this in her early years.

There was going to be stability. My life had been totally unstable. I'd been, on one or two occasions, in care. So it had been a completely chaotic life. We're talking about a time where the formulisation of care wasn't quite the same as it is today. So my mother basically would pick the best person she thought she knew who could look after me for school holidays or whatever, and that's where I would be. So this offered an opportunity of much more consistency in my life and I was aware of that even at that age. It gave everything that was missing. (Penelope)

Valuing Contact and Support from Family

Some participants described having experienced what they considered to be "normal" childhoods. They defined this as having had home lives where they generally felt happy and where they enjoyed warm and supportive relationships with their parents and other family members.

We had fun as a family, I'd say. My mum used to take us down to the beach in the summer and stay on the beach with us. It was good. We had lots of open, noisy discussions around the dinner table. (Andrew)

For some, being at boarding school was an opportunity for parents to show how much they cared, through the effort they were willing to put in to support them.

I think there were two days at the beginning when I was crying non-stop, well I say non-stop, every opportunity I got. I think my mum came back to visit two weeks after I started. She stayed in the UK to make sure I was okay. (Robert)

Many participants attended boarding school at a time when the only realistically available medium for staying in contact with family members was writing and receiving letters. For many these letters allowed participants to continue to feel connected with their family whilst they were away.

A letter was a big thing, you know, they'd be handed out every morning and you'd just be absolutely hanging out for your name to be called out when the letters were handed out. (Georgia)

For those who felt they had escaped from unhappy family situations to boarding school they reported not being particularly impacted by the times their family members didn't visit. This was something they had come to expect and had already learned to cope with.

I did start playing in the First Eleven when I was quite young, and I scored the most goals in the first season. My mother could have come to watch. It would have only taken her an hour and a half to get to Ardingly, but it never happened. It didn't bother me, funnily enough. I never thought about it. (Andrew)

Participants were also able to rationalise those times that their parents were not able to visit them or where contact with them was limited. This was often with regards to the cost.

When it came to things like sports days, events during the term time, there are only a handful that my mum ever came over to. Again, they were very expensive flights, how

> *long she staying for, what else is there to do? I never felt hard done by or abandoned or put aside by that. (Robert)*

For some, even though their family members were not able to visit much in-person, they still *felt* supported by their family throughout boarding school as they believed their parents had sent them to boarding school out of love and for their best interests.

> *I always felt that I was being supported, I had the back-up of them when I was at home. I think they were trying to make me as independent as possible. I always felt supported through the process. (Richard)*

Many respondents' parents did make extraordinary efforts to stay in contact with their child(ren). They would travel long distances to see them, take them for trips out or do their utmost to visit each weekend.

> *My mother wrote me a letter every day, but we also actually went home every weekend, so my mother learnt to drive just from home to school and back, and she clutched the steering wheel and… just did that. (Elizabeth)*

> *My parents always came to pick me up, you know, for all those holidays. So even though it's a long trek back up to Yorkshire they'd come and get me after congregation practice on Saturday and then poor dad would have to drive me all the way back on Sunday evening. (Georgia)*

Theme Two: Having Power, Control and Making the Choice to Board

This theme encapsulates the various domains of choice, control and influence that the boarder was able to have over whether and where they were to board. It explores the reasons given by those who described wanting to attend boarding school. It examines how having the ability to make choices influenced how boarders felt about their experience, and the impact parents had on this. Finally, the effects of starting age and family tradition are explored.

Many participants described having wanted to attend boarding school and having made the choice to go themselves. There was often a social element to this. For example, Jenny described how she felt envious of the experiences she imagined her siblings were having at boarding school.

> *I said to my parents, 'I don't see why I should be staying here when my brothers are going to England with double-decker buses and chocolates and sweets and I'm stuck here!' [Laugh]. So, in the end, they said, 'Well, if that's what you want to do and go overseas, to boarding school, we will do that'. (Jenny)*

For Jay, though there may have been reduced familial contact, he wanted to attend boarding school to stay connected with his friends.

> *Yeah, it was my decision really. I was really keen on doing it because the school that I was at originally you could do either day or board, and a lot of my friends were boarding so I wanted to be with them. (Jay)*

Others wanted to attend boarding school due to their holding slightly romanticised fantasies about what boarding school would be like. These were often based on depictions in then contemporary popular media.

> *I was very influenced by Enid Blyton, the books on boarding schools, and I really wanted to go. (Georgia)*

Others, like Rachel, wanted to attend boarding school to escape the instability they had experienced in their early lives.

> *Apparently I asked to go away to boarding school, but I wouldn't be surprised if I did because I knew we were going to be moving again. So when I was eight I went to a boarding school. Yes, so I kind of went with the sense that this is what I wanted to do because at least school wouldn't change. (Rachel)*

Whether the respondents had had the ability to choose which boarding school they wanted to attend varied widely. Many had not been given the choice and boarding school was simply

something that happened to them, outside of their control. In her description below Suzanna appears to minimise the emotional impact this likely had on her younger self.

> *You didn't go and visit or anything, you just got left there. Which was a bit of a shock I have to say [Laughs]. (Suzanna)*

However, some participants had been able to visit potential schools and choose the one they wanted to attend. This was important as having been given this element of autonomy and control appeared to influence whether participants wanted to go to boarding school and how they felt about going there.

> *I did a trial weekend and loved it and then said basically that I want to do that. We looked around. It was my decision. But we looked around I think three or four different schools. And I just really loved the one at xxx, I thought it was fantastic, I could really see myself there. I just remember absolutely loving it, just saying that's definitely where I want to go. I got to choose it, it was my decision, so I was happy with my decision and excited about it. I'm not sure I would have been happy if my parents had just said you're going there, off you go, bye-bye. (Jay)*

If the choice to attend boarding school was made for the participant by their parent(s) without their being involved in the decision then the reasons parents gave for this and how persuasive they were was important. For example, Robert felt the choice had been made for his benefit, to provide stability, and so he continued to feel positively towards, and supported by, his parents.

> *We were moving around a lot when I was younger. Every two to three years in different countries, mostly around Africa but other continents as well. My parents thought it would be a good idea for me to have stable base for my senior year particularly when it came to things like senior exams. So, I think my parents mainly wanted me to have a stable base for getting qualifications. (Robert)*

However, some participants, like Andrew, felt the decision for them to attend boarding school was made more for their parents' benefit than their own. The reason often given was to allow parents to complete their work. Andrew's discussion of this demonstrates participants'

tendency not to voice ill feelings towards their parents and to not comment much on the subject.

> *He was an entrepreneurial man, so while he was flying, he was also running businesses, and I think perhaps he felt he would have more time for his businesses while we were away at school. (Andrew)*

Attending boarding school was often part of a long family tradition. Participants spoke about the pressure they felt to maintain this and the sense of guilt for failing their family lineage they would feel should they not comply. Interestingly, participants did not speak of any sense of pride, or either familial or historical inclusion by being part of this process. Jay richly described the pressure this rational for attendance could place on a child and appears to be implicitly communicating that he was not particularly convinced of its value as a reason for attendance.

> *Some of the people I know, they've got rich history of their family always going to the same school, at which point the choice is pretty much taken away from them. So, a couple of people I know, their father was at the boarding house they were in, and their grandfather was also there, and it just goes back and back. So, I'm pretty sure that was a foregone conclusion that they were going to have to end up going to the school whether or not they wanted to or whether or not they felt it was right. (Jay)*

Many participants started boarding around the ages of 11 to 14. Participants spoke of feeling by that time in their lives they had developed sufficient maturity to be able to handle the transition to boarding school life well.

> *When I was just turning 11 my father decided to go back to xxx for a year to practise, and my mother worked in xxx and doesn't really drive, so it became logistically impractical for us to stay in day school. Plus, we both played the piano and the violin, and our piano and violin teachers both taught at xxx, and we'd met a lot of their pupils already, and we were very impressed with them. It was very important to me to keep having the same piano teacher, so that was the only school that we would consider boarding at, and because it was near enough home, it wasn't too big a deal. (Elizabeth)*

Theme Three: Development of Interpersonal Skills and Individual Strengths

This theme encapsulates how the boarding school environment affected the development of the boarders' social skills and individual strengths. It explores the impact of the relative freedom and wide array of extra-curricular activities on boarders' social and personal development. The importance of the fit between the individual boarder's temperament and the school environment is considered. Finally, the influence of the multiple opportunities and ongoing contact with other boarders on the building of close friendships is examined.

Extra-curricular Activities Build Confidence and Individual Strengths

Participants spoke of how their boarding schools had helped them to identify what they enjoyed and were good at and supported them to develop these areas, allowing them to build confidence.

> *The focus on the individual students and finding their passions and their interests and helping them explore those, whatever they were was excellent. This focus on the whole person was excellent. (Daniel)*

Jay describes the sense of freedom this provided to explore who you are, what matters to you and where you excel.

> *It was that same sense of you can… Not do what you want, but there was opportunity there to do what you want, everything was there, sport, literally anything. My mate built a car in his spare time there. Loads of opportunities to do the things that you're interested in. I was in a band at the time, which was encouraged, and you could do that, concerts put on all the time. Yeah, it was just a really broad spectrum of opportunity and things that you could do. (Jay)*

Participants spoke of the importance of sports in particular not just for exploring their own interests but for achieving peer acceptance, social status and avoiding persecution from other boarders. Sports were also often highly valued by the schools themselves.

> *Games and sports were everything, even back in those days. I was quite good at them so that meant I never experienced any bullying or pressure really. Now I look back, I sailed through it. (Michael)*

Many participants described enjoying being in positions of social power and status at boarding school. These positions included being captain of athletics teams, being a head of house and being head boy.

> *I quite enjoyed playing lacrosse and hockey and tennis, and I was in fact quite good at swimming. Obviously, living in xxx, I ended up being Swimming Captain. (Jenny)*

Being given these positions of responsibility and power gave the boarders a taste of these roles. They were one of the factors that prepared them for taking up similar roles upon graduation.

> *I wanted to be head boy at school of course, and naturally was. Then I wanted to be head boy when I came out of school. (Michael)*

Sometimes the boarding schools' focus on fostering individual strengths could arguably go too far.

> *I was in the rugby team but not by choice. I was put in one of the rugby teams fairly early on. I had never played rugby and I remember not being given any instruction. The school had a policy, it's changed now, they had a policy where if you were good enough to play rugby and you were put on the teams, you had to play it. It wasn't optional and I remember just having to ask my teammates where I was meant to stand and what I was meant to do because no one thought to explain the rules to an international student because it's England everyone knows rugby. (Robert)*

Perhaps due to the nature of their schools many participants boarded with very talented peers, including those who would later go on to achieve celebrity status. This suggests the environments of these schools were conducive to this type of development and may well have

helped boarders to develop strong talents of their own, including through being in close contact with other talented individuals.

> *We had a lot of artists and, and you know famous… xxx was with us, for example. We got a lot of actors, actresses, artists, erm, xxx, he was my friend, erm making cigar boxes, and all this kind of stuff. (Rupert)*

A common element of boarding school life that participants spoke of was the completion of chores. This was often seen positively, as something that built character and kept boarders grounded. Participants often expressed pride in themselves for having gotten involved in these.

> *You were made to, which I think was a good thing, everyone had to take turns cleaning the common room or filling up hot water bottles or whatever. They always gave us kind of chores, tasks, at the weekend. I think that was quite good for us all. So, nobody felt they were above doing anything menial because they were rotated around. So, I think that was a good thing. (Richard)*

Participants spoke of the many extra-curricular activities they could participate in at boarding school and the sense of opportunity these provided. These activities allowed boarders to follow their interests, build confidence and provided the chance to become well-rounded individuals.

> *When I was at school, I did everything, I was one of those. I did everything, I was an academic scholar and a music scholar, and I also was a prefect, and I did all of the Duke of Edinburgh awards. I did everything except sport, I didn't do any sport. I ran house events, I wrote music… I did all of the things. (Elizabeth)*

Boarding schools often took non-mainstream approaches. These allowed the participants to flourish, achieve and gain a sense of personal value. Rupert describes how he appreciated the unconventional approach his school took to education.

> *They built farms out of cow shit, and things like that, you know, I mean it's that kind of place. You know? You know, build buildings as they used to build them in stone age*

> *times. They had ducks, geese, donkeys, God knows what - I mean they had a*
> *farm! (Rupert)*

Elizabeth particularly enjoyed the times when her boarding house came together for
activities. Projects such as these were particularly fertile ground for learning to work well
with others and take responsibility.

> *Things like the house music and the house drama and these things where girls came*
> *together without teachers and ran their own thing, so that they could have practise at*
> *running a little community, or running an event, or taking responsibility for things.*
> *(Elizabeth)*

An important aspect boarders spoke of was the school having had the facilities to allow them
to pursue the extra-curricular interests which shaped their self-esteem, self-efficacy and
autonomy. These included cutting-edge sports facilities, theatres, arts centres, pools and
science labs. Penelope spoke of the implicit pressure she felt to do well due to the
opportunities offered and their removal of obstacles and excuses.

> *You know, it's not just the academic… Part of me feels kind of wrong, but it's the pure*
> *facilities, the pure opportunities you get. They've got no excuse but to get on with it*
> *and do well, really. (Penelope)*

Boarders spoke of the physical grounds allowing them to pursue the interests that had
meaning for them, supporting their development into well-rounded confident individuals.
Georgia describes how the countryside of her boarding school allowed her to pursue her
deeply valued personal interests and acted as a site for the development of important
relationships.

> *There was lots of countryside around and actually I did used to go running on my*
> *own off into the countryside. I was a long-distance runner and I remember loving*
> *that. I used to go with friends at the weekend. We'd walk out into the fields and you*
> *know sort of go roaming and exploring, but as we got older yeah I guess… Although*
> *with my boyfriend, we did, we used to go and meet at xxx reservoir and go on long*

> *walks together. And you know we'd go off on our bikes and have you know lovely*
> *days out together. (Georgia)*

School Values, Culture and Environment

Participants spoke of their tending to be a lack of pastoral care at boarding school, creating a 'survival of the fittest' context. Whether or not they received support was based on whether they had developed a particular relationship with a member of staff. The juxtaposition between Rachel and Jenny's experiences illustrates this well.

> *Very often, I was with my housemistress in tears and she always said 'oh, cry-baby,*
> *cry-baby, cry-baby'. (Jenny)*

> *We had a really, really good housemistress there, she was fantastic, very firm but fair*
> *and funny, you know she was a very sort of nice person. She sort of kept an eye out for*
> *me. (Rachel)*

Participants often thought of themselves as self-reliant and described how this was something they had had to develop as their parents were far away and they effectively felt they had to deal with things alone. Becoming more resilient was intimately linked with the sense of becoming more independent.

> *We would just be figuring it out for ourselves, you don't have to rely on other people,*
> *so it's really taking responsibility for your day-to-day life without having to then get*
> *some parent to come and pick you up or figure out how you're going to get from A to*
> *B. It was really important I think for becoming a responsible adult contributing to a*
> *community. (Elizabeth)*

Many participants described boarding school as not particularly restricting. They were environments that created the space for boarders to develop in their own way towards their full potential.

> *The bedrooms were really nice, they said you can make it your own, bring your own*
> *stuff, whatever you want to bring with you. I'm quite a homemaker, I like to have my*

things with me. I'm a bit of a techy and all that sort of stuff, so I was like I can bring a
stereo, I can bring this, this just sounds brilliant. (Jay)

Though boarders often enjoyed the freedom and independence they were granted at boarding school there were some downsides to this. Rupert describes the potential impact if one didn't have a strong internal motivation to study.

I didn't study and there was nobody to make you study. There's that lack of framework that you would get in a home environment with the parents peering over your shoulder. Erm, you know, you would get some form of you, erm, it doesn't have to be pressure it can just be some form of guide rails. I had no guidance, there was no career guidance there. Erm, there was no parental guidance, because they weren't there, so, you just kind of, in my case, you were just an unguided missile. (Rupert)

Several boarders spoke of not doing as well as they'd hoped academically. They often felt that the lack of regimented structure and external scaffolding played a part in this.

I didn't do great academically. I didn't do terribly but I didn't do certainly as good as I would have if I'd had a more focused structure in place to revise for exams. That's certainly somewhere where boarding school is a lot more regimented suffers a little bit. You're given a lot of freedom, particularly on study leave where you're revising for exams and things like that. But if you're not a particularly motivated or regimented person, which at that age I wasn't because of too many distractions, you might not be revising as much or be taking homework as seriously as you should. (Robert)

The specific values of each boarding school differed but boarders spoke of those that were chosen as being particularly enforced and prominent in the boarding school environment.

The school that I was at, you were expected to achieve, you were expected to do well at the things you do. And I definitely think that has rubbed off on me. I'm not somebody who thinks I'll just do this half-hearted and get it done. Which I think was definitely from school I think they definitely push you down a route of you need to achieve. And they'll help you do it for sure, but there wasn't really an opportunity

where you can't not achieve, that's not an option. So, I think I've definitely taken that forward into my work life and the life I live now. (Jay)

For Elizabeth, her boarding school emphasised the importance of community as a value and its social importance. Again, she had internalised this and taken it forward into her adult life.

I think it's not that I contribute to a community despite my education, it's that specifically my education taught me that and gave me those values, because I think that I have those values more than my parents do, which I think shows that when you have slightly different values from your parents, some of it must be attributed to your education, and I can trace it very specifically. The things that were most celebrated were the contributions to the house community, that it wasn't getting a whole load of A's. I think that the people who got a whole load of A's but didn't contribute anything to the community were just a bit boring. They weren't really the people who were involved with things, whereas contributing to the house, to becoming a prefect, that kind of thing, becoming a head of house, those were the things that were, I think, made for students who were really looked up to. I think that was the most appreciated thing. (Elizabeth)

Many of the female boarders who attended single-sex schools deeply valued having grown up with their female peers. This often meant they were not exposed to, and so had not internalised, the kind of gender stereotypes that their non-boarder peers had often taken in.

The thing that was really important was that being at a girls' school meant that I never was subject to gender stereotypes when I was growing up. So, I don't think I was really aware of the stereotype about boys being better at maths, and girls not, I just wasn't aware. But then, because I had good teachers, they made me aware of it before I went to university so that I would be prepared. (Elizabeth)

Single-sex girls' schools were also appreciated because they created a context where the girls could develop at their own pace, outside of the often more boisterous and distracting mannerisms of boys. This allowed the girls' individual talents to be more easily recognised and developed by their teachers.

> *I'm glad to have been to a single sex school as well, I have to say. A lot of people don't like it or disapprove of it, but I personally am glad that I did at that time. I think it gave more chance for some of the girls to flower and get attention in some classes where I think boys would be more domineering. And no one was in competition for the attention of the boys and all that which we might have been otherwise. (Suzanna)*

Many boarders also deeply valued being exposed to an environment where female leadership was modelled by staff and older peers, and where boarders had the opportunity to practice these roles themselves through the day-to-day running of social activities at school.

> *Because we were all girls, when it came to running things and leadership I think it was really important that that was the case as well, because we were just completely used to girls running things, girls taking responsibility, girls being leaders, girls doing all the things, being the best at everything. (Elizabeth)*

Living with Others Strengthens Social Skills

Most of the participants spoke of having made close friends at boarding school. These were connections they deeply valued, that they had often made fairly quickly after starting.

> *The school was great, amazing facility, amazing opportunities. But as with most things, experiences come down to the people you're with. It could be a complete shithole, excuse my French, but you could have amazing people around you, in which case you'd probably have a great time. Or you could live in The Shangri-La and The Shard, and be surrounded by unpleasant people, and you'd probably have quite a dull time. (Jay)*

Boarders were often able to have fun with friends during the day and then continue having midnight feasts and talking together at night. Elizabeth describes how she feels this prolonged opportunity for connection would not have been possible outside of a boarding school context.

> *The quantity of stuff we did in the evenings was… it would involve a lot of parents driving backwards and forwards, and you wouldn't be embedded in the same way. We were embedded in a way that I just don't think could happen at a day school, even if you stayed there until ten PM. We would carry on talking about stuff until 11 or midnight, and so you work on your house play, and then you'd keep discussing it in whispers after the lights were out until midnight. (Elizabeth)*

Suzanna described how she felt that the friendships between boarders were built rapidly and deeply due to the prolonged amount of time they spent with one another.

> *I think probably simply the sheer amount of time that you spend together, because you never spend time like that together with anyone else really, unless university maybe. It's intense amounts of time. Because it seemed to me at the time quite an intense experience, perhaps you fast-forwarded to a level of intimacy that you might not have had if it was playing for an hour at their home every so often. It's not that you wouldn't have built a strong friendship, but it's just you wouldn't have spent nearly all weekend doing things together solidly. And a huge amount of your day. (Suzanna)*

Participants described how their friends became their confidantes who helped them to manage their experiences. This contributed to the strengthening of their bond. Friends then replaced family relationships. Robert describes how for him this allowed him not to feel the pain of being left at boarding school.

> *I never felt lonely or abandoned by them. I never felt alone at boarding school. I never felt bored. There was always someone there and like I say, it didn't take very long into my time there to get really excited at the end of school holidays to fly back and see all my friends. (Robert)*

There was a sense for boarders that everyone was in the same boat, all dealing with the situation together. This helped to strengthen their developing bonds.

All her friends took me under their wing as well, and it was really nice. That was the kind of thing that people did, there was a very big, strong atmosphere of older girls take younger girls under their wing because everyone is away from their family, and that was one of the wonderful things about it. (Elizabeth)

Participants spoke of feeling they had developed the ability to effectively communicate and get along with many different types of people at boarding school. There was a sense of not having had a choice, of it having been necessary for adapting to the environment.

I think definitely people skills and not managing people but being able to deal with different types of people and all that sort of thing helped being at boarding school, because you didn't have a choice, that was the life you lived. When you're at boarding school and you're living with… I lived with 60 other boys day in, day out. I think you learn quite a lot about how to deal with people and how to interpret what people say, how to get along with people, how to manage tricky situations. And I definitely think that personable side of things has helped work situations. (Jay)

Suzanna describes how having developed strong social skills during her boarding school experience she found this transferred to her ability to make friends throughout life.

I think I found it quite easy to make friends through my life after that time, know how to be sociable. I think I learnt how to fit in with people and I'm quite adaptable. So, I think that's been quite a useful skill. (Suzanna)

Importance of Personality Fit with Boarding School

It seemed important for there to be a good fit between the boarder's personality and the boarding school culture for the participant to have had a positive experience.

The right boarding school for the right child is a better option. But my sister… it didn't suit her and she might have done better at home, so I think it really depends on

> *the character of the child primarily and then it's like, what's the school like? What's the culture of the school? Is that going to suit them? (Rachel)*

One of the most important elements of boarding was the ability to flexibly adapt to the new environment.

> *I'd get on OK with everybody and that's, that's really my features, I, I don't have issues adapting to people and situations. And that was the thing… I think that helped me very much. (Rupert)*

Having a confident temperament and feeling that boarding school was something that could be managed was helpful for allowing the participants to adapt to their new environment. Especially if they already felt sure of who they were.

> *I think maybe to have a good time there, you have to have an element of resilience when you turn up. I think it comes down to resilience and also a sense of… It sounds quite vacuous, doesn't it? But just being quite confident in yourself and I suppose popular. (Jay)*

To be able to make the most of the opportunities offered by the school boarders spoke of having to arrive pre-packaged with self-discipline and a drive to achieve. Without these aspects the relative freedom and independence boarders had meant individuals could easily fall through the gaps academically.

> *I think my drive to achieve is internally from me. I think you split it into two. The school part taught me how to and just made it part of life, whereas I think the desire to… I used to and still do really look up to my parents and what they've achieved, and that makes me want something like that. But I think I have that inherently inside me as well. (Jay)*

Maintaining Friendships after Boarding School

It was common for participants to have stayed in touch with the friends they made at boarding school. For many participants their closest friends were still those they boarded with. As adults participants often felt they had a special bond with their ex-boarder friends that helped them to stay connected. Robert describes how boarding school friendships had for him remained more intimate than some family relationships.

> *My best friends to this day are people I met in the boarding-house. In a way I have much closer relationships… I bordered with and lived with in those dorms with for six/seven years than I do my brother. (Robert)*

Rupert describes how despite him and his peers now being in their 60s almost his entire year group of boarding school peers are still in touch with one another.

> *We're all now knocking 60 and I would say, apart from two deaths, err, the entire year is in communication. It's testament to the school that, you know, out of a year of close to eighty people, erm, you know all except maybe less than five, are in communication over this. We have a bond. (Rupert)*

Ex-boarders often used the new methods of communication that had emerged since their time at school to remain in contact. They had email or social media groups that helped them to stay connected to their old peers.

> *I made such close friends, that's the other thing, really solid, important, deep friendships from that time, and we were talking to each other on Zoom recently. After about a year and a half. We were all in different countries. (Elizabeth)*

Theme Four: Developing Life-long Resilience and Independence

This theme brings together some of the psychological change boarders often experienced. The development of a 'mental fortitude' which appeared to help the boarders adapt to the school environment is discussed, alongside its risks. The theme concludes by examining the

influence of the boarders' education on their transition into university, work and adult life and on their decision whether or not to send their own children to boarding school.

Instilling of Responsibility, Resilience, Confidence and Determination

Many participants spoke of having developed at boarding school an increased sense of responsibility. This included taking responsibility for one's own actions, working responsibly in a group and developing a good understanding of the moral consequences of one's decisions. Jay describes how having to take responsibility for his own actions at boarding school allowed him to develop independence.

> *I had a bigger sense of independence and ability to just deal with life, because I think you're taught that through boarding school. You don't have a mum and dad… not waiting on you hand and foot but taking care of things in the background. It's your responsibility to get your homework done, it's your responsibility to pack the right things when you go to school, it's your responsibility to change your bed sheets, it's your responsibility to fold your clothes. And that had just been the norm for me since I was 13. (Jay)*

Many ex-boarders spoke of how they valued the mental fortitude they had developed at boarding school. There was an emphasis on no matter what life throws at you, just keep going. Boarders expressed the importance of not becoming distressed by problems and instead looking for solutions. This attitude appeared to have been internalised into the boarders' way of being. Having this mental fortitude was seen as essential for surviving boarding school, where one had to manage situations without parental support.

> *I suppose I would call that having deep inner strength or something, but the kind of strength that's like the roots of a tree so that the tree can bend and sway, but its roots are still there. Sometimes I do think back to the core essence of me that I think I found when I was at boarding school, to remember that that's still there. (Elizabeth)*

> *I'm definitely the sort that thinks that you should soldier on and not give way to kind of you know sort of emotions and feelings that might hold you back. It also means that I'm very good at pushing projects through and making things succeed and not fail.*

> *Yeah. I do think I'm a very resilient person. I'd definitely say I would be a survivor. I'd like to make the best of things really. (Georgia)*

This ability to maintain this mental fortitude was an expectation at boarding school.

> *He'd heard that day that his father had died in a prisoner of war camp in Japan. The point related to that is that he re-joined the rest of us and none of us said anything to him about it, nor did he say anything to us about it. So, you were expected to withhold your emotions really. (Michael)*

Suzanna describes how this mental fortitude helped her cope with difficult periods of life.

> *I think it's helped me with, like in everyone's lives, hard bits and ups and downs. I've always felt I'll get through it. Because you do. And I think when you're young and face things that you found difficult and then it's not that difficult, I think it helped develop a mental toughness of ability to think this is rotten, but it will get better, and I will get through it. And you can get through it in your own time. So, I think that was good. Basically yes, I think it either helped to develop something or it gave a sort of resilience. (Suzanna)*

Many boarders expressed how their mental fortitude allowed them to cope with any situation they found themselves in. They felt they had developed the ability to adapt and make the best out of things. Rupert described how this allowed him to feel comfortable in any scenario.

> *I'm not too bothered by the winds of change, or whatever circumstance I find myself in. I don't mind which country I live in, I don't mind which house I live in, I don't mind what I do. (Rupert)*

The strategies boarders had developed for coping psychologically appeared to contribute to their mental fortitude. Michael describes how he had learned to emotionally withdraw at boarding school.

> *The bishop, who had been to the same school a little bit before me, said that he had been told by this wife that he was emotionally dead, despite the fact he was the leader*

of the church. That rang a big bell for me, it was about when I was having therapy, I can't remember what was caused and what was awareness then. I still remember that conversation very clearly. We'd shared the same experience as children, him a few years before me, and we were both being told by other people that we were emotionally withdrawn. (Michael)

Rupert described having developed a constellation of psychological and relational strategies for managing life. He explains how these helped him cope with exposure to warfare.

I do not get so close to people. I'm close to all of them up to a limit, but nobody realises it doesn't go past a certain… as a defence mechanism. And it worked fine, so it's how I am I think. I don't stick to any particular person. You don't develop the close relationships. (Rupert)

I do have this capacity to block things out, if, if they don't appear the, the… I mean even if they're relevant I block them out. I mean the obvious example is being in the blast, you know, do I have a crisis a week later even though I had my head bandaged up? Not really, it just happened, you know. I'm not gonna sit here and moan about it for the rest of my days. Just water off a duck's back. (Rupert)

However, the boarders' ability to maintain their mental fortitude, or resilience as they termed it, appeared to come with significant risks. Suggestive in Robert's account is a sense of real unhappiness that he seemed unable to let himself know.

So my second year there, I made a suicide attempt in the boarding house, and it was a hanging. Now, I have regretted that hugely since then. I don't at this point even remember why I did it. Whenever I think about it, I try not to too much, whenever I do, I am so thankful that I am still alive. I don't think about it too often because it's really hard to fathom and really hard to get my head around just how lucky I am. I don't just tend to dwell on it. At this point, it's very hard to even remember why. I just know it was a huge mistake, but it wasn't because… when I tell people about it, I think one of the things they must think is, that wouldn't have happened if you had that support or if you were with parents at home. In fact, if anything being a boarder probably saved my life because there were more than just my four other family members around to

> *walk in, see what was happening, and run and get help because I was in a house of 50 odd, up to 100 people. I think I probably moved past it faster than my parents did. I never self-harmed, I don't think I was particularly depressed at any point. It was very strange. (Robert)*

This disavowal of feelings which appeared to be part of boarders' mental fortitude appeared to have other severe consequences, as described by Georgia.

> *I developed anorexia when I was at boarding school. So when I was 13, I think I just basically stopped eating, so I was sort of two years into my time at boarding school. I don't think of myself as having been unhappy but maybe I was, maybe I was unhappier than I thought I was. I mean I must have been if I got this anorexia. But in my head all I wanted to do was be thin. That's how it played out in my head. You know I didn't think it was sort of linked to any psychological problems or other problems. It was just I want to have a good figure. I want to be thin. I want to be you know… I can be this because I am determined enough to lose weight or to say… I never thought that was a kind of illness or meant that I was unhappy. I think it's part of your protection mechanism to you know sort of block those feelings out otherwise you probably couldn't survive. (Georgia)*

Transition to Adulthood and Parenthood

Many participants spoke of having found the transition from boarding school to university a smooth one, despite frequently attending Russel group universities. They often spoke of doing well academically in these institutions. Elizabeth describes how the many similarities between her boarding school and university made the transition smooth.

> *Together with having no trouble with the transition, because so many people have trouble just making that transition from school to university. I felt like it was completely normal. It felt very smooth, it was really the same. It was a bit further from home, but apart from that it felt just like being in the sixth form house, except that there just happened to be boys around as well. I just think that I had a spectacularly*

> *easy move into university exactly because of the education I'd had before that.*
> *(Elizabeth)*

Many spoke of having little difficulty finding work after graduation. They often made their way into workplaces they found highly stimulating. It was common for ex-boarders to find themselves in competitive and highly paid roles such as working in finance, as lawyers or in politics. They often moved up through the occupational hierarchy quickly, taking on more and more senior leadership and management roles. Some managed large amounts of people. Others ran major international companies. Still others formed their own companies.

> *I think my super skill at work that enabled me to be as successful as I was, was the*
> *ability to be able to read what was being said in a room when there were no words. I*
> *could read body language. And I think part of that is walking into a room in boarding*
> *school full of testosterone leaded men, what's the dynamic in this room? What's going*
> *on right now? (Daniel)*

> *[I] built my own career that had no blueprint, nobody does what I do, plenty of people*
> *said it wouldn't be possible. I just thought I might be able to do it, and so I did it. I*
> *really have an amazing life, and my career is a dream career. I just do the work that I*
> *want to do when I do it. I'm very highly paid and appreciated, because it's not the*
> *money I care about, but I'm both paid and appreciated for it, which is amazing.*
> *(Elizabeth)*

There was often an awareness of having come from a privileged cohort, with many of the peers that joined them at top-tier universities also having had a boarding school background. Boarders tended to view their educational background as having contributed to their occupational successes.

> *I know I have benefitted from unconscious bias. I know I've probably benefitted from*
> *conscious bias, I can't think of any instances, but I might not have been aware of that.*
> *And I know I benefitted from this kind of class structure or whatever you want to call*
> *it that meant I could go to a boarding school to begin with. But I did benefit so the*
> *outcome wasn't bad. I was aware at the time that the opportunity I was being given*

> *was that, it was an opportunity. I was aware that this was an investment where the return could be meaningful. (Daniel)*

Many boarders described not feeling tied down occupationally and frequently had worked across the globe. They described feeling much more able to travel on their own, be self-reliant and be away for long periods of time as compared to their non-boarder peers. They linked this to their boarding school experience, alongside having an ability to motivate themselves to go out and do things. These attributes made it easier to look for jobs internationally.

> *I've lived all over the world. I've worked on five continents. And I don't know if I'd have had the confidence to go out and just pick up and move to America or work in Singapore for five years, or I taught in Kenya for a year. I just don't know if I'd have had the confidence to do that with my life if I hadn't effectively left home aged seven. Where I ended up living is because of my comfort moving overseas from going to boarding school, who knows. There's so many different things but it felt like the continuation of a boarding school existence. (Daniel)*

The participants had taken contrasting stances towards whether they had sent their own children to boarding school. Their rationales for their decision varied widely. For those who had sent their children to boarding school there was often a sense that if their children had said they didn't want to go, they wouldn't have been forced to. Participants' children tended to have started attending boarding school at a later age, often beginning in senior rather than junior school. Some ensured that their children had the choice as to whether they went to co-educational or single-sex schools. Overall, the participants appeared to have thought more of their child's welfare and where would be a good fit rather than just sending them off. Jenny describes how difficult it was for her to say goodbye to her own children as they went to boarding school.

> *[I] hated it. I mean, every time we took them to the airport so they could catch a plane… It was literally being at the airport and seeing them off with the stewardess and crying. Me crying [laugh] and my husband trying to stay. I did find it very hard. There were lots and lots of tears saying goodbye and I didn't like it one bit. The*

> *parting was very difficult. The separation. I'd probably find the 24 hours after they'd*
>
> *left… I hated it. (Jenny)*

Those who chose not to send their children to boarding school gave a multitude of reasons for this. For many, family was enormously important and they didn't want to risk losing that. Some wanted their children to experience a more 'normal' upbringing, to have friends and be able to spend time by themselves. Some found contemporary boarding schools too expensive. For others it was important for them to feel they were a part of their children's childhood and that their child was embedded in a family.

> *We decided not to send them to boarding school. They went to independent day*
>
> *school. Partly it was pretty good day schools. Partly it was we have three very*
>
> *different children. We could have probably gotten away with two different boarding*
>
> *schools, but not three. But, honestly, a lot of it was selfishness as parents. We liked*
>
> *our kids, we still like our kids. They're all back from university at the moment. We*
>
> *wanted to spend time with our kids, we wanted them to be part… The single word*
>
> *answer to your question is selfishness as parents [Laughs]. (Daniel)*

This chapter presented the findings of the study. It examined each theme and subtheme in detail, providing examples from the participants' narratives to allow the reader to ground the findings in the primary data. The next chapter will discuss the results presented here in the context of previous empirical and theoretical literature. It will offer some of the primary author's reflections regarding the research process and the project's strengths and limitations. Finally, recommendations will be made for the possible application of the findings in clinical practice, policy development and future research.

Chapter 4: Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings of the study in the context of its aim and previous empirical and theoretical literature. The project's strengths and limitations are discussed along with the author's reflections on the research process. It considers how the findings relate to the outcome of the meta-ethnographic synthesis and the theoretical model generated

therein. Finally, the implications of the findings for future research, clinical practice and policy development are discussed.

This study aimed to explore the narratives of ex-boarders who describe having had a positive experience of boarding school.

A thematic analysis identified four main themes and nine sub-themes. The boarders' family backgrounds impacted their boarding experience in complex and sometimes contradicting ways. For those who had had a difficult family life boarding school offered an escape from this and sometimes provided the nurturance they had missed out on. For others, boarding school provided an opportunity for parents to show their love. How much power boarders had over whether and where they went to boarding school was important for how positively they experienced it. Having a wide variety of extra-curricular activities at school helped develop their sense of identity, confidence and individual strengths. These activities and living together in boarding houses allowed the boarders to develop strong social skills. Many made friends they stayed connected with long into their adult lives. It was important for there to be a good fit between the school's culture and each boarder's temperament for a positive experience. Some boarders described how they had developed a mental fortitude that helped them to adapt to the boarding environment. The boarders were able to draw together the strengths they had developed at school, allowing them to transition smoothly into adult life and the workplace, often obtaining highly rewarding jobs. Despite their positive view of their boarding experience not all participants sent their own children to boarding school. Their decision was influenced by a multitude of factors.

Family Relationships: Contrasting Perspectives

Within this theme, we see how powerfully boarders' backgrounds influenced their boarding experience. In line with Schaverien's (2011) hypothesis, boarding schools were seen as positive by some due to their offering an escape from difficult family dynamics. This makes sense, given dysfunctional family dynamics are often associated with later psychological problems (Higgins & McCabe, 2003). It is possible that where children have developed a negative view of self and others (Beck & Beck, 2020) boarding schools may offer an opportunity to challenge and potentially alter these beliefs. For those who had a limited sense

of control and autonomy at home the relative freedom of the boarding environment provided a juxtaposition to this, an escape and a new experience. This may have allowed the boarders to challenge negative expectations of the world and others (Beck & Beck, 2020). Valuing the opportunity to actively escape from a difficult background is in line with Judith Herman's (2015) hypothesis that being able to flee from a threatening situation may prevent one from falling into the helpless overwhelmed state which typically leads to post-traumatic mental health symptoms. These boarders may have not found boarding school traumatic therefore as they felt they were actively escaping a bigger threat. For these boarders the physical site of boarding school and the clear predictable rules and structure (Beard, 2021) may have been their first opportunity to establish a secure base (Bowlby, 1998). Boarding school environments arguably meet the three characteristics of a secure base: availability, non-interference and encouragement, which facilitates the ability to explore (Feeney, & Thrush, 2010). This perspective would be in keeping with the meta-ethnographic model, where a safe physical environment is hypothesised to allow children the space to make sense of their experiences following highly distressing events. Boarders from less supportive homes appeared to rationalise their parents not visiting or being in contact much as being due to the costs involved. This may have helped them adapt to the situation and maintain self-esteem (McWilliams, 2011).

For those who came from supportive families, the lengths their parents often went to to stay connected, visit and support them at boarding school likely reinforced positive views of self and others (Beck & Beck, 2020). These individuals are more likely to have already developed a secure attachment and an internalised sense of others caring for them (Wallin, 2007). This internalisation of 'good' views of others is a major contributor to good psychological health (Lemma, 2015) and was theorised by Donald Winnicott (1958) to underly the capacity to be alone. Beginning boarding school may have therefore been an easier experience for these individuals. Mentalisation, the ability to reflect upon one's own experience and the minds of others, appears to develop in secure attachment relationships (Luyten & Fonagy, 2014). These boarders may therefore also have had a greater ability to understand their parents' reasons for sending them to boarding school and so still feel loved. If this perspective was reinforced by ongoing parental support it may have created a virtuous cycle reinforcing positive beliefs about self and others and improving mentalising abilities. Indeed, boarders who felt their parents sent them to boarding school for their own benefit did see it as a more positive experience.

For many boarders writing letters was one of the only ways to stay in contact with parents. In contemporary contexts where there are many more mediums through which parents can stay in contact future research could examine whether these technologies have influenced boarders' relationships with their parents.

Having Power, Control and Making the Choice to Board

Many participants had wanted to attend boarding school. They often described depictions in popular media, such as the Enid Blyton (2022) novels, as having influenced their decision. This can be seen as an example of how through social constructionist influences narratives can be internalised and used to make sense of the world (Burr, 2015). Those who started boarding school with these somewhat idealised media-influenced frameworks may have experienced it more positively.

Those who felt they had no control over whether and where they went to boarding school often described having lost their sense of agency and autonomy. Finding themselves in this helpless state with a loss of the ability to act for oneself may have increased the chances of these individuals experiencing worsened emotional health and post-traumatic symptoms. Including a higher likelihood of dissociating aspects of themselves, following their beginning boarding school (Herman, 2015). Implicit in this scenario is a significant power imbalance between parent and child, with boarders having little ability to voice their perspective. However, the importance of achieving a good balance between individual perspectives for the emotional health and social functioning of family members has been highlighted in systemic theory (Selvini, Boscolo, Cecchin, & Prata, 1980). This experience is also likely to have set up an internal relationship of a powerful other and a powerless self (Hinshelwood, 1991). Given the likely replication of this when attending boarding school, with its typically strict hierarchical structure (Beard, 2021), this internal relationship may often be reinforced. Many boarders had taken up positions of leadership and social power indicating some may have identified with this position of powerful other (Fraiberg et al., 1975). This may be a process through which some boarders adapt to this dynamic, contributing to their holding a positive view of their experience at school.

Those who had been given more choice whether and where they wanted to board typically expressed a much more positive view of the process. Being able to make their own choices regarding boarding school may have allowed participants to frame it as being in line with their goals. If they were to make progress towards these goals it may have increased their short-term wellbeing and allowed the implementation of an approach to life that would be beneficial for their happiness long-term (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). This effect may have been particularly powerful if these goals were in line with their values (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).

The reasons parents gave for sending the participants to boarding school were important. Those who were told in a believable way that it was for their own benefit had a more positive view of boarding school. This is in line with Stanley Ruszczynski's (2018) emphasis on the importance of balancing needs in any relationship for positive emotional health. He highlights that both individuals need to remain open to mentalisation with the other and not withdraw into a purely self-focused perspective. Where boarders perceived there was a balancing of the needs and perspectives of both parent and child they were more likely to view boarding school as a positive experience. This makes sense as it may have reinforced beliefs that one is valued and loved and that others are loving and supportive (Beck & Beck, 2020). The internalisation of these positive views of others would have been likely to have made the boarding experience much easier (Winnicott, 1958).

There was a sense for some boarders that they were in a privileged position and their families were making great sacrifices for them to be able to attend boarding school. It was therefore something they felt they should feel grateful for. This attitude may have been beneficial as Wood et al. (2010) demonstrated that those who experience more gratitude for the positive aspects of their lives show greater levels of happiness and wellbeing. Therefore being able to be grateful for their boarding experience may have improved some boarders' wellbeing.

Many boarders came from families with long traditions of attending boarding school. It was a large part of their family's identity and they felt pressure to continue the legacy. Bourdieu (2020) viewed social and cultural capital as being highly valued due to its potential for transformation into other forms of capital and its transmissibility between generations of a family. The pressure these boarders felt to attend can be understood as reflecting these families' desire to retain and transmit these forms of capital. This can also be seen as an example of how similar experiences can be transmitted between generations of a family (Wolynn, 2017).

Development of Interpersonal Skills and Individual Strengths

The boarders described deeply valuing how the extra-curricular activities at school helped them develop their social skills and individual strengths. These findings align with Schaverien's (2011) description of boarding schools as providing social and sporting opportunities typically unavailable in the public sector. Boarders were able to use the extra-curricular activities to set value-congruent goals for themselves and make progress on them. This approach is likely to have bolstered their enjoyment of school (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). In line with previous research (Beames et al., 2020), activities provided an opportunity for boarders to try new things and figure out who they were, what they were good at and what they enjoyed and valued. This in turn bolstered their self-confidence. These findings are in line with approaches within cognitive behavioural therapy where activities which produce a sense of achievement are practiced to improve mood (Beck & Beck, 2020). In this way, the school experience could be somewhat adapted to the individual student. It sought to provide opportunities appropriate for each unique boarder. This holds parallels with an attuned relationship, a necessary component for developing a secure attachment (Bowlby, 1998). This may have allowed some boarders to develop a relationship with the boarding institution itself, compensating for lost familial ones. For those from more difficult backgrounds this may have been their first experience of this type of relationship. The use of activities as a healthy outlet for emotions, or sublimation, is often thought of as a 'mature' coping strategy (McWilliams, 2011). Along similar lines, Bessel van der Kolk (1994) emphasised the healing power of activities for overcoming the negative impact of traumatic events. Perhaps these boarders who describe a positive experience of boarding were able to use the opportunities at school to manage difficult feelings. This would also be in line with the meta-ethnography findings were activities were commonly used as an emotion regulation strategy.

The opportunity to engage in a variety of sports was often valued by the participants. In concordance with previous research (Bass, 2014), this bolstered confidence and allowed boarders to increase their levels of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2020). For some, sports allowed them to climb the social hierarchy at school and begin to practice positions of leadership. This is in line with previous findings that boarding schools can help develop young peoples' leadership skills (Beames et al., 2020). In fact, many participants had held

various positions of social power and status at school. Being able to take a place at the top of a social hierarchy has been liked with increases in serotonin (Stevens & Price, 2015), a neurotransmitter associated with mood (Jenkins, Nguyen, Polglaze, & Bertrand, 2016). Thus having achieved these positions of social power may have been a contributing factor to the participants' positive experience of boarding school.

In line with Bass's (2014) findings that boarding schools increase their students' social capital and ex-boarder Richard Beard's (2021) assertion that acclimatisation to one's peers is fundamental to adapting to boarding school, many participants spoke of having made close friends quickly at boarding school. Peers are a commonly under recognized source of attachment relationships for children (Seibert & Kerns, 2009). These friendships provided the opportunity to form new attachments and have experiences different from those in the family of origin. They also created further opportunities for boarders to develop new expectations of others (Beck & Beck, 2020). Quickly developing new friends may have allowed the boarders to develop feelings of acceptance and belonging, potentially mitigating any feelings of rejection or loss they felt leaving their families.

Boarders described a sense of everyone being in the same boat, all dealing with the same situation and that this strengthened their bond. Friends became confidantes who helped each other manage the situation, they became like a new family. Older boarders especially could offer pieces of wisdom that helped younger boarders adapt successfully to the new environment. This aligns with previous findings that trauma survivors particularly value the perspectives of those who have had similar experiences (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1993) and Tedeschi & Calhoun's (1996) assertion that supportive others help facilitate post-traumatic growth through the joint creation of new narratives which are then integrated into the individuals' belief systems. With the help of their peers therefore some boarders may have been able to rebuild their world view into one more adaptive to the environment (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

Boarders described learning to communicate with a wide variety of people through their boarding experience, making it easier to form relationships throughout life. The development of these social skills is likely to have allowed the boarders to access greater social capital and develop a strong support system, which is linked with a better emotional health (Maulik, Eaton, & Bradshaw, 2011).

None of the participants mentioned having any difficulty socially. It is possible therefore that their positive experience of boarding school was related to their being fairly socially skilled individuals. As warm and supportive family environments support the development of social skills (Steelman, Assel, Swank, Smith, & Landry, 2002), participants from these backgrounds may have started off on a good footing. Further research exploring whether starting boarding school with strong social skills supports adaptation may be beneficial for elucidating this area further. Children with strong connections to community support tend to have greater resilience (Theron et al., 2013) and by their teenage years friends often become more important than parents for children's resilience (Chen, 2019). Perhaps for the socially skilled, boarding school can help build resilience through the development of these connections.

The strength of the boarding school friendships was evident in the fact that many were still connected well into their adult lives. For some their closest friends were still those they boarded with. There was often a sense of a special bond. Perhaps the extended contact boarders had with each other and the need to find supportive others to replace the lost family led to the internalisation of these relationships, that were then carried with the boarders throughout life (Lemma, 2015).

Boarders described the importance of there being a good fit between one's personality and the school environment and culture. They spoke of having confidence as being helpful for this adaptation. The importance of children's confidence for good educational outcomes has been demonstrated previously, with this confidence being strongly linked to the supportiveness of the family background (Kleitman & Moscrop, 2010). Perhaps those boarders from supportive families arrived with greater confidence and were able to adapt initially with more ease. Those from more difficult backgrounds may have been able to use the available extra-curricular activities to boost their confidence and adaptation. This would be in line with previous findings that boarding school educations can increase confidence (Beames et al., 2020).

The participants described having almost no time to oneself at school. This is likely to have provided more opportunity for connecting with peers and experiencing different ways of being. However, boarders who had more difficulty socially or were lower on the extraversion dimension (Costa & McCrae, 1992) may have struggled more with this aspect, suggesting again the necessity for a good fit between school and child. This was something participants reflected on when deciding whether to send their own children to boarding school. Within the

meta-ethnographic model it was suggested children may need time alone to make sense of their experiences. These findings add further nuance, suggesting it may be only a subset of children who need this to adapt effectively. Future research could examine whether this is the case, and if so how best to identify and support individual needs.

Developing Life-long Resilience and Independence

Boarders described how whether you were supported by an adult at school depended on the relationship you developed with staff members. For those who were able to develop a new supportive relationship this created a new opportunity to develop a secure attachment and reinforce positive expectations of others (Bowlby, 1998). Teachers and school staff members offer the opportunity for new attachment relationships (Verschueren & Koomen, 2012), which may be more secure than those developed at home. Being surrounded by other people at boarding school created the opportunity for the formation of new, potentially secure, attachment relationships. This emphasis on community, not just familial, attachments is more typical of collectivist cultures (Seymour, 2013). These opportunities for new attachment relationships may have allowed some of those with more insecure styles to move towards security, if they found the right relationship. Although attachment styles typically remain stable, they are flexible (Zhang & Labouvie-Vief, 2004) and relationships with others have the potential to improve attachment security (Ruvolo, Fabin, & Ruvolo, 2001).

Those who were not able to find a new adult attachment figure appeared to develop a form of self-reliance and independence that they highly valued. The meta-ethnographic model suggested that following distressing events children need to be held in supportive relationships to begin the process of post-traumatic growth. Perhaps this development of self-reliance and independence is an alternate form of coping to the post-traumatic growth process and one more reflective of Schaverien's (2011) boarding school syndrome. Schaverien (2011) argued that without an attachment figure children are unable to effectively process their emotions and so they repress these from consciousness, leaving an apparently emotionally unaffected and self-sufficient veneer. As a result they no longer recognise their need for intimacy and learn to depend on no-one. Schaverien (2011) argued that ex-boarders who report having had a positive boarding experience may do so because they have repressed painful boarding memories and emotions. This may be the case for this subset of boarders.

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

Webb et al. (2019) argue that happiness is the result of experiencing a higher ratio of positive to negative feelings in one's life. Individuals who experience positive feelings more frequently than negative ones do appear to report higher happiness levels (Diener et al., 2009). It is possible therefore that boarders repressing negative feelings and memories do still experience overall feelings of happiness. This may be a fruitful area for future research.

Many boarders spoke of having developed a 'mental fortitude', something they deeply valued and labelled as being their resilience. This included the emphasis on remaining independent and self-reliant, that no matter what life throws at you, you must keep going and one must never become distressed by problems, only look for solutions. Implicit in this is a lack of an expectation that one could take refuge in a secure base to recover within the safety of others. The development of this mental fortitude was often an expectation of the schools. This fostering of similarities between boarders where their individual identities are replaced by those sanctioned by the school is characteristic of Goffman's (1961) depiction of 'total institutions'. However, participants described this mental fortitude as helping them adapt to the boarding environment. The development of this attribute may be one reason why some viewed their boarding experience as positive.

This paper defined resilience as: the ability to adapt to significant stress or trauma, using both internal and external resources, in a manner that allows a person to continue functioning with a sense of emotional wellbeing. This mental fortitude did appear to allow these boarders to adapt to their environment, using their internal psychological resources and the external resources provided by the school. However, for some it was questionable how well it allowed them to function and how much it promoted good emotional wellbeing. The use of psychological coping strategies appeared to be part of this mental fortitude, especially the disavowal of feelings (McWilliams, 2011). Common ways of coping included repressing aspects of experience, never getting close to others and withdrawing emotionally. It is questionable therefore how well these individuals were able to form genuine connections with others.

Difficult childhood experiences are linked with an increased risk of later psychological problems (Masten, 2014). Several boarders described having experienced significant emotional distress at boarding school. One boarder had attempted suicide. In their narrative was evidence of the use of more 'immature' defences such as repression, denial, rationalisation and emotional disavowal (McWilliams, 2011). These defences appeared

linked with the attempt. This is in line with previous findings of emotional difficulties and suicide attempts being associated with the use of more immature defensive styles (Corruble, Bronnec, Falissard, & Hardy, 2004). Another boarder had developed an eating disorder at school. Anorexia has been associated with the overuse of immature defences (Gothelf et al., 1995) and in line with this Georgia also described her anorexia as being fuelled by a need to block out feelings. These boarders' descriptions of the use of less mature defences, including repression of memories and feelings, feeling emotionally unaffected and self-sufficient, no longer recognising the need for intimacy and depending on no-one is in line with Schaverien's (2011) description of boarding school syndrome. It is possible then for at least some of the boarders they did not develop resilience as defined in this paper as including good emotional health and functioning, but boarding school syndrome. Having this mental fortitude however was described by many boarders as essential for surviving boarding school without parental support. It is possible that the boarders who did not get the opportunity to form new secure attachments to either school staff or peers were more likely to form this mental fortitude, what for some may become boarding school syndrome. However this mental fortitude was often highly valued by the boarders as it helped them cope with difficulty, adapt and make the best of situations not just at school but throughout life.

The boarders had often attended Russel Group universities after graduating from boarding school. They spoke of having found the transition to university a smooth one due to ample preparation from their schools and the similarity between school and university. They described finding employment easily and having moved quickly into competitive and highly paid roles, often with high status and power. They tended to have moved up quickly through the occupational hierarchy taking on senior management and leadership roles. These experiences are in line with Bourdieu's (2020) proposition that forms of cultural and social capital, i.e. the internalisation of the knowledge and cultural aspects of boarding and the social connections boarders made at school, can be later translated into economic capital. Receiving higher levels of pay is related to greater job satisfaction (Judge, Piccolo, Podsakoff, Shaw, & Rich, 2010), as is the seniority of one's occupational position (Robie, Ryan, Schmieder, Parra, & Smith, 1998). People with higher incomes (Lyubomirsky et al., 2004) and in good living conditions (Fredrickson, 2013) tend to be happier, especially if their lives include occupations that foster feelings of competence (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Furthermore, achieving and making significant progress towards goals tends also to lead to higher levels of happiness (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005), especially when these goals are value-congruent

(Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). Therefore, having attended a school that supported their achievement of valued goals and facilitated their access to more senior and better paid jobs may be one reason these boarders valued their schooling experience.

Boarders frequently cited the confidence they had developed at school as having a large impact on their careers. Higher confidence does appear related to greater occupational success (Childs & Klimoski, 1986). In line with Lopez and Gormley's (2002) findings, it is possible that those boarders who were able to develop new 'good enough' (Winnicott, 2016) attachment relationships with peers or staff were able to develop their confidence through these relationships. For others developing skills or social status through extra-curricular activities may have been another route to increased confidence (Jamal, 2012). For others still, having successfully adapted to and survived boarding school may have conferred confidence. Many boarders described how their confidence had allowed them to work all around the world, travel frequently and take on international responsibilities. It is possible that those who developed a heavy emphasis on independence and self-reliance found these roles easier to take on and didn't feel as affected by the loss of social connections they entailed. Indeed many described how they didn't feel 'tied down', that they felt more able to travel alone and rely on themselves than most. Although this aligns with descriptions of boarding school syndrome (Schaverien, 2011), aspects of which may be associated with poorer emotional health (Zhang et al., 2022) there appears to have been a trade-off here with these boarders making significant gains in their occupational lives.

Some boarders chose to send their children to boarding school. This can be understood from many perspectives. These were boarders who perceived their boarding years as being a positive experience, so it makes sense that they might want the same for their children. It is common for patterns to be passed down trans-generationally through a family (Wolynn, 2017). It appeared that some boarders consciously thought about the positive aspects of their schooling and decided to send their own children based on these factors. Another, not mutually exclusive, explanation is some boarders may have unconsciously identified with their parents or boarding staff and so repeated their own experience, a possible route for trans-generation transmission of patterns (Fraiberg et al., 1975). However, many had made attempts to improve the experience for their children, sending them at a later age, giving them greater choice about where they boarded and stating they wouldn't have forced their children to attend if they didn't want to. These can be understood as corrective scripts, instances where parents try to improve on their childhood experiences for their own children (Byng-

Hall, 1986). However, there has also been a recent cultural shift here. Over the last 20 years there has been a significant reduction in the number of children boarding below the age of ten (Independent Schools Council, 2022). Perhaps this represents a shift in national parenting values towards giving more thought to individual children's needs.

Those who chose not to send their children to boarding school reported that they didn't want to risk losing family members, they wanted to be involved in their children's lives and they wanted their child to be embedded in a family. Implicit in this perspective is a view that there is something more beneficial about parents being involved in a child's life and a child being embedded in family.

Stories of Resilience

The results of this study suggest that one group of participants achieved a form of resilience through forming genuinely supportive relationships with friends or school staff. These relationships stood in for the lost parental and familial ones, and provided the opportunity for new, potentially more secure, attachment relationships (Wallin, 2007). They provided a sense of holding (Winnicott, 2016) and access to culturally held stores of knowledge and experience that could help the boarders to make sense of their new lives. These relationships supported the development of positive ways of viewing self and positive expectations of others (Beck & Beck, 2020), likely making the development and maintenance of positive relationships throughout life easier (Wallin, 2007). This finding is in line with descriptions of post-traumatic growth (Schaverien, 2011). It appears this way of adapting allowed many to make use of the cultural and social capital available at boarding school (Bass, 2014) to pursue and achieve valued goals. This may have contributed to a greater sense of happiness (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005) alongside their ability to maintain loving relationships and have their own family.

Those who were not able to form 'good enough' (Winnicott, 2016) relationships at boarding school to substitute for those lost appeared to develop a second form of resilience, a mental fortitude or a defensive adaptation (McWilliams, 2011) involving the splitting off and keeping out of consciousness of more vulnerable parts of self and the maintenance of emotional distance in relationships. They became self-reliant and independent and highly valued the adaptation as it helped them cope with difficulty and make the best of situations not just at school but throughout life. This approach is in line with descriptions of 'Boarding

School Syndrome' (Schaverien, 2011). These individuals typically had still been able to pursue and achieve valued-goals and develop a family of their own. Perhaps therefore this form of adaptation, where the defences function well enough to maintain relative emotional equilibrium, had allowed them to achieve subjective happiness (Diener et al., 2009; Webb et al., 2019). It may be interesting to question whether genuine happiness can be achieved whilst being divorced from significant portions of oneself and from intimate connectedness with others. This may be a fruitful area for future research and may lend clues as to whether we should respect these different forms of adaptation or still encourage movements towards a capacity for intimacy and self-integration.

It appears therefore for these participants that resilience is a concept that encompasses at least two distinct forms of adaptation, post-traumatic growth and defensive adaptation or 'Boarding School Syndrome'. Both forms of adaptation appeared to allow the individuals to make use of both internal resources and those available at school, pursue and achieve valued goals, achieve success and form families of their own. This success in their later lives likely contributed to increased happiness in both groups (Fredrickson, 2013). This illustrates the importance of clearly delineating and defining psychological concepts if they are to be of most practical use in research, theory and clinical applications. It may also suggest a caveat regarding theory generation based exclusively on clinical cases, the self-selective nature and inherent similarities in these groups may result in only a partial perspective on a phenomenon and the multifaceted contributors to it being perceived. Theories developed based on partial perspectives on phenomena may be more tenuous.

Comparison with Meta-ethnographic Synthesis Results

Many of the findings of the meta-ethnography were in-line with the findings of the thematic analysis, demonstrating an element of internal validity. Adding nuance to the meta-ethnography, the results of this study demonstrated more than just one linear pathway for children's adaptation following distressing events. One leading to post-traumatic growth, the other to defensive adaptation. The current study's congruences with and developments on the meta-ethnographic results are discussed below.

In keeping with the meta-ethnographic synthesis, following their separation from family boarders did find themselves in the relatively safe physical space of the school, characterised by structure, holding and predictability. Thus a physical secure base was provided. However, for many boarders their access to space to be alone was limited. Whether or not the boarders had access to genuinely supportive relationships in which to heal, express themselves and make sense of things was not guaranteed and seemed based on luck, social skills and popularity. Those who obtained these relationships may have been able to begin post-traumatic growth, those not so lucky appeared to repress feelings and become more independent and self-reliant. In line with the meta-ethnography, boarders did seem to learn ways of creating meaning and managing distress through knowledge gained from tradition and their peers. These boarders appeared to rely more on others than on self-reflection. The boarders appeared to have rebuilt their sense of identity and belonging, but this was not just through relationships, but also through engaging in activities, taking on social roles and internalising school values. As in the synthesis results the school culture did provide a repository of knowledge boarders could draw upon that helped them adapt. It also provided traditional perspectives that helped them to make sense of what had happened and to construct new ways of understanding themselves and the world. The importance of being able to construct a new system of meaning following highly distressing events was highlighted in the meta-ethnography. The boarding experience may add nuance to the meta-ethnographic model as typically for boarders there was a loss of, rather than access to, their family as a source of social and cultural resource. Perhaps for some, the resources gained at boarding school somewhat compensated for this. In keeping with the synthesis boarders did appear to develop both internal and external resources at school that boosted their confidence and ability to manage difficult situations. This allowed them to engage well with higher education and the occupational world, often becoming very successful. In line with the meta-ethnography boarders were able to use the skills they had developed to maintain connection with others. It was unclear however the depth of these connections and future research examining this further may be beneficial.

The meta-ethnographic model proposed that children who went through the process of post-traumatic growth eventually were able to let go of painful feelings related to the trauma and develop acceptance. Some of the boarders may have achieved this but others appeared to cope by repressing rather than processing painful feelings. It appears a dual pathway may exist with some individuals developing acceptance, letting go of painful feelings, achieving

personal growth and developing adaptive new skills and beliefs; Others may instead repress painful feelings and memories and develop a variety of superficial skills that allow them to adapt and carry on. However, this can come at the cost of losing touch with aspects of oneself, lead to relationship difficulties and increase the risk of developing emotional problems.

Author Reflections

The primary author completed this research as part of a professional doctorate in clinical psychology. This was the second of two projects, with the first having had to be terminated due to significant difficulties in participant recruitment. The primary author was offered the opportunity to conduct this project after the interviews and transcription had been completed. In some small way this experience held thematic similarities to many of the experiences of the boarders. There was a rapid and unexpected change from one expected future, i.e. the completion of the initial project, into another, the beginning of this project. Due to the time-pressured nature of the doctorate in clinical psychology there was a need to adapt resiliently and quickly to the changed context, with little time to acknowledge the emotional reality of the loss of the first project and the rupture in my attachment to it. In psychoanalytic terms, I felt I had to mourn the loss of my first object and develop a relationship to my new object, i.e. this project, rapidly (Freud, 1917). Although on a far smaller scale, this experience may have helped the primary author to resonate on a conceptual level with some aspects of the boarders' experience. The primary author was also grateful for the opportunity to join a new project that was already underway, rather than having to start a new project from its inception. This experience of gratitude and still being able to pursue one's goals allowed the author to personally resonate with Lyubomirsky et al.'s (2005) proposition that these elements contribute to greater emotional wellbeing and happiness.

Beginning the project after the completion of interviews and transcription came with both benefits and disadvantages. Not being involved in recruitment meant the primary author had not undergone the process of relationship building that usually begins with the initiation of contact with a potential participant (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This holds analogues with the receipt of referrals in clinical practice, with many approaches seeing this as the initiation of what may become the therapeutic, or in this case the research, relationship (Hinshelwood,

1991). However, by not having carried out the interviews or the transcription process the primary author may have avoided the reality distorting impact of the projection of aspects of self onto the research participant, both during and following the interview process (Lemma, 2015). As the thematic analysis was inductive in nature (Braun & Clarke, 2021) this may have allowed the development of themes that were more based on participants' actual narratives than would otherwise have been possible. A potential drawback of having started at the data analysis stage however is the primary author may have been less immersed in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). In qualitative research it is often implicitly assumed that greater insights are developed from spending more time within the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This may perhaps be so, but it is also possible a researcher may experience difficulty 'seeing the wood for the trees' with this approach. It is notoriously difficult to hold an outsider perspective when embedded in a system (Dallos & Draper, 2015) and systems of data may be no different. It is possible therefore that the primary author was able to analyse the data in a manner which would have been more difficult with greater immersion in the data. It may be interesting for future qualitative studies to examine how different levels of researcher immersion affect the research process.

Typically a post-graduate student completing a clinical psychology doctorate will complete one project from inception to completion. Although the primary author completed all stages of the research process across the two projects they did not follow one through to completion. This conferred the benefit of experiencing each stage of the research process whilst also learning about the conductance of research within teams. This included having the opportunity to experience the benefit of different aspects of the process being completed by those with the greatest experience or how multiple perspectives can allow contrasting views on a dataset (Fernald & Duclos, 2005).

Author reflexivity is an essential aspect of qualitative research, especially within Braun and Clarke's (2021) contemporary thematic analysis methodology, which was used to guide this project. The primary author found the use of a reflective journal particularly useful for identifying potential biases related to the context or their own characteristics and background (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The author was able to reflect upon their own experience of junior and secondary school and the values that were particularly important to them at the time. These included developing a sense of identity and progressive independence from family, creating and maintaining friendships, looking towards the future and developing mastery over

academic and extra-curricular activities. Many of these concerns reflect typical aspects of development during this life stage (Erikson, 1993). However, as an individual who did not attend boarding school the primary author was able to reflect on the differences in experience between their development and that of the boarders. Particularly striking distinctions included the boarders' inability to rely on parents or family for support during times of distress, the greater extra-curricular activities boarders had for exploring their values and aspects of identity and the longevity of the connection to very early friendship groups. The primary author held in mind that their experience could not be generalised to all non-boarders but the ability to make these contrasts was helpful for considering the nuances of the boarders' experiences.

As noted the primary author did not attend boarding school themselves. Before starting the project they, like many participants had described, held only a fantasy of what the experience might be like. This was based on depictions in popular media and mythology held in the surrounding culture. It included expectations of long family histories of boarding, boarders being typically from the upper echelons of society and their having access to a wide variety of experiences. In this way the primary author was an outsider to the participant group. Advantages of this included there being less potential for experiential bias and a reduced likelihood of projection. A disadvantage was not having experiential knowledge of the boarding school context and culture (Greene, 2014).

The interviews were conducted by experienced clinical psychologists. Their professional skills in developing interpersonal relationships characterised by trust and openness were likely helpful for allowing participants to feel comfortable enough to discuss aspects of their experience that were deeply personal (BPS, 2017). In addition, the interviewers were from a similar age group to many of the participants. This overlap in researcher-participant social graces (Burnham, 2018) may have allowed the participants to feel the researchers were more likely to understand their experiences. This may in turn have facilitated greater openness, allowing the collection of rich data that was filled with nuance (Braun & Clarke, 2013). A potential drawback of the interviewers having had experience of training and practice in clinical psychology is the possible limiting of their understanding of the participants' narratives to those perspectives commonly held within the profession. This phenomenon could have the potential to influence the interviewers' curiosity and direction of questioning in semi-structured interviewing. This is not an aspect unique to clinical psychology. It is

likely to be a common problem within all discrete systems of knowledge. This power of knowledge to subtly influence human behaviour has been discussed in depth by Michel Foucault (2019). Arguably as individual disciplines have developed their knowledge bases and complexity there has been a decrease in the tendency for professionals to use a 'polymath' approach. This has the likely benefit of allowing professionals to develop greater competency in one field, but comes at the cost of the loss of creativity that can result from blending forms of understanding (Root-Bernstein, 2003). During this project some of the theoretical perspectives were influenced more by the primary author's interest in sociology than the theoretical frameworks offered by their clinical psychology training. Taking this approach was helpful for gaining a better understanding of the epistemological lenses used by disciplines and the benefits and limitations of these.

Conducting the data analysis during the final year of a clinical psychology training programme is likely to have influenced the lenses through which the primary author understood the data. Those theoretical and empirical stances that the author was most recently exposed to may have come more readily to mind, reflective of the recency effect (Baddeley & Hitch, 1993). Furthermore, those concepts that were repeated with most frequency throughout the training may also have come more readily to mind, in line with Donald Hebb's (2005) "neurons that fire together, wire together". Different clinical psychology courses have different theoretical orientations and emphasise different theoretical concepts (BPS, 2023) adding further nuance to the limitations of the concepts the primary author had available for understanding the data. Despite these limitations there is a benefit to clinical psychology training as it facilitates the understanding of data through multiple theoretical lenses, allowing multiple perspectives upon reality to be explored, syntheses reached and theoretical, epistemological and ontological conflicts to be examined (Johnstone & Dallos, 2013). The primary author made particular use of the systemic concept of not wedding oneself to any particular hypothesis but instead endeavoured to hold multiple explanatory perspectives in mind (Selvini et al., 1980).

It is likely that the primary author's ways of understanding the data were influenced by their exposure to the ideas commonly circulated in their current clinical placement at the Tavistock Clinic. This institution has a rich history of developing psychoanalytical, especially object relational, theory (e.g. Stubley & Young, 2021). Having worked clinically with unconscious processes allowed the primary author to transfer their understanding of this aspect of

interpersonal interactions into their analysis of the research data (Walsh, 1996). Currently the use of psychoanalytical ideas has fallen somewhat out of vogue within clinical psychology training (BPS, 2023) and within the NHS more widely. Some authors have argued this may be partially due to defensive mechanisms such as splitting and projective identification within NHS multidisciplinary teams leading to psychoanalysis and psychoanalytically-orientated clinicians coming to represent unwanted, vulnerable and expendable aspects of services, with these aspects being consequently expelled (Rizq, 2011). Alessandra Lemma (2015), a clinical psychologist by background has in contrast argued that the psychoanalytic approach suffers due to its tendency to focus inward and communicate infrequently with other related disciplines. She advocates integrative and interdisciplinary working between psychoanalytic and more recently developed perspectives, an approach the primary author attempted to follow in this project.

The surrounding context influences data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and a particular strength of qualitative approaches is the depth at which this is considered (Bryman et al., 1996). This project took place over a particular time-period and in a particular geo-political context. Of note was the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine which was heavily covered in the media. Themes of institutional power, vulnerability, adaptation, systemic support, resistance and resilience were part of this narrative. It is possible through social constructionistic processes (Burr, 2015) these concepts had an influence over the analytic process. On a national level, in the UK the population was subject to a 'cost-of-living crisis', rising inflation and a deterioration in quality of life. Within state media the responsibility for this was typically placed on political missteps, with many of those receiving blame being those that were educated within UK boarding schools. This was in the context of increasing dissatisfaction with conservative approaches to politics and an increase in populism in the UK (Algan, Guriev, Papaioannou, & Passari, 2017). It is possible the presence of these narratives in the media influenced the understanding that the primary author made of the data. Particularly considering the relationship between British boarding schools and their alumni achieving positions of political power, and Duffel's (2016) assertion that boarding schools can create 'wounded leaders' with damaging political consequences.

During the project, the primary author found themselves reflecting on how despite these boarders' positive perceptions of their experience and their financial and occupational successes these were individuals who had suffered great losses and undergone enormous

challenge. In addition, they had been frequently reminded of how lucky and privileged they were to be having their boarding experience. They likely experienced a double-bind (Gibney, 2006) between feeling grateful for getting what many others did not, their education, and natural anger and sadness due to losing what many others had, their family. It is easy to see how one could experience an element of guilt if one were to express dissatisfaction with having had this experience, even to oneself. Where ex-boarders may be experiencing emotional difficulties related to their schooling experience it may be difficult for them to recognise their need for support, to risk losing any idealisation of the school or acknowledgement of its negative aspects (McWilliams, 2011).

Strengths and Limitations

All interviews were conducted over video conferencing software. This was particularly beneficial for this participant group where many lived and worked internationally. This allowed a wider and more varied sample to be collected. Although it is arguable there can be some loss of non-verbal information using this medium, participants tend to find it a positive experience and have expressed there being greater ease in discussing sensitive topics (Gray, Wong-Wylie, Rempel, & Cook, 2020). Video conferencing tends to be experienced as convenient and accessible by both researcher and participant and thus removes barriers to data collection. (Archibald et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2020).

This project used a team-based approach rather than it being solely conducted by an individual researcher. The interviews were conducted by two separate individuals. This can be challenging due to the potential differences in philosophical orientation, personal style, experience and skill of different researchers (Fernald & Duclos, 2005). To manage this a considered and systematic research approach was used where roles and responsibilities were clearly delineated. In addition, the potential influences of differing styles and skills were reflected upon and discussed (Fernald & Duclos, 2005). Both interviewers were experienced clinical psychologists and researchers. This similarity in background and their use of a standardised topic guide is likely to have created reasonable uniformity in the interviews (Ritchie et al., 2013). A strength of the interviewers having a background in clinical

psychology was their ability to use the interpersonal skills developed as part of their profession to help facilitate the interviews (BPS, 2017).

Another strength of the study was its use of one interviewer with a boarding background, and one without. The primary author did not have a boarding background, whilst their supervisor did. This structure allowed a good balance between insider and outsider perspectives on the boarding experience. Advantages of being an insider researcher include having experiential knowledge of the topic, awareness of context, understanding of the culture and the ability to interact more naturally with participants. Drawbacks include an increased risk of bias, of making assumptions and of projection and potential difficulty asking provocative questions (Greene, 2014).

The primary author analysed the data but did not conduct the interviews or transcribe the data. The interviewers had greater interviewing and qualitative research experience than the primary author. It is likely therefore that the data collected was richer and more nuanced than it might otherwise have been. A further advantage of this was that the author was able to approach the data from a more objective standpoint. Given the inductive approach of the thematic analysis this was beneficial (Braun & Clarke, 2021). However, it did mean that any data communicated through non-verbal means such as via voice tone, body language, gesture or facial expression was lost. The primary author may also have been more immersed in the data if they had been involved in the interview and transcription process (Braun & Clarke, 2021), although this may had conferred the additional advantage of their being less influenced by interpersonal responses to any particular participant.

The project did rely on asking participants to reflect on experiences that for some happened many decades ago. This is a common difficulty for qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). However, this project focused on the potentially traumatic experience of boarding school (Schaverien, 2011). Recent research has found that traumatic and distressing experiences are typically recalled more reliably over time than other types of memory (Peace & Porter, 2004). This suggests memories of the boarding experience may have been particularly preserved. In addition, it was principally the participants' understanding of their boarding experience that the project was focused on, how it was that they held a positive view of the experience rather than needing to acquire a completely factual account of their boarding school lives.

It should be noted that particularly for the older participants their experience was rooted in a different time period. There may have been systemic or cultural change in the institutions they attended and across boarding school contexts generally. A particular change has been the development of communication technologies. Many participants spoke of letters as being the only available method for communicating with the outside world. The development of mobile phones, the internet and video conferencing software is likely to have fundamentally changed the boarding experience. Future research could explore what impact the development of these communication technologies has had on allowing children to stay in contact with family members in situations where they otherwise may not have been able to.

Strengths of the sample included having a good mix of genders and a wide age range. This may mean the results are reflective of the experiences of a wider group of individuals than would otherwise have been the case (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The project also achieved a good sample size of 14 participants. This allowed the development of rich and nuanced themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013). A limitation of the study was the sample's lack of ethnic diversity. All but one participant were from a White British background. There is currently limited research examining the representation of ethnic diversity in UK boarding schools. Further research examining this is likely to be beneficial, especially where this facilitates discussions regarding equality of access to the different areas of the educational system. This does mean however that it is difficult to disentangle how much of the findings of the study are related to the environment and culture of boarding school, and how much are due to cultural commonalities in those from a White British, likely middle and upper-class background (Beard, 2021).

Twelve of the initial sample of 26 boarders who completed the first stage opted out of taking part in the interviews. As the sample was self-selective it is possible the decision to participate in the interviews reflected an unknown difference between the interview sample and those who chose not to participate further.

Clinical and Policy Implications

Clinical and policy recommendations are highlighted below, discussed within the context of the HM Government's (HMG; 2021) Promoting Children and Young People's Mental Health

and Wellbeing policy and the Department for Education's (DFE; 2022a; 2022b) Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges and National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools policies. These publications provide guidance that is relevant to the results of the study. Below, their alignment with the findings and the recommendations made is discussed and suggestions are made for the implementation of these recommendations.

The DFE (2022a) emphasises that schools should aim to ensure that all children achieve the best possible outcomes. It gives little clarification however on what these outcomes refer to. Arguably this lack of clarity can leave the door open to schools focusing more on academic or occupational outcomes than on the development of good emotional health, psychological maturity and relational abilities. It is recommended therefore that future policy development be more specific about outcomes and especially about how resources may be best distributed between domains. This may support schools to follow the HM Government's (2021) recommendations that a curriculum be delivered that supports children's social and emotional development. One that results in happier, more confident children.

The DFE (2022b) also recommends that boarding schools identify an individual, independent of staff, whom boarders can easily and comfortably access for support. It did appear that it was beneficial for those boarders in the current study who were able to form a good relationship and potentially a secure attachment with a staff member. For at least this cohort of boarders whether or not they had access to this resource appeared somewhat luck of the draw. Therefore, this policy could be extended to recommend that each boarder be allocated an adult easily accessible at school whom they could seek support from. How well this relationship is meeting the boarder's attachment needs could be assessed on a regular basis. This could build on the DFE's (2022a) more general recommendations that educational staff build trusting relationships that facilitate good communication with students. Educational staff have the potential to provide the 'good enough' (Winnicott, 2016) relationship that can allow children from difficult backgrounds to form a secure attachment (Verschueren & Koomen, 2012). It is therefore recommended that staff in educational settings receive the training necessary to be able to facilitate this with their students where appropriate.

In line with this emphasis on attachment, the DFE (2022b) also recommends boarding schools maintain all possible continuity of staff, so borders' relationships are less disrupted. This seems like a sensible suggestion given the great benefit that boarders seemed to gain from establishing strong relationships with others. This emphasis on maintaining continuity

for children is likely to be beneficial beyond an educational context. It is common for NHS mental health services to offer short-term interventions that focus on skills-based approaches (NHS, 2019). However, these run the risk of allowing children to develop attachment relationships that are then cut short within a brief period of time. Given that children accessing these services are more likely to have insecure attachments (Zhang et al., 2022) these rapid interventions may be inadvertently reinforcing some of their difficulties. It is recommended therefore that children's mental health services hold this in mind, whilst trying to achieve a balance with the constraints of waiting lists and scarce resources.

Many participants highly valued their parents' regular communication, continued connection and support. It is recommended therefore that educational and CAMH services retain some focus on children's relationships with their parents, considering offers of support where difficulties are identified. Achieving a good balance between the needs and perspectives of both parent and child appeared to contribute to children's wellbeing. It is recommended therefore that when difficulties with this are identified that caregivers be offered support to mentalise their children's perspectives and to strike an appropriate balance between their child's and their own needs. This may have the additional benefit of supporting the development of the children's own mentalisation abilities (Luyten & Fonagy, 2014).

When the participants were able to make their own choices this appeared to allow them to organise their lives better around their values and goals. As being able to make progress towards valued goals contributes to greater wellbeing and happiness (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005) it is recommended that educational and CAMH services allow children to have as much choice as is realistically possible as to what directions their lives take.

The study results did suggest that some boarders met Schaverien's (2011) description of boarding school syndrome. It is recommended that future research examine the validity of the suggestion here that there is a qualitative difference between these individuals and those that were able to achieve post-traumatic growth at boarding school. Examining this area further may allow clinicians to develop assessment tools to better identify difficulties in this area and allow interventions to be better tailored to meet individual needs.

The DFE (2022a) places significant responsibility on schools for the implementation of policies and initiatives that promote good mental health. The results of the current study suggest that at least within boarding schools focusing on the quality of students' relationships whilst at school should be a major target of these initiatives. Given that in state schools

children still spend long periods of the day with peers these initiatives are likely to have beneficial applications in these environments too. Programmes that normalise and promote children's safe emotional expression within relationships may be of benefit, alongside approaches that discourage peer and systemic emotional suppression. It may also be beneficial for teachers and other school staff to be supported to model these attributes. This approach may build on the HM Government's (2021) more curriculum-based recommendation that students should be supported to develop emotional literacy through being taught what they are feeling and why. Having access to a wide variety of extra-curricular activities was also described by boarders as supporting their emotional health and identity development. It is therefore likely to be beneficial for state schools to provide access to as many of these activities as possible. Especially as this study's findings indicated having a variety of available options created a higher likelihood of children finding what suited them. It may be that those activities that schools are able to provide could be supplemented by additional commissioning of extra-curricular opportunities by local authorities.

The implementation of the above suggestions may prevent some at risk children developing mental health difficulties in the first place. This has the potential to reduce waiting lists and pressures on children's mental health services. Any resulting increase in available resources could then be used to allow clinicians to work for longer with clients where beneficial or allow children to engage in meaningful opportunities, supporting their identity development and creation of values-congruent goals for their futures.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the narratives of ex-boarders who viewed their boarding experience as positive to determine the potential contributors to this perspective.

To conclude, for those from difficult family backgrounds boarding school provided the opportunity to escape these and sometimes the chance for reparative experiences. Many established new close relationships either with peers or staff. Peers often supported each other, helping new boarders to adapt to the environment. For many this led to life-long friends. Boarding school could provide an opportunity for parents to demonstrate their love and was generally experienced more positively if it was seen as being for one's own benefit.

Having the choice whether and where to board improved the experience and increased the likelihood of there being a good fit between the boarder and the school culture. Boarding schools provided a wide variety of extra-curricular opportunities through which boarders were able to develop their social skills, individual strengths and confidence, and work out who they were and what they valued. Some boarders had developed a 'mental fortitude' and a sense of independence and self-reliance. These attributes often helped them to adapt to and cope with difficult experiences. The resources developed at boarding school allowed boarders to transition smoothly into university and the workplace. They often successfully achieved valued goals and obtained senior positions in competitive occupations.

Dissemination

The primary author will offer a report of the study findings to all participants. The project will also be submitted for possible publication in a peer-reviewed journal. In addition, the findings will inform a chapter of a book examining multiple aspects of the boarding school experience, soon to be published.

References

Algan, Y., Guriev, S., Papaioannou, E., & Passari, E. (2017). The European Trust Crisis and the Rise of Populism. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, *2017*(2), 309–400. https://doi.org/10.1353/ECA.2017.0015

Andres, L., & Round, J. (2015). The role of 'persistent resilience' within everyday life and polity: households coping with marginality within the 'Big Society'. *Environment and Planning A*, *47*(3), 676-690.https://doi.org/10.1068/a46299

Annas, J. (1993). *The morality of happiness*. Oxford University Press.

Archibald, M. M., Ambagtsheer, R. C., Casey, M. G., & Lawless, M. (2019). Using zoom videoconferencing for qualitative data collection: perceptions and experiences of researchers and participants. *International journal of qualitative methods*, *18*, https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919874596

Aristotle, J. B. (1984). *The complete works of Aristotle* (Vol. 2, p. 1984). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Arnett, J. J. (2007). Emerging adulthood: What is it, and what is it good for?. *Child development perspectives*, *1*(2), 68-73. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2007.00016.x

Atkins, S., Lewin, S., Smith, H., Engel, M., Fretheim, A., & Volmink, J. (2008). Conducting a meta-ethnography of qualitative literature: Lessons learnt. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, *8*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-8-21/TABLES/4

Baddeley, A. D., & Hitch, G. (1993). The recency effect: Implicit learning with explicit retrieval? *Memory & Cognition*, *21*(2), 146–155. https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03202726

Balnaves, M., & Caputi, P. (2001). *Introduction to quantitative research methods: An investigative approach*. Sage.

Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control: New York: Freedom and Company.

Bass, L. R. (2014). Boarding schools and capital benefits: Implications for urban school reform. *Journal of Educational Research*, *107*(1), 16–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2012.753855

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (2018). The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation. *Interpersonal Development*, 57–89. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351153683-3

Beames, S., Mackie, C., & Scrutton, R. (2020). Alumni perspectives on a boarding school outdoor education programme. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, *20*(2), 123–137. https://doi.org/10.1080/14729679.2018.1557059

Beard, R. (2021). *Sad Little Men: The revealing book about the world that shaped Boris Johnson*. Random House.

Beck, J. S., & Beck, A. (2020). *Cognitive behavior therapy: Basics and beyond*. Guilford Publications.

Behaghel, L., Chaisemartin, C. de, & Gurgand, M. (2017). Ready for boarding? The effects of a boarding school for disadvantaged students. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, *9*(1), 140–164. https://doi.org/10.1257/APP.20150090

Bergin, C., & Bergin, D. (2009). Attachment in the Classroom. *Educational Psychology Review*, *21*(2), 141–170. https://doi.org/10.1007/S10648-009-9104-0

Bernstein, D. P., Fink, L., Handelsman, L., & Foote, J. (1998). Childhood trauma questionnaire. *Assessment of family violence: A handbook for researchers and practitioners.* https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Ft02080-000

Bhaskar, R. (2013). A realist theory of science. *A Realist Theory of Science*, 1–284. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203090732

Blevins, C. A., Weathers, F. W., Davis, M. T., Witte, T. K., & Domino, J. L. (2015). The Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5): Development and Initial Psychometric Evaluation. *Wiley Online Library*, *28*(6), 489–498. https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.22059

Blyton, E. (2022). *Last Term at Malory Towers*. DigiCat.

Bourdieu, P. (2020). The Forms of Capital. *The Sociology of Economic Life*, 78–92. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429494338-6/

Boutilier, M. A., Rajkumar, E., Poland, B. D., Tobin, S., & Badgley, R. F. (2001). Community Action success in Public Health: Are we using a ruler to measure a sphere? *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, *92*(2), 90–94. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03404937

Bowden, L., Reed, K., & Nicholson, E. (2018). The contribution of occupation to children's experience of resilience: A qualitative descriptive study. *Australian occupational therapy journal*, *65*(4), 268-275. https://doi.org/10.1111/1440-1630.12462

Bowbly, J. (1980). Attachment and loss: Sadness and depression. *New York, NY: Basic*.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, V., & Clarke. V. (2013). Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners. *Successful qualitative research*, 1-400.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). Thematic analysis: a practical guide. *Thematic Analysis*, 1-100.

Britten, N., Campbell, R., Pope, C., Donovan, J., Morgan, M., & Pill, R. (2002). Using meta ethnography to synthesise qualitative research: a worked example. *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy*, *7*(4), 209–215.

Bryman, A., Stephens, M., & a Campo, C. (1996). The importance of context: Qualitative research and the study of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *7*(3), 353-370. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1048984396900259

Burke, R. J., & Cooper, C. L. (Eds.). (2008). *Long work hours culture: Causes, consequences and choices*. Emerald Group Publishing.

Burnham, J. (2018). Developments in social GRRRAAACCEEESSS: Visible-invisible and voiced-unvoiced. *Culture and Reflexivity in Systemic Psychotherapy: Mutual Perspectives*, 139–160. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429473463-7/

Burr, V. (2015). Social constructionism: Third edition. *Social Constructionism: Third Edition*, 1–276. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315715421/

Byng-Hall, J. (1986). Family scripts: A concept which can bridge child psychotherapy and family therapy thinking. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, *12*(1), 3–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/00754178608254780

Campbell, R., Pound, P., Morgan, M., Daker-White, G., Britten, N., Pill, R., Yardley, L., Pope, C., & Donovan, J. (2012). Evaluating meta ethnography: systematic analysis and synthesis of qualitative research. *Health Technology Assessment*, *15*(43). https://doi.org/10.3310/HTA15430

Campbell, R., Pound, P., Pope, C., Britten, N., Pill, R., Morgan, M., & Donovan, J. (2003). Evaluating meta-ethnography: a synthesis of qualitative research on lay experiences of diabetes and diabetes care. *Social science & medicine*, *56*(4), 671-684.

Carlisle, N., & Rofes, E. (2007). School bullying: Do adult survivors perceive long-term effects? *Traumatology*, *13*(1), 16–26. https://doi.org/10.1177/1534765607299911

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*. sage.

Cheetham-Blake, T. J., Family, H. E., & Turner-Cobb, J. M. (2019). 'Every day I worry about something': A qualitative exploration of children's experiences of stress and coping. *British Journal of Health Psychology*, *24*(4), 931–952. https://doi.org/10.1111/BJHP.12387

Chen, S. (2019). Chinese adolescents' emotional intelligence, perceived social support, and resilience-The impact of school type selection. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*(JUN). https://doi.org/10.3389/FPSYG.2019.01299/FULL

Childs, A., & Klimoski, R. J. (1986). Successfully Predicting Career Success. An Application of the Biographical Inventory. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *71*(1), 3–8. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.71.1.3

Cooper, H., Camic, P., Long, D., & Panter, A. (2012). *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol 2: Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological.* https://psycnet.apa.org/books/TOC/13620

Corruble, E., Bronnec, M., Falissard, B., & Hardy, P. (2004). Defense styles in depressed suicide attempters. *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, *58*(3), 285-288. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1440-1819.2004.01233.x

Costa Jr, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1992). Four ways five factors are basic. *Personality and individual differences*, *13*(6), 653-665. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/019188699290236I

Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (2022). *CASP Checklists.* Retrieved from https://casp-uk.net/casp-tools-checklists/

Dallos, R., & Draper, R. (2015). *An introduction to family therapy: Systemic theory and practice*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Daly, J., Willis, K., Small, R., Green, J., Welch, N., Kealy, M., & Hughes, E. (2007). A hierarchy of evidence for assessing qualitative health research. *Journal of clinical epidemiology*, *60*(1), 43-49.

Daly, M., Sutin, A. R., & Robinson, E. (2022). Longitudinal changes in mental health and the COVID-19 pandemic: Evidence from the UK Household Longitudinal Study. *Psychological medicine*, *52*(13), 2549-2558. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291720004432

De Fina, A. (2008). Who tells which story and why? Micro and macro contexts in narrative. *Text and Talk*, *28*(3), 421–442. https://doi.org/10.1515/TEXT.2008.020/HTML

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The" what" and" why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological inquiry*, *11*(4), 227-268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794108098034

DeVerteuil, G., & Golubchikov, O. (2016). Can resilience be redeemed? Resilience as a metaphor for change, not against change. *City*, *20*(1), 143-151. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2015.1125714

Diener, E., Sandvik, E., & Pavot, W. (2009). Happiness is the frequency, not the intensity, of positive versus negative affect. *Assessing well-being: The collected works of Ed Diener*, 213-231. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-2354-4_10

Duffell, N. (2016). *Wounded Leaders*. Lone Arrow Press Limited.

Dush, C. M. K., & Amato, P. R. (2005). Consequences of relationship status and quality for subjective well-being. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *22*(5), 607-627. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407505056438

Easterlin, R. A. (2003). Explaining happiness. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, *100*(19), 11176–11183. https://doi.org/10.1073/PNAS.1633144100

Erikson, E. H. (1993). *Childhood and society*. WW Norton & Company.

Feeney, B. C., & Thrush, R. L. (2010). Relationship influences on exploration in adulthood: the characteristics and function of a secure base. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *98*(1), 57. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2009-24670-011

Fernald, D. H., & Duclos, C. W. (2005). Enhance your team-based qualitative research. *The Annals of Family Medicine*, *3*(4), 360-364. https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.290

Foucault, M. (2019). *Power: the essential works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984*. Penguin UK.

Fraiberg, S., Adelson, E., & Shapiro, V. (1975). Ghosts in the Nursery: A Psychoanalytic Approach to the Problems of Impaired Infant-Mother Relationships. *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry*, *14*(3), 387–421. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0002-7138(09)61442-4

Fraley, R. C., Heffernan, M. E., Vicary, A. M., & Brumbaugh, C. C. (2011). The Experiences in Close Relationships-Relationship Structures Questionnaire: A Method for Assessing Attachment Orientations Across Relationships. *Psychological Assessment*, *23*(3), 615–625. https://doi.org/10.1037/A0022898

Frankl, V. E. (1985). *Man's search for meaning*. Simon and Schuster.

Fredrickson, B. L. (2013). Updated thinking on positivity ratios. *American Psychologist*, *68*(9), 814–822. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033584

Freeman, H., & Brown, B. B. (2001). Primary attachment to parents and peers during adolescence: Differences by attachment style. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *30*(6), 653–674. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1012200511045

Freud, A. (2015). *War and children*. Lulu Press, Inc.

Freud, A. (2018). *The ego and the mechanisms of defence*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429481550/

Freud, S. (1917). Mourning and melancholia. *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, *14*(1914–1916), 237-258.

Freud, S. (1955). The psychotherapy of hysteria from studies on hysteria. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume II (1893-1895): Studies on Hysteria* (pp. 253-305). https://pep-web.org/document.php?id=SE.002.0253A

Freud, S. (1983). The interpretation of dreams. In *Literature and Psychoanalysis* (pp. 29-33). Columbia University Press. http://www2.uadec.mx/pub/Infoteca/1TheInterpretation.pdf

Gibney, P. (2006). The double bind theory: Still crazy-making after all these years. *Psychotherapy in Australia*, *12*(3), 48-55. https://search.informit.org/doi/abs/10.3316/informit.545822294870607

Goffman, E. (1961). On the characteristics of total institutions. In *Symposium on preventive and social psychiatry* (Vol. 4384).

Gothelf, D., Apter, A., Ratzoni, G., Orbach, I., Weizman, R., Tyano, S., & Pfeffer, C. (1995). Defense mechanisms in severe adolescent anorexia nervosa. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, *34*(12), 1648-1654. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0890856709663541

Gough, D., Thomas, J., & Oliver, S. (2012). Clarifying differences between review designs and methods. *Systematic Reviews*, *1*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1186/2046-4053-1-28/FIGURES/4

Gray, L. M., Wong-Wylie, G., Rempel, G. R., & Cook, K. (2020). Expanding qualitative research interviewing strategies: Zoom video communications. *The qualitative report*, *25*(5), 1292-1301.

Greene, M. J. (2014). On the inside looking in: Methodological insights and challenges in conducting qualitative insider research. *The qualitative report*, *19*(29), 1-13. http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR19/greene15.pdf

Griffin, J. (2007). What do happiness studies study?. *Journal of happiness studies*, *8*, 139-148.

Gullestad, S. E. (2001). Attachment theory and psychoanalysis: Controversial issues. *Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review*, *24*(1), 3–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/01062301.2001.10592610

Hanh, T. N. (2001). *Thich Nhat Hanh: Essential writings*. Orbis Books.

Harazneh, L., Hamdan-Mansour, A. M., & Ayed, A. (2021). Resiliency process and socialization among Palestinian children exposed to traumatic experience: Grounded theory approach. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, *34*(2), 88-95. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcap.12298

Harley, R., Sprich, S., Safren, S., Jacobo, M., & Fava, M. (2008). Adaptation of dialectical behavior therapy skills training group for treatment-resistant depression. *The Journal of nervous and mental disease*, *196*(2), 136-143. https://doi.org/10.1080/10503300600830710

Hatala, A. R., Njeze, C., Morton, D., Pearl, T., & Bird-Naytowhow, K. (2020). Land and nature as sources of health and resilience among Indigenous youth in an urban Canadian context: A

photovoice exploration. *BMC Public Health*, *20*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/S12889-020-08647-Z

Hebb, D. O. (2005). *The organization of behavior: A neuropsychological theory*. Psychology press.

Herman, J. L. (2015). *Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence: from domestic abuse to political terror*. Hachette UK.

Herrman, H., Stewart, D. E., Diaz-Granados, N., Berger, E. L., Jackson, B., & Yuen, T. (2011). What is resilience? *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, *56*(5), 258–265. https://doi.org/10.1177/070674371105600504

Higgins, D. J., & McCabe, M. P. (2003). Maltreatment and Family Dysfunction in Childhood and the Subsequent Adjustment of Children and Adults. *Journal of Family Violence*, *18*(2), 107–120. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022841215113

Hinshelwood, R. D. (1991). Psychodynamic Formulation in Assessment for Psychotherapy. *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, *8*(2), 166–174. https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1752-0118.1991.TB01173.X

HM Government (2021). *Promoting Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing A Whole School or College Approach.* Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1020249/Promoting_children_and_young_people_s_mental_health_and_wellbeing.pdf

Independent Schools Council (2022). *ISC Census and Annual Report 2022.* Retrieved from https://www.isc.co.uk/media/8387/isc_census_2022_final.pdf

Jacobs, M. (2017). Psychodynamic counselling in action. *Psychodynamic Counselling in Action*, 1-168.

Jamal, A. A. (2012). Developing interpersonal skills and professional behaviors through extracurricular activities participation: A perception of King Abdulaziz University medical students. *JKAU: Med Sci*, *19*(4), 3-24.

Jenkins, T. A., Nguyen, J. C., Polglaze, K. E., & Bertrand, P. P. (2016). Influence of tryptophan and serotonin on mood and cognition with a possible role of the gut-brain axis. *Nutrients*, *8*(1), 56.

Jennings, N. A., & Caplovitz, A. G. (2022). Media use and Coping in Tweens during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *31*(6), 1511–1521. https://doi.org/10.1007/S10826-022-02252-X

John, W. S., & Johnson, P. (2000). The Pros and Cons of Data Analysis Software for Qualitative Research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, *32*(4), 393–397. https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1547-5069.2000.00393.X

Johnstone, L., & Dallos, R. (2013). Formulation in psychology and psychotherapy: Making sense of people's problems. *Formulation in Psychology and Psychotherapy: Making Sense of People's Problems*, 1–290. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203380574

Jones, S. R. (2002). (Re) writing the word: Methodological strategies and issues in qualitative research. *Journal of college student development*. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2002-17472-003

Joseph, J. (2004). Foucault and reality. *Capital & Class*, *28*(1), 143–165. https://doi.org/10.1177/030981680408200108

Judge, T. A., Piccolo, R. F., Podsakoff, N. P., Shaw, J. C., & Rich, B. L. (2010). The relationship between pay and job satisfaction: A meta-analysis of the literature. *Journal of vocational behavior*, *77*(2), 157-167.

Kearney, M. H. (2001). Levels and applications of qualitative research evidence. *Research in Nursing & Health*, *24*(2), 145–153. https://doi.org/10.1002/NUR.1017

Kleitman, S., & Moscrop, T. (2010). Self-Confidence and academic achievements in Primary-school children: Their relationships and links to parental bonds, intelligence, age, and gender. *Trends and Prospects in Metacognition Research*, 293–326. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-6546-2_14/

Kirmayer, L. J. (1989). Cultural variations in the response to psychiatric disorders and emotional distress. *Social Science & Medicine*, *29*(3), 327-339. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/0277953689902815

Kobak, R., & Madsen, S. (2008). Disruptions in attachment bonds: Implications for theory, research, and clinical intervention. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2008-13837-002

Korol, M., Kramer, T., Grace, M., & Green, B. (2002). *Dam break: Long-term follow-up of children exposed to the Buffalo Creek disaster.* https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2002-01675-011

Layard, R. (2006). Happiness and public policy: A challenge to the profession. *The Economic Journal*, *116*(510), C24-C33. https://academic.oup.com/ej/article-abstract/116/510/C24/5085707

Layard, R. (2011). *Happiness 2/e: Lessons From A New Science*. Penguin UK.

Lemma, A. (2015). *Introduction to the practice of psychoanalytic psychotherapy*. John Wiley & Sons.

Levey, E. J., Oppenheim, C. E., Lange, B. C. L., Plasky, N. S., Harris, B. L., Gondah Lekpeh, G., Kekulah, I., Henderson, D. C., & Borba, C. P. C. (2016). A qualitative analysis of factors impacting resilience among youth in post-conflict Liberia. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, *10*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/S13034-016-0114-7

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. sage.

Linehan, M. (2018). *Cognitive-behavioral treatment of borderline personality disorder*. Guilford Publications.

Long, H. A., French, D. P., & Brooks, J. M. (2020). Optimising the value of the critical appraisal skills programme (CASP) tool for quality appraisal in qualitative evidence synthesis. *Research Methods in Medicine & Health Sciences*, *1*(1), 31-42. https://doi.org/10.1177/2632084320947559

Lopez, F. G., & Gormley, B. (2002). Stability and change in adult attachment style over the first-year college transition: Relations to self-confidence, coping, and distress patterns. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *49*(3), 355. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.49.3.355

Lowe, J. R., Kelley, M. N., Hong, O., & John Lowe, C. R. (2019). Native American adolescent narrative written stories of stress. *Wiley Online Library*, *32*(1), 16–23. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcap.12222

Luyten, P., & Fonagy, P. (2014). Mentalising in attachment contexts. In *The Routledge handbook of attachment: Theory* (pp. 107-126). Routledge.

Lyubomirsky, S., King, L. A., & Diener, E. (2004). Is happiness a strength?: An examination of the benefits and costs of frequent positive affect. *Manuscript submitted for publication*.

Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of general psychology*, *9*(2), 111-131. https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.9.2.111

MacKinnon, D., & Derickson, K. D. (2013). From resilience to resourcefulness: A critique of resilience policy and activism. *Progress in human geography*, *37*(2), 253-270. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132512454775

Mairi Emerson-Smith, Susan McPherson, & Penny Cavenagh (in press). Chapter 8: Having Psychotherapy to Help with Boarding School Experiences: the Role of Denial, Shame and Privilege. In Eds. Cavenagh, McPherson, Ogden, *Psychological Impacts of Boarding School*. Routledge.

Mander, D. J., & Lester, L. (2017). A longitudinal study into indicators of mental health, strengths and difficulties reported by boarding students as they transition from primary school to secondary boarding schools in Perth, Western Australia. *Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools*, *27*(2), 139-152. https://doi.org/10.1017/jgc.2017.1

Martens, M. F. J., Nijhuis, F. J., Van Boxtel, M. P., & Knottnerus, J. A. (1999). Flexible work schedules and mental and physical health. A study of a working population with non-traditional working hours. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, *20*(1), 35-46.

Masten, A. S. (2014). Global Perspectives on Resilience in Children and Youth. *Child Development*, *85*(1), 6–20. https://doi.org/10.1111/CDEV.12205

Matzka, M., & Nagl-Cupal, M. (2020). Psychosocial resources contributing to resilience in Austrian young carers: A study using photo novella. *Research in Nursing & Health*, *43*(6), 629–639. https://doi.org/10.1002/NUR.22085

Maulik, P. K., Eaton, W. W., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2011). The effect of social networks and social support on mental health services use, following a life event, among the Baltimore epidemiologic catchment area cohort. *Journal of Behavioral Health Services and Research*, *38*(1), 29–50. https://doi.org/10.1007/S11414-009-9205-Z

McFarlane, A. C., & Van Hooff, M. (2009). Impact of childhood exposure to a natural disaster on adult mental health: 20-year longitudinal follow-up study. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, *195*(2), 142-148. https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.108.054270

McWilliams, N. (2011). *Psychoanalytic diagnosis: Understanding personality structure in the clinical process*. Guilford Press.

Mertens, D. M. (2010). Literature review and focusing the research. *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity with Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods*, 89.

Miller, A. (1987). *The drama of being a child* (p. 176). London: Virago.

Mitchell, S. A., & Black, M. J. (2016). *Freud and beyond: A history of modern psychoanalytic thought*. Hachette UK.

Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J., Altman, D. G., & Prisma Group. (2010). Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses: the PRISMA statement. *International journal of surgery*, *8*(5), 336-341.

Mosavi, S., & Iravani, M. R. (2012). A study on relationship between emotional maturity and marital satisfaction. *Management Science Letters*, *2*(3), 927–932. https://doi.org/10.5267/J.MSL.2011.10.012

Muris, P., Meesters, C., & Van Brakel, A. (2003). Assessment of Anxious Rearing Behaviors with a Modified Version of "Egna Minnen Beträffande Uppfostran" Questionnaire for Children. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, *25*(4), 229–237. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1025894928131

Mutluer, T., Fatih, P., Tayakisi, E., Shabshog, M. K. Y., Çapaci, M., Yürük, D., & Necef, I. (2021). Psychopathology and Dissociation among Boarding School Students in Eastern Turkey. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma*, *14*(2), 201–207. https://doi.org/10.1007/S40653-021-00351-3

Myers, D. G. (2000). The funds, friends, and faith of happy people. *American psychologist*, *55*(1), 56.

National Health Service (2019). *The NHS Mental Health Implementation Plan.* Retrieved from
https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-mental-health-implementation-plan-2019-20-2023-24/

Noblit, G. W., & Hare, R. D. (1988). *Meta-ethnography: Synthesizing qualitative studies* (Vol. 11). sage.

Nvivo (2021). *QSR International.* (Version 13) [App]. University of Essex Software Hub.
https://software.essex.ac.uk/

Hammer, C. S. (2011). The importance of participant demographics. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, *20*(4), 261. https://doi.org/10.1044/1058-0360(2011/ed-04)

Partridge, S. (2013). Boarding school syndrome: disguised attachment-deficit and dissociation reinforced by institutional neglect and abuse. *Attachment: New Directions in Psychotherapy and Relational Psychoanalysis*, *7*(2), 202-213.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Qualitative research and evaluation methods. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *3rd*, 598. https://doi.org/10.2307/330063

Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice.* Sage publications.

Pawson, R., Tilley, N., & Tilley, N. (1997). *Realistic evaluation.* sage.

Peace, K. A., & Porter, S. (2004). A longitudinal investigation of the reliability of memories for trauma and other emotional experiences. *Applied Cognitive Psychology: The Official Journal of the Society for Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, *18*(9), 1143-1159.
https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721419898122

Richards, H. M., & Schwartz, L. J. (2002). Ethics of qualitative research: are there special issues for health services research? *Family Practice*, *19*(2), 135–139.
https://doi.org/10.1093/FAMPRA/19.2.135

Rizq, R. (2011). IAPT, anxiety and envy: A psychoanalytic view of NHS primary care mental health services today. *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, *27*(1), 37-55.
https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0118.2010.01221.x

Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M., & Ormston, R. (Eds.). (2013). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. sage.

Robbins, M. S., Alexander, J. F., Newell, R. M., & Turner, C. W. (1996). The immediate effect of reframing on client attitude in family therapy. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *10*(1), 28. https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.10.1.28

Robie, C., Ryan, A. M., Schmieder, R. A., Parra, L. F., & Smith, P. C. (1998). The Relation between Job Level and Job Satisfaction. *Group and Organization Management*, *23*(4), 470–495. https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601198234007

Robson, C. (2002). *Real world research: A resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Rohner, R. P. (1998). Father love and child development: History and current evidence. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *7*(5), 157–161. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.EP10836851

Root-Bernstein, R. S. (2003). The art of innovation: Polymaths and the universality of the creative process. *International handbook of innovation*, 267-278.

Rowling, J. K. (2015). *Harry Potter and the philosopher's stone* (Vol. 1). Bloomsbury Publishing.

Ruszczynski, S. (2018). *Psychotherapy with couples: Theory and practice at the Tavistock Institute of Marital Studies*. Routledge.

Ruvolo, A. P., Fabin, L. A., & Ruvolo, C. M. (2001). Relationship experiences and change in attachment characteristics of young adults: The role of relationship breakups and conflict avoidance. *Personal Relationships*, *8*(3), 265–281. https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1475-6811.2001.TB00040.X

Sayer, A. (1999). Realism and social science. *Realism and Social Science*, 1-224.

Schaverien, J. (2011). Boarding school syndrome: Broken attachments a hidden trauma. *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, *27*(2), 138-155. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0118.2011.01229.x

Schneider, J. C., Trinh, N. H. T., Selleck, E., Fregni, F., Salles, S. S., Ryan, C. M., & Stein, J. (2012). The long-term impact of physical and emotional trauma: the station nightclub fire. *PLoS ONE*, *1*(10). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0047339

Schore, A. N. (2002). Dysregulation of the right brain: A fundamental mechanism of traumatic attachment and the psychopathogenesis of posttraumatic stress disorder. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, *36*(1), 9–30. https://doi.org/10.1046/J.1440-1614.2002.00996.X

Seibert, A. C., & Kerns, K. A. (2009). Attachment figures in middle childhood. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, *33*(4), 347-355. https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025409103872

Selvini, M. P., Boscolo, L., Cecchin, G., & Prata, G. (1980). Hypothesizing — Circularity — Neutrality: Three Guidelines for the Conductor of the Session. *Family Process*, *19*(1), 3–12. https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1545-5300.1980.00003.X

Serageldin, M. (2000). Preserving the historic urban fabric in a context of fast-paced change. *Values and heritage conservation*, 51.

Seymour, S. C. (2013). "It Takes a Village to Raise a Child": Attachment Theory and Multiple Child Care in Alor, Indonesia, and in North India. *Attachment Reconsidered*, 115–139. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137386724_5

Sheldon, K. M., & Elliot, A. J. (1999). Goal striving, need satisfaction, and longitudinal well-being: The self-concordance model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *76*(3), 482–497. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.76.3.482

Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006). Achieving sustainable gains in happiness: Change your actions, not your circumstances. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *7*(1), 55–86. https://doi.org/10.1007/S10902-005-0868-8

Smith, B. W., Dalen, J., Wiggins, K., Tooley, E., Christopher, P., & Bernard, J. (2008). The brief resilience scale: assessing the ability to bounce back. *Springer*, *15*(3), 194–200. https://doi.org/10.1080/10705500802222972

Smith, J., Kyle, R. G., Daniel, B., & Hubbard, G. (2018). Patterns of referral and waiting times for specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, *23*(1), 41-49. https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12207

Smith, J. A., Flower, P., & Larkin, M. (2009) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research. *London: Sage*. https://www.torrossa.com/it/resources/an/5282221

Smith, S. (2006). Encouraging the use of reflexivity in the writing up of qualitative research. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, *13*(5), 209-215. https://doi.org/10.12968/IJTR.2006.13.5.21377

Solms, M. (2021). *The hidden spring: A journey to the source of consciousness*. Profile books.

Spiers, J., & Riley, R. (2019). Analysing one dataset with two qualitative methods: The distress of general practitioners, a thematic and interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *16*(2), 276-290. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2018.1543099

Squires, A. (2008). Language barriers and qualitative nursing research: methodological considerations. *International Nursing Review*, *55*(3), 265–273. https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1466-7657.2008.00652.X

Steelman, L. M., Assel, M. A., Swank, P. R., Smith, K. E., & Landry, S. H. (2002). Early maternal warm responsiveness as a predictor of child social skills: Direct and indirect paths of influence over time. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *23*(2), 135-156.

Stein, H., Koontz, A. D., Fonagy, P., Allen, J. G., Fultz, J., Brethour, J. R., Allen, D., & Evans, R. B. (2002). Adult attachment: What are the underlying dimensions? *Wiley Online Library*, *75*(1), 77–91. https://doi.org/10.1348/147608302169562

Stevens, A., & Price, J. (2015). *Evolutionary psychiatry: A new beginning*. Routledge.

Stubley, J., & Young, L. (Eds.). (2021). *Complex Trauma: The Tavistock Model*. Routledge.

Tawfik, G. M., Dila, K. A. S., Mohamed, M. Y. F., Tam, D. N. H., Kien, N. D., Ahmed, A. M., & Huy, N. T. (2019). A step by step guide for conducting a systematic review and meta-analysis with simulation data. *Tropical Medicine and Health*, *47*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41182-019-0165-6

Taylor, S. E., & Brown, J. D. (1999). Illusion and well-being: A social psychological perspective on mental health. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2000-07436-002

Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. G. (1993). Using the support group to respond to the isolation of bereavement. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1993-22827-001

Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. G. (1996). The posttraumatic growth inventory: Measuring the positive legacy of trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, *9*(3), 455–471. https://doi.org/10.1002/JTS.2490090305

Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. G. (2004). Posttraumatic Growth: Conceptual Foundations and Empirical Evidence. *Psychological Inquiry*, *15*(1), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1501_01

The British Psychological Society (2017). *BPS Practice Guidelines.* Retrieved from https://www.bps.org.uk/guideline/bps-practice-guidelines-2017

The British Psychological Society (2021). *BPS Code of Human Research Ethics.* Retrieved from https://www.bps.org.uk/guideline/bps-code-human-research-ethics

The British Psychological Society (2023). *Alternative Handbook 2023: Postgraduate Training Courses in Clinical Psychology.* Retrieved from https://explore.bps.org.uk/binary/bpsworks/ce5d8f58a20ecf32/fcd8f2a79b191dce9493d5d990 41b36b99db8e35b67f53a786fbc5941068eb56/prelims.pdf

The Department for Education (2022a). *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges.* Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data /file/1101454/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2022.pd

The Department for Education (2022b). *National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.* Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/boarding-schools-national-minimum-standards

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2022). *Depression in Adults: Treatment and Management.* Retrieved from https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng222

Theron, L. C., Theron, A. M., & Malindi, M. J. (2013). Toward an African definition of resilience: A rural South African community's view of resilient Basotho youth. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *39*(1), 63-87. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798412454675

Thomas, J., & Harden, A. (2008). Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, *8*. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-8-45

Thompson, A. R., & Russo, K. (2012). Ethical dilemmas for clinical psychologists in conducting qualitative research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *9*(1), 32-46. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2012.630636

Tozer, L., Stedmon, J., & Dallos, R. (2019). 'It is that bad but it isn't that bad': Exploring children's experiences of their mother's non-terminal cancer with a focus on attachment, resilience and trauma. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *24*(1), 53–68. https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104518781922

van der Kolk, B. A. (1994). The body keeps the score: Memory and the evolving psychobiology of posttraumatic stress. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, *1*(5), 253–265. https://doi.org/10.3109/10673229409017088

Verschueren, K., & Koomen, H. M. Y. (2012). Teacher-child relationships from an attachment perspective. *Attachment and Human Development*, *14*(3), 205–211. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616734.2012.672260

Vivian, E., Chewning, B., & Flanagan, C. (2022). Chasing a dream against all odds. *BMC Public Health*, *22*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/S12889-022-14130-8

Wahab, S., Rahman, F. N. A., Wan Hasan, W. M. H., Zamani, I. Z., Arbaiei, N. C., Khor, S. L., & Nawi, A. M. (2013). Stressors in secondary boarding school students: Association with stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms. *Asia-Pacific Psychiatry*, *5*, 82-89. https://doi.org/10.1111/appy.12067

Wallin, D. J. (2007). *Attachment in psychotherapy*. Guilford press.

Walsh, R. A. (1996). The problem of unconsciousness in qualitative research. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, *24*(3), 377–384. https://doi.org/10.1080/03069889608253022

Webb, L. E., Veenhoven, R., Harfeld, J. L., & Jensen, M. B. (2019). What is animal happiness?. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, *1438*(1), 62-76. https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.13983

Windle, G. (2011). What is resilience? A review and concept analysis. *Reviews in clinical gerontology*, *21*(2), 152-169. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0959259810000420

Winnicott, D. W. (1958). The capacity to be alone. *The International journal of psycho-analysis*, *39*, 416.

Winnicott, D. W. (2016). *The collected works of DW Winnicott* (Vol. 12). Oxford University Press.

Wolynn, M. (2017). *It didn't start with you: How inherited family trauma shapes who we are and how to end the cycle*. Penguin.

Wood, A. M., Froh, J. J., & Geraghty, A. W. (2010). Gratitude and well-being: A review and theoretical integration. *Clinical psychology review*, *30*(7), 890-905.

Woods-Jaeger, B., Siedlik, E., Adams, A., Piper, K., O'Connor, P., & Berkley-Patton, J. (2020). Building a contextually-relevant understanding of resilience among African American youth exposed to community violence. *Behavioral medicine*, *46*(3-4), 330-339. https://doi.org/10.1080/08964289.2020.1725865

Yablon, Y. B., & Itzhaky, H. (2021). The contribution of school experience to students' resilience following a terror-related homicide. *International journal of psychology*, *56*(1), 40-47. https://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.12635

Yanchar, S. C., & Westerman, M. A. (2006). Reconsidering quantitative research approaches: New interpretations and future possibilities. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2007-02036-002

Yardley, L. (2000). Dilemmas in qualitative health research. *Psychology and Health*, *15*(2), 215–228. https://doi.org/10.1080/08870440008400302

Zhang, F., & Labouvie-Vief, G. (2004). Stability and fluctuation in adult attachment style over a 6-year period. *Attachment & human development*, *6*(4), 419-437. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461673042000303127

Zhang, X., Li, J., Xie, F., Chen, X., Xu, W., & Hudson, N. W. (2022). The relationship between adult attachment and mental health: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *123*(5), 1089. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000437

Zigmond, A. S., & Snaith, R. P. (1983). The Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, *67*(6), 361–370. https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1600-0447.1983.TB09716.X

Zolkoski, S. M., & Bullock, L. M. (2012). Resilience in children and youth: A review. *Children and youth services review*, *34*(12), 2295-2303.

Appendices

Appendix A - CASP Quality Assessment Results

Item	Vivian et al., 2022	Harazneh et al., 2020	Yablon and Itzhaky, 2021	Matzka and Nagl-Cupal, 2020	Lowe et al., 2018	Woods-Jaeger et al. 2020	Hatala et al. 2020	Tozer et al., 2019	Bowden et al., 2018	Cheetham-Blake et al., 2019	Levey et al., 2016	Jennings and Caplovitz, 2022
1. Is this study qualitative research?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2. Are the research questions clearly stated?	N	Y	N	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
3. Is the qualitative approach clearly justified?	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
4. Is the approach appropriate for the research question?	Y	U	U	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
5. Is the study context clearly described?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	U	Y	Y
6. Is the role of the researcher clearly described?	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	Y
7. Is the sampling method clearly described?	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	Y

8. Is the sampling strategy appropriate for the research question?	Y	U	U	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	Y
9. Is the method of data collection clearly described?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
10. Is the data collection method appropriate to the research question?	Y	Y	U	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
11. Is the method of analysis clearly described?	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	U	Y	Y	N	N
12. Is the analysis appropriate for the research question?	Y	Y	U	U	U	U	Y	U	Y	Y	U	U
13. Are the claims made supported by sufficient evidence?	Y	Y	U	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U

N.B. Y = Yes; N = No; U = Unclear

Appendix B – Data Extraction Table

	Study Author(s)	Eva Vivian1*, Betty Chewning1 and Constance Flanagan2	Lobna Harazneh Ayman M. Hamdan-Mansour, Ahmad Ayed 2020	Yaacov B. Yablon1 and Haya Itzhaky2 2021	Martin Matzka | Martin Nagl-Cupal 2020	John R. Lowe1 | Melessa N. Kelley1 | OiSaeng Hong2 2018	Woods-Jaeger et al. 2020	Hatala et al. 2020	Laura Tozer , Jacqui Stedmon and Rudi Dallos 2019	Linda Bowden,1 Kirk Reed2 and Ellen Nicholson2 2018	Tara J. Cheetham-Blake1 * , Hannah E. Family2 and Julie M. Turner-Cobb 2019	Elizabeth J. Levey et al., 2016	Nancy A. Jennings 1 • Allison G. Caplovitz2 2022
Key Study Details													
	Purpose	The paper reports the findings of a draw-and-write activity designed to learn the processes whereby protective factors promote resilience from a child's point of view	to explore the process of resilience among Palestinian children exposed to psychological trauma due to detention experiences	The present study focused on students who were exposed to terror-related homicide with the aim of investigating the contribution of school climate resources to their resilience.	s to identify psychosocial resources used by young carers in Austria.	to report study findings related to themes of stress and coping strategies experienced by non-reservation-based Native American adolescents as expressed by their written stories	Specific aims of the focus groups included: 1) operationalizing the construct of resilience based on the youth's lived experience and 2) identifying factors aligned with the socioecological model that promote and inhibit resilience.	explored urban Indigenous youth perspectives about health and resilience within an inner-city Canadian context.	to explore how a child's attachment style, resilience and trauma levels influence their experiences of having a mother with cancer and how this effects the way they construct a narrative about their experiences	explored what occupations children aged 10–13 years participate in and how participation in occupation contributes to resilience from their perspective	The present study aimed to better understand children's experiences of stress, adversity, and coping	to identify factors contributing to resilience among youth in post-conflict Liberia	to learn about young people's (1) life situations, including school experience, (2) overall media use, (3) overall worries and difficulty with their situations, and (4) stress management and coping strategies during the fall semester of 2020
	Setting	U.S.A	Israel	Israel	Austria	U.S.A.	U.S.A.	Canada	United Kingdom	New Zealand	United Kingdom	Liberia	U.S.A.
	Sample	33 children, (23 females and 10 males	18 Palestinian children aged 12–18 years were exposed to detention.	Twenty five (13 girls) students	. Ten children and adolescents (aged 9–17)	179 Native American adolescent's ages 13–18-years old.	39 African American adolescents (ages 13–18) exposed to community violence	28 youth	; 10 children (six females and four males) aged between 10 and 18 years participated.	eight participants aged 10-13	Thirty-eight children (22 boys) aged 7–11 years	Seventy-five young people (age 13–18) The average age of the participants was 16.4 years (standard deviation 1.8 years). There were 38 females and 37 males.	36 young people ages 9–14 years; g 19 boys and 17 girls
	Data Collection	visual representations of resources (persons or things that, in their view, contribute to their wellbeing.) In depth interviews with a subset of 15 of the children was conducted to discuss the meaning of the	semi-structured interview	interviewed in an open-ended interview	Children took photographs to illustrate their everyday lives. The photographs were then used to guide subsequent interviews.	A qualitative descriptive narrative approach was used to capture written stories of stress	focus groups	in-depth interviews	narrative interview	semi-structured interviews and one focus group	Interviews	Semi-structured interviews were conducted	online interviews

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

Key Concept	Sub-Concept												
		images in their drawings											
	Data Analysis Method	A summative content analysis of the visual and narrative data was performed using a resilience framework.	A qualitative approach utilizing grounded theory	Mixed-methods	directed qualitative content analysis and using the theoretical lens of resilience	Key concepts and themes were identified by using the consensual qualitative research (CQR) approach from the participant's stories of stress	Focus-group transcripts were independently coded by two members of the research team and analyzed using an inductive approach	photovoice and modified Grounded Theory methodology	Narrative and Thematic analyses	thematic analysis, developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), was utilised to analyse the data.	analysed using inductive thematic analysis with a phenomenological lens	grounded theory	Generic analysis
Key Concept	**Sub-Concept**	**Concept Presentation in Study**											
Acceptance	The Passing of Time										The passage of time allowed coping with and moving on from stressful events		
	Letting Go of Feelings									Letting go of emotions helped to create opportunities to breath, reflect and accept their situation and build resilience and feel stronger Letting go of anger and sadness led to feeling calm, happy and strong and helped build resilience Letting go of feelings makes you feel relaxed and happy, it helps you to reflect on how to become a stronger person			
Supportive Others	Parents	Parents helped children make it through	Parent comforts, reduces fear, increases feelings of safety and explains what is happening		Parents are confidents and major source of support								

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

	Family	Supportive family	Family support		Family confidants and support		Seeking support from family	Family support					Spending time with family
	Community	Supportive teachers, neighbourhood and community	Community support	Supportive and available teachers		Guidance and support from teachers, traditional cultural elders and school counsellors	Rebuilding trust in others					Community connections can be stabilising	Spending time with neighbours
	Peers and friends	Supportive peers			Meaningful friendships Connecting with peers with similar experience, sometimes leading to friendships		Seeking support from close friends	Friend support	Emotional support from friends Practical support from friends, e.g. driving lifts	Talking to friends gets things off your chest	Playing with friends helps distract	Playing with friends stops thinking so don't feel worse	Spending time with friends Playing with others distracts from the stressor
	General									Talking with others allows emotional expression, getting advice, fostering support and letting go, which built resilience Fostering support vital for resilience Feeling supported by others you feel you can take on anything and others help you deal with things, you don't feel alone so you feel you can overcome problems	Social support helps you cope with stress Sharing your problems with others, feeling listened to, understood and reassured helpful Physical closeness to others is reassuring Being in others' presence can be comforting Hugging parents, friends, pets or toys is comforting	Stable support figures helped cope with difficult memories Relationships helps self-regulation	
Culture	Religion and spirituality					Praying helps calm down if stressed						Praying to a deity allows feelings that everything is possible and hopes that the deity will	

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

													improve their future Belief systems where their lives mattered, God loved them, and they had the power to make things happen for themselves.
	Tradition					Thinking about our traditions makes us strong as people		Ceremonial objects (e.g. traditional medicine, drums and powwow dresses) bolster resilience Gift-giving, traditional dancing				Traditional beliefs and moral codes of behaviour giving systems of meaning	
	Cultural Values		Developing political awareness				Cultural values of communalism and self-determination contribute to resilience	Cultural pride					
	Identity and Belonging		Developing a sense of identity and belonging to the homeland	Having roles and a sense of belonging at school									
Emotion Regulation	Activities	Music Drawing Photography				Running relieves stress Art relieves stress and creates a feeling of calm Listening to music Watching movies, TV and internet videos Reading books	Creative expression through art, dance and music regulates emotions Playing an instrument calms me Playing sports as an emotional outlet Eating and sleeping helps self-regulate			Taking part in activities helped build resilience through fostering support, letting go and experiencing distraction or fun, laughter, enjoyment and happiness, getting advice, expressing feelings, escapism, Talking with others Listening to music Watching TV	YouTube videos provide distraction Creative activities (drawing, writing) allows emotional expression and helps coping	A balance of work and play, suffering and joy allows one to withstand difficult experiences	Media use (video games, TV, movies, reading, music) increase resilience by reducing stress Video games allowed connection with friends and unwinding Texting and video chats help

| | | | | | | | Creativity, craftwork, drawing, photography | Working jobs helps cope with financial stressors | | | Social media

Creative activities

Social media allowed getting advice, laughter and enjoyment, building feelings and emotional expression

Watching videos made to help people with tough times, and reading advice in comments, helping others with comments can help you feel connected to others and helps

Watching TV allows enjoyment, laughter, forgetting reality, escapism, distraction and happiness contributing to resilience

Listening to music allows emotional expression, enjoyment, laughter and forgetting reality, calming, clears mind, forgetting the past, helps cope

Creative occupations (reading, writing, drawing) allow emotional expression, forgetting reality, escapism and getting advice | | | social needs be met

Exercise and sports helps get stuff off my mind and helps distract

Doing crafts helps keep me occupied

Reading

Writing

Painting

Drawing

Designing

Riding horses calms me down, reduces stress and helps me feel safe and happy

Playing with pets |

					Sport, singing and dancing allowed building friendships, distraction, enjoyment, laughter and happiness, fostered support and contribute to resilience							
	Distraction				Finding distraction from sorrows and problems Pursuing personal interests alone allowed distraction	Working all the time to stay distracted from worries				Distraction allows forgetting reality, escapism and builds resilience Distraction helps get through challenging times, provides temporary relief and builds resilience	Distraction helps coping and is helpful	
	Defences							Denial and minimisation of the stressor and one's emotional response Not remembering the stressor		Emotional expression through cathartic actions (releasing anger) helps recover from stressful experience Cathartic release through crying allows emotional expression and diminishes stressor impact	Fantasies of being powerful and providing help for others rather than needing help themselves	
	Coping Strategies										The ability to delay gratification and self-soothe supports emotion regulation without unhealthy coping strategies	
	General										Emotion regulation essential for continuing to function	
Cognition	Normalising		normalizing the traumatic situations									

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

	Reframing		Surviving trauma as something to be proud of								The ability to positively reframe a stressful experience supports coping and resilience Trying to have positive thoughts helps		Having a positive mindset
	Problem-solving		Problem-solving coping skills								Problem-solving coping skills	thinking creatively about alternative strategies for managing difficult situations thinking creatively about problems allows identification of adaptive solutions and maintains hope	
	Reflection				Spending time alone reflecting on experiences and thoughts led to relaxation and peace of mind						Cognitive flexibility (including being able to put experiences into perspective, use metaphor, be self-reflective) associated with resilience, allows realistic appraisals of situations and difficulties faced and effective responses, neither overly optimistic or despairing		
Knowledge	Developing understanding								When understanding is developed worry is lifted and feel more comfortable		Increasing awareness through information gathering helpful for managing future stressors and able to mentally prepare for stressor, helpful for coping Increasing awareness through getting		

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

											knowledge from others a source of comfort		
	Learning from Adversity						learning from adversity			Learning from experiences so know what to do next time	Being familiar with a stressful event makes you more able to cope with it		
										Learning from stressful experiences			
	Education	Education creates hope for a successful future										Children in school function better	
Changing Oneself	Changing Oneself						Changing how you do things and becoming a new person to adapt better and increase resilience			Becoming stronger through the adversity			
										Resilience is a coping process that happens to you rather than something your born with			
										Bouncing back from what happened as a changed person, different and prepared for the next challenge			
										Resilience is going through something and becoming a better version of yourself so knowing what to do next time			
										Resilience is a process leading to becoming calmer			
										The difficult experience leads to growth, a changed			

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

									self, and bouncing back

Growing in strength and confidence | | | |
| *Traits* | Determination | | | | | | Relying on oneself to manage difficulties after trauma important

determination makes one appear less vulnerable

Resilience is the ability to persevere | | | | | Showing determination in the face of obstacles |
| | Discipline and perseverance | | | - | | Resilience requires being disciplined

Being disciplined by taking care of family members, reducing family stress and increasing connectedness | | | | | | |
| | Hope and Optimism | | | - | | | | | Once the event is over everything will be back to normal | | | |
| | Social skills | | | | | | | | | | | Social intelligence

(empathy, altruism, and the ability to form connections) allows access to |

153

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

												sources of support	
												The ability to connect allows children to form supportive relationships in their communities	
	Responsibility, Agency and Control		Being responsible and an agent of change									An internal sense of control and agency reinforces self esteem and optimism	
			Responsible for participating in communal events									Having a sense of agency and control over your life, that have ability to impact your environment	
			We are our country's future									Believing one had the power to positively impact your future	
Environment	A physical Safe Space			School providing a safe environment was important for coping with traumatic event				Safe places in their environments, e.g. youth centres and schools					
	Routine and Structure								Life became settled as got into a routine, and then it was fine				
	Connection to Nature							Being present in and connecting with nature fostered resilience and well-being					

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

								Nature seen as protecting from negative experiences Being in nature reduces stress and distracts from negative feelings Being in nature led to a feeling of deeper connection with loved ones Nature provides metaphors for new beginnings, starting over and overcoming negative life experiences, teaches resilience and that change is part of life, models healthy relationships, providing peace of mind and, easier adaptation to change, bringing a sense of hope, positivity and inner strength					
Explanation, Theory and Second-order Interpretations	families, particularly parents have the strongest influence on supporting the resilience process in a child. a protective factor (mother's support) interacted with risks (unsupportive father and bullying from peers at school) to result in a resilient outcome (improvement in grades and new friends).	Palestinian children exposed to political detention had their own positive perception of the trauma and had a high level of posttraumatic maturation early childhood political awareness, family and community support, and sense of belonging improved the ability of detained children to normalize	when considering resilience as presenting fewer negative (PTS) outcomes, school safety and school facilities serve as protective factors. However, when focusing on positive change (PTG) following a disaster, it is connectedness to the school and relationships with teachers that explain students' resilience	Personal resources encompassed (a) being able to spend leisure time and (b) finding distraction from sorrows and problems. Interpersonal resources, encompassed (a) fostering meaningful friendships; (b) receiving support from the family; and (c) bonding with the ill or disabled family member. The availability and use of these resources enabled or supported young carers to adapt to the challenges of their lives as young	Participants who expressed positive coping behaviors reflected characteristics of Native-Reliance qualities related to beliefs and values of seeking truth and making connections, being responsible, being disciplined, and being confident. Seeking truth and making connections for Native Americans refers to knowing the spirit in everything, including themselves, so that connections become known in all aspects of their lives.	participants consistently highlighted the critical role of social support, interpersonal relationships, and cultural factors in promoting resilience after trauma.	youth can make or create space for culturally rooted stories, teachings, and conceptions of land and nature to function materially and spiritually within urban cityscapes, and thus becomes an important strategy of identity recreation and hope for the future Nature was seen here as endowed with sacred or spiritual meanings and embedded in relations that served as powerful embodied metaphors	In describing their experiences, each child typically said they were 'okay', 'fine' and 'not worried'. While this could reflect the reality of their experience, it could be evidence of the activation of defences such as denial and minimising to protect them from the level of trauma associated with this experience. These defensive attachment strategies typically act to protect the child from the distress of not having their needs met by their attachment figure.	identified six occupations (using social media, talking to others, watching television, listening to music, creative occupations and active occupations) which contributed to resilience by building friendships; forgetting reality; imagining another place; expressing feelings; and enjoyment and laughter. In turn, these five elements of participation in occupation appear to build resilience through four coping strategies; letting go, fostering support, distraction, fun and happiness		Five essential factors interact to support the development of resilience in this population: emotion regulation, cognitive flexibility, agency, social intelligence and meaning-making Relationships impact the development of all the individual factors that support resilience, including emotion regulation,	Media was serving as a tool and strategy for keeping them from getting stressed. media was a tool for coping with this difficult situation. For a chance to escape with funny TV shows, self-entertain or be creative with TikTok, and just have fun after school with video game play, tweens found ways to

Like families and schools, communities can provide relationships that support resilience in youth.	abnormal situations and successfully cope with psychological trauma	the actual staying in school and the use of school resources that are not necessarily targeted intentionally toward interventions with disasters are resilience factors	carers, such as worries and fears associated with the relative's wellbeing or witnessing unpleasant aspects of care, illness, or disability, and allowed them to demonstrate resilience	Participant descriptions of feeling connected to their ancestor's experiences exemplified this quality.	that helped youth to mitigate distressing life experiences. The trees, plants, and animals which inhabit the "land" were also highly personal beings which formed part of young people's social and spiritual universe, and taught youth important life lessons	cognitive flexibility, agency, social intelligence and meaning-making
Emotional awareness, the process of identifying when one is stressed or angry is an important part of the resilience process.	Awareness among these children was well developed, fostering their resilience and ability to cope effectively	The findings suggest a differentiation between two main school factors in order to understand the school's role in enhancing resilience: sheltering and supporting. Sheltering encompasses students' feelings of both psychosocial and physical safety in school and the level of school facilities provided for them. Supporting encompasses students' relationships with their teachers, the teachers' availability, and their school connectedness	we identified a variety of personal resources that can be attributed to the young carers themselves, as well as interpersonal resources that can be traced back primarily to their friends and families. This indicates that young carers can largely draw on resources comparable to those generally available to other children.	Participants who described being willing and motivated to work at jobs that were available to them in their communities to help contribute to their family financial needs were exemplifying the quality of being responsible. The quality of being responsible refers to caring to provide by having an income and accepting assistance for what is necessary and to respect others by being present and accountable.	Indigenous youth connections with land and nature may be a hidden strength or source of resilience and well being that has not been adequately explored or understood within urban contexts in previous population or public health literature	relieve stress with media.
Finding an internal locus of control where one feels they can control how they feel by engaging in healthy coping strategies can have a positive impact on mental health	Palestinian children's participation in socialization strengthens their identity and is fostered by a sense of belonging and commitment to the homeland					
If the home environment is nurturing and supportive, internal assets such as confdence, selfesteem, and coping skills are strengthened, enabling a child to overcome obstacles and adversities within his or her environment.	from supportive social relations have promoted the well-being and healthy sense of belonging of Palestinian children, fostering their internal resources that promote resilience			The quality of being disciplined refers to seeking a vision by making decisions based on honor and defending the vision which was frequently exemplified in the participant's desire and plans to continue their education beyond high school.		
Social resources such as schools, teachers and peers also contribute to the resilience process if they provide support	Children's perceptions of trauma have a direct influence on how they react and cope. their high level of socialization awareness helped them to perceive			The quality of being confident refers to having a sense of identity by being proud of and accepting one's Native American heritage, beliefs, and values. Those participants who noted their belief in traditions such as prayer and ancestral		

		and a sense of belonging.	traumatic experiences as a noble act that they should be proud of.			reflections exemplified this quality							

REFLECTIONS

Having not undertaken the interviews or completed the transcription I have no memory or model of the way anything was said, what the person looked like, how they spoke and behaved – biases based on these factors removed – but the contextual influence of these factors on the ideas generated thru analysis also removed

The interviews were conducted during the pandemic and I analysed them afterwards – big shift in this sociocultural context – new context may have influenced the way I interpreted the data developed in the previous context

Each interview is a story, developed in that particular moment, between those two people (researcher and participant) – how much can it ever reflect other people's experience

But bringing together multiple people's stories may help draw the common strings out between stories

Impact of my not having been to boarding school interpreting conversations between two people who have – could I miss subtext/ common language between them

Impact of my not going to boarding school and hearing the stories and caricatures of boarding school – how much is my perception and interpretation influenced by these?

What is the impact of my current training and knowledge – those theoretical ideas freshest in my mind – seeing things through a psychoanalytic lens?

Significance of the historical, social and political context that I am analysing the data in – current cost of living crisis and war in Ukraine – how might themes of deprivation, threat, conflict etc held in the collective consciousness about these events influence the data analysis.

All interviews were conducted over video conferencing software – how might this have influenced the rapport of the interviewee and researcher – did it feel more comfortable being a safe distance, in own space, not in the same space, not having to travel, not being in a primal situation with another – especially with potential differences in attachment of ex-boarders

The benefits of the audio recording being transcribed professionally, but a loss of this element of exposure to the data for me that would have if listened over and over transcribing – also loss of original exposure to data thru not doing interviews

How might the two interviewers ask the questions differently, and related to the participants differently, and how might this have affected what material the participants produced.

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

How much correlation was there between the interviewers' ages and the participants ages – both significantly older than me, most participants were too – participants see them as more part of their cohort? – feel they would understand more?

Did participants see interviewers as part of their culture? – especially ex-boarder vs. non-boarder interviewer – an implicit communication of understanding what is meant by boarding life concepts and terms, having lived them – would participants be more likely to say certain things and not others to the interviewers based on how they perceived age, gender, social class etc?

The participants may feel better relationship with researcher and may feel more able to say certain things – importance of relationship building skills – impact of interviewing psychologists? – some participants easier to build relationship with than others?

Reflecting on why participants chose to take part in this for free – what do they get out of it? What wants and needs are met? – or what pressures are there from systems to do it?

Both interviewers were highly experienced researchers and clinical psychologists – how might this have affected their confidence and how this was portrayed – and so how professional they seemed to participants and how safe participants felt disclosing

Which lenses do I not have yet that I would have used to understand the data and interact with the participants?

Which lenses do I choose/ prefer and why?

Trying not to view material through themes/ hypotheses/ lenses already developed and use systemic theory approach of curiosity, not marrying to one hypothesis and keep generating hypotheses

Now doing psychoanalytic placement I know how much was likely being communicated unconsciously between researcher and participant – not much of this would make it into transcript – also how well is transcript transcribed by company to show potential defenses and resistance – also learned better how to listen for unconscious communication AFTER results finished

What part(s) of themselves were the interviewers bringing to the interview and what part(s) of self is the interviewee bringing?

How much does the interview situation trigger each interviewer's object relations, and how much the participants? unconsciously – for me, on the outside, not included – or contemporary Oedipus complex of being the analyser of the data but not allowed in the close (parental relationship) between interviewer and interviewee

What story/ discourse/ narrative would I be putting out there with this research – if its published, if it's not – would it be a dominant or subjugated story?

How well were participants able to tell whether the interviewer went to boarding school or not – and so what groups did they see the researcher as being in – theirs or different

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

Participants seeing researcher as authority figure – abandoning – just wanting their own needs met – like parents – projecting on to them

participants may need to build rapport/ engagement/ trust with you before they feel safe to say some things – a benefit of psychologists doing research?

Appendix D – Consent Form

Consent Form

Title of Project: Exploring the impact of boarding schools on adult wellbeing and relationships: **Part 2 – in-depth interviews**

Name of Researcher: [Name of interviewer]

Thank you for agreeing to participate in Part 2 of this study. Information for Participants was included in the online survey that you have already completed. The Information for Participants page described the study and what is involved in Part 2 (in-depth interviews). If you have any questions about the study or wish to discuss taking part please contact [Name] on [email]

Please initial boxes

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information page for the above study which was part of the online survey I have already completed. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my medical care or legal rights being affected.

3. I understand that data collected during the study, may be looked at by the other members of the research team listed on the Participant Information page. I give permission for these individuals to have access to this data.

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of participant _____ Date_____

Signature_____

Resilience and Happiness Among Adults Who Attended Boarding School

Name of person taking consent _____ Date_____

Signature_____

Appendix E – Recruitment Poster

Did you have a positive experience at boarding school? Are you based in the UK and over 23?

Would you be interested in taking part in a research study, run by University of Essex looking at peoples' experiences of boarding school? The study is part of an ongoing programme of research about various different experiences of boarding school. **The research team are currently particularly interested in hearing from ex-boarders who feel the experience was on the whole mainly positive.**

If you would like to find out more about the study and decide whether to take part or not, click:
https://essex.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bCrzyWF3tphWgsK

Here you will find more information about the study and what is involved in taking part. If you do not want to take part, you can close the webpage at any time and are not obliged in any way to go ahead. If after reading the study information you want to take part, please proceed to complete the online survey.

After completing the online survey you will be asked if you would be willing to take part in an interview with one of the researchers. This is entirely up to you. If you are willing to take part in an interview, you will be asked to leave contact details.
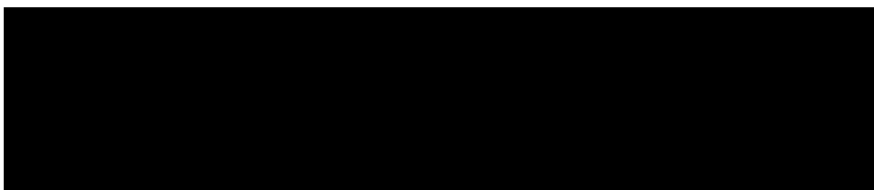
Appendix F – Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Page

Exploring the impact of attending boarding school on adult wellbeing and relationships

Information for participants

We are a team of researchers at the University of Essex. We are interested in the experiences of people who attended boarding schools and what impact school and early family life has had on adult well-being and relationships.

Who can take part?

If you are aged 23 or older and attended a boarding school, you are eligible to take part in this study.

What is the aim of the project?

This study aims to explore the experiences of those who attended boarding schools and to compare the impact of attending as a boarder with attending as a day pupil. The study will examine if there are differences in the impact of school on current well-being and relationships.

What is involved in taking part?

There are two parts of the study. You may take part in Part 1 only (the online survey); or you may take part in both (online survey plus an individual interview). If you just wish to take part in the interview please get in touch with us directly.

Part 1

The first part of the project involves completing this online survey. If you tick the consent box on the next page, you will be guided through an online survey which includes a range of questions about your current wellbeing and relationships as well as what you can remember about your childhood upbringing, experiences and family life. The survey will take 10–15 minutes to complete.

Part 2

At the end of the survey there will be an opportunity to let us know if you would be interested in taking part in a further interview about your experiences. If you want to take part in an interview, you can enter your contact details and one of the researchers will get in touch to arrange a convenient time and place for the interview. The interview would be audio-recorded and transcribed.

The interview would take place by Zoom or telephone.

What if I'm not sure whether to take part?
If you have questions about the project or if you would like to talk more about it before you take the survey or before you

decide whether you want to be interviewed, you can contact a member of the research team by email (details below).

Do I have to take part?

No. It is your choice to participate or not. No one will mind if you choose not to take part. You can also change your mind at any time during the survey or interview. You can let us know at any time that you no longer wish to take part.

Will people recognize me from the information I give?

No. All of your answers to the survey will be kept confidential. Your name or details will not be mentioned. All information will be stored securely in password protected files to which only the researchers will have access to.

If you decide to take part in an interview, this will be recorded. The recording will be kept securely and any personal details will be changed. Everything you say will be kept confidential and if something you say is quoted in a report, you will not be identifiable to others.

What happens to the data?

All the information from all the people who take part will be compiled and then analyzed. The findings will then be written up and (if you choose to provide contact details) will be shared with you and other people who took part. The project will be written up in an academic journal article or book chapter.
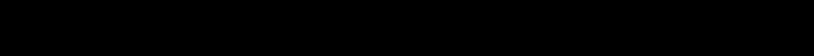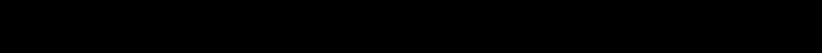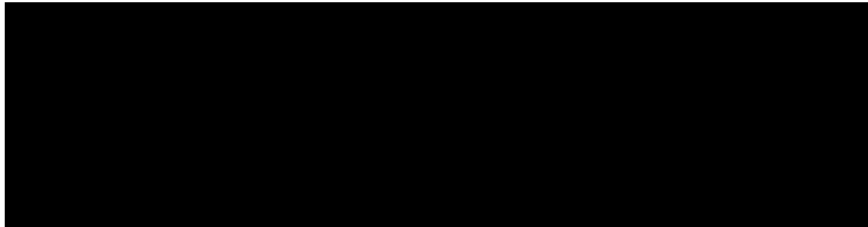
Are there any risks to me?

Participating in the research is not anticipated to cause any harm or distress. However, discussion of any personal or emotive topics may bring up feelings for some. Please let us know if taking part in the project causes you any distress. At the end of this survey, you will find names and details of professionals and organizations where you may be able to find support for any distress that is stirred up.

What if I'm not happy and want to make a complaint?

If for any reasons you feel unhappy with the process or treatment you receive when participating in the project you can contact one of the lead members of the research team: ████████████████████████████████████ If you feel your complaint isn't handled to the best of your satisfaction, you can contact the University of Essex research governance manager ████████████████████████████████
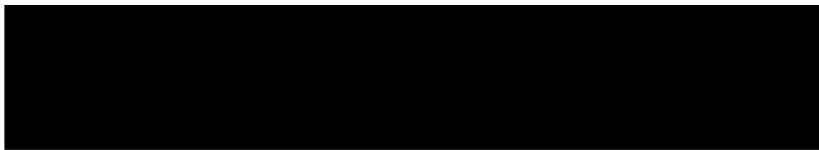
Researcher contact details

████████████████████████████████
████████████████████████████████
████████████████████████████████
████████████████████████████████

Consent to Survey

Before completing the survey, please read the statements below and indicate your consent by checking ALL of the boxes.

If you would like to contact the researcher in this study to discuss this research before you complete this survey, please contact:

☐ I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information on the previous screen

☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason

☐ I agree to take part in this study

Appendix G – Demographics Questionnaire

Demographics

About you

Gender

○ Male
○ Female
○ Other
○ Prefer not to say

Age

_____

Relationship status

○ Married
○ Single
○ Divorced
○ Separated
○ Civil partnership
○ Co-habiting
○ Common law

Number of children?

_____

Schools attended from age 5-18

	Age started (approx)	State/independent	Day/boarding
School 1			
School 2			

	Age started (approx)	State/independent	Day/boarding
School 3			
School 5			
School 6			

If you attended a boarding school, what were the reasons for attending? (Tick any that apply)

☐ I'm unsure

☐ Parent in the armed forces

☐ Family tradition

☐ [   ] Other (describe)

Locations of school attended (either day or boarding school)

☐ London

☐ South West England

☐ South East England

☐ East of England

☐ West Midlands

☐ East Midlands

☐ Wales

☐ Yorkshire and the Humber

☐ North West England

☐ North East England

☐ Scotland

☐ Northern Ireland

☐ Republic of Ireland
☐ Other

Age finished school

[   ]

What is your highest educational qualification?

○ GCSE
○ A Levels
○ Diploma
○ Degree
○ Masters
○ PhD
○ [   ] Other

What is your current occupation?

[   ]

What is/was your mother's main occupation?

[   ]

What is/was your father's main occupation?

[   ]

Did one or both of your parents attend an independent day school?

○ Yes, both
○ Yes, my mother
○ Yes, my father
○ Neither attended
○ Don't know

Did one or both of your parents attend a boarding school?

○ Yes, both
○ Yes, my mother
○ Yes, my father
○ Neither attended
○ Don't know

How would you describe your ethnicity?

[   ]

What religious beliefs do you hold (if any)?

_____

Appendix H – Study Ethical Approval

University of Essex ERAMS

20/04/2021

[redacted]

Health and Social Care, Health and Social Care

University of Essex

[redacted]

Ethics Committee Decision

Application: ETH2021-1196

I am writing to advise you that the amendment to your research proposal entitled "Exploring the impact of attending boarding school on adult wellbeing and relationships" has been reviewed by the Ethics Sub Committee 2.

The Committee is content to give a favourable ethical opinion of the research. I am pleased, therefore, to tell you that your application has been granted ethical approval by the Committee.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information or have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

This email was sent by the University of Essex Ethics Review Application and Management System (ERAMS).