Letters from home:

an interpretive exploration of the

experiences of people who were

children during World War Two

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Abstract

World War Two (WWII) brought upheaval for children on a global scale, with fathers conscripted and transported away to fight in sometimes distant places, mothers supporting the war effort and millions of children evacuated away from home and harm. People turning eighty in the 2010s are the first generation to have become octogenarians having experienced WWII as children.

Interviews and written accounts have been adopted as methods of data collection, to hear stories from this "silent generation", people whose voices were again stifled by a global pandemic. The challenges of engagement with technology and the requirements for many to shield away from potential harm facilitated a novel approach to reach a population that risked further marginalisation.

The resulting themes reveal how children experienced the last period of global conflict for over 80 years. Their stories tell of gas masks and air raid shelters, of missing fathers and hard-working mothers of course, but the use of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) has uncovered deeper meanings for these wartime experiences.

A key theme is "purposeful remembering", the way in which older people are engaging with their memories of a wartime childhood, using those memories to construct and re-construct the narrative of their lives. This may shed light on how those early experiences are shaping relationships, expectations, hopes and fears as people move forward in to older, older age.

Acknowledgments

Glossary of terms and abbreviations

AAI – Adult Attachment Inventory

ACE – Adverse Childhood Event

BDI – Beck Depression Inventory

Eleven-plus exam – this national examination gave children access to grammar school education

Froebel, Friedrich (1782-1852) – early education pioneer and inventor of the kindergarten.

GET – Group Experiential Theme

IPA – Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

LQR – Longitudinal Qualitative Research

PET – Personal Experiential Theme

Probus – a local, national and international social organization for retired and semi-retired people

PTSD – posttraumatic stress disorder

RMN – Registered Mental Health Nurse

U3A – University of the Third Age – groups offering opportunities for ongoing learning and education for people no longer in work

WI - Women's Institute, an international women's organization founded in the UK in 1920. The organisation played an important role in the evacuation of children from cities to the countryside during WWII

WWI – World War One

WWII – World War Two

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Chapter 1:   INTRODUCTION

Global events of the first half of the twentieth century heralded social change which impacted upon the life experience of subsequent generations. Prior to World War One (WWI) in 1914-18, women in Great Britain could reasonably have expected to marry and enter into parenthood by their early twenties, but this hope was dashed with the loss of potential husbands, conscripted to fight, leaving behind a generation of widows and spinsters (Schoen & Baj, 1984). In a similar way, deprivation in 1930s USA saw a delay in marriage and childbearing, although this change was not carried forward into future generations (Elder, 1974). World War Two (WWII) separated families, through mass evacuation and/or conscription. Men left the family home to fight, leaving women behind to take on roles vacated by those men, at the same time as managing homes and families.

1.1 HISTORICAL EVENTS

> *"I have to tell you now that no such undertaking has been received, and that consequently this country is at war with Germany." (Neville Chamberlain radio address, September 3rd, 1939)*

This broadcast was heard by families nationwide as they gathered around the household radio. On 1st September 1939 Nazi Germany invaded Poland. Two days later on 3rd September Great Britain and France declared war on Germany, heralding the start of a global conflict that would last for 6 years.

Events from WWII are well documented, and their historical significance has not diminished over time, with the 70th anniversary of Operation Pied Piper (the move

to evacuate children to the countryside out of harm's way) being marked in 2019. The British Evacuees Association publishes a monthly newsletter containing stories of evacuation and requests to reconnect with foster families. Commemoration takes many forms from formal memorial to fictional representation such as books or films. The "story" is well known, we talk about it, fictional representations mirror true events, and the ending is known in advance. Although it is important to look at events from a historical perspective, the way that they are portrayed colours our interpretation of them. Winston Churchill said, "history is written by the victors", international perspectives differ and when we read something from the past, we are unaware of the motivational influences of the person writing it (Friedlander, 2019). Reading across time, we use our own individual lens in the present to understand events of the past (Elder, 1974).

It should be remembered that perspectives on WWII differ by nationality. For people in Great Britain, remembrance is an important aspect of our social calendar. For people in other countries such as Germany this is not the case, and the remembering of WWII events may be an uncomfortable endeavour (Wilkinson, 1985). German researchers have however explored the impact of paternal separation due to the war and its impact on the life course, establishing the importance of the father in the early life of the child, and the potential impact of separation due to war (von Franz et. al., 2007).

A warning was issued by Bowlby et. al. (1939) that childhood separation because of evacuation may have lasting impact, particularly for children aged between two and five years when war broke out. He suggested that whilst older children might be able to withstand being moved away from home, the risk was greater for younger children. Bowlby was already beginning to explore the prolonged impact of separation (six months or more) from mothers as a cause for delinquency as

well as anxiety and other mental health disorders in adolescence. He made suggestions for strategies to mitigate the impact of separation, including regular visits from parents, although in reality, distance precluded this for many. Children who remained at home continued to attend school and were often raised in multigenerational households where grandmothers and aunts took lead roles in childcare whilst mothers took on traditional male roles such as those in engineering and agriculture.

Children who were evacuated away from cities in "Operation Pied Piper" were billeted, usually with strangers in the countryside. Evacuation timescales gave families little time to prepare for such a momentous event; children in Guernsey left home with only a change of clothes and little idea of where they were heading or how long they would be away (Le Poidevin, 2010). It cannot be assumed though that wartime experiences were all negative, evacuation was itself an attempt to move children away from the path of danger from enemy bombing raids, and many people have fond memories of their time away (Foster et. al., 2003). It should be remembered also that many children (including the participants in my study) were not evacuated and areas including Staffordshire and Derbyshire became reception areas for those evacuated away from larger cities such as London and Birmingham.

Periods of adversity in childhood have the power to exert negative impact on mental and physical health across the life course, and the impact of WWII on people's health has been explored by several authors (Beekman et. al. 1998; Foster et. al., 2003; Rusby and Tasker 2009). These explorations have tended to focus on evacuation and been largely quantitative in nature, however, and have

not examined the phenomenology or individual meaning of the experiences. A small qualitative study focusing on separation through evacuation and life transitions has been conducted using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis as an analytical framework (Morris-King, 2009), but there has been little exploration of the experiences of children who remained at home. My study aims to explore that gap further in exploring the experiences of children at home during WWII. Svensson et. al., (2012) identify the importance of early life experiences for wellbeing later in life and Morris-King (2009) suggests that traumatic events may resurface as older people make the transition into another, potentially challenging phase of their lives - the Fourth Age or "older, old".

1.2 WHY THIS TOPIC?

In 2013, in my role as Specialist Practitioner in older person's mental health I was asked to see John (name changed to protect confidentiality) in the Older Person's Mental Health Out-patient Clinic. John told me that he had experienced sub-clinical symptoms of anxiety for most of his adult life, including digestive issues such as irritable bowel syndrome. He described these as a "nervous stomach". Despite these feelings of anxiety, John got married and was able to work continuously until his retirement at the age of sixty-five years. John and his wife never had children, although reasons for this were not explored in any detail. It was only post-retirement that John sought formal help with his symptoms of anxiety and depression, which were by now causing him to withdraw from his usual activities. John described being reared by his grandmother during WWII. His father was away fighting (not returning until John was six years old) and his mother worked on munitions. He had not considered his early childhood in relation to his overall life experience, but this clinical encounter was the catalyst to developing a research question which would address the issue of childhood separation due to war and its impact on mental health in later life.

This clinical encounter and a subsequent review of the research (Longson & Beech, 2017) stirred an interest in exploring potential links between a childhood experienced during a period of global conflict and the development of psychopathology later in life. Early indications seemed to show that there is a link which is multifactorial and warrants further exploration using a research method that illuminates meaning for the people who experienced WWII as children (Longson & Beech, 2017).

1.3 ME – INSIDER/OUTSIDER

My grandfathers had quite different experiences during WWII. My paternal grandfather was a miner so was not subject to conscription to the armed forces. He spent the war at home which meant that my father and his family (mother and two brothers) were not separated. My father was born in 1935 and had just turned four when war was declared.

My maternal grandfather was conscripted and served in the army in France. He was a medic and took part in the evacuation of men from Dunkirk in 1940, being one of the last to leave. My mother was born just before war was declared so has no clear memory of events, although like many families, stories have been passed down through the generations.

I joined the nursing register as a Registered Mental Health Nurse (RMN) in November 1987. I worked in a range of clinical areas but from 1994 specialised in the care of older people with mental health disorders including depression, anxiety, psychosis and dementia. I became a Specialist Practitioner in the care of older people in 2007 and later took on the additional roles of Non-medical Prescriber and

Clinical Practice Teacher. I went on to work in the university setting and it was here that I was able to develop my research thoughts and ideas, into a PhD study, resulting in this thesis.

I carried out a review of the literature (Appendix A), exploring connections between paternal separation due to WWII and anxiety symptoms in later life, and this review established that childhood experiences do have the potential to interplay with other factors as a person ages, and may precipitate symptoms of anxiety and/or depression in later life (Longson and Beech, 2017). Bowlby's early warnings about the impact of separation due to evacuation seem to have resonance here as do effects relating to the absence of the father which may be of particular significance for boys (Bowlby, 1969; Carlsmith, 1967).

Longson and Beech (2017) focus on the link between childhood wartime experiences and psychopathology in later life and suggest that further qualitative exploration of the subjective experience of events and the interpretation of that experience could be used to underpin understanding of this link.   This understanding may be of particular relevance for clinicians working with older adults. People born in the years immediately preceding WWII are the first cohort to become older adults having lived through this period in history as children. Longson and Beech (2017) also suggest that further research could be used to underpin assessment strategies in older person's mental health settings, with a focus on the narrative of a person's life story underpinned by understanding of how childhood events affect mental health across the life course.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

This thesis outlines the process and findings of the research project undertaken using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as its methodology to explore the lived experience of people who were children during WWII. The participants invited had lived at home during the war rather than experiencing evacuation. Some had been separated from and subsequently reunited with their fathers because of conscription and the ongoing impact of this separation was a key concern. IPA is now well established as a methodology suitable for the exploration of lived experience which focuses on participant meaning making and is underpinned by hermeneutic phenomenology, where the researcher explores and interprets how participants are making sense of events (Nizza, Farr & Smith, 2021).

This study uses a small sample size (eight participants), seven from North Staffordshire and one from Derbyshire to explore aspects of childhood wartime experience.   Small sample sizes allow detailed in-depth exploration and interpretation of the participant's experience acknowledging the time-consuming nature of transcript analysis required by IPA, whilst individual semi-structured interviews facilitate collection of data that has sufficient detail to be an accurate reflection of the thoughts and feelings of participants, thus constructing a dialogue between researcher and participant (Smith & Osborn 2003).   Semi-structured interviews were the instrument of first choice but as will be seen later, adaptations had to be made because of restrictions placed on research activities due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Analysis using IPA has illuminated a range of themes that have been explored and interpreted using a hermeneutic approach to establish broader meaning of childhood wartime experience on an existential and experiential level (Smith et al,

2022). This analysis has been conducted on an individual level to identify Personal Experiential Themes (PETs) and then across cases to form Group Experiential Themes (GETs) (Smith et. Al. 2022).

Discussion of the findings has engaged with the current theory and knowledge in order to identify areas of significance for those working with older people moving forward. The literature reviewed at the outset had a focus on separation due to evacuation and psychological health, but the course of the research and the methods used have revealed that the key theme is that of "remembering" and the way that people have processed their experiences to create a personal life narrative focused on everyday experience.

This new understanding has been made possible through the use of semi structured interviews and written accounts focused on discussion of the participant's wartime experiences as presented by them. On reflection, asking people to reflect on their current state of health and childhood experience may have caused me to "put words in the mouths" of the participants rather than focusing on how their memories were constructed and relayed.

1.5 AIMS OF THE STUDY

A large number of British children who remained in their family homes were separated from their fathers (either temporarily or permanently) as a consequence of conscription and many were not reunited until after the end of the war (BBC 2020) and the overall aim of this study is to investigate the nature of the wartime experience for children, including separation and reunion, and what if any effects or consequences these bring about over the life course. Previous quantitative studies have established that wartime experiences potentially impact on

psychological health over time (Pesonen, 2007; Waugh et. al., 2007), but little research of a phenomenological nature has been carried out to interpret the nature of the experiences or to ask the question "what was it like…?".

The aim of the study is set with deliberately broad parameters to capture all elements of the experience of WWII for children living at home without pre-supposing the outcome. This approach acknowledges potential fore structures that arise through learning about and discussing events of WWII both at school and with family members who lived through them.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The first stage in any research process is to clarify the question to be asked (DeVaus, 2001). In relation to the current project which will be exploring the experiences of children living at home during WWII, not all children will have had the same experiences based on the time period alone. If experience can be considered as a linguistic representation of an event, accessed via an interpersonal interaction, the event may be shared by a number of people but may be experienced differently by each individual. It is the linguistic interaction that gives the researcher access to the meaning making of the participant (Larkin, 2020).

In order to formulate questions to be answered, the principles of Who, What, Where, When, Why and How (5W1H) were applied (Galiana, 2022). Initially used as a tool for journalists the 5W1H helps in identifying questions to explore the issue at hand. In the case of children during WWII, the 5W have largely been addressed, we know who they are where and when they lived, and the reasons for the upheaval they experienced. What remains unanswered is the "how?", how have people who lived through the war as children processed and made sense of those experiences across the course of their lives?

In order to examine the experiences from an interpretive perspective, to get to the meaning of how sense-making has taken place, the following research questions are posed:

- What was it like to be a child during WWII?
- What was the experience of children separated from their fathers during WWII because of conscription?

- What was the experience of children when they and their fathers returned home at the end of WWII and the family was reunited?

- What was the experience of children whose fathers remained at home in a protected profession such as mining?

- What has been the impact of childhood wartime experiences on life experience, choices such as career, and relationships?

The position of the father is included in the research questions because of the experience of John, conscription being the reason for him spending 6 years without his father. Separation was itself multifactorial because of the high proportion of protected industries in North Staffordshire and the age of young fathers, making them subject to early waves of conscription (UK Parliament, 2023).

This chapter has outlined an introduction to the research topic identified including a description of how I first became interested in the experiences of children during WWII and how I panned to further explore those experiences. The process of outlining how the research was conducted now follows, beginning with a review of what is already known.

Chapter 2:   LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to establish what is already known about the experiences of children during WWII a review of the literature available is required. Given the time elapsed from the events, I considered the historical aspects of the literature, taking account of the idea that:

> "Few things rest in isolation from historical precedent…The purpose is to place research in a historical context to show familiarity with state-of-the-art developments and to identify the likely directions for future research" (University of Southern California, 2019).

In the same way that scientific lenses allow us to examine organisms and bring them more clearly into focus, so the knowledge and theory that we use to examine lived experience becomes a "lens" and allows us to focus on different perspectives of that experience. When we look at things from an historical perspective, we observe the past through the lens of the present (Elder, 1974) but multiple lenses may be employed depending on the perspective or viewpoint being examined. Life course theory itself has to take account of the fact that society is changing, and we have a new cohort of people who are living longer than ever before.

Theoretical perspectives have developed over the 20th and 21st centuries but maintain links back to ancient philosophical traditions. The cohort-historical effect of Elder and Giele (1988) acknowledges that the current cohort of people aged eighty yeas plus is larger than in previous generations and the first to turn eighty

with WWII as a childhood memory. We are now examining those experiences through the lens of the present, using current thoughts and knowledge to uncover previously unexplored meaning.

Twentieth century social theory has developed alongside the proposed cohort, and in some instances, it is the first cohort to which such theory has been applied e.g. the Fourth Age – the older, old as described by Gilleard and Higgs (2010). Likewise, the analytical frameworks suggested by IPA were not available in the 1940s when the cohort was living its childhood experiences. The question is raised as to who has the right to talk about the events of WWII with any authority and who has the right to call themselves the "expert".

I would argue that as a nation we have already carried out a thematic analysis of sorts relating to the events of WWII, with at its core, themes of resilience and fortitude. Events from WWII are widely represented in both historical and fictional literature, film, and TV. Evacuation is the backdrop for CS Lewis's fantasy land Narnia (Lewis, 1970). Although WWII is not a compulsory topic in the National Curriculum, many British schoolchildren will have, at some point in their education, dressed as evacuees to experience what it might have been like to leave home to live with strangers during the war and may have tried on gas masks and tasted dishes made from wartime recipes using the food available on ration (Keystage History, 2023). Figure 2:1 shows examples of Anderson shelters created as part of a local school project, kindly shared by Freya and her classmates.

Figure 2:1 - Anderson shelters created as part of a school project

Organisations such as the Imperial War Museum, British Library and the BBC hold collections of photographs, objects and recollections from WWII and commemorative events such as the annual Remembrance Day parades in November reinforce the ongoing significance of war and military service in the national collective memory (Royal British Legion, 2023)

Many physical artefacts remain from the time, in personal as well as those national collections described above. Some gardens still house a corrugated iron Anderson shelter, now in use as a shed perhaps, ration books, gas mask boxes, wartime medals, all act as physical reminders of long finished events. Discussions with older people who lived through the war will evoke phrases such as "digging for victory", "keep calm and carry on", and "walls have ears". The British stiff upper lip was legendary and older people often refer to themselves as hard-working, resilient, and thrifty (Great British Mag, 2020).

The body of literature pertaining to the impact of childhood wartime events has been building since the end of the war. A range of studies, mainly quantitative in

nature, examine childhood wartime events such as evacuation and their impact on both physical and emotional wellbeing across the lifespan (Beekman et al, 1998; Foster et al, 2003; Pesonen et. al., 2010; Waugh et. al., 2007), many engaging with Bowlby's subsequent work on attachment (Foster et. al., 2003; Waugh et. al., 2007). There has been debate as to whether it is the nature of the experience itself that is significant or whether differences such as those suggested by gender exist, but nonetheless a number of researchers have established a link between father absence due to war on boys in particular, and aspects of child development such as attachment and sexual identity (Carlsmith, 1967; von Franz et. al. 2007; Hasanovic et al, 2006).

Formal research makes up only a part of the literature around WWII and broader literature such as historical texts and organisational reports have also been included to provide context.

2.1 SEARCH STRATEGY

Longson and Beech (2017) were looking to establish a link specifically between paternal separation due to war and mental health in later life, but the proposed focus for the current research is broader, encompassing the wider experience of being a child during the war years and placing a closer focus on how the return of fathers to family life at the end of the war was managed. The initial search terms used by Longson and Beech (2019) are indicated in Table 2:1, below:

Search terms/keywords for Longson and Beech (2017)				
Parental deprivation OR Father absence OR Paternal Deprivation	AND	Anxiety disorders AND Males AND Later Life AND Older adults	AND	World War Two OR WWII OR War

Table 2:1 - Search terms (Longson and Beech, 2017)

The search strategy used by Longson and Beech's (2017) was replicated in 2018, using the same search terms and databases and setting the date parameter to post-2014, but no newer literature was identified.

2.2 NEW SEARCH STRATEGY

The search parameters for this project have been set using deliberately broad criteria to capture elements that may have been missed by placing the focus only on long-term consequences on mental health for males. Separation from, rather than death of the father is included because as well as this being the experience of John, there is evidence to support the notion that the impact of paternal death is shorter lived that the impact of temporary separation due to war. Otowa, York, Gardner et. al. (2014) studied male twins to establish links between parental loss in childhood and psychopathology later in life and found that loss due to separation had a stronger association for a number of psychiatric disorders than did loss due to the death of a parent. Otowa et. al. (2014) also established that the quality of parenting and the parent/child relationship is significant to how the child experiences separation.

The new search used EBSCO Host including the following databases:

- Academic Search Complete (full text)
- AgeLine
- AMED (Alternative & Complementary Medicine)
- APA PsycArticles
- APA PsycInfo
- Child Development & Adolescent Studies
- CINAHLPlus with full text
- MEDLINE
- Philosopher's Index with full text

This strategy was adopted as the databases selected include both health and social science resources.

The search was conducted using the following keywords:

- "separation"
- "Parental deprivation"
- "Maternal absence"
- "Maternal deprivation"
- "Father absence"
- "Paternal deprivation"
- "males"
- "Later life"
- "Older adults"
- "Second World War"
- "World War Two"
- "war"
- "warfare"
- "evacuation"
- "Operation Pied Piper"

The terms were searched individually, then Boolean operators used to combine terms to conduct an advanced search (see Table 2:2). The search is contained in Appendix B.

Key search terms combined using Boolean operators				
"Separation" OR (MH "Paternal Deprivation") OR (MH "Maternal Deprivation") OR "Paternal Deprivation" OR "Paternal Absence" OR "Father absence" OR "Parental deprivation" OR "Parental absence" OR "Maternal absence" OR "Maternal Deprivation"	AND	"WWII" OR "World War Two" OR "Second World War" OR "1939-45" OR "World War Two" OR Wartime" OR (MH "World War Two") OR "Warfare" OR (MH "Warfare")	AND	Evacuation" OR "Operation Pied Piper"

Table 2:2 - Search terms combined using Boolean operators

Sixty-eight results were identified from this search, to which the following (deliberately broad) inclusion/exclusion criteria were applied.

Inclusion criteria:

- Experience of war – children and/or boys

- Experience of evacuation

- Links between mental health and wartime experience

- Childhood experience of separation from father due to war

- Written in English (or translation available)

Exclusion criteria:

- assessment of mental health in late life without mention of wartime experience

- mental health of veterans without including WWII

- maternal separation in military families due to active service post WWII

- Family disruption/movement due to regular military service not related to war

Five papers were found to be in languages other than English (they were written in German) and these were included only if a translation of the whole paper (rather than just the abstract) could be found. This excluded a further three papers. Two papers (von Franz et. al., 2007; Freitag, 2011) had been excluded by Longson and Beech (2017) but an English translation had become available enabling their inclusion here. No date limiters were applied which meant that literature from as early as 1946 was included. This is the earliest time at which researchers began to explore the impact of paternal separation as fathers returned home post-deployment in wartime.

British literature addressing the topic of wartime and paternal absence is limited; the focus for British authors seems to be on the experience of evacuation rather than paternal separation per se. This topic is, however, covered by both German and American researchers (Carlsmith, 2014; von Franz et. al., 2007; Freitag et. al., 2011; Vaizey, 2011). To ensure that British research was not missed, a further search using the terms "Great Britain" and/or "UK" was conducted but returned no additional results. A further search of ProQuest and the British Nursing Index again uncovered no new literature focused on the experience of separation (other than by evacuation) in the UK. From the original sixty-eight papers identified, twenty were included in the final review. A Preferred Reporting items for Systematic reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) chart is included at Appendix C.

Since the potential impact of the war on the lives of children was identified as a matter of concern by Bowlby as early as 1939 (Bowlby et. al.,1939) it was felt appropriate to include older literature that was written in the same historical timeframe as the experiences under examination. Giele and Elder (1998) stress the importance of cultural background (location in time and place) whilst Settersten (2003) suggests that all human lives are framed by historical time, echoing the hermeneutic concept of historicity. Heidegger, with his concept of Dasein, or being in the world, emphasises the importance of time and the experience of individuals within the temporal and social situation within which they exist (Golob, 2019). The development of personal agency is "intertwined" with history and sociology; past experience and future expectations interact dynamically, and it is therefore appropriate to judge experiences by the cultural context in which they occurred (Smith, 2023).

The literature and research identified follows an historical trajectory and interacts with individuals as they pass through time, capturing elements of experience

shared by a generation as they age together. Longitudinal studies allow researchers to take a snapshot of people's lives whilst retrospective approaches have encouraged people to reflect on their wartime childhoods in order to make links with how attachment style is affected across time by those experiences (Beekman et. al., 1998; Foster et. al., 2003; Waugh et. al., 2007). In examining the literature chronologically, I have gained insight into how both authors and researchers have engaged with people who experienced war as a child across their life course.

The age of some of the texts and research papers makes assessing their quality and rigour less than straightforward, but I defend their inclusion in the context of the historical significance described above and their value in illuminating the changing nature of research relating to Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs) and how this has been developed and applied in the years since the end of WWII. International research has been included as it brings a different and interesting perspective to the discussion, for example comparing evacuation within the child's own country and abroad, the differing social context for English and German children and quantitative vs qualitative approaches.

Translation of papers from German into English allows access to the contents but it is acknowledged that words translated directly may have different usage across countries and cultures. German research identifies ways in which father absence can be managed and adds a specific perspective – that of fathers returning home to an atmosphere of societal shame in sharp contrast to the hero's welcome experienced by their British counterparts (Freitag, 2011).

A paper exploring the experiences of children in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Hasanovic et al 1996) is included both because it explores the impact of a child

being separated from his or her parents because of war (albeit a civil rather than a global conflict), and because the authors make comment about how multifactorial elements of the experience may impact on long-term outcomes for the child. Hasanovic et al (1996) make recommendations for further research, highlighting the gaps in knowledge around the social experiences of children at the time of the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the need to explore how much factors (such as chronic stress) alongside the traumatic event itself may be responsible for adverse outcomes for children as they grow older. Lester and Flake's (2013) work does not address WWII specifically but offers interesting insights into managing the post-deployment period for soldiers posted to overseas conflicts.

2.2.1   Literature identified in addition to database search terms

Two resources were identified from the British Library index and have been included in the PRISMA chart. The evacuation of children from Guernsey is described in a book written by the son of the Torteval School headmaster and offers an insight into the experiences of Guernsey families, whose children were evacuated to the UK mainland (Le Poidevin, 2010). The National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI) wrote about the effects of evacuation (from the perspective of the host mothers) and published an audit report in 1940 outlining how children and families adapted to their new circumstances, (NFWI, 1940; Stamper, 2003).

Further book chapters describing the wider experience of children during WWII have been used to give historical context to the research described, as have those exploring the impact of the wartime experience for children (Bragg, 1999; Gardiner, 2004; Jalland, 2010; Stone, 2019)). Further archival materials including the BBC's People's War have also been included (Fynn, 2004). These items are additional

to the data included in the PRISMA chart and take the total number of pieces of literature included in the review to 25.

2.3 CRITICAL APPRAISAL

The age of some of the research identified in this review predates the development of formal tools for the critical appraisal of clinical evidence. Tools such as those used as part of the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) project, designed to introduce evidence into clinical practice, were only introduced in the 1980s (CASP 2022). Likewise, formal peer review, (although said to have been in existence since the 1740's) only became part of the formal publication process much later. The Lancet, for example did not introduce peer review until 1976 (Al-Mousawi, 2020).

There is no "gold standard" critical appraisal tool (Buccheri & Sharifi, 2017) and research terms and approaches can differ by country. Earlier papers describe psychological measurement tools which are no longer in use, such as Bach's doll play research (Bach, 1946), but their inclusion serves to illustrate the changing face of approaches to research. The generation of participants taking part in the study has been subject to measures and approaches that have changed over their lifetime, with those approaches having in turn been influenced by developments in the theory and understanding of how childhood experiences influence later life. Connections between childhood and later life have only been revealed as the wartime generation of children have aged - they are the first generation to have become octogenarians having had first-hand experience of World War II in their childhood history.

Where appropriate and practicable, a critical appraisal tool has been used to evaluate the research described but there are many limitations identified within the individual studies by the researchers themselves. These include participant self-selection, sample size and gender distribution. Achieving rigour in quantitative research can be achieved through the process of randomisation, where selection of participants represents the target population being examined. Selection bias can occur when the target population is limited in some way, for example, only selecting those registered with a GP when conducting healthcare research (BMJ, 2023). In qualitative research, randomisation is not appropriate as participants are selected purposefully from a specific group of people, for example those having had a particular kind of experience (Sargeant, 2014). This does not rule out the risk of bias introduced by self-selection, where participants opt-in to a study, as these participants may already have an interest in the topic under discussion or belong to an organisation with others with similar interests. Self-selection may exclude people who share an experience but do not have the means to access information about research studies and so miss an opportunity to participate. This may happen in older populations for whom social isolation or lack of access to electronic data may be an issue. Gender bias may also occur in this age group as demographically women live longer than men and the gap between numbers of men and women widens with age (Gov.uk, 2023). The presence of these issues need not necessarily rule out studies on the basis of rigour, but they do need to be taken into account during discussions around generalisability and application.

The findings from the literature have been arranged into three themes. The first two – "The experience of the child during wartime" and "The impact of separation" - illuminate more clearly what happened both during the war and when families resumed their daily lives at its conclusion. The third theme discussed aims to

highlight the implications for further research into the subject of childhood experiences relating to war and conflict.

2.4 THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CHILD DURING WARTIME

"The war destroyed part of my life and left a big hole where my family should have been, these things are now lost forever and can never be regained". (Fynn, 2004)

There are many harrowing stories of death and destruction during WWII, and it is undoubted that children witnessed the effects of loss and grief on their families. The memories of Fynn (2004) and many others were collected to form a BBC archive, a record of people's experiences during WWII that comprises 47,000 stories, many told from the perspective of the child. The importance of storytelling cannot be underestimated, and these stories are a vehicle for memories which can highlight perceptions of wartime experiences (Sixsmith et. al., 2014). Sixsmith et. al. (2014, p. 1458) suggest that wartime experiences "intersect with the everyday lives of older men and women" and that social connections and networks are vital for social support for older people. Organisations such as the University of the Third Age provide a network both for social connection and for collective remembering about events such as WWII.

Separation of children from their families during WWII was widespread and multifactorial. Children from many countries across Europe were affected when fathers were conscripted to fight and children were moved, often rather hurriedly, out of harm's way. As well as within countries, children were moved across international borders. The Kindertransport saw 10,000 Jewish children brought to the UK from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland, leaving behind their families. Many were never reunited as six million Jews across Europe fell victim to

the Holocaust (Stone, 2019). Finnish children were evacuated to Sweden and Denmark (Pesonen et.al., 2010) and children from The Channel Islands were transported by boat to mainland Britain away from imminent invasion by German forces (Le Poidevin, 2010). German children did not experience mass evacuation at the beginning of the war, but eighteen million German men were called to serve in the armed forces, and as a consequence, wives and children were left behind without husbands and fathers for up to ten years (Vaizey, 2011). The perception of the reasons for the fathers being away varies by country and may have been influenced in some part by the propaganda messages perpetrated by the authorities in those countries. Thus, at the start of the war German boys have "strong and noble" fathers (Grundmann, 1996), whilst British conscripts regard their role in the war as "unpleasant but necessary" in order to restore normality to civilian life (Gardiner, 2004 p.79).

The National Service (Armed Forces) Act (1939) saw all men aged between 18 and 41 liable for service in the armed forces in the UK, although single men were called up first. By the end of 1939 a total of 1.5 million men had joined the forces under conscription which meant that a significant number of children were raised in fatherless families. Not all conscripts entered the armed forces however, and 10% (chosen by lot) became Bevin Boys, working in the mining industry to support the war effort. This was not a popular option and 40% of those chosen appealed against their orders (Gardiner, 2004). Children in these families, although not fatherless, did sometimes see their fathers subject to abuse as some perceived them to be "draft dodgers". A further five million men were initially exempt from conscription as they worked in reserved occupations. These included railway workers, farmers, teachers, doctors and engineers and, if they were eventually called up, these men did not leave home until much later in the war (BBC, 2020).

The evacuation of British children away from cities is described as one of the most significant upheavals of the twentieth century and plans for it had been discussed as early as the 1920s (Foster et. al., 2003). Not all children experienced evacuation, although this is often the focus for the British research about childhood wartime experiences. Estimates of the number involved vary but it is thought that overall, between 1 and 3 million children were affected by evacuation (Rusby & Tasker, 2008). Initial plans were to evacuate 3.5 million children although early numbers were less than half of this. Compliance with evacuation may have been influenced by social class and education, with poorer, less well-educated families less likely to send their children away (Gardiner, 2004).

Most of the children who were evacuated were of school age, although some younger children went away with their older siblings. For some children the evacuation was very short, maybe less than a month, whilst for others it was much longer (Foster et. al., 2003). Children were sometimes moved a number of times, before returning home when the conflict ended. Significantly, no checks were undertaken to ensure that host families were suitable to be entrusted to the foster care of the nation's children and this may have increased the risk for abuse of unaccompanied children. This is borne out by the descriptions of physical, emotional and sexual abuse in the literature describing evacuation experiences (Waugh et. al., 2007). September 2019 marked the 80th anniversary of Operation Pied Piper and the commemoration events held indicate the ongoing significance of this period in people's lives, indeed a statue dedicated to evacuees is one of 400 memorials at the National Memorial Arboretum.

The Women's Institute (W.I.) were pivotal in the organisation of Operation Pied Piper and in fostering city children in country locations. The experience was not always a particularly happy one for either the children or the host families, with a

stark contrast in expectations which led to the city children being perceived as dirty (many with head lice) and lacking in table manners, whilst the city children perceived their new country lodgings as primitive, with no inside lavatories or running water (Stamper, 2003).   Children were often far away from home, with little family contact. Some parents did manage to visit but for many the distance and access to transport made this difficult.

In December 1939, Women's Institutes were issued with a questionnaire that sought to explore the condition of the evacuated children and mothers as they arrived in the countryside. An issue that seemed to be of particular significance was bedwetting. Estimates show that between 4% and 33% of evacuated children experienced enuresis (Isaacs, 1941, cited by Waugh et. al., 2007).   This was attributed by many host families to poor parenting, although the cause is now known to be more likely the stress experienced by children moved away from home and loved ones with little or no emotional support (Bowlby, 1969).

In 1939 the link between stress and nocturnal enuresis had not been established and for foster mothers with little spare linen or facilities for daily washing, this became a significant burden, particularly since there was no financial reimbursement for the extra costs involved. The final W.I. report seems rather one sided and highlights many differences between town and country life, including extreme poverty in slum areas in cities. The role of the W.I. was intended to be supportive but the behaviour of some of the foster mothers towards the evacuees does not appear to have been particularly so and there were obvious cultural tensions between the city dwelling mothers and their rural counterparts (W.I., 1940).   Despite this tension, the W.I. went on to lobby government for the improvement of living conditions and education for children and suggested the institution of a financial allowance for children to reduce poverty (Stamper, 2003).

The impact of cultural difference is discussed in the description of the experiences of children evacuated from Guernsey to mainland Britain (Le Poidevin, 2010). The Guernsey evacuation is sometimes referred to as the "forgotten" evacuation, but over five thousand children, along with their teachers and five hundred mothers (to assist the teachers) were evacuated from Guernsey and did not return home for over five years. Parents were instructed to bring their children to the schoolhouse on the evening before the evacuation and to say goodbye at that point. To avoid emotional scenes at the port, parents were not even allowed to watch their children depart.

Le Poidevin (2010) describes how Torteval School was evacuated en-masse and settled in Alderley Edge in Cheshire. Schoolchildren and their mothers lived in the village whist the headteacher and his wife lodged in the manor house. Guernsey islanders had lived in a society that enjoyed a flattened hierarchy but when brought to a Cheshire town were exposed to a very rigid class structure. The mothers and children fitted relatively comfortably into village life, but the headmaster and his family endured a strange "between stairs" experience where they were not of sufficient status to be welcomed by the family upstairs but were perceived as too high class to fit with the staff below stairs.

When the German occupation ended with the liberation of the island, some of the children returning from England had actually spent more time away from their homes and families than they had spent with them. The reunions that followed were not always straightforward and the headmaster's return in particular was not a happy one. He was shunned by members of his own family whose perception was that he had escaped, leaving them behind to suffer at the hands of the German occupying forces (Le Poidevin, 2010).

Foster, Davies and Steele (2003) applied a retrospective approach to explore the experiences of British children, presenting a comparison of the experience of children who were evacuated against those who remained at home. They predicted that people who had been evacuated as children would have lower levels of psychological wellbeing as they entered later life (aged 60 years plus at the time of the study) than those who had not. Foster et. al. (2003) hypothesized that attachment theory would be influential in that an insecure attachment style would be more likely amongst children who were separated because of evacuation and this in turn could influence psychological wellbeing in later life.

Participants in the Foster et. al. (2003) study comprise non-randomized groups consisting of 169 people who were evacuated and, as a comparison group, 43 who were not. Former evacuees were recruited via an advertisement in the Evacuees Reunion Association newsletter and word of mouth, whilst people who had not experienced evacuation were recruited via social groups for people aged sixty years plus. No significant differences in regard to age, gender, marital status or social class were identified.

Foster et. al. (2003) foresaw concerns relating to lifespan and developmental issues because of the time elapsed so their choice to include a comparison group of people who were not evacuated as children was an attempt to limit those confounding factors. They found that both evacuees and children who stayed at home were exposed to events such as aerial bombardment, use of air-raid shelters and the death of a close family member. Although the two groups show relatively minor difference overall in terms of their experiences, a wide range of events is described by both groups of participants, reinforcing the idea that there is no "typical" wartime experience and evacuation cannot be regarded as a

homogeneous event. This is despite the tendency for anecdotal literature to use the term "evacuation" to refer to these multiple events as a single shared experience.

A wartime experiences questionnaire (Davies, unpublished) was adapted to create the Evacuation Experience Questionnaire (EEQ), a combination of multiple-choice, Likert scale and open-ended questions. The authors acknowledge that some adaptations were needed to collect information from the participants who were not evacuated, for example questions relating specifically to evacuation were removed. In order to establish validity, the questionnaire was reviewed, and a pilot study was carried out. Foster et. al. (2003) were specifically looking to establish long-term psychological impacts of the evacuation experience, using a range of established and validated assessment tools designed to explore psychological wellbeing (GHQ-28) (Goldberg, 1978), attachment style (AAS), (Hazen & Shaver, 1987) and social support (SSQ-6) (Sarason et. al., 1987). These were included with the EEQ to evaluate whether participants displayed current signs and symptoms of psychological illness. The sources cited for the questionnaires relate to the versions used by Foster et. al. (2003).

The measures used are all established self-report tools. and the participants self-selected to the study, indicating a willingness to share their stories - participation potentially prompted by a recent commemorative event (sixty years since the date of evacuation at the time of the research). Whilst it is positive that people wish to participate and share their stories of the war, one of the limitations of this study is self-selection compounded by the fact that all participants come from a narrow geographical area in the Southeast of England with little variation in age, gender or social status. It could be argued though that given the nature of the research, the sample was always going to be limited by the fact that it was exploring the experiences of a specific group of people during a specific period in time. There

are also known issues with self-report tools in relation to motivation and reasons for participation along with potential subjectivity of findings, and these factors are acknowledged by Foster et. al. (2003). Self-report bias is acknowledged to be a limitation in research generally as people may give answers that they believe to be anticipated by the researcher, or those that are more socially desirable (American Psychological Association, 2022).

Foster et. al. (2003) establish that even amongst the children who were evacuated, there were variations in experience. Children were given a range of explanations as to why they were going away, for example going on holiday. Around a third of children studied were billeted alone with a foster family, almost half were billeted with siblings and less than one fifth of children were evacuated with their mothers. Participants report both positive and negative aspects of being an evacuee. Positive aspects of the evacuation experience include being billeted with a wealthy family, being well looked after, living in the countryside and feeling safe. Negative aspects include being away from parents, lack of food, feeling anxious, being lonely, and missing friends and school. Specific questions about abuse were not included in the EEQ but nevertheless a small number of respondents (fourteen) disclosed having been sexually abused whilst they were away from home. This number is not generalisable across the sample since the information was offered rather than being requested and the incidence of sexual abuse was not a factor specifically explored in the study. Using criteria available today it is worth noting that sexual abuse is one of the ten categories identified as an ACE with potential for psychopathology later in life (Asmussen et. al., 2020), although this link had not been well established in the UK in the early 2000s when Foster et. al.'s (2003) research was conducted.

Waugh, Robbins, Davies and Feigenbaum (2007, p.168) adopted a similar approach to Foster et. al. (2003) for recruiting participants and used the same EEQ. They describe the initial evacuation, Operation Pied Piper, as an "enormous undertaking" which took place over a period of four days, with families given little time to prepare. Waugh et. al. (2007) reflect the work of Bowlby et. al. (1939) who predicted that separated children would experience anxiety. Bowlby et. al. (1939) indicated that a child's age would be significant in how they experienced separation and made the suggestion that regular parental visits would be of benefit to reassure children of their safety and security. The conscription of fathers meant that contact from them was even more sparse as they were away and had limited opportunities for communication with their children (Waugh et. al., 2007).

Waugh et. al. (2007) included a range of tools to measure the impact of wartime events, attachment style and general health, and, unlike Foster et al (2003), included a specific abuse questionnaire to add more detail to the question of whether the children had experienced abuse and if so, what form it took. Almost twice as many children (in percentage terms) who were evacuated experienced abuse compared to those who were not evacuated. This amounted to 24% of the not evacuated group experiencing abuse compared to 46.9% of the evacuees. There is little difference between the groups for physical abuse, but the evacuees were statistically more likely to experience other forms of abuse such as sexual or emotional. Children who were not evacuated had higher levels of exposure to events such as air raids, which the authors note as unsurprising since they were living in large cities known to be at higher risk of aerial bombardment or invasion.

Waugh et. al. (2007) note that previous research has suggested that childhood sexual abuse has negative consequences for mental health outcomes across the life course. There is a sense of irony here that the intervention designed to protect

children from harm during a period of war did in fact have the opposite effect for some children for whom this was an intensely unhappy and potentially traumatic experience. This finding is presented by the authors with the caveat that not all children experienced trauma or other unfavourable events during WWII and that short term events are less likely to have a negative effect than chronic childhood adversities (Rutter and Maughan, 1997, cited by Waugh et. al., 2007).

There are many similarities between the experiences of the evacuated and non-evacuated groups of children, although the location of those experiences varies between the child's home and the place to which they were evacuated (Foster et. al., 2003). Two-thirds of the non-evacuated group lived in areas from where children were not evacuated as a matter of course, whether in towns or the countryside, but they were nonetheless exposed to extreme events such as air raids, food shortages, father absence and the death of family members.

The Evacuee Association (formally the Evacuees Reunion Association) continues to publish a bi-monthly newsletter which provides a forum for people who were evacuated to share their stores as well as for finding people and re-establishing connections. Foster et. al. (2003) discuss the role of the Evacuee Association in the recruitment for their study, noting that people subscribing to its newsletter were people specifically seeking to renew contacts and share experiences of their time as evacuees. They further caution that recall may not be accurate and that the structure of their study might introduce bias since the groups were not randomised and a significant amount of time had elapsed between the experiences and the study.

Personal stories and recollections can have an enormously powerful impact and there is often a resurgence in interest after a significant anniversary such as 80

years since the date of the evacuation in 2019. The value of such stories as formal research is limited if not examined in a way which is robust, evidence based and conforms to formal research standards.   Foster et. al. (2003) research is quantitative in nature and although a range of experiences is described, and some qualitative elements, such as open-ended questions are used, the nature of the experience itself is not examined in any depth.   This means that whilst a link may be established between having had an experience in childhood and then experienced psychological issues in later life, few insights into particular aspects about why the childhood events have an impact on later life are established.

Sixsmith, Sixsmith, Callender and Corr (2014) used semi-structured interviews to explore the perspectives of older people in relation to their wartime experiences as part of a larger project exploring the attitudes, thoughts, experiences and values of older people in relation to healthy ageing. The primary focus of this research is not wartime experience per se but data in relation to it emerged naturally from the accounts given, rather than from structured interview questions.   A grounded theory approach following Charmaz (2003, p.1466) was applied to analysis of the data and suggests two key perspectives.   The first is social connection and "comradeship" as a key source of lifelong values. The second is that the wartime generation see themselves as different from younger generations, having developed key practical skills (such as household tasks) and character aspects such as resilience and adaptability. The older people surveyed by Sixsmith et. al. (2104) were not all children during the war itself, having been born between 1914 and 1923 but their experiences reflect the social context of the time and the values and skills that were carried forward into peacetime. This study emphasises the need to explore social aspects of the war and the way that these influence and shape the lives of people living through them.   Regional variations may exist (this study focused on one geographical area, as did that of Foster et. al. (2003)) but

what seems to be clear is that people's recollections and the ways that events shaped their social connections and values is of significance; this idiographic focus on personal story telling gives a wider view of events than one which focuses solely on trauma and loss.

Morris-King (2009) took a different approach to explore the lived experiences of people from Liverpool during WWII by using focus groups and individual interviews followed by analysis using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Free Association Narrative interviews allow rich data to be obtained which lend themselves to analysis using IPA. This use of IPA facilitates the uncovering of an underlying experience, thus moving from description to the interpretation of events (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

Participants in Morris-King (2009) came from Liverpool, an area regularly subjected to bombing and from where 100,000 children and mothers were evacuated in 1939. Recruitment was via a community-based advertising campaign and people self-selected on the basis of age rather than physical or mental health condition. The study had a psychological focus based on narrative accounts of wartime experiences and perceived impact on psychological health. In contrast to quantitative studies measuring psychological health using structured measurement tools, participants took part in a focus group, followed by individual interviews based around initial themes identified in the group session. The interviews contain detailed narrative of events moving forward from the war into adulthood, and participants are seemingly able to establish connections between their childhood experiences and life choices.

Findings from Morris-King (2009) suggest that although the older people interviewed could be viewed as functioning well, they are in fact reporting psychological difficulties such as anxiety, attachment issues and trauma which

they are attributing to their childhood experiences. The Lifespan Model of Developmental Change as defined by Hendry and Kloep (2002) suggests that different challenges are posed at different points in the life course and that it is the individual's "pool of resources" that determines how the individual manages a particular challenge (Morris-King, 2009, p. 54). This research is of value to clinicians working with groups other than older people, highlighting that early childhood experiences of war cannot be ignored as potential markers for later life psychopathology. This may include survivors of the Bosnian war in the 1990s, for example, as well as those who have moved away from areas of conflict as refugees or asylum seekers.

Pesonen, Räikkönen, Feldt et. al. (2010) describe WWII as a "natural experiment" that could be utilised to explore the impact of wartime experiences on psychosocial stress later in life. Finnish children experienced separation from their parents because of evacuation and much like the UK and Guernsey this initiative was implemented to move children out of harm's way during a time of significant aerial bombardment and the threat of occupation. Children were evacuated to a range of settings, although unlike British children the setting was often overseas (with unfamiliar languages). Some were organised by government agencies and others via family contacts. Siblings were often separated, deliberately in some cases to encourage the learning of a new language more quickly, and most children experienced food shortages.

Pesonen et. al. (2010) also note that since all families were experiencing the war, the experience was normalised, and the emotional support afforded by mothers potentially offered protection from adverse effects. They identify that for some, separation may actually have been a positive experience although it is easy to assume that it was always (inevitably) traumatic. Response to the experience of

separation depended on the place of evacuation and the quality of the foster care on offer. For some children who were not separated, staying in the war zone and experiencing aerial bombardment or invasion may have caused more stress than would have been encountered through separation.

Vaizey (2011) discusses the work of a number of researchers who used oral history and letters to explore the experiences of German women and children during WWII and cites Stargadt's (2000) project to use stories to illuminate the experience of children across Europe during the war. Vaizey (2011) seeks to establish how WWII affected family relationships and argues that letters written to and from the home front shed useful light on how families managed the separation, despite their subjective nature. This reflects the assertion of Foster et. al. (2003) that there is a tension between individual and collective remembering and despite commonalities across groups, there is no "typical experience" of WWII (Vaizey, 2011).

Vaizey (2011) describes the difficulties and strain experienced by mothers left to raise children on their own, with food shortages, air raids and worries about their husbands away fighting. Despite the worries, some mothers described their children as a motivator and a "source of strength" (Vaizey, 2011 p. 369). Children described their experiences in a matter-of-fact way, seemingly unaware of the gravity of the situation facing them. This attitude could be born of the fact that since they were very young at the beginning of the conflict, they knew nothing else, and since everyone was experiencing the same situation, it became normalised for them (Vaizey, 2011). This train of thought reflects the earlier work of Grundmann (1996) on family formation which found that the age at which separation takes place, and the normalisation of the experience mitigates its effects.

There are three elements in this theme that seem to be of significance. The first is that people volunteer to take part in research relating to wartime experience. Where researchers have advertised for participants, they have found a group of people who are happy to share their experiences. The popularity of the Evacuee Association magazine seems to reinforce this point – people are seeking to find people who shared the same experience in order to specifically re-live that time in their lives.

The second is that people seem to value their wartime experience. Evacuation was sometimes positive, and people developed skills and values that they perceive as having stood them in good stead across their life course. Sixsmith et. al. (2014), without denying the traumatic aspects of war, identified some positive aspects of wartime experience which may have interplayed with other aspects of life experience as people have got older.

The final point is that people like to talk about their experiences. As in the case of Waugh et. al. (2007), people volunteer information over and above what is asked of them. This of course raises the question of self-selection and self-report bias, but the value placed on talking cannot be ignored and could potentially be exploited in exploring factors that mitigate against the effects of traumatic experiences.

2.5 IMPACT OF SEPARATION

> *"He had not thought the war would take him away for years,*
> *and so far away. Nor had she, but they were in an old*
> *island story, centuries of men going across the sea to fight,*
> *leaving the women to weave the days, waiting at home.*
> *Yet sometimes she was glad for her new independent life.*
> *She doused her guilt by telling her son that his father would*
> *be home soon." (Bragg (1999) The Soldier's Return)*

Bragg's (1999) book reflects the experience of British men conscripted and sent overseas as far away as Burma (often known as the forgotten war). The soldier is returning in 1946, to a hometown that looks unchanged, although he himself has been changed by his experience. Children of men serving in the armed services were raised by their mothers and grandmothers and this is reflected in the lives of my participants. Some children did not know their fathers at all until they returned at the end of the war (Vaizey, 2011).

British children were not the only group to experience separation from their fathers. Children in Germany and the USA were not evacuated but compulsory military service took their fathers overseas, sometimes for prolonged periods (Bach, 1946; von Franz et. al., 2007). Soldiers from the USA were fighting far away from home since there were no active hostilities on home soil, and German men were subject to mass mobilisation from early in the war. Research from these two countries focuses on father absence and the impact of his return post-deployment, as well as the long-term impact on psychological health (Freitag, 2011; Lester and Flake, 2013; von Franz et al 2007).

Bach (1946) was one of the first authors to explore the impact of paternal separation when he explored the impact of wartime conscription for the sons of American soldiers. American society of the time was largely patriarchal in nature with fathers making the majority of decisions affecting the household, and this work suggests that a child's relationship with their father is of greater significance for psychological security than with their mothers. The sample comprised a homogeneous group of boys who were similar in age, social background and intelligence and who were described as "normally adjusted" (although there is no expansion on the meaning of this term). A control group comprised boys whose fathers were not conscripted. During Bach's experiments, children were presented with a doll's house and four dolls – a mother, father, a boy and a girl. They were then invited to make up a story using the four characters and their play was observed and categorised by an experimenter. It is noted that boys whose fathers were away produced fewer father doll actions in the play session than boys whose fathers were at home, although this is what the researcher had anticipated (Bach, 1946).

One of the key findings in these experiments is that the boys who were separated from their fathers because of WWII seem to demonstrate an idealised view of the family. In the experimental group there is more affection demonstrated during play by the fantasy father, with less aggression. In essence, the fantasy father in the separated group appears to be enjoying family life, he is affectionate and does not exert authority. The fantasy play demonstrated by the boys in the experimental group is similar to the fantasy play demonstrated by girls living in "ordinary family conditions" and may reflect the increased maternal/female social interactions of families without fathers (Bach, 1946 p. 72).

Bach's (1946) doll play technique filled a gap in the research methods arena of the time, but concerns were raised about whether the doll play actually replicated real-life experience or simply represented wish fulfilment. The findings highlight potential difficulties for the family in the post-war period. For example, if the father were to return and behave in an authoritarian way, this would contradict the idealised view of a more feminine approach as seen during the doll play family modelling. The father may, in turn, perceive this as rejection by the child, and the overall stability of the family unit could be disturbed. One potential solution put forward might be to work with parents to explain the psychological processes at work, so preparing them in advance of the father's return (Bach, 1946).

Carlsmith (1967) carried out a comparison between the personality traits and interests of American boys whose fathers were either absent or present during WWII. The boys were born between 1941 and 1945 and were studied as they were finishing high school or starting college. Homogeneity in the sample was enhanced by the fact that the boys were from a similar social background and had been separated from their fathers for a "socially acceptable" reason where the duration of the absence could be measured accurately. It was found that boys who were separated from their fathers had a different pattern of achievement and scoring in tests (such as college entrance exams) than boys who had not experienced separation. The patterns of the separated boys were more aligned to female than male attainment. The notion of social acceptability/normalisation of the separation is reflected in the findings of Grundmann (1996) who describes its role in mitigating the negative effects of the father separation. The boys studied by Carlsmith (1967) were all high academic achievers and were selected because it had already been noted that boys who were separated from their fathers had different achievement patterns to those who were not. Limitations to this study lie in the fact that the boys were middle class and already noted as being high

achievers, thus reinforcing the importance of acknowledging social context in interpreting any findings in relation to the impact of paternal absence.

Grundmann (1996), in exploring the consequences of German father absence on sex role development and family formation suggests that the experience of father absence may vary according to the age (of the child) at which it happened. For boys born between 1939 and 1941 the absence of their father could almost be described as "normal" due to elevated levels of military service. In fact, up to 35% of boys in this cohort were not actually born before their fathers went away and therefore did not live with them until after the war. In contrast, boys born between 1929 and 1931 were aged over eight years old when their fathers left home. This difference in age signalled a difference in the nature of the experience for the two groups, where the older boys were separate from their fathers because of the war, rather than being born directly into a "fatherless" family, which led to the situation being normalised for the younger boys. It would appear that father absence during WWII may actually have had less impact on family formation than becoming separated either before or after the war. Grundmann (1996, p.429) calls this the "normality hypothesis" and suggests that boys in this situation may have experienced less hardship than, for example, a child whose father has left for a different reason, one which had a different social meaning to the war.

Beekman, Bremmer, Deeg and Van Balkom et. al. (1998) used data from the Longitudinal Aging Study Amsterdam (LASA), a ten-year longitudinal study examining predictors for, and consequences of changes in wellbeing for older people in three regions of the Netherlands, to examine the prevalence of anxiety disorders in the older population of The Netherlands as well as identifying significant risk factors for those disorders. Samples were taken randomly, and across a wide age range (55-85 years). People over eighty-five years of age were

excluded because of the longitudinal nature of the study. Anxiety disorders (as at the time of the study) and depression were assessed using the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) and the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS-A), with diagnosis identified by DSM-III (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) criteria. Overall, a prevalence of 10.2% was estimated for all anxiety disorders, with Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) being the most common at 7.3%.

Risk factors for anxiety disorders include long-lasting effects of events in WWII, although these are described in no more detail than being extreme or severe events. Beekman et. al. (1998) established that for participants in the middle age group (aged between three and thirteen years old at the commencement of the war) there is a significant association between anxiety and having experienced these severe events during the war. Whilst this study does not clearly identify separation due to war as one of the extreme events, it is noted that wartime events constitute risk factors that cannot be changed and could not be controlled by the children experiencing them. It is also noted that age or ageing itself are of little importance for the aetiology of anxiety disorders in older people. This means that, given the prevalence of anxiety disorders in the older population, the risk factors identified should be used to identify those individuals who may be at higher risk of developing an anxiety disorder.

Foster et. al. (2003) hypothesised that children who experienced separation due to evacuation would have reduced psychological well-being as adults. They suggest that these people are more likely to have an insecure attachment style which in turn predicts lower levels of psychological well-being. Attachment theory suggests that a child develops internal representations of the relationships between him/herself and their primary caregivers in order to develop internal working

models that assist in navigating life events (Bowlby 1969). This theory originally stems from the study of children who experienced maternal deprivation in particular, but Bowlby later suggests that the effect of children worrying about their parents being in a dangerous situation (such as the father being away at war) might also be long-lasting and may predispose the child to anxiety disorders in later life. Social support (as in that provided by mothers and other family members) is a possible mediating factor and this idea is supported by the findings of Foster et. al. (2003) who suggest that high levels of social support during childhood are indeed associated with lower levels of depression in later life.

A weak but significant link between separation and insecure attachment in adulthood had been identified in an earlier study, but Waugh et. al. (2007) found no statistical link between evacuation and adult attachment style. What they did find was a link between the experience of evacuation and abuse, and abuse and attachment style. There is a caveat that the Adult Attachment Style questionnaire was not as robust as developmental/psychological measures and so the findings of the study should be applied with caution.

Rusby and Tasker (2008) focus on attachment style in their retrospective survey of 859 people who lived in Kent during the war. Their survey further establishes links between childhood evacuation and an insecure attachment style in adulthood and again reflects the concerns of Bowlby et. al. (1939). If Bowlby's assertion is correct, that attachment related events influence both adult personality and how relationships are formed in the longer term, stress associated with close relationships may serve as a trigger for referral to mental health services in later life.

Hasanović, Sinanovic, Selimbsic et. al. (2006) examined the experiences of children during the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995, comparing those who had been separated from their parents with those who had lived with one or both parents. There are significant differences between civil war and WWII, but children experienced potentially overwhelming amounts of war related trauma during this later conflict. The children studied were living either with parents (one or both), or in a government orphanage, or in a children's village, cared for solely by women. Significantly in this study, the psychological trauma was measured whilst the children were still children, rather than at a later point in adulthood as seen in the studies conducted by Foster et. al. (2003) and Rusby and Tasker (2008). Trauma was measured using the Child Post-traumatic Stress Reaction Index along with Kovac's Child Depression Inventory. It was found that over half of the children studied (51.6%) reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Prevalence of symptoms was lowest when a child had been living with both parents, whilst highest prevalence was found amongst children who had been cared for in the foster village. The results of this study seem to indicate that separation was a causative factor in the development of PTSD, and that self-esteem was negatively impacted by this experience. Hasanovic et. al. (2006) also support the assertion that the presence of a male caregiver offered protection against adverse psychological impact for children being cared for away from their parents.

Von Franz et. al. (2007) acknowledge that early life events can precipitate mental health issues in later life and assert that whilst the role of both parents is crucial in child development, the role played by the father differs from that of the mother. This mirrors the findings in Bach (1946) where the significance of gender difference on parenting had already established. Von Franz et. al. (2007) suggest that the father's presence seems to support the child in developing strategies for managing

separation and is therefore important for the development of autonomy in children as young as one or two years of age. The role of the father is also pivotal in the development of sexual identity, particularly for boys. The father acts as a role model for relationships with mothers and supports gender specific behaviour patterns for girls. Furthermore, if the father is both physically and emotionally present and available to his children, his presence can have a positive impact on the development of resilience, which is now known to be a key factor in mitigating the impact of Adverse Childhood events (NHS Highland, 2018).

Von Franz et. al. (2007) selected a large sample (883) with an average age of 67.9 years from the Mannheim Cohort Study (2000) and data was collected retrospectively. It confirms that growing up without a father can make a person more likely to experience long-term psychological impairment. Those separated as children may also experience difficulties dealing with other people as well as increased discomfort and distrust. This could reflect an insecure attachment style developed by people growing up without a father (or a secondary care giver).

Von Franz et. al. (2007) also discuss the potential clinical and social consequences of the experience of children in Germany during WWII, especially given the fact that many aspects of the war experience were suppressed for many years. Many boys had lost not only their father's physical presence but also his "idealized image" and lived with mothers experiencing depression which was suppressed in public (von Franz et. al., 2007, p. 225). The boy's role in the family was elevated in the absence of the father, this extra responsibility compounding the impact of the absence of the father and the depression of the mother. This aspect reflects the experience of some British children whose fathers fought in the far east and spent a significant portion of the war as prisoners. They were discouraged from taking about their experiences on their return and have only relatively recently been

involved in commemoration events. Similarly, the role of men conscripted as Bevin Boys has not always been recognised as having similar value to the service of men on active military service. These men were not awarded medals for their service and their contribution was only officially recognised by the British Government in 1995.

Von Franz et. al. (2007) identify limitations with their own research, discussing the risk of memory bias in a retrospective study. There is no record of socio-economic status of the families in their study and it does not capture lifetime prevalence of somatic and psychological illness.   Despite this, von Franz et. al. (2007, p.225) believe that even if the results of the study are not significant statistically, there is enough evidence of a "psycho-historically significant connection" between growing up without a father during the war and long-term psychological health and this should be considered in clinical assessment.

Freitag, Strauss and Hannig et. al. (2011) examined predictors for quality of life (LQ) older people in Germany who had been children during WWII using a quality-of-life questionnaire followed up by qualitative interviews. Both displaced and non-displaced children were included in the research and findings showed that in contrast to the hypothesis of von Franz et. al. (2007), traumatic experiences during childhood (including those related to war) actually had no measurable impact on LQ in older age between the two groups. The researchers acknowledged however that little had been done previously to examine the impact of biographical variables such as separation related trauma and suggested that resilience is a key factor in determining LQ.

Many Finnish children were separated from their fathers because of military service. Conscription had been a feature of Finnish life since 1919, although it had

been possible to sign up for unarmed or civilian service following a change in the law in 1931. At the outset of war in 1939, all those who had signed up for civilian service were called to the army (War Resistors International, 2015). Pesonen, Räikkönen, Feldt et. al. (2010) explored paternal absence linked to conscription and separation because of evacuation and concluded that separation during childhood could have an effect on how adults experience and manage stress later in life. Participants were randomly selected from the Helsinki Birth Cohort Study and invited to take part in a clinical examination and a psychological survey. Responses to stress were measured and a hypothesis formulated that early life stress may alter the structure and function of the central nervous system. Given the known link between parental separation, cardiovascular disease and diabetes it could be suggested that the connection is the early life stress caused by the separation experience. The effects were noted to be greater after sixty years suggesting that the effect may increase with age with other factors coming into play as a person ages produces a cumulative effect.

Lester and Flake (2013) assert that perceived risk to a parent undertaking military service has an impact on how children manage the experience of being separated from a parent. Citing the bi-directional nature of family relationships, Lester and Flake (2013) identify a range of factors that interplay. Mental health problems related to war, marital conflict and behavioural problems displayed by children all have the potential to upset equilibrium within and beyond the family unit. Depending on the length of absence, children may have moved through (or missed) developmental milestones or taken on extra responsibility within the family. On the absent parent's return, readjustment may not be straightforward.

Lester and Flake (2013) focus on children in the USA where a parent has been deployed overseas to a place of war. In this study the focus is on wars in Iraq and

Afghanistan but there are similarities with the findings from Foster et al (2003) where separation and other wartime events affected whole families as well as individuals. Nearly half of respondents reported a reduction in the quality of family life following the war with a much smaller number (14.7%) reporting that family life was better. Several factors were highlighted, and these included the impact of their own or their parents' experiences, or the fact that as a family they had simply grown apart as a consequence of being separated (Foster et. al., 2003).   There are major differences in that the soldiers in Lester and Flake (2013) were not conscripts, and only the families of serving personnel were affected but there is an ongoing theme here of the need for children and their fathers to remain connected during a period of separation due to war in order to maximise the chances of the smooth transition back to family life.

A rage of interventions is identified as being supportive of family relationships at the end of a conflict. Vaisey (2011) for example argues that by exchanging of letters on a regular basis, fathers remained in touch with their children and kept up to date with events at home meaning that the children were less likely to forget them. Experiences were variable for children during WWII, and the regularity of correspondence would sometimes depend on where the father was posted, but it could be concluded that maintaining contact in this way may have reduced the level of estrangement experienced when fathers returned home. More recently, technology such as email and social media has enabled contact in a more direct way between children and parents overseas, but it is the principle of maintaining contact that seems to be the important factor in managing the family relationship during and after periods of separation (Lester and Flake, (2003).

2.6 IMPLICATIONS OF WARTIME CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCE FOR THE LIVES OF OLDER PEOPLE/NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A number of issues have been identified that warrant further exploration and discussion. A link has been demonstrated between evacuation in childhood and psychological health, particularly anxiety, in later life, but there are multiple factors such as the experience of abuse that could also be at play here (Foster et. al., 2003; Waugh et. al., 2007). Attachment theory as developed by Bowlby in the 1960s and 1970s has been used to underpin these findings; work developed following his initial warning at commencement of war.

Rusby and Tasker (1998) discuss Bowlby's internal working model, where a child builds up a set of models of "the self and others" (p. 208) based on its interactions and experiences. Their belief is that these models, built in early life, are not easily modified and persist throughout a person's life, and thus, attachment style is set in childhood. What remains unclear is whether later life experiences, including loss can continue to have an impact on adult attachment style. The link has been explored with adults as they approach older age, but little has been done as the cohort move into their 80's.

Acknowledging that WWII is "a very special and unique social experience" with the potential to leave a lasting legacy on the lives of older people, more research is needed, focusing on wartime experiences, including those which might be deemed to be of a traumatic nature (Sixsmith et. al., 2014). The participants in Sixsmith et. al. (2014) were veterans rather than children but the danger of suppressing traumatic memories for these men may result not only in personal psychological damage for themselves. Their suppressed frustration and anger may have a

detrimental effect on the wider family. Further exploration of the long-term implications of childhood wartime experiences may illuminate the impact they have on everyday lives now, determining how social policy should reflect the way that an older generation conceptualises their view of the world and the choices they have to make.

Research about wartime experience focusing on trauma and loss may highlight risks associated with psychological health but it is worth noting that the respondents also identify positive traits such as resilience and independence which may be supportive as they navigate the later stages of their lives (Sixsmith et. al., 2014). Focusing purely on negative aspects gives us a limited perspective, and a broader reading and interpretation of wartime experience is needed to fully determine its impact over time. Examining events of the post war period when families settled back into their ordinary lives will illuminate how family dynamics were affected by a prolonged period of separation and/or upheaval because of the war.

Studies focusing on psychological health in later life have identified a potential link with the experience of abuse among children who were evacuated. It had been hypothesized that evacuation in itself may have had an impact on adult attachment style (leading to a less secure attachment style) but this seems not to have been the case (Waugh et. al., 2007). Findings do seem, though, to establish a significant link between childhood *abuse* and attachment style.   Understanding about attachment has largely focused on the role of the mother and distress caused by maternal separation as described by Bowlby and his colleagues, but a number of authors also hint at a pivotal role for the father in how attachment style is developed and influences the life course (von Franz et. al. 2007; Morris-King 2009; Sixsmith et. al. 2014).

Morris-King (2009) develops this idea and suggests that even when older adults appear to be functioning well, there may be underlying psychological issues relating to childhood experiences. She suggests that childhood experiences can influence a person's resilience in relation to challenges throughout the life course and uses Hendry and Kloep's (2002) Lifespan Model of Developmental Change to underpin her discussion in relation to how people use their individual resources to manage challenges across their lives.

The qualitative nature of the research conducted by Morris-King (2009) and Sixsmith et. al. (2014) has facilitated more in-depth exploration of the emerging themes and these studies have identified how this approach may be supportive in developing insight into how childhood experiences are assimilated into later life. Being able to capture the essence of these experiences, using a phenomenological methodology such as IPA will facilitate greater understanding of how experiences are conceptualised across the life course.

Separation has undoubtedly been identified as a feature of significance in the wartime experience for children, but a question remains as to what it is about the nature of the parental relationship at this time which is significant. Reunion has not been addressed in the research to date and this is a gap which needs to be exploited in order to adequately address the question as to "what is the experience of the child during wartime?".

In conclusion, a range of elements of the childhood experience of war have been explored and the following section will explore how these elements have informed the choice of methodology for this research project.

2.7 How does the literature inform the choice of methodology?

Longson and Beech (2017) identify the importance of the narrative of the older person in the clinical assessment of conditions such as anxiety. Without personalising the assessment, assumptions could be made that all people who were children at points in history across their lifespan have had the same life experiences. Longson and Beech (2017) also identified the need for further qualitative research in order to understand how children have made sense of their wartime experiences.

Previous survey and questionnaire based quantitative research has attempted to capture the impact of childhood wartime experiences over time, but this leaves a gap between the experience and the perceived impact. Idiographic, narrative approaches bridge this gap encouraging the person to tell the story in its entirety. The idiographic nature of IPA in qualitative approaches encourages narrative storytelling, unencumbered by the restrictions introduced by fixed questions or rating scales. This then facilitates in-depth analysis of the narrative to uncover meaning rather than cause and effect (Smith et. al. (2015).

Children born between 1928 and 1945 are known as the Silent Generation and form a relatively small cohort, due in part to low birth rates between the wars. This is a group of people then whose voices may have been suppressed, and avenues need to be explored in order for them to be heard. Picton et. al. (2017) advocate the use of phenomenological approaches in research to allow service user voices to be heard whist the application of interpretive frameworks such as IPA allow us to explore the impact of childhood events on later life transitions (Morris-King,

2009). Research with a phenomenological focus facilitating deeper exploration of the meaning of childhood events has implications for ongoing mental health and may be of use to clinicians working with people as they make the transition to older age.

There are three key themes from the literature reviewed that underpin the research questions posed by my research project:

- Childhood wartime experience is multifaceted and events such as evacuation, despite being a shared experience is not an homogeneous event. Many children were not evacuated and remained at home. Factors such as the quality of care offered to children (both at home and with foster families) and exposure to events such as air raids needs to be considered.

- There needs to be a shift of focus away from psychological health. Whilst childhood evens are clearly affecting later life mental health for some, for many this is not a feature and other factors facilitating mitigation against negative effects need to be considered.

- There is a narrative to childhood experiences that needs to be heard in order to understand how people have been making sense of their experiences across their lives, particularly as the cohort moves forward into older, older age.

Having concluded that there are key themes which merit further research, the next step is to consider the philosophical and theoretical concepts needed to underpin an appropriate research strategy. The following chapter will demonstrate how ontology and epistemology combine to position the research and will outline the key theoretical perspectives used to support it.

Chapter 3: PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

3.1 ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality or what exists in human experience, in this case, the reality of what it was like to be a child during WWII. If we regard ontology as a continuum, at one extreme, realist approaches may suggest that one single reality exists, so, descriptions of the experience of being a child in wartime could be achieved using an appropriate method. At the other end of the continuum, to explore the meaning of the experiences, where multiple, individual realities exist, a relativist viewpoint is preferred (Dudovsky 2018). This suggests that each individual child has their own reality, based on how they interacted with and made sense of their experience.

Epistemology, the study of knowledge, is concerned with how knowledge is created and whether or not this knowledge is transferable (Mason, 2018). Again, if we place epistemological approaches on a continuum, objectivism suggests that one, objective reality exists independent of the subject, where subjectivism acknowledges that the meaning is created by the subject and imposed on the object. Using a subjective epistemology enables us to explore subjective meaning of events for which there is a fixed, objective, historical reality (Moon & Blackman, 2014).

There is fixed documentary evidence of childhood activities during WWII; children shared a reality, but from different perspectives. Some stayed at home, others were moved away from harm, sometimes a significant distance from home. The meaning of these experiences is not reliant solely on geography, education or age, but on the interplay between the child and their physical and social environments,

and their psychological response to those events. In order to reveal how the experience influences perception at an individual level, an epistemology sitting between constructionism (where individual realty is constructed) and subjectivism (where meaning is imposed by the individual) may be more appropriate.

When exploring our motivation (as researchers) for undertaking research, we need to find a justification for it, particularly where we are attributing thoughts and meanings to a person outside ourselves. The German word verstehen, literally "meaningful understanding" was used by Weber, asserting that "human individuals cannot be quantified" (Gann, 2017 p.31). Acknowledging that true empathy may not be achievable, Weber called for an interpretive understanding of others, an anti-positivist standpoint acknowledging the complexity of human experience. Verstehen calls for methods that align to social norms (such as the conversational nature of interviews), allowing us to observe and interpret the worldview of those being researched with empathy and compassion, thus exploring meaning to interpret and understand experiences rather than simply observing and describing them.

Moving on from the ontological and epistemological position, an explicit philosophical perspective is required, to make clear the researcher's assumptions about the topic under examination, and to underpin the choices made in relation to methodology, method and analysis. With this in mind, and with the intention of examining the experiences of people who were children during WWII, an interpretivist stance is taken, acknowledging the cultural and historical significance of meaning making.

3.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Before moving on to discuss phenomenological approaches to research, other theoretical positions will need to be identified and explored. The first is life course theory, an approach taken to understanding how people make sense of their lives over time. The participants in my study have moved through a number of life stages since WWII. They have become adolescents, adults and older adults and there is a need to recognise that social change may have influenced their life choices and experiences.

The second theoretical perspective to be considered is social constructionism. This theory suggests that knowledge exists in a historical context and is constructed through the interactions of people with their social world (Burr, 2015). The same experience will have different individual meanings based on both social and historical contexts. Taking a constructionist approach to exploring life course concepts moves away from a traditional trajectory of ageing and moves towards a meaning-making endeavour based on the changing nature of everyday life (Holstein & Gubrium, 2007).

The third theory to be explored will be attachment theory. This theory has been used by a number of authors to underpin their explorations of psychological health in later life aiming to explore whether events from childhood have influenced adult attachment style (Foster & Davies, 2003; Waugh et. al., 2007). In understanding how childhood attachments form and discussing these in relation to the life course may give some insight not only into why exposure to adverse events is influential, but also what factors might mitigate against the impact of those events.

3.3 LIFE COURSE THEORY

3.3.1 Life course perspectives

Life course approaches present a traditional method for establishing how individuals and groups have reacted to social change, as well as identifying ways in which they have orchestrated social change (Giele & Elder 1988). Thus, it can be established that each cohort's experiences is both unique and formative.

Prior to WWII research tended to follow the work of authors such as Durkheim who focused on how society worked as a whole or on microsystems – individual and small group interactions (Delanty & Strydom, 2003). In contrast, the period since WWII has seen significant attention placed on the impact of social change on the everyday lives of both individuals and groups. It has been noted that social environments have a role to play in how individuals make sense of their worlds and post WWII the role of the family has been examined more closely; the thought being that the "family" could support individuals through transitions and so be a mediating force between the individual and wider societal change (Giele & Elder, 1974).

The commonality of the event does not however equate to a commonality of experience, and a different way of seeing and thinking about these experiences is needed in order to interpret individual meaning for those involved. Life course research from the mid twentieth century has started to explore the impact of history on life patterns and the effects of major life experiences on wellbeing (Mitchell, 2003).

3.3.2 Age

The nature of age is multidimensional, and the concept of ageing should include an historical element, that of "social time". Elder (1975) introduced the idea of the cohort-historical effect, exploring how individuals move through and make sense of historical time. This approach acknowledges that although ageing has been explored from a social perspective, relatively little is known about how specific events in history change the social "meaning of life" (Elder, 1975 p.167). Interpreting age-related data could be hampered by the multi-faceted impacts of age, life stage and history, the cohort-historical factors, with clear interpretation being hampered by the interactions of these factors one upon the others. Mannheim (1952, cited by Green, 2010) emphasised the significance of history on both a social and individual level, suggesting the idea of "generational consciousness" (Green, 2010 p.25), a product of individual experience and socio-political factors that persists across the life course.

A more recent addition to the thinking in relation to age comes from Higgs and Gilleard (2014) who have conceptualised a social imaginary - the "Fourth Age". The older, old, is a twenty-first century phenomenon linked to improved health and longevity amongst the British population which stands distinct from the third age. The fourth age imaginary stems from previous conceptualisations of old age in terms of inevitable decline, infirmity and a loss of agency (Gilleard & Higgs, 2010). Comparisons are particularly difficult to manage since historical events are unique, but age is not a singular variable. Even when cohorts (the word itself suggesting a commonality of experience), experience events such as war at the same period in historical time, their experience may vary according to a range of factors including social positioning (Elder 1975; Green 2010,). Elder (1975) cautioned that an assumption of heterogeneity based on age alone carried risks, citing Shaie (1970) who used a two-factorial model, essentially suggesting that any chosen method of

data collection should facilitate analysis of two or more factors such as examining the same cohort at two points in time.

George (1993) identifies that events in childhood have the potential to influence experiences later in life but also suggests that the impact of traumatic experiences can be mediated by the quality of the care afforded to the child at the time of the trauma. It seems that higher quality care from a parental substitute following parental loss results in fewer negative outcomes.

It should be acknowledged that memory itself is not necessarily static, so the individual lens may be changed by time (Prager, 2015). Events from WWII have an accepted social memory which at the time was deemed necessary in order to maintain calm and order (Jalland, 2010). The Myth of the Blitz for example suggested an outward impression of national calm despite immense suffering at a personal level.

3.3.3   Life course research

Alwin (2010, p.206) suggests a framework for examining the consequences of "life course events and transitions", seeking to bring together perspectives relating to the life course under one umbrella, acknowledging the importance of this approach in the examination of human behaviour and experience.

Traditional methods for researching the life course include surveys and questionnaires but Giele and Elder (1988 p.9) rejected these in favour of methodologies that illuminate "the subjective meaning of experience" such as life stories. Settersten (2003 p.22) argues that human lives are "framed by historical time and shaped by the unique social and cultural conditions that exist during those times" and cautions that the impact of historical events may have become bound

up with the impact of ageing per se. This reflects Heidegger's phenomenology and its emphasis on historicity.

Elder's cohort-historical approach indicates that ageing is not homogeneous across cohorts, and because of this, reactions to historical events will vary according to the age (or life stage) at which the event is encountered (Elder, 1974). If we apply this principle to the events of WWII, despite the fact that events are experienced by each generation (parent and child) at a fixed point in time, the cohort effect may give rise to multiple interpretations of a given experience. An example here may be where children describe the "freedom" of being able to spend their days out at play, without appreciating the "freedom to worry" afforded to their parents whilst children are away from the home and keeping each other occupied. Both Elder (1974) and Settersten (2003) have identified risks associated with a retrospective examination of far distant events as people may reframe their experiences based on present knowledge and understanding of events. Furthermore, there is a risk that societal memory, as portrayed in media and culture may not truly represent the trauma experienced during the event itself. It is also possible that the impact of events for the individual may change with time and take on a different significance, for example at points of transition such as ageing (becoming "old") or moving into "older old" age (Gilleard & Higgs 2014; Morris-King, 2009).

3.3.4 Longitudinal Qualitative Research

Neale and Flowerdew (2003) suggest Qualitative Longitudinal Research (QLR) as a way of knowing and understanding the social world, essentially a new approach to exploring the life course. QLR is different from other paradigms in as much as

it focuses on "time and texture" and how the cultural elements of time and culture interplay.

Neale and Flowerdew (2003, p. 190) go on to suggest that the nature of social change can be understood through the ways in which people "generate and manage change in their personal lives", but the potential risks of using retrospective surveys are articulated because of the potential for the lens of "history and hindsight" to distort data. In quantitative research, time is perceived as linear with an "orderly" progression through life stages, but in QLR research it is acknowledged that the life course does not follow a linear trajectory. For the participants in my study, the time period – 1939-45, was a unique point in British culture for children, and one from which the person cannot escape. If we accept that the future is determined by past (and unchangeable) events, there will always be social/cultural events beyond people's control that alter the expected trajectory seen in life cycle approaches (Neale & Flowerdew, 2003). We know what people did in very general terms, but not how they interacted with events. Children will have encountered the same experience, they all lived through WWII, but it could be argued that they are not an homogeneous group per se, since age, social situation and family will all have had an influence over the experience of the individual child.

Berthoud and Gershuny (2000), use an analogy which suggests that if life is a movie, individual events are the frames whilst the narrative is the process of editing those frames into a movie that makes sense to the participants. QLR research though, offers a focus on the plot and (potentially through the use of IPA) detailed stories of the individual players rather than the "grand vista of the epic picture" (Neale & Flowerdew, 2003, p. 193).

QLR is developed further by Neale (2021, p.5) who suggests that although longitudinal research is usually prospective in nature, a retrospective approach can examine how individual have interacted with time and allows researchers to "gaze backwards in time from the vantage point of the present day". This methodology has evolved from anthropological ethnography, sociological community studies and biographical studies such as oral history projects and is now used for the study of life course transitions with a focus on the "wider socio-historical contexts" of people's lives (Neale, 2010, p. 4).

Neale (2019) acknowledges the significance of historical events to alter traditionally expected trajectories conceptualised in life cycle theories and this reflects the thoughts of Higgs and Gilleard (2014) who suggest that the fourth age is bounded not by age but by levels of frailty and infirmity. As more of the population in the UK achieve "older" old age as predicted, new ways will be needed to explore how life trajectories interact, particularly as people achieve ages in excess of eighty years in order to have a clear understanding of their needs moving forwards (Centre for Ageing Better, 2023).

3.4 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Durkheim believed that it was possible to study people in groups, asserting that whilst society is composed of individuals, it is more than a sum of its parts – it has a structure of its own and can be treated like a natural object (Nickerson, 2023). Durkheim's view was contrary to that of Weber who believed that individual motivation was of greater significance than social facts since facts reveal only the pattern of experience and not the motivation that underpins all activity (Delanty and Strydom, 2003)). In-depth analysis is required to illuminate the motivation rather than the patterns produced.

Berger and Luckmann (1966, p.13) define reality as "phenomena that we recognise as having a being independent of our own volition" and argue that knowledge is the "certainty that phenomena are real" and possess specific characteristics. Everyday life is perceived as real and is subjectively meaningful to those living it. The child of WWII accepts the reality of his/her situation since they have no experiences with which to compare it. Furthermore, their peers, families and wider society experience the same socially constructed reality. Members of that shared reality, living events as their everyday life, do not question the reality of their world because it is coherent and has subjective meaning based on the social culture of the time (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

If one accepts then that reality is "socially constructed", taking an analytical standpoint to identify individual meaning brings us to the knowledge that reality can be understood independently of the person experiencing an event (or phenomenon). That is, the phenomenon has reality and meaning outside of the experience.

There is a crossover here between philosophy and sociology. Where a philosopher questions the nature of reality and how we know about it, the man in the street takes it for granted. Examining the subject from an external standpoint requires that people are asked to re-examine their experiences and a sound, ethical standpoint is needed from which to approach this. In asking people to recall and reflect on childhood experiences they are being asked to reconstruct their reality through an alternate lens based both on what they remember and what they now know. For the researcher the ontological (what was the experience, what was it like?) and epistemological (how can we find out, what method will we employ) standpoints may not match those of the people being researched, whose motivations may differ from that of the researcher.

Construction depends on the view of the society rather than the event – German children's experience is, on the surface the same as that of the British child but the broader societal context changes the meaning. The meaning for the child is constructed in this context and through the collective perception of events.

3.4.1 Propaganda

Broad societal events such as WWII are represented by a series of vignettes, which, when combined, construct an overall narrative or picture of the event. The British political ruling classes took steps during the Blitz (the bombing of British cities that had started in September 1940), to maintain morale and calm by portraying a picture of stoicism, even in the face of significant death and destruction (Jalland, 2012). The Church was complicit in this deceit, with the Bishop of Coventry encouraging people to "not to dwell too much on what we have lost" even as he presided over the funeral of 172 people being buried in a common grave following bombing of the city in 1940 (Jalland, 2010 p. 124). It seems to have been

accepted as part of the country's collective memory that stoicism and resilience pervaded during this time and even looking back it has been noted that people did in fact behave in a way which could be viewed as dignified and courageous. It should be noted, however that censorship of the press and a significant amount of propaganda were used to reinforce the nation's view of itself as heroic and inspirational, using its values to construct what Jalland (2012) refers to as "The Myth of the Blitz".

Propaganda can be viewed as a method of disseminating information, but it has associations with manipulation and the spread of disinformation (Till, 2020). It is sometimes positioned as an adversarial action, designed to spread information or to censor output. During WWII propaganda was disseminated by the (then state controlled) media via posters and via cinema newsreels. The BBC World Service broadcast positive messages that might be heard overseas and were broadcast in many languages. These messages were designed to encourage people to show courage and fortitude. Some photographs, such as that of a milkman delivering through the ruins of buildings were deliberately staged to deliver a positive message, the most iconic of which "Keep calm and carry on" is still used today.

Applying Berger and Luckmann's (1966) emphasis on communication in social construction, we can understand propaganda as a mediated construction of reality. These socially mediated messages form a backdrop to the experience of children during WWII, who were exposed to them through radio broadcasts and via the newsreels that were shown alongside their films at the Saturday morning cinema. Sixsmith et. al. (2014) acknowledge that WWII is "a very special and unique social experience" with the potential to leave a lasting legacy on the lives of older people. These people have carried forward with them feelings of resilience and independence, attributable to their interactions with the broader societal message of the need for calm and stoicism perpetuated by the media of the time.

3.4.2 Constructionist approaches and the life course

Objectivist approaches to the life course take for granted set stages of the life cycle, where a constructionist approach instead examines the construction of meaning across the life course (Holstein & Gubrium, 2007). This approach reflects the notion that many subjects, including class, gender and family are now viewed as social constructions. Studying meaning-making across or through the life course makes a presumption of distinct, identifiable stages such as infancy, childhood and old age, but does not see the life course itself as socially constructed.

Life stages (such as old age) can be considered facts of life, but the meaning of being old can be "subjectively discerned and constructed" (Matthews (1979), cited by Holstein & Gubrium, 2007, p. 4). Thus, older age can have multiple meanings which can be discerned through social interaction, and which are mediated by the social definitions of particular situations. The term pensioner, for example tends to be an age-related label, rather than linked directly to a person's work status. Fivush and Haden (1977) describes the life course in terms of transitions and role enactment. These roles are not static although transitions have traditionally been viewed in terms of a one-way continuum. An alternative view might be that we move between roles dependent on the social context in which we find ourselves (Holstein & Gubrium, 2007).

Interpretive approaches can be viewed as the processes by which everyday reality is approached and understood. The everyday reality of our social worlds is subject to our "socially shared resources" but is also sensitive to the broader sociocultural and historical context in which it is experienced (Holstein & Gubrium, 2007). For boys during WWII, their role as child became that of the man of the household, supporting their mothers, but returned to the status of child on the return of the father (Grundmann, 1996; Vaisey, 2011). As people make the transition across

the stages of the life cycle they move from dependence as a child, to independence during adulthood, and potentially back to dependence, being viewed as "child-like" as they reach older age.

3.5 ATTACHMENT THEORY

3.5.1 Psychoanalysis, Freud and the role of the father

In early psychoanalytic theory Freud saw the role of the father as pivotal in both the pre-oedipal and oedipal phases of psychosexual development in a child's life, but post-Freudian theories saw the role of the father a more significant during the Oedipal phase (Jones, 2005). Freud's concept of the Oedipus complex posits that children form strong attachments with the parent of the opposite sex and have feelings of competition to the other (same sex) parent (Telloian, 2022).

Psychoanalysis presupposes that people have unconscious thoughts, feelings, desires and memories and Freud suggested that by making the unconscious thoughts conscious, people would gain insight into their psychological issues and could be cured (McLeod, 2023). Psychoanalysts offer an interpretation of the patient's thoughts and actions through which they may be able to gain insight. Bowlby was a trained psychoanalyst but had become dissatisfied with the way that child development and associated issues were explored from the standpoint of clinical experience rather than the from the study of normal childhood behaviour. He began to explore the role of failures within the child's environment and exposure to trauma rather than relying on theories of internal conflict as suggested by Freud (Gullestad, 2001).

3.5.2 Bowlby's theory of attachment

Bowlby and a group of colleagues had written to the BMJ at the start of WWII to articulate their concerns about the potential impact of evacuation on children who would be separated from their families at a very young age (Bowlby et. Al., 1939). This was suggested in the context of the first 5 years of a child's life being the most

significant in terms of how a child's attachment (or lack of it) to its mother figure at this point would influence the rest of its life. Bowlby's theories were not fully established until the 1950s (and so postdate the experience under examination in this study) and the work of Ainsworth added further, new perspectives, suggesting that whilst a secure caregiver *is* needed, this did not necessarily need to be the child's mother (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1965).

The role of the mother was prioritised by some theorists, but Abelin (1975) noted signs of paternal attachment in children as young as nine months old, contradicting suggestions that the father's role was secondary to that of the mother. Later work by Lamb (1997) seems to suggest that the quality of the care offered in terms of warmth and nurturing is secondary to the gender of the care giver. Bowlby's theories seek to explain how early caregiver relationships can affect attachment style in adulthood (Telloian, 2022).

Bowlby (1969) asserts that attachment style remains stable unless close relationships undergo radical change. If stressful life events occur, for example, these may lead to the child's caregiver losing sensitivity to the needs of the child. The following are the styles of attachment as described by Ainsworth (Huang, 2023):

- Children with a *secure attachment* may be distressed upon separation but warmly welcome the caregiver back through eye contact and hug-seeking.

- *Anxious-resistant attachment* describes a child who is frightened by separation and continues to display anxious behaviour once the caregiver returns.

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- *Avoidant attachment* denotes a child who reacts fairly calmly to a parent's separation and does not embrace their return.

A fourth attachment style was added later by Main and Solomon (1990):

- *Disorganized attachment* is manifest in odd or ambivalent behaviour toward a caregiver upon return—approaching then turning away from or even hitting the caregiver—and may be the result of childhood trauma.

Self-reported adult attachment style is used in Foster et. al. (2003), Waugh et. al. (2007) to judge the impact of extreme events during the war, although the participants in those studies were in their sixties rather than eighty and over as in my study. Bowlby argued that attachment style, once set in childhood would persist into adulthood, but it has been suggested that internal models formed in childhood update as adults age, and relationships formed later can continue to influence adult attachment style (Brogaard, 2015).

Given that not everyone who experienced wartime events as children report a disordered attachment style in later life it cannot be assumed that the long-term impact of events is by default either damaging or persistent. Sixsmith et. al. (2014) identified positive traits such as resilience and independence for example that might be protective and there is evidence from Hasanovic et. al. (2006) that the quality of the care giver may be of significance.

Rather than take the retrospective self-assessment route as discussed in the review of the literature, the current study aims to examine the experience of the child in wartime from a phenomenological perspective, to uncover not only the meaning of the events but to engage with the participants' process of sense-making to further develop understanding not only of how events may adversely

affect psychological wellbeing later in life, but to also identify factors that might be supportive, having a role in mitigating the negative effects.

3.5.3 Piaget

Piaget suggests that children, in interacting with their environment develop cognitive frameworks or schemas that enable them to make sense of their surroundings (Huang, 2021). As the child has new experiences, the new knowledge attained is incorporated into the existing schema but may require the child to adjust their way of thinking, particularly if the new experience does not fit with the existing knowledge. This stage of disequilibrium requires adjustment on the part of the child and a new stage of development is achieved once assimilation has taken place and equilibrium restored (Huang, 2021).

There are four stages in Piaget's theory of cognitive development. These are:

- Sensorimotor – 0-2 years of age
- Pre-operational – 2-7 years of age
- Concrete operational – 7-12 years of age
- Formal operational – 11 years to adulthood

Participants in my study ranged in age from three months to nine years old when war broke out, so, according to Piaget's theory, would have been at several different stages in terms of their cognitive development. From this, it could be posited that for each child, assimilation of the events of WWII would be influenced by their internal schemas of the time, as well as the quality of their caregiver relationships as discussed by Bowlby and Ainsworth (1965). In researching the childhood experiences of war, a methodology which is focused on lived experience with the potential to interpret and bring new insights is needed.

3.5.4 Adverse childhood events

Adverse childhood events (ACEs), defined as traumatic events or circumstances that occur before a child achieves the age of 18, can increase the risk of mental illness and chronic disease in adulthood and there is 'a clear correlation between suffering adversity in childhood and experiencing further negative outcomes in later life' (Asmussen et. al., 2020 p.7). There are ten categories traditionally recognised as ACEs in the UK and whilst the list includes experiences such as physical and psychological abuse, neglect, and parental separation due to divorce, wartime events are not on the list.

Bowlby and his colleagues were not alone in expressing concern about the long-term effects of war. Bowley (1948 p. 143) asserted that it was "too early" to judge the long-term effects of war but identified that early field work was beginning to provide information about its impact. She identified (like Bowlby et. al., 1939) that evacuation was a "major upset" particularly for children under five years old but expanded on wider aspects of war such as rationing and air raids and interestingly "a general exhaustion due to accumulated war fatigue" among parents of the time (Bowley, 1948, p. 147). Howe (2011) identifies the ages at which attachment style is developed or subject to change, with the ages of one to four years being most influential. The adolescence "blip" might be accounted for by the teenagers striving for independence, but attachment style is likely to remain stable and unchanged across adulthood, provided that close relationships remain stable. One significant factor identified by Bowlby is the potential of stressful life events to increase the likelihood of "caregiver losing sensitivity" (Howe, 2011, p.217)

British children born post 1945, (with the exception of those living in military families) will not have had direct experience of war, or the loss of a parent due to war, although childhood experience of events during WWII have been identified by a number of authors as possible predictors for an increase in psychopathology in

older age. Exposure to violent and traumatic events, and evacuation away from home and family may be exerting an influence across the life course, and their potential in the lives of young children now cannot be underestimated (Banyard et. al. 2017; Foster et. al., 2003; Pesonen et. al., 2010; Waugh et. al., 2007).

3.6 PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenology is a philosophical tradition concerned with the nature of experience, where philosophy is defined simply as a theory or attitude that acts as a guiding principle for behaviour (Oxford Dictionary, 2020). Van Manen (2014) defines phenomenology as the study of lived experience (or "lifeworld") but cautions that there are many misconceptions relating to both the meaning of phenomenology, and to phenomenological research. He asserts that simply using a qualitative method such as unstructured interviews and looking to explore human experience is not enough, and that the label phenomenological is often attributed to research that is in reality ethnography, narrative analysis or case study. In order to be truly defined as phenomenological, research should be pre-reflective, as described by Husserl and should address the "primal, lived experience". Pre-reflective experience describes the way in which we experience the world, in its "ordinariness" as we go about our daily lives; the process of reflecting phenomenologically can itself be viewed as pre-reflective as it in turn becomes the focus of our reflection (Van Manen, 2014).

The question "is it phenomenology?" needs to be addressed at the outset of a project in order that a phenomenological question can be formulated (Van Manen, 2017). If the question is not clear at the outset it is unlikely that researchers will "be able to focus on the lived meaning of a human phenomenon that is experientially recognizable and experientially accessible." (Van Manen, 2017 p. 776). One cannot assume that the questions will emerge as the interviews are conducted.

A first step for researchers approaching a phenomenological research study is to clearly articulate its philosophical standpoint. Phenomenological research,

whether following Husserl's descriptive approach or Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty's interpretive (or hermeneutic) stance, employs a qualitative research method, usually based around semi structured interviews. What differs is the nature of the knowledge that we are concerned with or are attempting to construct based on the philosophical standpoint from which the question is posed (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

3.6.1   Phenomenological philosophy

Twentieth century philosophy in social science, where it has been directed towards addressing questions of human existence, concerns itself with the "principles regulating the search for, and acquisition of, knowledge (in this case, social scientific knowledge) about reality (in this case, social reality) through a series of intersubjectively accessible and justifiable methodical steps" (Delanty & Strydom, 2003 p.3). The philosophy of phenomenology could be viewed as an ever-evolving art, a process that is aimed at uncovering mysteries, as yet unseen but ever-emerging and subject to ongoing reflection and exploration (SEP 2020).

Weber's interpretive standpoint in the early part of the twentieth century asserted that all human action has subjective meaning. He suggested that even when faced with situations not of their own making, people will make choices and judgements about how they will act in that situation (Baert, 2005). In order to examine the experiences of people in a given situation then, the history of that situation needs to be considered. Interpretivism focuses on particular phenomena and the conditions from which they arise and suggests that since knowledge and facts are inherently linked, they have a value-base which cannot be ignored, contrasted with positivist approaches where facts and values are separated to arrive at a more objective reality.

Husserl, described as the father of phenomenology, argued that the true reality of human situations could be missed if only natural scientific approaches were used (Laverty, (2003). He promoted instead a descriptive/transcendental phenomenological approach where the lived experience, or lifeworld, of the person is explored; the lifeworld being described as "what we experience pre-reflectively" without attempting to categorize or conceptualize events. In taking this approach, new meanings can be uncovered as we set aside what we have previously taken for granted (Laverty, 2003 p.22). Key to Husserl's approach to phenomenology is the epoché, the bracketing of past knowledge and so-called "taken for granted" understandings. These understandings are not dismissed, they are rather put out of action temporarily in order that the essence of the phenomenon can be observed, aside from the natural sciences and attitudes.

Heidegger, a scholar of Husserl, developed his work further into the realms of interpretation. He considered Husserl's approach to phenomenology to be too descriptive, preferring the idea of "the situated meaning of a human in the world" (Horrigan-Kelly et. al., 2016 p.2). Heidegger (1962. P.58) takes an ontological approach to defining phenomenology and suggests that its role is "to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself". Followers of Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology are seeking to interpret and so explore more deeply to find something which has hitherto been hidden. Hermeneutics has its roots in theological study, being utilised to interpret Biblical texts, and now has a place in phenomenological research as a vehicle to bring out "that which is usually hidden within human experience" (Spielberg, 1976, cited by Lopez and Willis, 2004).

When approaching the ontological question of human experience, Heidegger argues that since the world that we are born into already exists, we need to

understand our pre-understandings where events have already been subject to interpretation. We bring our own interpretation, for example relating to objects, by how we use them (Laverty, 2003). Heidegger's newer Hermeneutic Phenomenology places significance on individual history, presupposing that since culture and background already exist, they cannot be put aside. He argued that fore-structures, such as historicity should not be ignored and should instead be acknowledged and explored in order that any influence on interpretation could be identified. Heidegger, rather than following Husserl's attempts to understand human beings, focused on the "situated meaning of a human in the world" or Dasein, where individual existence is inextricably linked to "cultural, social and historical contexts" (Laverty, 2003, p. 24).

Heidegger's concept of Dasein is future directed, where the future contains possibilities for the realisation of projects, and acknowledges the role of people, places and organisations – the complexity of human structures. This may translate to the experience of the individual human and the distinct situation in which it finds itself. Heidegger's work is contrary to previous philosophes, such as those of Dilthey, who describes the "bloodless" subject and Kant, where the complexity of human nature is missing. In contrast to Husserl, Heidegger asserted that our observations are our own, and we are only able to interpret experiences from another's perspective.

Dasein understands itself in terms of a social role, acknowledging aspects such as sexuality and occupation and the person views themselves within the context of their social context. Heidegger also notes the significance of mood. Mood is never neutral and has the effect of altering our experience of an event. Thus, time might be said to "fly" when we are excited or take on a slower pace if we are not occupied. In summary, Dasein is a subject with blood in its veins, existing within a particular

social context, with views and emotion, a view of itself and a limited time in which to live (Golob, 2019).

Authors who followed Heidegger levelled the criticism that he had overemphasised the distinct nature of the human condition, taking a rather theological dimension to emphasise the special nature of humans, and so setting them aside from the rest of nature, drawing a hard line between humans on one hand – rational animals – and other non-rational animals (Golob, 2019).

Gadamer was influenced by the work of both Husserl and Heidegger and emphasised the importance of language in the interpretive process. Gadamer's belief that interpretation is a developing process means that "a definitive interpretation" may actually never be achieved. He disagreed with Husserl's views on bracketing, seeing this process as both impossible to achieve and undesirable, and he emphasised the need for historical understanding, as espoused by Heidegger, asserting that it had inherent value in the process of undercovering meaning (Laverty, 2003).

3.6.2 Phenomenological research methodologies

Researchers employing a methodology rooted in phenomenology, such as IPA, are seeking to expose meaning from experience. Husserl's descriptive approach suggests that in order to do this, they should practice epoché or the suspension of judgement about a subject, as well as phenomenological reduction, where prior knowledge is replaced by astonishment at previously hidden meaning (Cogan, 2020). It should be remembered that the epoché and reduction refer to a deliberate setting aside rather than a not understanding in relation to a particular phenomenon. A common misconception is that epoché in abstaining from belief

in the world, denies the world. It is important to remember that epoché is neither an affirmation nor a denial of the world, but rather a moment at which point we accept what we see, without recognising it as absolute truth (Cogan, 2020).

Following Husserl's principles leads some to argue that even conducting a thorough review of the literature relating to a particular topic can influence the outcome of the research and that true subjectivity can only be achieved by the researcher "bracketing" out any preconceived ideas and constantly re-evaluating their own role in the research process (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

Followers of Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology seek to interpret by exploring deeper into an experience to find something which has hitherto been hidden. Heidegger believed that it was not possible to set aside our own experience and knowledge of the subject being examined but encouraged reflexivity, asserting that in order to adopt a phenomenological approach, self-awareness is key. To facilitate this interpretative approach, questions should take the approach of "what is this like?" rather than "what is the lived experience of…", this change in emphasis is aimed at revealing the meaning, rather than the nature of the experience (Van Manen, 2017). IPA uses phenomenology and hermeneutics to simultaneously uncover and illuminate how sense is being made of experiences.

Other methodologies seek to explore human experience but take a different philosophical standpoint. Longitudinal studies (as preferred in life course research) reveal connections between experiences – for example it is acknowledged that wartime experience can affect psychological wellbeing over time, (Beekman et. al., 1988; Rusby & Tasker, 2009) – but the essential nature of the experience itself

(the phenomenon) remains obscured and interpretation is needed before the true reality can be revealed and analysed.

If we apply an interpretive stance when exploring the experience of children during WWII, translating the question of "what happened?" to "what was it like?", for children with absent fathers, the status of being a father itself is not changed, albeit a physical distance is introduced, but the enactment of the role of the father is interrupted. When the father returns, the question changes from "what is it like to have a father?" to "what is the impact of having a person at home enacting the role of the father?", given that this will bring changes to the family dynamic, and may even influence the way that the child thinks, feels and behaves relative to the way that they did whilst the father was away. If the father remains at home, he may be taken away from the child emotionally, despite being physically present, if for example his wish to take part in active duty is thwarted by physical disability or a protected profession.

In order to exploit the possibilities lying within phenomenological methodologies, an approach is needed which uses qualitative methods such as interviewing and/or focus groups where date is analysed using a method which takes an interpretive stance.

3.6.3   Phenomenology as research

Phenomenological research adopts a qualitative research method that facilitates insight into the lived experience from a human perspective that cannot be achieved using quantitative methods alone (Morris-King, 2009). Qualitative, phenomenological approaches to research are inductive and recognise that context is important, acknowledging the potential influence of both people and

places on the respondent. To facilitate use of the knowledge embedded within the experience effectively requires that both descriptive and interpretive techniques are used. Researchers need to make a philosophical choice at the research design stage whether descriptive phenomenology (following Husserl) or interpretive phenomenology (following Heidegger) is the most appropriate method to pursue. The key question is whether the topic under examination needs to be described or interpreted and whether bracketing is needed to answer the question posed. If the decision is made that bracketing is not necessary, the researcher still has the task of managing the intrusion of their fore-understandings; that which is already known must be acknowledged and managed in order that an open approach to the data can be taken.

Smith et. al. (2009) argue that experience has a hierarchical structure; most of the time we are caught up in our everyday lives and are not consciously aware of an event as "an experience". They acknowledge the role of social constructionism whilst Greatrex-White, (2008), exploring the use of hermeneutic-phenomenological approaches in nursing, identifies that particular events could have multiple interpretations. Thus, if we look at WWII as a socially constructed event, the child, mother, and father (soldier) will each highlight a different aspect through their individual interpretation of it and Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology is a closer fit.

3.7 HERMENEUTICS

Hermeneutics, also known as the theory of interpretation, has its roots in ancient Greek philosophy, initially being used in the interpretation of biblical texts. It offers an opportunity for interpretation, based not on the idealised objectivity of the natural sciences, but rather an individualised view of the world. Interpretation is facilitated by the exploration of phenomena through interaction and conversation with other people (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2014).

Dilthey was one of the first to ground hermeneutics in the realms of the social sciences and highlighted the need to explore how the world is made accessible through symbolically mediated practices, those meaningful actions and symbolic representations that form the structure of human life and complete our understanding of scientific explanation (Makkreel & Rodi 2002). He used the ideas of lived experience and understanding (or verstehen) to differentiate humanities from the natural sciences. Verstehen relates ostensibly to our understanding of others, where the exploration of lived experience requires active synthesis in order to conceptualise our understanding of the world. This leads to the conclusion that hermeneutics, or the interpretation of meaningful texts, are well suited to interpretation relating to human history and activity (Smith et. al., 2009).

Schleiermacher (1998, p. 266) asserts that authors or speakers are individuals and thus interpretation has both grammatical and psychological elements. The words have an exact textual meaning but are interpreted in an individual way. The interpreter's relationship with the text means that analysis "brings to consciousness what was unconscious" and therefore the interpretive analyst is able to bring a new perspective, unknown by the author. Schleiermacher's perspective seems to suggest that in IPA, it is engaging with the wider data as well as engaging with

psychological theory which has the potential to bring wider understanding (Smith et. al., 2009).

Gadamer (1975) critiques modern science and the development of modern society, asserting that they need concrete answers. Rather than a monologue, however, he asserts that a dialogue is needed, whereby what we know can be moderated by our conversations and feelings. Gadamer's approach thickens our understanding of the research process and reinforces the importance of history and tradition on the interpretive process (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2022). In remaining open to the new, our interpretive actions inform our understanding; preconceptions may emerge but are revised by the process of interpretation.

The hermeneutic circle, the constant moving between the part and the whole, may be better described as a hermeneutic spiral, where a dynamic process moves us not just back and forth but in an ever-widening circle, (Bauman,1978). The process of analysis may appear linear but is in fact circular and iterative. The hermeneutic circle can be used to understand a number of relationships, from a single word in its relation to a whole sentence to a single episode in the context of a whole life (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, Figure 3:1). When applied to the process of research the circle can operate at the "whole" level of the researcher's ongoing biography where a "part" is characterised by an encounter with a participant.

The Part	The Whole
The single word	The sentence in which the word is embedded
The single extract	The complete text
The particular text	The complete oeuvre
The interview	The research project
The single episode	The complete life

Figure 3:1 - Hermeneutics diagram from Smith, Flowers and Larkin, (2009)

Reflexivity is a key component of research using a phenomenological, hermeneutic approach. We reflect on the process of the research and how we influence the findings, thus evaluating what we have brought and how we might have shaped the process. It is through combined understanding of the theoretical perspectives of a project that we can situate our own understandings of how events influence lived experience, and it allows us to situate the lived experience of participants within the social context of their lives. Reflexivity keeps us within the hermeneutic circle by constantly engaging with the text, the participants and the underlying philosophy from which we are approaching the research.

Key philospophcal and theoretical perspectives have been outlined in this chapter and have led to the conclusion that a qualitative methodology rooted in an interpretivist paradigm is appropriate for the exploration of how people experienced WWII as children. This will be achieved through the use of qualitative methods such as interviews which will be analysed using the double hermeneutic of IPA to support analysis of the resulting data.

The chapter is summarised in Table 3:1.

Paradigm	Ontology	Epistemology	Philosophical/ Theoretical perspective	Methodology	Method
Interpretivist	Relativist - Reality is individually constructed, there is no single truth or reality. The social world is different from the natural world. Individuals ascribe their own meaning. (What was it like to be a child during World War Two? What was it like when the war ended, and the family was reunited? What has been the impact of childhood wartime experiences on life experience, choice and relationships?)	Reality needs to be interpreted to uncover the meaning contained within events. Historical perspective to events uncovers part of the truth but the "essence" or individual meaning remains hidden.	Phenomenology (get back to the "things themselves". Meanings are shaped by culture. Hermeneutics Idiography Social constructionism (reality relies upon human interaction) Life course perspectives (cohort-historical effect)	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)	Qualitative: Idiographic approach Individual semi-structured interviews Written accounts Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) – double hermeneutic, making sense of how participants make sense themselves)

Table 3:1 - Ontology and Epistemology

Chapter 4: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

A range of qualitative research methodologies are available and can be used to explore the experiences of people. In order to make a choice about methodology, thought and consideration has to be given as to the researchers ontological and epistemological positions.

Gadamer (2013) asserts that we are never standing outside a situation therefore cannot develop objective knowledge of it – we are always within a situation. This inability to completely illuminate a particular situation is due to our historical nature where the present is finite, we are always looking backwards or forwards and the moment of looking is fleeting (Gadamer, 2013). If a situation forms a particular standpoint, then the concept of "horizon" refers to everything that can be seen from "a particular vantage point" (p. 313). As researchers we need to establish an appropriate horizon of enquiry in order to answer the questions posed by the situation under examination.

In relation to the current study, the historical events relating to WWII have been described and interpreted many times over in the decades since 1945. In our society wide thematic analysis of wartime events, we now have a range of phrases and images that effectively sum up knowledge of these events, even when we have no direct memory, or were not even born at the time of their occurrence. Our use of terms such as "keep calm and carry on", "make do and mend" and "dig for victory" summarise the experience of a population living through a time of significant trauma, uncertainty, and hardship with stoicism, but this image does not reflect the true lived experience of individuals, particularly children, for whom the

reality may have been quite different. We need to establish a new horizon or vantage point from which to observe and understand these experiences.

The concept of horizon identifies the wider breadth of vision needed when trying to understand, looking away from the situation close at hand in order to see it more clearly (Gadamer, 2013). Understanding is then possible through encounters, conversations directed at getting to know where a person is coming from, to establish their horizon. These conversations cannot be described as true conversations, since we are not seeking to come to an agreement, rather we are trying to "get to know the horizon of the other person" (Gadamer, 2013 p. 314). We do not need to agree in order to do this because through the framing of the conversation we can get to know the other person's standpoint and form some understanding of their ideas.

An example of this encounter is a clinical consultation where clinician and patient arrive with pre-understanding and fore-structures, and their own separate horizon. The consultation facilitates a fusion of those horizons, and both leave with a separate but changed horizon of meaning. The old horizon (or story) does not disappear, it is carried forward into the new horizon in a circle of understanding (Clark, 2008).

Reflecting back to my encounter with John, his horizon comprised pre-understanding of his symptoms and the effect of those symptoms on his life. My pre-understanding came from knowledge of the clinical symptoms of low mood and anxiety, and I was able to form an impression of John's situation based on this. During our encounter John's childhood story was revealed and broadened the conversation from his symptoms in the present to include events from his past. Whilst this knowledge did not necessarily affect the interventions on offer for John,

through remaining open to John's meaning, a new level of understanding could be achieved – I was becoming aware of John's horizon (Gadamer, 2013). After our conversation his horizon had moved to encompass some understanding of how he might manage his symptoms, whilst my horizon now encompassed his childhood experience and how this might be exerting an impact on his mental health.

Merleau-Ponty, arguably the leading French phenomenologist of his generation, drew on the ideas of both Husserl and Heidegger to develop his own interpretive theory based on perception, and drawing on gestalt theory – the "meaningful whole of figure against ground" – the figure being the person or object under scrutiny and the ground being the background against which the figure is explored, (Toadvine, 2019). He argued that sensing is the key to understanding the world of "the other" and in order to understand another's experience we must make connections to our own experience. Taking Merleau-Ponty's idea of embodiment, where he suggests that we exist in the world in a bodily way, we take our bodies for granted, noticing them only when something happens to disrupt their functioning. If we agree with the idea of embodied perception, it follows that we cannot be in another person's body or experience and the embodiment is theirs alone (Toadvine, 2019).

Freud viewed the world as a text, requiring interpretation. He used external symptoms – neuroses as a key to understanding/interpreting underlying unconscious thought processes. His psychoanalysis used interpretational methods of analysis to uncover hidden meanings of human reality that are otherwise inaccessible. He argued that human rationality is divided between the unconscious (grounded in the laws of biology) and the conscious, or autonomous, free of biological forces, a "repository of interpretation and free will" (Tauber, 2009, p.1).

A key tenet of the interpretive tradition as espoused by Merleau-Ponty and Freud is that of empathy, an understanding of another's point of view which stems from connection with one's own sensations and experiences. This philosophy, shared with nursing and mental health nursing in particular, enables us to work with people in a person-centred way acknowledging the importance of individual lived experience, and enables us to pose questions such as "what is it like to be a person in your situation?" (Lopez and Willis, 2004).

Sartre, (1946), himself a prisoner of war in 1940- 41, takes an existentialist perspective to the question of what it is like to be a human being. He suggests that the way in which we engage with the world is akin to a project which is developmental, and our experience is continuously evolving. Sartre's work is forward facing, directed towards becoming rather than being, and stresses the significance of personal relationships, social context and moral encounters.

Existentialist approaches suggest that human beings have no inherent value, but rather they create their values by their interactions both in the world and with the people around them. Sartre asserts that it is only after we come into existence and interact with the world that we are able to define ourselves. The complexity of human nature means that the life, biographical history and social situation need to be taken into account (Tuffour, 2017). If we accept that our experience is shaped by the presence or absence of others, we can explore the impact of the absence of a person previously known and influential, (such as an absent father at a time of war), not only on our social relationships, but also on our view of ourselves. A war is an event that threatens our very existence and for many people WWII was experienced in a bodily way, through changes to environment, occupation and relationships, even if they were not directly involved with the actual mechanics of the war itself.

4.2 WHY IPA?

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative research approach aimed towards the exploration of lived experience that is derived from three philosophical approaches – phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith, 2012). Whilst IPA was initially developed to support research in the field of psychology, it has more recently been adopted by a range of academic disciplines, where its structure and qualitative approach is of interest in fields where human lives are examined, including the areas of social and health research (Tuffour, 2017). The use of IPA has been discussed and debated by a range of authors; Van Manen (2017), for example, argued that IPA is more therapy orientated than phenomenological, an idea firmly rejected by Smith (2018), whilst Alase (2017) identifies significant advantages to IPA and calls it the "best opportunity" for exploring the lives of research participants (p.9).

The complex individual, social and cultural nature of the experiences of children during World War Two (WWII) demands a research approach underpinned by theories effectively supporting the exploration of human experience. A qualitative methodology, such as IPA where the notion of meaning is key, exposes the phenomena contained within human experience and facilitates interpretation on the part of the researcher (Smith et. al., 2022).

IPA's idiographic focus is supported theoretically by both phenomenology and hermeneutics, and it has been asserted that "without the phenomenology, there would be nothing to interpret…without the hermeneutics the phenomenon would not be seen" (Smith et. al. 2009, p.37). By utilising IPA's double hermeneutic, the researcher is making sense of the way in which individuals make sense of their experiences in order to illuminate phenomena (Smith et. al. 2009).

IPA is a useful methodology for examining events where meaning making is an essential component, as its primary concern is with examining in detail people's lived experience of events (Smith & Osborn, 2015). As stated, although originally developed for use in psychological research, IPA now has a growing corpus of research from other disciplines. Its idiographic focus facilitates examination of major life events, examining individual cases before moving on to a more detailed exploration of meaning across and between those cases (Smith et. al., 2022).

Ontologically, IPA assumes that there "really is a world out there" and in line with hermeneutic phenomenology it aims to understand the person in the context of their lived experience (Larkin, 2020). Epistemologically, it fits with the aims of my research which is to uncover individual meaning from historical events. My epistemological position is that knowledge of the events themselves uncovers part of the truth, but interpretation of individual realty is required in order to uncover the meaning contained within those events. Morris-King (2009) identified IPA as an appropriate method to analyse the data she had collected via in-depth interviews. Here the research question was broad and aimed at exploring the experiences of people who had been children during WWII rather than testing a hypothesis.

Returning to the discussion about attachment styles, IPA has the power to "read between the lines" of experience to reveal what is underneath and this may be where the key to questions about mediation of impact and the development of resilience lies. Through the use of IPAs double hermeneutic, I hope to be able to show that the way that participants are actively making sense of their experiences across their life course may be mitigating the impact of exposure to extreme events.

4.2.1 Gems

Gems are offered as a valuable concept in IPA where the focus is on the in-depth analysis of experiences. Gems are "single utterances and small passages" that have "a significance completely disproportionate to its size" (Smith, 2011, p.6). Gems have the capacity to offer strong insight into the experiences of both individuals and groups of participants as a whole. Where a single utterance stands out it can highlight significance within a transcript and offer "analytic leverage" (Smith, 2011, p. 7). We are directed to pay attention to the extracts within a transcript that catch our attention and demand deeper exploration in order to expose meaning which can be deeply hidden within the extract. Even single gems can represent value which is much greater than the size of the extract within the transcript.

The value of the gem can also be seen in relation to the hermeneutic circle, a dynamic process where a single utterance forms a part, and the sentence represents the whole. Once the gem is revealed, it is both clarified in terms of its own meaning and the bigger picture which it highlights. Several kinds of gem are described by Smith (2011, p.14). These include:

- **Shining** – the object is apparent and can be seen without "peering".
- **Suggestive** - the object is seen but needs further exploration on the part of the researcher.
- **Secret** – here, despite little happening "on the surface", further detective work will expose the meaning.

Exploring gems is a discriminatory task, they cannot be created and may not be present in every transcript. It is up to the researcher to remain attentive when carrying out the analysis of the data to recognise gems and exploit the opportunities for in-depth meaning making that they offer.

IPA has three primary concerns:

- Personal lived experience

- The meaning of the experience to the participant

- How the participant makes sense of the experience

In essence, it is concerned with the role of people as meaning makers, where meaning is created through an interaction between people, usually through language.

My research is focused on the experiences of people who were children during a period of significant societal upheaval, and I have identified IPA as an appropriate methodology because of its qualitative, phenomenological nature, aligned to exploring meaning in relation to lived experience. Previous research about the long-term impacts of wartime experience has largely focused on separation because of evacuation or loss during the war years and although some authors have examined the impact of wartime events on later life there is little which focuses on the impact of family reunion and the resumption of family life as the war ended – this despite the initial warnings of Bowlby et. al. (1939) that the experiences of children would have ongoing significance for their psychological health. Given what we know about how families behaved as war ended, and attempts to "carry on" as before, the aim of my study is to give voice to those children labelled the "silent generation" and encourage them to tell their stories to allow us to illuminate meanings contained within them.

Following the work of Heidegger, research framed by IPA examines the significance ascribed to lived experience and is of particular usefulness when examining experiences where "hot cognition" (including events surrounding separation and loss) is engaged, that is cognition that is "emotionally laden" (Smith,

2019 p.167). Heidegger argues that it is actually the significance imparted by an individual participating in an event that makes it an experience, rather than the event itself, and the very nature of being human is to make sense from events, particularly where those events may be of life changing significance and from this, Smith (2018 p. 3) suggests five levels of meaning ranging from literal ("what does that mean?") to existential ("what does my life mean?"), siting IPA at the third, experiential level, seeking significance by asking the question "what does *it* mean?".

Smith et.al. (2009) suggest that good IPA prompts people to reflect on events in order to make sense of them. Its quality increases when the analysis engages with both the experiential and existential aspects of participant accounts and the meaning-making contained within them (Nizza et. al., 2021). The method of data collection in IPA is likely to be semi-structured idiographic interviews and is directed towards developing a compelling narrative which includes both existential and experiential elements. It requires close, analytical reading of participant data to highlight areas of convergence and divergence.

The aim of research exploring individual meaning suits a phenomenological methodology using small numbers of participants identified through purposive sampling. Phenomenology can be said to uncover meaning, whilst hermeneutics provides the interpretation and IPA includes both these elements whilst recognising the importance of the participant voice – what they are actually saying, represented by the use of direct quotations (Pringle et. al., 2011). When using IPA as a methodology the researcher, rather than "bracketing" themselves as in the work of Husserl, follows the work of Heidegger, acknowledging that they are part of the interpretive analysis, by identifying and reflecting on their fore-structures. In

this way, the hermeneutic circle can be broadened and become a spiral as the layers of interpretation are peeled away.

IPA is not without its issues. Paley (2017) asserts that some researchers fall into the trap of selecting phenomenological approaches based simply on a desire to explore meaning. He feels that this justification is too simplistic and that nurses using phenomenology have a limited understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of the methodology. This can in turn result in research that is not truly phenomenological in nature. Given that any qualitative research could be argued to explore individual experiences using interviews as method, it is essential to identify what it is in particular that makes the research distinctly phenomenological (Paley 2017).

Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) caution against choosing a methodology in advance of refining a research question. The temptation is then to adapt the project to suit the methodology rather than identifying the focus of the research question first. It is also important to ensure that the analysis is interpretive (the main thrust of IPA) so that the researcher does not simply conduct a thematic analysis that is descriptive in nature. Mason (2018) advises that researchers ask themselves key questions in order to challenge their own assumptions about their research and to ensure reflexivity. I have refined my research question and have included specific elements of the childhood wartime experience – that of children who remained at home and reunion at the end of the war which have been covered less by research about this period. It is hoped that this will start to illuminate the longer-term impacts on life choices and health into later life.

Despite cautionary advice about making arbitrary choices in relation to methodology, at some point a decision needs to be made and a justification for this

choice needs to be developed. It is possible to debate choices based on a range of considerations, whether philosophical or epistemological, but there will always be a point at which the debate needs to be replaced by the development of a strategy to research the chosen topic based on the choices made (Mason, 2018). In summary, IPA has been chosen as the methodology for this research because of its ability to facilitate interpretation of the meaning attributed to events of WWII by people who were living through that time as children. It will illuminate what lies underneath the everyday experiences described in historical representations and further our understanding of how older people reflect across the life course and make sense of their lives using both their memories of the time and their subsequent discussions and re-framing of events.

4.3 SAMPLING AND RECRUITMENT

4.3.1 Sampling

The first step in the sampling process is to identify the sample universe – the total number of individuals who could potentially be included as participants in a study; inclusion and exclusion criteria narrow down the sample to the final number of potential participants (Robinson, 2014). IPA-based research requires a degree of homogeneity to ensure that context is preserved but it does not necessarily demand triangulation. This being said, triangulation can be viewed as a way to increase confidence in the research and can be carried out via methods or data (Larkin and Thompson, 2004). In my study, data was collected in three formats – face to face interviews, telephone interviews and written accounts. This was not a conscious attempt at triangulation, rather a consequence of circumstances external to the project – the Covid-19 pandemic meant that all face-to-face research was halted, and a new way to proceed needed to be found. It does though offer an unanticipated opportunity to compare between and across the different methods of data collection. Cross-case analysis has enabled identification of convergence and divergence through the data and is reflected in the themes identified.

Homogeneity can be achieved from a range of perspectives, although using demographics such as age or gender alone may not give the specificity required (Robinson, 2014). Combining age and gender with experience of specific life events may be a more appropriate way to achieve the desired sample population, and here I am combining age with a specific historical event - WWII. Both convergence and divergence in relation to participant data are desirable, but greater diversity amongst participants in a phenomenological study creates

potential difficulties in identifying common themes whilst locating enough people who have experienced a particular event may also be an issue that needs to be considered (Cresswell, 2013). It would be undesirable in this study to include anyone who could not be considered a "child" during the war which is why the date of birth criteria was set to 1930-39. Even setting these criteria meant that the oldest participant was fifteen at the end of the war and had actually left school and was working by that point. This reflects the history of the time, where school leaving age had been raised in 1944 to 15.

Studies aiming to produce large scale generalisable data require relatively large sample sizes, whereas studies with an idiographic focus (such as those using analytical frameworks such as IPA) require much smaller numbers in comparison. Smaller numbers allow for individual voices to be heard and facilitate the depth of analysis required without the researcher having to wrestle with unmanageable quantities of data (Robinson 2014; Smith et. al. 2009). Studies with an IPA focus have been known to have single number participants and Smith et. al. (2009) offer arguments for differing sample sizes dependent on both the purpose of the study and the experience of the researcher. Thus, researchers new to IPA or those involved in educational projects (e.g., PhD studies) typically include between four and ten participants. Larger quantities of data can be generated, if needed, by either increasing the number of participants, or by conducting multiple interviews with a smaller number of people (Smith et. al. 2009).

People who were children during WWII comprise the sample universe, and the original aim was to recruit people who had experienced separation, including evacuation, due to the conflict. In order that the people interviewed would have memories of the war period (particularly the end of the war), age exclusions were applied, meaning that the youngest participant might be a few months old at the

beginning of the war, and the oldest a teenager (and in work) at the end. Given the range in ages and what is known about memory formation it is anticipated that there will be differences in how participants experience, recall and relate events. To ensure that informed consent could be obtained in line with the Mental Capacity Act (2005), those with a diagnosis of dementia, or in current contact with mental health services were initially excluded, giving inclusion and exclusion criteria as shown in Table 4:1:

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
• People born between 1930 and 1939. • People with a father conscripted to the armed forces. and/or • People evacuated away from home. • People with no diagnosis of dementia or significant cognitive impairment which might preclude informed consent. • People not in current contact with mental health services	• People with a diagnosis of dementia or significant cognitive impairment which precludes informed consent. • People in current contact with mental health services. • People not separated from their father/wider families during the war.

Table 4:1 - Initial inclusion/exclusion criteria

Further historical exploration revealed that North Staffordshire was actually designated as a reception area for evacuees, and this meant that whilst children were evacuated *to* North Staffordshire, from cities such as Birmingham and Liverpool, and as far away as the Channel Islands, children were generally not evacuated *away* from the area. This meant that including evacuation as part of the inclusion criteria was deemed inappropriate and was removed as it was unlikely to yield participants.

North Staffordshire has a significant industrial heritage with coal mining and steel production. Men engaged in these reserved occupations were exempt from conscription, as were those engaged in farming, teaching and medicine. As the war progressed there was a shortage of coal miners and one in ten eligible men were actually conscripted to work in the mines as Bevin Boys, although this was not always a popular choice. Given the number of protected professions, and conscription to coal mining, those with fathers in these professions were included, as were any who had been eligible for conscription but turned away due to a medical exemption. From the participants eventually recruited for the study, all the fathers who were not conscripted fitted these criteria, having wanted to volunteer to fight, but been refused either on the grounds of protected profession or health.

I reflected on the decision to exclude people in current contact with MH services, recognising that the reasons for this may be multifactorial, and may not automatically predispose a person to distress through participation in a research project. This approach acknowledges the value of personal agency in determining what decisions a person may or may not decide to take. People may have their own motivations for wanting to talk about their childhood experiences and this activity may in fact be supportive. This being said, the research project was not

directed towards a therapeutic outcome so my decision to not recruit through mental health services was an appropriate one.

The Mental Capacity Act (2005) should be used to determine a person's capacity to make decisions should they be suffering from "an impairment of, or a disturbance in the functioning of, the mind or brain" and capacity should be assumed unless established otherwise. Age alone is not an indicator of capacity and given that my exclusion criteria excluded those with cognitive impairment, capacity to agree to participate was assumed on this basis.

The final inclusion and exclusion criteria are detailed below (Table 4:2):

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
• People born between 1930 and 1939.	• People born after the commencement of WWII.
• people who experienced temporary separation as children because of WWII because their father was conscripted into the armed forces.	• People with a diagnosis of dementia or significant cognitive impairment which precludes informed consent
• People whose fathers remained at home ether due to protected profession or medical exemption.	• People in current contact with MH services
• People with no cognitive impairment or diagnosis of dementia	

Table 4:2 - Final inclusion/exclusion criteria

4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Challenges associated with potentially vulnerable populations should always be anticipated but whilst the participants in the study are all over the age of 80, vulnerability should not be assumed simply on the grounds of age. Many older people remain actively interested and engaged in social activities and projects.

As a current registrant with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), I am bound by its code of practice - The Code (NMC 2018). This requires that I "take reasonable steps to protect people who are vulnerable or at risk from harm, neglect or abuse" (NMC, p. 18), and includes a requirement to be aware of the laws and policies relating to protecting and caring for vulnerable people.

Beauchamp and Childress (2019) outline four pillars of ethics as they relate to health care. These are:

- Autonomy

- Beneficence

- Non-maleficence

- Justice

If we apply these to the current research, participants must have the right to either participate or not as they choose, to withdraw consent at any point and to not be harmed by the process. No direct benefit to the participants was anticipated although the findings may be of wider benefit for older people in clinical settings.

The concept of doing no harm is central to any research project (Smith et. al., 2009) and university ethics processes were adhered to in order to identify and reduce potential risks to participants. Ethical approval was sought via the relevant research ethics committee (see Appendix E).

Unintentional harm may arise simply from talking about sensitive issues including emotional memories related to childhood experiences (Smith et. al., 2009). My clinical background and significant experience as a Registered Mental Health Nurse (RMN) working in older person settings means that I have the skills and knowledge required to identify and manage signs of emotional distress. Contact details for local mental health support organisations were identified and a plan put in place such that participants would be advised to make contact with their GP should referral to formal services be deemed advisable as a result of participating in the research.

I was potentially going to be visiting participants in their homes and although the risk to me was considered low in this situation I sought out the university one worker policy. The university wide policy seemed to focus on working alone within the university setting so I turned to the policy produced by the School of Nursing for situations where students might carry out solo visits to patients in the community. I would not be carrying out clinical duties during any home visits, but I would need to ensure that there was an agreed mode of contact (mobile telephone) for the duration of the visits.

The power relationship within an interview process requires consideration. Interviewers "exercise power over interviewees" but power can shift, potentially exposing the interviewer themselves to emotional distress (Mason, 2018). My supervisory team were available for discussion and debrief following the interviews and active reflection was used at each stage to process the experience, to ensure that I was observing the need for an ethical approach, and to ensure that I had effectively processed the data. I felt that this was particularly important given my previous clinical roles and the risk of my taking a psychotherapeutic rather than an interpretive stance to the data.

Consent extends beyond the interview into data analysis and publication. Clear explanation of the research process and intentions was offered at the outset and revisited at each stage. The right to withdraw consent at any point was articulated clearly, although in the event nobody expressed a desire to withdraw. In fact, several participants identified that they would be willing to provide extra information if needed and some expressed an interest in reading the finished piece of work.

4.5 RECRUITMENT

An information sheet and invitation to participate were drafted, outlining the aim and purpose of the research (see Appendix F). This followed the university guidelines and contained information about the aims of the project, eligibility criteria and the university complaints procedure. The consent documents were delivered by email or post dependant on personal preference. No time limits were set for response in order that prospective participants could take time to review the documents and make a decision about participation.

Consent was sought on the basis of participating in a semi-structured interview and/or a focus group, all of which would be audio recorded and transcribed. Permission to use quotes arising from the data was also sought. These might be used both as part of the findings but also during the dissemination process following completion of the project.

Healthcare organisations were not used to recruit participants so as to reduce the risk of participant vulnerability due to ongoing mental health issues or dementia. Questions about mental health and cognitive impairment were included on the consent form and the expectation was that people would provide this information – no formal assessment took place. The focus of the research is childhood experience rather than mental health in later life and as I would not be recruiting people via mental health services no application for NHS ethical approval was required.

4.6 PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

Purposive sampling was an appropriate strategy for this study because I was looking to understand a particular perspective of WWII – that of the experience of the child who was **not** evacuated away from home, and in order to do that I had to select participants who had been children at the time of the war. This was achieved by initially targeting organisations whose members might fit the sample universe. This approach proved fruitful as snowballing then occurred as people within the organisations spoke to each other about the project, and potential participants made contact with me to express an interest in taking part in the research.

The organisations identified were the University of the Third Age (U3A), The Women's Institute (WI) and Probus – an organisation for retired people from a range of walks of life. The local newspaper has a weekly local history supplement, and the editor of this supplement was contacted. He kindly gave me access to the newspapers twitter feed and an advertisement was placed via this feed.

The U3A has a number of local branches, and the Stoke South group has Local History and Family History subgroups. Contact was made with the secretary for the Stoke South group and details of the proposed research were included in a newsletter. Copies of the participant information sheet and eligibility criteria were also forwarded for distribution to interested members.

The WI has a monthly magazine which reaches the entire national membership and details for the editorial team were sourced in order that they could be contacted for help with advertising and recruitment. Each county in the UK has a WI Federation with a local office. Staffordshire Federation was contacted and information about the project shared via the monthly newsletter and social media

platforms. Contact was also made with the secretary of the local Probus branch, and they agreed to circulate details of the project to members along with my contact details. No further correspondence was received from either of these groups, but the onset of the pandemic and the suspension of group activities may have had some influence on this.

The U3A group yielded all the female participants – 5 in total – via a combination of direct advertising (purposive) in the organisation newsletter and social media platforms, and snowball sampling. The first two participants, Brenda and Mary responded to an advertisement placed before pandemic restrictions were put in place. Brenda made contact via email and Mary sent a handwritten letter, outlining some of her wartime experiences. Both ladies were interviewed but unfortunately the Covid-19 lockdown precluded further recruitment for a number of months. Elizabeth responded to an advert placed in the U3A group's newsletter placed after the pandemic and Beryl and Dorothy both made contact after hearing about the project from Elizabeth.

General advertising seemed to be producing only female participants, so Eric and Gerald were recruited through social contacts, identified as men who were of the correct age to fit the inclusion criteria. Jeremy made contact with me after reading Longson and Beech's (2017) paper in Mental health Practice and was subsequently invited to become a participant in the research. Jeremy had not lived in North Staffordshire during the war, but it was reasoned that he could be included because Derbyshire was similar in terms of the fact that it was a reception area for evacuees and was a site for heavy industry. This would maintain a level of homogeneity with the other participants.

Having developed an appropriate recruitment strategy following ethical guidelines, the next stage of the project was to collect data. The following chapter will outline how that process was followed, including adjustments made necessary because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chapter 5:   DATA COLLECTION

5.1 QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION METHODS – AN OVERVIEW

5.1.1   Semi structured interviews

Semi structured interviews offer a flexible approach where open-ended questions are accepted as an appropriate method for collecting data in qualitative studies (Bryman, 2016), whilst non-directive interview techniques are important for hermeneutic approaches as they seek to "explore and analyse" the lifeworld of participants (Addeo 2013). Through this method, participants tell their own story, formulating a narrative that is interpreted by the researcher, co-constructing meaning (Locke & Lloyd-Sherlock, 2011).

The research interview is a contrived device, intended to fulfil the purpose of the research and care must be taken to allow the person being interviewed to speak from a personal perspective. Such interviews use a conversational style to create a dialogue which reflects the structure of human encounter (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008). The purpose of the interview is to enable the participant to describe experiences from a first-hand perspective, encouraging both detail and depth (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008).

Heidegger's concept of Dasein can be situated within a conversational reality, and humanity itself can be described as "enacted conversation" (Mulhall, 2007 p.58). In order to take the participant "back to the experience itself", as indicated by Husserl, they should be encouraged to tell their own story and to reflect on the experience. The use individual interviews which are semi-structured is the most appropriate way to collect data containing the required level of detail which is likely

to be a true reflection of the thoughts and feelings of the participants. To facilitate all of these requirements a dialogue needs to be established between the interviewer and participant, thus establishing a "conversation with a purpose" (Smith et. al., 2009). The importance of listening (another key skill for MH nurses) cannot be overstated, along with the need for reflexivity and awareness of the researchers own preconceived thoughts, ideas and motives.

The key to establishing the necessary setting to facilitate the participant-interviewer relationship is preparation. This preparation refers not only to the proposed content of the interview but the preparation of the interviewer themselves. My background working within a clinical interview format was a strength in this regard as I had the skills and experience needed to manage both the structure and dynamic of the research interview. This being said, I reflected on the nature of the interviews and the differences between those used to collect data and those conducted for the purpose of clinical assessment and formulation. At this point it was necessary to acknowledge my fore-structure in terms of clinical interviewing but to set aside my therapeutic self in order to focus on the conversation as a means to produce data for analysis rather than a set of concerns to be addressed with a clinical approach.

Both participants who responded via face-to-face interview were given a choice of venue and opted to be interviewed in their own homes. This enabled them to provide responses in a setting that was familiar to them and did not require them to travel. As interviewer I needed to be respectful of their space and allowed the participant to set the dynamic in terms of timing of the interview and seating arrangements once the interview was taking place. Recording of the interviews was necessary to capture their content accurately and a small recording device was used for this purpose. The device was set up in a discreet position so as not

to prove a distraction and although mentioned, the device did not pose a barrier to either participant during our conversations.

5.1.2   Focus groups

Focus groups, or group interviews, have been in use since the early part of the twentieth century and can be a convenient way for researchers to simultaneously collect data from a number of people (Mason, 2018). They do not ask individual participants the same answer in turn, rather they facilitate a discussion and the resulting group interactions form part of the method. Participants exchange views, ask questions and make comments about their own and others' experiences. This method is useful for exploring shared experiences and illuminates not only what people think but also how and why they think what they do (Kitzinger, 1995).

When recruiting to a focus group, inviting participants from pre-existing groups can mean that the discussion is aided by the fact that the people taking part are already familiar and comfortable with each other and are able to share and challenge each other with ease. This may be of particular value where the subject under examination could be difficult or stigmatising to discuss in front of strangers. Conversely, some people may find discussing difficult topics and revealing personal information easier with strangers, where challenging others' views is possible without the fear of repercussions (Gill et. al., 2008).

The participants in my study who were recruited via the U3A had already taken part in other projects exploring wartime experience. Beryl for example had been involved in a project where poetry reflecting her wartime experiences had been developed. Through the recruitment process those people who are members of

the U3A made reference to the organisation, and their discussions at the history group are reflected in some of the data collected.

Focus groups are now used to generate data in IPA studies although their use is not straightforward because of the difficulties posed in extrapolating individual meaning from a group discussion. Multiple hermeneutic processes may be at play in a focus group and participants may be attempting to make sense of each other's experiences whilst the researcher is attempting to make sense of the individual experience. The multiple levels of interpretation require careful management (Love, Vetere & Davies, 2020).

Focus groups should be used with caution in IPA studies, because of the tension between a socially mediated response to a research question and personal meaning. Whilst acknowledging that IPA may be possible, a mixed methods approach might be more useful, where discursive approaches might better facilitate control of the dynamics within the data (Smith et. al., 2022).

A further concern with focus groups is the management of personal data, particularly if personal disclosure occurs. Given that the prospective participants are accustomed to discussing wartime events in a group setting it might be assumed that they are comfortable in such a setting. This does not preclude the need for a facilitator to manage the dynamic in a group setting and for them to ensure that the discussion remains respectful (Smith et. al., 2022).

Morris-King (2009) used focus groups when exploring the experiences of evacuees from Liverpool and used the themes generated to structure the interview questions. The intended aim of the focus group in my study was, following Morris-King's (2009) example, as a pilot project to generate themes which might be discussed

during individual interviews with the same participants. It had been envisaged that the discussion could be prompted by the use of photographs, objects or music for example. This thought was driven by experiences of using such items during reminiscence activities and their value in supporting memory and discussion.

This plan did not come to fruition as events meant that an alternate strategy for data collection had to be devised in response to the covid-19 pandemic. With restrictions placed on research and a halt to face to face contact with participants, it was, sadly, impossible to bring together a group of people at this stage.

5.2 Innovative Adaptive Methods (Change of plan because of health issues/Covid-19)

In August 2019, just after receiving ethical approval for my study, I was diagnosed with cancer which meant that my research was interrupted. Shortly prior to my diagnosis I had received email contact from Brenda telling me that she "would like to take part" in my research. Given the positive nature of the response I decided to interview Brenda whilst waiting for surgery and as seen above, the interview took place in her home. Mary made contact by letter which reached me after surgery, and as previously stated, she was also interviewed at home. This meant that I had two sets of data ready to analyse during my ongoing treatment and recovery period.

I had received contact from another potential participant via her daughter and had made arrangements to visit her at home. Unfortunately, in March 2020 the country experienced a lockdown because of the Covid-19 pandemic and this interview never took place.

As lockdown was instituted, all face-to-face research activities were put on hold and as a consequence of my clinical vulnerability, I was advised to shield, meaning that I had to stay at home. This meant that having just got started with the active research phase, my project was in jeopardy of being brought to a complete standstill.

5.2.1 Finding a new way

In-person research activities were halted for an indefinite period meaning that no further face to face interviews would take place until restrictions were lifted and if my research was to continue a different way of reaching participants was needed.

One of the positives of the pandemic was the movement of conferences, meeting and training sessions to an online format, making them easier to access. One such session was an IPA global taster session, hosted by two members of the IPA research community, and attending this online event opened up a new possibility for my own research. Maynard (2020) challenged the notion that marginalised groups of people are "hard to reach" arguing that to continue in this vein would risk losing opportunities to engage with groups of people who have an important story to tell. Human beings are natural storytellers, and our experiences and memories are organised in the form of a culturally transmitted narrative (Bruner, 1991).

This moment caused me to challenge both my notions of why I was undertaking the research and the key experiences that had driven me to formulate the questions to be answered. If participants have a story that needs to be told, that we as researchers have a need to hear, we also have a responsibility to consider the context from both sides, to ask what the research means to the participants. As researchers the interview is data to be interpreted but we only access an authentic interpretation of how participants interpret their experiences through the double hermeneutic afforded by IPA. Reflecting on my reasons for starting the project, I considered my initial aim of giving a voice to a population who had been known as the "silent generation" and came to the conclusion that a new way would need to be found to continue.

5.2.1.1 Telephone interviews

Telephone interviews are an accepted method of data collection, traditionally used to collect survey data via structured interviews. Their use is now more accepted as a way to collect data in qualitative studies and there are a number of advantages to the use of telephone interviewing (Block and Erskine, 2012). Cost is often lower as there is no need for the researcher to travel which also means that people from

a much wider geographical area can be invited to participate. In terms of time, a one-hour interview lasts for an hour and can facilitate data collection in a shorter timeframe. Disadvantages include practical issues such as being able to record the interview or managing sensory issues such as hearing loss. This might be particularly pertinent with an older population. It can be more difficult to develop a rapport over the telephone which may impact on the development of trust, and an emotional distance might be introduced that might not be present in a face-to-face scenario (Block & Erskine, 2012).

Drabble et. al. (2016) acknowledge that there is a paucity of evidence to support the use of telephone interviewing in hard-to-reach populations but cite two studies where the relative anonymity and comfort of participating by telephone made participation in studies about difficult subjects more acceptable (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004; Trier-Bieniek, 2012).

Strong interpersonal skills are needed to be able to conduct interviews by telephone as there is a need to be able to identify emotion through tone, pace and pauses without the benefit of visual clues. Interviewing by telephone also calls for skills in self-reflexivity (Drabble et. al., 2016). Given my 32-year clinical background as a mental health nurse, I am skilled in therapeutic interviewing, including handling difficult emotional conversations by telephone. Reflection and reflexivity are also integral to my clinical role. These factors gave me the confidence to consider the inclusion of interviews by telephone as part of my revised data collection strategy.

Two of the male participants opted to be interviewed by telephone. To ensure that the interview ran as smoothly as possible I prepared and practiced with a recording

device in advance of the interviews taking place. I was able to use a mobile phone with speaker which facilitated direct recording of the interview using the same recording device used in the interviews.

Bearing in mind the need for the interviewer to be prepared I thought about my own seating position and opted to be seated on a sofa rather than behind a desk as this would likely replicate the seating position if I were interviewing the men at home. Preparations ensured that I was comfortable and confident in the process, and this allowed me to focus more closely on ensuring that the men being interviewed were comfortable and able to participate in an effective way, despite the fact that we were not in the same physical space. There were some issues with hearing and pacing as unlike a face-to-face interview, it was not always obvious whether a "gap" reflected a natural pause or missed question. Despite the challenges the telephone interviews generated significant data that was straightforward to transcribe.

5.2.1.2 Videoconferencing

The other option considered as a method for interviewing participants remotely was the use of videoconferencing. As a result of the pandemic, video calls were being used in many ways including teaching, therapy, patient assessment, multidisciplinary team-working and research interviews. I had personal experience of all of the above as lockdown progressed and had the skills and technology needed to be able to offer video interviews to prospective participants.

It would be wrong to assume that videoconferencing would not work based on age alone. Organisations such as AgeUK offer advice and support for the use of video calling technology as the need for families to find new ways to make contact with older relatives grew because of the restrictions posed by the pandemic. Pre-

pandemic in 2019, 62% of the people who had never used the internet were aged 75 years and over, but Covid-19 meant that more people were engaging with online shopping, banking and zoom calls to keep in touch with family (Tabassum, 2020). The opportunity to participate via video call was not taken up by any of the participants. Issues such as lack of appropriate technology and low confidence in the use of videoconferencing software were cited as reasons for this so the option was not pursued.

5.2.2 Written accounts

Thinking back to the idea of people waiting to be reached I revisited the two interviews I had conducted before lockdown, where letters and letter writing had both featured. Mary's first contact with me was via a handwritten letter and Brenda had talked about the letters received from her father in Burma – "we would have no letters for weeks then a bundle would arrive." Vaizey (2011) has also emphasised the role of letters in maintaining contact between absent fathers and their children.

Revisiting the concept of Verstehen and the need to act with empathy and compassion, inviting people to participate by sending a written account would give me an opportunity to meet people "where they are", reflecting the social conventions of the wartime period.

5.2.2.1 Evidence base

Data is gathered in the course of qualitative research in order to provide evidence of the experience under examination. This data is then analysed, and the researcher reports the findings using excerpts from the data. The evidence is usually in the form of a written text, either from a document or as a transcription of an oral account. The evidence of the experience is not derived from the words

themselves, but from the meaning that they represent (Polkinghorne, 2005). The quality of the meaning in the data depends on the ability of the participant to reflect and discern aspects of the experience and to represent that meaning through the use of language, whether verbally or in writing.

There is an established precedent for the use of journals or diaries to collect data in qualitative studies. These can facilitate the contemporaneous recording of experience allowing phenomenological examination of that experience (Morell-Scott, 2018). The use of a diary to collect data may be preferable to some participants who might be concerned about discussing personal issues in front of other people or who might be influenced by the presence of others, such as in a focus group. They also support participants for whom memory might be an issue in an interview setting (such as those living with dementia) and are useful in capturing the voices of marginalised groups (Bartlett, 2012).

Writing can also be used as a therapeutic endeavour. Pennebaker (1997) explored the use of writing as a therapy, where acknowledging and disclosing a problem is an important first step in the healing process. Writing about emotional issues in particular can bring about significant improvements in health. Participants (regardless of age or social status) disclosed a wide range of traumatic events such as loss, death and failure but despite experiencing difficulties at the time of writing the "overwhelming majority" reported that the "experience of writing was valuable and meaningful in their lives" (Pennebaker, 1997 p.162). Having analysed the data from a number of studies, three linguistic factors were found to be significant. A higher number of positive emotion words (such as happy and laugh) and a moderate number of negative emotion words (such as sad and crying) predicted improvement in health (Pennebaker, 1997).

The most important linguistic factor was found to be an increase in causal and insight words such as "understand" and "realise". These words were strongly predictive of improved health and the people who benefitted most were those who began with disorganised accounts and progressed to a more coherent style. This raises questions about whether the cohesiveness in the narrative produced transfers to an improvement in cognitive processes, and whether writing about an experience helps in the assimilation of experiences (Pennebaker, 1997). The participants in my study are being asked to write about ordinary, everyday experiences and a question already forming for me is what actually constitutes an "emotional experience" and whether emotion will become visible through the telling, whether verbally or in writing.

Elizabeth (2008) discusses the use of writing beyond therapy, suggesting that its beneficial effects potentially make it useful as a method of qualitative research inquiry. There are some risks associated with writing about traumatic events as these might result in re-traumatization but there may be much to be gained from the self-reflexive nature of written answers to interview questions when participants are free from the constraints posed by the presence of an audience in the form of an interviewer (Elizabeth, 2008).

A small number of papers were found where written accounts are the primary source of data. Handy and Ross (2005), challenging the assumption that interviews using open-ended questions are the only way to gather qualitative data, used written accounts to explore family relationships where there is an anorexic child. The approach was chosen in response to the idea that although the use of qualitative research is increasing, the range of methods used is not.

Written accounts, undertaken at a time to suit the participant are more considered and so are better constructed and more self-reflective. As a consequence, the data may be easier to engage with and analyse (Handy and Ross, 2005). The approach seems to be particularly suited to narrative life history research because of the potential for chronological ordering of response, although as with all research, the method should be chosen in order to be answer the question being asked rather than for convenience.

Overall, Handy and Ross (2005) pilot study revealed that emotion was visible through the written accounts, and accounts from different families had a different feel to them. They reflect that the use of written accounts was a practical solution when participants were from a wide geographical area and generated high quality data, suiting the topic being examined.

Echoing Pennebaker's (1997) view of writing as therapeutic, written accounts were used to explore the experience of living with a childhood survivor of eye cancer from the perspective of the parent (Beddard et. al., 2020). Phenomenology was the underpinning methodology in Beddard et. al. (2020) and the data collected was a first-hand narrative account. Parents were able to construct their responses away from the gaze of the family, creating a safe space in which to document their experiences. Sample size in this study was small and this was identified by the authors as a limitation, although for phenomenological studies small sample sizes are often the norm (Smith et. al., 2022).

Email interviews have been used in IPA studies to explore experiences of stillbirth (Üstündağ et. al., 2015), and online questionnaires with open-ended questions to explore women's experience of endometriosis (Grogan et. al., 2018). Written accounts have also been used as part of a randomised control trial exploring the

impact of expressive writing as an intervention for people experiencing non-epileptic seizures (Rawlings et. al., 2017).

All the studies using written accounts identify more strengths than limitations for the approach and taking into account the caution from Handy and Ross (2005) that the method chosen should suit the question, I reasoned that a good argument for the use of written accounts could be made for my study, given that for the participants recruited, letter writing was both familiar to them and a social norm for the time period under consideration.

Advantages and disadvantages of writing as data collection are summarised in Table 5:1.

Advantages	Disadvantages
- Written data is already transcribed - Highly focused/Self-reflective - Limited need for the researcher to manage the "self" - No emotional/sensorial component from researcher - Time neutral - Cost effective	- Writing could be difficult as may trigger old or bad memories - Requirement for the person answering to be literate - Time lapse from receiving to response may cause delay

Table 5:1 - Advantages and disadvantages of data collection in writing (Handy and Ross, 2005)

5.2.2.2 Process

In order that written accounts could be offered as an alternative, an updated ethical application was made and approved. Participants were offered the opportunity to reply via email or post with all but one opting to post their responses. Accepting that being given a relaxed time frame in which to respond seemed to be important the research paperwork was delivered by email, by post or by hand and no time limits were set for responses. Stamped addressed envelopes were provided for the purpose of providing responses by post.

Covid-19 restrictions in relation to vulnerable groups were reinstated in December 2020 and access to university buildings was restricted. During this time the School of Nursing was also relocated to a different campus, and it took some time for post to "catch up". This meant a period of some anxiety for me as a research student as I did not know whether the participants had responded. I contacted them via email and was reassured that they had all sent responses and a brief time later I was able to collect them from the university.

The written responses were effectively already transcribed, and no further work was required to structure the content. In order to maintain the integrity of the letters, they were photocopied to make them A4 size. They were then added to a sheet of A3 size paper to facilitate the addition of line numbers, highlighting and comments.

Covid-19 conditions meant that I needed to make provision for secure storage of data in the home environment and in order to maintain confidentiality, once collected and transcribed the data was stored securely either on a password protected laptop, or in a securely locked box. The data collected was analysed

using IPA and the following chapter outlines that process along with the findings

from the analysis.

Chapter 6:   FINDINGS

6.1 PARTICIPANT DETAILS

A total of eight participants took part in the study, five females and three males. The youngest participant is Dorothy, aged 81 years and the oldest Mary, aged 89 years (at the time data was collected). All, apart from one (Jeremy) lived in North Staffordshire during the war. Brenda and Mary were interviewed at home and the interviews were voice recorded. Eric and Gerald were interviewed by telephone and their interviews were also recorded. Voice recordings were then transcribed. Jeremy, Elizabeth, Beryl and Dorothy took part by providing written answers to the interview questions. Jeremy responded via email, the other three by post, their accounts being handwritten. The schedule for in person interviews is included at Appendix G and the questions for the written responses are included at Appendix H.

Participants were allocated a pseudonym, and details are outlined in Table 6:1 which comprises the following information:

- Participant - code/pseudonym

- Gender

- Mode of participation

- Sibling information

- Whether father conscripted

- Reason if not conscripted

- Age when father conscripted

- Age when father returned

- Age when war declared

Although the focus of the demographic information is the situation at the time of the experience, on reflection I wonder whether broader information including marital status and profession might have been useful, particularly in addressing the question as to impact on career or relationships later in life. These details did appear naturally in the transcripts and some participants made direct reference to influences from childhood on their choice of career or alluded to their marital status.

Demographically, the sample is relatively homogeneous with all participants coming from areas supported by mining and other heavy industries. Within the context of "being a child", there is some difference in age but all fall within the childhood age bracket between 1939 and 1945.

Participant P – Face to face TP – telephone W - writing	Gender	Mode of participation	Siblings? Y/N Number Place in family	Father conscripted Y/N Reason if not	Age when father conscripted	Age when father returned	Age when war declared
P1 (Brenda)	Female	Face to face interview	N	Y	15months	8 years	15 months
P2 (Mary)	Female	Face to face interview (Had written a letter initially)	Y 1 brother Eldest	Y	9 years	15 years	9 years
TP1 (Eric)	Male	Telephone interview	Y 2 Brothers Eldest	N Medically unfit	N/A	N/A	7 years
TP2 (Gerald)	Male	Telephone interview	Y 1 brother Eldest	N Reserved occupation (railway)	N/A	N/A	7 years
WT1 (Jeremy)	Male	Writing	Y 1 brother Eldest	N Medically unfit	N/A	N/A	5 years
WT2 (Elizabeth)	Female	Writing	Y 1 brother Eldest	Y	2 years 6 months	8 years	1 year 9 months
WT3 (Beryl)	Female	Writing	Y 2 – 1 sister, 1 brother Middle (sister eldest)	N Medically unfit	N/A	N/A	4 years
WT4 (Dorothy)	Female	Writing	Y 1 sister Eldest	Y	10 months	7 years	3 months

Table 6:1 - Participant details

6.2 PROCESS OF IPA (SMITH ET. AL., 2022)

The audio recordings were transcribed. I felt that it was important to carry out the task of transcription myself as it enabled me to become immersed the data and kept me connected to the individual participants. Once transcription was complete, the process outlined by Smith et. al. (2022) was followed closely. This involved working with each transcript in turn, reading and re-reading, with the aim of becoming immersed in the data. Reflective memos were used alongside the process of reading in order that I started to make sense of those "first impressions" (see examples in Appendix I).

The process of IPA can be described in terms of four main phases:

Phase 1 – Working towards Personal Experiential Themes (PETs)

Phase 2 – Working towards case level summaries

Phase 3 – Working towards cross-case themes

Phase 4 – Working towards a linear account of the thematic structure

There are nine steps identified within those phases, beginning with getting to know the data and ending with a linear written report. A table containing more detail about each step of the process is included in Appendix J (Larkin, 2023).

6.2.1 PHASE 1

STEP 1 Get to know the data – Reading and re-reading.

STEP 2 Conduct detailed exploratory analysis, staying close to the account and make exploratory notes.

A table was constructed, with the transcript placed in the centre and columns either side for exploratory notes and emerging experiential statements.   The written

accounts were photocopied onto A4 paper and placed onto a sheet of A3 paper, thus constructing a table allowing notes to be added on either side (see figure 6:1)

Experiential statements	Transcript	Exploratory notes
		Descriptive comments
		Linguistic comments
		Conceptual comments

Figure 6:1 - Table construction for individual analysis (transcribed interviews)

Descriptive comments are in plain text, linguistic comments are italicised, and conceptual comments are in bold.

In the handwritten accounts, exploratory notes are colour-coded:

Blue – description - key words, phrases or explanations, allowing access to things of importance such as events or experiences in the participants lifeworld.

Orange - linguistic elements reflecting how the content and meaning is presented.   This might include use of pronouns, fluency, and functional aspects of language.

Purple - conceptual comments. This level of annotation is interpretive and may take the form of a question. Conceptual comments may represent a move away from what the participant is claiming explicitly and at this stage may involve a move towards developing an understanding of the participant's experience.

The text was highlighted in the appropriate colour and then notes added at the right-hand side. Careful attention was paid at this point to noting line numbers so that individual statements could be traced back to the correct point in the transcript. An example page of how this was constructed for the written accounts is at figure 6:2. A clearer representation of this to show the comments is included later at figure 6:3.
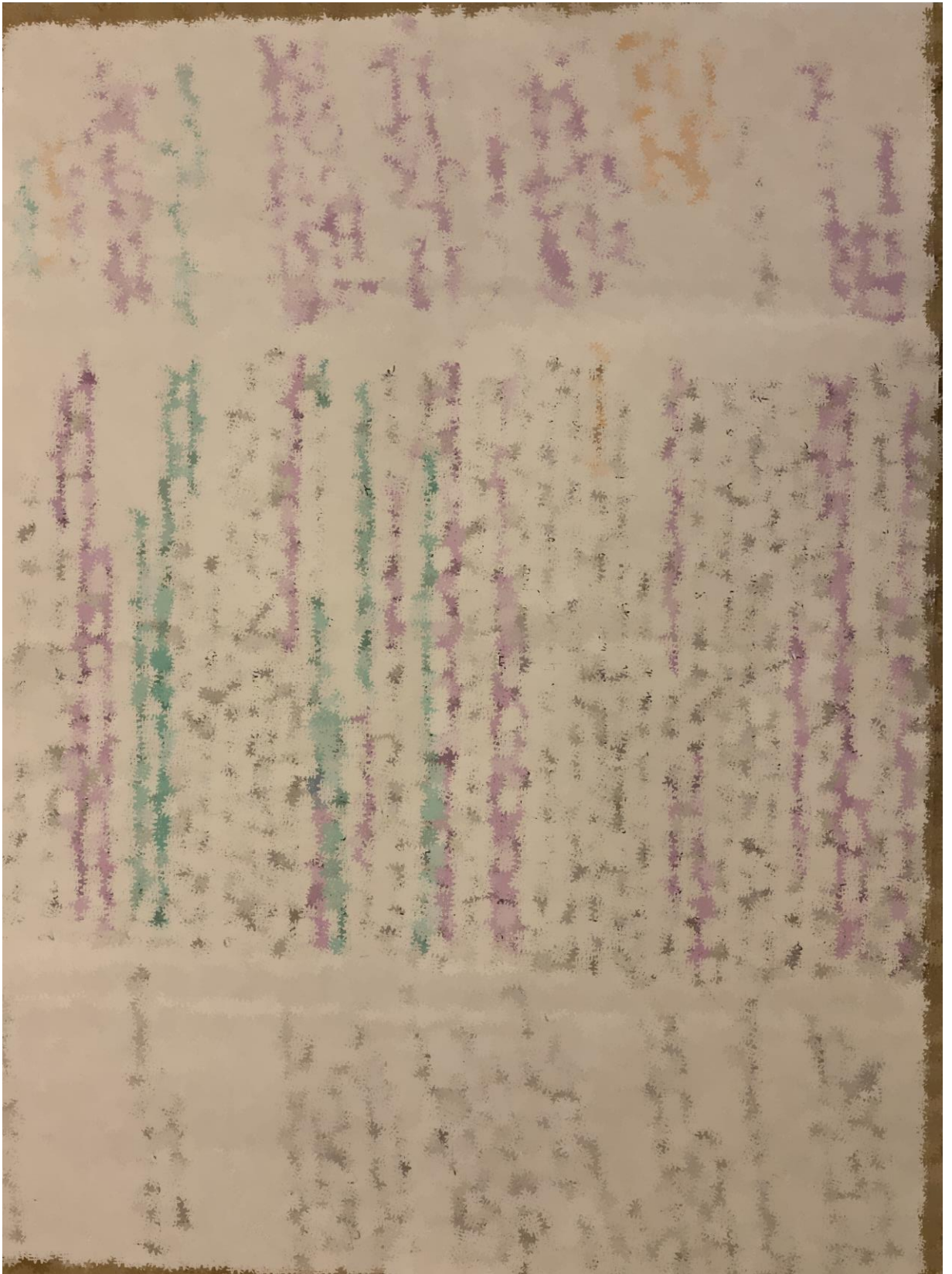
Figure 6:2 - Dorothy's transcript example page

STEP 3 - Articulate the main claims about the meaning of the person's experience based on their account – construct Experiential Statements.

Experiential statements are used as a vehicle to provide a summary, where the volume of detail in the transcript is reduced, whilst at the same time articulating the most important features from both the transcript and the exploratory notes (Smith et al, 2022). This is one part of the hermeneutic circle, breaking up the narrative into parts which will be reconstructed as the process of analysis progresses. This first stage produces a summary of what is important, containing enough information to allow it to be grounded in the data and at the same time, be abstract enough to be conceptual. The statements both directly reflect personal experience and start to move towards exploration of the wider experience of being a child during the war.

In an interview it is conceivable that experiential statements might be repeated in later parts of the transcript, for example if a participant returns or is brought back to a topic by the researcher. In the cases where this happened there was a need to return to the transcript to ensure that the process was rigorous and to avoid overly long lists of experiential statements. This reflective examination of the statements is an important part of the process and ensures that the work is analytical, following hermeneutic principles of moving between the parts and the whole (Smith et al, 2009). In the written accounts this happened noticeably less often as these participants had followed the questions in a more methodical way and did not tend to revisit topics.

6.2.2   PHASE 2

STEP 4 - Searching for connections across Experiential Statements

Lists of experiential statements were cut up and placed on a board. This allowed the individual statements to be moved around into clusters, looking for commonalities across content and use of language, forming an initial list of Personal Experiential Themes (PETs). Physically handling the extracts and moving them round enabled me to feel immersed in the data. This is the "me" element "becoming involved with the lived experience of the participant" to produce an analytic account which represents both participant and researcher (Smith et al, 2022, p. 87). This physical manoeuvring and sorting of the data into potential experiential themes gave me the sense of enacting the process of hermeneutic circling in an embodied way, using the physical re-ordering to underpin the cognitive process of interpretation.

STEP 5 – Naming the Personal Experiential Themes (PETS) and consolidating and organising them into a table.

I think it important to note here that the process outlined by Smith et al (2022) is based on transcripts developed following an interview and suggestions are made about returning to the audio recordings to engage the voice of the participant with the process of analysis. This suggestion was followed during the analysis of Brenda, Mary, Eric and Gerald's data where the audio recordings contain intonation and pace that are not present in the written accounts. This meant that active reflection was an important aspect of the analysis of the written data sets in order that participant meaning was given due focus. Overall, the process for all accounts was followed in the same way, with initial noting followed by the formulation of experiential statements, the development of Personal Experiential Themes and a case level interpretive summary.

6.2.3 Interpretive Summaries

The step I took next in analysing the individual participant data was to produce an interpretive summary (Dibley, 2020). Formulating interpretive summaries steps outside of the IPA process as outlined by Smith et al (2022) but I considered that it was a useful endeavour to summarise each participant before moving on to the next stage of cross-case analysis as the summaries also start to highlight where there is convergence and divergence across cases.

An interpretive summary is a vehicle for summarising the narrative and the key moments identified during the analysis. In the first part of the analysis, the early workings are written down in order to identify early patterns and themes and these early thoughts are supported by quotes from the data, whereby we demonstrate understanding of something of significance to which the reader's eye should be drawn (Dibley, 2020).

Gems, "small utterances" as described by Smith (2009) may be seen more clearly during this stage of the process. The shining gem will be on the surface of the data, but the suggestive and secret gems will be uncovered as the interpretive process continues.

6.2.4 PHASE 3 – working towards cross-case themes

STEP 6 – Repeat steps 1-5 for each participant.

STEP 7 - Review individual summaries and identify themes across participants.

This step requires the identification of Group Experiential Themes (GETs). The PETs are "shuffled", again by using a board and moving around the PETs to enable clustering of themes. The process of cross case analysis is not simply looking for connections or similarities but facilitates reflection of how the individual PETs contribute to the GET, looking for both convergence and divergence across

participants. This stage of the process also facilitates the identification of individual quotations which might be used in supporting the interpreted narrative.

6.2.5   PHASE 4 – Working towards a linear account of the thematic structure

STEP 8 – Finalise analytic structure.

At this stage, any subthemes are finalised and supporting quotes identified from the PETs. Further reflection here is needed to identify which participant's PETs are to be used to illustrate and support the interpretive process.

STEP 9 – Produce written report

The final step in the IPA process is to produce a written report, which should include:

- A compelling and unfolding narrative

- A vigorous experiential and/or existential account

- Close analytic reading of a participant's words

- Attendance to convergence and divergence

(Nizza, Farr and Smith, 2021)

To illustrate how I applied the process of IPA to the data gathered I am using Dorothy's account as an exemplar, from transcript to the development of Personal Experiential Themes (PETs) and a case level summary – steps 1-5 as outlined above. The interpretive summaries for the other participants, along with their PETs will follow, as will the complete cross-case analysis.

6.3 DOROTHY'S STORY

Dorothy participated by providing a handwritten account of her experiences. Prior to participation, I had engaged in email conversations with Dorothy. She contacted me having spoken to Eizabeth, offering to participate. Her account was accompanied by a letter expressing the hope that she had provided a factual account without "expressing an opinion". She outlined her career in education, having endeavoured to provide opportunities "to prepare for rounded and balanced lives", adding that she had not always felt fully prepared to support the "needy" youngsters she encountered. Her final sentence "although experience helped" did leave me wondering whether it was personal experience from childhood, or as a teacher that had been influential.

6.3.1 Step 1 – getting to know the data.

Initial reading and re-reading of Dorothy's transcript was carried out, developing a sense of her narrative and personal story. Dorothy's account is articulate and coherent, following the structure offered by the questions supplied. Her answers are comprehensive – "plus dog, plus parrot" in relation to the household members for example. Throughout the account she is painting a picture of her life as a child.

6.3.2 Step 2 – initial exploratory comments

This process is illustrated in Figure 6:4. The exploratory comments and emerging experiential statements were handwritten but have been typed here for clarity. The colour coding used is as follows, with examples from the page of Dorothy's transcript:

Description - Dorothy uses the term "multigenerational household" (Line 8), describing how her childhood home life is constructed.

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Linguistic - Dorothy is presenting a memory, but it is in the form of knowledge rather than recollection – "I think it was", in relation to explaining why farmer's children boarded at school during the week (Line 24).

Conceptual – Dorothy's description of her mother's training as a Froebel trained teacher (Line 16).

Personal reflection may form part of conceptual coding, reflecting Gadamerian understanding and a move from pre-understanding to "newly emerging understanding of the participant's world" (Smith et. al., 2022). Froebel's approach to education was something with which I was not familiar, although it was obviously of significance for Dorothy. It was only after researching Froebel (the inventor of kindergarten education) that I understood that it was her mother's specialist training in kindergarten education that caused her to be "signed up" (Line 16) to oversee nursery education in the city. Her role was significant in supporting mothers engaged in war work and for the children in her care, but it took her away from her own daughter. Dorothy herself attended an independent Froebel school.

The process of exploratory noting was completed for the whole transcript (see Appendix K) before moving on to step 3 where my initial thoughts were articulated in the form of Experiential statements. Careful noting of line numbers enabled me to keep track of the experiential statements and were used as a quality measure to ensure that the statements were reflected from, and could be tracked back to, the data.

6.3.3   Step 3 – constructing Experiential Statements

This stage of the process resulted in the identification of thirty statements from Dorothy's dataset. These were then listed, in chronological order, along with a verbatim quote and page number – see Table 6:2.

Experiential statements	Transcript	Exploratory notes
Lived in a multigenerational household.		Didn't want to fight but saw it as his duty
Uncle's attitude more of an influence whilst father was away		Multigenerational household Uncle's attitude portrayed strength she wished to emulate -? She wished to emulate in absence of father
Uncles participated by being in the Home Guard		
Froebelian education – reflects mother's training.		Froebel – early years education/invented kindergarten (https://www.froebel.org.uk/about-us/froebelian-principles)
Mum "was signed up for" indicates being told rather than given a choice		Home – left behind, occupied by strangers
"Think it was" – making sense of the experience rather than remembering it		Support for women working because of the war
Knows about (ration books) rather than remembering them		Suggests use of knowledge rather than memory
Food made multi-purpose by adding extra ingredients – avoided waste		Cheese rind a "treat" Canadians offered support Food not wasted

Figure 6:3 - Dorothy's transcript example page(typed)

Experiential statement	Quote/line number
Father originally conscientious objector but then followed the example of others.	"…when he saw what others were prepared to do" (Line 3)
Volunteered for the Education Corps (made a choice rather than direct conscription?)	"He opted for the Education corps." (Line 4)
Lived in a multigenerational household	– "mum and I went to live with her mother…my bachelor uncle…made up the household." (Line 7
Uncle's "can do" attitude and approach more influential when father was away.	"His never say die attitude was a big influence." (Line 12)
Uncles (one disabled, one a factory owner) both participated in the war by being in the Home Guard	"…both served in the Home Guard." (Line 14)
Home was left behind and taken over by strangers	"…our house, the home we left, was used by evacuees from London." (Line 15)
Mum was signed up – suggests limited choice – to lead city's nursery service and was influential in supporting women who were working because of the war.	"…was signed up for war work." (Line 16)
Memories of beds and the sound of the potties triggered by the memory of	"I can still see…hear the noise…" (Line 20)

being made to take a nap in the afternoons. Sensory memory making the memory more vivid	
Use of the words "I think it was" is suggestive of making sense of the experience (boarders at the nursery) rather than directly recalling it.	"I think it was shortage of fuel etc…because boarding stopped as soon as the war was over." (Line 24)
Was aware of the ration book but did not understand the link to food and shortages – ate a week's ration of cheese because too young to realise the implications.	"I didn't understand what a ration book was for…" (Line 27))
Food made multipurpose by adding different ingredients to basic meal e.g. pudding – savoury or sweet. Avoided waste.	"…batter pudding savoury, then with syrup for afters." (Line 36)
Leftovers re-used to make new meals.	(Line 37 – "left over boiled potatoes…mixed with flour…potato cakes.")
Fruit and vegetables (extra to the ration) were plentiful because the family had room to produce them.	"…we had a large garden and greenhouse". (Line 38)
No contact with father while he was away – only remembers seeing him once before he came home. (May	"I can only remember one leave which was very brief." (Line 39)

have been too young to remember other leaves?)	
Father had experiences e.g., relief of Belsen which are known to have been traumatic, although the trauma was not managed at the time. Did not want to worry family by telling them what he was doing.	"He never spoke about his experiences…" (Line 45)
Father later wrote about his experiences but used the third person suggesting a dissociative position from the experience itself.	"…several years after…he wrote it all down." (Line 46)
Father returned home later than other soldiers as he stayed behind to help with education for demobbed soldiers. Served for longer even though he had not wanted to be involved at the outset.	"…he was transferred back to Education…he was one of the last to be demobbed." (Line 48)
The evacuees who moved into their house had not taken loving care of it causing upset to her parents.	"…the property had been neglected." (Line 53)
Father was extremely strict and treated her like a pupil rather than a daughter.	"I felt I was still in school" (Line 54)
Having a new sister was a barrier to reforming her relationship with her father.	"…before we had chance to get to know each other…" (Line 55)
Interprets her father's behaviour towards her sister as how it would have	"All he had missed with me he made up with her." (Line 56-7)

been with her had he not been away and missed 6 years of her life.	
Had to hurt herself to get noticed after the birth of her sister.	"…giving myself bruises to get attention." (Line 57)
Very close relationship with her grandmother. Made closer by the fact that they were both alone and needed someone to support them.	"…so our relationship was strengthened by mutual need." (Line 62)
Making sense of things from her mum's perspective – work stopped, marriage resumed, husband changed and had a new baby in a short space of time.	"…she must have found it difficult to adapt to the changes…" (Line 64-7)
Church connection provided support to young women whose husbands were away. Language used suggests making sense of the activity (winding wool) rather than remembering that the mums were knitting.	"…must have done knitting as I can remember winding khaki coloured wool into balls." (Line 71)
Had to get on with things – no other option.	"…a situation that couldn't be altered..." (Line 74)
Move to third person mirroring the way that her father had written about his experiences.	"Standards of behaviour were set…" (Line 74/5)
Strict but not perceived as cruel – standards set and aware of boundaries.	"…we had boundaries but nobody was trying to catch you out." (Line 75)

Use of "you" and "we" rather than "I" suggests generalisation of memory in relation to events	(Line 74-7)
States she knows how to make the best of the situation despite having felt displaced by sister.	"We knew how to share and appreciate the good and positive." (Line 77)

Table 6:2 - Dorothy Experiential Statements

6.3.4   Step 4 – Initial clustering of statements

Dorothy's Experiential Statements were cut up and placed on a board (Figure 6:4). Physically moving the individual statements around was for me, a way to stay grounded with the data and for the hermeneutic process to be enacted in a very embodied way.   The whole (transcript) has been broken down, through interpretation, into a set of parts.   These parts are then, through a further interpretive process – that of searching for connections and shared meaning – reconstructed into a new "whole", an interpretive summary.   The initial chronological structure is now replaced with a thematic ordering, by allowing the data to flow in a different way it is possible to see Dorothy's meaning making from a new perspective (Table 6:3).

As can be seen, the longest list came under the heading of "father". This group contained statements from several sections in the transcript – early, where Dorothy explains her father's military service and later, where Dorothy sums up her experiences of her father as he returned home. These later statements directly reflect Dorothy's sense making around her relationship with her father. Her own confusion at the change in the family dynamic is seen as she hurts herself to gain

attention from her parents, but she consolidates her understanding of the experience by framing it using positive language, echoing the stoicism of the time.
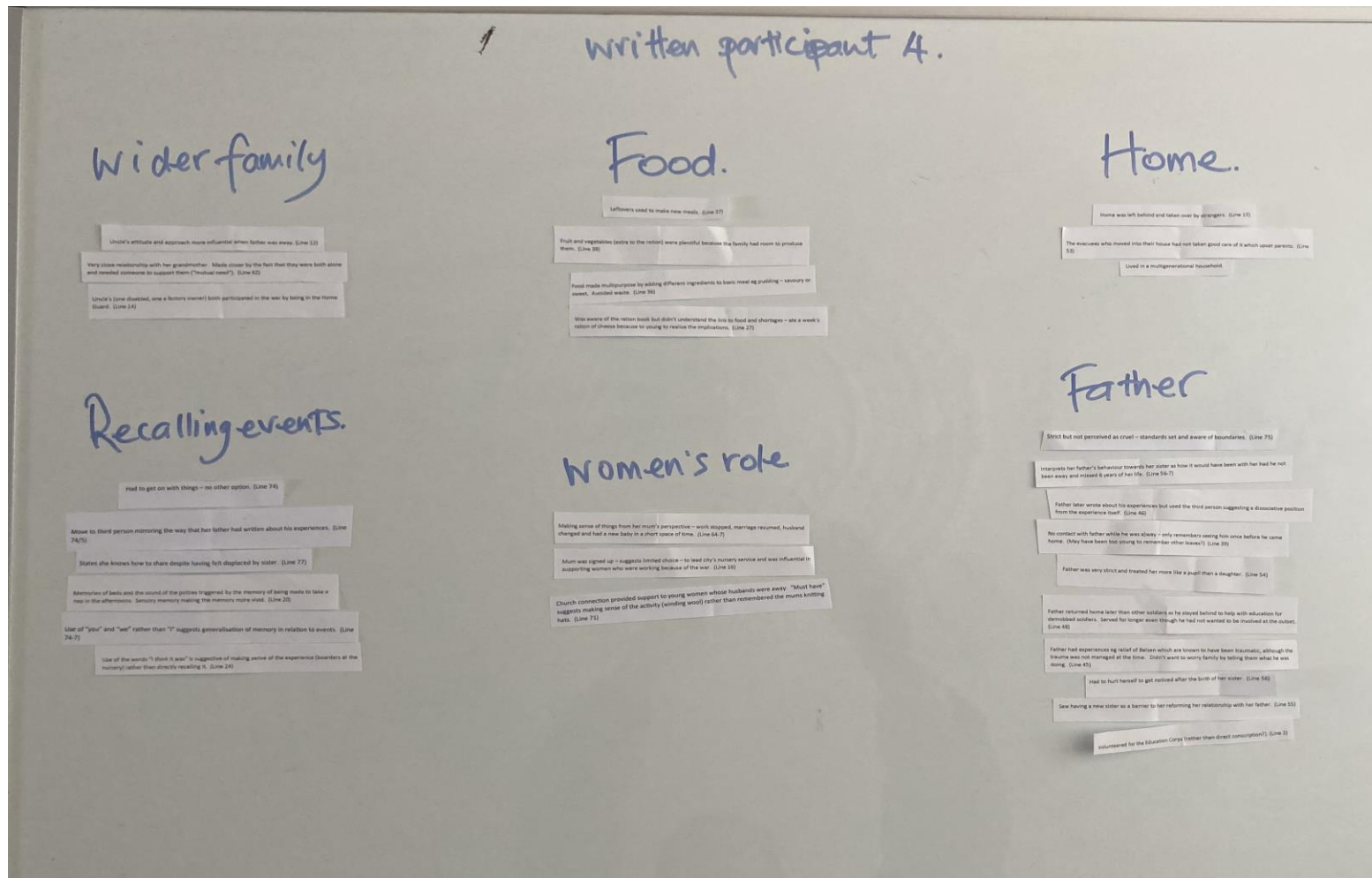
Figure 6:4 – Process of initial clustering of experiential statements

Home	Women's role	Father
Home	**Women's role**	**Father**
Home was left behind and taken over by strangers. (Line 15)	Mum was signed up – suggests limited choice – to lead city's nursery service and was influential in supporting women who were working because of the war. (Line 16)	Volunteered for the Education Corps (rather than direct conscription?). (Line 2)
Lived in a multigenerational household. (Line 17)		Father originally conscientious objector but then followed the example of others. (Line 6)
The evacuees who moved into their house had not taken loving care of it which upset parents. (Line 53)	Making sense of things from her mum's perspective – work stopped, marriage resumed, husband changed and had a new baby in a short space of time. (Line 64-7)	No contact with father while he was away – only remembers seeing him once before he came home. (May have been too young to remember other leaves?) (Line 39)
	Church connection provided support to young women whose husbands were away. "Must have" suggests making sense of the activity (winding wool) rather than remembered the mums knitting. (Line 71)	Father had experiences e.g. relief of Belsen which are known to have been traumatic, although the trauma was not managed at the time. Did not want to worry family by telling them what he was doing. (Line 45)
Wider family	**Recalling events**	Father later wrote about his experiences but used the third person suggesting a dissociative position from the experience itself. (Line 46)
Uncle's attitude and approach more influential when father was away. (Line 12)	Use of the words "I think it was" is suggestive of making sense of the experience (boarders at the nursery) rather than directly recalling it. (Line 24)	
Uncle's (one disabled, one a factory owner) both participated in the war by being in the Home Guard. (Line 14)	Memories of beds and the sound of the potties triggered by the memory of being made to take a nap in the afternoons. Sensory memory making the memory more vivid. (Line 20)	Father returned home later than other soldiers as he stayed behind to help with education for demobbed soldiers. Served for longer even though he had not wanted to be involved at the outset. (Line 48)
Very close relationship with her grandmother. Made closer by the fact that they were both alone and needed someone to support them ("mutual need"). (Line 62)	Had to get on with things – no other option. (Line 74)	Father was extremely strict and treated her more like a pupil than a daughter. (Line 54)
		Saw having a new sister as a barrier to her reforming her relationship with her father. (Line 55)
Food	Move to third person mirroring the way that her father had written about his experiences. (Line 74/5)	
Was aware of the ration book but did not understand the link to food and		Had to hurt herself to get noticed after the birth of her sister. (Line 56)

shortages – ate a week's ration of cheese because too young to realise the implications. (Line 27)	Use of "you" and "we" rather than "I" suggests generalisation of memory in relation to events. (Line 74-7)	Interprets her father's behaviour towards her sister as how it would have been with her had he not been away and missed 6 years of her life. (Line 56-7)
Food made multipurpose by adding different ingredients to basic meal egg pudding – savoury or sweet. Avoided waste. (Line 36)	States she knows how to share despite having felt displaced by sister. (Line 77)	Strict but not perceived as cruel – standards set and aware of boundaries. (Line 75)
Leftovers used to make new meals. (Line 37)		
Fruit and vegetables (extra to the ration) were plentiful because the family had room to produce them. (Line 38)		

Table 6:3- Dorothy initial clustering of Experiential statements

6.3.5 Dorothy - Interpretive summary

Producing an interpretive summary at this point in the process facilitated a hermeneutic dialogue with Dorothy's transcript and early experiential themes, allowing me to develop a "plausible and coherent expression of findings", re-telling Dorothy's story but including early patterns and themes, using verbatim quotes to support my interpretations (Dibley et al, 2020 p. 122). Putting in this step slowed down the process, whilst summarising allowed me to move back to and between the transcript and list of PETs, thus keeping open the hermeneutic circle. Considering the whole along with its parts and re-constructing back into a new whole supported the development of deeper insight into the meaning of Dorothy's experience.

Dorothy…

Dorothy was 10 months old when her father joined the armed forces and was 7 years old when he returned. Her father had initially been a conscientious objector but then: "…signed up when he saw what others were prepared to do." Line 3). He joined the educational corps, later moving to a tank division, and eventually helping with the liberation of Belsen. Ironically, having not wanted to join up initially, his return to the education corps led to him being away for longer than most as he stayed behind preparing other conscripted men to return to civilian life. (Line 48).

Dorothy's mother had a pivotal role in the city's nurseries, caring for the children of women supporting the war effort and Dorothy developed a very close relationship with her grandmother. Dorothy's recollections of her grandmother speak to the practical aspects of care but also reveal the crucial role played by her grandmother in providing emotional support, particularly after her father's return. The two are joined by a bond of "mutual need". Dorothy also speaks of her uncle, who was a

high achiever despite significant disability. His "…never say die attitude was a big influence." (Line 12).

Dorothy is able to see, through her new baby sister, the type of relationship she might have had with her father had it not been interrupted by war. There is clear distress articulated through Dorothy's account although she is pragmatic about her ongoing relationship with her sister. Through her father's writing she comes to the realisation of the traumatic events he had experienced during his time as a soldier. He had been unable to articulate these experiences verbally at the time, not wanting to alarm his family by telling them of the danger he was in.

Dorothy reflected her father's approach by opting to respond using a written account of her experiences. Her account is not as long as some of the other participants but contains several of what Smith (2011) might describe as "gems", for example when she describes what now might be considered self-harm in order to gain attention from her parents.

Dorothy employs a reflective way of remembering; her horizons of understanding have been expanded as she has got older. In recounting an experience of eating cheese after being shut in the pantry, we see that Dorothy's understanding of rationing was limited as a child. She realises now, looking back using her adult understanding of wartime rationing, that she had actually eaten a whole family's weekly allowance of cheese when stuck in the pantry.

When reflecting on the change in the family dynamic on her father's return, Dorothy is able to now see things from the perspective of her mother, who experienced a number of significant changes – a husband returning after 6 years away, the loss of her role supporting other women and a new baby – all within a relatively short

period of time. Dorothy is pragmatic about her mother's actions, when the marital relationship was prioritised and a new sister arrived, acknowledging that her mother had a lot to get used to, including a new man "because of what he had experienced" (Line 67).

There is a stoic feel to Dorothy's account, her grandmother's attitude was pivotal, and she acknowledges the good and positive aspects of her life. Referring back to the letter Dorothy sent accompanying her account, it can be seen that Dorothy experienced a difficult time on her father's return which may have forged a connection between her own childhood experience and those of the "needy youngsters" she encountered whilst working in education.

6.3.6   Revising and re-naming final Personal Experiential Themes and organising them into a table

In the process of producing a summary, further reading, referring back to the transcript and examination of Dorothy's experiential statements resulted in further distillation down to four final PETs (Table 6:4). "Home" and "wider family" were merged to become "Home and the role of the wider family", whilst "Women's role" and "food" both reflected "Dorothy's experience of childhood". "Father" was kept as a standalone PET because of the attention paid to it by Dorothy but was re-named "Dorothy experiencing her father as a father", to reflect the difference between her knowing *of* her father and knowing him *as* a father, on his return. The final PET "Recalling events" was re-framed as "Ways of remembering" because Dorothy is remembering in a very active way that incorporates both recollection and sense-making.

Initial Personal Experiential Theme	Final Personal Experiential Theme
Home Wider family	**Home and the role of the wider family**
Women's role Food	**Dorothy's experience of childhood**
Father	**Dorothy experiencing her father as a father**
Recalling events	**Ways of remembering**

Table 6:4 - Dorothy, final PETs

6.3.7 Dorothy – individual analysis

The following is the analysis of Dorothy's transcript arranged thematically following the PETs determined during the previous phase of the process. This is now my interpretation of Dorothy's story, constructed hermeneutically, by re-structuring from the parts (PETs) into a new "whole", following the process of analysis.

Quoted material highlighted in **bold** relates to the identification of sections of particular significance or gems (Smith, 2011).

6.3.7.1 *Home and the role of the wider family*

When Dorothy's father left to join the army, Dorothy and her mother moved to live with her recently widowed grandmother. This was a multi-generational household where as well as Dorothy, her mother and grandmother:

> "…my bachelor uncle plus dog plus parrot made up the
>
> household." (Line 7).

The family home was used to house evacuees from London (Line 15) and their treatment of the house caused some upset to Dorothy's mother because of:

> "…the way the property had been neglected." (Line 53).

This seems doubly unfair for the family when it is considered that Dorothy's mother was "signed up" (Line 16) to supervise the city's day nurseries, supporting women who were working in the pottery industry. The use of the words "signed up" seems to suggest limited choice for Dorothy's mother who was a Froebel trained teacher. Froebel was a German educationalist who invented kindergarten and this experience led to Dorothy's mother being employed to supervise the nurseries.

Dorothy recalls food being on ration and although she realises the purpose now, had limited understanding of it at the time:

"…I got shut in the pantry and ate the cheese ration for four!" (Line 28).

Her recollections of food include using sheep's heads to make brawn, making butter from milk, and being given cheese rind as a treat in the grocer's shop. Food was traditional and multifunctional. Things were made multi-purpose by the addition of new ingredients:

"…batter pudding savoury, then with syrup for afters…" (Line 36).

This approach meant that food was not wasted, and leftovers could be used to make new meals. The ration was supplemented by plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables;

"…as we had a large garden and greenhouse." (Line 38).

Occasional food parcels arrived from a family friend in Canada but there is no detail in Dorothy's account as to what these parcels contained.

Dorothy's uncle lived in the same household. He was "disabled" as the result of a childhood accident and had not been able to walk until he was 12 years old. Despite his physical limitations, Dorothy's uncle trained and qualified as a solicitor and took a keen interest in sport, playing both cricket and hockey. Dorothy regarded that her uncle's approach to life and:

"…never say die attitude was a big influence." (Line 12),

particularly whilst her father was away.

Dorothy had another uncle who lived nearby and owned a factory. Despite not being called up for active service, both men served in the Home Guard.

Dorothy had a very close relationship with her grandmother, a lady with:

"…a lovely sense of humour and a deep faith." (Line 61).

Her grandmother had been widowed in her forties and she and Dorothy found a mutual need for support which strengthened their relationship.

6.3.7.2   Dorothy's experience of childhood

Dorothy was less than year old when war was declared and 7 years old when her father returned. This means that a number of childhood milestones had occurred during the wartime period. Initially, she travelled around with her mother to the day nurseries where she was made to take a nap with the other children in the afternoon. Dorothy:

> "…didn't like having to have a nap in the afternoon." (Line 19).

It could be that this nap time took her away from her mother's company and she was perceived as one of the children rather than a daughter. She spent her time with the nursery children, some of whom stayed overnight during the week. These farmer's children were cared for because their parents worked long hours and journeys were limited by fuel shortages.

Dorothy started school at the age of four, part-time initially, then full-time at the age of six. Since the school was only across the road:

> "…I went independently." (Line 23)

This seems a big responsibility for a small child but is likely to be reflective of the usual pattern for many children at the time.

Dorothy describes her memories of food as "interesting". With regard to the cheese eating episode, Dorothy explains that although she was aware of ration books, she had no awareness of what these were for, so had no realisation that what she had done was of wider significance for the family.

Dorothy talks fondly of her grandmother and the time they spent together. Her grandmother's heroine was Pollyanna and she had:

> "…that sort of attitude". (Line 59).

This reflects her uncle's "can do" attitude, possibly derived from the same source – his mother (Dorothy's grandmother). Dorothy recalls that her grandmother taught her "many skills" (Line 60) and passed on a love of nature. She recalls spending time with her, winding balls of khaki coloured wool in preparation for knitting by women at a church "young wives" group (Line 70).

After her father returned Dorothy continued to spend time with her grandmother. At a time when she felt excluded from the family – particularly following the birth of a baby sister – her grandmother:

> "…gave me the stability I needed." (Line 58).

This was at a time when Dorothy recalls:

> "…**giving myself bruises to get attention**." (Line 57).

If relating this to current theory, these actions might be regarded as self-harm, but here it is possible that having a stabilising influence from her grandmother limited this from developing further. Dorothy's grandmother was very encouraging, and Dorothy never perceived any limitations as to:

> "…what I could aspire to." (Line 69).

Once her baby sister arrived Dorothy's mother stopped working and she describes their relationship as "good", although she recognises that her mother experienced some difficulties adapting to post-war life with a new baby and essentially a new man:

"…because of what he had experienced." (Line 67).

6.3.7.3 Dorothy experiencing her father as a father

At the age of 10 months, Dorothy has no recollection of her father or her relationship with him before the war. She can only recall one brief period of leave but other than that she did not see her father until his eventual return at the end of the war. She can remember sending items such as photographs and homemade peppermint sweets but does not remember exchanging any letters. This limited communication with her father meant that:

"When he returned, he was a stranger…" (Line 51).

The family then moved back home, so there were two major changes to Dorothy's life in a short space of time. The addition of a baby sister then happened:

"…before we had chance to get to know each other…"

(Line 55),

At this point Dorothy felt more like a pupil than a daughter (Line 54) and to compound this, she experienced no physical affection from her father.

As previously stated, Dorothy felt the need to hurt herself to gain attention from her parents and she interprets her father's behaviour towards her sister as how it would have been with her had he not been away and missed 6 years of her life. Dorothy does not specifically talk about her relationship with her sister, but her description of events seems to suggest that Dorothy considers her to be a barrier to her

developing a relationship with their father. She alludes to having a sibling at the end of the account when she says:

"We knew how to share…" (Line 76)

Her she is possibly referring to the sharing of a father as well as more material objects.

Dorothy frames her grandmother and uncle's "can do" attitude in a positive light but the description of her father's attitude:

"…there is no such word as can't in the dictionary…" (Line 54)

seems to have a different tone. This feels more disciplinarian than encouraging and follows Dorothy's assertion that:

"**I felt I was still in school**." (Line 53).

Dorothy's father was strict but not cruel and she did not feel that people were trying to "catch you out" (Line 76). She was aware of the standards of behaviour that were expected, and boundaries were clear (Line 75).

It is clear from Dorothy's account that her father had some traumatic experiences whilst in the army, but he did not reveal too much at the time as he wanted to shield his family from the knowledge that he was:

"…driving fuel tanks to the front line and sleeping under them." (Line 44).

He had also been present when Belsen was liberated and public accounts of this event reveal its horrific nature, even for those doing the liberating. Even after his return, Dorothy's father did not speak about his experiences, although several years later he "wrote it all down." (line 46). Dorothy reveals:

"What was interesting was that he used the third person."

(Line 47).

Use of the third person is suggestive of a dissociative position from the event themselves and what is also interesting is that Dorothy does the same thing herself at the end of the account when she is summing up events, mirroring the way that her father described events:

"I suppose it was all very matter of fact. It was a situation
that couldn't be altered…" (Line 73).

6.3.7.4 Ways of remembering

Dorothy uses a number of devices to relate her memories of the war. Most of the account has a narrative feel to it but her use of language sheds deeper light on the meaning in her words. The use of the words "I think it was", when describing the reasons for children boarding at the nursey (line 24) is suggestive of reflective meaning-making rather than a direct recollection of events, as is the "must have done" when describing activities at the young wives group.

There are elements of sensory memory in Dorothy's account. Memories of the sight of the beds and the sounds of potties "scraping the floor" is triggered by the recollection of being made to take a nap in the afternoons.

Dorothy is more definite when recalling her parents' reaction to the state of their pre-war home:

"I can remember how upset they were…" (Line 52)

and the definite nature may be underpinned by the hot cognition revealed in the emotional content of that event.

Dorothy's fairly concise account gives us access to what life was like as a child but significantly, illuminates the changing family dynamic on her father's return. Through the process of remembering as an activity, Dorothy has reconciled her experiences and there is a stoic feel to her description of events. She describes her grandmother's love of Pollyanna, her uncle's "can do" attitude and her father's "no such word as can't". Her final paragraph is interesting linguistically as it moves between first and third person and active and passive voices:

> "…it was all very matter of fact…we had boundaries…nobody was trying to catch you out. We knew how to share…" (Lines 73-77).

Her final statement about appreciating "the good and the positive" underpins this stoic element.

Dorothy's account contains rich description of events from when she was very young. These memories may have been combined with family conversations over the years to give a clear narrative of her experiences and what they mean to her.

6.4 STEP 6 - INTERPRETIVE SUMMARIES AND PERSONAL EXPERIENTIAL THEMES (PETs)

6.4.1 Reflecting on managing voices within the discussion

The eight people who took part in my research all have a distinct part to play when it comes to analysing the data produced in their contributions. On reflection, balancing the voices within the analysis and the discussion has been like balancing the voices in a focus group discussion. The transcripts vary in length, with those resulting from face to face or telephone interactions being longer than the written contributions.

I have been conscious that some voices seem louder than others and have reflected on why that might be. Having met both Brenda and Mary face to face I know what they look like and have a recording of their voices. Likewise with Eric and Gerald, I have a voice recording of their interviews that I can revisit to check how elements such as intonation and pacing influence how I engage with the data. I have never met Jeremy, Beryl, Elizabeth or Dorothy. I have no knowledge of what they look or sound like but still feel I have some understanding of them through the way that they have framed their recollections and made sense of their experiences. All eight participants have had the same contextual experience, having lived through World War II as children and share much common ground in their recollections.

Ethically, I feel obliged to give the findings from each participant the same respect and value and to ensure that their stories are represented equally. This has been difficult to balance at times, particularly if one participant has more to say on a topic than another. The use of interpretive summaries at the stage of identifying PETs

was useful in this regard as it enabled me to summarise each participant's analysis and to become more familiar with each contribution.

I have been conscious of bringing forward the "quieter" voices so that they do not get lost in the analysis but have been aware of the danger of *looking for*, rather than *finding* meaning within the data. Adopting IPA as the methodology for my study has enabled me to take a proactive stance when it comes to balancing the voices, looking for convergence and divergence across and supporting the analytical narrative with extracts from the data.

Following the process outlined in Dorothy's example, the other seven participant transcripts were analysed, resulting in a list of experiential statements distilled into PETs. An interpretive summary was produced for each participant (Dibley et al, 2020) and these are included here with the list of experiential statements and tables identifying how these were distilled further.

6.5 Let's Meet The Other Participants…

6.5.1 Participant 1 – "Brenda"

Brenda is an only child who was born in 1938. She was 15 months old when her father was conscripted into the army, very early into the war. Her father spent a large part of the war in Burma and did not return home until Brenda was 8 years old. After passing the eleven-plus exam, Brenda was educated in an all-girls grammar school and went on to work in the accounts department of a local insurance company. She married and had two children of her own, a boy and a girl, both now with families of their own.

Brenda cared for her parents and her husband until their deaths although her relationship with her father was not always a harmonious one. Brenda's husband helped her to care for her parents and in turn, Brenda cared for him until the end of his life. She never let anyone know how difficult she found this task and emulated her father in suppressing her emotions, not wanting to be seen crying by anyone.

Brenda clearly enjoys talking about, and sharing her experiences of, being a child during WWII. She responded by email to my initial advert via the U3A, a straightforward "I would like to take part in your research…". and was then interviewed in person in her own home. The interview with Brenda lasted for over an hour and the recording contains a lot of laughter, even when sharing experiences that appear to have been difficult, such as forming a relationship with her father after the war, and her experiences of caring for him at the end of his life ("he lived for another three years and went through hell and so did I with him" (laughing) Line 542-3).

Brenda's account contains rich descriptions of her life. During the war she spent time with her mother at the pot bank where she worked and recalls the women carrying a board loaded with cups to the kiln on their shoulders. This activity stood her mother is good stead as she was later able to carry suitcases on her shoulder at the station when the family had to run to catch the train to take them on holiday. Brenda's description of Brighton is particularly evocative, the pebbly beach, hot waffles on the pier and the sights and sounds of the races with its colourful characters and funfair.

Brenda clearly enjoyed spending time with her father when he returned home but he set very high standards for her. She knows that she was "loved" but at the same time felt that she was "not good enough" for her father (Line 451) because he always expected her "to do better" (Line 452). It was only much later in her life that her father's feelings towards her became apparent, when she found a poem that he had kept from her schooldays.

There is a perspectival shift in Brenda's account where the way that she recalls her experiences changes from the first-person "I", relating her direct experience or understanding, to the "we" of shared experiences, such as spending time with her family in the air-raid shelter. A further perspectival shift to "they" indicates an un-named subject. Examples are where Brenda is describing the erection of air raid shelters, and how the families of serving soldiers got money; this adds to the sense of generalisation that Brenda is using in describing some of her experiences as a child. Despite her very young age at the start of the war, she presents clear recollections of events, although with closer examination, these memories are built from an early sensory experience and supported by conversations and understanding developed later in her childhood.

A total of ninety experiential statements were extracted from Brenda's interview. These statements were distilled and placed into clusters which were then renamed to reflect their experiential nature. Six final Personal Experiential Themes were identified.

6.5.1.1 Brenda's Personal Experiential Statements

Ways of remembering

Memory of dad contained in objects – important to keep these to support her memory of him. Remembering dad through objects such as his glass eyes which are described as being distinctive. Memory is caught up with the objects, but she finds a way to excuse keeping them, other than as a memorial. Line 846, 46, 853

Remembering in general terms rather than specific, describing a range of events rather than a single event. "Remembering" as a generic term when talking about wartime events. She brings the events to mind to remind her of them. Line 20, 104-12

Changing pronouns**" You**" to "he" – moving from the general to the specific – anything it was possible to grow he (Uncle) grew because he was a good gardener. Line 102

Sensory memory -

Remembering sights and sounds in clear detail. Line 621-7

Remembering the event through the singing and places people by who sang which song in some detail. Line 398

Remembering the sounds, colours and sensations of the train. Describing memories but using the word assume suggests that there is an element of being told as well as remembering. Knows the coat had a scratchy texture but no recollection of actual colour. Line 10-17

Remembering the shelter using senses – wood, colour, size. Line 165-6

Prepared every day for possible air raids by carrying a gas mask. Remembers the smell. Line 370

Remembering vs having been told -

Remembering some things very clearly, others reported rather than memory as was "too young to know". Line 71

Describes as though remembering but seeking clarification. Line 123

Moves from telling to teacher to describing more generally. Some detail clearer than others. Line 644-9

Remembering by combining memory with knowledge from working out dates. Line 42

Talking in general terms rather than reporting direct memory, acknowledging that she was too young to know first-hand. Line 127-129

Remembering weight very precisely. *Either rationing didn't impact on weight or this reflects the childlike perception? 20 stone, not "about 20 stone". How would she have known this?* Line 350

Wartime memories resurfacing through association, discussing frogs triggered memory of air raid shelter. Line 193-8

Expressions of herself

Thought that all children could read before they went to school. Hadn't expected to have to learn how to do it there. Line 264-9

Associates trigonometry with dad being away, hates it. Line 715-6

Being shy stopped her doing things outside the family and with other children. Line 739

Being useful by helping in the school when retired. Line 764

Boy spoiled the coat and now doesn't wear anything second-hand herself. Sense of self-worth contained in the clothes. Line 868-9

Had clothes but did not have specific summer clothes so were unprepared for the weather. Line 650-2

Has pride in her appearance and maintaining standards through the generations. Line 794-6

Caring for parents was difficult but carried on. Parents' needs were put first. Line 1088 -

Didn't follow family's expectations in regard to food and eating and didn't eat breakfast even when people tried to make her. Feeling of being clever despite not eating breakfast, outside of the norm. line 674, 668

Friend was jealous of something out of the ordinary. Shows they were not really all the same. Line 386-389

Discipline

Needs to be perceived as polite as this is what dad instilled.   Had to do what dad said but did defy him by painting her nails every day.   Standards of behaviour applied to own children, did not use corporal punishment. Line 927, 946-7

Did not want to get in trouble but hated the hat more. Afraid of being in trouble and having to stay behind after school. Laughing at the recollection but describing it as a negative experience. Line 235

Stayed clean to avoid getting into trouble. Cleanliness still regarded as a good thing. Line 296-7

"all" but not "we" – sense of virtue associated with not drinking. Line 395-6

Father exercising discipline even when daughter (she) is an adult. Line 1012

Impact of the war on daily life

Children played and did what they wanted, and no-one stopped them. Children all went out to play together, seemed to have a lot of freedom but no mention of what the adult perspective was. Sense of being free but (actually) being left to get on with it. No alarm expressed by parents if children were out all day because they were all together. Line 275-90

Everybody was in the same position, giving a sense of togetherness/community spirit with food used as a means of support (reflects the way that dad supported was with food when in the jungle). Line 110-112

Maintaining routine by carrying on activities like walking to Grandma's. Stability maintained because nothing changed. Line 333-5

Always needed to be prepared for an air raid in the night, focusing on what she was wearing rather than the risk posed by the potential air raid. Description of one episode encapsulating the whole of wartime experience.   Line 178

Use of the air raid shelter as a play area, minimising its sense of risk. Line 304-5

Association of air raid shelter with frogs focuses fear of the shelter on that rather than the potential air raid. War forced grandma to confront something she had always been afraid of but now couldn't avoid. Making the best of the situation, had to have air raid shelters but could make them more pleasant. Line 185, 306

Distinction between "they" (people who provided the shelter? MOD/Council) and "we" (people who used the shelter) suggesting passive involvement – were given the shelter. Line 162-9

Christmas more significant than birthdays. Line 380-1

Feeling protected because the adults (obviously) did the worrying, but the reality of the war was triggered by a simple event such as the telegraph boy or an air raid. Line 357-361

Reality of the war brought close to home by a bomb landing in the same street. Risk greater because men were away and not able to protect them. Line 323-331

Dad away

Dad is hidden from view, not just because he is away but he is trapped somewhere and can't get out or make contact by letter.   Dads being away was not unusual at the time. Men's roles defined as either in, or not in, the army. Says she has no men in her life but then talks about a number of men, indicating significance rather than presence of men. Line 61, 273, 400

Signs being hidden from view caused the soldiers' whereabouts to be obscured. Line 33

Receiving the letters confirmed what the spiritualist said. Someone, although it is not obvious who must have known where the soldiers were in order to send food. Line 65

Uses the word never to describe uncertainty of when she would see her dad again. Line 50

School was prepared but not really understanding what would happen if a bomb dropped. Line 375-7

Using clothes again to minimise waste and maximise finances. Line 777-8

The role of women in the war

Female relationships were important in maintaining routine during the war – normal activities. Having no men around reinforced the togetherness of the women, this is reflected in later life as she herself is seeking the support of women after losing her husband, like women did during the war. Close to daughter and female friends as this is what women do. Line 779-80, line 74-5

Went to visit mum and aunties at work and was free to move around the potbank and carry out jobs with the women. Very precise description of jobs – cup make higher status than cup handler. Line 254-6, 248

Most men missing so household comprised solely of women. "Spoiled" as a consequence of living with women. Dad came home without warning and changed family dynamic from all female and precipitated a change in sleeping arrangements -didn't want to move out of mum's bed. Line 82-5, 425

No dad meant no money for many, so missing dad significant for the economic welfare of the whole family. She was in a better position because mum was working. Line 117-9

Older women supported younger women by taking on childcare roles while they went to work. Flexible living arrangements based on the needs of different parts of the family – young couple needed a house more than their mother did. Family living arrangements – expressed in terms of the women. Line 258-60, 546-50, 207-9

Men encroaching on women's activities. Women have grown used to be able to speak without men listening. Women exercising control in the absence of the men. Lie 481-2, 488

Men and women behave differently as parents. Tension between what men and women (mum and dad) wanted. Took 2 years for dad to re-establish role in the family's decision-making. Line 362, 607-8

Demonstration of mum's physical strength. Needed to be strong to get what you wanted. Line 585-7

Men behaving differently – fear of a man, even a priest. Line 492

Men providing for the women and giving them something extra. Line 614-6

Emotional expression - self

Actions rather than expressing feelings important. Dad talked about his feelings indirectly and made family aware of how he felt. Line 453

Feels loved because well provided for physically – this is how the family demonstrated affection. Way of family showing affection didn't involve physical contact such as kissing or hugging. Line 449, 437

Felt loved but at the same time not good enough. Line 450

Needs to suppress emotion as this is her norm but expressing it now when remembering. Suppresses emotion outwardly, although has the feelings and expresses them in private. Recognises the need to express emotion but does so privately. Line 461, 978, 506-8

Doesn't tell "people" personal things although overshares with mum and daughter. Needs to share by telling, sometimes overshares. Talking vs telling – talks a lot, doesn't tell much. Line 789-92, 981-3

Importance of female friend to share experiences with. Important to maintain relationship with mum when dad came back. Line 985, 781-3

Spending time out with mum even though they knew that dad would be upset when they got home. Prioritising relationship with mum. Line 1080

Gains pleasure from recounting wartime experiences and telling other people about them. Story not finished…lots more to tell. Line 858 onwards

Relationship with dad – needing to feel connection with her father.

Enjoyed spending time with her dad, didn't want to miss time with him. Line 734-9

Describing one of the things that upset her suggesting that dad upset her in multiple ways. Line 142

Dad behaving with intolerance towards her despite being kind to other people. Line 1015-1023

Dad bought a gift because that is what is expected even though it was too old for her. Line23-4

Relationship with dad tricky to begin with, had to get used to him being at home. Line 430

Relationship with father would have been different if dad had not gone away. Line 474-5

Reconciliation of feelings in later life (dad). Laughter concealing sadness of the last years of dad's life. Line 542

Women using male role to instil discipline and mum's behaviour had a negative effect on relationship with dad leaving her with a sense of regret, missing the relationship she might have had. Line 431-6

Dad disciplined her by explanation rather than corporal punishment. Line 758-60

Dad expected perfection and didn't tolerate less - attention to detail when making maps may save lives. Dad doesn't like to be told something is not possible, did not want to be perceived as not able to do it. Dad intolerant of inefficiency or incompetence. Line 750-1, 825, 840-3

Military standards such as posture applied at home. Line 928

Own reflections on relationship with dad -

Dad protecting mum and giving her time on her own to get ready - making sense of the experience by reflecting back. Dad providing treats, realises now that they were extras. Line 683-5, 658-9

Dad's expectations of her set very high. Doesn't want her to waste the opportunity he never had. Dad's focus was on education, and he had very high expectations. Dad didn't fully understand her ability. Line 147-8, 155

Dad stayed as a basic grade but demonstrated his abilities in other ways by helping the map maker. Line 712-3

Dad's knowledge being demonstrated by him knowing all the flags (did he learn these in the army?) and this reinforced the point that dad was very clever. Line 704

Range of general knowledge reinforces how clever dad is. Not talking about the war was a conscious thing as was very happy to talk about other things and pass on what he had learned, albeit indirectly. Line 727-9

Showing respect for dad by describing him as interesting. Line 696

Dad's potential was unfulfilled. He could have gone to grammar school but didn't because his family were poor led to unrealistic level of expectation, possibly over-compensation for his own lost opportunity. Never experienced it first-hand. Line 137-8

Being the breadwinner was important so went straight back to previous job, reflecting wish not to progress through the army ranks. Line 827-8

Emotional response from father although emotion previously suppressed. Having everyone together demonstrated what might have been lost. Dad realising that he might not have come home. Suppressing traumatic memory by not talking about events. Dad managed his emotions by not talking about the events. line 501-4, 517

Her father didn't even want a physical reminder of his time in the war, although she has kept a number of items relating to that time e.g. discharge papers. Line 533

Faith damaged by experience of war and anger (with God). Line 495-6

Protecting the reputations of the men in her life. Associating dad's upsetting behaviour with illness.

Bitterness and anger causing dad to behave unkindly when he was ill. Line 1025

Physical infirmity impeding dad's ability to do things he wants to do. Line 1003

Resumed pastimes from before the war and gave the women something extra because of his betting. Women allowed to go to the races once, rest of the time dad went on his own. Line 629

Miscellaneous

Appetite needed to be good so would eat the breakfast that had been paid for. Line 692-3

Fox fur has a sense of luxury. Associating fox fur with fear of dogs. Lie 342-7

Man's strength displayed through upsetting people but didn't allow it to upset her. Line 974

Tension between what was expected (where most people went on holiday) and what her family did. They were able to afford a better holiday. Line 637-42

The oldest child has the bigger responsibility in terms of earning money and status of the woman is expressed through the quality of the work. Need to maintain standards to maximise income. Line 568

Initial Personal Experiential Theme	Final Personal Experiential Theme
Remembering vs having been told	**Reflecting on her life as a child**
Miscellaneous	
Impact of the war on daily life	**How the war is impacting on daily life**
Dad away	
The role of women in the war	**How women are influencing her experience of the war**
Discipline	**Relating to and feeling connected with her father**
Relationship with dad – needing to feel connected with her father	
Own reflections on relationship with dad	
Expressions of herself	**Expressing emotion**
Motional expression - self	
Sensory memory	**Ways of remembering**
Remembering vs having been told	

Figure 6:5 - Distillation of themes - Brenda

6.5.2   Participant 2 – "Mary"

Mary was born in 1930 and was the older of two children. Her brother was six years younger than herself and died at the age of fifty-six. Mary spent the war with her mother, as her father was conscripted into the army. She makes little mention of her brother during this time, although his age suggests that he would have been present.   When Mary describes going away to meet her father she talks about "mum and I", possibly implying that her brother stayed behind, and only mentions him once more in passing when describing sleeping arrangements.

There are many false starts in Mary's interview, where she starts to answer a question but then moves onto another topic, for example when asked what she remembers about the war, Mary says "gas masks" (line 117) but then immediately changes the subject and moves on to talking about attending chapel (line 119). She describes geographical locations in great detail and outlines events but there is a sense that her memory is being supported with information that she has gleaned from other people, as well as assumptions about what happened, because these were general events that happened to everyone.

There are seventy-one experiential statements from the data in Mary's interview transcript. These statements were arranged into clusters and then distilled down to four Personal Experiential Themes (PETs), as outlined below:

6.5.2.1 *Mary Personal Experiential Statements*

Views of the world now compared to then (wartime)

Bases her opinion on conversation she has had with people about what things were like.   Line 306

Comparing own experiences with children now, placing value judgments on the role of material possessions. Line 199

Generalised view of "people" now, rather negative. Line 309

Seems to be associating homelessness with aggression but not clear whether the homelessness is the problem or people's attitudes to it. Line 311

Alcohol

Alcohol – financial cost, smoking – physical cost. Line 246

Associates bigger families with greater poverty. "they" (men) drank the money which in turn caused deprivation. Own dad not at home so that didn't happen to her, although reports having little money. Line 204

Repeating previous assertion that drinkers have less money. Line 234-4

Dad

Used to father being away because of his pre-war profession. Line 17

Knew dad was away but didn't know where. Line 27

No mention of mum here but is describing being a parent and having others to care for as stressful for her dad. (Mum was still around as talked about her spending time together after she was married and parents had 58 year marriage). Line 355

Seems to be equating stress of delays with stresses of wartime. Line 252-3

Dad planned the trip for mum and daughter to go and see him. Line 31

Dad's absence anticipated because of sign-up to reservists, but unclear what the formal process was – "it must've been…" Line 72

Dad's return was not a surprise. Reports what probably happened rather than a direct memory. Reflecting what people do rather than what they did. Line 230

Didn't perceive dad as different at the time but recognises the difference now, looking back. Restructuring the narrative. Line 233

Event (Dunkirk) has significance in the recognition of dad's service. Line 41

Contradictions in the narrative, "they had the same interests" but husband loved football and dad "wasn't sporty at all". Line 272

Keen to recognise dad's contribution as significant because of multiple roles played during the war. Line 41

Had married a man with a similar nature to her dad. Line 279

Mum didn't want the men arguing to interrupt her relationship with her daughter. Line 276

Tone and pace very considered during this section of the interview – keen to emphasise that the radio was the only source of argument. Line 262-7

Seeing the same thing with her son and granddaughter made her realise that this was what had happened to her. Line 254

Occupation

Resentment at having to care for mother-in-law. Line 289-91

Uses the word "just" to signify the low status of the job.

Mum was good with shopping, living well seems to be an assumption based on what she now knows of "the time". Line 184/5

Mum's activity dependant on grandad but it allowed her to make extra money. Line 223

Mum's ambition for external work thwarted because working for/supporting parents. Line 157

Mum's role supported the wider family but also gave her an income. Line 110

Enjoyed working and learned things that could be of use e.g. in relation to managing money. Line 301

"Ended up" rather than making a conscious choice. Line 146

Dad didn't approve of her choice of job. Line 148

Father expected good food even with limited money, up to mum to make the best she could from limited resources. Line 193

Financial support from parents. Line 159-62

The "little housewife" gives an indication of the low status of the role that mum took on even though she was the brightest. Line 182

Grandfather stopped her mum from working because he needed her to look after the family. Line 180

Was not looking for work but "he" (? husband) needed someone, so she was called upon to help out. Line 293-

Was the choice of a factory-based job deliberate? Line 148

The War

Adults talked about the war but children were deliberately excluded from the conversation, particularly if difficult issues were being discussed. "Little pigs have big ears". Line 323

Air raid shelter ("of course") would have been a feature in everyone's garden but protection perceived as no better than being in the house. Line 169

Hadn't perceived that their food was different (better) until she talked to other people. Line 176

Food plentiful although basic and the best was made of what was available e.g. by preserving it. Line 213

Gas masks seems significant but then moves away to describe another set of events. ? talking about the mask would make memory of "war" too close, chooses to remember peripheral events. Line 117-122

Generalising her own experience based on the chapel victory party. Assumes they had a party – "a lot of…wasn't there?" Line 228-31

Change in tense from present to past and from "you" to "we". General to specific, what people did, to what we did. Line 213

Context important for the taste of the food. Line 211

Spent time with mum "always with her" when not at school. Line 110

Remembering

Checking out memories. Line 164

Colourful cards (sensory memory) cements the recall of a "little incident". Line 96-7

Combining memory with newspaper articles to make a coherent story. Line 364

Describing events as memories but checking and clarifying - "it must have been right on the war starting", "I don't know what it's called" Line 140

Family history important and she wants her history and experiences to be remembered. Line 371-2

Lots of the narrative is checking out memories, asking the researcher for confirmation e.g. re street names and places. Line 98-104

Memory caught up with what she has been told. Line 112

Memory clear but not clear – "I can't recall…I can always remember" Line 167

Memory clear, but not clear – "he must've", "I think", "I would imagine". Is using the telling of the story to arrange her memories of it. Line 209

Moving away from specific personal memories to very general ones. Seems more comfortable talking about the things that everyone did rather than focusing on her own experience. Line 239-244

Questioning her own memories to get clarity. Line 90-1

Recalling what she has heard but putting it in order using dates e.g. Dunkirk. Line 331

Remembering using what she has been told rather than direct memory – "they" gave them… Line 27

Remembers things by bringing them to mind. Line 68

Says she can remember clearly but intersperses with being told things. Line 64-6

Seeking validation of her experience by asking researcher to imagine how good it was. Line 218

Trying to put things straight in her mind (memory) by the use of narrative and involving the researcher – "do you know where…?" Line 78

Using "they" as a general term – not clear that she knows who they are. Line 330

Using conversations about the past to boost her own memories of events ("what she told me"). Line 196

Using telling to remember.

Talks in a lot of detail, about events from childhood. Line 56

Enjoys talking about it with other people who were children at the same time. Line 53

Moving away from memories of the war and taking in great detail about how she cared for her M-I-L's friend. Line 315

"That's the conclusion I have come to".

Miscellaneous

Didn't take rather than risk failing the 11-plus. Line 141

Harm from smoking passed down through the generations – son has problems with chest because family members smoked. Line 24

Initial Personal Experiential Theme	Final Personal Experiential Theme
Views of the world now compared to then (wartime)	**Comparing the world now to wartime**
Alcohol	
Dad	**Mary's relationship with her father**
Occupation	**Experiencing life during the war**
The war	**Mary remembering…**
Remembering	

Figure 6:6 - Distillation of themes – Mary

6.5.3 Telephone Participant 1 – "Eric"

Eric was born in 1932 and was 7 years old when war was declared. He spent the war at home with his parents – his father was not medically fit for conscription due to an industrial injury to his hand.   Eric's first brother was born after the war started (when Eric was 8), and his second 8 years after that when Eric was 16. Despite the age difference, Eric was (and is still) closer to his youngest brother than he was to the middle one who died at the age of forty-two.

Despite being deemed unfit to serve in the military services, Eric's father was active during the war as both an air raid warden and a motorbike messenger.   Eric's mother worked as a nurse and Eric was often left "in charge" of his younger brother. This did not always end well (Line 190) and both Eric and his parents seem to have realised that he was given a level of responsibility that exceeded his years.

Eric was recruited purposively via a work colleague and his interview took place via the telephone. There were some issues relating to hearing and the pacing of the interview but despite these, the interview lasted for 58 minutes and contained lots of detail. There were a number of occasions where Eric moved between his childhood and adult lives during the interview, telling me in some detail about his own time in the army doing National Service for example, and he seems to make links between what happened to him as a child and his adult thoughts and experiences, often reflecting on his child self, using an adult lens.

Eric's daughter contacted me and told me that her father had really enjoyed the interview as it had helped him to remember events from his childhood and family. She went on to say that the news was making him feel pessimistic (this was at the height of the pandemic) so our conversation had really helped.

I have had the pleasure of meeting Eric since our telephone conversation. He was able to recall clearly what we had talked about and seemed animated when talking about our conversation. He has also told other people about it and someone commented about how much he had enjoyed talking about his wartime childhood. He still thinks that younger people "don't know they have lived", suggesting that despite the stress and austerity of the time, he views the war years as positive in the context of his life story.

There is a total of 91 Experiential Statements in Eric's interview transcript, and these have been clustered and distilled, resulting in seven Personal Experiential Themes.

6.5.3.1 Eric Personal Experiential Statements

Dads

Being in the union meant better working conditions. Line 156

Could see dad being productive (even though not away fighting). Perception that the activity was enjoyable. Line 36-39

Family happy that dad did not go away. Line 36

Father had volunteered to join the army but was deemed medically unfit due to his disability. Line 22-24

Important to mention the connection to the spitfire. Line 146

Men not serving in the army needing to be seen to be doing something. Line 49-52

Wanted to play his part. Line 14

Reflecting

Bitterness that we won but Germany came better off. Line 429

Covid-19 often referred to in terms like wartime spirit but celebration will be less dramatic. Line 374

Expressing regret based on knowing that life was different during the war. Line90-93

Gifts given because they wanted to give gifts, rather than that they were appropriate. Line 169

He was conscripted even though his father wasn't. line 265

Learned useful skills in the army. Line 261

Recognises that the weapons would not be acceptable now and is reluctant to talk about how knives were used. Line 87

Recognising now the futility of the equipment against a potential incendiary bomb attack. line 56

Telephone reflected the status of the job and as a consequence, elevated the status of the family. Line 272

Using adult sensitivities to judge childhood activities. Line 93

Access to food

Eggs were on ration but could be wasted if not used. line 389

Food allowances not sufficient and had to be supplemented with what could be gained without using the ration book which led to unusual foods being eaten. Line 304

Food shortages/rationing always in the background serving as a reminder. Line 14

Highlighting social differences between what could be obtained by higher status organisations such as hotels and ordinary people. Line 314

Playing with the word to make the fish seem more fun than it had been to eat. Line 333

Brothers

Having a brother changed the family dynamic and meant he had to share things such as attention from relatives. Line 168

No longer the centre of attention. Resented baby having a food allocation. Line 174

Closer affinity with S than he had experienced with L. line 202

Expected to be in trouble but this didn't happen. Line 187

Parents knew they shouldn't leave them but had limited choices. Line 189-90

Realised the potential consequences but also realised he should never have been given the responsibility. Line 190

Significant responsibility for a young child. Line 177-82

Understood the consequences but didn't want to miss his Saturday cinema treat because brother would need investigations. Line 186

Radio/information

Able to access more modern music via the radio. Line 8

Almost as though the newsreel is an extension of the adventure film main feature. Line 364

Escapism caught up with imagination. Line 82

Imagination helped form impressions of the war. Line 82

Information gleaned by overhearing adult conversation rather than being told directly. Line 59-60

Information received indirectly rather than it being told to them directly. Naïve language belies true depth of understanding. Line 364

Mixing up Tarzan and Flash Gordon for comic effect. Line 77

Radio was used for information during the war and entertainment after. line 3

Freedom/play

Able to escape the reality of the situation by being outdoors with other children. Line 16-18

Able to find distractions but aware of the implications/effect of the war if we didn't "win". Line 10-14

Air raid shelters demoted in significance by becoming places to play rather than being used for protection. Line 367

Air raid shelters incidental and just happen to be in the play area. Line 109

Anxiety of the war buried until something happened to trigger the anxiety of it. Line 460

Doing battle with rival kids was exciting and not perceived as negative, it was fun. Line 401

Entertainment not provided; children expected to entertain themselves. Lie 194

Freedom started at the door of the house. Line 109

Lots of distractions but still aware of the war. Line 460

Play kept the war at bay, adult talk and radio/media triggered realisation that the war was still happening. Line 141-2

Playing in the fields was our life. Line 113

Provided play opportunities in all seasons. Had the capability as children to build sledges without the adults helping. Line 137-8

Roam implies wandering further away from home – river was the boundary of home. Line 125

Reflecting the freedom he had as a child to roam…

The river marked the edge of the territory. Line 401

Sense of freedom even when it involved hazardous activity. Line 108

Education

Dad hadn't expected him to pass 11-plus and had no educational aspirations for him. Line 241

Didn't value his school education. Line 260

Early experiences of education not good but survived. Line 230

Education post-11 is vocational rather than academic. Felt that he had lost an opportunity by not going to high school. Line 236

Experience would have been better if male teachers had not been conscripted. Line 247

Gas masks the only outward sign that the war was happening when the children were at school. Line 214

Lack of formal education has not hindered his brother from getting on and developing his own business. Line 205

Men not fighting playing out their frustration on pupils. Line 259

Other teachers out to control rather than support pupils. Line 257

Respect was automatic because he was a man. Line 253

Surprise that didn't pass 11-plus as had been seen as clever up to age of 11. Line 232

Unable to identify a specific "bad" behaviour (in relation to use of the cane). Line 253

Women over disciplined because there were no male teacher and set expectations for behaviour and consequences right from the start. Line 248

Risk

Able to access the pistol even in the light of dad's disapproval. Line 98

Accessed a knife via exchanging soft drinks bottles. Umbrella organisation (scouts) validate reason for needing a knife. Line 95

Both weapons but knives etc encouraged more freely that pistols. Line 98

Incident tolerated because there was no-one to report it to. Line 424

Items that could be used as weapons were commonplace and not questioned. Line 84

Lower perception of danger because people were sent to the local area away from danger. Line 381

Perception of risk lower than now. Line 483

Remembering

Assumes researcher pre-knowledge of the geographical area. Line 115

Bombing perceived as exciting. Line 222

Clear memories of the different picture houses. Line 69

Discussion of topics has triggered memories about shortages and what had to be done to get everyday items. Line 346

Gender specific roles – "mum" struggled, dad grew the vegetables – "dug" for victory. Line 306

Hadn't aligned the memory of giving out earplugs with why they were given out. Line 44

Learned catchphrases of the time. Line 58

Making own assumptions based on the adult conversation. Line 65

Most significant event in terms of harm but had "forgotten" to mention it. Line 496

No obvious difference perceived between the experiences of people whose dads were away. Line 435

Presented as a memory but not clear – "I would say that, yeah". Line 225

Remembering the shelter by the sight of the lights and the smell of paraffin. Adventure initially but then became routine and not exciting any more. Line 217

Significant event but still manged to sleep through it.

The smell of the uneaten sandwiches connected memories to dad's workplace. Line 150

Use of Adolf's first name reducing his status and reinforcing lack of respect for what he was doing. Line 60

Using date of a later event to support memory of rationing. Line 358

Using modern technology to support memories. Line 324

Using naïve language e.g. Big guns to demonstrate knowledge of events. Line

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Initial Personal Experiential Theme	Final Experiential Theme
Dad	**Dads – roles and relationships**
Access to food	**Describing food**
Brothers	**Childhood activities and responsibilities**
Risk	
Freedom/play	
Radio/Information	**Accessing information and the importance of the radio**
Education	**Attitude towards education and learning**
Reflecting	**Reflecting on childhood experiences**
Remembering	**Remembering**

Figure 6:7 - Distillation of themes - Eric

6.5.4 Telephone Participant 2 - "Gerald"

Gerald was born in 1932 and was 7 years old when war was declared. He had one (younger) brother and lived with his parents, brother and grandfather in a terraced house. Gerald's father was a train driver and so was not conscripted because he was employed in a protected profession. His mother had stopped working when Gerald was born but he is keen to point out that this was because his father earned a good wage and she did not need to work outside the home, despite having a skilled profession in decorating speciality ware in a potbank prior to Gerald's birth. The family hosted lodgers – often soldiers – so his mother's time was taken up with this during the war, and for a time afterwards. Gerald's grandfather, the owner of the only radio in the household, was the person who gathered the family to hear the declaration of war made via the radio by Neville Chamberlain. Sadly, his grandfather did not survive long past this time and died in 1940.

Gerald was invited to participate as part of my purposive sampling strategy as he fitted the inclusion criteria for the study. I have known Gerald for many years and have some knowledge of his activities and interests. This foreknowledge led my questions at one point in the interview (in relation to his participation in sport) and it was something of which I had to be aware for the rest of the interview in order to not influence the outcome.

Gerald's interview took place via the telephone. This posed some challenges in relation to hearing and on occasions I had to repeat questions. Gerald's account is detailed, and despite the issues with hearing, he was able to answer all the questions posed clearly. The interview lasted for 55 minutes.

Gerald's transcript produced sixty-four experiential statements, which were clustered and distilled down into 6 Personal Experiential Themes.

6.5.4.1 *Gerald Personal Experiential Statements*

Remembering

Assumption rather than clear memory. L.171

Describes a lot of celebrations but checks memory by saying "I think we did". Line 188

Expressing regret that found events exciting, didn't know anything more serious was happening. Line 334

Family got together regularly, not just at Christmas. Line 163

Had not mentioned bombs before – significant events but something of an afterthought. Line 279

Matter of fact description of someone known to the family getting killed. Line 168

More emphasis on VE than VJ day – war in Japan more remote. Line190

Only realised the consequences when looking back. Line 328-9

Remembers details about food and shopping clearly including the divi number. Line 341

Talking about the event triggered the memory. Line 341

Use of the word lad indicates the young age of the injured soldier. Line 126

Horizons

Better educated but still had to go into the army for national service. Line 211

Conscripted himself although father hadn't been. Line 208

Limited horizons – not aware of things outside own geographical location. Line 141

National Service enjoyable. Wished he had made it into a career. Line 217

Pattern – free railway travel because of dad, free trips with ATC, free travel with work. Enjoys travel when someone else is paying. Line 267/274

Sons serving even though the fathers hadn't. line 217

Spent time away from home on his own helping relatives. Line 221

Stayed very close to home even when he got married – horizons hadn't been broadened by his experiences of travel. Line 266

Took a while to learn the skill of milking. Line 233

Dad…

Dad didn't stay away but work took him away to different places. Line 27

Dad in protected profession but not directly conscripted. Line 31-3

Dad made own arrangements in absence of a formal shelter from things he could obtain illicitly. Line 287

Dad stayed with the train even though others left it. Suggests a sense of duty to the ammunition. Line 319

Dad's job enabled them to go on holiday because the travel was free. Line 245

Dad's profession gave access to travel. Line 219

Does not equate air pistol with guns. Line 366

Physical appearance had changed – mum wanted it back to what it was before. Line 323

Shaving beard returned dad to the person he was before he left – erased event. Line 325

Significant event but did not want to talk about it. Line 312

Travel facilitated by dad's access to free train passes. Line 248

The war – children

Access to food controlled by rationing and specific location. Line 341

Action was far enough away for it to be exciting rather than anxiety provoking. Line 303

All children carried gas masks – not a choice. Line 90

Boys wanted to be involved in war like activities. Line 133

Carried on being kids by doing things that "kids always did." Line 110

Children aware that some dads were away but they didn't talk about it much. Line 125

Children wanted to be involved, perceived home guard as fun activity. Line 368

Discipline maintained even in the event of a potential air raid. Line 92

Education not interrupted by the war. Line 177

Enemy activity unseen but anticipated line 95

Forgiven because of the occasion. Line 200

Gender – boys in home guard, mums did the sewing. Line 331

Gender – game to the "lads", no mention of girls. Line 329

Had an awareness of ranks and the hierarchy of the army. Line 359-60

Having somewhere for the children to play more important that the chickens. Line 355

Lad with no legs a visual reminder of the outcomes of war. Line 127

Looked after but not looked after – felt part of the group but excluded from the fun part. Line 235-8

Making use of what was left over. Line 194

Membership of household fluid because of lodgers. Line 60-65

Parents didn't really want the children to be an army but helped with the uniforms.
Line 362

Preparation for /anticipation of bombing raids. Children needed to be protected at
school. Line 81-82

Prepared for bombing raids – shelters a visual reminder of the threat. Line 95

Radio the source of news and information. Access to it controlled by grandfather.
Line 74

School day shortened because war broke out. Line 78

Soldiers looked after the kids by giving them treats. Line 120

Things happened that brought the war into focus even though it could not directly
be seen. Line 112-4

War did not bring disadvantage. Line 144

(Other) men in the war

Men worked in the mines and the Michelin factory got involved in the war by
forming the Home Guard. Line 132

Older men making extra money by supplementing rations for local families. Line
104

Mum (household)

Mum did not go to work as money not needed. Line 149

Mum had skills that she could have used to make money if needed. Line 155-60

Mum had to sit with the anxiety and wait to see what happened. Line 320

Mum not directly involved in war work such as munitions but contributed by offering

lodgings. Line 156-61

Tenant as opposed to lodgers. Line 117

Initial Personal Experiential Theme	Final Personal Experiential Theme
The war - children	**War impacting on children's lives**
Horizons	**Expanding and contracting horizons**
Dad	**The role of men staying at home in the war**
(Other) men in the war	
Mum (household)	**Mum (household)**
Remembering	**Ways of remembering**

Figure 6:8 - Distillation of themes - Gerald

6.5.5   Written participant 1 – "Jeremy"

Jeremy was born in 1934 and was 5 years old when war was declared. He had one brother who was born in 1938. The household comprised four people – Jeremy, his brother and their parents.

Jeremy who has himself published a number of journal articles and book chapters contacted me after reading my article published in a journal. He had been reflecting on an experience of fear triggered recently when hearing about the invasion of Norway during WWII. Jeremy was beginning to reflect on his own childhood experience of the war, wondering whether the feelings of fear he is experiencing now, as an older adult may be linked to those experiences, despite not feeling fear when learning about the same event as a child. After several email conversations (and reflecting with my supervisors), Jeremy was asked if he would like to become a participant in the PhD study and he agreed to take part. He initially consented to be interviewed by telephone but changed his mind, and instead produced a written account based around the interview questions which had been provided via email. His is the only typed response.

Jeremy's father volunteered to join the army but was turned down on medical grounds. His daytime occupation was as a bank clerk (which he disliked intensely). The reasons for the medical exemption were never explained to Jeremy, but it is clear that his father was not happy about remaining at home. The embarrassment he felt at having to wear a Home Guard uniform rather than being on active service caused stress which played out as anger towards Jeremy, his brother and their mother. Jeremy experienced his father's feelings in a "pervasive tension of silence and sadness." (Line 46).

Jeremy's mother took on responsibility for dealing with the family's food ration and for providing protection in the form of an indoor air-raid shelter. At one point, late in the war, she worked (in a voluntary capacity) at a local mental health hospital but was made to stop as her husband's employer did not like wives to work outside the home. Jeremy's uncle was a prisoner of war, so the tension of the family household followed on visits to his maternal grandparents, where the worry was experienced as anxious tears. Interestingly, Jeremy relates that events surrounding his uncle's capture and return were of greater significance than any events involving his father during the war.

Despite the tension felt at home, Jeremy sees a number of positive aspects to his childhood experience during the war. For example, food rationing is interpreted as the reason for the lack of obesity at the time. Jeremy also draws comparisons with the Covid-19 pandemic, realising that the war did not result in the same levels of social isolation because children continued to attend school and mothers continued to talk to each other whilst out shopping.

Jeremy's account is a relatively short, but interpretive written account. He speaks openly about a number of sensitive issues including bedwetting which he attributes indirectly to the tension at home, despite him not experiencing feelings of fear at the time. He is able to make this connection by noting that the bedwetting stopped when he left home to go to boarding school at the age of eleven. As previously stated, his participation in the research was driven by a search for confirmation (and potentially validation) of his thoughts around how his childhood experiences are now returning in the form of anxiety (and fingernail biting) as he has reached older age.

Jeremy's transcript yielded a total of thirty-four experiential statements, and these have been distilled down and clustered to 5 Personal Experiential themes, as shown below.

6.5.5.1   Jeremy Personal Experiential Statements

Reflecting

Associates bedwetting as related to fear. Stopped aged 11. Two events – war in Europe ended and left family home – may have eased the fear that caused the bedwetting. Line 70-73

Being able to talk amongst friends and neighbours was helpful. Line 82

Relating wartime experiences to the current pandemic – acknowledges value of discipline at the time in managing the experience. Line 76-7/80-81

Has constructed his own reality about father using information from his mother. Line 14-15

Has tried to make sense of his experiences by relating feelings triggered by reading about wartime events to lack of fear at the time. Line 73-5

Would not buy German made car. Line 52

Sense of regret rather than relief at only have experienced a single bomb. Line 62

Generosity came from strangers. Line 37-8

Romantic notion of soldier's going away to fight but not knowing whether they survived. Line 90

Memories summarised and events categorised using knowledge and information rather than direct memory. Line 6-9

Most positive memory came from an encounter with army personnel and a tank. Line 84-91

"something like that" – knows what Royal Ordinance is but does not know exactly what uncle did so has linked them together to make sense of them. Line 36

Children's activities

Children were able to engage with the POWs. No sense of risk from doing so. Line 64-8

War had little impact on daily life and its effects could not be seen directly. Line 4

Preservation of routine for children e.g. by going to school perceived as supportive. Line 83

"allowed" a walk – had to be given permission. Line 44-5

Use of language e.g. "when there were" and "weather permitting" suggestive that these were not usual activities. Line 34

Grandparents

Can't remember his grandmother's actual death, just that "she died". Was shielded from this by being sent away. Line 18

Grandfather showed an interest in the progress of the war, in particular the destruction of German cities. Knowledge useful for later geography lessons. Line 58

Grandparents upset because son was a prisoner and shared this grief when daughter and grandchildren were visiting. Line 53-5

Multigenerational household. Memory about where he lived not clear. Line 18-19

Food

Diet supplemented by items not on ration and those which could be grown in the garden. Line 49

Sees rationing as a positive and relates to the value of eating a balanced diet. Line 33/77-8

Parents

Disappointment at not being able to use training mirrors father's disappointment at not being in the armed forces. Line 49

Embarrassment with uniform because perceived as second best to direct service, although had legitimate reason for not being called up. Line 12

Emotion bound up in the generalisations e.g. tearful anxieties. Line 8

Family members in the army. Mother upset by what her brother was experiencing. Is this what father resented? Mum was more upset about her brother than him and his experience was perceived as more significant. Line 22-23

Father dictated what could be listened to on the radio. Only classical music.   Line 44

Father left son in bed – not clear if perceived risk to be low or did this deliberately. Mum taking responsibility for concern as well as practical issues. Line 41-42

Father wanted to fight but denied the opportunity which he resented. Lin 10-13

Fear and frustration were not articulated but were clearly evident through father's behaviour. Line 79-80

Gender roles – mother took on the responsibility but actions dictated by the man/men. Father stopped mother doing war work. "Made to" suggests no choice. Line 28-9

Mother may be using memories of WW1 to drive her actions during WW2. Line 25

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Parents not talking caused fear rather than allaying it and caused the whole household to feel sad. Line 46

Initial Personal Experiential Theme	Final Personal Experiential Theme
Children's activities	**War impacting on children's lives**
Grandparents	**Involvement of grandparents in Jeremy's childhood**
Food	**Jeremy's relationship with food**
Parents	**Relating to and communicating with his parents**
Reflecting	**Reflecting as an adult on his childhood experiences**

Figure 6:9 - Distillation of themes - Jeremy

6.5.6 Written Participant 2 - Elizabeth

Elizabeth was born in 1937 and was two and a half years old when her father was conscripted into the RAF. She was eight years old when he returned in 1946 after the end of the war. She was an only child throughout the war but had a brother, born soon after her father's return home.

Elizabeth recalls being raised in a predominantly female environment during the war and describes being shy on her father's return. Elizabeth's father had been talked about often, his photograph was on display and he was always "included" in hugs (Line 37). Family members told Elizabeth about her father and his active role in her care before being conscripted which caused her to formulate an idealised "Prince Charming" image of him despite her having no real memory of him before his departure (Line 47).

Despite this feeling of her father being "present", Elizabeth took some time to adapt to his presence in the family home after his return. Her vision of Prince Charming did not materialise, and she acknowledges feeling displaced by him. He, in turn, needed to find a way to break the ice with her and did this by sharing the contents of his kit bag and its souvenirs from his time abroad (Line 42). From Elizabeth's account it can be seen that the family never allowed themselves to believe that he might not come home, and a selection of foods (including a tin of salmon) had been set aside to celebrate his eventual return. Elizabeth stayed connected to her father through the letters and souvenirs he sent home and she herself asserts that she "knew he was coming home" *because* he was talked about all the time (Line 20).

Elizabeth's account contains descriptions of her life as a child, particularly food. She recalls "good plain food" and says she never felt hungry. Her grandmother's meat and potato pie was a favourite but she describes the disappointment she felt

at her first encounter with a banana, which did not live up to her expectations. Having been brought up in a predominantly female household, Elizabeth reflects that even now she feels more comfortable in female company.

Elizabeth talks about her career as a geography teacher, which she attributes to her father's stories and souvenirs but mentions little else about her life as an adult. She does mention going into her grandson's school to talk about her time as a child in the war but reveals nothing else about her husband or children.

Elizabeth chose to participate in the research after hearing about it via the local U3A group (the same group attended by Brenda and Mary). She contacted me via email initially but expressed a wish to participate by post due to "limited technical skills". The information was hand delivered to Elizabeth, and she sent a written response to the interview questions. Her letter is handwritten, in the form of a letter. She makes apologies for her poor handwriting, although this is actually very clear, and she expresses the hope that she has not "rambled on" too much.

Elizabeth's account yielded 27 Experiential Statements which were distilled and clustered into 4 Personal Experiential Themes as shown below:

6.5.6.1 Elizabeth Personal Experiential Statements

Father

Father had to move to a different part of the country because he was orphaned. Came to live with family. Line 6

Father moved around a lot during his service with the RAF – reflects the movement in his early life. Line 13

Father wanted children to have better prospects suggests father's prospects were not good pre-war, but he had two professions, neither of which were manual jobs. He himself was successful so better prospects may be broader than job-related. Line 67

Father was a qualified hairdresser which suggests a level of skill and training. Line 2

Father was able to send gifts of exotic foodstuffs (dates, oranges and almonds) despite being on active service. Suggests good communication links. Line 22

Father's expectations with regard to education are set very high and children felt under pressure to pass the 11 plus and so go to grammar school. Line 65

Father's return expected (he will return – aunt saved food to celebrate) and anticipated (we knew when he was coming home (Cousin put up bunting). Line 25

Father's wartime experience influential in her choice of career. Attributes her interest in geography to his stories and souvenirs. Line 95

Had knowledge of father because people talked about him…BUT…he had to find a way to break the ice when he got home. Line 38

Penpal in Italy may have been a way for her father to feel connected to her even though he was away. He was thinking of her even though he was on active service. No detail as to how this link was established. Line 99

"Not strict in a domineering way" suggests father may have been strict in other ways. Line 62

Remembering

Has no direct memories of father pre-war but has an idealised image of him ("Prince Charming") formed from what she has been told. Line 47

Memories of her father bound up in objects such as souvenirs and other objects such as balloon fabric (he was a barrage balloon operator). Line 106

Memories bound up in food and seems to have good memories of this. Food was plain but "good". Was well fed and makes no mention of hardship in relation to food. Line 80

Memories of family life dominated by female presence. Care provided by them when other was working. Line 75

Reflecting

Expected a banana to taste good because expectations built but was disappointed both by size and flavour, so it didn't meet expectations. Line 87

Has read literature about the experiences of children in wartime and uses these to support knowledge and sense-making in recalling her own experiences. Line 57/8

Reflecting that she felt displaced in her mother's affections by her father when he came home. Line 50

Family life

Lots of aspects of family life such as birthdays, Christmas and holidays carried on as they had before the war. Parties small and involved family. Line 90

Stating that family filled the gaps suggests that there were gaps to be filled. Line 79

Use of language/ways of telling

Happy to tell other people about her experiences and enjoys talking – has lots of stories to tell. Line 121

Sums up memories of her father in an eloquent way to show that he was well liked and respected. Line 114

The use of the words "rambled on" may suggest that she believes her information may not be of value and is seeking reassurance, or she is afraid of having said too much. Line 119

Use of inverted commas to highlight words seem to be utilising those words to sum up elements of the experience. Line 46, Line 54

Uses childlike language e.g. "lovey dovey", "Prince Charming". Line 54, Line 46

Uses clichés such as "lovey dovey" to make sense of her parents' relationship when her father came home. Line 55

Describes feeling left out and inconspicuous. Line 57

Initial Personal Experiential Theme	Final Personal Experiential Theme
Father	**Feeling connected to and building a relationship with her father**
Reflecting	**Reflecting on childhood**
Family life	**experiences**
Remembering	**Remembering**
Use of language/ways of telling	**Use of language and ways of telling**

Figure 6:10 - Distillation of themes – Elizabeth

6.5.7   Written Participant 3 - Beryl

Beryl was born in 1935, the middle of three siblings – a sister who was six years older and a brother who was seven years younger (and would have been born partway through the war). Beryl spent the war at home with both parents as her father had undergone major surgery and was not eligible for conscription on medical grounds. He was initially called up for conscription (despite his wife telling the medical officer about his recent surgery) but was sent home as soon as the doctor saw his scar. Despite being declared "unfit" to undertake active military service, once he was well, Beryl's father played an active part during the war as an air raid patrol warden.

Beryl contacted me by email, having spoken to Elizabeth. She told me that she had memories of the war and would be happy to share these. She opted to respond in writing and sent me a handwritten account. Beryl's account is one of the shortest, but she also included two poems that she had written as part of another project. These were analysed as part of Beryl's data.

Her written account yielded thirty experiential statements. These were clustered into 4 Personal Experiential Themes, as shown below.

6.5.7.1 Beryl Personal Experiential Statements

Ways of remembering

Memories of her father and his service are contained in the bell he used on ARP duties – has kept this. Line 16

Use of words such as "usually", "sometimes" and "used to" suggest that overall memory is being generalised by the description of singular events. Line 45, Line 74, Line 96

Has precise memories of the house and the number of houses in the street. Line 23

Daily life of the child

Evacuees were sent to the local area. Use of the word sent suggests limited choice for either the evacuee or the host family. Not clear who did the sending. Line 85

One evacuee was loved by the girls because of his accent. Would have been a UK local dialect but was perceived as a matter for fascination. Suggests limited experience of life outside Staffordshire. Line 89

Children's communal play area was used to celebrate VE and VJ day with street parties. Line 112

Not much space to play around the house itself but had access to a communal area where the children ("we") went to play. Line 37

Parlour was only used on special occasions, despite the house being small and only having a kitchen and back kitchen downstairs. Line 25

Garden/outside space was lost because of the air raid shelter being put in. Line 32

Bananas and ice cream took on a special value because they were rare treats. Important to get to the greengrocer's early to get bananas.   Line 73

Chickens were nurtured and cared for by being kept indoors initially. Chickens for meat and eggs supplemented the ration, along with fish and tripe which weren't on ration. Line 67

Food was not wasted – went to feed the pigs. Line 103

Having food to make a celebratory tea specifically for the children suggests that some items may have been kept in anticipation of and in preparation for a celebration when the war ended. Suggests that adults had been expecting (and possibly hoping for) the end of the war. Line 115

Made best use of the limited choice available by saving up sweet ration. Didn't get more, just wider choice. Line 109

The celebration tea was made special by the ladies who produced it. Mums only had plain food, but the occasion elevated it to party food. Line 117

Birthdays did not always cause the parlour fire to be lit – could this be because birthdays happened outside the winter months so extra heat not needed. Line 76

Celebrations focused on the children ("we had races"). No mention of adults eating or taking part in the races. Line 117-123

Christmas was a big occasion involving the whole family. Was able to play the piano and participated by playing carols and going to chapel. Line 82

Feeling protected as children

Frightened to open the closet because of the gas masks. Not clear if this is because of how they looked or what they represented i.e. risk from air raids/bombs. Line 45

Children had distractions such as the cinema, allowed them to escape and pretend to be film stars. Line 100

Children had to behave by not being noisy – sanctioned if noise levels were too high. Line 99

Children were march out to the shelter, (to maintain order and calm?) and during raids were distracted from the danger by sweets and singing. Line 52

Children were protected at school by the addition of an air raid shelter – "…was erected" suggests that the building wasn't there before the war. Line 50

Parents

Father could not be conscripted due to recent surgery. Line 10

Father had extra rations because of his surgery, identified as "special" but no detail as to whether these were specific items or just extra food. Line 60

Father kept people safe by making sure that they were in the air raid shelters on time. Line 13

Father volunteered for ARP (Air Raid Precautions) – wanted to play his part when he was well enough. Line 11

Mother perceived as being busy. Activities focused on feeding the family by baking. Line 56

Initial Personal Experiential Theme	Final Experiential Theme
Daily life of the child	**Daily life of the child**
Feeling protected as children	**Feeling protected as children**
Parents	**Parents**
Ways of remembering	**Ways of Remembering**

Figure 6:11 - Distillation of themes – Beryl

6.6 CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

6.6.1 Step 7 - Group Experiential Themes (GETs)

The purpose of the analysis at the stage is to identify "patterns of similarity and difference" across the PETs identified in the previous stage. From this a set of Group Experiential Themes (GETs) will be generated (Smith et al, 2022, p.100). This stage is not about trying to establish a common experience but rather we are trying to highlight where experiences are shared by or are unique to the participants. We are looking for convergence and divergence across the individual cases.

Smith et al (2022) suggest that the starting point for this part of the process is to examine the PETs to form a broad impression of similarity and difference. This early examination may reveal similarities, for example in the use of language across the participants. Reflecting the process for developing the PETs, the individual tables were then moved around on a board whilst referring back to the individual summaries. This process represented a further stage in hermeneutic cycling, where the content of the PETs is looked at using a different lens, this time one that facilitated focusing in and across the participant data in order to formulate Group Experiential Themes (GETs).

Sorting and restructuring the PETs was an active process where five initial GETs were identified. At this stage the titles were descriptive with the intention of reviewing after this stage of the analysis was complete:

- Remembering/memory

- Reflection/self

- Father

- Wider family activities/home

- Impact of the war on the daily life of the child

6.6.2   Identifying Experiential/Existential elements

Bearing in mind the need to construct an account with vigorous experiential and/or existential account (Nizza, Farr and Smith, 2021), the next step in my analysis was to identify where those elements might be present in the data. The individual cases were analysed again alongside the provisional GETs and extracts were identified to demonstrate that my initial thoughts were grounded within the data. The process is illustrated in Figure 6:12.

Existential	Theme/ Participant represented	Experiential
Fear and frustration (father's) made obvious by his behaviour Son left in be during air raid "when we hugged, we left a space for dad" "Feel a pupil rather than a daughter"	**Father/Dad** P1 P2 TP1 TP2 WT1 WT2 WT4	Experience of life with/without dad (physical) Experience of dad as dad (emotional Letter from father at the "front" – bitter and angry "why have you let her do that?"
Female roles dictated by men either directly or because of the gaps left by conscription Home shared by lodgers/soldiers from local camp	**Wider family/home** P1 TP1 TP2 WT1 WT2 WT3 WT4	Raised by women/spoilt Mum made to give up work Visits to grandparents Mums supporting other women by caring for children
Left alone to care for younger sibling, parents had to accept the risk because of work commitments "Little pigs have big ears" No change initially – no tangible evidence of "war" Threat always present but unseen and only revealed by (sometimes fleeting) experiences, eg telegraph boy, hearing about "The Blitz".	**Impact on daily life** P1 P2 TP1 TP2 WT1 WT3 WT4	Snippets of overheard conversation "We knew what was happening from the radio" "interesting" food
"I wonder if this is why I…" "No-one ever sees me cry" Acknowledging fear now and relating it to the war. Applying adult knowledge and understanding reveals the nature of the threat that had not been obvious to a child Recognising now the futility of the equipment against a potential incendiary bomb attack.	**Reflection/self** P1 P2 TP1 TP2 WT1 WT2	Expected a banana to taste good because it was "special" reads literature about experiences of children in WWII and uses these to support knowledge and sense-making in recalling own experiences. Comparing own childhood experiences with experiences of children now and placing value judgments on material possessions
Recalling the event reveals the threat Sensory memories Embodied remembering	**Remembering** P1 P2 TP1 TP2 WT2 WT3 WT4	Use of language significant in formulating narrative memory of experiences Memories of beds and the sound of the potties triggered by the memory of being made to take a nap in the afternoons

Figure 6:12 - Existential and Experiential Elements

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Each of the five preliminary GETs was broken down further, drawing out the experiential and existential elements and identifying quoted material from each participant and reflecting how this would be represented in the narrative. A diagram illustrating how this process was applied to "Remembering" is included at Figure 6:13, the other four are included in Appendix L.

Remembering	
Participants represented	
P1, P2, TP1, TP2 WT2, WT3, WT4	
Experiential	**Existential**
WT2 – Experienced care from a female perspective – Memories of family life dominated by female presence. Care provided by them when other was working. Line 75 WT4 - Memories of beds and the sound of the potties triggered by the memory of being made to take a nap in the afternoons. Sensory memory making the memory more vivid. (Line 20)	P1 – Father recalling the event reveals the threat and what he might have lost. TP1 – "Sirens then still indoors ready to leave with baby etc when the bombs fell the allotments over the road bringing down the ceilings and blowing out the windows. Many dead in the lane and houses destroyed." Most significant event in terms of harm but had "forgotten" to mention it. Line 496 P1 - the reality of the war was triggered by the memory of a simple event such as the telegraph boy. Line 357-361
Narrative	
Participants are recalling everyday ("ordinary") events in response to questions about those events. Mode of remembering is significant – using events/phrases to bring the events to mind and remind themselves of the event. Multiple layers – remembering one event triggers the memory of another. Reveals the collective nature of the experience. Existential threat from the war is ever present but is revealed by the (sometimes fleeting) memory of the experience. Existential nature of being a child revealed by memory of the experience of "being made to take a nap".	

Figure 6:13 - Remembering - Existential and Experiential elements

The final stage in the formulation of the GETs was to establish that the groupings effectively represented the findings and to refine the GET titles. In order to enhance clarity, the PETs were colour coded and grouped under four final Group Experiential Themes (GETs) as shown in Table 6:5. The occurrence of GET by participant is shown in Table 6:6.

All eight participants are included in three of the themes – "Experiencing war", "Experiencing fathers" and "Purposeful remembering". The first two themes reflect most closely the initial questions posed by the research and in the rich and evocative description of events, the underlying meaning of the experiences is revealed through the participants' use of language and reflections.

"Reflecting on childhood self as an adult" picks up elements in the transcripts where participants are directly making sense of their own experiences, for example where Eric is passing judgement on his childhood use of a knife ("Regards the knife, the poor creatures that came across us, we had no mercy…I'm sorry to say, I regret what we did as kids" (Line 89).), or where Gerald describes excitement ("I think mostly excited.") when hearing about bombs dropping – he realizes as an adult that the bombs that he found exciting had catastrophic consequences for people, particularly those living in larger cities who were subjected to regular aerial bombardment.

"Purposeful remembering" cuts across all participants and the action of remembering can be seen all the way through the other three GETs. It has been included here as a standalone theme and has been called "purposeful remembering", rather than "memories" because use of the verb reflects the active nature of the process revealed in the transcripts. The participants are presenting their experiences as memories, but these are supplemented by knowledge,

collective remembering (for example in U3A meetings) and recollections triggered by the telling of their stories, for example where Gerald talks about the family "divi" number, which then triggers a recollection of a neighbour's number. The use of language in the action of remembering reveals the formative nature of the process and participants are seen to be questioning their own memories ("I think it must've been") at the same time as presenting the information as direct memory ("I clearly remember…").

Subthemes were identified, reflecting the significance of particular elements within each theme. Identification and use of subthemes also assisted in shaping the structure of the narrative as it was presented by each participant.

Participant 1 Brenda (Father away)	Participant 2 Mary (Father away)
Ways of remembering Expressions of herself /Emotional expression – self Impact of the war on daily life The role of women in the war Relationship with dad – needing to feel connected with her father	Remembering Views of the world now compared to then (wartime) /Occupation Relationship with Dad Alcohol The War
TP1 Eric (Father home)	**TP2 Gerald (Father home)**
Remembering Reflecting Access to food Brothers /Freedom/play /Risk Radio/information Education Dads	Remembering Horizons The war – children (Other) men in the war Mum (household) Dad…
WT1 Jeremy (Father home)	**WT2 Elizabeth (Father away)**
Reflecting Children's activities Grandparents Food Parents/Father	Remembering /Use of language/ways of telling Reflecting Family life Father
WT3 Beryl (Father home)	**WT4 Dorothy (Father away)**
Memories Engaging with others Physical Environment Food Celebrations Protecting the children Parents/Father	Recalling events Home Women's role Food Wider family Father
Key Experiencing war as a child Experiencing Father Reflecting on childhood self as an adult Purposeful Remembering	

Table 6:5 Group Experiential Themes

Experiencing war as a child	Experiencing Father	Reflecting…	Remembering…
Brenda	Brenda	Brenda	Brenda
Mary	Mary	Mary	Mary
Eric	Eric	Eric	Eric
Gerald	Gerald	Gerald	Gerald
Jeremy	Jeremy	Jeremy	Elizabeth
Elizabeth	Elizabeth	Elizabeth	Beryl
Beryl	Beryl		Dorothy
Dorothy	Dorothy		Jeremy

Table 6:6 - Occurrence of GET by participant

6.6.3 Step 8 – finalised analysis across cases

GET 1 – Experiencing war as a child	
Subthemes:	• The role of women in the life of the child • Access to and relationship with food • Being educated • Feeling protected

GET 2 – Experiencing fathers	
Subthemes:	• Fathers being away • Fathers staying at home • Feeling connected • Communication • (Not) talking about his experiences • New siblings

GET 3 – Reflecting on childhood self as an adult	
Subthemes:	• Use of language • Judging childhood behaviours • Links with adult self

GET 4 - Purposeful Remembering	
Subthemes:	• Ways of remembering • Generalisations • Sensory memory • Remembering through objects

The themes will be presented in the following order:

1. Experiencing war as a child
2. Experiencing fathers
3. Reflecting on childhood self as an adult
4. Purposeful Remembering

Words or phrases in the text/quotes highlighted in **bold** indicate a potential gem (Smith, 2011).

6.6.4   GET 1 - Experiencing war as a child.

6.6.4.1   Introduction

Participants were encouraged to describe their daily lives during the war. The questions used were broad (what was your life like during the war?) with follow up questions and prompts. Initial demographic questions were used to establish what households looked like, and to get an idea of where children were living, with whom they shared their homes, and whether moves had been necessary because of the wartime conditions. The opening questions took participants in different directions, and they focused on a range of aspects. For some, talking about their mothers seemed more significant, whilst the subject of food was explored in more depth for others.

Multigenerational households were a common feature amongst the participants. Gerald described a grandparent forming part of the household before the war, Dorothy and Mary moved to live with their grandparents when war broke out, whilst Jeremy moved between living at home and moving to be with his grandparents at various points during the war years. Grandmothers and aunts have a pivotal role in the raising of children while fathers are away or otherwise engaged in wartime activities, providing both practical and emotional support.

There is a sense through the accounts of life going on and children "doing the things that they had always done" (TP2, Line 110), such as going to school and playing with friends; Special days such as Christmas and birthdays are celebrated, as witnessed by Beryl's family continuing to use the parlour "for special occasions" (WT3, Line 26); family holidays are possible. Gerald does not become fully aware of the war until he sees the air raid shelters at school (TP2, Line 110) and Jeremy wonders why, if war has been declared, the skies are quiet (WT1, Line 4). He reflects that on the surface it may appear that little has changed for his family despite war being declared but his account goes on to reveal how events playing out beneath the surface illuminate significant changes both in how routine was enacted, and most significantly, how the changing dynamic, brought about by his father's frustration affected family life.

On surface level, Brenda echoes that life went on pretty much as before the war started, she and her friends were free to roam and play. Here again though, interpretation of Brenda's account reveals significant changes brought about by the fact that her father went away to fight leaving her to be raised in a predominantly female environment. The significance of this s revealed in Brenda's noting of the change in dynamic to family life on her father's return.

There is a disconnect between the articulated feeling of everything carrying on, and the real, significant changes brought about by the fact that the country was at war and the roles and responsibilities of the adults in children's lives have changed. How war is exerting an impact on the daily life of the child will be explored within the following subthemes:

- Subtheme 1 - The role of women in the life of the child (being cared for by women)

- Subtheme 2 - Access to and relationship with food (feeling cared for through food)

- Subtheme 3 - Being educated

- Subtheme 4 - Feeling protected

6.6.4.2   Subtheme 1 - The role of women in the life of the child

Participants were not asked direct questions about the role of women per se, but they were encouraged to describe what their mothers did during the war and who cared for the children if/when mothers were at work. This elicited descriptive discussion about the changing roles of women, support across generations, and ways in which women supported each other. Grandmothers seem to be of particular significance, particularly for the female participants.

Brenda, Mary, Elizabeth and Dorothy all had fathers who volunteered or were conscripted to join the armed forces. Having been left behind with their mothers, all four discuss the importance of the wider family in their upbringing. Mary and Dorothy lived in the same house as their grandmothers during the war whilst Brenda and Elizabeth lived very close to their grandmothers and reflect on the caring roles provided by the older women, supporting young mothers who were at work. Dorothy in particular had a very close relationship with her recently widowed grandmother, offering emotional support to each other, their relationship "strengthened by mutual need" (WT4, Line 63).   Dorothy feels that her grandmother's "can do" attitude, reminiscent of the fictional character Pollyanna, set the tone for her adult life.   Elizabeth observes that she still feels "more comfortable" in female company, a fact that she attributes to her early life being "dominated by women" (WT2, Line 75).

Mary's father was in a reserve force prior to the outbreak of war so had anticipated being called up (P2, Line 9). This meant that the family were prepared when he had to go away, and her mother knew that as soon as the call came that war had been declared she had to**:**

> "…get your dad out of bed to go down to the police station
>
> to register" (P2, Line 65).

This lead in time, knowing that call up was coming, potentially gave Mary's mother time to prepare emotionally for separation. It must have been anticipated as a possibility for the wives of all men of the defined age for conscription, but there was little time for many women to prepare for their changing roles and responsibilities – roles and responsibilities that were not chosen.

Women were the lynchpin of the household, some balancing a paid job outside the home with supporting other working women, or with caring for the wider family. Brenda's mother worked on a potbank, and here, as well as the financial security afforded by paid work, there was an opportunity for the women to support each other emotionally. Brenda recalls being able to visit her mother and aunts at work and having freedom to walk around between "shops" on the factory floor. She identifies a direct link with her later life, where she too attends a group where women provide support to each other:

> "…they were all women together, so they did things
>
> together…I go to a lady's group once a month" (P1, Line
>
> 74).

Not all the mothers were able to work outside the home, indeed for some this was restricted by the men in the family. Gerald's mother was a very talented pottery decorator before having children, but her husband's earnings meant that she did not need to work after this point. Mary's mother wanted to work outside the home

but had been prevented from doing so since leaving school at the age of thirteen. Instead, she cared for the family at home, and, after marrying, continued to keep house for her parents. She was paid for doing this, which supplemented the relatively small amount sent home by Mary's father in the form of his army salary and allowances.

It is interesting that the paid work undertaken by Mary's mother after the war, as a cleaner, was considered by Mary to have low status, despite the extensive skills she appears to have, including sewing, knitting, and repairing clothes and soft furnishings. Mary describes her mother as "very much the little housewife" (P2, Line 182) even though she was able to manage money, balance the family ration and provide good meals, enabling the family to remain well cared for throughout the war. Mary only realises the extent of her mother's capabilities in retrospect, having spoken to other people about their experiences of the time.

Beryl's mum did not work outside the home but is described as "always…busy" (WT3 Line 56). Her activities seem to be focused on feeding the family, for example by baking:

> "…pies and puddings (roly poly pud, bread and butter pud
>
> etc.). (WT3 Line 57).

Jeremy's mother was actively prevented from working outside the home by his father. She took a voluntary role in a local mental health hospital but was made to stop because his father's employers (a bank) "did not like wives to work" (WT1, Line 29). Jeremy describes his mother's key role in the management of the household and concludes that it was his mother who bore the most stress, despite his father being at home. She was responsible for the family's food – both procurement and preparation - and for arranging air raid protection in the form of

indoor shelters. The stress that she was experiencing overspilled as anger towards Jeremy and his brother (WT1, Line 79), but the events causing the stress – the frustration felt by his father, and the fear felt by his mother - were never talked about in front of the children. It is only later, after his father's death that Jeremy establishes, from his mother, the reasons why his father was not allowed to join the army. The reasons are based on health (pneumonia as a younger man) – legitimate reasons to be kept at home, but the shame felt by the family at his rejection from the armed forces only added to the stress that they experienced.

Dorothy's mother worked as a teacher before the war. Her experience as a Froebel trained teacher (Froebel was a German educationalist who invented the concept of kindergarten) meant that she "was signed up" to oversee day nurseries where the children of working women and farming families were cared for (WT4, Line 16). The use of the words "was signed up" is interesting as it suggests instruction rather than volunteering. In order to take up this role, the family left behind their family home. Dorothy's choice of words here, "the house, **our home** we left…" (WT4, Line 15) suggests an emotional connection as well as a physical one to the home left behind to be occupied by strangers. This also gives a sense of impermanence to the places that Dorothy and her family lived during the war – these were not "home". There is no indication as to whether the house was given voluntarily or taken but what is evident is the level of upset caused for Dorothy's mother when the occupants (evacuees from London) did not care for her home, particularly given her pivotal role in supporting others.

Gerald's mother also had a role wider than caring for direct family. Lodgers from a local army camp were a regular feature of Gerald's war, and part of his mother's role was to care for them. For Gerald the lodgers enhanced the household,

particularly when they offered the children treats, such as fudge from Canada (TP2, Line 121).

Gerald's father was a train driver who was often away overnight, so his mother was used to being left alone to care for her children and father-in-law. Despite this, one episode provoked significant anxiety for her. Gerald's father regularly carried ammunition by train from local factories to various parts of the country and on one such journey,

> "…he only got as far as Coventry when the Blitz arrived, so
>
> he had to **sit with it."** (TP2, Line 315).

"Sit with it" relates to the train itself but also the risk associated with remaining with the ammunition it was carrying. Gerald's father saw it as his responsibility to stay with the train, but with no way for him to contact home, his wife suffered considerable upset during the time he was away. Despite the stress she must have felt, Gerald's mother's first reaction on his father returning home was to make him shave off the beard that had grown (TP2, Line 327). Maybe restoring his appearance removed the event but whatever the reason it seems that little was spoken openly about the episode after his return. Apart from recalling that his mother was "very upset" (TP2, Line 322) Gerald has little to say about the emotional impact of this event on his mother, echoing her outwardly stoic response on his father's return.

This episode with Gerald's father being missing and unable to communicate with home resonates with the experience of Brenda, whose father was serving in Burma. There was a time when no communication was received from soldiers fighting on this front, and in the absence of information, Brenda's mother resorted to going to see a spiritualist with her workmates to ascertain what had happened

to her husband. It seems that she needed reassurance in the absence of any objective news about his wellbeing (P1, Line 56). The spiritualist provided this reassurance, indicating that letters would arrive in due course, because Brenda's father was "trapped" somewhere (P1, Line 58). The letters did arrive as predicted, providing relief that Brenda's father was indeed alive and well despite being surrounded by enemy forces.

These episodes reveal the significant stress that women were living with during the war. Without the benefit of modern telecommunications, and no regular news about their husbands, they were left to manage both the practical elements of caring for their children and the emotional anxiety that resulted from having a husband serving in the armed forces during a time of global conflict. Brenda's use of "they were all women together" (P1, Line 74) serves to emphasise the absence of men.

Work outside the home gave women an opportunity for mutual support and Dorothy's account in particular highlights the value of this informal support. She spent substantial amounts of time with her grandmother, some of which was spent at a "young wives" group organised by the local church (WT4, Line 70). Here Dorothy would wind khaki coloured wool into balls that the women then used for knitting. These meetings gave women an opportunity to be together and a welcome distraction to the stress they felt, as well as offering a contribution to the war effort. Dorothy's mother was working in a busy role overseeing the city's kindergartens and initially, Dorothy had spent time in the kindergarten, although she disliked being treated like all the other children. Moving forward, having her grandmother around gave Dorothy practical and emotional support, an escape from the kindergarten and a feeling of stability. This was particularly significant at

the end of the war when Dorothy felt excluded from the nuclear family by the birth of a new sister. Being with her grandmother:

"…gave me the stability I needed." (WT4, Line 58).

Grandmothers, although discussed in a very positive way by the female participants, do not receive the same level of attention from the male participants. Gerald makes no reference at all to a grandmother (although his grandfather formed part of the household before the war) and Eric makes a very brief reference to his when "for some reason" (TP1, Line 460), he was at his grandmother's house, listening to his grandmother and aunt talking about the war and referring to the Bible:

"…they were taking snuff and one thing stuck in me mind,

in the Bible tells you a yellow race will rule, I thought no

that's the Japanese a yellow race will rule the world." (TP1,

Line 465).

This talking openly in front of Eric is in contrast to Mary's experience where her grandmother deliberately withheld information from the children, and she cannot remember anything being talked about openly, even when her father returned. A favourite phrase of her grandmother's was "little pigs have big ears" (P2, Line 323). It may be that this was a strategy designed to protect children from the horrors of what was happening, but it may also be resonant of the general attitude of the time, that children should be seen, but not heard.

For Jeremy, visits to see his maternal grandparents were anxious affairs because his uncle was a prisoner of war. This was naturally a source of stress for all involved and tears were a regular feature of their visits. Jeremy's grandmother collected for the Red Cross and would occasionally take Jeremy with her on door-

to-door collections. Towards the end of the war, however she became ill and moved into her daughter's home, at which point Jeremy was sent to stay with his paternal grandparents (as he had been when his younger brother was born). This meant that he was not at home when his grandmother died and seems to reflect his parent's actions at other points in time when he was sent away to be out of the way.

This stage of the analysis identifies that for the female participants, the role of mothers and grandmothers is clearly identified in both practical and emotional support in the absence of fathers. For the male participants, where their father was at home, the role of female members in the wider family is not articulated in the same way. The role of women in maintaining family wellbeing through the management of the home and the family is undoubtedly significant and can be seen in the next subtheme which relates directly to the acquisition, storage and preparation of food, and the role of food in caring for others.

6.6.4.3   Subtheme 2 - Access to and relationship with food

Food was rationed from January 1940 and every person (including children) was issued with a ration book. The fact that his baby brother was given a ration book was a source of amusement for Eric, although he realises now that his brother would of course need feeding once he was weaned. The ration books could be lodged with more than one shop, allowing mothers to make the most of what was on offer.

Talking about rationing prompts memories for Gerald of going to the shop for the pre-weighed rations of:

> "…bacon, butter, margarine, lard and cheese, no weights
>
> on it cos it was on ration so they knew how much of the
>
> ration was given to us." (TP2, Line 344)

He immediately recalls the families Co-op dividend number –

> "24301 and I've never forgotten it." (TP2, Line 346)

and talking about it triggers recall of the dividend number of a neighbour:

> "…hers was 44241 I've just remembered it." (TP2, Line
>
> 348).

The family dividend number was significant for gaining access to food and other goods and being trusted with it is a significant responsibility for Gerald. His constant recalling of the number in the shop has ensured that it is firmly cemented in his memory.

Despite the lack of availability of some foods, rationing is viewed as a positive by Jeremy, who appreciates the discipline in relation to food that was instilled in him as a child, at a time when obesity was unknown. He is aware that rationing "brought difficulties for everyone", but this is balanced by the value of a "nationally balanced diet" (W1, Line 78). Beryl recalls the sweet ration given to children, which she saved up and used once a month. This did not give her extra sweets, but it did extend the choices that she could make, and so allowed her to make best use of her allotted ration, a sophisticated strategy for a child of primary school age.

Eric is aware that there were food shortages during the war but alludes to the fact that exotic foods were available to some organisations such as London hotels where lobster was on the menu, although he is not clear how he knows this (TP1,

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Line 313). He recalls rabbit being available from the local market and his mother bringing home a fish called "snook". Eric has used the modern technology available now to find out more about snook:

> "…they call it the soap fish…you cook it with the skin off, if
> you don't, you know why they call it the soap fish. I reckon
> they cooked it with the skin on because it didn't taste very
> nice." (TP1, Line 326)

This recollection suggests that not only has Eric retained the memory of snook, but he has found a way to explore his childhood experiences of unusual foods further as he has got older and the means to do so has become more readily available.

Managing the family diet was an extension of the mother's role, using a combination of what was on ration, what was grown (often collectively) in gardens and allotments, what could be foraged in season and unusual items including whale meat. Descriptions of cake on birthdays and at Christmas and the making of jam reveal the way that women are anticipating and storing rationed food such as sugar for special occasions. The efforts made by families to extend the range of foods on offer is acknowledged by Brenda and Jeremy but not all participants demonstrate that they understood the purpose and implications of the need to ration food. On getting shut in the larder on one occasion, Dorothy ate the whole family's weekly ration of cheese (WT4, Line 28)! Dorothy reflects that although she was aware of ration books, she had no awareness of what these were for, and so had no realisation at the time that what she had done was of wider significance for the whole family.

Dorothy and Jeremy remember having gardens and greenhouses that were given over to food production, whilst Gerald recalls allotments near his home, used by

those families whose houses had no gardens. The growing of vegetables and fruit was the domain of the men remaining at home, who saw his as an opportunity to support incomes as well as diets by selling excess produce to local families. Women made the most of opportunities to acquire and preserve seasonal produce. There is a sense of the children feeling well fed on a daily basis, despite the obvious shortages of some food items. Mary specifically remembers food being plentiful (P2, Line 212) as does Elizabeth, who can:

> "…never remember feeling hungry." (WT2, Line 86).

She particularly remembers her grandmother's meat and potato pie (WT2, Line 81), which she associates with being cared for by her grandmother whilst her mother was at work, along with occasional ice creams supplied by an uncle on his way home from work at the colliery (WT2, Line 86). These treats reveal the caring nature of familial relationships, enfolded in the everyday provision of food.

Brenda similarly recalls feeling cared for through food:

> "…any time somebody was ill someone would bring you an
>
> egg custard across...." (P1, Line 111).

The use of the words "somebody" and "someone" suggest a generalisation here, of the community caring for each other by knowing when someone in a neighbouring family is unwell and in need of extra support. The caring nature of the act is bound up in and obscured by its "any time" everyday nature.

Treats for children consisted of the regular sweet ration along with occasional ice creams, usually at the cinema. One of the more unusual treats for Dorothy was cheese rind from the grocery store. Beryl describes how occasionally the cinema would:

> "let us buy ice cream in a tub." (WT3, Line75).

The permissive element here suggests that even though ice creams were available access to them by children was controlled by adults. It is interesting that sweets were also given to children in the school air raid shelters and at street parties to celebrate VE Day, implying that whilst not always directly available to children, sweets were in circulation and could be provided when the occasion demanded, such as when a distraction from fear was needed. It also speaks to hope and the anticipation of the end of hostilities bringing the need to be prepared to celebrate.

Citrus fruits such as oranges and lemons were rarely seen and bananas were a source of fascination that did not always live up to expectation, despite their novelty value bringing queues to the grocers. Elizabeth recalls her first encounter with a banana when, despite her expectations, she was:

> "…very disappointed at its size and taste…" (WT2, Line 89).

Beryl and Dorothy both discuss the need to avoid waste and to repurpose food. Beryl describes the bin at the end of the street where waste food was deposited to be fed to pigs (WT3, Line 103). Dorothy tells of how food was made multi-purpose by the addition of new ingredients, a strategy that ensured that everything was used, and nothing was wasted:

> "…batter pudding savoury, then with syrup for afters…" (WT4, Line 36).

One of the most poignant recollections in relation to food comes from Beryl. At the end of the war, the children's play area was transformed into a party space with balloons and flags:

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> "…and the ladies prepared **a wonderful tea** for the
> children." (WT3, Line 117).

The focus of the occasion is firmly placed on the children and the **wonderful tea** can only have been produced from the same plain, basic food that was on ration. This gem reveals the efforts of the mums in the street, saving and supplementing the food on ration, combined with the release afforded by relief. The celebratory nature of the event itself serves to elevate it from the ordinary to the special.

6.6.4.4   Subtheme 3 - Being educated (attending school)

Mary, Eric, Gerald, Jeremy and Beryl had all started attending school before war was declared. Brenda, Elizabeth and Dorothy's education started at various points during the war, with Dorothy the last at the age of 4 in 1943. Education seems to have had little interruption for the participants despite the war, but they describe the addition of air raid shelters to school playgrounds and the requirement to carry a Mickey Mouse gas mask to school in a cardboard box. None of the participants describe ever having to use the masks although their recollection of the smell suggests that they were at least tried on.

Brenda was 15 months old when war was declared, and her school career started later, in infant's school. She is proud of the fact that she could read before starting school:

> "…because me Aunt M.A. used to sit for hours with me
> reading…" (P1, Line 266).

She goes on to reflect whether this had actually been a good idea because it essentially meant that she had to "relearn everything" when she went to school (P1, Line 269). Brenda clearly recalls her time at school and the rubbery smell of the gas mask she carried with her (P1, Line 370). Her father was catholic and, she

assumes, would have wanted her to attend a catholic school as she herself was baptised catholic. This did not happen though, despite regular visits from the priest to ask why Brenda was not in school. It must have taken courage for Brenda's grandmother to defy the priest, but here we see evidence of women making decisions and asserting authority in the absence of men.

Brenda makes it very clear that her father's influence around her education was strong when he returned home, attributing his strict attitude in relation to education to his own missed opportunity:

> "My dad actually was a very clever man he passed his eleven plus, but they were too poor to let him go." (P1, Line 137)

Brenda went on to grammar school, having herself passed the eleven-plus exam and describes difficulties managing her father's expectations. He had been "top of the class" at school (P1, Line 142) but Brenda qualifies this by pointing out that he "didn't go to high school" (P1, Line 143) and so standards were different for him. Brenda's peers had all been top of their class, so the standard for her was more equal but set higher. Despite her frustrations, Brenda is keen to point out her father's cleverness, particularly in relation to maths even though he refuses to help her despite helping her friends:

> "…he used to say, "no, you are clever enough – do it yourself."" (P1, Line 155)

This demand to succeed academically is mirrored by Elizabeth who outlines the pressure felt by both her and her brother in relation to passing the eleven-plus. Elizabeth's father was a successful hairdresser who went on to run his own business, but despite this he wanted his children to have:

"…better prospects than his." (Line 67).

This seems to underline a view that a professional career rather than a manual occupation (albeit a successful one) is preferable and can only be accessed via education. Elizabeth went on to become a geography teacher, inspired by her father's many stories and the souvenirs that he sent home when he was stationed abroad. It is evident that his wartime experience was influential in her choice of career and Elizabeth recognises this influence, recalling a piece of balloon fabric she keeps, listing the places her father had visited.

Gerald also passed the eleven-plus exam and went to high school. He was in junior school at the start of the war and identifies little interruption in his education although like Brenda, he recalls the addition of air-raid shelters on a piece of land adjoining the school and the need to carry a gas mask to lessons. Gerald's description of a "parade" to the air raid shelter seems to indicate the way that teachers both maintain discipline and manage any fear expressed by the children (TP2, Line 92) by maintaining order and calm.

This idea is also reflected in Beryl's account, "marching" to the shelter maintains discipline, whilst sweets and singing provide distractions reducing the psychological impact of the risk from a possible air raid (WT3, Line 53). Beryl and her peers were joined in school during the war by two evacuees, boys who had been sent to the local area. Beryl does not say where the boys were sent from but describes how the girls were:

> "…in love with B…we were fascinated by his accent."
> (WT3, Line 90).

The novelty of the boy's accent highlights that children were unused to meeting people from outside their own local area and had limited horizons outside their everyday lives.

Mary was nine at the beginning of the war and while she talks very descriptively about the location of her schools and how long she spent at each, there is no real detail about what her experience of being at school was like. What is noticeably clear is that she did not want to progress to grammar school:

"The very thought of it frightened me to death" (Line 141).

She left school and went to work on a potbank before her father returned home, attracting his displeasure. He was not at all happy and asked:

"Whatever are you thinking about letting her do that?" (P2, Line148)

It is not clear what he had expected her to do but Mary reflects that:

"I couldn't have had a lower job". (P2, Line 147)

Mary further reflects that she had not actually known what she wanted to do on leaving school at the age of fourteen and so had "ended up" working on a potbank, rather than it being a conscious choice. She had been offered the opportunity to work for the Bank of England (which had relocated to the local area) as part of a recruitment drive in schools but had turned this down (P2, Line 144). It is possible that choosing not to take advantage of educational opportunities was an act of teenage defiance towards her father, part of the resentment that he had come back and wanted to have influence over her life and choices, or a reflection of her mother's experience of leaving school at the age of 13 to care for her family. Whatever the reason Mary remained defiant and refused to leave the potbank.

Eric was aged seven and in junior school at the start of the war and his experience was quite different from that of Brenda, Gerald, Elizabeth and Mary in that his father had no educational aspirations for him at all. His father actually appears dismissive of education, regarding children wanting to read for pleasure as "unnatural" (TP1, Line 241). Eric initially reflects his father's attitude, describing a neighbour whose parents were teachers as a "swot" (TP1, Line 238). She was the only girl locally who went to university, with everyone else destined for the factory shop floor or the coal mines (TP1, Line 236).

Interestingly, Eric then discusses his own educational experience in terms of lost opportunity. He and his friends all failed the eleven-plus exam, despite having been:

> "A-stream kids all the way through to 11…" (TP1, Line 232).

This means that Eric and his peers were effectively "denied" further education post eleven as their schooling from then on had a vocational rather than an academic flavour to it. Eric's time at school was not happy. Teaching was a reserved occupation, but despite this, many men had gone to join the forces, leaving behind women and older men who delighted in disciplining or ridiculing their pupils. Children were introduced to the cane - affectionately known as "little Johnny" - on their first day (TP1, Line 250) and were punished with it "pretty often for nothing" (TP1, Line 248). Men not able to fight for their country were perhaps playing out their frustration on pupils and female teachers were:

> "…out to control rather than support pupils." (TP1, Line 257)

Women were inclined to over discipline (possibly as a reaction to the lack of male teachers), setting out unrealistic expectations for children's behaviour, and outlining the potential consequences if these were not met, right from the start.

One teacher stands out for Eric, Mr E the science teacher. Mr E was different and rather than controlling would encourage pupils, sometimes in lively behaviour, never resorting to using the cane. This meant that he commanded respect instantly through his humour and supportive attitude (TP1, Line 257).

Eric regrets his lack of formal education and there is obvious frustration at this. He goes on to describe his younger brother's success in business despite a lack of education and acknowledges that his own experience took an upward turn when he left school and went to technical college. The skills he gained here, along with those added through National Service were put into practice in his career as a dry-cleaning engineer. He prides himself that he is able to build machines "from drawings" (TP1, Line 243) and has put this skill to use by developing machines and systems for his chosen industry. This way, Eric acknowledges, no knowledge goes to waste (TP1, Line 276). This seems to be Eric reconciling his earlier loss of opportunity in light of the opportunities he gained later, maybe it was only after this point that he recognised the true value of what had been withheld. He now self-identifies as someone who is both knowledgeable and capable despite his lack of schooling.

Jeremy makes only brief reference to his schooling. He was 5 years old at the start of the war and recalls, like the other participants, taking a gas mask to school in a cardboard box. What Jeremy does reflect on is the supportive nature of school attendance during the war. He sees as a positive the fact that:

> "…children were able to go to school and play with friends…" (WT1, Line 82).

He relates this when comparing wartime to the recent pandemic, when children were kept at home, being educated online, and sees the disruption to everyday

activities caused by Covid-19 as being worse than the impact of the war. At the end of the war in 1945 Jeremy took and failed his eleven-plus exam. He was sent to boarding school for two years before resitting and passing the exam at age 13. Being at boarding school had a positive emotional impact for Jeremy. Being removed from his family seems to have eased some of the "pervasive" stress that he describes (WT1, Line 71) and the bedwetting experienced at home stopped.

Dorothy, the youngest participant (at age 3 months when war started) did not start school until much later in1943, aged 4 years. Before this, she spent much of the time with her mother travelling around the nurseries that she supervised. Dorothy did not like being with the other children and particularly:

> "…didn't like having to have a nap in the afternoon." (WT4,
>
> Line 19).

It could be that this nap time took her away from her mother's company and she was perceived as one of the children rather than a daughter. She spent her time with the nursery children, and later with some of her schoolmates who stayed overnight during the week. These farmer's children were cared for because their parents worked long hours and journeys were limited by fuel shortages.

When Dorothy started school at the age of four, she attended part-time initially, then full-time at the age of six. Since the school was only across the road:

> "…I went independently." (WT4, Line 23)

This seems a big responsibility for a small child but is likely to be reflective of the usual pattern for many children at the time.

There are differences in the educational experience of the participants but there are no obvious reasons for those differences – they are not divided in terms of

gender or age for example. The impact of educational experience on later career is easier to track from the participants who were older during the war as they were approaching school leaving age when war ended. It does seem that the attitude of fathers is of great significance in terms of educational choices, opportunities and attitudes, and this is the same across all participants, whether the father served in the armed forces or not.

6.6.4.5 Subtheme 4 - Feeling protected

Participants all refer to air raid shelters, be that outdoors or in the house, and these are possibly the most outward expression of attempts to protect the population in the event of an air raid. The building of the shelters is articulated in the third person, often passive voice. Brenda says that her family had:

> "…what **they** called the dugout air raid shelter…" (P1, Line 178)

and Eric recalls that:

> "every household had a shelter" (TP1, Line 225)

Beryl recounts a brick structure being built in the school playground, "which was the air raid shelter" (WT3, Line 49). This use of the passive voice indicates that whilst the children were aware of the shelters, they were not aware of who had provided them – it is simply "they" did. Maybe this level understanding is beyond the horizon of a child in infant school, or the topic may not have been deemed appropriate to discuss with the children, it is without the horizon of a parent's conversation with a child at the time.

There is a distinction between "they" – the un-named authority providing the shelter and the "we" relating to those using them, which suggests a passive involvement

on behalf of the people who were given a means of protection from air-raids without much discussion or involvement in how that protection was provided.

Brenda's grandmother had a particular dislike for the shelter because it housed frogs,

> "me nana used to say "see if there's any frogs in before I
>
> go in" (P1 Line 195).

Brenda recalls the family anticipating potential air raids and a wicker basket being prepared for her to be carried in:

> "…there always used to be pillows put in the basket and it
>
> used to be got ready before we went to bed just in case"
>
> (P1, Line 178)..

"Always used to" generalises the experience from "on one occasion" to "every time" it occurred. Recalling the white fluffy material of her pyjamas moves the focus to what she was wearing rather than the risk posed by the potential air raid, as does association of the air raid shelter with the fear of frogs. The war forces grandma to confront something she had always been afraid of but now could not avoid.

Mary's mother disliked the shelter so much that she decided that it would be preferable to die in her own bed in the event of an air raid meaning that everyone, including children, continued to sleep in the house, her wishes overriding the needs of the wider family. Mary's mother had limited power to make decisions – she was made to leave school and prevented from working outside the home, but here she is decisive, and the family accept her decision.

For those participants whose shelters were constructed indoors, it is more obvious who provided them. Gerald's father reinforced the family cellar using pit props

because there was no room in the garden for an Anderson shelter, whilst Jeremy's mother took on the responsibility for creating a shelter inside their house. She had memories of bombs dropping on her hometown during World War 1 and this intensified the stress she felt about potential aerial bombardment (WT1, Line 25).

Jeremy recalls one occasion when, on waking up, his mother realised that her husband had left Jeremy's brother in bed rather than carrying him down to the shelter. This is an occasion when the adults should be protecting the children and his mother had already done her part by constructing the shelter. This story was repeated for many years, indicating its lasting impact (WT1, Line 42) and Jeremy can still shiver at the sound of a siren - it is not clear whether it is the siren per se that causes Jeremy to "shiver", the memory of the risk to his brother's life if a bomb had dropped on their home that evening, or the apparent disregard that Jeremy's father showed for his brother's safety.

Gerald's reaction to the sound of the sirens is quite different. He recalls feeling "mostly excited" which he attributes to knowing that few bombs had dropped close to his home (TP2, Line 302). He understands that the risk was greater to people in big cities, and his own father had been outside Coventry with a train full of ammunition on the night of the Coventry Blitz (TP2, Line 306). The risk is real but obscured until a bomb drops close to home, such as the time a nearby tyre factory was targeted, the bomb destroying part of the adjacent football ground (TP2, Line 281). Realisation of the real impact of wartime bombing has only come later in life but for Gerald and his friends, being at war felt like a game (TP2, Line 330).

Eric does not initially describe bombing raids but at the end of the interview he recalls one occasion, almost as an afterthought:

> "bombs fell the allotments over the road bringing down the
>
> ceilings and blowing out the windows. Many dead in the
>
> lane and houses destroyed." (TP1, Line 497).

Even when the war is "at the back of our minds" (TP1, Line 141) events such as this bring it into sharp focus.

Children were protected at school by the provision of brick shelters in the playground, although Brenda reflects that these did not offer much more protection than the school building itself (P1, Line 376). When sirens sounded, as described previously, the psychological impact as well as the physical risk of air raids was managed by the teachers maintaining discipline and providing distractions in the form of singing and sweets.

Brenda recalls playing in the street with her friends and the feeling that the war was not a bad time for them. She is aware of and can articulate though the worry that adults must have been feeling (P1, Line 357). The existential threat of war lies just beneath the surface, and reveals itself when **the telegraph boy arrives in the street**:

> "…you'd look which house he was going in and you'd be in
>
> a panic…" (P1, Line 360).

When the telegraph boy does not visit your house, the threat is obscured again, and play can resume. This gem, revealed in one short sentence serves to illuminate how a fleeting moment takes on significant meaning and reveals the pervasive, underlying fear as described in Jeremy's account.

On occasion, the threat of aerial bombardment was realised, for example when a bomb landed in the same street as Brenda's grandmother's house. The distress

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experienced by Brenda's grandmother on this occasion was felt more keenly because of the lack of men to provide protection:

> "it was so close to my other grandmother's…she was just
>
> her and her daughter, she hadn't got her husband and my
>
> dad was in Burma her other son had been killed" (P1, Line
>
> 325)

Men are far away fighting to protect the country, but the women left behind feel the lack of protection that their absence brings.

Air raid shelters were an outward, visible show of the protection afforded in the case of bombing, but once this threat had passed the shelters took on new meaning. The language used to describe the now defunct air raid shelters reveals a gendered difference as Brenda refers to these as "Wendy houses", (P1, Line 305) whilst Eric uses the word "gang huts" (TP1, Line 368). In both cases, the word used is more oriented towards play than threat.

The psychological threat caused by the anticipation of harm to one's family was more subtle than the obvious threat of bombing raids and the stress this caused was not always obvious. Much of the responsibility for managing fear fell to women who had to manage their own stress at the same time as caring for and protecting the wider family.

Saturday morning cinema provided a welcome distraction from the stress of wartime life for children, including Beryl and Eric. Time in the cinema removed them physically from their situation but the films on offer provided more than that, they provided an escape to glamorous and exciting worlds. Beryl tells how two

pennies could get a child access to the cinema in what was known as the "tuppeny rush". She recalls how:

> "I used to pretend I was Veronica Lake or Margaret
>
> Lockwood with her beauty spot." (WT3, Line 100).

Eric talks vividly about the superheroes of the Saturday morning cinema where films featuring Tarzan and Flash Gordon were among his favourites. "Wilson" was an ageing superhero who had discovered the elixir of life, giving him superhuman strength.

Having a younger brother brought an increase in Eric's responsibilities as, even at the age of 10 or 11 he was expected to care for and protect his brother while his parents were at work. This did not always end well; on one occasion the boys were firing pins across the room with a pea shooter when he realised that his brother had swallowed something:

> "… "you've swallowed a pin" you can hide it because you
>
> knew it would jeopardise the trip to the cinema" (Line 184).

Eric clearly understands the danger for his brother and realises the potential consequences, fully expecting to be in trouble when his mother returned from her night shift. This did not transpire, the necessity of his caring role reducing the repercussions:

> "Well I suppose they realised, we're leaving them on their
>
> own like y'know but I was too young to take responsibility
>
> for him." (TP1, Line 186).

Play largely kept the threat posed by war at bay and playing in the fields gave the children a great sense of freedom. Early in his interview Eric reflected that as children, he and his friends were:

> "…always outside and it all disappeared then of course…just life went on pretty well…" (Line 16).

"It disappeared" refers to the war, childhood everyday life takes over and the war recedes from view, although the implications cause Eric to say "…prayers…so's we'd win the war". Even as a child he is aware that much is at stake.

The ability of play to obscure the anxiety of the war is reinforced later in the interview where Eric is describing how he and his friends:

> "…**lived a long day**, in the fields…" (TP1, Line 113).

The fields essentially became their life for the day, but they knew their boundaries and how far they could wander away from home. Brenda recalls a similar experience, of being afforded lots of freedom to roam with her friends. From their descriptions, it is likely that Benda and Eric are playing in the same geographical space although their activities are quite different.

Eric describes how rival gangs of boys threw rotten eggs at each other across an agreed border – the river (TP1, Line 402). If evacuees were unfortunate enough to get in the way, they too would be pelted with rotten eggs. One evacuee, not realising, did not retreat in time:

> "we knew what was coming but he didn't, we never warned
> him and they just pelted him with bad eggs (laughing)"
> (Line 393)

Eric's laughter reflects his pleasure in these events, even though for the evacuees they are not amusing. Having been sent away to avoid harm from the war, evacuees are not shielded from harsh treatment by fellow children and become the brunt of the joke.

No alarm was expressed by parents if the children were all together and, like Eric, for Brenda and her friends there was no expectation that they would return until tea-time:

> "in the school holidays…you'd take a bottle of water and a piece of jam and…didn't come back till teatime…and nobody bothered, cos y'know you were with your friends"
>
> (P1, Line 289)

It could be suggested that leaving the children to their own devices but having the security of knowing that they were together, whether at the cinema or roaming the countryside, may have lessened the pressure for parents preoccupied with more existential issues (such as the possibility of bombs and the shortage of food) that being at war posed. Synonyms for "bothered" suggest that no-one was anxious, no-one was annoyed, or nobody cared but here it seems that nobody "worried". There is a sense that everybody being in the same position provides a feeling of togetherness or community spirit, as well as mutual care and looking out for each other, even as children.

6.6.5 GET 2 - Experiencing fathers…

Four participants had fathers who were away fighting in the armed forces, four had fathers who remained at home. Of those at home, one was in a reserved occupation (train driver), the others were deemed medically unfit. Two of those deemed unfit had wanted to volunteer but had been prevented from doing so by longstanding medical issues, the third was called to a conscription medical but turned away as he had recently undergone major surgery. Despite being unable to join the armed forces, these men became active members of the Home Guard

or Air Raid Patrols. The fathers who were in the armed forces were away from home for an average of 6 years.

There are many similarities in the experiences of the participants on a practical level, as outlined where participants describe their daily lives during the war. What seems to be significant for father/child relations is the difference in the ways in which fathers manage not only their own experiences, but the impact of those experiences on their relationship with their children. Since the participants are split neatly between fathers away and at home, this is the way in which this theme has been structured.

6.6.5.1   Subtheme 1 - Fathers being away…

Brenda's earliest recollection of her father is on the station when he went away. She recalls:

> "…being on the station…and somebody hugged me with a
> scratchy coat in a funny colour and that was me dad." (P1,
> Line 13),

although she clarifies by adding:

> "well I assume it was me dad." (Line 16)

This addition of "I assume" suggests uncertainty since at the age of 15 months it is unlikely that she will have a clear memory of what her father looks like. What she is left with is the feeling of a hug and the impression of a coat. The feeling of uncertainty in this situation is seen in the actions of Brenda's father. He buys her a gift – a jigsaw, which although too difficult for a toddler to complete was "all they had" in the station shop. He wanted to buy a gift as this was what was expected

but had to make do with what was available. Brenda treasured the jigsaw puzzle and kept it safe because it was a gift from her father. She was finally able to complete it at the age of 10 (P1, Line 23).

The uncertainty in Brenda's account is reflected in the experience of Dorothy who was aged 10 months when her father went away. He had initially been a conscientious objector but had signed up when he:

> "…saw what others were prepared to do." (WT4, Line 3).

Like Brenda, Dorothy has no clear recollection of her father or her relationship with him before the war. She can recall one brief period of leave but other than that did not see her father again until his eventual return after the end of the war. She can remember having her photograph taken to send to her father along with homemade peppermint sweets but does not remember exchanging any letters. This limited communication with her father meant that:

> "When he returned **he was a stranger**…" (WT4, Line 51).

This notion of **"stranger"** resonates in Brenda's account. Brenda also did not communicate directly with her father directly when he was away (although her mother sent and received letters) and when he returned home at the end of the war her relationship with him was initially difficult to manage. She recalls feeling:

> "…a bit nervous of him" (P1, Line 429).

Elizabeth makes no direct mention of her father leaving the family home, which he did in 1940 when she was 2 years old. He was conscripted into the RAF as a barrage balloon operator. She has no direct memory of him pre-war but holds an idealised "Prince Charming" image of him based on what family members have told her (WT2, Line 47). While he was away, Elizabeth's father remained very

much at the heart of his family and despite her lack of direct memories, other family members told her that her father was a very:

> "hands-on father who played with me and read me stories."
>
> (WT2, Line 32).

Elizabeth describes her father as "present" during her childhood, despite his physical absence because there were photographs of him at home and she recalls that:

> "…when mum and I hugged we always left a space for
>
> dad." (WT2, Line 36).

In her written account, Elizabeth places words such as "present" and "hands on" in inverted commas, to give added emphasis, a device she uses throughout the account to identify words of significant importance. Elizabeth's father arranged an Italian penfriend for her (WT2, Line 99) which may have been a way to stay connected to his daughter and it certainly reveals that he was thinking of her, despite being on active service.

Elizabeth knew her father would be coming home as he was "talked about all the time" (WT2, Line 20), the use of the word knew conferring certainty here in Elizabeth's assertion about her father's return He wrote regular letters (WT2, Line 22) and was able to send back exotic food as gifts, including dates and oranges, suggesting effective communications links, despite him being stationed abroad. This is in contrast to Brenda's father for whom communication was much more infrequent, hindered by the fact that he was in the far east.

In contrast to these younger participants, Mary was much older (9 years old) when war broke out and has a clear recollection of events around her father going away.

He was part of a reservist force so was aware that he would be called up to active service should war be declared. Mary was at Sunday School when the call came, and her father was required to register at the police station (P2, Line 65). Mary was used to her father being away from home as before the war he was a long-distance lorry driver, although his work had not previously kept him away for such a prolonged period.

Mary saw her father on two occasions during the war, one during a family visit to an army barracks (arranged by her father), the second on his return from Dunkirk. There was little contact from this point (in 1940) until the war ended in 1945, which Mary attributes to her father moving "all over the place" (P2, Line 335). When he eventually returned, their relationship was "terrible" (P2, Line 250), with regular arguments, particularly about radio listening choices. Mary wanted to listen to popular music on the American Forces Network while her father had an interest in amateur radio and had bought a radio with his demob money, specifically for this purpose.

> "I wanted to listen…to Frank Sinatra and their top ten but
>
> dad, he'd got…amateur radio bands…" (P2, Line 262).

There is a contradiction at this stage in Mary's account. On one hand, she recalls arguing with her father "all the time" (P2, Line 253) but this is countered with:

> "…it was the radio we argued about, nothing else." (P2, Line
>
> 266)

Mary reflects that her life had changed while her father was away (she had become a teenager) and that:

> "they're invading your space in a way aren't they" (Line
>
> 254)

The use of "they" indicates a generalisation, an alignment to the experiences of other people, and so her experience is not out of the ordinary The use of "they" also supports her reflection that seeing her granddaughter's reaction to her father being at home permanently (he too was a long-distance lorry driver) reinforced her view of what had happened between her own father and herself when he returned home.

The efforts of Elizabeth's mother, encouraging her to feel connected to her father did not stop Elizabeth feeling shy when he first returned, and her idealised expectations were not fulfilled. Knowing that she had a father and keeping him close in thought was a different experience to having a father at home, being and behaving as a father, and she goes on to recall feeling "left out" when he did eventually return:

> "When he came home – all the anticipation gone and an
> "ordinary" man – no "Prince Charming" materialising." (WT
> 2, Line 45).

The image built up by Elizabeth, based on the descriptions provided by her mother and wider family clearly did not match that of her father in reality. Her aunt, in anticipation (or hope?) that he would indeed return at some point had kept back:

> "a tin of salmon and another of peaches all through the war
> to be eaten on his return…" (WT2, Line 25).

Her cousin (who lived next door) and the wider family also got involved in the welcome home celebrations, leaving Elizabeth feeling a little "pushed out" (WT2, Line 5).

Although initial resentment of her father is evident in Elizabeth's account, particularly when describing her parents walking arm in arm and appearing **"lovey-**

dovey" (WT2, Line 55), her father was keen to break the ice and Elizabeth "thawed out" (WT2, Line 42) when he shared the contents of his kit bag. The use of naive language, for example in "lovey-dovey" reveals that Elizabeth, in directly quoting her own words, is describing the event from the standpoint of an adult but using the language of the child. These words also frame the jealousy that she feels as she is made an outsider to the loving action described, despite having always kept her father at the centre of the circle during his time away.

Significant changes to family living arrangements and dynamics are in evidence for all participants when their fathers returned home. Neither Dorothy nor Elizabeth describes the exact point at which their fathers returned unlike Mary who reports being aware that her father was due to come home, although her use of "I think we must've known…" suggests uncertainty (P2, Line 230). The expectation is linked to preparations of a party at the local chapel which to Mary suggests that a homecoming is anticipated.

Brenda has a clear memory of her father returning but for her it was totally unexpected, he simply appeared on the doorstep in his army uniform, having not told anyone he was coming home (P1, Line 421). His return meant that Brenda was "kicked out" of her mother's bed (P1, Line 425) which "didn't go down very well". Sharing her mother's bed was all that Brenda had known prior to her father returning so the change in the dynamic of her maternal relationship was significant. In Dorothy's case also, the marital relationship was prioritised, and a new sister came along in fairly short order, displacing Dorothy in her parents' affections causing her significant upset and precipitating actions such as hurting herself which now may be construed as self-harm.

For Brenda, Elizabeth and Dorothy, having not known their fathers well prior to the war, having them home essentially meant that they were essentially living with a stranger. Elizabeth's father tried hard to "break the ice" and they did go on to have a close relationship; she describes him as strict but not domineering. Elizabeth reflects that "in spite of the war situation", her father enjoyed his time abroad and she has kept many of the artefacts he brought home. One such object, a piece of balloon fabric has a list of all the places that her father visited, and Elizabeth attributes her love of geography (her eventual chosen career) to her father's many stories and souvenirs of his time abroad. The affection in her closing words sums up her feelings about her father. Describing him as:

> "…a lovely, kind, humorous man, well liked and respected
>
> by all." (WT2, Line 115).

Brenda recognises the impact of a long interruption due to war on her relationship with her father. She expresses regret that her relationship to him was not closer, and wishes that this was different:

> "I mean we were alright me and me dad, but I didn't have
>
> as close a relationship as I could've done" (P1, Line 433)

Brenda's father was a strict disciplinarian, particularly when it came to education. He had missed an opportunity to go to grammar school due to his family's financial situation and was intolerant of anything but top marks from Brenda. We don't know whether Brenda's father would ever have achieved his academic potential (he immediately returned to his previous job on a potbank at the end of the war), but he was generally intolerant of inefficiency or incompetence in any sphere, once upsetting a nurse who had failed to recognise that he had a glass eye:

> "…she ran up the ward screaming, thought it was my real
>
> eye" (laughter) (P1, Line 841)

Despite this perceived intolerance Brenda demonstrates great respect for her father

> "…**he was very interesting** he was a man who was
>
> interested in anything and everything." (P1 Line 697)

This seems to be important to Brenda and she gives many examples of where she has learned something from him, or when his discipline has stood her in good stead. He had a good knowledge of maps and countries (much like Elizabeth's father) that came from his time supporting the map maker in the army. This was demonstrated when Brenda was with her father in London in 1948 - shortly after the Olympic Games – and he was able to name the flag from every country as they hung around Euston station. This knowledge reinforces Brenda's opinion of his abilities:

> "…and he took me round and showed me all the flags and
>
> told me all about different countries…**he was a very clever**
>
> **man**" (P1, Line 707).

For Dorothy, the end of the war meant that the family moved back home, bringing about two major changes to her life in a short space of time. Her situation was made worse by the family's upset at how their home had been neglected by the family occupying it during the war, and then the addition of a baby sister happened:

> "…before we had chance to get to know each other…"
>
> (Line 55).

Dorothy's father was strict and showed no physical affection towards her. Having framed her grandmother and uncle's "can do" attitude in a positive light, the description of her father's attitude:

"…there is **no such word as can't** in the dictionary…" (P1, Line 54)

seems to have a different tone. This feels more disciplinarian than encouraging and follows Dorothy's assertion that:

"I felt I was still in school." (P1, Line 53).

Dorothy's phrasing of "**I felt I was** still in school", rather than "I felt **like** I was still in school" reinforces that the feeling is real, not imagined. In her father's eyes Dorothy is a pupil rather than a daughter and this is how she experiences her father. Dorothy sees a difference in and interprets her father's behaviour towards her new sister as how it would have been with her had he not been away and missed 6 years of her life. In fact, she recalls having to hurt herself:

"…**giving myself bruises** to get attention." (WT4, Line 57).

She observes her father's interactions with her sister as he learns how to "be" a father, and to construct his role in the family. There is a sense of regret for Dorothy:

"All he had missed with me he made up with her." (WT4, Line 56).

Brenda reflects in a comparable way, having watched her father's interactions with her own daughter (his granddaughter). She has concluded that had he never gone away, things would have been different. There is a certainty about this and a sense of regret that their relationship was never fully what she wanted it to be:

"When I saw him with me daughter, he was with me daughter how he would have been with me, he **absolutely adored** me daughter…I'd **never seen him put pen to paper** he wrote to her every single week" (P1, Line 474)

He "adored" his granddaughter suggests that this element was missing in his relationship with Brenda and the "never put pen to paper" reflects the lack of written correspondence with him during his time in Burma. This means that their relationship has never been quite right.

For Dorothy, Brenda and Elizabeth, their father being away in the early part of their lives meant that he missed important milestones in their development, he didn't get to know them as they made the transition from toddler to school age child or have a direct influence over how they were raised. In Brenda's case, her father's wishes were actively disregarded when it came to where she was educated, despite the women in the family knowing what his wishes would have been. Elizabeth's father was kept "in view" by the actions of others but he still missed a significant portion of her early childhood and had to find a way to "break the ice" when he came home. Dorothy's father focused on his younger daughter, never feeling like a loving father to Dorothy.

In developmental terms, Mary had moved from being a child to becoming a teenager while her father was away, and on his return, he was met with the resentment that interactions with a teenager can bring. She alludes to the difficulties that this brought for her father when she describes his quick temper and lack of patience at the docks when being held up delivering goods to be shipped:

> "There was a lot of stress and strife…after going all through the war, he ended up with ulcerated stomach because of the irregular eating with them stuck in these queues, it must've been horrendous on the docks at that time…his patience as a I say he was up like a bottle of pop

which didn't help matters when he'd got me and my brother

to cope with." (P2, Line 352).

Here we see the physical impact of stress and irregular eating habits on Mary's father's health. The words "cope with" relate to having two children at home, and although Mary does not specify what it is about being a father that tests his patience, she is aware from his behaviour that he is finding fatherhood tough to manage.

Brenda has seen glimpses of her father's true feelings towards her, such as finding a poem that he had saved from when she was eleven. It took a visit from her daughter to a family friend though to reveal what Brenda had actually meant to him:

"…he asked N to go and see his friend and the friend said

"ooh your dad was proud of your mum" (P1, Line 460)

At this point in the interview Brenda becomes upset, and whilst acknowledging that she is upset she says that:

"…this this is alien to me I never show me feelings." (P1,

Line 466)

Brenda seems to have come to the realisation that her father's feelings for her were not absent, but rather were obscured both by his wartime experiences, and by his inability to articulate them to her directly.

Brenda's father was adamant in his refusal to talk to *anyone* about his experiences in the war:

"because so many of his colleagues got killed…he **never**

ever mentioned the war if ever anybody talked about the

war he would say "oh shut up it's over now"…He said "if

you had actually been in the real war you wouldn't want to

talk about it you'd just want to forget about it so just shut up

cos I do" (P1, Line 516)

In refusing to discuss the traumatic elements of his experience, he attempts to suppress the memory, but emotion spills over in spite of this. Brenda recalls:

"…I can remember the first Christmas he came back we

were all having Christmas dinner round the table and he

suddenly burst into floods of tears…" (P1, Line 501)

Having everyone together around the table reveals what might have been lost had he not returned home. The realisation that this had been a real possibility exposes the existential nature of the threat posed by his service. Brenda actively seeks to emulate this suppression of emotion, not even crying when her husband died. She states, with an air of pride that no-one ever sees her cry and that she is known for this trait.

Dorothy's account contains evidence that her father experienced traumatic events whilst in the army, although he did not reveal too much at the time, wanting to shield his family from the knowledge that he was:

"…driving fuel tanks to the front line and sleeping under

them." (WT4, Line 44).

He had also been present when Belsen was liberated and public accounts of this event reveal its horrific nature, even for those doing the liberating. After his return, Dorothy's father did not speak about his experiences, much like Brenda's father, although several years later he "wrote it all down." (WT4, Line 46). Dorothy reveals:

> "What was interesting was that **he used the third person**."
>
> (WT4, Line 47).

Use of the third person is suggestive of a dissociative position from the event itself and what is also interesting is that Dorothy does the same thing herself at the end of her written account when she is summing up events, mirroring the way that her father described events:

> "I suppose it was all very matter of fact. It was a situation
>
> that couldn't be altered…" (WT4, Line 73).

This nicely summarises events and experiences that were out of the control of both parents and children. Fathers returning were strangers to their children and their relationship began again at the end of the war. The complexity of the events experienced by men, many miles from home influenced the way in which they rebuilt their family relationships. In turn, the younger children have learned to live without a father (having no memory of anything else) and undertook the building of their relationship with him from that standpoint. Reflections of the participants show that this relationship building had both barriers and enablers and looking back, they have come to the realisation that things may well have been different had the war never happened, but that there is no way to make it any different now.

6.6.5.2   Subtheme 2 - Fathers staying at home…

Gerald's father worked in a protected profession as a train driver so was not required to join the armed forces. Eric and Jeremy's fathers both volunteered to join the forces but were prevented from doing so because they had longstanding health issues. Beryl's father was called for a conscription medical but sent home as soon as the doctor saw the scar from his recent surgery.

Had he not had surgery, Beryl's father would have been eligible for conscription and may well have served in the armed forces. The recent nature of his surgery (for a perforated stomach ulcer) is emphasised by the fact that he received "special" extra rations. "When he was well enough" again seems to denote that Beryl's father was acutely unwell at the start of the war, and it was only when he recovered that he was able to participate more actively in wartime events (WT3, Line 14).

Eric's family were pleased that his father stayed at home, Eric articulates this as "good news" (TP1, Line 36). Reasons for this relief are not explicitly stated, and his rejection may actually have been a source of disappointment for Eric's father himself, since he did try to volunteer for service. It is likely that the family felt more protected by having him at home, and there would not be the loss of income experienced by some other families as Eric's father was able to work. He also took on several roles on the Home Front including as an air raid warden (TP1, Line 36).

Jeremy's father was also considered not physically fit enough to join the armed forces, and this was a source of great resentment and embarrassment for him. He did not articulate directly to Jeremy why he was rejected, but his feelings of unhappiness and frustration were clearly visible through his behaviour, despite his medical exemption being legitimate. Jeremy's understanding of his father's medical exemption was limited at the time because it was never spoken about. He only formed a clearer understanding after his father had died, and he was able to use:

> "…comments and stories from my mother to form the conclusion that **pneumonia in his early twenties may have made my father ineligible** for call-up." (WT1, Line 14)

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Jeremy's father was able to join the Home Guard and Auxiliary Fire Service but was embarrassed by the uniform he wore in these roles and his anger and resentment at not being allowed to serve in the armed forces persisted despite being able to actively participate in protecting his local community. Jeremy's uncle was a Prisoner of War, a fact that caused great anxiety to his mother and may have added to his father's resentment. Jeremy actively acknowledges that the effect of his absent uncle was of greater significance to the wider family than anything that happened to his father during the war (WT1, Line 24).

The resentment experienced by Jeremy's father played out as anger towards his children and Jeremy does not describe anywhere in his account being spoken to fondly by either of his parents. His father, a silent man "…except when he was angry…" (WT1, Line 11) dominated household activities, dictated what was listened to on the radio and did not allow his wife to work, even in a voluntary capacity, as his employer "did not like it" (WT1, Line 28). Family life was overlaid by:

> "…a **pervasive tension** of silence and sadness." WT1,
>
> (Line 46),

which Jeremy attributes this to his parents trying hard to suppress their own fears by not talking about them. They do not tell him that they are angry or upset but their silence seems to have the opposite effect, serving to increase the tension felt by the family.

There are positives in Jeremy's account. He was allowed to join his father on Air Raid Patrol training sessions, learning what to do in the event of an incendiary bomb, and he was later taken to a wartime exhibition where he sat in a German war plane. On a family holiday Jeremy was taken by his father to see a crater

formed when a bomb landed close to where the family were staying. When recalling these events Jeremy seems to be reflecting his father's disappointment at not being more actively involved, for example when he refers to only "experiencing" a bomb via the crater:

> "I was probably quietly **disappointed** that I was never able
> to put any of that training into use. I had to remain content
> with seeing pieces of shrapnel brought to school." (WT1,
> Line 49).

Beryl's experience is in contrast to Jeremy's in as much as there seems to be an air of cohesion and working together between her parents, rather than discord and tension as described in Jeremy's account. When describing her parents' activities, Beryl refers to them collectively, for example:

> "**Mum and dad** would buy day old chicks…" (Line 66).

This feeling of cohesion persists when she is describing family activities. At Christmas, the house was filled with extended family who celebrated Christmas and attended chapel together. This is all in contrast to the tearful anxiety that surrounded Jeremy's visits to his wider family.

Beryl's father carried on working as a joiner. He volunteered for the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) when he was well enough as he "wanted to play his part" (WT3, Line 11). His role was to ring a bell and ensure that everyone was in the shelters, thus keeping them safe in the event of an air raid (WT3, Line 13). Beryl still has his ARP bell, an outward sign for her of the importance of her father's service (WT3, Line 16).

Eric's father took on several roles on the Home Front, including being an air raid warden and a bicycle messenger (TP1, Line 36). He stayed overnight on occasion at his workplace to keep a watch for incendiary bombs, equipped only with a stirrup pump and a bucket of sand. Eric recalls with amusement that at least the bucket had the word "Fire" on it. Men from the local neighbourhood were stationed in an air raid post and there was an air of mystery about activities there, although the boys perceived that their fathers must be having fun. The men (and parents) not talking openly about their activities meant that children filled in the gaps.

> "…that was something else that was a **mystery** to us…what's behind the green doors kind of thing, we thought they must be having a good time in there…" (TP1, Line 38)

It seems to have been important for the men who were not conscripted to be seen as productive and protective, combining daytime jobs with air raid patrols and growing food in gardens and greenhouses. Boys occasionally joined their fathers, for example handing out ear plugs. It is only through talking about it that Eric realises that the ear plugs were for blocking out the noise of the bombing raids, he has "never questioned that…" but now acknowledges that it "must have been" their purpose (TP1, Line 44).

Eric describes his father as even mannered and although he does not describe their relationship in any depth, there are glimpses of them interacting at various points in the interview. For example, when a works outing was arranged, Eric describes going to the coast for a day out with his father (TP1, Line 162) who had moved jobs from one where he had been unhappy, to a better one. Eric's use of the words:

> "…and I got the impression he wasn't too happy
>
> sometimes… it was totally different he seemed to be freed
>
> from the worries, he seemed happy there…" (TP1, Line
>
> 156)

seem to suggest that although such matters were not discussed openly in front of the children, paternal feelings could be deduced from their behaviour.

When Eric acquired an air pistol:

> "…me dad, he didn't like that but he didn't stop me, y'know."
>
> (Line 98).

Here, there seems to be a level of tolerance displayed by Eric's father, which may reflect a more lenient approach to discipline because of the war. This tolerance is also apparent in Gerald's account where he describes how he and his friends formed their own Home Guard Unit, emulating their fathers. They cajoled their reluctant mothers into sewing stripes onto homemade uniforms, needing to "twist their arms" in order to get them to do it.

The adult men living in Gerald's neighbourhood were largely employed in protected professions such as mining, steel and railways, which meant that overall, relatively few fathers were conscripted and those at home formed their own Home Guard Divisions, usually based around workplaces in order to protect their families and neighbourhoods.

The parents in Gerald's neighbourhood were less than enthusiastic about the boys' army games but, like Eric's father, tolerated them, nonetheless. Gerald reports that his father "was alright about it" (PT2, Line 362).

When asked whether they knew of children whose fathers had been away, both Gerald and Eric's responses reinforce the fact that this was rare. Gerald responds:

> "one or two yes, but they didn't seem to talk about that part of it, they just said like "my dad's in the army" …But I don't think much about…I can't remember their dads being away" (TP2, Line 441)

The rarity of men being away is further reflected in the level of detail with which Gerald describes their experiences. One relative escaped from a warship, and a soldier who had been based at the local army camp was killed in Libya. The experience of one young man – an errand boy for the local butchers is described in the clearest detail. Having been wounded and captured at Dunkirk he returned home with no legs (TP2, Line 126). This single recollection brings the war into sharp focus, and although the children continued doing the things that "children always did" (TP2, Line 110), they did so against a background of the stresses brought about by global conflict.

Protection from conscription did not mean that Gerald's father did not himself encounter significant risk, particularly since his work required hm to carry ammunition from local factories to various parts of the country. He spent four exceedingly difficult days protecting a train loaded with ammunition just outside Coventry whilst bombs fell on that city causing significant damage (PT2, Line 304). Gerald did not hear his father discuss this episode in any depth, despite the upset caused to the family who knew nothing of his whereabouts at the time.

> "He **just said**… "I was outside Coventry when they blew it up" and he never said much more about it really." (TP2, Line 313).

He "**just**" said reinforces the brevity of the discussion, or at least the discussion overheard by the children. This reluctance to talk about traumatic experiences is reminiscent of Dorothy's father who used "not talking" to shield his family from the true horror of what he had experienced, or Mary's grandmother who used the phrase "little pigs have big ears" to justify not talking about things in the earshot of children.

For Eric, Gerald and Beryl, the men's activities are part of their routine and there is little mention of any emotional impact, whether positive or negative. This is not to say that below a seemingly calm exterior the men were not experiencing emotional upset. The lack of awareness of this may be due in part to the adults' reluctance to talk in any detail about their feelings in earshot of the children. Eric overhears snippets from the radio and picks up on the adults talking but this is descriptive of events rather than their feelings about them. In Jeremy's case, his father's feelings were very much felt by the children despite his parents' efforts to shield them from events. The shielding actually had the opposite effect, and the silence translated into tension, experienced as anger, by the whole family but particularly by the children – Jeremy and his brother.

6.6.6   GET 3 - Reflecting on childhood experiences as an adult

Six of the eight participants are represented within this theme which explores the way that participants are reflecting on their childhood experiences. The reflection is essentially from the standpoint of being an older adult but for some it reveals how they have interacted with their experiences over time. This section of the analysis highlights some interesting differences between the interview transcripts and written accounts.

During the interviews, whether face to face or by telephone, the participants appear to be reflecting as they answer the questions. They are asking questions of themselves or making sense of events as they are talking about them. In contrast, the participants who have written down their answers seem to have reflected before writing, meaning that their answers are more concise and seem more considered, without the same direct evidence of questioning.

Participants employ a range of devices when reflecting. For Eric and Gerald, reflection is evident as they are relating their experiences during their interviews. Brenda has evidently reflected on her experiences and relationships and has used this reflection to formulate an impression of herself that she likes to portray to other people. Mary has used discussions with others, such as the local history group to reflect on and make sense of her experiences, whilst Elizabeth has made comparisons between her own experience and those described in a celebrity autobiography. For all, the process of reflection has been, if not continuous, intermittent across the course of their lives and other events have triggered thoughts and feelings relating to their own childhood experiences.

Reflection was the basis for Jeremy wanting to take part in the research. He contacted me after reading a paper published in Mental Health Practice (Longson and Beech 2017). Reading the article had caused Jeremy to wonder whether feelings of fear he is experiencing now, as an older adult may be linked to those childhood wartime experiences. A feeling of anxiety ("a slight shaking and a feeling of a fear" (WT1, Line 73)) has been triggered by reading about a German invasion of Norway that he did not experience on hearing about it when it actually happened. His use of the word "significantly" when describing this adult experience of fear underpins its importance in his reflections and he asks himself a question:

"Does this recent event only now indicate I was more frightened during wartime than I knew at the time?" (WT1, Line 74).

There is a strong reflective element throughout Jeremy's account, and he seems to be trying to make sense of childhood events and how these have influenced his life choices. Whilst he acknowledges that he did not "feel" frightened during the war, he does recall wetting the bed, which he now perceives is a physical representation of the fear he must have been feeling subconsciously at the time. This perception is reinforced by the fact that the bedwetting stopped when he was taken out of the family home, away from the tension that pervaded his home life, and sent to boarding school:

"There was no bedwetting at boarding school, or since…"
(WT1, Line 72).

Jeremy reflects on some of his life choices. He has only recently bought a German car, for example, despite the feeling of comfort he experienced when sitting in a Messerschmitt cockpit at a wartime exhibition. He reflects that the feeling was similar to his car seat, but the way that this is phrased, "…which I put off buying…" (WT1, Line 52) suggests a deliberate choice, and he seems to be reflecting and posing a question as to why this is. He also attributes the fact that he has never been overweight (WT1, Line 33) to the "nationally balanced diet" (WT1, Line 78) imposed by rationing meaning that obesity was unheard of during the war.

Jeremy ends his account with a positive wartime experience that has stayed with him. He describes in some detail, meeting a soldier who was passing by in a military convoy. The detail reveals the significance to Jeremy of this slightly romantic notion of a soldier, off to fight in France, maybe never to return... He sums up the excitement he feels in the following words:

> "In those few minutes of that morning, that was my first American, my first black person, my first tank – and my first chewing gum." (WT1, Line 90).

Jeremy has reflected on the comparison between his wartime experiences and the recent Covid-19 pandemic, as has Eric. Jeremy reflects that:

> "The **stress of pervasive fear we are experiencing now** must obviously have pervaded during wartime…" (WT1, Line 80),

whilst Eric reflects on how people will celebrate when the pandemic is over. He feels that this will not match the celebrations at the end of war:

> "So it was a big celebration, I remember victory in Europe we just went mad…it's just like if…this Covid-19 was gone we'd all go mad wouldn't we, but not like on the scale of the war was ended the big release" (TP1, Line 374).

The "big release" speaks to the restrictions imposed by war but seems to relate also to the restrictions posed by Covid-19. It is interesting that Jeremy too refers to restrictions, but he acknowledges that protective factors such as the continuation of education and being able to meet people were present during the war. In contrast, during the pandemic social isolation has been a feature for many people. There are several points during Eric's interview where he is looking back to his time as a child, using his adult self to reflect on the experiences. For example, when relating the story about caring for his younger brother he realises the potential consequences but reflects that he should never have been given the responsibility "…Well I suppose they realised…" (TP1, Line 189) relates to his parents who left Eric and his brother alone at home.

Eric seems aware that the perception of risk during his childhood was lower than now and he recalls with some amusement their use of burning tin cans or "winter warmers" (TP1, Line 102), swirled around their heads as entertainment. He is also aware of the danger presented when:

> "I was in one of the pools swimming and Joe my mate dived
>
> over me head and he'd got a knife in his teeth, he'd got a
>
> knife a sheaf knife in his teeth! (TP1, Line 483)

This reflection occurs when Eric is reliving Saturday mornings at the cinema, watching Tarzan and Flash Gordon. One of his heroes was "Wilson", an aging superhero who had discovered the "elixir of life", giving him superhuman strength. Eric laughs at the realisation that this would now be a banned substance, although it had been believable as a child. He also notes that ownership of weapons, although commonplace when he was a child would be viewed very differently now.

Reflection is tinged with regret when Eric is talking about his own ownership of a knife. He is reluctant to talk about some activities and it is evident that he is using adult sensitivities to judge his childhood activities:

> "I'd rather not actually go down that road. The knife was
>
> always for cutting things, strings and stuff…Regards the
>
> knife, the poor creatures that came across us, we had no
>
> mercy…**I'm sorry to say, I regret** what we did as kids"
>
> (Line 89).

There is bitterness mixed into Eric's reflections when he talks about the end of the war:

> "…when you think Germany had to make reparations, this
>
> might be an oversimplification but what did they keep?

> They kept Mercedes and VW and Audi and we got the BSA
>
> 125 Bantam." (TP1, Line 429)

This seems to be a matter that Eric has been reflecting on over time although the use of the word "oversimplification" belies the more complex nature of the matter of reparations. There is resonance here with Jeremy's reluctance to buy a German made car until much later in his life.

Brenda reflects on two distinct aspects of her life during her interview, one, the practical aspects that she attributes to childhood, the other the emotional impact. She describes being good at maths:

> "I was good at maths and I got maths O-level and
>
> everything and I was really good at maths" (P1, Line 718).

She ascribes this to her father's ability, and she remains intolerant of people who seem less able to complete simple mathematical calculations, particularly when in shops and people "…can't add two and two" (P1, Line 723). She attributes her lifelong love of maths to her early experiences and this love for numbers eventually led her to work in the accounts department of a local insurance firm when she left school.

Brenda's father was a strict disciplinarian and her need to be perceived as polite stems from the standards that were instilled into her as a child,

> "if my dad said jump you didn't say why you said how high"
>
> (P1, Line 937)

She has carried on her father's methods of discipline with her own children:

> "I said go to your room …that's **how I always used to**
>
> **punish her** and that's **how I'd been punished…"** (Line
>
> 943)

Brenda has pride in her appearance and recalls with pride having won the cleanliness prize at school. Her ability to stay clean meant that she avoided the telling off given to her friends when they came home with shoes full of mud, and even now dislikes getting her hands dirty. Her need to stay clean mirrors the control that she exerts over her emotions. The outward cleanliness and emotional control enable Brenda to portray an image of herself that she has developed over her life. She reflects that:

> "I can never remember being hugged or kissed by
>
> anybody…and now I'm very defensive about being kissed
>
> I'm funny about it" (Line 437).

Emotional expression recurs throughout Brenda's interview and is something that she herself raises on a number of occasions. For Brenda suppressing emotion is her "norm" even though it spills over when recalling events related to her father. She controls her outward emotions but feels the need to and expresses them privately:

> "In fact, when me husband died somebody said they
>
> couldn't believe how hard I was because I hadn't blubbed.
>
> They didn't see me at home on me own I kept me feelings
>
> to meself." (P1, Line 506)

She is not "hard" as accused, but rather she is conscious that she does not want to be seen crying, emulating her father's emotional control. "I've always hid me feelings" indicates a conscious act of emotional suppression, a shield, and the

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word "wanted" further suggests that although Brenda has the need to cry, she also has the need to appear strong.

Elizabeth reflects on her relationships with women, in a similar way to Brenda's reflections about her mother, daughter and aunts. Elizabeth and her mother lived next door to her grandmother during the war, with a large family of uncles and aunts living nearby. She reflects that her early life was:

"…dominated by women" (Line 75)

and that she still feels more comfortable in female company. Reflections of being with her grandmother and being fed meat and potato pie demonstrate how these activities filled the perceived gap left by her mother going to work. The provision of food is synonymous with the provision of care she experienced from her grandmother.

Elizabeth has read popular literature relating to children in wartime and uses this to support her reflections and sense-making around her own experiences. When reflecting on feeling "inconspicuous" she states that:

"Melvyn Bragg in his book "A Soldier's Return" speaks of

similar experiences. (WT2, Line 57).

This seemingly validates her own initial feelings of rejection at her father's return.

Mary's reflections focus on comparisons between life now, and what things were like when she was a child. One example of this is when Mary talks about being poor. Her perception of poverty in the war years is based on conversations with her mother:

"…**from what she told me** cos we'd been with her all these

years and talking about the past…she'd say er about how

> poor the families were and children starving and got hardly
>
> anything to wear." (P2, Line 197)

Here, Mary seems to be relaying what she has learned from her mother, rather than directly remembering but she uses this to make direct comparisons with the present, where she reflects that although the word poverty is used, people have more material possessions such as televisions:

> "it's a different kind of poverty" (Line 201)

Mary's view of people now does not always measure up to her wartime experience. She seems to reflect with other people, for example about the experience of being at work and, having talked to others, has the view that:

> "it's not the same anymore **they'd** say" (P2, Line 306)

> "I think as a nation we've got far more aggressive, it's only
>
> as **I** see it" (P2, Line 309)

Moving from the use of "they" to "I" illustrates how Mary is internalising her discussions and using this to formulate her own opinion of events.

Reflecting back to the war illuminates aspects of Mary's relationship with, and views of, her parents. When discussing her mother's role, Mary identifies that it was her ability to manage money and balance the family ration books that allowed the family to eat well:

> "We must have lived quite well for the time" (P2, Line 184),

but this has only become apparent as Mary has learned more about the experience of other people from her discussions at the local history group. These conversations have supported her reflections on her own experiences and how she has made sense of them. Mary considers her family experiences to be

significant and enjoys talking about them. She has been involved in other local history projects and finds it sad that her granddaughter does not share her interest, particularly since her granddaughter is experiencing a similar situation with her father who has recently stopped working as a long-distance lorry driver. She realises on reflection that it is through conversation that family history is maintained.

> "It's been a pleasure for me because you talk about these things and what irks me is my granddaughter, I say to her…**you never ask me** anything about family other than me mother". (Line 367).

There is a matter-of-fact quality to some of Gerald's recollections, for example when talking about how a former boarder was killed (TP2, Line168) but there is a reflective element to other sections. He expresses regret that he found events exciting. When asked how the air raid siren made him feel, his response was "I think mostly excited." (TP2, Line 302), and later reiterates that excitement was the overriding emotion (TP2, Line 334).

Gerald has reflected on events as he has moved through his life and now applies an adult frame of reference to his childhood experiences. It is only when looking back that Gerald appreciates the consequences of what was actually happening:

> "…later in life we realized that people had suffered for it and all that but to us, certainly to us lads it was a game." (Line 329).

This is comparable with Eric's experience where he now, looking back expresses regret about his childhood activities, and Jeremy who expresses disappointment that he was not more directly impacted by wartime events such as bombing.

Gerald's account reveals expanding and contracting horizons, his descriptions of his childhood focus in the main part on a limited geographical area – that around his home. At the age of eleven he moved up to high school which was only slightly further away.   He recalls being:

"…allowed to go round there…" (Line 190)

in reference to the location of a street party, implying that even neigbouring streets may have been off limits at other times.

Gerald's horizons were expanded by his father's access to free travel because of his job on the railways. This enabled Gerald to visit family on a farm during school holidays to help with the harvest and to enjoy seaside holidays with his family in North Wales. When undertaking National Service, he moved away from home but remained in the UK and later on, work allowed him to:

"…travel and get somebody else to pay for it." (Line 274)

Despite his enjoyment of travel, Gerald never moved to live more than a mile from where he grew up. He reflects that he enjoyed his National Service - "I had a grand time of it." (TP2, Line 215) and expresses some regret that he did not carry on in a military career.

Beryl's written account did not directly yield a PET relating to reflection, but she did enclose two poems that she had written as part of another project. These reveal a reflective quality that sums up Beryl's feelings about her wartime childhood and exposes the attention that these experiences have attracted both for Beryl personally and the groups to which she belongs. She, along with Mary and Brenda, belongs to a local history group and clearly enjoy revisiting and reflecting on their childhood experiences as children during WWII.

6.6.7   GET 4 – Purposeful Remembering

It may seem obvious to say that the participants are remembering because that is what they are being asked to do as part of the process in participating in the research. The questions they are being asked are encouraging them to recall events, but rather than presenting "memories" their process of remembering is an active one, they are engaged in purposeful remembering. The narrative is constructed and re-constructed through conversation or consideration of a particular topic and the participants are asking questions of themselves in order to structure and present their individual representation of past events.

This process raises questions about how memory is constructed, both on an individual and a collective level; there is evidence is some accounts that discussions with others have been used to structure and reinforce memories. Memory of events with a significant sensory element is presented very clearly, as is the use of objects in memory making, particularly around people. The language used by some seems to indicate that whist the memories are presented using the voice of the adult, the feeling of the child is still present and revealed through the linguistic structure of the accounts.

"Remembering" has been structured using four subthemes:

- Ways of remembering (? memory construction)
- Remembering through the senses
- Memory in objects
- Use of language

6.6.7.1 Subtheme 1 - Ways of remembering

Gerald, Brenda, Eric and Mary, who all participated in interviews (either face to face or by telephone) use a range of devices throughout those interviews in order to remember things. They seem at times to be speaking with clarity but then qualify their responses with "I think we did", or "it must have been". This device is also seen in Dorothy and Jeremy's written accounts, reminiscent of them thinking aloud and making sense of their experiences as they write.

Brenda and Eric have moments of apparent clarity in their accounts. Eric, when asked about the level of detail in his account responds:

> "...yes, **vivid,** yes. I **can see myself now** as a child and
>
> the surroundings and the lifestyle..." (TP1, Line 472),

but earlier in the interview when talking about rationing and shortages, the conversation had caused Eric to question his memory:

> "I'd **forgot about that**, shortages...what was it? I can't
>
> remember now, **it was something that affected me**
>
> **badly,** but then, austerity..." (TP1, Line 347).

Here, Eric seems to have an overall picture in his mind of what it was to be a child during the war, he knows what it looked like and what it felt like. He has rehearsed aspects of his childhood such as listening to the radio or going to the cinema and has detailed memories of those aspects. When attempting to recall specific elements of other aspects of the war, such as rationing, for example, he is less able to bring them immediately to mind.

There are similar discrepancies in Brenda's interview. Her use of the phrase "I always remember" (P1, Line 21) comes in response to questions about her father leaving but follows "...I **assume** it was me dad" (P1, Line 17), the two statements

seemingly contradicting each other. There is further uncertainty when recalling her father's return and she realises that she is unlikely to have remembered because she was very young at the time the events took place:

> "I **must have been**, I can't remember exactly" (P1, Line
> 42), "I was **too young to know** because I mean I was only
> eight when the war ended" (P1, Line 71)

At this point, Brenda is combining her memories with using dates from her father's discharge papers to work out her age rather than directly remembering how old she was. She describes other events as though remembering but again, seeks clarification:

> "I think, didn't they get an army allowance…I think, but as I
> say **when you're that age** you don't know anything about
> money" (Line 123)

The indication is that here Benda is using the conversation to construct the narrative of her early life rather than recalling it directly, using a combination of what she has remembered and what she has learned through conversations with others.

Mary uses a similar device to Brenda when working out dates. Her memories too are checked out, supplemented with information from others and cross checked with dates to ensure accuracy. For example, early in the interview Mary states that (despite being 9 years of age) she doesn't remember anything about her father before the war apart from him being a long-distance lorry driver. She then uses a combination of events and her age to determine when his first period of leave had been:

"…it would be after Dunkirk and I'd be about 12 I think, so

that would be 1942 wouldn't it?" (P2, Line 29),

She often uses phrases such as "he must've", "I think" and "I would imagine" to arrange the memories within the storytelling. In a similar way to Brenda, Mary seems to be using the telling of the story to construct the narrative, an example here where she is describing events around her father joining the army:

"It must have been a kind, I don't understand what he was

in…something, mm, he didn't have to go away, it wasn't

like, it wasn't like a regular army or anything like that, I think

it must've just been something that they signed up for…"

(P2, Line 70).

There is a tension here between Mary's lack of clarity and apparent certainty. This is further revealed when describing eating peas straight from the garden as she was picking them:

"…but **I can't recall**, we probably did grow peas and beans

and things**, I can always remember** the bean row." (P2,

Line 167),

She is using the recollection of eating peas straight from the plants to support the memory of the garden, which in turn prompts a memory of the air raid shelter and her grandmother's decoration of it, the narrative building as she talks.

Gerald also mixes certainty and questioning in his interview. He describes some events seemingly clearly but then qualifies with "I think we did". When he is describing celebrations at the end of the war in Europe, Gerald says:

> "…there were lots of celebrations yes…I **think** we had a
> party in the street…**folks provided pies and sweets**…"
> (TP2, Line 188).

Here Gerald appears to have a clear idea of there having been celebrations and remembers the food. These elements then support his recollection of the street party.

Some of Gerald's memories appear to have an assumptive quality to them. When talking about where a local man was killed, he adds:

> "Well that's where his grave is." (TP2, Line 171),

suggesting that he has made a connection and is constructing the knowledge of his neighbour's place of death based on the siting of his grave. In other sections, for example when discussing food rationing and shopping, a memory is triggered by the discussion. Thus, recalling the family dividend number enables him to remember that of his neighbour for whom he did shopping (TP2, Line 341).

Beryl's written account follows the interview question structure quite closely and she describes her wartime experience in a clear way with lovely details, for example in relation to her relationship with the evacuees and her visits to the cinema – even recalling Margaret Lockwood's beauty spot (WT Line 102). Her description of the family house is detailed, and she clearly recalls the number of houses in the street. There is some generalisation in Beryl's account, but it does not contain the questioning element of some of her fellow participants.

Jeremy, in his written account uses several devices to support his "remembering". For example, he has constructed a narrative relating to his father based on post-war conversations with his mother. He has summarised key points including taking

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a gas mask to school and food rationing to sum up his family's experience (WT1, Lines 6-9). Jeremy's account is very structured, but he also introduces doubts about the exact nature of his memories.   He describes his uncle's role with Royal Ordinance with certainty but then qualifies this by adding "(something like that)". (WT1, Line 36), mirroring the actions of participants such as Eric and Gerald who have introduced uncertainty into their recollections by using the same device in their interviews, clarifying through the answering of questions.

6.6.7.2 Subtheme 2 - Sensory elements to remembering

Sensory memory is generally very short-lived, but the describing of events where sensory elements make up the recollection is prevalent particularly in the accounts of Eric, Brenda and Dorothy. Descriptions of sights, smells, sounds and textures support memories and recollections across both participants who were interviewed and those who provided written accounts.

There is a strong sensory element to Eric's recollections. He describes the smell of paraffin in the air when going out to the air raid shelter at night:

> "…the **smell of paraffin and heaters on the night air**
>
> struck me, that smell of people's shelters with a bit of light,
>
> a bit of heat, you could smell that (Line 217).

Smell is also evocative of the uneaten sandwiches brought home uneaten by his father, where here the smell reminds Eric of the factory where his father worked (TP1, Line 150). A smell is not being used to trigger the memory here, but the memory of the smell has lingered across Eric's life, and he frames the memory in relation to it.

For Brenda, sights, sounds and textures feature in her recollections. Her earliest memory of being on the station is described in terms of the sights and sounds and the sensations of the train:

> "I remember being on the station and seeing a steam train
> and being frightened of the noise and somebody hugged
> me with a **scratchy coat in a funny colour**" (P1, Line 10).

It is interesting that despite remembering and being able to describe the sights and sounds associated with the experience Brenda only "assumes" that the man hugging her is her father. The sensory description of the memory is more akin to a child's use of language, there is a lack of specific names or dates. She recalls the scratchy nature of the coat, maybe aligning this to the unpleasant experience of saying goodbye but cannot recall the exact colour. The air raid shelter's wooden bunks and grey blankets are similarly recalled later in Brenda's interview, in terms of their colour, texture and size, along with the "fluffy" pyjamas she wore during nights in the shelter. The bunks and blankets have a coarse texture, but the pyjamas speak of comfort, safe in her basket. The gas mask taken to school each day is recalled in terms of its "disgusting" smell of rubber (P1, Line 371). Again, the smell is not being used to trigger the memory, but the memory of the smell itself is strong.

Both Brenda and Mary use colour to highlight enjoyable experiences. Brenda describes in detail the sights and sounds of the South Downs where she went on holiday with her parents:

> "…it was a lovely view and it was very colourful Brighton
> races there a man dressed like an Indian with a feathered
> headdress…" (P1, Line 622),

whilst Mary uses the colourful images of birds on cards brought home by a relative to support her memory:

> "…coloured cards with these coloured birds…we'd never
>
> seen before, **that's how I remember** that little incident."
>
> (P2, Line 96).

Mary does not recognise and cannot remember the names of the birds, but the colourful imagery has reinforced her memory, both of the cards and of the event where they were shown.

For Dorothy, sound is of significance. The sound of potties "scraping the floor" along with the sight of the beds is brought to the fore when she is describing having a nap in the afternoon with the other children:

> "I can still see the rows of beds and **hear the noise** of metal
>
> potties scraping the floor." (WT4, Line 20)

This is not a pleasant experience for her – Dorothy "didn't like" having a nap and the dislike is resonant in the memory of an unpleasant sound.

6.6.7.3 Subtheme 3 - Use of language/ways of telling

The linguistic components of the accounts reveal the nature of how the participant's memories are constructed and reported. The way that the narrative of the accounts is constructed varies between the interviewees and the written participants. In the interviews, there are many false starts, where a participant begins a sentence but changes direction before finishing their point. Brenda uses this device when describing events as a way of setting the scene for her recollections. An example is when she is describing the day of her father's departure. She begins to talk about the fact that her father bought a jigsaw but explains about the station shop first:

> "...he bought out of the you know Smith's had a stationary
>
> thing…he bought a jigsaw…" (P1, Line 20)

On another occasion, Brenda is describing the bombing of a house near where her grandmother lived. The false starts here seems to reflect how difficult the event was, she doesn't really know where to start:

> "…mum and aunty coming home…they hadn't come from
>
> work, they'd come from my grandmother's…they had two
>
> rows of terraced houses with an entry in between…where
>
> the two houses joined, the house opposite had been
>
> bombed…just a hollow in the ground…" (P1, Line 319).

There are moments where clarification is sought from the researcher, for example in relation to places and street names. Mary seems to be checking out – "you know where?" in relation to the local area, particularly when she is describing the moves the family made. Eric uses a similar device, with lots of geographical descriptions, checking out – "you'll know that won't you?" (TP1, Line 115), about places where he lived and played.

Catchphrases from the war are used to highlight and sum up element of the experience. Eric acknowledges that these are "funny to the war" (TP1, Line 58). He goes on with:

> "…it was all the war effort, er dig for victory…careless talk
>
> costs lives…it was around us all the time." (TP1, Line 58)

The use of the catchphrases sums up Eric's experience but despite his assertion that we were "pretty well up to date" (TP1, Line 65), his use of naïve language and

clichés here suggests that his understanding of the time was superficial, the words do not convey understanding of the implications:

> ", y'know, Adolf's done it now, he's taken on the Russians, and I was thinking, even to me y'know the logic was, that's more war effort needed by the Germans which we can be like, then it was Stalingrad was in sight, wasn't it…it was like…the forces went on…" (TP1, Line 60)

In the written accounts there is less evidence of the participants seeking clarification, these participants seem to have structured their answers carefully so as to follow the flow of the questions as presented, whereas the interviewees have moved between topics and at times been brought back to a question having digressed. The written accounts are generally more concise. This is to be expected as there is no phatic element as there is in a conversation, there are no pauses, populated by filler words such as "um", "ah" or "y'know". There is also no emotional expression such as laughter or tears, which were a feature of the interviews.

The people who have written their accounts have been able to highlight (by using bold type or inverted commas) words or sections that they consider to be of particular importance. In the interviews, body language, tone and pace have been used to perform a similar function. The aspect most obviously missing from the written accounts is the conversational element, the opportunity for me as a researcher to seek clarification from the participants (or vice versa) or explore further any of the points made.

The way that language is used gives evidence of meaning making. Jeremy compares wartime with the covid pandemic, where he is better able as an adult to articulate the feelings of stress associated with more recent events:

> "…**stress of pervasive fear** we are experiencing now must
>
> obviously have **pervaded** during wartime". (Line 76).

Dorothy recognises that life was difficult for her mother during the war.
She had a busy role during the war and then significant changes to her
life when it ended, including:

> "…family life with a different man because of what her had
>
> experienced." (WT4, Line 66).

Those providing written accounts have provided summaries in their accounts,
wrapping up their memories. Jeremy sums up the excitement of encountering a
soldier, part of a military convey heading to France:

> "In those few minutes of that morning, that was my first
>
> American, my first black person, my first tank – and my first
>
> chewing gum." (WT1, Line 90).

The description is a naïve, slightly romanticised version of events, belying the
existential significance of the event for the soldier.

Elizabeth provides an eloquent summary of her relationship with her father, both
whilst he is away ("he was a hands-on father" and on his return, sharing how his
stories "brought places to life" for her (WT2, Line 102). Her final summary is of her
father:

> "…a lovely, kind, humorous man, well liked and respected
>
> by all." (Line 115).

Participants from all groups show evidence of generalisation in their accounts.
Here, they seem to be using a single memory to sum up and represent a range of
events and experiences. Brenda recalls neighbours supporting each other, for
example by sharing that:

"Any time somebody was ill **someone** would bring you an

egg custard…" (P1, Line 111)

Phrases such as "used to", "sometimes" and "usually" are evident across all the accounts. Beryl has very precise memories about the family home and the number of houses in the street but for other elements, for example going to the cinema, generalisation is used to describe the events. Examples include the "sometimes" relating to ice cream being available at the cinema (WT3, Line 74), or "usually" in relation to the type of film being shown (WT3, Line 96).

6.6.7.4 Subtheme 4 - Memory in objects

Objects play a pivotal role in the process of remembering for a number of participants across all three groups. Even before his telephone interview started, Eric sent me a photograph of an old radio he had kept from the war. He told me that he had "kept the darn thing, I don't know why" although he added that his father had considered it to be of "historic value" (TP1, Line 3). His father had used the radio during the war to listen to speeches and after the war Eric had listened to pop music via the American Forces Network (AFN). Eric goes on to discuss the importance of radios during the war, both for news and for entertainment.

One of Gerald's earliest memories of the war is of his grandfather calling the family through to listen to Neville Chamberlain announcement on the radio that war had been declared (TP2, Line 74). Jeremy recalls listening to breakfast time news bulletins via the radio and listening to classical music at other times – the only music allowed by his father. Gerald and Jeremy do not still have their wartime radios, but their mention suggests that they were an important feature of wartime life.

Mary's mention of the radio coincides with her father returning home at the end of the war. It was something that her father purchased with his demob money. Mary had mentioned the radio in her initial letter, so this was something picked up at interview. The radio in Mary's house was a source of arguments – she wanted, like Eric, to listen to the popular music on AFN (P2, Line 262) whilst her father had an interest in Amateur radio. Again, Mary has not kept the radio, but she uses it to support her remembering when discussing her relationship with her father.

Beryl talks in her written account of the role her father played as an Air Raid Precautions (ARP) warden. He had a bell, and his role was to:

> "…go up and down the streets ringing a bell and checking
>
> that everyone was safely in the shelters." (WT3, Line 14).

Beryl has kept the bell, a reminder of her father's service during the war.

For Elizabeth, her father's memories and souvenirs provided a way to stay connected to him, but they also prompted an interest in geography which led to a career as a teacher. Elizabeth has kept a piece of balloon fabric on which is written a list of the places visited by her father during his wartime service (WT2, Line 106). Objects such as photographs were used by Elizabeth's family during the war for her to maintain a connection with her father and he sent home gifts such as exotic fruits from where he was stationed, thus keeping him "real", and building anticipation for his eventual return home.

Brenda's father actively rejected physical reminders of the war, even declining his wartime medals. For Brenda though, memories of her father are caught up in material objects. She has kept his discharge papers and even has a collection of

his glass eyes which are in themselves special because of her father's distinctive eye colour (P1, Line 853). Her comment "I've got them somewhere" suggests that these are not objects she looks at or handles on a regular basis, but they nonetheless have ongoing significance for Brenda and her assertion that her father was an interesting man.

6.6.8 Summary

Remembering is a golden thread that is visible through all the participant accounts. On reflection, I had anticipated that memory would be a key feature but had underestimated how significant the *action* of remembering would be. The way that the participants are constructing and relaying their memories indicates that remembering is an active process through which they are both recalling and constructing the narrative of their memories. Some events are remembered in an embodied way and objects are used to recall, reflect and make connections to past events and people.

The fact that remembering is an active process can be seen, both in how participants answer the questions posed and how they use their responses to reflect, clarify and construct narrative. They are using a combination of sensory, episodic and semantic memory to paint a picture of their experiences, some of which are very vivid. At other times, words such as "used to", "sometimes" and "usually" (Beryl) indicate that participants may be using memories of singular events to generalise their memories across repeated experiences of similar events. Brenda and Eric use smell to support memories. This is not them using smells to trigger a memory, they are saying that they remember the smell clearly. Examples are the smell of the gas mask, the smell of the heat as Eric is wandering across the field and the smell of his father's uneaten sandwiches. The sensory element has become the memory, and this is what is presented.

I considered that it would be useful to pause at this point to consider "remembering", and to identify further theoretical constructs around memory that might be useful.. The way that remembering is used in a purposeful way will be explored in the following chapter. Theories around memory formation will be used

to support the discussion to identify how participants have been using their own personal histories, alongside activities of collective remembering to structure a coherent narrative of their wartime experiences. Reflective activities have allowed for the narrative to be framed and re-framed as new knowledge is used to support the expansion of the participants' horizons of understanding (Gadamer, 2013).

The role of collective remembering and its impact on individual and social identity will also be explored, as will the value of objects for remembering and the sharing of oral histories passed down through generations to maintain contact with past events.

Chapter 7: DISCUSSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This research project was directed towards exploring the lived experience of people who were children during WWII, aiming to explore the phenomenology, or subjective experiences of those people in order to uncover individual meaning of wartime childhood both during the war and in the time that followed as families reconstructed their lives together. The events of WWII are well documented but by applying Husserl's premise of returning to the things themselves (Laverty, 2003) and using an interpretive methodology in the form of IPA (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2022), in-depth interpretation of the events has facilitated deeper understanding of how the people taking part are making sense of their childhood experiences, and how those experiences have influenced their later lives.

Established theory around ACEs (Young Minds, 2018) and Attachment Theory (Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlby, 1969; Main & Solomon, 1990) seems to suggest that traumatic experiences such as war (particularly evacuation) might have lasting impact for children but so far, retrospective analysis of this theory has relied largely on quantitative methods and self-report questionnaires aimed at identifying adult attachment style and experience of depression and anxiety which is then related back to wartime events (Foster et. al., 2003, Waugh et. al., 2007. There has not been a strong focus on what happened at the end of the war, when fathers returned home, women returned to their pre-war roles and families picked up where they had left off when war was declared.

This study has specifically focused on the experience of the child during WWII *without* a direct focus on the experience of the evacuee. People who were not evacuated as children have been involved in previous research but only as comparators, included to offer balance rather than as a cohort in their own right. Thus, the experience of children who were not evacuated has been used to support the researcher's findings in relation to the experience of children who were (Foster et. al., 2003) and although hints as to what that may have been like were uncovered, further in-depth exploration has facilitated an interpretation of events from the standpoint of a child spending wartime at home.

In contrast to earlier research that relied on questionnaires and quantitative psychological measures, this study has analysed, and provides an interpretation of, the experience of the child collected via the medium of semi-structured interviews and the more novel written account (developed in response to the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic). Thus, the focus of my research has been placed on interpretation of the idiographic narrative of the experience, rather than trying to establish potential links with later life psychopathology. What I wanted to convey primarily is the meaning of the child's experience of war, through the voice of the participants, both as individuals and across cases.

The theoretical underpinnings to my methodology give credibility to what I am trying to achieve. Through demonstrating my understanding of phenomenology, its history, development and application I can situate the research that I have conducted within an interpretivist paradigm. Acknowledging that the participants have moved through both chronological and social time I have gained an understanding of how they have reflected on and framed their individual realities through a process of purposeful remembering.

From an historical perspective, I am not simply using events from the past to illuminate a point in the present. My participants have moved through time from WWII to today and their "present" is shaped by how they have encountered and managed their experiences during that time. The theories that underpin how we explore the experiences of children have only become available to us later and the writers of that theory have in some cases "grown up" with the participants. Phenomenological writers Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur shared in the same experiences as the participants and their families. Both had fathers who served in the military, and both were themselves drafted to compulsory military service during WWII.

Heidegger's concept of Dasein introduces the notion of living (human) beings as part of the "world in which they exist", who are in fact inseparable from that world (Horrigan-Kelly, Millar & Dowling, 2016, p. 5). Dasein exists in the world on an everyday, ordinary level and in the context of my study this concept assumes the position that for the children of the time, WWII was their ordinary, everyday normal, and was a socially shared reality. For some, because of their early age they had no other life experience with which to compare it. One of the key elements of Heideggerian philosophy is ordinary, everyday existence and the analysis of human existence both for the individual and within a social context. Meaning for the participants is explored from this co-constituted perspective of shared humanness and shared interactions (Horrigan-Kelly et. al., 2016). The ordinary, everyday nature of the participant responses when asked about their daily activities as children has presented me with an opportunity to reveal meaning from within the data. This illumination of the extraordinary in the ordinary exposes the layers with which ordinariness is composed and allows the identification of gems, those small utterances that reveal significance from the seemingly insignificant in the narrative (Smith, 2011).

Following the analysis of the data, purposeful remembering has emerged as a key theme. The participants are using purposeful remembering as a process with which to structure their narrative; there is evidence that the remembering is an active process, and the participants are moving around within their own narrative to frame and re-frame their memories.

This discussion will engage with the theoretical literature examined at the start of the project but will also link to literature explored later during the process. As time has passed, new studies, for example in relation gathering stories about childhood narratives of WWII have been conducted (Davey & Salapska-Gelleri, 2020). As would be expected with a study using IPA, conducting interviews and analysing the data has opened up new insights that had not been considered during the initial review of the literature (Smith et. al. 2022). Purposeful remembering became a thread that wove through the analysis of the data and a second review of the literature, exploring how "remembering" has been theorised was conducted, particularly in the context of autobiographical memory and collective remembering. This new literature will be used where appropriate to support the discussion.

7.2 MY JOURNEY WITH IPA

My journey with IPA began with the encounter described at the beginning of the thesis, when in my clinical role as a Registered Mental Health Nurse (RMN) I met John (not his real name) who was experiencing issues with anxiety and depression during the later years of his life. The simple sentence "I was granny reared" sparked a curiosity as to whether seemingly ordinary events from John's childhood had the capacity to be exerting an influence on his wellbeing over a prolonged period of time. I started to look for ways in which this topic could be explored further, focusing not only on separation but also on how relationships were rebuilt at the end of the war.

As an RMN, part of my role had been to carry out an assessment to identify signs and symptoms which may respond to treatment or intervention. A person's social history can give clues as to where the symptoms might have their root but is not necessarily explored in any depth in a clinical interview. Furthermore, as professional clinicians we only encounter people experiencing health issues at a defined stage in their lives. We are there when a person is born, we support them through childhood illnesses, through their development as adults and potentially becoming parents themselves. Older age is sometimes (but not necessarily) defined by frailty and forgetfulness, but it is only at this point in a person's life that we are able to look back to see how time and events have intertwined through their life's journey.

At the start of my research journey the challenge for me was to step aside from my nurse "self", opening up the possibility for wider exploration of life events, not necessarily connected to mental health issues. I have repositioned myself in the process, becoming researcher rather than clinician, acknowledging that

undertaking research is not a therapeutic endeavour and that clinical assessment is not the purpose of the interviews I am conducting. Acknowledging Husserl's call to go "back to thing themselves" (Laverty, 2003 p.22) I chose to return to the child's experience of war without a therapeutic hat on, challenging my curiosity about the phenomenology or subjective experience of those events in order to exploit the gap left by quantitative research methods.

IPA, as a phenomenological methodology calls for the use of qualitative methods to explore individual lived experience and the way that people are making sense of their experiences (Smith et al, 2022). It was chosen because of its focus on idiography and its application of hermeneutics where interpretive actions can open up new perspectives and in turn inform new understandings. A key aspect of the project was giving a voice to The Silent Generation whose childhood voices were supressed.

Reflexivity is a key strategy for both exploring and examining one's own "preconceptions and experiences" and for developing understanding about the experiences of participants in the research process (Smith et. al., 2022, p.130). This is a key skill for nurses working in mental health (MH) settings and the tools for working reflexively are afforded to me through my clinical background. Reflexivity is different to reflection, rather it means reflecting "in action" (Benner, 1984) and in my analysis of the data I am using it to drive deeper interpretation based on the surface appearance of the words.

Reflecting back to my meeting with John having learned about and engaged with IPA, I now recognise the sentence "I was granny reared" as what Smith (2011) might describe as a gem. For John, being cared for by his grandmother is reflective of the events of his wartime childhood (and the childhoods of many children) but it

actually illuminates much wider events, the role of a global conflict in disrupting daily lives and displacing many parents as the primary caregivers for their children. Smith (2019) asserts that it is the significance placed upon an event that turns it into an experience, potentially revealing how a person is changed by that event. In telling me in person-specific terms about his family dynamic during WWII, John reveals the significance of those events for himself and the way that his childhood was shaped by the war. Applying Smith's (2019) typology of meaning, we move from the literal meaning of the words, "I was granny reared" ("what does *that* mean?"), to John's meaning ("what does *he* mean?"), where we try to make sense of what John is telling us, and on to the more experiential "what does *it* mean?", what is the significance of the event? This experiential level of meaning is the central focus of IPA.

7.2.1 Gems

The word "tantalising" can be used in relation to the phenomena that lie hidden, unseen but hinted at and connected by clues in the data to what is visible (Smith, 2019 p. 170). This resonates with my experience of interpretation as used in IPA. In providing a scenario whereby the participant can talk about their experiences, in this case by conducting an interview or inviting written responses, I have provided circumstances by which the phenomena can be accessed, and the use of double hermeneutic has allowed me to interpret the sense-making activities of the participants.

Gems, described as small utterances which carry a much greater significance than their size, offering deeper insight into the experiences of individuals or groups are present across the data collected from all participants, whether in the interview transcripts or written accounts, and personal sense-making is made visible by

participants' use of language (Smith, 2011). Identifying and reflecting on the gems (identified in bold type in the analysis) has enabled me to interpret from within the data, using what participants have said in relation to things found in other parts of their transcript and then in relation to transcripts from other participants. Links to theory have then illuminated this further.

At times, glimpsing a gem has made me catch my breath, for example where Brenda recalls seeing the telegraph boy, whose appearance is of direct existential significance for someone in the street, or where Beryl describes the "wonderful tea" produced for children on VE Day, revealing the hopes and expectations of women, storing food in anticipation of an end to hostilities and the need for a celebration. It has been through analysis and interpretation of the transcripts as a whole that these gems have been exploited to illuminate the subjective experience of these events.

Elizabeth uses the words "lovey-dovey" for example, to describe her parents' affection for each other, but at the same time the phrase is framing her childhood jealousy at feeling "pushed out" (WT2 Line 5). In reflecting on Elizabeth's use of the words "lovey-dovey", I am aware of my own fore structures so have an understanding of what those words mean to me, that is, showing affection, maybe excessively so. I have to check out though that I am interpreting Elizabeth's experience rather than applying my own meaning to her words. Using hermeneutics and fitting the words within the wider account "I remember feeling left out and rather inconspicuous" (WT2, Line 57) reveals Elizabeth's experience of feeling replaced in her mother's affections by the return of her father to the family home. The exploration of this suggestive gem confirms the validity of my interpretation, both within the context of my own understanding and through Elizabeth's use of the expression "lovey-dovey".

The hermeneutic process is usually described in terms of its circularity, but this can create tension as the interpretation may never be "complete" if the circle goes on forever (Smith, 2009). If, however, we follow Heidegger's direction to approach interpretation from the perspective of our own experience, we acknowledge the impact of our own history and biases and introduce the opportunity for the interpretation to influence our future (Harris 2020). If we remain open, the hermeneutic circle then becomes a spiral, widening our own understandings.

7.3 DISCUSSION OF GROUP EXPERIENTIAL THEMES (GETS)

The four GETs were developed as part of the interpretive process of IPA and revealed some key points in relation to the child's experience, both of the war and moving forward from childhood as war ended. Each GET will be discussed but the key theme for me was that of purposeful remembering as I believe that this process has supported participants in framing their childhood experiences and making sense of them over the decades since 1945. The GETs will be discussed in the order in which they are presented in the analysis:

- GET 1 - Experiencing war as a child

- GET 2 - Experiencing Fathers

- GET 3 - Reflecting on childhood self as an adult

- GET 4 – Purposeful Remembering

7.3.1 Experiencing war as a child

The first GET, "Experiencing war as a child" elicited descriptions of everyday life, reflecting Heidegger's concept of Dasein, being in the world on an ordinary, everyday level (Heidegger, 1926/1972).   Participants recall ordinary events such as attending school, playing with friends, celebrating birthdays and Christmas, albeit with the addition of gas masks, air raid shelters and restrictions due to food rationing, highlighting the existential threat overshadowing ordinary, everyday life. The events are remembered and discussed in a matter-of-fact way, reflecting the continuation of ordinary everyday life despite the country being at war.

Vaizey (2011), in seeking to establish the impact of WWII on German children found that they too described their experiences in a matter-of-fact way, seemingly unaware of the gravity of the situation facing them. This could be attributable to the fact that since everyone was experiencing the same situation, it became

normalised for them. The young age of the children at the time may also be a factor as conceptual knowledge and language are not well established until the age of three or four years. Once a child reaches the age of three or four years of age they are able to engage in brief conversations with other children and may become aware of aspects of the wider world, without having experienced those things directly. This may happen through being told stories or having conversations about events they themselves have experienced (Fivush & Haden, 2003). Without those wider conversations (only accessed through language) the child has only the single reality of itself, its horizon is limited by what it can see and experience (Gadamer, Weinsheimer, & Marshall, 2013).

This ordinariness reflected in the data does not mean that children did not witness or hear about extreme events such as air raids (Foster et. al., 2003). Indeed, after Eric's interview was finished, he sent a follow up message to tell me that he had "forgotten to mention" an air raid that had killed people in his street. The message was very matter of fact, prefaced by "missed this…". Having told me in great detail about eating strange foods such as whale meat it seems strange that Eric would have forgotten about an air raid, particularly one that had resulted in fatalities. Extreme events (such as air raids) tend to be described as singular occurrences and this appears to be a way of the participants generalising their experience through the description of a singular event. There is a sense that they are using one "key" memory to frame the rest. On reflection, in encouraging the participants to talk about their everyday lives, this is what they have done, focusing on the ordinary rather than the extraordinary.

Air raids were not unknown, particularly given the factories and coalmines nearby. Gerald's family lived near to a tyre factory, and he comments on the ineffectiveness of the enemy bombs which never seemed to hit the intended target. He does

though recall one episode of particular existential significance when his father was stuck near Coventry during the series of bombing raids during 1940-41, known as the Blitz. He was stranded for four days with a train full of ammunition unable to make contact with anyone.

The story is told in a matter-of-fact way and apart from reflecting that his mother was "very upset" at the time, Gerald has little else to say, although he later remarks that this event was the one thing that really "stuck out" for him (TP2, Line 340). The matter-of-fact nature of this recollection of extreme events reflects the narrative of stoicism of the time, obscuring the existential significance for the family (Jalland, 2010). In staying with his train, Gerald's father unknowingly witnessed the deaths of 568 people. Jalland (2010 p.124) recalls the address given by the Bishop of Coventry, who, when burying 172 victims in a common grave, encouraged families to "not dwell too much" on what had been lost, but rather to focus on the bond created by the "evil air raid". Bereaved families from later disasters such as Aberfan in 1966 were offered emotional support in the form of therapy, a far cry from the wartime strategy of managing the psychological impact of extreme events by encouraging an outward show of courage and stoicism (Jalland, 2010).

Heidegger suggests that experience can have two qualities – meanings can be both visible and hidden. In phenomenological terms, we are understanding the "thing that shows itself, as it is brought to light" (Smith et al, 2022, p. 19). The surface experience for Gerald was of anxiety expressed by his mother ("she was very upset" (TP2, Line 322)), but this was put aside and not discussed when his father returned home and simply said "I was outside Coventry when they blew it up" (TP2, Line 313). The true existential nature of the experience – the secret gem - is only brought to light when exploring it within the context of what is known about

the effects of the Blitz and the scale of the death and destruction it caused. The suppressed nature of the emotion is highlighted by the stoic narrative of the time, the "not dwelling" on what has been lost (Jalland, 2010).

Extreme events have the potential to cause trauma which may have a lasting impact across the life course, as identified in the review of the literature. Foster et. al. (2003) established a link between WWII and reduced psychological health in later life but related this to separation due to evacuation. Waugh et. al. (2007) hypothesized that the trauma of wartime experiences would affect psychological health and their findings bore this out. However, the multifactorial nature of the experience, discussed by Waugh et. al. (2007) and demonstrated through the convergence and divergence in my participants descriptions of their lives makes it difficult to pinpoint one particular type of experience that is more likely to have a negative impact on mental health.

Access to education and play seem to have largely carried on, uninterrupted by the war. For the boys, emulating their father's participation in the Home Guard and air raid patrols seems to have extended their range of play as they formed home guard units of their own. Gerald remembers having to cajole his mother into sewing his "army stripes" onto a makeshift uniform. The boys have a rudimentary understanding of army ranks, arranging themselves by age and despite the risks posed to soldiers fighting view their activities as "entertainment". The overriding emotion for Gerald was excitement. The cultural narrative of the time was one of men as protectors in the community and the boys situated themselves in a similar context through play. The narrative is rehearsed and reinforced through the course of the boys' lives framed by national remembrance celebrations.

Eric describes one event in a way that may be understood by applying Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodied (Merleau-Ponty, 2012).   Eric is walking in the night, through a field to an air raid shelter. His recollections are of the sight of the lights and the smell of the heat and paraffin and the overarching emotion is excitement. Eric presents an evocative image using an initial sensory experience to build a memory, making sense of the event through the recall of the sights, sounds and smells he encountered as he walked through the field. Taking Gadamer's (2013, p. 313) description of a horizon as "everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point", Eric's horizon is limited by his childhood self's understanding of what is happening in that moment - an exciting adventure, made mundane by its repetition and absorbed into the everydayness of his existence (Heidegger, 1962). Reflecting as an adult his horizon has extended and he now has a realisation of the existential nature of those experiences. He recalls that as a child he knew "what was going on" but reflects later that he had no idea what the war had cost, just that it had been an "exciting adventure".

Brenda asserts that despite the worry felt by adults, the war was not a bad time for children. She goes on to describe the telegraph boy whose appearance in the street has the capacity to stop children playing and cause panic until the destination of his telegram is known (P1, Line 360). Brenda holds her breath until she sees that he is not going to her house where the existential significance is greater as her father is away fighting in the Far East.   This shining gem reveals the stress underlying the ordinary appearance of life (Smith, 2011). Brenda has selected memories that echo resilience and stoicism, reflective of the cultural symbolism of the time when people are encouraged to "keep calm and carry on".

7.3.1.1 Women supporting each other and the wider family

Von Franz et. al. (2007) discuss the pivotal role of women in maintaining the household in the absence of men but note the additional stress that this places on mothers, who are missing the psychological support afforded by fathers. The German "hero mother" did not show outward signs of stress or grief but their distress was internalised and had the potential to affect or even blame the fatherless child (von Franz et. al., 2007). Vaizey (2011) similarly describes the stresses and strains put on mothers by being left alone to manage child-raising alongside food shortages and social deprivation.

Both von Franz et. al. (2007) and Vaizey (2011) highlight the negative impact of father absence on mothers but in Jeremy's case this is passed to an uncle. Jeremy describes his mother's "tearful anxieties" in relation to her brother who was a prisoner of war. Visits to see his maternal grandmother provoked frequent tears. The stress of having a son/brother being captured is visible and further highlights the stress and frustration felt by Jeremy' father who was denied conscription.

In my study, only girls were separated from their fathers due to conscription, the boys' fathers stayed at home. For those mothers left behind, the input of grandmothers and aunts was a key source of support. Mary and Dorothy moved to live in the same house as their grandmothers and there is evidence of intergenerational support on both a practical and emotional level. Elizabeth's life was "dominated by women" (WT2, Line 75).

Mary's mother is expected to care for the wider family and makes the most of what was available on ration by dividing the family's coupons between two shops. The rationed food is supplemented with seasonal fruit and vegetables, which was

preserved for use in the winter. There is a theme running through the participant accounts of feeling cared for and well fed, despite the restrictions of the time.

There is a suggestive gem (Smith, 2011), in Beryl's account illuminating the work of women "behind the scenes". Having described how her mother used food such as tripe to supplement the family's ration, Beryl goes on to describe a party to celebrate the end of the war:

> "…the ladies prepared a wonderful tea for the children."
>
> (WT3, Line 117)

The wonderful tea is prepared using the same "plain" food that is available on ration. What the gem is revealing on the surface is the resourcefulness of women, able to hold back items and store them in preparation for a celebration. The fact that the women have been doing this then reveals another layer – that of their hope and expectations that the conflict will one day come to an end. The hermeneutic process as described by Smith et. al. (2009) reveals the meaning for the children who had a wonderful tea, but it widens out to encompass the wider oeuvre, the meaning contained within the wider data where children's needs are put first. In terms of my research project, Beryl's sentence has been an important element in the interpretation of events and the double hermeneutic of my making sense of how participants are making sense of their personal life histories.

Bowlby's (1969) early work on attachment theory initially focused on the significance of the maternal relationship for successful child development, but later work by Ainsworth (1979) introduced the concept of the secure caregiver, finding that this role could be filled by someone other than the child's mother. In the case of the participants in my study the secure caregiver was likely to be a grandmother, particularly in the cases of Brenda and Dorothy whose mothers were at work. For

Dorothy in particular, her grandmother was pivotal as a source of support at a time when Dorothy was displaced in her father's affections by a new sibling.

There is an interesting divergence in the accounts of those children whose fathers were away and those at home, highlighting the supportive role of women in the absence of men. Brenda, Mary, Elizabeth and Dorothy, with fathers away, relied on the women of the wider family whilst for Eric, Gerald, Jeremy and Beryl, with fathers at home, this is not seen as clearly.

7.3.2   Experiencing fathers

The second GET relates to how participants are experiencing their fathers. For half the participants, their father was present during the war, for the others he was away. None of the fathers had military careers before the war although Mary's father was part of a reserve force.

If things that are absent are as important as those that are present then the absence of the father could be considered as an experience in itself (Sartre, 1956/1943, cited by Smith et al 2009 p. 20).   The father's absence fixes the meaning of being a child during the war in this context. The child is developing in the knowledge that they have a father, but his prolonged absence means that they are only aware of the enactment of the role of father on his return. For the youngest children (Elizabeth and Dorothy) in particular, who were under a year old when war was declared, the absence of their father is not perceived as an absence – in essence he was never there. In order for Elizabeth and Dorothy to miss their fathers they needed to have been aware of his previous presence; in order for a person to be perceived as missing, they need to be recognised as an absentee (Cumhaill, 2018). For Elizabeth, the absentee status of her father is evidenced in

the space that her mother leaves for him in their hugs (WT2, Line 36). Dorothy, much younger on her father's departure, had no relationship with her father during his absence. Vaisey (2011) notes that the exchange of letters can maintain contact and a sense of the father/child relationship but the absence of these for Dorothy means that rather than being a returning (known) absentee, her father was a stranger. For Elizabeth and Dorothy, having a father at home is for them essentially a new experience and one to which they must quickly become accustomed.

Neale and Flowerdew (2003) suggest that time can be understood in terms of changing relationships as well as events. The life course is not linear and changes in family dynamics, for example through marriage, divorce or the addition of a new sibling have an impact on individuals across generations. For Brenda, whose father returned and "kicked me out of my bed" (P1, Line 425), there was a sudden change to the family dynamic, one which nobody had anticipated or had time to prepare for. Dorothy and Elizabeth had new siblings soon after their fathers returned, a further change to a family dynamic altered by the presence of a new adult.

Mary was 9 years old when her father went away. She turned fifteen and left school before he returned and took a job which she knew would attract his disapproval. Her father returned to a teenager who had become accustomed to the freedom she had enjoyed during the war, and she recalls arguing with him "all the time". Older children such as Mary may be aware of the risks posed to serving fathers who in turn, miss developmental milestones – in Mary's case this includes the shift from schoolgirl to working teenager with her own views about music and occupation (Lester and Flake (2003).

For Jeremy's father, failing the conscription medical was a source of shame for him. The resulting frustration is displayed in an embodied way, with Jeremy perceiving the "grief or the anger of the other in his conduct" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/2012 p. 372). Jeremy perceives his father's behaviour as anger towards him, but his father perceives it as anger towards himself – frustration at not being able to fulfil his desired purpose of being useful as a soldier because of physical infirmity. It is only by being removed from the situation of his father's anger (by going away to boarding school) that Jeremy is able to relax.

As a child, Jeremy may not have had the conceptual knowledge needed to make sense of this experience at the time. Conceptual short-term memory requires the use of concepts (knowledge) from long-term memory in conjunction with stimuli in the present to make sense of experiences as they happen (Potter, 2012). As ideas become more well-structured, for example by conscious recall and discussion, the memory is likely to persist in the long-term memory (Potter, 1993). This then allows Jeremy makes sense of his memory by reflecting on the fact that he stopped wetting the bed once removed from the household, the source of the stress. He recognises that he still carries an embodied expression of the stress – chewing his fingernails – forward through his life.

Despite Jeremy's father being physically present in the family home, his emotional distancing from his children may have been perceived as an absence, albeit an emotional one. This emotional absence is an experience in itself and it shaped Jeremy's childhood. It is returning now in the form of new anxiety as Jeremy has reached old age, triggered by memories of wartime events.

Social position and power shape identity and the way that social groups interact create mental representations of each other. Our identities are "socially

constructed" through membership of particular groups, and "automatic categorisation" pervades society (Misawa 2010, p.26). Socially constructed stereotypical views are often oversimplified but have the power to influence the way that members of a society are perceived, thus, those engaged in active military service might be perceived as heroes, whilst those engaged (legitimately) in protected professions might be perceived as avoiding rather than being denied the opportunity to take a more active part in the fighting through conscription.

Gerald and Eric saw their fathers joining Home Guard and Air Raid Precautions units and their perception was that the men were enjoying their activities. Gerald recalls going down to "have a chat" to the men on duty (TP2, Line 134) and eventually joining forces with his friends to form their own Home Guard Unit. Eric's father spent time at an air raid warden post, his activities obscured by a "green door" (TP1, Line 37). Eric and his friends were keen to know what went on behind the door, being left outside to wonder what was happening within. The men excluded from active service created their own opportunities to serve and the boys, not wanting to be excluded, emulated them in forming their own junior units.

7.3.2.1 Reunion

WWII meant that the absence of father was normalised and had a different social interpretation than absence for other reasons (Grundmann, 1996; Vaizey, 2011). This normalisation may have the potential to mitigate the effects of the separation, but it is how the reunion was managed that was of greater significance for some. The value of Bach's (1946) research using his doll play experiment has been contested but his work did give suggestions as to how emotional difficulties on the father's return could be managed. By explaining the psychological processes at work to parents in advance of the father returning, they would have a better

understanding and be able to plan for and manage potential issues. Some fathers were concerned that they would not even recognise their own children "if they saw them in the street" (Vaisey, 2011, p. 373).

One of the primary concerns for this research was to address the issue of the returning father and the impact on family relationships moving forward. Lester and Flake (2003) addressed the issue of reunion in the context of military families and accept that although reunion may be the most stressful part of a deployment, it is probably the issue that has received the least attention in terms of research.

It is to be expected that readjustment will be needed when a father returns from active service. During the absence, children may have moved house (as in the case of Mary and Dorothy) and a further move may be necessary on his return. If a child knows (as in Mary's case) that their father is going away to war, there may be feelings of sadness or concern, followed by initial excitement on his return (Lester & Flake, 2003). The return presents another disruption to the child's daily life and can prove stressful as the family dynamic is restored. This is exacerbated when the child has moved on in developmental terms, particularly if contact has been sparse (as in the experience of Mary) and the change has been unanticipated by the father (Lester & Flake, 2003).

Elizabeth's family took steps to ensure that she and her father stayed connected, showing her photographs and exchanging letters. Despite not knowing "him", she knew that he was a "hands-on father" (WT2, Line 32) and feels connected to him (albeit in an idealised way) through his letters and gifts. Vaisey (2011) describes the way that German fathers were kept "alive" in family life. Much like Elizabeth, photographs are used to support discussions about the father and this in turn allows the father to know that he is remembered. There is variation in the

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experience of families and not all manage the separation effectively, as witnessed by the experience of Dorothy who has no recollections of letters being shared with the consequence that her father is a stranger on his return. There is evidence that a proactive approach paid dividends for Elizabeth and despite some tension on his return their relationship is successfully re-established.

For Brenda and Dorothy, the return of their father was more problematic. Brenda's memory is of her father appearing without warning, evicting her from her mother's bed; the use of the words "kicked out" (P1, Line 425) sums up her understanding of this experience. Dorothy's father "was a stranger" (WT4, Line 51) and the swift arrival of a baby sister precluded them getting to know each other. Both women saw glimpses of what might have been when observing their father's behaviour with younger family members. Using Gadamer's (2013) theory, their horizon of understanding was changed by these observations, but it could be argued that this new understanding actually reinforced the hurt they felt through being displaced in their mother's affections.

Discipline is an issue for Brenda, Mary and Dorothy. Brenda notes the difference between her experience of women – "…so nobody ever shouted at me" (P1, Line 362) and her father who was intolerant of anything but top marks. Mary describes her father's temper - "I mean his patience as a I say he was up like a bottle of pop…" (P2, Line 354) but she mitigates this be explaining that he had his children to "cope" with. Dorothy, too wants people to understand her father's position when discussing his strict nature, emphasising that "nobody was trying to catch you out" (WT4, Line 75). These participants are describing their horizon of understanding situated in their childhood experience (Gadamer, 2013) but are being reflexive in the way that their narrative is shifting to frame the memories from an adult

perspective, the memories mediated by time and experience (Neale and Flowerdew, 2003).

Dorothy's assertion that her father was a stranger is revealed by a secret gem (Smith, 2011). Her statement "I felt I was still in school" (WT4, Line 53) indicates that her father's behaviour towards her was that of a teacher rather than a father; he showed her no physical affection. In the same way that Dorothy has no clear recollection of her father, he has missed both her early childhood development and the opportunity to develop their relationship, both issues identified of as significance by Lester and Flake (2013). He has no experience of "being" a father so as a teacher, can only relate to her as a pupil rather than as a daughter. This idea is reinforced when a baby sister arrives, and Dorothy is able to observe her father enacting the role of a father towards her new sibling, leaving her feeling like an outsider.

Being excluded and feeling like an outsider can have a lasting effect (Oliker, 2012) but having initially spent time with her mother who supervised the city's nurseries, Dorothy went on to spend significant amounts of time with her recently widowed grandmother. In attachment terms, Dorothy's grandmother had experienced the loss of her husband and Dorothy's mother was otherwise occupied with work and service. We see here a reflection of caregiver sensitivity being interrupted by stressful events (Howe 2011). Dorothy acknowledges that she and her grandmother supported each other in a time of "mutual need" (WT4, Line 58). The embodied nature of the painful experience of a new sister is revealed by Dorothy giving herself bruises to gain attention (what might today be construed as self-harm) but her grandmother steps in to provide support – mitigating the potential harm caused by the disruption to the care provided by her parents.

For Elizabeth, her father's military service has had a direct influence on her career as a geography teacher – his love of travel fuelling the same in her. Brenda has sought to emulate her father in a different way. She seeks to suppress her emotions, like her father, although, in the same way, these overspill at unexpected moments. Dorothy has gone on to have a career in education, supporting some children she describes as "needy", for which she has not always felt prepared. There is a hint here that she is using her childhood experience to help her.

7.3.3   Reflecting on childhood experiences as an adult

GET 3 is represented by six of the eight participants and demonstrates how they have interacted with their childhood experiences across their life course. Sartre suggests that the self is an ongoing project rather than a "pre-existing" unity (Smith 2009, p. 19). This idea can be seen in the reflective element of some of the accounts – looking back over lives since being children in the war gives glimpses of how self-identity has formed across the life course.

There are sections where reflection is seen as an active process on the part of the participant, for example where Jeremy reflects on how his wartime experiences may be inducing feelings of anxiety as he has got older. For others, the talking about childhood has prompted new insight into what they have remembered and how they have engaged with those memories. Reflection has taken place on an individual basis and as part of group discussions, for example at the U3A where Mary has talked about her childhood with others and has formed a new opinion of her mother's role during the war. Eric reflects on his childhood activities, his reluctance to discuss some events suggesting that he has re-framed these memories as he has got older. This shift in horizon (Gadamer, 2013) enables him

to see that what was perceived as play during his childhood would be perceived as less acceptable now.

Neale and Flowerdew (2003) comment on the value of exploring the contours of historical time and how participants situate themselves in the different "epochs and generations, personal and cyclical time". The participant reflections are discussed here with the support of Gadamer (2013) and the idea of shifting horizons of understanding, reflecting the work of Neale and Flowerdew (2003) in how time has influenced participants' perceptions of events from the past.

The concept of a "shifting horizon" was revealed in the experiences of a number of participants. Table 8:1 sums up and gives examples of how these horizons are made manifest in the data.

Participant	Quote	Initial horizon	New horizon
Dorothy	"…she must have found it difficult to adapt to the changes…" (Line 64-7)	Dad returned, mum stopped work, had a new baby	Sees things from her mum's perspective – making sense of the changes in the family dynamic when father returned.
	"…we had boundaries, but nobody was trying	Dad was strict and set expectations for behaviour, felt more like a pupil.	Recognises that this might sound overly strict – wants people

	to catch you out." (Line 75)		to understand her father's position.
Gerald	"…allowed to go round there" (Line 190)	Childhood s focused on a narrow geographical area (neighbourhood.)	Enjoyed travel as part of National Service, regrets not taking up a military career.
	"…it didn't really hinder on us all that much…it was a game." (Line 329	War was a game to Gerald and his friends.	Has realised that people suffered as he has got older.
Eric	"I'd rather not go down that road…regards the knife…" (Line 89)	Items such as knives and axes were commonplace playthings for boys.	Realises that this would not be tolerated now. Regrets his childhood actions.
Mary	"we must have lived quite well for the time" (Line 185)	Mum was just a housewife	Conversations with peers at U3A have revealed that the family were well cared for and fed in comparison to some others.

Table 7:1 – Examples of shifting horizons of understanding

Eric's reluctance to discuss his childhood activities demonstrates how he is locating himself differently in different eras of his life. As a child he experiences feelings of excitement when describing his friend carrying a knife in a public swimming pool but acknowledges that this would now be considered unacceptable.

Eric cannot change the events in historical time but his re-working of the way that the event is framed is evidence that he is making sense of the experience as an adult (Neale and Flowerdew, 2003). Eric was 12 years old when the war ended and so entering the formal operational sage of Piaget's cognitive stages (Huang, 2021). From this point he is developing the ability to reason with things in a logical way and to develop hypotheses about how the world works. In his reflective process he is not identifying his behaviour as "bad" as a child, rather he is comparing his childhood to the present and reasoning that what was acceptable when he was a child would not be acceptable today.

7.3.4 Purposeful Remembering

GET 4 is the theme is which the ways that people are remembering is represented. The participants are using a variety of devices in which to structure and present their memories, they are not simply using recall. This section has been sub-divided as follows:

- Autobiographical memory
- Collective remembering
- Remembering through objects

7.3.4.1 Autobiographical memory

The participants were all children at outbreak of war but at various stages in relation to memory formation. Autobiographical memory (AM) forms part of the long-term memory and is of importance for the development of self-identity. It combines two elements – episodic and semantic memory (Haslam et. al., 2011) and operates on three levels – lifetime, general events, and event-specific knowledge (ESK) (Conway and Rubin, 1993). These are:

- **Lifetime level** – this level corresponds to long periods, usually measured in years or decades. It may include "When I was at school", "when I worked for…" and will have a defined beginning and end point.

- **General level** – these are more specific, single representations of repeated events. This level may include single events, for example a holiday, or repeated events such as country walks. They may also include "mini-histories" such as learning to drive, and the individual memories may represent goal-achievement knowledge or information about how easy (or difficult) it was to achieve a particular skill. This level also includes "first-time" events such as a first kiss and these events are of particular significance in determining the nature of "the self". Clusters can emerge when one general memory is used to prompt a second, resulting in the organisation or generalisation of events.

- **Event-specific knowledge (ESK)** – here, detailed information about specific events is held. Visual imagery is common as are sensory-perceptual features. If memories contain a high level of ESK, it is more likely that their content is accurate. Events at ESK level are measured in hours or minutes, generally less than a day.

Participants are using all these levels in their accounts and IPA facilitates understanding of participants are constructing their own narrative based on AM, illuminating how this narrative forms both part of their own personal history and the collective memory.

Declarative memory, also part of the long-term memory allows people to "detect, encode and retrieve" information relating to a single event from a particular moment in time and place. Through declarative memory the external world can be

modelled (Straube, 2012). This modelling can be seen when participants wrestle with "I clearly remember" vs "I think it was…" as they construct the narrative of their childhood memories. The flexibility of declarative memory can though make it prone to distortion, resulting in false memories, through the addition of new information to recall cues, altering the narrative.

The way that memories are formed, and what we remember develops during childhood, with very few memories recalled from before the age of 4 or 5. This is referred to as childhood amnesia. This term applies to adults rather than children as whilst young children do have memories, these do not persist beyond childhood (Fivush and Haden, 2003). The next phase, the reminiscence "bump" is from youth to early adulthood, with recency being the period from the present day back to the reminiscence bump (Munawar, Kuhn and Haque, 2018). Childhood amnesia is not something that I had not considered prior to starting to advertise for participants, with the consequence that six of my participants were aged 5 years or younger at the outbreak of war. The initial intended focus of the research however was the end of the war, at which point all the participants were aged 6 years or over and so as adults would potentially be able to remember events leading up to and moving on from that point.

If we accept that adults can remember few events from before the age of 7 (and fewer still from before the age of 5), and that AM diminishes with age, the apparent clarity with which participants describe events from these periods in their childhood needs further explanation than simply "they are remembered". Here, the role of IPA in facilitating close analytic reading of participant's words illuminates both the events themselves and the devices used by the participants in their sense-making. Through the process of hermeneutics, and its ongoing circling (or spiralling) we

see how something previously hidden is revealed allowing access to the meaning of the phenomenon (Smith, 2009).

Stage	Participant	
	Start of war	**End of war**
Childhood amnesia (0-8 years)	Dorothy (3 months) Brenda (15 months) Elizabeth (1year 9 months) Beryl (4 years) Jeremy (5 years) Eric (7 years) Gerald (7 years)	Dorothy (7 years) Brenda (8 years)
Reminiscence bump (10-30 years)	Mary (9 years)	Elizabeth (9 years) Beryl (10 years) Jeremy (12 years Eric (13 years) Gerald (13 years) Mary (15 years)

Table 7:2- Participant age in relation to memory formation

Table 7:2, above, uses age to differentiate the memory stage of the participants, but this is not always clear cut and is not a linear process. The way that memories are retrieved, for example in response to a cue-word, or a request for important memories (such as those explored in this research) is likely to demonstrate where a person's reminiscence bump may be situated in terms of their life span. The age at the start and end of the bump may differ by up to 5 years, with important memories peaking between the ages of 15 and 28 (Koppel and Rubin, 2016). This

contrasts with the findings in this research, where the participants are presenting seemingly clear accounts of events from a much younger age. This raises the question of what constitutes an "important" memory, along with the part played by hot cognition and how memory, emotion and social cognition interconnect in a person's life story narrative.

By the end of the war, all participants were moving towards what might be considered the reminiscence bump period, although the youngest was still only 7 years old. Children younger than 7 years old can have memories in relation to specific events (even before they have developed language) but can only demonstrate this once their language skills have developed (Morrison and Conway, 2010). It is also important to note that AM changes over time and recency memory starts to deteriorate from the end of the reminiscence bump (Morrison and Conway (2010). This means that, given the age of the cohort in my study (all 80 years plus) it can be anticipated that gaps in memory may be present.

The participants seem eager to present their memories as clear recollections, using words such as "I always remember", or "I clearly recall" but alongside these assertions they are checking their memories. An example is seen when Eric is talking about his childhood and appears to have a very clear memory:

> "Yes, vivid, yes. I can see myself now yeah as a child and
> the surroundings and the lifestyle…" (TP2, Line 472)

despite earlier in the interview having to check out his recollections of food shortages:

> "I'd forgot about that, shortages…what was it? I can't
> remember now…" (TP1, Line 347).

Eric's questioning of his own memory, alongside the conversational nature of the interview has supported the construction of a narrative of his childhood experience, allowing him to assert that his memories are "vivid".

In response to a question about her earliest memories of the war, Brenda presents a very specific recollection of a wicker washing basket being made ready to take her to the air raid shelter and the "fluffy pyjamas" she wore. Given her age at the outbreak of war (15 months) it could be expected that she was starting to develop autobiographical memory (memories of life events) which is known to persist for many years (Fivush and Haden, 2003). Early autobiographical memory contains the "perceptual, affective and spatiotemporal contextual details that elicit the subjective experience of conscious reflection" and tends to consist of brief but evocative scenes – much like Brenda's description of the wicker basket (Piolino et.al.,2010 p.429). Memories formed in the first three years of life are bound by *context* and consist of *actions* and *associations* (Fivush and Haden, 2003). For Brenda this could be seen as:

- *Context* – the air raid
- *Actions* – being carried
- *Associations* – the frogs despised by her grandmother

Brenda's visual and sensory recall around the air raid shelter reflect the fact that her narrative memory may not have been fully formed. However, knowing the dates allows Brenda to situate the memory within the course of her life, giving her some understanding of events from her childhood.

Dorothy was the youngest person at the outbreak of war at 3 months. Her earlier memories, like Brenda's are characterised by visual scenes and associations. She

recalls the "sight" of beds in the nursery (*context*) where her mother works and the sound the metal potties make as they are dragged across the floor (*action*). The *association* is with being made to take a nap with other children which she disliked. Here again, the focus of Dorothy's narrative is an event for which she can have limited direct memory but nonetheless remains a significant childhood memory. Since very young children do not have memories of specific calendar dates, their memories are reported with reference to dates that are known, such as birthdays or other specific events. First events are of particular significance (Luchetti & Sutin, 2018). This effect is seen in Mary's account, although she was a little older than the other participants. She uses the date of the Dunkirk evacuation and her age at the time to work out the date of her father's last leave before he came home (P2, Line 29). Dorothy situates the date of her father's return as later than the official end of hostilities, since he had to remain behind to help prepare soldiers for their return to civilian life.

Early episodic childhood memories have a large sensory-perceptual element and given that these memories are accessed via cues that correspond to their content, it is interesting to note the elevated level of sensory information in the memories of the participants. The following diagrams represent the stages in Brenda and Dorothy's age and memory formation and illustrates how the passage of time and the development of language and conceptual memory has influenced how they are remembering events. The two event-specific memories presented begin with a sensory/perceptual event, for Brenda a scratchy coat and for Dorothy the eating of cheese. These sensory experiences are built into a narrative using conversations and the application of conceptual memory as language develops (Morrison and Conway, 2010). People are then able to name details contained in the memories and conceptual knowledge can be used to more formally organise the content. Those aspects combine and the event is presented in the form of event-specific

knowledge (ESK). This is represented in the following diagrams (Figure 7:1 and

7:2):

Brenda

Event-Specific Knowledge (ESK)

I said goodbye to my father on the station. He bought me a jigsaw puzzle that I completed at the age of 10.

Brenda aged 15 months - pre- verbal perceptual/sensory experience (scratchy)

Talking about the experience reinforces the memory over time

Over time learns that she said goodbye to her father - jigsaw acts as a reminder

Conceptual memory - making sense - I assume that was my dad
Completing the jigsaw cements the memory

Verbal skills - can name elements of the experience - coat, train

Brenda 15 months

Pre-verbal | Sensory experience - scratchy coat

Brenda 10 years

Language skills
Conceptual memory | "I assume that was my dad"
Jigsaw cements the memory

Brenda adult

Autobiographical memory (ESK) | Collective remembering situates the memory

Figure 7:1 - Brenda, memory diagram

Dorothy

Event Specific Knowledge (ESK)

I got shut in the pantry and ate the cheese ration for four.

Reflection - now understands that the cheese was for four people

Dorothy - pre-verbal
Eats cheese

Perceptual/sensory memory

Conceptual memory - knowledge about rationing

Verbal skills - talking about the event cements it in the memory

Dorothy - 2 years	
Pre-verbal Sensory/perceptual memory	Eats cheese

Dorothy - child	
Conceptual memory	Ration books

Dorothy - adult	
Autobiographical memory - generalised	Cheese was four people's allowance

Figure 7:2 - Dorothy, memory diagram

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The action of retrieving a memory has the potential to activate linked information or episodes, creating new ways to access the memory being retrieved (Ferriera, Charest & Wimber, 2019). This seems to suggest that the process of retrieval consolidates and generalises memory. Gerald is accustomed to recalling events around his role in collecting the family's food from the Co-op and clearly remembers their "divi" number, reciting it without hesitation. Talking triggers his memory of his neighbour's number reflecting Ferreira at al (2019) who asserted that the process of retrieving one memory can grant access to another. Further, Gerald's recall has granted me access to the event through his recollection of it.

Memory and perception may also be viewed as "imperfect reconstructions of reality" (Straube, 2012, p.1). Mary, in response to a question about growing food recalls that her family had grown things before the war. She initially says that she "can't recall" but that things were "probably" grown during the war (P2, Line 167) since the family had a big enough garden. She then goes on to add "I can always remember the bean row" because "we couldn't eat the beans" direct from the garden. Here, she seems to be employing gist level memories of which plants would have been grown and the fact that the garden was big enough to grow vegetables in order to formulate her knowledge of events. This then leads on to her descriptions of the air raid shelter that also occupied the garden. The remembering (although the memory is not initially clear), is facilitated through the conversation and the narrative builds as the conversation develops.

The exploration of the participant narrative in the context of theory around memory formation and recollection has facilitated understanding of how the narrative presented in later life has been influenced, not only by the event being recalled, but also by processes such as language formation and the development of

conceptual knowledge. This is further discusses below by considering how the participants have framed their recollections in a group setting.

7.3.4.2 Collective remembering

How individuals make sense of the world is reflected through their use of language and social interactions. The term collective memory has been in use since the 1920s and groups develop their own vocabulary, which is shared and understood by the whole group, allowing a joint construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Brenda, Mary and Elizabeth are members of a University of the Third Age (U3A) local history group and Mary, Beryl and Elizabeth have participated in other projects about WWII. Beryl produced poetry during one such event and generously shared examples of it with me.   Mary has used talking to other people to reformulate her thoughts around her mother's occupation. Elizabeth has used popular literature such as The Soldiers Return (Bragg, 1999) to situate her own memories and has used this to validate her experience by comparing directly to that book:

> *"The boy could not truthfully remember his father, not at all,*
>
> *but she referred to him in everyday ways and there was a*
>
> *presence in the child's mind which became like a memory*
>
> *as the years went by." (Bragg, 1999)*

Elizabeth has no memory of her father pre-war, but he is talked about and remains part of the family despite his physical absence.

Sixsmith et. al. (2014, p.1467) found that people shared stories of the war in a way which did not focus on traumatic events but allowed them to discuss "special

moments in their lives". These shared social moments, of both listening to and telling stories serve to strengthen relationships with peers in a "convivial" way. Repeated retrieval can influence both gist-level (less detailed long-term memories) and idiosyncratic memory (Ferriera et al, 2019). If, however, gist-level and verbatim memories become mixed, maybe through discussions of memories on a group level, it is possible that the idiosyncratic memory may become distorted and reconstructed in line with the group norm or metanarrative. This process will be influenced by the group's schematic narrative, the way that the collective story is told based on the socially situated context in which individuals are remembering as part of the group (Abel et al., 2017).

Discussing her mother's creative use of ration books and her ability to sew and repair has enabled Mary to access and reflect on her memories of the time. Having initially described her mother as "very much the little housewife" (P2, Line 182), Mary's discussions with her peers about food and rationing have shifted her horizon of understanding (Gadamer, 2013) and she now realises that it is due to her mother's efforts that as a family they actually "lived quite well for the time" (P2, Line 185).

Repeated retrieval in group discussions has the ability to strengthen semantic and episodic memory, but there is also a risk that repeated retrieval can cause distortion when new information is "incorporated into existing representations" (Lee et al. 2017, p. 3305). This is not necessarily negative (as seen in Mary's positive reframing of her mother's role) but is nonetheless worthy of note when examining recollections of distant events particularly where these have been shared as a group and form part of the metanarrative of the time.

If we examine the life of a collective group of people who live closely together – a village, for example, everybody knows everybody, and individuals are portrayed within the common context, the knowledge and experience of the collective. This can mean that the individual self can be lost, but by the telling of the collective story, others understand the whole village (Connerton, 1989). What holds the recollections together as a consistent narrative is the shared colloquial language with which daily events are recounted, shared, and understood. In the case of World War Two, the use of terms and catchphrases such as "resilience", "keep calm and carry on", "dig for victory" has become commonplace in the narrative of that period and the phrases have a common meaning, both to people who experienced the war first hand and to those looking at events from an historical perspective.

7.3.4.3 Intergenerational narratives

Intergenerational narratives feature in family conversations and can be a vehicle through which personal narratives are shared and family culture and values developed (Merrill & Fivush, 2016). Stories passed down through generations grant access to events that may have happened in the distant past (Merrill& Fivush, 2016) and people have a need to "preserve self and ancestors" for the next generation (Stevens et. al., 2019, p. 221).

The telling of stories across generations may serve additional pedagogical functions in passing down cultural values to young people (Merrill & Fivush, 2016). Elizabeth has spent time in her grandson's school telling children about her own childhood experiences during the war and this may be important for the teaching of values across generations, where stories of collective experience and social

relationships dominate over those of individual achievement (Wang, 2017). This also resonates with Mary's experience of trying to maintain her family history through her granddaughter. She is upset that she is never asked anything about her family and fears that the memories may be lost.

Miller (2023) suggests that intergenerational contact has the potential not only to connect people across communities but also to challenge ageist stereotypes. Empowerment and belonging can be fostered through collaboration and building bridges through shared leaning. Miller (2023) goes on to highlight the potential for mentorship opportunities, promoting life skills, reducing loneliness and improving wellbeing across all ages. Another key approach to tackling ageism is to promote interactions between children, schools and older adults. This has been Elizabeth's experience through visiting her grandson's school to talk about her childhood, where an hour session turned into a whole afternoon.

7.3.4.4 *Social construction of the wartime narrative*

A metanarrative can be explained as a story used to legitimise power and social customs or the periodisation of history (Lyotard, 1979). Whether an action is conscious or not, people start to "frame the recollections they will share with others later even as they are experiencing an event". People then go on to incorporate facts learned later along with their developing attitudes into the narrative. Psychologically, the collective representation of events can undermine the individual memory, particularly if individual experiences challenge the collective voice. Metanarrative, the overarching, possibly "morally weighted" narrative can be used as a framework to situate personal stories but can distort or distract away from the personal narrative (Davey & Sapapaska-Gelleri, 2020, p. 55). WWII is a discrete block of time since it has a defined beginning and end, but understanding of it will be based in the sociocultural context of those remembering.

For people who were children during the war in Germany the metanarrative is quite different. Here, the long-term consequences of war were collectively suppressed (von Franz et. al. 2007). Much like the fathers of the participants in my research, German fathers did not speak about their experience of war. These men might have been involved in atrocities, the memories of which were kept bottled up for years (Dinges, 2018). Some psychologists at the time even believed that children would not remember the war so would not experience trauma as a result but Dinges (2018, p.52) cautions that "What we repress finds its way into our daily lives in roundabout ways…". What is evident from the responses of the participants in my study is that people have most certainly remembered events from their wartime childhoods and have processed and reflected on them in a variety of ways. Despite frustrations arising from their fathers' lack of willingness to talk about their experiences, the process of actively remembering through talking has largely been perceived as helpful by those who have participated.

Participating in conversations during and after events enables children to co-ordinate their reminiscing with others in their social world. The development of language allows sense-making, initially between parent and child, as experiences can be shared verbally. This joint endeavour of encoding and reminiscing allows the development of a life history or narrative of the self, reflecting the ways in which societies share their understanding of experiences (Fivush and Haden, 2003). Through participating in group discussions with their peers as they have moved through adulthood, Brenda, Mary and Elizabeth are carrying on this process, reminiscing and developing a shared narrative of their childhood experiences.

The two poems shared by Beryl paint a picture of carefree childhood life, for example when sent to collect water because the supply was cut off. Despite her mother's instruction to return quickly, Beryl and her friends couldn't resist playing:

> "Off came the shoes and socks, hitched up our frocks too
>
> And we paddled and splashed 'til we were wet through.
>
> We laughed and we shrieked like happy kids do.
>
> Not a care in the world for life was so good"

A snapshot of life, not just "good", but "so good", seen through Beryl's childhood eyes, the existential nature of the war obscured, this time by children, unable to resist an opportunity to play.

7.3.4.5 *Remembering through objects*

Remembering through objects is a subtheme in GET 4 – Purposeful remembering. Objects seem to play a significant role in supporting memories of childhood experiences for Eric, Gerald, Jeremy, Mary, Brenda and Elizabeth. They also illuminate the nature of relationships, particularly with fathers. Brenda, Eric, Beryl and Elizabeth all have objects that they have kept because they carry significant memories in them.

Attachments to possessions can arise because of their ability to embody and "bring to mind personally significant memories" (van den Hoven, Orth & Zijlema, 2021, p. 94). Memories themselves can build connections between objects and the self, enabling people to maintain family connections (Ahde-Deal, Paavilainen & Koskinen, 2016).

Beryl recalls her father's service as an air raid patrol warden through the bell he rang to warn people of impending air raids and to encourage them to take shelter. This bell now symbolises that service and Beryl keeps and uses it both to remind herself of the war, and to use it as a vehicle to tell others about her father. This object now forms part of her autobiographical memory and sums up her childhood during the war.

Sixsmith et al (2014) describe a culture of "making do" (p. 1472) and a feeling of transience in relation to material possessions, particularly when so many people had lost everything they owned during bombing raids. This sense of impermanence in relation to material objects seems to have reinforced social connections and built resilience and a sense of independence amongst the generation who lived through WWII (Sixsmith et al 2014).

It can be considered normal to be attached to objects, but extreme object attachment (as in the case of hoarding behaviour) can occur in response to the lack of interpersonal attachment (Dozier and Ayers, 2021). This may be linked to cognitive and emotional changes associated with ageing, where the importance of secure interpersonal attachment has been established. The subject of object attachment in older age has not yet been widely researched but it is plausible that over time life events may have an influence over the relationship that we have with possessions.

Objects retained by people often have links to the past, to memories of childhood. They are used a prompt to reminiscence and storytelling particularly about significant or special occasions (Stevens et al, 2019). An increase in sentimental thoughts about an object may be brought about when a person uses it to reminisce and if the memories are recalled are pleasant, the attachment to the object may increase further (Dozier and Ayers, 2021). It could be suggested then that for Eric, on surface level the radio he keeps reminds him of his father (who considered it to be of historical value). If, however, Eric then uses the radio on a regular basis to reminisce about his father and his wartime childhood (which evokes a positive emotional response) he may become more attached to it over time. For Eric, though, this process is subconscious, he does not know why he has "kept the darn thing" (TP1, Line 3).

For Elizabeth, the effect of remembering using objects may be threefold. Elizabeth's family used photographs of her father to maintain her connection with him during his absence, whilst the balloon fabric she keeps holds memories of both her father and the places he visited during the war. She uses the fabric to remind her of her father and of the loving relationship they shared after he returned home

at the end of the war. Subsequently, Elizabeth uses the fabric to reinforce her own identity as a teacher, having been influenced in her love of geography by her father. Brenda's experience differs from that of Eric and Elizabeth. Brenda's relationship with her father was difficult on his return and she uses memories of being bought nice clothes as evidence that she was loved. Brenda's father was clever and interesting, even down to the distinctive colour of his eyes. What is interesting in Brenda's case is that she is holding on to possessions such as her father's discharge papers and collection of glass eyes. There are no medals to be handed down as her father refused them (he wanted no physical reminder of his service) which raises the question as to why Brenda now feels the need to keep the discharge papers. The answer seems to be in *her* need to commemorate his time of service, to make it meaningful even though it caused a rift in their relationship. The glass eyes symbolise an "interesting" man, the term Brenda uses to describe him; in contrast, the term "loving" is never used in her descriptions of him as a father.

7.3.4.6 Radios

Mary, Jeremy and Gerald no longer have the wartime radios they describe but are still able to recall the significant part they played during their childhood experiences. For Gerald and Jeremy, like Eric, the radio gave access to information about the progress of the war. They felt that they were "up to date" with events, although Eric's use of naïve language – "Big ships, big bombs" – reveals the superficial nature of the knowledge they actually had as children. For Jeremy, the radio triggers memories of breakfast and news bulletins and paints a picture of his father's dominance of the family's listening choices.

For Mary, talking about the radio illuminates the nature of her relationship with her father on his return. During his absence, Mary has become a teenager and enjoys listening to popular music. Her memories about the radio might be considered a secret gem (Smith, 2011). Her assertion that she and her father argued "only about the radio" is at odds with her earlier revelation that they argued "all the time". She goes on to reveal that he disapproved of her job and that he "invaded her space". Stressing that he was a generous man in spite of the arguments about the radio conceals the difficult elements in their relationship, revealed only by close reading and hermeneutic circling to explore meaning within the phrase itself and linking this with the wider transcript.

Using just recollections of how radios were used has exposed the multifactorial elements of remembering through and with objects. The object itself does not need to be present physically for it to be connected to the memory or to cue memories. Cued responses might not relate to specific episodes but may highlight wider associations or be part of a reflective process (van den Hoven et al, 2021).

So, what will happen then to these objects when the person holding them is no longer here, or when the person holding them loses the memory of what they are, or who they celebrate? These are not objects traditionally used to commemorate service such as war medals that might become family heirlooms, these are everyday objects, incomplete objects, and somewhat macabre objects. They nonetheless have meaning for the person keeping them, possibly in the hope may be that they can be used to pass on those memories to a younger generation. Sentimental beliefs may play a role in how people become attached to objects. Losing an item that contains a core memory relating to a person or important event can cause someone to believe that they will lose connection with that person or event. The objects themselves may be a source of comfort in the absence of a

loved one (Dozier and Ayers, 2021). In Beryl's case, for example, the bell allows her to remain connected to her father even though he is no longer here.

If Higgs and Gilleard's (2015) imaginary of the fourth age becomes a reality, the future for many may include a move to an unfamiliar place, and with it the loss of objects, the memory cues. In essence, the memory will lose its possessions (van den Hoven et al, 2021). Furthermore, relocation in older age may not be a planned move. If it comes in response to illness or loss, there may be little time to plan or discuss the importance of particular objects. Despite a general lack of research about beloved objects and later life, there is evidence that these objects can actually aid transition into residential care and their importance should not be underestimated (Wapner, Demick and Redondo, 1990).

The act of downsizing and giving up objects can present a challenge to personal identity and the objects that are kept often have strong associations with a person's past or childhood (Stevens, Camic and Solway, 2019). If the selection of objects to be taken to a new home is left to another person, they may not have the same connection to the object or realise its significance for the identity of the person actually moving home. Stevens et al (2019) discuss the importance of objects with strong attachment to family, particularly for lost loved ones, as these objects may provide connection to the person who is deceased. A small piece of balloon fabric, treasured by Elizabeth may be overlooked by someone for whom it has less significance.

Eric holds onto his radio, unsure why, but able to articulate clearly its place in his memories of events during the war (it forms part of his narrative both of the war but also his relationship with his father; the object itself carries those memories), whilst

Brenda holds on to artefacts that link directly to her father and allow her to reinforce

her description of an interesting man.

7.4 ATTACHMENT AND IPA

Attachment theory was used to support the work of Foster et al (2003) and Waugh et al (2007) exploring the impact of separation due to evacuation during WWII. Foster et al (2003) hypothesized that separated children would be more likely to have an insecure attachment style than those who were not separated. Both these studies use psychological health and self-reported attachment style questionnaires to support their hypothesis and have found that separated children are more likely to have an insecure attachment style. Rusby and Tasker (2008) also placed the focus of their work on attachment and similarly found that children who experienced separation through evacuation were more likely to have an insecure attachment style in adulthood.

Using psychological health as a lens tells only part of the story (Sixsmith et al, 2014). This approach does not necessarily allow for the exploration of how adverse experience is mitigated. The psychological distress being experienced by an older person may itself distort their self-perception and this may lead them to incorrectly identify an attachment style based on questions framed in a questionnaire rather than a narrative approach. This is a particular risk in the use of questionnaires since self-report bias is a known risk in terms of self-reported data gathering (Althubaiti, 2016).

The use of the word trauma has become more commonplace and is used to describe events of an extreme nature that have the potential to leave a lasting impact (Mind, 2023). The navigation pane was used to carefully search the participant transcripts and despite the potential traumatic nature of events during WWII, the word trauma was never used by the participants in my study.

Borcsa and Witzel (2023) in describing their work around intergenerational narratives related to forced migration post-WWII identify that the word trauma is introduced, but it is not by the mother (the oldest generation), but by a member of the generation below supporting the idea that the use of the word trauma, in its current usage is more recent phenomenon.

My research did not ask participants to self-report an attachment style, nor did it ask questions about psychological wellbeing. Using an interpretive methodology in the form of IPA has facilitated in-depth analysis of childhood experience of war, particularly through the exploitation of gems where they appear in the individual transcripts (Smith, 2011). It has supported interpretation at a deeper level through the process of hermeneutics. This means that previously unseen elements of the childhood experience have been considered, in particular elements that might be considered positive in terms of the development of adult attachment style.

As discussed earlier, Bowlby suggests that early social experiences contribute to Internal Working Mechanisms of attachment (IWMs) and that these internal models will continue to influence the expectations and behaviours of people across the life course (Pierrehumbert et al, 2009). Fraley and Roisman (2019) however have identified that early life experiences do not necessarily determine outcomes in adulthood, using longitudinal research to examine the influence of childhood experience on adult attachment style. The approach taken by Fraley and Roisman (2019) uses prospective data from longitudinal studies rather than retrospective data and found that associations, although present, are small in magnitude. It is only recently that these insights have been possible because of the nature of the research undertaken.

Challenges posed at different points across the life course help individuals to develop a "pool of resources" and this in turn determines how the individual manages those particular challenges (Morris-King 2009, p. 54). It could be said that the Covid-19 global pandemic was for many the biggest challenge encountered since WWII, and it has been interesting to see how the participants discussed the pandemic in relation to their wartime experiences.

Jeremy describes the "stress of pervasive fear" posed by the pandemic and acknowledges that the same stress must have been present during the war. The use of the words "must have" indicates that he did not experience those feelings at the time (a fact that he acknowledges) but he suggests that in some ways the pandemic is worse because of the social isolation it brought with it. During the war, social activities carried on and "we could talk in pairs or groups in shops or in the street." (WT1, Line 82). He particularly remarks on the fact that children continued to attend school and were able to play with friends, in sharp contrast to the isolation of children from both family members and their peers during periods of lockdown.

Save the Children (2023) have remarked on the negative impact of school and nursery closures during the pandemic, resulting in the "marginalisation of children". In its report, "What about the children?" (Save the Children, 2023) the organisation has highlighted the slow response of the government to protect children who were vulnerable. In contrast to wartime rationing, intended to ensure that everyone was fed, children from the poorest families who were entitled to free school meals were often reliant on charities and celebrity campaigners for support. School closures were prolonged and opportunities for wider socialisation and play as well as education were lost. It has been agreed that the Covid-19 inquiry will conduct a research project aimed directly at hearing from children and young people and that

the results will form part of the findings and subsequent recommendations of the inquiry (Save the Children, 2023).

Békes et al (2023) examined the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on older adults, aiming to explore both the psychological impact of the pandemic and potential links between childhood trauma, defensive functioning and covid-related fear and distress. Békes et al (2023) identify that older-older adults (those over 75 years old) show higher levels of resilience and defensive functioning, linked to exposure to adversity as children. Eric makes reference to the pandemic, acknowledging the need to celebrate when "this lot is over", but at the same time pointing out that "it won't be "anything like the end of the war" (TP1, Line 374). Wartime children it seems lived through something of much greater significance.

Resilience is a theme that is identified by Sixsmith et al (2014), recognising this as one of the key skills derived from the experience of war, linked to the comradeship of shared adversity. There is even the suggestion of a link to increased longevity for this generation.

For the people who took part in my research study, there is no way of exploring whether their childhood experiences have influenced their attachment style as this is not how the research was structured. Given the known issues with self-reporting bias via the use of questionnaires etc it cannot be guaranteed that retrospectively asking questions about attachment style would give accurate results in terms of causation linked to childhood experiences.

I think that there is more at play here. The way that the participants are recalling and re-framing their experiences seems to relate to self and collective identity. The events being recalled are revealing that exposure to traumatic events is only part

of the story. Unlike their fathers, who were reluctant to talk about their experiences, these participants are very keen to tell their stories and would like their family history to be remembered. Jeremy has made a link between his childhood and symptoms of anxiety now and others have made reference to their current personalities and events from the war but, all have identified that taking part in the research was itself a positive experience. So, instead of focusing on what may have occurred to produce a negative outcome, it needs to be recognised that the telling of the story is what people have celebrated.

The participants experienced the war at a very early stage in their lives and this experience forms only part of their life history narrative. The way that later narratives have interplayed with the remembering of childhood may give some indication as to how resilience has built over time and mitigated the effects of the early life experience.

The following diagram (Figure 8:3) represents how attachment and IPA interplay and may provide a way forward in understanding how time and reflection through purposeful remembering might influence the long-term impact of childhood events. There is a need to explore and understand the factors that mitigate against lasting harm so that these might be exploited with younger generations experiencing extreme or adverse events.

Extreme events in childhood influence attachment style

IPA illuminates meaning and identifies potential mitigating factors

Enhanced knowledge of how meaning is processed and carried forward into adulthood
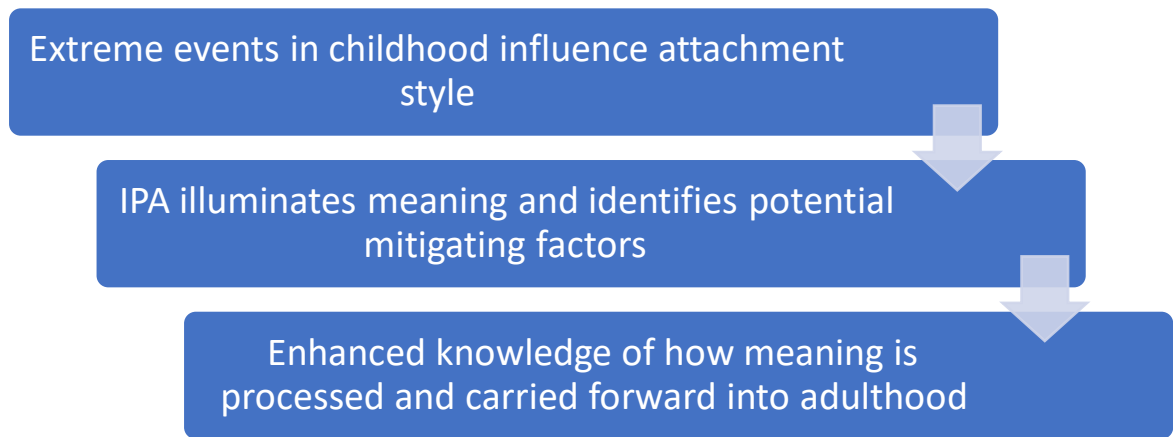
Figure 7:3 Attachment and IPA

7.4.1 Attachment and the participants in my study

I have included this section on how attachment theory relates to my participants because of the attention given to it by previous authors, and in an attempt to explore what elements of the participants' experiences might predispose them to insecure attachment as adults. It is important to consider also that how the participants have processed their experiences might mitigate against any adverse effects and may in fact provide protection from psychological harm as they age.

Regardless of how attachment theory is applied, there are common factors that need to be considered Sharpe (2009). The following factors are of particular significance in the accounts of my participants and could potentially be exerting an influence on the experiences described by them:

- The presence at least one firm, caring relationship in the early years of life
- Secure environments where children feel they have a role and clear identity
- Good role models
- The child knowing that it is loved
- Encouragement for the child to play and explore

Before exploring this further, it needs to be made clear that the initial research questions did not address attachment styles and the aim of the study was not directed specifically towards exploring this. Although I did not ask direct questions relating to attachment style I have:

- Mapped the ages of my participants to attachment stages.
- Explored the phenomenology of the participants' experiences to identify factors that might apply to attachment.

- Looked broadly (where articulated) at the participants' adult lives to identify information which might relate to adult attachment style.
- Acknowledged that with self-reporting, perception is everything. For example, although corporal punishment at school might be perceived as abusive now, at the time of the war this and other forms of physical punishment such as smacking would have been considered a normal feature of childhood.

Adult attachment is categorised in the same way as childhood attachment, one major difference being that adult attachment styles are self-reported and based on self-knowledge, experiences and expectations. Fraley and Roisman (2019) suggest that although adult attachment styles can be seen to have their roots in early relationships and experiences of caregiving, there is not one consistent set of circumstances that could be identified as predictors for how these factors affect attachment style in adults.

Table 7:3 maps the ages of the participants across the course of the war to the stages of attachment style development:

Attachment

Age	Attachment stage	Participants falling into this age category – start of war	Participants falling into this age category – end of war
1-4 years	Attachment style becomes established	Brenda, Elizabeth, Beryl, Dorothy	
Childhood	Attachment style stable	Mary, Jeremy, Gerald, Eric	Brenda, Elizabeth, Dorothy
Adolescence	"Blip" potentially prompted by striving for independence.		Mary, Eric, Gerald, Jeremy, Beryl
Adulthood	Attachment style likely to remain unchanged if relationships are stable		

Table 7:3 Attachment stages

In the early work of Bowlby, the mother is seen as the most significant figure in terms of the child's early development although later theorists such as suggest that the preferred adult (who is not necessarily the mother) exerts more influence over the child's attachment style Ainsworth and Bowlby,1965). The role of the wider family in caregiving for the children in the study is clearly demonstrated in the data with grandmothers and aunts playing a particularly significant role.

There are glimpses in the data of how events may have shaped attachment style, but we need to question whether this can be assessed simply by looking at the transcripts. We can make comparisons, but it could be deemed unfair to judge the quality of attachment relationships retrospectively, particularly since this question was not specifically posed. Taking the factors suggested by Sharpe (2009) we can find examples in the data to support their importance for the child.

7.4.1.1 The need for at last one firm, caring relationship in the early years of life

Dorothy's father left home when she was 10 months old and returned when she was 7, a gap of over 6 years. Having initially spent time with her mother in the city's nurseries, Dorothy went on to spend significant amounts of time with her recently widowed grandmother. In attachment terms, Dorothy's grandmother had experienced a loss of her own personal relationship through being widowed, and Dorothy's caregivers were otherwise occupied with work and service. Here we see an example of caregiver sensitivity being interrupted by stressful events (Howe 2011).

Dorothy acknowledges that she and her grandmother supported each other in a time of "mutual need" (WT4, Line 58) and shows insight into the impact of her returning father on the family dynamic, at which point she is left feeling like a pupil rather than a daughter. The embodied nature of the experience of a new sister is revealed by Dorothy giving herself bruises to gain attention (what might today be construed as self-harm) but here again her grandmother steps in to provide support – mitigating the potential harm caused by the disruption to the care provided by her parents.

7.4.1.2 The need for a secure environment where children feel they have a role and clear identity

For Jeremy, although his father did not go away, the stressful nature of *not* being called up is revealed in the expression of anger. Merlau-Ponty (2012) states that we perceive anger or grief in another person because of their behaviour or expressions and this is the case for Jeremy, he perceives his father's anger,

embodied in the pervasive silence and tension in the household (WT1, Line 46), or his angry outbursts, the only time he was not silent.

7.4.1.3 The need for good role models

Dorothy speaks very fondly of her grandmother and her uncle whose "never say die" attitude was a big influence in her life (WT4, Line 12). Her grandmother had many skills that she passed on to Dorothy. In contrast her father's "no such word as can't" approach (WT4, Line 54) seems to have a disciplinary rather than an encouraging feel.

Elizabeth has the impression of her father as a good role model, despite her not knowing him well prior to his conscription; family members have told her that he was a "hands on father" (WT2, Line 32). Despite some initial difficulties when he returned, her father has been influential in Elizabeth's choice of career as a geography teacher, passing on his love of travel.

7.4.1.4 The need for the child to know that it is loved

Brenda's account contains possibly the clearest indication of her adult attachment style and the impact of her early childhood experiences. She speaks clearly of her need to suppress emotion, emulating her father. This may suggest an insecure avoidant attachment style, where self-regulation is important – Brenda acknowledges that she sometimes needs to cry, but when she does, she hides away from public gaze (P1, Line 976).

In relation to love or affection, Brenda states that she has no memory of being hugged and still finds being kissed by others difficult. She "thought that I wasn't

good enough" for her father (P1, Line 451) but feels certain that she was loved, despite the lack of public displays of affection because she always had "beautiful clothes" (P1, Line 450). There is a complex interplay here between the knowing that she was loved, whilst at the same time feeling not good enough.

7.4.1.5 Encouragement for the child to play and explore.

Brenda and Eric both describe having significant amounts of freedom to play. Brenda talks of nobody "bothering" if she and her friends were out all day – there is a sense that the children are providing support for each other through their recreational activities.

Eric also refers to playing with his friends and the rivalry between gangs. His use of the words "we lived a long day in the fields" gives a sense of the play obscuring the war. The boys knew where their boundaries were and were free to play and explore within those boundaries.

Saturday morning cinema provided another opportunity for the children to be together and there is a feeling of escapism in Beryl's account where she describes pretending to be a film star, exercising her imagination. Eric's account also tells of Saturday morning cinema and superheroes.

Toys are mentioned, the participants all received gifts on birthdays and at Christmas. Brenda particularly remembers a doll she was given, whilst Gerald recalls that he and his brother were "never short of anything" (TP2, Line 144).

Play took a slightly more sinister turn for Eric and his friends when they gained access to knives and an air pistol. Eric expresses regret about some of his activities and is reluctant to talk in much detail about them. His adult self reflects

back and realizes that these activities would not be common today although there is no evidence in his interview that these childhood activities have had an adverse effect on his life choices as an adult.

These are not the only factors relevant to adult attachment style but they do seem to indicate that mitigation of potential trauma is possible and that despite exposure to adverse events, there are ways to support children, giving them long-term resilience to future difficult experiences.

7.5 SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

In this discussion of the findings, I have touched on elements of all the themes arising from the data, considering where they sit in terms of what is already known about wartime childhoods.   The most significant theme – the "golden thread" lies with purposeful remembering.

The childhood events can be conceptualised using the theories of Heidegger – the extraordinary in the everyday, revealed using IPA, Merleau-Ponty's embodied experience and Gadamer's shifting horizons of understanding.   This has been achieved, in part, by taking a longitudinal retrospective approach to the childhood experience of the participants.

IPA's use in the exploration of temporally distant events has recently been discussed by Smith (2023), elaborating on the work of Neale (2021, p.5) and the ability of Qualitative Longitudinal Research (QLR) look backwards in time in order to explore the "dynamic processes" at play in people's lives. IPA facilitates the observation of lives, highlighting both continuity and change of perspectives.

This has been seen through the analytic process in this study where the participants have described and then questioned their responses to events from their childhood. Applying Gadamer's (2013) horizons of understanding it has been possible to see how standpoints have shifted as the focus is re-directed through discussion, collective processes of remembering and personal reflection. The process of IPA has revealed how people have "navigated temporally" through the phenomenon of their childhood experience.

The findings of this research indicate that it is the whole narrative of people's lives that is significant in understanding how they have navigated their life experiences. It has also been shown that the position of the child within the family (both during and after the war) rather than separation itself may be predictive of a person's sense of self as life progresses. The following (final) chapter will demonstrate how these findings might be useful to researchers exploring the lives of older people and to those working with older people in clinical settings and will make recommendations for policy, practice and education.

Chapter 8: CONCLUSION

Yardley (2015, p.265) cautions that we are not aiming to "rediscover what is already known" and although my study is situated in the context of the current theory and research conducted to date relating to childhood and WWII, the use of a qualitative method including interviews and written accounts along with the use of IPA has illuminated new perspectives on the experiences of those children who lived through WWII.

Yardley (2015) identifies four pillars for the creation of qualitative research that is both valid and trustworthy. The four pillars are:

- Sensitivity to context

- Commitment and rigour

- Coherence and transparency

- Impact and importance

In constructing this conclusion, I asked myself a series of questions, directed towards assurance that I have paid attention to quality measures identified above. These are:

- Did I answer the research questions posed?

- What are the strengths and limitations of the research?

- What new insights have been revealed?

- Were there any specific points of interest that arose that might inform recommendations for clinical practice or future research?

8.1 Did I answer the research questions posed?

8.1.1 What was it like to be a child during WWII?

The responses to questions posed about the experiences of children during WWII contain rich descriptions of events. Some are of a general nature, but others contain clear detail, outlining their significance for the people involved. The fact that these descriptions are so vivid speak to the significance of the experience and their role in personal narratives of the time. The participants, through describing their lives have given me access to material from which deeper meanings have been derived through the use of an interpretive methodology.

The surface level descriptions, such as carrying gas masks, watching for the telegraph boy, having a father driving trains loaded with ammunition obscure deeper existential meaning – the constant, underlying threat posed by the war. The perspective of "What was it like?" moves from being a child, seemingly living a normal, everyday life to being a child subject to ongoing pervasive stress. The ongoing stress did not get in the way of everyday life on the whole, since particularly for the younger participants they had nothing with which to compare, they were essentially "normal childhoods" for those children.

Deeper insights were gained through the process of purposeful remembering, the process used by the participants to actively engage with their childhood memories, revealing how memory (both individual and collective) and reflection have interplayed across time as new understandings and insights have revealed deeper meaning to childhood experience.

8.1.2 What was the experience of children separated from their fathers during WWII because of conscription?

Only girls in my study experienced separation due to conscription. Given the discussions of von Franz et. al. (2007) and Freitag et. al. (2011) concerning the role of boys in supporting mothers in Germany, it would have been interesting to explore that aspect of the experience from a British perspective but for the men who participated, their experience was of fathers at home. Despite the physical presence of the fathers, there is evidence of an emotional separation, of the men being preoccupied with war work or with concern for others.

The girls who experienced separation were very young at the outbreak of war so for them, living in female oriented environment was their "norm". The lack of a father's physical presence was only really recognised on his return, and in the interim, they were supported (both physically and emotionally) by secure caregivers - the women in their lives.

8.1.3 What was the experience of children when their fathers returned home at the end of WWII and the family was reunited?

This has been one of the most enlightening aspects of the research and has shown how different families managed both the separation and reunion aspects of the fathers' wartime absence. What the data has shown is that the maintenance of connections with the absent father has mitigated potential disruption on his return, and that preparation is key to managing this successfully. Dorothy and Elizabeth's accounts show the two sides of this story – one where the father is kept at the heart of the family and who reaches out to his daughter, the other who can see her only as a pupil, despite his ability to "be" a father, demonstrated through his behaviour towards a younger sibling.

Reunion was not a straightforward endeavour, and the families all took some time to adjust to being "a family" but the participants all took steps to frame their fathers in a positive light, despite these initial difficulties.

8.1.4 Did experiences of separation during the war influence people's lives, relationships and the choices they made?

There is evidence across all the datasets that participants have carried forward aspects of their experiences as wartime children. Some, such as Elizabeth, align their career choices (in Elizabeth's case as a geography teacher) with their childhood whilst others, such as Brenda, show a desire to emulate their father's personality traits in order to be seen to be like him, in Brenda's case by the suppression of emotion, even as she herself has got older.

Although not separated during the war, Eric wrestles with his father's thoughts on education. He feels that he missed out on education having failed his 11-plus exam but has realised that education is an ongoing endeavour and values the skills afforded him by his own military service.

Whilst it is possible to pick out instances where direct influence is visible, what has been really interesting for me is to see how the participants have engaged with their childhood experiences at different stages in their lives and are continuing to do so as they have become octogenarians. They have not simply remembered events but have engaged with their memories in an active way, their understanding developing as new horizons become available to them.

Two of the participants in particular (Brenda and Mary) reflected on how they "knew" their fathers, both before and after the war, revealing aspects of their

paternal relationships through their adult lives. These relationships had their difficulties but both women cared for their fathers until death.

In summary, the research has answered the questions posed by illuminating not only what happened to the participants but also by illuminating how they themselves have interacted with their personal narratives across time, making connections with their wartime and present selves.

8.2 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

8.2.1 Strengths

The key strength of the research for me lies in the willingness of the participants to share their experiences such that the application of an interpretive methodology has been possible. They engaged actively across all three data collection methods, and I was left feeling that there was still more to share. The rich descriptive language used in the participant transcripts has, through the application of hermeneutics, revealed a layer of meaning hidden below the surface.

Key areas of strength are:

- Small participant numbers – allowing in-depth interpretation of all the participant transcripts leading to depth rather than breadth of analysis.

- Process of IPA have been followed closely, paying close attention to the stages outlined by Smith et. al. (2022) and Larkin (2020).

- Introduction of a new method of data collection in the form of written responses. Participants engaged very readily with this method and the responses were structured such that their analysis was straightforward without the need for transcription which saved a significant amount of time.

- Collecting data in 3 different formats (face to face interviews, telephone interviews and writing) facilitated some triangulation.

- Hermeneutic circling/spiralling – the meaning is situated in the data and understanding has grown through the process.

There was an area of indirect and unanticipated benefit. Talking about the war as an activity was found to be supportive. Eric's daughter told me that taking part had made him feel positive when events during the pandemic had made him feel down.

Mary enjoyed talking about her experiences and all participants offered to say more if needed.

8.2.2 What would I have done differently?

The most significant barriers encountered during my project were beyond my control – serious illness and a global pandemic were not events that could have been anticipated at the outset. This being said, reactions to the pandemic and the consequent change in direction for data collection have I think added a new dimension to the project which would not have been there otherwise.

At the outset, I had intended to conduct a focus group as a pilot study, supported by photographs or objects from WWII but this proved impossible because of the restrictions posed by the pandemic. Pilot studies are commonly used to test out research instruments and to test the feasibility of potential qualitative research projects (Malmqvist et. al., 2019). In a pilot study I could have checked the validity of the interview schedule I had planned or tested areas of potential bias for me as a researcher. I used the first two interviews as a pilot of sorts and was able to make judgments about how the interviews were conducted and where I needed to reflect about the intrusion of my therapeutic self on the research process. The second participant – Mary had written to me initially and when lockdown restrictions came into play it was through reflecting on this that I was able to develop my strategy for using written responses as a data collection method.

Reflecting on how I would have structured the focus group I have come to the realisation that the objects I might have brought would not have reflected the objects actually retained by the participants. Having this insight would prompt me in future to have the discussion about retained objects prior to a focus group and

encourage prospective participants to bring their own objects of significance rather than supplying these.

During the in-person interviews, aspects of the participants' lives were illuminated through the conversation, examples such as work choices and relationships with wider family members. This was less obvious in the written accounts because these were less "conversational" and more focused on answering questions. I found myself wondering about those aspects of peoples' lives and how they could have been captured.

The demographic information collected focused on the structure of the family and the position of the participant and their father within the family. The focus initially was on recruiting participants who were the correct age (i.e. a child during the war) and with a father who had been conscripted or in a protected profession but were I repeating the research I would ask a broader set of questions to include marital status, age at marriage and having children, and career choice.

8.2.3   Was it good IPA?

Nizza, Farr and Smith (2021) apply Yardley's (2015) pillars of quality to IPA, and this is the framework that I have applied in relation to assessing the quality and validity of my study. IPA of good quality should include:

- A compelling and unfolding narrative

- A vigorous experiential and/or existential account

- Close analytic reading of a participant's words

- Attendance to convergence and divergence

Close attention has been paid, through analysis of the data, to the words of my participants in order to illuminate their subjective experience of events, whilst at the same time, paying attention to areas of convergence and divergence between participant accounts.

The narrative unfolded through the individual analysis and was built on by the process of cross-case analysis. The initial themes were broken down into experiential and existential elements and cross checked across participants, identifying quoted material from within the data to support the findings.

Analysis was conducted in an embodied way by breaking down the individual experiential statements on paper and constructing PETs for each participant. This ensured that I remained immersed in the data whilst identifying quoted material to support the narrative. The process was repeated across cases, each time widening the hermeneutic circle (or spiral) as new insights came to light through the process of identifying and comparing experiences across participants.

The final narrative is compelling in as much as it allows the voices of each participant to be heard. Importantly for me as a researcher it also illuminates clearly the processes at play in constructing a personal narrative across time.

8.3 ARE THERE NEW INSIGHTS?

Using what is already known about what happened to children during the war it is possible to build a picture of their experience. What has been new is the way that gems have illuminated particular elements of the experience to give deeper insights into the stresses that children were exposed to (Smith, 2011). The result

has been a multi-layered account of everyday occurrences, reflecting Heidegger's notion of the extraordinary in the ordinary (Horrigan-Kelly et. al., 2016). Access to food was regulated, gas masks gave a daily reminder of the war, but it is only in the effect of the telegraph boy appearing or the return of a father exposed to the Blitz in the course of his everyday work that the true existential nature of the experiences is seen.

Despite what would today be described as a "traumatic" set of events, the participants are happy to talk about and share their experiences. They want younger generations to know what happened to them and have retained objects in which precious memories are bound. The nature and value of objects was unanticipated, these are not the war medals or ration books that we are used to seeing, rather they are small, intimate, unusual objects that carry significant meaning for their owners.

The participants have shared some very personal and sensitive information from which new insights into the ongoing impact of childhood experiences have been uncovered. Moving forward, these insights may help us to support people as they make the transition into older-older age, recognising the importance not only of the environment in which they now reside, but also the narratives that have accompanied their journey across the course of their lives.

8.3.1 Methodology

The use of a less traditional method of data collection (written accounts) was, I believe a successful choice. The lack of direct contact with the participants did not detract from the value of their contributions and the written format made analysis straightforward without the need for initial transcription of the data.

Analysis using IPA has enabled me to think about attachment in a different way. Rather than using a retrospective self-report tool to provide an idea of adult attachment style, or to measure psychological health, the use of a retrospective qualitative approach has illuminated meanings that can be used to support discussions about how childhood events have been processed over time and how those reflective processes may have mitigated any potential long-term effects of the experiences.

8.3.2 Impact of Covid-19

An indirect consequence of the pandemic was that it allowed comparisons (albeit brief) between the experience of children during the war where school attendance and a sense of freedom was maintained, and the restrictions posed by lockdown. It has been suggested by the covid inquiry that children should be prioritised in future events should they arise, and a recommendation made that schools should be the last to close (Save the Children, 2023).

For older people, social isolation was often cited as a negative consequence of the pandemic and several of my participants made mention of this. Jeremy discussed the positive impact of schools staying open during the war and the fact that people still met socially, when shopping for example. This finding gives a useful insight into how a hitherto silent generation, talking only now about their experiences might influence future policy by recognising that both individual and collective narratives of events might illuminate how current generations might best be supported in the future should extreme events arise.

8.3.3 Social construction of ageing

It is anticipated that by 2035, 3.7% of people in the UK will be aged eighty-five years or older. As our population ages, gerontologists are challenged with addressing the social and psychological needs of older, old people, those of the Fourth Age (Higgs & Gilleard, 2015). This group of people, over the age of eighty years is a new, as yet little researched cohort, who have the shared experience of a childhood lived through a World War. If Bowlby's assertions are correct and childhood experiences do indeed have an impact on attachment across the life course, this is going to be of particular significance for the participants in my research and their peers.

Differentiations between the third and fourth ages are generally based on (in)ability and frailty rather than chronological age.   Conceptions of the fourth age, focusing on frailty and exclusion create a social imaginary based on a "collectively imagined terminal destination of life" (Higgs & Gilleard, 2015 p. 14) and do not take account of the potential for self-management and maintenance of good health and social connectedness post the age of sixty-five.

Sixsmith et. al. (2014) describe wartime experience as a "unique and defining characteristic of the wartime generation" (p. 1466) and identify that those experiences have significance for people as they grow older and make a move towards older, old age. The relevance of skills learned during wartime continue to carry significance for people as they have aged and form part of the narrative of independence and resilience. People who were children during WWII were young adults in the 1960s – where the culture of the time emphasised autonomy and choice (Gilleard & Higgs, 2010). People of this generation have carried these notions forward with them as they have moved into later life.

Whichever way the fourth age is theorized, there can be no doubting the increase in size of the population aged over eighty years and the participants in this study all now sit in this group of older, old people.   Koss and Ekerdt (2017), in exploring the housing needs of people as they enter the fourth age assert that once retirement age is reached, visions of a positive future diminish.   If we imagine people as social actors, there is less of a script to follow, and the timetable becomes uncertain.

Jeremy is starting to recognise the potential for frailties triggered by fear as he ages – the feelings of fear he experienced when hearing about a wartime event may be signalling a reduction in the resilience he has shown so far in relation to events over the course of his life. He has reflected on his experience of reading about the invasion of Norway.   This event did not evoke fear in him as a child and he is disturbed that reading about it seventy-seven years later made him feel frightened. He reasons that this may have been because the consequences of the event were not known to him at the time, or that maybe the fear was present but unrecognised. His concern is that as he grows older, other emotional memories, laid down by fear as a child might in the future be triggered by cues as yet unknown.   Mary's view of the world is that we are "more aggressive" as a society than when she was a child and I wonder whether again, this reveals feelings of underlying vulnerability as she herself gets older.

Morris-King (2009) considers how people will make the transition to the fourth age. This is unmapped territory, so charting how the current generation of octogenarians manage the transition will inform future generations, with the caveat that life events are different across the generations.   The level of impact is not about chronological age, rather it is about the significance of the event and the manner in which people have processed events over a whole life.   This is an

important factor to be considered by those influencing policy for the care of older people moving forward.

The participants in my study have enjoyed talking about childhood events and seem to perceive them as "better" times, despite the obvious adversity. Is this because looking forward to the future is uncertain and may bring further illness, infirmity and hardship? Gilleard and Higgs (2010) argue that the conditions of the fourth age are established by the state and are based around control and institutionalisation. Ideas of "good ageing" are malleable and the view of whether life satisfaction increases or decreases with age is in the eyes of the author describing it (Fenton, 2014). What seems to be key is the view of the individual and the value placed on continued independence in later life.

At the time of this research, the participants were living independently and still actively engaged in community activities. Eric, Jeremy and Mary were known to still be driving – in fact Mary only learned to drive at the age of sixty-two. Elizabeth has talked to children in her grandson's school about her life during the war, Brenda retains pride in her appearance and never leaves home unless "everything matches".

The articulated fears of Jeremy and Mary reflect the notion of a fourth age where previously experienced autonomy and choice will disappear into a black hole and any chance of a return to independence will be impossible (Gilleard & Higgs, 2010). The findings of the study seem to defy this though – Jeremy is looking for ways to mitigate the effects of the anxiety he is feeling, by understanding their origin. Eric's participation enabled him to feel positive at a time when life was difficult, The U3A members are using their collective remembering to review their lives and to reflect

on childhood events and how these have had an impact on their journey through life.

The use of the double hermeneutic has meant that whilst exploring the experiences of the participants during their wartime childhoods I have also been able to see and make sense of the ways in which they are making sense of their own experiences, particularly through the process of purposeful remembering. The impression I am left with is of people wanting to maintain the self-agency caught up with self-identity, reinforced through collective remembering and personal reflection.

Those seeking to construct and deliver policies for supporting older people need to recognise that this generation of people may not have spoken about their childhood experiences before nor made links between those experiences and their health as older people and assumptions cannot be made without involvement from those for whom the care is being designed.

8.3.4 Recommendations for policy, practice and education

The findings of this study suggest that those directing policy relating to the care of older people must take account of whole life narratives, acknowledging that this generation have experienced events that have contributed to their sense of self and that is unique to this cohort. The way that the participants talked about their lives, both past and present, challenges the notion of the fourth age as being an age solely of frailty and exclusion.

This finding will be of continuing significance as future generations will likewise have encountered and processed situations (the covid pandemic for example)

which will be exerting an impact of their sense of self moving forward. Of particular interest is the way that participants have described their position within the family both during and post-war. The shifting position from being raised by women to experiencing their father as "father" or from only child to older sibling have affected the personal sense of self. This moves away from a focus on separation to one on insider/outsider perspectives, family dynamics and the need for emotional support when families have been separated and reunited.

8.3.4.1 Mental Health Nursing/Education

Assessment is an integral component of the role of the MH nurse. It is through this initial encounter that we begin a therapeutic relationship with the people in our care. In order to understand the whole person, we need to adopt robust assessment strategies – be those formal or informal. It can be suggested that "people make themselves up as they talk" (Barker, 2004, p.14). This idea resonates with this research and its findings around memory and the role of purposeful remembering in the development of personal narratives and life stories and in order to fully understand those for whom we care we must engage with those narratives and stories.

There is a role here for those developing educational packages for MH nurses at all levels. Nurses are now undertaking a much wider range of roles including advanced practice, and history taking is an important aspect of their work at all levels. Emphasis is often placed on the presenting complaint and medical history – both essential components of course – but family and social history should not be overlooked as these contribute to the person's sense of self and identity.

Communication is a key skill, and its importance should be emphasized in nurse education at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Active listening, observation and empathy should be included alongside the use of open-ended questions as these will encourage the person being assessed to tell their story, rather than answering a set of questions which limit the expansion of the narrative.

In terms of policy and practice, the key message is around how people engage with and process life events in order to develop a sense of self and this needs to be acknowledged at all levels in order that appropriate services can be developed to support this unique cohort of people, both socially and in health settings. This "silent" generation have not talked about their experiences before, and care must be taken to listen to their stories in order to provide care and support which acknowledges their unique experience.

There is a need for further qualitative research into how older people make transitions into later life, focusing on past experience and individual narratives whilst not forgetting that older people have hopes and aspirations for the future. Some suggestions as to how this might be achieved as described below.

8.4 POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Whitty (2023) in his annual report as Chief Medical Officer acknowledges that the range of gaps in our knowledge about the lives and needs of older people makes it difficult to know where to prioritise research. Likewise, Fenton (2014) found that older people want to exert control over their lives and to remain independent, but some also need care and support. These areas can be difficult to manage but greater involvement from older people will facilitate greater understanding of how older people view their situation and how best to support their needs whilst acknowledging the desire for control over their lives.

Sixsmith et. al. (2014) identified that research in the area of WWII experience is developing and echo the thoughts of Morris-King (2009) around how experiences earlier in the life course will exert influence as people move forward. Engaging with these experiences through research will help us to develop understanding how this happens, without a focus solely on psychological health. Given the findings in my research, I have identified a number of suggestions where and how research might be conducted in order to engage with and on behalf of our population of older people.

8.4.1 Narrative approaches

The use of storytelling is an established method for gathering data in qualitative research (Ntinda, 2019). It supports people in making sense of their lived experiences. The findings from my research supports the use of this type of method as it has shown that people are happy to talk about events and to share reflections on life experience, facilitating interpretation of those experiences.

8.4.2 Written accounts

Development of written accounts as a method of data collection will open up new possibilities for future projects where participants might be anticipated as "hard to reach". Older people may become marginalised due to geographical or health constraints, but writing gives an outlet which is therapeutic in nature (Pennebaker, 1997). Providing a voice for participants is a worthwhile endeavour in older populations where there is a risk that lack of involvement might lead to the development of services and support mechanisms that suit organisations rather than individuals.

Creative writing projects – such as the one in which Beryl participated – are a valuable way to explore how humans process and make meaning through reconstructing and interpreting their lived experience (Crewe, 2021). Encouraging people to engage with their past experiences through the medium of creative writing has the potential to bring new insights to the understanding of how older people process their lives.

8.4.3 Object attachment

Further research into sentimental attachment to objects could close the gap in knowledge as to how different generations form attachments to objects. Findings of future research on object attachment in late life could inform interventions in areas such as adjustment, grief, trauma, and hoarding. It is likely that there will not be a "one size fits all" model. Given the random nature of the objects retained by my participants, research could enhance both knowledge of how memories become bound in objects, and understanding of their significance for people as they make transitions in later life and have to make choices about which objects are retained or left behind.

This conclusion has outlined suggestions for policy makers and those delivering care to older people. This "silent" generation, in sharing their experiences have opened up new insights into how they have lived through and processed experiences and in doing so have opened up new ideas and possibilities for how they, and those that follow, might be supported into older, old age. There follows one final reflection on my thoughts on the process and findings of this project.

8.5 Final reflection

This project has been a joy and a privilege to complete. Despite the barriers experienced during the research I have developed deeper personal insights into the childhood experiences of my participants. The most significant findings for me have been the most unexpected and this has been made possible by the application of an interpretive methodology. I expected to hear stories of rationing and adversity but have been taken by surprise by the way that memories have been framed by the childhood excitement and joy expressed by the participants.

At the start of my PhD journey, I had a plan that would see me applying a straightforward qualitative method, using IPA to explore the experiences of people who were children during the war. Changes in circumstances, both for me personally and at a global level required that I adapted my strategy to fit the circumstances available to me. Reflexivity and adaptability are key skills for mental health nurses, and I was able to reflect and adapt my plan so that the research could continue.

Older people were advised to stay at home during the pandemic and this made them a "hard to reach" population even though pre-pandemic they were actively engaged in social activities and were seemingly happy to engage with face-to-face research activities. Using the principles of Weber's concept of verstehen (Gann, 2017) and the notion of social norms, a new way of approaching data collection through letter writing enabled me to be with the participants in a social reality that was familiar to them and that facilitated their participation in the research.

My research journey has had many twists and turns but negotiating potential barriers has extended my knowledge and understanding of the research process

and the strengths and limitations of data collection methods. There have been moments where my experience has mirrored the experience of the participants. Letters sent by Brenda's father often got "stuck" on their way from Burma and I was afforded an idea of the frustration caused when the pandemic temporarily prevented me from accessing post through the university. It has also given me a broader understanding of how my own family might have experienced events during the war, the father returning from Dunkirk, the father returning home to find he had a new daughter and the children spending long days playing with their friends, with the nature of the war obscured from view by childhood pursuits.

The findings from my study fit nicely with the current political agenda around older people and the acknowledgement that what needs to be done *for* older people needs to be done *with* older people. Further research using an interpretivist paradigm needs to be conducted to determine what life means for this expanding, active group of people.

Dylan Thomas said:

> "Do not go gentle into that good night,
>
> Old age should burn and rave at close of day,
>
> Rage, Rage against the dying of the light."

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – LITERATURE REVIEW FROM MENTAL HEALTH PRACTICE

Longson, K.J. and Beech, R. (2017). The long-term effect of childhood wartime trauma on anxiety in later life. *Mental Health Practice*. 21 (4), 30-35

Introduction

Anxiety disorders have significant impact on the lives of older people (Korte et al 2009). However, the area is under-researched and measuring prevalence is not straightforward, indeed results range from 1.2%-15% (Bryant et al 2013, Bryant et al 2008). Fuentes and Cox (2003) reported a lack of quantitative data relating to anxiety in older people and also raised the issue of potential gender disparities in presentation and their impact on diagnosis rates. The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) (2013) estimate that 25% of people in the United Kingdom (UK) will experience an anxiety disorder at some point in their lives, and it is most likely to occur between the ages of 35 and 55 years of age but at any given time up to 10% of people over the age of 65 will be experiencing symptoms of anxiety (Byers et al 2010). Despite some insights into anxiety and the lives of older people, the impact of anxiety is frequently both underestimated and under researched in older populations (Alwahhabi, 2003).

Lenze and Wetherall (2011) identified a number of known factors predisposing to anxiety in later life including female gender, low income and chronic ill-health but suggested that there are gaps in knowledge as to how psychosocial factors interplay with these predisposing factors and influence the development of anxiety over time. It is known that stress in childhood can impact on mental health in later life and it is hypothesised that stress during early development may present long term hypersensitivity to stress-related changes in brain development (Maniam, Antoniadis and Morris 2014).

Paternal separation in childhood has been cited as a significant factor for psychological wellbeing later in life and may be of greater significance for males than females (Otowa et al 2014, Beekman et al 1998, Franz et al 2007). A period of particular significance in paternal separation was World War II (WWII) when 1.5 million British children were evacuated from cities. Older men who are now becoming octogenarians may have experienced significant social and personal upheaval in childhood because of their wartime experiences and it could be argued that the presence of psychiatric symptoms in later life may be directly linked to these experiences, with the impact of the absence of the father seeming to be of particular significance to males (Franz et al 2007). John Bowlby wrote a letter to the British Medical Journal (BMJ) in 1939, expressing concerns that separation from parents at a young age (primarily because of evacuation) may impact on psychological wellbeing across the life course and at the end of the war Bowley (1948) wrote specifically about its impact on children.

This paper explores the link between childhood experiences of WWII and anxiety across the life course specifically for men. The aim is to establish the need for and potential direction of future research and the potential implications for practice for those working with older adults (particularly men) experiencing anxiety disorders in later life.

Method

A literature search was carried out to identify research relating to paternal absence during WWII and anxiety in later life for men.   An initial search using EBSCO Host was conducted which included the following databases - Amed, Medline, PsychINFO, Ageline, Cinahl Plus and Academic Search Complete.   A preliminary search using the keywords "anxiety" and "older age" produced 2079 results indicating that there is a considerable body of research and knowledge relating to this subject already available.

A search was undertaken to generate results on the subject of paternal separation and impact on males across the life course using a combination of keywords including "parental deprivation", "father absence", "paternal deprivation", "anxiety", "males", "later life", "older adults", "world war two", and "war". 29 papers were identified and exclusion criteria (not available in English, not addressing male anxiety or not including WWII) applied which led to 14 papers being rejected. A final total of fifteen papers were reviewed in full.

In order to establish that British authors had not been overlooked the search term "United Kingdom" was added but generated no results and a further search using Proquest and the British Nursing Index was carried out using the key words "father Absence", "anxiety", "war" and "older males" which again generated no results. Underpinning narrative around the experiences of children in World War Two was collected from a variety of sources including websites and books.

Findings

Table 1 is a data extraction table and outlines the main themes and findings.

Beekman et al (1998) reported on findings from the Longitudinal Aging Study Amsterdam (LASA) in relation to anxiety disorders in the older Dutch population. A random sample of 3107 older adults in The Netherlands was screened using a two stage screening process to establish prevalence and risk factors for anxiety. They established that anxiety disorders are common amongst older people and that a range of risk factors including the impact of traumatic childhood experiences during WWII exist.

Pesonen et al (2009) described WWII as a "natural experiment" that has facilitated the examination of the impact of separation on the stress response of children later in their lives. Participants were randomly selected from the Helsinki Birth Cohort Study and assessed using a Trier Social Stress Test (Kirschbaum et al 1996), a psychosocial stress test which provokes a powerful response from the Hypothalamus-Pituitary-Adrenal (HPA) Axis) before salivary cortisol and plasma Adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH) levels are measured. Cortisol and ACTH levels are used to measure levels of stress (Hellhamer et al 2009), and subjects who had experienced separation from both parents during WWII had higher

levels of both salivary cortisol and plasma ACTH than those who had remained with their parents, thus identifying a potential link between early life separation and stress physiology in later life. On a similar theme, Maniam et al (2014) established that Early Life Stress (ELS) can disregulate the HPA Axis leading to a risk for metabolic disorders; given the impact of stress on physical health further research may establish whether similar risks exist for psychological disorders.

Foster et al (2003) carried out a retrospective study of 169 people who experienced evacuation as children during WWII comparing them with a group who had been children during the same period but were not evacuated.   This study used an adapted questionnaire – the Evacuation Experience Questionnaire with a combination of Likert scale and open-ended questions to assess participants' experiences of evacuation. Findings show that the experience of evacuation is associated with reduced psychological wellbeing later in life which may in turn be related to an insecure attachment style developed as a consequence of the experience of evacuation.

Waugh et al (2007) carried out a similar study using the same questionnaire (Evacuation Experience Questionnaire) to explore the experiences of people who had been children during WWII. A sample of evacuees and non-evacuees (self-selected from the Evacuees Reunion Association or adverts in local press) answered questions about their experiences and results indicated that a number of factors, including whether the person had been separated from one or both parents or had experienced abuse were of significance. Both studies indicate that people who were evacuated as children risk reduced psychological wellbeing in later life, indicating that evacuation and separation are both factors which have the potential to impact on mental health across the life course.

Rusby and Tasker (2009) studied 870 adults aged between 62-72 years to establish whether evacuation as a child had impacted on their mental health over time. This study analysed a range of life-course experiences including social class and parental divorce alongside evacuation finding that a number of variables including time away, age at evacuation and quality of nurturing were all influential, with those evacuated at a younger age (4-6) more likely to experience depression in later life. The authors acknowledge limitations to the study; respondents may have had difficulties remembering specifics about parental visits or judging the quality of the care they had received, but overall the results seem to reinforce the fact that childhood history needs to be explored when working clinically with older people.

Studies reviewed to this point have explored the experiences of all children separated due to WWII, however Carlsmith (1967) focused specifically at the experiences of boys in the USA who had experienced separation from their fathers during WWII. A group of 20 Harvard students whose fathers were absent for between 22 and 36 months were studied in relation to academic achievement in a range of verbal aptitude and mathematical tests. Results indicated that father absence had a "powerful and long-range effect" on development over time, particularly in relation to sex role identity.

Franz et al (2007) and Grundmann (1996) explored the impact of being fatherless on the experience of German children in WWII. Franz et al (2007) studied people born before 1947 who were separated from their fathers during WWII and demonstrated that they experienced a higher rate of psychiatric symptoms than

those who were not separated, whilst Grundmann (1996) looked retrospectively at the life experiences of boys whose fathers were absent and argued that the "normalisation" of the experience (primarily because of the numbers of boys affected) potentially mitigated against any negative effects on development.

Otowa (2014), attempted to establish links between parental loss in childhood and psychopathology across the life course by examining the experiences of male twins born between 1940 and 1974 in Canada. 6814 telephone interviews were followed up by 5629 face to face interviews where twins were interviewed separately by clinically trained interviewers. Seven common mental health disorders including depression and generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) were included and parental loss was found to be significant for all disorders. It was found that parental separation (as opposed to loss) was generally significant for the development of GAD but for some disorders, paternal separation seemed to be more significant for males than for females.

A link between wartime experiences and psychological trauma in children was established more recently by Hasavonic (2006) who examined the experiences of 186 children in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995. This study compared the experiences of 93 boys and 93 girls who had either been cared for in a government orphanage, cared for in a children's village, lost a parent but lived with the surviving parent or lived with both parents. The children were assessed using the Children's Posttraumatic Stress Index and Child Depression Index and over half (51.6%) reported symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Children who remained with both parents had the lowest prevalence for symptoms whist children cared for in the foster village had the highest, indicating that separation does indeed seem to have an impact on psychological wellbeing. The loss of a parent impacted on self esteem but the presence of male caregivers seemed to offer some protection against psychological effects which may implicate the absence of a father figure specifically, rather than simply the absence of a parent, as being of significance. This work reflects the findings of Carlsmith (1967) and Franz et al (2007) both of whom had established that the absence of the father was of significance for boys growing up through WWII.

Sociological perspectives seem to have significance with societal normalisation having a protective element for boys (Grundmann, 1996). Neale and Flowerdew (2003) look to longitudinal qualitative research as having value in establishing causal links between events across the life course but caution that childhood is not a "unitary enterprise"; the age at which an event occurs along with sociological factors can all influence how a child processes an experience and how that experience influences development over time. Given the ages of the boys concerned in the wartime studies, and their ages now, a gap exists, which, if closed, could establish whether the experiences described have indeed had a lasting impact into older adulthood.

One aspect which a number of studies have identified is a link between wartime evacuation and attachment as first postulated by Bowlby in 1939 (Foster et al 2003, Rusby and Tasker 2008 and Waugh et al 2007). Waugh et al (2007) even went as far as to say that the "impact of WWII on the population of Britain cannot be overestimated". Evacuation may result in insecure attachment which in turn may impact on psychological wellbeing later in life (Foster et al 2003). There is a

developing body of work exploring this phenomenon with a number of authors alluding to long lasting impact from wartime experiences (Beekman et al 2008, Pesonen et al 2009 and Bryant et al 2008). Evacuation and societal changes impacting on gender identity and separation seem to be significant, but studies carried out so far have largely been self-selected from groups such as evacuation associations. Given that these people had responded to an advertisement it could be assumed that they were keen to talk about their experience introducing potential bias impacting on the objectivity of the results. Foster et al's (2003) Evacuation Experiences Questionnaire was developed specifically to test the hypothesis that children who were evacuated would have lower levels of psychological wellbeing and whilst results from this study seem to support that hypothesis, the number of variables identified, including the wartime experience of the parent serve to demonstrate that evacuation was not a "homogenous" event.

Fuentes and Cox (2000), in exploring the validity of self-report questionnaires for symptoms of anxiety in older adults found similarities with the experience of symptoms across all age groups but found gender differences within the older cohort. Despite the fact that their study had limitations because samples were small and self-selecting, Fuentes and Cox (2000) suggested that their work is a starting point from which further exploration can be made, whilst Rusby and Tasker (2009) in their study of anxiety across the life course identified the need for those caring for older people with anxiety symptoms to acknowledge historical experiences in their assessments. In relation to assessment, tools which focus only on the current presentation and symptomology may fail to identify historical factors whereas those taking a narrative approach would be better suited to unpicking the complexity of how mental health disorders develop over time, including potential issues linked to childhood wartime experiences.

Discussion

Themes from the literature indicate that although the impact of anxiety upon the lives of older people is not disputed, more needs to be known about how anxiety develops over the life course. Experiences from the author's own clinical practice uncovered a potential link with anxiety and childhood, having met a number of older men verbalising having had little or no contact with their fathers early in life due to WWII and subsequently developing symptoms of anxiety post-retirement.

Given Bowlby's (1939) warning about the potential impact of WWII and Howe's (2011) recent work exploring links between attachment, resilience and psychopathology in later life, the findings of the literature review seem to indicate that these links should not be ignored and may be of significance for those who are experiencing issues with anxiety as older people having experienced separation as children. The timing of some of the studies reviewed means that the people discussed had not yet achieved older age and relatively few authors have followed up this cohort to confirm ongoing impact of childhood separation into later life.

There may be merit in developing further understanding of the processes which impact upon psychopathology across the life course, and in particular in developing potential links between childhood wartime experiences and anxiety disorders in later life. The availability of narrative through a range of cultural media would suggest that people are happy to talk about their childhood

experiences of war and commemorative events (such as anniversaries) re-kindle memories from this time. Caution is needed however to avoid the risk of recall bias or placing emphasis on singular events as being of greater significance than others (Foster et al 2003, Neale and Flowerdew 2003).

In conclusion, it would appear that Bowlby's warning issued in 1939 that childhood separation could impact on mental health across the life course could indeed be relevant to older people experiencing anxiety in later life today. Evidence from the literature reinforces the idea that mental health in older people is a complex matter and that a number of factors interplay over time. The absence of the father for boys during WWII appears to be of significance and further research, particularly within the British population, may establish whether methods for assessing symptoms of anxiety in the here and now should be supported by historical narrative. If childhood factors are indeed precipitating and impacting upon the development of anxiety disorders across the life course a method for collecting this information is required. Further qualitative exploration of the subjective experience of events and the interpretation of that experience could be used to take forward the themes identified by previous research and enable men experiencing anxiety for the first time as older adults to understand how factors from their early lives may have impacted on their mental health, as well as supporting the development of more in-depth assessment strategies for clinicians working in mental health services for older people.

People born in the years preceding the start of WWII are the first cohort to become older adults having lived through this period in history as children and further research exploring their experiences could cement the links already described and inform future assessment and treatment of anxiety disorders in older adults.

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Table 1

Reference	Type of study	Findings	Themes
Beekman, A.T.F; Bremmer, M.A; Deeg, D.J.H; Van Balkom, A.J.L.M; Smit,J.H.; De Beurs, E. et al (1998) Anxiety disorders in later life: A report from the longitudinal aging study in Amsterdam. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry.* 13 pp717-726	10-year longitudinal study of predictors and consequences of changes in wellbeing and autonomy in the older population.	Anxiety disorders common Range of risk factors Prevalence 10.2%	World war two experiences significant risk factor for anxiety in later life. Use of vulnerability stress model
Bryant, C; Jackson, H. and Ames, D. (2007) The prevalence of anxiety in older adults: Methodological issues and a review of the literature. *Journal of Affective Disorders* 109 (2008) pp233-250	Systematic search of articles published between 1980-2007 discussing anxiety in people over the age of 60	Prevalence in community samples 1.2-15%. GAD most common anxiety disorder in older adults Mixed methodology in study hinders comparison	Nature of anxiety in older people needs more exploration. Hampers interventions Needs more research
	Mixed methods – interviews and aptitude (verbal and	Father absent students share fewer interests with adult males	Separation from the father impacts on academic

	mathematical) tests Single female experimenter Direct comparison – male students who had been separated and those who were not separated	Father absent students more self-acceptance and ideal self, more like mother	achievement and sex role behaviours There are lasting measurable effects from being separated from the father at a young age
Foster, D; Davies, S. and Steele, H. (2003) The evacuation of British children during World War II: a preliminary investigation into the long-term psychological effects. *Aging and Mental Health*. 7(5) pp398-408	Retrospective non-randomised post-test group study	Childhood evacuees show lower levels of psychological wellbeing than non-evacuees. Events linked to childhood attachment are significant for wellbeing over time.	May be related to attachment Evacuation not a homogenous event and attachment is an important factor.
Fuentes, K. and Cox, B. (2000) Assessment of anxiety in older adults: a community-based survey and comparison with younger adults. *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 38(2000) pp 297-309	Comparison study – symptoms of anxiety amongst young and older adults – to test whether anxiety presents differently for different age groups	Anxiety symptoms as common in older adults as in younger cohorts. Symptoms in older men more specific so could be missed by generalised measurement scales. Small sample, no demographic data	Anxiety measures may not be reliable for older male pattern anxiety
Grundmann, M. (1996) Historical context of father absence: some consequences for the family formation of German men. *International Journal of Behavioural Development*. 19(2) pp415-431	Retrospective study, 2 cohorts, born 1929-31, 1939-41	Paternal absence impacts on family formation and sex type behaviour	Absence normalised because all men conscripted. Social meaning has significance on sex role development
Hasanovic, M; Sinanovic, O; Selimbsic, Z; Pajevic, I. And Avdibegovic, E. (2006) Psychological Disturbances of War-traumatized Children from	Assessment of mental health in war traumatised children.	Loss of parent increased risk for PTSD and depression	Parental absence significant but male caregiver

Foster and Family Settings in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Croatian medical Journal* 47(1) pp85-94			can mediate effects
Lenze, E.J and Wetherall, J.L. (2011) A lifespan view of anxiety disorders. *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*. 13(4) pp381-399	Comparison of anxiety across the lifecourse including data on prevalence in older age compared with younger age groups.	Neurodevelopmental changes and psychosocial factors significant in development of later life anxiety. Proposes eight strategies for treatment of anxiety in later life.	Gaps in understanding need to be closed to facilitate effective treatment.
Maniam, J; Antoniadis, C. And Morris, M.J. (2014) Early life stress, HPA axis adaptation and mechanisms contributing to later health outcomes. *Frontiers in Endocrinology*. Doi: 10.3389/fendo.2014.00073	Review of the mechanisms underlying how early life stress leads to maladaptation of the stress response	Early life stress can deregulate the HPA axis and increase risk of metabolic disorders	Impact on physical health may be risk factor for mental illness
Otowa,T; York,T.P; Gardner,C.O; Kendler, K.S. and Hettema, J.M. (2014) The impact of childhood parental loss on risk for mood, anxiety and substance use disorders in a population-based sample of male twins. *Psychiatry Research*. 220(1-2) pp404-409	Examination of association between parental loss (any loss, death, and separation) during childhood and lifetime risk for seven common psychiatric and substance use disorders in a sample of 2605 male twins. Structural equation modelling used	Early parental separation more significant than parental death.	Need to explore the links between paternal separation and anxiety in later life further
Pesonen, A.K; Raikkonene, K; Heinonen, K; Kajantie, E; Foren, T. And Eriksson, J.G. (2007) Depressive symptoms in adults separated from their parents as children: a natural experiment during World War II. *American Journal of Epidemiology* 166(10) pp1126-33	Participants randomly selected from birth cohort study and invited to participate – 129 separated from father, 68 from both parents, 85 not separated. "Natural experiment"	Separation from father or both parents affects stress physiology (HPA Axis) over time.	Childhood events have impact across the life course into later life.

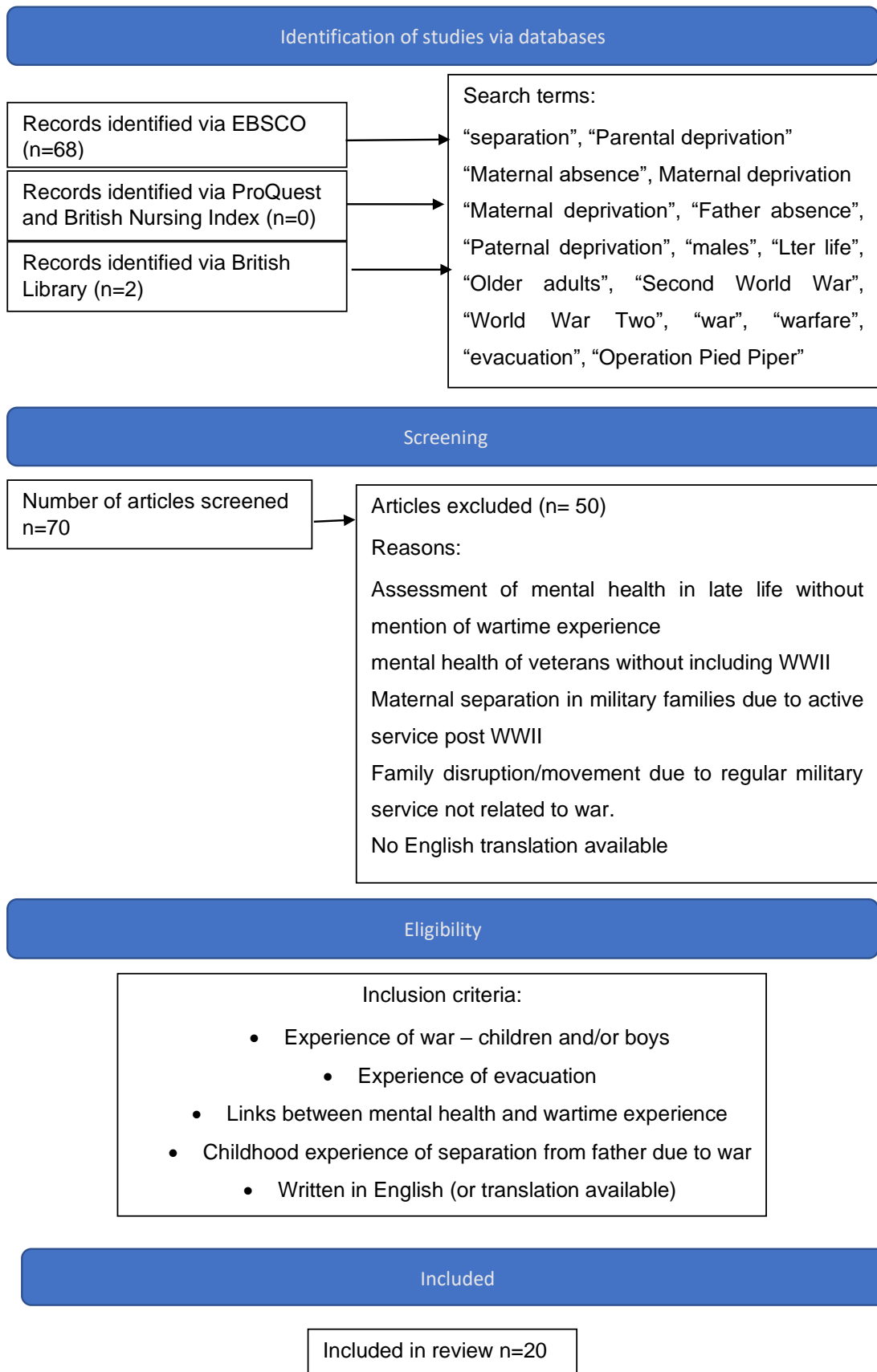|			
		afforded by World War Two		
Rusby, J.S.M. and tasker, F. (2009) Long-term effects of the British evacuation of children during World War 2 on their adult mental health. *Aging and Mental Health* 13(3) pp 391-404	Self-select study – participants identified via advert and invited to take part	Evacuation impacts on mental health in later life. Level of care received as an evacuee is significant	Supports Bowlby's assertion that evacuation at a young age impacts over time. Need to include childhood events in assessment
Therrien, Z. and Hunsley, J. (2012) Assessment of anxiety in older adults: A systematic review of commonly used measures. *Aging and Mental Health* 16(1) pp1-16	Systematic review of the literature	91 anxiety measures identified, mostly developed for younger populations	Clinicians need to use age-appropriate measurement tools for anxiety in older cohorts.
Franz, V.M; Hardt, J. And Brahler, E. (2007) Fatherless: Long term sequelae in German children of World War II. *Zeitschrift fur Psychosomatische Medizin und Psychotherapie.*53/2007 pp216-227	Interviews conducted with men, average age 68 about absence of father in WW2 in Germany	Subjects who lost a father had more psychiatric symptoms	Growing up fatherless may have lifelong consequences.
Waugh, M.J; Robbins, I; Davies,S. and Feigenbaum, J. (2007) The long-term impact of war experiences and evacuation on people who were children during World War Two. *Aging and Mental Health* 11(2) pp168-174	Self-select sample. Retrospective cross-sectional design Standardised self-report questionnaire	World war two experiences of evacuation still significant 60 years later.	"Likely to be of relevance" to older cohorts – need to explore childhood experiences during assessment.

APPENDIX B - SEARCH STRATEGY

#	Query	Limiters/Expanders	Last Run Via	Results
S22	S10 AND S21	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S21	S11 OR S12 OR S13 OR S14 OR S15 OR S16 OR S17 OR S18 OR S19 OR S20	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S20	(MH "Warfare")	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S19	warfare	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S18	(MH "World War II")	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S17	wartime	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S16	"world war two"	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display

#	Query	Limiters/Expanders	Last Run Via	Results
S15	1939 - 1945	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S14	"second world war"	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S13	"world war II"	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S12	"world war 2"	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S11	WWII	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S10	S1 OR S2 OR S3 OR S4 OR S5 OR S6 OR S7 OR S8 OR S9	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S9	"maternal deprivation""	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S8	"maternal absence"	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S7	"parental absence"	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced	Display

			Search Database - MEDLINE	
S6	"parental deprivation"	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S5	"father absence"	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S4	"paternal absence"	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S3	"paternal deprivation"	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S2	(MH "Paternal Deprivation") OR (MH "Maternal Deprivation")	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display
S1	separation	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - MEDLINE	Display

APPENDIX C - PRISMA CHART

Identification of studies via databases

Records identified via EBSCO (n=68)

Records identified via ProQuest and British Nursing Index (n=0)

Records identified via British Library (n=2)

Search terms:

"separation", "Parental deprivation" "Maternal absence", Maternal deprivation "Maternal deprivation", "Father absence", "Paternal deprivation", "males", "Lter life", "Older adults", "Second World War", "World War Two", "war", "warfare", "evacuation", "Operation Pied Piper"

Screening

Number of articles screened n=70

Articles excluded (n= 50)

Reasons:

Assessment of mental health in late life without mention of wartime experience

mental health of veterans without including WWII

Maternal separation in military families due to active service post WWII

Family disruption/movement due to regular military service not related to war.

No English translation available

Eligibility

Inclusion criteria:

- Experience of war – children and/or boys
- Experience of evacuation
- Links between mental health and wartime experience
- Childhood experience of separation from father due to war
- Written in English (or translation available)

Included

Included in review n=20

Reference	Type of study	Aims	Participants	Findings	Themes
Bach, G.R. (1946). Father fantasies and father-typing in father-separated children. Child Development 17(1-2) pp. 63-80	Experimental, observational study using doll play Doll play technique developed by the author	To explore the emotional aspects of the father-child relationship	20 "normally adjusted" schoolchildren, aged 6-10 years whose fathers were still away serving in the military in 1945. Control group of children of fathers not serving.	Father separated children produce "idealistic, fantasy picture f the father". The father in this group is enjoying time with his family, is affectionate and demonstrates a happy marriage. Demonstrates strong desire for paternal affection and a harmonious marital relationship. Control group (father at home) show father as a punitive figure who contributes to "intra-family hostility".	Highlights potential difficulties for the family post-war. Child may have idealised view of the father which may not be realised on his return. Need to work with parents to manage expectations on return of the father
Beekman, A.T.F; Bremmer, M.A; Deeg, D.J.H; Van Balkom, A.J.L.M; Smit,J.H.; De Beurs, E. et. al. (1998). Anxiety disorders in later life: A report from the longitudinal aging study in Amsterdam. *International Journal of*	10-year longitudinal study	Predictors and consequences of changes in wellbeing and autonomy in the older population.	Random sample of 3107 older adults, aged 55 years to 85 years in The Netherlands taken from the Longitudinal Aging Study.	Anxiety disorders common Range of risk factors Prevalence 10.2%	World war two experiences significant risk factor Use of vulnerability stress model

Geriatric Psychiatry. 13 pp717-726					
Bowley, A.H. (1948). War and the Child. In *Modern Child Psychology.* Hutchinson's University Library	Book Chapter	Explore the effects of: Evacuation Father absence Air raids General effects of the war Parental loss Family disturbances	N/A	Reports on a range of early studies of the effects of the war on children. Examples of findings include: Evacuation more likely to cause upset that air raids. Age of the child significant. Loss of the mother causes greater psychological disturbance. Older students reported being more sociable after the war. Infant school age children showed greatest effects of air raids e.g. lack of concentration, difficulty learning.	Acknowledges that in 1948 it was too early to judge the effects of the war but early research has identified some potential areas for concern.
Carlsmith, L. (1967). Some Personality Characteristics of Boys Separated from their Fathers during World War II. *Ethos* 1(4) pp 466-477	Mixed methods – interviews and aptitude (verbal and mathematical) tests Single female experimenter	To study the effects of early separation from father on boys. Direct comparison – male students who had been separated and those who were not separated	20 students at Harvard – had been separated from father at a very young age (because of military service) for between 22 and 36 months	Father absent students share fewer interests with adult males. Father absent students show more self-acceptance and ideal self is more like mother.	Separation from the father impacts on academic achievement and sex role behaviours There are lasting measurable effects from being separated from the father at a young age

Foster, D; Davies, S. and Steele, H. (2003) The evacuation of British children during World War II: a preliminary investigation into the long-term psychological effects. *Aging and Mental Health.* 7(5) pp398-408	Retrospective non-randomised post-test group study	To explore psychological wellbeing in people who were evacuated as children compared to non-evacuees Hypothesis – childhood evacuees would have lower psychological wellbeing than those who were not evacuated	169 evacuees 43 non-evacuees	43.2% of evacuees reported that life was worse after evacuation. Reasons include: • Own experience • Mother's wartime experience • Father's wartime experience • Parental separation/remarriage • Family growing apart • Feeling unwanted or abandoned	Evacuation not an homogeneous event Attachment an important factor in relationship between evacuation and current psychological wellbeing Current social support may mediate impact Recent events rekindling wartime memories may impact psychological wellbeing
von Franz, M; Hardt, J. And Brahler, E. (2007) Fatherless: Long term sequelae in German children of World War II. *Zeitschrift fur Psychosomatische Medizin und Psychotherapie.*53/2007 pp216-227	Quantitative Questionnaire	Explore connections between wartime experience of boys and long term consequences on psychological health	883 subjects (average age 68 years)	Subjects who lost their father showed an increase on psychiatric symptoms	Growing up fatherless may have lifelong consequences

Freitag, S; Strauß, K; Hannig, C; Rostalski, T. and Schmidt, S. (2011). Predictors of quality of life in old age in people with and without displacement in World War II. Z Med Pstchol 4(2011) pp. 170-177	Mixed methods – Questionnaires and interviews Qualitative interviews used to validate the quantitative results	To examine Quality of Life (QOL) in older adults who were either displaced or not displaced during WWII To identify factors predicting current QOL	420 questionnaires distributed, balanced between those who were displaced and those who were not displaced. 130 people interviewed	Traumatic experiences in WWII had no direct impact on current QOL, but people who were displaced have higher incidence of trauma related stress. Factors such as current life situation, attitudes and social situation more significant predictors of QOL	Recognises the limited exploration of biographical factors in relation to QOL in older people. Subjects characterised by resilience and optimistic attitudes towards difficult life situations. Recognises the importance of biographical data and the role of resilience in managing difficult life events.
Grundmann, M. (1996) Historical context of father absence: some consequences for the family formation of German men. *International Journal of Behavioural Development.* 19(2) pp415-431	Retrospective study examining life history data of men born between 1929-31 and 1939-41	Explore developmental consequences for boys who were separated from their fathers because of military service	675 West German men	Paternal deprivation has an impact on family formation and sex-type behaviour Family formation affected less if separation due to war	Social interpretation of that father absence was "normal" during the wartime period Illustrates importance of social meaning in how child copes with separation from their father

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					Suggests the need for further research when participants achieve "older" age.
Hasanovic, M; Sinanovic, O; Selimbsic, Z; Pajevic, I. And Avdibegovic, E. (2006) Psychological Disturbances of War-traumatized Children from Foster and Family Settings in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Croatian medical Journal* 47(1) pp85-94	Questionnaires and interviews Child depression inventory used to assess level of depression. Children's Posttraumatic Stress Reaction Index used to assess symptoms of PTSD.	Assessment of mental health in war-traumatised children in Bosnia and Herzegovina	93 boys 93 girls Government orphanage Or SOS children's village Or Living with single surviving parent Or Living with both parents	26.9% had both parents. 39.2% lost father. 22.3% lost both parents. 51.6% met criteria for PTSD (no gender difference identified). 42 children met threshold for depression. 15.6% had both PTSD and depression. 41.4% had neither PTSD nor depression.	Loss of a parent results in lower self-esteem. Loss of a parent resulted in higher frequency of PTSD and depression. Presence of a male figure may offer some protection psychologically
LePoidevin, N. (2010). *Torteval School in Exile: The story of a Guernsey school evacuated shortly before the German occupation of 1940-45 and its establishment at Alderley Edge near Manchester*. ELSP	Book	Tells the story of the experiences of children, their mothers and teachers who were evacuated away from Guernsey during WWII.	Children, their mothers and teachers	Children and mothers lived in local village and were accepted by local population, headmaster and family experience was different as did not fit easily into the hierarchical structure of the village.	Some children had spent more time away than they had been at home and the book highlights the fact that although the evacuation was intended to be supportive, issues such as lack of acceptance by

					families on their return was difficult for some.
Lester and Flake (2013). How Wartime Military Service Affects Children and Families. *The Future of Children*. 23(2) pp.121-141	Review	To answer questions about how parental military deployment affects children, risk factors for psychological problems and how resources such as resilience can be supportive.	Military children	Prolonged separation coupled with danger is unique to military children. Living in a military family gives a sense of identity. Living in a military family results in repeated moves – 47% moved three times in five years. Readjustment post deployment can be troublesome.	More longitudinal research needed. Better understanding of resilience enables the building of preventative strategies. Cumulative stress models can foster understanding of how multiple risk factors interact.
Morris-King, S. (2009). Eliciting first person accounts of childhood wartime experiences and perceived impact on psychological wellbeing. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research.* 1(3) pp 48-57	Qualitative study Focus groups Free Association Narrative (FAN) interviews	To elicit first-hand accounts of experiences of war and their perceived impact on psychological health To identify issues that may be of significance to psychologists when assessing psychological health in older people To consider how the wartime experiences	Nine participants, three men and six women, all of white British background, aged 73 or over with no diagnosis of dementia or issues which might hinder verbal communication. Participants were assigned to a focus group or individual	Although levels of depression were not identified on self-reporting measures, high levels of anxiety, loss and adaptive coping strategies were observed. The subjective nature of life experiences means that the participant's perception of the events that is significant i.e. whether the event is whether it is viewed as challenging.	There is a need to use in-depth qualitative research methods to "access individual narratives of wartime experience". Results may be useful for those working with victims of terrorism attacks, particularly as these events have

		of older people might inform practice for health professionals working with people experiencing war-like events	interview depending upon their choice. Participants al community dwelling and not n contact with MH services.	Lifespan model of development was useful in identifying the impact of other later life events such as bereavement as well as which individuals used adaptive vs maladaptive coping mechanisms.	a wider global impact. Health professionals need to consider the ongoing effects of wartime or war-like experiences, particularly as people get older.
Otowa, T; York, T.P; Gardner, C.O; Kendler, K.S. and Hettema, J.M. (2014). The impact of childhood parental loss on risk for mood, anxiety and substance use disorders in a population-based sample of male twins. *Psychiatry research.*220(2014) pp. 404-409	Qualitative: interviews	Examine risk for seven psychiatric and substance misuse disorders associated with parental loss in separation in male twins. Examine association between parental loss pre-age 17	2605 male twins born between 1940 and 1974. Mean age 36.8 years. Twins interviewed by different interviewers.	584 – parental loss (22.4%) 184 – parental death in childhood (7.1%) 400 – parental separation (15.4%), 316 due to divorce. Parental loss and separation predict risk for psychopathology, though loss alone does not increase risk. Parental death increases risk for phobia and alcohol dependence (marginal).	Effect of loss due to separation "more striking than loss due to death". Mediating factors e.g. family environment both before or after loss may predispose to psychopathology. Quality of parental relationship may be influential. Possible effects of chronic stress, particularly in young children. Effects enhanced in boys compared to girls.

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Pesonen, A.K; Raikkonene, K; Heinonen, K; Kajantie, E; Foren, T. And Eriksson, J.G. (2007) Depressive symptoms in adults separated from their parents as children: a natural experiment during World War II. *American Journal of Epidemiology* 166(10) pp1126-33	Experiment. Report of a Trier Social Stress Test – measure of cortisol levels and ACTH	Establish a link between childhood separation due to war and HPA axis response to psychosocial stress in adulthood.	282 people selected from Helsinki birth cohort study. Random selection: 129 separated from father. 68 separated from both parents. 85 not separated.	Impact of Early Life Stress (ELS) higher for men. Experience normalised due to the fact that everyone was affected by the war. Some positive effects noted based on location of evacuation and the quality of the foster care offered.	Effects from childhood persist and the effect may increase with age. BUT other factors may come unto ply.
Rusby, J.S.M. and Tasker, F. (2008) Childhood temporary separation: long-term effects of the British evacuation of children during World War 2 on older adults' attachment styles. *Attachment and Human development.* 10(2) pp207-221	Retrospective survey exploring: Evacuation experience Upbringing Life-course e.g. social class, education level and severe events Attachment style using self-report measure.	Explore potential associations between childhood separation due to war and adult attachment style	869 respondents aged 62-72 years, all lived in Kent during WWII. 770 evacuated 89 remained at home. Recruited via notices in libraries, newspapers and school magazines. 76% return of questionnaires.	Participants evacuated between the ages of 4 and 6 showed lower incidence of secure attachment style (male 38%, female 27%). Not evacuated more likely to have secure attachment style (64% male, 44% female). Quality of care received influenced results 23% incidence of secure attachment for poor home nurture 45% good care.	Consistent care n early childhood is important whether at home or foster care. Long-term effects of childhood separation and quality of care have both "sociological and psychological" implications. Need for clinicians and carers to consider the importance of childhood separation and poor nurture in

					childhood when caring for older adults.
Rusby, J.S.M. and tasker, F. (2009) Long-term effects of the British evacuation of children during World War 2 on their adult mental health. *Aging and Mental Health* 13(3) pp 391-404	Quantitative analysis of associations between upbringing, evacuation and life course variables with incidence of depression and anxiety across the life course of the participants.	Same study as above, investigating long term effects on adult mental health of childhood separation due to WWII. Identification of associations between evacuation experience and lifespan mental health along with influence of factors such upbring and other life course variables.	869 respondents aged 62-72 years, all lived in Kent during WWII. 770 evacuated 89 remained at home. Recruited via notices in libraries, newspapers and school magazines. 76% return of questionnaires. Acceptance criteria – excludes incomplete questionnaires, people evacuated with their mothers or attending boarding school.	Evacuated group - depression in females 1.64 times for males, 41% females, 25% males. Nurture – 36-58% females (good enough to poor nurture) experienced depression, 20-43% for males. Anxiety – 11-25% for females, 7-21% for males. Significant association between childhood experience and mental health over the lifespan. Context of the separation and quality of upbringing (before and after the separation) that influences effect on mental health across the lifespan, rather than the experience of evacuation per se.	Need to have knowledge of childhood history when treating older adults in clinical settings.
Sixsmith, J; Sixsmith, A; Callendar, M. and Corr, S. (2014). Wartime experiences and their implications for the	Grounded theory design, part of a five country project	To explore the impact of the experiences of World War Two on the lives of older people in the UK.	40 participants from UK born between 1914 and 1923 (20 1914-19, 20 1920-23). 12	Nature and meaning of home –	Wartime experience is a "unique and defining characteristic of

everyday lives of older people. *Ageing & Society.* 34(9) pp 457-1481	(ENABLE-AGE) Semi-structured interviews conducted. 8 analysed by UK team, 12 by international team, followed by a further 20 UK interviews.		females, 8 males in each group of 20. 376 UK respondents following longitudinal survey. Self-selection adopted following stratification by age/gender of those interested in the topic of home and healthy ageing.	Wartime identified as a defining period in the participants' lives. Strong desire to live in a stable home following destruction (such as bombing) during the war. Perspectives of wartime experience – Sense of belonging or exclusion lined to comradeship during the war. Wartime experiences a key bonding factor with others in the community	the wartime generation". Organisations such as veterans associations are key places for the maintenance of friendships ad social connections, e.g. if moving to a new area. Storytelling important (for men in particular). Need to understand the wartime experience in social terms, not only in relation to psychological health.
Vaizey, H. (2011). Parents and Children in Second World War Germany: An Inter-generational Perspective on Wartime Separation. *Journal of Contemporary History* 46(2) pp 364-382	Discussion paper	Discussion of how parent/child relationships were affected by WWII. Challenges the assumption that families were always destabilised by wartime separation. Explores		Later research challenges the literature focused on government policy and statistical trends. Letters to and from the front can be supportive in maintaining family relationships. Maintains contact between children and	Family relationships were resilient during the war. Role of children should be emphasised – can be a calming influence on

				their absent fathers, allowing fathers to remain involved and support discipline. Letters previously discounted as significant – fear that the letter writers were writing what the recipients "want to hear". Younger children dd not understand the serious nature of the war – nothing with which to compare it. Older boys took on the role of the "father". Fear that fathers would not recognise their children after being away so long.	mothers experiencing stress.
Waugh, M.J; Robbins, I; Davies,S. and Feigenbaum, J. (2007) The long-term impact of war experiences and evacuation on people who were children during World War Two. *Aging and Mental Health* 11(2) pp168-174	Retrospective cross-sectional design Standardised self-report questionnaire (EEQ as developed by Foster et al, (2003))	To explore experience of war for evacuees and non-evacuees. Builds on previous study using four questionnaires: • Experience of abuse • Impact of event • GHQ (General Health Questionnaire,	Self-select sample. 343 questionnaires distributed. Evacuees - 136 identified from Foster et al (2003) 207 recruited via advert in Evacuee Reunion Association magazine. 72.6% return rate	No significant relationship between evacuation and attachment style Not evacuated – 73.0% had secure attachment style Evacuated – 67.5% had secure attachment style Not evacuated – 24% abused Evacuated – 49.6% abused, more likely to include emotional and sexual abuse and neglect.	"The impact of WWII on the population of Britain cannot be overestimated." Experience of war including evacuation had significant impact at the time and 60 years later. Findings likely to be "of relevance"

		measures mental health) • Attachment style	Non-evacuees – 145 questionnaires distributed. Recruited via local press and local clubs		to services for older adults. Potential link between childhood experience and MH in later life and professionals need to understand the link
Women's Institute (1941) Town Children through Country Eyes	Audit report	Explore the experiences of children evacuated to the countryside and the impact on host families	1700 WI's completed the survey	City children found to be dirty and having lice. Eating habits differ between city and country children. Bedwetting common amongst evacuees.	Clashes between expectations of foster mothers and their city counterparts.

Keele
U N I V E R S I T Y

Faculty HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES Research Ethics Committee (hUMss FREC) Application Form

Instructions for completing this application form

This application form must be completed in full and submitted along with all project documents to apply for Keele University Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty Research Ethics Committee (HumSS FREC) review. Information on how to submit for HumSS FREC review can be found here.

Project Details

All questions in this section are **mandatory** unless otherwise stated.

FULL Project title:

An exploration of the experiences of people who were children during World War Two

Name of applicant:

Karen Julie Longson

NAME(S) of Keele Co-applicant(s):

Dr Derek McGhee (supervisor)

Academic unit:

School of Social Science and Public Policy

Proposed start date:

If you are unsure, please provide an estimate.

03 June 2019

Proposed end date:

If you are unsure, please provide an estimate.

01 June 2020	Estimate

Status of funding:

Including internal sources.

Unfunded / no external funding

Funding references: (Where applicable)

Click here to enter a RaISE reference number if the project is seeking / has obtained external funding.	
If there is external funding, is this provided by the Economic and Social Research Council ESRC?	No
Click here to list any other funding references.	

does the project meet any of the following criteria that would require central research ethics committee (CREC) review?

The research could expose participants to potential civil, criminal or other proceedings. (e.g. through disclosure of past events or prospective activity)	No
Administering a substance to participants including drugs, nutritional supplements and challenge agents or other intrusive intervention e.g. hypnotherapy, transcranial magnetic stimulation.	No
The research involves human exposure to ionising radiation / X-Ray.	No
The research involves a risk of significant[1] or permanent physical, mental or emotional harm, psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation requiring medical attention, treatment or other amelioration/mitigation/alleviation.	No
The research involves prisoners and/or young offenders.	No
The research involves participants without their consent in activity that will have a direct impact upon those participating.	No
The research may bring the reputation of the University or other body into question (e.g. controversial sources of funding, engaging with issues that may cause offence to groups or individuals, or engaging in areas that might be misconstrued as endorsing illegal practices)	No
The research could involve the generation of knowledge that could potentially be weaponisable.	No

[1]*Significant is the threshold of harm that justifies compulsory intervention.*

Does the project involve the use of Security Sensitive Information?

For guidance on what constitutes Security Sensitive Information go here

No

Aims and Objectives & Experimental Design

Project synopsis:

Describe the purpose and rationale for the proposed project. The description should be in everyday language that is free from jargon. All technical terms, acronyms or discipline specific phrases must be clearly explained.

I met John (not his real name) in 2013 and he told me that he had been cared for by his grandmother during WWII as his father was away fighting and his mother worked in a munitions factory. John did not meet his father properly until the age of 6. John had maintained a good quality of life, marrying and working until retirement at the age of 65, but had always experienced mild problems with depression and anxiety. As he reached retirement age, the depression and anxiety got worse and he sought professional help. I began to wonder whether John's early life experiences were influencing his mental health now and I discussed this possibility with him. Meeting John was the starting point for this project and I began to wonder whether people's experiences of separation and reunion because of the war may be influencing their later lives.

A number of events during the twentieth century have had lasting impact for the people who experienced them. Before World War One, women could have expected to marry and start families by their early twenties. The death of almost an entire generation of young men because of the war changed this, however, and many women were widowed or never married at all. In the USA, the depression in the 1930s meant that many people married and had children later than previous generations, although this lasted for just one generation.

When World War Two (WWII) started, many men were conscripted and left home to join the forces.   Evacuation, known as "Operation Pied Piper" meant that nearly 3,000,000 children moved from cities to the countryside. Families were given little time to prepare meaning that children left home with only a change of clothes and little idea where they were heading or how long they would be away. Not all wartime experiences were negative, however, and many people have fond memories of their time away as evacuees.

I would like to take a different angle to researching wartime experiences. As well as looking at what it was like to be separated, either because of evacuation or because a father was away, I would like to look at what happened when the war ended and everyone was reunited as a family. I hope that this will give me an idea of whether experiences during the war changed the life of the family after it.

As our population ages, more people will be classed as "older, older people", that is, over the age of 85. This is a new group but they have the common experience of a childhood lived during a World War. If experiences during childhood have the potential to affect later lives, this research may be of particular significance for this group of people, as they move into this new generation.

Methodology:

Please give a brief description of the methodology of the project. This should not be a repetition of the study protocol.

The project will adopt a qualitative methodology, using a phenomenological approach. Focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews and written accounts will be used

to allow people to tell their own stories. These will then be analysed and interpreted using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis.

What are the primary outcome measures/AIMs?

The primary aim of the research is to answer the following questions:
What was it like to be a child during WWII?
What was the experience of children separated from their fathers during WWII because of conscription?
What was the experience of children separated from their families during WWII because of evacuation?
What was the experience of children when they and their fathers returned home at the end of WWII and the family was reunited?
Did experiences of separation during the war influence people's lives, relationships and the choices, such as career, they subsequently made?

What are the secondary outcome measures/AIMS?

If there are no secondary outcome measures enter 'Not applicable'.

Not applicable

What is the significance or benefits of the project?

Childhood experiences have the potential to influence mental health across the life course and childhood separation has been found to be of significance for some cohorts. By exploring the meaning of separation and reunion, it may be possible to influence clinical assessment strategies for clinicians working with older people, encouraging the use of the person's childhood narrative to support the assessment process.

Does the project involve any of the following?

Human Biomaterial	No
Personal Identifiable Information transferred into the University	Yes
Personal Identifiable Information transferred out of the University	No
Security Sensitive Information	No
Ionising Radiation	No
HRA approval (to be sought after REC approval)	No

Identification & Recruitment

When submitting your application form you should also attach a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (if applicable), the Consent Form (if applicable), the content of any telephone script (if applicable) and any other material that will be used in the recruitment and consent process.

All questions in this section are **mandatory** unless otherwise stated.

Describe the participant population:

Include relevant important characteristics such as age, gender, location, affiliation, level of fitness, intellectual ability etc. Describe any relevant inclusion/exclusion criteria.

The participants will be people who were children during World War Two. They will have been born between 1930 and 1939, so will be aged between 80 and 89 years old. Both men and women will be invited to participate, and mixed gender sibling groups will be particularly welcome. The participants will live either in North Staffordshire, or a part of the country from where children were evacuated to North Staffordshire.

> **Inclusion** criteria will be:
> Born between 1930 and 1939
> Father conscripted to the armed forces
> And/or
> Evacuated away from home
> No diagnosis of dementia or significant cognitive impairment which precludes informed consent
> Not in current contact with mental health services
> **Exclusion** criteria will be:
> A diagnosis of dementia or significant cognitive impairment which precludes informed consent
> In current contact with mental health services.
> People not separated from their father/wider families during the war

How many participants do you intend to recruit?

DESCRIBE Per population group WHERE APPLICABLE.

> 20

From which source(s) do you plan to recruit your participants? E.G SCHOOLS, CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS, UNIVERSITIES, ETC

> British Evacuees Association
> University of the Third Age
> Women's Institute
> Local History Society

How will potential participants, records or samples be identified? Who will carry this out, what resources will be used?

> To locate the sample, an information sheet outlining the aim and purpose of the research will be produced along with a contact sheet and invitation to participate. This will be distributed to a range of local organisations whose membership demographic fits the sample universe. Evacuees have been involved in previous studies (Foster et al 2003, Waugh et al 2007), and participants self-selected by responding to adverts placed in the Evacuees Reunion Association Newsletter. This organisation, now The British Evacuees Association, has a bi-monthly magazine sharing stories and establishing links with other evacuees. A request for participants will be made via this magazine. 2019 marks 80 years since the start of WWII and this act may increase interest in sharing evacuation experiences.
> Likewise, the WI has a monthly magazine which reaches the entire national membership and approaches will be made to the editorial team for help with advertising and recruitment. Each county in the UK has a WI Federation with a local office. Staffordshire Federation will be contacted and information about the project shared via the monthly newsletter as well as social media platforms. The University of the Third Age has a number of local branches and the Stoke South group has Local History and Family History subgroups; the information sheet will be sent to the secretariat of the local groups.

Will any of the following be used:

When submitting the application form a copy of each of these that are being used should be uploaded. For web content, insert a link below.

Posters in public spaces	No
Advertisements	Yes
Social Media	Yes

Websites	No
Click here to enter links to web content.	

Describe what measures will be taken to ensure there is no breach of any duty of confidentiality owed to the public, service users or any other person in the process of identifying potential participants

Participants will be invited to contact the researcher individually and information about other participants will not be shared. The invitation to participate in a focus group will outline the fact that other people will be involved. First names only will be used by the researcher in identifying participants and no other information such as addresses or telephone numbers will be shared by the researcher.

Will consent be obtained?

Describe how.

Yes
Consent form

Will participants be deceived in any way about the purpose of the study?

If yes, please describe the nature and extent of the deception involved. Include how and when the deception will be revealed, WHY, and who will administer this feedback.

No
If yes, provide justification and details of how they will be deceived.

Describe how participants will be informed of and act upon their right to withdraw from the project:

The consent form will indicate the right to withdraw at any point. Willingness to continue will be evaluated prior to focus group and interviews being conducted and prior to data being published. If a participant indicates that they do not wish to continue the interview will be halted. If a participant decides that they do not wish their data to be used this will be removed from the project dataset and destroyed. It will be made clear from the outset that it may not be possible to delete an individual's voice from a focus group recording, although this will be possible from the data transcript produced after the recording.

Will research participants receive any payments, reimbursement of expenses or any other benefits or incentives for taking part in this research?

No
If yes, describe how.

Will you inform participants of the results?

Yes
Participants will be invited to read the completed thesis.   A presentation of the results could be delivered to each organisation, for example at a monthly meeting.

Participant Procedures

All questions in this section are **mandatory** unless otherwise stated.

Give details of all procedure(s) that will be received by participants as part of the research protocol.

These include seeking consent, interviews, imaging investigations, taking samples of human biological material, observations and use of questionnaires.

For each procedure indicate:

Total number of interventions/procedures to be received by each participant as part of the research protocol.

If this intervention/procedure would be routinely given to participants outside the research, how many of the total would be routine?

Average time taken per intervention/procedure (minutes, hours or days)

Details of who will conduct the intervention/procedure, and where it will take place.

> All participants will be asked to give consent.
> All participants will be invited to take part in a focus group.
> All participants will be invited to take part in an individual face to face interview.
> All participants will be invited to provide a written account of their experiences.
> Focus groups will be scheduled to last one hour and participants will attend one group
> Individual interviews will be scheduled to last between 60 and ninety minutes.
> Participants will be interviewed on a maximum of two occasions, although most will be interviewed once.
> None of the interventions would be routinely offered outside the research.

What are the potential risks and burdens for research participants, the research team and the general public AND how will you minimise them? What procedures will be adopted to manage adverse events?

> There is no perceived risk to the general public as a result of this research.
> Individuals taking part in the focus group and interview will be asked to recall memories from their childhood. Some of these memories may have an emotional component and recalling events may provoke an emotional reaction, potentially causing distress. The clinical background of the researcher (Registered Mental Health Nurse) means that she is well placed to identify and manage signs of emotional distress, although it needs to be recognised that the interviews in this context do not have a therapeutic purpose. Contact details for local mental health support organisations will be available and participants will be advised to make contact with their GP should referral to formal services be deemed advisable.
>
> The researcher may be exposed to narratives which contain distressing elements and needs to be aware of the potential risk of distress to themselves. The researcher will have support from a supervisory team and will engage in active reflection to identify and articulate emotionally distressing encounters.

What are the potential risks to the environment and Society and how will you minimise them and what procedures will be adopted to manage adverse events?

> No perceived risk to the environment or wider society

Are there any other ethical issues raised by the research?

> None identified

Confidentiality & Data

All questions in this section are **<u>mandatory</u>** unless otherwise stated.

Will you be undertaking any of the following activities at any stage (including in the identification of potential participants)?

Check all that apply.

Transferring personal data electronically or by hard copy, including by public/private transport, courier and postal services.	Yes
Storing personal data on University Servers	Yes
Storing personal data on University computers, laptops, digital devices, phones, tablets	Yes
Storing personal data in University Premises	Yes
Storing personal data on cloud services	No
Storing personal data on private computers, laptops, digital devices, phones, tablets.	Yes
Storing personal data on any form of removable storage media.	Yes

Will participants be anonymous/rendered anonymous?

Please describe how data will be rendered de-identifiable/anonymous. See ICO guidance.

| Yes |
| Complete anonymisation during a focus group is not possible, although just first names could be used. Rules of confidentiality will be outlined and agreed before the focus group begins. When the focus group/interview data is transcribed, the transcripts will be anonymised by the removal of the participants name and replacement with a code. |

Please describe the physical security arrangements for storage of personal data during the study?

| Data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet |

How will you ensure the confidentiality of personal data?

Consider data throughout the study lifespan and any publications/data sets made available.

| Data in its raw form will not be shared other than with the project supervisory team. Focus group - expectation of confidentiality between members will be outlined before the group takes place. Participants will be asked to sign confidentiality agreement. Data produced will be anonymised on transcription and individual identifiers will be used in all transcripts, analysis and publications. |

Where will research data be stored during the project's activity?

| Secure laptop Locked filing cabinet |

Describe the arrangements for storage of research data after the project has ended?

Please refer to the University's Record Retention Schedule (found here) and the Keele University Research Data Management and Sharing Policy (found here).

| Guidelines published by the University for the storage and retention of research data will be followed as below: Research data will be kept for a minimum of 10 years following project completion. The date of project completion will the date of the conclusion of the project, as defined and understood by all parties. |

> Electronic data such as participant recordings will be stored on a password protected laptop.
> Paper records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet.

Further Information

Once the REC Application Form is complete and all documentation is prepared and ready for submission, follow the process outlined in **UREC-SOP-20-Applying for HumSS Faculty Research Ethics Committee Review** available [here](#).

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HUMSS FREC) <u>AMENDMENT</u> APPLICATION FORM

Instructions for completing this amendment application form

This application form must be completed in full and submitted along with all amended project documents to apply for Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty Research Ethics Committee (HumSS FREC) review. Information on how to submit for HumSS FREC review of an amendment can be found on the <u>HumSS FREC website.</u>

Where applicable, it is strongly advised that supervisors review and approve the amendment application before it is submitted. Confirmation of this is required as part of the submission process.**Contents**

Project Details

All questions in this section are **mandatory** unless otherwise stated.

Full Project title:

An interpretive exploration of the experiences of people who were children during World War Two

Original REC code (for original project application):

HU-190023

Amendment number & date:

Amendment 1 15/10/20

Name of applicant:

Karen Julie Longson

Academic unit:

School of Social Science and Public Policy

Date of original favourable ethical opinion (FEO) for project:

04 June 2019

Which committee provided the original FEO

HumSS FREC

Type of amendment

Amendment to information in the project Application Form	Yes
Amendment to / addition of other documents linked to the project	Yes
Amendment to the protocol (or equivalent, where applicable)	Not applicable

Amendment details

Description of all changes with reasons

No.	Brief description of amendment(s) *(please enter each separate amendment in a new row. If changes are extensive, refer to a separate document if needed)*	Reason for change	List relevant affected sup numbers to be approved *(ensure all referenced documen*
			Document name
1	Additional data collection method – written accounts included.	Face to face interviews and focus groups are problematic to arrange and carry out due to the current Covid-19 restrictions and the potential vulnerability of the participant group.	Research proposalAdvert information sheet

[Click + to add further rows as required)

5 November 2020

Dear Julie Longson,

Project Title:	An interpretive exploration of the experiences of people who were separated from their fathers as children during World War Two.
REC Project Reference:	HU-190023
Type of Application	Amendment
Amendment Reference:	HU-200090
Amendment Date:	18.10.2020

Keele University's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee reviewed the above amendment.

Favourable Ethical opinion
The members of the Committee gave a favourable ethical opinion of the above research on the basis described in the application form, protocol and supporting documentation, subject to the conditions specified below.

Conditions of the favourable opinion
The favourable opinion is subject to the following being met prior to the implementation of the amendment.

1.	Please update the contact information in the information sheet

Reporting requirements
The University's standard operating procedures give detailed guidance on reporting requirements for studies with a favourable opinion including:
- Notifying substantial amendments
- Notifying issues which may have an impact upon ethical opinion of the study
- Progress reports

- Notifying the end of the study

Approved documents

The documents reviewed and approved are:

Document	Version	Date
Advert version 3 - Julie Longson	1	05/11/2020
Amendment form - Julie Longson	1	05/11/2020
Ethics application JL March 2019 amendment - Julie Longson	1	05/11/2020
Information sheetconsentpartcipant data1 v 2 - Julie Longson	1	05/11/2020

Yours sincerely,

Professor Helen Parr
Chair / Lead Reviewer

Participant invitation letter

My name is Julie Longson and I am a PhD student in the School of Social Science and Public policy at Keele University. Prior to starting my PhD in Social Gerontology, I worked for a local mental health trust as a Registered Mental Health Nurse and Specialist Practitioner in the care of older people. I worked in a clinic where I carried out assessments with people over the age of 65 who were experiencing issues with low mood and anxiety. Part of the assessment involved me talking to people about their lives as children, and a number of people talked to me about the Second World War (WW2) – some had fathers who were conscripted and went away to fight whilst some shared experiences with children who had been evacuated to the local area.

There seems to have been a lot of coverage, both in research and in films, books etc about what happened to evacuees as well as what is was like to be in the forces during the war itself.   Less seems to be known about what happened at the end of the war, when fathers came home and evacuated children returned to their families. Some researchers have identified that childhood experiences during WW2 might have affected the later lives of those involved, and some have indicated that boys and girls may have experienced things differently, but few studies have been done to explore what the time after the end of the war was really like, and I would like to make this the focus of my research. I intend to use an approach called phenomenology; this is where researchers look closely at individual experiences to determine what those experiences might mean to those individuals.

In my project, I would like to talk to people whose fathers were conscripted and then returned home when they were demobbed, or whose fathers were at home during the war working in a protected industry such as mining. I would like to ask the question "what was life like during the war, and what was it like when it ended and your family was reunited?"

The people who take part will have been born between 1930 and 1940, and had fathers who were either conscripted to one of the armed forces (e.g. army, navy or air force), or remained at home working in a protected industry such as mining. They will write down their experiences, using a set of questions as a guide, or they will take part in an interview which will at the moment be conducted using Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

The process will be fairly informal as I want people to tell me their own personal stories in as much detail as possible, rather than simply answer pre-set questions. The interviews will take about an hour and will be audio recorded (voice only). The recordings will then be transcribed (written down) before being analysed, along with the written accounts.

If you are interested in taking part in this project or would like more information please feel free to contact me.

Best Wishes,

Julie Longson
PhD Student
School of Social Science and Public Policy
Room DW1.06
Darwin Building
Keele University
Staffordshire
ST5 5BG
k.j.longson1@keele.ac.uk

Participant Information Sheet

Study Title:

An interpretive exploration of the experiences of people who were separated from their fathers as children during World War Two.

Aims of the Research:
> The primary aim of the research is to answer the following
>
> questions:

- What was it like to be a child during WWII?
- What was the experience of children separated from their fathers during WWII because of conscription?
- What was the experience of children when their fathers returned home at the end of WWII and the family was reunited?
- Did experiences of separation during the war influence people's lives, relationships and the choices they made?

Invitation

You are being invited to consider taking part in the research study *"An exploration of the experiences of people who were separated from their fathers as children during world War Two."* This project is being undertaken by *Julie Longson as part of a PhD study.*

Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the attached information sheet carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to take part in the study because you were a child during World War Two and either – your father was conscripted to the armed forces and went away, or you were evacuated away from your family. You may have responded to an advert or seen information about the project on social media.

Do I have to take part?

You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign two consent forms, one is for you to keep and the other is for our records. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time and without giving reasons.

What will happen if I take part?
If you join the study you will take part in a group session with the researcher and other people who are taking part in the research.
After the group session you will be invited to take place in an individual interview with a researcher.

If I take part, what do I have to do?
During the group session we will use music and objects to start a discussion about what it was like to be a child in World War Two. You will have the opportunity to talk with others about your experiences.
In the individual interview you will be asked questions and have the opportunity to tell me in more detail about your experiences during World War two.
You will not need to do any formal preparation but you might like to identify a photograph, a piece of music or an object that reminds you of the wartime period to bring with you to the group session.

What are the benefits (if any) of taking part?
The research may have no direct benefits to you as a participant but it will enable me to build up a picture of the experiences that people had as children during World War Two.

What are the risks (if any) of taking part?
I don't anticipate any specific risks to taking part in the research, although sometimes remembering things from your past can be an emotional experience.

How will information about me be used?
The group session and the interviews will be audio recorded. The content of the tape will then be written down and will be used by the researcher to identify any common themes and ideas. Both the audio recordings and the written data will be kept for the duration of the project and for 10 years afterwards in line with university regulations.
The data will not be used for any other purpose than this research project, although excerpts of the findings may be published in relevant journals or presented at conferences. All data will be anonymised and it will not be possible to identify individuals.
The final written thesis will be stored in the university archive.

Who will have access to information about me?
During the group session you will be able to see and hear other people talking so you will not be completely anonymous. It will be expected that you will not share details of the other participants, or what they said, outside the group without their permission.
During the interview there will only be yourself and the researcher present and confidentiality will be maintained by the researcher not sharing your

details with anyone apart from people directly involved with the researcher – for example the PhD supervision team.

- Paper data such as notes from the group session, or answers to questions in the interviews will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet, and once written up and analysed the data will be stored on a password protected computer.
- Once written down your data will be anonymised and a code will be used to identify you.
- The data will be retained by the principal investigator for at least 10 years after the end of the project.
- The final thesis (report of the research) will be kept by the researcher and a copy will be placed in the university library. At this stage no individual participants will be identifiable.

(I do however have to work within the confines of current legislation over such matters as privacy and confidentiality, data protection and human rights and so offers of confidentiality may sometimes be overridden by law. For example, in circumstances whereby I am made aware of future criminal activity, abuse either to yourself or another (i.e. child or sexual abuse) or suicidal tendencies I must pass this information to the relevant authorities.)

Who is funding and organising the research?
The research is being organised by a postgraduate student for the purposes of doctoral study. There is no external funding for the project.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you may wish to speak to the researcher who will do their best to answer your questions. You should contact *Julie Longson* on *k.j.longson1@keele.ac.uk..* Alternatively, if you do not wish to contact the researcher you may contact Dr Derek McGhee on *d.mcghee@keele.ac.uk.*
If you remain unhappy about the research and/or wish to raise a complaint about any aspect of the way that you have been approached or treated during the course of the study please write to Nicola Leighton who is the University's contact for complaints regarding research at the following address:-

Nicola Leighton
Research Governance Officer
Research & Enterprise Services
Dorothy Hodgkin Building
Keele University
ST5 5BG
E-mail: n.leighton@uso.keele.ac.uk
Tel: 01782 733306

Contact for further information:
Julie Longson
School of Nursing and Midwifery

Clinical Education Centre
Royal Stoke University Hospital
Tel: 01782679627
k.j.longson1@keele.ac.uk

Participant eligibility sheet
Please complete the following information to check if you fit the eligibility criteria for participation in the study. All information given will be confidential.

Name	
Date of Birth	
Gender	
How many children did your parents have?	
What position are you in the family e.g. eldest, youngest, 3rd of 5 etc?	
Were you evacuated as a consequence of WW2?	Yes/No
If yes, where were you evacuated to?	
Were all siblings evacuated together?	
How old were you when you went away?	
How long were you away from home?	
Did you father serve in the armed forces away from home?	Yes/No
Did you father stay at home because he worked in a protected industry such as mining?	Yes/No
When did your father leave the family home? How old were you when this happened?	
When did you father return home? How old were you when this happened?	

Do you have a diagnosis of dementia or mild cognitive impairment	Yes/No
Are you in current contact with mental health services for help with your mood?	Yes/No

Primary research questions

- What was it like to be a child during WWII?
- What was the experience of children separated from their fathers during WWII because of conscription?
- What was the experience of children when their fathers returned home at the end of WWII and the family was reunited?
- Did experiences of separation during the war influence people's lives, relationships and the choices they made?

Demographic questions

How old were you when your father went away? How old were you when he came home?

How long was he away?

Where did you live during the wartime period?

Who was in your household?

(Prompts – did you have brothers and sisters? Did other family members live with you? How many?)

Were then any other men in the family who did not go away to fight? Why was this?

What is your first memory of the war?

(prompts – do you remember your dad going away? Was he conscripted or did he volunteer? Did you have to move house? Were you at school?)

What did your mum do during the war?

(Prompts – did she go out to work? If so, what did she do? Who looked after you while she was at work.?)

What was your life like during the war?

(Prompts – did you go to school? What did you eat? How did you celebrate family events like birthdays and Christmas? Did you father come home on leave? If so, how long was he home?)

What do you remember about your father coming home at the end of the war?

(Prompts – did you know in advance that he was coming or did he just appear? Did you recognise him? Did he look/sound/feel the same as when he went away?)

Did you notice any differences to your everyday life when you father came home?

(Prompts – did you continue to live in the same place? Did your mum continue to go out to work? Did your relationship with your mum change?)

How did you get on with father after he came home?

(Prompts – was he strict? Did he talk about his experiences? Did he and your mum stay married?

Anything else?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences during the war? Have I missed anything?

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me.

APPENDIX H - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – WRITTEN ANSWERS

Thank you for agreeing to provide a written account of your experiences as a child during World War Two.   My research is trying to address these main questions:

- What was it like to be a child during WWII?
- What was the experience of children separated from their fathers during WWII because of conscription?
- What was the experience of children when their fathers returned home at the end of WWII and the family was reunited?
- Did experiences of separation during the war influence people's lives, relationships and the choices they made?

Please write down your experiences following the questions below, using as much detail as you can remember.

I have divided this into sections with examples of what you might include but please do add any other details or experiences that you had.

Demographic questions

How old were you when war broke out?

If your father went away, how old were you? How old were you when he came home?

How long was he away?

If you father was at home, what was his occupation? Did this change during the war?

Where did you live during the wartime period?

Who was in your household?

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Did other family members live with you? If so, how many were there and who were they?

Were then any other men in the family who did not go away to fight? Why was this?

What is your first memory of the war?

Do you remember the war being declared? If so, how did you feel?

Do you remember your dad going away?

Was he conscripted or did he volunteer?

How did you feel when he went away?

Did you have to move house during the war?

Were you at school at the start of the war?

What did your mum do during the war?

Did she go out to work? If so, what did she do?

Who looked after you while she was at work.?

What was your life like during the war?

Did you go to school?

What did you eat?

How did you celebrate family events like birthdays and Christmas?

Did you father come home on leave?

If so, how long was he home?

Did you keep in touch with your father, by exchanging letters for example?

If your father was away, what do you remember about him coming home at the end of the war?

Did you know in advance that he was coming or did he just appear?

Did you recognise him?

How did you feel about him coming home?

Did he look/sound/feel the same as when he went away?

Did you notice any differences to your everyday life when you father came home/the war ended?

Did you continue to live in the same place? Did your mum continue to go out to work? Did your relationship with your mum change?)

How did you get on with father after he came home?

(Prompts – was he strict? Did he talk about his experiences? Did he and your mum stay married?

Anything else?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences during the war? Have I missed anything?

Thank you very much for taking the time to take part in my research, it is much appreciated.

1)

APPENDIX I - REFLECTIVE MEMOS EXTRACTS

<u>Reflection following completion of Philosophy of the Social Sciences module – December 2017</u>

Key learning: philosophical underpinnings of research methodology, how we make sense of the world, how ideas have grown and developed through generations, need to take a pragmatic approach, tension between political leanings and philosophical standpoint and need to identify and be explicit about values from the outset in a research project. (A1, A2, A3)

Reflection: Easy to assume that a single philosophical standpoint will inform a specific methodology. Not the case however when the philosophical thinking and political leanings of the individuals leading the philosophical movements contradict not only themselves but also the people before them e.g. Marx, Husserl, Heidegger – positivist vs anti-foundationalist.

Confirmed that qualitative approach is appropriate to own project but introduced moral dilemma re using Heidegger's phenomenology to explore the impact of WW2 when he was closely allied to the Nazi movement. Thinking about how my own values influence my choices. Heideggerian phenomenology's humanistic focus mirrors my own Rogerian (person-centred) philosophy; therefore, I can potentially make an argument for using phenomenology in spite of the political tension it poses.

<u>Reflection following British Library doctoral open day – January 2018</u>

British Library offer open days to doctoral students to outline the resources available in the library, in themed sessions e.g. life history, sound archive and use of news media. This enables the student to find and make use of the library

collections for the purposes of research. I particularly enjoyed the oral history and sound collections session with the insight it gave into people's experiences as told by the individuals themselves; the use of language in particular was extremely illuminating. It was also exciting to hear Florence Nightingale's voice, encapsulated in a wax cylinder!

The value of cohorts and longitudinal studies session gave food for thought about how I might make use of this type of data in my own project, situating the experiences of those people that I aim to interview within a cohort framework. Longitudinal data might also help in identifying larger scale differences in life experience which may have shaped that of individuals.

Reflection following Advanced Qualitative methods module – May 2018

This was an opportunity to work in a small group with a mix of disciplines. Discussion and negotiating skills needed to "group code" and to establish common terminology for the coding process. Challenging to apply newly acquired knowledge re NVivo at the same time as preparing a presentation, and reflecting on both the process of coding and future applications for own research.

Presentations from other groups added further dimension, using same process with different data but identifying common issues.

Using historical data collected by someone else had its own challenges as the intentions and aims of the research were not always explicit and could not be explored in depth. Reinforced need for methodology to be explicit throughout the research process.

BSG is always a fantastic conference with opportunities to meet with students just starting out on their research journey alongside established experts in the field of gerontology.

Presenting a poster was an opportunity to present my ideas in a different format and facilitated a range of conversations about its content.

The understanding of the meaning of the terms "ageing" and "gerontology" are constantly evolving along with the shape and experience of our society. This idea was debated in the critical gerontology symposium and it was fascinating to hear experts in the field discuss and debate not only the changes in society and culture but also their own roles and understanding. Interesting question raised – is age war the new class war?

Seminar on the use of archives signposted literature and resources which may be helpful in identifying and analysing resources.

Reflection on potential use of focus groups prior to discussion in supervision – December 2018

What would be the role of a focus group as a pilot study? Need to consider what I might find and how I would use the data from the focus group to inform the main study. It might be possible to conduct a focus group (or group interview) and then invite some of the participants to take part in individual interviews, but might this change the role of the focus group from being a pilot study? Another option might be to conduct a focus group and use the themes generated to inform the structure for the interviews.

Palmer at al (2010) discuss the use of focus groups with "naturally occurring groups" so this could b a way to interview sibling groups.

In supervision -

Creative workshop e.g. as focus group discussed. Use of music/oral archive e.g. speeches and objects/artefacts/photographs suggested as staring points for discussion.

Topic for workshop may be "Returning home".

Palmer, M; Larkin, M; de Visser, R. and Fadden, G. (2010). Developing an Interpretative Phenomenological Approach to Focus Group Data, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. 7(2), 99 — 121

Reflection post supervision July 2019

Historical context:

Explore local history societies, look at miner's perspective, autobiographical aspects as a starting point, WI role in caring for children.

Chronological, historical approach to literature review, link theory to events from an historical perspective

Methods/methodology:

Interviews - may open up a therapeutic space if people have not explored events before.

Focus group - starting point, may give aspects of contrast in experience e.g. gender, ideas re using music or photo elicitation. Invite participants to take part in individual interviews

Reflexive practice - use of therapeutic background to support interviewing process.

Sampling/participants:

Keep local to preserve homogeneity of experience whilst using contrast of

conscripted vs protected occupations.

Age of participants - preservation of memories

Multiple siblings

children of fathers who were unfit to serve in the forces

Use of IPA - reflection on moments e.g. food and drink, music, clothing

Interview questions:

Demographics of the whole community

Finances - did fathers send home money? Contrast between finances of families

of conscripted soldiers and miners for example. Were women working?

Government allowances.

Changing role of women

Role of grandparents

did men come home on leave, how long for

Diversification of pottery industry

Reflexivity - use of therapeutic background, what would I use and why?

Articulate thought processes re preparation for interviews/focus group

<u>May 2020 – reflection on how methods will need to change because of the</u>

<u>pandemic</u>

Difficult to reach vs waiting to be reached (Maynard, 2020). Need to shift focus if

I want to keep going during lockdown. How might I reach participants if unable to

see them face to face? Need to explore the best route for people to tell their

stories.

Telephone – may be possible, need to think about management of emotional

elements

Skype – will depend on availability of equipment/confidence of participants.

Written history via letter may be a possibility. Letter writing mentioned by first two participants and would seem to replicate/reflect the way that they communicated with their fathers. Second participant had originally written outlining some of her experiences. Verstehen – being with the participants "where they are" emotionally and socially.

<u>July 2020 – reflection post supervision</u>

Focus – methodology and application of philosophical perspectives.

Advantages and limitations of IPA were discussed along with the need to explore further studies to ensure that IPA is best fit. Also need to consider how lifecourse theory interacts and overlaps with IPA, particularly in relation to how generation experience the same event differently.

Methodologies in use now were not available when the participants were children so the methodology section needs to reflect how modern methodologies will be used to examine childhood experience retrospectively.

The main focus of the project is to uncover hidden meanings through analysis/interpretation/multiple layers and this is where IPA comes to the fore – the double hermeneutic, making sense of the participants own sense-making.

<u>Reflective memo – January 2021</u>

Considering how societal norms affect the individual experience of an event or set of events

Literature identifies the "Myth of the Blitz" (Jalland, 2010) which can be viewed as a misrepresentation of people's experiences aimed at producing an image of people in London being stoic and carrying on life "as normal".

Individual testimonies from the time illustrate the horror of the experience in a descriptive way but may not allow the players in the scenes illustrated to fully engage with the horror of the situation because of the specific societal norm expected at the time i.e. appearing stoic and continuing with life almost as though war is not actively happening.

Does the expectation of the development of resilience as being the desired "norm" interfere with people's ability to actually engage with the experiences which may cause psychological disturbance (cognitive dissonance?) and cause resilience to only actually be a temporary cover to a crack in the plaster rather than a permanent repair?

Using a more modern analogy, is it really "okay to not be okay"? This might be anther societal ploy to paster over the cracks and t pay lip service to care rather than demonstrating actual care.

Reflection – April 2021

I was invited to present a seminar during a Methods Northwest season of seminars exploring the impact of Covid-19 on research activity. Developing the presentation gave me the opportunity to reflect on the changes that I had made, specifically to my data collection methods because of the cessation of face-to-face research activities imposed in response to the pandemic.

I had experienced some severe health issues prior to the pandemic which had already posed a risk to the continuation of my PhD, and I was reluctant to simply stop, particularly since there was no indication as to how long the restrictions would remain in place.

Thinking back to an online IPA session I reflected on whether my participants were hard to reach (because of the pandemic) or waiting to be reached. I had received a positive response to adverts prior to the pandemic and here certainly seemed to be an appetite for participation. I had conducted two interviews face to face so had some data and the idea letter writing stemmed in part from these. P1 had mentioned her father's letters home and how his position in Burma meant that there were often delays. P2 wrote to me before being interviewed.

I explore other options, primarily telephone and zoom. Telephone interviews have traditionally been used for survey research and I needed to explore the advantages and disadvantages of this method for qualitative research interviews. The most obvious advantages were cost and time, an hour interview would only take an hour without the need for travel, and no costs would be incurred to the participant.

There are challenges associated with telephone interviews, with an older population hearing mgt prove an issue, and people might behave differently if not in a face-to-face situation. The physical separation might introduce an emotional distance which would not be present in a face-to-face situation.

Drabble et al describe the need for strong interpersonal skills and reflexivity, both of which I have developed in my career as a MH nurse, so on balance I decided that telephone interviews would be tried.

Nobody expressed an interest in being interviewed via zoom which was interesting given the increase in such methods for everyday communication during the pandemic. I did not pursue this option any further.

Letter writing was a social norm when my prospective participants were children, so I decided to explore the evidence base. Some research has been conducted using written accounts (Handy and Ross, 2005; Rawlings, 2017) and the use of

writing has also been used as a therapeutic endeavour (Pennebaker, 1997). Health research seems to lend itself to written methods so I felt that there was a firm enough evidence base to proceed.

Part of a PhD research project is to further not only ones own knowledge but also expand what is already known about a topic. This extends to the use of particular methodologies, as shown in the development of IP since its inception in the 1990s. I reasoned that using written accounts a data would give me the opportunity to apply IPA in a different way, and as an unintended benefit would rule out the need for transcription of interview data.

The written accounts received so far are very detailed and insightful and follow the interview structure closely. One participant told me how taking part had caused his memories to come "flooding back", whilst the daughter of another told me how participating had helped her dad to feel positive at a time when life was difficult.

Analysis of the data will reveal where it sits in relation to the interview data but I am feeling optimistic about the process. I think that the process I have undergone has been reflective but also demonstrates reflexivity – reflecting in action and changing direction based on changing circumstances. On a personal level, continuing has helped with my recovery and has supported me in remaining engaged with my PhD study which had potentially been jeopardised by Covid-19.

Drabble L, Trocki KF, Salcedo B, Walker PC, Korcha RA. (2016). Conducting qualitative interviews by telephone: Lessons learned from a study of alcohol use among sexual minority and heterosexual women. *Qualitative Social Work*. 15(1), 118-133. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325015585613

Handy, J. and Ross, K. (2005). Using Written Accounts in Qualitative Research. *South Pacific Journal of Psychology*. 16(1), 40-47

Maynard, E. (2020). The self, the other and the space between. IPA global taster session [online]

Novick, G. (2008) Is there bias against telephone interviews in qualitative research? *Research in Nursing and health* 2008(31) pp391-398

Rawlings, G.H; Brown, I; Stone, B. and Reuber, M. (2017). Written accounts of living with psychogenic nonepileptic seizures: A thematic analysis. Seizure. 50(2017), 83-91
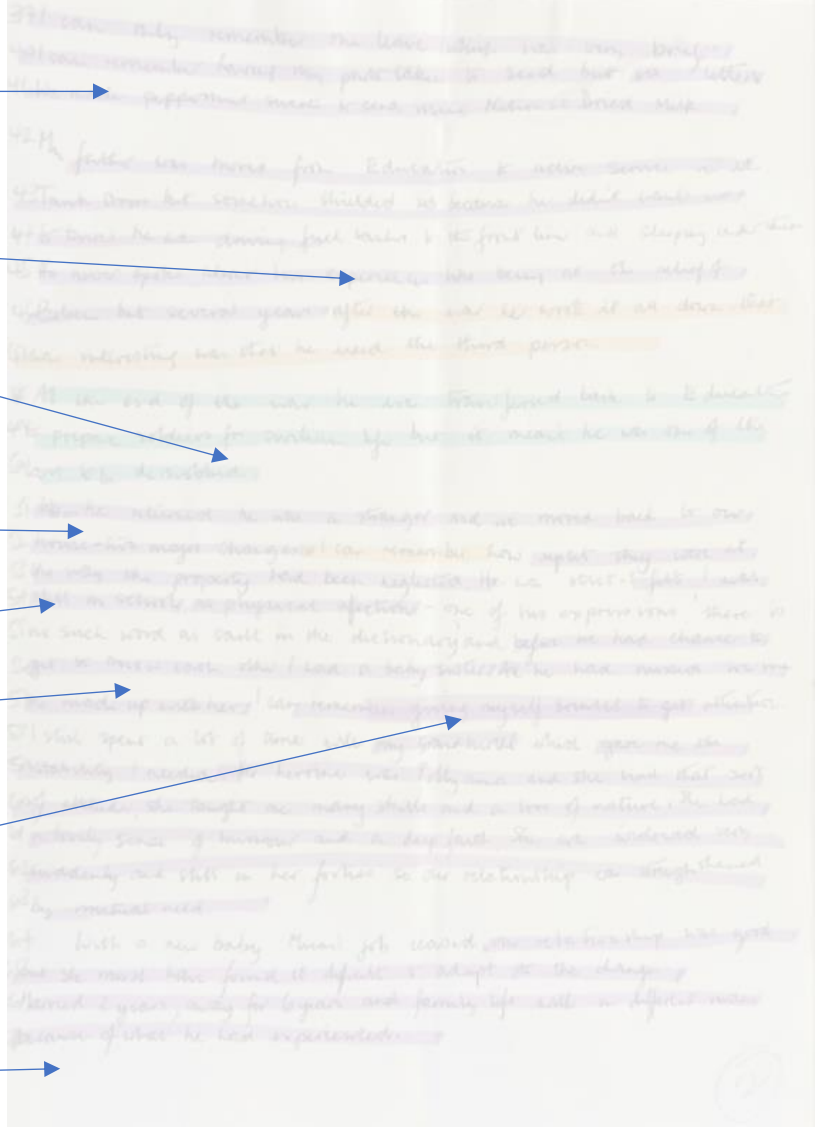
APPENDIX J - IPA PROCESS CHART – LARKIN, 2023

Non-technical description	META-description	Technical description
STEP 1 Get to **know the data**		*Reflexive reading*
STEP 1a Get to **know your interests** & preconceptions	*PHASE 1:* *Working towards experiential statements*	
STEP 2 Conduct **detailed exploratory analysis,** staying close to the account		*Exploratory notes* *[incl. list of some useful strategies]*
STEP 3 **Articulate the main claims** you are making about the meaning of the person's experience on the basis of their account *Important stepping stone*		*Experiential statements*
STEP 4 **Organise the work** you have done around the main claims, and **supplement** it with 'at a glance' annotation [Start by shuffling on screen, or on physical desktop]	*PHASE 2:* *Working towards case-level summaries*	*Preliminary clustering of statements (candidates for themes)* *Supplementary annotation* *Reflexive threads*
STEP 5 **Consolidate your case analysis** in a case-level summary *Consolidation point*		*Structured consolidation of case-level work mapping to Personal Experiential Themes* <u>Make sure there is a link back to key data extracts in this document: either direct quotes of page numbers</u> *(including Sub-themes;* *linked to key examples, reflections on*
		language, metaphor, narrative etc)
STEP 6 Repeat 1-5 for each case, allowing time and space to add go back a step and add further reflections, interpretations or notes	*PHASE 3:* *Working towards cross-case themes*	
STEP 7 Review the case-level summaries and **identify candidate themes** which cut across the cases		*Group Experiential Themes* *(drawing on the PETS to begin with, but examining clustered material underneath them too, for potential cross-cutting themes)* Shuffle and sort the components of the PETs Reflect on contributions made by each PET to each developing GET Use colour to help you to keep track of each process
STEP 7b **Review** the emerging analytic structure in supervision, with research team, or reference/advisory group Add further reflections, interpretations or notes Revise themes as appropriate		**Discuss** your proposed structure and revise it accordingly
STEP 8 **Finalise** the analytic structure *Consolidation point*	*PHASE 4:* *Working towards a linear account of the thematic structure*	*Finalise sub-themes and structure* Use structure to make a plan for writing up each section; use your PETs to identify quotes to support each theme
STEP 8b Review work for **audit** trail		Make sure your plan includes opportunities to reflect on variations across cases

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STEP 9 Work with supervisors, research team, or reference/advisory group to **decide how to present** some or all of the structure in a linear, written report *Outcome*		Make sure your plan includes opportunities to reflect on variations across cases Reflect on the level of granularity you can include, given the document you're writing

APPENDIX K - DOROTHY'S WHOLE TRANSCRIPT SHOWING EXPLORATORY NOTING

This appendix contains the remainder of Dorothy's handwritten transcript with the exploratory/explanatory noting on the right-hand side and the emerging themes on the left.

Experiential statements	Transcript – page2 and 3	Exploratory notes
No contact with father whilst he was away. "can only remember one leave" suggests that there may have been more but she has no knowledge of them Had experiences which are known to be traumatic but the trauma is not acknowledged or managed at the time. Late home because supported other soldiers. Evacuees had not cared for the home they had been loaned. Father very strict and treated her more like a pupil than a daughter. Interpreting her father's behaviour towards her sister as how he would have behaved towards her at the same age had he not been away. Had to hurt herself to be noticed. (A lot of detail encapsulated in one paragraph.) Making sense of things from her mum's perspective – stopped work, resumed marriage, new baby.		No contact whilst father away. Dissociated himself by using third person. Significant event. Large amount condensed to a single paragraph – trying to get it in as few words as possible. Mutual need. Remembers grandmother fondly.

Church connection provided support to young women whose husbands were away.
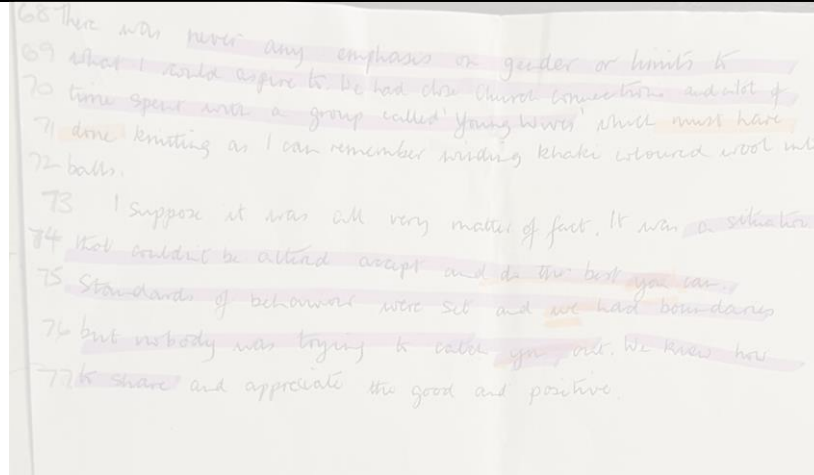
Had to get on with things, no option other than that.

Strictness for a purpose – not designed to be cruel.

Knows how to share although had felt displaced and had to hurt herself to be seen.

Final paragraph – moves from "I" to "you" and "we" suggests a generalisation of events.
? mirroring the way her father had written about his experiences.

Making sense by using knowledge and memory combined.

Resilience

You = us

APPENDIX L - EXPERIENTIAL/EXISTENTIAL DIAGRAMS

Experiencing Fathers	
Participants represented P1, P2, TP1, TP2 WT2, WT3, WT4	
Experiential	**Existential**
P1 - Relationship with dad tricky to begin with, had to get used to him being at home. Line 430	P1 - Relationship with father would have been different if dad had not gone away. Line 474-5
TP1 - Could see dad being productive (even though not away fighting). Perception that the activity was enjoyable. Line 36-39	P2 - Seeing the same thing with her son and granddaughter made her realise that this was what had happened to her. Line 254
TP2 - Dad's profession gave access to travel. Line 219	TP2 - Shaving beard returned dad to the person he was before he left – erased event. (referring to when dad was stuck with train full of ammunition during a bombing raid) Line 325
WT1 - Father dictated what could be listened to on the radio. Only classical music. Line 44	
WT2 - Father's wartime experience influential in her choice of career. Attributes her interest in geography to his stories and souvenirs. Line 9	WT1 - Father left son in bed – not clear if perceived risk to be low or did this deliberately. Line 41-42
WT4 - No contact with father while he was away – only remembers seeing him once before he came home. (May have been too young to remember other leaves?) (Line 39)	WT4 - Father was very strict and behaved towards her like a teacher rather than a father (Line 54). Had to hurt herself to get noticed after the birth of her sister. (Line 56)

Narrative

Role of the father significant even if not conscripted – played a significant role in protecting population e.g. home guard, fire wardens.

Men not fighting had all wanted to fight but had been prevented either by profession or health. Present physically, absent emotionally.

Fathers away - difference in relationship with children born after return. Were fathers but did not *enact* the role of fathers.

Impact on daily life	
Participants represented P1, P2, TP1, TP2 WT1, WT3, WT4	
Experiential	**Existential**
TP2 **-** Radio the source of news and information. Access to it controlled by grandfather. Line 74	P2 "Little pigs have big ears"– reveals the existential nature of how adults perceive children.
WT3 - Children had distractions such as the cinema, allowed them to escape and pretend to be film stars. Line 100	TP2 - Prepared for bombing raids – shelters a visual reminder of the threat. Line 95
WT4 - Was aware of the ration book but didn't understand the link to food and shortages – ate a week's ration of cheese because too young to realise the implications. (Line 27)	TP2 - Things happened that brought the war into focus even though it could not directly be seen. Line 112-4
WT1 - War had little impact on daily life and its effects could not be seen directly. Line 4	
WT1 -Diet supplemented by items not on ration and those which could be grown in the garden. Line 49	

Narrative

Snippets of overheard conversation is how children experienced finding out about the war.

Children were aware and can now name experiences such as rationing but at the time, perceived little change to their daily lives.

Events such as going into the air raid shelter brought the war into focus although it could not be clearly seen.

Reflection/self	
Participants represented P1, P2, TP1, WT1, WT2	
Experiential	**Existential**
TP1 – Using adult sensitivities to judge his childhood experiences. Line 90-3 WT1 - Parents not talking caused fear rather than allaying it and caused the whole household to feel sad. Line 46 WT 2 - Expected a banana to taste good because it was "special" Line 87; reads literature about experiences of children in WWII and uses these to support knowledge and sense-making in recalling own experiences. Line 57-8 P2 – comparing own childhood experiences with experiences of children now and placing value judgments on material possessions. Line 199	P1 "No-one ever sees me cry". Line 978 WT1 – Acknowledging fear now and relating it to the war. Applying adult knowledge and understanding reveals the nature of the threat that had not been obvious to a child. Line 74-5 TP1 – recognising now the futility of the equipment against a potential incendiary bomb attack. Line 56

Narrative

Participants are reflecting on their experiences as children but through the eyes of an adult, making judgements about the experiences e.g. in relation to use of weapons and fighting with rival gangs.

Using recent events e.g. Covid-19 to compare experiences and validate reflections e.g. in relation to discipline.

Comparing their childhood to childhood now, valuing discipline.

Reading about WWII and comparing/validating their own experiences.

Pleasure derived from recalling and talking about wartime experiences.

Wider family/activities/home

Participants represented
P1, TP1, TP2
WT1, WT2, WT3

Experiential	Existential
P1 - Went to visit mum and aunties at work and was free to move around the potbank and carry out jobs with the women. Very precise description of jobs – cup make higher status than cup handler. Line 254-6, 248	TP1 - Having a brother changed the family dynamic and meant he had to share things such as attention from relatives. Line 168
WT1 – Family members in the army. Mother upset by what her brother was experiencing. Is this what father resented? Mum was more upset about her brother than him and his experience was perceived as more significant. Line 22-23	WT1 - Multigenerational household. Memory about where he lived not clear. Line 18-19
WT2 - Lots of aspects of family life such as birthdays, Christmas and holidays carried on as they had before the war. Parties small and involved family. Line 90	
WT3 - Parlour was only used on special occasions, despite the house being small and only having a kitchen and back kitchen downstairs. Line 25	
WT4 - Was aware of the ration book but didn't understand the link to food and shortages – ate a week's ration of cheese because too young to realise the implications. (Line 27)	

Narrative

The fact that family are perceived to be filling gaps identifies that there were gaps to be filled.

War not allowed to disrupt the standards set for the house e.g. parlour still set aside for special occasions, sense of pride in home.

Lots of activities unchanged e.g. Christmas and birthdays still celebrated.

Women supporting wider family, providing food, making the best of rations etc. Little sense of choice. "Mum was put in charge of…", had to leave own house…family home not cared of by strangers who lived in it.