An Exploration of the Lived Experiences of Parents Whose Children Have Been Permanently Excluded from School

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This thesis is dedicated to the parent participants who gave their time and trusted me with their experiences. You have taught me your knowledge and shaped me in invaluable ways.

It is for the countless other parents, children and young people who have ever experienced a permanent exclusion.

And for all of the children and young people who have lost their lives due to the 'ripples' caused by their permanent exclusion. Here, I write this poem to remember you in the hope that change will come:

Plastic Wreath[1]

Don't leave flowers at the place
where my life was brutally taken
Don't put circles of bright plastic
beside the road or on the pavement.

It's so lovely that you care
I'm so glad that you stopped by but
I don't want to see them blossom in a wrapper
before they die.

Wrap your flowers in your words.
Let those words turn into action.
Don't wait until it happens and then display floral reaction.

For when the wind sweeps to the East
there's only rustling in these streets.
Withering inside a slow decay where others stomp their feet.

Please leave a policy or a law
Not a plastic wreath.

1 'Plastic Wreath' with artwork is an original unpublished poem written by Ama Agyeman in 2021

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To Susan, angel of the North - for always seeing the firefly in me
For lifting me up every time I fell
And knowing I could do it, even when I didn't

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I dedicate the SIP to my parents – Sam and Gisela, K & A, wider family and hometown GY

To Joel for holding on as we felt the Earth and all its reverberations
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To art, music and nature for always reminding me of the ineffable

To Samba ♡
To Noel ♡
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Abstract

School exclusion (SE) in England continues to be a topic of debate within education research, policy and practice. Discussions frequently centre around disproportionate impact of SEs on working-class boys, Black and special educational needs (SEN) pupils. Furthermore, worrying correlations between permanently excluded (PEx) individuals and criminal exploitation have been recognised. However, PEx parents and children are frequently problematised and there remains a significant gap in research regarding their perspectives. This is especially in relation to how unique intersecting factors may influence their experiences of SE policies and procedure. This study explores the lived experiences of parents whose children were PEx from a mainstream London school, to understand these within the broader SE policy and discourse context.

Integrative methodological framework: By introducing the Stratified Integrative Prism (SIP) conceptual framework, this study integrates critical realist and phenomenological theories to achieve ontological, methodological, and axiological congruence. The SIP utilises natural world metaphors to visually enhance analysis of the parents' experiences. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) with semi-structured interviews supported this process.

Findings: This study finds that when the parents' experiences are analysed through the SIP's layers, the profound and complex impact of PE is highlighted. Descriptions of PE experiences include their likening to seismic events, stressing temporal and spatial effects; similarity to water on glass, reflecting intersectional experiences of ableism, classism, and racism; and comparisons to chimeric fireflies, illustrating parents' navigation through complex PE policy and discourse.

Strengths and limitations: Conducting this study during the COVID-19 pandemic, presented unique factors, as data gathered was amidst evolving discussions around racial inequality and changes in English politics. In part, the research process was informed by the researcher's shared identity with participants and background, as an education practitioner in London. The SIP framework also highlighted the ineffable aspects of the research, acknowledging parents' experiences are embodied and much remains unanswered.

Conclusions: This study underscores the importance of utilising parents' lived experiences to shape SE policy and practice, advocating for their role as co-creators in both school and national contexts. This thesis recommends use of an intersectional lens to frame these experiences fairly and to appreciate their complexity.

Future research includes examining police involvement in schools and valuing parental knowledge. Methodologically, the SIP, the authors own conceptual framework, offers a holistic, transdisciplinary approach suitable for future research on SE and the experiences of marginalised groups in relation to policy and transformative change.

Glossary of terms

ADHD – Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

AP – Alternative provision

CAMHS – Children and adolescent mental health service

CE – Children's commissioner for England

CCE – Childhood criminal exploitation

CME – Children missing in education

CR - Critical realist

CYP – Children and young people

DfE – Department for Education

DfES – Department for Education and Skills

EHCP- Education and health care plan

FPEs – Fixed-period exclusions

IPA – Interpretative phenomenological analysis

LA – Local authority

LAC – Looked after child

OFSTED – Office for standards in education

PE – Permanent exclusion, permanently exclude

PEx – Permanently excluded

PEs - Permanent exclusions

PHE – Public health England

PRU – Pupil referral unit

SE – School exclusion

SEs – School exclusions

SEMH – Social emotional and mental health

SEN – Special educational need

SIP – Stratified Integrative Prism

UK – United Kingdom

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Chapter One – Introduction

1.1 – Background

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of parents whose children have been permanently excluded (PEx) from a mainstream school. This research aims to deepen the current discussions around permanent school exclusions (PEs) and to contribute to wider social justice in education agendas. This is a partial story that elucidates views from frequently marginalised parent participants. School exclusions (SEs) are an increasingly prominent issue, not only for stakeholders but also for the wider public. For example, SEs frequently receive media and political attention for a variety of reasons. These include suggested links to knife crime and the criminal exploitation of excluded young people (Timpson, 2019). Furthermore, academic research on SEs continues to gain traction (Daniels, Porter and Thompson, 2022; Stewart-Hall, Langham and Miller, 2023). This includes publications across disciplines that offer a plethora of perspectives, including those from the government, policy think tanks, and other organisations. Findings and discourse on SEs shape educational policy, research, and guide professional teaching practices (ibid). Equally, the lived experiences of pupils, parents, and practitioners drive aspects of SEs research and policy. As such, it has become a uniquely intersecting and complex area of study.

Despite parents being legally integral to a permanent exclusion (PE) process, their views and perspectives remain peripheral within public discourse, research, and policy analysis. This marginalisation is the rationale for this study. Accordingly, the focus is on this under-researched area, exploring the lived experiences of parent participants regarding the SE procedure, personal reflections, and events since their child's PE. It contributes to knowledge in the field of SEs by legitimising perspectives through a robust IPA research design. In a wider sense, it draws eclectically upon critical realist (CR) and phenomenological theory to demonstrate the validity of the participants' experiences. Overall, this introductory chapter provides background information, including public discourse and key trends, to situate the research within these contexts.

1.1.1 – What are PEs?

As chapter two outlines, there is a significant level of complexity to the various ways in which schools use 'exclusion' to discipline and sanction pupils. Therefore, throughout this thesis, the term school exclusion (SE) is used as an umbrella term to encompass varying forms of disciplinary action, which schools can take to sanction pupils. In a most simplified sense, there are two main forms of exclusion, official and unofficial (Gill, 2017). Official exclusions include fixed-period exclusions (FPE) or suspensions, where pupils are temporarily unable to return to school. Permanent exclusion (PE) is the permanent removal of a pupil from the school's register, 'in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy' (DfE 2023, p. 13). Unofficial exclusions can take various forms including managed moves to other schools and 'off-rolling' where, without due process, pupils are taken off the school register (Gill, 2017; Just for Kid's Law, 2019).

1.1.2 – Recent changes to school exclusions statutory guidance

This thesis study was designed, conducted and analysed, prior to publication of the most recent DfE (2023) statutory guidance on SEs; *Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral in England, including pupil movement.* There is also a partner document, *Behaviour in Schools: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff* (DfE, 2022), which works as additional guidance and builds on from *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools* (DfE, 2018). Although DfE (2023) has given slightly more detailed statutory guidance on SEs in these documents, no legislative changes pertaining to PEs have been made. As a result, the legal aspects relating to PE as outlined in chapter two, remain entirely unchanged. Therefore, this thesis acknowledges this newer guidance, however DfE (2017a) *Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England* remains the main point of reference. Further details on some of these changes are outlined in section 2.1.

1.1.3 – Public discourse on school exclusions

Although SEs are a concern across England, there is a higher proportion of PEx young people in London (Thompson, 2020). Furthermore, with discussions frequently focused on suggested links to knife crime in the city, SEs arguably take on a new meaning in London. For example, Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan has blamed exclusions on increased youth violence (London City Hall, 2019), and a cross-party summit on violent crime demonstrates further concern (London City Hall, 2021; Talora, 2021). Public pressure led to a House of Commons Home Affairs Committee inquiry into youth violence (2019) and an all-party parliamentary group (APPG) on knife crime (APPGKC, 2019), both of which highlighted indicators to SEs and serious violent crime involvement. Although the government has acknowledged correlations between exclusions and knife crime, direct causal links have been explicitly denied (OFSTED, 2019; Timpson, 2019).

The issue of county lines, particularly the childhood criminal exploitation (CCE) of PEx pupils, is another area of concern (McCluskey *et al*., 2019). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the former Children's Commissioner for England (CE) suggested that the pandemic would put excluded young people at greater risk of CCE (Brooks, 2021; Savage, 2021). Furthermore, media reports have covered the 'school-to-prison-pipeline' (McIntyre, Parveen and Thomas, 2021; Siddique, 2020). These articles highlight the disproportionate number of exclusions affecting Black working-class pupils, making links to an Institute of Race Relations report (IRR) (Perera, 2020). Further discussion of key trends in SEs is found in section 1.1.2. Overall, it is argued that the 'damaging consequences' for excluded children and young people from school cannot be ignored (Power and Taylor, 2018). As a result, SEs research often focuses on exploring what might cause them and the research contributes to knowledge around what might be done differently.

Outside of correlations with violent crime and CCE, SEs also feature in other political discussion. Developments in the field shed light on many 'hidden,' illegal, and subversive forms of SE through 'off-rolling' practices (Power and Taylor, 2018). In 2018, public concern surrounding rising SEs figures and worrying trends prompted former Prime Minister Theresa May to commission a review (DfE, 2019b).

The final report (see Timpson, 2019) gave thirty recommendations which have only added to further debate, with many criticising that the review did not address structural issues such as socio-economic inequality and racism in enough depth (Haque, 2019; Whittaker, 2019). The recent DfE (2023) statutory guidance on SEs now formally acknowledges the occurrence of 'illegal off-rolling' by schools.

A governmental focus on school discipline has been a key aspect of education agenda since the Conservative-Liberal Coalition in 2010 (Perera, 2020). In 2021, former Education Secretary Gavin Williamson launched a consultation into behaviour in schools (see DfE and Williamson, 2021); which was criticised by school leaders' unions (Santry, 2021). At the time the DfE faced fierce backlash from children's charities over its suggestions to formally introduce the terms 'expulsion' and 'suspension' (Booth, 2021). Although expulsion does not feature in the newer DfE (2023) statutory guidance, the term suspension does. Special educational needs and disability (SEND) charities have fervently argued that such terminology is historically linked to times of corporal punishment in schools. Rt. Hon. Gavin Williamson's approach to enforce discipline post COVID-19 was school closures, which subsequently led to heated Twitter responses from key stakeholders (Simpson, 2021). The complex nature in which pandemic-law making impacted SEs policy and procedure is explored by Daniels *et al*. (2020) and Ferguson (2021). Furthermore, the DfE's continual focus on behaviour and discipline continues to spark debate in the SEs field (Stewart-Hall, Langham and Miller, 2023). These examples begin to demonstrate ongoing and evolving controversies surrounding SEs in England.

Parental experience in English public discourse remains peripheral, but some high-profile examples have included activism around behaviour policies at two London-based academy schools (Reaidi, 2021; Parveen, 2021). These cases highlighted parents who felt their child had been unfairly excluded for various reasons including special education need, race and COVID-19 due to targeted and zero-tolerance behaviour policies (Reaidi, 2021; Parveen, 2021; Sheppard, 2021). Overall, in this section, examples of continued media attention, political debate, discussion, and reporting on these issues is argued to influence and contribute to developments in public opinion around aspects of SE policy (Meijas and Banaji, 2018; Powell, 2015). They begin to highlight the complex nature of the SEs area in terms of public discourse and provide some context for this thesis study.

1.1.4 – Rationale for the exclusion of critical race theory

Given that racism emerges as a strong contributory factor to these parent participants' experiences of their child's permanent exclusion, critical race theory (CRT) was considered as potential lens for data analysis. Although CRT originated as an American legal studies framework for exploring systemic racial inequality, it has been used in some educational research (University of Birmingham, 2024). For example, CRT has been utilised effectively to explore experiences of exclusion with a particular focus on Black parents (see Gilborn, 2015). However, CRT was rejected as the theoretical framework for this study.

The rationale behind this decision is that from the outset of this doctoral research, the focus of the research is on parental experience. Although interpretative connections across cases have been made, as a researcher I have felt committed to ensuring that individual parents accounts are valued. In this way, some parent participants placed slightly less emphasis on race than others. Furthermore, this thesis acknowledges that these experiences represent a small proportion of parents in England whose children have been permanently excluded. This recognition aligns with the wider literature which demonstrates a wide range of potential factors contributing to a PEx decision, of which race may not always be a factor. As such, it is possible that had this study taken place in other regions of the country, certain themes may not emerged as prominently.

1.1.5 Key trends

Research, public interest, and political debate around SEs could lead to an assumption of this being a very recent issue. However, formally documented SEs have a historical presence in the United Kingdom. Being first sanctioned in 1986 under the Education (No.2) Act. They have been said to have increased in number since the early 1990s (Parsons, 1999). Despite the occasional dip in exclusion rates between years, towards the end of the decade and into the early 2000s, overall, a slow but noticeable upward trend has been commented upon (Cole *et al*., 2019; Ferguson, 2021; Gordon, 2001; Parsons, 1999; Parsons, 2018). SEs in England have higher officially and unofficially recorded exclusions over time. Therefore, it has been stated that England manages 'exclusion differently from the other countries of the U.K.' (Parsons, 2018b, p. 530). For instance, in Scotland, differences in policy and curriculum strategy have arguably led to a reduction in exclusion rates in recent years when compared with England (McCluskey *et al*., 2019).

This suggests that there is a unique approach to SEs in England. Given the unprecedented global and social circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, this section acknowledges this as a contextual anomaly, but primarily focuses on pre-pandemic exclusion statistics. Although the impact of the pandemic features within some parents' accounts, this does not directly correlate with exclusions statistics and is therefore not explored in detail here.

The most recent figures from the DfE (2021) for the year 2019/20 depict a decrease in both fixed-period and PEs in comparison to the previous 2018/19 year. It is likely that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted heavily upon these figures; the DfE (2021) do acknowledge this and the impact of the 23rd March 2020 national lockdown, adding:

> *While PEs and suspensions were still possible throughout the academic year, school closures have had a substantial effect on the number of PEs and suspension and therefore caution should be taken when comparing figures across years*.

In total for the year 2019/20 there were 5,057 officially recorded PEs (DfE, 2021). When only autumn 2019 figures are considered, 3,200 PEs were registered, this being a 5% increase in comparison to 2018/19 data. It also shows a continued increase from the DfE's (2017b) SEs data. The most common reason cited for PEs was 'persistent disruptive behaviour' (ibid). It is important to note that DfE's SEs data has been criticised in recent years for overlooking the numerous 'hidden' forms of exclusion such as 'off-rolling,' where pupils are removed from school registers without going through an official exclusions process (Power and Taylor, 2018). This issue was acknowledged by the government through working with the school inspection department, OFSTED (Ferguson, 2021) and a House of Commons publication (see Long and Danechi, 2020) specifically explores this issue.

Since the late 1990s pervasively worrying correlations between SEs and SEN pupils, as well as disproportionately high numbers of ethnic minority pupils, have been commented upon (Gordon, 2001; Hayden, 1997; Little, 1998; Parsons, 1999; Wright *et al*., 2000). Now, over twenty years later, the same groups of pupils are still being affected, with large-scale longitudinal research in England finding similar links and associations (Paget *et al*., 2017; Obsuth *et al*., 2017).

The DfE commissioned Timpson's review (2019, p31), which also acknowledges 'longstanding national trends' with higher exclusion rates for: boys – particularly Black Caribbean or those from Gypsy/Roma communities, SEN pupils, and those receiving a free school meal (FSM) and/or looked after children (LAC). Although causality is not established there is a correlation between being a LAC, experiencing SEs and then later social exclusion (Hoult and Gibson, 2023).

Recent figures from the Department for Education (DfE, 2023) continue to corroborate trends and concerns regarding the disproportionate effects of SE. In England during the academic year 2021/22, there was a total of 6495 PEs, indicating an increase of over 2,500 from the previous year 2020/21. PEs have increased across all school types and although there has been an increase in primary schools, the highest rate of PEs occurs in secondary schools. There is a higher exclusion rate for boys which is a historical trend. For example, in the year 2019/20 the DfE (2021) report that boys had three times the number of PEs compared with girls. In addition, there continues to be an increased rate of exclusion for those eligible for FSMs who were seven times more likely to be excluded than peers not on FSM in the year 2020/2021 (Nasen, 2022). The DfE (2021) highlight that Gypsy/Roma and pupils of mixed White and Black Caribbean ethnicity have the highest rates of PE. Similar trends have continued for the year 2021/22. Furthermore, the disproportionate exclusion of Black pupils, which includes Black Caribbean, Black African and Black Other, and Mixed-race group, has been prevailing trend for decades (Stewart-Hall, Langham and Miller, 2023). Furthermore, it has been argued that the DfE's specific breakdown of pupils by ethnicity does not represent the extent of disproportionality. For example, in some London boroughs the rate of exclusion for Black Caribbean pupils was found to be five times higher than that of white peers (McIntyre, Parveen and Thomas, 2021). Additionally, pupils with a known special educational need and disability (SEND) continue to be disproportionately affected by exclusions (DfE 2023). This has continued from previous years. For example, in the year 2019/2020, 45% of all PEs were pupils with a known SEN (DfE, 2021).

Importantly, this snapshot of statistical data does not account for the intersection of variables, for any given pupil, which has the propensity to further exacerbate differences in exclusion rate. Such examples begin to show that the statistical headlines from the DfE's most recent exclusion figures may not fully explore the nuanced nature of the SEs experience for parents and pupils.

Furthermore, over time trends in SEs data indicate significant discrimination based on a pupil's familial background, SEN, gender and ethnicity (Gill, 2017; Stewart-Hall, Langham and Miller, 2023). To meet the recruitment criteria for this thesis study, any children of the parent participants taking part must have been first PEx from a mainstream primary or secondary London school within the last ten years. As the data collection was undertaken in Summer 2020, this covers academic years 2009/10 through to 2019/20.

1.1.5 – The underrepresentation of parental experience

Overall, there is a notable gap in research prioritising the parental SEs experience. Often, parents' perspectives are secondary, appearing as an addendum to their child's experience, or merged within triangulated approaches that include other practitioners such as teachers. This trend was observed by Parker *et al*., (2016), who conducted a qualitative analysis of the experiences of parents. A study by children's charity Coram into the parental SEs experience (Mesie and Michelmore, 2019) also echoes this observation; the findings from this study contributed to the government-commissioned Timpson review on SEs (Timpson, 2019). The Coram study highlighted the significant gap in research in this domain and delved into how both pupils and parents navigate SEs policies and procedures. The online survey, completed by 124 parents and 318 pupils, sheds light on this under-researched field. Preliminary findings revealed that parents undergo significant emotional and physical stress due to their child's exclusion. However, due to the inherent limitations of survey research, the depth of these experiences was not fully captured. The Timpson report briefly elaborated on the negative impacts of exclusions on parents. This emerging concern underscores the importance of further research focusing on the parental experience.

The newest DfE (2023) statutory guidance on SEs continues to offer suggestions to schools on the procedural aspects. However, although there is slightly greater emphasis on the legal necessity of parental involvement, arguably this remains peripheral in comparison to other aspects. Additionally, academic research around SEs often integrates various perspectives, with some exploring combined parental and pupil views (see Wood, 2011; Mesie and Michelmore, 2019) or others including insights from pupils, parents, and practitioners (e.g., Demie, 2019; Gazeley, 2012; Lally, 2013; Power and Taylor, 2018).

However, Parker *et al*. (2018), whose study solely explores parents' experiences, highlight that parents are a valuable yet underutilised source of insight into this area. The aforementioned examples begin to demonstrate the necessity for in-depth exploration of the parental experience in relation to PEs. The literature review further highlights these aspects.

1.1 – Research question, aims and objectives

What are the lived experiences of parents whose children have been permanently excluded (PEx) from school?

To answer this question, the research is divided into four main areas. These are aligned with the ontological and methodological underpinnings of the research design.

A. **Family**
   How does the parent describe their child?
   How do they describe their relationship?
   Has the PE affected daily routines and their emotional well-being?

B. **Events leading to the exclusion**
   How did the parent experience events led to their child's permanent exclusion?
   Were they aware of policy and guidance?
   How did parental interactions with school staff or those involved in the PE shape their experiences?

C. **Events since the exclusion**
   What has been experienced by the parent since the exclusion?
   How do they describe and explain their experiences?

D. **Reflecting on the experience**
   From these experiences, what does the parent think might have been done differently?
   Were there any aspects of their experience that they found supportive?
   Has anything changed regarding their outlook or direction?

1.2 – Outline of ontological and methodological approach

The research design of this study is aligned with the objectives and axiological principles relating to the aforementioned research questions. As a researcher it has been important to recognise the inherent validity of the parents' lived experiences and prioritise approaches which remain congruent with this, specifically from an ethical standpoint. This aims to legitimise parents' experiences in order to form part of evidence-based approaches to school exclusion (SE) policy (see Daniels, Porter and Thompson, 2022).

It was also important to acknowledge the parents' frequent marginalisation in permanent exclusions (PEs) discourse as well as their disproportionate impact. Furthermore, it has been important to remain aware of my own interpretative role in the research process and analysis. Therefore, a SIP was designed to holistically situate participants lived experiences. This conceptual framework draws upon aspects of the CR theories of Roy Bhaskar (see Boje, 2017; Bhaskar, 1978; Prowse, 2010). It draws attention to the ontological validity of the parent participants' experiences, offering potential for findings to inform PEs policy and practice. Furthermore, ontological, methodological and axiological compatibility allowed an openness to consider differing but complementary theories. For example, concepts such as embodied experience, (see Merlau-Ponty, 1962), intersectionality (see Crenshaw, 1989) and misrecognition (see Xie *et al*., 2021). The SIP interpretatively incorporates metaphors using natural world imagery to support visualisation of concepts. It consists of six tiers and one outer layer; 'Earth,' 'Water,' 'Glass,' 'Fireflies,' 'Air' and ' the 'Ineffable'.' Each layer should be seen as interdependent, working together interchangeably.

IPA was employed to allow in-depth and nuanced exploration of these experiences. Considering the frequent marginalisation of the participant group, IPA also justified the use of a small-sample size. This facilitated recruitment and permits the valuing of each case and individual experience to be appreciated discretely, before finding shared themes between participants. In line with my own researcher principles, the hermeneutic pivot inherent in IPA necessitates self-reflection around my positionality and acceptance of the inherently subjective nature of the analysis (see Chapter Three). Thus, participants' unique experiences have been acknowledged as ontologically valid, while beginning to explore some of the causal mechanisms that participants suggested were occurring throughout their journey of permanent exclusion. These nuanced understandings offer opportunities for reflections on policy and practice in the field.

1.4 – Limitations

The unexpected onset of the COVID-19 pandemic influenced data collection procedure particularly in regard to careful ethical consideration of physical safety. However, it is possible that the traumatic aspects of participants' PE experiences may have been intensified during the pandemic. This may have been due to the "collective trauma" experienced world-wide due to the pandemic (Budrytė and Resende, 2023, p.106). The authors however emphasise the importance of viewing its impact through intersectional lenses, particularly questioning its effect on 'minorities, women, people of color, people with disabilities, and indigenous individuals.' At the time of data collection, other global events were occurring simultaneously, notably the tragic death of George Floyd and subsequent Black Lives Matter protests (see Merritt, 2021). Such events might have heightened the racialised aspects of participants' experiences, influencing both their accounts and my interpretations. Whilst recognising the potential bias, these factors could be viewed as a strength, offering unique insight into an intersection of personal and global trauma during a significant moment in modern history.

Additionally, the English political landscape has seen significant shifts; notably, at the time of writing, eight individuals have held the post of Secretary of State for Education in England. Mapping and continuously following these changes throughout all stages of this doctoral study presented a challenge, introducing an unprecedented number of external variables into the research context. It is essential to acknowledge that factors such as these political changes, as well as socioeconomic shifts, though not explicitly addressed within this research, might have influenced participants' experiences and my interpretations. These elements are critical for interpreting the findings in their broader context and for presenting a comprehensive overview of this research journey.

Methodologically, while IPA facilitates a rich and intricate exploration of participants' experiences, the small sample size inevitably led to an in-depth but narrow focus. The participant demographic, consisting solely of individuals identifying as Black, Asian, or Mixed, may have been influenced by the snowballing recruitment method. Furthermore, there was attrition involving two participants who identified as White. They participated in the pilot phase but subsequently withdrew and no further reasons were given. Capturing these experiences may or may not have offered new perspectives on the themes which eventually arose.

1.5 – Thesis outline

This thesis explores the lived experiences of parents whose children have been permanently excluded (PEx) from a mainstream school in London. The first chapter introduces and contextualises the notion that that school exclusions (SEs) are problematic considering the public discourse. The chapter outlines the main research aims, questions and direction of study, including limitations.

Chapter two reviews the literature in relation to permanent exclusions (PEs) and consists of three main parts. The first defines key terms and explores statutory policy, legal requirements and parental obligations pertaining to the permanent exclusion process. The second conceptualises parental experience within SEs contexts, exploring the various perspectives around their positioning in the literature. The third, outlines the SIP, which is the unique conceptual framework designed by utilising the participants' experiences in this thesis. The SIP offers ontological, epistemological and methodological congruence.

The methodology chapter further outlines the research approach and design. It clarifies the critical realist phenomenologist theoretical underpinnings of the SIP framework. A rationale for the adoption of IPA framework is given. Further details are explored around procedure, sampling, data handling and reflexivity within the process.

Chapter four, presents findings which are structured around the three superordinate themes: 'Permanent school exclusion as a rippling life-changing event,' 'Permanent school exclusion as a distorted reflection,' and 'Resisting permanent school exclusion.' These sections explore the significant impact of the permanent exclusion as experienced by the parent participants, the ways in which the parents' knowledge of themselves and their children were dismissed, and finally the agentic ways in which parents responded to the permanent exclusion decision. The discussion chapter then uses existing literature to explore these themes and make links to themes introduced in the second chapter.

The conclusion revisits and synthesises the aforementioned aspects by viewing findings through the SIP layers. Explored in chapter five includes: 'Earth: Physical and Psychological impacts,' 'Water' and 'Glass'; Social interactions in the PE process' and 'Fireflies' and 'Air'; Agentic resistance, School Exclusions Policy and Discourse.' Finally, the ineffable aspects of parent experiences and the research findings are considered. The conclusion reflects on the implications of the findings and possibilities for shaping policy and practice in relation to permanent school exclusions.

Chapter Two – Integrative review: policy, literature, and conceptual framework

This chapter provides a review of the school exclusions (SEs) policy context and academic literature. However, given the complexity and inherent interdisciplinarity of the SEs field, a novel conceptual framework is introduced. This section further outlines some key terms as used within school exclusions policy. It gives a brief overview of SE frameworks. It supports understanding of research aims and objectives as outlined in section 1.2.

2.1 – Policy context

As section 1.1.1 briefly outlined, this thesis used DfE (2017a) statutory guidance as the main point of reference when designing, conducting and writing up findings. However, it is important to acknowledge the DfE's (2023) updated the statutory guidance and therefore this chapter gives an overview of any changes which most relate to the central themes of this thesis. The DfE (2023, pp. 8-10) outlines the main changes compared with the previous 2017 edition. These include greater emphasis on the requirement for headteachers to immediately notify LAs, parents or carers and where necessary social workers of a decision to permanently exclude (PE) a pupil. The DfE also remind schools to ask if the 'behaviour policy is understood by pupils and parents' and to consider the *Equality Act 2010* when designing them (p.48). Another noticeable change in DfE (2023) is a supplanting of the term 'fixed-period exclusion' with 'suspension.' The terminology first officially appeared in DfE (2022) behaviour guidance, however crucially the change of terminology has not been reflected in the legal regulations (Goddard, 2022). The DfE (2023, p.4) even acknowledge this stating, 'use of the term suspend in this guidance is a reference to what is described in the legislation as an exclusion for a fixed period.' Therefore, this change remains largely semantic or ideological, rather than one which affects legal or procedural aspects of a 'suspension' or 'fixed-period' exclusion. Consequently, schools, teachers, parents and carers may choose to use their preferred choice of terminology, so long as this remains consistent within school policy (Kerr and Elridge-Hinmers, 2022). This thesis also continues to use the legally binding terminology - 'fixed-period' exclusion (FPE).

Overall, it can be said that there is slightly more attention given to parents and carers in DfE (2023). However arguably the language used, such as 'inform' suggests a continued lack of understanding around the need for their equal and collaborative involvement. The newer guidance does contain some details on the procedural aspects in relation to parents. For example, they outline their right to obtain notification of intent to PE in writing or request support in any meetings held.

However, as Goddard (2022, lines 91-95) highlights in relation to the affiliated DfE (2022) behaviour guidance, significant 'confusions' remain;

> *they seem to imply that the making of representations by parent and a request for a meeting are separate acts, when in fact the regulations make it clear that is it the making of representations that triggers the requirement to hold meeting - there is no requirement for parents to specifically request a meeting.*

This begins to demonstrate that within the newer guidance, contradictions or areas which require greater clarity, around parents' practical involvement, remains. If this document (DfE, 2023) is intended to support schools and parents around legal involvement or rights, then this confusion will likely exacerbate issues for PE procedure. Still, the newer guidance does have slightly increased emphasis on PE being 'a last resort' (ibid, p.3). However, the DfE equally state that 'schools and local authorities should not adopt a 'no exclusion' policy' (p.3). Therefore, it is apparent that the Government's overall position and advocacy for SEs remains unchanged. The DfE still continues to support headteachers in their decision to PE and is steadfast in seeing SE as a way of maintaining 'high standards of behaviour and maintain the safety of school communities' (Kerr and Elridge-Hinmers, 2022, line 12).

A further problematic aspect of the new DfE (2023) guidance is the lack of acknowledgement regarding the impacts of receiving a PE for parents and pupils. More importantly, the DfE (2017a) guidance contained a discrete section for parents/carers (see Annex C, pp. 56 – 61) which no longer exists in DfE (2023). Although the DfE (2017a) non-statutory segment might have offered detailed support for parents, it did in-directly acknowledge some pitfalls in SEs procedure.

For example, short summary responses to questions were given which directly address parents. These included, 'Can I question the decision to exclude my child?' and 'What can I do if I feel my child is being discriminated against in the exclusion process, for example because he/she has a disability?' In the DfE (2023) guidance, requirements to 'inform' or 'notify' parents are integrated throughout but address school leaders such as headteachers or other stakeholders such as the local authority (LA) or members of the governing body. Any specific guidance directly addressing parents has been now removed in the newer publication. Through the lens of this research study, this is seen as particularly problematic for parents of PEx children, due to their already frequent marginalisation. This also seems to continue a trend already suggested by Tawell and McCluskey (2022) in their critical discourse analysis of English and Scottish SEs policy. The authors note that DfE (2017a) statutory guidance seeks to embolden headteachers in their use of exclusion by providing details on legislative parameters whilst omitting the impacts on parents and children.

Therefore, it is argued that although newer statutory guidance has been published, the issues highlighted in this study, remain largely unaddressed. Furthermore, given that no legal changes have been made since the publication of DfE (2023), the former DfE (2017a) statutory guidance remains entirely relevant to this study's research aims. As such it continues to form the basis for exploring SEs legal frameworks, defining terms and parents' legal rights as seen in the subsequent sections.

2.1.1 – School exclusions legal frameworks

Exclusions in English schools are bound by law under the *Education Act 2002* amended in 2011, as well as legislation held in other key documents such as *The Education Act 1996* and *Education and Inspections Act 2006* (DfE, 2017a). Under the *Equality Act* 2010, which applies across the UK, it is illegal for schools to exclude based on a pupil's race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion, beliefs, due to pregnancy or gender reassignment (Child Law, 2023). In relation to SEND in England, statutory guidance around exclusions is referred to in the '*Special educational needs and disability code of practice'* (see DfE and DoH, 2015). However, SEs are devolved across four jurisdictions of the UK; England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Daniels, Thompson and Tawell, 2019; McCluskey *et al.,*2019). This means that each jurisdiction has its own responsibilities for national statutory SEs policy and practice. These can have significant differences in the ways SEs occur (McCluskey *et al.,* 2019). The focus of this thesis will be in relation to SEs in England.

As this thesis explores SEs in London, specifically English statutory guidance remains the focus. Those with legal responsibilities to exclude in England must refer to statutory DfE guidance publication, *Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral in England, including pupil movement* (DfE, 2023) and formerly *Exclusion from Maintained Schools, Academies and Pupil Referral Units in England* (DfE, 2017a). Included are the steps headteachers are legally required to take when considering excluding a pupil and during a SEs process. The guidance covers a variety of areas including the role of a school's governing board, the financial aspects of exclusion and the ways in which parents must be involved. Some key procedural points are summarised by Timpson (2019, p.5) as follows:

- *Only the head teacher of a school can exclude a pupil and this must be on disciplinary grounds*
- *Permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort, in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy; and where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school*
- *A pupil may be excluded for one or more fixed periods (up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year), or permanently*
- *The decision to exclude a pupil must be lawful, reasonable and fair*

As such there are two legal forms of exclusion: 'permanent' and 'fixed-period'; in the case of the former - where no appeals have been made, a pupil is permanently removed from a school's register. In the case of a 'fixed-period' exclusion (FPE) a pupil is asked to remain off-site for shorter time periods. For instance, where a pupil's behaviour during lunchtime is deemed by the school to be persistently disruptive, they may receive a FPE for these times only. Such cases do not allow for the law to be circumvented and these must still be formally logged as a half-day fixed-period exclusion with up to 45 instances in a school year (DfE, 2017a). In 2021, the DfE begun informally supplanting the term 'suspension' in place of 'fixed-period' exclusion (Ferguson, 2021). These changes have now been reflected formally through publication of DfE (2023) statutory guidance. However, given that the legalisation remains entirely unchanged, this switching of terms has been criticised as a confusing move (Ferguson, 2021). It is argued to be an 'unhelpful' blurring of lines between non-legal guidance and statutory, legally bound policy (ibid). This is particularly relevant when considering parental involvement in the PE process.

A FPE or PE can be legally administered due to persistent breaches of a school's behaviour policy (DfE, 2023; DfE, 2017a). Therefore, DfE (2017a, p.48) reminds schools they must establish one and 'should have processes for identifying and supporting pupils' additional needs.'

They offer brief guidance in asking;

- *Does the school behaviour policy clearly set out behaviour expectations and sanctions and reflect the requirements of the Equality Act 2010?*
- *Are governors/staff (including sixth form staff in school sixth forms) clear about their roles and when to escalate issues/involve parents?*
- *Is the behaviour policy understood by pupils and parents?*
- *Are sanctions monitored to identify any inconsistency or potential discrimination (e.g., Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) or ethnicity)?*
- *Are systems in place to identify pupils showing persistent poor behaviour and if there are any underlying causes?*

However, in recent DfE (2023) statutory guidance this section has now been removed with the reason for this remaining unclear. Additional discussion of behaviour policy development is given in '*Behaviour in Schools'* (DfE, 2022), but this is non-statutory, therefore non-legally binding guidance.

2.1.2 – Legal obligations towards parents

Throughout a PEs process there is a legal obligation for schools to include both parents and pupils at various points once a decision to exclude has been made (DfE, 2017a). The DfE (2017a, p.5) defines 'parent' as 'any person who has parental responsibility (which includes the local authority where it has a care order in respect of the child)'. In addition, a 'parent' may also be 'any person (for example, a foster carer) with whom the child lives. Under law a headteacher in England who has made the decision to exclude a pupil must, 'without delay' let parents know the type of exclusion, the reasons for it and the period it will cover (DfE, 2017a, p 12).

Newer DfE (2023) guidance also reminds schools that legally this includes informing a social worker or if the pupil is 'looked-after' by the LA if relevant. Intent to PE must be communicated in writing, delivered either directly, to their last known home address or with agreement, electronically. Within this letter the headteacher must ensure that parents are aware that they are able to attend formal meetings regarding the exclusion.

The DfE (2023) is clear that regardless of whether a school recognises the SEN of a pupil, 'all parents have the right to request the presence of an SEN expert at a review meeting' (p.7). Efforts should be made to include and encourage participation from an excluded pupil wherever possible. Children's legal charity Coram (Mesie and Michelmore, 2019, p.18) outline some additional legal requirements during an exclusions process. They note that parents must be told:

- *their right to make representations about the exclusion to the school's governing board, and how they might be involved in this*
- *how representations should be made, and, where there is a legal requirement for the governing board to consider the exclusion, that parents have a right to attend a meeting, to be represented at that meeting (at their own expense and to bring a friend*
- *their right to see copies of their child's school record (for schools run by the local authority)*

In the case of both FPE and PEs, alternative educational provision at another location may have been provided, and so full details of this must also be given to the parents (DfE, 2017a, Mesie and Michelmore, 2019). Legally, expectations are also held of parents. For example, once parents have been notified of all relevant information, during the first five days of any lengthier exclusion, their child must not be present in any public place during school hours. Parents are under legal obligation to enforce this and failure to comply with this may result in the parent receiving a fixed-penalty notice or prosecution (DfE, 2017a). Additional DfE (2017a) guidance suggests that headteachers should make efforts to ensure all information is not only shared, but it has been understood by parents. For example, where the parents do not speak English as their first language, the DfE advise translation. Furthermore, they suggest directing parents to Annex C which contains some additional information, and links to external organisations such as Coram or the National Autistic Society (NAS) School Exclusion Service (England). Annex B provides non-

statutory guidance for headteachers and schools to consider throughout the process. This suggests practice which 'should' be carried out, such as having timely PE procedure that enables parents to make representations for meetings. However, it is made clear that this is guidance not obligatory in law.

For the most part, it is argued that statutory legal guidance around exclusions is, 'sparse' and allows a wide range of interpretation by key decision-makers such as those in schools (Ferguson, 2021, p. 102). It is suggested that these grey areas contribute to the many unofficial or illegal exclusions such as 'off-rolling,' where a pupil is removed from the register solely in the interests of the school (ibid). Arguably this issue has been indirectly acknowledged in newer DfE (2023) statutory guidance, where more discrete emphasis around 'off-rolling' and 'unlawful' SEs is given. For example, the DfE (2023) now suggest that parents who feel their child has been unlawfully excluded, can use the 'school's complaints procedure.' However, there is no nuanced exploration of how this would work in practice to safeguard parents, given it is effectively a whistle-blowing process. Questions are raised about whether parents do remain informed throughout their child's SE in accordance with the legal requirement (Mesie and Michelmore, 2019).

In broader legal contexts SEs in the UK sit within Article 2 of Protocol 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights (Ferguson, 2021). This remains binding, despite the UK leaving the European Union (see GOV.UK, 2022). The protocol (cited in Ferguson, 2021, p.103) states:

> *No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their religious and philosophical convictions*

Despite this, three PE cases brought to the House of Lords/Supreme Court demonstrate its 'weak protection' in practice (ibid). Acknowledgement of this complex legal dynamic within the SEs process has led to the rise of dedicated resources and assistance providing support for families navigating legalities. These include The School Exclusions Hub through the charity Just for Kids Law (2019), and The School Exclusions Project through Matrix Chambers and City, 11 Kings Bench Walk Chambers (City, University of London, 2020).

2.1.3 – Defining a mainstream school

This study explores the lived experiences of parents whose children have been permanently excluded (PEx) from school. However, 'school' in this thesis will be defined as mainstream, which will include both maintained and academy trust settings. This section outlines these terms, as the landscape of educational provision in England is wide, and distinguishing between settings can be challenging (Ball, 2018; GOV.UK, 2023). In relation to PE statutory guidance and legislation (DfE, 2017a, p.3), the following settings to which they must adhere are:

> *maintained schools, pupil referral units (PRUs), academy schools (including free schools, studio schools and university technology colleges) and alternative provision academies (including alternative provision free schools) in England.*

School type dictates several factors such as personnel management, finance, admissions, accountability and curriculum (GOV.UK, 2023). Therefore, these differences can be crucial in terms of governance. In relation to funding three main branches of school exist: academy, maintained and other, which includes independent and grammar (GOV.UK, 2023). Maintained schools receive funding via a local authority (LA) and remain accountable to LA stipulated requirements (DfE, 2020). Independent schools are privately funded, oftentimes by parents. grammar schools are selective; pupils must pass a test to gain entry, but may be maintained (GOV.UK, 2023).

Academy schools, of which there are several types, in England are funded directly by the Secretary of State (IPSEA, 2018). For example, they may be part of multi-academy trusts (MATs), or be free schools, but all are publicly funded and legally bound by a 'funding agreement' (GOV.UK, 2023). However, as they are not governed by LAs, academy schools have greater freedoms to design core features such as curriculum, policy and school hours. It has been said that the autonomous nature of academies can be an attractive and potentially beneficial for parents if they can be involved in governance (Eyles *et al*. 2017). However, it is important to note that academies have received considerable criticism in this regard. It is argued by some that they form part of a wider neo-liberal agenda in education which values economic goals (Keddie, 2019; Reay, 2018; Wilkins, 2017). For example, 'sponsors' of academies can include businesses (Haves, 2022). These aspects are said to outweigh the 'policy goals of academisation' which suggest increased 'school diversity and parental choice' (Keddie, 2018, p.2).

The continued Government push for MATs is argued to have decreased parental rights, specifically their ability to influence decision-making around governance (Healey, 2022). The effect is increased parental marginalisation, and lack of MAT accountability regarding procedure (ibid). Some concerns around academy governance have led to some parental activism in London around anti-academisation. For example, this includes parents postponing the academisation of local London primary schools by requesting a judicial review (Long, 2018), and by staging protests (Shaw, 2017; Weale, 2019). The 'Anti-academies Alliance' (AAA) organisation gives campaigning advice to parents (see AAA, 2020). In-line with their agenda they also post articles in relation to academies and SEs. An extensive analysis of academy schools opened, since 2002, found that PE rates are much higher in these settings (Machin and Sandi, 2020). The authors suggest this may be due to more stringent approaches to institutional behaviour policy. Michaela Community School Academy Trust is one example which employs strict zero-tolerance behaviour policies and has notably high SE rates (Australian Financial Review, 2023; Lister, 2022). Given that a PE can be administered due to persistent breach of a school's behaviour policy, this becomes a pressing issue.

Regardless of whether an English school is an academy, maintained, or is independent, most children and young people, including SEN/D pupils attend a mainstream school (DfE, 2015). Mainstream schools may also house units embedded on site or provide other specialist support if required (ibid). However, in some cases pupils may require alternate support and so may attend a special school or alternative provision (AP). According to DfE (2015), it is recommended that pupils attending a special school have a statement of educational need or education, health and care (EHC) plan. However, attending a mainstream school or AP does not preclude a pupil's entitlement to have a statement or EHC plan to support their SEN. Although this study focuses on PE from a mainstream school, alternative provision (AP) settings are noteworthy. This is because many pupils who receive a FPE or PE, subsequently attend some form of AP such as a pupil referral unit (PRU) (Gill, 2017). Pupils can be excluded from AP (ibid), which may be state maintained through the LA or academy trust. They may be independent, and in some cases, unregistered and/or illegal schools (ibid). In short AP can be defined as 'a catch-all term which describes any educational provision outside of mainstream and special needs schools' (Gill, 2017, p. 6). Although classified as different to special schools, many AP settings have higher numbers of SEN children.

This includes pupils facing challenges in relation to their social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) which can correlate with receiving a SE (ibid). However, smaller class-sizes frequently seen in APs have been seen as beneficial by some parents in providing better support for their child's SEN (Mills and Thomson, 2018).

Thus, in England there is a wide range of educational settings that must adhere to DfE (2017a) statutory guidance on SEs. However, in relation to the research question this thesis defines school as representing a mainstream setting. This definition includes both maintained or academy trust schools, but excludes independent, grammar and special schools. However, it acknowledges that AP settings such as PRUs are likely to be discussed in the accounts of parent participants. This is due to APs forming part of the provision after FPEs and PEs. This thesis highlights how differing attributes across school types and at individual school-level, creates intricacy and complexity in terms of governance. Varying degree of autonomy across and within boroughs means significant variance in relation to how SEs occur and are officially monitored or reviewed (see Bryant *et al*., 2018). Therefore, although this study focuses on parent participants in London, their experiences of PE may cross boroughs and settings. Importantly, as a PE can be legally administered due to 'persistent breaches' of a school's behaviour policy (see section 2.1.1), school type determines governance around their development. As DfE (2017a, p.48) acknowledges;

> *At a maintained school or PRU, the head teacher must determine the behaviour policy in accordance with principles set out by the governing board. An academy trust must have a behaviour policy but it is up to the academy trust to decide who is responsible for drawing up the policy.*

This demonstrates a lack of clarity regarding procedural governance. For example, in the case of academy trusts, it is at their discretion to decide who draws up a behaviour policy. This may have implications for accountability, such as who reviews content development and the impact of behaviour policies at institutional level. This may disadvantage parents whose input may be overlooked. These aspects highlight the significant complexity to the SEs process and variance across settings which parent participants may have experienced.

2.1.4 – Education provision post-permanent exclusion

After day 6 of a pupil's permanent exclusion (PE), it is a statutory duty for a LA or governing board to take responsibility to provide some form of full-time education (DfE, 2017a). This must be discussed with parents during the exclusions process (DfE, 2017a, 2023). Oftentimes this results in a pupil attending a PRU or AP, which should be a temporary placement until attendance at another mainstream or specialist setting (Gill, 2017). However, permanently excluded (PEx) pupils frequently stay in these settings until the end of their GCSE examinations (ibid). There are many other instances of unofficial exclusions. These include managed moves, whereby mutual agreement between headteachers leads a pupil to transfer to another school's register. Given the frequent grey areas around managed moves, DfE (2023) does acknowledge and give some greater guidance on how they can occur lawfully. Additionally in the case of unlawful exclusion, a school may not PE a pupil officially, but move them to an off-site AP. The pupil, therefore, remains on the school's register, but they have been PEx. Schools may illegally coerce parents to remove their child out of school and in some cases require they sign paperwork stating they will begin home-educating their child (Gill, 2017). In the newer SEs guidance this is acknowledged as a possibility by the DfE (2023, p.15). However, overall the DfE's (2023, p.3) position remains clear in terms of advocating 'school exclusions, managed moves and off-site direction' as 'essential behaviour management tools for headteachers.'

As outlined previously, legally parents must be involved in a PE process. This includes discussing the provision for their child post PE. However, given the complexity of PEs and the variety of ways it may occur, this can be different in each case. For example, for unlawful or unofficial PEs, provision remains outside of officially defined procedure. Therefore, parents may not be informed or post-PE provision may not be adequately arranged (Gill, 2017). Due to the potential pathways post-PE, it is also feasible that a pupil may become a 'child missing in education' (CME) (Gill, 2017). This may occur in cases where no replacement school has been identified or there have been variations in the exclusions process via unofficial or illegal means.

This may be noticed when the pupil's file is not requested by any new setting (ibid). The issue of children who are missing in education is deemed to be a safeguarding issue, on which DfE (2016) provides statutory legally-binding guidance. Although schools are obligated to report these cases to the local authority, this does not necessarily occur and remains a 'woefully unregulated' area (Parsons, 2018, p.8). Statutory DfE (2016) guidance identifies that CME are at greater risk of childhood criminal exploitation (CCE) and/or experience detrimental effects on their life trajectories in terms of employment.

It is likely that a permanently excluded (PEx) pupil will have experienced multiple exclusions (Paget *et al*., 2017). For example, prior history of FPE can be a predictor of later PE (Strand and Fletcher, 2014). Therefore, a pupil may have received several FPEs leading up to a PE. Even when proper procedure is followed and a pupil officially attends an AP or special school, under DfE (2017a, 2023) guidance it is permissible they may later still receive another PE at a subsequent setting. There is no limit on the number of PEs a pupil may receive across settings. Although the DfE (2021) shares data on how many times a pupil receives multiple FPEs within a setting, figures do not track any repeated PEs received by a pupil across provisions. This may indicate that a more holistic picture of the ways in which individual pupils and their families experience SEs is absent. Although this is not explored deeply, the Timpson (2019) review does begin to acknowledge the limitations in tracking SEs across educational settings.

This section highlights how parent participants' experiences of their child's PE are frequently complex and multifaceted. Even where a PE follows statutory guidance this naturally includes varied experiences for each parent for example in relation to post-PE provision for their child. Although this study uses their experience of a PE occurring in a mainstream setting, it recognises that parent participants may discuss or refer to multiple experiences of FPE and PE processes.

2.1.5 – Summary

Section 2.1 explored the legal frameworks which are embedded in statutory SE policy guidance in England. This includes details of legal obligations of and towards parents in relation to their child's PE from school. This section defined the term school as being mainstream, including maintained and academy settings. It defines parent as those who hold parental responsibility, including for example the local authority where a care order has been placed. Overall, this section demonstrates a parents' legal right to be involved in their child's PE process. This includes being informed of intent to PE their child and being aware of post-PE provision. However, this section demonstrates the complex nature of a PE experience, even where policy guidance has been adhered to. This is due to variance across boroughs, school types and institutional policy or approach to SEs. Furthermore, it acknowledges the occurrence of illegal or non-conforming exclusions such as off-rolling. In these cases, there are significant safeguarding concerns where a child may become missing in education. This section highlights that despite legal requirement, parents may not always be involved. They may have experienced multiple FPE or PE processes across settings which highlights the complexity of experiences some parents may face over time. The next section explores the conceptualisation of parents within the SE context in relation to academic discourse.

2.2 – Conceptualisation of parents within the school exclusion contexts

Academic research plays a significant role in the formulation of 'evidence-based' national statutory policy on SEs (Daniels, Thompson and Porter, 2022). This legally binding guidance is the basis for the design and implementation of the institutional-level behaviour policy, used by school leaders to make a PE decision (see section 2.1). Despite ongoing tensions and feuds around what constitutes suitable evidence, the authors argue that all SEs research is worthy of consideration. This is due to the significant complexity of the SEs in England, requiring a more comprehensive contextualisation of individual cases or experiences. To some extent, the value of considering the broad scope of SEs research was acknowledged by the former government under Theresa May (Loft, Roberts and Danechi, 2020). This resulted in an extensive literature review (see Graham *et al.,* 2019), to support Edward Timpson CBE's 2019 report on SEs. Therefore, as will be explored, some of the academic perspectives around SEs remain pertinent to this thesis to contextualise parental experience. As such this section 2.2 explores three broad conceptualisations of parents within SE contexts in England; sociological, psychological and integrated perspectives. Although academic literature remains the focus, some references to policy documentation are made. This is to highlight discursive elements and to understand how these may reflect viewpoints rooted in related research. Given the multifaceted ways in which a school exclusion may occur (see section 2.1), the abbreviated term, SE is used throughout this section. This is to reflect academic discourse which may use the umbrella term of 'school exclusion,' rather than focusing on logistical or legal nuances around terminology.

2.2.1 – School exclusions as a sign or symptom of social inequality

This section focuses on sociologically rooted discourses around SEs and how parents are positioned within them. It covers research considering the wider structural factors suggested to influence the existence and prevalence of SEs. Research has demonstrated that a variety of social factors contribute to increasing exclusion rates (Graham *et al*., 2019; Gill *et al*., 2017). SEs have been argued to be a representation of social inequality and disadvantage in relation to race (Demie, 2019, 2022; Ball, 2018), disability (Demie; 2022; Ball, 2018; Hatton, 2018) and parental social-class (Gazeley, 2010, 2012). In these contexts, exclusions were produced and re-produced by social and educational disadvantage (Gazeley, 2010; Ball, 2018). School exclusion practices, and the societally-marginalised groups they affect, including parents, are suggested to be the result of contemporary neoliberal approaches in education which are market-focused (Gazeley, 2010; Power and Taylor, 2018; Joseph, 2020). Parsons (2018) argues that it is in fact a 'deregulated and marketised education system' and 'system 'gaming'' which has contributed to the 'continuing school exclusions scandal in England'. He further points to systemic failures affecting 'large numbers of the most vulnerable children in society' (p. 245). As such he suggests that schools are eager to look favourably in national league tables.

Not only are SEs seen as a sign or symptom of societal disadvantage, but they are said to be part of an education system which further reproduces them (Gazeley, 2010; Gewirtz, 2002). In a critical commentary on the current state of the English education system and policies over the last forty years, Stephen J. Ball suggests the system continues to 'reproduce and legitimate complex social divisions and inequalities' (Ball, 2018, p. 207). Such persistent and unrelenting inequalities in English education are said to have been caused by neoliberal changes to school structures with the introduction of academies (Ball, 2018; Reay, 2018). Overall, SE has been seen as a pathway to social exclusion in the with damaging long-term consequences for those affected (Ball *et al*., 2000; Lanksey., 2015; Macrae *et al*., 2003). For example, the concept of the school-to-prison pipeline is often discussed to highlight correlations between SEs and increased likelihood of later imprisonment (see Graham, 2016; Hemez *et al.,* 2020). However, as is discussed further in section 2.2.3, focusing solely on the wider societal influencers contributing to SEs does not fully explore all of the 'multiple, layered and inter-related factors, at individual, family and school levels' (Graham *et al*., 2019, p 95). Such a view also arguably overlooks the ways in which parents exert their agency in response to the various manifestations of social inequality.

For example, kinship care, where a child is parented in extended family arrangements, has correlations with the socio-economic disadvantage in the UK (Nandy and Selwyn, 2014). Additionally, forms of kinship care are acknowledged as having higher prevalence in Asian, Black African and Caribbean heritage communities in England (What Works for Children's Social Care, 2022). However, in sociological research around African American kinship care, this has been suggested as an agentic form of family preservation, and a response to loss or separation induced by systemic and historical oppression (Nwachuku *et al.,* 2021; Scannapieco and Jackson, 1996). Therefore, rather than positioning parents as passive recipients within the systems of structural inequality which contribute to their child's PE, it remains important to consider ways in which parents may respond agentically.

Given that certain academic research is used as evidence to inform statutory SEs guidance it remains crucial that a wide range of perspectives are considered (Daniels, Porter and Thompson, 2022). However, there remain many perspectives which are overlooked in English SEs policy. For example, Tawell and McCluskey (2022) question which 'silences' exist in English DfE (2017a) SEs policy guidance. They suggest that absent discussion of the impact of structural factors such as school environment, systems and institutional policy is noteworthy. Their analysis implies a tendency for national SEs guidance to circumvent engagement with sociological models which explore any causal relationship between structural inequity and the increasing existence of PEs in England. Furthermore, they demonstrate the discursive effects of these omissions, such as the increasing problematisation of PEx children and their families. Therefore, remaining aware of sociological perspectives even when they are excluded from SEs policy, is important to understand the way parents of PEx children are viewed. Awareness of these gaps, therefore, contextualises the lived experiences of parents whose children have been PEx.

The aforementioned perspectives offer insights into systemic and structural factors surrounding PEs in England whilst affirming parental agency. The next sub-section summarises some psychological discourses around parents and SEs in England.

2.2.2 – School exclusions arising due to parental mental illness or trauma

In contrast to previously discussed sociological discourses, other research in the field has focused on SEs as arising from parental mental health needs or trauma. Here it is argued that children and young people who are excluded are more likely to have one or more forms of social, emotional and/or mental health (SEMH) needs, which manifest in a variety of behaviours (Ford *et al*, 2017; Gill, 2017; Paget *et al*., 2017). These psychological approaches often draw upon medical language and models (Cole, 2015). For example, the term 'social emotional and mental health' (SEMH) needs is now frequently used in the context of SEs (Graham *et al*., 2019). Previously known as behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD), the DfE introduced the term in the SEN Code of Practice in 2014 as a broader area of special educational needs (Sheffield and Morgan, 2016). Consideration of mental health within English policy guidance has increased in recent years (O'Reilly *et al*., 2018). Such changes are reflected in national policy and guidance from the DfE and Public Health England. Examples include *Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing: A whole school and college approach* (PHE, 2015) and *Supporting Mental Health in Schools and Colleges* (DfE, 2018). Current and former SEs statutory guidance discuss mental health in relation to behaviour, and signpost to wider related documentation (see DfE, 2017a, 2023).

The term adverse childhood experiences (ACES) refers to challenging or traumatic experiences affecting a child. Having ACE frequently correlates with changes in behaviour linked to poorer educational outcomes and school exclusion (Belis et al., 2018; Webster, 2022). ACE was a term initiated by medical researchers from the Centres of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States, (Larkin et al, 2012). However, in England ACES refers to parental loss, separation, and living in environments where children are subject to emotional or sexual abuse, neglect and/or community violence (DfE, 2018; Rajan et al., 2019; Walling et al., 2011). Overall, having one or more adverse experiences throughout childhood, is accepted as increasing the likelihood of exclusion from school (Coleman, 2015; John, 2019). Some psychological perspectives such as ACES are reflected in DfE policy guidance which feature or discuss SEs, for example Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (DfE, 2018). This provides support for schools and education practitioners explicitly discussing how a pupil's mental health needs might increase some of the 'poor' or 'disruptive' behaviours linked to exclusion (DfE, 2018).

Here the DfE (2018, p14, 15) also explore key 'risk' and 'protective' factors, which may influence or protect against mental health needs in pupils. These are divided into four categories to show where these factors originate: 'in the child', 'in the family', 'in the school', and 'in the community'. Some examples of 'risk' factors emanating from 'the child' include, 'genetic influences', 'low IQ' and 'neuro-diversity.' Examples of 'risk' factors 'in the family' include 'parental conflict' and 'parental psychiatric illness.' Reference is made to external social influences are made such as 'socio-economic disadvantage' and 'homelessness' which are categorised as originating 'in the community.' The document offers an insight into DfE perspectives on how the negative experiences of an individual child and their family can affect their emotional health and impact their educational experiences.

However, it has been argued that such medicalised approaches pathologise, problematise and perpetuate negative narratives about children, their families and communities through deficit discourses of vulnerability and risk (Abel and Wahab, 2017; Ecclestone and Hayes, 2019; Swadener, 2010). For example, the concept of resilience, most notably discussed by psychiatrist Michael Rutter (1985) considers a child's ability to manage adversity. Rutter (p.604) suggests that 'parenting problems' and 'parental mental disorder' are 'risk' factors, to which a child may need to show resilience. Oppositely, 'protective factors' are supportive features which enable a child to overcome such adversity.

Terms such as 'bouncing back' and 'succeeding against the odds' have been used synonymously with 'resilience' in relation to dis/abled children and families in the UK (Runswick-Cole and Goodley, 2013). However, this is seen as problematic due to viewing dis/abled people as passively 'weak' or 'failing to have strength of character' (p.76). The term is used in relation Black, Asian parents and SEs (Sims-Schouten and Gillbert, 2022). Sims-Schouten and Gillbert observe the increased governmental promotion of 'community resilience' during the COVID-19 pandemic which particularly targeted Black and Asian populations. The authors argue that this perpetuates 'White-middle class' norms, placing blame on both individuals and their communities. The authors suggest increased use of resilience as a discourse decontextualises agentic parental behaviour, community strengths and circumvents discussions around the existence of structural racism in the UK.

Despite this, an American study explored the experiences of 15 parents regarding their child's ACE screening and subsequent medical support (Conn *et al*., 2018). Findings showed that parents were in favour of the process, seeing it as a way to break intergenerational cycles of adversity through targeted support. Importantly, DfE (2018) acknowledge that some ACES are due to 'traumatic' circumstances. These include 'abuse, neglect, domestic violence, bullying, violence, accidents or injuries; and other traumatic incidents such as a natural disaster or terrorist attack' (p.18). This may demonstrate an acknowledgement that circumstances outside of an individual parents' control may induce the trauma associated with changes in their child's behaviour. Thus, it is important to dismantle and challenge stereotypic notions of the traditional or 'normative family' (Allen and Henderson, 2022). This may include not making presumptions, and acknowledging that conceptualisations of family may differ, including complex or diverging family histories.

Furthermore, systemic inequality may induce the psychological trauma which results in adverse outcomes for individuals and families. For example, having an imprisoned parent can be categorised as an ACE, increasing the likelihood of mental health challenges and behavioural changes in their children (Shaw, Woods and Ford, 2022). Another example is Dodzro's (2021) reflection on how post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) seen in some gang-affiliated Black men, is often overlooked within British clinical psychology. Specifically, Dodzro explores how systemic racism contributes to the violence that these men experience. Interestingly DfE (2018, p.11) does mention PTSD as a cause of mental health and behavioural challenges in young people, although it does not explore wider systemic contributors.

This section explored some key psychological discourses, whist discussing some problematic positioning of parents within a deficit model of causing their child's PE. This section demonstrated the persisting relevance of considering psychological and trauma-informed models in relation to SEs.

2.2.3 - Parents as partners: an integrated way forward

Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 explores suggested causes of SEs. It considers how parents may experience their child's PE due to systemic inequality, or individual familial circumstance, such as mental health challenges and traumatic experiences. However, arguably it is a combination of these factors which drive increasing exclusions, leading in turn to a reproduction of social inequity (Demie, 2023). The school-to-prison pipeline has been one way of conceptualising how receipt of a PE can be the result of multiple factors, leading to criminality (Timpson, 2019). However, this model can 'oversimplify' the 'complex interplay' of influencing factors (Valdebenito, 2019). For example, to explore why disproportionately high numbers of neurodivergent children are excluded, a much deeper understanding of the multifaceted causal factors must be considered (Valdebenito, 2019).

Relatedly, in an extensive review of the causes and consequences of SEs, Demie (2023) considers the perspectives of teachers, parents and schools. Here, Demie begins to explore parents' perspectives around the intersection of ethnicity and SEN. Specifically, challenges faced regarding gaining support and acceptance of child's neurodiversity, for example, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and/or autism. Demie notes challenges for parents around obtaining an EHCP, or grey areas for those whose SEND should be acknowledged, but they are unable to obtain official recognition. Alongside perspectives of a wide range of key SEs stakeholders, Demie considers some structural factors influencing SEs in England. They include 'government education market policy,' 'institutional racism' and 'poverty' (p.136). Demie highlights the need for continued research to explore the ethnic and SEN disproportionality in SEs, which is timely, since Demie's publication of 2023 the DfE (2023) SEs data shows these trends continuing at an alarming rate. However, Hoult and Gibson (2023) highlight complexities which may arise solely due to interpretation by teachers, parents and even other children. For example, Hoult and Gibson (2023, p.10) argue that once a LAC is thought to be autistic or have ADHD then all subsequent behaviour may be explained by this interpretation. This may result in a 'vicious circle' which 'denies the child the freedom to have their actions read plurally in the way that other children benefit from.'

In acknowledging such complexities, SEs are increasingly viewed as being generated 'not only by the dynamics of social exclusion', but also 'within, and by schools through their actors, their relations, and their practices' (Tarabini *et al*., 2017, p 837). This view positions SEs and parents within a complex web of individuals' experiences, exclusion policy and everyday practice alongside wider social structures. Additionally, government commissioned literature acknowledges 'inter-related factors can be at play, which can overlap and possibly have a multiplier effect' (Graham *et al*., 2019, p. 16). These factors are seen at a variety of levels for example, individual emotional or mental health, institutional structures and systems, or as a result of wider social and political issues (Cole, 2015; Demie, 2023; Graham *et al*, 2019). Through recognition of the many complex influences, research in the SEs field now suggests integrated approaches to effect tangible change, reduce or eradicate PEs. An example of which is seen in findings from a recent analysis by McCluskey *et al*. (2019). As Scotland has successfully reduced SEs over the last few years, the authors review Scottish approaches to exclusions policy and practice. A sample of 27 senior-level stakeholders at local authority and national levels were interviewed across the UK in this cross-national study. Overall conclusions suggest that effectiveness of the Scottish approach to SEs lies in a 'partnership' approach to policy-making, involving, 'all stakeholders (school leaders, psychological services, parents, leaders, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, teachers' unions), resulting in a high degree of consensus and support' (ibid, p.13). Senior civil servants participating in the study commented on the 'co-design and collaboration' of exclusion policies including the views of a variety of interested groups.

Although the authors do acknowledge some continuing 'dissonance' between policy creation and implementation in practice, they saw this integrated approach to exclusion policy-making as a potential opportunity for other parts of the UK such as England. Most importantly they (ibid, p.17) conclude that;

> *An interdisciplinary or partnership approach—with regard to both the experience of the young people affected, and the terms of the support services available to them and their families—continues to be needed to address the serious gaps in knowledge about the contexts, causes and consequences of exclusion (how different factors inter-relate) and the trajectories for young people post-exclusion*

Mesie and Michelmore's (2019) Coram study took an integrated approach by exploring structural exclusions policies and procedures which were experienced by both parents and pupils. However, the authors acknowledge that the survey approach did not adequately capture the nuances of parental experience. Children's Commissioner's Office (CCO) also conducted a study across 5 geographical locations in England exploring parents' understanding of school procedures (CE, 2019a). Furthermore, Daniels, Thompson and Porter (2022) urge for methodological approaches which focus on the intersections of experiences for individuals in SEs contexts. This is relevant given the intersecting demographical aspects of those affected by PEs (see section 1.1.4). However, they suggest greater acknowledgement of systemic factors to create well informed evidence-based SE policies.

2.2.4 – Summary

Section 2.2 reviewed key discourses, sociological, psychological, and integrated perspectives to explore SEs. Sociological models considered parents, not as the contributors to their child's PE, but as situated with systems of inequity. Psychological perspectives reviewed the role of ACES and trauma in relation to parents and their children. However, it was demonstrated that neither perspective fully encapsulates the complex nature of SEs. There are problematic aspects to consider, for example how sociological perspectives may view parents as passive rather than agentic. Furthermore, how psychological models may position parents within discourses of deficit, vulnerability and risk.

Instead, an integrated approach with parents was suggested as a more effective way of understanding the complexities of SEs. This involves considering interdisciplinary approaches and acknowledging both systemic and individual factors which may contribute to SEs. These perspectives should feed back into national SEs governance as part of well-informed, evidence-based policy. This section therefore highlights research which may be carried out to contribute to the growing knowledge around SEs in England. This includes involving parents to explore their lived experiences, whilst also considering interdisciplinary and methodological approaches which remain aware of intersecting factors within complex structural systems. These include considering wider stakeholders as well as individual parents and their communities.

2.3 – Conceptualising the lived experiences of parents whose children have been permanently excluded: a Stratified Integrative Prism framework

2.3.1 – Overview and rationale

The previous sections explore the lived experiences of parents, whose children have been PEx, positioned within a complex web of legal and policy frameworks, and public and academic discourses. Additionally, as section 2.2 outlines, parents of PEx children have been situated as passive victims of systemic inequality or as contributors to their child's PE due to trauma, mental health challenges or familial history. These discussions demonstrate the need for approaches which consider the multifaceted nature of the SEs policy. Therefore, this thesis presents the SIP framework which builds on calls for more integrated approaches to SEs research. The holistic SIP aims to situate and contextualise the lived experiences of the parent participants by considering wider systemic factors, individual circumstances and the discourses shaping SEs' policy guidance.

The SIP contains six layers: 'Earth,' 'Water,' 'Glass,' 'Fireflies,' 'Air' and ' the 'Ineffable'' domain. In its layered structure, the SIP framework draws eclectically upon aspects of Roy Bhaskar's critical realist (CR) layered ontology (see Boje, 2017, Scambler, 2014; Scott, 2010). Throughout his lifetime Bhashkar adapted his 3-tiered depth-ontology model. This included embracing a more holistic dialectical model, which reflected his views on politics, climate change, interdisciplinary thinking and even spirituality (Bhaskar and Danermark, 2006; Boje, 2017). As such the SIP primarily utilises Bhaskar's (1978) 3-tiered structure of the 'empirical,' the 'actual' and the 'real' domains whilst embracing the essence of his latter holistic approaches. Where any links have been made, these are stated and explained throughout this section 2.3. The philosophical underpinnings of the SIP also draw upon the phenomenological theory of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1962) specifically in relation to the concept of embodied experience. These two philosophical approaches were selected as the combination of phenomenology with CR ontology has been argued to acknowledge the ontological validity of lived experience (Budd, Hill and Shannon, 2010). Therefore, this is well-aligned with the research aim of exploring the lived experiences of parent participants, allowing these experiences to be valued and to support evidence-based approaches to SEs policy and practice (see Daniels, Thompson and Porter, 2022).

However, it is important to emphasise the novel aspects of the SIP and its eclectic, rather than purist, use of CR and phenomenological theory. This is a conscious stance taken by the researcher so as to question traditional 'systems of dominant knowledge production which silence and marginalize particular groups of people' (Quantz and Buell, 2019, p.120). In this study, this applies not only to the parent participants who represent the wider marginalised views of parents whose children have been PEx, but also to myself as a marginalised doctoral researcher. The concept of epistemic justice as introduced by Fricker (2007) queries those who have been traditionally viewed as experts within academia. Fricker argues that historically this has further marginalised, harmed and excluded the lived experiences of those frequently impacted by research, policy and practice. Instead it is argued that 'education research must build knowledge that centres the experiences and expertise of the people most impacted by education policy and practice through elevating and bringing previously silences voices into dialogue with traditional education researchers' (Quantz and Buell, 2019, p.120).

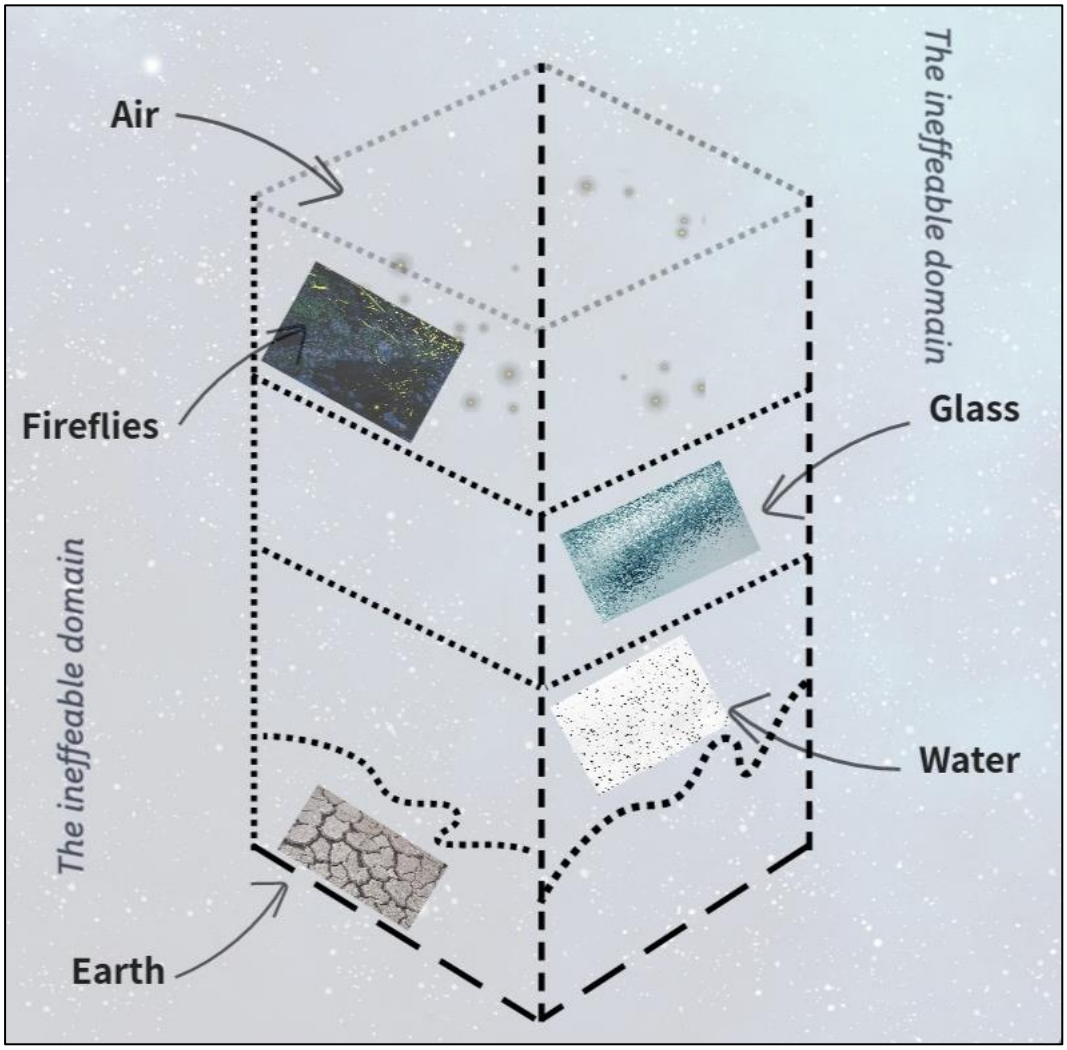
Furthermore, at times Bhaskar's CR work is perceived as dense and inaccessible especially when considering research that applied practice contexts (Fletcher, 2016; Thorpe, 2020). Hammersley (2009) also critiques CR approaches due to their inherent desire to challenge the 'socio-political' status quo. Although this thesis is unashamed in its advocacy for the parents' experiences within their political context, it does acknowledge the complexity of applying CR to research in context. Therefore, where applied in practice, it is used as a theoretical backdrop rather than used dogmatically (for example Lally, 2013; Parr, 2015). As such the SIP considers ontological and epistemological positions, as well as methodological compatibility. As Thorpe (2020, p.10) suggests, combining CR layered ontology in conjunction with relativist epistemology, it 'promotes methodological pluralism' which 'rejects positivist and interpretivist assumptions but does not reject their research methodologies wholesale.' Therefore, chapter three explores how the SIP is aligned with the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach. This includes IPA's philosophical phenomenological underpinnings and its systematic approach to elucidating lived experiences. For example, the development of the SIP occurred as part of IPA's 'double hermeneutic' approach to analysis (see section 3.6.3). This process allowed for deeper theoretical engagement with participant experiences, which is seen both in the titles of the themes arising, as discussed in chapters four and five.

Another systems theory model, Bronfenbrenner (1979), was considered given it has been used to contextualise PEs in micro and macro contexts (see Sellman *et al.*, 2002, p.891). Additionally, given its complex consideration of various structural, policy and interactional aspects, to some extent the SIP model does align with this approach. However, given that the focus of this study is on parental experience the following sections, including the methodology, support the justification that this aspect is inherently rooted in the SIP framework. This is because it was created through the iterative and interpretive process of data analysis based on the parent participants' experiences (see chapter 3). Furthermore, it considers the notion of 'ineffability' (see 2.3.5). This inherently acknowledges the oftentimes inexplicable nature of reality that extends beyond the structures created in such models.

Therefore, as a marginalised researcher seeking to challenge how only certain epistemologies are valued within the academy, I have sought to 'be brave' in order to question this 'epistemic injustice' (see Zocchi, 2021). In this study, the in-depth interpretative analysis of parent participants' perspectives (see chapter three) led to the development of the SIP framework itself. Therefore, the SIP framework embodies a collaborative process between the lived experiences of parents and my interpretations of these as researcher. Therefore, each layer of the SIP acts as a tool for valuing and integrating a range of epistemologies which may be best aligned with the participants' unique experiences during analysis. The SIP intentionally considers the ways parents of PEx children are frequently marginalised within discourses about them (see chapter 2.2.) and aims to redress this. Additionally, by embracing creative metaphors, the SIP illustrates how I have interpretatively visualised and contextualised parent participants' experiences in my mind. Having been inspired by Hayward (2023) who incorporates a variety of creative approaches to explore experiences of 'resisting higher education's (re)production of elitism' (p.29), each sub-section is opened with a short excerpt of reflective prose or poetry taken from my reflective researcher diary. This aims to evoke the imagery linked to each tier of the prism. Hoult *et al.* (2020, p.88) state that, 'poetry has the potential to help communities and academics to say the unsayable, to move beyond the 'Ineffable' and, as such, move us beyond representation.' Therefore, these poetic and personal aspects of the SIP demonstrate axiological congruence with reflexive approaches and my own researcher positionality and identity.

Overall, given the intricate problematic nature of SEs, this framework seeks to situate parents' lived experiences holistically, whilst offering a tangible methodological pathway. Although each layer of the prism is subsequently explored discretely, it is imperative that they should be seen as interconnected. The nature of causality therefore should not be seen as a linear or hierarchical process, but a complex dynamic including those aspects which remain ineffable.

Diagram 1 - Ama Agyeman (2023) Stratified Integrative Prism (SIP): a visualisation



2.3.2 – 'Earth': physical and psychological impacts of the PE

> *'Terra firma' – the Earth feels so reliable and firm until one day, without warning it falls from beneath you or you feel reverberations through the soles of your feet. These disruptions change you; your mind and body. They move and shake every fibre of your being. You know – things will never be the same again.*[2]

The 'Earth' layer represents the tangible impact of an event or phenomenon. In relation to the parent participants, these are the descriptions of physical impacts experienced in relation to the PE. This layer relates closely to Bhaskar's (1978) 'empirical' domain in that it focuses on materially perceptible aspects of phenomenon. For example, parent participants may describe practicalities relating to PE procedure such as paperwork or experiences of having to attend meetings. However, this thesis considers any psychological or emotional impacts through consideration of Merlau-Ponty's (1962) concept of embodied experience. This rejects a mind-body duality. As such the thesis acknowledges the parents themselves, as material sites of experience and knowledge. Bhaskar's later CR work also acknowledged concepts of embodied experience at a psychological level, as part of what was described as human-human, human-material and even quantum interaction (Boje, 2017). Therefore, the 'Earth' layer considers both psychological and physiological experiences parents shared.

However importantly, the 'Earth' layer also recognises how events or experiences may remain unobserved, including those which occurred but were not described in the interview. This aligns somewhat with Bhaskar's 'actual' layer (Bhaskar, 1978). Therefore, this layer also alludes to events and processes around their PE experience which occur irrespective of their observability or conscious recognition. For example, a parent may internalise an emotion or not see its relevance to discuss during the interview. Physical environmental factors are also included in this layer, for example the material impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic or activism due to the murder of George Floyd (see Merritt, 2021). These are important to consider given they occurred whilst this study was being conducted and likely framed parents' experiences or their descriptions of them. Finally, the layer acknowledges historicity; for example, the time before, during and post-permanent exclusion. This view supports the temporal positioning of the parents PE experiences.

2 This passage 'Terra Firma' is an original unpublished excerpt written by Ama Agyeman during data analysis

Parallels, to the aforementioned tenets of the 'Earth' layer, can be drawn with Gibson's (2006) book, *Order from Chaos.* Here Gibson explores major or significant life-events and responses to them. Alongside natural events such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, Gibson includes 'personal disasters,' 'tragedies' or 'crises.' Gibson demonstrates that these can be 'person-made,' rather than those created by natural or environmental forces. By drawing parallels to more commonly understood war or terrorist disaster scenarios, Gibson demonstrates how any crisis event can tangibly impact an individual's life as well as their families and those responding to them. These include understanding the 'psychological and physical chaos' experienced by individuals, but also eventually their attempts to seek order within this over time. Importantly, Gibson (p.3) emphasises the necessity of viewing the experiences 'from the perspective of the person affected' and notes;

> *What constitutes a personal disaster for some people may be coped with routinely by others. The factors that make the difference between such reactions are complex and multiple and include previous life experiences, personality traits and the efficacy of social supports.*

In doing so Gibson prioritises the individual's experiences whilst analysing the relationship with macro events and their responses to them. Similarly, a study by Kritzler *et al.* (2022) which analyses over 2000 participants' experiences, prioritises individual descriptions of 'major life-events.' To guide this process the authors used the following table (ibid, p.3), to support individual self-definition of 'major-life event.' The table is useful when supporting discussions of the parent participants' experiences in this study, as seen in chapter 5 of this thesis.

Table 1 - Overview of dimensions of event characteristics compared in the event characteristics questionnaire (ECQ) (Kritzler et al., 2022, p.3)

Event characteristic	Description	Sample item
Challenge	Amount of stress and anxiety associated with the event	The event was stressful.
Change in world views	Extent to which one's views have changed due to the event	The event let me view things from a different perspective.
Emotional significance	Extent to which the event elicited strong feelings	The event elicited strong feelings.
External control	Extent to which the event was controlled or caused by others	The event was caused by other people.
Extraordinariness	Extent of how ordinary or extraordinary the event was	It is uncommon for people like me to experience such an event in their lives.
Impact	Extent to which one's life has changed due to the event	The event led to changes in my social, family, or work roles
Predictability	Extent of how sudden or predictably the event had occurred	I knew in advance that the event would be happening.
Social status change	Extent of changes in one's social status and dependence on others	The event hurt my social standing.
Valence	Positive and negative aspects of the event	The event was positive.

Thus, it is important that each layer is viewed in the essence of interconnectedness with an acknowledgement of the inherent dialectical tensions between them (see Bhaskar, 1993). Therefore, the 'Earth' layer should not be understood in isolation, rather as interdependent with other layers. As such the following two layers 'Water' and 'Glass' are discussed in conjunction, highlighting their synergistic coexistence. This integrative approach aims to highlight the inherent complexities of the PE experience and as shared by the parent participants.

2.3.3 – 'Water' and 'Glass': social interactions in the PE process and structural barriers

> *One rainy day, sitting in a tube carriage as it sped away from the station I looked through the window opposite me at the black insides of the tunnel and saw droplets of rain. These were being pulled into small strands and streams. They flowed away, along the glass as we hurtled into the darkness. They glistened, tapped, danced against the pane, but as I looked around nobody seemed to notice their display. I watched the way each droplet interacted with another. And how the water and glass reflected distorted images of my face in the carriage. I wanted to touch them, but the glass wouldn't allow me to. How many times I have journeyed on the tube and never considered the glass until the water brought my attention to it.*[3]

These two layers are explored together to highlight their relationship and interdependency, particularly in relation to the experiences of the parent participants. Just as the glass became apparent through the lens of the water, the experiences of parents whose children have been PEx is elucidated when viewed through the 'Water' and 'Glass' layers. Therefore, within the SIP the 'Water' layer represents the social interactions of parents with actors within the SEs process. This includes teachers, but also, for example, educational psychologists or the police. This layer is shaped by what I envision to be an almost impermeable layer of glass. This 'Glass' layer represents the structural mechanisms that could act as barriers to the parents within the PE process, impacting their interactions and experiences. The 'Water' and 'Glass' layers can be seen to overlap with aspects of Bhaskar's (1978) 3-tiered CR framework. For example, the 'real' domain which contains the generative mechanisms aligns with the 'Glass' layer representing the invisible structural mechanisms. The 'Water' layer links closely to both 'actual' and 'empirical' domains which posit that mechanisms cause both observable and non-observable events. This is because of how structural mechanisms may shape social interactions as part of the PE process.

In utilising the imagery of 'Water' and 'Glass,' the concept of 'relational dialectics' may become relevant. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) use this specifically when exploring all social interactions and relationships. Moving away from Marxist dialectical materialism which centres discussion around the tensions between economic production and consumption, the authors focus on social life as existing through communicative relationships and the contradictions arising (ibid). The authors posit social life as an 'unfinished, ongoing dialogue in which a polyphony of dialectical voices struggle against one another to be heard' (p.4). This is a useful way of understanding the

3 This passage 'Rain' is an original unpublished excerpt written by Ama Agyeman during data analysis

relationship between 'Water' and 'Glass' in this prism, and how it may relate to the parent participants' experiences of the PE process. As acknowledged by the DfE (2021), PEs are disproportionately administered to Black, Asian, working-class and SEN learners. Although the research questions do not overtly address ethnicity, it is important to recognise this context when regarding parents whose children have been PEx. This disproportionate impact may have impacted recruitment and sampling in this study given that all participants reflected some of these characteristics.

Intersectionality coined by Kimberley Crenshaw may be a relevant theory to utilise when framing parental experiences of PE (See Crenshaw, 1989). Originally used to explore the experiences of African American women, intersectionality has been used to contextualise Black British middle-class parental experiences (Gilborn, 2015). Intersectionality suggests how multiple strands of discrimination compound and supports understanding of how these are uniquely experienced by individuals (Bešić, 2020). In this case, the experiences of parents whose children have been PEx may be better elucidated when using this perspective.

In the same way as light is refracted through water and glass, perceptions of the parents may be distorted or reflected back to the parents in ways which they do not recognise. Theoretically, such a process is explored by Xie *et al*. (2021) who use the term 'misrecognition' to describe how an individual may be labelled by others in a way that does not align with their self-identity. The authors posit that psychologically racism is one specific form of misrecognition. Conversely, 'recognition' is when a person's sense of self is acknowledged and approved by others in ways which they recognise (ibid). The effects and impacts of this are noted by Taylor (1994, p.25);

> *a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.*

From a more sociological perspective Rawls and Duck (2018) also discuss the phenomena of 'nonrecognition' drawing links to the "fracturing" which C.H. Cooley described as the "looking-glass self." They add, 'everyone depends on others for information about their interactional performance.' (Rawls and Duck, 2018, p.279).

However, 'if the response the other(s) reflect back to them is not related to that identity, we say the identity has not been recognized: the reflection they get back is fractured as if reflected from a broken looking glass' (ibid). The authors suggest that focus should be on how 'institutionalised racism' is embedded in the interactions of daily life. Rawls and Duck (2018) therefore reject seeing this 'fracturing' as inherently damaging 'Black selves, which will then be viewed as diminished and degraded as a result of such exchanges: a culture of poverty argument.' Links are drawn by both Rawls and Duck (2017, 2018) and Xie *et al*. (2021) to Web Du Bois' theoretical concept of 'double consciousness.' This is where marginalised groups in a society experience dual and conflicting perceptions of self, due to external oppressive gaze (Rawls and Duck, 2017, 2018; Xie *et al.,* 2021).

However, as Kirkland (2013) cautions, it is important to reject the interpretation of Du Bois' 'double consciousness' as leaving Black people in a 'conflicted psychological' disposition. This rejects any deficit models of racialised individuals choosing instead to focus on the action of societal and structural mechanisms. Yet, Du Bois' concept offers a way of understanding how the external social world may shape internal self-perception. The intersecting dynamics of age, class, disability, gender and ethnicity are recognised by Bradley (2016) as contributing to 'fractured identities.' Here the term does not imply broken individuals, rather it represents the ways in which systemic inequality in the UK shapes and forms unique experiences for individuals. These theoretical perspectives may support exploration of parental experience of their child's PE. The following section explores 'Fireflies' and 'Air' together in order to further expand on the SIP model.

2.3.4 – 'Fireflies' and 'Air': agentic resistance, SEs policy and discourse

I am a thousand fireflies
burning swirling twirling yearning
one fire flying light
A thousand and one fireflies
unifying night.[4]

This section explores the last two tiers within the prism, 'Fireflies' and 'Air.' It elaborates on the symbolic representation of 'Fireflies' as individual and collective agency, which co-exist with 'Air;' representing PE policy and the discourses contained within and around it. These two tiers are discussed in conjunction. This is not to imply that these two layers only interact with each other; the SIP is designed to consider how each layer may act interchangeably. However, for the purposes of the thesis, 'Fireflies' might be best illuminated in relation to the 'Air' around them and vice versa. Symbolically, 'Fireflies,' in the prism come to represent asynchronous individual and synchronous collective behaviours of the parent participants, as recounted by them during the interviews. 'Air' remains the omnipresent backdrop containing the national and institutional discourses as embodied in PE policy. 'Air' represents the seemingly determinative discursive PE ideologies which surround and potentially influence the parent participants' PE experiences.

Drawing upon the natural world, the bioluminescent qualities of fireflies have enchanted minds across time and the world due to their visual and symbolic qualities (Sokol, 2022). However, as Sokol demonstrates, this does not only pertain to cultural or indigenous spirituality or mysticism, but also to the realm of quantum mechanics. Specifically, Sokol explores the ways synchronous flashing of some firefly species has captured and perplexed biologists, mathematicians and physicists alike. Fireflies, he writes, have 'helped spark some of the most fundamental attempts to explain synchronization, the alchemy by which elaborate coordination emerges from even very simple individual parts' (ibid, line 16 – 18). More recently ground-breaking research has even demonstrated the existence of 'chimera states' in the *Photuris frontalis* species. 'Chimera states,' which represent the coexistence of synchronous and asynchronous natural synchrony, are seen within the swarm as 'the spontaneous emergence of different groups flashing with the same periodicity but with a constant delay between them' (Sarfati and Peleg, 2022, p. 1).

4 This poem 'One Thousand Fireflies' is an original unpublished excerpt written by Ama Agyeman during data analysis

Other than the phenomenon of 'unihemispheric sleep' in the human brain, observation of this in natural or animate systems rather than by experimental design is novel. It opens avenues for understanding naturally observed behaviour, both individual and collective, in relation to mathematical thinking. The authors share how firefly chimeras are self-organised and spontaneous. They (p.4) observe,

> *Even more perplexing, perhaps, fireflies presumably use cognition in their interactions with each other, a process substantially more complex than the typical functional relations that link abstract oscillators. Natural chimeras, while certainly not malicious, may have de facto opened up a Pandora's box of intriguing new problems for mathematicians to consider.*

Ultimately Sarfati and Peleg (2022) recognise there are many more questions to explore. For example, they ask what their observations reveal about the networks of this species' interactions. Furthermore, upon reading the article, it was noticeable the authors do not address how external or environmental factors may or may not have influenced their findings. Still, this research adds to the wealth of literature exploring complex systems; spatial, temporal, cardiac, neuronal and electronic (ibid). Whilst this research is grounded in mathematical thinking, arguably it offers new ways of interpreting the social world. In this way, the prism embraces the chimeric firefly as a metaphor to contextualise the participants experiences. In doing so this study acknowledges parents' individual agentic cognition and behaviour, whilst holding an openness to understand its potentially collective significance. However, their illuminating qualities are seen best within an enveloping atmosphere.

As outlined in section 2.1, national PE policy (see DfE, 2017a; 2023) is legally binding guidance which dictates the PE process at school level. Section 2.2 also outlined prevalent discourses. This included sociological approaches viewing SEs as being influenced by neoliberal policy and societal inequalities. They also include psychological approaches which focus on how a PE may arise due to a child's adverse experiences at home and in their community. In this prism, the amalgamation of PE policy and these discourses form the 'Air' through which the parent participants must navigate. Therefore, the 'Air' layer, offers a lens through which to view and understand parental agency within the context of structurally determinative PE policy and discourses. As such, the 'Air' layer offers a way to further contextualise the parents' experiences of the PE.

This acknowledges that there is an inherent and recognised dialectical tension between parental agency and structurally determinative PE policy. The interaction between firefly and air, or the 'Firefly-Air' dynamic illuminates the ways parent participants navigate and emerge within, and challenge the seemingly pre-determined PE procedure.

Expanding on this metaphor, the 'Firefly-Air' dynamic encapsulates resistance. However, defining resistance can be complex due to diverse interpretation within the social sciences (Rubin, 1995). Furthermore, there are important nuances to be considered, such as Rosales and Langhout's (2020) assertion that 'Western forms of knowledge production' are privileged. The authors give the example of Bourdieu's 'cultural capital,' a concept which alludes to class and how the dominant groups in society use resources to navigate middle class institutions such as schooling. However, the authors argue that for marginalised people, such approaches maintain deficit models, positioning the white middle-class demographic as the norm and overlook other factors such as race. Instead, Rosales and Langhout (2020, p.6) suggest that 'marginalized groups have different types of capital that constitute community cultural wealth,' but these remain 'undervalued by dominant groups and institutions.'

Similarly, Yosso (2005) provides an alternative to traditional understandings of cultural capital. Yosso's (2005) notion of 'resistant capital' is defined as 'those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality' (p.83). Drawing upon Freire's (1970) notion of *conscientização* or 'critical consciousness,' which encourages transformative individual reflection to affect societal structures, Yosso highlights its relevance for challenging inequality. As such, 'transformative resistant capital includes cultural knowledge of the structures of racism and motivation to transform such oppressive structures' (Yosso, 2005, p.81). These definitions have greater resonance with the participants due to their acknowledgement of individual and collective knowledge within traditionally marginalised communities. In light of this, the following discussion articulates resistance as it is conceptualised within this thesis. Rather than viewing parents as deficit, it embraces conceptualisations of resistance which recognise the unique forms of knowledge that these parent participants embody.

Furthermore, the thesis utilises the concept of 'everyday resistance' to support recognition of the ways in which parent participants may agentically navigate the PE process. 'Everyday resistance,' which appears more covertly than in traditional definitions, 'undermines power in ways that talk back to unjust power relations and says "no" to the logics of domination (e.g., neoliberalism, whiteness), rather than attempting to directly alter power structures' definition (Rosales and Langhout, 2020, p.3).

In this way there are alternatives to the oppression faced by marginalised groups in which they might agentically resist through everyday action within their daily lives (ibid). Such approaches accept resistance without the need for specific criteria. For example, although Giroux's (1983) explorations around resistance emphasis the individual human, Giroux still centres discussions around notions of legitimisation of these actions. This could arguably overlook the many ways in which alternative acts of resistance may transpire. Similarly, Trethewey (1997, p.284) draws upon Foucault to understand the concept of 'everyday resistance.' Foucault's (1977) *Discipline and Punish* notion of resistance is conceptualised as a complex dynamic including socio-historic aspects where power remains continuously negotiated and contested. Here Foucault argues that when power subjugates individuals into 'docile bodies' within systems of surveillance, opportunities arise for them to uniquely challenge modes of oppression. Therefore, Trethewey (p.284) writes resistance, 'cannot be reduced to a list of public behaviors, such as revolt, uprising, rebellion, or insurrections. Resistance emerges in the ever-changing and contestable space between acceptance and revolt.'

Given the frequent marginalisation of parental experience of PE, conceptualising resistance as manifesting uniquely in response to oppressive power can offer ways to view and record their agency. Returning to the 'Firefly-Air' dynamic, this represents my role as a researcher to watch this interplay and record my interpretations as part of this study. For example, Scott (1989, p.34) notes that historically, marginalised people engaging in everyday forms of resistance have been less likely to leave written records which 'ensure them a firm place in the historical record.' This means there are less historical forms of reference for alternative modes of resistance. To counteract this, they emphasise the importance of defining it in relation to dynamics and interactions of power. Therefore, this study accepts that 'conceptually, resistance is not about intent, but about undermining power.' (Rosales and Langhout, 2020, p.5).

Thus, this project draws upon the concept of 'everyday resistance' in relation to the participants. It includes an exploration of how the participants' experiences demonstrate individual and collective agency as humans and parents of their PEx children. In accepting this model of resistance, acknowledged are the multifaceted ways in which parent participants behaved agentically – that is as 'Fireflies',' within discursive and ideological PE structures – that is 'Air.' This is in response, not only to oppressions or misrecognitions they experienced, but also physical or psychological manifestations of these, which are represented by 'Earth', 'Water' and' 'Glass' as well as 'Fireflies' and 'Air.'

2.3.5 – The 'Ineffable'

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The concept of the 'ineffable' acts as a crucial and expansive domain, enveloping the SIP and its layers, as outlined in sections 2.3.2 – 2.3.4. It explores its conceptualisation in relation to this thesis study. It loosely relates to Bhaskar's later interdisciplinary work which considered concepts of non-duality and notions of perception (Boje, 2017; Bhaskar, 2010). In a literal sense, the Oxford English Dictionary (2023) defines 'ineffable' as:

> *'That cannot be expressed or described in language; too great for words; transcending expression; unspeakable, unutterable, inexpressible.'*

It is this definition that forms the basis for discussions around its conceptualisation within this thesis. For the participants in this study, the 'ineffable' domain represents the aspects of participants' PE experiences which remain elusive. This pertains not just to linguistic limitations but allows for a wider range of subjective interpretations. For example, a participant's uniquely personal belief system; their faith or non-faith, and their subjective meaning-making of experiences which remains innate. Therefore 'the 'Ineffable'' domain of the SIP remains inclusive and open to the unknown aspects of these participants' experiences. It also aligns with Gibson's (2006) explorations of some of the wider belief systems individuals may draw upon to bring about order within the chaos of a traumatic event.

Historically the concept of 'ineffability' has been associated with the philosophy of religion and mysticism, however the term has value and application outside of these contexts (Cheetam, 2020; Jonas, 2016; Piiola, 2023). These aforementioned authors begin to unpick the term and demonstrate its relevancy outside of merely religious connotations. For example, Jonas (2016) argues that systematic analysis of the metaphysics of 'ineffability' has been overlooked, suggesting the importance of revisiting to develop conceptualisations. In physics, the 'ineffable' has been used to describe the inherent nature of quantum mechanics such as interdependence between particles in 'quantum states' (see Nobel Prize, 2022).

In '*Embracing the Unknown'* Piiola (2023) explores the 'paradigm of ineffability', examining its conceptualisation as a mystical experience, a theological construct and that which belies the limitations of language. Piiola argues that 'ineffability' should not only be treated merely as an absence of words for certain experiences, but as an acknowledgement of the constraints of language itself. Thus, Piiola wishes to embrace ineffability not as a negation, but rather an affirmation of the uniqueness of certain experiences. As such, Piiola opens the opportunity to see 'ineffability' as a gateway to deeper understanding rather than merely a simplistic linguistic barrier.

Whilst Piiola offers contemporary interpretations, the historical roots of ineffability must be acknowledged. Ineffability was a central tenet of ancient philosophy, including the Greeks and other world religions (Janowitz, 2018). Discussion or inherent qualities of ineffability are seen in various systems of philosophical thought. For example, 'Buddhist philosophy rejects that language is capable of ever getting to the particular' and suggests, 'language is ill equipped for articulating certain experiences' (Blomberg and Żywiczyński, 2022, p. 494). The authors demonstrate the similarities of such thinking in the work of Nietzsche showing links to Western schools of thought. Arguably the concept of ineffability is also well aligned with Merleau-Ponty's concept of embodied experience which remains central to the SIP framework. For example, in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) Merlau-Ponty outlines the 'pre-reflective experience;' the non-cognitive aspects of lived experience which remain unarticulated or unprocessed. This demonstrates experience in its raw state, not having been cognitively or linguistically interpreted.

Through his concept of *embodied knowing,* Merleau-Ponty also believed in an inherent knowing of one's own body or self; that aspects of our perception of the world remain embodied and situated. For example, Merleau-Ponty (1962) frequently references the artist Paul Cézanne to highlight the essence of embodied knowledge. He argues that aspects of Cezanne's embodied experience are seen in his artwork. This aligns with Jonas' (2016) explorations around art as a medium for accessing the ineffable, which does offer critique around how aspects of ineffability might still be gleaned. However, for parent participants the notion of embodied experience acknowledges aspects which remain situated within themselves and inaccessible, at least within the constraints of the chosen research design for this study.

Whilst having historically diverse roots, the various conceptualisations of ineffability have some shared qualities, including encapsulating experience in its entirety, which remains out of reach within the confines of linguistic expression. As such, there is an acceptance that particular experiences or aspects of an experience, transcend the bounds of conventional human modes of articulation. As Horgan (2020) discusses in relation to quantum mechanics and philosophy, 'scientists and philosophers should keep trying to solve reality's deepest riddles while accepting that they are unsolvable.' For instance, it is in accepting the ineffable nature of quantum mechanics that has led to further developments in the field of quantum entanglement (see Nobel Prize, 2022). Similarly, Piiola (2023) accepts the inherent paradox to the term 'ineffable' in that 'being ineffable' implies its 'absolute ineffability.' As such, the term 'ineffable' encapsulates all that is outside the realm of capturability, at least currently or in a traditionally Western academic sense. As a researcher, this means acknowledging that although I contribute to knowledge around the topic of PEs, I do not own it nor aim to. Therefore the 'ineffable' domain of the SIP holds a quality of openness and invites others to continue to explore, discuss and share their own ways of knowing the research area of PEs.

2.3.6 – Summary

Overall section 2.3 has introduced and explored a holistic Stratified Integrative Prism (SIP), designed as a conceptual framework for this study. Although the SIP layers are not hierarchical or discrete, for the purposes of this study the layers were described in 5 sections: 'Earth'; 'Water' and 'Glass'; 'Fireflies' and 'Air' and the 'Ineffable'. However, the interdependence between sections has been emphasised throughout. The prism is ontologically grounded, drawing eclectic inspiration from Bhaskar's (1978) 3-tiered CR theory, as well as some aspects of his latter interdisciplinary and open-systems work (see Boje, 2017; Bhaskar *et al.*, 2010). Recognising the validity of parent participants' experiences is a key tenet of this study. Therefore, the SIP also considers methodological flexibility and axiological compatibility with research aims and objectives. In doing so it remains congruent, offering opportunities to draw upon wider theory such as intersectionality, and phenomenological perspective on embodied experience.

It has been important to acknowledge the interpretative role of the researcher in representing the lived experiences of the parent participants. As such I have used creative metaphors, prose and poetry in the design and exploration of the prism. Drawing upon natural imagery, I have sought to share how I have visually and theoretically conceptualised the parents' lived experiences. It has been through an interdisciplinary approach, including consideration of ethical principles, metaphysics and reflecting on the symbolic relevance of quantum mechanics. the 'Ineffable' domain specifically addresses my role, not as an owner of knowledge relating to participants' experiences, but someone who interpretatively navigates and situates these. The SIP is designed to remain focused on that which emerges from interpretative analysis of the participants' experiences.

2.4 – Overview with implications for policy and practice

This section synthesises key aspects from chapter two in relation to the research aims. Section 2.1 explored legal frameworks governing PEs in England, including statutory policy guidance (see DfE, 2017, 2023). The legal rights and obligations of parents within the PE process were noted. However, the variance of PE procedure and outcome across settings was recognised.

Section 2.2. discussed some academic discourses which envelop statutory SE policy guidance. These considered sociological and psychological perspectives, particularly in relation to social inequality and marginalisation of the demographics most impacted by PEs. This highlighted the need for integrated research approaches which acknowledge the intersecting individual and systemic factors influencing the occurrence of SEs.

Section 2.3 introduced the SIP, a holistic ontologically grounded, methodologically and axiologically considered conceptual framework. Designed to situate the parent participants' lived experiences of PE, the SIP considers wider structural and relational factors. It builds on existing SE literature to provide a flexible model with theoretical compatibility. For example, the 'Firefly-Air' dynamic considered discourse theory, and the 'Water-Glass' utilised concepts of misrecognition and intersectionality. This offers ways for themes to emerge from participants' lived experiences.

Chapters one and two outlined the marginalisation of parents whose children have been PEx from school. The area of SEs remains a current issue which has societal implications. These are not restricted to education but extend to areas such as health and crime. This can be seen in public and academic discourse which influence SEs policy. Given their legal right to be involved in decision-making around their child's PE, there is a need for parents to be further involved in research around their PE experiences. This is due to the multifaceted effects on their lives. Due to the disproportionate impact of SEs on the lives of parents and their children, for example regarding discrimination, research in this area becomes a social justice issue (Demie, 2023).

Outcomes from research in this area can continue to strengthen and inform knowledge around SEs, forming part of evidence-based policy approaches (Daniels, Thompson and Porter, 2022). Therefore, this thesis explores the lived experiences of parents whose children have been PEx from their mainstream school. There is a focus on how parent participants experienced exclusions procedures and policies and any effects on their lives. The research aims to give insight into these worlds and makes recommendations to key stakeholders as to how these might be considered when developing or amending exclusions policy and practice.

Chapter Three – Methodology

3.1 – Outline

The introductory chapter identified the overarching research question and sub-sections which are outlined below:

What are the lived experiences of parents whose children have been permanently excluded from school?

A. **Family**
   How does the parent describe their child?
   How do they describe their relationship?
   Has the PE affected daily routines and their emotional well-being?

B. **Events leading to the exclusion**
   How did the parent experience events led to their child's permanent exclusion?
   Were they aware of policy and guidance?
   How did parental interactions with school staff or those involved in the PE shape their experiences?

C. **Events since the exclusion**
   What has been experienced by the parent since the exclusion?
   How do they describe and explain their experiences?

D. **Reflecting on the experience**

   From these experiences, what does the parent think might have been done differently?
   Were there any aspects of their experience that they found supportive?
   Has anything changed regarding their outlook or direction?

The SIP introduced in section 2.3 is the conceptual framework for this study. The SIP's design considers ontology and epistemology, as well as methodological and axiological congruence with the selected IPA methodological approach. Furthermore, it was created in the spirit of the originators of IPA; Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2022). They write, 'successful analyses require the systemic application of ideas, and methodological rigour; but they also require imagination, playfulness, and a combination of reflective, critical and conceptual thinking' (p.35). In this way, the development of the SIP, and use of imaginative metaphor, has supported my creative engagement with the themes emerging from participants' lived experiences.

As a researcher, designing the SIP has been a way of engaging in sense-making with the participants as part of the 'hermeneutical circle' (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022). This meant an iterative, interpretative analytical process in which I moved back and forth, developing a dynamic relationship with the data (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022). Therefore, the development of the SIP represents a collaborative meaning-making process between me and parent participants. Accordingly, the chapter explores the SIP's practical methodological applications in utilising IPA research design, exploring the philosophical stance in conjunction with specific methods used and ethical considerations.

The distinctions between the research questions were formulated as a result of the literature review (see chapter two). This includes key themes arising from existing exclusions research, particularly parental experiences and the potential long-term effects. For example, the literature highlighted the need to explore family dynamics (A), procedural aspects of a PEx (B), and the long-lasting impacts on the families affected (C). The decision to ask participants to reflect on the experience was rooted in IPA methodology and the desire for parents to have an opportunity to share thoughts on what might have been done differently. Finally, the pilot and pre-interviews allowed parents to review questions. Had there been any suggestions there would have been an opportunity to adjust these questions slightly, however confirmation was received by participants that these would be suitable for the study.

3.2 – Ontological and epistemological position

In its structure, the SIP draws eclectically upon aspects of Bhaskar's (1978) 3-tiered CR depth-ontology, whilst embracing aspects of his latter interdisciplinary open-systems and dialectical thinking (see Boje, 2017). The SIP also embraces phenomenological thinking such as Merleau-Ponty's (1962) concept of embodied experience. Furthermore, each layer of the SIP embraces an openness to wider theoretical compatibility. For example, Crenshaw's (1989) 'intersectionality' can be used to explore interactions occurring between 'Water' and 'Glass' layers. Evidently there is some paradigmatic blurring, however arguably there is a naturally inherent 'messiness' when researching education and social worlds (Harreveld *et al*., 2016). The acknowledgement of this intricacy led me to 'reject the positivism–interpretivism binary' (ibid, p.1).

It became my view that adopting a purely realist or relativist position is inherently irreconcilable with the complexity of researching SEs (see section 2.2). As such the SIP framework sits within the realm 'transdisciplinarity' as 'there is a focus on 'the relating and integrating of different forms of epistemics' (Sholz, 2020, p.1034). These include integrated perspectives as explored in chapter two. Also required is 'the input and cooperation of authentic practitioners, i.e., the experts of practice and real-world complexity' (Sholz, 2020, p.1033). This is seen through the research aims and 'mutual learning' between parent participants and me, as practitioner-researcher as part of the analysis. This thesis also makes recommendations for SEs policy and practice, thus inviting stakeholder engagement.

Overall, a succinct way of describing the underlying philosophical stance of the SIP is 'phenomenological critical realism'. It synthesises CR and phenomenological ontology to acknowledge 'reality in all things, including human and social action' (Budd *et al*., 2010, p. 267). Merlau-Ponty's (1962) notions on embodied experience also serves a dual role throughout the SIP. This concept challenges mind-body duality by acknowledging the ontological validity of experience as integral to being. However, epistemologically Merleau-Ponty's view of body as an agentic sense-maker demonstrate embodied interpretation and communication with the world (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022). Understanding lived experience as body-in and of-world is a key part of exploring participants' perspectives (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022). By paying attention to descriptions of emotions, greater insight into the embodied experiences of participants can be explored.

Ontologically, CR and phenomenological philosophy are aligned in several ways (Budd *et al*., 2010). Both Edmund Husserl's phenomenological position and Bhaskar's CR outlook prioritise ontology which is not constrained by notions of positivism (Budd *et al*., 2010). With Bhaskhar's CR, ontology is prioritised to avoid an 'an 'epistemic fallacy' – the process of reducing 'being (ontology) into knowing (epistemology) and things (objects, people, events, structures) into thoughts' (Alderson, 2013, p 48; Price, 2014). The transcendental component of Husserl's phenomenology comprises of thinking about the perceived object and the perceiver's consciousness of it (Budd *et al*., 2010; Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022). Synthesis of both phenomenological and CR philosophy acknowledges the ontological validity of participants' lived experiences, which is imperative given their frequent marginalisation (see chapter 2).

It also allows for exploration of structural mechanisms which may be dialectically influencing their experiences of PE. Therefore, the SIP's inherent CR phenomenological positioning offers ways in which findings provide ontologically real 'evidence' in relation to policy and practice.

IPA is used for its compatibility with this thesis' ontological, epistemological and axiological stance. It provides a distinctive epistemological framework which considers my interpretive role as researcher (Shinebourne, 2011; Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022). It has been important to align these aspects, as methodological approach reveals 'meta-theoretical assumptions' of the researcher (Slevitch, 2011). Axiologically, taking a realist position in its purist sense, would disregard my interpretative role (Andrews, 2016). Adversely, a purely relativist position would have suggested that all reality is interpreted – for which there are not only implications for cross-case analysis, but also ethical and moral concern (Lukes, 2008). For participants this would mean rejecting any material impacts of their child's PE or rejecting the nuances of subjectivity and interpretation regarding their experiences. The SIP framework and its interdependent layers represents this complexity and serves as guide for analysis and interpretation of data.

3.3 – Qualitative and quantitative methodologies

To allow for nuanced explorations of participants' experiences, a qualitative approach was selected. This allowed for greater flexibility and an 'open-endedness' which 'facilitate[d] the emergence of new, and unanticipated, categories of meaning and experience' (Willig, 2013, p.90). Selecting a solely quantitative approach would have favoured notions of 'generalisability' achieved by statistical approaches to sampling to achieve a sense of 'representativeness' (Silverman, 2018).

As Daniels, Thompson and Porter suggest, there has been an overreliance of SEs policy to favour 'decontextualized data,' including statistical data, randomised control trials and the view 'that one size fits all.' The authors argue such limited approaches have the propensity to further marginalisation of those affected by SEs. Given the underrepresentation of parental perspectives of PE, this would not have allowed for contextualised understandings of their experiences. Another consideration would be to select mixed-methods allowing for the integration of both quantitative and qualitative aspects to give a 'multidimensional' research design and approach to inquiry (Miles *et al*., 2014).

Although theoretically the SIP framework and inherent CR phenomenological ontology allows for quantitative, qualitative or mixed-method approaches, considerations around recruitment, sampling and research-scope were factors in rejecting integrated approaches.

3.4 – Interpretative phenomenological analysis

3.4.1 – Origins

As IPA was selected as the methodological approach, the next subsections offer a summary of the key element that underpinnings the theory. IPA was developed in the mid-1990s, originating from the field of psychology (Shinebourne, 2011). The main principles of IPA are outlined by its leading proponents Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009; 2022). Since this time however, it has been developed and used by scholars across a wide range of disciplines. This includes health, human and social sciences, as well being advocated for use in educational research (Oxley, 2016; Noon, 2018). 'IPA synthesizes ideas from phenomenology and hermeneutics resulting in a method which is descriptive' (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014, p.8). 'It is concerned with how things appear and letting things speak for themselves, and interpretative because it recognizes there is no such thing as an uninterpreted phenomenon' (ibid). These aspects remain aligned and compatible with the SIP framework.

3.4.2 – Phenomenology

As explored in section 3.2, the SIP incorporates phenomenological philosophy which is a core tenet of IPA methodology. IPA draws upon key phenomenological theorists such as Husserl and Merlau-Ponty to systematically focus on lived experience (Smith *et al.*, 2022; Shinebourne, 2011). Phenomenology, the study of human experience views the social world as a phenomenon that is meaningful to its own members (Crossley, 1996; Noon, 2018). Furthermore, it focuses on the world as it is experienced by individuals within specific contexts and times, as opposed to abstract notions of it (Willig, 2013). As such the phenomenological aspect of IPA aims to explore participants' lived experience and how they make meaning or sense of these experiences (Allan and Eatough, 2016). This was deemed appropriate for this study which focused on the specific 'context-dependent life worlds' of the parent participants (Noon, 2018, p. 75).

3.4.3 – Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics, another main tenet of IPA, can be described as, 'the theory of interpretation' (Smith *et al*., 2022, p.17). This refers to the iterative and dynamic relationship a researcher has with the data (Smith *et al*., 2022). Specifically, IPA draws upon hermeneutical traditions to advocate a process of 'double hermeneutics' in research (Oxley, 2016). IPA uses a two-stage or 'double hermeneutic' process in which 'the participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world.' (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 53). This process can be illustrated by the formulation of the SIP framework and key themes arising from data analysis. As a researcher it was important to reflect on the process of 'bracketing,' a hermeneutical tradition, whereby a researcher attempts to have a 'dual position' (Alase, 2017). This involved attempting to put aside 'the taken-for-granted-world in order to concentrate on our perception of that world' (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p.13). In this study it has meant engaging reflexively throughout the research process to assess my own assumptions and biases. This was especially important during data analysis when analysing the participants' experiences during the interpretative process (see Goldspink and Engward, 2019). Accordingly, it was necessary as part of the reflexive process to keep a reflective journal, engage in discussions with other doctoral researchers and develop the SIP framework. Arguably the 'ineffable' layer arose from my acknowledgement of the limitations of my ability to fully interpret the embodied experiences of parent participants.

3.4.4 – Idiography

Idiography is 'concerned with focusing on the particular and individual details' using 'expert groups' drawn from small samples of participants (Oxley, 2016, p. 56). In this study, these are parents whose children have been PEx from school. IPA is idiographic because it provides an in-depth focus and detailed analysis of the particular, not possible in nomothetic research which focuses on large amounts of aggregated data (Shinebourne, 2011). The implications are that each case must be considered independently and respected in its own right, even when later conducting cross-case analysis (see Noon, 2018; Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022). This was an important feature for this study, as it allowed for a small number of parent participants' experiences to be explored in greater depth. This ensured a commitment to value each individual participant's perceptions independently, but also supported recruitment when considering access.

3.5 – Alternative methodologies considered

When creating my proposal, I compared my research question using a table by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, p. 45) to explore suitability of differing qualitative approaches. Some alternative methodologies considered included: discourse analysis; thematic analysis; and narrative analysis. These were rejected due to their lack of focus on participants' experiences of a significant phenomenon - in this case PEs. However, with IPA, focusing on lived experience remains a central commitment, due to 'finely tuned analysis of how people talk about their experiences' (Howitt, 2016, p. 357). IPA can be more procedurally systematic and detailed than thematic analysis allowing for thorough exploration of experience (Howitt, 2016; Noon, 2018). As a neurodivergent researcher, I also valued this protocol as it provided specific methods and logical processes to which I could refer. Given IPA's psychological origins and uses across human sciences, it gives more opportunities for interdisciplinary analysis. Smith, Flowers and Larkin's (2022) most recent edition significantly examines IPA's value when exploring topics of 'embodiment and emotion.' Furthermore, IPA allowed for participant quotes and metaphors, 'in theme titles or descriptions' which 'further root the analysis directly in their words.' (Pringle *et al*., 2011, p. 21). This is seen in the wording of the themes in chapter four.

The use of semi-structured interviews was rooted in the principles of IPA (Smith et al., 2022). This prioritises idiographic accounts of participants lived-experiences. Given the in-depth interpretative analysis of accounts within this methodology, semi-structured interviews allowed for some flexibility and response to individual parents' perspectives whilst maintaining a focused and aligned approach across all cases. Furthermore, in light of the literature review it was noted that parents whose children have been permanently excluded are frequently marginalised. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, it was expected that recruitment may pose additional challenges which was also apparent during the recruitment process. However, IPA was selected over other approaches due to it supporting small sample sizes (typically 6-10 participants) which addressed recruitment challenges for this study. IPA semi-structured interviews also last between 45 and 90 minutes which was preferred for this study, compared with other methodologies due to allowing time for participants to explore their experiences to offer rich data.

3.6 – Research design and rationale

Importantly, IPA is dedicated to 'giving voice' and 'making sense' of participants' perspectives and lived experiences (Alase, 2017; Larkin *et al*., 2006; Noon, 2018). IPA is well aligned with this thesis' ontological phenomenological CR position, embodied in the SIP conceptual framework. This was an important principle of the research which is dedicated to parent participants' experiences as ontologically valid. From an ethical standpoint, it also supports the suggested recommendations as part of evidence-based policy approaches to SEs research which prioritise a range of perspectives (see Daniels, Porter and Thompson, 2022). The idiographic, case-by-case approach ensured that each participant's experiences was valued in their own right before conducting cross-case analysis. Furthermore, IPA is suited to smaller sample sizes which supported recruitment but was useful for sensitive areas of research considered in this study (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022). Given the frequent marginalisation of parents of PEx children, IPA research design has been advocated in research exploring their experiences in-depth (see Embeita, 2019; Lally, 2013; Wood, 2011).

As a researcher I have utilised creative methods such as creative poetry, prose and photography as tools to support the interpretative analysis of participants' experiences. This was particularly supportive during the lockdown periods of the COVID-19 pandemic. Beattie and Zhimms (2021, p.2) also suggest how autoethnographic methods such as poetry and reflective journals became a response to 'the isolation and disembodiment from the academic community experienced by academic researchers during the 2021 lockdown.' This mirrors my own experiences, as employing autoethnographic approaches for this study were not considered prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. I only became empowered to share and utilise these interpretative tools with support during later analysis. The occasional use of poetry, prose and photography within this thesis also aligns with Moran's (2024) use of poetry as part of IPA study with higher education social work students. Moran notes that this offers a co-construction of experience between researcher and participant which offers a much deeper emotional connection and understanding. Similarly, Bennion (2024) used poetry to support co-analysis with children's experiences of belonging and school inclusion. Additionally, the photography included in chapter five offers a visual way of representing the interpretative analysis. Similarly, Scarles (2010) used their own photographs as a reflective tool to deepen insight in ways which may not be captured when only using words. Historically, researchers such as Laurel Richardson (see Richardson, 2002) have used poetry as a creative qualitative analytical tool. In this way Richardson has advocated for a richer exploration of lived-experiences which acknowledges the researcher-self whilst deepening connection with participants' stories and challenging academic conventions. Further details on data analysis are found in section 3.8.

3.6.1 – Recruitment

A total of six parent participants, consisting of seven individual parents, completed interviews. During the recruitment process, two parents articulated that they co-parent and would only conduct the interview together. Although I separated their accounts within the interview transcript, reflecting their wishes I have considered them as one parent participant. Although a total of nine participants agreed to take part in a pre-interview, there was some participant attrition. These included two participants who met all criteria and agreed to take part in the study,

but later decided against. Unfortunately, I was not able to ascertain the reason, which may have been useful when reflecting on key themes arising during analysis. However, one of these was involved in the pilot and attended the pre-interview which was a contribution to the study. Given the sensitive nature of the research topic, a 'pre-interview' was deemed to be a necessary part of the recruitment process (see section 3.7.2).

This was an ethical consideration but ensured participants met the inclusion criteria as well offering opportunities to build rapport. 'Purposive' sampling' was used to recruit parent participants, as 'special knowledge' was used 'to select subjects who represent this population' (Lune and Berg, 2017, p 39). This is discussed in the next section.

3.6.2 – Sampling strategies

As IPA guidance suggests, participants were contacted principally through 'opportunities, as a result of one's own contacts' (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022 p. 43). As such, I used connections arising from living and working in London. From the seven participants finally interviewed, four were recruited via professional contacts from my years in education and involvement with local London-based community organisations. These included two organisations specifically for parents, and two wider community organisations for young people and their families. In two cases, participants were referred via personal contacts. Some limitations to this approach were its time-consuming nature, given the requirement to build trust and rapport with participants. This potentially limited the variance in individual characteristics of participants which may have added to richness in data. Purposive sampling required that as a qualitative researcher, I thought critically about the individuals selected (Silverman, 2018), which included a 'homogenous sample' (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022, p.44). As the authors emphasise, this did not mean that participants were 'identical', but there was a level of uniformity around experience type. Each participant had nuanced circumstances, however there was a clear commonality, a child, and in one case two children, who had been PEx from a mainstream school in London.

3.6.3 – Inclusion criteria

As per requirement for IPA, I sought criteria which would recruit a relatively homogenous, smaller sample size, pooled from an 'expert' group (Noon, 2018; Oxley, 2016). In this study, parent participants were seen as the experts of their own experiences regarding their child's PE. In order to achieve this, the following inclusion criteria were used to recruit participants. Criteria such as gender, looked after status, disability, neurodiversity, poverty and class were not explicitly included as this study relied on snowballing and required the development of trust with participants. As a result, opportunistic sampling was utilised (see also section 3.6.2).

Table 2 - Inclusion criteria

Type	Inclusion criteria	Details
Definition	Must be a 'parent' of child when the exclusion took place	As defined by DfE statutory guidance on school exclusions; 'The definition of a parent for the purposes of the Education Acts is broadly drawn. In addition to the child's birth parents, references to parents in this guidance include any person who has parental responsibility (which includes the local authority where it has a care order in respect of the child) and any person (for example, a foster carer) with whom the child lives. Where practicable, all those with parental responsibility should be involved in the exclusions process.' DfE (2017a, p.5)
	The exclusion type must have been 'permanent' (It is expected that the child may have received multiple FPEs, however the inclusion criteria for this study must be at least one permanent exclusion)	**'**A pupil may be excluded for one or more fixed periods (up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year), or permanently' In the case of a permanent exclusion pupils are removed from that particular school register.

		DfE (2017a, p.8)
	Must have been permanently excluded from a school	The permanent exclusion must have occurred in an approved mainstream provision as defined by Department for Education.
Time	The last received permanent exclusion must have occurred within the last 10 years	The parent's child must have had their last permanent exclusion within the last 10 years. This is so that policy and practice is still relevant and supports some homogeneity across the sample.
Location	The permanent exclusion must have been given by a primary or secondary school in a London borough	Access and homogeneity across sample
Language	Parent must be able to communicate to a good level of English. Parent to feel able to communicate experiences in English – ascertained during pre-interview process when interview schedule is shared.	Due to the need for in-depth analysis of participants' accounts and experiences, a shared language across cases and with the researcher is required. If parent has any impairments, efforts were made to provide adequate support.

Exclusion criteria included:

- Refusal to give informed consent prior to interview
- Inability to take part in a pre-interview process including discussing the interview schedule
- Where participant or researcher safety would be compromised
- If participant would be unable to commit to a minimum 45-minute interview held in a safe and uninterrupted space.

3.6.4 – Participant details

The six participants, consisting of seven parents, were given the option to choose their own and their child's pseudonym. However, in most cases participants asked me to select one on their behalf. I did reflect on this process aiming to ensure participants were 'de-identified without being de-personalized' (Heaton, 2022, p.127). Therefore, I kept all pseudonyms as close to the original characteristics of names as possible. These are listed in the table below.

All demographical characteristics were recorded in the way the participants self-described, rather than giving pre-set options. The two participants who did not complete final interviews but had spoken with me prior, had described their ethnicity as white. Their children had been PEx within the last 5 years and were male, but I did not formally record any further information.

Table 3 - Participant details

Name	Age	Ethnicity as described by participant	Relationship to child as described by participant	Time since child's last permanent exclusion	Child's age at time of interview	Child's gender as described by participant
Amina	40	Bengali	Mother	2 years	17	Male
Patricia and Christopher	62, 61	African Caribbean	Parents – Mum, Dad - adoptive	7 months	16	Male
Kiera	42	Black- British Jamaican	Mother	6 years	Deceased at 14	Male
Deandra	42	Mixed – Black African and White	Mother	10 years	27	Male
Callie	37	Mixed – Black and White	Foster carer and Godmother	7 years	Deceased at 17	Male
Jeanene	52	Black – British Caribbean	Foster carer	6 years	22	Male

3.7 – Procedure

The methods and forms associated with the interviews were produced after exploring various doctoral IPA theses and research papers which focused on educational themes, specifically the parental and/or pupil experience. In addition, due to the COVID-19 pandemic considerations were made through the ethics submission process. Data collection commenced from June 2020 and was completed by mid-October 2020. As the pandemic continued to evolve and change regularly, I agreed to adhere to any social-distancing guidance as per national guidance.

3.7.1 – Ethical considerations

Final ethical approval was gained from the London Metropolitan University Research Ethics Review Panel (RERP) on 5th June 2020. This included the panel reviewing the participant pack (see Appendices I-III). Alongside wider literature, the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) ethical guidance for education research was consulted.

The unexpected onset of the COVID-19 pandemic meant an added dimension of ethics, considering the practicalities of physical, as well as emotional safety. At the time nationally imposed lockdowns had been in place, but I was aware that new regulations around social distancing and household mixing would be in place over the summer months. Therefore, logistically this was considered. However ethically I ensured participants were comfortable with taking part in interviews in a suitable location (see section 3.7.3). All participants gave their written informed consent to take part in the study.

From immersion in the research subject, I was aware that sensitive discussions may arise regarding the PE of participants' children. Therefore, Haigh and Whitan's (2015, p.2) 'distress protocol' was identified as a suitable process to follow if needed. This included remaining aware of the signs of emotional distress such as verbally stating this or non-verbal cues such as 'uncontrolled crying' (ibid). This protocol and considerations of it were submitted during the process of ethical approval. I also continued to refer to it before interviews took place. Although there were moments when some participants became upset during the interview, there were no circumstances where the distress protocol was required.

In these instances, the interview was briefly paused. After any minor breaks, I checked with participants gaining consent to continue. However, in one case, upon arrival to conduct the interview, the participants' son had arrived home earlier than anticipated. Noticing the participants' change in behaviour and referring to my ethical considerations, I made the decision to request that we arrange another date to conduct the interview when she would be alone and emotionally safe. We then went through the informed consent process again to ensure she agreed to take part in the interview.

Prior to pre-interview a participant pack was sent to participants which was submitted during the ethical approval process (see Appendices I - III). This included information about informed consent, but also data collection, anonymity and confidentiality. There was signposting information and details about how to contact my supervisors for any concerns around my conduct. I also considered 'aftercare for communities' (Kara, 2018). This involved following up with participants immediately after the interview, and approximately a week later. This was an informal rather than formal de-briefing process where participants had the opportunity discuss any thoughts.

3.7.2 – Interview structure and schedule

As indicated by IPA guidance (see Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009; 2022), six semi-structured interviews were held each lasting approximately between 45 and 90 minutes. Interview questions were formulated in relation to research aims and literature around SEs. This was then informally piloted with two prospective participants with some minor adaptations made to ensure all questions allowed for open-ended discussion. The final interview schedule was shared with participants in the participant pack (see Appendix I). I viewed the interview itself as a 'research instrument designed to elicit trustworthy reports of the subjects' experiences' (Brinkman and Kvale, 2018, p.25). Therefore, the interview itself played a crucial role in my own sense-making of the participants' experiences. I consulted Smith, Flowers and Larkin's (2009) IPA guidance on formulating, preparing for and conducting the interviews for this study.

In IPA research, it is suggested that creating and sharing an interview schedule can support interaction and create an atmosphere where participants are more able to share detailed account of their experiences (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009; 2022). The pre-interview structure followed reviewing of key information from the pack. It acted as a part of a two-way screening process ensuring participants felt comfortable with me, the interview questions, and overall process. Participants later commented on the usefulness of this to prepare themselves to think about the topic. As there was a gap of at least a week and in some cases up to a month prior to the interview, participants had time to make an informed decision about taking part. Therefore, the pre-interview was 'part of the informed consent process' this supported the process of trying 'to anticipate any undesirable consequences for the potential participant' (Oliver, 2003, p. 31). In addition, I was able to ensure participants' suitability for the study against inclusion criteria.

Prior to starting formally recorded interviews, participants were reminded of their right to withdraw or decline to answer at any time, without the need to explain. Although the interview schedule had a clear structure, in-line with IPA guidance the questions were not used to 'restrict lines of conversation' (Noon, 2018, p. 76). As such there were opportunities for participants to feel free to talk around the topic. I also used prompts where needed to support interaction or refocus conversation.

3.7.3 – Location for pre-interviews and interviews

When considering location, I was able to uphold the commitment to hold interviews at 'a time and place of the respondents' convenience, in a comfortable setting, free from any potential disruptions and noise' (McGrath *et al*., 2018, p. 1003). However, further considerations were given due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, to reduce face-to-face meetings wherever possible, pre-interviews were held in a variety of ways such as in-person, video-conferencing or telephone. In-between organisational correspondence was kept via email or phone conversations. This also supported with building rapport between participant and me. All but one of the final interviews was held in-person at the participants' own homes.

The one exception included an interview planned to be held in person, however close to interview date the participant requested that it be held online due to a change in concerns regarding COVID-19. Prior to the interview, I consulted with my supervisors and once all ethical considerations had been reviewed, the interview was conducted over the Zoom platform. All protocol regarding ethics and the participant's emotional and physical safety were followed. As with all the other interviews, it was audio-recorded only, and consent was gained.

Having conducted several in-person interviews prior to this, I did not feel the interview process or data collection was altered detrimentally. Holding interviews in participants' homes had the added benefit of many referring to objects relating to their children. This included showing me photos before the interview. Reflexively I believe this deepened the richness of discussion, however as a researcher it was challenging during analysis (see section 3.10). For example, where participants showed me personal items from their deceased or since absent child, I felt even more deeply connected with their accounts when engaging in the in-depth process of analysis.

3.8 – Data analysis

As explored in previous sections IPA was selected due to its in-depth focus on participants' experiences. This was seen as a rigorous and methodical process of the data analysis. Transcription followed IPA guidance in acquiring a 'semantic record of the interview' which means, 'a transcript showing all the words that are spoken by everyone who is present.' (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p. 74).

As suggested by the authors, I acknowledged my own interpretative role by including 'notable non-verbal utterances,' laughter and significant pauses or hesitations (ibid). These were instances where I was able to interpret emotional aspects of a participants' experiences which had not been overtly described. As part of the 'double hermeneutic' process, I kept a research journal with any reflections arising at this stage.

Post-transcription, I used Smith, Flowers and Larkin's (2009) six-step process: 'reading and re-reading,' 'initial noting,' 'developing emergent themes,' 'searching for connections across emergent themes,' 'moving to the next case,' and 'looking for patterns across cases' to analyse data (ibid, pp. 79 – 117). Following the idiographic approach, a table of themes with page numbers was created for each participant, before beginning to look for general themes across cases (see Appendix IV and V).

In their second edition Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2022) give more detailed support for researchers around the practicalities of data analysis. Although the inherent process remains the same, they do change some terminology to reflect IPA's focus on experience. For example, participant 'emergent themes' are now 'experiential statements' (p.76).

There are now also 'personal experiential themes' (PETs) and general experiential themes' (GETs) (see Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009; 2022). However, given that the author's (2022) edition was published after initial data analysis was completed, I have retained the original terminology of 'superordinate' and 'subordinate' themes. Nevertheless, the newer Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2022) edition, has been very useful when writing-up. For example, it encouraged my development of the SIP framework. This has deepened my theoretical understanding of the themes in relation to the concept of experience. Additionally, the layers of the SIP have allowed me to reflect on the complex interactions which may be underpinning participants' experiences.

Although the SIP's layers were outlined in chapter two, their relevance to participants' experiences and general themes is discussed in chapters five and six. The SIP made me reflect deeply on my interpretative role throughout, as well as the aspects of the participants' experiences which remain 'ineffable.' Details around how creative autoethnographic use of photography and poetry is included in section 3.6.

3.9 – Data storage and protection

Participants were informed of all data storage and protection protocol as part of consent process and in the participant pack (see Appendix I and II). Participant pre-interview and consent forms were kept as hard copies in a secure location. For all participants, audio recordings from interviews were made using my own encrypted laptop and detachable microphone. Files were saved in an encrypted folder using allocated participant numbers to which only I had access. All audio recordings were transcribed with identifiable personal information anonymised and then pseudonymised (see section 3.6.4). The digital files were backed up securely using Box a GDPR compliant cloud storage to which only I [researcher] had access. All hard and digital data will be kept until the final thesis has been completed before being destroyed. Post-data collection, I have continued to consult the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and London Metropolitan University (LMU) guidance on data for any updated information (see ICO, 2023; LMU, 2022).

3.10 – Reflexive statement

The pandemic, global politics and my own identity significantly impacted the methodological processes inherent to IPA. Due to lengthy periods of lockdown, in-depth interpretative analysis became much deeper than expected. During these times I spent most days alone and was unable to go to a library. Such factors have been acknowledged as damaging to doctoral researchers in terms of mental health and wellbeing (Jackman *et al*., 2022; Lambrechts and Smith, 2020). Furthermore, experiencing the 'collective trauma' globally due to the pandemic also highlighted its disproportionate traumatic impacts (Budrytė and Resende, 2023). As a British researcher, this meant being aware of the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black and Asian people in the UK (see Aldridge *et al*., 2020; Platt, 2020; Nguyen *et al.,* 2022). Although further research continues to emerge since the pandemic's onset in 2020, during lockdowns information was being released daily, which meant experiencing this in real-time. Amongst this, the death of George Floyd in America and subsequent protest movements had significant global impact (see Merritt, 2021). On a personal level they continued to highlight continuing racial discrimination and inequality in England and around the world. This was not just in relation to the themes arising in this thesis, but also regarding my personal life.

This meant the process of 'bracketing' (see section 3.4.3) became more challenging. However, during this time I engaged intensively with reflective journal writing. I also used creative outlets such as poetry, music and photography to process challenging emotions. As doctoral researchers we organised weekly online meets which became a form of self-arranged peer-supervision. Meetings with my supervisors were incredibly supportive. Furthermore, over the last two years I have engaged regularly with therapy. This has supported reflection on participants' and my own life experiences, highlighting the importance of researcher wellbeing, regardless of discipline. On reflection, being a counselling psychology student, it is likely that therapeutic support and peer-supervision would have been embedded in the methodological process. However, for researchers crossing disciplinary boundaries, this seems to have been overlooked. I was able to self-fund therapeutic support; however, I know this is not an option for many researchers.

I am very grateful that participants felt comfortable to share such personal details from their lives. Even though they chose to self-disclose, this still led to significant feelings of guilt. This was particularly around feeling responsible, or as a practitioner being part of the educational system that had induced their experiences. This guilt also meant I continued to check in with participants after interviews longer than I might have ordinarily planned. Fenge, Oakley and Beer (2019) discuss the necessity of 'preparedness' in relation to 'sensitive research.' The authors highlight researcher wellbeing and distress particularly in research covering social justice and inequality. However, the absence of literature around how deeply impactful and at times traumatic the PE was for these parents meant I could not have been fully prepared. The unexpected global and national events or how these would make me reflect on my positionality and interpretative role were things I could not foresee. Inevitably these aspects contributed to key themes arising which can be seen as a limitation and a strength.

For marginalised researchers engaging in topics around discrimination and inequality, I feel support in this area requires attention. However, reflecting on the speed of quantitative data emerging during the pandemic, I believe it is important to find a balance between ensuring researcher and participant safety, whilst not gatekeeping sensitive qualitative research, particularly if 'epistemic injustices' in academia are to be challenged (see Zocchi, 2021). Furthermore, educational researchers often experience tensions with ethics committees who may be 'friends or foes,' so this process should not be made more difficult than necessary (Brown, Spiro and Quinton, 2020). That said, in spite of the challenges, I now see the benefits of engaging deeply and personally with this research process given the important themes arising.

Chapter Four – Results and analysis

As chapter three outlined, this thesis employed an IPA methodological approach to analyse data. This approach sits within and remains congruent with the SIP conceptual framework. The data analysis process, as detailed in section 3.8, resulted in the following superordinate and subordinate themes.

Table 4 - Superordinate and subordinate themes

Superordinate themes	**Subordinate themes**
Permanent exclusion as a rippling life changing event	Impact on the structure of daily life
	Impact on emotional and psychological wellbeing
	Permanence – long lasting effects
Permanent exclusion as a distorted reflection	Questioning parental capabilities and dismissing expertise
	Feeling disempowered in the exclusions process
	Negative perceptions of own and child's intersecting identities
Responding to permanent exclusion: supportive strategies	Utilising existing support strategies
	Experiences of police and policy
	Self as change-maker – study, career, political and research involvement

Throughout this chapter selected participant quotes have been included to illustrate the main aspects for each superordinate and subordinate theme. These are written in italics with reference to the participant, page and line numbers.

4.1 – Superordinate theme one: permanent school exclusion as a rippling life-changing event

This section explores the first superordinate theme which had three sub-themes. These include: 'significant impacts on the structure of daily life', 'impact on psychological wellbeing,' and 'permanence – longer lasting effects.' These are explored below. Although these are presented as discrete sub-sections, as per the SIP framework their inherent complex nature and interdependence is discussed in chapter five.

4.1.1 – Significant impact on the structure of daily life

The complex nature of SEs meant that all participants experienced increased interaction with their child's school/s in the months and even years prior to the PE. This, they expressed as contributing to the PE itself. As such the impact on the participants daily lives were experienced both in the time prior and during the process itself. It is important to note the long-lasting nature of changes to daily experience in order to recognise their impact and overall significance to the participants. In general, this increased interaction with their child's school was perceived to be negative rather than supportive in nature. As Callie summarises:

> *School was difficult, because I found his school very rigid. And I don't feel like the school system on the whole was very supportive. They were like, either 'fall in line or you are gonna get kicked out!'*
>
> *Callie, 1, 25-27*

This account possibly indicates how the PE felt to her and that Ryan's experiences of being 'kicked out' were synonymous with her own exclusion as a parent. I have interpreted the 'rigid' characterisation to mean Callie feeling that the school required conformity and was not listening or hearing Callie's needs.

Parents described how their child's school frequently called them during the day to report on behaviours which they felt were unjustified or unable to support. This was for multiple reasons such as being at work themselves or wanting support with their child. For example, in the months prior to his PE Amina was already managing stressful and sudden 'changes' in her son Naeem's behaviour towards her at home. He had started to spend increasing amounts of time outside of the home which worried Amina She was concerned about his physical safety and involvement in

criminal activity. Furthermore, Naeem had started to distance himself emotionally and showing aggressive behaviours towards her. As he began to be absent from school, Amina often received phone calls from his teachers which interfered with her daily activity and heightened existing anxieties:

> *And suddenly he changed. He stayed outside. I was worried, stressed. And then school called me every time he's not in school. I don't know what to do. So, I was imagining like you know – how am I gonna get help for him?*
>
> *Amina, 2, 57 – 60*

The way in which Amina expressed, 'how am I gonna get help for him?' also represented time spent without receiving help herself. Amina seemed to have been perpetually presented with information she already wanted support with. It also demonstrates Amina's overwhelmed state of being and sense of isolation in managing these experiences alone in the absence of support from the school. The impact of this on daily life is shared by Amina and the continual presence in her thoughts:

> *So, when I used to go doctor or anywhere shopping, I used to see - who can help my son? Trust me. I used to cry every time. My building neighbour that time, she didn't know me properly, and she used to call my one of my friend - she knows one of my friends. She used to tell her – 'I saw your friend and I think she's depressed,' or something like that.*
>
> *I used to cry every time I go outside. My tears used to come. And whenever I saw strong man I used to say - I should ask him to help him, maybe Naeem will be scared of him…Trust me. So much pain. Always I used to think about Naeem. I used to think about Naeem.*
>
> *Amina, 9, 272-280*

The huge sense of parental responsibility Amina experienced trying to find solutions was overwhelming and all-encompassing; it was her duty and pervaded her thoughts, disrupting daily activities such as going shopping. Her repeated phrase 'cry every time,' shows how intensely emotional and time-consuming it was. Amina repeating, 'I used to think about Naeem' shows how his life, both inside and outside of the school, became the sole focus of her thoughts Crucially, Amina described how this had contributed to her experiencing depression which was even perceived by her neighbour and friend.

Another example of disruptions to daily life includes persistent and in the main, negative communication in relation to their child in the time prior to the PE. This was linked to a feeling that certain individuals at their child's school were pre-empting behaviours unjustly. For example, Patricia explained her experience of a teacher calling her to discuss Kehinde's behaviour regarding an upcoming educational visit. This happened in the years before her son's PE, but similar calls persisted thereafter. These discussions took time out of Patricia's working day as a teaching assistant in another local school. Recalling this she notes:

> *She had… it was almost like she was gunning for him all the time. And there was a situation where she'd say. She'd say things like, 'He had that look.' And I'm like, 'What look is that?' sort of thing. And he was due to go on a school trip, the end of year five. And I got phone call from this teacher saying, 'Kehinde's going on this trip.' Blah, blah, blah – lots of problems as always. So I said, 'Well, are you saying he's not going?'*
>
> *Patricia, 5, 113-117*

The use of the term 'gunning' may indicate a sense of repeated persecution felt by Patricia in relation to her son's school due to the continuous negative reporting. The phrase, 'as always' indicating the repetitive and disappointingly expected nature of the communication. This account mirrors experiences presented by all participants, where similar interactions were expressed as constantly interrupting daily life. Not only was this due to physically taking parents away from other tasks to answer calls, or attend the school for ad hoc meetings, but as an additional emotional labour, with time spent worrying about the issues presented by teachers. The questioning, reporting and lack of support from the school becoming another disruptive pressure.

Despite this intensified interaction and sense of 'build-up' described in some form by all parent participants, there was a strong consensus that the final naming of 'permanent exclusion' by the school felt abrupt and ill-communicated. The irony of experiencing constant phone calls to report on their child's negative behaviours but initially nothing around the PE itself is outlined clearly by Callie:

> *It felt like a set-up, because then shortly after he was permanently excluded. And when he was permanently excluded - I was really annoyed, because any little thing they used to call me at work. So I had to have to come out the room, to go to the office to take the phone call. And I just said one day look unless it's important. Don't keep on phoning me telling me, 'Oh he's looking out the window.' Okay… you know what I mean? It's like…*
>
> *And then that day when he got permanently excluded no one called me so I was livid.*
>
> *Callie, 4, 147 - 153*

It is evident that such repeated phone calls were causing Callie issues in her own work as a teaching assistant in a school by interfering with her working day. Callie's use of the term 'livid' may indicate persisting lingering frustrations around her treatment during that time. In particular perhaps a perceived inability to be agentic to effect change in the way she had desired.

Once the school had communicated the PE there were further changes to the functioning of daily life for all participants. As their child could no longer attend their mainstream school, arrangements were made to attend alternative provision – in these cases pupil referral units. For Callie this meant sudden changes in the living arrangements for her foster son Ryan. She shared that this was due to the shortened hours at the PRU which were not compatible with her own job. The shorter alternative provision hours were cited by several parents as a key contributor to their child's exposure to CCE. In Callie's case these concerns around Ryan's susceptibility to negative and dangerous influence outside of the home had a significant impact on living arrangements. As Callie was fostering Ryan as a co-parent in a kinship care arrangement, the family decision was made for Ryan to move out of London for a short time to stay with his grandparents to ensure his physical safety.

Callie's experiences of immediately after the PE are described here:

> *So it was really hard because, um yeah. He got kicked out of school on a Friday… Over the weekend we had to pack up his stuff. And that was it.*
>
> *So it was. It was very, very difficult. And yeah, I just didn't hear from the school again. So eventually I went back and I took thank you cards to certain staff. But that was it. It literally…*
>
> *Callie, 5, 174-179*

She tailed off at this point, demonstrating the importance of this account. The phrase 'very, very difficult' and the short sentences indicate that this was not only physically but also emotionally disruptive experience for Callie. The phrase, 'and that was it' evoke a sensation of abruptness and finality, which mirrors her experiences of Ryan having to move home almost immediately.

All parents experienced significant changes to daily life due to their child's PE. Parents began to feel an increased negative interaction from their child's school leading up to the PE. This became an additional pressure for them which consumed time in various ways. In an immediate sense, after the PE itself, the shortened hours at the PRUs influenced the structure of daily life for parents. They voiced increased concerns about the detrimental social interaction their child may have had. In a wider sense the PE acted as a catalyst or contributed to significant deterioration in

their child's circumstances, including education, emotional wellbeing and physical safety. Similarly, the parent participants shared changes in their own lives which were disrupted. Explored further, in section 4.1.3. are the long-term effects experienced by the participants; these are characterised as 'permanence'. Briefly explored in this section were the emotional impacts of the PEs on the parents which were a fundamental aspect of their experiences. This is considered further in the next section.

4.1.2 – Impact on emotional and psychological wellbeing

All six participants experienced a wide range of emotions in relation to their child/ren's SE. This varied in both intensity and expression across the participants but was a connecting strand across all cases. As such the participants' emotions are woven throughout the analysis chapter. Although participants' emotions and psychological wellbeing form a part of all subthemes, in this section they are presented in a discrete sense. This is to value the centrality of these themes to the parents. Throughout the interviews, participants were extremely expressive and forthcoming about how they had been feeling at various stages across the SEs experience. Furthermore, not only were participants' emotions and feelings intrinsically attached to all aspects of their experience, but they were able to remember and express them much more readily than specific events or procedures. For example, it became apparent that certain details about the PEs process were challenging to recall for participants due to gaps in memory as Amina reflects in response to be asked about certain details relating to Naeem's PE:

> *Actually, I can't remember this because that time I was really depressed.*
>
> *Amina (3, 83-84)*

Here Amina draws specific links between her ability to remember events due to her depression at the time.

Similarly, towards the end of Deandra's interview she reflects on the process and highlights how this had supported the recalling of experiences:

> *I loved the fact that it was.. That it allowed me to just talk. Because too many questions is way too rigid for me, and I kind of like the freedom to just talk about things. Because remember, with trauma you miss the timeline... and it's not even about a timeline. It's that things are happening all over the place.*
>
> *Deandra (13, 520-523)*

Deandra here making a note of the 'trauma' she had experienced and how this impacted upon her memory. She highlights the multifactorial nature of the experience in that 'things are happening all over the place,' potentially indicating the disorientation of the influx of events. Parents shared that when they did express their emotions during the PE process, these were frequently weaponised against them by the individuals at their child's school. For example, Deandra uses the term 'ammunition' to describe the after-effects of sharing her emotions with her son's school:

> *…and I think that's another ammunition for them is that… I did disclose. I did speak with them on a personal level.*
>
> *Deandra, 4, 126-127*

The use of the term 'ammunition' suggesting that Deandra felt her own mental health had been turned against her. Again, it links to wider recurring feelings of being under attack, which all parents shared in relation to their PE experience. The term 'ammunition' also made me reflect around the term in a corporeal sense. For example, the way ammunition might impact a body and the reverberating effects thereafter. She describes feelings of 'rage' when she discovered reports that had been written about her, without consent by a psychologist at her son's school:

> *…but that was years later, and that was trauma… …. like I was so furious. I had nowhere to go with it. It was like – do I open this up or do I close it? And I had to close it because emotionally I was unable to deal with the rage that came from me reading that. The rage.*
>
> *Deandra, 3, 108-111*

Deandra described the process of uncovering the reports as being 'trauma'tic. Feelings of anger, frustration and in some cases, rage were described by other parents in relation to the exclusion/s experience. They begin to shed light on the longer lasting and rippling psychological impacts. Deandra summarises how the experience overall continued to make her feel even many years later:

It was again - in a world of all white middle-class people and me - the subject, you know, and my son. And it was just like, I don't like this. I don't like the vibe, I don't like any part of it. I feel like I'm in a cage here and I'm being pointed at…

Deandra, 3, 100 - 103

Deandra's sensation of her being 'the subject' in a 'cage' and 'pointed at' create powerful imagery around how degrading this experience was. Her account begins to draw attention to Deandra's experiences within a wider societal context.

Although participants noted that in retrospect, they had felt a slow 'build' up towards the PE, the final decision by the school felt unexpected and abrupt. This led to feelings of shock where there was a lack of time given to process the information and emotions adequately. For example, Christopher shares how, this led to the sensation of being 'stunned.' Both Christopher and Patricia's shared account made me think they were so shocked they were unable to react in ways they knew they wanted to. When I enquired whether they had received paperwork or any formal notification of Kehinde's PE they responded:

We tried to find it. But to be honest, I mean - I think a) we were stunned. You know and… but we were absolutely stunned. And it was said in a way that actually right, there was no recourse - there was no-thing… I think we were told, 'If you want, you could appeal.' Yeah. But even the way that the appeal was – was almost put in a way that actually if you appealed it would be…

Christopher, 16, 510-514

…it would be on record.

Patricia, 17, 515

Christopher's expression as being 'stunned' made me think of the physiological impact of being stunned in the sense of attack, as well as it being merely a description of surprise. Again, there seems to be an underlying perception of being persecuted which was seen across all participant accounts. The sensations of 'shock' were linked to the lack of options they felt available to them, which may have been due to concerns about the appeal being kept 'on record.' I interpreted the situation as being wholly frustrating; knowing that legally they might 'appeal' but feeling unable to take this course of action due to concerns of how it may be used against them. The way in which 'on record' was expressed, communicated a shared and unspoken understanding of what it might mean in a wider sense for them as parents. The impact on both Christopher and Patricia was highlighted by the notable pauses in their account, bring to attention how the process of recalling and reflecting on emotions at the time may have been challenging.

Additionally, the way in which Patricia completed Christopher's sentence was characteristic of their approach and togetherness in co-parenting. It emphasised the pair as having a shared understanding of the experience.

In Amina's case her experiences of isolation around the time of her son's PE led to frequent suicidal ideation. Amina herself used the term 'depressed' throughout her interview to share her experiences. The following quote demonstrates the connection between her psychological state of mind and her need, at times, to take physical action to alleviate the pain:

> *I used to think. Sometimes I used think, like you know… … jump off the window. Sometimes I used to think…*
>
> *I used to go in the toilet, and I feel like that is a safe place. I want a quiet place at that time. And all the time, quiet place and crying.*
>
> *Amina, 4, 100-103*

Amina's desire to find 'a safe place' highlighted to me how she had felt very unsafe both psychologically and physically at that time. For example, her state of mind linked to a desire to finding a physical 'place' of refuge where she might be able to express her emotions freely. Similarly, she thought practically about a choice to take her own life. It is important to note that after Amina disclosure, we did pause the interview and I did check to gain consent to continue. However, still I found these and similar accounts to be particularly challenging to hear and interpret and analyse. Not only due to the words used, but also in being taken back to the interview space myself. I also felt a huge sense of helplessness, frustration and even anger around my profession as a teacher and wondered for example, if those involved in Naeem's PE would have ever contemplated Amina's situation at that time. Although it is not possible to attribute the PE itself as the sole contributor to Amina's depression, it became apparent that its rippling effect contributed significantly to her psychological and emotional state at the time. Amina's need to express her emotions privately reminded me of how parents avoided sharing these challenges due to fears they might be weaponised against them.

Chris and Patricia also summarised the wide range of emotions that many of the participants shared:

> *Well it made me feel helpless. Because there's a part of me that actually - I do this as part of my work. Yeah. And yet still I felt that I wasn't able to support my son, and prevent him from being permanently excluded. Yeah. So there was a part of feeling helpless. There was a part of being really angry. Part of being really frustrated. And, and despair. I mean there was lots of different things about just being a parent, and actually feel… and I know we….*
>
> *….talked about it as well. [Both]*
>
> *There was a part of us that were really angry to the point that we were going to send right. You know - write angry letters.*
>
> *Christopher, 20, 656-662*

Accordingly, the examples begin to demonstrate the connection between the PE and the parents' psychological and emotional wellbeing. They link to interpretations of how this was experienced in an embodied sense. Many of the longer and more 'permanent' effects of the SE continue to be explored in the next section.

4.1.3 – Permanence – long lasting effects

The term PE has been used throughout the research to emulate language in DfE (2017a, 2023) exclusions policy and guidance. As chapter two explored, this relates to the legally binding procedures which result in a pupil being unable to attend a school or provision. However, the experiences of the parents show there were permanent changes which extended throughout all aspects of their lives. The narratives begin to demonstrate that the word 'permanent,' used as part of statutory guidance, transcends policy, continuing to impact the lived experiences of the parents. Their experiences can be characterised as the long lasting 'rippling' effects of the PE. The imagery of a 'ripple' was brought to my attention in an account by Kiera in relation to her son Chris. It provides a relevant metaphor to describe what was a shared experience across all participants.

Here Kiera outlines the way that Chris' PE connected to events later:

Okay. So… …. This is when it gets kind of… It's not even tricky it's because of… For me. Him being… Leaving that school, the following events for him that happened was detrimental for him. And this is the sad thing that really... I can only put that. This is what's made it so important for me to speak out. The fact that something, so minute. That people may think is minute, can have a ripple effect of how that child's future can go.

Kiera, 10, 376 - 381

For Kiera 'the following events' included the murder of her son at aged 14, which occurred around 2 years after his PE from school. A similar experience is shared by Callie when Ryan was murdered around 3 years after his PE. Both see the PE as a markable point after which their lives have changed significantly in very psychologically and physically real ways. They draw clear and explicit links between their children's PE and the events that followed.

The most immediate change that all parents felt, was a permanent end to their child's educational life as they had previously known it. Parents drew links between this and their child's increasing exposure to what they saw as harmful outside influences. All parents commented on low-quality learning experiences for their children in the time after the PE and whilst in their alternative provision. Jeanene shares the emotional impact and explains why it affected her.

...erm... it was quite... .... upsetting. Because for me I would want the best for all children ... for them to have their education and, you know, the exclusion denied him the education. And it was bad enough as it is - lacking - much less to be excluded. So it just wasn't good at all.

Jeanene, 7, 204-207

Callie also summarises and highlights the increasing levels of violence Ryan became exposed to after his PE and specifically at his PRU:

> *And yeah and it was just. It was just awful. It was just behaviour management. Like I would say then from year 9 he stopped learning.*
>
> *And so it was, it was like it was a bit like a prison really. And there was just a lot of violence the staff weren't great, he just didn't…he stopped learning.*
>
> *Callie, 7, 232-233; 237 -238*

The repetition of the phrase 'he stopped learning' demonstrates the importance of an education to Callie. For me, it emphasises the notion of finality, both for Ryan and Callie. For Callie the exclusion was made more pertinent when she shared that the socialising Ryan had done at his PRU had direct connections to his murder. She notes, 'so the boy that killed him. Went to his first PRU' (ibid, 12, 452). Kiera and Amina both discuss criminal involvement linked directly to exposure to people at their child's PRU. Overall, all parents discuss the unsuitability of the alterative provision arrangements which had some permanent long-term impacts. Frequently parents drew parallels between PRUs and how it had felt like a transition to a prison-like environment which had long lasting impacts on their child.

Christopher and Patricia highlighted that the PE had had the potential to permanently end many of Kehinde's positive friendships and relationships at his mainstream school. They also began to notice some deteriorations in his mental health and self-confidence which worried them. Kehinde's case was particularly unique due to the time of his PE, which occurred at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and a month before the first national lockdown March 2020. The move to online teaching for all pupils meant that Kehinde was able to continue to socialise and interact with his friends online at points during the day. For example, Patricia shared that when gaming on his PlayStation, Kehinde played team sports such as basketball and football with friends who would normally have been going in-person to attend his former mainstream school. Patricia shared 'It was a blessing for him. His spirits were lifted so much.' (Patricia, 20, 637-638).

Interestingly, Patricia and Christopher noted that they started to receive phone calls from his former mainstream school months after the PE. Patricia explains that most likely this was due to the school's SLT feeling a duty to 'care' during lockdown, which they had not felt previously.

Patricia found this experience to be particularly angering due to the school's lack of interest regarding after-care for Kehinde before that point. I found it intriguing that the pandemic had in this case reduced some of the permanent effects Kehinde and his parents may have experienced. Had this not been the case he may have missed out on 'the whole kind of norms of closing' such as saying goodbye to friends at the school prom which he had been excited about and planned for (Christopher, 22, 727). As it was, missing out on these things became a shared experience Kehinde had with peers who had not been PEx. However, this was an unusual case and Christopher acknowledges what might occur with other PEs:

> *And that for a lot of young people - especially those that are excluded. Things come to an end. Things come to an end for a lot of them in their lives as a form of punishment. Yeah. And so they don't have a good view about what things are ending.*
>
> *Christopher, 21, 706 - 710*

Christopher explains PE in terms of permanence and finality, which was shared by all parents in relation to their child. For Deandra her son, Lyon, his PE led to him moving to a residential school in a completely different region of the country. As such there was a permanent end to her living with him at home after which she rarely saw him. She described the PE as having a significant knock-on effect on both her and his younger brother Noa. In fact, Deandra had a moment of realisation later in the interview, in which she drew connections between her own PE and those of her son's. Thus, PEs are profound and long-lasting, as Deandra was experiencing some of the effects of her own PE.

The circumstances of the PEs were particularly poignant due to them all having attended the same school:

> **Deandra:** *Got kicked out. I got excluded from there. I got excluded from there. Right? Yes… and then… yeah, yeah, yeah. Why? Why did I send my kids there…?*
>
> **AA:** *So just to clarify - you were also excluded from that school?*
>
> **Deandra:** *yes…*
>
> **AA:** *...and then both of your sons were excluded from that school?*
>
> **Deandra:** *Yeah…[laughs in disbelief] It's craz... ….*
>
> *Deandra, 11, 439 - 444*

Here was a significant moment for me in the interview, I was able to understand how powerful the role of the interviewer can be in making sense of a lived experience for those involved. During analysis, I reflected on the process and at times felt guilt around probing these aspects. Even now I can remember how shocked and angered Deandra was in bringing these connections together and consciously speaking them aloud.

When I asked Deandra earlier on about her youngest son Noa's PE she answered:

> *Did he go to a PRU? I think they tried to set him up with a PRU. He wouldn't go. He got in trouble. He followed the footsteps of his brother. He was very… very… very affected by loss of my mother. Loss of his brother… like literally when his brother started going through all of this stuff. At 12, 13, 14, Noa lost everything. His whole world came… and he was left with me this distraught mother.*
>
> *Deandra, 7, 269 - 273*

Not only does this account literally mark the end of her youngest son's involvement in education, but this has had long-term effects as experienced by Deandra. Amongst numerous pauses in her speech, I noticed how Deandra repeated the term 'loss' and 'very' several times. To me it showed a depth of emotion.

The ways in which this was experienced by her youngest son Noa, and the rippling effect this had further exacerbated her own grief, leaving her 'distraught.' The word 'distraught' emphasises the emotional impact on Deandra at that time.

It helped me to make sense of some of the suicidal ideation she experienced during that period. Deandra shared how both sons are now serving long prison sentences, the implications of which were still being felt at the time of interview. This included implications of the COVID-19 pandemic such as prolonged periods of zero-contact. Deandra conveyed her continued worries about the health and wellbeing of her sons in prison during this time. Originally Deandra's case met the criteria for inclusion due to her youngest son's PE being at the upper limit of 10 years ago, however in the interview it became evident that connections extended much further. Although each case is unique, it begins to show how long the 'ripples' around a PE may continue to be felt across all participants' lives. This is much after the procedural aspects of a PE, as per statutory policy, have ended. In Deandra's case the permeating absence of her sons from her life continues to impact upon her daily experiences.

4.2 – Superordinate theme two: permanent school exclusion as a distorted reflection

Before, during and after the PE, parents interacted with a wide range of professionals affiliated with their child's schools. These included teachers, educational psychologists and in some cases social workers. In addition, parents shared their experiences of increased interaction with the police which oftentimes was initiated by or connected to their child's school. However, despite requiring collaborative engagement with these individuals, parents' saw an image reflected back which was at odds with how they viewed themselves. Experiences of these interactions were divided into 3 sub-themes: 'questioning of parental capabilities and dismissing expert knowledge'; 'feeling disempowered in the PE process;' and 'negative perceptions of their own and their child/ren's intersecting identities.'

4.2.1 – Questioning of capabilities and dismissing expert knowledge

In sharing their experiences, parents consistently demonstrated expertise and unique insider-knowledge of their child. Parents also saw their children as intrinsically connected to and as extensions of their own 'self.' For example, Patricia related the experience to knowing her own body, 'I know how my body works' she says. In relation to this Christopher adds, 'Yeah. We know our children.' (31, 1101, 1105). Later in Christopher's account he uses the term 'knowing' (28, 989). 'Knowing' has been a useful term which connects experiences across cases. For the parent participants, 'knowing' has included a full and balanced understanding of their child's personality and their physical and emotional changes as they had been growing with age. Parents gave many of their positive detailed descriptions throughout the interviews including aspects of their child's uniqueness. For example, Callie shares her memories of Ryan and some of the things he enjoyed doing:

> *And he had a big personality. He was very bubbly and very energetic. He loved dancing. He liked cooking, eating. I used to take him swimming and kickboxing which he loved. He was just very active he used to love playing rugby at school which I loved. Because he used all his energy so when he came home he was a bit chilled. He liked football, riding his bike. He was just like… a proper like. Rough and ready boy. But he was he was also very like gentle and loving and caring*
>
> *Callie, 1, 15-21*

Importantly I feel this demonstrates Callie's knowledge of the things Ryan was good at, how these were beneficial to him and what he enjoyed doing. The way in which Callie described Ryan was an uplifting experience for me as an interviewer. Not only did Callie's demeanour physically brighten, but her use of adjectives such as 'bubbly' has helped me to tangibly feel Ryan's 'active' and positive energy. The phrase 'rough and ready' contrasts with 'gentle and loving and caring' in a way in which I felt she presented a well-rounded knowledge of his personality.

Callie also repeatedly uses the word 'love' showing her genuine 'care' and affection for him. I found these warm memories humanising, normalising and balanced. Callie felt both she and Ryan had been mischaracterised by others. For example, Callie shares feeling a lack of 'care' or judgement in relation to Ryan's PE and the events that followed:

> *Because like - many people don't care – 'Yeah… your child's in a PRU so what?' People don't care. Or even to a degree that your child has been stabbed. People… I still get it – 'Oh well… what was he doing then? Was he in a gang?' And then especially what the newspaper wrote, which wasn't all true.*
>
> *Callie, 18, 694 - 697*

The repeated phrase 'don't care' is in direct contrast to the feelings of care Callie herself described in relation to Ryan. When asked to say what might have made the difference to both her and Ryan's PE experience Callie replied, 'I think at that time just understanding. Because I often felt judged by the school' (14, 526-527). This reminded me again of her desire to have had an open and equal dialogue with Ryan's school which was not reciprocated. Callie's knowledgeability of Ryan was met with the school's perception of Callie as incapable. Callie's experiences highlight very similar accounts across all cases, creating a strong theme and bond between the parents. Here the metaphor of the 'distorted reflection' has been a way for me to make sense of these and similar experiences. For example, actors connected to the PE reflected back an image which was a distorted version of how the parents knew themselves and their child.

Participants had an in-depth understanding of the ways in which their children learned best. In addition, four of the parents were working as professionals within schools and education themselves. Their experiences highlighted frustrations around the dismissal of parental knowledge of their own children, and a negation of what they saw to be their professional skills. Jeanene spoke about trying to get support for her foster son Jay, whom she knew from professional experience, may have an undiagnosed special educational need.

However, Jeanene shares how her unique understanding of Jay was not recognised. She notes the feeling of 'chasing' which demonstrates how her desire to work with and remain in a dialogue with the school.

> *'I had quite a lot of interaction with the school. Anytime anything happened or... you know because I was constantly chasing them to do more for him.'*
>
> *Jeanene, 5, 128 – 130*

Despite 'a lot of interaction with the school,' it was only just before his PE, that his autism was acknowledged through official diagnosis. Jeanene later shared that this delay contributed significantly to Jay's PE. During this time Jeanene adapted to rely on her own familial support systems. It is important to note how Jay was seen as a member of Jeanene's family:

> *I think for the family we tried to home school him and tried to help with everything he was going through. But it was very difficult...as I said because he was autistic... I think he was only diagnosed right at the very end...*
>
> *Jeanene, 7, 210-213*

Despite family support, the experience was still clearly emotionally 'difficult.' In my interpretation it is also another example of a juxtaposition of perception between parent and actors within the PEs process. Jeanene's accounts assert her as capable, resourceful and a knowledgeable parent; Jay's school held a different perception of her. This was exhibited by their dismissal of Jeanene's expert knowledge and refusal to fully engage with her in decision-making around Jay.

In Deandra's case she has made sense of these experiences. Here she shares her own understanding of why she may not have been considered an equal by those involved in one of her sons PE:

> *So, again - it's about racism and classism. Some of the teachers were so middle class. So white middle class. That they just talked to me like I was beneath them. And I'm like - nah mate - my child. So it was about respect, and I just feel like there was that hierarchical positioning. That they thought they were above me, but this was my child.*
>
> *Deandra, 9, 347 - 351*

The repeated phrase 'my child' is Deandra's assertion that as a parent she knew she had a right to be involved in decision-making around her son. It counteracts perceptions of teachers at the school who Deandra felt saw her as 'beneath' them due to 'racism and classism.' The school's view of Deandra was at odds with her own perceptions of self as a parent who ought to have been treated equally. These experiences left Deandra feeling disrespected.

Parents also held invaluable knowledge about their child's life outside of school hours which was left unrecognised. Some of this knowledge was gained due to experiences of putting their own physical safety in jeopardy, to ensure their child's wellbeing. In the time around their children's PEs, Callie, Kiera and Amina all shared such experiences. For example, after Ryan's PE, Callie remembers having to consider Ryan being fatally attacked when going shopping or attending appointments. She notes, 'Things were so bad at that time with regards to me worried about if he was going to be killed.' (369-70):

> *It was just dangerous. And then the thing is, I'd put him at risk. Because if anything happened, I would slow him down, or they would come for me. So, it was just hard and the thing is it's like, it's not just my reality, loads of people experience it.*
>
> *Callie, 10, 385 - 387*

The word 'dangerous' and 'risk' highlight how this felt for Callie. Not only were there continued concerns about Ryan or herself being 'killed', but this account demonstrates an overwhelming sense of responsibility as a parent to protect him. Callie connects the experience to that of the other parents, which begins to shed light her insider knowledge of other parents' experiences. In Ryan's case, these insights could have been utilised by those at his previous mainstream school or his subsequent alternative provision but were left unheard. For Callie, the PE had 'devastating' consequences for Ryan and the family. When reflecting on the events after Ryan's PE which led to his eventual murder Callie laments:

> *It's just devastating because it's like…Ryan was like failed immensely by the school education system. By CAMHS because he was supposed to get counselling, because when I went to - I think it was the first ever LAC review in the first PRU. The head or whoever he was some guy, I'm sure it was the head. He was saying that he thinks Ryan needs counselling.*
>
> *So I said, "100%, he's been through a lot." But he never received it.*
>
> *Callie, 13, 483-388*

The last sentence representing a one-sided conversation with Callie reiterating what Ryan needed to support him, but 'never receiv[ing] it.' Amina shared how in the time at which Naeem was PE at age 14, he regularly went missing from home. With little support from the school or police, she often took the night bus to search for him well into the early hours. 'The first year, every night. Every night he used to go missing. Yeah, I had to go. Every night I called police' (15, 471-472).

The repetition of the phrase 'every night' mirroring the literal daily repetition of these events which seemed etched into her memory.

You know… empty bus and I was scared. Sometimes I felt like – I don't care about me. I just wanna see… … where is my son?

Amina, 14, 449-450

The terms 'scared' and 'I don't care about me' demonstrate the high levels of self-sacrifice and parental responsibility Amina has for her son. Amina showed self-awareness and knowledge that she wanted support from the police, both in protecting herself and her son, however she was left without any such care. Again, I saw this as another example representing the countless attempts by these parents to keep the channels of communication open with relevant parties around their child's PE. However, these attempts seemed frequently rebutted due to negative perceptions of the parents. Yet, they demonstrate, in contrast to the frequent negative perceptions of them as parents, that they show high levels of self-sacrifice to safeguard their children.

I asked if Naeem's school was involved during the times he went missing, Amina responded:

No. No when he's not in school they just call me and say your son not in school. That's it.

Amina, 15, 476-477

The bluntness of 'that's it' shows the lack of reciprocity from the school, representing this one-way conversation. The finality and abruptness demonstrate a dismissal of Amina's expert parental knowledge. An absence of support leaves little upon which Amina to expand. Although Amina repeatedly shares experiences of exhibiting high levels of personal responsibility to ensure her son's safety. However, her capabilities to parent were constantly brought into question. Yet again an unrecognisable and distorted image of herself as an incapable parent was reflected back. Additionally, there were expectations for her to parent in ways which breached her own moral values. She notes;

Even when you call police. Sometimes, they're rude to me. I remember one lady she was saying, 'You have to talk to your son.' Give him.' [gestures hitting]

I don't know what that's called. Like - slap on his bum. 'You have to do something to your son!'

Amina, 15, 478 - 481

Amina expressed shock at being urged by a police officer to 'do something' to her son by physically hitting him. She was so upset and confused by this experience that she remembered sharing it with her social worker afterwards to seek clarification. I saw that the police officer's perception of being a responsible parent, contrasted deeply with her own non-violent approaches which I

felt from her throughout the interview. It seemed ironic to me that the police were questioning her ability to parent, due to her decision not to use corporal punishment. I wondered how Naeem's school, Amina's social worker or the police may have responded if they thought Amina had been hitting Naem.

4.2.2 – Feeling disempowered in the PE process

Although there are legal requirements for parents to be included in the PE process, one of the clearest responses from all participants was around their own exclusion. Not only did parents feel that they were not involved in decision-making of their child's PE, but they received little to no paperwork outlining key details. Oftentimes meetings were called at short notice by the school and there was little to no time to prepare. Parents were frequently unaware of why the meeting may have been called before attending. Kiera for example was not reminded of her right to bring along support, and the meeting where she was told about Chris' PE lasted only 20 minutes. Kiera shared that during Chris' PE meeting she had received one 'sheet' stating he had breached the school's behaviour policy but nothing more. I then enquired further:

> **AA:** *So did you get shared any school policies or any paperwork regarding… you know… Apart from the sheet was there any of the paperwork that was given to you?*
>
> **Kiera:** *No. No. No… …not at all.*
>
> *Kiera, 8, 293-295*

Kiera's response is definitive and the repetitive 'no' emphasises this absence of inclusion in decision-making around Chris' PE. Similar responses were given by all of the parents. When I encouraged elaboration around whether they had received any paperwork, guidance or support for their child's PE their responses were abrupt with little expansion. This is in direct contrast to the often flowing and extensive accounts given at other times throughout the interviews. To me the overwhelming absence of detail was noteworthy. Furthermore, in the immediate days after their child's PE there was little to no contact from their child's mainstream school, as Jeanene shares:

> **AA:** …*but did you have any further contact with the school - like did they get in touch?*
>
> **Jeanene:** *No. No nothing. No. That was it. You know it was - he wasn't going back again. That was it.*
>
> *Jeanene, 7, 218-221*

As the interviewer, I often found the responses so alarmingly short that I found myself probing in a way that felt different to the lengthier exchanges, where in-depth experiences were explored. Again, here in the exchange between Callie and I, shows a similar conversation:

> **A.A:** *Did they give you any paperwork?*
>
> **Callie:** *No nothing.*
>
> **A.A:** *Were you given any guidance…?*
>
> **Callie:** *No.*
>
> **A.A:** *… any support?*
>
> **Callie:** *No nothing.*

Callie, 5, 163-168

During analysis I wondered if these questions had evoked uncomfortable emotions in the parents about how glaringly obvious their own exclusion from the process had been. As Kiera laments, 'No, I didn't have no support for myself. I don't understand. There's so many different things that could have been done.' (8, 285-286). I have since reflected on my own interviewing style which now seems probing and slightly interrogatory. At the time I had been aware that their answers had been 'no' but kept encouraging elaboration when in fact their experiences had left little upon which to expand. I realise, the approach was perhaps for my own benefit as researcher, which included a narrow-minded view that descriptive accounts automatically signify a richness in data. I now interpret these responses as a poignant demonstration of the absence of involvement in the process, an overwhelming removal of their agency and rights as parents. I found this to be at odds with the ways in which the parents frequently demonstrated their agentic selves or reaffirmed positive qualities about themselves and their children as shared throughout the interview.

Returning to the metaphor of distorted reflections, the PE and actors within it instead presented an image of the parents as incapable or undeserving of involvement in the PE process. For Deandra the PE process felt as though it had been made intentionally inaccessible:

> *…it wasn't accessible to me in my eyes, in my view at that time. And you know now looking back, it could have been - had someone given a shit. If somebody wanted to involve me, they would have kind of helped me through that and, you know, advocated on my behalf because they wanted the best for me and my family, but it wasn't the case.*

I fit a criteria. I was a statistic I was a… you know. And they put me in a box with my son and that was that. And it was me against them. You know, I mean, so I just felt so isolated from the whole thing - the whole process.

Deandra, 4, 117-123

Deandra's use of the conditional 'could' and 'had someone,' 'if someone,' highlight a realisation that her experiences might have been avoided. To me they represent a choice of which she is aware, she should have had, but she was not given. Again, this reminds me of the juxtaposition between Deandra's agentic self and the emotions of injustice and disempowerment she felt because of being excluded from the process.

The feeling of being forcibly disempowered is highlighted by the parents feeling uncomfortable with the learning environment in which their child was placed, that is, the alternative provisions decided upon by their child's mainstream school. As Patricia explores here, she felt like she did not have any 'choice' regarding this arrangement:

And so he went there but he wasn't learning anything. He wasn't as much as… alright as far as we were concerned it was a temporary thing. And I just kept saying to him, 'Just keep your head down. Go there because I don't have any choice in this.' Because my thing would have been to keep him at home. Didn't have a choice. But it was a horrible, horrible place to be at.

Patricia, 12, 335-339

Christopher begins to acknowledge the impact of not receiving support throughout the PE process and begins to draw wider links:

So I kind of get a sense that, you know, it's quite a huge issue, and yet there still doesn't seem to be place that parents could go to actually - they can go to get some support. They can get some help. They can even, you know, like Patricia was saying - even if it's just opportunity just to let it out. So what happens is you end up carrying it, and you also – there's a sense of feeling guilt. Right. That actually what is it you've done wrong

Christopher (28, 972-982)

Here Christopher makes links to some of his own experiences of 'carrying it' which resulted at times in a 'feeling of guilt' which was challenging. On the whole parents were very aware that they had been unable to influence or be a part of their child's PE process despite knowing they were capable. The absence of their own involvement was made clear by the short responses and lack of elaboration which reflected their own experiences. This was another example of how the parents' agentic selves were forcibly stopped. Instead of parents being asked to collaborate and discuss their child's proposed PE, they were told. It highlights the way the school misperceived them as lacking agency; again, presenting a distorted image of themselves as parents which they did not recognise. All parents felt a deep sense of injustice and related emotions which I have interpreted as being a chasm between the knowledge they had of themselves, their child and their rights, in opposition to the way they felt perceived by actors within the SEs process. In its literal sense, a removal of the power they knew and felt they had.

4.2.3 – Negative perceptions of own and child's intersecting identities

As explored in the section 4.2.2, parents shared positive and well-rounded characterisations of their own children. However, in contrast parents frequently felt that the intersecting aspects of their child's identity were perceived negatively by individuals involved in the PE process. This included negative perceptions of their child's unique way of learning and their child's racial and gender identities. For example, for Christopher and Patricia, made explicit links between Kehinde being a 'Black male', and this contributing to his PE.

> **Christopher:** *And for me. I think. I mean I don't know. I mean there's a part of me feels like - let's just get the elephant out the room. I almost feel that - I can't say that his race doesn't have anything to do with it. Right. You know. I can't say it's the only factor. Yeah, but I think to say that it doesn't - it's not played a role. I think it really hard for me to sit here. Knowing what I know. Yeah, and not say that's not played a factor. Kehinde is also six foot. I mean he's a big lad. Right. So I think his size plays a role. I think how a six-foot odd Black male can be perceived. Right. Is perceived if he is loud, speaks his mind, and is very visible.*
>
> **Patricia:** *Yeah because it was always that – 'his look.'*
>
> **Christopher:** *Is very visible. I think I'd be lying if I don't think that those also played a factor in it.*
>
> **Patricia:** *I think it does…*
>
> *Christopher and Patricia (23, 768 – 779)*

Here Christopher brings attention to his experiences of other people's perceptions of Kehinde. The terms 'his look' and repeated phrase 'very visible' demonstrate how they felt the entirety of Kehinde's presence were seen as threatening by some. In Christopher and Patricia's experience, these perceptions contributed to significantly to Kehinde's eventual PE. Deandra also comments explicitly on how one of her son's height and racial identity as a 'Black boy' was seen negatively by teachers at his school and contributed to his eventual PE. Deandra comments on how Noa's behaviour was seen differently because of this and notes, 'and, you know, it's because he was taller than the rest of them' (6, 237).

Jeanene also shares experiences of how her foster son Jay's haircut was seen negatively due to his racial identity. In the lead up to Jay's PE he received several FPEs. In one instance, after taking Jay to get a haircut, she had received a letter a few days later notifying her that he had been given an FPE. She then shares how the line that had been shaved into his hair had been perceived as the school as a 'gang sign' when she had seen it simply as a 'parting:'

> *Yeah. It was ridiculous. It was because he had a line in his haircut ... you know. It was totally ridiculous that he should miss school for something so... just... rubbish basically as far as I'm concerned. I didn't know that you were not supposed to have a line... it's just a bit of a parting. But for them it meant it's gang signs and stuff. You know...a line is...*
>
> *Jeanene, 6, 161-166*

Jeanene's use of the words 'ridiculous' and 'rubbish' demonstrate her frustrations around the school's interpretation of Jay's haircut. The terms Jeanene uses such as 'it's just' and 'you know… a line,' highlighted to me the disbelief and shock Jeanene experienced when faced with how different the school's perception was versus her own. Again, I have interpreted this as being presented with a distorted image by the school of Jay and by association Jeanene. What represented a simple 'parting' to Jeanene was misperceived by the school as indicative of Jay's affiliation and association with gang involvement. Jeanene's experiences and knowledge of Jay were at odds with the school. Jeanene's description of also acts as a rejection of the perceived identity by the school and a reminder that it differs from the way she views both herself and Jay.

In all cases, parents felt adaptations were not made in everyday teaching to consider their child's unique way of learning. This included special interests and things they knew engaged and interested their child. For example, Deandra shares experiences of the things that differed about Noa's way of learning in comparison to his brother Lyon and other children at his school. She remembers,

> *He used to fall asleep with six books around him. He would come out with words. He was the narrator in the school plays. He used to project his voice with this confidence and this… like this power, about him. And he would question things that other children of his age wouldn't question.*
>
> *Deandra (6, 229 – 232)*

Deandra's use of the terms 'power,' and 'confidence' demonstrate how Noa's interests were a source of strength both to her and him. They also shed light on Noa's eagerness to acquire and question existing knowledge. I interpreted them as positive representations of hope and the Noa's potential to continue developing these interests. Nevertheless, she later laments, 'they put him in gifted and talented and all that, and they still excluded my son.' (6, 236). In some cases, parents specifically identified that these special interests were related to their child's known SEN. However, parents noted behaviours associated with need were then used as reasons for the PE.

Kiera discusses the conflicting emotions she experienced in feeling that Chris' SEN and race had contributed to his school giving him a PE, but wishing this was not the case:

> *I was kind of frustrated because…I didn't want to put it down to his ADHD. I didn't want to put it down to our race. I didn't want to put it down to anything that could just - make it be more than it just being a child having to go to another school. So I just really tried to keep it really calm at home. I didn't want him to make. It make him feel like this is anything out of the ordinary. And that's, that's a part of being a mother. You just got to try and… You try to do collateral damage to what's actually going on for that child*
>
> *Kiera, 10, 361-367*

The term 'frustrated' shows how emotionally challenging the experience was for Kiera. Her account sheds light on how conflicting this might have been. For example, her identity and role as 'a mother' meant that despite knowing there was 'damage' being done to Chris by those at his school, she was continuing to try and maintain 'calm at home.' Despite feeling that the 'situation' and actions towards Chris by his school were 'out of the ordinary,' Kiera tried to mitigate the 'damage' a form of protective duty. As such it can be seen as Kiera's assertion that Chris' mistreatment by his school due to ADHD and his racial identity, were not acceptable or normal. The phrase 'collateral damage' also indicative again of Keira feeling persecuted. The language also evokes imagery of a body under attack and a containment of emotion within it.

In Jeanene's case, she spent many years trying to get the school to acknowledge Jay's neurodiversity which she felt was not being duly considered by teachers at his school.

> *He needed more but they didn't give... it just wasn't there. So ... you know. He was one amongst many. So he was just one in the crowd as far as I could see. Even though you're battling, battling ...*
>
> *Jeanene, 5, 132 - 135*

Jeanene's repeated use of the term 'battling' again evokes imagery of having to engage in a physical fight with the school. Furthermore, Jeanene's use of 'you're' shows how embedded personally she was within this process and the personal sacrifices she made. Despite her knowing Jay needed unique support, a contrasting perception of Jay as just 'one in the crowd' was held by his school. Jeanene's resolve to keep 'battling' may represent an assertion and knowledge of Jay's rights and her own as his parent. It reminds me of Jeanene's agentic self and resolve. Hence, these accounts show that in spite of seeing their child's unique interests and qualities as strengths, the school's presented a distorted reflection. This included overlooking their child's need to be included or seeing identity characteristics negatively.

4.3 – Superordinate theme three: responses to permanent exclusion

The experiences shared by parents throughout the interview process highlighted the many challenges faced before, during and after their child's PE. As explored, parents experienced a range of emotions. However, during analysis it became apparent that parents responded to these by adapting and utilising their own existing support systems.

4.3.1 – Utilising existing support strategies

This section explores how parents utilised existing support strategies in response to their child's PE. In their own lives and to varying degrees all participants operated within systems of co-parenting and kinship care, where a wider network of family and friends contributed to the upbringing of their children. Even prior to in-depth discussions about their child's PE in the interview, parents referred to their own parenting systems of support. For example, Christopher and Patricia describe Kehinde's 'extended family' as including friends they have had for 'over 50 years.' Christopher also explains how this forms part of a wider 'social network' – 'the community' as he describes it:

> *So, I, and so we're very much part of not only in terms of tight knit and close family. We're also part of a quite a social network. A part of the community, I think that's a good word. That - they are also part of and have been a part of.*
>
> *Christopher, 2, 27 – 30*

It is interesting to note Christopher's use of the singular and then plural personal pronouns in saying, 'so, I, and so we're part of.' This highlights the sensation of connectivity felt by Christopher and Patricia in relation to their children and wider parenting network. I felt this demonstrates Christopher's assertion of both his individual and shared parental agency. Later during the interview Christopher describes experiences which directly relate to Kehinde's PE. In lieu of support from Kehinde's school during the process and associated police involvement, Christopher and Patricia returned to their own personal contacts.

For example, Christopher shares how a barrister friend gave crucial legal aid and advice:

> *And he's a top criminal barrister. And Kehinde really looks up to him, you know. And I mean even with the incident with the police. It was through him that we actually got the support - gave us the support that we needed. And Kehinde was really grateful and even when he got back he thanked him for the support that he gave*
>
> *Christopher (27, 915-918)*

Christopher's use of 'we actually' and 'that we needed,' imply that as parents they not only desired, but knew they required support. I have interpreted that in the absence of receiving this from Kehinde's school, Christopher and Patricia actively resisted an implied or enforced helplessness. They did this by returning to their established networks. The discussion of this and inclusion of these experiences also act as an acknowledgement of their own ability to source and utilise the support they required.

The nature of the relationships within extended parenting systems of support were often described as collaborative, where aspects of decision-making regarding the parenting of their child were discussed together. For example, Kiera describes this early on in her interview:

> *And, yeah, we have a very loving environment, very family orientated. Very close, we discuss everything. And if anything, if any of my children did anything that was good or bad, the family would know so that we could either praise them or, you know, tell them off together.*
>
> *Kiera, 1, 1-9*

Kiera's repetition of 'very' in conjunction with positive adjectives such as 'loving' and 'close' begin to evoke a sense of warmth and belonging. Later Kiera even shows some regret in not listening to a member of her own parenting network when considering decisions around Chris' PE. She notes,

> *And I was saying, 'Well the school's saying I've got to do this.' And she goes, 'No but you can still do this.' So in my head. And this is me looking back behind. I wish I'd listened to her, because she was saying the same kind of things that Chris was saying. Because her and my son was very close. This person I'm talking about is like my cousin that I'm really close with. So our children grow together.*
>
> *Kiera, 9, 306 – 310*

Again, Kiera emphasises the word ‘close’ and describes her as being like a ‘cousin.’ She also acknowledges the unique knowledge that this family member had of her son, Chris, to which she may not have had access. Furthermore, despite a return to existing networks, aspects of the PE experience were still identified as very isolating for all the parents, as Callie shares:

> *I also think – actually I know that is no support for their family, parents carers. And that has a knock-on effect. And it’s very difficult. And it can be very stressful and very isolating and very lonely. And there's a lot of stigma attached to it within society*
>
> *Callie, 17, 674 – 677*

Callie’s description begins to explore how ‘stressful’ and ‘lonely’ this experience was for her and her own wider familial network. It begins to show Callie’s grasp of a wider parental experience which is isolated from a society which stigmatises PE. Similarly other participants commented on and shared how they found their own strategies of self-reliance in spite of being isolated. For example, Jeanene is resolute in her persistence and insistence on ‘not giving up’ despite those involved in Jay’s PE not providing the necessary support:

> *I just find that I'm quite resilient. I'm not giving up. So no matter what I'm going, I'm going, I'm going, I'm going. I'm not giving up. So that's just who I am. Because at the end of the day, life is too short. You've just got to keep... you know - do what you have to do.*
>
> *Jeanene (10, 297-302)*

Jeanene’s repetition of ‘I’m going,’ and ‘I’m not giving up’ create the sensation of motion, an energetic driving force. They also act as an implied acknowledgement that there may have been an internal or external pressure to do the opposite. Jeanene’s expression to, ‘You know – do what you have to do’ acts almost as a self-mantra or affirmation.

As such Jeanene begins to demonstrate an active resistance against isolating experiences by utilising what she describes as her own resilience. She later adds:

> *You know, I just feel that as a carer I just had to get on with it. There was nothing I could say that there was anyone there supporting me.*
>
> *Jeanene (11, 343 – 344)*

The phrase 'I just had to get on with it' indicates a form of acceptance. In a wider sense Jeanene also begins to describe how being a foster carer meant she received even less support. This is an experience which was shared with Callie who frequently commented throughout the interview on the extra financial pressures or lack of acknowledgement of her parental role by actors within Ryan's PE process. For Amina turning to her faith has been a form of support during Naeem's PE and the time thereafter:

> *Well, it's my faith actually. Always I pray. You know within this two years, I have experienced … Like whenever I used to think I need help for Naeem I used to go here, I used to go there. I used to call social worker everyday – 'Please help my son! Please help my son!' And they told me, 'Sorry we can't force him if he doesn't want to go school. We can't force him.' I used to think he's got mental health problems. So because of that I used to call CAMHS every time - 'Please help my son!' Even they told me – 'Sorry we can't help him.'*
>
> *Then I was thinking like – I said, I'll listen to the Islamic lectures.' I listened to them. We have to ask our god. There's no one who can help you. So I used to pray every time and pray for him…*
>
> *Amina (10, 301 -310)*

This account elucidates Amina's experiences of trying to seek the support she required from relevant parties. Amina's phrase 'I used to go here, I used to go there' evoke a sensation of literal and physical movement between agencies who ought to provide support. Her phrasing 'Please help my son! Please help my son!' are representative of Amina's cry and plea for help and show a sense of despair and desperation. There is an implied acceptance of her own isolation, 'There's no one who can help you' despite wanting and needing support.

However, Amina then shows her resistance against this by returning to 'pray every time' for Naeem and utilising her faith as a supportive mechanism. Later in the interview Amina also shows how opening up to other parents has since provided access to a supportive emotional network. 'Yeah, I talk to so many parents' (Amina, 11, 337). Through talking to other parents Amina has managed to access a shared experience, which due to isolation she hadn't been aware of before. When describing her realisation of this she recalls a conversation with another parent, 'But then when I talked to her, she was telling me, 'Ah…I'm getting depressed!' This has highlighted how like her, others were experiencing mental health challenges in relation to the circumstances of their child.

4.3.2 – Experiences of police and policy

In all cases there was a strong police presence in the accounts shared. Several parents shared experiences of when this came about due to their child's school involving the police without their consent. This occurred by schools calling the police onto school premises. It also occurred when schools cited involvement with the police as reason for their child's PE. In other cases, the police became involved in a wider sense as a result of their child's PE and subsequent exposure to PRU environments or inappropriate influence outside of PRU hours. For Callie, this blurring of lines between school and police seemed notable:

> *I went from getting phone calls from the school to getting phone calls from the police. Even stuff like, once he was locked up for 24 hours. And they were like, 'Oh it was just mistaken identity we are gonna release him.'*
>
> Callie (9, 319 -321)

In many ways parents' experiences show how, despite their own desire to be involved, they felt unable to influence or affect the school policies which directly affected their children. For

example, Deandra describes how the changing demographic of parents in her son's school had a direct impact on the way policy was used and how it became enforced:

> *There was a lot of PTAs. Very is white middle class. Very dominating white women, like you know… who just kind of got involved with the school and started changing policies and rules about - what is and what isn't.*

Deandra (2, 69 – 72)

Deandra's perceptions of 'white middle class' women show their ability to be 'involved' and make change as part of the parent teacher associations (PTA) in a way she could not. The term 'dominating' indicates a collective power and knowledge, in ways in which she was prevented from having. Her expressions situate her as an outsider or observer. Although Deandra's son Lyon had been PEx when the following event occurred, her younger son Noa was also involved. She describes:

> *They actually even went to the point of calling the police for my eldest son when he went to pick up my younger son. And they gripsed up my son. They called the police. One of the fucking. One of these teachers. She had it in for my kid, and she called the police for my eldest son and they pinned him down in front of all the kids and twisted him up. Handcuffed him up in front of all the kids on the school grounds…. …. Yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah... so there's a lot of shit that, you know… there's a lot of shit. I feel like a lot of black kids go through it*

Deandra (12, 451 – 457)

I have interpreted Deandra's descriptions as evoking sensations of outrage. She added, 'Yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah…' Within the interview I could feel the emotion palpably building within the space. There is a sense of shock and disbelief that this could happen 'on school grounds. As such her account begins to resist an implied belief by the school and police that this was acceptable.

The imagery of Lyon being 'pinned' down and 'twisted' up depicts the physicality of the experience. It is not clear whether Deandra watched or heard about it afterwards, but regardless, it seems etched into her memory in a visceral way. The racial connotations are drawn by Deandra who begins to discuss how this relates to not only the experiences of Lyon and Noa, but other children as well. Deandra's repetition of how this occurred 'in front of all the kids' may shed light on the shaming nature of the experience. Deandra refers to a single teacher but also uses 'they' which may indicate how teachers and police have become one joint entity to their Otherness.

Kiera also shares how her son Chris' first involvement with the police came about because his school had called them onto the premises. She shares how his school had presumed he had

breached school policy, suspecting he had stolen another pupil's phone. Without confirming this or contacting Kiera directly to discuss the matter, the school called the police who arrested and removed him from the premises:

> *Just so happens a couple of days later, the police attend the school, without my knowledge. They've arrested my son at the school. They haven't contacted me. The school hasn't contacted me and nor had the police at that moment.*
>
> *Kiera (3, 115-117)*

Kiera's phrases, 'without my knowledge' highlight her overwhelming absence in this process. It acts as an assertion that she is aware that as Chris' parent she ought to have been informed. In this way Kiera's account begins to resist the school's dismissal of and negation of her parental rights. Kiera's repetition of the words 'haven't' and 'hasn't contacted' extend beyond this excerpt and persist throughout her account. They demonstrate experiences of how Kiera was kept from key information about her son. In addition, Kiera shares experiences of how a member of her network of support provided her with the knowledge from which she had been excluded by Chris' school. She shares the moment she received a call asking her to come home:

> *It was my neighbour, you know saying, 'Kiera they've got your son in the back of a meat wagon,' and I'm like, 'What you mean?' and… 'They're outside my house?' And I'm like, 'Okay, what's going on?' He goes, 'I don't know, but it's best you get here.'*
>
> Kiera (4, 120-122)

'What do you mean?' highlights Kiera's confusion, disbelief and shock at what might have happened. In a literal sense, it is a questioning and a reminder of how at odds this is with her own understanding. In doing so she begins to reassert herself in a situation where power had been forcibly removed from her. She later elaborates on how disorientating and confusing this experience was, 'I didn't understand what was going on because I know my son was at school, and the school hadn't contacted me' (4, 127 – 129).

Despite school policy being used to call the police to arrest Chris and take him away from the premises, the information provided by Kiera's neighbour proved invaluable. This was because with this knowledge, Kiera was then able to return home and intervene to ask the police to 'take

the cuffs off my son' (4, 137) and de-escalate the situation. The term 'meat wagon' begins to shed light on wider experiences and interactions with the police in Kiera's local community. Kiera later reflects that the visibility of her son speaking to police in the area led to a local 'rumour saying that Chris is an op' (5, 167). Unfortunately, Kiera believes these false perceptions of Chris being a police informant, contributed significantly to Chris' murder at age 14.

Just as Kiera's neighbour shared knowledge with her, parents counteracted increased police involvement, by protectively and proactively educating their children on how to interact safely with the police. For example, Patricia and Christopher share how the FPEs which Kehinde received prior to his PE, were in relation to 'joint enterprise.' His school also cited 'joint enterprise' as reasons for his eventual PE:

> *And that's… his fixed term exclusions were joint enterprise. And we've said to him, over and over again - like the fact that police were involved and all this, should have shaken you up. It did me being there. So you should have learned from that*
>
> *Patricia (14, 437 – 439)*

Patricia account shows the unique challenges of parenting, that is providing support, as well as firm protective guidance. Again, there is a parental and familial togetherness in using the plural 'we've.' Although Kehinde was not physically present in the interview, she addresses him 'you should have' and so acknowledges his existence as part of her experiences. She also shares how being involved with the police was challenging for her; she felt 'shaken' up. Later Christopher describes again a 'knowing' about 'joint enterprise,' which he has shared with Kehinde

> *Saying things like - 'When you go out in the street, make sure you come home.' And I mean, 'Be aware of joint enterprise.' I mean I've been saying that to him for years and I say to him, 'You know, I'm not saying it because it's something that I read or whatever.'*
>
> *I say, 'I see the impact of this as part of the work that I do. You know I'm around young people that are impacted every single day around joint enterprise. So when I'm talking to you about stuff - there's a knowing'*
>
> *Christopher (28, 984 -989)*

Similarly, Kiera shares the conversations she held with Chris after his interaction with the police outside of their home. Her experiences show the many thoughts that were in Kiera's mind during this interaction. They highlight Kiera's protective sense of parental responsibility:

I said, 'Okay. Well one thing that I need you to understand is. Anybody of law. You have to show them respect.'

This was one of those most important moments in my mind because I'm thinking right this is a Black boy. I know how he sees it as on TV, and I need him to understand that he needs to be respectful to them.

Kiera (4, 139 – 140; 159-161)

Chris' racial identity becomes a consideration in relation to how Kiera explains how he should interact with 'anybody of law.' As 'respect' must be offered, Kiera begins to shed light on or bring to question what might happen if Chris was not compliant. Kiera's use of the verb 'need' shows that there is a real potential danger to Chris if this advice is not followed. In this way, Kiera begins to demonstrate the ways in which she shared knowledge with Chris. This being to protect against future police involvement in which she may again not have been allowed to be present to assist him. There is an implied expectation that a similar experience may occur again in the future.

4.3.3 – Self as change-maker: channelling experiences

Despite many of the challenging aspects around or connected to their child's PE, parents responded to these experiences by making changes in their own lives. In addition, all parents have considered how their experiences may be utilised to influence change in a wider systemic sense. In some cases, this has led to significant shifts in career and study. For example, in addition to starting a university degree, Kiera is engaged with policy change at local and national level. These relate to the events leading to Chris' murder and featured his PE. The serious case review identified failures by her son's school and their dismissal of his SEN.

Kiera here highlights a position taken by all parents, which is to resist perceptions that the experiences they and their child/ren had, were or should be seen as 'normal':

> *With the way that my son passed - was actually* ['near school - specific location erased]. *Right next to where my son's nursery used to be. In the middle of an estate – well houses, residential area. And for that to be able to take place is very shocking. It's very distressing. I want to try and make* [borough] *safe for children and make them believe that what happened to Chris is not normal. We're not treating it as normal, we're trying to do something about that. So I want all those babies… I class them as… When you… Well I don't know. From myself, I'm a mother unto all.*
>
> *Kiera (17, 657 – 664)*

Kiera's inclusion of the geographical locations related to Chris' death begin to connect and make sense of her experiences. The locations address not only her understanding of the school's wider role, but a rejection that it cannot be 'normal' for his life to be taken amidst an educational or 'residential' space. The adjectives, 'shocking,' 'distressing', bring attention again to the emotional impact that this experience has had on Kiera. However, they also act as counteractions to perceptions that might seek to normalise them. They begin to bring context to these experiences by considering the entirety Chris' life starting with his 'nursery' attendance. Although it is not clear to whom the plural 'we're' refers, it shows Kiera's connectedness to a wider network. However, we hear Kiera positioning herself as an individual agent of change when she states, 'I want,' and 'myself.' Her description of self as 'a mother unto all' demonstrates the extent to which her parental responsibility expands to incorporate all children.

She adds:

> *And I believe that - we're paying into a system that's supposed to be working for us. And right now, it can't be just working for some and not for all. So I become a part of this committee, in order to make* [name of borough] *safe for all. To make sure off-rolling doesn't happen within schools or across borough and nationally as well. Three - to just make sure that children with any special needs - their needs are being met first*
>
> *Kiera (22, 618 – 622)*

Kiera's account begins to situate not only her own experiences but, others who she names as 'us,' in relation to a wider 'system.' Kiera demonstrates her in-depth understanding of some of the issues around PEs such as 'off-rolling.' Her desires to use her experiences to make change links directly to levels within this 'system;' school, borough and nation.

Similarly, Amina reflects on her experiences and shares conversations she would like to have with those in the 'Government.' Here Amina addresses the 'Prime Minister' directly:

> *You know sometimes I feel like I want to go next to the Prime Minister and tell him like – Please do something for this criminal stuff, criminal people.*
>
> *Because they are taking so many children. Innocent children. Like 12 years old, 14 years old, 15 years old. These people go to the children next to the school. Every school. Whenever they find some vulnerable children. You know some children? They don't understand more. They attack these kinds of children. If it's clever ones, they can't attack them.*
>
> *I feel like Government should do something about these criminal people.*
>
> *Amina (13, 397 – 405)*

During the interview, the maintained eye-contact and expression Amina shared was a powerful experience for me; I became the recipient of what felt like Amina's plea. In this excerpt, Amina begins to situate and make sense of her experiences within wider 'criminal' contexts. In particular, Amina highlights the geographical location of 'next to the school. Every school.' This acts as reminder of the occurrence but also as a stand against the normalisation. The repeated use of the verb of 'attack,' demonstrates a continued sense of persecution not only towards her own son, but others too. Her repeated term 'children' also acts as a reminder that the 'criminal people' are adults. There is an assertion that 'vulnerable children' require support and protection. Amina here shows that her desire to make change extends beyond herself.

Deandra reflects and makes sense of her experiences in relation to one of her son's PEs:

> *With Noa - the second. It's racism. 110% inequalities and racism within the institution, and that is it bottom line. Because my son Noa was a good kid. And if they had love for him as they did their little white, blue-eyed kids, they would have never would have… Noa would have put the stats up. The OFSTED would have... you know… what I mean - he was amazing.*
>
> *And if you'd had had love you would have lifted him and carried him through rather than excluded him. You hated him. You were racist. Your institution and your school was racist. And that is it.*
>
> *Deandra, 8, 301-307*

Deandra's terms 'bottom line' and 'that is it' could be interpreted to be resistors to perceived debates around her experiences or her understanding of them. Deandra situates these experiences within their wider social and political contexts by discussing 'stats' and 'OFSTED.' This begins to show Deandra's wider knowledge of the educational systems operating in relation to Noa's PE. Although in this excerpt Deandra does not directly refer to the changes she would like to see, her account begins to specifically outline what she sees as having been the issue. This relates to 'racism within the institution.' Furthermore, Deandra's description of Noa reasserts her own knowledge and perception of him as 'amazing' and resists mischaracterisations of him. As the researcher in the interview, again I found it particularly powerful and poignant how the focus of Deandra's address changed. For example, at the start she states, 'if they' and 'their little white, blue-eyed kids,' but then later uses the second person 'if you'd had had love,' 'your institution and your school.' Overall, this address could be seen as a way to make change by speaking directly with the system through me as researcher. Deandra later reflects on some of the personal conflicts in being involved in change, with regards to her own support work role:

> *But I just feel like the system, definitely failed me, 100%. And they found my children and I don't trust them in the slightest. And I work with professionals and it's a very conflicting position, because… in one breath I cannot stand the police. I cannot stand social services and I cannot stand the education system. But in the other breath I need to work with them to support the women I work with.*
>
> *Deandra, 12, 476 – 480*

Deandra's account highlights an overwhelming sense of persecution when she adds, 'And they found my children.' She also begins to acknowledge the inner-personal conflicts and sacrifices made when trying to make change through her current job role. Christopher and Patricia hold an exchange where, as parents they begin to formulate ideas around changes, they would like to see.

Christopher and Patricia also begin to situate their own experiences within wider 'systemic' structures:

> **Christopher:** *You know when I look at the figures of, you know, and it's not decreasing - the numbers of Black boys especially. I mean that's not saying it's not Black girls - but you know the amount of Black boys, that have been excluded consistently over the years. Right. It needs to be real campaigns, about what to do with what to do about that…*
>
> **Patricia:** *…and actually sometimes holding schools or local authorities to account.*
>
> **Christopher:** *Yeah*
>
> **Patricia:** *Yeah, I agree with that but I just think…*
>
> **Christopher:** *…I just think some of the decisions that made - they are systemic. And I'll be the first to admit – I think there's some that actually really does deserve to be… you know what I mean. But I think there are systemic issues.*
>
> **Patricia:** *…but I think there are parents out there that just don't know what to do. And campaigning is just too big a thing for them.*
>
> **Christopher:** *I agree. I agree.*
>
> **Patricia:** *I think you need to have somewhere you start off with having. Where people can just talk to each other. And then you can then collectively go and do something about it.*

Christopher and Patricia, 30, 1048 – 1062

The exchange highlights their approach to parenting where they confer and hold nuanced discussions about their beliefs. Their account begins to elucidate upon their understanding about the complexities of balancing individual parental need for support, with a desire or requirement to make systemic change.

Jeanene also envisions how change might be made and focuses attention on how schools and teachers can provide more support for children:

> *The children need to have the help. Otherwise, that's how they turn out. They end up in prison and vulnerable and you know, falling into gangs. Because it's not addressed and it needs to be addressed. With him... …. I don't even know where he is...I know he went to prison again. But his life... … he needed more help, and he didn't get it so he could understand what was happening.*
>
> *Jeanene, 10-11, 318-323*

Jeanne demonstrates her own understanding of the consequences of children not receiving 'the help.' In this she refers to her own experiences and subsequent estrangement from her foster son. Callie also comments on the absence of support for young people and their parents by making links to her own individual 'isolating,' 'lonely' and 'difficult' experiences:

> *I think there's not enough support for young people who have been placed in a PRU. I also think – actually I know that is no support for their family, parents, carers. And that has a knock-on effect. And it's very difficult. And it can be very stressful and very isolating and very lonely. And there's a lot of stigma attached to it within society.*
>
> *Callie, 17, 673 – 677*

Callie here legitimises and asserts her experiences by correcting herself, 'I also think – actually I know.' She also situates these and those of other parents by making sense of how she has been stigmatised. Callie, begins to shed light on how being involved in this piece of research has formed part of her own change-making experience:

> *I felt anxious because I knew I'd find it hard, but I'm also glad I've done it. Because there's so many people that don't get to share their experience and just their voice. Because like - many people don't care – 'Yeah… your child's in a PRU so what?' People don't care. Or even to a degree that your child has been stabbed. People… I still get it – 'Oh well… what was he doing then? Was he in a gang?' And then especially what the newspaper wrote, which wasn't all true. So, yeah, I was anxious for that - but I wanted to do it for myself, obviously for Ryan's memory. And I think it's a good cause what you're doing, because it's not an area within society that people focus on. But there's definitely a link. And I'm sure with all the young people that have been murdered - if you was able to interview their families. They would probably have similar stories or links*
>
> *Callie, 18, 692 – 702*

Callie acknowledges the emotional process of involvement and how she felt ‘anxious,’ but saw this as a necessary process. Furthermore, it shows how she saw taking part in the interview as an opportunity to acknowledge not only her own experiences, but to act on behalf of ‘so many people that don’t get to.’ She also saw it as a way to honour Ryan’s life. It could be interpreted that this is a way of acknowledging and resisting negative perceptions of Ryan which came in the form of the questions Callie shared. Overall, it highlights a notion of self-sacrifice and sense of parental duty. Similarly in all cases parents articulated that taking part in this research study formed part of offering an alternative view. In sharing their own experiences, they articulated opportunities for hope and wider systemic change.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

This chapter explores the participants' experiences by utilising the SIP framework. As introduced in Chapter 2.3, the SIP framework contains several layers: 'Earth,' 'Water,' 'Glass,' 'Fireflies,' 'Air,' and the outer 'Ineffable' domain. The framework serves as a multidimensional, integrative tool to understand the participants' experiences.

Firstly, section 5.1 views the findings through the 'Earth' layer, by focusing on the empirically tangible physical realities of the participants' experiences. Section 5.2 then analyses both 'Water' and 'Glass' layers together to illuminate the interplay between the parents' social interactions and structural mechanisms such as racism, ableism, and classism. In section 5.3, the 'Fireflies' and 'Air' layers are explored together to reveal the dynamic and agentic response of parents in relation to often structurally determinative SEs policies and practices.

Finally, the chapter delves into the 'Ineffable' aspects of the study, reflecting on the elements of the parents' experiences that remain elusive or may yet emerge through future research endeavours. Photographs I have taken are included at the beginning of each subsection. These visually enhance the textual analysis. The images reflect the SIP's inherent interpretative nature and openly acknowledge the researcher's role in the analysis.

5.1 – 'Earth': permanent exclusion as a life-changing seismic event

Figure 1 - Ama Agyeman (2023) Cracked Earth - Abnanilla, Spain

When viewed through the 'Earth' layer of the SIP framework, the participants' experiences of their child's PE can be symbolically described as a 'seismic event.' During earthquakes, the most common form of seismic event, vibrational energy waves travel through the Earth's crust causing the ground to shake violently (Mousavi and Beroza, 2023; Zeng and Wang, 2021). This echoes the experiences of parent participants as outlined in section 4.1, who spoke of it as a 'rippling life-changing' event. It disrupted their daily routines and affected their emotional and psychological states. The PE was a life-changing experience which reverberated through the foundations of their lives. Before, during and after their child's PE from school, the effects continued to reverberate outwardly. In the immediate sense, parallels can be drawn to the 'fore-' and 'aftershocks' which occur pre- and post-earthquake (see Mousavi and Beroza, 2023; United States Geological Survey, n.d). However, as section 4.1.3 demonstrates, there were prolonged effects. Symbolically, 'slow slip events' (SSEs) which can be described as 'slow-motion' or long-lasting earthquakes, that may act as a suitable comparison (see Bartlow *et al.,*2021; Fagereng, 2020). These were the extended and oftentimes subtle changes to parents lives which evolved both temporally and spatially.

The ‘Earth’ layer of the SIP was designed predominantly with Bhaskar’s empirical layer and Merlau-Ponty’s concept of *embodied experience* in mind (see section 2.3.2). Therefore, when seen through the ‘Earth’ layer of the SIP, this section considers how parents experienced their child’s PE as a life-changing seismic event which impacted them in materially embodied ways. Each section builds incrementally on the one before, illustrating a landscape view of the parents’ experiences.

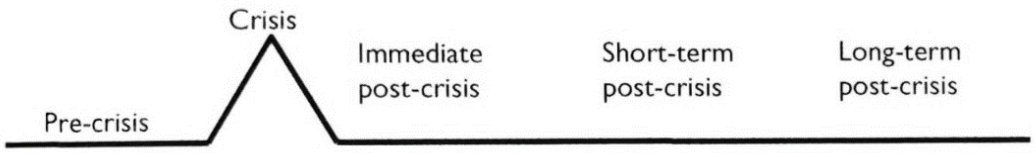
5.1.1 – Seismic ripples: temporal and spatial experiences of PE

Findings in section 4.1 illustrate how PE was experienced as a life-changing event which rippled through these parents lives in various ways. However, when viewed through the lens of the SIP’s ‘Earth’ layer, the ‘rippling’ can be visualised comparatively with ‘seismic waves’ occurring during an earthquake. Drawing parallels to the parents’ experiences, these can be described metaphorically as ‘ripples’ expanding throughout the time around the school’s decision to PEx their child. For example, Witze (2017) describes how a 7.8 magnitude earthquake which struck New Zealand in November 2016 was ‘still rippling’ at the time of writing a year later. In the immediate time before and after an earthquake ‘foreshocks’ and ‘aftershocks’ can be measured (Mousavi and Beroza, 2023; United States Geological Survey, n.d). Furthermore, earthquakes can trigger or be triggered by ‘slow slip events’ (SSEs), which are long-lasting seismic events that continue for periods of a year or more (Schwartz *et al.,*2021; Fagereng, 2020; Hirose *et al.,* 2023; Witze, 2017). Therefore, just as there may be a slow and sometimes imperceptibly increasing amount of seismic activity prior to an earthquake, for the parents there were similar advancing shifts to the structure of their lives prior to their child’s PE. Similarly, just like the aftermath of an earthquake, the reverberations continued in both the immediate and long-term sense. For example, Deandra’s realisation within the interview that not only both of her son’s, but she too had been PEx from the same school. For Deandra this suggests significant longevity to the seismic ripples associated with her experiences of PE. In this way, it is suggested that the seismic ripples of a PE may extend outwardly through time in pervasive and long-lasting ways.

Gibson (2006), whose work was introduced in section 2.3.1, also uses the metaphor of ‘ripple’ to describes the continuing effects of crises’ events on the individual/s at the epicentre. Gibson describes this like dropping a pebble ‘into a still pond of water’ in that, ‘the disturbed water ripples out from the point of impact’ (p.10).

Gibson uses this model to think not only about the immediate aftermath of a natural or personal disaster, but also the long-term impact on the individual and those connected to them. In relation to the parents' temporal experiences, Gibson's (2006, p.4) model of 'time as a continuum associated with a crisis can be a useful tool.

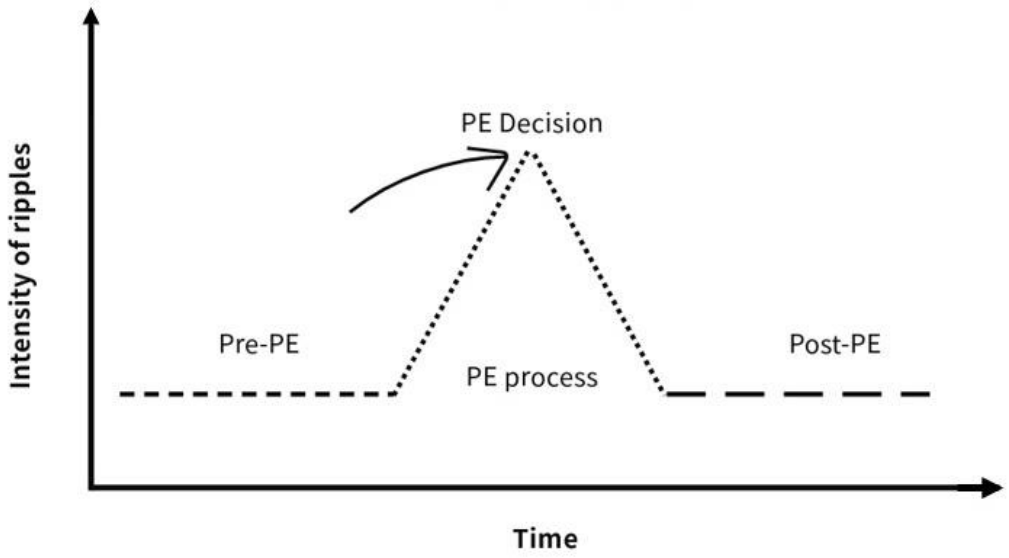
Diagram 2 'Time as a continuum associated with a crisis- Gibson (2006, p.4)



However, considering chapters 2.2 and 2.3, which highlight the interrelation causal complexities within PE dynamics, it is important to recognise this as just one way of conceptualising the parents' temporal experiences. Furthermore, as the holistic SIP framework demonstrates, there are various interdependent ways of exploring these experiences. Similarly, Gibson (2006, p.35) cautions against using this continuum literally, noting that the stages represent a 'continuous process rather than milestones to be achieved in a timed sequential way.' Furthermore, Gibson highlights how time is a subjective concept as experienced by the individual/s at the epicentre, adding 'time periods may be short or prolonged, lasting for a few hours or days, or taking a lifetime due to the uniqueness of each individual's reaction' (ibid). In this vein Done, Knowler and Armstrong (2021) also question 'linear continuums' such as the 'school-to-prison' pipeline, which posits a correlation between later criminality and PE from school. The authors argue that such models are open to misinterpretation and believe that there is 'an inevitable movement between two discrete events rather than a complex web of contingent processes and experiences' (p.36).

Therefore, the following adapted diagram of Gibson's continuum, it acts as a guide to position and make-sense of the temporal landscape of PE as experienced by parent participants. It still acknowledges the inherent 'messiness' of individual experiences of PE procedure. As such it seeks only to position conceptual 'landmarks' which were experienced similarly across cases. Symbolically, the adapted continuum positions the school's decision to PEx their child as the peak of this 'seismic event.' As a result, it distinguishes the difference between the PE process and the specific policy-bound procedural aspects of their child's PE. The dotted lines represent the reverberating ripples expanding outwardly and inwardly through time.

Diagram 3 - 'Seismic PE ripples' adapted from Gibson (2006, p.4)



Importantly, the SIP framework's inherent critical realist phenomenological stance recognises the parents' subjective embodied experiences of time as ontologically valid in their own right (see section 2.3). Given that the 'Earth' layer of the SIP also incorporates Bhaskar's (1978) 'actual' domain, the adapted diagram 3 intrinsically acknowledges aspects of PE procedure which did not materialise within this timeline. This was evident when all participants repeated their non-involvement in decision-making around their child's PE, despite it being their legal right (see section 4.2.2). Therefore, the following diagram is in relation to the parent participants' unique temporal and material experiences of their child's PE. The timeline does not intend to account for the significant complexity of the intersecting factors and experiences which are personal to each participant. For this reason, throughout this chapter, the SIP framework offers opportunities to continue exploring these complex nuanced aspects.

Spatially, seismic waves generated during an earthquake can have disruptive effects on the crust remotely over large areas (Zeng and Wang, 2021). Although there are several forms of seismic wave, the vibrational energy of 'surface waves' during earthquakes cause the most destruction to the material living environment (ibid). This means that 'earthquakes with moderate intensity or larger can generate remote effects on near-surface spaces in a large area of more than 2000 km' (Zeng and Wang, 2021, p.7).

SSEs also travel over prolonged periods of space and time (Fagereng, 2020; Hirose *et al.,* 2023). This can be symbolically related to parent participants, as although the PE decision was administered by their child's school, the consequences continued to ripple materially across different locations. For example, Kiera directly attributed the 'ripple' effect of the PE to several significant events outside of his school. Kiera commented on how these ripples culminated in his murder in a familiar residential area, close to her son's former nursery school (see section 4.3.3). Similarly, other parents discussed the complications of their child having to travel to or from their AP setting in the time after the PE.

The PE also induced some dislocations and displacements in these parents' familial landscapes. For example, Callie indicated how Ryan's PE resulted in immediately needing to move home to be with other members of the co-parenting family. Furthermore, in the immediate aftermath all parents had experiences of taking their child to a new provision post-PE which significantly altered the structure of their lives (see 5.1.2). Callie also attributed Ryan's eventual murder with the associations he made at this PRU post-PE. In relation to earthquakes Chen, Haliday and Fan (2016) explore internal displacement of people after the Haiti earthquake in 2010 noting the detrimental correlation with child health and mortality. The human impact of earthquakes is explored further by Doocy *et al.* (2013) who historically review earthquake events from 1980-2009. They highlight increased risks of mortality, injury and displacement due to such disaster events. These act as symbolic parallels to some of the outcomes experienced by the parent participants after their child's PE from school.

Environmental factors may create disorder or chaotically complex situations in crises, such as earthquake events (Farazmand, 2017). Similarly, the unexpected onset of the COVID-19 pandemic added another layer of complexity. For Deandra, it meant she was further separated from her sons given she could not visit them in prison during lockdowns. However, for Christopher and Patricia, the pandemic resulted in their son receiving provision at home post-PE, which was seen as a positive aspect. Post-PE lockdowns were easier for Amina. As her son was at home, she had a respite from travelling across London at night looking for him due to his involvement in CCE. Additionally, '[t]he concept of 'ripples, reverberations and responses' is explored by Harding (2020) in relation to the 'wider consequences' and violence in relation to drug trading across geographical county lines. Here Harding demonstrates the longer-lasting impacts felt by family members of the young people involved.

Arguably, chapter two loosely introduced concepts of space and time with regards to the PE process and DfE (2017a, 2023) statutory policy guidance. For example, variance in the ways SEs and PEs are governed in individual schools and across boroughs, or the pre-cursors to a PE. It was noted that a PEx pupil is likely to have experienced prior FPEs or possibly even multiple PEs across educational settings. Section 2.1 also highlighted the DfE's (2017a, 2023) guidance for post-PE provision. Section 2.2. explored how societal inequality and familial trauma may act in complex ways across generations to influence the occurrence of SEs. However, the parent participants' experiences further emphasises the expansive rippling temporal and spatial complexity to the PE process. For the participants this extended around the literal decision to PEx their child.

5.1.2 – Foreshocks to PE: altering the structure of daily life

In the time leading up to the PE, all parent participants described an increase of additional life-stressors, which were attributed solely to interaction with their child's school. These included receiving frequent phone calls to report on their child, or requests to collect them due to behaviours which the school saw as unacceptable. This correlated with their child's receipt of an increasing number of FPEs which aligns with discussions in section 2.1. For the participants this was experienced as highly disruptive, impacting the structure of their daily life in the lead up to the PE. It disturbed routines in their day and for some impacted their working life. Overall, this can be symbolically likened to the occurrence of 'foreshocks' leading up to the 'mainshocks' of significantly increased seismic activity present during an earthquake (Guila and Wiemer, 2019). Being able to discriminate between whether an earthquake was in fact the 'mainshock' or if a stronger shock is yet to come, which remains an area of concern for the public and decision-makers (ibid). Similarly, section 2.2 explored the numerous discussions around potential causes and effects of SEs in England. When viewing the participants' experiences using their own historical PE timeline (see Diagram3), they had an increase of 'minor life-stressors', particularly in relation to interaction with their child's school prior to the PE. These included increasingly being called in for meetings at their child's school regarding their child's behaviour. For Callie, this meant being called out of the classroom regularly disrupting her ability to carry out her job (see section 4.1).

‘Minor life-stressors’ and events, also characterised as ‘daily hassles’ have been found to contribute significantly to psychological distress (Pillow *et al*., 1996, p.392). However, these are seen to have had a significant impact on the structure of daily life for these parents. ‘Strong earthquakes seriously affect the operational conditions of buildings and other structures’ (Gonzalez-Drigo et al., p.2830) However even earthquakes of ‘low magnitude and macroseismic activity’ can result in significantly damaged buildings due to ‘strong ground motions’ (Gonzalez-Drigo *et al.*, p.2830). The persistence of these daily hassles, which initially seemed relatively minor, had a compound effect in the time leading up to their child’s PE. In addition to other life events they experienced, the persistent low level disruption added significant pressure to the parents. Here, the term ‘chronic stress’ can be used, as it describes the ‘persistent or recurrent difficulties of life’ including the ‘incompatible demands of being a parent and a worker’ (Serido, Almeida and Wethington, 2004, p.18). The authors note these can and often exist concurrent with ‘daily hassles’ which they define as ‘relatively minor events arising out of day-to-day living’ which ‘disrupt daily life’ (p.18). The authors argue that experiencing these can increase the likelihood of psychological distress. They are also keen to highlight that the ‘combined effects of chronic and daily stress processes may account for socioeconomic and demographic disparities in health and well-being’ (p.30).

For the parents they also arguably contributed to the way in which the PE experience impacted their emotional and psychological wellbeing (see section 5.1.3). Pillow *et al*. (1996) found that minor-life stressors do not occur independently of major-life stressors. At times they signify or can be co-current with an incoming ‘major-life’ event and are likely to increase after one has occurred (Pillow *et al*., 1996). This could be likened to the correlation between the intensity of tectonic stress conditions in the likelihood of a larger ‘mainshock’ earthquake. As Guila and Wiemer (2019, p.193) note ‘from the physics point of view, the probability of a subsequent larger mainshock must depend on the stress conditions set up by the previous events and the long-term tectonic stress condition.’ In relation to the parents, this could illustrate how long-term chronic stress may have impacted their experiences of the PE process itself.

Being a working parent or having caring responsibilities can be seen as source of chronic stress (Serido, Almeida and Wethington, 2004). However, Patricia's account of receiving repeated phone calls during work hours and feeling that Kehinde's teacher was 'gunning' for him, is an example of how additionally persecutory this daily contact felt. Similar experiences were seen across cases (see section 4.1). Some SE studies focusing on parental experience begin to highlight such phone calls received by parents (see Demie, 2019; Sproston *et al*., 2017). Demie (2023) highlights that many parents of PEx children are already 'having to cope with the chronic stress' due to conditions related to their child's SEND. This included for example their neurodivergence, e.g. autism, ADHD and/or dyslexia. A more recent study (Martin-Denham, 2022) exploring care-giver experiences of marginalisation, autism and SE, begins to note the significant anxiety such interactions which the school induce. However, in general there is a lack of research exploring this issue.

Overall, using the participants' experiences it possible to infer that these additional daily disruptions by their child's school, became significant daily and chronic stressors in the lead up to the PE. DfE (2023, p.19) statutory guidance does have a short section on 'preventative measures to school exclusion' but these remain centred around alternative provision arrangements or managed move processes to another school. Furthermore, the previous DfE (2017a) statutory guidance on exclusions states, that 'schools must also ensure that their policies and practices do not discriminate against pupils by unfairly increasing their risk of exclusion' (p.9). However, it could be argued that in these participants' cases, the school's approach in the lead up to the PE became a significant contributor to parental stress. This was due to the disruption to the structure of their daily lives, much like the incremental tectonic stress experienced prior to the mainshock of an earthquake (Guila and Wiemer, 2019). This lead up to the mainshock of the PE is seen in Diagram 3. However, just as 'crustal-moderate-to-large' earthquakes may experience an aftershock sequence (ibid), these events impacted their psychological wellbeing and their involvement in the legally-binding PE process.

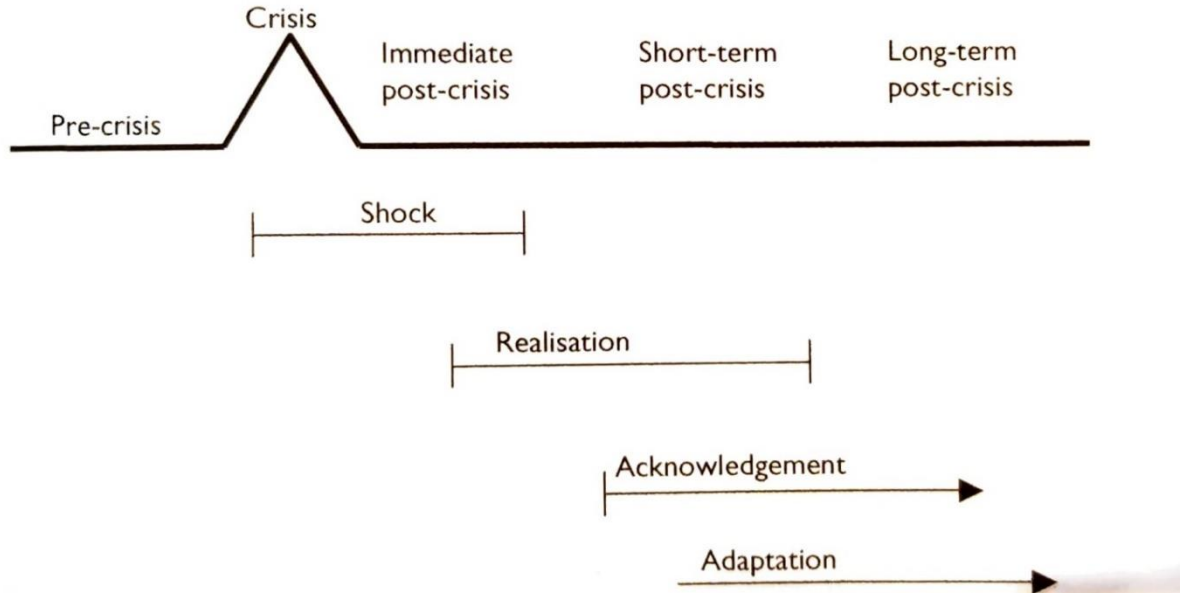
5.1.3 – Aftershocks: psychological wellbeing and involvement in the PE process

For the parent-participants in this study, the PE of their child induced a wide range of emotional responses. When viewed through the SIP's 'Earth' layer their responses can be likened to the aftershocks of an earthquake in terms of both seismic activity and the psychological impact. In geological terms, 'aftershocks are a response to changes in stress generated by large earthquakes' (DeVries et al., 2018, p.632). In this definition, 'stress' refers to the pressure on the Earth's crust rather than an emotional experience. However, in this regard, Pistoia *et al.* (2018) note, how after earthquake events or similar natural disasters, around 15% of the affected population formally receive a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). However, they note that even without such formal recognition, individuals are more likely to experience impacts on their emotional wellbeing. They may also experience 'anxiety, depression and alteration of emotion recognition' which is not formally diagnosed (2018, p.1).

The emotional experiences of the parents also largely correlate with experiencing the PE as a 'major life' or 'disaster' event (see section 2.3.2). For example, the table by Kritzler *et al.* (2022, p.3) outlines characteristics, which although not shared with participants, do largely align with their experiences in the short and long term after their child's PE. For example, parents used language to indicate that the PE 'event was stressful' (ibid). The term 'stress,' 'distress' or similar adjectives were used frequently by participants throughout their accounts (see chapter 4 for excerpts). The language used by participants also demonstrates there was 'emotional significance' to their experiences as the PE 'event elicited strong feelings' (ibid). Parents often used adjectives to demonstrate experience of the PE as persecutory, for example Patricia used the phrase 'gunning' to describe how she felt the school was treating her son. These sensations not only contributed to the parents' emotional and psychological wellbeing but also demonstrated the 'extent to which the event was controlled or caused by others' (ibid).

Although there had been an increase in interaction and FPEs, for the parents the decision to PEx their child still felt unexpected and abrupt. This aligns with Kritzler *et al.'s* (2022, p.3) characteristic that major-life events often feel unpredictable which has emotional and psychological repercussions. Gibson (2006) creates an adapted model (see diagram 4 below), of the continuum to explore some of the psychological reactions which may be common during, and after a crisis or disaster event. This model can be useful to understand the feelings of 'shock' which were seen across participants accounts relating to their child's PE. Again, the timeline is not prescriptive but can begin to demonstrate some affiliated emotions often seen post-crisis events.

Diagram 4 - 'The continuum of psychological rehabilitation' (Gibson, 2006, p.35)



As section 5.1.1 described, the seismic ripples continued throughout the parents lives after the school's decision to PEx their child. In the immediate sense, parallels might be drawn from the 'aftershocks' to the earthquake event. In a geological context, aftershocks, even in the short-term, still can have magnitudes of significance. For example, the recent earthquake in Turkey had an aftershock of magnitude of 7.5 which was defined as another earthquake (Chuck, 2023). Although such intense aftershocks are rare, symbolically there are similarities in the parents' experiences.

Here, Gibson's (2006) model can be used to support an understanding of how parents were feeling in the immediate aftermath of their child's PE. For example, parents' shock, disbelief and in the initial stages perceived sense of helplessness, align with the 'chaos' and 'state of confusion and disorder' often seen post-crisis events (Gibson, 2006, p.3).

The chaos post-natural disasters such as earthquakes, is also a reason for sometimes disordered responses and management (Farazmand, 2017). In these scenarios people can 'experience cognitive chaos as a result of information overload. This can result in feelings of numbness and a sense of unreality' (Gibson, 2006 p.3). It is particularly important to consider these emotions when thinking about the functional aspects of the PE process, which were outlined in section 2.1. The chapter included exploring DfE (2017a, 2023) policy guidance around the legal obligations towards parents as part of a PE process. Obligations to parents include communicating the intention to PE in writing and ensuring parents are involved in meetings detailing key information related to their rights to appeal. As detailed in section 2.1, there is a statutory duty to provide alternative provision (AP). Therefore, parents should receive details about the AP arranged for their child.

However, if parents are already in a state of shock due to the news of their child's PE, it must be expected that they are not able to fully process legally-binding PE communication at that time. In the participants' cases parents disclosed that these aspects were already not well-communicated, which led to feelings of uncertainty. Furthermore, the AP arranged for their child, post-PE, involved making adjustments to their working day to attend the location of the new setting. These changes were already disruptive to the structure of their daily lives. Although parents should be made aware that they can bring someone into any meetings, given the experiences shared, it was unclear whether this happened, or whether they had been able to process or make use of this, due to emotions such as shock or confusion.

Additionally, as seen in the analysis, Amina specifically noted her inability to remember much about that time due to being 'really depressed.' Although it is not possible to draw causal links with her son's PE, Amina herself attributes her state of being at that time to Naeem's absenteeism from home and school. She also referred to related pressure from his mainstream setting about this. It can be inferred that her experiences in the lead up to Naeem's PE are likely to have only exacerbated this psychological state. Although Amina did not share whether she had received any clinical diagnosis of depression, it is noteworthy that memory, 'executive function and information processing speed' is significantly affected in those experiencing major depression (Nuño *et al.*, 2021).

Even if Amina herself did not experience a clinically recognised level of depression, in a wider sense it is important to consider that other parents might. During the interview other participants also commented on challenges in memory recall regarding their child's PE. Despite this it is crucial that parents are not further stigmatised, as Deandra shared, her disclosure of mental health challenges at that time became an 'ammunition' which she felt was used against her. Furthermore, Pistoia *et al.* (2018) discuss how emotional experiences post-earthquake led to increased sleep issues and a heightened anticipation of external threat. Similarly, some of the language used by participants reflected an increased awareness of potential threats from their child's school or subsequent interactions with other educational institutions post-PE. However, Pistoia *et al.* (2018) also note that those experiencing natural disasters develop 'emotional expertise.' For the parents this might have contributed to an increased knowledge and understanding of their child's emotional state (See 5.2). Pistoia *et al.* continue to suggest there is strength in how individuals emotionally adjust, cope and respond to natural disasters.

Overall, given the emotions experienced by these participants due to finding out their child had been PEx, it is suggested they would have benefited from much more processing time as part of their legal right to be involved in the PE process. This may have allowed the parents time to find adequate support, have discussions with their child and the school, possibly avoid the PE or make appeals. Furthermore, in relation to wider PE policy, it is argued that schools should be accountable for having clear and detailed policy guidance on how it will be conducted to ensure that parents receive the support they need to make informed decisions. Unfortunately, these parent participants also experienced a wider sense of disempowerment due to feeling a lack of involvement during the PE process which is further explored in section 5.2.

5.2 – Permanent exclusion as distorted reflection

Figure 2 - Ama Agyeman (2023) Rainwater on Tube window - East London

As explored in section 2.3.2, the 'Water' layer of the SIP represents the social interactions of those involved in the PE processes the parents experienced; the 'Glass' layer represents the structural barriers which changed or shaped the ways these interactions occurred. These layers draw inspiration from Bhaskar's (1978) real, actual and empirical layers as well as Merlau-Ponty's notion of *embodied experience.* As seen in the excerpt at the start of section 2.3.2, noticing these patterns highlighted how the water interacted on the glass without permeating it. Therefore, when the 'Glass' and 'Water' layers are combined, they offer ways of exploring how interactions during the PE process shaped or were shaped by structural barriers as experienced by the parents.

As shown in the photo above, larger raindrops merge into streams due to the forces of gravity and wind (Conover, 2022; Hooshanginejad and Lee, 2022). Other smaller droplets remain stationary, due to water's tendency to adhere to glass (ibid). This forms a variety of formations on the window which distort the images behind it.

The photo taken post-analysis, further demonstrates how the raindrops interact dynamically to form patterns which alter the images in the background. Here parallels can be drawn to the experiences of parents as explored in section 4.2. For example, this included feeling questioned, disempowered and misrecognised as parents. Therefore, this section explores parents' interactions with their child's school and those involved in the PE process. It suggests that as a part of PE process parents became confronted with an image of both themselves and their child which felt distorted due to structural barriers or misperceptions of them as incapable.

5.2.1– Distorted interactions: questioning and dismissing knowledge

The irregular shapes of raindrops sitting on a glass windshield, increase the distortion of images in the background (Hamzeh and Rawashdeh, 2021). This can be likened to the complex ways in which social interactions around the time of the PEs interplayed with wider structural factors. For example, all parents discussed the interactions of their child outside of school hours, oftentimes occurring due to a FPE or the PE itself. For example, in Amina's case her son's increased disappearances from both home and school, correlated not only with his PE, but also his involvement with criminal activities. This increased interaction with 'criminal people' as Amina described (line 405), also exposed her to these interactions when she looked for him at night. Furthermore, the intensified involvement with the police, for Amina also became an additional stressor. Amina's experiences are in line with literature exploring strong links between a young person's 'frequent missing episodes' from home and the movement of drugs across 'county lines' (O'Hagan and Edmundson, 2021). This is a 'rapidly evolving, drug supply model which sees urban drug dealers cross police borders to exploit provincial drug markets' (Windle, Moyle and Coomber, 2020, p. 64). The authors argue that the highest proportion of those participating in county lines are 'young,' 'male' and from London, which puts them at greater likelihood of involvement.

With children and young people being 'groomed' as drug dealers and couriers, it is the exploitative nature of 'county lines' involvement which is most concerning (O'Hagan and Edmundson, 2021; Windle, Moyle and Coomber, 2020). The issue is now increasingly a point of interest at governmental level (ibid). Furthermore, links to PEs have been drawn. For example, in *Keeping Kids Safe* (2019b) former Children's Commissioner for England (CE) Anne Longfield cites a young person, Chris' 'Serious Case Review' and the 'problems in primary school leading to exclusion from secondary school and grooming by criminal gangs.' Anne Longfield is here referring directly to participant Kiera's second son. Other parents also discussed how the PE itself led to increased exposure of their child to criminal activity. This begins to demonstrate acknowledgement of the wider societal issues outside of the parents' individual capabilities, which are likely to have impacted their lives. The complexity of interactions occurring between parents, children and external parties outside of school hours is symbolically similar to the ways in which raindrops accumulate to create increasingly complex patterns. In turn when seen through glass, these progressively distort the images in unique and multifaceted ways. In the same way complex raindrop patterns reduce visual clarity, these social interactions obscured and changed how these parents saw themselves and their roles. This meant a distorted image of themselves as parents was reflected back. Additionally, it meant that deciphering how structural factors may have been influencing their experiences became harder.

However, even though these parents had unique knowledge of their child's interactions, which could have been utilised by schools, it was disregarded. For example, Amina shared that the school had no interest in knowing what her son had been doing when calling her to inform her of his absence. In addition, other parents wished to explain that they too were concerned about their child. However, instead of seeing the parents as partners who may be able to enhance their understanding of a pupil's behaviour, the parents felt dismissed by those involved at the time of their child's PE. Importantly, when schools look through these 'Water' and 'Glass' layers without full context, these distortions may reflect an image of parents, which is misinterpreted or misrepresentative of how the parents see themselves.

Furthermore, the DfE (2017a; 2023) statutory guidance on SE law clearly states that a pupils' behaviour outside school can in fact be a reason for administering a PE. Although Patricia and Christopher's son did not commit a crime, issues about 'joint enterprise' were directly cited by the school as the final reason for his PE. Legal charity Just For Kids Law (n.d, lines 6-7), outline joint enterprise as a 'common law doctrine where an individual can be jointly convicted of the crime of another.' They share concerns about how this law is interpreted, particularly where young people have SEND. In Kehinde's case, with relatively little discussion, a decision made by police outside of the school, led directly to Kehinde's PE from school. Additionally, analysis of the other participants' experiences would suggest that their child's experiences outside of both home and school were a key contributor to their eventual PE.

Duncan (2021) argues that in and of itself 'experience is knowledge.' In what Duncan describes as 'epistemic oomph' he notes that experience simply 'helps generate knowledge by being it.' (p.7). In relation to the participants, not only did they share experiences which demonstrated this lived-knowledge, but throughout the interviews they were aware of and acknowledged it. Deandra used the term 'my child' to reiterate this and drew upon her wider lived experience to explain the negation of it in terms of 'racism' and 'classism' (lines 347-351). Christopher used the phrase 'knowing' to encapsulate a sensation or bringing together of experiences relating to being Kehinde's parent. This included not only lived experiences directly related to his son, but also drew upon his life and interactions within the wider world. Additionally, as explored in the analysis chapter, 4 parents had professional knowledge due to working in schools themselves.

Loveridge (1990) discusses the concept of 'embodied' parenting using Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodied knowledge and experience. Loveridge notes that, 'the knower is situated because knowledge arises through perception, and perception is the work of an 'embodied knower', which allows for the understanding of parents' 'lived (understood to be thought, felt and bodied) experience in a much fuller sense' (p.24). Callie, Kiera and Amina for example, shared how their own physical safety had been put at risk to safeguard their child in situations which were occurring outside of both home and school. Their descriptions outline the sensations and feelings associated with their experiences that were examples of embodied experiences, which held within them a wealth of knowledge. It is suggested that in refusing to hear or dismissing the parents' experiences, the schools not only missed opportunities to support and keep children safe, but also neglected a duty of care towards parents.

This neglect put parents at significant risk of emotional and physical harm. This oversight by their child's school can be likened to looking through a rainy windshield where the distorted images and misperceptions made driving in such conditions unsafe for all involved.

Overall, given the parent participants' in-depth knowledge of their children's lives, it is striking that their expertise felt unheard and underutilised. This is perhaps because many of the incidences that were occurring outside of the school were also incidents which occurred outside of the home. Parents knew they held valuable insights into this, and therefore were eager to support their child with these issues alongside their child's school and those relating to their lives. However, in spite of parents demonstrating persistence in their desire to engage in the lead up to and during the PE process, for the participants their knowledge and capabilities were overlooked. As such their parental expertise felt unreciprocated and dismissed by their children's schools.

5.2.2 – 'Glass' barrier: feeling disempowered in the PE process

Depending on the way in which it is used, glass has numerous structural properties which change the way it is interacted with or its overall architectural applicability (Jóźwik, 2020). For example, Cai *et al.* (2022) describes how the properties of glass can impact the ability to discern or detect objects on the other side. For example, dark, thick or bent glass can change the 'refractive index,' which subsequently distorts images of objects. Furthermore, reflected images can obscure the ability to see through the glass. This results in blurred or missing aspects of perceived objects (ibid). Therefore, the structural or physical features of the glass create a barrier which change perception in various ways. Metaphorically, when the parent participants' experiences are viewed through the 'Glass' layer of the SIP, a 'glass barrier' emerges. Due to the complex features of this layer, the participants saw distorted reflections of themselves and their rights. As explored in section 2.1.2 schools have a legal obligation to include parents once a decision to exclude has been made (DfE, 2017a; 2023). These are statutory requirements which schools must follow in order to practically involve and consult parents. This relates to the PE process, including the time before, and in its immediate aftermath (see also section 5.1). At the time of the PE all parents had some understanding of the procedures PE policy dictated.

Despite this, there was a unanimous response from all parent participants around the absence of paperwork, guidance or overall involvement throughout the process. As Jeanene responded when asked about this 'No. Nothing. No. That was it. You know it was – he wasn't going back again. That was it.' (7, 218-221). Jeanene's words act as a good representation of something experienced by all participants. Jeanene's experience can be symbolically paralleled to Cai *et al.*'s (2022) descriptions of distorted perceptions through glass. Even though parents were aware of their rights to be involved, this aspect of self, became distorted in the PE process. The structural barriers held within the PE process meant it became harder for parents to act upon their rights. Not only were they unable to see through the 'Glass' to navigate PE procedure, but their right to contribute was negated.

Furthermore, it became increasingly apparent that parents consciously acknowledged the ways their parental rights and image were distorted by PE procedure due to the interview process itself. This frequently occurs as participants make-sense of their experiences (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022). As Merleau-Ponty (1962, p.346) notes 'tomorrow, with more experience and insight, I shall possibly understand it differently and consequently reconstruct my past in a different way.' For example, as Deandra noted the process could have been accessible had her and her family been advocated for. It is paradoxical that the implementation and enactment of PE policy in the parents' cases, created an absence of being able to experience in the ways to which they felt entitled.

Analysing the participants' views illustrated how they experienced the implementation of the PE policy, or in reality the lack thereof. Workman (2002) reflects on the notion of living and experiencing policy in all of its facets. Beginning with considering the physical presence of objects within a work office, Workman ponders on definitions of what policy is in terms of governance, and then contrasts with their lived experiences (p.215);

> *…such cold words to describe my living reality. The policy world is embedded in my office and it pulses with life through all that I touch, see, feel, think, and exchange in dialogue with others. The neutrality and rationality of the words of the policy world obscure but cannot eliminate the pain, the wonder, the awe, the hopefulness, the experience of it.*

This is the difference between physical policy, in what Workman (p.217) describes as its existence in 'black print,' and its 'lived reality.'

For the parents, they had some knowledge of their parental rights, which they should have been accorded, but simultaneously, they lived in a lack of experiencing it. Wakelin (2008) discusses how parents of children with special educational needs feel when advocating for their rights in school settings. Although Wakelin refers to the American system, there are parallels with parents becoming 'disempowered by the process rather than respected and influential.' Waklelin adds, 'although parents have the most legal power, they often come away from the IEP [*Individualised Education Programme]* process feeling powerless' (p.276).

For Patricia, experiencing disempowerment, was described as having 'no choice,' which contrasts wider neo-liberal framing of parents as 'customers' or 'equal partners' (Macleod *et al*, 2013). Furthermore, the notion of 'choice' in relation to a parent's selection of school has been argued to be highly racialised within UK contexts (Bagley, 1996). Here Bagley suggests that parental choice is not only a matter of preference but frequently complex, imbued with racial considerations. This demonstrates broader structural implications regarding discrimination and inequality. Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2008) similarly problematise the concept of parent-partnerships in relation to parents of disabled children. This is because of contradictions in relation to the reality and lived experiences of this demographic. Macleod *et al*. note the impossibility of seeing parents of excluded children as consumers, when in actuality they had little choice around the decision-making process of their child. This was because 'service providers,' the schools or actors within the exclusions process, saw parents as part of the problem. This was especially the case when parents did not comply with the demands or expectations of their child's school.

Macleod *et al.* also found it 'striking that 'none of the service providers talked about parents as genuine partners' (p.398).

> *We argue that the almost universal positioning of parents as problematic in someway is not a good basis on which to expect partnership. Further, we suggest a possible re-conceptualisation of non-compliant behaviour that may allow parents to be seen in a more positive light.*

Furthermore, a study by Reeder and Morris (2021) explores the perspectives of 14 parents whose children access specialist paediatric care within an NHS Trust.

The study highlights wider systemic and institutional barriers which impede the empowerment of these parents, and their desire to act as a 'collaborative partner' in relation to their child's care. The authors discuss finding issues of traditional hierarchies, where health professionals maintained power and control over decision-making processes. They explore these inherent power imbalances which created a 'position of persisting disempowerment' (p.116). Also, hierarchical approaches were found to destabilise models which prioritised parental partnership (ibid). Similarly, for the parent participants in spite of wanting to act collaboratively with their child's school about the PE, they persistently experienced the opposite.

If parents are seen to have free choice and a right to participate in decision-making about their child, they should be able to use this power to share their views and opinions. This cannot be done if they are being marginalised or seen as a problem. Despite written DfE (2017a) statutory guidance, barriers remained in relation to its implementation, with structural imbalances potentially making its lived reality an impossibility for the parents. Thus, it is argued that findings in this study specifically contribute to a growing understanding of how parents experience PE policy in the way it is lived, implemented and enacted or not. These findings demonstrate how the parent participants became aware of, and experienced, an absence of procedure, despite it being written in statutory policy guidance and their legal right to be involved. It is likened to trying to discern an image through thick or bent glass; the experience was isolating and tiring. Parents could see the rights they ought to have been able to enact, but the opacity of the 'Glass' posed a significant barrier. This left them feeling disempowered and presented an image of self which felt distorted.

5.2.3 – Distorted reflections: misrecognition of intersecting identities

In the same way in which water droplets on glass may obscure one's view or distort images, social interactions and complex mechanisms of discrimination also presented misrecognised images to parents. Thus, water droplets can represent individual experiences and biases within interactions held during the PE process, whilst the 'Glass' symbolises structural barriers and wider systemic issues, which may have influenced these. Theoretically, the processes of 'misrecognition' (Xie *et al.*, 2021) and Rawls and Duck's (2018) concept of 'fractured reflections' were explored in chapter 2.3.2.

These misrecognitions and fractured reflections can be likened to the parents' experiences of seeing distorted images of themselves reflected back at them throughout their child's PE process. As described in the introduction to section 5.2, larger raindrops on a glass window may merge into streams or remain static unless overcome by external forces of gravity and wind (Conover, 2022; Hooshanginejad and Lee, 2022). These form unique patterns on the glass surface which distort or change the view. This imagery can represent the complex interactions parents had with actors with the PE process such as those at their child's school. Parents became increasingly aware that there were structural mechanisms of ableism, classism and racism, which were influencing their interactions. This is like becoming aware of the rain on a window because the glass creates an illuminating effect by creating differing reflections and refractions of light. In the lived experiences of these parents, the distortions manifested as reflected misrecognitions and biases much like the theoretical concepts explored in section 2.3.2. As a result, parents saw distorted and discriminatory images of themselves and their child reflected back at them at times before, during and after the PE process.

Due to the various familial constellations of the participants, it was not presumed that parents held the same racial, gender or special educational need identity as their children. However, the context of PEs disproportionately affecting pupils, with SEN, those from black, Asian and working-class backgrounds, was still recognised (see sections 2.1 and 2.2). Despite this, the research question and approach for this study did not explicitly seek participants from any particular demographic or background preferring to let experiences emerge from individual participants. As part of the pre-interview process, participants were asked to self-describe their 'ethnic identity' (see Table 2).

The term ‘ethnic identity’ was used in line with UK governmental recommendation. This was to acknowledge how parents and their children would be categorised as per official SEs data and policy guidance (see also GOV.UK, 2021). However, this thesis emphasises the importance of prioritising parent participants’ self-identification. This is because participants’ experiences have been the focus of this study as outlined from the start of this thesis. As such, although the wider policy context is acknowledged, it is argued that these parents’ experiences around the misrecognition of their intersecting identities have emerged naturally.

As this thesis focused on ‘parents’ there was no particular research focus on the gendered experiences of the participants involved. Despite this, many but not all of the participants did explore and share their own identity as a ‘mother’ as part of their accounts. Given chapter two explores the disproportionate impact of permanent exclusions on boys, the findings of this study offer opportunities for future research to explore how parents who identify as ‘mothers’ may face additional challenges in advocating for their children in a system which already marginalises boys and young men. Future research could explore how these dynamics may impact experiences of the exclusions process for parents involved.

As introduced in section 2.3.2, Crenshaw’s (1989) concept of ‘intersectionality’ offers a lens through which the experiences the parents may be better understood. Gilborn (2015, p.278) utilises an ‘intersectional’ lens noting that ‘the majority of racism remains hidden beneath a veneer of normality’ and that ‘only the more crude and obvious forms of racism ... are seen as problematic by most people.’ Just like water droplets becoming more noticeable on the glass, symbolically this links to the ways parents noticed negative perceptions of their own and their child’s intersecting identities through their unique PE experiences. Analysis of the data demonstrated that all but one of the parents - Amina, referred explicitly to their own and their child’s racialisation as part of the PE experiences. For example, Christopher and Patricia referred directly to their son’s ‘race’ making links to how his physical attributes, being a ‘six-foot odd Black male’ were perceived negatively by his school (23, 768-779). They also expressed a dissonance in relation to this, in comparison to their own unique and endearing knowledge of their son as a person. Also, racialisation was seen by Jeanene who shared how her foster son Jay’s haircut was misperceived as ‘gang signs’ by his school. This resulted in a FPE prior to his eventual PE. These examples represent the distorted reflections of which parents became aware.

As chapter 2.1 explored, discriminatory perceptions around social class may also play a significant role in influencing the experiences permanently excluded children and families. Gazeley (2010, 2012) argues that exclusions disproportionately impact working-class families, further reproducing social and educational disadvantage. For several of the parent participants in this study, the intersection of social class, race and SEN compounded barriers they faced, limiting their abilities to advocate for their children in spite of their legal right to do so. The experiences of the parents in this study demonstrate that these parents felt misrecognised as a result of these intersecting forms of discrimination.

Troyna and Williams (1986) demonstrate the long standing and dysfunctional relationship between UK education policy, institutional racism and processes within the education system. They focus on 'racialisation' which involves the use of 'physical markers' such as stature, hair texture, facial features and pigmentation (ibid, p.3). Although written nearly 30 years ago the authors (1986, p.57) highlighted the lack of consideration of intersecting factors. In what they refer to as an 'absence of linkages' they note that, 'the processes through which racial inequality is perpetuated are neither linked with or understood in conjunction with those that reproduce class and gender inequalities.' Additionally, these incidences may be linked to processes of 'adultification' and 'anger' bias. Drawing upon multiple studies, including their own, Cooke and Halberstadt (2021) demonstrate how anger and incorrect perception of age is frequently misattributed to Black children. They conclude that, 'Black children receive[e] increased consequences when adults perceive them as older and angry' (p.1416). According to Drew, Wilson and McCarter (2022) adultification bias was shown to be prevalent and played a part in over criminalising Black girls in the American school-prison-pipeline. The authors advocate for the need to take intersectional approaches which consider race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender, trauma and ability status. Similarly, Deandra frequently referred to how 'classism' shaped her experiences in addition to other discriminatory mechanisms.

Furthermore, all parents highlighted their children's unique ways of learning. Parents often saw this in a fond way although this did not feel recognised. Amina for example discussed how her son had challenges in understanding which remained overlooked by his school. Other parents explicitly referred to a special educational need, which they had recognised or like Jeanene were fighting for the school to provide support with the application and process.

Udonsi (2022) explores the 'erasure of intersectional race, intellectual disability and neurodivergent identities' in the UK (p.226). Critiquing the UK's neo-liberal agenda, Udonsi focuses on how health and social care policies and procedures result in 'the invisibility, misrecognition and consequential misdiagnosis of the intersectional complexities of the needs and entitlements of young black people' (ibid). Given how this has significant consequences, such as an increased risk of incarceration, Udonsi is unapologetic in the demand for anti-racist approaches. Udonisi reframes the othering of this demographic, preferring to use the phrase, 'young, gifted and black.' This reflects many of the participants experiences who were able to frame their child's identity positively.

As section 2.1.3 highlighted, changes within the English schooling system, such as academisation, these have led to changes within institutional policies which may disproportionately affect socio-economically disadvantaged families and/or children from certain ethnicities. In addition, as Ball (2018) explores, the increased prioritisation of particular forms of academic performance may alienate children who do not conform to these standards. For all of these parents, they were aware of the unique qualities and learning styles of their children which were frequently misrecognised by their child's school. Their accounts often featured experiences of feeling misunderstood or unsupported by teachers. Therefore, this thesis study opens up opportunities to explore how more inclusive policies, particularly around curriculum, teaching and learning, may positively influence parental experience in this area.

Despite this, even when acknowledged by the school, Deandra stated, 'they put him in gifted and talented and all that, and they still excluded my son' (6, 236). Furthermore, Deandra links and describes experiences of 'racism' and 'classism' during both of her son's PEs and later involvement in the criminal justice system. They seem to mirror much of that discussed in a London case-study by Perera (2020). Perera (p.6) outlines the 'alarming trajectory of the criminalisation of young black students' from working class backgrounds. Since the onset of this doctorial study, there has been a slow increase in the term 'intersectional', which is beginning to be used in relation to SEs experiences.

Although this study does not specifically focus on school environment, for these parents the physical and emotional aspects of their child's school setting may have also contributed to their experiences. These environments were spaces in which they knew their children should belong, but were so frequently pushed out of, further amplifying their feelings of misrecognition due to intersecting factors. Future research could explore how these environments contribute to the continuing misrecognition and marginalisation of excluded children and families.

A Special Needs Jungle (2022) survey of 138 parents, shares a wide range of views. The authors are clear in outlining the importance of recognising 'intersectionality' within this.

They write (p.2);

> *Acknowledging intersectionality in SEND illustrates how multiple modes of advantage, and disadvantage, discrimination, and privilege, affect children's access to services. These factors also impact a family's ability to advocate for their child.*

A Just for Kids Law report (2020) uses the term to explain how 'social factors intersect, creating overlapping disadvantage and marginalisation' of PE parents.' As explored in chapter 2.2, even where the term 'intersectional' itself has not been used, the notion that intersecting factors of discrimination play a role in parental experience has been acknowledged (e.g. Demie, 2023). When viewed simultaneously through the 'Water' and 'Glass' layers, the parents' experiences can be understood as having presented distorted images of self, which were shaped by complex interactions, after having been influenced by multiple modes of discrimination. Therefore, the findings in this thesis contribute to knowledge in the field of exclusions and the need to prioritise intersectional perspectives.

5.3 – Resisting permanent exclusion: fireflies in the night

Figure 3 - Ama Agyeman (2023) Fireflies in the Night - Westminster, London

Section 5.1 demonstrated that when viewed through the 'Earth' layer of the SIP framework, the PE created seismic ripples which had significant and frequently detrimental impacts on the parents' lives. This included the time before, during and after the decision to PEx their child. Section 5.2 demonstrated that when viewed through both 'Water' and 'Glass' layers of the SIP framework, the parents' felt disempowered, disregarded and misrecognised. Not only did parents experience structural barriers, but the complex array of social interactions was also influenced by intersecting mechanisms of discrimination. This resulted in parents seeing distorted reflections, which did not align with the knowledge of themselves and their child.

However, this section explores the participants' experiences through the 'Fireflies' and 'Air' layers of the SIP as introduced in section 2.3.3. In the framework, 'Fireflies' represent the agentic asynchronous and synchronous behaviour, much like the 'chimeric states' of the *Photuris frontalis* species (see Sarfati and Peleg, 2022). 'Air' represents the seemingly structural determinative and discursive PE ideologies which influenced the parents' experiences, acting symbolically like the environment in which a firefly lives.

Therefore, much like the photograph above when utilising the SIP's 'Firefly-Air' dynamic, the experiences, as outlined in section 4.3, demonstrate the ways in which parent participants agentically navigated the PE process. This section explores the unique ways they each agentically illuminated the night sky.

5.3.1 – Agentic glow: utilising existing support strategies

Despite frequently feeling disempowered or dictated to during their child's PE, parent participants were still able to find ways to act agentically. Much like the *Photuris frontalis* firefly species (see section 2.3.4), parents acted agentically in both synchronous and asynchronous ways by utilising existing support strategies. In symbolically similar ways to the firefly chimeras described in section 2.3.4, these parents were self-organised and spontaneous in their responses to many of their negative experiences during their child's PE. For example, parents agentically chose to draw upon wider family and friends for support with everyday practicalities or decision-making regarding their child. Callie for instance, was part of a wider kinship care network which co-parented Ryan over time and responded or adapted as best as possible to his PE from school. The overall supportive **'**sense of identity and shared belonging' that kinship care can provide, is highlighted by Frustenberg *et al.* (2020, p.365) who write,

> *From the perspective of evolutionary biology, kin recognition, protection, and support are mechanisms for selection and survival. This helps to explain why kinship evokes a powerful sense of belonging and diffuse emotional connection that enhances social solidarity.*

In this way, participants highlighted the collaborative nature of their approach to parenting by using 'we' to refer to wider family and friends who at times provided support during their PE experiences. This again can symbolically relate to the ways in which an individual firefly may act in coordinated ways through flashing synchronously with other fireflies. This sense of connectivity may have been strengthened, given these connections were oftentimes related to the participants' sense of identity. For example, with Christopher and Patricia these connections were linked to their racial identity and community. As a result, a sense of belonging was provided, whilst they had been feeling excluded and negatively racialised during their child's PE process.

Reynolds (2003) explores the concept of 'black community parenting' in the UK which considers extended family networks as well as evolving use of community organisations. Reynolds argues this 'increased collective mobilisation' is 'in response to feelings of disengagement, disillusionment and disaffection with 'mainstream' municipal bodies' (p.29). In this study, these can be seen to be the schools and actors within their PE experiences.

Jaikla *et al.* (2020) note how the behaviour of *Pteroptyx* fireflies, which frequent the 'meandering mangrove rivers' in Thailand, may be altered by environmental factors. Amongst multiple aspects this can include air temperature, moon phase and windspeed. Similarly, just as these fireflies navigate and adjust to their changing environment, it is important to acknowledge that the 'family context' can still add complexity. For example, in kinship care arrangements, this can be seen as 'both a strength and a weakness' (Rose *et al*., 2022, p.635). The authors' findings from their study with carers showed, kinship carers often had to manage 'complex family dynamics.' This could include challenges when facilitating 'contact with birth parents that were sometimes perceived as posing a risk to the child' (ibid). Expressed by Callie, she explored the nuances of these relationships and the varying support levels or challenges they offered.

As a result, just like a firefly's individual glow in the dark, there were moments where parents felt only able to rely solely on themselves as support. Jeanene's (11, 343) phrase 'I just had to get on with it' summarises how participants ultimately demonstrated agency through self-reliance and adaptability. This became a way to resist negative experiences within the PE process. Self-reliance included finance; for example, both Jeanene and Callie described additional costs incurred as a result of the PE. For Callie this meant buying extra clothing when Ryan needed to move home after the PE, and paying for taxis to and from the PRU or hospital appointments due to fears for his life. As Hunt notes (2020, p.11) for carers 'local authority funding may be forthcoming, but it is discretionary and practice varies. Hence carers may have to incur considerable legal costs themselves.' This then became another form of bureaucracy which made navigating the PE even more challenging.

Amina also discussed how her religious beliefs give her significant support during her most isolated or challenging times. This aligns with Gibson's (2006) understanding of how a person's faith, belief system or lack thereof may become a way to respond to a crisis or trauma event. Although Gibson notes that people may question or lose their faith during these times, for others it can provide a mechanism of support. These self-illuminations acted in symbolically similar ways to the bioluminescence of fireflies which light up in the night sky. They offered glimmers of hope which provided support to the parents who were navigating complex interactions and processes dictated by the PE discourse which enveloped them. The parents in this thesis, demonstrated ways in which they ultimately had to resist their negative experiences by relying on themselves. However, they all shared how they would have much rather received the support from the outset, as their parental right.

5.3.2 – Lighting the way: resisting 'policing' policies

As outlined in section 2.3.4, when viewed through the SIP framework, the 'Air' layer represents the seemingly structural determinative PE policies and discourses. However, just as the fireflies illuminate the night, these findings show how parents resisted negative experiences to navigate the oftentimes problematic enforcement of school behavioural policies. For example, the parents' experiences demonstrated the various ways in which school policies were used as a rationale for inviting the police to interact with their children. This was seen across the participants' cases; however, parents' questioning of the legitimacy of these occurrences shed light on the issue. For example, in Deandra's case a poignant moment was when her eldest son had gone to collect her youngest from school. Due to his own PE the police were called onto the school grounds and he was arrested in the playground. Deandra gave a vivid description of the police 'pinning' him down, 'twisting' him up and handcuffing him in front of observing parents and pupils. Deandra then connected the incident to race by adding, 'I feel like a lot of black kids go through it.' (line 457).

Although Deandra vocalised doubts about the long-term efficacy of the Black Lives Matters (BLM) movement, given that her interview was conducted in the summer of 2020, the imagery of George Floyd's death was inescapable. Kilby (2020, p.1) makes a similar point;

> *Whilst demonstrating against police brutality and racism in America, protestors in the UK also emphasised how these same issues of anti-Black racism play out in the UK too, pointing to deaths including those of Rashan Charles, Sheku Bayoh, Mark Duggan, and Dalian Atkinson. All these men died during attempts by UK police to either apprehend or restrain them, or whilst in police custody.*

A more recent, related UK, case involves the death of Chris Kabba. Following an inquest by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IPOCC, 2022), the police officer who shot him was charged with murder. This outcome led to widespread protests by officers who handed in their weapons' permits due to feeling unsupported in their employment. This event drew parallels to similar tensions relating to policing in America (Specia, 2023). Analysis of Deandra's account found this to be a deeply shaming experience, but in sharing her anger around it, she resisted perceptions that this was acceptable. Thus, Deandra's account highlighted the blurred boundaries between the police, school and individual teachers. Kiera also gave a similarly vivid description of how in the lead up to his PE, her son was arrested at school due to a perceived breach of behaviour policy. Chris was then taken off premises without 'her knowledge' (line 451). All parent participants had accounts they shared of police involvement linked to their child's school and PE experiences.

Incidents of police-involvement in school are no longer being seen as isolated events with there being a significant increase in police officers based in English educational settings (Thomas and Mohdin, 2023). For example, a high-profile case of police-school involvement was brought to attention in spring 2022, when parents and supporters gathered publicly to protest in and around Hackney, East London[5] (McVeigh and Waterson, 2022). This was in response to the publication of a safeguarding review by City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP, 2022). The review had been launched due to the treatment of a black 15-year-old pupil, named as Child Q, who was intimately strip searched by police on school premises (Nickolls, 2022).

5 See Appendix VI for some photos taken on the day

This was due to wrongly suspecting she had been carrying cannabis. In addition to the fact that the child's parents had not been informed and she had no support; Child Q was menstruating at the time and has remained traumatised as a result (CHSCP, 2022). The review found that there had been an 'adultification bias' and this had likely occurred due to racism. The notion of 'adultification bias' was touched upon briefly in section 5.2.3. Four Metropolitan police officers faced disciplinary action due to the treatment of Child Q (Davis, 2022). A most recent update outlined urgent recommendations regarding police involvement in schools in order to prevent similar incidents in the future (CHSCP, 2023)

In 'Police-school partnerships: the war on black youth,' Nijjar (2021) highlights the increasing blurred lines between police and school. These include exploring trends across successive government policies, such as increased political rationale and active encouragement of police onto school premises. Nijjar (2021, p.491) voices concerns around police-school partnerships due to their enhancing 'existing and escalating forms of multi-agency police surveillance and profiling, while also giving officers a greater role in everyday schooling matters.' (p.491). Due to political affiliations between racialised political agendas and the police, such as the 'war on gangs' and 'serious youth violence,' Nijjar suggests that increased police-school partnerships disproportionately subject black pupils to multiple layers of surveillance. This includes storing 'intelligence' in police tools such as the Gangs Matrix (Nijjar, 2021).

Both Deandra and Kiera's vivid descriptions are arguably examples of surveillance and school policy being used as a rationale for police involvement in disciplining and punishing non-compliant individuals. It can be interpreted that quite literally in Deandra's case, the playground became an observational arena in which the force of the police was displayed for other parents, pupils and teachers to witness. In Kiera's case her son's unlawful arrest was also highly visible, both at the school and in her neighbourhood.

Parallels may be drawn to Foucault's (1977) exploration of Bentham's panopticon, an architectural arrangement where a prisoner has the sensation of being observed. He writes, 'the panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately' (p.200). Foucault argues that this reverses the principles of a dungeon in which prisoners were hidden away and deprived of light.

Foucault notes however, that a panopticon's 'visibility is a trap' (ibid). He adds that the ultimate goal and effect of the '[p]anopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power' (p.201). In this way, it could be argued that the visible police involvement in these cases, became a highly racialised institutional demonstration of power. These actions were directly linked to breaches of school rules as outlined in school policy. Like agentic fireflies navigating through the night sky, the parent participants perpetually travelled through a complex atmosphere of school policies and the subsequent surveillance they induced. They also resisted the negative visibility they experienced by shining brightly and vocalising their disagreement. However, undeniably the policies which surrounded and dictated these actions become even more apparent in these circumstances. In a somewhat phenomenological and reflective exploration, Workman (2002) begins to explore the 'weight' and authority that policies hold, (p.220);

> *Policy, then, is about authority. Authority has a voice that speaks in many tongues. There is authority as power, as in should/must do, as in orderliness, as in obedience to rules. And so I read on, wondering what I am supposed to do. This policy book has weight, has authority, has procedures. And each policy refers to another and yet another. Policy helps me to say "no" to a client. If I do not think that the problems can be best met by my organization or if I feel I do not have the skills, I can say, "It is against our policy," or when I have a situation, I do not know how to handle I can say, "That is not our policy." Or I can refer problems to a higher authority that protects me.*

Hence, policy becomes a tool in which action might be justified. In these cases, the individuals within the schools are referred onto an authority, the police, who could enforce obedience.

Although the visibility of these arrests acted as a reminder of constant surveillance and the power behind it, the parents resisted in their own ways. This included ensuring the actions of the police and school also remained visible through active observation and recalling of these incidents. In Kiera's case this visibility was acted on by a neighbour. Sharing this knowledge allowed Kiera to rush home and intervene to advocate for her son and quite literally 'resist' the arrest. These actions were in direct response to being refused parental rights Kiera knew she had, which can be interpreted as acts of 'resistance' that are just as meaningful as protests and movements.

In a wider-sense however, Nijjar (2021) also acknowledges many of the wider parental and community grassroots and anti-racist movements in Britain. In doing so Nijjar documents the historical and ongoing presence of resistance in Britain in response to the 'policing of black youth' and 'weaponization of schools and the wider welfare state' (p.498).

Knowledge-sharing was also another example of how parents lit the path for their children. This was done through sharing their understanding and equipping their children with the skills to better navigate the ways in which policies were not used to involve police, but how to effectively manage these situations once they occurred. Also, this could be seen as another form of agentic resistance, which led to collective responses involving their child. For example, Christopher used the term 'knowing' to describe his inherent knowledge about the police and how to interact with them which both he and Patricia wanted to convey to Kehinde. It also began to address many of the epistemic injustices they had faced by sharing the knowledge which was valuable to them.

Although focusing specifically on Black parents' resistance to police violence in the United States, Anderson, O'Brien Caughy and Owen (2022) discuss what they refer to as 'The Talk.' They define this as a 'specific type of racial socialization message that many Black parents have with their children about how to safely conduct themselves when interacting with police officers and other individuals in positions of power' (p.475). Both participants expressed some tensions and concerns around this form of knowledge-sharing with their children. These centered around what Anderson, O'Brien Caughy and Owen (2022, p.495) describe as 'striking a balance' between sharing the necessary information, and avoiding fear-mongering or the assumption that every interaction with the police would be inherently discriminatory.

For example, Kiera felt the clear need to remind her son to remain 'respectful' towards 'anybody of law.' All parent participants had significant interaction with police as part of their child's PE experiences. Although these brought several challenges, parents respectfully resisted in a variety of ways in order to assert their rights and question the ways in which the police saw or interacted with them and their children. As discussed in section 2.3.4, these became forms of 'transformative resistant capital' for the parents (see Yosso, 2005, p.81).

This became part of a 'Firefly-Air' dynamic which demonstrated the 'everyday resistance' of parents. Equally, this increased glow was a way of warning against dangers their children may have to face. This is like how the bioluminescent and ultrasonic clicking behaviour of fireflies acts to ward away potential predatory attack (see Krivoruchko *et al.,* 2021).

Therefore, much like fireflies navigating and illuminating the night sky, the parents' agentic glow resisted the ways in which policies were used to exert power over them.

5.3.3 – The 'Firefly' self: agentic change-maker

As discussed in section 2.3.4, the 'chimera states' of *Photuris frontalis* fireflies are a natural example of individual and collective cognition and behaviour, resulting in asynchronous and synchronous illuminations. In this way, parent participants demonstrated their individual agentic desire for change not only for themselves, but to affect policy and practices around SEs in general. This demonstrated their motives to simultaneously take individual action to potentially influence collective experience in relation to PEs. Much like fireflies navigating the air around them, parents had an awareness that their actions could act against negative experiences induced by SEs policy and practice. For example, Amina made calls for the 'government to do something' (line 13, 405) and Kiera's continued campaigning at LA level. These indicate the participants' agency and vocalisation around desires for change. Furthermore, as section 5.3.1 explored, all parent participants had their own unique PE timeline. However, in similar ways each shared how their PE experiences influenced their desire for change. The parallels across cases created a unique form of synchrony amongst the experiences of these parent participants. Gibson (2006) highlights the agentic essence of those who have experienced a crisis event, which is similar to the participants' actions and desires for change post-PE experience. This is a reminder of how individuals may find 'order from chaos' (Gibson, 2006, p.212);

> *Order came when the people affected felt that they could adapt their coping mechanisms to meet the challenge of the crisis. Life was changed for them all. Their experiences had to be integrated into their psychological chaos to bring an order with which they could face the future.*

Relatedly, Laufer and Isman (2022) explored the stress and mental health experiences of 257 Israeli parents of children who had special education requirements. The authors acknowledge the long-lasting stressors these parents face in caring for their children.

However, they use the post-traumatic growth model (PTG) to suggest how cognitive changes occurring during traumatic event/s stimulate reflection on the 'life-changing' nature of the experiences.

In doing so, such individuals may begin to rebuild, redress or form new cognitive assumptions. This can be defined as a period of 'growth' (ibid). Through a process of 'meaning-making' the individual may become aware that 'positive changes can accompany the negative ones' (p.2). For the parents in this study this positive growth or desire for change in the midst of the challenges faced, may be symbolically aligned with the agentic illuminations of fireflies connecting to others in the swarm. It also demonstrates adaptability to shine brighter in spite of adversity.

Parent participants in this study wanted to share the ways in which they resisted negative experiences and challenged these by being part of, or vocalising desire for change. This was seen through involvement in policy, hopes for change voiced through this doctoral research, and in some cases other studies. Laufer and Isman (2022) findings showed that the more involved parents were allowed to be in decision-making around their child, the more growth they experienced in relation to their more challenging experiences. Additionally, they found that PTG can improve future involvement. Laufer and Isman (p.11) write;

> *Our finding indicates that PTG is a positive dimension that reflects upon parents' ability to be a functioning part of the decision-making process regarding their children. We view this finding as another indication that PTG reflects a real positive change enabling the parent to play an active role in the decision-making process*

Devaney *et al.* (2023) also argue for a strengths based approach (SBA) to young people and their families who may be interacting with official support programmes. The authors findings show that acknowledging the competencies of young people and their families promoted positive change and the development of 'hope-inspiring' relationships. Therefore, parent participants might have been seen by institutions as more likely to be able to participate in decision-making around their child rather than less. Their enforced lack of involvement in the PE process not only defied their rights but also under-utilised and denied their capabilities. Love *et al*. (2021) use a Disability Critical Race Theory lens to explore how racism and ableism became resisted by the parent participants in their study.

The authors found that the notion of 'parental involvement' was centred around 'white middle-class families' norms' leading to a deficit model of Black families which belies their actual engagement. Love *et al.* (2021, p.649) argue that 'Black families' resistance provides important implications for reconceptualizing parent involvement based on the priorities and contributions of Black families.' Through channelling and redirecting their experiences towards change it can be seen that the parent participants in this study have resisted perceptions of themselves as deficit. Overall and importantly, through a process of meaning and sense-making both outside of and during the interviews, it can be said that parent participants have established themselves as change-makers. Pointing to the strengths of individuals who have experienced life-changing events, Gibson (2006, p.211) summarises;

> *'They deal with the pain they may experience in small segments; they go forward and reinvest in life. They are those who face the pain, resist staying in a state of helplessness and know how to balance independence with the ability to rely on others when necessary.'*

Accordingly, the ongoing challenges that the parent participants face is recognised whilst also acknowledging the ways in which they continue to adapt and respond appropriately. Consequently, the parent participants' expert knowledge of self is understood, whilst not ignoring the pain or support they may still require. Instead, the parents' actions may be seen like the powerful and persistent bioluminescent flashing of fireflies in that they light the night not only for themselves, but in providing small beacons of hope for collective change.

5.4 – The 'Ineffable' permanence and emergence of parental PE experience

Section 2.3 introduced the SIP framework which is theoretically based in phenomenological critical realism. The SIP integrates and considers ontological, epistemological and axiological as well as methodological compatibility. The development of the framework arose as part of the iterative process to data analysis in line with the selected IPA methodology (see chapter three). Therefore, sections 5.1-5.3 utilised the layers of the framework to demonstrate the ways in which the parents' experiences can be understood more holistically. This included conceptualisations such as the PE as being experienced as 'seismic ripples,' 'distorted reflections' and ''Fireflies' in the night.' The use of creative metaphor, poetry and photography also acknowledged the role of the researcher in continuing an interpretive analytical dialogue with participants, even though interviews were completed.

As section 2.3 reinforced, the SIP framework's dynamic non-hierarchical nature and the dialectical tensions it embodies should be recognised. Given the traditional written format of a doctoral thesis, it became necessary to dissect each layer incrementally for the analysis chapter. However, when the SIP framework was created, the idea was to embrace an encompassing view of how its layers interact. Therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge how parents' experiences may be better conceptualised in their entirety. However, although the SIP offers a holistic lens, it still recognises the limitations to accessing all aspects of these parents' experiences. This is seen through the SIP's ineffable domain (see section 2.5). It is crucial therefore, to recognise the boundaries, scope and breadth of this study. Rather than providing conclusive argumentation, the thesis embraces the inherent values of the SIP. In doing so it leaves much unanswered and offers new trajectories, so that questions may be asked and new opportunities for exploration or discussion may arise.

In light of the findings, it is crucial to emphasise that Merlau-Ponty's notion of *embodied experience* when applied to the parents may mean that many aspects of their experiences remained inaccessible. This is not only due to thesis design or limitations in language, but also the nature of lived experience in an embodied sense. For example, as section 2.4 considered Merlau-Ponty's concept of 'pre-reflective experience' may have meant that certain experiences remained unprocessed and unarticulated by parents. There may have also been numerous ways in which there were no words to describe their experiences, for they remained embodied.

For example, Amina's discussion of her depression opens opportunities for research around whether other parents' may have physiological manifestations around the time of their PE experiences. If explored this may support participants with discussing connections between their experiences and any physiological representations, linking to Merlau-Ponty's notion that 'emotions are embodied' (Krueger, 2020, p.197).

Furthermore, it is important to consider the relationship between the term 'permanent' in the DfE (2017a, 2023) policy term 'permanent exclusion,' and the temporal-spatial aspects discussed in the 'Earth' layer analysis (see 5.1). The section explored the expansive nature of the 'seismic ripples' which were associated with the parents' PE experiences. Although a linear model (see Diagram 3) was produced to support understanding, it was noted that the concept of time was subjective to each participant. The concept of space also considered displacement post-PE. It acknowledged the parents' experiences of accessing educational provisions across geographical locations and recognised that the 'ripples' extended not only after the PE, but through participants' sense-making of experiences ripples seen in the time before. There was also a level of pervading 'permanence' which was experienced once their child had been PEx. For example, in reflecting on his son's PE, Christopher reflected deeply on the concept of 'endings.' This was in relation to the abrupt loss of relationships built at school or a right to educational continuity. Other participants drew connections between the ripples emanating from their child's PE and a permanence linked to their murders or continued imprisonment.

Encapsulating the ineffable nature, as experienced by the parents remains an uncapturable aspect, given that this permanence will continue throughout time, beyond the scope of this study. However, the area of 'quantum social theory' may offer new avenues for exploration. For example, McIntosh (2022, p.5), utilises quantum mechanics in the area of international relations to explore how; 'multiple different pasts, presents, and futures; which overlap in some ways, separate in others, and order political reality in a manner that enables discernible pasts and futures to cohere in a present.' As such, the intricate relationship between the PE and the temporal-spatial ripples seen as per the parents' experiences may benefit from such nuanced understanding. This may offer an opportunity to explore non-linear timeframes which embrace the interconnectedness of past, present and future.

Furthermore, as section 5.1 explored, all participants experienced varying levels of stress or even trauma in relation to their experiences of the PE. Chronic stress may lead to increased risk of physical and mental co-morbidities such as 'cardiovascular disease, diabetes, certain cancers, and autoimmune disease' (Seiler, Fagundes and Christian, 2020, p.84). Gudmundsdottir (2009) also explores the notion of 'embodied grief' whereby loss presents somatically in parents whose children have died. Therefore, in an embodied sense, for some if not all of the participants, the effects of the PE may be continuing to be experienced. However, although there was significant negative 'permanence,' as section 5.3 explored, the parents' agentic 'Firefly-self' emerged to resist, adapt and forge alternative possibilities for collective or individual change.

This simultaneous individual and collective connectivity is comparable to fireflies' 'emergence of different groups flashing with the same periodicity but with a constant delay between them' (Sarfati and Peleg, 2022, p.1). This ineffable but apparent quality brings opportunity amidst seemingly determinative structures which are embedded in PE policy and practice. The various identities, faiths, beliefs and non-beliefs of parents is also another ineffable aspect of this study. For example, Amina described how her faith formed a significant way in which she prevented her suicidal thoughts associated with stress around the time of her son's PE. Moore (2019) suggests that certain faith-based knowledge is inherently ineffable and therefore language may not always be used to describe it appropriately. Other participants also discussed supportive friends, family and communities linked to their sense of identity. These may be ineffable experiences and qualities which emerged or became heightened as a result of their PE experiences.

When moving away from exploring the parents' experiences using individual layers of the SIP, it may be useful to consider other theories. Here, Chaos and Complexity theory (see Gleick, 1987) may deepen understanding of the parents' experiences. Returning to concepts embedded in critical realist ontology (see Bhaskar, 1978), it may also support understanding of causality and non-causality. In turn if may offer insight into some of the perceived ineffable aspects of this study. Gleick (1987) explores the concept of chaos in relation to systems which may appear random or disordered. In this, the metaphor of the butterfly effect, is used to describe for example, how a butterfly's wings in Brazil may initiate a tornado in Texas. This suggests how seemingly small changes to initial conditions can lead to varied outcomes within chaotic systems.

Gleick's approach values the interconnectedness of nature and draws across disciplines. Although this text focused on the concept of 'chaos' it did provide the backdrop under which 'Chaos and Complexity' theory emerged (Murphy, 2011). Another key related text includes Prigogine & Stengers' (1984) *Order out of Chaos.* Furthermore, in *Education and Conflict: Complexity and Chaos.* Davies (2004) utilises this combined theory to explore how wider conflict, war, violence, protest and peace interact relationally with educational systems. Davies (2004, p.23) writes;

> *Chaos is a subset of complexity. If chaos theory is about showing how a few interactions can produce immensely divergent behaviour which looks random but is not, complexity is about how interactions in non-linear systems may produce an emergent global order*

Importantly, the notion of 'feedback' can be highly relevant to the ways in which parent participants' agentic selves may have changed the system in inexorable ways. In complex systems which contain 'non-linear dynamics, like the ones enveloping the parents' experiences, 'there is feedback in which internal or external changes to a system produce an amplifying effect. (Davies, 2004, p.22). Therefore, parents' agentic resistance to the negative experiences may be further explored as a form of feedback loop into this complex system. This would offer ways of understanding how their actions may already be changing the systems governing PEs in ineffable and non-linear ways. Additionally, when applied, this concept reiterates the importance of utilising the parents' experiences to feed back into educational policy and practice in the area of SEs. Also, by sharing thesis findings in various ways with key stakeholders, change may prevail (see also Agyeman, 2023).

Furthermore, the parents' experiences highlighted significant complexity around the school's interpretation and implementation of policy. This aligned with Workman (2002) who unpicks the conflicts between the way policy is interpreted, and enacted in relation to human lived experience. For the parents the policies which were related to their child's PE were interpreted within a complex interacting system which subsequently had a unique impact on their life. Considering the parents' experiences, McIntosh's (2020) concept of 'Quantum ontologies' offers a potential theoretical pathway to explore. McIntosh applies the concept of quantum entanglement to global policy contexts.

As such this approach emphasises the interconnectedness and limitations of human, nonhuman, material, and social relations in shaping policy decisions. This may be an avenue for future exploration around educational policy particularly in relation to SE. It would acknowledge McIntosh's approach which suggests a politically 'collective entanglement of the present with the past and future' (ibid, p.163). Thus, the parents' experiences would continue to be considered in relation to the political context. Whilst this thesis is constrained in its ability to further explore these concepts, it acts as a foundation for future questions which may continue to arise.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This section revisits the thesis questions, aims and objectives. It explores some of the strengths and limitations of this thesis study. It highlights a series of recommendations for parents, policy makers and practitioners in relation to the findings. Finally, it gives brief concluding remarks and reflections on areas for future research in the field.

6.1- Overview

This thesis study explored the following research questions:

What are the lived experiences of parents whose children have been permanently excluded from school?

In order to answer this question, the study was divided into 4 main areas of enquiry. These were aligned with the critical realist phenomenological underpinnings of the research design.

A. **Family** – How does the parent describe their child?
   How do they describe their relationship?
   Has the PE affected daily routines and their emotional well-being?

B. **Events leading to the exclusion** –
   How did the parent experience events led to their child's permanent exclusion?
   Were they aware of policy and guidance?
   How did parental interactions with school staff or those involved in the PE shape their experiences?

C. **Events since the exclusion** – What has been experienced by the parent since the exclusion?
   How do they describe and explain their experiences?

D. **Reflecting on the experience** – From these experiences, what does the parent think might have been done differently?
   Were there any aspects of their experience that they found supportive?
   Has anything changed regarding their outlook or direction?

In relation to the aforementioned questions, findings demonstrated that parents maintained strong relationships with their children, exhibiting a nuanced understanding of their child's strengths and areas for growth. The PE significantly disrupted parents' daily routines and escalated stress levels, with some describing the experience as traumatic. These disruptions often led to tragic outcomes, including for some, the murder or imprisonment of their child, or at the very least, unwanted police involvement. Such events have profoundly altered their life trajectories. Parents expressed a desire for recognition as knowledgeable in relation to their children, for their rights to be upheld within the PE process, and to be seen as individuals beyond discriminatory lenses. The findings when seen through the layers of the SIP framework demonstrated that the PE was experienced as a life-changing seismic event. Parents also experienced that the PE process created distorted reflections of themselves which they did not recognise but became acutely aware of. However, parents expressed their experiences of active resistance to oftentimes overwhelmingly negative events which were related to PE policy and practice. Key recommendations call for the acknowledgement of parents' expertise and legal rights to ensure their active participation in the PE process as outlined in related policy. Further details around recommendations and findings are summarised in 6.3 and 6.4.

Overall, this thesis contributes to knowledge in the field of exclusions by prioritising the lived experiences of parents whose children have been PEx from school. Whilst the literature highlighted existing research, it also demonstrated the need for greater focus on these perspectives. By drawing upon the interdisciplinary discussions around SEs discourses in Chapter 2 and utilising critical realist phenomenology, the Stratified Integrative Prism (SIP) framework offers a novel approach for exploring the embodied experiences of these parents.

Another key contribution has been the development of the interdisciplinary SIP framework, which integrated critical realism and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) methodology. This has allowed for the temporal, spatial, and embodied experiences of the parents to be explored. Importantly, it has encouraged creative researcher interpretations to be uniquely combined to conceptualise the parents' experiences. In addressing models that frequently position parents of PEx children as deficit, this thesis acknowledges their agentic roles. This thesis also uniquely highlights the ways in which parents of PEx pupils have resisted discriminatory practices, whilst still seeking opportunities to liaise with those involved in their child's PE.

A novel finding is the view of the parents' PEx experiences as a life-changing seismic event.

This opens opportunities for further interdisciplinary research to explore the seismic, life-altering impact of exclusions on families. This thesis, conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and at the onset of movements like Black Lives Matter (BLM), which highlighted existing inequalities, emphasises the urgent need for SEs policy reform by situating these findings within this historical and political context. Therefore, this research contributes to ongoing debates around justice in education and the much-needed reform regarding the disproportionate impact of SEs on marginalised families.

By prioritising parental experience, this thesis has recognised the unique ways in which the parents have navigated their child's PEx. Therefore, this research advocates for equitable policy reform to effectively utilise parental perspectives and ensure parents are able to fully contribute to decision-making around their children.

6.2 – Strengths and limitations

The IPA methodological framework supported use of small-sample sizes, allowing for in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences. Given the marginalisation of parents whose children have been PEx, this supported recruitment especially amidst logistical challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the interview schedule given in the Participant Pack (see Appendix I) facilitated a supportive environment for participants, given the sensitive nature of the research area. The small sample of 7 participants allowed for a detailed exploration of their experiences.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic had both logistical and methodological implications which could be seen as a limitation and a strength. For participants various global events may have offered greater time for introspection or reflection about previous PE experiences. As a researcher, the increased levels of isolation and reduced support, likely impacted the process of 'bracketing,' potentially emphasising aspects around grief and trauma.

Themes arising may have been of greater relevance given continually escalating world conflict and natural disaster. However, these circumstances may have brought about richer and more nuanced insights and interpretations from participants and I, due to deeper reflection in relation to world-wide events.

Although the research pace was affected, the extended timeframe enriched discussion with peers and supervisors, enhancing the interpretive process and contributing to the development of the SIP framework. This framework has since broadened the scope for future inquiries and collaborations with parents and other SEs stakeholders.

Political changes in the UK posed challenges for contextualising this study in relation to the SEs and PEs policy landscape. Since starting this degree, there have been four UK prime ministers; Theresa May, Boris Johnson, Liz Truss, and current PM Rishi Sunak. During this period, eight individuals have served as 'Secretary of State for Education.' Gillian Keegan's appointment as the fifth Education Secretary within four months (Simpson, 2022) and the three appointments made in July 2022 during Boris Johnson's premiership (ITV NEWS, 2022) demonstrate this continual flux. Events like George Floyd's murder and the death of Queen Elizabeth II introduced additional political dimensions as a backdrop at various stages of this study. My visible and invisible identities may have facilitated the exploration of emergent themes. This proved advantageous in building trust with participants, who often shared similar experiences of marginalisation. The study's aim was not generalisability but to provide an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences, however there was some homogeneity across participant cases due to shared identities and experiences around the PE. The 'Ineffable' domain of the SIP framework demonstrated how aspects of the parents' experiences may remain uncapturable due to their embodied nature and the constraints of the research design.

6.3 – Recommendations

Below are some recommendations based on the research findings for parents, schools, teachers and related practitioners. Additionally, there are some suggestions for national level policymakers and other SEs stakeholders. As they are intended for these audiences in mind, they are listed in bullet points to support accessibility and readability.

6.3.1 – For parents

- **Continue to recognise your expertise, rights and collective strength** as knowledgeable partners in the decision-making around your child's experiences at school.
- **Continue to build relationships with other parents** facing similar experiences in order to grow your networks of support and collective advocacy
- **Meet with other parents to explore the school's behaviour policy** and ask specific questions around how it is implemented practically with examples. Enquire how school level policy is developed and how parents might have opportunities to co-construct it. This should be a supportive discussion and should be done preferably when your child starts at the school.
- **Speak with other parents about any changes in school's perception of your child and/or their behaviour.** This can include receiving regular phone calls and being asked to attend meetings. It can also include your child receiving a suspension or other disciplinary action. Continue to take a partnership approach and work with your child's school to discuss these changes. Draw upon your holistic knowledge of your child as well as their life outside of school.
- **Where police are involved, continue to work in partnership** to collectively find the best ways to support your child. Engage with other parents to question the necessity of any police-involvement with your child, particularly on school premises. Remain knowledgeable of any potential communication between the police and your child's school.

- **In the eventuality of a permanent school exclusion familiarise yourself** with current national policy guidance to ensure your parental rights are upheld. Collaborate with other parents and/or advocacy groups regarding meetings held with your child's school or ask for support in understanding its relevance.

- **Where possible collaborate with other parents to take a legal representation to meetings** pertaining to a potential PE. If possible, ask for a note-taker and/or minutes which will support you in making informed decisions around your child after the meeting has ended. Request further meetings or clarifications when unsure.

- **Remain aware of your right to be involved in decision-making** around your child's PE. Discuss with other parents and avoid agreeing immediately to any suggested course of action. It is preferable that you request periods of time during the process to consider the next course of action. Ask questions around what these changes will mean practically, seen as an everyday experience - for yourself, your child and family.

- **During any PE process, grow collective strategies of care by actively connecting with other parents** and your own personal and/or professional networks of support. Continue to rely on supportive strategies to actively maintain your own wellbeing. Seek to further build and create individual and collective strategies for support during what is likely to be an increased time of stress.

- **Ask the school what they can do to ensure your health and personal safety is safeguarded.** Seek community support and healthcare professionals to ensure your wellbeing is prioritised, especially if you are noticing any physiological and/or psychological responses due to your exclusion experiences.

6.3.2 – For schools, teachers and related practitioners

This includes any other staff working with children and their families in, with or around the school setting.

- **Remain aware of the likely life-changing and potentially traumatic impacts of a PE** for the parent, their child, family and community.
- **Consider how a PE decision may put parents and children at-risk of additional emotional and physical harm.** Further familiarise yourself with concepts of familial displacement and the ways in which risk of criminal exploitation may increase post-PE.
- **Question the necessity of police involvement in relation to a pupil's behaviour** and understand the repercussions of this. Ensure parents are immediately informed and have an opportunity to be present if police interact with a pupil on school premises.
- **Give parents time to organise support or advocacy in meetings** which are part of any school exclusions process. Facilitate this and work in partnership with parents to provide formal decisions in writing, giving time for these to be reflected upon or questioned after meetings.
- **Co-create school policy with parents and their children**, particularly that which may cover behaviour. As a result, remain proactive about preventing permanent school exclusion wherever possible.
- **Acknowledge parents as highly knowledgeable** of their life experiences and children's unique qualities. Ask what is being doing to utilise this expertise.
- **Remain responsible and accountable to and for parents, their children and local community** if a permanent school exclusion is administered. This is especially important in the days and months after you have made this decision. Ask what practical physical and emotional support remains available for these parents if you are unable to provide this.
- **Engage in interdisciplinary approaches which consider the impact of a SE on a parents' physical and/or psychological health.** Liaise with community healthcare professionals to remain knowledgeable and open to learning more about embodied experiences.

- **Strengthen and foster relationships with parents through partnership decision-making** and strengths-based approaches to support their children and prevent all forms of official and unofficial PE.
- **Utilise intersectional lenses and remain in continual discussion** with parents, children and their communities about their experiences. Embrace anti-racist, anti-classist and anti-ableist pedagogies.
- **Facilitate support groups for parents and communities** particularly in relation to experiences around SEs. Utilise their skills and knowledge to feedback into curriculum and pedagogical approach.

6.3.3 – For national level policymakers and stakeholders

- **Acknowledge the life changing and potentially traumatic impact of receiving a PE** on a parent their child/ren their families and communities. This includes considering familial displacement, physiological and psychological issues or other long-term impacts akin to those which occur after disaster events.
- **Consider the complex non-linear ways PEs may impact society** and the purposefulness of their continued existence. Explore their impact on other systems such as healthcare and housing. Therefore, consider their efficacy and explore alternative means to address the issue of behaviour in schools.
- **Address the ways in which national school exclusions policy and guidance** may be interpreted or enacted at school level in ways which disproportionately impact some parents and their wider networks.
- **Provide greater scrutiny around school behaviour policies** and support schools to embed consistent and equitable practice to support staff, pupils and that which remains accountable to parents.
- **Explore how mechanisms of racism, classism and ableism impact the way in which national school exclusions statutory guidance is experienced** by parents whose children are being permanently excluded.

- **Understand and utilise lived experiences of parents** whose children have been permanently excluded to inform policy development at national level and/or instruct schools to utilise these when developing school policy.
- **Use intersectional lenses when creating policy guidance** around mental health and behaviour in schools. Resist problematising disabled individuals and their families by taking strengths-based approaches. Consider the complexity of various family structures and how this can be utilised.
- **Ask what is being done to utilise the unique lived experiences of working class and/or Black and Asian parents** whose children have been permanently excluded from school. In addition, ask what is being done to avoid stigmatisation of disabled and/or neurodivergent individual.

6.4 – Thesis summary

This thesis has provided an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of parents whose children have been permanently excluded (PEx) from school. The study's findings reveal the multifaceted ways in which permanent exclusion (PE) impacted the parents and their families. Chapter one introduced and contextualised the study amidst ongoing media, public, and political interest in school exclusions (SEs). Chapter two reviewed SEs policy and literature contexts, before presenting a framework designed to support in-depth and interdisciplinary exploration of this complex and evolving area of study. Chapter three further justified the creation and introduction of the SIP framework. The SIP has provided a way of integrating the study's theoretical underpinnings, critical realist phenomenology, with an interpretative phenomenological analysis methodological approach. This integration facilitated inter- and transdisciplinary exploration of the key themes arising from the analysis of parents' experiences in chapter four.

Chapter five examined these themes through the layers of the SIP. Findings demonstrate that the PE was experienced as a life-changing seismic event, akin to a natural disaster. Seismic ripples then reverberated through the parents' lives, altering them in non-linear, temporal, and spatial ways. Another significant finding was that the PE process and interactions within it created distorted, misrecognised reflections of parents, which they frequently experienced as discriminatory due to racism, ableism, and classism. However, the parents' agentic selves were highlighted, exploring their individual and collective responses.

This demonstrated how parents resisted and shaped their complex experiences by responding to structurally determinative discourse contained within school exclusion policy and practice, leading to positive changes despite numerous negative experiences.

Overall, the findings underscore the importance of valuing the knowledge held within embodied parental experience. The study suggests that when this knowledge is valued and utilised, it can enhance understanding of their children, thus challenging the frequently deficit narratives often associated with families in the context of PE. The limitations of this study were acknowledged, also through the exploration of the 'Ineffable' domain, which recognises that some of parents' embodied experiences may remain uncapturable.

Findings suggested further exploration of temporal and spatial conceptualisations which would require revisiting findings in their entirety rather than taking each layer of the SIP separately. Researcher bias was acknowledged, especially in light of concurrent global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the study offers a rich, and unique, contextualised understanding of this complex issue. Recommendations for practice include involving parents in national and school-based policy development, questioning police involvement in schools in relation to SEs policy and adopting intersectional lenses in understanding and working with parents and children.

Future research should continue to explore the embodied experiences of parents and children in the context of school exclusions, particularly through the lens of intersectionality. This study has illuminated the participants' approaches to parenting, which included co-parenting and kinship care. It suggests that schools explore how these broader parenting roles could be better recognised and included in their approaches to SEs, challenging the narrow definitions of 'parent' as seen in school exclusions policy used as sampling inclusion criteria. Thus, parenting may be seen as a constellation, and further research might focus specifically on this area in relation to SEs. Additionally, the need to investigate the long-term physiological and psychological impacts of exclusion on families is highlighted. This was seen when considering how a PE may be experienced as akin to a natural disaster, involving displacement or significant disruption to family structure and life.

Lastly, on reflection this thesis contributes to the ongoing discourse on PEs, providing a platform for the voices of those often marginalised within public and policy-related debates. The SIP framework offers a potential methodological tool for future research covering similar themes.

The SIP framework also offers a way of further questioning epistemic injustices within educational research. Furthermore, the findings of this thesis call for a serious re-evaluation of SEs and specifically PEs policies and practices, advocating for an educational system in England that recognises the inherent value and expertise of parents and families in supporting their children's educational journeys. Given the potential for the ripples of a PE to result in loss of life or other traumatic experience, the urgency of addressing these issues in educational policy cannot be understated.

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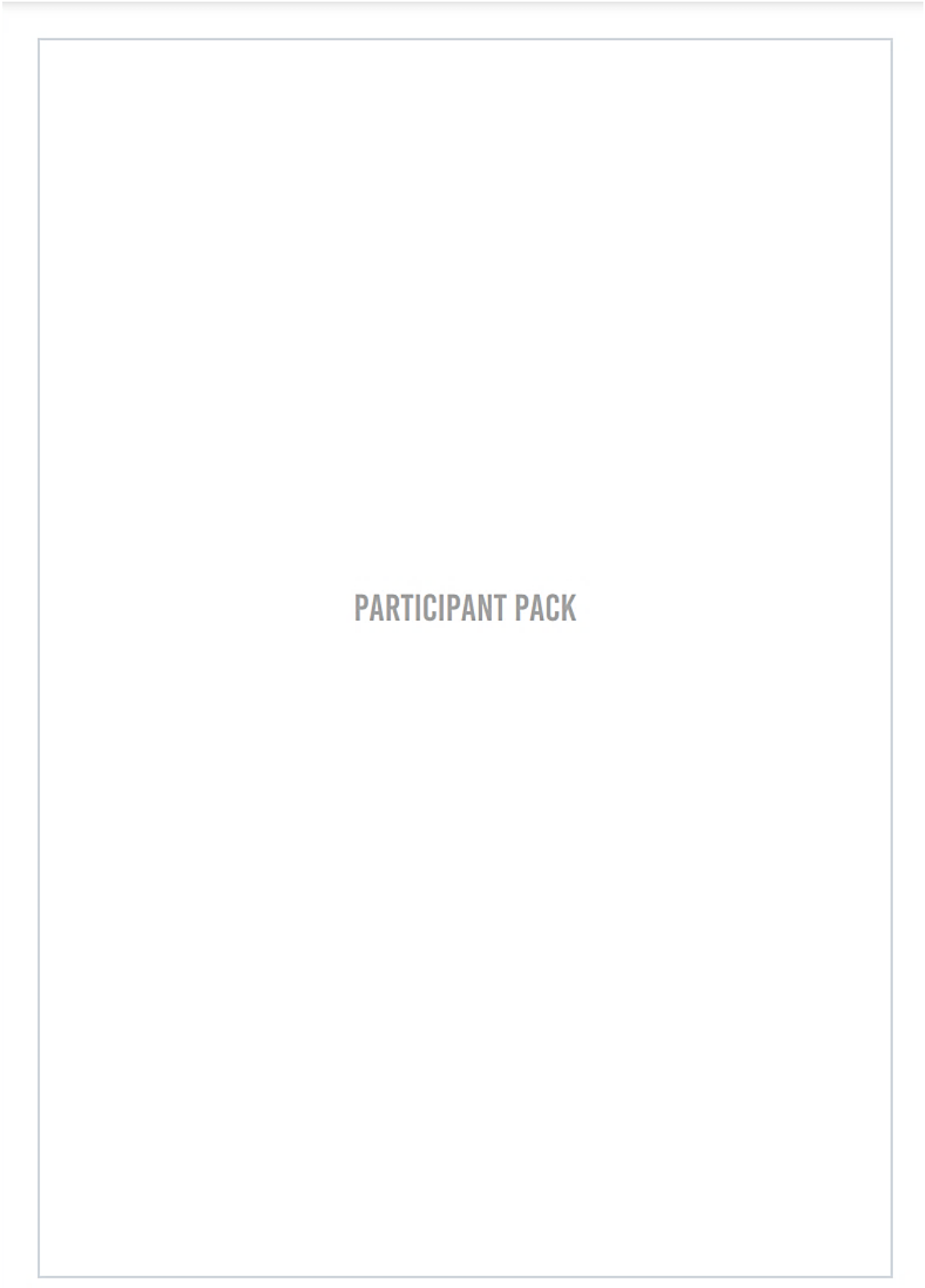
Appendix I – Participant Pack

This pack was given to participants before the pre-interview to support in deciding whether to participate in the research study.



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Who is carrying out this research?

My name is Ama Agyeman and I am a researcher studying for a Doctorate in Education at London Metropolitan University. I am inviting you to take part in a research study exploring the: **Lived-experiences of parents whose children have been 'permanently' excluded from a mainstream school.**

The research is being supervised by Professor Diana Stirbu and Dr Mabel Encinas. The study has gained ethical approval by London Metropolitan University Research Ethics Committee.

Would you like to take part in research?

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study. However, before you decide you will need to understand what is being researched and what it will involve for you. I can read the next sections to you if you would like. You should keep a copy of this form for your records.

Please take some time to read this information sheet carefully and ask any questions before making your decision. If you accept you will need to fill out a consent form.

***

What is the purpose of the research?

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of parents whose child has been 'permanently' excluded from a mainstream provision. The aim is to understand your personal experiences of your child's exclusion and to gain insight into this phenomenon.

What will I be required to do?

If you choose to be a participant in the study you will be asked to take part in an individual interview at a safe place and time convenient to you. This will be in accordance with Government social distancing guidance[1]. We will be able to discuss the options for safe location of interview if you decide to take part in this study. The interview should last 45 mins – 90 mins and will be audio recorded. The interview will involve questions relating to your experiences of your child/ren's permanent exclusion.

How will you manage this data?

The audio recording will then be transcribed anonymously – written out in full from the recording with any personal identifiable information removed. The recording and information will be kept securely and confidentially. Only anonymised information will be available to supervisors and examiners. Anonymised quotes will be used in the report of this research. The audio recording will be destroyed after completion of the Doctorate [2].

Continued overleaf

[1] **For more information please visit** - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do

[2] **For more information please visit** - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation

Will the research allow other people to identify my family and I?

Anonymisation will be carried out in line with UK Data Service guidance[3]. This will mean identifiable information personal to you will be removed for example names, and precise locations. However, given your individual experiences it is possible that anyone who knows you personally may be able to identify you through the specific details you might provide. This identification should only apply to those you know well or have been previously heard your experiences.

Will the information I provide remain confidential?

The information you provide will be anonymised. However, if you were to say anything during the interview that may indicate that you or another person were at risk of harm, I might have to pass on this information for safeguarding reasons. Where appropriate I would always aim to discuss this with you first.

Do I have to participate in this research?

No, you can choose if you would like to participate. You are not obliged to say yes. If you agree to take part, you will need to complete a consent form. You can withdraw your consent at any time during the study, including during the interview itself. You do not need to provide a reason for withdrawal.

Are there any risks involved in taking part?

During the interview I will be asking you to share some personal experiences linked to the exclusion of your child. Depending on your circumstances recalling these experiences may be upsetting and could cause you distress. I have prepared an interview schedule which I invite you to look over. The schedule is rough guidance and conversation may deviate slightly. The interview will be held in a quiet, safe space where we can follow current Government guidelines on COVID-19. I would like to remind you that you do not need to share anything you would prefer not to. You can also end the interview at any time. You will be given debriefing information afterwards.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The experiences of parents and their child/ren's 'permanent' exclusion from mainstream school is an under-researched area. Your thoughts and opinions are valuable in shedding light on how school exclusions are experienced by parents like yourself. I will be writing up the findings in my final report. I would like to explain the findings once the research is completed, if you are happy for me to contact you please indicate this on the consent form below.

***

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

If you have any questions or queries regarding the above information, please do not hesitate to contact me:

Ama Agyeman
Email: [redacted]

If you have concerns about the research you can also contact:
Professor Diana Stirbu – Email: [redacted]

[3] https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/manage-data/legal-ethical/anonymisation.aspx

CONSENT FORM

LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Please tick all that apply:

The process and purpose of the study has been explained to me	☐
I understand the purpose of the study	☐
I would like to participate in the study	☐
I know that I can withdraw from the study at any given time **and** I know that I do not need to give a reason for withdrawal	☐
I understand that I will share information on the pre-interview sheet	☐
I understand that the interview will be audio recorded **and** I understand that any information I provide will be kept securely and confidentially	☐
I understand that I am able to request to view the findings **and** discuss them once the study has been completed	☐
I have the information sheet and contact details if I have any further queries	☐

Name: .....

Signature: .....

Date: .....

PRE-INTERVIEW INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANT

LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Date: .....

The lived-experiences of parents whose children have been 'permanently' excluded from a mainstream school.

Information about participant:

Participant number: ..... [as assigned by researcher]

Participant age: .....

Gender Identity: .....

Ethnic Identity: .....

Participant occupation: .....

Parental relationship to child: ..... [at time of exclusion]

Your preferred pseudonym: .....

Information about participant's child:

Age when last 'permanently' excluded: .....

Time since last 'permanent' exclusion: ..... [to date]

Total amount of 'permanent' exclusions received: ..... [to date]

Total amount of fixed period exclusions received: ..... [to date]

Gender Identity: .....

Current age: .....

Current education or employment status: .....

Preferred pseudonym for your child: .....

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Exploring the lived-experiences of parents whose children have been 'permanently' excluded from a mainstream school.

Pre-Interview: ☐ Pre-questionnaire ☐ Consent to interview ☐ Consent to audio recording

A. Family

1. Can you tell me a little bit about your family and yourself?
2. Could you tell me about your [child] who you are here to talk about today?

[Prompts – family composition, ethnicity, occupation etc.]

B. Events leading to the exclusion

1. Can you tell me about the events which led to [child]'s last 'permanent' exclusion from their mainstream school?
2. Could you tell me about any involvement you had with [child]'s school at this time?
3. Can you tell me about any official paperwork or guidance you received at the time?
4. What effect did your experiences have for you?

[Prompts – fixed period exclusions, meetings, policy guidance, mental and/or physical health]

C. Events since the exclusion

1. Can you tell me a bit about what has happened since [child]'s last exclusion?

[Prompts – personal experience, for [child], for family], optional: COVID-19]

D. Reflecting on the experience

1. Why do you think [child] was excluded?
2. What might have made a difference? [For yourself, for [child]]
3. What did make a difference? [For yourself, for [child]]
4. In which ways have your experiences of [child]'s exclusion impacted on you?

[Prompts – support, policy, guidance, school, family, identity, personal experience]

E. Future

1. What would you see as a positive development?
2. What are your hopes for the future?

[Prompts – support, school, family, identity, personal experience]

F. Anything else

1. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences that we have not already discussed?
2. What are your experiences of this research process [optional: COVID-19]?

[Prompts – anything else that feels important?]

Post-interview: ☐ Participant Debrief form

LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF FORM

Exploring the lived-experiences of parents whose children have been permanently excluded from a mainstream school.

Thank you for taking part in this research study. Your experiences are valuable and your participation will support further understanding of the experiences of parents whose children have been 'permanently' excluded from a mainstream provision.

The information you have provided during this interview will now be transcribed anonymously. It will then be written up, before being included in the final research findings. If you would like to receive a copy of the final research findings or if you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me [the researcher]:

Ama Agyeman [Researcher – Doctorate in Education]

London Metropolitan University

Email: [redacted]

Tel.: [redacted]

***

If you would like further advice or support regarding any of the issues discussed, please contact:

Just For Kids Law [Registered Charity]

site: https://justforkidslaw.org/contact-us

Action for Children [Registered Charity]

Web: https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/support-for-parents/support-near-you/

Parents Helpline:

Tel: 0808 802 5544

You may also wish to read more about school exclusions procedures:

Government: https://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions

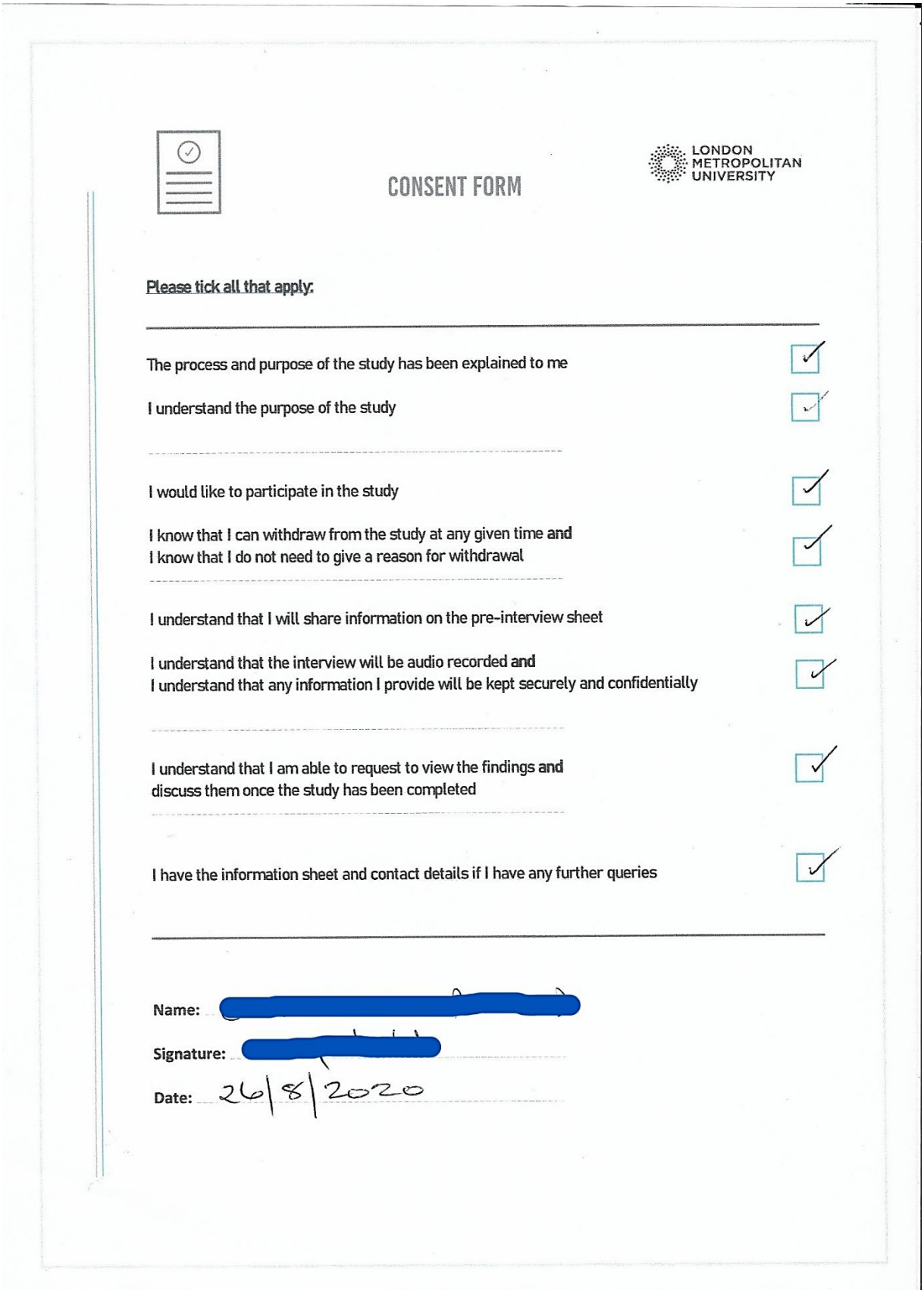
Independent Advisor of Special Education Advice [IPSEA]-Charity:
https://www.ipsea.org.uk/pages/category/exclusion-from-school

This research is supervised by Professor Diana Stirbu who can be contacted by email:

[redacted]

END

Appendix II – Example of signed participant consent form



CONSENT FORM

LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Please tick all that apply:

The process and purpose of the study has been explained to me ☑

I understand the purpose of the study ☑

I would like to participate in the study ☑

I know that I can withdraw from the study at any given time **and**
I know that I do not need to give a reason for withdrawal ☑

I understand that I will share information on the pre-interview sheet ☑

I understand that the interview will be audio recorded **and**
I understand that any information I provide will be kept securely and confidentially ☑

I understand that I am able to request to view the findings **and**
discuss them once the study has been completed ☑

I have the information sheet and contact details if I have any further queries ☑

Name: [redacted]

Signature: [redacted]

Date: 26/8/2020

Appendix III – Notification of ethical approval

Ethics application approved - EdD student Ama Agyeman (12043089)

Rossana Perez-del-Aguila [redacted]

Fri 5.6.20 14:13

To:Ama Agyeman [redacted];Research London Met Uni <research@londonmet.ac.uk>

Cc:Diana Stirbu [redacted];Mabel Encinas [redacted]>

3 attachments (2 MB)

Participant information sheet - June 1.pdf; AA Research Ethics Form - 1 June Revised- Approved 5.5.20.docx; Condensed proposal II.pdf;

Dear Ama

Thank you for revising your Ethics Application.

This application is now approved. I am copying the Research Office for their records.

Hopefully you will be able to start your fieldwork soon with the guidance of your supervisors and considering the COVID-19 context. The quality of your application reflects your hard work and understanding of ethical issues.

I would like to end with a quote that I heard in an Ethics event that I attended this week:

'thinking is not optional' (2011, p.4) *Code of Ethics and Conduct* and *Code of Human Research Ethics*,

All the best with your research
Rossana

--

Dr Rossana Perez del Aguila, MSc, PhD, PG Cert AP, FHEA
Senior Lecturer in Education Studies | Course Leader Doctorate in Education. | Head of Postgraduate Research Studies. Chair of Research Ethics Review Panel (RERP) for the School of Social Professions.

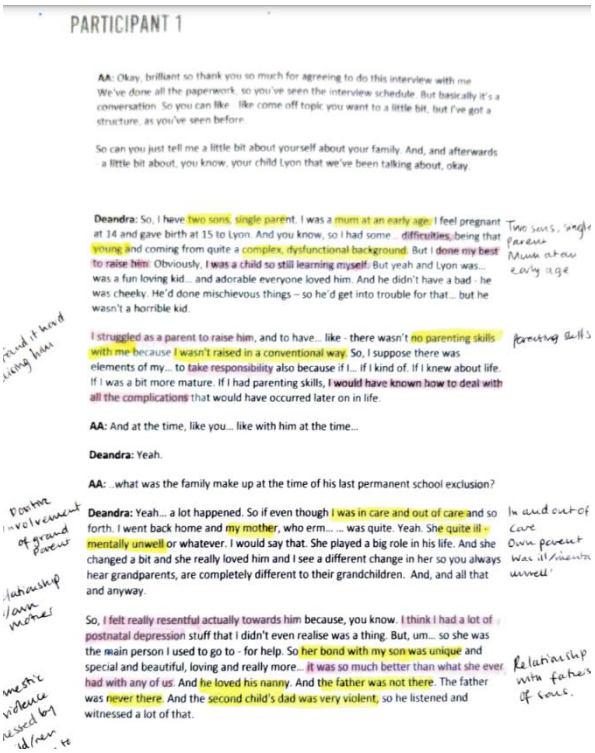
London Metropolitan University | Room TM1-35 | Tower Building | 166-220 Holloway Road | London N7 8DB

T: +44 (0)20 7133 4032

Appendix IV - Excerpts from data analysis process

Below are excerpts from 'Deandra' initial noting process, analysis tables – list of final themes. This represents an example of the process I followed for each of the 6 cases

1. Initial noting – emotional and descriptive highlighting



PARTICIPANT 1

AA: Okay, brilliant so thank you so much for agreeing to do this interview with me We've done all the paperwork, so you've seen the interview schedule. But basically it's a conversation. So you can like... like come off topic you want to a little bit, but I've got a structure, as you've seen before.

So can you just tell me a little bit about yourself about your family. And, and afterwards a little bit about, you know, your child Lyon that we've been talking about, okay.

Deandra: So, I have two sons, single parent. I was a mum at an early age. I feel pregnant at 14 and gave birth at 15 to Lyon. And you know, so I had some difficulties, being that young and coming from quite a complex, dysfunctional background. But I done my best to raise him. Obviously, I was a child so still learning myself. But yeah and Lyon was... was a fun loving kid... and adorable everyone loved him. And he didn't have a bad - he was cheeky. He'd done mischievous things – so he'd get into trouble for that... but he wasn't a horrible kid.

Two sons, single Parent Mum at an early age

I struggled as a parent to raise him, and to have... like - there wasn't no parenting skills with me because I wasn't raised in a conventional way. So, I suppose there was elements of my... to take responsibility also because if I... if I kind of. If I knew about life. If I was a bit more mature. If I had parenting skills, I would have known how to deal with all the complications that would have occurred later on in life.

Parenting skills

AA: And at the time, like you... like with him at the time...

Deandra: Yeah.

AA: ...what was the family make up at the time of his last permanent school exclusion?

Deandra: Yeah... a lot happened. So if even though I was in care and out of care and so forth. I went back home and my mother, who erm... ... was quite. Yeah. She quite ill - mentally unwell or whatever. I would say that. She played a big role in his life. And she changed a bit and she really loved him and I see a different change in her so you always hear grandparents, are completely different to their grandchildren. And, and all that and anyway.

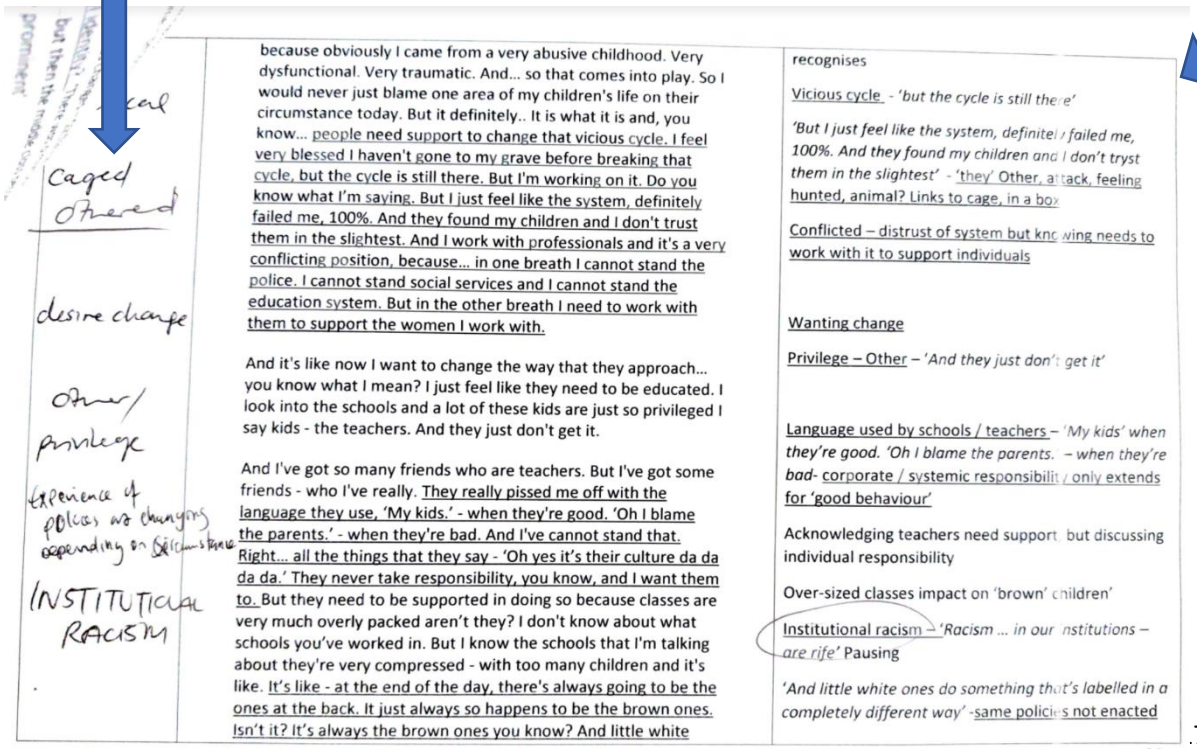
In and out of care Own parent was ill/mentally unwell

So, I felt really resentful actually towards him because, you know. I think I had a lot of postnatal depression stuff that I didn't even realise was a thing. But, um... so she was the main person I used to go to - for help. So her bond with my son was unique and special and beautiful, loving and really more... it was so much better than what she ever had with any of us. And he loved his nanny. And the father was not there. The father was never there. And the second child's dad was very violent, so he listened and witnessed a lot of that.

Relationship with father of four.

2. Exploratory comments following IPA stylistic guidance on the right

3. Emergent themes on left



Caged / Othered

desire change

Other / privilege

Experience of police as changing depending on circumstance

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

because obviously I came from a very abusive childhood. Very dysfunctional. Very traumatic. And... so that comes into play. So I would never just blame one area of my children's life on their circumstance today. But it definitely.. It is what it is and, you know... people need support to change that vicious cycle. I feel very blessed I haven't gone to my grave before breaking that cycle, but the cycle is still there. But I'm working on it. Do you know what I'm saying. But I just feel like the system, definitely failed me, 100%. And they found my children and I don't trust them in the slightest. And I work with professionals and it's a very conflicting position, because... in one breath I cannot stand the police. I cannot stand social services and I cannot stand the education system. But in the other breath I need to work with them to support the women I work with.

And it's like now I want to change the way that they approach... you know what I mean? I just feel like they need to be educated. I look into the schools and a lot of these kids are just so privileged I say kids - the teachers. And they just don't get it.

And I've got so many friends who are teachers. But I've got some friends - who I've really. They really pissed me off with the language they use, 'My kids.' - when they're good. 'Oh I blame the parents.' - when they're bad. And I've cannot stand that. Right... all the things that they say - 'Oh yes it's their culture da da da da.' They never take responsibility, you know, and I want them to. But they need to be supported in doing so because classes are very much overly packed aren't they? I don't know about what schools you've worked in. But I know the schools that I'm talking about they're very compressed - with too many children and it's like. It's like - at the end of the day, there's always going to be the ones at the back. It just always so happens to be the brown ones. Isn't it? It's always the brown ones you know? And little white

recognises

Vicious cycle - *'but the cycle is still there'*

'But I just feel like the system, definitely failed me, 100%. And they found my children and I don't tryst them in the slightest' - 'they' Other, attack, feeling hunted, animal? Links to cage, in a box

Conflicted – distrust of system but knowing needs to work with it to support individuals

Wanting change

Privilege – Other – *'And they just don't get it'*

Language used by schools / teachers – *'My kids' when they're good. 'Oh I blame the parents. – when they're bad-* corporate / systemic responsibility only extends for 'good behaviour'

Acknowledging teachers need support but discussing individual responsibility

Over-sized classes impact on 'brown' children'

Institutional racism → *'Racism ... in our institutions – are rife'* Pausing

'And little white ones do something that's labelled in a completely different way' -same policies not enacted

Appendix V - Deandra table of themes with illustrative quotes

Themes	Page / line	Illustrative key words / phrases
Complex personal experiences – familial setup	P1, L7-9	*single parent* *mum at an early age.* *I had some… difficulties, being that young and coming from quite a complex, dysfunctional background*
Positive experiences – recollections of son	P1, L11	*fun loving kid… and adorable everyone loved him*
Finding parenting challenging	P1, L14	*struggled as a parent to raise him,*
Questioning of self – taking responsibility, guilt	P1, L16 - 18	*If I knew about life. If I was a bit more mature. If I had parenting skills, I would have known how to deal with all the complications that would have occurred later on in life*
Experiences of care system	P1, L22	*I was in care and out of care*
Reflections on own mother's mental health	P1, L23-24	*my mother, who erm… … was quite. Yeah. She quite ill - mentally unwell or whatever*
Relationship with mother changing	P1, L26	*grandparents, are completely different to their grandchildren*
Resentment towards son	P1, L28	*felt really resentful*
Postnatal depression	P1, L29	*Postnatal depression*
Co-parenting (grandparent)	P1, L31-32	So her bond with my son was unique and special and beautiful, loving
Sadness	P1, L31-32	*really more… it was so much better than what she ever had with any of us*
Domestic violence	P1, L33	*child's dad was very violent*
Trauma	P2, L37-38	*But traumatic things had occurred*

Bereavement of mother	P2, L38	*mum died.*
Loss/grief of coparent - impact	P2, L39	*things went completely shit for all of us.*
Son running away – missing, worry	P2, L44	*he'd run away*
Displacement – school exclusion	P2, L44 – 46	*He'd been so there's so many times from school, he got moved to another school. They excluded him immediately… immediately… …. And he just run away and I used to drive him to school*
Doing best	P2, L47	*Put little notes to encourage him*
Onset – fixed term exclusions – primary school	P2, L66-67	*because it started in the primary school*
Otherness – white, middle class	P2, L70	*Very is white middle class.* *Very dominating white women*
Policies – seeing others have power to change policy (feeling disempowered)	P2, L71	*who just kind of got involved with the school and started changing policies and rules*
Feeling judged and inferior	P3, L73-74	*they were so condescending* *pointy and judgy and exclusive with their little groups*
Not seen as intellectual	P3, L85-86	*I didn't even know how to be in a room with academics or people that portrayed to be intellectual*
Feeling isolated, judged as a result of childhood traumas	P3, L86-87 L88	*I felt very inferior, and I felt very judged.* *very like – like judged* *suffering my childhood traumas*
Feeling directed, isolated, excluded	P3, L89 L92	*don't feel like I was included I just got told* *never felt like I was part of that world*
Othered	P3, L92-93	*'Oh she's the one with the naughty kid.'*

Special educational needs (SEN)	P3, L98	*they wanted to statement him*
Race and class	P3, L101	*in a world of all white middle-class people*
Son as extension of self / own identity	P3, L101 - 102	*and me - the subject, you know, and my son.*
Discomfort – emotional response	P3, L102	*it was just like, I don't like this. I don't like the vibe, I don't like any part of it*
Feeling like an animal	P3, L103	*I feel like I'm in a cage here and I'm being pointed at*
Misrepresentation in documentation	P3, L104	*later the reports from the psychologist and it was so bad*
Trauma -relating to experience with school psychologist	P3, L108	*And that was traum…*
Anger, fury – emotional	P3, L108, 110	*I was just so furious, rage*
Trapped – unable to process	P3, L109	*I had nowhere to go with it*
Racial, class, gender identity – judged, Othered **[split-self – own perception vs what ed. system sees – identity]**	P3, L111 - 114	*They don't want to actually say, 'Well, we're failing as a system.' Let's point the finger at the mother. Let's point it at the single black mother or the mixed-race, mother. He's got no father figure there and living in poverty. Let's point the finger…*
Lack of support, care	P4, L118 - 120	*it could have been - had someone given a shit. If somebody wanted to involve me, they would have kind of helped me*

Trapped within 'box' - statistic	P4, L121-122	*I was a statistic, they put me in a box with my son and that was that.*
Mental health used as 'ammunition'	P4, L127	*ammunition for them is that… I did disclose.*
Coping with grief /trauma/ domestic violence/abuse	P4, L129 - 30	*I'd lost my mum; trying to process like … my trauma; hitting rock bottom; not coping, just being beaten up by…; really traumatic relationship*
Multiple factors around time of exclusions	P4, L133 - 134	*two children by myself with no money. It was awful. It was the most horrific time for me actually around them times.*
Challenges with memory recall / trauma	P4, L137	*and utter… in fact, that was before*
Suicidal	P4, L144	*just kind of give up… … I give up; mental health was completely at breaking point.*
Knowing own moral code – infringement by school	P5, L167	*I think it was unethical.*
Loss of son to residential care post exclusion – geographical displacement	P5, L177-178	*they took him up North; put them in this special school. It turned out to be a home*
Interaction with legal systems	P5, L182-183	*he got excluded from society from the age of 14. Right...and he was in a young offenders*
Fighting/violence – racism – sense of injustice	P5, L181-182	*for him fighting with a group of white racists. He went to prison. They didn't. A group against him*

Feeling excluded by society	P5, L187-188	*he's been told, basically by the system, 'You don't fit in our society. You are over there. You are a bad person.*
Resistance as reframing narrative – returning to positive recollections of son **[split-self – own perception vs what ed. system sees – identity]**	P5, L189-193	*But this boy is amazing. This boy is fun to be with. He's got a good energy. He laughs. Yeah he wasn't academic. He didn't want to sit and write. He wasn't that person but he was creative. But you know… all of that, 'Bye, bye. You're a criminal. You're excluded from us. You're not good enough to be in our space*.
Blaming 'them'	P6, L200	*totally hundred percent blame them for this*

Appendix VI – Child Q protest photos

Photos taken on the day by Ama Agyeman