

“Remember when...”

**Exploring the experiences of looked
after children and their carers in
engaging in collaborative
reminiscence**

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work, has been identified and that no material is included which has been submitted for any other award or qualification.

Signed:

Date:

Dedication:

To Keith and Rosie. May we continue to enjoy co-constructing and cherishing stories of our time together.

Acknowledgements:

Many thanks to the children and carers who took part in this research, for their time and their honesty.

A huge thanks also to Richard Parker, my supervisor; for his wisdom, insight, commitment and patient endurance!

Abstract

Background: 'As the corporate parent of children in care the State has a special responsibility for their wellbeing...That means being a powerful advocate for them to receive the best of everything and helping children to make a success of their lives' (Department for Education and Skills, 2006, p. 31). The background literature outlines the positive impact that life story work can have for children in care, although there is only a small amount of published research to support these claims and to date no research which explores both carers' and looked after children's experiences of engaging in collaborative memory work which forms an important component of a child's life story.

Aim: To explore the experience of foster carers and looked after children in carrying out collaborative memory work using the memory store approach and discover what their talk could tell us about how using the approach had affected: the carer-child relationship, child's self perception, aspects of the child's thinking and learning and their emotions.

Sample: Five carers who attended the memory store approach training and volunteered to take part in the research and four children in their care who also volunteered to take part.

Method: Two-three months after a one day training course for carers in using the memory store approach, semi-structured interviews were carried out with the five carers and a board game session took place with each of the children to explore their views. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to guide both the data generation and its subsequent analysis.

Findings: The talk of the carers and children suggested that using the memory store approach has a number of perceived benefits, emotionally, relationally and

in terms of the child's self perception and learning. A memory store approach model was postulated on the basis of these findings.

Conclusions: Using the memory store approach (or similar) should be a statutory requirement of foster carers, not only because of the potential benefits outlined in this study but also because of the ethical necessity to safeguard the memories of a child's time in care. Further research would be helpful to explore the general uptake of the memory store approach following the training as well as wider research into the experience of children undertaking particular forms of life story work with social workers/other professionals. The study also highlights the utility of games in research and educational psychology practice.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Thesis Overview

This chapter will outline the aims of the research and its context. Definitions and variations of life story will be explored as well as the current status of life story work in the UK for looked after children. Research into life story work will be briefly considered before an exploration of the origins of this study. I then go on to outline the development of the memory store approach and explain the distinctive contribution of this particular research, my epistemological position and reflexivity.

The next chapter (Literature Review, p. 30) gives an overview of the literature regarding life story work and carer-child reminiscence. I give a critical review of the existing literature before presenting the theoretical underpinnings of the present study and explain how the literature led me to my research questions.

The Methodology chapter (p. 73) outlines my research questions, the research paradigm I used and the rationale for this. I then outline the methods I used for generating and analysing the data. I go on to consider reflexivity and the ethical practices I put in place.

In the Findings chapter (p. 102) I describe my findings from the interviews with the carers and the sessions with the children. I outline the overall master and constituent themes that were discovered and then select themes with direct

relevance to the research questions. Mind maps and summary tables provide an overview of the themes before I go into more detail outlining my analysis of the participants' talk.

In the Discussion chapter (p. 165) I postulate a model for the memory store approach. I critically evaluate my methodology and discuss the implications of my findings, going on to discuss further research that it would be helpful to undertake in this area. The report concludes with the References (p. 201) and Appendices (p. 208).

1.2 Aim

The aim of my research is to explore carers' and children's experiences of engaging in a particular type of life story work, called the memory store approach. This approach was developed in Northumberland as part of my role as a Senior Specialist Educational Psychologist for looked after children. Using this approach, carers and children collaboratively collect, record and reflect on memories of their time together. Carers do not attempt to provide an account of the child's life from birth; they focus on collaboratively recording the time the child has spent in their care with them. I aim to explore both carers' and children's experiences of engaging with this approach and their perceptions of the effect that engaging with the approach has had upon:

1. The carer-child relationship
2. The child's self perception
3. Aspects of the child's thinking and learning
4. Their emotions

1.3 Context

In the UK there are currently over 80,000 looked after children and young people in public care. Nearly 60,000 children live with foster families (Foster Care Associates, 2011). Most children now come into care through experience of neglect or abuse (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2010) and because of the rejection they commonly experience and the lack of a secure attachment, many experience an emotional and motivational shut down. They struggle to believe they are lovable or acceptable and tend to report themselves as being hostile and aggressive, holding a negative view of themselves and the world (Baumeister, 2005; Bowlby, 1988; Cameron & Maginn, 2009; Rohner, 2004).

Children who grow up in care have a greatly increased chance of encountering negative life outcomes, as illustrated in Table 1.

Life outcomes	Increased likelihood
Requiring the help of mental health services	x4
Described as having special needs	x9
Misuse of alcohol and drugs	x7
Going to prison	x50
Becoming homeless	x60
Having children who are taken into care	x66

Table 1: Life outcomes for looked after children (Jackson & McParlin, 2006)

Advances in brain scanning technology indicate the physiological impact of neglect and abuse and highlight the power of early attachment relationships on the development of the brain (Perry, 2006). Interventions which help develop positive attachment relationships between carer and child are strongly related to

improved outcomes for vulnerable children. For looked after children, building new and positive relationships with carers who can give high levels of thoughtfulness, understanding and encouragement, alongside firm boundaries and high expectations, seems to be critical in helping these children start to develop new stories about themselves (Bruner, 2004; Cameron & Maginn, 2009; Freeman, Epston, & Lobovits, 1997).

1.4 Life story work

1.4.1 Defining life story work

Life story work is a term often used in social work practice to describe an approach that helps looked after and adopted children to talk and learn about their life experiences with the help of a trusted adult. It often involves recording relevant aspects of their past experience in the form of a book, film, audio record or computer file. According to Ryan and Walker (2007) it is not necessary for life story work to result in an end product, the process itself is the most important factor in yielding benefits for the child. However, an end product is of some benefit in that it becomes a useful record to refer to at a later date. Life story work should be ongoing as the child grows and develops (Rose & Philpot, 2005).

1.4.2 Variations in life story work

Life story work has been reported in a range of social care and health settings: with children (Aust, 1981; Beste & Richardson, 1981; Cook-Cottone & Beck, 2007; Fahlberg, 2006; Rose & Philpot, 2005; Ryan & Walker, 1985, 2007; Willis & Holland, 2009); with people who have learning disabilities (Hewitt, 1998, 2000;

Kristoffersen, 2004); with older people on medical wards and in nursing homes (Clarke, Hanson, & Ross, 2003; Hansebo & Kihlgren, 2000) and with adults who were brought up in an institution (Cozza, 2006).

Evidence suggests that there is little consistency, even within UK Local Authorities, as to how life story work is carried out with looked after children, and there are wide variations in terms of what constitutes life story work (Baynes, 2008; J. Harper, 1996; Willis & Holland, 2009).

Life story work has been carried out by a variety of professionals, including: social workers, family placement workers, therapists, clinical psychologists and carers. Different approaches and types of involvement are described throughout the literature. There are variations in the level of participation which the child experiences. For some children a life story book is created for them and presented to them, with the child having little involvement in its creation. For others there may be little in terms of an end product but a pile of messy drawings may represent a meaningful and important piece of work with a child (Baynes, 2008). The literature describes methods that are more in-depth and therapeutic, often carried out by psychologists or specialist social workers specifically trained in using such approaches (J. Harper, 1996; Henry, 2005; Rose & Philpot, 2005); others suggest less therapeutic, more factual approaches which carers have undertaken after some training (Beste & Richardson, 1981).

1.4.3 A case study

In one article by an adoption social worker (Nicholls, 2003) the story of Sandra (now 40) is told, which highlights the importance of keeping tangible memories safe.

Sandra was placed in the care system at two months old. She then spent the next eighteen months between the care of her birth mother and a number of different foster carers. After that she spent the next seven years moving from placement to placement. She then resided in a children's home for a year before being adopted at nine years old. The adopters were given copies of relevant court documents which gave some details about Sandra's past and were also given a postcard which listed her placements. The earliest photo Sandra has of herself is a school photo taken when she was five years old. It is not even an individual photo but one taken with her class. She has no knowledge of her birth family or tangible memories of what she was like as a baby to nine years old. She doesn't know when she learnt to walk, talk or ride a bike. All she knows is her mother's name and date of birth.

This case study highlights the importance of safeguarding tangible memories for looked after children. The conclusion that Sandra may have come to, because nobody made the effort to record and keep significant memories for her, is that she is of little worth; that she wasn't loved or cherished enough, perhaps that she wasn't good enough to be worth someone safeguarding memories of her childhood, thus adding to the feelings of rejection she already has to deal from her experiences (Rohner, 2004). These are devastating conclusions to come to in terms of one's self esteem and self worth. Conclusions, that in all likelihood, will have a negative impact on her internal working model; the beliefs and expectations that she develops about herself, others and the world around her (Baumeister, 2005; Bowlby, 1988).

More recent research suggests that there are still looked after children for whom few tangible memories from various placements are kept (Gallagher & Green, 2012; Willis & Holland, 2009). The Adoption and Children Act 2002 highlights the importance of the views of children and requires that on placement for adoption they must be given comprehensive information about themselves. The National Minimum Standards for adoption services (Department for Education, 2011) specifies that in preparing a child for adoption, his/her social worker should be gathering their views in relation to their life experiences to date, which should include constructing a life story book. Whilst this is in place for children being prepared for adoption, there is no statutory requirement for life story work to be carried out with children who are being fostered.

The CWDC Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Care (CWDC, 2011) sets out minimum standards of best practice for foster carers. Standard four, section 5d, outlines that foster carers should know how to enable children and young people to participate in record keeping and keep their own memorabilia. This is a step in the right direction but whilst there is an expectation that all foster carers complete the standards within 12 months of approval, there is still no statutory obligation to undertake any collaborative memory work with the child in their care.

Some practitioners argue for a more coherent, consistent model of life story work to be carried out (Cook-Cottone & Beck, 2007; Nicholls, 2003). A model for life story work that strives to create greater consistency is described by Nicholls (2003). A key part of this model is the preservation of children's memories using

memory boxes and age appropriate memory books which include as much anecdotal and factual information as possible from the child's time with that carer. A new memory book/box is started for each new temporary placement the child experiences. This aspect of the model is very similar to the memory store approach we have trained carers to use in Northumberland. A key difference is that in the model described by Nicholls (2003) the child is not an active participant. The work is done *for* the child as opposed to *with* the child, whereas the approach we have adopted in Northumberland is to train foster carers to engage *with* the child in collecting and reflecting on memories of their time together, using a person centred approach (Murray & Sanderson, 2007).

1.5 Research Background

1.5.1 Research into Life Story Work

Despite acceptance of the importance of life story work, numerous writers have acknowledged the lack of empirical research carried out into the use of life story work with looked after children (Connor, Sclare, Dunbar, & Elliffe, 1985; Davis, 1997; Mennen & O'Keefe, 2005; Rushton, 2004) and that there is a need for research evidence to substantiate the reports of the potential value of life story work (Cook-Cottone & Beck, 2007; Davis, 1997).

I carried out a systematic review (McKeown, Clarke, & Repper, 2006) of the literature which revealed the paucity of evaluative research conducted into Life Story Work with looked after children. Many of the articles retrieved looked at how life story work has been carried out, describing different practices (Aust, 1981; Beste & Richardson, 1981; Cant, 2008; Connor, et al., 1985; Fitzhardinge,

2008; J. Harper, 1996; Henry, 2005; Nicholls, 2003). Other articles were more theoretical, describing the theory underpinning life story work and telling one's own personal story (Cook-Cottone & Beck, 2007; Fitzhardinge, 2008; Treacher & Katz, 2001). Only five articles were found where a research process was explicitly outlined to explore/evaluate life story work with looked after children (Backhaus, 1984; Gallagher & Green, 2012; Happer, McCreadie, & Aldgate, 2006; Shotton, 2010; Willis & Holland, 2009) and only three of these articles explored life story work as the primary intervention (Backhaus, 1984; Shotton, 2010; Willis & Holland, 2009).

The picture that emerges is that there have been few studies focusing on life story work carried out with looked after children. More recent research has explored the views of teenagers and adults on their experiences of life story work (Gallagher & Green, 2012; Willis & Holland, 2009). My study (Shotton, 2010) gives insight into the carers' perspective of contributing to life story work though, to date, there has been no research which explores both the carers' and the children's experiences of participating in carer-child reminiscence which can form an integral part of life story work.

1.5.2 Research into carer-child reminiscence

I was unable to find any research on carer-child reminiscence specifically with looked after children but there has been wider research into this area. Studies have highlighted relationships between styles of carer-child reminiscing and attachment, emotional knowledge, effective emotional regulation, the development of self knowledge and learning (Fivush, Marin, McWilliams, &

Bohanek, 2009; Fivush & Sales, 2006; Fivush & Vasudeva, 2002; Reese, Leyva, Sparks, & Grolnick, 2010; Shotton, 2010; Van Bergen, Salmon, Dadds, & Allen, 2009; Wareham & Salmon, 2006).

There is also evidence that mutual reminiscence, through the creation and review of a life book within families of individuals with chronic, life-limiting illnesses, is effective in decreasing stress, and improving family communication. It also resulted in increasing the frequency of positive emotional experiences (Allen, 2009).

1.6 Origins, genesis of this study

This study came about through my role as a Senior Specialist Educational Psychologist for looked after children in Northumberland. Through consultation with a variety of professionals and carers it became apparent that there was a lack of training for foster carers in ways they could contribute to life story work with the children they look after.

To carry out life story work in a way which is helpful and meaningful takes time and training. To create a comprehensive account of an individual's life requires access to information from the child's past, much of which may not be readily available or easily accessible. It often requires writing letters to the child's birth parents or other carers asking for photographs and information which they may not respond to, if indeed they have the items requested (T. Ryan & Walker, 2007). It is a time consuming task to undertake.

Exploring a child's troubled past with them may result in the child experiencing some distress. They may experience flashbacks to times they wish to try to forget. There may be some regression in their behaviour and there may also be some transference of emotion where the child comes to blame the person who is doing this work with them, for the events he/she has experienced (Fahlberg, 2006; T. Ryan & Walker, 2007)

It was for these reasons that we felt that it was unethical to expect foster carers to create a full chronology of a child's life, in terms of the potential impact on the carer, the child and their relationship. The British Psychological Society's Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines (British Psychological Society, 2009) outlines how, in planning interventions or research, any threats to psychological wellbeing, health, values or dignity should be eliminated. Going beyond these ethical guidelines, our aim was not only to protect the participants from harm or loss but also to deliver positive benefits for the carers and the children (Hart & Bond, 1995; Willig, 2008).

We wanted to find an approach that would help to build the attachment relationship between carer and child, not place it in jeopardy. With this in mind we developed the memory store approach to life story work.

This approach encourages foster carers to record and reflect on memories of the child's time in their care, in collaboration with the child. In this way the focus is on the events and experiences they share with the child, recording things that happened, however large or small, that were significant to the child. The thinking behind it is not that it replaces the full chronology of a child's life, but that it forms

an important part of that story. There is still a need for the child to receive a full account of their life prior to their present placement, including the reasons for them coming into care. This role is most helpfully undertaken by a social worker, family placement worker or psychologist who has received training in carrying out life story work. Here then lies a division of labour, with the social worker/family placement worker/psychologist undertaking life story work with the child to help them understand the reasons for them coming into care as well as their life prior to the present foster placement, and the child's foster carer collaboratively recording and reflecting on the child's time in the current foster placement using the memory store approach.

1.7 Theoretical framework

The theory underlying the memory store approach is drawn largely from narrative psychology (Bruner, 2004; Freeman, et al., 1997) and Bowlby's work on attachment (1988). A central idea within narrative psychology is that we are continually engaged in interpreting and making sense of our experiences. The stories we have about our lives are created by linking particular events together in a meaningful way and making sense of them. The narrative is the thread that weaves the events together to form a coherent story (Morgan, 2000). We all have many stories that exist simultaneously about different aspects of our lives, e.g. stories about ourselves, our abilities, our relationships, our interests, our failures.

Through the experiencing of events and our interpretation of each event, stories are built up. In doing so, some events which fit with a dominant story are given

more attention than others which may be forgotten. A dominant story not only affects us in the present but also has implications for our future actions as it affects how we interpret events. An individual may have a story about themselves as being a failure at trying new things and subsequent events will be interpreted in the light of this dominant story. Narrative therapy seeks to help people explore the stories they have and develop and strengthen or 'thicken', alternative stories that are more helpful to them (Freeman, et al., 1997; Morgan, 2000).

The thinking behind the memory store approach was that it would offer the carers important opportunities to engage with the child and tell new stories together, sharing memories about their time together. From a narrative perspective, identity is seen as being continually reworked rather than being static. Bruner (2004) puts forward the idea that, '...we become the autobiographical narratives by which we tell about our lives' (page 694).

It was thought that using the memory store approach might strengthen or 'thicken' alternative stories (Freeman, et al., 1997, p. 50) that the child might have or develop about their lives. Stories where perhaps they had achieved at school or made a friend or overcome an area of difficulty. Our thinking was that through co-constructing and reviewing these stories with their carer, it would impact positively on the dominant stories they had about themselves, particularly thickening stories around their competencies and sense of belonging and in doing so provide them with counter narratives to less helpful stories.

We also thought that having the tangible evidence of these stories in an accessible format (the memory store book/box) would help to reinforce and thicken these counter narratives particularly when older, less helpful stories re-emerged, perhaps of being unacceptable and unlovable. Their foster carer could help them to recall the positive stories that they had recorded together through using the memory store approach. Words are ephemeral, they fade away and are hard to recall, but a book/box can be looked at again and again (Freeman, et al., 1997) thus providing opportunities for the child, either alone or with their carer, to re-experience the positive counter narratives contained therein.

Bowlby (1988) outlined how it was through the child's relationship with a significant carer that their internal working model developed. An internal working model contains all one's expectations and beliefs about the world, about oneself and about other people. The contrast between the beliefs and expectations of a child with a secure attachment and a child with an insecure attachment is shown in Table 2.

Beliefs and expectations of a child with a secure attachment	Beliefs and expectations of a child with an insecure attachment
I am good, wanted, worthwhile, competent, and lovable	I am bad, unwanted, worthless, helpless, and unlovable
Caregivers are responsive to my needs, sensitive, caring and trustworthy	Caregivers are unresponsive to my needs, insensitive, hurtful and untrustworthy
The world is safe and life is worth living	The world is dangerous and life is not worth living

Table 2: Contrast between internal working models (Bowlby, 1988)

Early experience of attachment relationships is seen as being fundamental in forming the template for this model but later relationships are also thought to be capable of shaping its development. Our thinking was that using the memory store approach would help to build a secure relationship between the carer and child and in doing so, have a positive impact on their beliefs about themselves, others and the world. Research highlights important associations between reminiscing and attachment (Fivush & Vasudeva, 2002; Laible, 2010; Wareham & Salmon, 2006). This idea is also supported by Allen's (2009) research into mutual reminiscence within families of older adults who had life limiting illnesses, where they found that constructing and reviewing a life book was effective in decreasing care giving stress and increasing family communication. It also resulted in increased positive emotional experiences.

1.7.1 The training

The memory store approach training has now been carried out twice per year over the past three years for foster and adoptive carers. It is an interactive day with many experiential activities (please see Appendix E for the power point slides). It helps the carers to appreciate emotionally what it would be like to lose important memories. It also brings about an appreciation of the importance of creating a coherent narrative in partnership with the child to accompany the photos/mementos that are chosen to go in their memory store. Principles and practical aspects of the approach are discussed as well as ideas for getting started. The emphasis is on encouraging the child to record the memories that are significant to him/her using their words.

No pressure is placed on the child to carry out any of the writing but they can if they wish. Spelling or grammatical mistakes are not corrected as then the child might come to perceive recording and reflecting on memories as a reading/writing exercise. A patient approach is suggested, not forcing the child if they lack motivation but continuing to take photos, collect important mementos and write the story behind them, ready for when they are interested. A useful approach that has been found is to leave the photos/mementos out on the kitchen table for the child to find and comment on. Often the child will then suggest themselves that these items should go into their memory store.

In both writing and reflecting on specific memories, carers are guided how to use an elaborative reminiscence approach (Fivush, 2007); using open ended questions, reflecting on internal states and following the child's lead, expanding on their utterances.

Other digital methods of recording and reflecting on memories are also explored. It is emphasised that whatever method is chosen, the important thing is the co-construction of stories and ensuring that the child can take the media with them when they move on from the placement.

1.7.2 Evaluating interventions and consulting with children

There is a need for rigour in evaluating the interventions suggested to carers, children and other professionals. It is important to ensure that interventions and practices have been researched and evaluated. There is also an ethical need to

explore the recipients' views of particular interventions, as article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that,

'Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views, the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.'

Over the past ten years there has been a number of initiatives, legislation and research which have all underlined the need for, and benefits of, involving children as fully as possible in matters affecting them and their views being taken into account.

One of the five key outcomes of the previous government's Every Child Matters (Department for Education and Skills, 2003) was for children and young people to make a positive contribution. In March 2005, the first Children's Commissioner for England was appointed to give children and young people a voice in government and public life. The Children's Plan, Building Brighter Futures (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2007) also emphasised the need for children to be listened to and their views to be taken into account. The current coalition government also places an emphasis on getting people involved and contributing, through their Big Society initiative. A part of which is for 16 year olds to undertake a non-military form of national service, which involves them in serving their local communities.

There is, therefore, a strong trend in thinking backed by legislation for ensuring we consult thoroughly with children and their carers, to explore their experience of any intervention that is carried out with them.

This increased emphasis on eliciting and understanding children's views has meant there has been a need for more qualitative approaches that focus on how individuals make sense of the world and experience events, to find out what it feels like to experience particular phenomena, e.g. how it feels to discover you are HIV positive. The focus of qualitative approaches is on the quality and texture of experience rather than the identification of cause and effect relationships (Willig, 2008).

This focus on experience seemed particularly appropriate for the research I wanted to undertake, as my aim was to develop a rich and deep understanding of carers' and children's experience of using the memory store approach. I was surprised by the lack of research in this area and felt troubled that very little research had been carried out where the looked after children themselves had been consulted about using a particular approach to life story work. From an ethical stance I felt it was the right thing to do, to invest time with children and their carers and try to develop as deep an understanding as I could of their experience of using the approach we were advocating.

My hope is that this research will help professionals and carers gain more insight into the experience of children and carers in using the memory store approach in order to inform and improve future practice and training in this area, both locally and further afield.

1.8 Distinctive contribution

In exploring the experiences of looked after children and their carers in using the memory store approach, this piece of research will make a distinctive contribution to this area. There has not yet been any research carried out into the experiences of using carer-child reminiscence with looked after children and their carers. Although research has been carried out into looked after children's experiences of life story work, (Willis & Holland, 2009) and carers' experiences of using the memory store approach (Shotton, 2010) there is no research which looks at carers' and children's experiences of carer-child reminiscence. The research will be unique in that it will explore both the carers' and the looked after children's experiences of a particular approach to life story work, and what participating in carer-child reminiscence has meant to the participants.

1.9 Epistemological position

Research can never be isolated from one's epistemological commitments, the diversity of which leads to different ways of approaching and engaging with any area of research (Johnson & Duberly, 2000). The researcher's choice of methodology is influenced by a number of factors. Of significant influence is the researcher's beliefs about the world and how it can be known; their ontological and epistemological stance (Martin, 2003).

I would describe my stance as being a pragmatic critical realist. I integrate a realist ontology (there is a real multi-layered world that exists independently of my perceptions, theories and constructions) with a constructivist epistemology (my understanding of the world is inevitably a construction from my own

perspective). I acknowledge that there is no possibility of attaining a perfect and complete understanding of the carers' or the children's experiences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). I also acknowledge that a different researcher might develop a different understanding of the participants' experiences, according to the varying background, experiences or discursive conventions they deploy through their human agency (Johnson & Duberly, 2000). It is these factors which make my realism critical.

From a pragmatic perspective I am interested in what works and is most appropriate and helpful for the research in question, rather than being enslaved by any one methodological approach in particular. Quantitative and qualitative are often considered different research paradigms in the sense of distinctive belief systems carrying with them clear philosophical assumptions. However, either type of research can be carried out from a range of philosophical stances (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

A strong motivator for the research was that it would help to inform and improve future training on life story work. This would occur by feeding back the findings from the research and allowing the foster carers on the life story work training to learn of the experiences of other carers and children who had carried out the approach. From this perspective the research could be regarded as being an example of action research as it has followed a spiral or cyclical process (Robson, 2002, 2011).

In addition to the researcher's ontological position, culture, politics and legislation also influence choice of methodology. In his book 'Real World Research', Robson (2002) writes how, between the publication of his first edition in 1993 and his second edition in 2002, there has been an increased acceptance of the value of qualitative approaches. This growing acceptance is further reflected in the 3rd edition of his book (Robson, 2011). The change has reflected changes in our culture as well as political change. Increasingly, legislation has emphasised the importance of listening to children, understanding their views, giving them a voice in decisions which might affect them and getting them involved with their local communities (Cabinet Office, 2010; Department for Children Schools and Families, 2007; Department for Education and Skills, 2003; United Nations, 1989).

I align myself with this emancipatory paradigm. I am interested in hearing and making known the voices of those who have often been voice-less. Foster carers and looked after children's views have been, for the most part, overlooked in terms of research into this area.

1.10 Reflexivity

Willig (2008) makes the distinction between personal and epistemological reflexivity. 'Personal reflexivity involves reflecting upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities have shaped the research. It also involves thinking about how the research may have affected and changed us as people and researchers. Epistemological reflexivity requires us to engage with questions

such as; How have the research questions defined and limited what can be found? How has the design of the study and the method of analysis constructed the data and the findings? How could the research questions have been investigated differently? To what extent would this have given rise to a different understanding of the phenomenon under investigation? Thus epistemological reflexivity encourages us to reflect upon the assumptions (about the world, about knowledge) that we have made in the course of the research, and it helps us to think about the implications of such assumptions for the research and its findings'. Reflexivity involves being aware that I am a part of the social world that I am researching (Frank, 1997). From a critical realist perspective I recognise that my beliefs, values and experiences have shaped the design of the research as well as shaping my interpretations and conclusions. I also feel the influence that carrying out the research has had on my own practices. I find myself making more of an effort to collect and reflect on memories with my own family, valuing it on a deeper level as a result of the reading and research carried out. A discussion of epistemological reflexivity will be covered in the Discussion chapter in relation to this study.

Ahern (1999) provides a useful set of suggestions to help researchers become more aware of the influence of their background, expectations and assumptions. Using reflexivity in this way helps the researcher to identify areas of potential bias.

Prior to starting the research I wrote about why I wanted to carry out the research, my personal reasons and motivations for choosing this area to research. Throughout the research process I kept a reflexive journal where I

wrote about issues of reflexivity where they arose, such as the conflict between being the deliverer of training on the memory store approach as well as being the researcher. I also recorded relevant feelings and thoughts with regard to particular interviews and data analysis practices. Using the reflexive journal allowed me to take a step back and examine my feelings; for example, on one occasion it allowed me to examine why I felt particularly disappointed with the way a particular interview had gone. I was able to reflect on what my expectations had been and why they might have been that way.

1.11 Summary

This chapter has outlined the aims of the research and its context. Definitions and variations of life story have been explored as well as the current status of life story work in the UK for looked after children. The research that has been carried out into life story work has been briefly outlined before an exploration of the origins of this study. I have outlined the history of the development of the memory store approach in Northumberland, its theoretical framework and the training we put in place. I have gone on to look at the distinctive contribution of this particular research, my epistemological position and reflexivity.

2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of the literature regarding life story work and mutual reminiscence. I outline the search strategy I employed and give a critical review of the existing literature into life story work with looked after children. Perspectives on the underlying psychology behind life story work are explored. I then go on to delineate the search strategy used to explore research on carer-child reminiscence, followed by a critical review of this research. In the final part of this chapter I present the theoretical underpinnings of the present study and explain why the existing literature led me to focus here. I also outline how the existing literature led me to my research questions and the emancipatory and ethical motivations that played an important part in the focus of this research.

2.2 Search strategy

I carried out a systematic review of the literature on life story work with looked after children using the approach described by McKeown et al (2006) as a model. A variety of search methods was used to ensure that all the relevant literature was identified. The major social science and health data bases searched were Scopus, Web of Knowledge and Pro Quest. The search was repeated periodically over a period of four years in relation to other work as well as the current thesis research. Citations were followed up from the reference lists and bibliographies of the retrieved articles.

2.2.1 Keywords

The term 'life story work' was combined with population search terms such as; 'looked after', 'foster', 'adopt*', 'children in care'. No date, language or study restrictions were applied.

2.2.2 Inclusion criteria

Papers were included where life story work had been carried out with looked after/adopted children. Life story work was defined by drawing on the work of Ryan and Walker (2007) and McKeown et al (2007):

- A form of intervention usually undertaken to explore an account or aspects of a person's life or personal history
- The intervention usually takes place over a number of sessions
- Life story work aims to have a beneficial impact, primarily on the recipient but also sometimes on their carers
- It implies collaboration with another to gather and record the information
- It usually, but not always, results in an end product, e.g. book, film, tape recording etc.

2.2.3 Search results

Any abstracts discussing Life Story Work with looked after and adopted children were retrieved, read and included or discarded using the inclusion criteria outlined previously. Further relevant articles were also followed up from references. I then sorted the papers into a number of categories. Categories included:

- Research papers: where a research process was explicitly outlined and there was some attempt to evaluate the impact or experience of life story work with looked after children, n=5 (Backhaus, 1984; Gallagher & Green, 2012; Happer, et al., 2006; Shotton, 2010; Willis & Holland, 2009)
- Theoretical papers: where the concept of life story work was explored and underlying theoretical perspectives presented but there was no formal description of research being carried out, n=2 (Cook-Cottone & Beck, 2007; Treacher & Katz, 2001)
- Practice guides: where accounts of practice were outlined as protocols and case studies were described but there was no formal adherence to a research process, n=7 (Aust, 1981; Beste & Richardson, 1981; Cant, 2008; Connor, et al., 1985; Fitzhardinge, 2008; J. Harper, 1996; Henry, 2005; Nicholls, 2003)

2.2.4 Texts

Relevant texts were retrieved and referred to (Fahlberg, 2006; Golding, Dent, Nissim, & Stott, 2006; Lacher & Nichols, 2005; Rose & Philpot, 2005; T. Ryan & Walker, 1985; T. Ryan & Walker, 2007). These texts do not contain any formal research into life story work, but in Rose and Philpot's book (2005) the views of two young people on life story work are presented. Two seventeen year olds give their views of the life story work that was undertaken with them through the Sexual Abuse Child Consultancy Service (SACCS). Whilst their views are extremely interesting and give insight into two young people's experiences of a

particular approach to life story work, there are no details of how their views were elicited or any formal research process being adhered to.

2.3 Research articles

Only five of the articles outlined specific methods that were used to explore life story work with looked after children (Backhaus, 1984; Gallagher & Green, 2012; Happer, et al., 2006; Shotton, 2010; Willis & Holland, 2009). Of these, only those by Willis and Holland (2009), Shotton (2010) and Backhaus (1984) focus on life story work as the primary intervention. In the studies by Gallagher and Green (2012) and Happer et al (2006), young people are interviewed about a variety of aspects of being looked after, life story work being one of these.

What follows is a description and critical evaluation of the relevant articles on life story work found through using the search strategy. The length of description and critical evaluation outlined in this section reflects to some extent the amount of detail given in each article.

2.3.1 Research article 1: Backhaus (1984)

Backhaus (1984) recognised that there had been no formal research into life story work; this then prompted her study. She constructed what she terms, 'a questionnaire' but it actually sounds like a semi-structured interview schedule with open ended questions. She used this to explore social workers' views on the purposes, benefits, practicalities and limitations of life story books. She then interviewed 15 social workers, 13 women and 2 men, who were known to use life story books.

The questions were designed to elicit information on some of the major issues for the children, including feelings of responsibility for placement, anger about separation, perceptions of parents and low self esteem. The findings from the interviews were grouped into themes: the uses of life books, preparing the book, format of the life book, problems, effects, issues and success stories.

Each worker had at least three reasons for engaging in life story work using life story books:

- Life story books were frequently cited as being a way of helping children to understand and deal with what had happened to them, to help them retrieve the parts of their lives they had lost through their numerous moves, and give them the ability to integrate past, present and future.
- The books gave answers and helped to avoid misconceptions, thus helping the child to be less likely to engage in fantasies about their past or blame themselves for their move into the care system.
- They were seen as helping children feel more in control of their past and so were felt to help them feel more in control of their future.
- Life books were seen as being a preventative health measure, giving continuity and helping children develop an intact sense of identity.
- They also felt that the work helped children integrate good and bad feelings towards others and themselves.
- The workers thought that the life books also helped the children to begin to see themselves as being different to their birth parents, whereas prior to the life story work they saw it as inevitable that they would repeat their parents' histories.

- Several workers commented that the books were therapeutic in that they revived memories, decreased anxiety and helped the worker to identify unfinished business on the part of the child.
- They were viewed as a useful way to get to know the children and so choose appropriate families for them.
- Many of the social workers reported how proud the children became of their life story book, wanting to show it to others. Several felt that this was an indication of improved self esteem. Some workers reported how the children would often want to re-read the books themselves and use them for comfort.

As well as outlining the perceived benefits of life story books, the study also highlights difficulties the social workers identified in carrying out life story work, such as finding the time and the child acting out.

2.3.1.2 Critical evaluation

The research gives an insight into both the practicalities of life story work as well as the perceived effects. However, the study also has a number of limitations. There is no detail given on how Backhaus constructed the questions within her questionnaire/interview guide which would have been interesting and useful to know. A number of short success stories are outlined. I found one of these to be rather overly simplistic in that it suggests that two young girls started to do well in school and take a pride in their appearance solely due to the completion of life story work rather than acknowledging a range of other factors that were probably also significant.

The article is short and therefore does not give a lot of detail as to the views of the social workers or insight into the way they phrased their responses and the language that they used. It refers often to 'several' workers as holding a particular view without giving an idea of how many workers this constitutes. It is therefore difficult to make a judgement as to the prevalence of particular views.

Another point to bear in mind is that the sample was confined to social workers who used life story books and who were therefore more likely to hold positive views about life story work. It would have been interesting to discover the views of a more random sample of social workers. An important omission is that the children's views were not represented.

The researcher concludes that life books have been shown to be an excellent concrete tool for discussing the past and helping the children to work on the feelings connected with life events. Yet these are solely the views of the social workers. It would have been interesting and useful to have heard the children's and carers' views on the life story work they had experienced, triangulating their perceptions with those of the social workers.

2.3.2 Research article 2: Gallagher and Green (2012)

In the study by Gallagher and Green (2012), interviews were carried out with 16 young adults (10 female and 6 male) of 16 years and over, asking about the care they had received in The Orchards (Therapeutic Children's Homes). A key part of the input in these homes was a focus on life story work. The life story

workers used what they termed a 'deep and rich' approach to life story work (Rose & Philpot, 2005), seeing it as a therapeutic tool in addition to the weekly one-hour therapy sessions each child received. There were 3-5 children in each home with 2-3 staff on duty at any one time. It is unclear whether the life story work was carried out by the staff in the homes or by others.

A semi-structured interview schedule was used with the young adults to explore their views. Most of the young people in the sample had received at least 36 sessions of life story work over a period of 18 months. The majority of them had been placed in the homes at a relatively young age (mean = 8.4 years) and most had left when they were 11-13 years of age. The average duration of each interview was 135 minutes. One of the main topics covered by the interview questions was life story work.

All the young people stated that they valued the life story work that had been carried out with them and some reported that it had been especially helpful. Quotes from the young people are offered, giving useful insight into their particular views.

An indication of the young people's positive attitudes towards life story work was evidenced by how well some of them had looked after their life story books over a long period of time, how familiar they were with them and still referred to them, their decision to carry on with life story work in their next placement and their intention to carry out life story work with their own children.

It is reported that the interviewees said that life story work had helped them in three main ways:

1. In acquiring a more accurate picture of their lives before they entered the home
2. In facilitating relationships with the staff in the home and with carers in subsequent placements
3. In dealing with the emotional and behavioural challenges they had faced.

Another benefit was that life story work could trigger positive memories for the young people, as their life story books often contained memories of happy times. Life story work was challenging emotionally for some of the young people interviewed, because of the complexity of their lives and because sometimes they did not want to recall upsetting experiences. One young person reported sticking a piece of paper over one part of her life story book that she did not want to be reminded of.

Some were pleased with the way their life story book had been organised and the effort that had gone into it. For others there was some dissatisfaction over the life story work they had received. They felt that they had not been sufficiently involved in it, that it had been done for them rather than with them, or that it lacked depth.

2.3.2.1 Critical evaluation

The sample was restricted to former residents over 16 who had completed their exams in their final year of compulsory education. A justification for this

restriction was that it would lessen the risk of the research having any negative effects upon any care or education that young people might currently be receiving. However, a danger of this is that the sample did not include the views of young people who had not completed their final year of education or young people who had recently experienced life story work and it would have been valuable to have heard their perspectives as well.

It is not made clear in the research how many of the young people expressed each of these views so it is difficult to get an idea of the prevalence of views expressed. The researchers link their findings to Willis and Holland's (2009) who found a similar commitment to life story work amongst the looked after children they interviewed.

Gallagher and Green acknowledge that their work may not have highlighted other problems that looked after children can have with life story work. In Willis and Holland's (2009) study, for example, some looked after children expressed how they sometimes found life story work tedious. However, Gallagher and Green's overall conclusion is that looked after children and young people value life story work and can benefit from it.

They also acknowledge that the research was based on a small sample size which they feel was probably why they did not identify as full a range of issues as were highlighted in the study by Willis and Holland (2009). Nevertheless the study reinforces many of Willis and Holland's (2009) findings and the views of the two young people outlined in Rose and Philpot's book (2005) in terms of some looked after young people's perceptions of life story work.

Their research has a particular practical relevance as it gives insight into one particular method of carrying out life story work which can then be adjusted and improved from the insights in this study.

The researchers are not explicit in how they view the status of their findings in this research. It is not clear whether they view the participants' accounts of life story work as being experiences that really happened or as telling them more about how the participants constructed their memories of life story work from the vantage point of their present situation (Willig, 2008).

2.3.3 Research article 3: Willis and Holland (2009)

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 12 young people aged 11-18 (5 female, 7 male) on their experiences of life story work in one local authority in South Wales. The young people reflected on the emotional aspects of the work and the new information they had gained about their own histories. In contrast to the study by Gallagher and Green (2012), here the young people had all experienced very different styles of life story work and the degree of input varied enormously. Interview findings were organised into three interconnecting themes:

1. The form and purpose of the life story work carried out
2. The emotions associated with the work
3. The constituents of life story work, i.e. the physical objects that made up the record

The content and level of input varied greatly. Most of the young people had memory boxes as well as some sort of written record. Amber (15) had done all the work herself, focusing on writing an account of the abuse she had experienced before coming into care. Three young people had used the pre-printed BAAF book (Camis, 2001) 'My Life and Me'; others had a more personal record in a scrap book or photo album and seemed to have spent more time in discussion with a practitioner. Some were taken on trips to get photos whereas others did not leave their home as part of the process.

A number of the young people's views are quoted which helps to develop a greater insight into the views expressed. For example, Harry (15), felt that life story work was about, 'yourself, your personality and family...(going) into greater detail about our histories and stuff like that'. His interests, such as cars, sports and animals were incorporated into his life story book, the authors outline that this helped to reflect his character.

All the young people expressed positive feelings towards life story work but some found the process tedious at times and perceived it as being a chore. There are reports from two young people who found it boring and felt it was a bit like homework that they did not want to do. Many reported positive feelings about learning new information about their past through the life story work, although it is not specified how many young people expressed this view.

Betty (17) had no photos or mementos from two of her foster placements which highlights how young people's experience of foster care and the memories stored remains varied. Several young people saw life story work as being an

ongoing project and envisaged a future purpose for it. Harry planned to show it to his children when he got older. Ellie also suggested she would show some, but not all, of her life story book to her children. Several reported that they had shown it to people who had visited their homes and were interested. Amber had ripped her account up as she did not want anyone to read it. However, she said that if she had kept it she would now have shown it to those closest to her.

Several of the young people gave some insights into the emotions they experienced when engaging in life story work. For example, David (11) had a photo of himself buried in sand at the beach and was reminded of his love for the sea and his pride in burying himself. He appeared to relive the emotions as he was reminded of this special time. Amber had written part of her life story to explore her negative experiences and said that it had helped her as it had 'taken her mind off crying and stuff'. Sid (11) felt that it was not helpful to have sad memories recorded as, "you read your life story book and you then feel sad again so what's the point?"

2.3.3.1 Critical evaluation

As well as the verbatim quotes from the young people I also appreciated the inclusion of pseudonyms for each of the participants which helped to identify each speaker and their unique voice. This meant I could look at the range of views from each participant to build up more of a picture of them as an individual.

The research highlights how varied young people's experiences of life story work are, showing that even within one local authority there was not a consistent

approach. For the young people, life story work invoked a range of emotions including tedium, pleasure, anger and sadness. It also seemed to play a role in helping them work out aspects of identity.

The authors conclude that both the process of life story work and the material record are important to looked after children. They acknowledge that the young people who took part may not be representative of other young people in care, as well as acknowledging a potentially positive partiality in the sample towards life story work due to the selection process. The study gives helpful insight into the varying experiences and perceptions of life story work from the young people themselves which, prior to this article, had not been the primary focus of any formal research. The variation in experiences of life story work is both a strength and a weakness of the study. The strength of this is that it gives insight into the variety of experiences that young people have of life story work; the weakness is that, as a result of this variation, it does not help us to evaluate any particular type of life story work, which would have been helpful for informing future practice and training.

2.3.4 Research article 4: Happer, McCreadie and Aldgate (2006)

Happer et al (2006) interviewed 30 adults and young people between the ages of 16 and 46 who either continued to be, or who had been, looked after. They asked the participants to tell their stories of being looked after and what had helped them achieve the success they had experienced.

Very little detail is given about the young people's views and experiences of life story work. We are not told how many of the young people experienced this work but what is outlined is that participants who had experience of social workers doing life story work with them thought that other children should also be able to explore their history in this way.

2.3.4.1 Critical evaluation

Given the scarcity of research in the area of life story work (Cook-Cottone & Beck, 2007) it would have been useful and relevant to have explored the young people's experiences of life story work in more detail. This would also have been closely aligned to the researchers' aims, to discover more about what constitutes helpful input and so improve future practice for looked after children. Nevertheless, it is somewhat helpful to discover that the participants who experienced life story work in this study seem to hold positive views about its usefulness to them, although the number of participants who experienced life story work is not given nor any details on the type of life story work they had experienced.

2.3.5 Research article 5: Shotton (2010)

In this study I interviewed four foster carers and one adoptive carer about their experiences of using the memory store approach. I devised an interview guide of ten questions. I used a variety of texts and articles to find examples of question formats where Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) had been used, to get a feel for the types of questions which worked well (e.g.

Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; Turner, Barlow, & Ilberry, 2002) adapting the content to fit my research questions.

During a training day on the memory store approach, the research was explained and the attendees were invited to volunteer. The interviews took place two to three months after the training day, to give the carers time to put the approach into practice. The interviews lasted from 40 minutes to one hour. A number of mainly open ended questions was asked, starting with more factual questions and moving on to more evaluative questions once rapport had been established. The interviews were flexible enough to allow the participants to raise and discuss other issues as they arose. The questions were not followed in a mechanical, sequential manner, but used as a guide to return to when each flow of interaction came to a natural ending.

The data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), though as a beginner in learning how to use IPA, I did not analyse the data to the same depth as I have in the present study. Instead I used the IPA steps as described in Willig's (2008) account of IPA, which was very useful for looking closely at the data in a systematic way and discovering themes in each transcript and then across transcripts, but perhaps lacked the richness and depth of analysis of the present study.

Findings

Three master themes emerged from the analysis:

- Impact (perceived effects of using the memory store approach)

- Motivation (the carer's motivation and their perception of the child's motivation to engage with the approach)
- Practical aspects (comments made about the practical aspects of using the approach)

Impact

- All the carers talked positively about how the approach had been good for helping them to spend quality time with the child. The carers felt closer to the child through using it, and thought that the child felt closer to them as well.
- The carers felt that using the approach had facilitated more interaction between them and the child.
- As many of the memories were of happy/positive times, the carers felt that reflecting on the store often had a positive effect on mood for both themselves and the children. It often gave them a chance to have fun with the child. Sometimes reflection also brought about more uncomfortable feelings, such as sadness due to loss.
- Three of the carers described how using the approach had provided opportunities for developing aspects of thinking and learning. The ages of the children varied from 3 to 15. For the younger children the store was useful for helping them learn colours, shapes, letters, counting, etc. For the older children (7 years plus), two carers found it gave the children opportunities to practise their written expression and computer skills.
- Only one carer (to a fifteen year old girl) felt that using the approach had changed the way the young person saw herself.

Motivation

- All the carers talked about how the child had been actively engaged in the approach either by suggesting memories to go in the store or by asking to look at the contents.
- All the carers talked about the value and importance they placed on storing memories and reflecting back on them. Three of the carers had experienced a similar approach undertaken with them as children or that they had put in place for their birth children.

Practical aspects

- All the carers used a combination of storage options, usually a memory book combined with a memory box.
- The frequency with which they engaged in the approach ranged from weekly to monthly. All commented that the frequency varied according to the recent events in the child's life.
- Four of the five carers mentioned the training as being helpful in using the approach; using the computer and having a nice album were also mentioned as being helpful by two of the carers.
- Difficulties expressed by two of the carers were knowing what to keep and finding the time, fitting it in around the child's other activities.

2.3.5.1 Critical evaluation

Two of the interviews were conducted over the telephone which had an impact on the level of rapport achieved and being able to develop a fuller understanding of their meaning through the non-verbal communication. Whilst the research explored the views of the carers on participating in the approach, it did not

explore those of the child, which I highlighted in the report as an important area for future research. I acknowledge that the small self-selected sample means that the findings lack generalizability, though my hope was that findings from future research using accumulative techniques would help to increase the generalizability of the findings.

The fact that the carers volunteered to be part of the sample suggests that they may have been positively predisposed towards the memory store approach already. The occasional feelings of boredom and tedium expressed by the young people in the study by Willis and Holland (2009) were not found in this research. This may be due to a positive bias in the carers but also may be due to the fact that the life story work being carried out by the carers using the memory store approach was very different from that being carried out with the young people. The carers were not delving back into the children's difficult and often abusive experiences but collaboratively recording and reflecting on their times with the child, which could explain these differing perspectives.

2.3.6 Summary of research into life story work

The articles outlined highlight how little research into life story work has taken place over the years. The more recent research (Gallagher & Green, 2012; Shotton, 2010; Willis & Holland, 2009) has helped to give insight into young people's and carers' views of life story work, highlighting the variety of approaches that are used to carry out this work and what young people think about different aspects of the input. It is noteworthy that prior to 2009 there had been no formal attempt to specifically explore young people's views of life story

work, despite the fact that this work has been carried out with looked after children since the 1960s. This runs contrary to the principles contained within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, article 12) and codes of ethics and conduct, e.g. (British Psychological Society, 2009). There is a strong ethical and legislative case for ensuring we consult thoroughly with children and their carers, to explore their experience of any intervention that is carried out with them and ensure that any intervention recommended has research evidence that suggests it is helpful rather than harmful.

Having given a critical review of the relevant research into life story work with looked after children I will now go on to outline the differing perspectives on the psychology underlying life story work.

2.4 Perspectives on the underlying psychology of life story work

There is a number of theories and perspectives on the psychology that underlies life story work. Aust (1981) writes about life story work as being the beginning of a re-education of the child's beliefs in a manner congruent with Ellis' Rational Emotive Therapy (1977). She describes how a child's reaction to separation and loss produces painful feelings of anger, abandonment, shame and rejection. These feelings affect how children see themselves and distort their interpretation of events. They commonly come to believe themselves to be bad and unlovable. Life story work is thought to help in identifying, challenging and re-educating these beliefs.

The trauma of rejection and separation impacting on the child's sense of worth is also outlined by Harper (1996). She puts forward the view that life story work can help children to accept their past and as a consequence they can then feel in control of it, rather than it controlling them. In this way they can move on, putting the past behind them. This links in with ideas around developing a sense of agency or self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Harper uses a non-directive play therapy approach to life story work, rooted in Psychotherapy.

The work of Bowlby (1980, 1988) on separation and attachment is acknowledged by Henry (2005) as providing a foundation for understanding how children experience and respond to loss. The model she outlines focuses on issues of loss, identity, attachment, and safety. The underlying thinking is that the child needs to reconcile the traumas and separations in their life in order to make a successful transition to a permanent placement. The child must also be allowed to grieve the losses they have experienced (Bowlby, 1980, 1988), and much of the difficult, acting out and aggressive behaviour, often seen in looked after children, is understood as being due to unresolved loss. Life story work is seen as being a useful tool for helping children to reconcile the traumas they have experienced and grieve their losses which will then help them to be able to move on.

The model of life story work put forward by Cooke-Cotton and Beck (2007) is rooted in narrative psychology. They draw on theory put forward by Nelson and Fivush (2004) outlining how the family and cultural stories that children hear, help them construct their own autobiographical narrative and thus contribute to their sense of identity, helping them to make sense of their past, present and

anticipated future (K. McLean, 2005; Nelson & Fivush, 2004). Parents reminiscing, telling their children stories about times in their earlier lives, provide children with information about who they are and this then helps to develop their sense of self.

For younger children, autobiographical remembering relies on the parent /carer prompting and sustaining the focus of the conversation (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). The years between complete dependence on the carer and the individual being able to independently construct their own memories are described by Nelson and Fivush (2004) as the years of co-constructed memories. Parents help the child to construct a coherent life narrative, so that they develop a clear understanding about where they came from, how others felt about them, their place in the family and in the world. There is evidence to suggest that reminiscences and the co-construction of life memories may be related to secure attachment, the development of a sense of self in the past, and how past self relates to current self (Fivush, Reese, & Haden, 2006; Fivush & Vasudeva, 2002; Kulkofsky & Koh, 2009). A critical review of research into carer-child reminiscence is outlined in the next section. The life story is sculpted continuously, becoming the organising structure that carries the self (Cook-Cottone & Beck, 2007).

Children in care do not live with people who can verify their past and so miss out on the opportunity to create a positive and coherent life narrative (Beste & Richardson, 1981). Life story work is seen as helping to fill the gap; the work allows for reminiscing and the co-construction of a coherent life narrative which will then help the child develop a stronger sense of identity.

Narrative and Psychodynamic ideas are drawn upon by Treacher and Katz (2001). A central proposal is that identity is multifaceted, inherently conflicting and constantly developing. They put forward the view that narratives and fantasies in adoption (and in life generally) help individuals express their feelings, thoughts and confusions. Alongside this they also recognise that narratives and myths can trap individuals into not allowing different thoughts, feelings and perceptions to occur. Life story books are thought to sometimes silence the difficulties experienced by adoptees by not allowing them enough space for exploring troublesome feelings and fantasies. They outline how often the life story that is constructed adheres to a prevailing narrative which has the following basic elements:

- Your birth parents loved you but because of their personal circumstances they were not able to look after you
- Your adoptive parents chose you because they love and value you
- You have had terrible life experiences and our job is to help you overcome those experiences

The writers outline how often such narratives prevail in order to help the professional make sense of the pain the child has been through. They point out that the story is unlikely to mention how administrative mistakes, a lack of available carers or practice failures have led to difficulties for the child. A certain type of narrative is expected to emerge which is essentially positive and reparative but which may not be the most helpful, or tell certain aspects of the story.

It is useful and interesting to look at the differing perspectives regarding the psychology underlying life story work. My own interpretation is that none of the perspectives seem to be in conflict but rather each offers a slightly different emphasis or way of understanding how life story work might function. In line with Ellis' rational emotional therapy, life story work has the potential to impact on children's beliefs about themselves. From a psychotherapy perspective life story work also has the capacity to help children accept and understand their past and feel more in control of it, developing their sense of agency and so allowing them to move on.

'This is what happened to me, this is my story. I am responsible for some parts of my story and others are responsible for other parts.'

Drawing on Bowlby's work, life story work has the facility to help the child reconcile the traumas and separations they have experienced and allow them to grieve their losses. From a narrative perspective, life story work has the potential to help looked after children develop a coherent life narrative so contributing to their sense of self. It is likely that each child's experience of life story work will be quite different and may work in all, some, one or perhaps none of these ways depending on how the work is carried out, by whom, in what context and at what stage of a child's life.

Having briefly explored the differing psychological perspectives underlying life story work, I will now go on to examine the research literature on carer-child reminiscence.

2.5 Research into carer-child reminiscence

The memory store approach that we train carers to use is essentially encouraging carers to engage regularly in reminiscing with their child, collaboratively recording and reflecting on memories the child has experienced whilst being in their care. The carers are encouraged to work in partnership with the child to co-create stories that reflect their joint experiences. They are taught how to use active listening and build on the child's utterances. They are also shown how to highlight emotions as part of those experiences. It therefore seemed appropriate to carry out a systematic review of the research on carer-child reminiscence with looked after children.

2.5.1 Search strategy

A variety of search methods was used to ensure that all relevant literature was identified. The major social science and health data bases searched were Scopus, Web of Knowledge and Pro Quest. Citations were followed up from the reference lists and bibliographies of the retrieved articles.

2.5.2 Keywords

The term 'reminis*' was combined with population search terms such as; 'looked after', 'foster', 'adopt*', 'children in care'. No date, language or study restrictions were applied.

The only paper that came to light where the focus was on carer-child reminiscence with looked after/adopted children was my own, (Shotton, 2010). The population search terms were then broadened to 'child*'.

2.5.3 Inclusion criteria

Papers were included where carer-child reminiscence had been the main focus of the study.

2.6 Search results

Any abstracts discussing carer-child reminiscence were retrieved, read and included or discarded using the inclusion criteria outlined. Further relevant articles were followed up from references. The search was narrowed down to 33 journal articles that met the inclusion criteria. I then grouped the papers into two main categories:

1. Reviews of the research literature: where a variety of research studies was outlined and placed in a theoretical context. (n=5, Fivush, 2007; Fivush, 2011; Fivush & Nelson, 2006; Fivush, et al., 2006; Haden & Ornstein, 2009; Wareham & Salmon, 2006)
2. Research papers: where a research process was explicitly outlined and there was some attempt to investigate different styles of reminiscing with children and the impact of carer-child reminiscence, (n=27)
 - o Cultural differences in reminiscing: (Kulkofsky & Koh, 2009; n=5, Wang, 2001; Wang, 2007; Wang, Doan, & Song, 2010; Wang & Fivush, 2005)

- Differences in style of reminiscence according to the gender of the child: (n=3, Buckner & Fivush, 2000; Fivush, Berlin, Sales, Mennuti-Washburn, & Cassidy, 2003; Reese & Fivush, 1993)
- Relationship between reminiscing and emotional awareness/moral development: (n=4, Laible, 2004b, 2010; Van Bergen & Salmon, 2010; Van Bergen, et al., 2009)
- Relationship between reminiscing and emotional wellbeing: (n=4, Fivush, Marin, McWilliams, & Bohanek, 2009; Fivush, Reese, & Haden, 2006; Sales & Fivush, 2005; Sales, Fivush, & Peterson, 2003)
- Relationship between reminiscing and attachment/family climate: (n=2, Fivush & Vasudeva, 2002; Laible, 2010)
- Relationship between reminiscing and self perception: (n=3, Bird & Reese, 2006; Bost, Choia, & Wong, 1980; Wang, et al., 2010)
- Relationship between reminiscing and learning: (n=6, Farrant & Reese, 2000; Haden, Ornstein, Rudek, & Cameron, 2009; Jack, MacDonald, Reese, & Hayne, 2009; Reese, et al., 2010; Reese & Newcombe, 2007; Wenner, Burch, Lynch, & Bauer, 2008)

As this list indicates, there is a substantial body of research that has explored individual differences in, and developmental outcomes of, carer-child reminiscence. The research in this area has spanned over twenty years and has utilised a variety of methods. The most common are longitudinal designs (e.g. Farrant & Reese, 2000; Jack, MacDonald, Reese, & Hayne, 2009) and experimental methods (e.g. Reese, Leyva, Sparks, & Grolnick, 2010). The vast majority of research projects have focused on mother-child reminiscence in the

pre-school years, (e.g. Van Bergen & Salmon, 2010; Wang, 2001) but some have focused on older children, (e.g. Fivush, et al., 2009; Fivush & Sales, 2006; Wenner, et al., 2008) and other family members, (e.g. Kulkofsky & Koh, 2009; Reese & Fivush, 1993).

Research has established clear and consistent individual differences in the way that parents talk with their children about the past. Carers vary along a dimension from a high elaborative to a low elaborative style (e.g. Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988; Nelson & Fivush, 2004). A high elaborative style is characterised by talking frequently about the past, engaging in detailed conversations about what happened, using lots of 'wh' questions. The parent tends to follow up and expand on the child's often minimal responses, to provide a rich picture of the past. A helpful example contrasting a mother using a high elaborative style with a mother using a low elaborative style is outlined by Fivush (2007).

High elaborative style

M: Remember when we first went to the aquarium? And we looked down and there were a whole bunch of birds in the water? Remember the names of the birdies?

C: Ducks

M: Noo! They weren't ducks. They had on little suits (pause). They were penguins. Remember what did the penguins do?

C: I don't know

M: You don't remember?

C: No

M: Remember them jumping off the rocks and swimming in the water?

C: Yeah

M: Real fast. You were watching them jump in the water, huh?

C: Yeah

In contrast, a low elaborative style is characterised by not talking about the past as frequently and asking fewer questions which do not create a rich picture of the past and are often quite repetitive. Here the mother does not follow up on the child's responses but rather focuses more on having the child recall specific pieces of information. There is little sense of story, just attention to particular details.

Low elaborative style

M: What kind of animals did you see?

C: Lollipops

M: Lollipops aren't animals are they? What kind of animals did you see?

C: Giraffe

M: And what else?

C: Roar!

M: What's roar?

C: Lion

M: What else did you see?

C: Roar!

M: What else did you see?

Longitudinal evidence suggests that carers are consistent over time and with siblings in their level of elaboration (Haden, 1998; Reese, Haden, & Fivush, 1993). Research also suggests that reminiscing conversations have a unique role to play in the way that carers use language with their children (Laible, 2004).

2.6.1 Gender and cultural differences

There is evidence that parents tend to use a more elaborative style with girls than with boys, (Fivush, et al., 2003; Reese & Fivush, 1993) and by the end of the pre-school years, girls are telling more richly detailed narratives of their personal experience than boys (Buckner & Fivush, 2000). There also appear to be cultural differences in reminiscing style. Wang (2007) found Euro-American mothers used a more elaborative style than the mothers of Chinese families. Other research also supports this finding (Wang, 2001; Wang, et al., 2010; Wang & Fivush, 2005).

The level of elaborative reminiscing used by the carer is associated with a number of outcomes which I will explore under the following headings:

- Emotional wellbeing
- Relationship between carer and child
- Self perception
- Learning

As such a large amount of research has been undertaken it is not possible to go into each research study in depth, but I will attempt to highlight key pieces of research that are particularly relevant to the present study.

2.6.2 Emotional wellbeing

An important aspect of emotional wellbeing is the ability to recognise and manage your emotions effectively (Shotton & Burton, 2008). An interesting study examining the impact of training mothers in using high-elaborative, emotionally

referenced¹ reminiscing was carried out by Van Bergen et al (2009). They were specifically looking at the impact of the training on children's autobiographical memory and emotion knowledge.

Eighty mothers were assigned to one of two training conditions:

- Reminiscing condition: mothers encouraged to reminisce with their child (age 3.5-5 years) using open ended 'wh' questions, build on the children's responses and discuss emotions
- Control condition: mothers trained in child-directed play.

Both groups were given seven sessions of video training over a period of 8 months with specific feedback and reassessment at the end of the training.

They were also asked to use the interaction style every day at home for just five minutes and record one practice session on an audiotape each week on which they would be given feedback. Forty four mothers completed the study.

Assessments were carried out before and after the training, as well as 6 months later to explore the mother's level of elaborative reminiscence, the child's emotional knowledge, language skills and ability to talk about a remembered event with an experimenter.

Both immediately and 6 months after the training, mothers and children in the reminiscing condition made significantly more high-elaborative utterances and emotion references during shared recall than did mothers and children in the control condition. After six months children in the reminiscing condition were

¹ Discussing or highlighting emotions when talking about the past.

better at identifying things that made them feel happy, sad, angry and scared, than children in the control condition.

2.6.2.1 Critical evaluation

The study seems very comprehensive and well thought out. It was carried out on a large sample (88), although there was a high drop out rate. The authors hypothesise a number of reasons why this was the case, which include travel and time. Previous research of a similar nature (Reese & Newcombe, 2007) did not experience a high drop out rate, an important perceived difference being that they visited participants in their own homes rather than the carers having to travel to a clinic setting.

The carers were given frequent training input and a range of assessments was undertaken which were carefully controlled for inter-rater reliability. The advantage of having a control group undertaking a parallel intervention meant that they were able to disentangle the effects of training elaborative, emotion referenced reminiscing from the effects of increased maternal attention.

One interpretation which could be easily drawn from this study is that training in child directed play is of less value, in terms of developmental outcomes, than training in elaborative reminiscence. However, the study does not highlight the fact that other areas of benefit may have resulted from training in child directed play which were not explored in this study.

Nevertheless, the study provides evidence that carers can improve their level of elaborative reminiscing through training, and that this has benefits for the child,

in terms of their ability to talk about past experiences with their carer and in terms of their emotional knowledge. It would have been interesting to carry out further longitudinal research to explore the maintenance of change over a number of years.

Findings from other studies support the link between elaborative reminiscence and children's developing understanding of emotion and regulation (Laible, 2004b, 2010; Van Bergen & Salmon, 2010). Further evidence also supports the finding that parents who focus on emotions during reminiscing have children who are more explicit in expressing their emotions when engaging in recall (Sales, et al., 2003).

The benefits of more elaborative, emotion-referenced reminiscing on children's emotional wellbeing is also supported in a study by Sales and Fivush (2005) who found that mothers who used more emotional and causal language when reminiscing about a chronic stressor (asthma) had children (ages 9-12) who showed better emotional wellbeing on the Child Behaviour Checklist (Achenbach, 1991).

Evidence also suggests that mothers who scaffold more explanation talk in reminiscing about stressful events have children (ages 9-12) with more flexible coping strategies (Fivush & Sales, 2006). This supports a strong relationship between reminiscing style and child wellbeing and is indicative of the ongoing importance of elaborative reminiscence with older children. However, it must be acknowledged that correlation does not imply cause, rather suggesting an association between parental reminiscing style and emotional wellbeing/coping

strategies. It is possible that the higher levels of emotional wellbeing may have been due to a range of other factors.

2.6.3 Relationship between carer and child

In considering the function of collaborative reminiscence, it is likely that accurate memory for events may not, in itself, be the main aim. Fivush and Vasudeva (2002) proposed that we choose to reminisce with others to create and maintain social and emotional bonds. Through co-constructing our past with others we interlace our memories and our lives. They predicted a relationship between maternal reminiscing style and attachment.

Their study involved 37 middle class mothers and their 4-year old children engaging in a reminiscing task and a joint art activity. A home visit took place where the mothers were asked to discuss two events that had occurred together in the past. The conversations were taped and transcribed then coded for level of elaboration and expression of emotions.

About two weeks after this home visit, the mothers and children took part in a joint art activity in the clinic. At this activity the researchers observed the level of emotional warmth between mother and child, demonstrated through the amount of glances and positive facial expressions the mother made towards the child. Measures were put in place to ensure good inter-rater reliability. The mothers completed the Attachment Behaviour Q-set (Waters, 1987) where they had to

rate 90 behaviours on a scale of 1-9, ranging from, 'does not describe my child at all' to 'describes my child very well'.

2.6.3.1 Critical evaluation

One of the main research findings was that the mothers who were more elaborative during reminiscing also reported a more secure attachment bond with their children. This is an association only. It is unclear whether more securely attached pairs allow for a more elaborative style of reminiscence, or if elaborative reminiscing helps to create a closer, more secure relationship or if there is a dynamic relationship between the two.

A further point is that the attachment measure used, the Attachment Behaviour Q-set, relies on the mothers rating their children's behaviour. These were middle class mothers, the majority of whom were quite elaborative. There is the possibility of social desirability set biasing their responses to the attachment questions if they felt they were going to be evaluated by the professionals undertaking the study, particularly as this part of the study took place in a laboratory setting rather than at home.

Nevertheless, the study does suggest a link between elaborative reminiscing and attachment, which for looked after children in particular cannot be ignored as effective strategies are needed to build the bonds of attachment between these children and their carers. In line with this research, Laible (2010), found that the level of elaborative reminiscing was related to attachment, security and family climate.

2.6.4 Self perception

As well as there being relationships between elaborative reminiscing, emotional wellbeing and attachment, there is also evidence to suggest a relationship between elaborative reminiscing and the child's self perception. There is evidence to suggest that discussing internal states during parent-child reminiscing (characteristic of the elaborative reminiscing style) may play an important role in shaping children's understanding of themselves (Wang, et al., 2010).

It has been found that the emotional and evaluative content of reminiscing predicted self-concept consistency in children as young as 3 (Welch-Ross, Fasig, & Farrar, 1999) and up to 6 years (Bird & Reese, 2006). Wang et al (2010) found that mothers who used more internal state language when reminiscing (e.g. "You were so happy at the party") had children (aged 3) who were more likely to describe their trait characteristics ("I'm happy"). Mothers' use of internal state language in discussing a negative event uniquely predicted children's ability to describe their traits and provide evaluative comments about themselves (e.g. 'I'm very good at games').

2.6.4.1 Critical evaluation

The authors acknowledge that the self description task they used for capturing young children's self representations may not have been the best measure, and that this assessment was administered at the end of the session when the children may have been tired. Nevertheless, the individual differences that were

found are consistent with other research (Bird & Reese, 2006; Welch-Ross, et al., 1999) and suggest that reminiscences that highlight the causes and consequences of children's feelings facilitate the construction of self-knowledge.

2.6.5 Learning

There is evidence to suggest a strong relationship between elaborative reminiscing and a variety of aspects of learning.

A study by Reese, Leyva, Sparks and Grolnick (Reese, et al., 2010) aimed to compare the effects of training low income mothers in dialogic reading technique versus elaborative reminiscing on children's oral language development and emergent literacy skills.

Thirty three low income parents of 4 year old children attending a Head Start centre were randomly assigned to either dialogic reading, elaborative reminiscing or a control condition.

In the dialogic reading condition the parents were trained to share books with their children, asking open questions on each page to encourage the children to form new words and sentences. The parents were encouraged to follow the child's lead and expand upon the child's contribution, connecting book talk to real life events.

The training consisted of teaching the dialogic reading technique then seeing it in action through video clips. Following the training the families were given five

books and asked to use the approach to read with the child on a daily basis. New story books were exchanged at Head Start so that every month the family had five new stories to read. The families were given monthly phone call reminders about the technique as well as a fridge magnet and sheet outlining the approach.

Carers in the elaborative reminiscing intervention received training in the same format using video clips, a sheet outlining the approach and a fridge magnet. They were taught to use open ended questions during reminiscing about special events, such as a trip to the beach, e.g. 'what else happened?' They were instructed to try to not repeat questions but expand on their child's utterances. They were asked to practise the technique every day and keep a log of their daily conversations with the children. A monthly phone call reminder was also made to the families to remind them of the approach and allow them to ask any further questions.

In the control condition the families were visited at home to carry out the pre-test assessments after which they were not contacted again over the course of the intervention until the post-test assessments at the end of the intervention period.

Assessments of the children's vocabulary, narrative and print skills were carried out at the beginning and end of the school year. The results showed that elaborative reminiscing improved the quality of children's narratives in comparison to dialogic reading. Children whose carers had been trained in elaborative reminiscing retold stories that were richer in specificity and detail.

They were more likely to comment on the perspectives of the characters in the story and use evaluative words. Elaborative reminiscing was also effective in supporting children's story comprehension. The training effects were present regardless of children's ethnic background and whether they were bilingual. There was no difference in vocabulary development and print skills regardless of the training received.

2.6.5.1 Critical evaluation

One criticism of the study is that the researchers were not able to conduct a second home visit to ensure the carers were using the techniques as instructed. A possible hypothesis that the authors postulate for the different outcomes of the two interventions is that the carers may have perceived the elaborative reminiscence techniques as easier, and thus used the approach more frequently than the carers who were in the dialogic reading group. The study did not examine the carers' perceptions of the two approaches, which would have been interesting and useful to explore with this point in mind.

The study also highlights an ethical issue of having a control group that receives no intervention in comparison to the two experimental groups who received positive input. I wonder how the results were shared with this group and what their views were on the experience. It would be interesting to know if they became aware of the input their peers were receiving in the other two groups and what their feelings might be around this issue.

Regardless of this criticism, it seems that training carers in using elaborative reminiscing is an effective approach for enhancing children's narrative skills

which will also aid their developing literacy skills (Scarborough, 2001). The results are in line with other research and theories about the benefits of elaborative reminiscence for children's independent narrative skills (Reese & Newcombe, 2007; Wenner, Burch, Lynch, & Bauer, 2008).

In addition to enhancing narrative development, there is also evidence that training mothers in elaborative reminiscence helps children develop more accurate and richer memories of events (Farrant & Reese, 2000; Reese & Newcombe, 2007; Wang, 2007). Longitudinal research suggests the style of reminiscence also has an impact on the earliest memories children are able to recall. Jack et al (2009) found that mothers who used a more elaborative style of reminiscence, when their children were between two and four, had children at age twelve and thirteen who had earlier memories than adolescents whose mothers had used a less elaborative style.

2.6.6 Summary of research into collaborative reminiscence

There is a substantial body of evidence suggesting that the way in which carers talk about the past with their children may have an impact on a variety of aspects of development and the relationship between carer and child. Using a more elaborative style to talk about past events has a strong relationship with enhanced levels of emotional awareness, empathy, coping skills, the development of self knowledge, attachment, learning and memory. It seems that it is possible to train carers to use a more elaborative reminiscing style and that this then has a positive impact on children's narrative skills, emotional cause knowledge and memory for events.

2.7 Justification for the present study

There is a paucity of research on life story work with looked after children. It is encouraging to find that at least some research has now taken place where looked after young people have been asked about their experiences of engaging with life story work (Gallagher & Green, 2012; Willis & Holland, 2009).

Nevertheless, the views sought have been largely retrospective, with adults and older young people who have had some experience of life story work but are mainly no longer actively engaged in this work.

Conversely, there has been a great deal of research carried out on carer-child reminiscence which has established a relationship between using a more elaborative reminiscence style and a number of positive outcomes for children.

Until my own small scale study, (Shotton, 2010) there had not been any research specifically on using an elaborative reminiscence approach with looked after children as part of their life story work. My research, however, only explored carers' views of engaging with this approach, hence the need for the current research.

The motivation to carry out research into this area also came from both an ethical and an emancipatory perspective. It felt important to research and explore the views of both carers and children about the approach we were training them to use, the memory store approach. There was a desire to go well beyond the BPS guidelines in terms of eliminating any threats to psychological

wellbeing, health, values or dignity (British Psychological Society, 2009) to ensure that the approach was delivering positive benefits to the carers and children (Hart & Bond, 1995; Willig, 2008). It also felt important to allow the carers and children to express their perspective in a sensitive, thoughtful and imaginative way, for their voices to be heard.

In summary, the research on life story work and carer-child reminiscence, the gaps in that research, my pragmatic critical realist ontological perspective and my emancipatory and ethical motivations, have all been important influences in developing the current research.

The research literature on both life story work and carer-child reminiscence suggests the following:

- That creating a life book can be a very positive experience for looked after children. The literature often comments on looked after children feeling positively towards their book and taking care of it (Backhaus, 1984; Gallagher & Green, 2012; Shotton, 2010; Willis & Holland, 2009)
- That reflecting on memories can often trigger positive emotions but can also help the child to talk about more difficult times too (Shotton, 2010; Willis & Holland, 2009)
- That reflecting on memories using an elaborative, emotionally referenced reminiscing style can help to strengthen the carer-child relationship (Fivush & Vasudeva, 2002; Gallagher & Green, 2012; Laible, 2010; Shotton, 2010)
- That reflecting on memories using an elaborative, emotionally referenced reminiscing style can help children to develop a better understanding of

themselves and promote emotional wellbeing (Bird & Reese, 2006; Fivush & Sales, 2006; Sales & Fivush, 2005; Wang, et al., 2010; Welch-Ross, et al., 1999; Willis & Holland, 2009)

- That reflecting on memories using an elaborative, emotionally referenced reminiscing style can facilitate learning, particularly developing children's ability to recount rich stories and develop their understanding of different people's perspectives (Fivush & Sales, 2006; Reese, et al., 2010; Sales & Fivush, 2005; Shotton, 2010).

2.8 Summary

In this chapter I have given an overview of the literature regarding life story work and carer-child reminiscence, critically examining a number of key pieces of research. Perspectives on the underlying psychology behind life story work were then outlined. Finally, I described my justification for the present research and summarised the findings from the research which led me to my research questions. My aim was to explore what the carers' and children's talk could tell us about how using the memory store approach had affected:

- The carer-child relationship
- The child's self perception
- Aspects of the child's learning
- The carers' and children's emotions

3. Methodology

3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter outlines my research questions and their origin in the literature as well as the research paradigm I used and the rationale for this. Details of the participants are given as well as the different stages of the research process. I outline the methods chosen for data generation and underlying rationale. I also delineate details of the pre-pilot and pilot interviews and the consequent changes made to the design of the interview sessions. I discuss the interview sessions themselves and outline the ethical practices I put in place throughout the research process. I finally go on to explain how the data were analysed and consider reflexivity.

3.2 Research questions

The literature around life story work and collaborative reminiscence suggests that it has the potential to :

- help a child to build new and more positive stories about themselves (Aust, 1981; Bruner, 2004; Freeman, et al., 1997; Rose & Philpot, 2005; Ryan & Walker, 2007),
- modify a child's internal working model affecting their beliefs and expectations of themselves, others and the world (Bowlby, 1988; Cook-Cottone & Beck, 2007)
- provide positive emotional experiences for both the carers and children as well as providing a tool for processing difficult emotional experiences (Allen, 2009; Fahlberg, 2006; Fivush, et al., 2003; Shotton, 2010)

- strengthen the relationship between carer and child (Fivush & Vasudeva, 2002; Shotton, 2010; Wareham & Salmon, 2006).
- facilitate learning, particularly developing children's ability to recount rich stories and develop their understanding of others' perspectives (Fivush & Sales, 2006; Reese, et al., 2010; Sales & Fivush, 2005; Shotton, 2010)

In this research I wanted to explore the carers' and children's experiences of using the memory store approach and find out what their talk could tell us about how using the memory store approach had affected:

1. The carer-child relationship
2. The child's self perception
3. Aspects of the child's thinking and learning
4. Their emotions

3.3 Research paradigm

My aim was to explore the unique experiences of carers and children who had used the memory store approach. I wanted to hear their voices and explore their experiences of participating in the approach as a collaborative activity. I chose to use Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA, e.g. Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) as an approach to guide both the data generation and analysis as I wanted to gain a thorough understanding of the views and perceptions of the carers and children. I was attracted to IPA as it offers a systematic set of steps for analysing qualitative data on a number of different levels which I felt would result in a deeper, more thorough appreciation of the experiences expressed by the carers and children. I was also aware that it fitted with my critical realist

perspective, in acknowledging that the analytic process could never achieve a genuinely first person account, the account being a co-construction between the participant and the researcher (Larkin, et al., 2006). I liked the permission the approach gave me to interpret on a deeper level whilst also acknowledging that my interpretation was simply that, an interpretation of the participant's account and what it *might* mean for them in that particular context (Larkin, et al., 2006).

As IPA is an idiographic approach, concerned with understanding the unique experience of individuals rather than looking for broad generalisations, the study was carried out using a small number of participants. The detailed case by case analysis of the transcripts was extremely time-consuming. The study was designed to build on the previous research I carried out into carers' experiences of engaging in the memory store approach (Shotton, 2010) thus helping to build up a body of evidence and greater variety of perspectives on the experience. The sample was not treated as being totally representative for all foster/adoptive carers and children, but rather by analysing the patterns of similarities and differences that emerged between the accounts, I was able to examine the commonalities and differences of participants' experiences.

3.4 Participants

The participants were selected (Smith, et al., 2009) from people who could offer an insight into the experience of engaging in the memory store approach. Therefore a sample of participants who had engaged in the memory store approach was required (both children and their carers). The sample of carers was initially contacted via a training day that I delivered on the memory store

approach along with another professional, as part of my role as a senior specialist educational psychologist.

Although eight carers volunteered at the stage of the memory store training day, three of them were unable to take part in the research process. This was due to changes in placement for the child or they did not currently have a child in placement; another carer was involved only in fostering babies.

The resulting sample was five carers and four looked after children from the north east of England who were therefore able to give a detailed view from within their particular culture. Pseudonyms have been assigned for reasons of confidentiality:

Table 3: Pseudonyms of carers and children

Name of foster carer	Name of child	Age of child
Alison	Kallum	5
Wilma	Lilly	5
Jamie and Jane	Sara	5
Jess	Matt	9

The study does not claim to be able to say something about all cultures.

Subsequent studies may be able to add to the findings so that gradually more general claims may be made. My aim was to provide a rich, contextualised analysis of the accounts of the carers and children which would then enable readers to evaluate the transferability of the findings to others in particular contexts which were more or less similar (Smith, et al., 2009).

3.5 Stages of the research process

3.5.1 Data generation with the carers

IPA is best suited to a data generation method which will invite participants to offer rich, detailed accounts of their experiences. In-depth interviews and diaries are thought to be the best means of accessing such accounts (Smith, et al., 2009). I therefore decided to use semi-structured interviews to explore the foster carers' experiences of using the memory store approach.

Drawing on my literature review I devised a set of questions I wished to ask, set out in the most appropriate order. I used examples of the format of open ended questions from other IPA research articles and texts (e.g. Flowers, Smith, Sheeran, & Beail, 1997; Smith, et al., 2009), adapting the content to fit my research questions. I expected that the order of the questions would be likely to change once the interview was underway.

I was aware that however well I constructed the interview guide, it would not guarantee the content or the quality of the interviews that occurred. I knew that I needed to engage deeply with the carers, developing a good level of rapport so they felt safe to be open about their experiences (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 58). I expected the interview in part to be led by the carers areas of interest and experience and I anticipated pursuing topics of interest that they brought up if they were broadly relevant to the research questions.

Preparing the interview guide allowed me to consider the phrasing of more complex questions and construct suitable phrases for deeper probing into particular areas, trying not to lead the participant in a particular direction. The aim of the guide was to facilitate a comfortable interaction with the carer which would enable them to provide a detailed account of their experience of using the memory store approach (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 59).

Open questions were used to encourage each carer to talk at length. I found that in some interviews my verbal input was fairly minimal whereas in others more prompting was required. I used questions at the start of the guide which invited more descriptive accounts, to put the participant at their ease, moving on to questions which were more evaluative.

Smith et al (2009) advise a guide which contains between six and ten open questions, along with possible prompts, which will tend to produce a conversation lasting between 45-90 minutes. I devised a guide of ten questions along with possible prompts. In addition to the guide I also devised a pre-ambule to ensure I covered all the necessary points about the research before we began the interview (please see Appendix A for the carer interview preamble and the interview guide with possible prompts).

Smith et al (2009, p. 65) outline that there may be times when the interview moves completely away from the interview guide questions, on a course set by the participant. This turned out to be the case in most of the interviews. I did however, make use of the guide, finding it was useful to return to at intervals when a particular branch of dialogue had come to a natural end. Whilst I did not

refer to the prompts contained in the interview schedule very often, I was nevertheless glad that I had devised them, as the process of their creation had allowed me to secure those types of phrases in my mind. I had internalised the script so to speak, and so the phrases came more naturally without having to refer to what I had written.

3.5.2 Using photos/visual memorabilia

Photo elicitation is based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph (or photographs) into the research interview (D. Harper, 2002). I planned that the child's memory store would be available to refer to during the interview with the carer (having obtained the child's consent) to use as a focus for many of the questions. My rationale for using photo elicitation (D. Harper, 2002) was that the visual material contained in the memory store would give both the participant and myself something to look at and discuss together, which would elicit richer stories of their experiences of using the memory store approach (Woolner, et al., 2010).

In his 2002 paper, Harper presents evidence from 40 studies where photo elicitation had been used as the primary method across a variety of subject disciplines. In these studies, photographs seemed to be able to stimulate thoughts and memories that word based interviewing did not. In a photo elicitation study carried out with farmers in Northern New York state, (D. Harper, 2001) he describes how using photos facilitated discussions to go to a deeper level, moving beyond the descriptions of what happened and when, to what this meant for the farmers.

Harper (2002) puts forward the view that the difference between interviews using images, and interviews using words alone lies in the ways that we respond to these forms of symbolic representation. He outlines how exchanges which rely on words alone utilise less of the brain's capacity than do exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words. Although this has a certain appeal and face validity, it must be noted that Harper (2002) does not provide any research evidence in support of these claims, (e.g. from neuro-imaging studies).

Other studies suggest that interviews which utilise pictures elicit longer and more comprehensive accounts as well as helping participants overcome the fatigue and repetition of conventional interviews (Collier, 1957).

Further rationale for utilising the memory store during the interviews was that I felt that it had the potential to be more empowering for the participants. Both carers and children would be talking about something which they had created and were familiar with, and were often proud of. Within the session many of the questions gave them opportunities to look through the pages of their memory stores, e.g. in asking them to show me favourite or important memories recorded within. In doing so they inevitably encountered other memories that they wished to share with me. This naturally led me to probe more deeply about these experiences. In this way richer stories emerged and the participants were able to have more control in the interview (Woolner, Thomas, Todd, & Cummings, 2009).

3.5.3 Data generation with the children

I did not feel that a semi-structured interview which relied solely on oral questioning would engage the children sufficiently in order to obtain a rich account of their experiences. I felt it was important to be flexible and creative in the approach I adopted with the children (Smith, et al., 2009). My experience as an Educational Psychologist of working with children and exploring their views is that many children quickly become bored with simply answering questions. I have found that to keep their engagement in such a session it is helpful to use visual stimuli and to make the session fun. As with the carers I planned to have the child's memory store to hand for the child to refer to but, even using this approach, I felt their interest might wane after a little while. I could not be certain of the age range of my potential sample of children so I had to design something that I knew would be successful in keeping the attention of a range of ages. In my experience as an EP I have used board games to explore children's views and found them to be very successful with a variety of ages and attention spans.

I therefore decided to design a board game that would contain questions within it as a way of exploring their stories about using the memory store approach. As with the questions created for the carer interview guide, the questions for the board game were devised using my knowledge of the literature, my research questions and examples of the types of question used within IPA studies. My aim was that the board game would help to sustain the children's attention and make the session enjoyable and engaging. It would also allow the session to be more of a reciprocal experience, with me also answering questions on my experience of using the memory store approach with my daughter. I hoped that this would help to reduce some of the power dynamic, although I was aware that

even with using this strategy, power is always present, as it is in all human interactions (Nunokoosing, 2005). Nevertheless I hoped that using the game would put the children more at ease in sharing their views and create a more enjoyable experience.

I wanted to avoid the situation of the children feeling interrogated by being bombarded with questions. I felt it was potentially unethical to ask them to go through a negative interview experience as it may have resulted in them then disliking the memory store approach if they associated it with the negative interview session.

3.5.3.1 Research/literature on board games

Although semi-structured interviews are most commonly used to elicit rich stories for IPA analysis, other methods have also been used, such as postal questionnaires, email dialogue, focus groups and observational methods (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 57). To date I could not find any research where a board game has been used within a research interview situation, but I was able to find research reports which explored the use of board games and traditional games in different forms of therapy (Botha & Dunn, 2009; Kekae-Moletsane, 2008; Matorin & McNamara, 1996). These articles suggest that games have the potential to be a useful tool in developing rapport, understanding the child and increasing their motivation to participate. I was also inspired by visual research methods which have been used to help empower and include participants, helping them to express themselves more easily (Woolner, et al., 2010; Woolner, et al., 2009).

I felt that a board game used in conjunction with photo elicitation had the potential to facilitate the telling of rich stories and to keep the child engaged in the session. For over a century clinicians have used play as a technique for helping children to open up and explore their views. Anna Freud, a pioneer in the field of play therapy, used play to facilitate verbalisation in the children she worked with. In more recent years board games have become very popular tools in therapy (Matorin & McNamara, 1996).

A board game is instantly recognisable to most children, needing little explanation. This familiarity is thought to lower the child's anxiety and help to establish a relaxed atmosphere that enables free flowing conversation (Hemmings, 1996). Many children are attracted to board games and it has been found that they may be more willing to participate in therapy using this medium (Gardner, 1983). Games seem to aid the development of rapport between the child and therapist as the child then sees the therapist as being less threatening (Matorin & McNamara, 1996).

3.5.3.2 Developing the board game

The board game itself was in the style of a Monopoly board with a start and finish point. In the style of many board games some of the squares had instructions on them such as, 'go camping for the weekend, miss a turn', the idea being to keep it as near to a board game experience as possible.

Appendix F depicts the first version of the board game which was designed in conjunction with my seven year old daughter. Players were able to select a piece to move round the board, this could either be one of two small Lego men

or a coloured counter. I wondered if the Lego men might be a little too young for the older children but in fact all the children chose one of the two Lego men as their piece for playing the game.

As with the carer interview I constructed questions that were open ended with the aim of facilitating rich talk about their experiences of using the memory store approach given the basis of my research questions.

I also constructed prompts that I had available to refer to if needed. In practice I found I rarely referred to these, but here again the process of construction was valuable for familiarising myself with the language I might use and preparing myself thoroughly for the sessions (Robson, 2002). See Appendix G for a list of the questions devised and possible prompts that I used with the children. The questions were changed through the process of the pre-pilot and pilot interviews.

3.5.4 Pre-pilot interview

To thoroughly prepare myself for the pilot interview and to ensure the board game would work in its current format I conducted a pre-pilot interview with my seven year old daughter. She was able to engage with the questions as I have been using the memory store approach with her for a number of years. The pre-pilot interview revealed that some of the squares on the board game contained instructions which were unfairly placed, for example, one square instructed you to go forward three spaces but this then resulted in you landing on another square where the instruction was to miss a turn. The pre-pilot interview allowed

me to rectify these glitches as well as make some decisions about the recording of the sessions. It also allowed me to practise my interviewing style and the types of language that may or may not be helpful in the sessions.

3.5.5 Audio-visual vs. audio

I originally intended to video the playing of the board game. However, following the filming of the pre-pilot interview, I decided that the setting up of a video camera with a tripod, and ensuring the child stayed within the visual field of recording would be too much of a distraction from the focus of the session. I therefore decided to record the sessions using a digital audio recording device. This was easy to set up using my mobile phone and was unobtrusive, with the child hardly seeming to notice its presence.

The disadvantage was that it limited my data generation to what could be heard rather than what could also be seen. In conducting the sessions I quickly realised there were going to be gaps in the audio recording where it would be unclear what was happening, for example, when the child was looking through their book to find a specific memory. The visual data would have been very useful and added to my understanding and interpretation of their experience. To compensate for this I tried to provide a commentary on what the child was doing as I conducted each session. This was somewhat helpful but as there were still times when it was difficult to make out what the child was saying or what was happening from the audio, a visual record would have helped to clarify what was happening.

3.5.6 Consent and information leaflets/forms

The research was outlined to foster carers at a training day on the memory store approach but I also wanted to provide an information sheet for them to refer to and take away with them. I included a consent form with this information sheet for them to sign if they were willing to take part in the research (please see Appendix I). This will be further discussed in the section on ethical practice.

In addition to the information leaflet and consent form designed for the carers I also designed an information leaflet for the children. The rationale was that the carer would be able to read the leaflet through with the child. A consent form was also enclosed with a SAE for them to send back to me if they were willing to take part in the research (please see Appendix J for the leaflet and Appendix K for the consent form).

3.5.7 The pilot interview

I carried out two pilot interviews. One was with a foster carer (Anna) using the semi-structured interview schedule and photo elicitation approach, and one with a ten year old looked after child (Sally) using the board game and photo elicitation approach. Unfortunately Sally forgot to bring her memory store to the session which meant we were not able to use the photo elicitation approach for her session. This meant that it was much more difficult for her to answer some of the questions as she did not have the memory store to refer to. I had no room

to criticise however, as I had also forgotten to bring my daughter's memory store to the session for me to refer to!

3.5.7.1 Learning from the pilot interview

I transcribed the interview with Sally and reflected on various aspects; my interviewing skills, how the board game had worked, improvements that could be made to the phrases that I used as well as the questions. A sample of the transcript and my reflections can be found in Appendix L.

The interview experience highlighted for me the importance of having both the child's and my own memory store on hand to refer to in order to elicit rich stories of our experiences. In spite of this Sally was able to give some very interesting accounts of her experiences of using her memory store.

A particular advantage of using the game was that I felt it facilitated the development of rapport between us. It helped the session to flow more easily as, if there was a question Sally was not certain how to answer, it did not result in an awkward protracted silence. A focus back to the board game allowed an easy escape from potential embarrassment and uncomfortable feelings. It was less intrusive and embarrassing than a face to face to interview as it gave us something else to focus on, a welcome and fun distraction.

Anna (foster carer) came back into the room for much of my session with Sally and participated in the session, sometimes trying to help Sally in answering some of the questions. I felt that this inhibited Sally in terms of her feeling free to openly share her views. I realised that I needed to make my guidelines to the

carers clearer, so that they knew to come back into the room on occasions but not to stay in the room and start participating in the session. I changed the preamble to incorporate this (see Appendix A).

At the end of the pilot interview I asked Sally about her experience of playing the game and how she had felt about different aspects of it. She told me she had enjoyed playing it. I had had a concern that the pictures on the board might distract from the questions being asked. Sally did not feel that they had. When asked for improvement suggestions she said that I needed to put some colour or a picture in the middle of the board, something that would make people happy to look at. I incorporated this suggestion into the final version of the game which had a picture of a treasure box on it. The final version of the board game can be seen in Appendix F.

Upon analysing my own performance in the session I felt I needed to improve my technique by doing more summarising in response to answers, in order to clarify and prompt further stories to emerge. I also felt I needed to use the words of the child more, rather than rephrasing.

I reflected that I needed to avoid making evaluative comments which revealed my thoughts about using the memory store, as such comments could inhibit a child from being honest about their feelings towards the approach if they did not fit in with my own. I was aware that no matter how approachable and enjoyable an experience the session was, I would be unable to remove the power dynamic that exists, particularly between an adult who has a professional role and a child (Willig, 2008).

I discussed the idea of changing all the researcher's questions in the game so that they were not about my experience of using the memory store with my daughter. However, on reflection and through discussion with my supervisor, I decided that this might feel confusing for the child. The game would make less sense to them and be less of a reciprocal information sharing experience if my questions were completely different from their own. I therefore kept the focus of the questions for the researcher to being about the memory store and my experience of carrying it out with my daughter, but I adapted the questions.

I ensured that, early on in the game, I had a question that explored what I had found difficult about recording memories with my daughter. In doing so I hoped this gave the children permission to be honest about any difficulties they had had in using the approach. I also changed the order of the questions so that my questions appeared in a different order to the child's. I did this to reduce the likelihood that they would compare their answers to mine and perhaps feel that they should have answered their question in a similar way (please see Appendix H for the researcher's questions).

I found in the pilot interview that using questions such as, 'What do you get out of that?' or 'How did that help you?' were very difficult to answer. I decided to use instead questions such as, 'What do you like about doing that?' or 'Tell me more about that' or asking them to describe where and when they recorded and reflected on a particular memory, then go on to ask about their thoughts and feelings when doing so. Beginning with the descriptive then going on to the

evaluative, using funnelling (Ash & Guappone, 2007) seemed a more fruitful approach.

I also decided to add in a question asking, 'Do you have any memories in your store which show something that you are proud of or have achieved?' in order to elicit stories they might have about how using the memory store may have contributed to an awareness of their strengths and competencies.

I decided that, to add to the fun and game like nature of the whole experience, it would be helpful to have a prize for the winner of the game. A treasure box is something which fires children's imaginations and fills them with excitement. Inside the treasure box the winner of the game would receive a small prize, a few chocolate coins or a little toy as a reward for their efforts. I ensured that I had the agreement of the carer before going ahead with the prize element of the game.

3.5.8 Additional visual stimulus

In addition to having the child's memory store to hand for them to refer to during the session, I also recognised the need to have other visual stimuli available to help them answer some of the questions. I was aware that, particularly with the questions around feelings, many of the children may not have developed an emotional vocabulary (Shotton, 2002; Shotton & Burton, 2008) to help them express very easily how they felt in using the store. I therefore decided that I would use visual stimuli to help with this aspect of the session. I used a selection of the bear cards (Veeken & Harman, 1995) or the cat feelings card (Shotton,

2002) (see Appendices C and D), depending on the ages of the children, at appropriate times during the session.

I also felt the children might need some visual support in thinking about their strengths so I provided a small card depicting positive aspects of character using the strength cards resource (Jardine, 1992, see Appendix D). In practice I found that the strengths card was not needed but the cat feelings card and bear cards were very useful in all the sessions.

3.5.8.1 Potential pitfalls of using the visual prompts

I was aware that in using these prompts to aid the children's responses during the session there was a danger that they felt limited to the strengths or feelings depicted. To go some way towards countering this I explained during the session that these were just a starting point and that they may have experienced feelings or may identify strengths that were not depicted on the cards.

3.5.9 Using the game

Using the game certainly seemed to put the children at their ease. They were all very enthusiastic and motivated to play. As well as enjoying playing the game the children were very excited about the treasure chest and what might be inside it. I recognised with this that I ran the risk of them being reluctant to give fuller explanations of their responses in their eagerness to make progress with the game.

This turned out to be the case with one interview, which I undertook with a five year old boy diagnosed with ADHD, (Kallum) who at times became somewhat frustrated with having to answer some of the questions in his eagerness to get on with the game and make progress around the board to win. Discussion with his carers following the session revealed that he struggles to concentrate at school for even very short periods and actually they felt he had done very well to concentrate for as long as he did in his session with me. I therefore felt that, although in this instance the game had had this disadvantage, on balance, without the game Kallum may not have engaged with the session at all. I also reflected that, even though he had been keen to make progress round the board and at times had expressed frustration about answering questions, at other times he had engaged very well with the questions and shared some very meaningful experiences with me. His varying engagement can be seen as a reflection of his sense making of the experience at various points in time.

3.6 From interviewer to participant observer

In two of the interviews (Sara and Lilly, both age five) the carers came back into the room and stayed there for longer periods of time than I had originally intended them to. This I believe was due to curiosity and a perceived need to somehow help the child in answering the questions. I did not ask them to leave as I did not want to appear rude and actually their interactions with the child around the memory store were very interesting. I found I was actually witnessing the memory store approach in action and, rather than talking *about* the approach, they gave me live examples of using it from which I was able to see how it impacted on their interactions, their relationship, their co-construction of

stories about the events each store contained. In this way I inadvertently moved from the role of interviewer to participant observer (Robson, 2002).

3.7 Time line

For a detailed time line expressed as a GANT chart please see Appendix M.

The chart details the activities I undertook for this study over the period of three years.

3.8 Triangulation

In multi-perspective studies the exploration of one phenomenon from different perspectives can help to develop a more detailed and comprehensive account of that phenomenon (Clare, 2002). This was my aim in exploring both the carers' and the children's experience of engaging with the memory store approach. I wanted to look at the similarities and differences between their perceptions and experiences.

3.9 Ethical practice

To fulfil ethical guidelines outlined by the British Psychological Society (2009), the aims of the research were explained to the carers and children as well as what the interview process would involve. The carers and children needed to consent to being interviewed two to four months after the memory store training took place.

Participation was on a voluntary basis. At the training day for the memory store approach I outlined the research and what it would entail for both the carer and the child (this included me demonstrating the board game). I gave out the information sheets and consent forms (Appendix I). I then gave out the child's leaflet (Appendix J) and child's consent form (Appendix K) to each carer who volunteered.

The carers were assured that their identities and those of the children in their care would remain anonymous. They were also informed (both at this stage and at the start of the interview) of the aims of the research, their right to withdraw at any time and how the research would be likely to be reported. In particular with using IPA, it is important that the participants know that verbatim accounts will be included in the write up. They were also informed of the types of topics that were going to be covered.

I told the carers that I would be getting in touch with them in a couple of months time, after they had had the chance to get going with using the memory store approach, to arrange a date for the interview session. When I then phoned the carers I asked how they were getting on with using the approach and if they had managed to get started. We also discussed if they were still willing to take part.

For those that were able to continue (five carers) I asked them then to talk through the leaflet with the child to see if the child would also be willing to take part. A consent form was then filled in and sent back in a SAE to inform me of the outcome. Fortunately all the children were also willing to take part.

During the course of the interviews specific oral consent was sought for any sensitive issues which emerged unexpectedly (Smith, et al., 2009).

It was important to me that the research process resulted in positive benefits for the carers as well as the children. My aspiration was that the carers and the children would come away from the interviews feeling affirmed, encouraged and heard. For these reasons I used a positive and encouraging approach, joining them in their humour as well as in the seriousness of their responses using an active listening approach. I attempted to minimise the impact of any perceived differences in status or role by dressing casually and maintaining a relaxed approach to any interruptions to the flow of the interview (Willig, 2008).

The transcripts and analyses are held on a password protected computer. I will keep this data for a period of ten years. From an ethical point of view it was important to be honest about the aim of the game being to develop a conversation; that it was about both the researcher and the child sharing their experiences of using the memory store approach and learning more about one another's experiences.

3.10 Analysis

I transcribed three of the audio files whereas the others were transcribed by a professional transcription service. I then analysed the transcripts using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, et al., 2009), whose aim is to explore in detail the participants' experience of the topic under investigation. It recognises that such an exploration is affected by the

researcher's own view of the world as well as the nature of the interaction between the researcher and participant. The researcher's analysis is seen as an interpretation of the participant's experience, as the actual experience is never directly accessible to the researcher. It is an attempt to unravel meanings contained in accounts through a process of interpretative engagement with the transcripts using a series of clear, distinct steps (Willig, 2008) which I shall now describe.

3.10.1 Reading and re-reading

The first step involved reading and re-reading the transcript to immerse myself in the data. As I had most of the audio files transcribed by an external professional this represented a good opportunity for me to become more familiar with the data by checking the transcript for accuracy against the original audio file. I recorded the most striking observations in my research diary and observed how certain narratives were bound together through each part of the interview (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 82). An example of this is that during the interview with Alison, a number of narratives were bound together across various parts of the interview about the involvement of other family members, in particular her youngest birth child, Eva, in creating the memory store.

(section 18) And we came back and because Eva, who's the 11 year old was probably going to have the most contact with Kallum, we thought we would get her involved with that as well. So she would feel part of the whole thing. And that's why probably the first half of the book is written by Eva.

(section 50) I've got two other children but they're 19 and 17, they're mentioned in there and there's photographs of them in there but it's mainly from Eva's perspective.

(section 62) She kind of took responsibility for that, which made her proud of herself.

(section 66) And then when she heard that he really liked it (the book she had created). Apparently he's gone running into his classroom saying, "I've got a car bed in my new house, I've got a car bed!" (laughing)

(section 144) Again that's Eva yeah doing her little bits and bobs. (Eva had written things in the book like 'Kallum is cool')

(section 190) Oh that was the Easter card that Eva sent to Kallum just before he came to us, so he was still with his other foster carer. I don't know why she sent it, she wanted to send him something in the gap. I think there was a three day gap or something when we didn't see him and she wanted to send him something so she sent him the Easter card.

3.10.2 Noting

I then proceeded on to the stage of noting. This was certainly the most time consuming stage of the process as I attempted to explore the specific ways each participant talked, thought and understood their experience of using the memory store approach. The analysis went beyond simply examining the content of each transcript to considering the choice of language used by the carers and children; their use of pronouns, pauses, laughter, repetition, acronyms, particular words and changes in tone. For each line of transcript I tried to ask myself, what was the carer/child talking about here and what were they meaning? I focused on the ways that content and meaning were presented, looking for times when language and content were inter-related. I also tried to consider the construction of particular phrases and what underlay them (Flowers, Duncan, & Knussen, 2003).

To do this I analysed the content, making comments on three different levels, as recommended by Smith et al (2009):

1. Descriptive: comments which focused on the content of what the carer/child had said, the subject of their talk (represented by normal text)

2. *Linguistic: comments which explored their use of language (represented by italic text)*
3. Interpretative: Comments where I had imposed some sort of interpretation on what had been said, focusing on the possible meanings behind the words or actions recorded. I also recorded any questions or wonderings that I had (represented by underlined text)

I recorded these comments in the right hand margin of each transcript. For an example of a transcript recorded in this way please see Appendix N.

3.10.3 Identifying master and constituent themes

I then went through each transcript and my noting to identify themes. To do this more easily I used Nvivo (version 9). In coding each transcript I felt it was important to include my noting as well as the transcript itself as both were important in exemplifying the rationale behind the selection of a particular theme. My aim was to reduce the volume of detail whilst maintaining the complexity of the data. The process of analysis at this stage was the same for both the carers' and the children's transcripts.

It felt somewhat uncomfortable fragmenting the carers and children's data in this way, as the process thus far had felt so strongly led by the participants. In a way it felt like imposing more of myself and having less emphasis on them, but I was reminded by Smith et al (2009, p. 92) that in facilitating the interviews I had been closely involved with the lived experience of the carers and children and the resulting analysis would be a product of our collaborative efforts and my

sense making of the sessions. As such I recognised that the themes which emerged would reflect not only the carers/children's original words but also my interpretation.

As the analysis went on, case by case, common themes began to emerge across the transcripts as well as themes emerging that were unique to particular transcripts. In the process of identifying constituent themes, master themes also began to emerge as being useful 'umbrella' themes under which a group of themes could comfortably sit. When all the transcripts had been analysed I created a mind map which charted the master and constituent themes.

3.10.4 Numeration/recurrence

To get an overview of how often a theme had been supported by carers' or children's talk, I counted the number of excerpts that supported a particular theme (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 98) detailing how many carers and how many children had contributed to a particular theme. I then delineated this information on the mind map (see p104). This started to give me more of an overall picture about which themes were more commonly supported by the carers' talk and which were supported more by the children's talk. This process also highlighted which themes had emerged from just one or two participants and which had appeared across many of the participants.

Reflecting on the mind map and re-reading the excerpts that supported a particular theme I then began a process of revision, merging some themes

together or changing their position under a particular master theme. The process allowed me to identify possible duplications of themes, reorder and revise.

I subsequently went on to create a summary table for each master theme (see p. 109). In each table I gave an example of a quote from both a carer and a child for each constituent theme. I tried to pick examples that were representative of the talk around a particular theme. The next step was to start to write about each theme in more detail using more quotes to tell the story of a particular theme.

3.10.5 Reflexivity

Before embarking on the research I wrote a short piece about my reasons for wanting to carry out the research which helped me to become more aware of my views about the memory store approach and my value system as well as highlighting the potential for role conflict between my role as a trainer and researcher (Ahern, 1999).

It is important to acknowledge that in each subsequent interview I will, inevitably, have been influenced by what had previously gone before, as it is impossible to completely bracket off your own knowledge and experience. I felt it was important to be aware of how previous interviews might influence how I conducted subsequent ones, rather than engaging in futile attempts to eliminate the effect of my prior interview experience as well as my previous experience and world view (Ahern, 1999). To this end I kept a research diary throughout the process recognising feelings that could indicate a lack of neutrality, noting

anything new or surprising about the data and standing back from it, consulting with my supervisor when necessary. This process also allowed me to reflect on times when the interviews did not go as planned and what that revealed about my expectations of how an interview 'should' progress.

3.11 Summary

In this chapter I have sought to offer the reader insight into my research questions and their origin in the literature as well as the research paradigm I used and the rationale behind this. Different stages of the research process have been outlined alongside the rationale for the data generation methods chosen. I have also considered ethical practices put in place as well as reflexivity. There is also a description of how the data from the interviews was analysed using IPA.

4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I give an overview in the form of a mind map of all the themes that I discovered from the interviews and game playing sessions with the carers and children. I then go on to select themes that have direct relevance to the research questions and present these in a second mind map. Summary tables then provide quotes for each theme from both carers and children, to give the reader a flavour of the content of each relevant theme. I then go into more detail about each of the constituent themes, outlining my descriptive, linguistic and interpretative analyses of the participants' talk.

The aim of my research was to explore the carers and children's experiences of using the memory store approach and discover what their talk could tell us about how using the memory store approach had affected:

1. The carer-child relationship
2. The child's self perception
3. Aspects of the child's thinking and learning
4. Their emotions

I shall now go on to outline the master and constituent themes that were discovered through using Interpretative Phenomological Analysis to analyse the data.

4.2 Structure of Themes

Seven master themes emerged from the analysis:

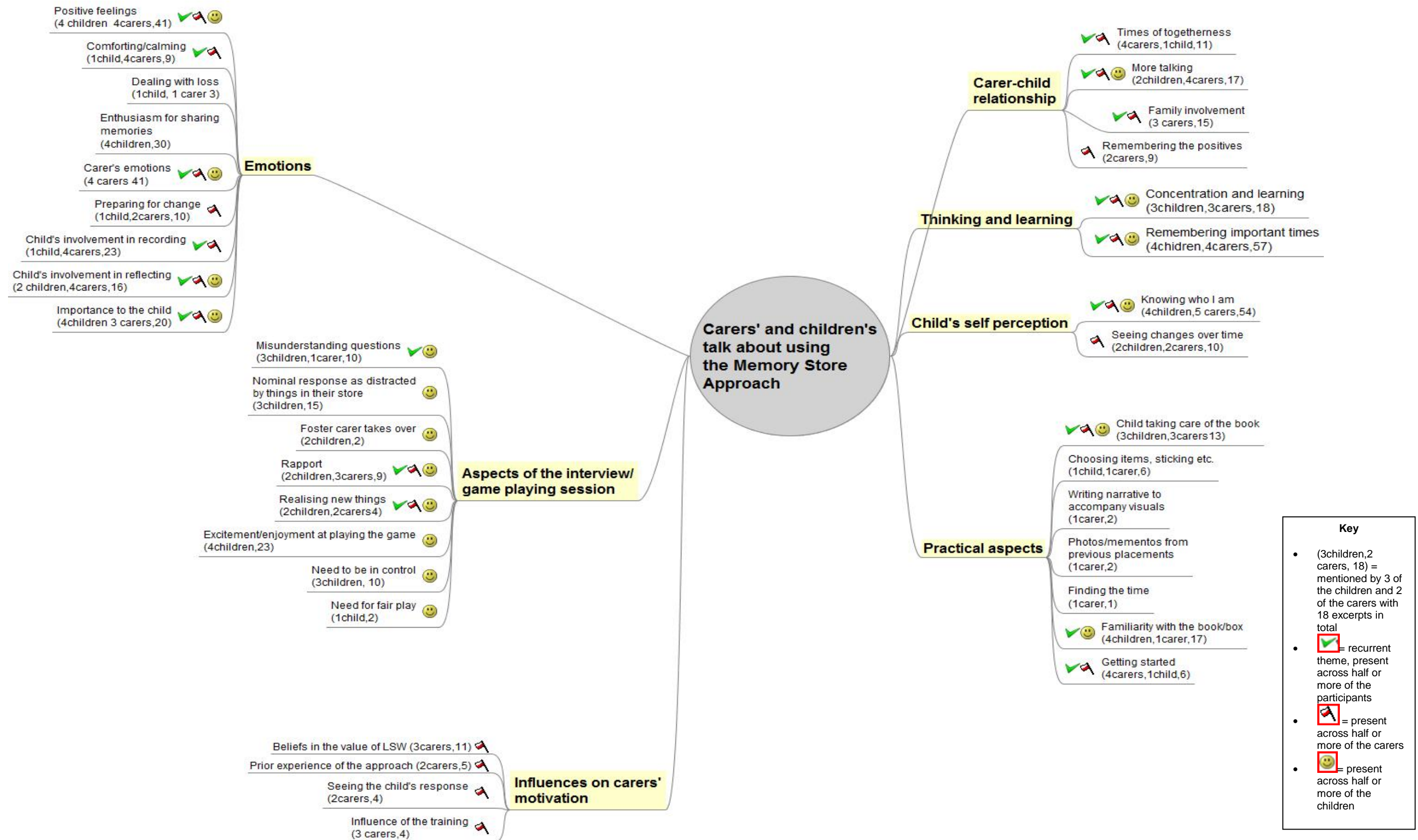
1. Emotions
2. Aspects of the interview/game playing session
3. Influences on the carers' motivation
4. Carer-child relationship
5. Thinking and learning
6. Child's self perception
7. Practical aspects

Within each master theme there was a varying number of constituent themes.

These can be seen diagrammatically in the mind map (figure 1, p104).

I included some constituent themes that I discovered even if they were only talked about by one child or one carer, if they seemed important in their talk and experience and relevant to the research questions. IPA is a method that allows this type of focus to be undertaken (Smith, et al., 2009). For example, Matt (child age 9) talked about how using the memory store allowed him to remember people or animals that were no longer around. His carer Jess also referred to his use of the memory store for this purpose. Although none of the others carers or children talked about this, it seemed important to include it due to its emotional significance to Matt. Matt was facing the loss of some close family friends/relatives as they were emigrating, so issues of loss and remembering were particularly pertinent for him. This highlights how IPA emphasises divergence as well as convergence, differences as well as similarities (Smith, et al., 2009).

Figure 1: Mind Map of Themes

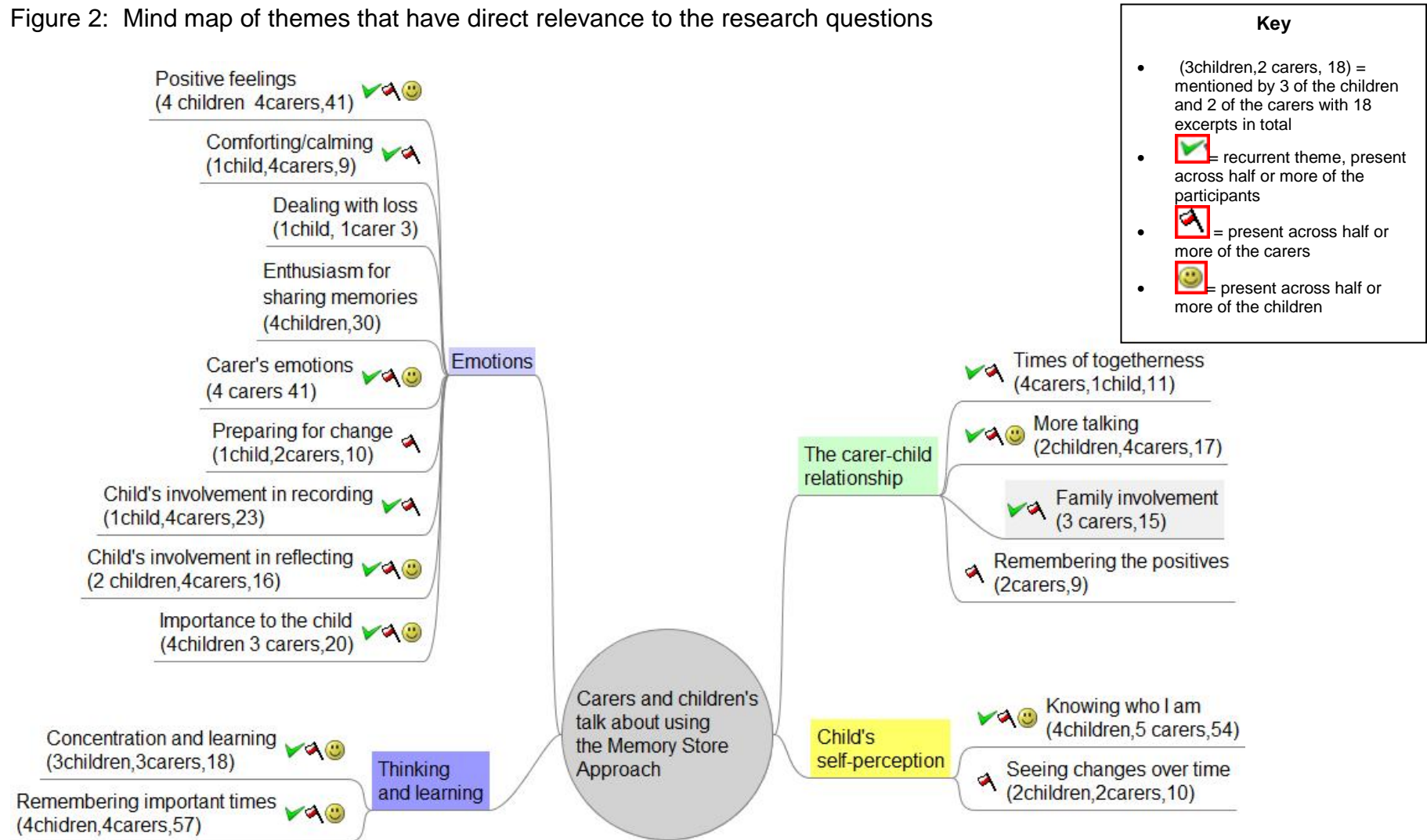


4.3 Themes with direct relevance to the research questions

The themes I will examine in more detail are those which have relevance to my research questions. To give an overview of these themes I have created a second mind map (see Figure 2, p1).

Other discovered themes are relevant to my methodology and I will explore those in the Discussion chapter that follows. For this chapter, however, the findings and themes were so extensive that it was essential to focus on those which I interpreted to be most relevant to the research questions.

Figure 2: Mind map of themes that have direct relevance to the research questions



I will now provide a summary table for each of the themes outlined which has direct relevance to my research questions, where possible giving an example of a quote from both a carer and a child for each of the themes. This will allow the reader to start to develop an idea of the content for each theme.

Within the summary tables I have included my noting (in brackets) but only where absolutely necessary to clarify the inclusion of a particular quote under a particular theme. In this context *italic text* represents linguistic comments which explore the participant's use of language, normal text represents descriptive comments which focus on describing the content of what the participant has said and underlined text represents conceptual comments which are more interpretative (as outlined on p97).

() represents where I was not able make out the words on the recording.

The summary tables also outline how many carers' and children's talk contributed to a particular theme and how many excerpts about that theme there are in total from carers and children. This will help to give more of an idea about the recurrence of a particular theme across children and carers.

The section following the summary tables will explore the participants' talk around each theme in more detail, outlining further quotes, commentary and interpretation to give a fuller understanding of the participants' views.

For ease of reference I have reproduced the table with the pseudonyms of the carers as well as the pseudonyms and ages of the children they look after, as originally shown in the methodology section.

Carer	Child in their care	Age of child
Alison	Kallum	5
Jess	Matt	9
Jamie and Jane	Sara	5
Wilma	Lilly	5

Table 4: Pseudonyms of carers and children

4.4 Tables of example quotations

Table 5: Master Theme: Carer-child relationship

Constituent theme	Example of a quote made by carer	Total of carer quotes	Total of carer sources	Example of a quote made by a child	Total of child quotes	Total of child sources
Times of togetherness	Jane: <i>Yes I think so uhuh. I suppose it's a special time looking at a book like this...</i>	9	4	Sara: <i>And my mummy gave me (card from her memory store) this because she loves me very much. And it says, 'I had scarlet fever, thank you very much'.</i>	2	1
More talking	Alison: <i>Yeah, yeah, he'll say "oh what were they called again?" and I'll say, "you try and think" and he'll, he does tend to remember</i>	6	4	Jane: <i>What it says, it says '(place name)'. Well that's where we were staying. And it says the date 'June 3rd Friday'</i> Sara: <i>And I was sleeping upstairs.</i>	11	2
Family involvement	Jess: <i>Hmm, hmm yeah he likes to go through them with Jack, his brother, he likes to share it. And Jack puts things in as well.</i>	17	3	Wilma: <i>This is the one you made at school actually, you did a journal at school didn't you?</i> Wilma <i>takes a photo out.</i> Lilly: <i>Oh yeah. That's when I had my patch on.</i>	2	11
Remembering the positives	Alison: <i>And he still remembers the characters names, which I find really strange because I couldn't remember.</i>	9	2		0	0

Table 6: Master Theme: Child's self perception

Constituent Theme	Example of a quote made by carer	Total of carer quotes	Total of carer sources	Example of a quote made by a child	Total of child quotes	Total of child sources
Knowing who I am	Jess: <i>Definitely the photograph album (memory store) has added to the security, I think, from when he was little, knowing that he was here from being a baby.</i>	11	2	Matt: <i>A Porsche</i> (referring to a favourite picture/memory in his store). (Once again cars figure strongly in Matt's memory store. The book displays different parts of his identity, his interests, his favourite things, the people activities and things that are most important to him.)	9	2
Seeing changes over time	Jane: <i>And amazed at how much she's grown, because you forget, we're so busy you forget. And you think, "Gosh, was she really that little? And did she really look like that?" and all the rest of it. And I think you look at photos, like this when she first came, and you remember what she was like. She didn't speak, she was so nervous, shy. I can't even think of the right word. No emotion whatsoever. And to look at her two and a half years down the line and she's settled, she's doing well at school.</i>	6	2	Matt: (Telling me why he likes a particular photo of when he was younger) <i>'Cos that was my um – 'cos I'm tiny (and I like the car).</i> (Matt seems to enjoy seeing himself when he was younger. <u>Perhaps because he can see how much he has changed.</u>)	4	2

Table 7: Aspects of the child's thinking and learning

Constituent Theme	Example of a quote made by carer	Total of carer quotes	Total of carer sources	Example of a quote made by a child	Total of child quotes	Total of child sources
Concentration and learning	Alison: <i>It's probably one of the things he will concentrate longer on, especially if you engage him in conversation about different pictures.</i>	8	3	Lilly: <i>K-a-y'</i> Lilly sounds out the letters from a birthday card in her memory store.	10	3
Remembering important times (memory)	Wilma: <i>I would say it was the Christmas and er – I think the Christmas and her birthday, because it was the first ever birthday, the first time she's ever had another person her age to tea.</i>	20	4	Matt: (Matt reads the question off the card) <i>Talk about the first thing you put in your memory store. When I was born. Yeah my brother come to visit us in hospital.</i>	33	4

Table 8: Emotions

Constituent Theme	Example of a quote made by carer	Total of carer quotes	Total of carer sources	Example of a quote made by a child	Total of child quotes	Total of child sources
Positive feelings	Jess: <i>Oh he loved it. He just, yeah, he just really enjoyed it. And he's always happy to – to look at it or add things. He often asks to look back through the memory book.</i>	9	4	Gillian: <i>How do you feel when you see your car bed (referring to photo in memory store) and you look at that?</i> Kallum: <i>Proud and happy. Because I love my car bed. I care about it and do you know what else I care about?</i> Gillian: <i>What?</i> Kallum: <i>Henry</i> (Kallum points to the photo of Henry (the family dog) in his book.	32	4
Comforting/calming	Wilma: <i>Quite quiet sometimes when she reads it. But then she'll just go through, "That's us, and that's us," you know. And then she'll say, "Can I read it?" And she'll sit there and then she'll say, "Can I show you?" and she'll come up and she'll show us, she'll show it.</i>	7	4	Lilly: <i>That's when I feed the kangaroo.</i> <i>(There is a short period of silence before Lilly says this as she looks at this particular photo and seems to be reflecting on the experience. She has definitely slowed down at this point in the session.)</i>	2	1
Dealing with loss	Jess: <i>Well I suppose, I think, at the minute it's um when they first go and he was looking at them, I think it would be more of a – not a direct happy memory to look at.</i>	1	1	Matt: <i>That's me with my old dog. My two old dogs.</i> <u>(These dogs are no longer around and I wonder if being able to see the photos has been helpful for Matt to</u>	3	1

				<u>remember them and maybe almost still be in touch with them in some helpful way (Hedtke, 2003)</u>		
Enthusiasm for sharing memories		0	0	Sara: <i>And this – and this is for my mummy because I made it at school, at nursery.</i> (Another item which Sara is obviously proud of and wants to share with me. <i>Her voice is full of excitement</i>)	30	4
Carer's emotions	Jamie: <i>You know, so from our point of view, seeing photographs of history, in some respects it can give you sort of mixed feelings, you know.</i>	8	2			
Preparing for change	Alison (referring to her birth daughter preparing the memory store before Kallum's arrival) <i>She did all the writing and she took the photographs of Kallum's bedroom and the house and everything else. So she really got involved with it. She wanted to make him feel really welcome, so we did that before he arrived and that was taken to him where he was with his other carers, and he had the chance to look through that.</i>	18	4	Kallum: <i>Well when I first saw Alison and Sam (in the memory store book, prior to his placement with them) I felt proud. Because do you know why I felt proud? Because I was (going to be) staying here, for ever. (Kallum was given the memory store book prior to his current placement.)</i>	1	1

Child's involvement in recording	Jess: <i>Yeah and he'll look through photographs and say, "Can we put them in?" And that's the latest one, and he chose photographs with Jack (brother) to put in that one. And they've put them in, so I think some of them are upside-down. So they've started to put them in themselves now.</i>	21	4	Matt: <i>I'd drawn a picture. I'd drawn a picture. My brother had drawn a picture. I didn't draw that, I made that on the computer.</i> (Talking about some of the items in his memory store that he's taken the initiative in recording)	2	1
Child's involvement in reflecting	Wilma: <i>but I think she's intrigued by it as well... she's seen it loads of times now, so she'll just flick through it, but you can tell she's looking for the best, the bits that she likes best.</i>	13	4	Gillian: <i>And was it a happy party, did you enjoy yourself?</i> Sara: () Sara is not listening she is back in her bag retrieving other things out of it. <u>She is lost in looking through it, very excited, enjoying looking through it and focused on it, on her memories, not on my words</u>	3	2
Importance to the child	Jamie: <i>And she does like to go over it again so she can sort of mull over memories, as we do don't we, in that way.</i>	3	11	Gillian: <i>What would happen if you lost them?</i> Lilly: <i>You won't be able to find them.</i> Gillian: <i>And how, why would that be bad?</i> Lilly: <i>'Cos you won't be happy.</i>	4	9

4.5 Developing a greater understanding of the participants' talk

Having given the reader something of a flavour of each theme that has relevance to the research questions, I will now go into each theme in more detail, giving more examples of quotations and my interpretations of the participants' talk. I will do this in the order of my research questions looking at what the carers' and children's talk can tell us about their perceptions of how using the memory store approach had affected:

1. The carer-child relationship
2. The child's self perception
3. Aspects of the child's thinking and learning
4. Their emotions

For developing a sense of where each excerpt has appeared in the course of the session I have numbered each section of transcript as well as numbering each section of my analysis. This can be seen in the following example:

Transcript	Analysis
119. Lilly: Hmm if you go on that one that means I've won.	120. Lilly is keen to discover the rules or even make up the rules of the game.
121. Gillian: No you have to get all way round first.	122.
123. Lilly: Yeah like that! (laughs)	124. <i>Her voice shows a clear level of enjoyment in the game. She seems quite excited about playing it.</i>

4.5.1 Key

For this section **bold text** represents speech. Please see p97 for an explanation of the normal, italic and underlined text.

4.6 The carer-child relationship

4.6.1 Constituent theme: Times of Togetherness

All the carers' talk contributed to this theme plus the talk of one child (Sara). It was evident in Alison's account that her relationship with Kallum had not been easy to start with. It is hard sometimes for foster carers to develop an attachment with their foster children, particularly at the start of a placement when they are just getting used to one another and developing the dance of attachment (Golding, 2008). At this point Kallum's behaviour was very challenging and difficult to deal with emotionally. However, their relationship developed and they began to have more good times together. It seems that as they experienced more positive times together, the memory store became more important and helpful for remembering those times.

Alison's voice is quite quiet at this point as though she is reflecting thoughtfully on the journey she has had with Kallum.

Alison: I don't think we particularly bonded in the beginning and I think that was because of his behaviour and I think the last couple of months we have been bonding and we do look back and we, he's now having happy memories (section 470).

So we've kind of worked out our own relationship together umm and I know he's happy with that relationship now, and that's why I think

he's happy to look back on our relationship, because we have bonded now whereas in the beginning it was very difficult (section 502).

All the carers felt that using the MSA had brought them closer to their child.

They talked about it being an intimate experience, often accompanied by close physical proximity, both sitting side by side focusing on the same thing together.

Alison: Yeah well we sit together on the sofa, I have my arm round him and we'll go through it, then he's all smiles and he'll concentrate as long as he can on it (section 510).

Wilma also felt it brought her closer to Lilly and emphasised the collaborative nature of the MSA in creating and retelling stories.

Wilma: it's something that you share together, and it's time you spend together. And we've both enjoyed doing it, and she knows that we do it together. And I write, and after, "What will I put here? Who is in this story?" and she'll tell the story. And I would say, yes, it's brought you a little bit close together (section 265).

There also seems to be a feeling that because Lilly knows it is something they do as a joint activity, she knows that she can have that time with Wilma, giving her security and building the relationship.

The one to one attention is also echoed by Jane and Jamie in their interview.

Jane: Yes I think so uhuh. I suppose it's a special time looking at a book like this, because you're trying to give them more one to one attention, aren't you, and talk about things? (section 317).

Jamie: Yeah well I suppose it's quite a bonding thing. You know, anything you can do that sits down and, you know, you can do together, is quite a bonding activity (section 352).

Jane: Sort of a one to one thing, isn't it? Hmm (section 354).

Jess also resonates this in her talk, that it is a joint activity for her and Matt, something that they often do together. In this context she also highlights how the visual nature of the memory store approach aids collaborative reminiscence.

Jess: Hmm, hmm. I mean you can always talk about it with them, about when they were little and where you went and what you did, but without the props it's very hard, isn't it? (section 391).

I was interested in her use of the word 'prop' thinking of the store as possibly being a support for conversations about the past, or alternatively in terms of the props used in a play, helping the actors inhabit their roles.

Sara doesn't explicitly outline that using the memory store approach helps her to feel closer to Jamie and Jane but provides a lived example of how reflecting on items in the store reminds her of her carer's love for her, thus strengthening their relationship as well as providing evidence of that love even when her carer is not there directly.

Sara: (picking up a card from her store) And my mummy gave me this because she loves me very much. And it says, 'I had scarlet fever, thank you very much' (section 332).

Another of the cards Jane had sent Sara, also reminded Sara of the love she has for Jane.

Gillian: This card, that one? And it's a big teddy on the front, and it says 'Hello'. And on the back it says 'Dear Sara, missing you. Hope you are being a good girl for dad. See you soon. Love (Jane).'" And why do you like that one so much?

Sara: Because um – because I love her so much (section 635).

Sara's voice is filled with enthusiasm as she utters this last line, emphasising the close relationship she shares with Jane.

4.6.2 Constituent theme: More talking

I have included this theme next as carer-child reminiscence and increased interaction is closely associated with strengthening attachment (Wareham & Salmon, 2006). The theme of increased interaction is supported by the talk of the carers and the children. All the carers talked about specific incidences when using the memory store approach had facilitated interaction with the child in their care. The sessions with two of the children provided lived examples of carer-child reminiscence around events within the memory store as in those two sessions (with Sara and Lilly) the carers became more involved.

Alison related how looking through the memory store with Kallum resulted in conversations around significant events for him, like going to the cinema.

Alison: Yeah, yeah, he'll say "oh what were they called again?" and I'll say, "You try and think" and he'll, he does tend to remember (section 272).

And I'll say, "Do you remember that we had some sweets?" and he'll say, "What did I have again" and I'll say, "Oh I can't remember, was it jelly beans?" (section 280).

Alison's voice is lively and full of fun as she relates the way she interacts with Kallum here. What comes across is the fun that she and Kallum have reminiscing about these times. Wilma also described how the store acted as a conduit for conversations, with Lilly often initiating interaction as a result of

looking through her store and wanting to share things with Wilma or her husband.

Wilma: then she'll say, "Can I show you?" and she'll come up and she'll show us (section 168).

This was also echoed in the talk of Jane who related how looking through the store would initiate conversations about achievements and significant memories such as when Sara received a star of the week award at school.

Jane: And it brings, I suppose, "Oh star of the week, do you remember?" She always says, "I was the first star of the week, then the next week it was so and so," or talking about why she was star of the week (section 175).

Jess felt that using the store enhanced the recall and quality of interaction around specific memories. She emphasised that without the tangible memories it is difficult to remember the detail.

Jess: You can't – you can't take yourself there.

Gillian: No

Jess: You can a little bit, but I definitely think the material things are good for that.

Gillian: Yeah, yeah.

Jess: And you can both share the more vivid memory of it definitely (section 391).

The sessions with two of the children (Lilly and Sara, both 5) provided lived examples of carer-child reminiscing around events within the memory store. For Sara there were numerous occurrences of carer-child reminiscing that occurred quite naturally as a result of Sara looking through her memory store with her carers participating. There are two examples below where Sara and Jane

reminisce looking at the photos in Sara's store.

Sara: That's when I went on the train with my friends.

Jane: Well we were staying in a caravan, weren't we? And that was at (place name) castle we went on the train (section 179).

Jane: Let's have a look, let's see (looking at photos in the store) Do you know what these are? It's when we went to stay on holiday with Phil and we went to see a big waterfall. Do you remember that?

Sara: Yeah (section 482).

There were no similar examples in the sessions with Kallum and Matt as their carers tended to remain out of the room and did not become engaged in the session in the same way when they did occasionally come in.

4.6.3 Constituent theme: Family Involvement

As well as facilitating interaction between carer and child, the use of the memory store approach often involved other family members. Three of the carers' accounts suggest that in this way, use of the memory store approach helped to strengthen relationships between the child and other family members. For Alison, her youngest birth child, Eva, became very involved in putting together the memory store book before Kallum's placement with the family began. This helped her to feel involved in the placement and generated positive feelings of excitement and responsibility around Kallum coming to live with them and the contribution that she could make.

Alison: She (Eva) did all the writing and she took the photographs of Kallum's bedroom and the house and everything else. So she really

got involved with it. She wanted to make him feel really welcome, so we did that before he arrived and that was taken to him where he was with his other carers, and he had the chance to look through that (section 26).

There is a real sense of pride in Alison's voice as she relates how Eva took on so much responsibility in preparing the memory store for Kallum's arrival.

Jane outlined on two occasions how the memory store approach had facilitated interaction between Sara and her foster siblings.

Jane: But then she likes to run off, "Harry (foster brother), come and look at this," or, "Sophie, have you seen these such and such?" So it sort of involves everybody, which is nice (section 317).

In this excerpt there seems to be a sense of pride and satisfaction in Jane's voice. She enjoys and is proud of seeing her children interacting positively and sharing memories together.

Jess relates how the memory store approach has become a joint activity for Matt and his (birth) brother Jack who lives nearby with other family relatives.

Jess: Hmm, hmm yeah he likes to go through them with Jack, his brother, he likes to share it. And Jack puts things in as well (section 45).

Jess: Hmm, hmm yeah they'll often look at the photo album together, and to put things in. But Jack's got a memory box off (family relatives), so a few things of Matt's will be in there, and some of Jack's bits and pieces are here (section 57).

Here again there is real pleasure in Jess' voice as she talks and smiles. She seems really pleased that the boys are able to share their experiences using the memory store.

4.6.4 Constituent theme: Remembering the Positives

I have chosen to outline this theme next due to its potential contribution in building the relationship between carer and child. In both narrative and solution orientated approaches, a key component is a focus on competencies (Morgan, 2000; Rees, 2009). My rationale, based on a narrative approach (Freeman, et al., 1997), is that by facilitating reflection and recall of the child's strengths, alternative stories are reflected upon or told which are counter to problem-saturated stories and reflect the richness of the lives of the carers and children. Such stories may help the carer to experience feelings of affection towards the child, which will then influence their behaviour towards them, which in turn will affect the child's response.

The talk of two carers indicated that use of the memory store approach helped them to recall positive features of the child they were looking after. For Alison looking through the memory store during our interview evoked memories of events which prompted her to tell stories of Kallum's strengths and achievements, such as a trip to the cinema where he surprised her with his concentration and memory for names.

Alison: He sat through about three quarters and then started to walk round the cinema, but for him that was a massive achievement (section 256).

Alison: And he still remembers the characters names, which I find really strange because I couldn't remember (section 264).

This prompted recall of other memories which reinforced Kallum's memory skills.

We went to the (name of shopping centre) and my son David came with me, he was eighteen then and he (Kallum) said, "Can you remember when David went off and he bought that hat?" And I'll think, "What?" then I'll think, "Yeah he did actually" and things like that and he'll kind of remember other things that I wouldn't (section 300).

As part of going to the shopping centre the family went to the cinema to see Toy Story 3. This memory, recorded in Kallum's store, prompted Alison to remember how Kallum was very caring and empathic when she became upset by the film.

And he was sitting next to me and he said, "are you alright Alison?" and I went, "Yeah, yeah I'm fine I'm just sad, it's just sad isn't it?" and he couldn't really understand why it was sad, but he realised that I was sad and he was like patting my leg, and I thought, "Ahh" (section 360).

Alison was obviously very touched by this event, there were almost tears in her eyes as she related it to me but happiness was evident as well. When Kallum first arrived to live with the family Alison related how he seemed emotionless and incapable of expressing empathy but here he was some months down the line being able to express compassion and empathy towards Alison.

In a similar way, looking through the memory store prompted Wilma to recall and relate how Lilly was very caring in making a card for a new baby.

Wilma: And when she was making this at the table, now this is a stork apparently (referring to Lilly's drawing on a card) but er – and that was the day, we were at (place name) and Katy went into labour.

And I kept saying, and she's done this, she said, for baby Jake (Section 136).

For Jane reflecting on memories in the store brought about feelings of deep admiration and respect for the progress Sara has made and how she's changed. There also seemed to be a sense of love, pride and satisfaction as she can see the impact of their involvement over time.

Gillian: And how do you feel when you look back on the photographs with her and share some of this stuff with her? What are your feelings that you get from that?

Jane: Well I think joy that she's with us. And amazed at how much she's grown, because you forget, we're so busy you forget. And you think, "Gosh, was she really that little? And did she really look like that?" and all the rest of it. And I think you look at photos, like this when she first came, and you remember what she was like. She didn't speak, she was so nervous, shy. I can't even think of the right word. No emotion whatsoever. And to look at her two and a half years down the line and she's settled, she's doing well at school. She's had such a hill to climb and she's got there. I'm just amazed she's managed to do it. I know we've put in a tremendous amount of work, but oh it's been worth it. You know, because she's holding her own now and settled. And she was just so far behind (section 272).

It seems that reflecting on when a child was smaller and more vulnerable engenders feelings of affection and love towards the child, as the carer thinks about the child's need for them and are reminded of their continued care over a period of time. Jess highlights how for both her and her husband Bill, looking

through the memory store reminds them of how different Matt was, how small he was and how in the early days he suffered at first from eczema.

Jess: (talking about her husband Bill) well he said it a couple of times when he was looking (through the store), “I didn’t realise he was so little when he first came.” (section 299).

Gillian: And do you look back on memories by yourself as well?

Jess: Sometimes yeah.

Gillian: And what do you think that gives you?

Jess pauses before answering this question, giving it some thought.

Jess: Um I suppose it’s just – well it depends what it is, it could be – sometimes it’s something like from when he was a baby. And like one of them’s a bib with a little () on, and that brings back memories. And then that’s his little mitts that I made, that he had to wear for his eczema, which takes me back to when he was a baby. And then it was like when his skin wasn’t too good, but now it’s nice to think how he’s improved (section 346).

Having written about the themes which tell us about how using the memory store approach has affected the carer-child relationship I will now go on to outline constituent themes which relate to how using the memory store approach seems to have affected the children’s self perception and sense of identity.

4.7 Child’s self perception

4.7.1 Constituent theme: Knowing who I am

This theme was supported by the talk of three carers and the talk of all the children. Both Jamie and Jane felt that Sara looking through photos of family

outings and events helped to reinforce that she is part of the family, that she belongs.

Jane: And then we've got a picture obviously there, but we've got another one somewhere of her and Sophie (birth child). So then we get, "Oh yeah that's me and my sister, isn't it?" You know, she likes to be reminded that she's part of the family, doesn't she? (section 70).

Jamie: Because most of these are with other members of our family. I mean there's this one, and things that we've done, feeding the ducks and so on, there's all of the pictures in here (section 249).

Jamie goes on to further emphasise how the photos in Sara's store are mainly taken with other family members which sends out a strong message to her that she belongs in the family. I wonder if verbalising this has helped both Jane and Jamie realise at a deeper level how using the memory store gives out important messages of belonging to Sara.

Jamie: But if you have photographs and they're with our lot, our children, it must make her feel as part of the family when she's there with () (section 235).

Jess also felt that using the memory store approach contributed significantly to Matt feeling secure. She spoke on three occasions of how having the store to look back on has helped Matt feel more secure, by giving him tangible evidence of his history, knowing who looked after him from an early age.

Gillian: What do you think that they get out of doing that, when they're doing that together?(Matt and his brother looking though the memory store together).

Jess: Probably, well it's a security thing, isn't it, I think? Um well just the start of where their life began with us (section 73).

Jess: Definitely the photograph album has added to the security, I think, from when he was little, knowing that he was here from being a baby (section 428).

Jess: Um because where would he have looked if he didn't have this? And as they get older they don't necessarily believe what you say, I don't know where they – where would they go to find that out? (section 456).

In my session with Matt, he identified a photo of himself as a baby in hospital as being the first photo that appears in his memory store and later he identified it as being one of his favourite photos in the store. I wonder if cherishing that memory of the day you were born, holding it somewhere safe and accessible, gives out a very strong message to the child, that they matter, that the day of their birth was a very important one. This particular idea is only reflected in Matt's account. The other children did not have any baby photos in their memory stores as they were taken into care when they were older whereas Matt was looked after from birth by Jess and Bill who are relative carers.

Gillian: Show me your favourite in that one (referring to memory store book).

Matt: That's me when I was born (section 137).

As well as photos of events and occasions, the children's stores contained pictures of things that they were interested in or motivated by, reinforcing their unique preferences and interests and so contributing to their sense of identity. For Matt, cars featured quite frequently in his store.

Gillian: () car. What sort of car is that?

Matt: A Porsche (section 217).

Certificates and achievements were also evident in all the children's memory stores, helping to reinforce and thicken positive narratives (see p19 for an explanation of this phrase) the children have and tell about themselves thus contributing to a positive self perception and helping to answer a key question in relation to identity, 'Who am I? (Henry, 2005). *Sara (age 5) was full of smiles and her voice was light with excitement when she showed me how she had earned enough stickers to fill a complete sheet at school.*

Sara: Um I filled my sticker sheet! (section 517).

The sticker sheet reminded Sara of things she had achieved at school thus thickening stories she has about herself as being someone who can achieve in school.

Jane (Sara's carer) felt that having achievements stored in this way, and reflecting upon them, helped to keep the memories of these important and positive stories alive through repeated conversations around them, thus thickening stories of strengths and competencies that Sara has about herself.

Gillian: And say like the star of the week one that you've got there, that she said, "Can I put that in?" what do you think she got out of you recording that and putting it in there?

Jane: Well it's a memory for her, isn't it? And if you weren't recording it, it would be something that was lost. Whereas this is sort of keeping it all together. And it brings, I suppose, "Oh star of the week, do you remember?" She always says, "I was the first star

of the week, then the next week it was so and so,” or talking about why she was star of the week. So it’s just sort of keeping memories alive, isn’t it? (section 173).

Kallum had an element of pride in his voice as he related how he had been able to help carve out a pumpkin for Halloween as well as relating lots of other achievements within his memory store.

Gillian: What’s that? (looking at photo).

Kallum: A pumpkin.

Gillian: Did you make that?

Kallum: Yeah! (section 233).

In a similar way, Lilly talked with pride as she related to me winning a race at school sports day. Thus helping to thicken stories about herself as someone who can be a winner, who can achieve.

Gillian: Tell me about that. What did you get your medal for?

Lilly: ‘Cos I won the race! (section 65).

Lilly was also keen to show me lots of memories from her birthday party. This was particularly significant for her as it was the first birthday party she had ever had where friends had been invited and they had had party games and a party tea. She had kept all the cards from this event as well as there being lots of photos. Her favourite memory of all was the birthday badge that she wore on the day. *There was a real note of pride in her voice and in the way she sat upright and showed me everything from the party; cards, photos, badge, etc. All of this seemed to be her way of asking me to look at her life, to take notice of the presence of friends in her life, to notice that her carer took the time and trouble*

to prepare a party for her, to look at the evidence that shows she is loveable and valuable. Lilly's birthday, her party and all that went with that celebration are clearly very significant to her. They represent her favourite memory in the store. It was a special day for her when someone had taken the time to invite her friends from school and prepare a birthday party and everyone gave her presents. I wondered if it was a favourite memory because it reminds her that others think she is special/worthwhile enough to do that for her.

Gillian: 'Can you talk about a favourite memory?' (reading from a card Lilly had handed to me). What's your favourite memory in the book?

Lilly: My badge.

Gillian: Your badge, and what did you get that badge for?

Lilly: Because it was my birthday and I was 5 (section 227).

Wilma (Lilly's carer) felt that the memory store helped give Lilly confidence in telling positive stories about herself and in talking to others.

Gillian: Do you think that using the memory store helps her in terms of how she sees herself as well?

Wilma: Yes definitely, I think that's the biggest er – I think that's the biggest thing. Like when she'll say – I think it gives her confidence, because she'll say, "That was my part in Sam and Emma coming, I had that cake, and I had this, and I had that," and it's all about her (section 273).

When asked if he felt the memory store helped him to see good things about himself, Matt said that it helped him to see that he'd been good.

Gillian: Your go. (I read out the card) 'Do you think looking back on memories helps you to see good things about yourself?'

Matt: Yeah.

(Matt responds immediately to this question. There is no need to pause and think about it. He seems very certain that looking back on memories helps him to see the good things about himself.)

Gillian: What good things does it help you to see about yourself?

Matt: That I've been good for my life.

(I interpret Matt to mean here, that the memory book helps him to see and remember the times when he has been good in his life, but it is unclear from his phrasing, so I summarise to try and gain further clarification)

Gillian: That you've been good for your life?

Matt: Hmm, hmm.

Gillian: Tell me a bit more about that.

Matt: That I've been good at school and good at home (section 677).

Matt clarifies that the good things he has done could be something at school or at home. The memory store helps him to see the good things he has done, at home or at school rather than the good things about himself. I wondered if repeatedly viewing and telling stories about his accomplishments would help him to internalise his achievements into virtues that he accepts that he possesses (K. C. McLean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007).

Bruner (2004) outlines the link between the narratives that we tell and the beliefs that we hold about ourselves: 'We become the autobiographical narratives by which we tell about our lives' (page 694). I wondered if the process of co-constructing, telling and retelling stories of his competencies was sufficient to move Matt towards making global internal attributions (Weiner, 1985) that he is 'well behaved' or 'good at sport' rather than just situation specific attributions, 'I've been good at school'.

Matt was keen to show me all his certificates from school and from football with a sense of pride. He revealed that one of his favourite memories was when he made a friend on holiday. A tangible memory of the time he made a friend reminds him that he is someone who can make friends. It thickens this story that he has about himself as someone who can form relationships and make friends.

Gillian: Talk about another favourite memory in your store.

Matt: It's when I was on holiday, when I went to um this club, err I made a friend (section 415).

Jess (Matt's carer) also highlighted the role of the memory store approach in thickening positive stories, particularly highlighting the importance of referring to these stories when the child might be going through times of self doubt, thus contributing to their self perception as well as their resilience.

Jess: Yeah because I think, well any child, if they've done something good and they've been awarded something, it makes them feel proud, or it should make them feel proud.

Gillian: Hmm.

Jess: And I think if you don't keep them, and say they go through a little bit of a lull or they're struggling a bit, you've got nothing to get back out and say, "Look, you know, you did get these, you were good at this, you were good at that." And yeah, you've then got the proof, haven't you, not just what you say? (section 454).

4.7.2 Constituent Theme: Seeing changes over time

I have included this theme in the section on self perception as some of the carers' and children's talk within this theme highlighted a potential relationship between the child seeing their progress over time and their self perception. This was supported by the talk of one of the carers (Jane) and two of the children

(Sara and Matt). Jane was observant of the changes she has seen in Sara over the time she has been with them which have been highlighted through use of the memory store approach.

Jane: And also it shows progression, doesn't it, of if you've been painting or a bit of work? And somewhere in the bag (memory store), she's writing () now, so one of her first attempts (at writing) I've put in there (section 186).

In my session with Sara, Jane points out to Sara one of the items in her store which highlights how, at that time, Sara was just learning to write her name whereas now she can write in sentences. This contributes to Sara also being able to recognise and tell these positive stories about her progress.

JANE: And that's when you could write your name. That's not long ago. You learnt to write your name, didn't you? (section 428).

And later again in the session...

JANE: Because, look, this was when you could write your name last year, and now you're writing sentences. And that's all that you could write, that was your first word wasn't it? (section 761).

One of Matt's favourite memories in his store is of him and his cousin sitting in a car. One of the reasons Matt likes the photo so much is seeing himself when he is smaller, perhaps because he enjoys seeing how much he has changed in size over time.

Gillian: What do you like about that? Why is that your favourite?

Matt: 'Cos that was my um – 'cos I'm tiny and I like the car (section 57).

4.8 Thinking and learning

My third research question addressed what the carers' and children's talk could tell us about how using the memory store approach had affected aspects of the child's thinking and learning. In my previous research, carrying out interviews with foster carers, their talk indicated that the memory store approach had been a useful vehicle for developing aspects of thinking and learning (Shotton, 2010). I wanted to further explore this in the current research with both carers and children.

4.8.1 Constituent theme: Concentration and learning

The talk of three carers (Alison, Wilma and Jane) and three children (Lilly, Matt and Sara) contributed to this theme. As the items in the store had direct relevance and emotional significance to the children, it was something that would hold their attention. For Kallum and Lilly in particular this was significant, as both had concentration difficulties. Lilly had a Statement of Special Educational Need² for behaviour and learning issues, and Kallum had a diagnosis of ADHD.

Alison (carer to Kallum): It's probably one of the things he will concentrate longer on, especially if you engage him in conversation about different pictures (section 513).

Wilma mentioned a number of times how Lilly would spend quite long periods of

² A statement describes a child's special educational needs (SEN) and the special help they should receive (Department for Education, 2010).

time looking through the memory store. In addition to the store captivating her attention, Wilma also highlighted how Lilly was motivated to try to read some of the words, hence practicing her words recognition skills

Wilma: Yes uhuh, er she just wanted to sit and look at it. She sits looking and, 'That's me there, and that's Mike, and that's' – she just sits with it really (section 164).

Wilma: Quite quiet sometimes when she reads it. But then she'll just go through, 'That's us, and that's us,' you know. And then she'll say, "Can I read it?" (section 168).

Wilma also talked about how using the memory store had had an impact on Lilly's behaviour when the family went on outings. She has become very observant, looking for things she can then put in her store later on without any prompts from Wilma to do so.

Gillian: Do you think that using the book has had any impact on her learning?

Wilma: Um yes, because when we're going places I would say that she's looking for things, different things, things out of the ordinary for to stick in the book. So I think when we go anywhere the book's always, you know, if we're going anywhere, something that's nice. But I don't mention it ever, she'll say – pick something up and say, "Oh this is nice, this is special, can I put this in the book?" (section 340).

The sessions with Lilly and Sara highlighted examples of them practicing their reading skills using items from the store. They were motivated to try to read the words because of the emotional relevance of the material. Lilly, on five occasions, made attempts to read the words off a number of cards that she had in her store from her birthday party. Lilly has not found letter and word

recognition easy but is now making progress with these skills. The memory store provides useful stimulus material that she is motivated to read. *Lilly sounded confident in her recognition and articulation of the letters on the card.*

Lilly: K-a-y (sounding out the name on a card) (section 325).

In a similar way, looking through the store during our session provided Sara with a chance to practice colour recognition and reading skills. Sara also highlighted to me how she loves to write, although it was unclear from her talk whether she meant writing in relation to her memory store or just in general.

Sara: And I even got one from the Christmas tree. It says on my book, it says 'happy birthday to Sara' (trying to read the words) (section 841).

Matt thought that using the memory store had helped him with his learning but wasn't quite sure how. I did wonder whether in responding to my question he was telling me something that he perhaps thought I wanted to hear.

Gillian: Has your memory store helped you with your learning?

Matt: Yeah.

Gillian: How has it helped you with your learning, do you think?

Matt: I'm not sure, but I think it does (section 555).

I was reminded of how, despite my best efforts to minimise its effect, power is always present, in all human interactions (Nunkoosing, 2005). Although alternatively it might have been that Matt just needed more time to think about why or how the memory store had helped him.

4.8.2 Constituent theme: Remembering important times

In terms of affecting aspects of learning it seems that the memory store approach affects the clarity with which children and carers are able to remember events and place them in some sort of chronological order. This theme was supported by the talk of all carers and children. There were numerous events outlined in the children's memory stores, e.g. outings to the cinema, walks, sports day, parties, holidays, trips on board a ship, Christmas, birthdays. There were also many significant milestones recorded: first days at school, first golf lesson, first time on a bike, etc. In looking through the store both the carers and the children were able to relate details of each event, fleshing out each memory with further details about when it occurred or who else was there. It was clear that the pictorial information was very powerful in taking the participants back to the time and place when it occurred. One example of this is Matt relating an excursion on a ship that he had with his brother.

Gillian: (Looking at a page in his memory store) Oh you and your brother again. It looks like you're having a good time on a ship there.

Matt: Yeah I was 6 and he was 9 then (). And um we were good so um me and Jack are going again (section 81).

Another example is Kallum relating to me a memory of walking the family dog (Henry) on the beach.

Gillian: And tell me about this one here, what are you doing there in that photograph? (Photo of the family down on the beach with the dog).

Kallum: We're on the beach.

Gillian: Oh and splashing in the sea. And how do you feel when you look back on that one and you remember doing that?

Kallum: (points to the happy bear).

Gillian: Happy. You feel happy? Why do you feel happy?

Kallum: Because I loved taking my dog for a walk.

Gillian: Did you? I bet Henry loved it too didn't he?

Kallum: I touched his tail a load of times.

Gillian: Did you? Did he like that?

Kallum: Mhum he wagged his tail! (section 341).

In the sessions with Sara and Lilly, their carers (Jane and Wilma respectively) were present for much of the time. This allowed me to observe examples of how the carers reminisced with the child using the store, clarifying memories. The carers often explained when an event occurred or what happened around the event, bringing greater clarity of memories. Often the child (Sara in particular) did not have an accurate understanding of when an event occurred and its context. This highlights the importance of a written narrative accompanying the pictures and artefacts so that the story is not lost or distorted if there are changes in placement. It also highlights the importance of having the memories stored in some sort of order. Sara's memory store was somewhat chaotic and not in any particular order with little written narrative to accompany the pictures, so this probably didn't help in terms of developing a better understanding of the chronology of events. However, as Sara was going through the process of adoption, this was perhaps less important as both Jamie and Jane were excellent at reminiscing with her and giving her an oral narrative to accompany the pictures.

**JANE: Can you remember what this was? Look.
(Jane holds up another memory from the store.)**

Sara: Oh yeah, it was when we went to um the farm.

JANE: No it was the donkeys. Our Sunday school have adopted a donkey (section 149).

The literature suggests that life story work helps children to remember events more accurately and understand sequences of events (Fahlberg, 2006; T. Ryan & Walker, 2007). Jamie felt this to be true of their experience of using the memory store approach with Sara.

Jamie: But it's one of the things that will get – will try and get things into perspective, isn't it?

Gillian: Hmm, hmm.

Jamie: You know, because obviously she doesn't have memories before she came here, and it's trying to get kind of an order of things. I mean we know where we came from and who our family was, but she hasn't got – she's only got this part of the family (section 362).

For Wilma it was particularly important that the store showed evidence of Lilly's birth family's involvement. Wilma wanted Lilly to be able to look back and see that her birth family had made an effort and had not just forgotten her.

Wilma: So I wanted her to have them. I would say the really – what I collected that I thought would be more special to her, actually for her, was her card off her Mam and her Dad and her Grandma. Because I think, I don't know, you think maybe she'll come to think, "Oh they didn't give us this," and they did...You know, if you just throw them away she might think, "Oh they never give us this, this and this even." And they wrote nice things inside (section 105).

4.9 Emotions

My fourth research question considered what the carers' and children's talk could tell us about how using the memory store approach had affected the participants' emotions, both when engaging with the approach and their feelings towards it.

4.9.1 Constituent theme: Positive feelings

All the participants' talk contributed to this theme. The carers described the children as often expressing positive emotions when they record or reflect on memories together. They talked about how the children would smile and seem happy, pleased and interested to look back on memories, showing their pleasure and enjoyment of the activity overtly. One example of this was Alison talking about Kallum.

Alison: And he always has a smile, especially when he talks about this (cinema excursion in his memory store book to see 'How to Train Your Dragon') because I think that was the first time he'd been to the cinema (section 248).

Alison felt that having happy memories was very unfamiliar for Kallum because of his difficult early experiences that brought him into care. At first he was reluctant to engage in reminiscing, perhaps because he didn't want to come face to face with photographs of himself and trust that someone (his carer) would find him acceptable and lovable. Now that he has developed trust in his carers, (which the book has perhaps contributed to as it shows that they think his time with them is important and worth recording) he can look back with them and accept himself and accept that they value him.

Alison: In his past really, because I'm sure he keeps a lot inside, you know about his mam his dad, he doesn't talk very much about it and I know he's got something inside but he just shuts it off, so it's kind of difficult to get him to open up about things and that's why I say that in the beginning he wasn't that interested about looking back in his life, but I think the more we do and the more time he's having with us, the more he's having fun and enjoying himself and having feelings, umm you know it's easier for him to look back and smile and think oh I remember this and I remember that (section 478).

Wilma, Jamie, Jane and Jess all echoed how the children display positive emotions when engaging in reflecting on memories in their store.

Wilma: But er sometimes she just reads – looks at it quietly and, you know, that time she'll get – she does get excited hmm yeah uhuh (section 185).

Jamie: Well she's pleased to have a look through them, she's interested in them (section 301).

Jess: He's always happy to – to look at it or add things. He often asks to look back through the memory book (section 33).

Lilly told me that she felt happy and excited when she first received her memory store whereas Kallum said he felt proud upon first seeing his store.

Kallum expressed on three occasions how he felt both pride and happiness when looking back on memories in his store. His memory store contains pictures of the people/things/animals that have special significance for him and that he cares about. I wondered if seeing them in his book reinforces and reminds him of their significance.

Gillian: How do you feel when you look at your car bed in your

book? How do you feel when you see your car bed and you look at that?

Kallum: Proud and happy. Because I love my car bed. I care about it and do you know what else I care about?

Gillian: What?

Kallum: Henry (Kallum points to the picture of Henry the family dog in his book) (section 429).

Sara said she felt happy when she looked at items in her store. Matt expressed that, as well as feeling happy when he looked through his store, he also felt peaceful. He later also added that he felt 'proud' when looking through his store.

Gillian: And when you look back at your memories, what sorts of feelings do you have?

Matt: That. (Matt points to happy and peaceful on the cat feelings card) (section 167).

Lilly displayed great excitement through both her voice and mannerisms as she showed me photos of the presents she received at her birthday party.

Lilly: Oh that's me hat for me bike. That's the bag for me presents. That's me skirt and they're me jarmees (pyjamas) (section 184).

She also showed great enthusiasm and affection for the cards that she received at this event.

**Lilly: Oh I love these ones!
(referring with great enthusiasm and pleasure to the cards she received for her birthday) (section 280).**

In a similar way Sara became very excited and animated talking about a photo where she attended a birthday party with her friends.

Sara: () that. That's when I – and that was when I was a big girl and I went to um Robyn's birthday with all my friends (section 255).

Lilly expressed how she would feel unhappy if anything were to be lost from her store. She placed great importance on taking care of her store in order to avoid this happening.

Lilly: Hmm. () out like this () got to put them back in.

(Any items which are not yet stuck into the book she places carefully back between the correct pages.)

Gillian: So you've got to tuck them back in to keep them nice.

Lilly: Yeah.

Gillian: Why do you have to tuck them back in?

Lilly: Just in case you lose them.

Gillian: What would happen if you lost them?

Lilly: You won't be able to find them.

Gillian: And how, why would that be bad?

Lilly: 'Cos you won't be happy (section 459).

4.9.2 Constituent theme: Comforting/calming

The idea that looking through the memory was a calming or comforting experience was supported by the talk of all carers and one of the children (Lilly).

Alison described how she and Kallum share looking through the memory store together as a calming activity, often as a part of their bedtime routine. This suggests that it helps him to feel secure and safe. Perhaps because it reinforces the relationships he has with the family, that he is wanted, that they value him

and that there are good points about him.

Alison: Yeah. I think it's comforting for him, because we tend to look at it at night when he's got his pyjamas on and I'm trying to get him to calm down after reading a book or something (section 412).

Wilma has noticed that Lilly often calms down and becomes very still when looking through her memory store, sometimes pointing things out to her and Paul. It seems to be important to her and she seems to get pleasure and comfort from looking through it and recognizing people and remembering places. It captivates her attention.

Wilma: She sits looking and, "That's me there, and that's Mike, and that's" – she just sits with it really (section 164).

Wilma: Quite quiet sometimes when she reads it (section 168).

I also witnessed quite a dramatic change in Lilly's emotional presentation as she looked through items in her memory store. At first Lilly became caught up in going through her memory store, telling me quickly about each thing in it before rapidly going on to the next. Her mind, thoughts and speech seemed to be racing along at quite a pace, but then she came across a photo of herself on holiday with her carers, where she was feeding a kangaroo. At this point she literally just stopped and was quiet and still for a little while, just looking at the photo. I wondered if the process of looking at the photo had brought back significant memories for her, taking her to a different place, calming her down, making her more reflective, triggering other memories.

Lilly: That's when I feed the kangaroo (section 87).

Wilma thinks that Lilly is “*intrigued*” (section 179) by the memory store. She took some time to choose this word and seemed pleased to have found it to describe Lilly's behaviour towards the memory store. It captivates Lilly's attention and curiosity and draws her in. Lilly has looked through her store so many times that she knows where her favourite memories are.

Wilma: Oh yeah definitely, uhuh. But I think er, she does, but I think she's...(pause) intrigued by it as well. You know, she likes sitting, you know, like say if I – well I think I would be the same if somebody had just given me a book – you just – you just look, and I think she just – she's seen it loads of times now, so she'll just flick through it, but you can tell she's looking for the best, the bits that she likes best (section 179).

Jamie also relates how Sara enjoys reflecting on memories again and again, recalling things from her past that have significance for her. He outlines how we all enjoy doing this, the implication being that we all gain something from reflecting on memories. *His voice is slow, thoughtful and reflective here which seems to imply that engaging in such reflection takes us to another place emotionally and has a calming and comforting effect.*

Jamie: And she does like to go over it again so she can sort of mull over memories, as we do don't we, in that way (section 177).

Jess feels that to not have clear knowledge about your background would be unsettling/unnerving. She seems to suggest that Matt panics at times or feels insecure but that the memory store book is comforting for him, reassuring him of his history, where he came from and who he's been with. Jess feels that using

the memory store approach is even more important for looked after children who are in short term placements.

Jess: Yeah just um – I mean you can only think you can understand what must be going through their heads. But it must be unnerving at times, unsettling, you know, he must panic at times. But hopefully – I mean he is very settled, he is very secure, I mean this is permanent. But for children who aren't in a permanent situation, you know, I think it (the memory store) is even more important (section 29).

Jess outlines how toys that Matt knows he is too old for, but doesn't want to part with, are often put in the memory box so that he doesn't lose them. I wondered if Matt felt that in the future he would find some comfort in being able to still touch and hold those things?

Jess: ... sometimes as he's going through his toys, because sometimes we'll have a bit of a clear out and we'll go to the charity shop, and some things you can see there's a bit of an attachment to, but he's getting a bit old for them, and he'll say, "Well can we put it in the memory box?" (section 123).

4.9.3 Constituent theme: Dealing with loss

As highlighted earlier this was not a theme supported by the talk of many of the participants though it did emerge as significant in the talk of Matt and his carer Jess, in relating Matt's use of his memory store. In Matt's store was a photo of his dogs who are now deceased. Matt highlighted this photo to me in particular, choosing it above other memories he could have talked about. I wondered if

being able to still see photos of his dogs has been has been helpful for Matt to remember them and helpfully process his loss (Hedtke, 2003).

Matt: That's me with my old dog. My two old dogs (section 143).

Matt also highlights to me photos that cause him to feel sad when he looks at them as they are of his friends/cousins who are soon going to be emigrating to Australia and he knows that he will not see them very much after they go.

Having photos in his store becomes an important way of him remembering them and may be helpful to him in dealing with this loss by being able to look back on the photos with fondness, remembering happy times with them.

Gillian: Have you got any memories like that, that make you feel a bit sad?

Matt: Well my cousins are going to Australia.

Gillian: Are they? Right.

Matt: And I won't see them any more.

Gillian: Oh right, so that's a bit sad.

Matt: 'Cos they're going to see their cousins.

Gillian: Right, so do you feel a bit sad when you see them in your book?

Matt: Yeah they're in my book, this book (section 584).

Matt can't find them in one memory store book so starts hunting through another. It seems very important for him to locate the photos which he does eventually find.

Matt: There's one of my cousins, there, there's two.

Gillian: Oh there they are, oh right great.

Matt: And there's my brother. And she's going too. Um I think there's err – um that's our Nan – and I think there's the one (). There yeah. There he is there (section 622).

Matt shares with me who all the people are in the picture, identifying the names of all the people who are soon to be leaving.

Gillian: Right, so when you look back at...

Matt: And there's the dog, they'll take the dog too.

Gillian: Oh right, when you look at that then you feel a little bit ?

Matt: There's me, Sam, Sally, Chris, Robin, John, Kath, and Jonny (section 626).

Matt wants to make sure I know who the people are in the photo. The people are significant to him and he wants me to know their names. This seems more important to him than listening to the question I try to ask about feelings. I wonder if he finds this comforting in some way? Is naming these close relatives a way of holding them close to him?

Jess also related how Matt has taken the time and effort to select the photos of his relatives/close family friends to go into his store, independent of her input but in conjunction with his brother Jack, in order to have these memories. The boys obviously attach great importance and significance to having memories of these people for when they are no longer around. There is a strong motivation to seek out relevant photos for remembering people in future. They seem to be using the memory store for helping them to deal with a future loss.

Jess: Like I say, he likes to do it with Jack. I think he likes to put the friends – well they're more like cousins really, and an aunty and

uncle, and um they're looking, if we've got any photographs in there on them, they want to put those ones in because they're going to emigrate to Australia.

Gillian: Oh gosh.

Jess: Hmm yeah.

Gillian: So quite important then?

Jess: Hmm, hmm.

Gillian: To be able to remember.

Jess: So they like putting – like they've chosen quite a few of those.

Gillian: Right hmm, hmm friends that are going?

Jess: Yeah.

Gillian: Wow. And with like the ones with friends going overseas, what do you think he got out of storing that particular memory?

(section 229).

Jess pauses before answering this question, taking her time to think through her response.

Jess: Well I suppose, I think, at the minute it's um when they first go and he was looking at them, I think it would be more of a – not a direct happy memory to look at. Later on it will be, you know, when he looks back. But he's only just turned 9, you know, so to understand them going away and not coming back. But it's nice for him just to choose them and put them in. But I think it will take – it might take him a while before he would sort of look at them and not be upset by them.

Gillian: Yeah a bit sad?

Jess: But in years to come that'll be nice memories for him (section 233).

She indicates that it is likely that Matt will experience a range of emotions through looking back on the photos as he grows older. When he looks at them at

first she thinks he may feel sad but in years to come he may be able to more fully enjoy the memories of them.

4.9.4 Constituent theme: Enthusiasm for sharing memories

All the children's talk contributed to this theme. During the course of the game playing sessions all the children became excited at times to show me particular memories from their stores. Their voices were often quite animated and full of enthusiasm and pleasure. There was a big emphasis on wanting to show me things, to share memories with someone who had never seen their store before.

Lilly in particular became very excited and enthusiastic at showing me things on numerous occasions throughout the session. Her voice was often animated as she picked things out to share with me.

Lilly: I'll show you who these are. That's Emily and Phoebe (section 438).

Lilly: That's me, me, me. (Lilly points to herself in each of the photos she shows me) (section 446).

Lilly: Oh that's what else I wanted to show you.

Gillian: Oh yeah, what's that?

Lilly: Them () tickets (section 901).

Sara's voice also became animated and excited at various points during our session as she showed me a variety of items from her store. As I opened her store at the start of the session her eyes widened and she said excitedly:

Sara: Oh I've got loads of things in here! (section 71).

Matt came across as being a quiet and thoughtful boy but he too became excited and enthusiastic about showing me items in his store.

Matt: Ohh there's me and my brother. Oh there's me and my cousin in the car (section 51).

Matt exclaimed the 'Ohh' quite loudly and excitedly. He seemed very excited and pleased to see the picture of his cousin and him in the car.

In a similar way Kallum's voice displayed amusement and amazement at a photo he came across of him and Sam (foster father) dressed up for Halloween.

Kallum: Look at that! (section 217).

The enthusiasm and excitement for sharing memories with me seemed to facilitate playfulness at times, as shown through the following quotes from Matt and Kallum.

Gillian: Oh wow, you're all dressed up as pirates.

Matt: He's a knight and then I'm a pirate (roars like a pirate) (section 177).

Matt surprised me here by suddenly roaring like a pirate, re-enacting the memory with gusto. On another occasion Matt is laughing as he talks, relating to me an event at a holiday club.

Matt: Yeah. And guess what he did to the person that runned it (). He got the cake and then went 'pow'.

Gillian: He got the cake?

(Matt can hardly talk for laughing)

Matt: And then 'pow'.

Gillian: And then splattered you in the face with it?

Matt: Yeah. No um the um – the guy – the um person that runned it () and then it was going round the room (section 419).

Kallum came across as being both enthusiastic and proud to show me items in his store. He engaged me with questions, enjoying the fact that only he had the answers! It felt fun for him to be in control of the information rather than the usual scenario of the adult knowing more and being in control. I wondered if this was particularly satisfying and enjoyable for him due to the lack of control he has experienced in his life.

Kallum: And do you know who that is? (Pointing to photo of his cuddly crocodile) Croc.

Gillian: Croc! Is he a special toy?

Kallum: He's got stripes! And do you know what? That's Eva (pointing to picture of Eva, birth child of his foster carers). She's still at school (section 104).

Kallum wanted to introduce me to his foster sister who is also represented in the book. The book acted as an aide to him telling me about his life, the things and people that are important to him.

4.9.5 Constituent theme: Carer's emotions

Looking through and sharing memories from the child's memory store in the interview session evoked a range of emotions for all the carers. Joy, pleasure, delight and sadness were expressed through words, through tone of voice and through non-verbal communication.

Jess, Jane and Wilma all expressed how much pleasure they gain from looking at memories in their child's store, either with the child or sometimes by themselves.

Wilma: It's enjoyment really, what enjoyment we've both had, and what enjoyment she's had really (section 225).

Jess: Oh well um I enjoy it. Because I mean fortunately, even though it was a sad event the reason he came, it's been a happy event since we've had him, because he's become permanent, you know (section 315).

At other times looking through the memory store provoked sadness for the carers. This is expressed particularly by Alison, Jamie, Jane and Wilma. The sadness expressed seemed to reflect the compassion that the carers had for their children. It felt as if the carers were grieving the loss of the childhood the children might have had if they had been able to look after them from birth. This

perhaps explains why this element of sadness in looking through the store is not expressed by Jess, as she has looked after Matt from birth.

In the session with Jamie and Jane we had been looking at a photo of Sara before she came into care, where she looked rather frightened and bewildered. Jamie goes on to outline how reflecting on some memories can prompt a variety of emotions.

Jamie: You know, so from our point of view, seeing photographs of history, in some respects it can give you sort of mixed feelings, you know.

Jane: Well that's right, yeah.

Gillian: Some sadness there as well as ?

Jamie: Well yeah (section 289).

Alison's voice became much quieter as she looked at a memory that reminds her that Kallum's birth mum has been in prison and has not had a lot of contact with him and that he does not really talk about her, she's not an active part of his life.

Alison: Umm well he's been here since April, maybe four times since that time, cos she's been in prison, she went to prison for a while and she's just got out and I expect that he's going to have one more contact before Christmas. Um yeah so he doesn't really talk about her very much, if at all (section 186).

In a similar way Jane expressed a sense of sadness in her voice as she looked at the store and reflected that they do not have any baby photos of Sara. There

is a part of Sara's past which is missing and for which they have no memories to share with her or reflect on themselves.

Jane: It's a shame really, I feel, that we don't have any baby photos. It would have been nice if we could have had one or two baby photos.

Gillian: Yes, yeah to complete the full range.

Jane: Yeah that's right, because she's bound to be aware of this gap, isn't she? And she does talk a lot about babies (section 203).

4.9.6 Constituent theme: Preparing for change

I have included this theme under the section on emotions as in helping prepare the child for transitions, the memory store approach has the potential to prepare the child emotionally for future changes. Alison, Jess and Kallum's talk highlighted how the memory store approach had been helpful in preparing the children for transitions. For Kallum, the memory store had been given to him in his previous placement as a way of helping him know what to expect for his next placement. It helped to build anticipation about positive aspects of the change ahead. As a consequence of the book Kallum had some very positive emotions about his change of placement. Unfortunately, despite it being made very clear to him that this was not his forever home, he had formed the impression that he would be staying with Alison and Sam permanently.

Kallum: Well when I first saw my Alison and Sam (in the memory store before arriving), I felt proud. Because do you know why I felt proud? Because I was staying here, for ever.

Gillian: Right

Kallum: That's why I was feeling proud (section 187).

Kallum repeats, "That's why I was feeling proud". I wondered if he did this perhaps because he had realised his emotions in this context for the first time and found it comforting and reassuring to repeat to me and to himself, 'That's why I was feeling proud'.

The making of the store particularly seemed to help Eva (Alison's birth daughter) to prepare for Kallum's arrival in a positive and active way. By taking the photos and putting them into the book and writing messages to Kallum in the book Eva felt involved. It seemed like a constructive way of her preparing herself emotionally for the arrival of a new person into her home.

Alison: She did all the writing and she took the photographs of Kallum's bedroom and the house and everything else. So she really got involved with it. She wanted to make him feel really welcome, so we did that before he arrived and that was taken to him where he was with his other carers, and he had the chance to look through that (section 26).

So we were all learning and she (Eva) was nervous but it did make her feel like she was really involved (section 58).

She kind of took responsibility for that which made her proud of herself (section 52).

As well as introducing the members of the family, the activities that the family enjoy were also included in the store. This helped Kallum to become aware of the types of activities he might engage with in his new home, giving him possible activities to look forward to.

And he's done all of those things, he's done cycling, he's played football, he's been swimming but we haven't been brave enough to put him in a canoe yet! (laughs) (section 152).

Even with this level of preparation Kallum still worried that he wasn't going to be wanted, highlighting a deep-seated sense of self doubt and expectation of rejection.

Alison: It (the store) was taken away (and given to Kallum in his previous placement). So we didn't see his reaction (at the time), but we heard it went down very well. But he still said, "Are you sure they want me?" (section 168).

4.9.7 Constituent theme: Child's involvement in recording

The children's involvement in recording memories suggests they have positive feelings towards the memory store approach and are motivated to participate. The talk of all the carers and one of the children (Matt) contributed to this theme. The carers described the level of involvement the children had in recording memories. Some were more motivated than others to get involved in recording but all of them were able to contribute to the process in some way. Kallum did not want to participate in any writing or sticking, but he did like to help to print out the photos from the computer for his memory store.

Gillian: Yeah, so did you put these sorts of things in actually with him?

Alison: Yeah, yeah.

Gillian: And how does he get involved in that?

Alison: Umm well I try and get him involved on the computer because he has his photos all over the computer, different files and stuff and I'll say, "Oh do you want to come and we'll print this one off?" and he'll say, "OK then," and he'll come running over. And I'll say, "It's going to print off in a minute," but he can't wait a minute (we both laugh) and he'll run off and do something else and I'll say, "I'm putting it in now do you want to come and have a look at it?" and he'll... "Oh yes, OK then," then he might run off and do something else (section 218).

Alison: But at the moment he doesn't really want to get involved actually putting them in, but he likes it when they're in there and he can look at them (section 400).

Lilly, Sara and Matt would all ask to put things in their memory stores quite frequently showing a high level of motivation towards the recording process. Wilma, Jane and Jess all highlighted how it was often things they were proud of, achievements, awards etc, that the children would request to put in. This suggests the children have learnt how to notice their achievements and feel comfortable with allowing themselves to celebrate their accomplishments by asking for them to be recorded. In this way it seems they have learnt how to notice and record positive stories about themselves.

Jane: Well she's quite pleased to have the bag (memory store). And now if um – last week she got this certificate at school, "Right, is that going in my bag then? And can we have a look through my bag?" She likes to get everything out and have a look at it, and have a chat about it and ask questions (section 86).

Gillian: Oh he's made an Easter egg there.

Jess: Aye they made – they painted the faces on. And we did that together.

Gillian: That's very interesting.

Jess: Yeah well he won something, and he chose to put a photograph of that in (section 176).

4.9.8 Constituent theme: Child's involvement in reflecting

The talk of all the carers contributed to this theme. All the children are motivated to ask to look through their store and initiated this interaction with their carers by asking to look through it. Sometimes the children liked to look through their store on their own and sometimes in conjunction with their carers. For Kallum, looking through the memory store was often chosen as an alternative to a story at bedtime. It also seems that sometimes Kallum looks at the store just to check something specifically, perhaps checking on his recall of an event or looking to see if anything has changed. I wondered if he gained comfort or reassurance from these 'quick looks' that he engages in. *Alison repeats the phrase 'quick look' four times in this short excerpt. This is perhaps a reflection of how this phrase is frequently used by both her and Kallum in relation to the memory store. The phrase may also serve to establish the store as being a normal part of their life, something which they can just have a "quick look" at, as a part of their normal routine rather than it being something which requires a long session.*

Alison: If it's (the memory store) been out or if he sees it on there he might say, "Oh I'm going to just have a quick look at this" and then he'll have a quick look and then he'll leave it and then I'll say, "Do you want me to have a quick look?" And then we'll sit down. But sometimes when he says he wants a quick look he'll just look at one

picture and then put it away. Or sometimes I say, “What do you want to read?” and he says, “Can I read my book?” And I’ll say, “OK then,” and it gives us an alternative to reading a story, so that’s nice (section 643).

4.9.9 Constituent theme: Importance to the child

This theme was supported by the talk of three of the carers and all the children. Both Matt and Lilly were very careful with their memory stores, they had special places for each item and went to great efforts to keep them looking nice which suggests that their memory stores are important to them.

Matt: What’s happened there?

(Matt looks upset that two of the pages in his store have got stuck together) That’s got stuck with some of my paint (section 468).

For Lilly, every item had a particular place where it needed to be stored, which again suggests her memory store is very important to her. It also suggests she has a strong need to be in control of the things in her life. This is very common amongst children who have experienced neglect and abuse, i.e. they have experienced a distinct lack of control over negative events that happened to them in the past. There is a strong need for them to stay in control as they fear that if they are not in control the past may be repeated. In this excerpt Lilly tells me off for putting something back in the wrong place.

Lilly: So if you put them back in there.

Gillian: I’ll put those back in.

Lilly: Not them ones! Just put them in like that (section 730).

All the carers spoke of how the children often referred to particular items in their store and liked to go over their memories again and again which also suggests that they attach a great deal of value to them.

Alison: And it's funny he still refers to when he received the book, he still says I remember when I got the book and saw the picture of my car bed. So it's obviously one of his earliest memories of us (section 32).

For Matt the importance of the memory store seems to have endured over time. He has been using the memory store approach for quite a number of years now and it still seems to be very important to him.

Gillian: I remember that from when we were talking before about all the stones that he got from the beach.

Jess: He's still got them, yeah.

Gillian: Yes, yeah.

Jess: And he can still take them out and look at them and know what each one looks like (section 100).

Gillian: What do you like about it (the memory store)?

Matt: It's good when I look back on the memories (section 454).

4.10 Summary

In this chapter I have given an overview in the form of a mind map of all the themes that I discovered from the interviews and game playing sessions with the carers and children. I have then gone on to select themes that have direct relevance to the research questions and present these in a second mind map.

Summary tables then provide quotes for each theme from both carers and children, to give the reader a flavour of the content of each relevant theme. I then go into more detail about each of the constituent themes, outlining my descriptive, *linguistic* and interpretative analyses of the participants' talk. The talk of the carers and children tells us some interesting things about how using the memory store has affected:

- their relationship: bringing them closer together, facilitating more interaction and providing times of closeness through mutual reminiscence
- other relationships in the family: facilitating interaction with other family members, bringing the family closer together, helping other family members feel involved in the care of the child
- how the carer thinks about the child: helping them to remember the child's positive characteristics, fun times together and recall their care over time in relation to changes they see in the child
- how the children see themselves: contributing to feelings of security and belonging, thickening stories around competencies and skills, giving them confidence to tell positive stories about themselves and helping them to see their progress
- aspects of thinking and learning: helping to extend their concentration, practise their literacy skills and remember significant events more clearly
- their emotions: often bringing happiness, pride, excitement and enthusiasm, affection for their carer, sometimes having a calming or comforting effect, occasionally being a helpful tool for dealing with loss or future change and sometimes evoking sadness

I will now go on in the Discussion chapter to examine my findings in relation to the literature and provide a critical evaluation of my methodology.

5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I reiterate my research findings, discussing them in relation to the research literature and postulate a model for the memory store approach. I then go on to critically evaluate aspects of my methodology, considering possible influences on the findings as well as their generalizability. Consideration is given to what other methodology could have brought to the study, outlining the advantages and disadvantages of alternative approaches. I subsequently discuss the significance and implications of my findings to practice and policy. I also explore the implications of this research in terms of using games in EP practice and research in general. In the final part of the chapter I outline further research that could helpfully be undertaken in this area.

5.2 Discussion of research findings in relation to the literature

5.2.1 The carer-child relationship

The talk of all the carers and two of the children suggested that using the memory store was helpful in terms of strengthening the bonds between carer and child as well as with other members of the family. Their talk highlighted how using the approach facilitated times of togetherness which had a certain intimacy about them. It was often accompanied by close physical proximity, sitting side by side, focusing on the same things together, co-creating and retelling stories together. Their talk also outlined how using the approach

increased the frequency of interaction between carer and child. There was evidence of the carers and children having fun together, reminiscing about positive times. Three carers' talk highlighted how using the store facilitated interaction with other members of the family, strengthening relationships between the child and other family members and helping them to feel involved in the care of the child. The talk of all the carers indicated that using the memory store approach helped them to recall positive characteristics of the child or reflect on their care over time which engendered feelings of affection for the child.

The link between carer-child reminiscence and attachment is supported by a number of pieces of research. Research into carer-child reminiscence suggests a strong link between elaborative reminiscence and attachment (Fivush & Vasudeva, 2002; Laible, 2010). In the study by Gallagher and Green (2012), one of the main ways that the looked after children felt life story work had helped them was in facilitating relationships with staff in the residential homes and with their carers in subsequent placements. The carers in my previous study (Shotton, 2010) perceived that using the memory store approach helped to strengthen their relationship with the child.

In their book, 'Achieving Positive Outcomes for Children in Care', Cameron and Maginn (2009) present their 'Pillars of Parenting' model which outlines the key aspects of parenting for professional child carers based on psychological theory as well as pragmatics. The finding that using the memory store approach has the potential to strengthen the relationship between carer and child links in with

the second pillar of this model, 'encouraging secure attachment and building warm relationships'.

5.2.2 Child's self perception

The talk of three of the carers and all the children highlighted how using the memory store reinforced a sense of belonging within the family by showing photographs of the children with other family members and having the security of a shared history. The children's stores all contained pictures of their unique interests or likes, thus reinforcing their unique tastes and communicating that their preferences mattered. Certificates and achievements were also evident throughout their stores, allowing for the co-construction of positive narratives to take place and helping the child to build a positive identity. The talk of one of the carers and two of the children suggested that using the memory store approach might help them to notice changes in themselves over time, making progress with their writing or just growing bigger, all of which contributes to their self-perception. The co-construction of stories around these themes has the potential to help the child to develop a sense of how they used to be and who they are now, a sense of how they have developed and grown over time.

These findings are in line with previous research which suggests that the emotional and evaluative content of reminiscing plays an important role in shaping children's self concept and ability to identify their own character traits, so developing their self knowledge (Bird & Reese, 2006; Wang, et al., 2010; Welch-Ross, et al., 1999). The study by Willis and Holland (2009) also

highlighted the role of life story books in reflecting the unique interests of the individual children, helping to establish a sense of identity and self knowledge. There is also a link here to pillars three and four of Cameron and Maginn's (2009) 'Pillars of Parenting' model: 'building up self perception' and 'developing a sense of belonging'.

5.2.3 Thinking and learning

The talk of three carers and three children indicated that the children would concentrate for longer periods of time reflecting on memories in their store than for other activities, so allowing for the development of concentration. This was particularly significant for two of the children who were reported as having significant attention difficulties. The store also provided learning opportunities particularly with regard to reading and writing. The talk of all children and carers highlighted how using the memory store approach facilitated the clarification and elaboration of memories, particularly memories of significant events. Where the carers and children were observed using the memory store approach together, there were instances of the carers being able to clarify and elaborate on memories for the children. This is in line with previous research which suggests a strong relationship between reminiscing and aspects of children's learning and memory development (Farrant & Reese, 2000; Reese, et al., 2010; Reese & Newcombe, 2007; Wang, 2007; Wenner, et al., 2008).

Research suggests that carer-child reminiscence using an elaborative style is particularly helpful for developing children's ability to recount a story and developing their understanding of the perspectives of the characters (Reese, et

al., 2010; Reese & Newcombe, 2007; Wenner, et al., 2008). There is also evidence to suggest elaborative reminiscence helps children develop more accurate and richer memories of events (Farrant & Reese, 2000; Reese & Newcombe, 2007; Wang, 2007). Looked after young people have also reported how life story work has helped them to develop a more accurate understanding of events in their lives (Gallagher & Green, 2012; Willis & Holland, 2009). My previous research (Shotton, 2010) highlighted how using the memory store approach provided opportunities for enhancing learning. This links in with the first pillar of Cameron and Maginn's 'Pillars of Parenting' model, which is 'providing primary care and protection' of which an important component is to promote educational achievement. It also links to pillar five of this model which is 'enhancing resilience', an important component of which is academic success.

5.2.4 Emotions

All the participants' talk suggested that using the memory store approach evoked positive feelings both for the carers and for the children. The carers shared how the children would often smile, seem happy, pleased or excited to reflect back on memories. This was particularly significant for Lily, Sara and Kallum, who had come through some emotionally harrowing times. It was good for their emotional wellbeing to not only experience, but also be able to reminisce about, positive experiences. The children displayed and talked about experiencing a variety of emotions when sharing memories from their store; excitement, enthusiasm, and pride, as well as feeling peaceful.

All the children displayed a great deal of enthusiasm and excitement for sharing memories from their store with me. Their voices were often animated and excited; even Matt, who was quite a quiet boy, became quite animated at times when sharing particular memories with me.

The carers perceived that using the memory store approach often had a calming effect on the children and that it was also an activity that they seemed to find comforting. One child (Lilly) demonstrated a dramatic change in her level of activity when looking through her store with me, becoming very calm from being quite hyperactive. This is in line with previous research which found that reflecting on memories through life story work can often trigger positive emotions (Shotton, 2010; Willis & Holland, 2009). Research using photo elicitation suggests that photographs and images facilitate more reflective and meditative states helping discussions to go to a deeper level (D. Harper, 2002).

As well as eliciting positive emotions, the talk of one child and his carer (Matt and Jess) illustrated how using the memory store approach had played a role in helping Matt deal with the loss of his dogs and the future loss of relatives who were soon to emigrate. The relevant photos in the store allowed him to remember and to talk about the people and animals that he cares about.

Narrative perspective offers an alternative path to 'letting go' and 'saying goodbye' to those who are no longer around. In 'The Origami of Remembering,' Hedtke (2003) reflects on her practice of working with people to find ways of honouring and keeping alive relationships, through the bereaved remembering and telling stories about them rather than moving through distinct stages of a grieving process as suggested in the Kubler-Ross model of grief (Kubler-Ross,

2005). Using the memory store approach facilitates the telling and retelling of such stories, keeping memories alive through the co-construction of stories prompted by the visual tool of the memory store.

For the carers, reflecting on memories elicited joy, pleasure and delight as well as sadness. The sadness was often linked to the lives of the children before they came into care. It seemed as if the carers were grieving the loss of the childhood that the children might have had if they had been able to look after them from birth. This would explain why the only carer who didn't express this sadness was Jess, who has been able to look after Matt from birth. This links in to previous research where it was found that reminiscing about negative life events sometimes elicited sadness, anger or even shame (Gallagher & Green, 2012; Willis & Holland, 2009).

There is evidence that carer-child reminiscing about negative experiences, which may evoke such emotions, plays an important part in developing children's emotional self-concept (Fivush, et al., 2003; Laible, 2010; Sales, et al., 2003) so should not be actively avoided, but does need sensitive handling and the right balance between positive and negative life events to be struck to avoid an over emphasis on difficult times. As one looked after child, Sid (11), aptly said, "You read your life story book and you then feel sad again so what's the point?" (Willis & Holland, 2009)

The talk of two of the carers and one of the children highlighted how using the memory store approach had helped prepare the child emotionally for change. The making of a memory store book prior to the child's arrival not only prepared

Kallum for his change in placement but also helped to prepare the birth child of the family he was joining, as she played a very active role in preparing the book. This links in with the views of the social workers that Backhaus (1984) interviewed, who felt that life books were useful for helping children to integrate the past, present and future. The findings suggest that using the memory store approach contributes to pillars five and seven of Cameron and Maginn's 'Pillars of Parenting' model, which are, 'to enhance resilience' and 'improve emotional competence'.

Two of the children displayed a great deal of care in how things were placed in the memory store and were very familiar with where each item belonged. This is in line with previous research which suggests that many young people who have had life story work carried out with them take a great deal of care over their life story books and attach a high value to them (Backhaus, 1984; Gallagher & Green, 2012; Shotton, 2010; Willis & Holland, 2009). It must be acknowledged however, that for some children the negative information about their past can be overwhelming and result in them wanting to destroy their life story books, such as the example of one young person in Willis and Holland's (2009) study. Interestingly, this young person made her life book independently, focusing on the abuse she had been through. This is a very different experience to the collaborative reminiscence of the memory store approach. It seems that tearing up her book containing details of her abuse was therapeutic to this young person.

5.3 The memory store approach model

To help conceptualise my findings I have postulated a model (see Figure 3 p174) suggesting how the memory store approach seems to be working given the findings from this study. I will now go on to explain the model, its constituent parts and their theoretical basis. The model could be used within training to explain to foster carers/other child care professionals how the memory store approach seems to be working given the findings from the current research.

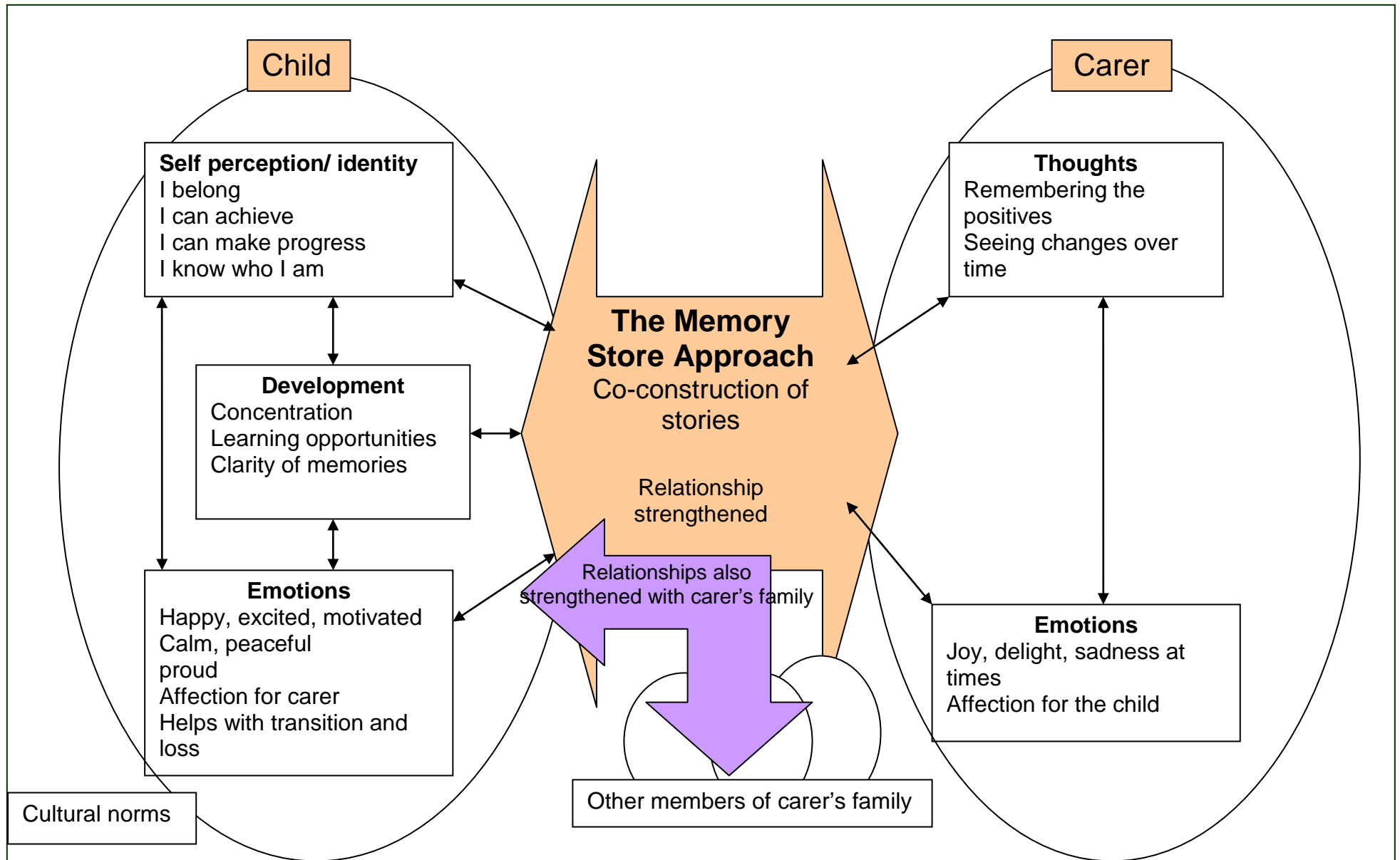


Figure 3: The Memory Store Approach Model

5.3.1 How the model fits together

The central process of the model is the memory store approach, which, through the co-construction of stories, strengthens the relationship between the carer and child and affects other outcomes. The large arrow between the carer and child emphasises how using the memory store approach helps to strengthen the relationship between the two. It offers the carer and child times of intimacy, engaged in joint activity that the child often seems to experience as being enjoyable, interesting and relevant. It communicates care and value from the carer to the child, the underlying message being that the carer thinks the child is worth spending time with, that the child's experiences are important and that they are worthy of recording.

The arrow from 'the memory store approach' to the child's 'self perception/identity' section indicates how, through the co-construction of stories, the child begins to see how the carer perceives them, thus contributing to the ongoing development of their sense of self. Their perception of how others see them influences how they see themselves- 'the looking glass self' (Cooley, 1902 paragraph 184). The strengthening of the relationship between carer and child may also influence the ongoing development or adaptation of the child's internal working model. Early relationships are seen as fundamental in forming the template for this model but later relationships are also thought to be capable of shaping its development (Bowlby, 1988).

Research suggests that through the development of a positive, secure attachment, after one year of being in a secure adoptive placement, maltreated

children developed more positive representations of adults (Hodges, Steele, Hillman, Henderson, & Kaniuk, 2003). The memory store approach has the potential to facilitate such adaptations to the child's internal working model through strengthening the carer-child relationship and, in doing so, have a positive impact on the child's beliefs about themselves, others and the world (Fivush & Vasudeva, 2002; Laible, 2010; Wareham & Salmon, 2006). In this way using the memory store approach has an impact on the child's self-perception/identity. The way that they see themselves, others and the world around them is affected by the strengthened relationship they have with their carer and the reflected image that the carers present to them through the co-construction of stories. The arrow is two way as, in turn, the child's security in knowing who they are, how their carer sees them and feeling that they belong means that they invest further in the relationship, which is consequently further strengthened.

The inclusion of the child in stories of family events and photographs over time contributes to the child's sense of belonging and security. A fundamental need we all have is to feel we belong within a social group (Maslow, 1954). The co-construction of stories around their achievements and certificates contributes to their perception of themselves as someone who can achieve. As they reflect with their carer and look together at their writing and spelling they are able to co-construct stories about their progress over time and see themselves as someone who can make progress, who can grow and change in positive ways. From a narrative perspective it is through the co-construction of stories about their achievements, about how they belong in the family and are loved and valued, that dominant narratives are built up. These dominant narratives not only

affect the child in the present but may also have implications for future actions as they affect the interpretation of future events (Freeman, et al., 1997; Morgan, 2000). The stories are thickened through carer-child reminiscence, using the memory store approach on a regular basis.

Evidence contained within the store of their particular preferences helps them to see that their opinions matter and are worth recording and talking about, thus contributing to their sense of identity and self worth.

The two way arrows from 'the memory store approach' to the 'emotions' sections for both the child and carer, indicates how the co-construction of stories affects the child's and carer's emotions, often triggering positive emotions which contribute to emotional well-being (Willis & Holland, 2009) as well as building the relationship between carer and child by providing more enjoyable and intimate times together, thus engendering feelings of affection from the child towards the carer and the carer towards the child (Fivush & Vasudeva, 2002; Laible, 2010).

The arrow from 'the memory store approach' to the 'development' section for the child indicates how the enjoyment of looking through the store, where the focus is on their experiences, increases the child's motivation to attend for longer periods, contributing to the development of their concentration. Both recording and reflecting on memories provides opportunities for learning, particularly with regard to literacy skills. Previous research highlighted how the memory store approach can facilitate learning in other areas too, such as knowledge of colours and shapes (Shotton, 2010). The approach allows the child to develop a greater clarity of memories as they co-construct stories with their carer/other family

members about previous times (Farrant & Reese, 2000; Reese & Newcombe, 2007; Wang, 2007). This sharpening of the clarity of memories over time also serves to strengthen the relationship between carer and child as, 'we interlace our memories and our lives' (Fivush & Vasudeva, 2002); this is indicated by the two way arrow .

The two way purple arrow from the child through 'the memory store approach' to the additional circles indicates how use of the memory store approach also serves to strengthen relationships between the child and other family members.

The two way arrow from the memory store approach to the carer's thoughts section indicates how using the approach triggers particular thoughts about the child, helping them to remember positives about the child as well as their care over time. This then has an impact on the carer's emotions as indicated by the arrow between the thoughts and emotions sections. The carer reflecting on the progress of the child and remembering their care for them over time also contributes to feelings of affection towards the child as they recall their vulnerability and the progress they have made. Recalling memories of positive times can also be helpful to the carer when they might be going through difficult times with the child as it helps them to remember positive characteristics about the child and the positive times that they have been able to share together. In this way both the thoughts and emotions experienced by the carer serve to also strengthen the relationship between carer and child which is shown by the arrows in the model being two way.

For the child, the memory store approach facilitates a variety of mainly positive feelings, including feelings of affection towards the carer, which here again

strengthens the relationship between carer and child as indicated by the two way arrow flowing from the child's 'emotions' section to the 'relationships strengthened' section.

The external box labelled 'cultural norms' represents the limitations of the extent to which these findings can be generalised. It can be likened to the macro-system or larger cultural context identified in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979). The sample of carers and children cannot be seen as representative of all foster/adoptive carers and children, but rather as representing the commonalities and differences of the participants' experiences. The participants were all carers and children living within the north east of England and therefore give a detailed view from within this particular culture. The study does not claim to be able to say something about all cultures. Subsequent studies may be able to add to the findings so that gradually more general claims may be made. The aim was to provide rich, contextualised analysis of the accounts of the carers and children, which would then allow the readers to evaluate the transferability of the findings to others in particular contexts which are more or less similar (Smith, et al., 2009). The model also has similarities with Bronfenbrenner's theory (Darling, 2007) in that the two way arrows between the child, carer and family emphasise the interrelationships that exist and the dynamic role of the child and family in shaping these relationships through using the memory store approach. The child is not seen as simply a passive recipient.

Having reiterated my research findings in relation to the literature and postulated the memory store approach model, I will now go on to critically evaluate aspects

of my methodology considering possible influences on the findings as well as their generalizability. I will also consider what other methodology could have brought to the study.

5.4 Critical evaluation of methodology

I used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA e.g. Smith, et al., 2009) as an approach to guide both the data generation and analysis as I wanted to gain a thorough understanding of the views and perceptions of the carers and children. The aim was to develop a deeper, more thorough appreciation of the experiences expressed by the carers and children. I was attracted to IPA as I felt it was a very respectful approach, where the carers and children would feel heard, which was important to me from a personal, moral and ethical standpoint. Additionally I knew that IPA accorded with my critical realist perspective, in acknowledging that the analytic process could never achieve a genuinely first person account, the account being a co-construction between the participant and the researcher (Larkin, et al., 2006).

Using IPA helped the carers and children to talk freely, as with its emphasis on following up on the participants' talk and active listening, it allowed them to lead parts of the session, an aspect which I felt was empowering. As a consequence rich stories were elicited which reflected the issues that were important to them as well as giving me the rich stories and insights I desired. Another advantage of IPA was that it helped me to systematically analyse the verbal content of the sessions and think deeply about the meanings contained within.

One of the disadvantages of using IPA was that, as it is such a time consuming approach, it limited the number of participants and sessions which could be included. A second disadvantage was IPA's emphasis upon the audible content. It places a great emphasis on participants' talk, analysing it at descriptive, linguistic and interpretative levels. This emphasis on the verbal meant that I was perhaps less inclined to consider how the visual content of the interviews could also be used as data through filming the sessions. IPA could still have been used to guide the data generation and analysis but the visual content would have also contributed to the analysis of the data.

5.4.1 Rapport with the children

One of my aims in using the board game with the children was to reduce the power dynamic between us, helping them to relax and talk freely. However, it is fair to acknowledge that the power dynamic can never be fully eliminated (Nunkoosing, 2005). Still, there is evidence from the sessions with the children that they were relaxed, that they enjoyed the session and felt confident within it.

I wondered whether the children may have felt uncomfortable expressing any negativity towards the memory store approach when it became apparent that I had used the approach with my daughter. I tried to counter this by expressing negative as well as positive views about using the approach (e.g. expressing that my daughter sometimes did not want to engage with the approach and would rather watch TV). This I hoped would give them permission to also express negative opinions about using the approach. In fact, no similar views were expressed by the children during our sessions. Perhaps because of the

power dynamic, perhaps because they did not hold negative views or did not think of them at the time of the session. This highlights the fallibility of research in trying to understand the nature of the social world which can never fully be known. This fallibility is acknowledged by critical realists (Scott, 2005).

5.4.2 Rich stories

In the interviews with the carers, using photo elicitation (D. Harper, 2002) along with semi-structured interview questions elicited rich stories about their experiences of using the approach. There was evidence to suggest a good level of rapport was established with all the carers. The carers took the lead on numerous occasions showing me things in the child's store. At times there was silence, but it seemed a comfortable silence where the carer was gathering their thoughts on a particular topic as shown in the following excerpt with Alison.

Favourite memory? (pause, thinking) I think it's the Toy Story one and that's because (pause), it was just before my son went to uni and I was nearly crying, I was trying not to cry, if you think of Toy Story (section 356).

As each interview went on the carers seemed to relax and give fuller responses, showing a growing level of rapport and there was an increase in laughter as shown in this excerpt from Jess.

Jess: (referring to Matt) A bit of a hoarder (*she laughs*) (section 97).

The interaction was comfortable and flowed well. The advantage of my having delivered the memory store approach training was that the carers had already developed a certain level of familiarity with me during that day. The training involves both carers and trainers sharing personal memories from mementoes and photos which results in some familiarity being established.

Using photo elicitation, having the memory store there to refer to and look at together, worked well in stimulating memories that a solely word based interview would not have done. The carers went beyond descriptions of what happened and when, to what it had meant for them or the children (D. Harper, 2001).

I also felt it was empowering for the carers and the children to be talking about something that they had created which gave them more control over what they shared with me and the subsequent direction for the interview (Woolner, et al., 2010). This is highlighted in the following excerpt with Lilly, where she directs the interview by choosing what to show me from her memory box and directing me where to put it back again after looking at it.

Lilly: Red Bear.

Gillian: Red Bear oh.

Lilly: He sort of says 'grrrr' (*Lilly says this very loudly, she is full of fun and excitement*).

Gillian: Oh he's lovely, Red Bear, isn't he? He's nice and cuddly.

Lilly: Put him back in there. He's gotta be in there (section 35).

5.4.3 Using the game

5.4.3.1 Advantages

There was lots of talk from all the children that illustrated their enjoyment and excitement at playing the game, such as the following excerpt from Kallum.

Kallum: I'm winning! 1,2,3,4,5, (counts his man round the board).

Where do I have to get up to? (section 40).

They were clearly motivated by the prize contained within the treasure chest. There were a couple of instances where two of the younger children tried to take control of the game attempting to impose their own rules; however, they were willing to accept the official rules of the game when I reminded them about them. I certainly think, in this way, using the game made it much less of a threatening experience (Matorin & McNamara, 1996).

The game sustained their concentration, motivation and enjoyment of the session which may have waned if the interview had solely been based on them looking through their memory store with me. For all of the children there was a tendency for them to want to keep looking through their memory stores rather than responding to my questions. They became absorbed in looking through their memories, which was lovely to see but didn't help me to understand more about their perceptions of using the memory store approach. The game was useful in that it helped to keep the session moving along so that a range of questions could be covered. I also liked how it reduced the power differential between myself and the children, as I had to answer questions as well. This allowed them to learn about my views as well as me to learn about theirs,

making it more of an equal, participatory experience with a subtle blurring of the roles of researcher and researched (Hemmings, 1996).

5.4.3.2 Disadvantages

For one child, (Kallum) a disadvantage of using the game was that he was so focused on getting round the board to be the winner that he sometimes found answering the questions to be an inconvenience that was interfering with his progress. This is highlighted in the following excerpt:

Kallum: Your go! (Quite loudly, really keen to get on with the game, never mind all this talking!)

Gillian: How did you feel when you saw that one there?

Kallum: My go again is it? (Ignoring my question and rolling the dice) (Section 11).

This strong desire to get round the board may have inhibited him from answering some questions more fully. However, there were also times when he became absorbed in his memory store and told rich stories around it. The photographs and visuals were a strong pull back into the memories contained there. Because of this I wondered whether more rich stories might have been elicited through using the memory store alone, although I'm not sure how long he would have engaged with this for.

I think that overall, particularly for the five year olds, the game was important for sustaining their concentration and keeping it lively and fun. It allowed me to ask a variety of questions, moving them on in a motivating way. In line with other practitioners, I found that the game had a positive impact on their willingness to participate (Gardner, 1983).

5.4.4 Misinterpreting questions

There were a few occasions where the younger children did not seem to fully understand the question that I asked of them. Sometimes I felt that this was due to their age and consequent level of verbal comprehension; at other times it was more about them not attending to the question as they were absorbed in looking through their memory stores. There were six instances where the younger children misinterpreted the question when I was asking about their feelings about using the memory store approach. They interpreted me to be asking about their feelings towards particular items in their stores, such as in the following example:

Gillian: You felt excited seeing your book? Oh, what was exciting about it?

Lilly: When I had me party (section 185).

Lilly does not answer the question I asked but answers the question I think she thought I'd asked, 'Tell me about something exciting that is recorded in your book?' rather than, 'What was exciting about seeing your book?'. I think she just heard the word 'exciting' and connected it with something exciting recorded in her store.

Originally I had designed the questions with slightly older children in mind and although I tried to re-phrase them to make them more understandable to a younger child, occasionally their level of verbal comprehension and distractibility inhibited their comprehension. Although I was aware that one or two of the questions would be difficult for the five year olds to understand, I did not want to omit them as I felt that it was important to still give them the opportunity to respond and not assume they would not be able to. Overall I think the children engaged very well with the questions, answering them to the best of their ability and for the most part seeming to understand their content.

5.4.5 Visual tools

The additional visual tools (the bear cards and the cat card, see Appendices C and D) were particularly helpful for ensuring that the child understood a range of emotions as well as providing a visual way of them identifying their feelings and responding to the questions. The children seemed to enjoy using them too. As an indication of the level of reciprocity, Kallum insisted that I used the bear cards to respond to my questions as well as him using them. I only used the strength card (Appendix D) once as I found it was not really necessary.

5.4.6 The missing visual data

Whilst the audio recording had the advantage of being unobtrusive, the disadvantage was that occasionally it was not clear from the audio recording what was happening in the session, e.g. when the children were trying to find something in their store. I attempted to alleviate this by providing a verbal

commentary during the session, though there were still occasions when it was difficult to understand. A visual record would have gone some way to help overcome this problem. It would have also been helpful in terms of being able to use the visual data from the sessions, the facial expressions and body postures that account for much of the meaning within our communication (Mehrabian, 1981) and which would have added to my understanding and interpretation of the participants' views.

The sessions differed according to the amount of time the foster carers stayed in the room and became involved in the session with the child. Wilma, Jamie and Jane all became active participants during Lilly's and Sara's sessions whereas Alison and Jess came in on occasion but did not become actively involved in the interaction. When active participation first occurred, with Wilma in the interview with Lilly, I felt anxious that this might influence Lilly's views. However, as the session went on I quickly realised that this active participation had a noteworthy advantage, it allowed me to observe the interaction around the memory store between carer and child. I was thus able to take on the role of participant observer which added a further dimension to the findings.

5.4.7 Sampling issues

The fact that the carers volunteered to be part of the sample suggests it is likely they were positively predisposed towards the memory store approach. The fact that I trained the carers in using the approach may also have resulted in the carers presenting me with more positive accounts of the approach as they may have felt reluctant to speak negatively about the approach with me.

5.4.8 Generalizability

As IPA is an idiographic approach (Smith, et al., 2009), I was concerned with understanding the unique experience of individuals rather than looking for broad generalisations, though this could be levelled as a criticism of the study. Critics might argue that the research has little value as the sample size was so small that it tells us something about the experience of the participants but their experiences of using the memory store approach cannot be generalised to others. One response to this would be to argue that the research findings are in line with those of previous research into the memory store approach (Shotton, 2010) as well as being in line with other research into life story work and carer-child reminiscence. It could also be argued that the findings develop warranted new insight into this area. It is fair to say that a bank of evidence is accumulating and commonalities of perceived experience in using the approach have emerged across a range of carers and children (Shotton, 2010). In providing a rich, contextualised analysis of the accounts of the carers and children I believe the study allows the reader to evaluate the transferability of the findings to others in particular contexts which are more or less similar (Smith, et al., 2009).

5.5 Methodological reflexivity

I recognise that my ontology and epistemology, my views about the importance of hearing and trying to understand the views of children and carers have shaped this research. They have influenced the methodology and the research questions affecting what could be found. My pre-conceptions from reading and

experience have also influenced the design of the study, the questions I asked, my interpretation of the participants' talk and the conclusions I drew. With this in mind I now consider how the memory store approach might have been investigated differently. I explore the advantages and disadvantages of alternative methodologies which may have given rise to a different understanding of the memory store approach.

5.5.1 Alternative methodologies

A postal questionnaire to all the foster carers who had undertaken the memory store approach training would have elicited a wider sample of views regarding the approach. It may have helped to develop an idea of the number of carers who go on to implement the approach on a regular basis. If the questionnaire had been anonymous it may have helped to lessen the possible impact of social desirability bias.

The main disadvantage of this approach is that it would not have elicited the rich stories of using the approach that were obtained through using IPA. It would have been a more impersonal and less respectful approach, not allowing for opportunities to follow up on responses and ask for clarification to establish a greater understanding on a deeper level, whilst still acknowledging that a completely shared understanding is an impossibility (Scheurich, 1995). The response rate may also have been very low as is common for postal questionnaires, and people with literacy difficulties would have been less likely to respond (Robson, 2002). The views of the younger children would not have been elicited using this approach or else only through the interpretation of the

carers. Neither would it have allowed me to observe the rich interaction between carers and children in using the memory store approach.

An experimental design may also have been used to try and specifically test the impact of using the memory store approach on attachment, emotional well-being, child's self perception and aspects of the child's thinking and learning. Pre and post assessments using standardised measures could have been administered before and six months after the memory store approach training to provide quantitative data on potential differences that using the memory store approach had produced.

The disadvantages of this approach are that the voices and views of the carers and children would not have been heard. Standardised measurement tools for attachment, self-perception and emotional well-being have a number of difficulties. A significant problem is their lack of reliability, as the results obtained are greatly influenced by the participant's feelings on one particular day, which may change dramatically when administered on a different day. Validity can also be an issue with such measures. Is the self report really measuring attachment for example, or is it tapping into something else, and whose definition of attachment is it based on (Willig, 2008)?

Carrying out the research using more quantitative measures may have generated a stronger argument for policy to be changed to more radically support such initiatives as the memory store approach. Within the health arena there is a strict hierarchy used to evaluate the quality of research with a systematic review of standardised controlled trials being at the top of the

hierarchy and qualitative research coming in near the bottom. Professionals as diverse as Speech Therapists, Nurses and Clinical Psychologists are all expected to base their practice on 'gold standard evidence' (Fox, 2003).

Fox writes that one of the issues that we have as EPs is whether to embrace the gold standard of randomised controlled trials as our colleagues in clinical psychology have done or to align ourselves with education where there is less agreement on what constitutes quality research. Nevertheless, IPA has its roots in health psychology research, as health psychologists realised the importance of understanding patients' perceptions and interpretations of their bodily experiences, and the meanings they assign to them (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

The value of including data from qualitative as well as quantitative studies in systematic reviews of health interventions is increasingly recognised.

Approaches have been developed to integrate qualitative with quantitative data and these has been found to be useful in finding strategies for improving interventions (Dixon-Woods, Fitzpatrick, & Roberts, 2000; Thomas, et al., 2004).

5.6 Evaluating this research

In terms of evaluating qualitative research, Yardley (2000) proposes some key dimensions on which studies using qualitative methods can be assessed. In Table 7 I have highlighted the qualities outlined by Yardley and provided examples of how this study has adhered to these principles.

Essential qualities	Examples
Sensitivity to context	<p>Systematic examination of previous research into life story work and carer-child reminiscence and awareness of psychological theory underlying life story work. Awareness of the likely ontology and epistemology that has shaped research in this area (e.g. Fivush & Vasudeva, 2002).</p> <p>Sensitivity to the socio-cultural setting of the study, conducting the interviews in the home and using tools and approaches which made the sessions as naturalistic and comfortable as possible. Sensitivity to the participants' perspectives through using IPA, sensitivity to the linguistic and dialogic context of each utterance.</p> <p>Awareness of my influence as researcher and the power imbalance, attempts to moderate this through the active participation of the carers and children in the sessions through use of photo elicitation and the game.</p> <p>Strong commitment to ethical practice (as discussed on p93).</p>
Commitment and rigour	<p>In-depth engagement with the participants establishing a good level of rapport. Methodological competence/skill developed through previous research (Shotton, 2010) as well as through the pilot interviews. Thorough data collection and analysis.</p> <p>Depth and breadth of analysis using IPA.</p> <p>Triangulation of data generation and analysis to achieve a rounded, multi-layered understanding of the memory store approach from both the carers and children's perspective.</p> <p>Accepting throughout that the process could never achieve a genuinely first person account, the account being a co-construction between the participant and myself and that my interpretation was simply that; an interpretation of the participant's account and what it might mean for them in that particular context (Larkin, et al., 2006).</p>
Transparency and coherence	<p>Careful detailing of each aspect of the data collection and analysis process.</p>

	Reflection on how aspects of the procedure will have influenced the findings as well as being open about the influence of my background, beliefs and experience in shaping the study, the findings and conclusions drawn.
Impact and importance	Enriching understanding of the participants' views about the memory store approach and the effects it is perceived to have. Implications of the research outlined in terms of policy and practice around life story work as well as implications for educational psychology practice.

Table 9: Characteristics of good qualitative research (Yardley, 2000)

5.7 Significance and implications of my findings

The memory store approach seems to have a number of benefits for both carers and children, emotionally, relationally and in terms of their self perception and learning. Its use also means that looked after children have an ongoing record of their time in care rather than having gaps of time unaccounted for. The potential of the approach to build and strengthen the relationship between carer and child has implications for adaptations to the child's internal working model (Bowlby, 1988). Through this strengthened relationship and the stories that are co-constructed the child can come to see themselves, others and the world around them in more positive ways. From a narrative perspective it can help the child to thicken positive counter-narratives impacting positively on the dominant stories the child has and is able to tell about themselves, particularly thickening stories around their strengths, worth and belonging. It also has the potential to facilitate learning, particularly developing literacy skills and concentration.

Given its potential it would be beneficial if the memory store approach, or similar, was in place for all looked after children. The approach could also be implemented with a wider population, to strengthen carer-child relationships,

help children to co-construct positive stories about themselves and develop their narrative skills.

It is likely that there will be differences between each child's experience of using the approach with their carer, but I would hope there would also be many similarities in terms of the perceived effects of employing the approach. Some children may not feel motivated to engage with the approach, though even if they show little or no interest the carer should continue to collect memories of the child's time with them so that memories of that placement are safeguarded. In the future the child may eventually come round to participating and, even if they do not, they may at a future date want to reflect back on their time in that placement. Knowing that those memories have been safeguarded communicates to the child that their time is important and that they matter.

5.7.1 Implications for the development of policy

Policy should be developed which specifies that training for foster carers in using the approach, or similar, should be mandatory as part of their induction to fostering. This would raise their awareness and help them feel equipped to use the approach right from the start of a child's placement with them. The training should emphasise the important elements of the approach in co-constructing stories, elaborating on the child's utterances, referencing emotions and reflective listening. It should highlight the flexibility of the format in terms of using a book, box or other technology based tools whilst emphasising the importance of co-creating coherent narratives that can be reflected upon again and again.

Creating a memory store book about the family in preparation for the child's arrival should also be used routinely as an effective way of preparing the child emotionally for the placement as well as potentially helping the receiving family prepare for the child's arrival. When the child needs to move on, the memory store approach can be used to prepare them for transition, helping them know what to expect and then going with them to their next placement to share with their new carers. Social workers and family placement workers should receive training so they feel confident in supporting carers to use this approach.

Given the potential benefits and the ethical need to safeguard memories for looked after children, it is recommended that a legislative requirement be established for foster carers to engage in collaborative memory work using the memory store approach or similar. Minimum standards for adoption services (Department for Education, 2011) specify that in preparing a child for adoption, his/her social worker should be gathering their views in relation to their life experiences to date, which should include constructing a life story book. Whilst this is in place for children being prepared for adoption, there is no statutory requirement for life story work to be carried out with children who are being fostered.

The CWDC Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Care (CWDC, 2011) sets out minimum standards of best practice for foster carers. Standard four, section 5d, outlines that foster carers should know how to enable children and young people to participate in record keeping and keep their own memorabilia, but there is no statutory obligation to undertake any collaborative memory work with the child in their care.

The memory store approach should be part of wider policy and practice regarding life story work. Other professionals (usually social workers) need to ensure that the child has a full understanding of why they came into care using life story work as the tool for this work.

In line with other researchers I would argue that a more coherent, consistent strategy to life story work needs to be implemented across the UK that is supported by legislation (Cook-Cottone & Beck, 2007; Nicholls, 2003). Either nationally or across each LA, a life story work strategy/policy should be developed which would include the theoretical and research background, a model of practice, training for foster carers, social workers and other relevant professionals and how the implementation will be monitored.

5.7.2 Relevance of the research to educational psychology practice

The research highlights the potential role of educational psychologists in using psychology to affect outcomes for looked after children, in terms of developing the memory store approach and the training as well as the research that was carried out. There is a clear role for psychologists in training foster carers, social workers, family placement workers and other child care professionals to ensure that these professionals feel confident and are skilled in carrying out their role in contributing to the child's life story. The foster carer uses the memory store approach while the social worker/family placement worker /psychologist carries out the full chronology of the child's life story prior to the current placement including the reasons for them coming into care.

The study highlights the potential of using games to explore children's views in both research and more general educational psychology practice. The use of such methods fulfils the HPC Standards of Proficiency for Psychologists; 2a.2 being the ability to select and use appropriate assessment techniques and 2b.1 the ability to understand and use applicable techniques for research and academic enquiry. Games increase rapport and can help to lower a child's anxiety; they can help to create a relaxed atmosphere that is more naturalistic than a formal interview, making the EP seem less threatening and they can help sustain a child's attention (Gardner, 1983; Hemmings, 1996; Matorin & McNamara, 1996). In this way they can be a useful tool for exploring the views of children who are wary of adults or who struggle to maintain their attention.

5.8 Further research that would be helpful to carry out

It would be beneficial to be able to undertake similar research into the memory store approach using children with a greater variety of ages to explore experiences of using the approach at those different ages. It would be also be interesting to film the interaction between carers and children using the memory store approach, looking at the micro-moments of interaction where the adult has responded in an attuned way to the child's initiative using a combination of non-verbal and verbal responses (Tucker, 2006).

It would be helpful to carry out research into the maintenance of change in using the memory store approach. Using a larger sample to find out what the uptake of

using the approach is after training and whether carers continue to use the approach over a long period of time or if there is a drop off effect.

From the point of view of persuading policy makers of the value of the approach it may be helpful to carry out some research using quantitative measures of attachment, self esteem, placement stability, learning etc to explore the relationship between using the memory store approach and these outcomes. However, as mentioned previously, standardised measures for concepts such as attachment and self esteem should be used with caution and be carefully thought through in terms of their validity and reliability.

Further research into particular types of life story work, carried out by social workers and other professionals, is needed to inform practice in this area (Mennen & O'Keefe, 2005; Rushton, 2004). Here again research would helpfully explore the children's experience of engaging with a particular approach to life story work to further inform practice.

5.9 Summary

In this chapter I reiterated the major themes arising from my findings and their relationship to the literature. I then presented the memory store approach model which suggests how the memory store approach seems to be working given the findings from this study. The findings suggest that through the co-construction of stories and reflecting on shared times of enjoyment and achievement the approach strengthens the relationship between carer and child as well as with other family members. It thickens positive stories that the child has about

themselves and facilitates positive emotions for both carer and child. It also provides opportunities to develop aspects of thinking and learning, particularly concentration and literacy skills.

I went on to critically evaluate aspects of my methodology and considered what other methodology could have brought to the study, delineating the advantages and disadvantages of alternative approaches. The significance and implications of my findings were then discussed in relation to policy and practice. I argue that a more coherent and consistent strategy to life story work needs to be implemented across the UK, either nationally or at a LA level. Training in using the memory store approach (or similar) should be mandatory for foster carers and legislation should be brought out to ensure memories of each child's placement are safeguarded by their foster carers. In the final section of this chapter I have outlined further research that could helpfully be undertaken in this area.

I would like to finish with a quote from Wilma talking about Lilly's engagement with the memory store approach and how it facilitates the interaction between them:

And then she'll say, "Can I read it? And she'll sit there and she'll say, "Can I show you?" and she'll come up and she'll show us, she'll show it.

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Appendices

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Appendix A: Carer interview preamble and interview guide

Preamble

- I am interested in you and your experiences of having used the memory store approach. Don't worry because there are no right or wrong answers, I simply want to find out more about your experience of using the approach.
 - The purpose of the research is to find out how different carers and children have found using the approach and the affect that they feel it may have had on different aspects of their lives.
 - It will be written up for my thesis in educational psychology. I may also write it up for a journal to help inform practice.
 - Are you OK with this interview being recorded so I can transcribe and reflect on it later on?
 - With the approach I am using, things that you say during the interview may appear word for word in my final report but don't worry because all your responses will be anonymous, your name and any other names you use will be changed to protect your identity.
 - What I will do is to send you a copy of the transcript so that you can see if you are happy with how I've reported your words. And if you're not happy you have the right both at that time (or at any time actually) to withdraw from the research.
 - The transcript and the report will be held on a password protected computer. Any paper copies will be held in a secure location.
 - Now for the sessions with (child's name): will it be OK for it to take place here in this room? And can I ask if you could not sit in on the session but perhaps just keep coming back in from time to time. Would that be OK?
1. Can you tell me how you got started with using the memory store approach with x ?

Possible prompts: What were your first steps? Can you describe what you did first?

2. Can you tell me about x's reaction when you first started using it with him/her?
3. How do you think he/she feels about using the approach now?
4. Can you tell me about (looking at the book/box) an event or item that he/she wanted to record or remember?

Possible prompts/probes: Why do you think he/she chose to record this?

5. What do you think he/she got out of storing that particular memory?
6. How do you feel when you look back on these memories with x?
7. How do you think he/she feels when you look back on these memories together?
8. Do you think that using the memory store approach has affected your relationship with x?

Possible prompt: In what way? Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

9. Do you think using the memory store approach has affected how x sees him/herself?

Possible prompt: In what way? Can you tell me a bit more about that?

10. Do you think that using the memory store approach has had an impact on x's learning?

Possible prompt: In what way? Can you tell a bit more about that?

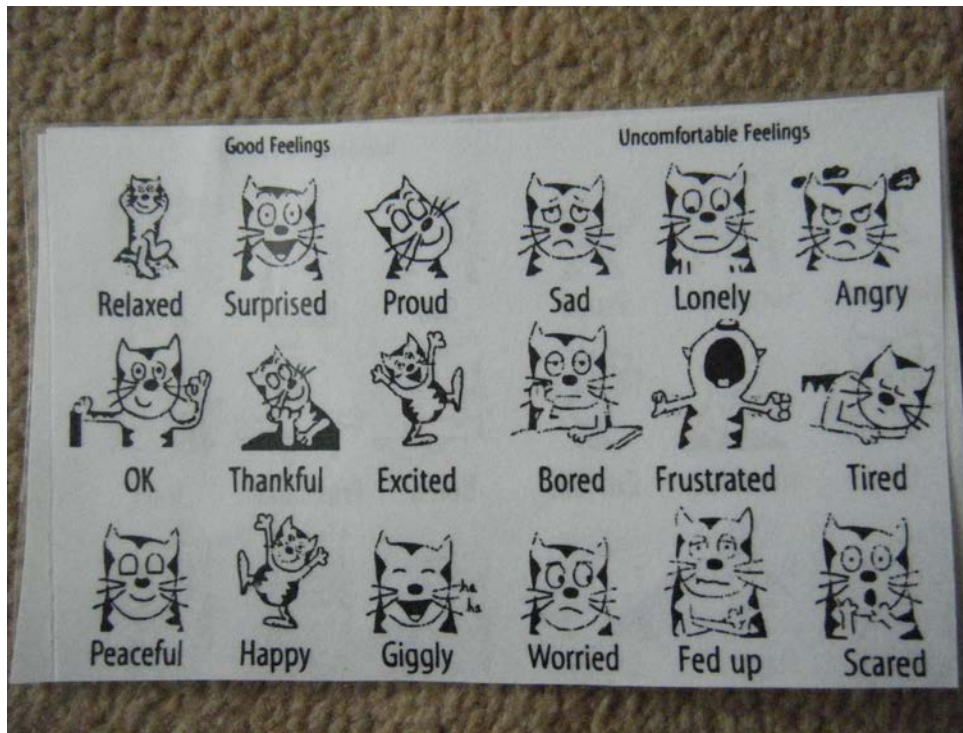
Appendix B: Child interview preamble

- I am interested in you and your experiences of using your memory box/book with (carer's name). Don't worry because there are no right or wrong answers, I simply want to find out more about what you think about it.
- The purpose of my research is to find out how you have found using your memory book/box and what you think about it. To make our session a bit more interesting and fun I have made a board game that we can play.
- It will be written up for my thesis in educational psychology. I may also write it up for a journal so that other people get to find out about the memory store approach.
- Are you OK with this interview being recorded so I can write down what you say and think about it later on?
- Things that you say during the interview may appear word for word in my final report but don't worry because I won't use your name, so no one will know it was you who said those words. Are you OK with that?
- What I will do is to send you a copy of what you say. If you're not happy you can let me know and you can even say you don't want me to use your words. That's fine as well.
- The transcript and the report will be held on a password protected computer. Any paper copies will be held in a secure location.
- Some of the questions in the game ask how you feel about this or that, because sometimes it's difficult to think how you feel about something. I've got some cards to help you (show bear cards/cat card).
- I've also got here a card on which are some strengths, things that you might feel are your strengths, like being kind or helpful. So if you like you can also use this card as well (show strengths card).







Appendix C: Example of the bear cards (Veecken and Harman, 1995)



Appendix D: Feelings card (Shotton, 2002) and strengths card (Jardine, 1992)



Appendix E: Power point slides from the memory store approach training

<h3>Life Story Work</h3> <p>Gillian Shotton Senior Specialist Educational Psychologist</p> <p>Tracie Faa Thompson Children's permanenceworker</p>  <p>www.hampshire.gov.uk</p>	<h3>Housekeeping</h3>  <p>www.hampshire.gov.uk</p>
<h3>Introductions</h3> <p>Introduce yourself and tell us why you brought along your special object</p>  <p>www.hampshire.gov.uk</p>	<h3>Aims of the day</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">To understand more about Life Story WorkTo understand the importance of Life Story WorkFor you to feel confident in contributing to Life Story Work by using the memory store approach  <p>www.hampshire.gov.uk</p>
<h3>Research</h3> <p>– Carers and children's experiences of using the memory store approach</p>  <p>www.hampshire.gov.uk</p>	<h3>Brainstorm in groups</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">What is Life Story Work?Why do it?Who does it?  <p>www.hampshire.gov.uk</p>

The memory store approach

Collaboratively collecting and reflecting on memories you have shared



Northumbria

www.northumbria.ac.uk

Guidelines



Northumbria

www.northumbria.ac.uk

Listening to difficult feelings

Active listening

- Listening
- Summarising
- Asking a question



Not advice giving or trying to make it all better

Northumbria

www.northumbria.ac.uk

Ownership

- No one may read it without the child's permission
- It may go with them when they gain a new family



Northumbria

www.northumbria.ac.uk

Creating a bank of memories/evidence

- Helps to establish relationships
- Helps to build self-esteem and resilience



Northumbria

www.northumbria.ac.uk

Photograph activity

- What's going on in the photo you have been given?
- Try to make up a bit of a story that might explain the photo.



Northumbria

www.northumbria.ac.uk



Co-creating stories

- Using the senses
- Describing feelings



www.norfolk.gov.uk

Summer 2007

- Nursery trip

Building a narrative together

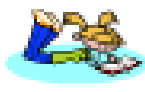
Summer 2007
 We went to (place name) for our nursery trip. I was in a (place name) and a police car. I was brave then too. (Name of child) and I were in the police car. (Name of child) was (action) but had to hold the wheel because the fire man helped me and I turned onto (place name). The (place name) this (place name) made a lovely (place name). That was (place name) but (place name) the (place name) of (place name).



www.norfolk.gov.uk

Other ways of recording memories

- Digital Life Stories
- Special photo books
- Memory box
- Video clips



Writing activity

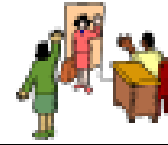
The very first time I met you...



www.norfolk.gov.uk

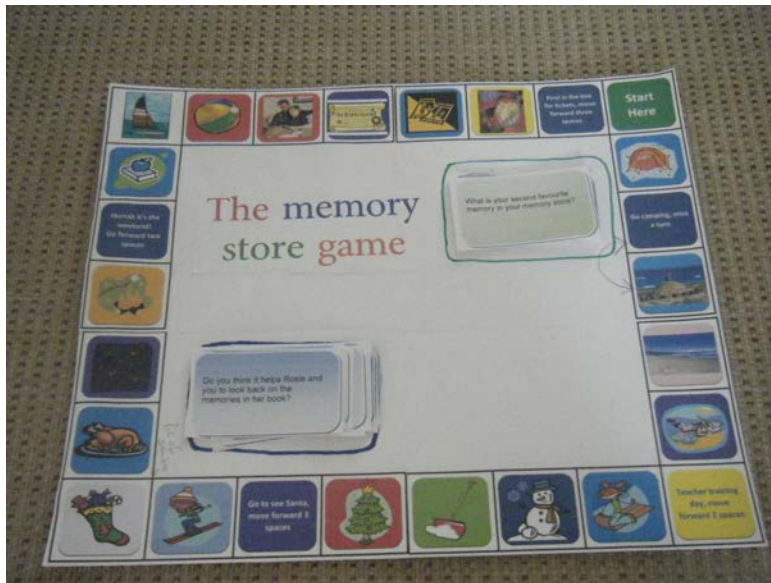
Photo montage

Thank you for your participation today
Please complete an evaluation form



Appendix F: Versions of the board game

The first prototype of the board game



The final version of the board game



Appendix G: Questions and possible prompts used with the child

NB: The cards used in the game did not have the prompts on them.

<p>1. Talk about the first thing you put into your memory store. Tell me more about what was going on here. Did you chose to record this memory? Summarizing/clarifying</p>	<p>2. Talk about how you felt when your carer first showed you the memory book/box. Why do you think you felt that way?</p>
<p>3. Talk about a favourite memory in your memory store. What do you particularly like about this one? How do you feel when you look back on it?</p>	<p>4. Talk about how you feel when you look back on memories in your store. What makes you feel.....?</p>
<p>5. Talk about any memories in your store that you feel proud of. What does that memory show about you?</p>	<p>6. Talk about your another favourite memory in your memory store. Tell me more about what was going on here. Did you chose to record this memory? Summarizing/clarifying</p>
<p>7. Talk about anything you don't like about recording memories or looking back on them. Tell me a bit more about that.</p>	<p>8. Do you think using your memory store has helped you with your learning? Tell me a bit more about that.</p>
<p>9. Do you think looking back on your memories helps you to see more good things about yourself? What sort of good things has it shown you?</p>	<p>10. Do you think using your memory store has affected how you get on with your carer? Tell me a bit more about that.</p>

Appendix H: Researcher's questions

<p>1. Talk about your favourite memory in Rosie's memory store.</p>	<p>2. Talk about the first thing you put into Rosie's memory store.</p>
<p>3. Talk about when you first showed Rosie the book and explained it to her.</p>	<p>4. Talk about anything you find difficult about recording memories with Rosie.</p>
<p>5. Talk about your second favourite memory in the memory store.</p>	<p>6. What do you like about recording memories with Rosie?</p>
<p>7. Apart from Rosie's memory store do you record <i>your</i> memories?</p>	<p>8. Talk about how you feel when you look back on memories in the store.</p>
<p>9. Talk about any sad memories that are in the memory store.</p>	<p>10. Are there any memories that show something Rosie is proud of?</p>

Appendix I: Information sheet and consent form for carers

Research into using the memory store approach

What is the purpose of the research?

The aim of the research is to explore your experience of using the memory store approach as well as the experience of the child you look after. I would like to find out how you feel using the book/box has affected:

- how you get on with your child
- how your child sees him/herself
- her/his learning

Why is this important?

1. As I explained on the course, there has been very little research carried out into life story work with children and carers so your participation is very much appreciated!
2. Your views and those of your child are important and should be heard, this will help to inform future training in the memory store approach.
3. The findings will be helpful to pass on to other carers and professionals.

What to expect

After 2-3 months of you using the memory store approach with your child I will contact you and arrange a time to come and interview you and your child (separately) about your experiences. The interview with you will last about an hour, the interview with your child may be shorter, depending on their age and concentration. To make the interview with the child more fun, I have made a board game which contains the questions that I wish to ask the child. The interviews will be taped and then transcribed to analyse later.

How will the research be reported?

The research is for my doctoral thesis in Educational Psychology so will be written up for that. I would also like to write a shorter account for a professional journal article. Before I include your account in either of these documents, I will send you the transcript of our interview for you to make sure you are happy for your words to be used. All names will be kept anonymous and the transcripts will be held in a secure location.

But I haven't recorded many memories with my child as yet?

Don't worry, your experiences will still be helpful.

What if I get cold feet about being involved in the research?

You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

If you are happy to take part in the research please complete the form overleaf and return it to me.

Thank you!

Gillian

I would like to take part in the memory store research.

I have read and understand the information sheet about the study. I know that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. I understand that all the information about me is confidential and that my identity and that of the child will be anonymous.

Name:

Foster/adoptive carer (please delete as appropriate)

Name(s) and age(s) of the child/children I look after

Address:

Telephone number:

Any particular times/days that are convenient to call?

Gillian Shotton

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Supervisor: Richard Parker

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Northumberland
COUNTY COUNCIL



Memory book/box research

Appendix J: Leaflet explaining research to the child

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NORTHUMBERLAND
COUNTY COUNCIL

Have your say...



What do you think
about using your memory
book or box?

Finding out your views

You have been using your memory book /box for a little while now with your carer and we would like to find out what you think about it.

Why?

- Your views are important.
- We want to find out if there are ways we can improve our training on using memory books/boxes.
- We want to find out how recording your memories in this way might help you. If it helps you then it might help other children too.

How will you find out my views?

I will come to your house and talk with you and your carer to find out about your experience of using your memory book/box.

Rather than just ask you questions we will play a board game I have made, which has in it all the questions I would like to ask you. This means I have to answer questions as well as you!



What should I bring?

Bring along your memory book/box as you will need to look at it to answer some of the questions. To save me having to write down your answers I will tape our conversation.

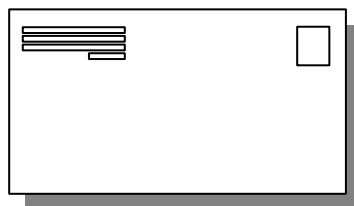


Will other people find out what I have said?

Other people will find out what you have said but they won't know it was you. Your name will not be used. We will make up a pretend name.

What will happen after the interview?

I will send you a copy of all that you said.



If there's anything you don't want me to include, or parts where I haven't got your views down correctly, you and your carer can let me know.

If you decide you don't want your views included in the research that's fine, you and your carer can let me know.

What do I do next?

Please fill in the card that came with this leaflet and send it back to me in the envelope provided to let me know if you are happy to take part.

If you say you would like to take part I will get in touch with your carer to arrange a time to come and see you both.

Thank you

Gillian



Appendix K: Consent form for the child sent with SAE

I would like/would not like to take part in the memory store research

(delete as appropriate)

I have read and understand the information leaflet about the study. I know that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. I understand that all the information about me is confidential.

I have a memory book/box/other (delete as appropriate)

Name.....

Age.....

Please put this card in the envelope provided and post it back. The envelope already has a stamp on it.

Thank you

Gillian

Appendix L: Sample of the pilot interview

Anna (foster carer) seated on the sofa to one side. Prior to the session I went through the leaflet with her so I was sure she fully understood all the details about the research, confidentiality, anonymity etc.

The board game questions are written in **bold**.

		<i>Reflections on my interviewing skills and the questions I asked</i>
Gillian	Right and was it Anna who first gave you the memory book?	
Anna	I gave her the memory box because she'd already started with her own story and I thought it was nice to have a box as well	
Gillian	So you felt happy when you got that did you?	
Sally	Yeah I'd heard of it on movies, where....have you heard of Super Nanny?	
Gillian	Umm yes	
Sally	She gave a child a memory box and they went ice skating	
Gillian	Ah I didn't realise it had been on Super Nanny. So you thought, 'oh great I'm getting one of those just like on the telly! Is that right?'	Too presumptuous. Putting words in her mouth. Perhaps I should have said 'so you liked the idea of it because you'd seen it on the telly'
Sally	Yeah	
Gillian	Kind of? (my turn reading out the question) Talk about how you felt when you first showed Rosie the book and explained it to her. Umm well when I first showed her it, she didn't really get it because the only thing we'd done like that before was if we'd been on holiday and put photographs from our holiday in the album. And so she just thought it was for holidays so I had to help her to understand and I wrote this little sheet for her saying, no it doesn't have to be a big thing like a holiday. It can be anything you enjoy doing on an ordinary school day. And then when she understood that she was quite kind of excited about putting things in.	I think I need to keep my questions factual. Not cover my feelings. Otherwise my attitude towards the approach may influence their responses. It might make it difficult for the children to express any negative feelings towards the memory store approach.

	(Few moments of silence whilst she rolled the dice for her go)	
Sally	Talk about your favourite memory in your memory store Umm I've lots. One of them, well you know when you go on holiday and you have the suitcase with the white band and it tells you where you're going and they scan it. I've got like one of them.	
Gillian	And when's that from?	
Sally	That I went to (place name)	
Gillian	Oh lovely, so you went on a plane?	
Sally	Yes	
Gillian	And that's where the white band bit comes from...and you kept that	
Sally	The leaflet, I've got, booklets where I went to (place name) castle and into (place name) and we went to Claire's accessories and I got a leaflet from there	
Gillian	Is that somewhere you went with your mum and dad?	
Sally	I went with my dad	
Gillian	And who did you go with for the (place name) one?	
Sally	I went with my mum and my sister	
Gillian	So when you look back at that white tag what do you feel?	
Sally	Happy that I did it and I went on holiday	
Gillian	It's a nice memory of that time	Should have used her words 'it's a happy memory of that time' or asked her 'so when you look at that band and you remember going to Jersey how do you feel?'

Appendix M: GANT chart time line

GANT chart time line	2010												2011												2012											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J					
Researching relevant articles around participatory research, alternative interviewing styles, visually mediated interviews		■				■	■		■	■	■									■	■	■		■	■		■	■								
Reading/researching relevant articles around LSW and collaborative reminiscence, contacting relevant researchers and academics	■	■	■				■		■		■				■	■			■		■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■						
Delivered presentation of previous research interviewing carers to ARTs group (Shotton 2010)		■																																		
Writing thesis proposal, getting feedback from supervisor on draft, revising, submitting	■	■	■																																	
Writing and submitting ethical approval form and project approval form, ongoing correspondence to fulfil requirements			■	■			■	■	■																											
Development of board game, questions, prompts and visual aids				■	■	■	■																													
Development of leaflet explaining the research to the children and information sheet for adults					■	■			■	■																										
Development of consent forms for adults and children					■	■																														
Requesting approval from heads of service						■	■																													
Pre-pilot interview with Rosie						■																														
Development of preamble for both carers and children							■																													
Writing introduction							■		■											■	■							■	■							
Supervision						■		■		■				■			■		■		■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■							
Progress panel presentations									■									■																		
Planning and carrying out of pilot interviews									■																											
Delivering training to foster carers on the memory store approach, requesting volunteers									■																											
Transcribing and analysing data from pilot interviews, adjusting questions and preamble on-going discussions with supervisor re changes									■	■	■																									
Contacting volunteers to arrange dates and writing to them to confirm										■																										
Carrying out interviews										■	■	■	■																							
Transcribing and analysing interviews using IPA										■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■																
BERA conference visual methods															■																					
Writing methodology																				■	■	■							■	■						
Writing findings																					■	■						■	■							
Writing literature review																							■	■				■	■							
Writing discussion & abstract + amendments																										■	■	■		■						

Appendix N: Sample from a transcript including initial noting

Interview with Jess (carer to Matt age 9)

We had the memory book open for me to look through and for Jess to refer to when she wanted. There was also a memory box with lots of items in it. The carer's interview preamble was used (see Appendix A) before any questions were asked.

Matt is now under a special guardianship arrangement which means that his placement with Jess and James is permanent.

Key

Normal text = Descriptive comments which focus on describing the content of what the participant has said

Italic text = Linguistic comments which explore the participant's use of language

Underlined text = Conceptual comments which are more interpretative. Going beyond the words to thinking on a deeper level what this might mean for the participant.

() = recording unclear

<p>11. Jess: Yeah, but when I just started it properly from when he was at nursery, you know, when children come home and they've made things, or if he'd done like a scribble in the house on a bit of paper, you just find it hard to – to throw it away.</p>	<p>12. Jess felt it was important to save things from when Matt was very young at nursery. She found it hard to throw anything away that Matt had done.</p>
<p>13. Gillian: Yes.</p>	<p>14.</p>
<p>15. Jess: And so I just started collecting things from then, just little bits and pieces. And like I said, the photograph album was more for a sense of security for Matt, knowing where he was when he was a baby. Because he's always known that he was um – he wasn't with his – obviously with his birth mum and dad. He knew um – well it took him a while, but when he did start asking, you know, we made him aware, you know, I wasn't his birth mum and what were the reasons he wasn't with Claire and Tom, and then that's how we got the photograph album started, you know, just to secure – for security for him.</p>	<p>16. Jess and James put together the photograph album as they felt that it would give Matt a sense of security from knowing and being able to see that he was with Jess and James from being a baby. The photograph album (memory store) was felt to give him that security of knowledge and clarity about his history.</p> <p>17. <i>Jess requires very little prompting, she is keen to share her thoughts about the memory store approach and talks quite quickly. <u>I get the impression she has given this much thought.</u></i></p>
<p>18. Gillian: Hmm.</p>	<p>19.</p>
<p>20. Jess: I thought it would be something that he could always look back on. And especially having me and James and Jack in the photographs, because he</p>	<p>21. Jess also felt it was important for Matt to be able to look back on photos of family member together rather than on their own. <u>I wonder if this is because Jess feels it is</u></p>

<p>can have photographs of them on their own, but that doesn't necessarily reinforce where they were or who they were with. So it was nice to have some of the pictures from when he was a baby.</p>	<p><u>important for Matt to be able to see the relationships that exist and have existed between family members over time.</u></p>
<p>22. Gillian: Yeah so he could see that you were there, kind of from a very early age?</p>	<p>23.</p>
<p>24. Jess: Yeah.</p>	<p>25.</p>
<p>26. Gillian: And he could have a kind of clarity about where he'd come from and at what age that you were looking after him?</p>	<p>27. Clarifying, summarising</p>
<p>28. Jess: Yeah just um – I mean you can only think you can understand what must be going through their heads. But it must be unnerving at times, unsettling, you know, he must panic at times. But hopefully – I mean he is very settled, he is very secure, I mean this is permanent. But for children who aren't in a permanent situation, you know, I think it's even more important.</p>	<p>29. Jess feels that to not have that knowledge about their background would be unsettling/unnerving. <u>She seems to be implying that Matt panics at times or feels insecure but that the memory store book reassures him of his history where he came from and who he's been with. Jess feels it's even more important for LAC who are in short term placements.</u></p>