Childhood Memories of Post-war Merseyside:
Exploring the Impact of Memory Sharing Through an Oral History and Reminiscence Work Approach

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'Childhood is the world we have lost. The children we were are still part of us, and also quite separate from us. The past is a partial script for the present, but to interpret our adult selves as determined by those children would be a mistake. In recognising the past the reality lies in the other direction. We are the ones who can reach back with our reminiscences and give those children meaning'

(Heron, 1985, p.9).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dedicated to Holly, Bobby and Teddy- life companions with whom I share many precious memories.

ABSTRACT

This study used an oral history (OH) and reminiscence work (RW) approach to explore childhood memories of Merseyside, England, United Kingdom, in the period following the Second World War. Interviews were conducted with ten volunteers between 60 and 70 years of age from communities across Merseyside, collecting unique reminiscences.

The researcher used a qualitative research approach to obtain and analyse the findings. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis and findings were analysed thematically according to emergent themes.

Firstly, the interview transcripts were analysed to identify the social conditions which impacted on childhood experiences. Then, the researcher created a Memory Tree Model (MTM) and revisited the same participants to focus on the reflective aspect of the reminiscence process itself; thus, each participant was interviewed twice, allowing adequate scope for reflection.

The researcher wrote a series of memoir chapters to present and discuss the research findings in a way that captured the essence of childhood and adequately represented the impact of reminiscence. This thesis explores the social conditions of childhood during the post war years in Merseyside and in doing so has prompted the researcher to develop a tool to support the reminiscence process.

Overall, the participants found the experience to be a positive one, with therapeutic benefits, even when recalling negative memories. The majority of the participants (n=9) found the Memory Tree Model and reflective reminiscence work interview easier and more supportive than the open-microphone oral history interview. Each of the participants continued to reminisce in the months between the first and second phase of interviews and had started to engage in reminiscence with their families.

The results were linked to the research and practice outcomes of a heuristic model of reminiscence to explain the impact that reminiscence had on those who took part. In theorising the use of both an oral history and reminiscence work approach, this thesis informs others working with reminiscences, in better understanding

the impact on those who are engaging in this type of research. It also demonstrates an understanding of the relationship between social research and community engagement.

The researcher was given the opportunity to disseminate the findings in a public forum via an exhibition at the Museum of Liverpool Life (MLL); this established that both OH and RW can be a positive experience for participants and enrich the wider community. Recommendations for future practice include increasing access to public reminiscence workshops, enabling people of all ages to benefit from its qualities. This would be an enriching practice in society, not only facilitating the process of reminiscing, but also bridging gaps between generations and cultures, building networks and bringing communities closer together.

The research contributes to the body of knowledge by providing insight into the social conditions of childhood in post-war Merseyside through a set of unique and candid childhood memories. The researcher achieved this by opting to use a multi-method participatory approach for gathering the research findings; a pictorial tool was created and used to support the participants in this process. Furthermore, a collaborative approach fostered community engagement in the form of an interactive museum event which provided a platform for public engagement and additional memory sharing.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CBPR	Community Based Participatory Research
HMR	Heuristic Model of Reminiscence
LJMU	Liverpool John Moores University
LWHG	Liverpool Women's History Group
MLA	Museums Libraries Archives
MLL	Museum of Liverpool Life
MTM	Memory Tree Model
OH	Oral History
PR	Participatory Research
RW	Reminiscence Work
SDM	Self Defining Memory
SMS	Self Memory System

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Overview

This chapter provides a general introduction to the thesis, outlines the context in which it was written, and identifies the aims and objectives of the study. The researcher chose to employ a multi-method approach to the research that used both oral history (OH) and reminiscence work (RW) to capture, analyse, present and preserve childhood memories; although this approach was not the initial intention. The research developed and changed as it progressed, so this chapter aims to clarify what those developments were and how they impacted on the research.

The participants' voices, reflective responses and opinions have shaped the research. Their responses suggested a research design following which the researcher chose to conduct both OH and RW interviews in order to capture the social conditions of childhood during the 1950s and consider the impact of the reminiscence process itself. The researcher's methodological choices, high regard for ethical research practice and flexible approach afforded access to unique, candid findings which represent a portion of Merseyside's social heritage.

This chapter concludes by discussing how the collaboration between Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) and the Museum of Liverpool Life (MLL) came about and led to dissemination of the research findings in a public forum. The researcher highlights the significance of intergenerational memory sharing and the importance of returning the results of the research to the Merseyside community.

Background of the author

Personal Reflection: 'Once I go, my memories go with me…'

My interest in OH stems from my passion for qualitative research approaches and deep appreciation for living memories as a window of insight into social history. Reading a variety of texts that explore the history of childhood prompted an interest in childhood experiences in times gone by (Aries, 1960; DeMause, 1974; Hendrick, 1997; Buckingham, 2000; Heywood, 2005; Cunningham, 1992, 2005, 2006). This in turn led me to OH texts which described methods of accessing and capturing childhood memories (Yow, 1994; Summerfield, 1989, 1998; Thompson, 2000). Not only did this literature inspire my academic writing, but it also awakened a realisation that many memories have already been lost, and provoked a feeling of deep frustration at this occurrence. Subsequently, my journey took me to more recent works about memory, reminiscence and narrative by Riessman (1993, 2002) and Berger and Quinney (2005). Additionally, I explored the role of subjectivity in research (Ellis and Flaherty, 1992), so that I could appropriately plan my approach to conducting OH and RW. Finally, attending conferences on digital history and archiving (courtesy of the Oral History Society) informed my approach to collecting data, enabling me to record and preserve the voices I was being entrusted with effectively.

Initially, oral histories of post-war childhood were collected and explored as part of a Masters in Research (MRes) study, which resulted in the successful accumulation of both unique and comparable oral histories. Following my successful completion of the MRes, I was waiting for a bus in Liverpool city centre when I was approached by an elderly gentleman who shared his personal memories of fighting in Burma during the Second World War. I spoke reciprocally about my study and explained that I intended to carry out further OH research. Before stepping onto the bus, the gentleman turned to me, smiled, and said, 'Well, once I go, my memories go with me', capturing the essence of reminiscence research: it is a poignant reminder of the value of capturing memories from those who have experienced history first-hand before they are lost forever. In the words of Gibson (2011, p.43): 'Each time a person dies, history dies with them'.

Autobiographical memories

Over the years much research has been conducted about and using childhood memories, with a particular focus on the role of self-defining autobiographical memories that are created from early childhood experiences (Mullen, 1994; Bauer, 2002; Schneider, 2015). The creation of autobiographical memory is a unique human ability which develops across the lifespan, from childhood into adulthood; it takes on board the cultural context of one's experiences, and is thus ever-evolving (Schneider, 2015).

It is important to note that autobiographical memory is not solely the recall of such experiences: it also includes one's perspectives and interpretations, as well as the interactions between short- and long-term memory recall. According to Fivush (2011, p.561) autobiographical memory is 'self-referenced memory of personal experiences in the service of short-term and long-term goals that define identity and purpose'. One category of this type of memory is Life Narrative, in which an individual pieces together a series of his or her autobiographical memories to link the past, present and future (Fivush, 2011).

There are numerous approaches to collecting autobiographical memories for research. Initially, the researcher explored the concept of OH as a method for capturing childhood memories, but many reflective responses were shared during the OH interviews. Reflective responses are not central to the OH method; therefore, in order to capture the reflective, emotive responses of the participants,[1] the researcher opted to conduct further interviews from a reminiscence work perspective.

There is limited use of multi-method approaches to capturing memories. Although the idea of interdisciplinary approaches to interviewing and analysing reminiscences is not ground-breaking, it is still innovative and sometimes controversial in academia. Some academics are stringent when it comes to disciplinary boundaries in research (Nolin, 2011); however the researcher

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[1] This is detailed in chapters six and seven.

contends that such stringency can only hinder progression and innovation in research using reminiscences. As such, this researcher presents an effective approach that uses both OH and RW, creating a reflective memory tool to gather broad, heuristic[2] findings whilst demonstrating how to conduct such research in a considerate, dignified and ethical manner. The second phase of the interview findings presented an empirical acknowledgement of this, and therefore contributing to the body of knowledge in interdisciplinary research.

The researcher's intention was not only to preserve a portion of Merseyside's social heritage and give a voice to childhood memories that would otherwise be lost forever, but also to explore aspects of the reminiscence process and consider the impact the process had on the participants as they recalled their childhood memories. Ultimately, this thesis investigates whether childhood experiences of a particular geographic location or era, or indeed reminiscing about such experiences, can form, shape or impact on human experience and identity.

Reminiscence in later life

Older people reminisce or engage in reminiscence in different ways (Wong and Watt, 1991). Reminiscence enables individuals to think about or share significant experiences of their past (Reis-Bergan et al., 2000). Recalling past achievements or particularly enjoyable memories can increase self-esteem and self-worth and help older adults to maintain a sense of identity (Wong and Watt, 1991; O'Leary and Nieuwstraten, 2001).

Research on reminiscence is grounded in the theories of Erikson (1968) and Butler (1981). According to Erikson (1968), human beings experience developmental stages throughout their lifespan, and encounter developmental crises at each stage. In later life, one such crisis is the conflict between ego integrity and despair (the eighth stage of psychosocial development), which is concerned with accepting one's life as a whole and reflecting on it in a positive manner. This theory contends

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[2] Heuristic: learning, discovering, exploring or problem solving by immersing oneself in an experience.

that older people reflect on their lives and either develop a sense of ego integrity and satisfaction or a feeling of despair. Butler (1981) built on Erikson's theory and proposed that reminiscence can enable those in later life to achieve a complete sense of satisfaction regarding their past and present life.

Cappeliez and O'Rourke (2006) also maintained that reminiscing in later life has a positive impact on life satisfaction, and believed that part of the process is accepting aging. According to Butler and Lewis (1977), life review occurs in the sixties and is less prominent after the seventies. Whilst for the most part reminiscence and life review in later life can prove beneficial, it is important to acknowledge that it can also reawaken unresolved problems or traumatic memories. However, while such memories can at first appear harmful, reminiscence involves searching for symbolic meaning in memories, enabling the continual development of the concept of the self (Gibson, 2011). Confronting both positive and negative memories can result in positive outcomes. Exploring unresolved issues from the past can enable individuals to achieve closure; this can occur at any point throughout the lifespan, not just in later life.

Rationale for conducting research using reminiscences

More and more individuals are interested in sharing, writing or recording their life stories and autobiographies. People are living longer, and the sharing of reminiscences is becoming a popular cultural past time, both privately and with others. Not only is there a personal interest in the memories being shared, but also an academic and historical interest in the information being documented. Furthermore, researchers are overwhelmed by the different contributions and uses of reminiscence, including its health benefits and the advantages it can bring in terms of the psychological well-being of those who engage in the process (Gibson, 2011).

According to Birren and Svensson (2013), this sudden surge of interest in reminiscence is due to the impersonal lives we lead in 21st century society. Although there is efficiency in the form of technological advancement and a wealth

of information is available on mobile devices at the touch of a button, many people are no longer engaging in personal relationships and communicating as they used to (Birren and Svensson, 2013). Another growing trend is that older generations are increasingly more active during their retirement years and have developed an interest in documenting their family history or personal life stories as a legacy for their families and for future generations. Reminiscence can serve many purposes and have a positive impact on those who engage in the process (Webster et al., 2010). Sharing and listening to life stories can establish and maintain relationships, and it can encourage shared empathy by allowing individuals to relate to the life experiences of others. Reminiscence can also strengthen families: research shows that the children of parents and grandparents who regularly reminisce and share their life stories are more emotionally stable (Fivush, 2011). Of course, it is important to understand that reminiscing about the past can also uncover sad or negative experiences such as feelings of guilt or remorse. However, according to Birren and Svensson (2013, p.4), 'Even though there may be the possibility for negative outcomes when writing and sharing one's life story… the benefits far outweigh the potential risks for the general population'.

In turn, due to a vast increase in interest, there is also an increase in the research being conducted on reminiscence and life review. Reminiscences are often about experiences of societal change, such as war or economic depressions, or about adventures and life journeys. Such memories enable researchers to comprehend human behaviour and the ways in which individuals experience the world around them; and of course sharing such memories can have a direct impact on the individual recalling the experiences. Reminiscence is something that is interpreted; a person's sense of self and identity can have an impact on the way they perceive themselves and in turn affect their behaviour.

It is an exciting time for reminiscence research because the fields of oral history, reminiscence work; life review and autobiographical memory are continuing to grow. Society is changing and particularly, the ways in which we communicate are changing. However, it is essential that as a result of such change we do not forgot the importance of human communication and the valuable effects it has on our

everyday lives physically, socially and psychologically. One way this can be achieved is by researchers actively engaging others in reminiscence, individually, in groups or in the wider community through community engagement projects. 'The new reminiscence era we find ourselves in bears testimony to the importance of using our shared life stories to maintain our shared sense of values, life, and goals for the future' (Birren and Svensson, 2013, p.6).

The field of research: why Merseyside?

Liverpool has a distinct culture that has developed over centuries (Lees, 2011). The people of Liverpool and the surrounding area of Merseyside, often have similar traits, including strength, stubbornness, at times rebelliousness, and a dry, sarcastic and sometimes cutting sense of humour (Murden, 2006). Murden (2006, p.485) wrote about Liverpool from the post-war period, and described its people overcoming hardship and austerity '...while the spirit of its people remained unquenchable'. Growing up in post-war Merseyside would have shaped many identities through community socialisation and coping with austerity both during and after the Second World War. This is an important point, because childhood social experiences directly impact on individual identity and personality. The characteristics and personality of the sample population played a significant role in the responses to this study, including the way in which the individuals perceived their childhood experiences and the way in which they constructed and shared them with the researcher. Not only does this research explore childhood: it explores a childhood with multifaceted constructs. It was a time of institutionalisation with set norms, values and expectations, a time when the stiff upper lip was prevalent, a time of discipline and respect, yet by contrast a time of widespread juvenile delinquency, of freedom and of boundless street life. Children roamed the cobbled streets of Liverpool, playing on old bombed sites, re-enacting scenes of the war; they knew their neighbours names; they shared what they had, but did not dwell on what they did not have; they got by with humour and hoped for a brighter future (Pressley, 1999). Exploring the intricacies of unique Merseyside childhoods in time gone by interests me, as I grew up on Merseyside myself. I feel that this place is my home and it triggers a particular fondness for its

people, so I take great pleasure in being able to give ordinary people from Merseyside a voice and allowing them to tell their stories as they experienced them. That itself gives me great pride.

Overview of the study

This thesis presents an OH and RW project that explores ten individuals' childhood memories of post-war Merseyside in the United Kingdom. The individuals were between 60 and 70 years of age – five males and five females – and experienced childhood on Merseyside (see Appendix H 'Participant Profiles'). The study provides insight into the social conditions of Merseyside in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. When analysing the first set of findings, it became evident that a significant number of the responses directly linked to the impact of reminiscing, including emotion, nostalgia, and how memories shape identity. The researcher believed that ignoring these findings would exclude important information from the research, so a second phase of interviews was conducted using an RW approach to enable more reflective responses to be captured. A memory tree model (MTM) was created to support the reminiscence process and it proved to be an effective tool for capturing, analysing and preserving reminiscences, childhood experiences and living memories.

The research evolved, taking a new line of inquiry and exploring the impact of reminiscence on individuals; it was approached flexibly, affording the researcher the opportunity to gather significant and detailed findings. The researcher views the research process as a journey, so embraced changes and developments and allowed the research to progress spontaneously. O'Leary (2008) used the term 'research journey' to describe a researcher's approach to the research process. However, Brew (2001) described research as having a 'domino effect', whereby one idea naturally leads to another. This research began with an OH approach and later incorporated elements of RW to accommodate its shift in focus. The research took many different turns during both the data collection and dissemination stages; due to the complex nature of the project, and for the purposes of clarity, the thesis is written methodically rather than chronologically to illustrate the project

in its entirety. This avoids confusion and demonstrates how different aspects of the project link together.

Finally, the researcher was given the opportunity to hold an exhibition at the Museum of Liverpool Life (MLL), which enabled the findings to be shared with the public. This exhibition, which became a two-day interactive event, disseminated the findings in a public forum and encouraged intergenerational and multi-cultural memory sharing. It triggered an awareness of the importance of sharing memories of the past, both for preserving social heritage and for passing on oral histories to future generations.

Aims and objectives

This thesis does not provide hard, factual historical data, but rather aims to give insight into post-war childhood, as experienced on Merseyside.

Aims:
- To explore the social conditions of childhood on post-war Merseyside.
- To explore the impact of the reminiscence process on the participants by creating and implementing a reflective tool.

Objectives:
- To conduct one-to-one OH interviews with individuals aged between 60 and 70 about their childhood memories, using an aide memoire as a trigger tool.
- To conduct revisiting interviews with the same participants using a memory tree model (MTM) developed from the outcomes of a heuristic approach to reminiscence (Webster et al., 2010).
- To capture and present childhood memories by linking them to literature about the social trends and conditions of childhood on post-war Merseyside as a way of organising emergent themes and cultural constructions of life experiences.

- To consider the reminiscence process and the impact it has on the participants.
- To disseminate the research findings in a public forum whilst preserving memories for future generations.

The research process is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, figure 1 provides an overview.

Figure 1: Research Process

Preliminary
Rapport
Building

> **Conversations in the community**
> The researcher went out into community centres across Merseyside and spoke about the study. Many volunteers were recruited at this stage. This also initiated snowball (word of mouth) sampling.

> **Pre-interview conversations**
> The researcher spoke to all of the participants either via telephone or face-to-face prior to conducting interviews.

Phase
One

> **Oral history interviews**
> The researcher conducted audio-recorded oral history interviews with ten participants. An aide memoire was used as a tool to guide the participants through four themes: family, education, society and childhood.

> **Oral history interviews**
> - Transcribed/analysed,
> - Abundance of reflective reminiscence work themes emerged.

Phase
Two

> **Reminiscence work interviews**
> - Audio-recorded revisiting (reminiscence work) interviews with the same participants six months later,
> - Created a memory tree model (MTM) as a tool to support the reminiscence process,
> - Asked a series of seven reflective questions,
> - Analysed the findings (using NVivo) in relation to the outcomes of the Heuristic Model of Reminiscence (Webster et al., 2011).

Dissemination

> **Dissemination**
> - A sequence of three memoirs covering emergent themes from the oral history interviews,
> - Two reflective essay chapters looking at the impact of reminiscence,
> - Disseminating research in a public forum: Exhibition/Event at the Museum of Liverpool Life (MLL),
> - Bringing it back to the community of Merseyside,
> - Publication/Conference.

The research lies within a qualitative paradigm that employs both OH and RW methods, because combining the two approaches gave the researcher the resources to explore the socio-historical and psychological content of the interviews and provide comprehensive, holistic analyses. It enabled the researcher to analyse the research from alternative perspectives, from different disciplines and according to unanticipated, emergent themes.

Two phases of interviews were conducted. The first interviews were analysed thematically and linked to social trends portrayed in the social-history literature. The second interviews were analysed using categories stated in the Heuristic Model of Reminiscence (HMR) (see figure 3), from which a variety of themes emerged. NVivo (qualitative data analysis software) was employed as an aid to organise the transcripts, enabling the researcher to make comparisons between the interviews. This thesis does not generalise about post-war childhood, but instead captures unique first-hand experiences. The research provided the participants with the opportunity to share memories of their childhood and reflect on how remembering the past made them feel. Recalling memories is not a cold, emotionless process; thus, incorporating this important dimension means that the study has succeeded in capturing 'authentic human memories' (Longman, 2012, p.5), rather than being simply a list of extracts.

Philosophical perspective

Although the researcher did not set out to conduct research with any preconceived values from any particular philosophical or theoretical stance, she drew on the underpinning values of phenomenology. Phenomenology is the study of human lived experience (Streubert and Carpenter, 2003). It is this lived experience that gives insight into how reality is for each individual. This study focused on different aspects of this experience. Firstly, it explored living memories of childhood, a period of time in one's life that is perceived, interpreted and conveyed by the individual. This gave insight into a particular lived experience in a person's past based on the perceived reality of the person recalling it. Secondly, the study explored the lived experience of recalling the memory of the experience, and how

reliving the memory made the person feel. This links with the philosophy of phenomenology, which explores a particular phenomenon or experience by considering it from the perspective of those who experienced it. How the person perceives and makes sense of the world around them is the key to this process. Prior to conducting the research, the researcher discovered Webster et al.'s (2010) conceptual framework, which used a heuristic approach to reminiscence. The researcher decided to adopt an approach that would be based on using lived experience and conceptual themes to explore the research findings. Such a heuristic approach has therefore framed the collection and analysis of the second (RW) phase of the results. A heuristic approach is ideal for this kind of research because it is based on the idea of exploring or problem solving by immersing oneself in an experience. The participants were able to do this by reflecting on their own childhood experiences. Additionally, this flexible approach allowed the researcher to use her own intuition and initiative while following best practice throughout the research process. The research afforded insight into the participants' experience of the reminiscence process while enabling the researcher to be reflexive and interpretive in analysis by drawing on a variety of interdisciplinary research to explore the findings.

Life-span perspective

In previous years, reminiscence research was conducted from a developmental stage theory perspective (Erikson, 1963; Webster, 1999). Reminiscence and life review were perceived as a natural progression that occurred psychologically in later life. Researchers refuted this and instead argued that reminiscence and life-review should be embedded in a life-span perspective (Webster and Cappeliez, 1993; Webster, 1999).

The life-span perspective views reminiscence as something that develops throughout the life-course and which is shaped by many influences, including environmental factors (Baltes, 1987). Life-span psychology focuses on development as a continual process throughout the life-course that is influenced by behavioural, cognitive, humanistic, contextual and evolutionary factors, all of

which also influence reminiscence (Webster, et al., 2010). Webster et al.'s (2010) use of a heuristic approach to RW is based in the field of life-span psychology. The heuristic model outcomes have been used to categorise the research findings and to identify and discuss the role of triggers, modes, contexts, moderators, functions and outcomes (Webster et al., 2010). Placing reminiscence research within a life-span perspective has enabled researchers to study reminiscence and life review across all ages and consider the influence of socio-cultural factors on the reminiscence process.

Interdisciplinary research

The roots of OH and RW are interdisciplinary (Bornat, 2001). This research has therefore been designed so that it can integrate a multi-method approach to both data collection and analysis. Different disciplines have been brought together to achieve broad insight into childhood memories and the impact of the reminiscence process. Different disciplinary orientations strengthen research at different stages of the process and all integrated successfully, provides a holistic, in-depth, study.

The study employed both OH and RW approaches, although these approaches have different ways of conducting interviews and different foci for analysis. In OH the researcher focuses primarily on collecting socio-historical representations of a particular period or circumstance from the past, whereas RW is more concerned with reflection and the role of the researcher in that process. All of these aspects are relevant and important to this study, so the researcher has adopted both approaches. Some academics may disagree with employing multiple methods for data collection, particularly when the methods are rooted in different disciplines. However, the researcher contended that important findings would have been excluded by only using one approach, and this would have gone against the wishes of the participants (n=10), who wanted their reflective contributions to be included. While the researcher intended to avoid influencing the participants' responses, rapport building played a significant role in this research, as did ensuring the well-being of those who took part.

A mixed methods approach had several advantages when conducting research with reminiscences. Firstly, an OH approach enabled the researcher to gather testimonies and draw inferences, which were later shared with the participants, from them. Secondly, the RW approach afforded her the opportunity to explore the impact of reminiscing on the participants and to refine a tool for supporting the participants during this process.

Using a flexible, multi-method approach gave the findings a depth and richness in which the researcher is located because all the responses were considered, not excluded. The voices of the participants were heard, as was that of the researcher through her interpretation of the findings.

When analysing data, it is common for disciplines to overlap (Thompson, 2006). In order to gain appropriate insight into different aspects of the findings, the researcher needed to draw on different disciplinary perspectives. According to Hadorn et al. (2008), the fragmentation of disciplines in research is inessential, and it is impossible to compartmentalise all areas of research without a degree of overlap. Interdisciplinary research enriches a study on multiple levels. Hadorn et al. (2008, p.4) noted that: 'Basic research is built on an idealisation of the multitude of phenomena and relationships'.

This research has taken a 'relational approach' to the study of the organisation of society through the exploration of generally relatable social substance (see Donati, 2011): 'The nature of "social facts" is a relational matter' (Donati, 2011, p.1).

Disciplines that relate to this study include OH, RW, history, social studies, identity studies, sociology, psychology and gerontology, all of which interlink and shape the interpretations of the memories captured. The heuristic framework has also helped to shape this process by enabling the researcher to explore different meanings in the participants' responses. Interdisciplinary research has flexible boundaries, enabling themes to emerge rather than trying to find specific answers. However, it is important to acknowledge that the intricacies of interdisciplinary research can mean that, at times, focus can be lost. According to McDowell (2002,

p.15), 'Historians employ generalisations to assist our understanding of specific past events, whereas social scientists use them to explain mainly current events and offer reliable indicators about future events'. Considering both social and historical elements of the research enabled the researcher to make links between the two. For example, social scientists cannot solely focus on contemporary social structures without first considering the historical influences on those social structures (McDowell, 2002).

Although historical facts cannot be extracted from OH and RW findings, this form of research does represent the ways in which historical time was experienced. Yow's work in the 1980s changed oral historians' approach to research. Yow (2005, p.55) acknowledged the interdisciplinarity of working with memories, which she referred to as 'the trickle-over effect'. Working with memories involves aspects of a range of disciplines, including education, psychology, cultural studies, sociology, life review and interdisciplinary work, which enables a researcher to explore the relationship between memory, experience, narrative and identity (Yow, 2005). It is important for researchers to keep in mind that the field of interdisciplinary research is ever-changing, particularly in research using memory (Ritchie, 2003). Researchers in this field are constantly adding to the body of knowledge through their findings and their approaches to research. Oral historians have begun considering the impact of the experience of reminiscence interviews, such as that of rapport building between the interviewer and the interviewee. Oral historians are influenced by reminiscence work, which highlights the therapeutic elements of the reminiscence process. These influences directly influenced the researcher's decision to adopt an interdisciplinary approach.

Being open to interdisciplinary research enables researchers to develop new techniques and perspectives. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) maintained that a multi-method approach to qualitative research enables researchers to study and interpret phenomena in their natural setting and decipher what meaning they have to people. New combinations of methods are continually emerging, with multi-method approaches becoming popular in qualitative research.

Overview

Reading a variety of literature about the history of childhood prompted the researcher's interest in childhood in previous eras. The literature on this topic explores the ways in which childhood experiences have changed over time. Of course, many factors influence childhood experiences, so this chapter provides only a brief overview of the changing concept of childhood from the earliest representations of the 'child'.

A comprehension of the changing concept of childhood as a social 'artefact' was fundamental to the subsequent collection of childhood memories, and it was important to understand how childhood has evolved, including the different representations of childhood through history. Researchers into historical childhoods cannot avoid exploring the 'history of childhood' because it is an essential scholarly foundation that allows them to comprehend fully the origins of childhood and the different social representations of being a child in different contexts within time and space.

Childhood has not always existed – 'childhood is an artefact of modernity'.

Authors continue to be fascinated by the concept of childhood and how it changes over time (Bellingham, 1988; Mills and Mills, 2000; Rhodes, 2000a; Rhodes, 2000b; Frost, 2010). Some believe that childhood is only a contemporary concept and consider it to be an 'artefact of modernity' (Clarke, 2002).

Cunningham (2006) explained that, in British society, childhood has not always been acknowledged as a concept or even been a particularly pleasant experience, and highlighted the diverse changes over time. Some authors believe that, until the modern period, childhood did not exist as a concept or as a perceived stage of development (Cunningham, 2006). Ideas about the concept of childhood and

debates about the nature of child development, which can be referred to as 'inventions of childhood', are subject to continuous debate (Cunningham, 2006). Children have not always received comfort, love or protection (Heywood, 2001). De Mause (1974, p.1) poignantly stated that: 'The history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken'. The way people perceive childhood has changed throughout history and will continue to change over time.

Philippe Ariès – The invention of childhood

The history of childhood can be said to begin with the work of the French historian Philippe Ariès, which debated the invention of childhood, and depicted the first historicised representations of the social concept of the child. Ariès's *Centuries of Childhood* (1960) emerged during the development of social history as a research approach and depicted children's powerless role within society.

Ariès argued that childhood did not exist in medieval society, either as a separate phase of life or as a social construct; he claimed that, although there was an acknowledgement that younger family members were not as capable as their older relations, they were still required to be socially involved in the same manner as their parents. Ariès noted that there was a lack of adult comprehension that children may indeed require a different social experience at different stages of their childhood. He documented that, before the 17th century, society regarded children as little adults, although their role in the family changed in different social strata (Blakemore, 2005). Children aged seven years were deemed ready to lead an adult life in society (Ariès, 1960). By contrast, modern society would perceive a seven-year-old to be in a transition stage between infancy and late childhood, and the child to still be vulnerable and developing (Schaffer, 2009).

Ariès (1960, p.125) claimed that: 'In medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist'. He based his claim on the research of art and literature and believed that children where portrayed as mini-adults in early medieval art (often religious); he also explored writings about childhood innocence and the history of games. Most controversially, Ariès, along with other historians, claimed that children held little

or no emotional significance to their parents at that time. For example, he claimed that parents would not be emotionally affected by the loss of an infant because this was a common occurrence due to poor health. Ariès argued that the seventeenth century was when the modern concept of childhood emerged; again, he based this claim on artwork that depicted children engaging in everyday situations or infant death, which he contrasted with the religious images of the Middle Ages. Ariès believed that this evidenced a greater emotional attachment to children in the portrayals of loss and bereavement that became common; he believed that, from this point forward, children become of central importance to family life and that they were recognised as vulnerable and in need of being cherished and protected. This implies that such emotions were not recognised prior to 1600 and that the seventeenth century paved the way for the modern day concept of childhood.

According to Ariès (1960) a critical aspect of this development was schooling, particularly of male children, which was not dependent on social class. Schooling provided a set period of time between infancy and adulthood and redefined the idea of childhood. It is important to acknowledge that Ariès's work is based on ideas rather than factual evidence and that it was heavily involved in the creation of a history of childhood and of the changing concept of childhood based on child rearing and social behaviour. Ariès's work was particularly influential in terms of theoretical developments, including the family institution progressing towards being conceived as a *unit* in which all of its members had meaning and value, leading to the idea that children require love and protection.

Wilson (1980) criticised Ariès for only using evidence based on the upper classes and thus giving a false and misguided representation of childhood. Ariès use of art as representative of childhood would have been unreliable because artistic works were not necessarily representative of truth, but rather of religious symbolism or idealised middle class childhood. As a result of such criticisms, many historians refute the idea that childhood did not exist before the seventeenth century.

The French author De Mause (1976) researched early historical representations of children being abandoned or killed, which he argued reflected a flippant attitude

towards the value of children. In medieval times, the children of the upper classes were sent away to be cared for or given a wet nurse, representing an emotional distancing between mothers and their children. Stone (1977) noted that, even in the seventeenth century, families remained emotionally distant from their children. Indeed, puritans even viewed children as sinful, and insisted that they not be encouraged in any way.

With industrialisation and a growth in the middle classes there was an emphasis on individualism of which children were at the centre. The values of individualism then filtered through from the middle to the lower classes (Stone, 1977). Although each of these historians differs somewhat in their chronology of events, they agree that the central changes to childhood that occurred in modernity were due to changes in the way people *felt* about children, particularly their emotional involvement and the value they placed on children. This brings us to the child-centred family of the twentieth century, which was geared towards safeguarding children: the literature suggests that such a family was non-existent in the preceding centuries.

Although many researchers agreed with Ariès's ideas about childhood, they have also been subject to numerous criticisms. Many historians have attempted to prove that in fact childhood did exist as a concept during medieval times. Pollock (1983) rejected Ariès's claim that childhood did not exist before the seventeenth century and particularly his notion that childhood is only a product of modernity. Pollock criticised the methodologies and conclusions of Ariès, De Mause and Stone. She argued that they had simply summarised some ideas about feelings and the existence or non-existence of emotional attachment. Pollock suggested that research should instead be conducted into the actual relationships within families, between parents and their children. Such relationships could be explored via diaries or autobiographies from between 1500 and 1700. Pollock (1983) studied such documental evidence herself and evidenced grief due to the death of a child. Pollock's work, based on actual, first-hand accounts rather than pictorial, idealised artwork or religious symbolism, showed that there was some similarity in the meaning of the concept of childhood between then and now. It is important to

acknowledge, however, that such diaries and autobiographical documents are more likely to be representative of only the upper and middle classes, because they were the only groups with sufficient levels of literacy to produce written records.

Other critics have refuted the view that there was less emotional attachment in medieval times due to the higher rates of infant mortality. It is evident from Pollock's research that there were feelings of grief experienced by parents, as they expressed in their personal diaries. Many at that time may have believed that their loss was God's will and that it was the child's destiny, but this was not enough to exempt them from feelings of bereavement.

Middle-class families: The child-centred family

The concept of children and their role within the family changed significantly between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to Clarke (2002), this is partly due to the spread of middle-class ideologies, including that of the male patriarch, whose role was to take care of the family and to be responsible for the upbringing of their children, which was of paramount importance – in fact, children were viewed as the primary purpose of the family institution. Children were viewed as needing care, love and protection. Bellingham (1988) highlighted how childhood came into focus as a significant, emergent stage of life, comprehending the necessity of showing children love and protection, which had not seemed important before. In the words of a Sheffield campaigner against child exploitation during the 1830s:

> They are, of all human beings, the most lovely, the most engaging, the most of all others claiming protection, comfort, and love. They are CHILDREN. (quoted in Cunningham, 1991, p.64)

Children would be educated by their father at home, with a central focus on religion and instilling good behaviour and values; this would include regular punishment (usually physical) to maintain consistent discipline (Clarke, 2002).

Children were viewed as sinful creatures who needed their spirits tamed so that they could become good Christians. There was an emphasis on the importance of education, particularly in the eighteenth century, and the 'enlightenment view', in which the child was perceived as 'naturally innocent' and in need of being nurtured into becoming a good person (Clarke, 2002), became popular. Rousseau's *Emile* (1758) discussed a child's need for education, the purpose of which was to aid a boy in flourishing through his natural curiosity.

This child-centred concept became popular with the rise of Romanticism, which viewed children as 'pure' and 'natural' beings. Artwork of this era portrayed the child as innocent (Porter, 1990, p.247). Again, this was largely typical of the new middle classes and aristocracy. In reality, most of Britain's children were living a life of hard labour, exploitation and poverty. Evidently, the representations of these ideologies in art and literature were contrary to the lived reality of childhood at the time. However, this view of childhood innocence, purity and vulnerability triggered the nineteenth century pursuit to save children from exploitation and child labour.

Nineteenth-century childhood: Social policy and child protection

Although the nineteenth century saw the emergence of the child-centred ideology amongst the middle classes, in reality industrialisation saw an increase in child labour. However, the increase in factory work placed a clear divide between work and family life: children would travel to their workplace and work shifts of up to 14 hours. Children were used as cheap labour and this was encouraged by their families, because they proved to be a major contributor to the family financial income. The reality of child labour, as a result of industrialisation, was in stark contrast to the ideology of childhood being portrayed by the middle classes. This triggered the start of a campaign to eradicate child labour, leading to legislation such as the Factory Acts, which stipulated lower working hours and age restrictions.

In society, children were now being viewed as in need of protection (Cunningham, 1991), and thus the state took responsibility by intervening: the initiation of various charitable movements in the nineteenth century paved the way for the twentieth-century welfare state. Although there was still widespread poverty and exploitation in the form of prostitution and in some cases child abandonment, the importance of childhood was widely emphasised through the enforcement of compulsory state education. Britain was behind many other countries in Europe, such as Germany, which had already enforced compulsory education. According to Hendrick (1997), compulsory education and the illegality of child employment succeeded in eradicating child labour in the UK. Although many children still endured extreme poverty and poor health, this ideology, with its focus on the child, was a step in the right direction, leading to the twentieth century becoming known as 'the century of the child' (James and Prout, 1999, p.1).

'The century of the child': twentieth-century Britain

According to James and Prout (1999, p.1): 'The twentieth century is said to be the "century of the child" and perhaps at no other time have children been so highly profiled'. Childhood was acknowledged as a significant stage of life (James and Prout, 1999; Corsaro, 2005) and indeed as an intricate developmental stage with substantial impacts on later life (Lindon, 2010; Allingham, 2011; Smith et al., 2011).

The century saw a decline in the average number of children per family, but also a decline in infant mortality. These developments meant that more time could be devoted to children. Compulsory education drastically changed both family structure and priorities. Children went from being a financial contributor to quite the opposite, because children required many resources to be cared for properly (Corsaro, 2005). Instead of financial returns, children would be cared for in exchange for affection, love and pride.

Initially, schooling created a rather confused status for children: they were given a certain level of responsibility and independence, but were still in need of guidance

and protection. The twentieth century saw the state taking responsibility for children, including for their education, health and welfare. As a result, parents were constantly given advice on child rearing practice, including on the importance of routine. According to Hardyment (1983), Benjamin Spock's advice was that caring for children was a skill to be developed and learned, not a natural instinct.

Conclusion

Although Ariès was criticised for his views on the invention of childhood, it is evident, based on middle-class ideologies, that the widespread concept of childhood is very much a modern phenomenon that has resulted from the child-centred family and state intervention in the form of compulsory education, welfare institutions, policies and legislation. This idealised concept of childhood did not mean that children would not live in poverty or endure exploitation or child abuse. However, the value of children was now acknowledged, and protection systems were now in place to fight against such maltreatment of children in an attempt to protect them. It is this concept and value system which represents the social construct of childhood in contemporary Britain.

The development of the social sciences has broadened our understanding of the changing concept of childhood, and over the last century interest in the concept has increased. This research is concerned with presenting a repertoire of childhood experiences and providing broad insights into the complexity of those experiences as a reality for the individual and as an intricate social phenomenon (Rhodes, 2000a). In the light of this, one must consider the viewpoint of James and Prout (1997, p.26): '...different discursive practices produce different childhoods, each and all of which are "real" within their own regime of truth'. Therefore, childhood experiences are interpreted by those who experienced them first-hand and then constructed and shared within the individual's parameters of reality. In turn, this gives a clear representation of childhood in which the individual and the listener attach their own meaning. The meaning of childhood therefore changes across time and space.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH PART TWO:
FROM WAR TO POST-WAR, GROWING UP ON MERSEYSIDE

Overview

Before embarking on this study, the researcher reviewed the literature about childhood experiences of the war and post-war years to gain some knowledge before talking to members of the community. Exploring this literature enabled the researcher to envisage the impact of the war and the austerity years that followed and provided insight into the social conditions of a Merseyside childhood at that time.

The war years: Merseyside and the May Blitz

The nation listened to Neville Chamberlain announce on the radio that Britain was at war with Germany and then endured the realisation that its husbands, sons, and brothers would be called up to fight. Britain was at war with Germany from 1939-1945. At that time Liverpool was a prime target because it had become a lifeline for Britain through its trade in vital food produce, fuel, and war materials (Hughes, 1993). The Luftwaffe's plan was to devastate and destroy London and Liverpool, two of Britain's greatest ports in order to 'pave the way for an invasion' (Lees, 2011, p.124). Liverpool and surrounding Merseyside therefore endured a string of devastating nightly air raid attacks, which became known as the May Blitz.

> 'The kisses on your window won't help you'
> Lord Haw-Haw, addressing the people of Bootle 1941 (Jones, 2011, p.1).

This quote from 'Lord Haw-Haw'[3] in 1941 is a stark reminder of the threat and fear of war for the people of Liverpool. The 'kisses' refer to the criss-crossed tape

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[3] 'Lord Haw-Haw' was the nickname of the announcer on the English-speaking propaganda radio programme *Germany Calling*, which was broadcast by Nazi German radio to audiences in Great Britain.

that people stuck to their windows to prevent shards of glass flying during bomb attacks.

> Between July 1940 and January 1942, German bombers made 68 air raids on Liverpool, in which 3,966 people died and the city was flattened. By far the greatest damage was done over eight nights, from 1st to 8th May 1941; the May Blitz was the most savage and sustained attack of the war so far, and Liverpool's anti-aircraft guns were poor defence against the Luftwaffe's bombers. In those eight nights alone nearly 2,000 died, over 1,000 were badly injured, and more than 75,000 were made homeless. On 14th May a mass funeral was held at Anfield cemetery, at which 1,000 people were buried in a common grave (McIntyre-Brown, 2001, p.127).

This passage illustrates the mass devastation caused to Liverpool by German bombers during the May Blitz. During this week-long raid, German war planes dropped 870 tonnes of high explosive bombs and over 112,000 incendiary bombs, which started fires that spread throughout Merseyside (Tulloch, 2008). Britain had faced the threat of gas warfare during the First World War, but Churchill warned that incendiary bombs were the more dangerous form of air attack (Summers, 2010). In an ironic twist of fate, it was discovered in the aftermath of the bombing in January 1942 that 102 Upper Stanhope Street in Toxteth, Liverpool, the residence of Adolf Hitler's half-brother, Alois Hitler Jr and birthplace of his nephew, William Patrick Hitler, had been destroyed (Unger, 2011).

The docks as well as the city suffered mass destruction. In 1941 the Pier Head offices and Harbour Board were bombed. The Brocklebank Line's *Malakand*, which was moored in Huskisson Dock, and contained a cargo of explosives, caught fire and consequently exploded, doing immeasurable damage to the dock (Collard, 2013). The head office of the Battle of Atlantic, who were responsible for coordinating action against the U-boat threat to convoys through the Western Approaches, was based in Liverpool city centre (Collard, 2013). According to

Collard (2013, p.6): 'During the war a total of ninety-one ships were sunk by bombing in the port, 1,285 convoys arrived, 75 million tons of cargo and approximately 4 ¾ million troops passed through.' Even after enduring mass devastation, the port managed to rebuild both its physical infrastructure and its workforce, and continued its role handling large port-trade for the country at such a vital time (Hughes, 1993). The literature illustrated the circumstances endured by the people of Merseyside during the war years. Authors have acknowledged the emotional encounters of the men, women, and children who experienced the nightly ordeals and trauma of bombing and witnessed the destruction of the communities around them (Smith, 2008; Russell, 2009; Longman, 2012).

> Life continued; the city may have been flattened, but the people weren't. Although the trams couldn't run and the telephones were out of action, Liverpudlians kept on with their 'normal' life as best they could. Union Jacks fluttered from windows that survived the bombs. When the Corn Exchange was hit, traders did business in the street, as their forebears did centuries before. The ferries kept sailing back and forth across the river, theatres and cinemas stayed open for packed houses. There were desperate stories of whole families killed and children orphaned. People who survived the loss of their homes were left with nothing but the clothes they stood up in (McIntyre-Brown, 2001, p.127).

McIntyre-Brown presented a clear description of the aftermath of the attack. Faced with the mass devastation of the war, the people of Liverpool 'simply dusted themselves down and started all over again' (Edwards, 2012, p.5). Following the war, '...it is testimony to the courage and resilience of the people that very few of them thought of not going to work or giving in. Liverpudlians just got on with it' (Tulloch, 2008, p.120). However, the morale of the population of the north-west was dwindling. Every air raid attack on London was reported via the radio, but, because Liverpool was such a vital port, it was decided that attacks on Liverpool would remain secret for the sake of National Security. This in turn 'had a

psychological effect of making Liverpudlians feel they were of secondary significance to the nation' (Lees, 2011, p.124).

The Liverpool Women's History Group (LWHG) (2011) provided insight into the experiences of childhood during the war years. They remembered having Mickey Mouse gas masks, which were designed for very young children, and other gas masks that were carried in boxes on a piece of string. 'Young women used to sew or crochet covers for their masks to match their outfits' (LWHG, 2011, p.17). LWHG recalled regular nightly blackouts to make it difficult for German bombers to see their houses. In the morning there would be jagged pieces of shrapnel from exploded bombs and shells from anti-aircraft guns scattered everywhere. Children would collect these pieces and exchange them, trying to get the "best piece". Windows were criss-crossed to stop glass shards flying and metal tables were put in homes for the elderly or disabled who could not make it to a shelter in order to provide them with some form of protection during the air raids (LWHG, 2011). Some children were evacuated to the safety of the countryside, where, in reality, not all could have been looked after properly. The German bombing subsided and the evacuated children returned home after a few months, but it resumed, and was much worse the second time. The precautions that had initially been put in place were thus a necessity (LWHG, 2011).

Many children were evacuated from the city of Liverpool to rural Cheshire and North Wales. Evacuation became a popular "scene setter" for many novels (Mann, 2006; Frisby, 2010) and nostalgic memory compilations representative of the time (Inward, 2007; Hobbs, 2009). Evacuation experiences have also been documented as OH work (Wicks, 1989; Summers, 2010). During WW2, it is estimated that more than three million British children were affected by evacuation (Wicks, 1989). According to Summers (2010), evacuation was a surreal and stressful experience: families were faced with the prospect of sending their children away to the safety of the countryside, even though many of the children would have to stay with strangers.

Lodge (2007) edited an assortment of recollections of Liverpool evacuees, portraying their experiences from autobiographical perspectives. Autobiographical literature and memoirs written about the experiences and memories of evacuees often adopt a creative and somewhat fairy tale persona (Frisby, 2010). However, it was far from an idyllic time, and was indeed quite traumatic time for many. Agnew and Fox (2001) wrote of the powerlessness of children during the WW2 years. Children had to face the perils of parental separation or endure the risks of war life in bombed cities. Memories of childhood from this era are often vague war ridden recollections that are confused with the austerity years that followed (Westall, 1995). The spirit that stems from many Merseyside memories is of particular interest. Russell (2009) expressed that Merseysiders refused to give up during the most intense and extensive bombing spree of the May Blitz from 1-7 May 1941. The people of Merseyside also had to endure the hardship of the austerity years that followed the war. LWHG (2011, p.17) recalled: 'Poverty caused by mass unemployment, already meant us going without many things. We were not, however, prepared for all the other horror and sadness that war brings both physical and emotional'.

Post-war austerity

> You won't keep us down
> Old Liverpool Town.
> Not wars or destruction
> Or slums all around
> Like the Phoenix she'll rise
> Her People will shout.
> We'll be here for forever
> Or at least thereabouts
> (Edwards, 2012, p.5).

After the end of the war, Bessie Braddock was elected to Parliament as the Labour MP for Liverpool Exchange. In one of her early speeches she described Liverpool slums as 'bug-ridden, lice-ridden, rat-ridden, lousy hellholes' (Lees, 2011, p.123). Braddock was a very outspoken character and worked in Parliament for 25 years,

focusing on the eradication of poverty and bringing social justice to the working classes. She was disliked by many because she gave the other political parties a hard time, but she eventually earned respect for her consistent campaigning to improve child welfare and maternity care and tackle juvenile crime (Lees, 2011).

In the immediate post-war years, Liverpool council was unable to rebuild the heavily bombed city due to mass unemployment and recession. People had believed that the underpinning principles of the Co-operative Society would mean a better life for all. Loyal customers were members of the Co-op and would receive a small percentage back in the form of dividend. Families knew their personal Co-op 'divi' (dividend) numbers by heart. Lees (2011) explained that families would not have survived such hard times if it had not been for the quarterly dividend pay-out of one shilling and seven pence, which was a valuable life line for many.

Poverty had been exacerbated by the First World War, the interwar years, the Second World War, and the austerity that followed WW2 and was the ongoing state of society for decades. Reform began with the Beveridge Report of 1942, which, although it started to change the legislation, failed to abolish poverty. In 1948 the abolition of the poor laws was seen as a distinct turning point for post-war Britain. However, 'there was still much local variation and variation in treatment by types of client – a hierarchy of "deservingness"' (Glennerster, 2004, p.67).

Post-war years: A better future ahead

Donnelly (1999) described the heartfelt jubilation of the population as the war ended after years of destruction, deprivation, and death. The people of Britain hoped and anticipated a better future ahead. Communities celebrated with street parties, hung patriotic bunting, and had picnics, and children were central to these celebrations (Weightman, 1994). Children had become an important part of community life and were certainly at the core of the 1950s family (Blakemore, 2005). The concept of childhood was changing. Children were of paramount importance. For example, a working class mother from Bethnal Green during the early 1950s recalled: 'When I was a kid Dad always had the best of everything.

Now it's the children who get the best of it. If there's one pork chop left, the kiddy gets it' (Willmott and Young, 1957, p.28).

The child, became the *child in focus* (Merritt, 2008). Post-war society needed their anticipated dreams to come true in order to enable them to return to a balanced and happy life after the devastation of the war. On 11 December 1946, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was established to support and aid children affected by the war. This itself illustrates the shift in attitudes towards children, who were now valued as central to society. As Merritt (2008, p.193) highlighted: 'Children, freed from the necessity of work and the relentless concerns of war, spent their days in school and became more engaged with their contemporaries'.

Changes in perceptions of childhood led to changes in the socialisation of children for the present and future generations (Goodman, 2005). These changes were initiated by the influence of post-war circumstances, because children became central to the future of British society. Rogoff (2003) noted that childhood is a social construct that encapsulates experiences and interactions through societal integration.

Gender stereotyping was typical of the era, which had clearly demarcated roles and responsibilities for women. Summerfield (1998) maintained that the active role of young women during the war years disrupted the pre-war discourse of the daughter, initiating a sudden independence for women, but one that was at the disposal of the government. For example, many young women left the secure home environment to take up work for the war effort, which was encouraged by the government after men had left to fight in the war. According to Summerfield (1989, p.48), 'Cultural constructions of the parent daughter relationship in the Second World War, then, were adjuncts of the idea of patriotically disintegrating family'. Women experienced a taste of independent life, had a role in the workplace and had finances at their disposal. After the war ended, many women wanted to continue with this way of life, and social structures and expectations began to change, particularly within the family. A common acknowledgement that family identity changes structurally over time is recorded frequently throughout

literature on social history (Klein and White, 1996; Allan, 1999). Family systems can adapt to meet the required changes in lifestyle within the societal environment in which they are based. As Harper and Levin (2005, p.157) stated, the 'combination of falling fertility and increasing longevity is having an impact on family structures and resultant relationships, with the emergence of long vertical multigenerational families replacing the former laterally extended family forms'.

It can be argued that the 1940s was a turning-point that saw an overhaul in the structure of family life and society. One example of such change was the decline in birth rate as an increasing number of married women became actively employed and men were away fighting in the war (Addison and Jones, 2005). According to Summerfield (1998), there was an alteration in gender roles both in the workplace and at home. Women engaged in clerical work, worked in food manufacturers, and fewer women were working in domestic service in the years after the war. The government alleviated some domestic pressures by providing wartime nurseries, which meant that women could adopt some of the jobs otherwise carried out by men (Summerfield, 1998). This changed again after the war: there was an increase in birth rate and women were encouraged to become re-domesticated after men returned home from war (Heron, 1985).

Women's post-war lives

It is important to acknowledge that there is a vast amount of OH literature exploring women's experiences in post-war Britain, particularly in relation to employment and family life (Heron, 1985; Summerfield, 1989; Summerfield, 1998; Spencer, 2000). Some of the literature provided observational insight into women's lives through fictional accounts. Spencer (2000) identified a number of concepts that emerged in the popular fiction of the era, such as the idea that the husband is the breadwinner, the idea that women are responsible for housework, and the fact that there were an increasing number of women in employment.

So, although many women took up employment, after the war the government wanted people, particularly women, to return to societal norms, thus restoring the characteristics of accepted femininity. The novels explored by Spencer depict the female engaging in a wider, more expectant journey of 'self-fulfilment'. Spencer

(2000, pp.329-330) stated that the 'young heroines are bound by ideals of duty and caring as they forge their adult identities'. Myrdral and Klein (1956) explained how young women had to accept the prospect of taking on a 'dual role' of both employment and domesticity. Summerfield (1998) explored the discourse of the dual role of womanhood that emerged after the war. Summerfield pinpointed a gap in research with regard to 'girls' career novels' and provided an overview of the impact of employment on women in the 1950s. The novels portrayed clear representations of the generational role of the woman at home and in the workplace. The home was still very much seen as the women's domain, and it was the woman's duty to keep the house in good working order (Summerfield, 1998).

Women were encouraged to marry young and bear children quickly, regardless of their employment status (Summerfield, 1994). The introduction of the welfare state provided a large number of jobs in the "health" and "care" professions, and many of these employment opportunities were filled by women (Rosen, 2003). However, women's equality in the employment, both in terms of status and wages, was still lacking. Women saw employment as an opportunity for family improvement. Some authors believed that this marked the onset of familial and community fragmentation, and saw female employment as detrimental to child-rearing and family unity (Summerfield, 1994; Simonton, 2006). Family structure and family happiness were of central importance in post-war society. Females in particular were seen to be responsible for ensuring that their husband and children were well cared for and that the family was secure (Pressley, 1999).

In Britain during the late 1940s and early 1950s, most pre-school children would remain at home with their mother or another female family member (Pressley, 1999). Women would undergo a daily or even weekly set routine of household chores: Monday, washday; Tuesday, ironing; Wednesday, baking; Thursday, cleaning: Friday, gardening and shopping on a Saturday, for example. Sundays were reserved for additional cleaning and attending church (Pressley, 1999). Frequently children would be involved in household activities, and this was encouraged, particularly if the child was female (Spencer, 2000). At the beginning of the 1950s mod-cons such as televisions and refrigerators were unheard of

(Feeney, 2009). For those who could financially afford it, the fifties was a time of change for the stay-at-home wife: it saw the gradual introduction of modernisation in the form of washing machines, vacuum cleaners, and refrigerators (Seacombe, 1998). Most food items were kept in a pantry, a small room, often under the stairs, that was cooler than other parts of the house. Women of the house would shop daily for perishable items to ensure that they had fresh produce; this was the most affordable option (Seacombe, 1998).

Some women refused to embrace modernisation, favouring a washboard and mangle to wash clothing and household linen and hanging the washing outside on a line to dry (Harvey, 1993). Personal washing was kept to a minimum; it usually involved bathing in a tin bathtub next to a coal fire – to avoid getting a chill – once a week (Pressley, 1999). Children would be told to sit in front of the fire until their hair was dry, and often girls had rags tied in overnight to create ringlet curls (Pressley, 1999).

Once women had completed their household chores, including child care, they would socialise within their own community (Pressley, 1999). Female social life during the 1950s involved local gossip and visiting other females in the neighbourhood. Women would visit each other's homes, drink tea, and talk about their neighbours. Families would often choose to go for evening walks as a form of entertainment before television became commonplace (Pressley, 1999).

Many women had similar daily lives, so they shared the same experiences and could relate to each other in times of need. Women can still relate to each other's experiences in later life, as is exemplified by the Liverpool Women's History Group, a group of fourteen women aged between 50 and 90 who felt that women had been overlooked in some of the literature about the history of Liverpool. They regularly meet at the Liverpool Maritime Museum to conduct their reminiscence workshops. They have painted backdrops and use furniture - for example, a corner shop with criss-crossed windows, representing the war years – to set the scene for reminiscing. They explained that this enables the workshops to 'come to life' (LWHG, 2011, p.7). Children from schools across the UK, but predominantly from

Merseyside, have attended the workshops to learn more about the past. LWHG stated that 'we are teaching the children Social History in a fun way and bridging the gap between young and old' (LWHG, 2011, p.7). The children are encouraged to get involved, by pretending to be evacuees or by taking part in household chores that are representative of the era. They sing and use humour, although they sometimes cry too. The workshops enable children to gain 'insight into a different world' (LWHG, 2001, p.8). In addition, the LWHG provides the women with a sense of self-worth: 'We feel worthwhile and it has proved very therapeutic, far better than sitting at home feeling sorry for ourselves' (LWHG, 2011, p.8).

Family life

According to Pressley (1999), post-war families became more close-knit than ever before. Pre-school aged children remained at home with their mother or grandmother. Children would immerse themselves in a routine between free-play and the running of the household, and were often assigned days of the week on which to do specific chores such as baking, washing, cleaning, and the daily shopping trip. In contrast, Peplar (2002) has argued that the 1950s saw the decline of the family and increase in broken homes and more juvenile delinquency.

The government's development of the welfare state came into force to support families, particularly problem families, with the aim of changing social relations for the benefit of the working class (Peplar, 2002). Social capitalism that aimed to improve the efficiency of society was also a priority of the welfare state. Rosen (2003) explained that at this time there were immense pressures and expectations within society, while, at the same time, families were becoming more fragmented. Families had support from the welfare state, but some families still failed to meet the needs of their children. This became one of the main social problems of 1950s Britain. Social workers believed that they could deal with this problem through reform and the re-education of mothers; indeed, the rise in problem families in Liverpool initiated a scheme for the re-education of mothers, which intended to encourage mothers to be more responsible. Although the aims of the welfare state were to eradicate poverty and to meet the want and needs of society, particularly of children, poverty, poor housing, and irregular employment remained ongoing

problems for many families across Merseyside. For example, many families relied on the casual labour at the docks, which was never guaranteed from one week to the next.

The Second World War changed societal attitudes towards the lower classes. The term 'problem family' did not always have the same meaning for different people. Todd (2005) stated that the families who were considered problematic included working mothers and large families. The government's view was that problem families could be transformed into decent citizens through education. Mothers were encouraged to attend sessions to learn how to care for their children and families. As a direct result of the mass destruction during the war, many families needed help and experienced times of acute need. Social workers, however, believed that problem families were responsible for their own deprivation and that their hardship was caused by their psychological makeup (Todd, 2005).

In 1951, Rowntree published a study about poverty and the welfare state which claimed that the government had failed to eradicate poverty (Rowntree, 1951). Hardship and poverty was widespread across Britain. Many social workers believed that this was because of the psychological issues and lack of pro-activity of problem families, while the government believed that problem families were unable to adapt to the welfare state and full time employment. Although poverty was widespread, only a small number of families were labelled problem families across the class system; low income families, however, were of most concern because they required the most government funding to support them.

The government blamed mothers for low income households; it was recognised that the future of any nation was dependent on its children. One of the campaigns put in place to support children was the Family Allowances Act of 1946 (Pateman, 2006). The family allowance was paid if the family had more than two children and increased with the more dependent children a family supported. The allowance was put in place to support families as part of the government's plans for post-war reconstruction. As a result, large families were seen as a burden on tax paying society, and in 1952 the family allowance was frozen.

In the immediate post-war years, many children experienced hardship, insufficient food, and a lack of money and worldly goods. It was essential to boost the morale of communities and of society at large at that time in order to move forward positively towards a better future. Thus, it could be argued that better wages and more social support would have been more beneficial to many.

The local authorities introduced the School Milk Act of 1946, which stated that all children under the age of 18 should receive one-third of a pint of milk each day. Rickets was eradicated as a result of this free milk scheme. The Beveridge Report of 1942 enforced numerous social insurance schemes that were intended to abolish poverty in Britain; part of the post-war optimism was a widespread belief that this goal could be achieved. To do so, key changes had to be made, including the creation of a national health care system that was free for all, family allowances for child support, support for long term unemployment, and, 'for all those who slipped through this comprehensive "cradle to grave" cover, a new National Assistance Board that would provide a final safety net' (Glennerster, 2004, p.80). In 1948 the National Health Service was founded to provide a service that aimed to improve the health of society by providing a better standard of healthcare to everyone. Heron (1985) maintained that the end of the Second World War marked the start of an era which greatly shaped society, as we know it today and triggered a sense of general optimism based on the promise of a brighter future ahead (Heron, 1985). The seeds of change were planted in the post-war years, and the resources put into place in this period had a significant impact on the working classes and on the health and well-being of the people of Merseyside. Family allowances meant that families received '5 shillings a week for each child apart from the eldest' (Glennerster, 2004, p.80); they were paid directly to the mother to ensure that they were spent on the children. The rise of the Labour Party to government saw improvement for the working classes and for the well-being of children especially.

Child mortality dropped as a direct result of these changes. Better healthcare allowed children to learn, develop, and improve themselves within society. Family

allowances meant that children could be clothed and fed properly. Cole and Utting (1962) commented that, after these provisions had been put into place, poverty disappeared from the political agenda for a decade, until concerns were raised for the welfare of the elderly. The initial provisions did not ensure that poverty had actually been abolished, however, as Glennerster (2004) evidenced with a photograph of a mother bathing her child in a tin bath in the Salford Slums in 1955. He stated that 'Poverty had, however, disappeared from the political radar' (p.86). The majority of the participants (n=8) had experienced times of hardship and deprivation, some more than others, until the late 1950s.

So, although such changes ensured that change was heading in the right direction and provided children with a better standard of living, poverty still existed in some parts of Britain, including on Merseyside, in part because of an ongoing reliance on unpredictable and unstable casual labour.

However, rising standards of living gave many parents new hope and in turn, parents began to invest money in their children and support them into early adulthood, which had been unfeasible in previous years (Cunningham, 2006). In many ways childhood had become prolonged, and now lasted into adolescence. More importantly, however, children had gained a higher worth and importance both within family life and in society (Cunningham, 2006).

The government instigated this essential way forward, but wanted to maintain the societal ideal of the nuclear family while society continued to view the female parent as the rock that held families together (Rosen, 2003). Starkey (2000) suggested that poor mothers in particular were stigmatised after the war and blamed for the increase in problem families. The notion that there is an institution in which we try to define variant social and kinship groups will continue to exist within every community and within every society, and will differ as a result of societal changes, geographic location, and historical progression (Valentine, 2004). Barrett (1980, p.187) argued that: 'Even to conceptualise "the family" is to concede the existence of an institution that, in whatever historical context it is found, is essentially and naturally there'.

Thus, it is evident that an essential part of what constitutes familial continuity or change must exist as part of an ideology. The government's idea at that time was to encourage a return to the pre-war society. However, the people of Britain had experienced change and had themselves in turn changed, and desired progress that would improve life for themselves and their families.

Due to many men joining the armed forces during the war years, many women had to take on a dual role within society and the family life: not only would they take on full parental duties and take care of household chores, but many would also work for the war efforts in the absence of their male counterparts (Summerfield, 1998). After the war, the government strongly encouraged women to vacate their positions in the workforce and return back to their role as housewives. The government even took measures to encourage this by closing day nurseries and child care provision facilities (Merritt, 2008, p.193). It is important to note the influence of class on this view: many working class women, for example, would have already worked to make ends meet before the Second World War.

Heron (1985) explained that many women were re-domesticated in their role as homemakers and the pre-war male and female hierarchy was resumed. This was not the case for all women, however. Some continued to work in offices, although they found doing so challenging once men returned. Weightman (1994, p.145) stated that: 'After the war, women had to find their place again, in the office, in industry and in social life'.

Women were still expected to take the lead role in all things family and childcare related. Merritt (2008) explained that women were expected to prepare themselves for motherhood by devoting a time of service to the care of children, hygiene or sick nursing; society believed that this would help women to become more efficient at bringing up a family. Younger women who had not yet married were encouraged to do so within their own social class and religion. Peplar (2002) explained that social change and family decline during the post-war years ignited a

surge of panic and sparked concern for the well-being of children, especially with the influx of babies born in the years immediately after the war.

Who was the 'post-war child'?

This study focuses primarily on the child of the 1940s and 1950s, who Merritt (2008) described as *The Child Challenged* by an era in which children faced the extremes of war and poverty. The war stole many identities, whether of children or adults, and left, was no distinction between the two, only survival of lives (Merritt, 2008). However, Merritt (2008, p.107) maintained that 'Children withstood bad times, were resplendent in good times and clearly preserved, in most instances, with their spirits intact'.

Chillingworth (2007, p.1) provided archival evidence of childhood in post-war Liverpool that depicted social experiences in childhood: children 'endured squalid living conditions among the bomb-damaged remains'. Social change, due to passing trade through Liverpool Docks, introduced immigration and a more multi-cultural society was established: the largest immigrant group was Irish Catholics. Moran (2005) illustrated the social shift and social turmoil of post-war Britain in relation to societal and governmental approaches to reform after the war, but, according to Cunningham (2005, p.186), the 'War most dramatically highlighted the difficulty of preserving the territory of childhood'.

Children born into the post-war era were born into the optimistic haze after the war. Those who had endured and survived the war had their spirits intact and men returning from the war were seen as heroes. Society promised better times ahead, resulting in an influx of births which became known as the 'Baby Boom' (Pressley, 1999). Although optimism soared, the post-war era was a time for rebuilding, not only of structural damage, but also of the psychological damage endured by the people of Britain. This rebuilding, however, entailed times of hardship and endurance (Kynaston, 2010). Rationing was still in place due to food shortages, and material luxuries were few and far between. This hardship was a way of life, and it encouraged communities to remain close, to help each other, and to support each other in times of need (Feeney, 2009).

Childhood was a time of immense freedom during the 1950s: children would roam free within the neighbourhoods in which they lived (Pressley, 1999). Children of this era benefitted from the Butler Education Act of 1944 and the arrival of the welfare state in the late 1940s, which provided them with a wealth of support and made them a stronger, healthier generation than any before (Chandler, 2002). Childhood would be viewed as austere by today's standards, but children were given a foundation that would stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives.

Pressley (1999) depicted a 1950s childhood as joyful, playful, and free and stated that, 'Life was just a total game, we played games non-stop. Things like eating or sleeping or going shopping or having your hair cut were just interruptions to having a good time'. The transition from home life to school was often abrupt and unexpected for many children during the 1950s. Children started school at the age of five, and had often had a free home life before this. The prospect of institutionalisation was often a shock, and therefore much of the nostalgic literature reported negative feelings about starting school and sheer excitement at returning home for lunch and at the end of the school day (Pressley, 1999). Many reflections also highlighted significant feelings of anxiety due to separation from the mother during this transitional period (Elliot and Place, 2004). Many schools of the era instigated a sleep time for children during the afternoon, something which would mirror the routine many of them had had at home (Peplar, 2002).

Festivities

In schools, Christmas, Easter, and Harvest festivals were celebrated religiously, patriotically, and modestly. At Christmas children would not receive multiple gifts, but would often put a stocking or a pillow case by the fireplace and on Christmas morning it would contain a piece of fruit, usually an orange, and some dates or nuts (Russell, 2012). If children were from a more privileged background, they would receive one present or something to share with their siblings. Evidently, children had limited toys, and therefore imaginative play was predominant in many children's lives. Make-believe and fantasy role-play were the main forms of

entertainment, and were usually enacted on the streets with other children in the neighbourhood.

Although children were not lavished with gifts at Christmas, it held a special magic for children during the 1950s. Children believed in 'Santa Claus' or 'Father Christmas' until their older years, and enjoyed the fantasy, which most houses had during this era, of him arriving on a sleigh with reindeer and squeezing down the chimney to leave presents in the stocking (Tait, 2014). Religious significance was given to the whole period leading up to, during, and directly after Christmas. Before the television era, regular festivities included carol singing around the local neighbourhood and playing charades with family and friends in the front room. Christmas was also a time for family being together. The extended family would gather to enjoy good food and play games (Russell, 2012). Jigsaws were a common activity in many households, for both children and adults. A family jigsaw was usually completed over Christmas as a tradition. Board games were also very popular during the fifties, including Tiddly Winks, Ludo, Chinese Chequers, and Monopoly (Tait, 2014). Before the arrival of the television in many households, games such as this were the prime entertainment for all the family (Pressley, 1999).

Patriotism was important during the post-war years. Celebrations and societal unity as a society were more important than ever. One event in particular that received a lot of attention in the literature was the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 (Tait, 2014). Communities celebrated the coronation by holding street parties all over Britain and decorating their streets with red, white, and blue bunting. Although rationing was still in force and despite post-war austerity, people pulled together to make the celebrations happen (Edwards, 2012). Those who owned a television opened their doors to the rest of the neighbourhood, allowing as many people as possible to get a glimpse of the Queen on her special day (Tait, 2014).

Conclusion

The study of childhood enables researchers to explore social institutions, societal behaviours, and constructs that impact on the child's experience of childhood, both socially and historically (Jenks, 1996). Individual experiences of childhood will differ depending on individual circumstances; these experiences provide insight into the history of childhood and serve as an important contribution to our socio-historic heritage. Social studies researchers such as Holloway and Valentine (2000) have studied the variation in societal concepts of childhood over time and they contend that recording and researching these periods of change are fundamental to social research. Holloway and Valentine (2000) developed the ideology that social progress and variation develop from one phase to another with a snowball effect; thus, being aware of social change can also provide insight into future evolution and change.

Conducting a review of the literature allowed a clear limitation of research into the study of childhood experiences in post-war Merseyside to be identified. There is an acknowledgement of the condition of society in post-war Liverpool, but no representation of its impact on childhood experiences. This study gave individuals born in post-war Merseyside the opportunity to retrieve, voice, and archive their childhood experiences. It enabled individuals to explore their own history, which contributes to how they are socially rooted and to who they are. As Opie (1999, p.7) stated, 'Our past is important because it relates to our origins, our cultural makeup and our basic understanding of who, why and how we have come to be'.

There are many compilations of assorted childhood memories and testimonies (Gissing, 1994; Arthur, 2006; Kelly, 2006; Inward, 2007; Maddox, 2008; Feeney, 2010). However, there is only a limited literature that explores the impact that sharing those memories has had on the people involved. Originally, this research intended to explore oral histories thematically, but the participants produced reflections during the interviews that led the researcher to focus on a different aspect of the findings. In turn, this led to a second phase of interviews, wherein the participants were reflective, ruminating on the nature of memory, which highlighted the nature of reminiscence itself and the impact it has on those who

engage in it. Also, due to the researcher's desire to carry out ethical research, she felt that it was essential that these findings were included in this thesis. Thus the research incorporated both elements in the study, as is discussed in Chapter Three.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH PART THREE:
APPROACHES TO ORAL HISTORY AND REMINISCENCE WORK

Overview

This chapter reviews the literature in the fields of oral history (OH) and reminiscence work (RW). It explores OH and RW as separate fields and discusses how their approaches to research can overlap. The similarities and differences between the two approaches are highlighted; an awareness of them can enable researchers to be flexible when conducting research with living memories. This chapter discusses how the use of both approaches in the same study can benefit research that uses reminiscences. The researcher considers when this approach to research may be particularly useful and draws on prior work conducted in the fields of OH and RW to illustrate this; she discusses how the construction of memory and the impact of reminiscence can shape and influence identity.

The research in context

> History enables us to view ourselves and society in a proper perspective, to focus on human motives and the consequences of them for other individuals or for society, and to enhance our knowledge of the potential, as well as the limitations, of human actions (McDowell, 2002, p.3).

> Everyone has a childhood memory, or more, and can and almost always does readily tell it to people. Most people are not aware of their incredible power to quickly and accurately provide a wealth of information (Mosak and Di Pietro, 2006, p.258).

The first quotation, from McDowell (2002), describes history as a means of comprehending action and consequence in relation to oneself and wider society. The second quotation, from Mosak and Di Pietro (2006), explains that everyone has the capacity to recall and share their childhood memories, and that people do not always realise how much detail can be recalled. These statements show the

importance of individual perspectives of history for understanding the world, and highlight our ability to retain a wealth of information, enabling us to reminisce about experiences from across our lifespan. Memories enable people to position themselves within society and to possess a sense of self throughout the course of their life. One's own history is thus forming continually, and, as it does, it is in turn contributing to and maintaining identity (McDowell, 2002).

Many methodological texts explore the process, depth, and consistency of a historical approach to research and believe that it has valuable attributes when it accompanies research in the social sciences (Ritchie, 2003; Yow, 2005; Perks and Thomson, 2006) and in the field of reminiscence and life review (Kavanagh, 2000; Haight and Webster, 2002; Gibson, 2011). The historical approach enables researchers to consider social norms and values within the contexts of time and circumstance. McDowell (2002) believed that the impact of human actions contributes to an ever-changing society. Every aspect of the social world is susceptible to change over time; it is this process that is of interest – particularly to researchers – because of the impact it has on our lives. During this process, human beings pinpoint events in time by focusing their memory upon the past, present, and use their knowledge to predict future life events (McDowell, 2002). Furthermore, they locate their present-day judgement by reflecting on their memories of the past (Howarth, 1998). The foundation of this research is based on the idea that, as humans, we judge our future behaviours and acknowledge our current selves based on our memories of past experiences.

Reminiscence and autobiographical memories: A lifespan perspective

In the field of reminiscence research, the term 'reminiscence' is used interchangeably to describe a multitude of approaches and processes. Some scholars have attempted to define reminiscence, and others continue to do so. Two definitions which describe the practice concisely are:

- 'Reminiscence is the act or process of recalling the past' (Butler, 1963); and
- 'The recalling of memories from one's own personal past' (Webster, 1997).

Mosher-Ashley and Barrett (1997, p.93) defined reminiscence as 'the recalling or remembering of past events, experiences, people and places'. Gibson (2011)

explained that, although reminiscence is usually made up of recollections of the past, it also applies to reflections on the present and future.

Krell (1990, p.13) approached the concept from an etymological and grammatical stance, building on Aristotle's perception that the reminiscence process is active, and that memories are interconnected, and maintained that: '...recollection or reminiscence is being reminded; it involves one thing putting us in mind of another'. Krell here linked 'recollection' and 'reminiscence' grammatically with the passive of the verb 'to remind'. Krell (1990) went on to investigate the complexity of the concept, demonstrating that Aristotle's perceptions indicate the fluidity of 'reminiscence' as a process.

When describing research-based uses of reminiscence, other terminology is adopted, such as life review (Butler, 1963; Coleman, 1994; Plastow, 2006), life story (Coleman, 1994), life work (Rose and Philpot, 2004), or oral history (Thompson, 2000). Reminiscence itself plays a central role in accessing childhood memories and the utilisation of the reminiscence process can be a valuable tool for further comprehending human behaviour. Reminiscence can consist of one or numerous memories; Wrye and Churchilla (1977, p.98) noted that: 'Reminiscence...may take a number of forms, formal and informal. It may range from the relatively random and haphazard flashes of unbidden memory to the structured process'. For the purposes of this study, the researcher accessed informal histories, which were usually anecdotal and varied between verbal accounts and written material such as journals, diaries, letters, and postcards. More formal histories such as historical documents (i.e. newspaper articles and medical records) can be used in support of anecdotes to provide a comprehensive window of insight into the past; however, due to the reflective nature of this research, the findings were discussed with reference to unique individual experiences rather than factual events.

Interest in reminiscence increased following the publication of Butler's (1963) seminal paper 'The Life Review: An Interpretation of Reminiscence in the Aged'. Scholars such as O'Leary and Barry (1998) and Wong and Watt (1991) placed

Butler's work in wider social and historical contexts, developing reminiscence work across the disciplines; reminiscence has thus developed into a popular research tool in a wide range of studies (Coleman, 1994).

Some authors refer to RW as an 'intervention method' (Stinson and Kirk, 2006, p.208), rather than a process. However, in this study it will be referred to as a process with a beginning, a middle, and an end: starting with a trigger, continuing with the sharing of the main content, and concluding with an evaluation of the experience. When one engages in the reminiscence process with the aim of either exploring shared experiences or changing current feelings about an experience, it is classed as reminiscence work (Gibson, 2011).

McMahon and Rhudick (1964) conducted research with veterans of the Spanish-American war; they found that the men who engaged in reminiscence regularly were healthy and had a good demeanour. McMahon and Rhudick argued that reminiscence therefore influenced identity and contributed to increased self-esteem. This theory was developed further by other researchers such as Tobin (1991), who suggested that an individual's ability to explicitly recall memories is reflected in his or her health. Tobin believed that reminiscence enables a person to be seen by others as he or she wishes, and perhaps not to be perceived only as in the particular predicament in which they find themselves (such as ill health or aging). RW approaches thus have strong links to a person's sense of identity. However, although some emphasis is placed on a person's self-worth and value, the individual might also use reminiscence to mask their current situation in order to avoid confronting or accepting reality. Individuals therefore reminisce in different ways (Gibson, 2011). Research by Coleman (1986) acknowledged that people have different attitudes and approaches to reminiscence.

1. Reminiscers	People who value memories of the past.	High Morale
2. Reminiscers	People troubled by memories of the past.	Low Morale
3. Non-reminiscers	People who see no point in reminiscing.	High Morale
4. Non-reminiscers	People who avoid reminiscing because of the contrast between their past and present.	Low Morale

Table 1. Reminiscence and Morale

(adapted by Gibson [2011] from Coleman [1986, p.36]).

It is important to understand that different individuals respond to reminiscence in different ways. Group one regularly engage in reminiscence and use their memories to get over difficult times. Group two find that memories cause feelings of sadness and regret; such individuals often feel guilty about past events as a result of their own negative actions. The third group should not be forced to reminisce; they prefer to focus on the present and engage in the here and now, and gain satisfaction from not dwelling on the past. The fourth group have had a happy past but they find that reminiscing makes them sad because it highlights the losses and changes that have happened in their life. They therefore choose not to engage in reminiscence.

RW can be used to regularly promote and maintain a person's positive thinking, well-being, and self-esteem. However, it is important to bear in mind that not every individual will feel the same way after engaging in the reminiscence process. McMahon and Rhudick (1964) maintained that reminiscence has many psychological functions in daily life, but they neglect its social function. Gibson (2011), however, argued that reminiscence is valuable because it allows communication with others. Reminiscence can also help to form, maintain, and shape relationships with others (Webster et al., 2010).

Furthermore, reminiscence is a central process in the maintenance of identity using autobiographical memories. In the field of RW, autobiographical memory functions are subject to a growing interest from researchers (Webster and Cappeliez, 1993; Bluck and Alea, 2002; Webster and Gould, 2007). A study conducted with 167 undergraduate students showed the presence of three functions of autobiographical memory: self, directive, and social (Bluck and Alea, 2002). The 'self' function accesses personal memories to maintain a sense of stability and rationality. The 'directive' function helps with problem-solving; it enables the individual to comprehend the past and the present, plan for the future, solve problems, and develop their own understanding of the world around them. Finally, the 'social' function of autobiographical memory nurtures, develops, and maintains relationships with others.

It is evident that reminiscence can act in many capacities. Wong and Watt (1991) believed that the reminiscence process has different types and developed a taxonomy for reminiscence research. Webster (1994) and Bluck and Alea (2002) also believed that reminiscence had a series of functions, while Cappeliez et al. (2005) believed that reminiscence should be categorised as having positive, negative, or neutral outcomes. The taxonomy of reminiscence is outlined in Table 2.

Type of Reminiscence (Wong and Watt, 1991)	Function of Reminiscence (Webster, 1994; 2010)	Function of Autobiographical Memory (Bluck and Alea, 2002)	Outcome of Reminiscence (Cappeliez et al., 2005)	Description
Integrative Reminiscence	Identity	Self	Positive	The participant reviews his or her life through memories, attaching meaning and value.
Instrumental Reminiscence	Problem solving	Directive	Neutral	Problem solving through recollection to support the self in the present.
Transmissive Reminiscence	Teach/Inform	Social	Neutral	Visualising memory as a source of information about the past that can inform the present and/or the future, particularly the next generation.
Escapist Reminiscence	Conversation	Social	Positive	Nostalgic reflection on past memories, often perceiving the past to be better than present day.
Obsessive Reminiscence	Boredom Reduction	Self	Negative	Regular recollection of negative experiences. Guilt and despair can often accompany such memories.
Narrative Reminiscence	Bitterness revival	Self	Negative	Recollection through storytelling. Descriptive in nature (anecdotal) and can uncover both positive and negative memories.

				Sustaining memories of old pain and justifying negative thoughts and emotions (Webster, 1997).
	Death preparation	Self	Positive	To prepare for nearing the end of life.
	Intimacy maintenance	Social	Negative	To maintain memories of loved ones and use memories to maintain or build relationships.

Table 2. Taxonomy of reminiscence.

Although there is an overlap between the classifications, it is evident that the categories of death preparation and intimacy maintenance are exclusive to Webster's model. According to Webster and Haight (2005), death preparation is a type of reminiscence that older adults engage in to gain closure on matters as they near the end of life. The study sample were all over the age of 65. Indeed, such functions of reminiscence are often associated with older adults when in fact there is little evidence to suggest that they are exclusive to older adults. For example, intimacy maintenance focuses on an informal conversational approach to maintaining close relationships with others. However, such functions correlate strongly with certain aspects of the life course: women are more likely to engage in intimacy maintenance reminiscence, while older adults are more inclined to reminisce for death preparation, and adolescents for boredom reduction (Webster, 1993).

Butler's (1963, cited in Webster et al., 2010, p.531) psychodynamic approach to studying the life-course emphasised that conducting RW with more mature participants triggered their consideration of 'impending mortality'. However, if researchers only focused on such work and only interviewed people in their later

years, reminiscence in earlier stages of the life course might be ignored. The broad scope of RW enables researchers to adopt a lifespan approach to memory recall and the skills and approaches which accompany it. Baltes (1987, p.751) used this idea in relation to a 'family of propositions' (see Table 3).

(1) Lifelong	Progressing through the lifespan.
(2) Multi-causal	'Biopsychosocial conditions reciprocally influence development' (Webster et al., 2010, p.531).
(3) Multi-directional	Change in behaviour, either in terms of direction or speed.
(4) Multi-disciplinary	Understood within differing disciplines.
(5) Plasticity	'The notion of reserve capacity' (Webster et al., 2010, p.531).
(6) Gain/Loss	Influenced by changes over adulthood.
(7) Hierarchic	'Interactive contexts' (Baltes, 1987, p.751). Dependent on variant cultural, personal, and historical factors.

Table 3. 'Family of propositions'
(Baltes, 1987, p.751).

Table 3 presents Baltes's propositions for reminiscence from interdisciplinary perspectives. Webster (1999) believed that reminiscence occurred throughout the lifespan and that it was an ever-evolving and predominantly multi-causal construct that was influenced by a variety of biopsychosocial factors (propositions 1 and 2). Proposition 3 illustrates that the process of reminiscence can change direction as a result of an individual's perspective or outside influences such as the media, the environment, or social circumstances. Proposition 4 focuses on the wider implications of multi-disciplines for reminiscence: multi-disciplines

encompass not only the influence of society but also the diverse perceptions and manipulations of individual reminiscence research from a range of interdisciplinary perspectives. Various studies conducted in clinical settings have examined the effects of reminiscence on dementia (propositions 5 and 6) and found that, in the later years of the life course, individuals can experience 'lucid episodes' (Webster et al., 2010, p.531) in which they experience a random and spontaneous snapshot of memory recall. Finally, proposition 7 discusses various historical, personal, and cultural influences on the reminiscence process. This is important for this research, which explores oral histories based on the social conditions of childhood experienced during the post-war years on Merseyside. The impact of the reminiscence process is an essential part of this study.

Personality can also influence the way in which an individual reminisces. For example, 'those who score highly on the neuroticism subscale of the NEO Personality Inventory tend to engage in bitterness revival. Those who score high on extroversion tend to endorse reminiscing as a conversational component' (Webster and Haight, 2002, p.68).

From a lifespan perspective, Webster (1993; 1997) developed the Reminiscence Functions Scale (RFS), which was validated using 710 participants aged between 17 and 91 years old. The participants reflected on the way in which they perceive their own and others' reminiscence. The research identified eight reminiscence functions: boredom reduction, death preparation, identity, problem solving, conversation, intimacy maintenance, bitterness revival, and teach/inform. These functions tally with Wong and Watt's (1991) taxonomy of reminiscence. Wong and Watt (1991) found that those who engaged in integrative and instrumental reminiscence were well-adjusted and had a coherent life story approach to memory sharing, whereas those who they regarded as less well-adjusted engaged in a higher proportion of obsessive reminiscence. Transmissive reminiscence was not measured, but, according to Wong and Watt (1991), this could have been as a direct result of an inappropriate interview setting and influenced by the power relations between the interviewer and the interviewee.

Comprehending the type of reminiscence that participants engage in is important for gaining a better understanding of the context of the responses given during the interview. It is also evident that the environment and the people present during reminiscence can have a direct impact on the type of reminiscence in which the individual engages.

Therapeutic nature of reminiscence

Only in the last 50 years has reminiscence been considered important or as more than just an everyday activity. The therapeutic benefits are widely recognised in the field of psychology and health and well-being (Cappeliez et al., 2005; Bohlmeijer et al., 2007; Haslam et al., 2009). Reminiscence can help people to come to terms with their circumstances or to overcome problems, and it can be an enriching experience for both the storyteller and the listener. The benefits of conducting research into reminiscence include the preservation of memory and the creation of evidence for future reference, historical reflection, and analysis (Howarth, 1999).

Butler (1963, cited in Gibson, 2004) was the inspirational founder of the contemporary reminiscence movement, and initiated developments in reminiscence and life review work by encouraging older generations to engage in reminiscence. He argued that reminiscence was a natural and integral part of the aging process, which, in turn, encouraged its promotion in many health care settings (Butler, 1963, cited in Gibson, 2004). This approach is often used with mature people, particularly in hospital or care settings, because of its therapeutic qualities (Schweitzer and Bruce, 2008). Like the deep-rooted anti-history approach of Frisch (1990), engaging in reminiscence enables professionals to get to know the personality of those they are treating in order to establish a trusting relationship.

Gibson (2011) used reminiscence as a therapeutic tool to help people to channel their thoughts, exercise their memory, or gain closure on negative experiences. Often this approach is referred to as 'reminiscence work' (Gibson, 2011, p.33; Gillies and James, 2013, p.16), 'reminiscence therapy' (Procter et al., 2014, p.265)

or talking therapy ('therapy talk') (Fitzgerald, 2013, p.1). RW tends to be conducted with older generations (Coleman, 1994), but it may also lend itself to helping vulnerable groups in society (Killick and Craig, 2011) such as ethnic minorities (Schweitzer, 2004), children and young people (Rose and Philpot, 2004), and people with additional needs (Atkinson, 1998). The origins of reminiscence lie in psychology, and much reminiscence work is based on clinical and therapeutic intervention (Bender et al., 1998; Bruce et al., 1999). The psychology literature has explored the benefits of reminiscence for the quality of life in older generations due to its healing qualities (Coleman, 1986; Woods et al., 1992). People are living longer and thus the demand for RW has increased, particularly because such therapies are beneficial and encourage mental stimulation, communication, socialisation, and liberation (Gibson, 2011). Anyone can share information about the past; when people share their personal reflections or stimulate self-awareness, they are engaging in RW (Grele and Terkel, 1991).

Life review has become an important part of RW because the demand and value of reminiscence as a therapy has increased in recent years. Life review is also regarded as a form of self-preservation in later life. Butler (1963) explored the theory that the life review is a predetermined process that all older people go through in their later years. RW focuses largely on the enriching aspect of this process, based on personal reflection on life experience, and is used as a central part of counselling and psychotherapy (Gibson, 1994; Puyenbroeck and Maes, 2005).

As a form of therapy, life review is a process of systematic reflection with a clinical therapist who puts coping strategies, based on a person's issues from the past, into place. The aim of the therapy is to improve well-being and resolve personal conflicts (Garland and Garland, 1994, p.21) which can occur as a function of the reminiscence process (Webster et al., 2010). In later life, life review occurs naturally, spontaneously, and often with great clarity and detail. According to Haight and Webster (1995, p.xvii), 'In late life, people have a particularly vivid imagination and memory for the past and can recall with sudden and remarkable clarity early life events'.

RW with older generations can be undertaken for different reasons and using different approaches. For example, it can be used as a therapy that accompanies medical procedures or in support of those with terminal illness or conditions such as Alzheimer's and dementia (Gibson, 1994). Research into this approach is predominantly grounded in the disciplines of medicine and psychology, which have a great depth of research. There is, however, a limited amount of research into the conceptual and reflective processes that are experienced during reminiscence itself (Webster et al., 2010). Other uses for RW include, counselling, psychotherapy, gerontology, and education (Bender et al., 1998; Scrutton, 1999; Haight and Webster, 2002). There is a broad scope and knowledge base to draw upon. Bornat (2001, p.224) stated that 'reminiscence work is still very much open to experimentation and development'. It is this scope that gives academics the freedom to cross academic boundaries and explore different and innovative approaches to conducting research with reminiscences.

Reminiscence can also be used to capture social history for evidence based practice or evaluative purposes, within groups, or on a one-to-one basis (Gibson, 2011). In some instances, reminiscence has been used to overcome depression and as an aid to behavioural change (Schweitzer and Bruce, 2008). Current negative experiences can cause a person to embark on regular RW sessions to try to make sense of what is happening in their present-day lives. Studies show that reminiscence has many positive qualities on the whole (Haight and Webster, 2002). Although this research does not aim to create any clinical or psychological interventions, therapeutic benefits may have occurred naturally during the reminiscence process in terms of enhanced positive well-being and heightened self-esteem (Chiang et al., 2010).

The Museums Libraries Archives (MLA) report 'New Directions in Social Policy: Health Policy for Museums, Libraries and Archives' described the effects of RW with the older generations (MLA, 2005). In some cases, health implications in later life can influence memory function, although Weisen (2005) emphasised that people's attitudes often pander to negative stereotyping and that society's view of older generations and their ability to remember remains passive.

Reminiscence has many functions beyond simply remembering. The retrieval of memories often occurs in an autobiographical and episodic way. Episodic reminiscence can often feature a storied style, whereby the individual describes an event in the past anecdotally (Webster et al., 2010). The individual may focus on one period of his or her life and not necessarily on the whole lifespan. The process contributes to many other aspects of a person's life: it is a tool for controlling emotions, developing a sense of self, creating narrative constructs based on learnt experience, and problem solving, and it can even contribute to the formation and maintenance of relationships (Cappeliez et al., 2010). Studies of the impact of reminiscence on various aspects of gerontology and psychology have evidenced the benefits for quality of life, particularly for older generations (Coleman, 1986; Wong and Watt, 1991; Woods et al., 1992; Cully et al., 2001; Bohlmeijer, 2007). Its benefits include the preservation of memory and the creation of archival evidence, both historical and medical, for future reference (Howarth, 1999).

The reminiscence process serves many purposes, and while it is often used in therapeutic interventions, it is also naturally beneficial for those who engage in it and make time for remembering. It is important for researchers to have an understanding and awareness that the reminiscence process can and will have some impact on the participants involved in the study and that some individuals might not respond well to it. This exploration of the literature from the field of reminiscence research has thus informed the researcher's approach to conducting the research proficiently.

Exploring approaches to oral history and reminiscence work

Bornat (2001) noted that there is common ground in approaches to OH and reminiscence and life review work, but only a limited literature exploring this common ground. Bornat (2001, p.219) described the approach as a process of 'interrogation, partnership and ownership' whereby, the researcher asks questions, puts the responses into context, and finally decides on the ownership of the data. There are many issues to consider when conducting research in the fields of OH and RW, including their shared similarities, differences, successes, and

pitfalls. To gain insight into the relationship between OH and RW, these issues need to be explored further. Some academics might struggle to differentiate between the two approaches because both involve the recollection of memory. 'In part the differences are rooted in differing disciplinary origins and in part in the distinctive aims and objectives of the two approaches' (Bornat, 2001, pp.219-220). Both approaches have differences in technique, practice, and values.

Bornat (2001) described the relationship between OH and RW by exploring the research process as follows:

Method	the interrogative nature of oral history and reminiscence.
Context	partnerships in the interpretation of memories.
Presentation	the ownership and control of personal memory.

<div align="right">(Bornat, 2001, p.220).</div>

Memories can either be personal or relate to wider, more general world events; they can be spontaneous or triggered, silent or spoken, private or public, and can have some evaluative aspects (Gibson, 2011).

Some memories can be frequently recalled, whereas others may remain forgotten until they are triggered. Some memories may be vague and lacking detail, whereas others remain vivid. According to Gibson (2011), memories are constructed using imagery in the mind, and individuals attach emotion to such memories in order to create autobiographical memories. These autobiographical memories form stories which are created from original experiences. People who share their memories therefore construct them in such a way that they appear interesting to others; stories can, to some extent, change every time they are shared. Reminiscence is a journey of discovery that makes links and attaches meaning. It enables us to understand the world around us (Gibson, 2011) and it can inform us about how our past experiences shape our identity and continue to impact on our lives. Reminiscence is not concerned with mindless recital of occurrences: it '...simultaneously invites reflection' (Gibson, 2011, p.26).

When working with reminiscences, it is important to have an awareness of different approaches to researching them. There are parallel approaches to researching reminiscences which can overlap, including autobiographical memory, narrative methods, and, of course, OH. One of the reasons for this overlap is the increased use of reminiscence as a therapeutic tool and the 'burgeoning interest in oral history, local history and family history' (Gibson, 2011, p.28). However, unlike historians who attempt to make accurate records of the past, reminiscence is more personal and is based on life review and reflection. Thus, the line between RW and OH is often blurred.

RW can differ from OH: the latter is conducted as a more formal process and is usually recorded. RW is not concerned with documenting data, but rather focuses on the benefits of the communication and sharing of memories (Haight and Gibson, 2005). This suggests that conducting both approaches together might be a more successful process of engagement because it will allow findings to be collected while the participants' experience of memory sharing is considered.

Bornat, an oral historian, maintained that OH work contributes to an individual finding themselves and giving meaning to their life in addition to uncovering social history (Bornat, 2006, cited in Gibson, 2011, p.29). This is a new acknowledgement: OH is not usually linked to the reflective element of reminiscing. Including reflectivity in OH research can be dependent on the skills and attitude of the researcher. This can indicate two things: either that research in this field is becoming more flexible and including new approaches or that researchers themselves are changing their attitude to research that captures memories. Work that uses reminiscence is capable of providing some therapeutic and reflective qualities, but whether this is a focus of the research is the decision of the researcher.

Unlike RW, OH is more concerned with the collection of personal historical information about individuals, families, and everyday life, and can often lead to individuals evaluating their life in relation to past, present and future events (Gibson, 2011). It can be recorded on audio and/or video or shared in a written

format (Ritchie, 2003). OH is a relatively modern approach and is growing in popularity amongst social and historical researchers (Howarth, 1999; Charlton et al., 2000; Thomson, 2000; Ritchie, 2003). Some historians praise the approach for its accessibility to information about the past (Portelli, 1991). Portelli (1991, p.55) maintained that OH has an exploratory nature that seems to be 'inexhaustible'. Not only does OH allow the researcher to delve into rich, personal, social history, but it also affords the emergence of themes across multiple disciplines.

Webster and Haight (2002) identified clear differences between the processes involved in OH and RW. Mosher-Ashley and Barrett (1997) explained that OH does not resemble the characteristics of the narrative or transmissive reminiscence (Wong and Watt, 1991), or teach-inform (learning from experiences) and conversational (Cappeliez et al., 2008) approaches to memory recall. Bornat (1994, p.3) maintained that 'Oral history values memory as a source of information about the past. The boundary between reminiscence work and oral history is finely drawn but forms around a focus on content rather than process'. As with RW, there is also a wide variety of terminology in the field of OH. Some researchers refer to it as a 'life history' (Gibson, 2010, p.207), a 'self-report' (Kenyon et al., 2011, p.178), a 'personal narrative' (Webster and Haight, 2002, p.122), a 'life story' (Gibson, 2011, p.144), or even a 'biography' (Trainor and Graue, 2013, p.151). All of these terms and more can be used interchangeably, and they all fall within the overarching field of OH. Oral history's roots lie in history and sociology (Bornat, 2001). Thompson (2000, p.1) argued that historians are dependent on 'social purpose', with a view to inducing change. OH is concerned with accessing personal testimonies and eye witness accounts, which can be an enriching source of information for historical research. Oral historians follow a tradition which has been present through history itself: for centuries people have shared oral traditions and folklore, passing on stories as factual evidence (Thompson, 2000).

The literature on oral expression and oral traditions is more dated. For example, Opie and Opie's (1959) publication of *The Lore and Language of School Children* focused on the preservation of oral tradition in the contemporary playground,

where school children pass on games, songs, and rhymes, passing the tradition from generation to generation. Work by Vansina (1985) delved into the importance of this oral tradition between generations, and explored why passing on traditions from one generation to the next is an important contribution to OH and how it exists within the historical reconstruction of our past. Oral traditions shape and mould society and the way we do things. They are passed on through the values and morals shared by word of mouth or learned behaviour. For example, taking on a certain form of etiquette depending on the circumstances one finds oneself in, or incorporating certain traditions, religious rituals, or behaviours into family celebrations, are all behaviours that are shaped by oral traditions (Thompson, 2001). By exploring into these traditions we can investigate particular social behaviours in a particular geographic location and/or a specific era of time. In turn, this enables us to interpret the social impact these behaviours had on the experience of childhood.

Summerfield (1998) viewed OH as a representation of testimony through language that deploys cultural constructions from life experience. Summerfield (1998, p.12) expressed that: 'cultural constructions form the discursive context not only within which people express and understand what happens to them, but also within which they actually have those experiences'. Opie (1999) supported this notion, maintaining that events and emotions impact on experience. It is essential to comprehend the idea that other life events can alter one's own recollection of memory before engaging in any research in this field. As Peplar (2002) conveyed, doubts are often raised about the validity of such data because it relies on fallible memories: as an individual increases in age, memories can fade and other experiences can merge into each other which can potentially cloud personal judgement (Thompson et al., 1994). Gibson (2004, p.4) maintained that:

> Older people are more likely to create myths about their parents and to dream about the past as a way of deriving comfort in the face of a lifetime of loss and present failing powers. Our memories provide us with a resource as we seek continuity as well as change and long for satisfying personal relationships in the present.

Both Thompson (2000) and Summerfield (1999) considered the process of memory construction and the impact that wider life experience has on the participant. Opie (1999) supported this notion, arguing that emotional reflection impacts on the experience at that time, thereby affecting the validity of the data generated. The circumstances surrounding the interview, life time experiences, personality, and mood (Parkin, 1999) can all influence the recalled memory. This is an important dimension to this research. The researcher collected living memories and ensured that the feelings of the participants were acknowledged in the write up of the findings. Exploring the impact of feelings, triggers, and emotions and the way in which they impact on OH findings is vital for any further understanding of the role of OH, not only in research but in other aspects of human life. In addition, individuals can gain a better understanding of their own background and where they come from. For example, Thompson (2000, pp.2-3) argued that 'through local history a village or town seeks meaning for its own changing character and newcomers can gain sense of roots in personal historical knowledge'. Thus OH can give individuals historical knowledge of their background and provide a social context on which they can base their heritage.

Some memories may be recalled spontaneously as part of day to day life, but others are triggered by something. Common triggers include photographs, conversations, objects, and media. Triggers therefore have a significant role in the recollection of memory (Yow, 2005). Sometimes outside influences can affect the way in which the person reflects on a memory or how they convey that memory to others. In some instances, certain triggers may falsely skew the recalled memory by, for example, adding false details to already existing memories. Listening to someone else's memory of a similar experience may influence the recollection of a participant's own experience, for instance.

Howarth (1999) argued that phantom memories acquired as a result of exterior influences such as the media or life experiences jeopardise the accuracy of the research process. The participants have had many life experiences since childhood and it is important to acknowledge that these experiences may influence their recollections of childhood. Theoretical scepticism about the reliability of memory

repositions OH and the use of memories as a resource in research, and has been the source of some debate about their rightful place in social and historical research (Peplar, 2002).

There is some debate around the accuracy of autobiographical memory and its reliability (Rubin, 1999; Berntsen and Rubin, 2012). People can re-author stories or embellish them, particularly when retelling stories which can give a false representation of an event; the retelling of stories can be influenced by the audience or purpose of the story telling (Tversky and Marsh, 2000). According to Tversky and Marsh (2000, p.2): 'We tailor what we say for the particular audience and to induce a particular effect. We select, we omit, we exaggerate, we embellish, and we dramatize as we relate events'. As a result of this, participants could develop a *retelling bias* when sharing narrative in certain situations and about certain life events. Thus, validity can be compromised if people choose to change, modify or re-author their stories.

The duty of the oral historian is to merge the recollections of the participants with the historical and social documentation from the era of study. With this in mind, the researcher can provide deeper, more enriched insight by not only considering the social conditions of post-war childhood, but also by exploring the impact of the reminiscence process. According to Ames and Diepstra (2010), OH research benefits the participant by giving meaning to their personal experience and triggering recognition of their self-identity and self-worth. At this point, elements of RW become important because they allow participants to come to terms with the impact of the process and how it has contributed to who they are.

Self-defining memories and identity

'Self-defining memories' are autobiographical and personal life memories that the individual believes to be significant in defining 'who they are' (Singer, 2005, p.2).

Identity studies have explored the importance of poignant memory recall for the formation of self (Arciero, 2009). Many factors can influence self-defining memories including age, gender, culture, mood, personality, and selfhood[4] (Arciero, 2009). The idea that personality is linked to memory recall is not new. Over the last few decades, the amount of research linking memory and selfhood has increased (Conway and Pleydell-Pearce, 2000). The relationship between memory and selfhood has been prominent in contemporary literature that links memory to personality and self-identity (Conway and Pleydell-Pearce, 2000; McAdams, 2008). McAdams et al. (2006) believed that life stories are an evolving process of identity formation that evoke insight into one's personality or, indeed, personality change. According to Gibson (2004, p.xiv): 'In our imaginations we construct our stories, and by telling our stories to other people we consolidate our sense of personal identity'. There are many influences on reminiscence, and yet it has the ability to enrich people's lives. 'Life history' refers to the autobiographical narrative source, which covers the complexity of an individual's life, often in a written format (Atkinson, 1998). According to Gibson (2004, p.3), 'Reminiscence is regarded as a part of autobiographical memory and life review as a special kind of reminiscence'. 'Life Review' is a review of a time or stage in a life (Gibson, 2011). 'Life story', however, explores the meaning of one's own interpretation of life experiences. Stories constitute what people believe to be true about themselves, yet the life story is a dialogical process whereby discourses and cultural implications contribute to the recollection of a memory (Friedman, 2001). A less in-depth approach, known as 'personal narrative', consists of a thematic extract from an individual's life. The influx of personal narrative work has increased in recent years due to interest in the study of selfhood, storytelling, and the construction of life history (Maines et al., 2008).

Wheeldon (2011, p.509) argued that: 'By focusing on individualistic accounts of knowledge, experience, and perception, meaning is discovered through social interactions and the ways in which the individual constructs, frames and describes one's past'. Wheeldon (2011) explained that the shared information is important,

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[4] Selfhood: comprehension of self; defining who you are.

as is the way in which the individual mentally constructs that information. One must consider language structure, past and present experiences, the chronology of events, and the socio-historic context of the responses. According to Riessman (2002), this approach often proves less reliable due to its selective properties, and a participant can be particularly selective about the personal recollections he or she divulges during an interview. Some participants may choose to share what they believe the researcher wants to hear. According to McDowell (2002, p.62): 'A degree of selectivity occurs with all oral evidence because previously forgotten facts may emerge, some may be temporarily forgotten, or a new interpretation may be placed on existing facts'.

According to Conway (1996), memories will never be completely accurate because they are reconstructed imaginings of an experience. Different people have different perceptions of constructed memories and a unique comprehension of their own selfhood and identity within these constructs. This can relate to the life experiences and particular cultural experiences of an individual. According to Kaslow and Massey (2004), personal narratives are analysed through culturally embedded constructs of the self through the individual's own portrayal of life stories. By contrast, Maines et al. (2008, p.2) described the personal narrative as an 'attempt to generate intersubjective understandings-between narrator and analyst and between analyst and audience'. Thus, the way in which the researcher interprets the constructed memories, the way in which the researcher presents those findings, and the way in which the reader interprets those findings can all alter depending on each person's perspective.

Historians may aim to access pure descriptions of the past that are exempt from opinion or explanation. However, this cannot always be possible. Garbolino (2011, p.293) referred to such explanations as 'evidence based stories' which have been experienced first-hand. Regardless of how explicitly detailed the shared narrative is, it will always possess a level of personal influence, emotion, or opinion. Schnettler (2002) argued that external factors, including socialising, media, and politics, can influence an individual's perception and the way in which he or she constructs memory. In turn, external factors can also change in different eras, and

thus comparisons can be made between present day and past experiences. The time at which the experience occurred contextualises the memory as it was then experienced, as does the time at which the memory is being recalled (Bathmaker and Harnett, 2010). Recalling such memories can have emotional connotations caused by remembering both the emotions experienced at the time and the emotions experienced during the reminiscence process in the present day (Stein, 1997). The process itself can evoke deep forgotten emotions as well as new emotions (Matthaus, 2009). The process presents itself as a personal narrative that possesses personal meaning to the rememberer[5] about a specific moment in an individual's life. OH and RW can encapsulate these moments of the past and preserve social heritage for future generations.

Story Construction

By telling stories individuals create a 'narrative identity' (McAdams, 2008, p.242). In doing so, individuals internalise their identity through adolescence and into their adult life (Habermas and Bluck, 2000).

> 'The life story is an internal story-like mental representation that individuals carry with them from situation to situation' (Pasupathi et al., 2007, p.86).

This mental representation can change throughout the life journey. The 'functional life story' contributes to self-identity based on ones experiences over time. A life story thus, develops as new experiences happen. Life stories are constructed of 'episodes' or 'themes' which change, are built on, or re-interpreted by the person recalling their memories. Episodes are added to the life story when the individual changes their ideas about a particular event or even based on their changing perception of self.

Labov and Waletsky's (1967) seminal work proposed that people use a five stage process to construct and share their life stories. They believed that this process followed a particular order, including orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution and coda. This particular cognitive process is governed by order of events and accomplished prior to sharing the narrative itself. The *orientation* stage

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[5] Rememberer, i.e., the individual who is recalling memories.

requires the individual to set the scene or context of the story, followed by the *complication* which refers to the narrative construction of the particular event. Once the narrative has been constructed the individual moves on to the *evaluation* stage which exposes the story teller's perspective on the narrative they are sharing by creating emphasis on some aspects of the event than other parts. The narrator would then produce a *resolution* or conclusion to the narrative. According to Labov and Waletsky (1967) the evaluative stage of the process is the most valuable as it leads the narrator to the resolution or enables them to create meaning from the information they have shared. Finally, the *coda* stage acts as a function to create their perspective on the narrative in the present moment. In one of Labov's later papers he introduced a sixth stage the *abstract* whereby the narrator starts by explaining what the narrative is about and also explains the meaning for the narrative being shared (Labov, 1999). This process is not necessarily used in everyday conversational narrative but could be accessed during more complex narration, for example, narrative that requires more depth of evaluation or 'meaning making'. Simpson (2005) explained that the evaluative stage is the most elaborate which enables the individual to explore the meaning of the stories they share; evaluation occurs throughout the narration process.

Thus, the process of creating and sharing life stories enable us to make sense of our lives and life events that impact on our experience of the lives we lead. These experiences are governed by many factors including family, gender, community, social class, culture, religion and ethnicity. According to Pasupathi et al. (2007) stories are usually constructed around a theme and this can be based on either positive or negative events. In turn, such events can influence the way an individual feels about themselves or impact on the way they conduct or approach similar future life events.

> 'Thus, the creation of self-event relations influences both the development of the life story and the development of self-conceptions more broadly' (Pasupathi, et al., 2007).

Narratives are usually constructed about most recent life events and shared in conversational format. However, stories from earlier life events such as childhood

are also common. The situation in which the individual finds themselves can often determine the stories that are told (Tversky and Marsh, 2000); for example, reminiscing about a holiday with friends or in this instance, reminiscing about childhood as part of a research project. It is important to acknowledge that stories also change over time; this is can be due to forgetting the finer details.

The circumstances in which an individual tells their story can impact on the way they convey what they mean to the reader. Hymes (1972) used a heuristic methodology to explore communication, particularly the role of speech and the way narrative is structured. Hymes (1972) created the SPEAKING model as follows:

Setting- to describe the context of the communication to include to location, time, situation (setting the scene).

Participants- the individuals involved in the communication process.

Ends- The rationale for the communication.

Act Sequence- the order of the communication/contents.

Key- The tone of the speech

Instrumentalities- Speech style or linguistic content used to convey the communication.

Norms- The social rules leading the direction of the speech.

Genre- The type of speech used.

Human beings use a structure, usually including a beginning and end to connect a series of life events and in turn create their story. Such stories are ever-evolving as individuals move through the stages of their life and such stories often provide meaning or a purpose. 'Life stories speak directly to how people come to terms with their interpersonal worlds, with society, and with history and culture... how people make sense of their lives in society and culture and how the stories they tell largely determine who they are and affect what they do' (McAdams, 2008, pp.257-258).

Conclusion

In accordance with Webster and Haight (2002) it is evident that there are differences between the functions of OH and RW. Mosher-Ashley and Barrett (1997) explained that OH does not resemble either 'narrative' or 'transmissive' reminiscence (Wong and Watt, 1991) or 'teach-inform' or 'conversation' reminiscence (Cappeliez et al., 2008). Although there are clear characteristics for each approach to gathering living memories, there are also elements which overlap (Bornat, 2001). OH aims to preserve and share knowledge of our historical past and places emphasis on this as a research outcome, whereas RW is more concerned with the impact of reminiscence on those engaged in the process (Gibson, 2011). Both elements are of great importance, so it seems beneficial to incorporate both approaches into the same study. Both approaches can be conducted by people from different disciplinary backgrounds. Conducting both OH and RW interviews ensures that questions are not left unanswered and gives insight into both perspectives based on the reflective nature of the participant's oral testimonies. This approach is a professional and holistic way of conducting research that focuses on both the importance of the findings and the impact the research has on those who take part in it (Stinson and Kirk, 2006). This review of the literature shows that, when conducting research with reminiscences, there are some therapeutic benefits, including both positive and negative memory recall. It is therefore imperative that the researcher consider the ethical implications of conducting a study of this nature (see Chapter Four).

In order to explore childhood experiences, it is important to explore social behaviours reflectively, which requires the incorporation of elements of both OH and RW. It is common for approaches to OH and RW to overlap, which can result in confusion when conducting such research. This study has employed both approaches. Analysing the first phase of OH interviews highlighted the presence of particularly reflective responses, steeped in emotion and expression. It was evident that in many aspects of the process, both OH and RW were intertwined, impacting on the methodological approach and the findings. Exploring approaches to OH and RW informed the researcher, enabling her to guide the research process appropriately.

However, exploring literature from both fields has also raised some pertinent questions. Does OH tell us more about the social conditions of being a child during the post-war years in Merseyside, and do those experiences impact, shape and maintain a person's identity through reminiscence? Does the process of RW impact on people when they recall childhood memories, and how can researchers ensure that they actively support participants during this process?

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY AND METHODS:
CONDUCTING ORAL HISTORY AND REMINISCENCE WORK

Overview

The researcher has collected childhood memories by capturing the reminiscences of ten individuals about their childhood experiences of the post-war years in Merseyside. Initially, the researcher intended to only conduct oral history interviews to capture childhood memories, but the research changed after the first phase of interviews had been conducted. Analysis of the findings showed that reflective thoughts consistently emerged as the participants attempted to construct meaning from the memories they had shared. Due to this, and the researcher's high regard for ethical research, she decided to conduct a second phase of reminiscence work interviews. This gave the participants the opportunity to contemplate these reflective thoughts further and focus on how recalling their childhood memories made them feel; this chapter systematically explains this process.

The researcher discusses the methods she used to collect childhood memories and compares her experience to methodological debates in the field of OH and RW. The chapter highlights the various challenges and advantages of interdisciplinary research that uses a multi-method approach, and details how methodological rigour was achieved. The differences between OH and RW are highlighted, and the benefits of using both, to the participants and to the researcher (in terms of more comprehensive research findings), are explained. The research comprised a multi-method approach, so it was important to explore a wide range of methods to ensure that the most appropriate were employed. An initial knowledge of OH and RW research supported the researcher in exploring her own role in the research process and highlighted how to appropriately access childhood memories while considering the impact of the process on the participants.

Any research process entails taking a systematic approach to collecting and disseminating findings in order to explore a question or phenomenon successfully – in this instance, experiences of childhood during the post-war years on Merseyside and how recalling these experiences impacted on the participants involved in the study. The methodological planning prior to any research enables the researcher to employ the best methods in order to explore unknown areas of phenomena (Kumar, 2005). This process consists of vital fundamental stages, which effectively and appropriately guide the research investigation (Burns, 2000). Later in the chapter, the researcher explains how the creation of a Memory Tree Model was an effective tool for gathering childhood memories while at the same time supporting the participants during their reflection on the reminiscence process. A conceptual, heuristic framework was used to analyse the RW findings against the outcomes identified by Webster et al. (2010).

OH and RW are tools that can be utilised to capture and preserve our past. The researcher interviewed individuals who had not taken part in any research before, and therefore collected unique childhood memories of growing up in post-war Merseyside. In fact, some participants admitted that they had not shared these memories of their childhood with anyone before.

The nature of qualitative research

There are two paradigms at the foundation of any research process. Each form of reasoning can be placed on a positivist or non-positivist continuum (Green, 2000). Each approach is beneficial to different forms of research. The positivist (quantitative) approach is more objective but more inflexible, and usually begins with an idea that originates from an already existing theory (Burns, 2000). Positivist researchers believe that observations made should be repeatable and use statistics to present their data. Non-positivist (qualitative) researchers take a more flexible approach and their results are usually explored and presented descriptively in detail (Creswell, 2013).

Quantitative research often involves predetermined questions in a structured format, which can lack flexibility and reduce the depth of exploration (Firestone,

1987; Downs, 1999; Burns, 2000; Green, 2000; Davis, 2003). This approach would therefore have hindered the researcher in analysing the depth of expression in the responses. The researcher instead opted for a qualitative approach, which enabled her to remain flexible and allowed developments to occur when necessary (for example, the decision to conduct a second phase of interviews). By opting for an exclusively qualitative approach, the researcher was able to gather and analyse comprehensive, detailed findings. Qualitative research describes variables when exploring the experiences and perceptions of the participants, a variable in this case being 'an image, perception or concept that is capable of measurement – hence capable of taking on different values' (Kumar, 2005, p.55). Green (2004) noted that quantitative methods are ineffective in measuring such perceptions or feelings due to their minimalist and closed approach to gathering data.

Qualitative research has a flexibility that is suitable for conducting research in the social sciences (Green, 2000; Mason, 2002; O'Leary, 2004; Gray, 2013; Silverman, 2013; Marshall and Rossman, 2014) because it allows for the in-depth exploration of the data collected (Hill et al., 1997; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Creswell, 2013). This approach permitted the researcher to present additional details from the participant's interviews, including reflective comments. It also gave the participants the opportunity to recall childhood memories freely and follow their natural train of thought free from unnecessary interruptions like the researcher continuously asking questions. Constant questioning during interviews elicits shorter answers and may cause some important findings to be lost.

This thesis is descriptive and provides detailed anecdotal extracts from the participant's childhood memories. Green (2000) explained that qualitative research affords an exploratory insight into different social backgrounds, both in society and through individual experiences. Holloway (1997, p.1) maintained that 'Qualitative research is a form of social enquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live'. This research explored childhood memories through the participants' own interpretations of them.

The researcher's open-mindedness and flexibility allowed methodological developments to take place for the benefit of the study. The findings represent detailed, rich enquiry and exploration based on the researcher's own interpretations, and draw on a variety of disciplines to support their discussion.

Stages of the methodology

The methodology entailed six stages: preliminary research, conversations – recruiting participants in the community (pre-interview conversations), research design, oral history interviews, reminiscence work interviews, and the dissemination of the findings.

1. PRELIMINARY RESEARCH
   i. Literature search: The researcher explored the literature about the history of childhood, read literature about the war and post-war years on Merseyside, and also explored approaches to OH and RW; this provided some background knowledge before participants were recruited.

2. CONVERSATIONS: RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS IN THE COMMUNITY
   i. Conversations in the community: The researcher visited community centres across Merseyside and spoke of her intention to conduct research based on childhood memories of the post-war years. Many volunteers were recruited at this stage. Additional volunteers were recruited via snowball sampling, which occurred through word of mouth.
   ii. Pre-interview conversations: The researcher spoke to each of the participants before conducting the one-to-one interviews; these conversations were held either face to face or via the telephone.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN
   i. One-to-one interviews: The researcher explored a variety of options for capturing childhood memories and wanted to provide a private

and comfortable environment for participants to share their personal memories.

ii. Establishing an interview schedule: Timing was important when conducting the research, in relation to both the duration and the pace of the interviews.

iii. Interview environment: The interview environment was an essential factor in the interview process and an inappropriate environment could have influenced the responses of the participants; it was important that the researcher provided a comfortable atmosphere that was free from distraction.

iv. Setting up the equipment: Ensuring that the equipment was in good working order and was placed at an appropriate distance from the participant during the interview was essential for collecting clear responses for the purposes of transcription and preservation.

4. ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

i. OH interviews: The researcher conducted one-to-one OH interviews with ten participants aged between 60 and 70. The participants were given an aide memoire, which had four themes, including family, education, society, and childhood. The interviews each lasted between 40 minutes and 1 hour. The interviews used an open-microphone approach: the participants spoke freely to an audio recorder with no guided questioning.

ii. Analysis: The findings were explored using NVivo (a qualitative data analysis computer package); several themes emerged including many reflective responses.

5. REMINISCENCE WORK INTERVIEWS

i. Memory Tree Model: The researcher created a Memory Tree Model (MTM), a pictorial tool that would support the reminiscence process.

ii. Revisiting interviews: Revisiting interviews were conducted with the same participants six months after the OH interviews, this time using a RW approach.

RW Questions: Participants were asked a series of seven questions about a specific childhood memory they had shared during the OH interviews and asked how reminiscing about their childhood made them feel.

iv. Analysis: The findings were explored using NVivo and analysed using the outcomes identified by the Heuristic Model of Reminiscence (Webster et al., 2011).

6. DISSEMINATION

i. Memoirs: The OH interviews were presented as three memoir chapters, which focused on collective emergent themes.

ii. Reflective chapters: The researcher wrote two reflective chapters that explored the impact of the RW interviews.

iii. Disseminating findings in a public forum: The research was disseminated in a public forum through an exhibition/event at The Museum of Liverpool Life (MLL).

Stage One: Preliminary Research

It was important to conduct a literature review to give the researcher some prior knowledge before she spoke to the public. The researcher familiarised herself with the literature about the history of childhood and the history and culture of Merseyside; although she grew up in Merseyside herself, reading such literature broadened her knowledge about the post-war era and provided a context with which to hold conversations with people in the community. The researcher also explored research that has been conducted in the fields of OH and RW, which helped to guide her approach to planning and conducting the research.

Stage Two: Conversations: Recruiting participants in the community

i. Conversations in the community

The recruiting process began in local community centres across Merseyside, which the researcher sought permission to visit. She spoke to people about the research project and her interest in childhood memories of the post-war years. Attendees at the community centres were

enthusiastic and interested in the project and many of them began reminiscing and sharing memories instantly. Eventually, individuals began to volunteer themselves or knew of people who would be interested in taking part. Ten participants were recruited through the Liverpool Dockers Club, the Liverpool Football Club Social Club and the West Kirby Bowling Club. The ten participants were aged between 60 and 70 and comprised five males and five females.[6] All had a white British ethnicity and had experienced childhood in post-war Merseyside.

Individuals were either recruited instantly during the initial conversations in the community centre or via a snowball sampling approach based on word of mouth. This approach is a common, unobtrusive way of recruiting research participants from the community (Oral History Society, 2015). It involves one person talking to another and then perhaps passing on this information again until someone hears it who would like to take part in the research.

Three separate instances of snowballing occurred in two venues in Liverpool and one on the Wirral. It proved to be a flexible way of accessing individuals who wanted to take part in the research and who wanted to share their memories of childhood. The disadvantages of this approach include unintentional biases in the data caused by a potentially selective recruitment or the exclusion of individuals based on judgement (Crosby et al., 2006). In this instance the researcher could have chosen participants based on their enthusiasm and willingness to share a wealth of information; however, the researcher opted to recruit on a first come, first served basis and ceased taking on participants once she had reached her target of ten people. It is important to note that the researcher would not have excluded other volunteers if they had put their names forward; this would have been unethical and disrespectful.

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[6] This division in gender was by chance and not due to selection criteria. The participants were recruited on a voluntary basis.

Snowballing does not provide a cross-section of the population or give the opportunity for random selection; but it did successfully recruit participants, and provided ample scope for the exploration required for this study. There was no incidence of exclusion because people accessed peers based on age range and local geographic location. It is important to acknowledge that not all communities within Merseyside are represented in this study, and the researcher's choice of recruitment location has played a role in this. However, the study does not aim to generalise its findings to the wider population or provide a representation of Merseyside as a whole during the post-war years; rather, it hopes to capture the essence of unique childhood experiences shared through living memories. Generalising to the wider population would not have been feasible anyway, firstly due to the small sample size and secondly due to the memories being personal and unique to each individual. The study offers an exploratory insight from a reflective perspective. Ultimately, generalisability is not a goal of qualitative research (Higginbottom, 2004).

ii. Pre-interview conversations:

The researcher held brief pre-interview conversations with each of the participants either face-to-face or over the telephone in order to introduce herself and the research. Taylor and Kermode (2006) maintained that breaking the ice with participants before an interview and debriefing them afterwards are part of best practice and can offer clarity and reassurance to the participants. The research involved sharing personal information, so the researcher felt that it was necessary to hold initial conversations with the participants to put them at ease. Some researchers have argued that this approach is time consuming, although Liamputtong (2010, p.74) referred to it as a 'caring avenue for communication'. Consequently, it proved to be a valuable part of the preparation process, both for the participants and the researcher, enabling any issues, anxieties, and questions to be discussed before the interviews were conducted, and allowing the participants to give their informed consent. The researcher's informal and friendly conversational approach to recruitment established a rapport with the participants right from the start and made them feel

comfortable asking any questions they had regarding the interview. The researcher was able to gain their trust. Stein and Paterno (2001) explained that people can have shy barriers that can interfere with the information shared during an interview because the individual may hold back detailed information. This did not prove to be an issue because many of these barriers had been overcome during the pre-interview conversations. Although the conversations were brief jovial chats, they were a valuable opportunity to explain the study to each participant, who were informed of their role in the interview and that it would be recorded. This gave them an idea of what to expect on the day of the interview itself.

Stage Three: Research Design

i. One-to-one interviews:

The researcher decided to conduct semi-structured one-to-one interviews with the participants in a private, comfortable environment that would help them to recall personal childhood memories. Stinson and Kirk (2006, p.209) explained that work in the field of reminiscence can be 'structured, or unstructured, within a group or on an individual basis'. Reminiscence groups are a beneficial way for participants to share experiences and offer support, but the researcher felt that a focus group would potentially discourage the sharing of unique memories in this instance. Participants could have been influenced by each other's responses, thus skewing the information shared. Furthermore, participants might have been reluctant to share certain memories and might have felt uncomfortable talking frankly in an open forum. One-to-one interviews enabled the participants to follow their own train of thought and collected many unique memories. They also proved to be a more personal experience, and enabled the participants to focus on their own childhood in a private and respectful way.

ii. Establishing an interview schedule

The researcher decided to conduct two interviews per week over five weeks. This gave her time to transcribe the interview promptly after each interview had taken place, allowing her to add analytical and anecdotal

notes during transcription while the information was still fresh in her own mind. Also, interviewing is a lengthy process; it was important that the researcher was able to listen attentively, and breaks between the interviews gave her ample time to prepare for the next interview.

   iii.   Interview environment:

Gibson (1994) stressed the importance of ensuring that participants are comfortable and relaxed during the interview. OH interviews access personal information, so it is beneficial that they be conducted in a 'natural setting' in order to get the most out of the interview (Creswell, 1994, p.2). A 'natural setting' is one that is familiar to the participant and therefore most beneficial to the conduct of the interviews. The environment in which the interviews are conducted can hugely influence the way the participant feels and, in turn, affect the responses given. Finnegan (1992) maintained that oral expression is best achieved when verbal communication is valued and enjoyed. The preliminary discussions between the researcher and the participants were valuable for this process because they were jovial and light-hearted, with no pressure or obligation to take part in the research. The discussions broke the ice and initiated a rapport, which encouraged the participants to be open and frank in their discussions in the later interviews.

Thompson (2000) maintained that the objective of creating an OH is free expression, and that free expression flows once an individual is comfortable and confident enough to share their reminiscences. Accordingly, interviews were conducted in either the participants' homes or at their local community centres, ensuring that they felt at ease in familiar surroundings. In line with Gibson's (2011) advice to pay attention to small details when conducting lengthy interviews, the interviews were conducted over tea and cake (Gibson, 2011). The researcher maintains that building a rapport with participants and providing an

appropriate, safe environment[7] in which they can tell their stories enable them to feel at ease sharing their memories. The researcher can in turn reap the benefits of this approach by capturing authentic and detailed memories.

The researcher gave the participants the option of being interviewed in their local community centre, but this was noisy and disruptive at times. The researcher tried to minimise background noise, but interviewing in community centres made this near-impossible. The interviews that were conducted in the participants' own homes have less background noise and therefore better audio preservation and play back clarity.[8]

iv.   Setting up the equipment

When audio recording, it is best practice to check that the equipment is working properly. The participants were encouraged to practice with the equipment to familiarise themselves with how it worked. Each participant gave a short introduction to their interview that included their name, date of birth, and where they grew up on Merseyside.

It was important that the audio recorder was positioned at the correct distance from the participant to produce a clear recording. Some participants did not want to see the recorder because they felt that it would be off-putting, so it was placed to one side, out of sight, for these participants, which resulted in these recordings being much quieter. This was not a problem with the participants who held the recorder to their mouths.

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[7] Creating a safe environment in which people feel comfortable to reminiscence can initiate more open discussion (Singer et al., 2008).

[8] Many archivists refuse to accept audio recordings that have background noise (OHS, 2015). Cleaning up or editing the recordings is not an option either, because this is also frowned upon. Thus, the researcher must bear this in mind when conducting future research. Although she was able to comprehend the recordings for this study, she might find it challenging to find an archive in which she can deposit the recordings on completion; one option might be to set up an archive and website of her own.

Initially, many of the participants (n=8) were put off by the idea of being recorded and by the sound of their own voice, but they felt more relaxed after discussing this and having the opportunity to practice with the audio recorder. According to Schweitzer (2007), discussions about the reminiscence process can be used to create a supportive environment for reminiscence. Thus, the function and positioning of the recording equipment formed an important part of the discussion.

Stage Four: Oral History Interviews
i. OH interviews:

    Initially, semi-structured OH interviews were conducted with ten participants, aged between 60 and 70, on a one-to-one basis. Conducting research using peoples' reminiscences gives ordinary people the opportunity to voice and record personal, first hand, living memories of the past (Howarth, 1999). According to Humphries (1984), encouraging such sensitive reminiscence requires its own interview techniques. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) argued that OH affords the participant total control over the narrative presentation, either oral or written. However, this is not always the case, as Gibson (2011) explained: when conducting OH research, the power is vested in the researcher, who directs the agenda of the interview. In this instance, the researcher opted to follow her own intuition and allowed the participants to guide their interviews based on their trains of thought. The only guidance the researcher gave was an aide memoire that detailed four themes to discuss: family, education, society, and childhood.

The aide memoire proved to be useful for the researcher because it helped her to return the participants to the key themes if they went off on a tangent or if they lost their train of thought. Gibson (2011) explained that, in OH research, a prompt is seldom used and that personal stories are linked to documented history. However, due to the broad topic area, the researcher felt that it was necessary to provide some guidance to keep the interview on course. Gibson (2011) maintained that it is important to start with the person before the triggers. What she meant by this was that the researcher should allow the person to share his or her memories

freely before intervening with prompts. Once the reminiscence process starts, other memories begin to surface (Agrigho, 1998), and this can ease participants into the flow of reminiscing. This is why the aide memoire was particularly useful, because it enabled the participants to recall with a natural flow, but retained an unobtrusive reference of themes to follow when necessary.

Coleman (1991) emphasised the danger that the participants may construct their memories to convey what they believe the researcher wants to hear. A flexible approach to interviewing enabled the researcher to remain neutral and avoid directly guiding the participants' responses; the participants were given free reign and an open-microphone. Mitchell and Jolley (2012) emphasised that being flexible and using open-ended approaches to interviews can be an effective exploratory tool for researchers and enable them to capture spontaneous and valuable responses. The goal of OH is to document the historical experiences of individuals' everyday lives through the perspectives of those who experienced them first-hand, and this was successfully achieved by this research.

It is important to acknowledge that there are limitations to the use of semi-structured or unstructured interviews: for instance, both are time consuming and create vast amounts of data (O'Leary, 2004). It is essential that the researcher sustains direction and focus to the interview in order to collect relevant responses. By contrast, structured interviews are more stringent, lack flexibility, use predetermined questions, and do not often explore the wider perceptions of the participant (Downs, 1999; Silverman, 2013).

There are other approaches that could have been used to collect childhood memories, such as surveys, questionnaires, or focus groups (Green, 2000; O'Leary, 2004; Gray, 2013). However, the researcher felt that semi-structured one-to-one interviews were the most comprehensive approach to collecting memories, and this approach successfully collected detailed information for the analysis stage of the research. The OH interviews provided insight into the past and proved to be an important analytical tool for exploring historic experiences. Furthermore, such recollections can be preserved for future posterity.

Although the Oral History Society provides guidelines for the conduct of OH interviews, particularly for archival purposes, researchers have used a variety of approaches and methods to collect oral testimony on an ad hoc basis. This research is no different in that sense: the researcher conducted her interviews with some input from OHS guidelines, but on the whole based on her own intuition, which allowed it to develop and be shaped by the participants' responses.

The researcher was aware of her eclectic approach, which is based in psychology, history, gerontology, identity studies, and other fields. OH has interdisciplinary roots and this also influenced the art of interviewing and enriched the researcher's approach to conducting the interviews. As previously explained, although there was some compromise on sound quality, the well-being of the participants always came first. It was essential that the participants felt comfortable in their surroundings, which sometimes meant recording in a noisy, community centre setting.

ii. Analysis:

Themes were organised into groups using NVivo software and analysed systematically using colour coding to highlight the themes. NVivo enabled a systematic exploration of the transcripts and gave ease of access and organisation to the rich and in-depth data. NVivo was invaluable for handling the vast amount of data collected. Thematic analysis was used to explore themes related to the social conditions of childhood in post-war Merseyside. Phase one of the research findings highlighted emergent themes and the discourse used to depict childhood experiences.

It should be acknowledged that the discussion of findings under thematic analysis is predominantly the researcher's own interpretation of the data (King and Horrocks, 2010). According to King and Horrocks (2010, p.149) '"Theme" implies some degree of repetition – an issue raised just once (however, powerfully) should not be called a theme, although it may still play a part in the analysis'. So, although the researcher highlighted themes

that consistently emerged throughout the interviews, she also pinpointed individual findings that were of particular importance, such as reflective comments or unique childhood memories. The analysis of the findings uncovered wider themes (than those of the aide memoire), including religion, corporal punishment, juvenile delinquency, identity formation, morals, and values.

The study had a turning-point after the first phase of interviews due to emergence of recurrent themes, particularly reflective thoughts, feelings, and opinions. The researcher considered the findings from the first set of interviews and felt there was a general air of incompletion that required further investigation, so conducted the second phase of interviews. These interviews were undertaken using a RW approach and focused on the reminiscence process, the impact of reminiscing, and the emotions experienced whilst recalling childhood memories. The participants themselves recognised the importance of the reflective anecdotes they shared, and it was therefore essential to acknowledge this as a significant function and outcome of the reminiscence process. The researcher claimed that the construction of memories during reminiscence naturally stimulated reflectivity in the participant's responses. As they shared their oral histories, the participants found that they naturally attached meaning to their memories and commenting on how reminiscing made them feel. Many of the participants (n=9) also consistently made comparisons between 'then' and 'now' (the past and the present). Reflectivity became an important part of the process and enabled participants to focus on their own lives and understand past experiences.

Bornat (2001, p.226) stated, based on her own experience of research, that:
The results are narratives which include moral, as much as social and political, explanations for behaviour and which enabled us to see how action recorded in larger data sets is explained and justified at an interpersonal level.

Human beings attach meaning to memories. It was important for the researcher to have an awareness of the historical and social context and also be aware of the potential impact reminiscence can have on the person remembering. Bornat (2001) believed that exploring both reminiscence and OH can validate findings and allow the researcher to make broader interpretations, which may include: having an awareness of the psychological implications facing older people during reminiscence; being aware of the participant's mood on the day of the interview; and how character and personality can affect the way in which a person constructs and shares his or her reminiscences. Having an awareness of other factors, including age, time of recall, the interrogative nature of capturing memories, and the interactive process of the interview, was also important. With this in mind, the researcher referred back to the Heuristic Model of Reminiscence (Webster et al., 2010) and considered how best to approach a set of revisiting interviews. At this stage, the researcher was certain that a second phase of interviews was necessary if the research was to reach its full potential. This also gave the participants and the researcher the opportunity to reflect and discuss the impact of taking part in the research.

Stage Five: Reminiscence work interviews

i.   MTM:

Before conducting the second phase of interviews, the researcher created a 'Memory Tree Model' (MTM) as a pictorial tool to support reminiscence. The MTM helped reflective memory retrieval because it facilitated the construction and organisation of the participants' childhood memories. The researcher contends that the MTM is an aid to uncovering buried memories and enables participants to make sense of their reminiscences.

Visual or 'pictor techniques' are used in qualitative research to explore experiences or perspectives, particularly in the field of healthcare (King et al., 2013, p.3). One such technique encourages individuals to place arrow shaped cards with key words written on them onto a large white sheet of paper to help them to tell their story (King et al., 2013). Essentially, human beings are meaning makers and this technique enables individuals to make

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sense of their memories before they share narrative explanations of them. The MTM works in a similar way: it helps participants to organise their thoughts before they share them. However, when using the MTM, the participant chooses the key words or pictures they want to display on the memory tree. The difference is that the participants are given a set structure to use, but they use it in different ways. None of the participants hesitated to use the tool.

The Memory Tree Model

Post-War Childhood Memories.

Reflectivity of the Reminiscence Process.

Participant Ref: _____   Duration of Interview:_____

D.O.B:_____   Participant Signature:_____
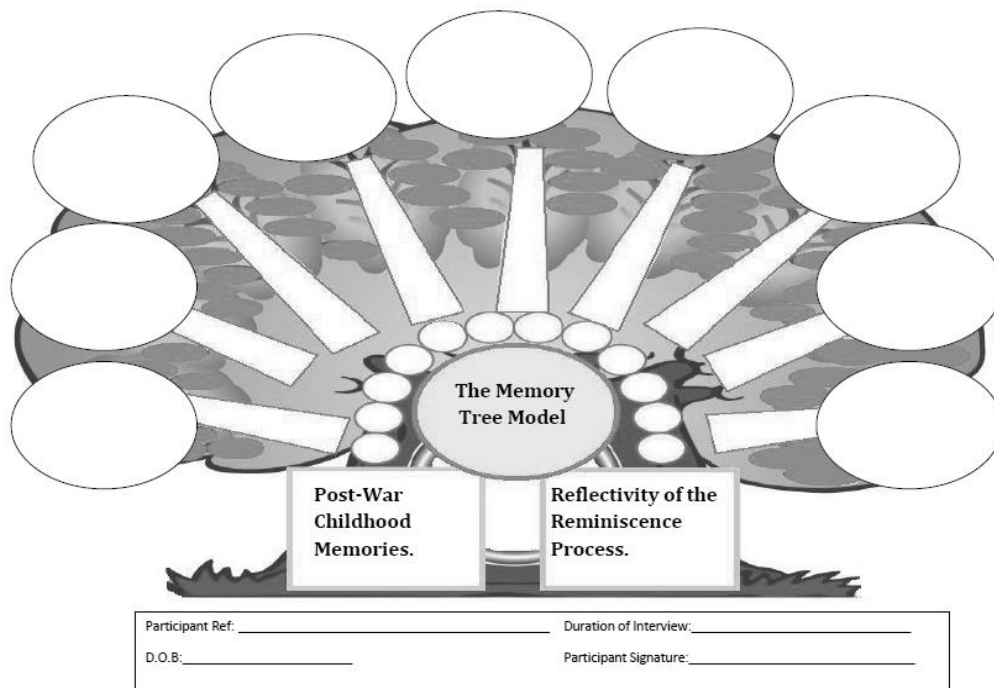
Figure 2: Memory Tree Model (MTM) [9]

The researcher intended to use the MTM flexibly in accordance with the needs of the individual. The researcher explained this to the participants, off the record before beginning the audio recording of the interview. The participants were each given as long as they needed to think about a childhood memory (which they had already shared in the first phase of interviews), reflect, and write or draw onto the MTM. The MTM is made up of branches and leaves where the participants can write or draw details (to be used as triggers) before the beginning of their second interview.

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[9] For the actual size used please see appendix A

ii. Revisiting interviews:

The researcher left a six month gap between the first and second phases of interviews. This allowed time for reflection and gave a significant amount of time for the participants to notice the impact of the first interview before they revisited their childhood memories for a second time. The participants chose a particular memory that they had shared during the first interview and then reflected on the impact of the reminiscence process itself.

iii. RW questions:

The intention of the second phase of interviews was to encourage the participants to reflect on the reminiscence experience and consider the impact it had had on them. The participants were given their transcripts from the first interview; they read them over and confirmed that they were indeed their responses. Each participant was then given a MTM (see appendix A). The MTM is a self-supporting tool for the participants to use to map their childhood memories. The participants filled in the branches of the MTM in the preparation time provided with triggers, thoughts, and emotions so that they would have a tool to refer to during their recorded interview. The participants were given ample time and privacy to complete the MTM and reflect on their thoughts. The participants were asked to choose one childhood memory that they had shared in the first interview as a focus point for reflection. In doing so, they engaged in a reflective process that helped them to organise their thoughts in a more structured way, prompting more in-depth responses during the recorded interview.

The participants used the diagram in different ways.[10] Some opted to fill in the sections from left to right and referred to it as a story with a beginning, middle, and end. Others chose a less structured approach, filling in the branches and circles with words as they were triggered spontaneously in their mind. Mrs E chose to draw pictures to illustrate their reminiscences. The MTM was designed so

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[10] The participants filled in the MTM privately, but explained the process in more detail to the researcher in response to question 6. Some found the process particularly beneficial, while others preferred the open-microphone approach used in the OH interview. However, all of the participants wanted to share the reflective responses that accompanied their childhood memories because they wanted to comprehend what those memories meant to them.

that participants could maximise their own preparation time whilst spontaneously jotting down notes. It was interesting to hear about the different ways in which the participants had chosen to use it (without being prompted or guided by the researcher). Once the researcher had started recording, she proceeded to ask the participant a series of seven questions as follows:

RW Questions

1. Could you give me a brief overview of the memory you have chosen, as you remember it? You can use the memory tree to help you, if you wish.

2. Do you remember your feelings at that time?

3. How did you feel recalling the memory just now?

4. Can you tell me how you felt after the first interview?

5. Has taking part in the interview impacted upon you in any way?

6. How did you find using the Memory Tree Model for reflection, in comparison to the spontaneity (open-microphone) last time?

7. Are there any final thoughts you would like to add about taking part in this research?

If the researcher had not chosen to embark on a second phase of interviews, then a substantial amount of reflective findings would have been excluded. The second interview enabled each participant to reflect on how engaging in the OH interview and reminiscing made them feel. According to Howarth (1999), OH is an opportunity to record very personal memories and experiences. This creates a need for its own interview techniques that are sensitive to accessing reflective reminiscences (Humphries, 1984). It is common practice in descriptive and experiential investigations to adapt tried and tested techniques to one's own research (Porter, 1998; Astedt-Kurki et al., 2001; Maggs-Rapport, 2001). The researcher contends that it is a researcher's responsibility both to adopt and utilise tried and tested methods and to create innovative techniques for collecting and capturing reminiscences.

Perks (2006) explained that conducting a second phase of interviews in OH research is common practice. However, to do this the researcher chose to adopt a RW approach in the second phase of interviewing to capture the reflective responses effectively. This proved beneficial in many ways. Firstly, the participants had a more relaxed approach to the second interview than they did to the first. However, this could also be due to their increased familiarity with the researcher and the interview process. Secondly, the participants explored their memories in more detail and used more emotional expression. As previously discussed, the researcher guided the second interview using a series of questions to explore the participants' reflective thoughts about the reminiscence process and thereby prompt more deep and detailed responses.

The interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 1 hour, and were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Additional information that the participants shared after the audio recorder was turned off was jotted down as field notes. From a journalistic perspective, Henderson (2006) highlighted that there are weaknesses involved in capturing off-the-record material such as lack of accuracy. Furthermore, Sommer and Quinlan (2009) suggested that only directly recorded material should be captured or stored. Details can be misinterpreted or lost when the researcher tries to listen to and write down comments simultaneously. However, the researcher felt that the information shared after the audio-recorder was turned off was valuable and relevant to the study, and therefore made a conscious decision to capture it in a written format. In support of this, Lindlof and Taylor (2010) stressed the importance of including field notes in order to capture and document additional valuable details. The second interviews collected many valuable details that had not been shared during the first interviews and enabled the participants to take an evaluative approach to their experience of reminiscing; the MTM supported this process.

This style of interviewing had encouraged the participants to be reflective, so they naturally wanted to continue these conversations long after the recorder had been turned off. The researcher felt a duty of care and responsibility to listen to and engage in these conversations, and asked the participants permission to jot down

additional off the record comments if she felt that they were particularly poignant or relevant.

iv. Analysis:

Webster, Bohlmeijer and Westerhof (2010) developed a Heuristic Model of Reminiscence as a framework for their work on reminiscence research and the reminiscence process during aging (see figure 3). The researcher has chosen this model as a framework for analysing the RW findings based on triggers, modes, context, moderators, functions, and research/practice outcomes. In this instance, the *triggered* reminiscence was based on the research situation itself; however, in the second interview participants were also triggered by being prompted to complete the MTM and by the series of questions. The mode element of the model was public, based on the idea of sharing memories. The model assumes that memories are stored in the context of different social circumstances. These categorised memories are then filtered through a variety of themes, which in the first phase of interviews were the researcher's chosen variables, including, family, education, society, and childhood, and in the second by the participants' own thoughts and feelings. Moderators in this instance were pre-planned based on age, gender (which was coincidentally equal), and ethnicity, which was British, and had experienced their childhood in Merseyside. Functions of reminiscence were analysed from the second phase of findings based on the ways in which the participants used reminiscence or felt that reminiscence had impacted upon them. This study was conducted to consider both the research and practice outcomes of the findings, which are explored in the discussion and concluding chapters.

Like the OH interviews, the RW interviews were organised using NVivo software. The findings were discussed in relation to the outcomes identified by the Heuristic Model of Reminiscence (Webster et al., 2010). A heuristic approach enabled the researcher to use experience-based techniques to learn and discover throughout the interview process itself. For example, as described earlier, field notes of any observations and reflections that the researcher felt were relevant to the study were made during the interviews.

As King and Horrocks (2010, p.153) advised, 'Highlight anything in the transcript that might help you to understand the participant's views, experiences and perceptions as they relate to the topic under investigation'. These field notes enabled the researcher to do this, and using them while analysing the findings proved particularly beneficial. The notes aided the researcher in understanding the memories and reflections discussed during the interviews, and made for a comprehensive exploration.

A heuristic approach to memory sharing was an effective tool for capturing, analysing, and preserving reminiscences and living memories. From childhood, humans have an innate ability to experience, store, and recall information (Baddeley, et al., 2002), which is stored in what can be viewed as metaphorical files and then constructed into a narrative form before it is shared with others (Webster et al., 2010). For people to access information, they must first undergo a process of retrieval using triggers. The memories accessed using these triggers are then shared, and are often referred to in RW as 'modes'.

Webster et al. (2010, p.532) believed that the reminiscence process allows humans to research a 'psychosocial goal'. For example, the process gradually leads to more in-depth recall of the past, which in turn allows a person to achieve or experience an outcome such as increased self-esteem, a sense of self-identity, or self-worth. It is important to acknowledge that these outcomes may not always be positive and that the process can also uncover negative responses, unresolved issues, or trigger anxiety (Butler, 1963; Webster et al., 2010). Webster et al. (2010) recognised that memory recall uncovers multi-dimensional themes and therefore a variety of thoughts and emotions can be triggered erratically throughout the process.

Research outcomes, as stated in the Heuristic Model of Reminiscence, are based on using reminiscences as information for analysis in order to answer questions about a particular phenomenon or to understand better or create theoretical interpretations.
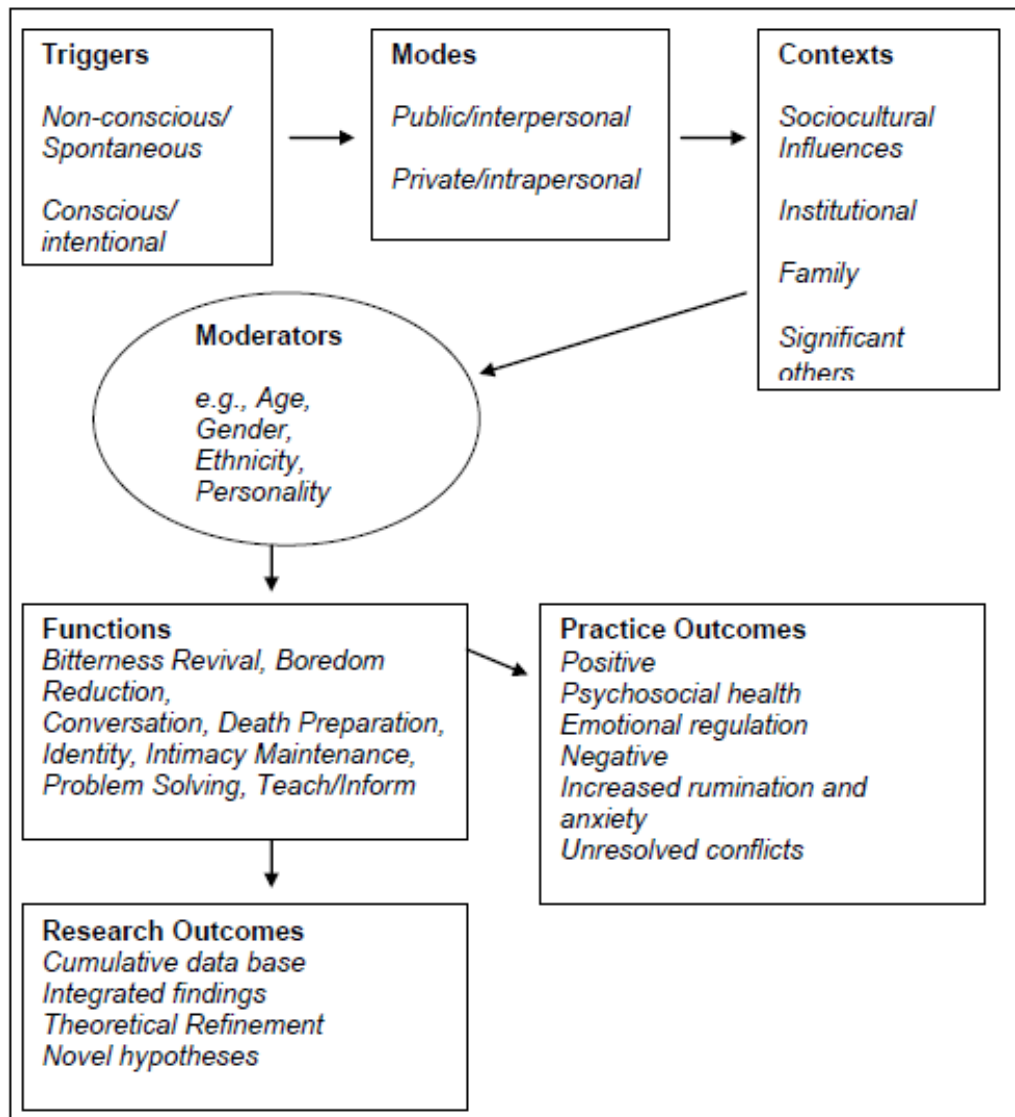
Figure 3: The Heuristic Model of Reminiscence (Webster et al., 2010).

The Heuristic Model of Reminiscences details research and practice outcomes and states the significant functions of reminiscence. In 1997 Webster developed the Reminiscence Functions Scale (RFS), which consists of eight functions of reminiscence.

1. Boredom reduction.
2. Death preparation: Value life and become less fearful of death.
3. Identity preservation: Discovery and a better understanding or sense of who we are.

4. Problem solving: Drawing on strengths and experience from the past for coping in the present.

5. Conversation: Rediscovering common bonds between old and new friends.

6. Intimacy maintenance: Remembering personally significant people who are no longer present in their life.

7. Bitterness revival: Sustaining memories of old pain and justifying negative thoughts and emotions.

8. Teach/inform: Teaching young people, including family members, about their values and history.

(Webster, 1997).

Cappeliez et al. (2008) regrouped Webster's functions to represent both positive and negative outcomes.

1. Private reminiscence with positive outcomes:

- Identity preservation

- Problem solving

- Death preparation

2. Private reminiscence with negative outcomes:

- Boredom reduction

- Intimacy maintenance

- Bitterness revival

3. Public interaction, pro-social reminiscence with positive social outcomes:

- Conversation

- Teach/inform

(Cappeliez et al., 2008).

Cappeliez et al. (2008) used cognitive behavioural therapy and reminiscence in their research on therapeutic RW. They found that reminiscence helped with problem solving and aided the evaluation of emotions triggered by the recalled memories. Although this particular study did not intend to be therapeutic in nature, all of the participants felt that there was some therapeutic response to their engagement in reminiscence. The second phase of findings are discussed in

Chapters Six and Seven in relation to these functions of reminiscence and to the research and practice outcomes identified by Webster et al. (2010).

Stage Six: Dissemination of findings

i. Memoirs:

    The OH findings are presented as a series of three memoirs, which describe the most poignant themes that emerged from the findings. Due to the limited word count, the memoirs are comprised of short extracts from the participants' responses to give the reader a flavour of the candid and authentic testimonies shared during the interviews. Some of the initial reflective responses shared during the first phase of interviews are also summarised in these memoirs.

ii. Reflective Chapters:

    The researcher has written two reflective chapters which explore the role of the reminiscence process, including the findings collected during the RW interviews. These chapters analyse and discuss the impact reminiscence had on the participants within the framework of the functions and outcomes of the Heuristic Model of Reminiscence (Webster et al., 2010).

iii. Disseminating findings in a public forum:

    Finally, the researcher wanted to bring the research back to the people of Merseyside; she was given the opportunity to share her findings in a public forum at the Museum of Liverpool Life (MLL) over a two-day event. The findings were exhibited in a written format using extracts from the transcripts and an audio format using audio clips taken from the interviews. The audio clips were played on a CD player with ear phones so that the attendees could listen to them privately in a comfortable seating area. The event created an ambience and forum for the sharing of memory and encouraged people from different generations and cultures to converse and share experiences from their past (see Chapter Eight).

Transcribing oral responses

The researcher hand-typed each of the transcripts by playing the interview through WavePad audio editing software on the computer. This was very time consuming, but was necessary: although there is a variety of transcription software on the market, it is sometimes unreliable, particularly when the accent on the recording is broad or the sound quality of the recordings is limited. Transcribing is a very tiring and lengthy process and the researcher listened to the recordings four or five times to ensure that the transcripts were written verbatim.

In OH research, transcripts are often edited; the researcher chose not to tamper with the transcripts because she wanted to present them authentically with the participants' chosen phrases and grammar. However, the researcher did not attempt to reproduce the participants' accents phonetically because this can be confusing for the reader and cause meaning to be lost.

Verifying the transcripts

Once they were complete, the transcripts were shown to the participants so that they could verify their responses (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004) – after all, who better to verify the findings than those who shared the information in the first place (Pitney and Parker, 2009)? Each of the participants were surprised by the details they had shared, but also felt that there were memories they had left out. One of the participants requested that part of her transcript/recording be deleted and withheld from the study because she felt that the information she had divulged was disrespectful towards her father's memory, and she regretted saying it. In keeping with ethical practice this wish was fulfilled.

Analysis of both approaches

A range of methods can be used to analyse qualitative research findings. According to Higginbottom (2004), the type of analysis applied is determined by the methodology selected and the chosen research topic. This research study employed a qualitative interview (Bryman, 2012) that used both OH and RW approaches in two separate phases; thus, two phases of analysis took place. The

first explored the social history content of the OH interviews: emergent themes, similarities, differences, trends, and some unique memories which have not been shared before. The second explored the impact of reminiscing about childhood and how this made the participants feel.

Thematic analysis enabled the researcher to develop a deeper appreciation of the findings and of the patterns that emerged from them (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). This was an appropriate analytical approach for this type of study, in which the researcher takes on board the participants' own 'theory of action and expressed identity' (Webster and Haight, 2002, p.37). In this instance, the researcher chose to analyse the data thematically in relation to the emergent themes and against the categories of the heuristic model of reminiscence.

The first phase of findings was thematically analysed using the categories on the aide memoire: family, education, society, and childhood. Additional themes emerged within these categories, and the participants also consistently shared and expressed reflective comments and emotions. This reflectivity encouraged the researcher to conduct further interviews.

Although some of the themes overlapped, the researcher divided them into separate memoir chapters, discussing each in turn. The memoirs each cover a broad theme in depth, and present the participants' testimonies in order to portray childhood experiences on Merseyside. The researcher adopted a systematic and organised approach to organising the broad data by basing her analysis on the approach of King and Horroch (2010).

| Stage one: descriptive coding

Read through transcript
Highlight relevant material and attach brief comments
Define descriptive codes
Repeat for each transcript, refining descriptive codes as you progress |
| Stage two: interpretive coding

Cluster descriptive codes
Interpret meaning of clusters in relation to researcher question and disciplinary position
Apply interpretive codes to full data set. |
| Stage three: overarching themes

Derive key themes for the data set as a whole by considering interpretive themes from the theoretical and/or practical stance of project
Construct a diagram to represent the relationships between the levels of coding in the analysis. |

Quality checks at any stage of the process.

Figure 4: Stages in the process of thematic analysis
(King and Horrocks, 2010, p.153)

The researcher constructed a diagram that represents the relationships between the various emergent themes in order to assess the similarities and differences. A diagram was constructed for the analysis of both phase one and two of the interviews (see appendix B).

Participatory research

Participatory research (PR) approaches have been used in community based research projects for many years (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). PR is a collaborative process that enables all those involved in the research to share in the decision making process and in guiding the direction of the research. There are

many different approaches to PR but the one most suited to this research is 'Community Based Participatory Research' (CBPR) which is used across a variety of disciplines and 'generally operates from a value base, derived from a commitment to sharing power and resources and working for beneficial outcomes for all participants' (Banks et al., 2013, p.263).

Although the researcher had not intended the research to be governed in this way, the findings from the first phase of interviews prompted a new line of inquiry, which afforded the exploration of the impact reminiscence had on both the researcher and the participants. As a result of this, the researcher embraced the opinions and suggestions of the participants to accommodate their experiences of the reminiscence process itself.

A CBPR approach lends itself to this type of research as it enables the participants to make sense of their reminiscences and the way recalling their childhood memories impacted upon them; the participants used this information to inform the way they used the MTM during the second phase of interviews. When adopting a participatory approach, researchers might involve the participants in creating research questions or even consult them when creating models, strategies and the underpinning methodology of the research (Krishnaswamy, 2004). In this instance, the participants were able to share their opinions on the responses shared in the final dissemination rather than the methodological structure. However, a participatory approach was deemed the most ethical way of demonstrating the value and importance of the participants' role in the research. Not only this, but listening to the participants' perspective provided the researcher with a better understanding of the memories they had shared and the significance such memories had on the rest of their lives.

CBPR has grown in popularity in the UK in more recent years due to increased initiatives being geared towards public engagement across a variety of organisations including educational institutions, museums and local government (Banks et al., 2013). CBPR has relevance and value in the public domain and

encourages local communities to take ownership of their own progression whilst preserving their social heritage.

Ethical issues of CBPR

A central component to CBPR is the power relationship between the researcher and the researched; tensions can arise when boundaries and roles become blurred. This can also prove to be an issue regarding the ownership of data or findings including rights to anonymity, privacy and confidentiality. In this research the participants gave informed consent to confirm that they wanted to take part in the research and also signed ownership of their responses to the researcher. In CBPR research integrity is important; emotions can run high and participants can change their mind about taking part. All participants were consistently reminded that they could withdraw from taking part in the study at any time and that if they did, any information they shared would be destroyed. The participants had some influence on the direction of the research; however they did not co-produce the research questions or the underpinning methodology of the study. The participants felt that their involvement in the research had empowered them and made them feel that their contribution was valued and important.

Establishing a rapport and research roles

According to Finlay (2003, p.ix), the relationship between the researcher and the participant is a '...thoughtful self-aware analysis of the intersubjective dynamics between researcher and the researched'. The effect of the interview process on both the researcher and the participants has become an important subject in OH. The relationship can affect both the responses and the researcher's interpretation of them (Yow, 1994). Thus, the subjective nature of the research is a significant part of the research process itself (Ellis and Flaherty, 1992). McTaggart (1997) noted that authentic findings emerge from a collaborative process. Lather (1991) believed that this collaborative process is a reciprocal relationship in which both the researcher and the participant aim for a shared goal. In this study, the shared goal was to record and present post-war childhood memories. However, the reflective responses of the participants became an integral part of this journey.

When conducting research with people, it is important to understand that the interview process can sometimes be daunting. Schweitzer (2007, p.41) expressed that: 'The one-to-one interview can feel like a slightly daunting prospect for a less confident informant, who may worry that his or her testimony will be found wanting in some way'. It was evident from all of the interviews that the participants felt that their responses were lacking or that the information they were sharing would not be of interest to anyone. The researcher tried to dispel the participants' concerns by explaining the importance of preserving oral histories because they give a unique insight into lived experiences from times gone by. This seemed to reassure the participants and instil them with confidence and an awareness of the importance of sharing their memories.

Working in partnership with the researcher or research organisation can influence the interpretation and direction of participants' responses. Bornat (2001, p.230) argued that 'Oral history's origins within the discipline of sociology pull it in the direction of academic research and the norms of academic life tend not to recognise partnership with subjects as a necessary part of the research process'. Partnership tends to be related to work-based practice and RW, but avoiding partnership in research with people is difficult. The participants took an interest in the study and wanted to read their transcripts, and embark on a collaborative input, by sharing their ideas and opinions. Frisch (1990) referred to this as 'shared authority,' whereby the participant has a say in what aspects of their contribution is shared. Some researchers allow participants to play a significant collaborative role in their research through equal partnership in the form of conversational interviewing. However, the interpretive process can be heavily influenced by the participants at the analysis stage of such research. It is important to acknowledge that, during reminiscence, the personal disclosure of information can lead to misinterpretation. Bornat (2001, p.237) explained that:

> There is evidence of shared endeavour in presenting the outcomes of these two areas of work. The roles of the director, editor, designer, facilitator, academic are basically the same. Across these groups, however, the quality

of individual collaboration practice and commitment to shared ownership in the product is what makes for differences.

This, along with the rapport built with the participants, encouraged more open and frank responses from all the participants. This was particularly useful during the second interview, which focused on the participants' personal feelings and reflections. Reiss and Judd (2000) maintained that remaining non-judgemental and knowing when to listen and not speak were essential elements of rapport building because they ensure that the participant is not interrupted prematurely, avoiding potentially losing precious findings about the particular theme being discussed (O'Donoghue, 2003). This was a key skill acquired by the researcher, who, more often than not, could not get a word in edgeways.

The reflective researcher acknowledges her personal influence on the research

The word 'reflective' is used to describe the process of looking back over the actions or thoughts involved in practices or occurrences (Fook, 1999). To reflect can also imply a reconsideration of 'meaning'. In this instance, 'reflective' is used to refer to the exploration of the impact of taking part in the research and the emotions triggered by the reminiscence process. Reflectivity lends itself to reminiscence research because it enables the researcher to consider the impact of the research on the participants and also his or her own role in the research design, the data collection, and the interpretation of the findings. This approach adds a holistic quality that cannot be achieved through other forms of research. Maines et al. (2008) described the importance of locating the researcher within the research. Similarly, Klenke (2008) explained that it is essential to have an awareness of the impact of a researcher's involvement, particularly in OH and RW, but ultimately in any research with people.

Reflective research almost always remains a collaborative process, at varying levels, between the researcher and the participant. Initially, collaboration involves finding a balance between listening and talking that allows the participant time to reflect as well as narrate. Adequate interaction between the researcher and the

participant is vital in order to break down boundaries and aid natural and relaxed memory recall (Valentine, 2002). This process varies between OH and RW. Usually in OH research the researcher leads the interview, whereas in RW research the interview tends to be more of a negotiation between the researcher and the participant. In this study the researcher took a flexible approach and allowed the participants to guide the OH interviews by following their own train of thought and then used questions to guide the RW interviews. This seemed to be an appropriate way to conduct both OH and RW interviews and the participants responded well to both approaches.

Collecting and listening to reminiscences is a thought provoking experience for the researcher: it offers the opportunity to gain insight into another life course and a series of unique personal experiences. Murphy-Shigematsu (2002, p.13) referred to this as 'empathic experiencing'. When the researcher 'experiences' the participants' recollection of memories, it can trigger memories in the researcher's own thoughts. In turn, this can trigger emotion for both the researcher and the participant. Memories are lived experiences which are steeped in emotion. These emotions had an impact during the interviews and a significantly greater impact while the researcher was transcribing the interviews. Listening to the interviews for a second time enabled the researcher to focus on the words, meaning, and tone of voice more intently and she found herself laughing one moment and crying the next; these memories were truly funny, explicitly heart wrenching, and extremely touching. Kennedy (2001, p.125) called the oral historian a 'secondary witness' to the reliving of the experience encountered by the eye witness sharing it. She refers to this experience as having an 'affective nature' for the researcher (Kennedy, 2001, p.125), and it is important to acknowledge that such research can and did have an impact on the researcher too.

The researcher found that listening to the audio versions of the interviews enabled her to build a familiarity with the shared memories and thereby gain a much deeper appreciation and comprehension of them. It was evident that each participant had engaged in reflection by embarking on a mission of meaning making because they questioned the impact childhood experiences had on their

identity and their adult lives. Tone of voice, which is lost in transcription, plays a role in the expression of emotion (Roberts et al., 2004). In an attempt to preserve it, the researcher made annotations about the participants' emotions as she analysed the findings. This enabled the researcher to read the testimonies in the context in which they were shared and also helped to identify the participants' reflective responses. Noting the emotional contributions proved particularly beneficial for comprehending humorous anecdotes, the meaning of which was sometimes unclear from the transcripts because it was contained in the participants' sarcastic tone, which can often hold dual meaning. According to (Frisch, 1990, p.26), 'By studying how experience, memory, and history become combined in and digested by people who are the bearers of their own history and that of their culture, oral history opens up a powerful perspective; it encourages us to stand somewhat outside of the cultural forms in order to observe these workings'.

When interpreting written data, the researcher can unintentionally bias the analysis of the findings. Gray (2013) maintained that it is essential that the researcher remain objective in order to avoid interviewer bias. This can also be the case during the interview itself: for example, the researcher may convey a positive reaction to certain response, therefore encouraging the interview to follow a particular line of inquiry. Similarly, the participant may provide answers that they feel are appropriate or expected by the interviewer (Mitchell and Jolley, 2012). Just because this research implemented a flexible and reflective approach does not mean that such biases were no longer a consideration – in fact, quite the opposite. A reflective stance encouraged a high awareness of the importance of objectivity and highlighted the researcher's own responsibility in this process.

The involvement of the researcher in such research is inevitable due to its conversational nature. It was important for the researcher to manage her level of involvement to ensure that she kept the influence of her own perspectives and opinions to a minimum. Thus, from the start, the researcher explained that there would be minimal guidance in the first interviews based on themes in the form of an aide memoire; the second interview was partly self-directed, using the MTM,

and partly directed by the researcher, who asked questions to gauge the participants' reflective thoughts about the reminiscence process. Prompts were used when necessary, but the researcher did not intervene during silent moments, instead giving the participants a moment to pause and reflect on their thoughts.

Smith (2012, p.486) maintained that OH 'affords rich insight into the reasons behind the decisions people make that would not be possible via more structured approaches'. Reminiscence research has positive benefits, but, ultimately, it enables the participants to make sense of their own memories and gives them the opportunity to reflect on the impact of reminiscing.

It is important to note that many researchers still do not comprehend the importance of the reminiscence experience, for either the participant or themselves; they also fail to recognise the therapeutic qualities that may accompany the experience (Bornat, 2001). The effects of the reminiscence process were particularly significant in the findings of this study and are discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Using heuristic inquiry as a theoretical framework

> 'Heuristic inquiry attempts to discover the nature and meaning of phenomenon through internal pathways of self, using the processes of self-reflection, exploration, and elucidation of the nature of phenomenon that is being studied' (Djuraskovic and Arthur, 2010, p.1572).

Although a heuristic approach to research is flexible in nature, there are various rules that the research must adhere to. Firstly, individuals need to be open-minded and exploratory in their approach; heuristics is about discovery. Secondly, the direction of the research and research process is susceptible to change- this was central to the researcher's approach as the research took an alternative line of inquiry after the first phase of data collection. According to Kleining and Witt (2000) 'changes of this sort should be regarded as a positive sign of accumulation of knowledge' (p.2). Enabling these changes to occur did accumulate a wealth of knowledge whilst proving to be supportive for the participants during their period

of reflection. Thirdly, different research methods can be utilised to collect data across the particular phenomenon (theme) being studied. Finally, 'The analysis is directed toward discovery of similarities' (Kleining and Witt, 2000). In this research, this started by grouping the similarities or emergent themes and this was then disseminated as memoir chapters to present the findings within this thesis. The researcher was the *meaning maker* of the stories told and the journey of experience is one that is shared with the participants (Moustakas, 1990).

According to Djuraskovic and Arthur (2010) there should be six phases to the heuristic research process, followed by validation of the research:

1. *Initial Engagement-* this involved the researcher immersing oneself in sharing the experience of the researched. In this instance, the researcher experienced her own childhood in Merseyside but also she found transcribing the interview responses a very moving and emotional experience and felt she relieved the experiences with the participants.

2. *Immersion-* this second stage required the researcher to fully comprehend the experiences and relate to the particular culture or phenomenon being explored.

3. *Incubation-* required the researcher to take a step back from the research. The researcher did this after both the first and second phase of interviews; she left adequate time to reflect on the findings before creating the memoir chapters. This then enabled her to move towards the illumination stage of heuristics.

4. *Illumination-* this stage of the research was reflective and involved drawing out themes from the findings. It was a process of discovery that the participants also shared during the second interviews and used the MTM to help support this process. '*Theme making'* involved drawing out the commonalities and differences between the childhood experiences (see Chapter Seven).

5. *Explication-* is the analytical stage of the heuristic process. This stage required 'a deep examination of themes and qualities that have surfaced during the illumination phase' (Djuraskovic and Arthur, 2010, p.1578).

This enabled the emergence of key themes, patterns as the meaning making occurred (see Chapter Five).

6. *Creative synthesis and validation of the heuristic research*- finally, the research was validated; the participants read their transcripts to confirm their responses. This also gave them the opportunity to withdraw any information that they did not wish to share. Additionally, the researcher decided to disseminate or present the themes discovered in a creative way. This was not merely presenting the data in written format but enabling the human experience to come to life. This was achieved by creating an interactive event at the Museum of Liverpool Life (see Chapter Eight). The event enabled further memory sharing which prompted others to engage in their own heuristic inquiry.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed how the research evolved from an OH project into a multi-method study that used both OH and RW interviews. It has explored the various stages of the research and detailed the way in which the researcher has conducted the research to capture and present childhood memories. The framework that underpins the analysis has been outlined in order to provide clarity about the interpretation. Exploring the advantages and disadvantages and the strengths and weaknesses of OH and RW approaches enabled the researcher to make an informed decision and choose the appropriate methodology for the study. This chapter has outlined the research process in its entirety and provided insight into the research journey experienced by both the participants and the researcher. The researcher contends that other researchers should strive for rigour and not be afraid to follow their own research journey, allowing for flexibility and natural changes to gain the best research outcome. The chapter has highlighted the challenges of conducting both OH and RW approaches to research. Bornat (2001, p.219) referred to these approaches as 'parallel universes' because they have many similarities. The research incorporated elements from both approaches, firstly interviewing participants as an oral historian, collecting oral histories and giving them a voice and secondly by conducting interviews to explore the

reflective responses further using a RW approach that considered how reminiscing about childhood made the participants feel. Both approaches are interrogative because they collect personal data using interviews. The chapter has explored the heuristic context in which the participants responded during interviews. 'For oral history, the older person has been viewed *as* the source of evidence; for reminiscence and life review the older person, who they were and who they are now, *is* the evidence' (Bornat, 2001, p.238). A qualitative method was the most appropriate approach to capture memories, social experiences, and perceptions (Mason, 2002; Green, 2004; O'Leary, 2004; Gray, 2013; Silverman, 2013; Marshall and Rossman, 2014). The researcher has explored the different ways of undertaking OH and RW and found that reminiscence is a tool for communicating, enriching, and providing coping strategies and is also concerned with accessing, preserving, presenting, and archiving ordinary people's voices.

Killick and Allan (2001) suggested that reminiscence can be a sensitive process and that the participant may initially feel under pressure to part with their personal memories. Furthermore, some participants can become entwined in their past, losing sight of their current perception of self (Killick and Allan, 2001). It is evident from the RW literature that, although positive reflections occur in many instances, it is also likely that the process can reawaken negative experiences, which could potentially affect the person's mood and psychological well-being (Schweitzer, 1994; Ulvik, 2010).

The researcher has acknowledged the impact and influence that reminiscence can have on those who engaged in the research (see Chapter Four) and has also acknowledged her own role in supporting the participants through her conversational and rapport building approach. She believes that building a rapport with participants is essential because it creates a safe environment in which the well-being of the participants is of central importance and in which the participants feel comfortable enough to share a wealth of information.

CHAPTER FOUR
ETHICAL CONDUCT

Overview

An ethical approach is of paramount importance to any research with people (Crombie and Davies, 1997). It is particularly important when accessing personal childhood memories, because doing so may uncover sensitive or traumatic memories of the past. Therefore the researcher needs to consider sensitivity, privacy, and dignity carefully. This chapter discusses how the researcher dealt with the ethical elements of this study in order to ensure that ethical practice was maintained throughout. The researcher describes the ways in which she minimised any problems and how she considered the welfare of the participants throughout the research. According to Hek (1996), it is best practice to plan and conduct ethical research; however it is important to note that things can happen during the research that the researcher cannot anticipate. As recommended by Hek (1996), a certain amount of planning occurred before the research was conducted, but this chapter also documents unanticipated ethical dilemmas that occurred and how they were dealt with appropriately.

Ethics in research

Ethics in research relates to the moral implications of the research, which must be deliberated at every stage of the research process and should be of paramount importance to the research design (Holloway, 1997; Graziano and Raulin, 2000). It is essential that the individuals who take part in the research have their rights, such as their right to privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality, upheld. Participants must not experience physical or psychological harm. McTaggart (1997) maintained that, although it is appropriate for the researcher to remain neutral during interviews, it is also important that he or she holds a certain degree of openness when dealing with personal and sentimental memories in order to give the participant adequate reassurance and support.

The proposed research design was submitted to the university ethics committee to ensure that the study was well-structured and had considered all aspects of the participants' privacy and wellbeing. The research design, participant information sheet, consent form, and aide memoire were also presented, and subsequently the application was approved (see appendix C). Due to additional developments later in the study, further approval was given for the researcher's desire to conduct further interviews (see appendix D).

Participant information sheets

Information sheets, which gave detailed information about the study, including the participants' rights and role in the research, were given to the volunteers before the interview (see appendix E). Although this information had been explained verbally during the pre-interview conversations, the information sheet gave the participants a copy of it that they could read further. The participants were also given contact details in case they wished to discuss the study further.

Informed consent

Numerous issues can arise when conducting research with people (Mauthner et al., 2002). During the pre-interview conversations, the researcher explained the reasons for conducting the research, including its aims and objectives, and what the participant's role was. Hek (1996) maintained that this is essential in order to get the most out of the research. According to Thomas and O'Kane (1999), before consenting to take part, the participants must be aware of their right to withdraw at any point throughout the research. The researcher spoke to each participant and explained that they could withdraw from the research if they wanted to at any point. Each participant consented to take part in the research both verbally and in writing (Mitchell and Jolley, 2012).

OH and RW interviews can sometimes seem daunting; this is often due to the prospect of the interview being recorded. Some of the participants (n=6) did express concerns about being recorded. The researcher took time to show the equipment to the participants, and even let them practice with it before the interview began. Although this took a considerable amount of time, it was

important to reassure the participants so that they felt comfortable enough to share their childhood memories. According to Gibson (2006), in any research it is essential to ensure that the participants fully consent and are comfortable taking part. The success of conducting research with reminiscences is dependent on adequate preparation and on how informed the participants are.

Vulnerability and sensitive issues

OH and RW can initiate feelings of vulnerability for the participants; this can be due to the personal nature of the information being shared or, indeed, just to the thought of being recorded. In some instances individuals who may be perceived as vulnerable may be unable to comprehend what they are being asked to do and thus cannot provide informed consent (Polit and Hungler, 1999). This may include people who have a learning disability or mental health issues such as dementia. For this research, the participants were consenting adults; the researcher felt that each participant was suitable and able to take part based on the pre-interview conversations.

It is imperative to respect the culture and perceptions of others (Ponterotto, 2010; Kemmis et al., 2013), in this case, the different social backgrounds of the participants. To prevent harm, questioning of sensitive areas was avoided, and the interview style was semi-structured, leaving flexibility for the participant to give whatever information they felt comfortable sharing. Sensitive issues can arise in any research with people and there were incidences of this during the interviews. The researcher reassured the participants by explaining that they could stop or take a break from recording at any time. Each of the participants agreed that they wanted to continue once they had a moment to compose themselves; they also wanted these sensitive responses to be included in their final transcripts.

Privacy and confidentiality

Privacy and confidentially are distinctly different concepts, but they overlap in the realm of research. Westin (1984, p.7) defined privacy as 'The claim of individuals, groups or institutions to determine for themselves when, how and to what extent information about them is communicated to others'. In research terms, privacy

refers to the right of the individual to have control over the information they have shared. As described above, the participants were made aware that they could withdraw from the research at any time. This meant that even if the participants contacted the researcher after the interview, she would respect their wish to withdraw and their responses would no longer be included. Luckily, this did not happen in this particular study, but, if it had, the researcher would have followed this ethical protocol.

Confidentiality is less concerned with the individual directly and relates more to secure handling of data. Due to the anticipated personal nature of some of the findings, confidentiality was always high on this study's agenda. The collected data was kept in a secure electronic file and transcripts remained stored in a lockable filing cabinet when they were not in use. In accordance with guidance from the Oral History Society (2015), the participants gave permission to have verbatim quotes from their transcripts used in the writing of this thesis and in future publications and exhibitions. The participants were made fully aware that the information they shared would be presented publically in the future. Additionally, some of the participants (n=3) wanted to share some photographs of their childhood and signed over the copyright of them to the researcher.

Lowrance (2012) recognised the importance of confidentiality in any research conducted with people. O'Leary (2004) stressed that information about the participant should not be disclosed to others at any time. However, the participants were made aware that the data they provided would be discussed with the researcher's supervisory team and referred to in the written thesis. Confidentiality can be maintained by using pseudonyms for family names or by changing street names in order to disguise personal information. According to Corti et al. (2000), family names, street names, schools, or other identifiable data should be replaced with fictitious alternatives. All the participants gave their verbal approval for their names to be attached to their interview contributions; however, the researcher has kept their identities anonymous in case they change their mind at a later date. Nevertheless, during the interviews the participants expressed that, while they were able to recognise the importance of anonymity in

research, they would also like the opportunity to be able to identify their own oral testimonies. The participants have therefore been referred to using abbreviations (e.g. Mr M). For the purposes of clarity, geographic location names are used.

The role of the researcher

As discussed, the researcher has a duty of care to inform, respect ownership, respect well-being, and give choice to the participants involved in the study. Reminiscing is a sensitive process, so it was important for the researcher to possess the skills and knowledge needed to conduct the research properly and professionally. According to Gibson (2011, p.144), 'Reminiscence workers, like oral historians, face the dilemma of whether it is ethical to talk with people for the purpose of recording their recollections, then, once done, abandoning them'. The answer to this is, quite simply, no. The researcher maintained contact with the participants, conducted a second phase of interviews, and included them in the dissemination and celebration of their memories through an interactive exhibition in which their memories have been greatly valued, respected, and appreciated (see Chapter Eight).

As discussed in the previous chapter, there are issues relating to veracity in OH and RW research. OH uses documentary evidence to check historical accuracy, while RW is less concerned with historical accuracy and more with understanding the meaning behind the processes of telling and sharing. The researcher's social world view also has a role in this process. It is important to acknowledge that the researcher's own culture, class, and political stance can, in some way, shape the research findings; this is because the transcribed interview is a document that has been created by both the participant and the researcher. The presentation of findings can be influenced by the relationship that has been created between the two and by the interpretations made during the analysis. It is the researcher's responsibility to select the findings he or she presents in the final write-up of the thesis. This is why the researcher has explored the findings in the context of the social historical literature and the reflective comments shared by the participants.

At times, some of the participants (n=3) expressed strong religious, political, or sexist views. However, the researcher had to respect the participant's responses, and thus adopted a non-discriminatory attitude to age, gender, culture, ethnicity, political views, religion, and sexual orientation, and did not comment or pass judgement on any of the comments that were made. Gibson (2011, p.58) maintained that: 'Reminiscence workers must model or demonstrate sensitive, anti-discriminatory practice at all times and confidently address any discrimination if it emerges'. Part of the researcher's role is to actively listen to their participants by showing empathy, sensitivity, and interest while remaining non-judgemental, dealing with emotion, and having the capacity to reflect and be criticised. It is important to note that reminiscence is a complex process and the outcomes of RW can hold different meaning for different people: while some people may want to reminisce about a specific life event, others will happily go off on tangents, others will be emotional even before they engage in the process, and others still may be shocked at the feelings that are aroused; all of these examples were the case in this research.

Researchers must ask themselves whether the people involved in the research benefit from it in any way. In this case, the answer was yes: the participants benefitted from the research experience and felt supported throughout the study; this in itself was an achievement. However, the study represents a diverse range of elements, including representation of the social conditions of childhood in post-war Merseyside, giving ordinary people a voice, capturing unique oral histories, and providing an authentic representation of the frank thoughts, feelings, and emotions that accompany those memories.

Another important role of the researcher was to comprehend the difference in ownership between OH and RW. OH is owned by the researcher, whereas RW is more open to negotiation due to its more personal, reflective qualities. In some studies, determining the authority between the participant and researcher plays a role in determining ownership: what are the boundaries and rules, and is there mutual input? The interviews were steered by the reminiscence process, but the researcher's input and voice are heard in the discussion of those interviews. These

discussions are based on the notes and reflective conversations held before, during, and after the interviews, and this conversational element to the research is valuable in authenticating the participants' responses.

Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the importance of ethical planning and conduct when carrying out research with people, particularly when accessing their personal childhood memories. The researcher played a central role in planning, guiding, and disseminating the research ethically while respecting the wishes of the participants. This included ethical practice such as obtaining informed consent and ensuring that privacy and confidentially were maintained at all times.

The sharing of sensitive memories resulted in some unanticipated ethical dilemmas, but, by using a conversational approach and taking the time to build a rapport with the participants, the researcher was able to support them appropriately throughout the reminiscence process.

CHAPTER FIVE
FINDINGS (PHASE ONE): THREE MEMOIRS

This chapter is written as a series of memoirs,[11] which cover three themes. These themes have been chosen due to their poignancy to the participants and because they kept re-emerging in the findings. The researcher initially gave the participants an aide memoire (see appendix F) with chosen variables for discussion, including family, education, society and childhood. These themes were then grouped together to include the themes that emerged from the findings. Thematic research encourages the researcher to explore the themes that emerge from the findings; the researcher may not necessarily have a broad knowledge of all these topic areas, but must have some conceptual understanding of the context being researched in order to guide the research process (Willig, 2013). Having conducted preliminary research, the researcher was able to contextualise the findings and chose to disseminate them as memoirs in order to present particular memories of childhood in post-war Merseyside suitably while exploring them in context. The researcher has identified recurring themes and unique childhood experiences and has organised the memories into reflective memoirs to provide a discursive representation of childhood memories. Each memoir explores different experiences of childhood, based on extracts from the interviews. Although the researcher was restricted by word count, these extracts provide an insight into first hand experiences and capture the essence of childhood on post-war Merseyside.

Exploring the historical and social implications that contributed to childhood experiences during the post-war era has illustrated the similarities and differences between children's lives, between classes, between genders and in different locations across Merseyside, including the urban city, dock communities and more

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[11] Memoir: a history or record created from personal experience; closely related to autobiography, a memoir differs predominantly in its degree of emphasis on external events. A memoir is not an autobiography; rather, it represents a phase of someone's life, usually in thematic form; that theme can encompass many reflections as the person attempts to make sense of the things that happened during a certain time in their life. Memoirs introduce the reader to a period of life and convey opinion and emotion as part of the process.

rural suburbs. The memoirs also detail unique childhood memories, some which have never been shared before.

MEMOIR 1.

'WE WERE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT': COMMUNITY LIFE IN THE 1950s.

Overview

Memoir 1 details the participants' experiences of community life during the post-war years and considers whether social and historical factors impacted their childhoods. Community life was a consistent theme throughout the OH interviews. Cunningham (2005, p.3) stated that: 'Childhood cannot be studied in isolation from society as a whole'. Therefore, this memoir contextualises childhood in post-war society.

Mr H described his childhood during the 1950s:

> Me childhood, as a whole, I was in the same boat as everybody else really ... we never had much but we all helped each other out ... and if you could help anybody out you would ... We were all in the same boat getting brought up as children, 'cause no one had much ... and ... you just had to get on with it.

A recurring phrase used during the interviews was that the children were 'all in the same boat'. [12] In this memoir the researcher discusses whether people really were 'all in the same boat' or whether Merseyside childhoods were actually quite different from each other. Many of the participants (n=8) experienced times of hardship as part of a working class childhood; however, one of the participants in particular experienced a more affluent middle class upbringing. The findings highlight the differences between the participants' childhoods.

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[12] The phrase 'in the same boat' refers to a group of people being in the same negative predicament, for example, suffering hardship or poverty (Kirkpatrick and Schwarz, 1993).

A fresh start for all or the collapse of close-knit Merseyside communities?

The war initiated social change for Britain, including the elision of pre-war class divisions, as Britain worked as one to defeat Nazi Germany. This united front was reflected by the new government philosophy of the welfare state and progression of post-war economy (Kynaston, 2007). Rose (2003) explained that during the war and post-war years, nationhood was an important characteristic of British society, and was necessary to support community morale. An event or tragedy that affects a nation has the ability to unite individuals and create a national identity (Rose, 2003).

Austerity shaped close-knit communities in which a neighbourhood of individuals helped and supported each other. The participants recalled memories of such communities including, dockland, urban, rural and inner-city communities and the bustling social life that accompanied them; they also discussed how community life affected their childhood.

During the post-war years there were limited work opportunities for many, including dock workers, and ex-servicemen were struggling to reintegrate into community life after experiencing the trauma of war. Yet it was also deemed a time of freedom and relative safety for children (Dudgeon, 2010). Ex-servicemen returned from war to the security of community life and often gathered in their local public house to provide mutual support networks. This would have been a welcome release: many men felt unable to discuss their experiences with their families and sought solace in those who had shared them. Mrs W remembered that her family avoided discussing the war and that her father's kit bag remained in the hallway without anyone looking inside. Mrs W's father chose not to discuss the war, she believed, as a coping strategy for blocking out the bad things he had experienced, such as grief caused by the loss and injury of comrades. According to Singer (2005), 'complicated grief' describes a high intensity of grief that lasts for a prolonged period of 12 or more months. Such grief can provoke deep depression and sleep deprivation, and sufferers usually have difficulty talking about their loss and feelings of bereavement (Singer, 2005). This type of grief could have also been experienced by those who experienced the trauma of regular bomb attacks.

After the war had ended, society began to strive for a better future, and children were at the centre of this agenda. Some of the participants (n=3) recalled moving away from their close-knit communities to start a new life in the suburbs of Liverpool and Wirral; many families moved to new housing developments, away from city life. This move was thought to be better for children's health and life opportunities, but the majority of the participants felt that it signalled the breakdown of community life as they had known it, and that things would never quite be the same again. For many, the community was a vital support network.

The move away from the familiarity of community life would have further contributed to individual's grief after the trauma of the war. Schultz (2010) referred to the experience of 'dislocation' whereby the individual experiences an overwhelming sense of loss and grief as a result of leaving the familiarity of his or her community. Schultz explained that, although moving away is often viewed as a positive decision, the sudden lack of support as a result of displacement from support networks can have a negative impact on individuals, causing them to grieve for what they have lost. Often people assume that replacing a community, friendship group, or environment precludes the need to mourn, but when individuals enter a new community they naturally experience a yearning for what they have left behind (Schultz, 2010).

For many, moving away was not their decision: the clearance of inner city areas forced many out of their homes. Kynaston (2009, p.221) deliberated:

> Before slum clearances and high-rise, before affluence, before mass immigration, before social mobility, before the spread of car ownership and the ubiquitous coming of the box in the corner[13] – was there that most precious, most elusive thing we call 'community'?

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[13] i.e., television.

So, were the changes in the years that followed the war responsible for the break-down of community life in Merseyside? Or had community life just changed and adapted to the needs of society? Many of the participants (n=7) spoke fondly of their experiences of living in a close-knit community, where they knew their neighbours' names, gave each other a helping hand and relied on each other in times of need. However, lifestyles were poor and housing developments were a lifeline for those impoverished by the war.

Belchem's (2006) work depicted the housing crisis in Liverpool after the war. Due to the mass devastation, the city had to regenerate to re-establish its former glory. A rise in birth rate created further strain at a time when many families had to move into prefabricated accommodation or shared tenement blocks (Murden, 2006) in the interest of their general health and well-being. Many buildings had been damaged during the war and prefabricated housing was intended to be a short-term solution. The Merseyside Plan, which came into force in 1944 (O'Connor, 2000), initiated the rapid clearance of slum areas in the name of public health (Murden, 2006). Liverpool was also recovering as a port. According to Murden (2006), the renewal process was intended to spur a wider economic revival.

Some of the participants (n=3), particularly those who had lived in inner city communities, agreed that moving to the suburbs was in their best interests, but described great sense of loss that accompanied the initial transition. The post-war years were a time of renewed hope for the people of Merseyside, with the aim of returning to normality and creating a better life in the years ahead. There was a strong drive to move forward and improve life, and this manifested itself in families wanting the best for their children. This feeling was never stronger than in the post-war years, and it helps us to understand the rapid changes that occurred in society at that time and demonstrates the huge shift in societal priorities following the war. Todd (2008) explained that ensuring that children had better housing, and a better lifestyle was a priority, giving them more financial independence and opportunity than ever before. Todd (2008, p.509) maintained that:

The prioritisation of children in the allocation of economic resources testifies to their parents' recognition that new housing, employment and educational opportunities might offer the younger generation higher living standards than they had enjoyed.

Mrs J explained that new housing developments had hot and cold running water, indoor bathrooms and even gardens, all of which were regarded as luxuries. Many families thus did not need much persuasion to move away; as Murden (2006, p.43) stated, there was a 'promise of a healthier life for all the family'. However, due to the lack of housing after the war, it was not unheard of for two families or larger extended families to be sharing one home (Bullock, 2002). Dr E spoke of finding it difficult to share his home with extended family members until his mother decided to send him to boarding school. Dr E explained that his mother felt that as he was an only child, he would not be 'socially well-adjusted' if he continued to live at home. By contrast, other participants (n=3) believed that living with their grandparents for prolonged periods contributed positively to their childhood because they learned a lot from spending time with them.

New housing developments in the suburbs of Liverpool were built to help with slum and prefabricated housing clearance resulting in the gentrification of mass areas of the dockland and poor inner city areas. Todd (2010) explained that parents felt that moving away from the inner city would give their children more opportunities for education and employment. Many families, though, still had to work hard to make ends meet despite the provision made for working class families, and poverty continued to be problematic.

Hamilton's novel *Lights of Liverpool* depicted the experiences of families waiting to be re-housed after Britain had been 'impoverished by war' (Hamilton, 2012, p.1). Hamilton (2012) believed that this contributed to the reconstruction of the community in Liverpool. According to Todd (2005), Dudgeon (2010) and Edwards (2013), the close-knit communities of the fifties were lost following the government's re-housing schemes. The government intended to regenerate society

to improve the life of its people, but in doing so it broke up the inner-city communities, dispersing them to the wider suburbs of Merseyside (Dudgeon, 2010). Edwards (2013, p.6) stated that:

> Unfortunately, many people were moved from the communities they had known for decades either out of the city or into faceless modern blocks of flats which began to spring up, American style, in many areas. Over sixty tower blocks were built in the city between 1956 and 1974, providing more than 5,500 homes.

Nonetheless, the construction of flats was a vital part of Liverpool's post-war slum clearance, and those who lived in tenements often endured cramped and unsanitary conditions (Edwards, 2013). Sometimes toilets and food preparation areas were in the same room, resulting in extremely poor standards of hygiene. Many tenement buildings were earmarked for demolition in the mid-1950s.

Mrs J and her family were one of the families who moved from prefabricated housing in inner city Liverpool to a four-bedroom house in Kirkby.[14] She recalled Kirkby being 'green everywhere'. According to Palen (1995), women were reassured that moving away from central city locations was key to providing a better life for their family with open spaces, greenery and a better place to raise children. Although, Mrs J felt that the area was spacious, allowing children to play, she missed the support network and closeness of the community life that she had experienced whilst living in the city. She recalled:

> We lived in a block of tenements ... they're demolished now ... they were called Sir Thomas Way Gardens and by that time after mum had the problem with her goitre they put her from the top to the ground floor but ... it was quite a close community familywise because ... me dad's mum lived on the fourth floor and his mum and

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[14] Kirkby – a town in the suburbs of Liverpool.

dad, and she's reared all her family and ... I had an Auntie on the bottom from me dad's side on the other side.

Not only had Mrs J experienced a very close-knit community life, but her extended family had lived in the same tenement block as her, in conditions she recalled as very cramped:

We only had a two-bedroom flat on the ground floor as I say and there was me mum and dad, five girls altogether, an two boys, so we were all bloody sleepin' ... round each other ya know and the lads used to sleep in me mam an' dads room, I don't know how they ever had sex [laughs]. An' the girls used to pile in the other one.

Although Mrs J expressed that she was very sad to leave the tenement community behind, she explained that Kirkby provided a better lifestyle and she developed friendships with children in the new community.

... It was all young families where we were in Kirkby ... so we weren't lost for choice but we carried on playin' as we were playin', you know what I mean; but there was more things to explore, you know, with being in the country, it wasn't just right in the tenements ... There was a stream runnin' through the place an things like that, there was woods you could go to, so there was a lot but ya know most of the kids done it together 'cause there was hardly any shops or anything.

According to Hornsby-Smith (1999), the influx of families to the suburbs weakened many social ties in society, leading to the gradual collapse of the close-knit communities of the 1950s; many of the re-housed families had moved from the inner cities and docklands. Hornsby-Smith (1999) noted that '... many ... struggled to come to terms with the traumas and doubts of leaving their close-knit communities'. However, as Mrs J explained, this did not seem to impact on her childhood: she continued to play outside with local children as she had done

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outside the old tenement block. Parents may have struggled to deal with the change in community life, but the impact of their children's experiences seems to have been lesser. This difference is interesting: times were changing to accommodate increasing social mobility, but this did not seem to bother children, who were quite happy to make new friendships in their new communities.

From this, we can see that, although change gave families a better lifestyle, it also contributed to the breakdown of social ties between adults, particularly working class adults, diluting the united community of the immediate post-war years. This skewed people's sense of social identity and diminished their sense of belonging (Schultz, 2010). In many ways, moving away from the city was a choice, but Todd (2008, p.508) explained that 'The forced removal of working-class residents from the inner city challenges the notion that post-war suburban growth was shaped by their aspirations and affluence'. For some families, there would have been no option. It is also important to note that there would have been a difference in experience between those who had lived an inner city childhood and those that were already brought up in suburban Merseyside: those children would not have experienced the upheaval and transition of moving away from their home (Russell, 2012).

The participants' responses describe social changes in post-war communities and provide insight into the gradual decline of inner city and dockland community life based on their perceptions as adults. Many of the participants (n=9) commented that they had noticed vast changes between then and now; some explained that people today do not know their neighbours, whereas they had spent most of their childhoods in and out of their neighbours' homes. Some of the participants (n=8) experienced hardship and poverty; however, they recalled this not being of great concern during childhood because they were 'all in it together' within the community in which they resided (Mr H). Those participants who had experienced a working class upbringing felt that although they knew the differences now, during childhood they were unaware of class variation because they only mixed with their own social class. It was not until later life that the participants realised

the differences between their own life opportunities and those of people from more affluent backgrounds.

Equal life opportunities

Some of the participants (n=4) felt that due to social class and the location in which they lived, they did not have equal opportunities. This perception was heavily based on what they now knew as adults. The participants expressed that they knew that they wanted skilled work and were glad that their own children have had the opportunity to develop skills that they could not. Mr T explained:

> Well meself personally, well I had no education, but me kids have done well, like one lad's a solicitor, me daughter's a teacher … So, ya know, I always think to meself if we'd have had the same experience going back to education we might have progressed ourselves … but we just never had the opportunities ya know.

Mr T had feelings of regret because of the lack of opportunity in his youth. According to Prager (1995), it is common for individuals to reminisce about memories that trigger feelings of regret. Mr T felt that his lack of job opportunities and job security directly contributed to a lifestyle of poverty, changing economic circumstances and community breakdown for working class Merseyside. By contrast, Todd (2008, p.51) maintained that during the post-war years 'Political reform, social welfare and, in particular, high labour demand made it possible for working class people to attain higher standards of living than ever before'. Todd highlighted that there was an emphasis on striving for affluence in the literature which failed to acknowledge the importance of achievement in life. Furthermore, Todd (2008, p.514) stated that: 'Historians' and Sociologists' longstanding concerns with assessing affluence and giving the working class the gift of respectability have also overlooked the complexity of working-class life and identity'. Feelings of regret can impact upon an individual's sense of self-worth, self esteem and identity (Gibson, 2011). However, many of the participants (n=6) were instilled with a high work ethic and with the grounded values which they

carried with them into their later life. For example, Mr T worked two jobs during his youth in order to buy himself a bicycle:

> I used to get up every mornin' ... an' do a milk round seven days a week before I went to school, with a little cart like that [gestures] for the local dairy in Beresford Road, there used to be a little dairy there; an I used to get ten-bob a week for that. An' god bless us, I was a millionaire ya know, ten-bob a week. Then I got a bit more like an entrepreneur then and I got meself another job then in Dale's butchers at the bottom by Speller Lane an' I used to do the milk in the mornin' an' I used to go to Dale's butchers in the evenin' after school an' I used to scrub out an I used work all day Saturday; all day Saturday in Dales butchers after doin' the milk first. At six o'clock in the mornin' an' I used to get a pound all week, a couple of hours after school an all day Saturday. God bless us, and ... it was thirty-bob a week which was yeah, a lot of money ... anyway that money ... I bought a bike, I bought a frame, I started to save up 'cause I wanted a Harry Quinn. I'd never had a bike see, any bike was always a hand-me-down ... an old wreck. Anyway, I got a few bob together an I got this Harry Quinn bike.

Another participant, Mr R, also saved money to buy a bicycle frame; he swapped and bartered for parts with friends and eventually built his own bicycle.

Children found that they had to work hard if they wanted something, encouraging ambition, achievement and work ethic. As Todd (2008, p.513) expressed, 'Vulnerability to poverty did not eradicate ambition, but it did inform a tension between aspirations raised by post-war social change and individual's ability to change their economic circumstances'. According to Hayes (2008), the attitude and ambition of children can break the poverty cycle; however, the attitude and support of family is also essential. Mr T explained that many children at the time were not encouraged to better themselves and were merely socialised for the jobs suitable for their social class; these values were then internalised and individuals

succumbed to the expectations of the society they lived in (Mayes, 1986). However, Mrs M was given the opportunity to attend private school – her aunt paid her school fees – which enabled her to achieve a greater lifestyle in her adult life.

Dockland community

Some of the participants (n=4) were children of dockers and were brought up in dockland communities. These participants experienced quite a different upbringing to those in nearby city communities and one that was very far removed from that of the wider suburbs of Merseyside. Dock life brought with it a very unpredictable lifestyle; employment was causal and poorly paid, resulting in stress and poverty as families tried to make ends meet. Mr H recalled:

> People would get down really 'cause they had nothin'. An money was hard to come by an people were linin' up, you know even down the docks waitin' for jobs, waitin' to get picked out, you seen them all goin' down the docks ... tryin' to get a job, so many would get picked out an a load would have to come away ya know.

Pat Ayers (1999) explored 1950s life in the Liverpool dockland; she explained that workers would need to stay near the docks during working hours in case they were offered work, so a community with housing and shops developed near the dock road, which ran from Dingle in the south to Bootle in the north. This dock community was significant in social science research in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and in more recent years historians have found in dockland culture important and distinct historical evidence of family and the way people led their lives. This is also evident from the findings of this research; although they did not think it at the time, childhood experiences were very different in the docklands to the other areas of Merseyside.

Some of the participants (n=4) spoke about hardship as a direct result of their fathers working on the docks; they recalled not being aware of this at the time because all the families in their community were experiencing the same

circumstances, so they accepted it as the norm. There is limited literature exploring the lives of children of Dockers in post-war Merseyside. *Waterfront Blues* by Towers (2011) documented poignant first-hand experiences of the life and work of Liverpool dockers. Towers (2011) expressed that those who managed to get work in Liverpool's docks tended to live in nearby dock communities, which mirrored the hectic, noisy hustle and bustle of the docks themselves.

Mr H recalled how busy the docks were, describing them as 'a thriving bustle of activity'. According to Lees (2011), dockers faced erratic work hours, a high risk of injury or even death due to poor health and safety regulations and poor pay. Two of the participants spoke about accidents on the docks: in the early 1950s Mr T's dad died after being hit on the back of the head by machinery, and Mrs J's mother's first husband also died on the docks after being decapitated while loading a ship. Although the dock seemed to be an unsafe place to work, for many it was the only opportunity to make money.

Dudgeon (2010) explored the unique dock culture that existed in Liverpool during the war and post-war years. Dockers would begin their day by seeking work in a somewhat demeaning process whereby they queued in pens (Dudgeon, 2010). Some workers were favoured more than others and thus received the bulk of work opportunities. There would be a fight to get to the foreman in the hope of receiving work;[15] those who were turned away would return for the afternoon intake, facing being turned away a second time. Lees (2011, p.117) stated that 'After a second rebuttal, they'd drift home grey-faced to greet their wives with, 'There's nottun down for ya girl''[16]. The participants spoke of the uncertainty of employment on the docks and were aware of the importance of their fathers managing to get work.

Pat Ayers (1999) found that the dockers' lack of autonomy in employment impacted significantly on their personal lives, social culture; eventually, as a result, many found work in factories. Others were united by strikes, and in 1947 the National Dock Labourer Scheme was established to support decasualisation. Some

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[15] Known as 'taking the book'.
[16] 'No money for you'.

dockers took a job share known as the welt: one man would stay at home and the other go to work, which meant that each would have a total of three inactive days, enabling both to claim state benefit in accordance with the Unemployment Insurance Act (Lees, 2011 p.118).

Four of the participants were children of dockers and two of them worked in the docks themselves. Mr T remembered one of the teachers at his school informing him that he would have three options for employment: a car factory, going away to sea or working at the docks. His school engaged in the anticipatory socialisation[17] of the children with an expectation of the job role they would be 'fit for' based on class and gender. Mayes (1986, p.20) noted that 'Functionalist and Marxist sociologies... believe that schools socialise young people, prepare them for the world of work and act as agents of selection for the occupational hierarchy'. Schultz's Human Capital theory described the investment in education which leads to higher status and wealth (Mayes, 1986). However, the findings of this study suggested that there was prejudice in working class communities that prevented children from reaching their full potential. Mr T expressed that:

> The education basically, we received, and through no fault ... of the school I don't suppose it was ... virtually nil to tell ya the truth. ...We got transferred, basically we were like nomads, we got transferred from St Francis De Sales to a little shack called the Scouts Hall where we did a little bit of boxin' an' different things.

This illustrates that education was given no priority in the area in which Mr T grew up. After Mr T finished school, he went to work at Russell's Ship Yard and he described himself as being 'a general dog's body'; he explained that this meant he had to do all of the jobs that no one else wanted to do. Mr T expressed that his work was not guaranteed and sometimes he would only work a two or three day week. He stated:

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[17] Anticipatory socialisation: taking on the values of a group of which one is not a member in order to interact socially once part of that group.

> Me father before me was a top labourer and that's why I always
> wanted to get his book on the docks 'cause we felt it was our right ...
> to follow ya father's footsteps into the dock ... at that time there was
> nothing else open for our kids.

Dockers would live in constant fear of unemployment and, although there was hostility as a result of the limited work opportunities, the dockland communities tried to pull together and support each other. If dockers missed their weekly pay packet, they would have to rely on their community to get by. Two of the participants remembered the importance of their docker fathers returning home with a pay packet on a Thursday evening. Receiving the pay packet on time was the difference between 'making ends meet' or 'going without' (Mr T). Mr T recalled that his father got paid on a Thursday and that there would be a queue of dockers' children outside 'Mr Burn's Chippy'; he described the kindness of Mr Burns towards him during childhood:

> He knew who we were and he knew ya dad was on strike or
> something like that and ... he'd give ya a bag of crispies[18] and a few
> chips as well, like 'ere ya are' have some chips ya know what I mean,
> but they were good people in them days ya know.

Mr T regarded Mr and Mrs Burns as good people, and spoke generally about people being good in those days. Another participant explained that dockers relied on family, community and humour to cope with the tensions of day to day life. Mr M commented that 'I remember the good times more than the hard times really, I laugh at the hard times cause the only way to laugh at them to deal with them I suppose'. Both Mr T and Mr M spoke fondly of the dockland community, explaining that, although they struggled, people willingly helped each other out when they could. This evidences empathy and community support, which was a recurring theme and evidently an important part of dockland life. The hardships of war and post-war austerity fostered a strong and supportive community network.

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[18] The leftover batter.

However, gradually, towards the end of the 1950s, many families moved away from the docklands, leaving them deserted. Lees (2011, p.125) stated that:

> The sea was in the city's blood but the commercial tides had left the shrinking port ... These displaced alienated water boys were on the back foot, bruised but not yet beaten by their city's declining circumstances.

Many blamed the government for the demise of the thriving city port. Labour did not gain control of Liverpool Council until 1955. Catholic parishes became central to the New Labour Movement, although by this time many dock communities had since been separated during urban regeneration. Lees (2011, p.124) stated that 'These wards had always operated on a horse-trading approach of nods, winks and family favours and eventually this became the modus operandi of the party itself'. However, the city was slow to revive, and while the emergence of Merseybeat was sweeping England, the dockers and their communities had been dispersed into utilitarian high-rise flats in other areas. Although Liverpool people maintained their spirit, communities were vanishing and the docks stood silent (Lees, 2011). Liverpool relied on dockers to re-build its prosperous trading port, so made efforts to regain a large, cheap and flexible labour force, resulting in the rising success of the docks in the 1960s.

Dock culture

The people of Liverpool's use of humour to deal with hardship is well-known (Boland, 2008). This humour was echoed in the lives of dockers, who were renowned for their rowdy banter and a dry sense of humour, which functioned as a coping strategy that kept spirits up and morale high (Dudgeon, 2010). The findings also highlight this as a common characteristic of the communities in the suburbs of Merseyside: the participants who grew up there also possessed a particularly sarcastic sense of humour. To this day, dry humour and friendliness are parts of Liverpool culture (Boland, 2008). Murden (2008, p.423) maintained that 'Liverpool developed its long-standing reputation for humour – the scouser being, according to legend, the one with all the backchat and jokes'. It is important

to note that such humour was not exclusive to Merseyside, but was typical of other communities across Britain.

According to Leonard and Strachan (2010), community spirit has always played a central role in Liverpool's culture. From the findings, it is evident that the communities in which people resided actually shaped the character and identity of their people. Brake (1980, p.53) explained that:

> The social structure of the Liverpool docks and a long social history
> of economic disadvantage, migrant labour, poor educational facilities
> and irregular work. The value system generated by this was partly
> fatalistic and depressed and partly aggressive ...

Men worked under poor conditions and with a lack of appreciation, and thus morale was inevitably low. In response dockers developed a high-spirited personality that incorporated banter and humour. Dockers were also defensive and competitive because they had to vie for work against each other on a daily basis. The behaviour of dockers was unique; some saw genuine aggression were others saw jest. Rowdy banter could sometimes become aggressive and feisty, resulting in taunting or goading. Male Liverpudlians developed a juvenile, rite-of-passage approach to social culture, engaging in risky behaviours in order to be accepted into a Liverpool subculture (Macilwee, 2008). Juvenile delinquency was common in dock culture.

Hay (2000) studied the interpersonal functions of humour between genders. From the research, Hay identified three categories 1) power-based (aggressive teasing); 2) solidarity-based (sharing memories and friendly teasing); and 3) psychological-based (using humour as a coping strategy for dealing with problems). Hay found that women were more likely than men to engage in solidarity-based humour, which involved sharing more personal details and a greater level of intimacy. Friendly and aggressive humour occurred more in single sex than mixed groups, suggesting that the dockers' aggressive banter could have been exclusively male. Hay found that there was a particular difference in the way each gender used

humour to cope: males were more likely to engage in a contextual use of humour to deal with immediate problems that emerged from the conversations, whereas females were more likely to engage in a non-contextual use of humour to cope with and talk about wider life problems outside of the conversational context. Although research on the functions of humour is embryonic, it does indicate that there is a difference in the way different genders use humour as a coping strategy. This research challenges Hay's research findings: participants of both genders used humour to disclose details from the wider context of their lives. The female participants were actually far more likely to avoid depth of expression and used humour to change the topic of conversation and avoid in-depth exploration. Male participants were more likely to use psychological humour to explore particularly negative memories of their past. Humour can be used to shape the personality and character of the individual. According to Martin (2007, p.149), 'men often use humour for the purpose of impressing others, appearing funny, and creating a personal identity'.

Another characteristic developed as a coping strategy during austere times was juvenile delinquency, often theft. In the mid-1950s cotton was one of the main items traded in Liverpool docks. However, additional forms of cargo were also loaded onto boats from carts or wagons that would queue at the docks for three or four days (Dudgeon, 2010). Due to widespread poverty, some lucky children would receive hand-outs from the dockers, usually bananas (Dudgeon, 2010). However, for others, the cargo proved an easy target for theft, as Mr T recalled,

> We got up to all kinds of mischief ... we'd rob potatoes and get apples ... all kids done it them days but one of the worst things when I think about it, there used to be a lodging house for the wagon drivers going down the docks and used to sheet up while on night time ... and we'd have a little look what was on the back of the wagon. If there was fruit we used to pinch it ... and different things ya know, the kids used to go down and pinch the sugar and everything ... It was just part of growing up, it was just the society we lived in.

On the one hand community taught children how to help each other and respect their neighbours, but on the other poverty meant that children learned negative, anti-social behaviour such as stealing food and a streetwise attitude.

The rag and bone man: Childhood, street-life and play.

The rag and bone man was a dominant character mentioned in many of the interviews; he often travelled on a horse and cart and was regarded as something of a con-man, who frequented the streets and looking to get household goods in return for balloons or goldfish (Lees, 2011). This approach particularly targeted children: two of the participants recalled wanting to trade anything they could for a goldfish. Mr R recalled trading his school blazer for a goldfish and being delighted; his mother had to run down the road after the rag and bone man to get her son's blazer back. The participants could recall the excitement they felt when they heard the call of the rag and bone man in their neighbourhood shouting 'any old rags'. The call could be heard from a long way away due to the lack of traffic at the time (Gripton, 2008; Lees, 2011).

The lack of traffic also meant that children spent a lot of their time playing on the streets. Mrs W referred to where she lived as a 'play street': no cars were allowed to drive down the road and there would always be a neighbour 'keeping an eye out'. This interestingly shows the value placed on play during that time: communities oriented themselves to ensure children's safety and give them the opportunity to play freely where they lived. This concept mirrors the ideology of the child of the 1950s (Merritt, 2008): in the twentieth century childhood became widely acknowledged as an important developmental stage in life (Lindon, 2010; Allingham, 2011; Smith et al., 2011), and thus more focus was placed on the importance of learning and development.

Figure 5: 1954 Street-play in Flint Street, Birkenhead, Wirral.

All of the participants recalled having immense freedom: children were left to their own devices to make discoveries, learn from their own mistakes and develop their own imaginations. Lindon (2002, p.16) maintained that 'Children's play has always picked up the echoes of what they know, or think, is happening in the adult part of their society'. According to Lindon (2002), play is shaped by the surroundings and circumstance in which children find themselves. Mr M recalled playing war games. Freedom of play enabled children to re-enact their own perceptions of what was occurring in the world around them. It was a central element to childhood in the 1950s, and absorbed 'most of the waking hours' of the children (Lees, 2011, p.121). Many of the participants (n=8) explained that, apart from school hours, any spare time would be devoted to free play. Mr M recalled 'Ya played 'til ya mam ran out and grabbed ya and dragged ya in screamin' for ya tea or to go to bed. Play in the dark. That didn't bother anyone in those days'. Similarly, Mrs M recalled having a lot of freedom: 'Mother never knew where I was from morning 'til night in the holidays ... I mean until it was dark and then I would come in but she wouldn't have known where I was, I could have been in anyone's back garden or house or anything'.

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Another theme acknowledged in the literature is the clear gender divide between girls' and boys' toys. Girls were encouraged to play with dolls and imitation household equipment such as pretend hoovers or kitchenette sets; this behaviour was also very much encouraged in the school environment in order to socialise girls into a domestic role in adulthood (Tait, 2014). Boys participated in more physical games such as football, cricket and rounders (Tait, 2014). Many boys would play war-related games, making tin war aeroplanes or pretending to have guns. Cowboys and Indians was another favourite, mainly due to the films that were popular at the time. Another common pastime was collecting post-war shrapnel shells and various piece of metal from derelict bomb sites. These scraps would then be swapped between friends with certain criteria determining who owned the 'best' pieces. In addition, boys would find other scrap metal and old bike parts to make their own pedal cars. Nostalgic reflection in the literature suggested that many boys found great pleasure and a sense of achievement in making their own toys and amusements (Tait, 2014). Mr R recalled:

> Most of the games we played were based around chalk games like hopscotch, throwing stones to see who could get the closest or nearest to the line. We used to play ollies a lot, and steelies. Steelies was … like little steel ball bearings and it was a bit like ollies but you played it … in a group and … it was who could get the closest to the big steeley, but there seems to be lots of children as well, you had lots of friends in those days, but all very close-knit community.

Young children took pleasure in building carts out of scraps and valued the small possessions and toys they owned (Blakemore, 2005). Boys from privileged backgrounds would own train sets (Tait, 2014). It is important to note that a proportion of this literature may rely on the nostalgic perceptions of the authors themselves, but it nonetheless presents a clear image of children's play from an autobiographical perspective.

Goodfellow (2008) presents a compendium of various games played over the decades. During the 1950s, games with little or no equipment such as skipping and

hopscotch were popular, as were rhymes. Many children did not have the luxury of toys. As Wombwell (2006, p.i) stated, 'Possessions were scarce and luxuries were rare but pleasures though simple, were genuinely enjoyed'.

Sticking together: Gambling in the community

During the 1950s gambling was part of community life, particularly for the more prosperous working class. According to Clapson (1992), gambling such as pitch-and-toss was widely available in working class areas, leading to 'the involvement of children, both as betters themselves and as messengers and assistants for adult betting' (Orford et al., 2003, p.13). This was mirrored in the findings: Mrs W recalled being sent by her mother down the back alley behind the house to give money rolled up in paper to another woman who lived on her street. Such activities showed children – or, at least, those who were aware of what was going on – that illegal gambling was widely accepted.

Two of the participants recalled witnessing adults playing pitch-and-toss in fields near where they lived; they explained that when the police arrived the adults would all run through the nearest neighbour's front door and disappear through the back alleys; the children would then jump down and pinch the money that had been left behind. Nearby neighbours' backdoors would be left open as an escape route, Mr H recalled: 'It was quite funny actually 'cause the police used to say, 'where've they gone' and ... they'd all disappear into the next road [laughs]'. In the field of criminology, this incident could be regarded as a form of cultural transmission, whereby criminal behaviour is learned by social interactions within society (Berg and Stewart, 2009). Edwards (2013) explained that the police had a lot of involvement with children in Liverpool, particularly, in the late 1950s, through Juvenile Liaison Officers. The community's illegal gambling represented a challenge to the authorities: the community would unite to act against them. Witnessing or taking part in gambling can have a significant influence on the behaviour of children and adolescents, and research into adolescent and juvenile gambling shows a link to social learning processes (Gupta and Derevenski, 2000). Aasved (2002, p.154) stated that:

The influence of one's early exposure to gambling – often through parental examples – on the development of pathological gambling in later life was noted some time ago and some modern researchers still believe that it constitutes one of the most important causes.

Studies have found that there is a significant link between gambling, theft and juvenile delinquency; additionally, such behaviour is more common in males than females (Winters et al., 1993; Oster and Knapp, 1994). This corresponds with the findings of this study: two male participants recalled engaging in theft or petty crime and made light of this behaviour during their interviews; both also witnessed gambling as a regular part of their lives. In contrast, female participants (n=5) did not reminisce about directly taking part in delinquent behaviours. Todd (2008) wrote about the Liverpool stereotype of deviant, non-conforming youth and the emergence of the problem family; she believed that working class culture has always been seen as the norm in Liverpool.

The rise in problem families and juvenile delinquency in Liverpool initiated the Re-education of Mothers scheme, which aimed to encourage mothers to be more responsible. The scheme was based on the idea that the female parent was the rock that held the family together, and sought to maintain the societal ideal of the nuclear family (Rose, 2003). However, it is evident that other influences may have impacted upon juvenile delinquency, including gambling.

Starkey (2000) suggested that poor mothers in particular were stigmatised after the war and blamed for the increase in the number of problem families. The notion that there is an institution through which we try to define variant social and kinship groups exists in every community and society, but differs in response to societal change, demography and historical progression (Valentine, 2004). Barrett (1980, p.187) argued that 'Even to conceptualise 'the family' is to concede the existence of an institution that, in whatever historical context it is found, is essentially and naturally there'. Thus, it is evident that an essential part of what constitutes familial change or continuity must exist as part of an ideology.

Browne (2011) suggested that there was an expectation in working-class communities that males possess a level of toughness and demonstrate their masculinity. Such behaviour can lead to a criminal record, marginalisation through poverty, a lack of education or social exclusion (Browne, 2011). Some of the participants (n=3) later stated that this was common occurrence in post-war society and was the general norm in their community. 'Hegemonic masculinity' is an idea that derives from gender studies and is closely associated with the concept of male dominance, a patriarchal society and the idea of men exercising power. Donaldson (1993, p.643) explained that:

> Not all men attempt to live it, and some oppose it by developing alternative (and subordinate) masculinities, but all men position themselves, in relation to it in situations where their choices may be quite restricted.

This was evident from the behaviour of two of the male participants who had referred to the area in which they were brought up in as 'very hard' or 'rough.' Mr R's use of the word 'rough' was his own choice for labelling this working class area, showing his awareness of societal divisions and implying that there was not always a 'united' community as many of the testimonies suggested.

One of the participants chose not to engage in particularly deviant behaviour, and was bullied and beaten up as a consequence. Mr R recalled:

> I went to secondary school, it was a hard school, I found the first couple of years very difficult ... I remember one particular incident, there was a school bully ... he dominated the school really ... and as best you could, you kept out of their way but obviously when paths crossed it was trouble and I remember one particular incident where I was in the park with my friend, it was the school holidays and I was with my friend D__ C___ and we were just sitting on the swings talking and this gang of lads come in, one of which I recognised as the school bully, came over and threw a packet of cigarettes on the floor

and told me to pick them up. Well, I guess I was as I am now really, quite stubborn, and I never gave in to bullies, which is why I probably got beaten up a couple of times. But on this particular incident I said, 'No', I wasn't gonna pick it up. And these lads started to beat us up and gave us quite a hefty beating until the park keeper shouted across the field, he spotted what was going on from the far side and he come running over and stopped it. They ran off and he just saw if we were ok, and ... I was quite black and blue after that but I'd have never told me mum and dad what had happened ... I just said I'd fallen over and we'd had an accident and that was it. It was never mentioned. But the positive side of that is ... that school bully never bothered with me after that nor his mates. I guess in some way he respected the fact that I stood up to him and I wouldn't give in. He pretty well left us alone after that.

This extract provides a great deal of insight into the context of the situation. The participant describes the school as 'hard', here meaning the same as 'rough' as discussed previously, rather than difficult. Mr R also recognised that his own characteristics, in particular stubbornness and not 'giving in' to bullies, even if there was going to be negative consequences, were formed during childhood. Most interestingly, he did not tell his parents what had happened, either to maintain self-pride (boys were encouraged to be strong and not show emotion) or out of fear that his parents would think that he had been involved in something deviant, leading to punishment. This is another example of the participant having a positive perspective on a negative memory – in this instance as a direct consequence to the occurrence, the bully left him alone, which he believed was due to the respect he gained by resisting the bully's demands.

This was not the only reflection about deviant behaviour. Mr M recalled sailing away on 'someone's barge' and accidently crashing into Lairds Shipyard wall. His mother consequently hit him, although at the time Mr M could not understand why:

Our playground was basically, Lairds yard, Tranmere shore where there was a breakers yard as well and we played on the barges that used to be broken in by Dixons yard, which is now Shell oil terminal. In fact, when Shell came along they built a wall half way along our, our football field so … we got our own back by firing fire arrows over the wall [laughs] … at the oil tanks. More a bit of fun really.

Mr T remembered the children in his road going to Blackpool for the day and that none of the men used to go, just the mothers.

We went in Woolworths in Blackpool and we went on a shop-lifting spree, and we were … only little, we were pinchin' key rings, we had about ten key rings and the police got me [laughs] me and this other lad yeah. Got us outside and anyway we got a [claps hands] slappin' and then that was it ya know, but they wrote to our mother, wrote to our houses … I got another belt then.

On reflection, there is a clear contrast in the values which underpinned a Merseyside childhood, particularly within different communities. The participants all portrayed communities based on support and strong values, and explained how they lived their lives based on societal norms and values. However, they – and particularly some of the male participants (n=3) – also recalled engaging in deviant behaviour such as gambling, stealing and getting into trouble, almost always with humour and laughter. The participants (n=3) believed that it was a normal part of childhood; they believed that 'they all did', although some sort of punishment, often physical, was usually a consequence of their actions.

Religion

Research such as the Crown Street Surveys has demonstrated how social change can be shaped by class difference in society, which in turn shapes the testimonials of those recalling their life experiences. According to Todd (2008, p.510) 'Liverpool's post-war working class was fractured by race and religion'. There was hostility between Catholics and Protestants which was exacerbated by Irish

immigrants moving into communities in Liverpool city centre. Many Irish dock workers were re-housed in the dockland areas, even after slum clearance. There were often demonstrations by the Orange Lodge, a Protestant fraternal organisation, provoking further hostility towards Catholics. Todd (2008, p. 510) stated that:

> The poverty, occupational status and ethnicity of newcomers interacted to kindle this enmity. Religious and racial relationships were not determined by economic trends, but they were lived within and shaped by specific historical circumstances.

Many of the participants (n=7) recalled hostility between religions and recalled their parents warning them off playing with those children of a different religion.

Sunday school was a substantial part of many British children's lives during the fifties, as was attending church regularly (Feeney, 2011), although religious attendance diminished in the following generations. Families would come together and cook Sunday roasts and children would rarely be allowed to play outside or make loud noise because it would disturb the peace and quiet of their neighbours. Sunday was viewed as a religious, respectful family day (Pressley, 1999; Feeney, 2011). Dr E remembered ministers occasionally visiting the family home for Sunday lunch. He recalled one memory in particular:

> Meat in the forties and fifties was a little bit of dubious origin and some of it was really rather tough and indigestible and on this particular occasion we had an outspoken Yorkshire minister who came for lunch on the Sunday and we'd really struck rock bottom with the joint and his suggestion to my mother was ... to do what they did in Yorkshire and that was to get the joint and kick it round the house before you put it in the oven.

Religion also impacted on education, particularly in Liverpool. Protestant children attended state education, or secular schools which were supported by the

Liverpool Corporation. Catholic children attended Catholic schools which had more limited facilities. Mr T was Catholic and recalled being disappointed by the lack of opportunities during his school years, which he believed hindered his later life. There was a clear divide in the findings between the childhood educational opportunities of those from dockland, inner city and suburban areas.

This lack of equality filtered down into social celebrations. Each of the participants spoke about Christmas during their interviews. Although Christmas was always celebrated in Britain in the 1950s, people were still struggling to 'make ends meet' and mothers would save up to provide Christmas 'trimmings' (Feeney, 2009, p.190). It was evident from the findings that that there was an air of appreciation and value for what was received on Christmas day, even if the children believed it had come from Father Christmas rather than their parents. Christmas was seen as a time for lifting people's spirits and was viewed fondly by all of the participants. Mrs L recalled there being a family feud with the family who lived opposite them: 'They always used to try and get better lights than we did and my mum put two sets of lights on our Christmas tree'. This feud contrasts with the image of united post-war communities. There was evidently some rivalry between families as the consumer society of the 1950s slowly began to emerge. Feeney (2009, p.194) wrote of the efforts of department stores to entice customers:

> Many a lost child would be found gazing through a department store's window at a display of life-like mannequins and wondrous objects that had been arranged into a Christmas setting; he or she would be completely captivated by a scene that was worlds apart from their own lifestyle.

One of the participants, Mr R, recalled being captivated by the Christmas grottos in Liverpool city centre. He remembered being given a pound by his grandfather before Christmas; he and his grandmother would travel by train to Liverpool from the Wirral to visit the Grotto in Blackler's or Lewis's. Mr R recalled:

I think we used to go to about three or four different grottos and it was two 'n' six, and you could get a present for two 'n' six, so you'd see Father Christmas and there was normally some theme like Torchy the Battery Boy and things like that and you'd see all the puppets off the television and then you'd go and see Father Christmas, and then you'd get your present.

...It seemed like forever [waiting for Christmas] at the time and it was probably days, but days used to seem like weeks.

Figure 6: 1952 Visiting Father Christmas at a department store in Liverpool.

Children did not get much, but when they did, they appreciated and valued it. This culture instilled values into the participants when they were children, and all commented that these values had contributed to their outlook on later life and to their identity. They believed that the values instilled during childhood are just as important to them today; such memories were recalled with nostalgia.

All of the participants recalled the sensation of being very cold in the winter, which was a predominant theme in the interviews. Mrs L recalled snowy Christmases with no central heating and only one coal fire in the front room. She recalled her mother putting the three piece suite very close to the fire. She remembered:

Mum used to put curtains, old curtains around the gaps between the chair and the settee and the same on the other side to keep the draft out. So we just had the coal fire in front of us and we used to think this was great it was like being in a tent you know, surrounded by furniture and curtains to keep us warm.

Similar themes, including receiving a stocking on Christmas morning which contained fruit, nuts, dates and a small toy, emerged from all the interviews. For example, Mr R commented: 'One of the things I remember about Christmas was the smell of tangerines and satsumas … when you woke up, that smell that's in the house with the fruit because we didn't have it the rest of the year.' Similarly, Mrs L explained:

We'd go in and say, 'Oh, he's been, Santa's been.' And we always used to have a stocking on the chair filled with nuts and we used to get a little toy that you used to press with your thumb and it used to be like a Muffin the Mule and you'd press the bottom and he'd jump around.

Mr M also recalled getting a stocking filled with fruit, nuts and a small toy, usually a toy gun. He remembered the house being decorated with homemade paper chains and that the front room would have lots of presents on the chairs for each child:

You'd come down into the front room, fire would be blazin' away and there'd be so many chairs, there'd be stacks of stuff, this'd be mine, this'd be me sisters, me brothers whatever, and just tuck into it all, and then rush out into the street, everybody had to say, 'Look what I've got; Look what I've got; isn't it great?'

This particular memory may reflect the newfound affluence of the era, as lifestyles improved after the war. Feeney (2009, p.202) explained that 'presents improved as you moved through the '50s and further away from the frugal post-war years.'

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By contrast, Mr T recalled a very frugal Christmas as a result of the dock strikes, which left his father without enough money. He recalled his mother hanging up nylon stockings at Christmas filled with dates.

> A few bits an bobs in it like, but they always used to put dates in and I don't know why the blinkin' 'ell dates, and I used to say they're the only dates I ever got me as a kid them, never got any other dates [laughs]. Anyway, tangerines, and nuts and that ... I think all the kids in our street were the same because at that time they were all ... basically round that area from dock labourer families.

Reflective summary

Were people all in the same boat? Or in fact, was society somewhat divided? Community life was a central theme of all the interviews, as Mr H explained: 'If you had nothing, you just all came together ya know, the children were the same... we were all in the same boat really and, it was absolutely brilliant you know'. The majority of the participants (n=8) started their interviews by arguing that they were 'all in the same boat' growing up in post-war Merseyside, when in fact they were only actually experiencing their childhood within their own social class. As the interviews progressed and they began to make comparisons based on their perceptions as an adult, other themes started to emerge which suggested that childhoods were actually very different depending on in what area they had grown up, what religion their family held and what gender they were.

Evidently, there were different communities across Merseyside, including inner city, urban, rural and dockland communities. Men who had been away at war were reintegrating into their community, which some found hard. Society was hoping for a better future, leading to changes that altered community identities. Families wanted a better life for their children; close-knit communities were fragmented as the government introduced re-housing schemes and people dispersed from the inner city to the greener suburbs of Merseyside. 'Arterial roads and utilitarian tower blocks were carving the last remaining communities asunder' (Lees, 2011, p.125). Although the regeneration schemes broke up inner city communities, they

did offer an improved standard of living, and new communities did not seem to impact directly on the participants' experiences of childhood: they explained that they still played outside and just made new friends. As a consequence of these new lifestyles, however, families lost the community support that had got them through the war years. The participants' reflections were heavily based on their adult knowledge rather than their childhood perceptions.

Those who lived in dockland communities led an unpredictable life, based on making ends meet and anticipating unguaranteed work. These participants (n=3) emphasised the value of money, and the weekly pay packet coming into the household was of huge significance to them growing up. Indeed, a unique dock culture was developed as a coping strategy for such times. The dockland communities supported each other and developed a culture of value and respect, although they still saw the humour in teasing one another. Those who had experienced working class dock life felt that the education system had let them down: they had a lack of equality of opportunity and were only prepared for the jobs for which their schools believed they were socially fit. This gave them a sense of being prejudiced against, a feeling of unworthiness for anything better and a sense that there was no opportunity to progress out of the poverty cycle. These participants spoke with feelings of regret. Although such experiences were negative, such circumstances also instilled a strong work ethic in the participants because they had to work to get what they wanted and carried that value into their adult lives. Eventually the dock communities dispersed as part of the regeneration; in turn the docks became derelict too.

Although the memories shared are all unique, they provide valuable insight into the lifestyle of communities in the 1950s. Looking at the past allows us to understand and learn from society and how it developed, and this in turn can help us to manage the industries and communities of the future. After the war Liverpool needed to diversify its industrial base because it was too reliant on the dock. The post-war years saw the development of industrial estates and new factories, which brought increased employment (Edwards, 2013). Manufacturers, including blacksmiths and rope, sack, barrel and crate factories, set up close to the dockland.

Fleming (2013, p.11) documented: 'After years of wartime hardship, demand for goods grew and Liverpool's docks and shipping companies flourished. By the mid-1960s, a record 28 million tonnes of cargo were passing through the port every year'.

Working class communities created support networks to help each other. 'Cope' was a word used by the majority of the participants (n=8), who had all put their own strategies into place to deal with difficult times. Having to respond to various trials and tribulations in everyday life and maintain a positive outlook by using humour as a coping strategy stood them in good stead in later life: some of the participants (n=4) explained that it had helped them with problem solving and other issues. Childhood experiences also impacted on their identities, values and behaviours, which differed between communities.

Children experienced times of hardship but also the freedom to play and explore street-life. Street play was a common theme described by participants from each community. Children's safety was considered important, as is indicated by the creation of 'play streets'. In retrospect, the participants felt that they had freedom, but they might not have necessarily felt that at the time: this feeling could be due to their knowledge of children's lack of freedom and safe spaces to play in contemporary society.

The findings demonstrate a distinct contradiction. Many participants (n=8) claimed that the majority of society was comprised of good, helpful and straight citizens, yet this did not seem to apply to legal values. Gambling was prevalent, particularly in working class communities, as was juvenile delinquency and theft. From the testimonies, it is evident that gambling was very much a part of community life; this was reflected on with light-hearted humour. Religion was another topic discussed in some of the participant's interviews, particularly in relation to Christmas; a sense of excitement and nostalgia accompanied these memories.

From the findings, it is evident that each community's experience was different. The findings evidence similarities in family values, gender roles, street play and attitudes to Christmas, but also clear differences between the participants' experiences of community life, including hardships, poverty, expectations, uncertainty and a lack of equality of opportunity in education and stability in employment. In the Wordsworth dictionary of proverbs (Apperson and Manser, 2006, p.505), it is stated that 'We are all in the same boat – though we do not all steer'. Although some of the participants (n=8) were adamant at the start of their interviews that everyone was 'in the same boat' growing up, as their interviews progressed, their own perceptions changed based on their adult knowledge. In fact, children were not 'all in the same boat' growing up, and had quite different experiences of community life in Merseyside in the post-war years, impacted by socio-economic status, location, religious differences, class divisions and gender differences.

MEMOIR 2.

POVERTY DOWN TO THE SOLES: HARDSHIP AND 'GETTING ON WITH IT.'

> The wet cobbled streets
> And the sound of the docks,
> The one o'clock gun
> And the holes in our socks,
> The games that we played
> Where the houses once stood,
> All make up memories of
> A Liverpool Childhood.
> (Edwards, 2013, p.15)

Overview

In the aftermath of the Second World War the most common and powerful images were those of the home front: communal air raid shelters, surviving the blitz, evacuations and hardship (Heron, 1985; Peplar, 2002). These times became known as the people's war due to community spirit and the collective fight for survival (Donnelly, 1999). Literature portrays the immediate post-war years as a time of hardship, of struggling through, of pulling together, but also, by contrast, as the best of times (Pressley, 1999; Rose, 2003; Hennessy, 2007). This chapter recounts the participants' memories of pulling together in times of hardship.

Pulling together in times of hardship

In the post-war years, fathers returned from the war ready to face austerity and the people of Merseyside got on with it together (Summers, 2008). 'Getting on' included ensuring that their neighbours did not go without. Although food shortages and rationing continued after the war, the atmosphere of the nation was largely united (Donnelly, 1999). The participants commented on the important, yet predictable, nature of food in everyday life; women tended to bake in order to create different meals or make food go further. Food would be purchased on a day-to-day basis because there were no refrigerators and limited daily funds, and using

leftovers for tomorrow's meal was a common occurrence. Mr T remembered his weekly diet:

> You basically knew ya meals everyday ... on Monday was always a fry up from the Sunday it was always bits and bobs, whatevers, if there was anything left from the Sunday. Then it'd be egg 'n' chips and different things like that, nothing elaborate. There was no such thing as curries and that in them days, you know what I mean, that wasn't heard of. Friday in our house was always fish 'n' chips, had to be fish ... 'cause ya couldn't eat meat on a Friday in them days ... ya mam always ... did that in the Irish side of it you know what I mean like.

Mr T referred to the 'Irish side of it', meaning the Roman Catholic belief that meat should not be eaten on Fridays. According to Buchanan (2006, pp.181-182), 'In medieval times each Friday was deemed a fast day, in commemoration of the death of Jesus, and was marked by the eating of fish in place of meat'; this was a weekly ritual for many Catholic families in the post-war years.

Dr E recalled strict rationing on food; he remembered his aunt taking him to the grocers to buy an apple when he was three or four years old, and having a stick of rhubarb taken off him because they could only buy one or the other. Dr E explained:

> I used to go and help in the back of the shop with the cutting up of the butter from big blocks ... we had to try and get the weight right for each one, but everything was done in the back of the shop, sugar came out of big drums, all weighed and put on sale, and the pride of joy and the hero of the shop was Mr Jones himself, Dave Jones, who presided over the bacon slicer, but you didn't have much choice then. You were virtually told what you could have.

When items were purchased, they had to be kept in a cool place such as a pantry; there were no refrigerators. Mr T recalled his mother keeping the milk in a bucket

of water to stop it from going off. He also recalled 'When you used to open the cupboard it was like old Mother Hubbard, the cupboards would be bare'. Mr T commented that times before this must have been even harder and that his parents tried their best: 'We didn't expect nothing'. Mr T remembered his house being very basic with a small fire; he explained that they never had a television, but he can remember the first family in the street getting one and all of the children peering through the windows to see it. Mr T recalled that living conditions were cramped; he shared a bedroom with his sister, and his other sister slept in their parents' room. Mr T explained that they used a galvanised bucket if they needed the toilet when it was too cold to open the door into the yard. 'Our Mary, honest a god, I said it's like havin' a horse in here with her when she used to go for a wee you know what I mean [laughs]'.

Mr T recalled it being very cold and having the coal fire lit, and explained that there would be ice inside the windows due to lack of insulation: 'Ya just got on with it do you know what I mean, ya just put woollies on didn't ya. Just had ya jumpers on'. Challenging times meant that families had to just get on with it and this way of life instilled children with the ability to cope with difficulty and pull together. Many participants (n=8) spoke of a sense of safety and trust within communities. Mr T described people leaving their doors open for people to come and go freely; he recalled women helping if one of the families were in trouble. Mr T explained: 'If someone was sick in the street the women would always rally around and I don't think you see much of that now were they go and get the bits an bobs from the shops because them days, with there being no fridges as well'. Many of the participants (n=6) remembered knocking at different neighbour's homes and asking for sugar or to borrow things such as knitting needles. Mr H commented: 'That's the way we used to all get by ya know every one of us ...'. Mrs J reflected on the differences between the post-war years and contemporary society, identifying a lack of community unity today and stating her belief that people 'fly-away' too soon, leaving behind elderly relatives. She concluded: 'I remember there was always a nana in the parlour or you know in the living room that's what I can remember as a child, but ya know now you see so many people an

they've got no one have they, you know'. She felt quite upset that there was a lack of such support in her own life.

It was evident from the findings that care occurred within the community during the 1950s and people looked after their elderly relatives in their own homes. Today the elderly are often seen as a burden, highlighting a significant change in societal attitude. Berridge (1991, p.71) referred to family or community care of the elderly as 'informal care' whereby the individual continues to live in the community, either with extended family members or in close proximity to a neighbour. However, communities dispersed during the 1950s, which meant that many older people lived further away from their relatives. For example, Berridge (1999, p.71) stated that 'In inner London, the proportion of elderly people who had a child living within five minutes' walk halved between the late 1950s and the late 1970s'. Furthermore, women had traditionally been carers for family members because they were thought to be natural carers who had the time to devote to the role (Berridge, 1999). However, the female role began to change as women sought employment and strove for a better standard of living.

Poverty versus affluence

'Great wealth and extreme poverty have always coexisted among the city's population' (National Museums Liverpool, 2012, p.64).

Todd (2008, p.501) explored sociological studies of Liverpool between 1956 and 1964 and concluded that 'Vulnerability to poverty continued to shape working-class life'. Social studies conducted in Liverpool in 1956 explored the lives of the working class including, family life and social structure in the working class areas, particularly Crown Street. Part of the slum clearance scheme was enacted by Liverpool's first Labour Council. Todd (2008) revisited these areas, including the wider southern suburbs of Liverpool where many families had been re-housed. Despite the provisions of the welfare state and increased employment, poverty continued to exist in both the inner city and the wider suburbs.

Autobiographical literature such as *Shiny Pennies and Grubby Pinafores* by Foley (2010) depicted working class life, giving insight into how British people overcame times of hardship while remaining united. This theme runs throughout much of the literature that portrays hardship in the 1950s (Pressley, 1999; Rose, 2003; Hennessy, 2007). It was also a common theme in the interviews; the findings show that, although the post-war lifestyle was centred around making do, a lack of heating and hot running water, limited food, struggling to make ends meet and, in many cases, austerity and poverty, working hard for the family seemed to encourage the efforts of a poor nation after the war. The majority of the participants (n=9) spoke of their hard-working parents, explaining that they had tried to give their children the best life they could. Many of the participants (n=8) also believed that they had taken these values into their adult lives and were appreciative of the lives they lead now. Parents who had already experienced hardship as a result of the First World War, the inter-war period and the Second World War wanted a better life for their children and possessed a strong work ethic, usually holding down two or more jobs. This highlights the importance of children and the family in the society of the time.

Marx developed the idea that class could be understood objectively, not only through individual consciousness but through the process of production. Marxism does not define classes based on wealth or indeed on how individuals position themselves within the class hierarchy, but on the outcome of their relationship with the product of their own labour (Kingston, 2000). Interestingly, many of the participants (n=8) explained that, during childhood, they had no idea about class division due to socialising within their communities. Two of the participants started to notice class variations when they moved away from their close-knit community as a result of increasing social mobility.

Browne (2011) described class as inter-generational social mobility, which is a comparison of the individual's current occupation or lifestyle to their circumstances at birth. The frameworks of Marx and Browne can be used to describe the different kinds of class structure that are evident in the transitions of the participants' lives. Few people moved before the war; people generally were

born, lived and died in the same place. After the war people moved to new communities and developed a heightened expectation of having a better life.

Mr R said that his parents chose to work to better the family's life. Eventually, the family moved to a Victorian, red brick, terraced house in Liscard. Mr R remembered the removal van driver said to his mother 'My god, you're moving up in the world'. Mr R recalled the excitement of moving house,

> We all had our own bedrooms ...you could run around, I remember thinking god the hall was probably bigger than our living room and kitchen put together in the house we'd come from. It had a bathroom, which was absolutely fantastic, we couldn't believe it, an inside toilet! There was even a small garden in the back and that ... was like another world for us.

According to Feeney (2011), by the 1950s many people were moving into homes that had an indoor bathroom. However, many households still only had a toilet in the yard and many families continued to use newspaper instead of toilet paper. Mr R referred to this as having to 'endure the hardship of using an outside toilet' and said that the prospect of using it was 'daunting' for children (Feeney, 2011). This is interesting: those who experienced change became discontented with their childhood, whereas those who knew no different described their childhood in mostly positive terms. Moving house was a turning point in Mr R's life because he disliked where his family had originally lived: 'I think life got better after that and I think it got better as I got older as well because ... I don't think I particularly enjoyed being a kid. I think I enjoyed being an adult more and being able to make my own decisions'. This statement contrasts with the rest of the participants (n=9), who all expressed a desire to return to their childhood days, which they remembered as happy. Generally the participants who recalled outdoor toilets laughed, evidencing their assumption that their circumstances were the norm.

Mr R witnessed social mobility as his family rose from a poor lifestyle to a middle class one. This was experienced both by contrasting the lifestyles of his parents

and grandparents and then through the move to a new family home in what he classed as a 'better' regional area on Merseyside. Giddens (2006, p.330) wrote about social mobility in the 1950s, stating that 'Upward mobility was much more common than downward mobility, and was mostly concentrated at the middle levels of the class structure. People right at the bottom tended to stay there'.

In society, the label of poverty was given according to the standard of children's clothing and hygiene (Welshman, 1999) and to those families who constantly borrowed from others in the neighbourhood. Families who genuinely 'hadn't got it' were seen as the societal norm (Mrs E), but those who took advantage of neighbourhood good-will were stigmatised and excluded:

> ... My job on a Sunday was on the step, where we had the gas meters ... she (mother) couldn't afford to put the shillings in and what have ya. So I used to file off, I used to file pennies the ha'pennys down, and I filed them down [does motion on the table] all the way down 'til they fitted in the gas meter [laughs] and then the gas man'd come out [laughs] and ... I heard him say one day, 'What's this?' Me man said, 'It's the money for the gas.' 'I can't be having this' he said. She said, 'Ah well you'll have to lump it then.' She said, 'because that's all I've got' [laughs] (Mr, H).

Mr T commented that, if you look at photographs from the time, 'everyone looks as though they'd never had a wash'. Some of the participants (n=6) recalled only bathing once a week and often sharing baths with siblings. Some families were unable to provide adequate clothing and, in some cases, footwear (Welshman, 1999). Mrs E remembered seeing people without shoes: 'We were used to seeing people without shoes and we were used to seeing people that you know, you would nowadays call tramps, but they weren't, they just hadn't got it'. Children would make do with hand-me-downs[19] and often be seen wearing clothes that were too big for them (Pressley 1999; Pressley, 2003). This is a huge contrast to

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[19] Hand-me-downs: possessions or clothes passed from one generation to another, typically between siblings, but during the post-war years also between neighbours.

today's consumer society, which encourages frivolous spending and the discarding of material items. The 'make do and mend' mentality of the 1950s mirrors the recycling trend that has become fashionable today, but after the war people had no choice. This was also typical of food waste. The participants expressed their appreciation for the value of things and referred to today's society as possessing a 'throwaway' culture.

Mr H recalled his mother never having much money; they shopped in the local market, known as Paddy's market, on Great Ormand Street. His mother took him there one Saturday to buy a new overcoat:

> She said, 'I know where I'll go, I'll go … to Mrs White.' That was Cilla Black's Mum her name was White at the time, and then Cilla became Cilla Black didn't she. Anyways we goes up, 'Hello May' that's me mam, 'Hello, May.' She said, 'Hello, Ms White, how are ya?' 'I'm Alright.' 'Anything to fit this fella?' she said. 'Er, a nice overcoat or something like that.' I've just the thing' she said. 'Let's have a look here' so anyway, put this overcoat on me and the arms were down here [gestures down to the floor] anyway she turned it up twice ya know. And she said, 'Ohh stand over there' … so I stood over there out the way, she said, 'I'm tellin ya, you'd think it was made for ya' and I'm going [shakes head] but it's not you know; [laughs] but I couldn't say nothing 'cause I'd have got a clip round the ear as I said … Anyway Mrs White said, 'Oh, you'll grow into it son, you know, ya gonna be a big lad aren't ya?' I'm nodding going 'Yes Mrs White [gestures].' 'Thanks very much Mrs White, Three Bags Full Mrs White.' And anyway, I had this over … we gets home and me elder brother said that's not a bad overcoat is it? … and as he tried it on, he said 'It'll fit me.' I said, 'Eh that's my overcoat' [laughs]. Anyway, he went out with the overcoat you see and … when me mum come she said, 'Show ya dad the overcoat.' I said, ' … our Brian's got it on.' 'What's he doing with the overcoat?' I said, 'He wanted to borrow it, it fits him, and he's bigger than me.' She said, 'wait 'til he comes in

here,' and he come in, 'Get that overcoat off now, that's it.' She said, 'Try it on, show ya dad, try it on.' So I tried it all on and ... he said 'Oh lovely that on, you'll fill out in it you'll be alright with that ya know' and that was that'.

Mr H laughed while recalling this memory and said that it was 'quite funny looking back'. He also recalled having to put cardboard into his shoes after holes formed in the soles. If his feet got wet he would exchange the wet cardboard for another piece; his parents could not afford to buy new shoes. Mr H humorously commented that he was always willing to help a mate out by giving him a piece of cardboard for their shoe. Mr H's stepfather had left, so his family were struggling financially, resulting in bailiffs coming to the house due to debts. He described collapsing during Mass because he had not eaten much for a couple of days, and being taken home and visited by the doctor, who gave his mother some money. He recalled that things became better again after that. Two of the participants remembered bailiffs entering their homes to reclaim goods due to their families' financial difficulties. These were particularly poignant and negative memories for both participants. Mr H explained that their mothers usually dealt with the bailiffs and organised how to make ends meet. Edwards (2013, p.28) described the importance of pawn shops:

> Wives and mothers could be seen entering these shops on a Monday morning with brown paper parcels containing their husband's Sunday suit and perhaps his best overcoat to be 'pledged' in order to get enough money together to put food on the table until Friday, when he got paid. They would then return to the shop and the items redeemed for the weekend, only to go through the same cycle again the following Monday.

This shows the desperate measures people took to make ends meet. It also shows the responsibility and pressure put on women at the time. It is important to note that each of the participants kept the negative part of their interview brief and quickly returned to more humorous or happier memories. Confronting negative

memories can help to come to terms with negative feelings (Magnussen and Helstrup, 2007).

Mrs W also recalled widespread poverty in Merseyside during the fifties, particularly in Birkenhead, and she could remember some children walking around without shoes:

> There was a baby once with just a nappy and rubber knickers which is what they wore over the nappies then and it was just stood in the middle of the road between the chippy and the corner shop, I don't know who's baby it was it had bare feet and just this nappy and rubber and it was just walking across the road and I just remember thinking, oh my god that poor little baby.

Some families struggled to get by and others reached breaking point and felt that they could no longer cope. Mrs E experienced her mother struggling when her father lost their home twice:

> She did once consider putting us in Barnardo's, almost got to the door and then couldn't do it, because she didn't know what to do, you know, I think if you lose your home once, that's one thing, but twice, and I mean the second time was hard, it was hard for me, 'cause I was in the middle of exams, bailiffs, not nice, not nice.

The impact of education on childhood

The Education Act of 1944 aimed to improve the education system by making secondary schooling free and offering scholarships where possible. Hennessy (2007, p.65) stated that 'Even before the 1944 Education Act began to accumulate its effects, several ladders of upward mobility into a skilled lower middle class had been put into place by the shift in the scientific and technological basis of British industry'. This was also noted by Young and Willmott (1957), who stated that the shift that started in the late eighteenth century from a stable, agricultural social hierarchy to an expansive, crowded urbanised class system was determined by

fluctuating relationships. Barriers in educational opportunities, including deprived areas, gender differences and inequalities of the tripartite system of technical, secondary moderns and grammar schools, have been ongoing issues.

Mr T felt he had a very poor schooling. He attended the St Francis De Sales School in Liverpool and recalled being taken to a scouting hall to learn things such as boxing rather than academic studies. He commented that 'The education basically we received and through no fault of the ... school I don't suppose, it was virtually ... nil to tell ya the truth'. He explained that there were no facilities at the school to learn wood or metal work so the children had to go to Major Lester School to do woodwork and to St John School to do metalwork. He complained that they were 'wandering around most of the time' and commented that 'In my opinion, now later in life, I think back on it, we shouldn't've been just sitting in a class room and tried and improve ourselves ya know, we weren't fortunate enough'. Mr T recalled his favourite teacher being a tough man who understood the way children grew up then. Mr T felt that he had unfairly missed out on the opportunity to have a good education and consequently a better life.

Dr E spoke about the children in his primary school being quite poor and being seen as wealthy in comparison to the other children at Egerton Grove School because his father owned a car: 'Egerton Grove would be empty of cars and he would drive up in this car and you would think royalty was arriving and I used to get in and the kids all used to chase the car down the road because it was such an exciting sight'. Dr E also felt privileged because his father was in the 'rag trade',[20] so in comparison to the other children he was always well dressed: 'I was the only child that I was aware of in the class that had a hemmed handkerchief, because most of the children there, all that they had were pieces of rag ... for their handkerchiefs'. Again, Dr E demonstrates an awareness of difference.

Some participants (n=8) reflected on their experiences of hardship in the 1950s giving them a sense of their place in society and of the opportunities available to

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[20] Slang for selling clothing.

them at the time. Although many of the participants (n=7) commented that they did not realise they were poor at the time, it seems that those who were more affluent noticed how poor the people around them were. However, Dudgeon (2010, p.142) stated that 'children were not conscious of being poor'.

Some participants (n=7) explained that they did not know they were poor during their childhoods because everyone was the same. It was not until later life that they realised how poor they had been. Other authors demonstrated a similar unawareness of class divisions during the post-war years (Hennessey, 2006; Dudgeon, 2010). Authors such as Lees (2011) and Summers (2008) wrote of the community experiencing times of hardship together and of mothers who held their families together by making ends meet, from making do with rationing to mending clothes and hand-me-downs. Due to people being 'in the same boat', the majority of the working class did not possess an awareness of class variation or of 'going without' (Feeney, 2009).

In contrast to the other participants, Mrs M experienced a privileged education due to the financial support of a wealthy aunt who had no children of her own. She first attended Avalon School in West Kirby aged three years old: 'I was such a snob in those days, I used to think [sigh] ... in those days, there was a lot of class distinction'. She described herself as being 'horribly snooty' and 'really snobbish', and the children being a 'snooty little bunch.' She commented,

> My friends used to arrive at school, a lot of them in Rolls Royces, Bentleys, chauffeur driven cars, I mean that was just the norm for them, they had staff at their houses in Caldy, they had gardeners and housekeepers and maids and I was such a snooty little horror ... I was just as bad as them, and when I had a birthday party which was always in July and usually seemed to rain I used to ask my Aunt if I could have the party up at her house and I used to pretend to them that I actually lived their behind the school 'cause it was nice and had a big garden.

Mrs M explained that children had to attend the eleven-plus exam at a state school:

> I never forget that day, it was awful, we ... were so horrible to the children at St Bridget's, I can't believe how ghastly we were, and we thought they were the pits ...We had this awful food they gave us for lunch and then we had to do the rest of the exam in the afternoon and I remember being so grateful to get out of the place, and yet, in later years and I'd married and had two daughters, I was more than happy and very proud to send them to St Bridget's [laughs] because there was no way I could have afforded to send them to Avalon and neither could my husband but, it's quite strange how the class system worked in those days. These days it doesn't seem to matter at all.

Mrs M stated that 'I suppose Avalon was a foundation for everything I did later on'. She clearly demonstrated an awareness of class division, explaining how she 'looked down'[21] on people who were less fortunate. This differs from today's society where class divisions are often blurred.

Although Mrs M had the opportunity to have a very privileged education, which at times she depicted as restrictive, referring to the high expectations of her behaviour and academic standards, she also had the opportunity to enjoy the freedom of street play, which stood in stark contrast to her experiences of school. She spoke of leading a basic home life and being influenced by the social interactions of school life; she described herself as having been a 'tomboy' in her home life but said that she felt a need to conform to the expected behaviour of her school friends at school. Mrs M felt that her home and school life contrasted immensely; she was thus able to experience both aspects of social life growing up. Seeing the more privileged children in school made her feel embarrassed by her background and home life, for which she made excuses; she also experienced exclusion when other children realised that she was less privileged than them,

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[21] Looking down: pitying those who are less fortunate and feeling that one is more superior in both status and standard of living.

exemplifying class variation and a lack of social acceptance. Mrs M's story is unusual; much of the literature of this era emphasises the separate experiences of the working and middle classes.

Dr E also spoke of his privileged education at Kingsmead School in his early adolescence, which he believed instilled values and skills that lasted into later life. He explained that the school gave him opportunities to learn sport, music and woodwork. Dr E stated that Kingsmead had an Evangelical ethos and the children were expected to attend assembly and prayers every day, which would last from thirty minutes to one hour, and instilled religious values. The children accepted the religious morals that were pushed upon them. It could be argued that they faced more constraint than some of their peers, but they had freedom in other aspects of life. Education moulds the aspirations of youth, and children are impacted by the ideals of their teachers (Best, 2000; Hayes, 2010). Dr E stated that 'There is no doubt that the foundations that were laid for my life from the teaching and the attitudes of the staff of Kingsmead have lasted me all my life'. The values instilled in children, such as the importance of learning, can have a huge impact on their inspiration and outlook in later life. Experience can open opportunities outside of the immediate community.

Mrs J, who attended a state school, spoke of enjoying cooking and woodwork – the latter of which was not usually taken by girls in the 1950s. This contrasts to the experiences of the other female participants and also with the literature, which focuses on girls participating in sewing, knitting and cooking (Barnes et al., 2002). Mrs J's memories evidence female empowerment as gender divisions began to break down and girls were included in activities that were once regarded as solely male. Wombwell (2006) explained that, if the teachers needed any errands running, the boys would almost always be chosen over the girls, while girls were taught to be good wives and mothers. There was evidence of differences in childhood experience caused by gender (Rhodes, 2000a). The extent to which gender demarcation within the education environment mirrored wider social trends of the time must be considered. Mr T commented on the channelling of children into specific job roles after school. Men and women would have set

choices and he regretted not being given better opportunities in his school years. For this reason, towards the mid fifties, passing the eleven-plus exam and choosing the right school for secondary education became an important part of growing up (Feeney, 2011; McCulloch, 2011). Parents would view passing the eleven-plus as a mark of respect, almost like a 'rite of passage'. Some social theorists believe that the function of education is to persuade certain groups that failure is their own fault and that they have been unable to gain the knowledge and skills deemed valuable by society (Mayes, 1986).

Marxist and Functionalist views of education differ in relation to success and occupation. Functionalists believe that education rewards those who are more intellectual, while Marxists believe the rewards are reaped by the ruling class in a process that Bourdieu referred to as 'cultural reproduction' (Mayes, 1986).

Mr R recalled being greatly influenced by the teachers in his school, some of whom had a positive impact on his life:

> I think it's quite interesting, if I hadn't have had those teachers would my path in life have gone differently? Because I can remember our form teacher saying ... to me, 'A__, you can do this, you can be an electrician, you can do this, go to the college and enrol,' you know he really gave me the enthusiasm to do it, so these people have actually had quite a huge influence on my life and the route that it took.

Mr R explained that, although times were hard at school, he still looked back with fondness because, he believed, of his good family life. He also explained that his grades rose to the top of the class in a strict learning environment; he was the only participant who believed that he had thrived in this type of environment. In the 1950s, the National Curriculum placed emphasis on learning by rote and learning social values and respect (Peplar, 2002). The female participants (n=5) in particular felt that learning by rote and receiving physical punishment hindered their learning and caused them to become withdrawn and to fail in school. Mr R, however, showed an appreciation for a strict teaching environment, believing that

it had contributed to his successful grades. Mr R stated that: 'I flourished in that environment ... I became school librarian, then a prefect and then, deputy, school head boy'. Sometimes this system allowed abuses of power to occur or adults took physical punishment too far. It also reflects a strict approach to learning, which meant that school was not enjoyable for many; however, there was a general consensus among adults that physical punishment was for the best.

'Six of the best': Physical punishment: Child abuse or necessary discipline?

Beating children with canes, rulers or other implements was legal in Britain in the 1950s (William and Simpson, 2004). Although it has now been abolished in Britain, Benthall (1991) argued that ritual physical punishment is a clear case of child-abuse. Feeney (2011) highlighted not only the physical pain of being caned but also the mental trauma and humiliation that came with the experience, both of which negatively impacted on children. In contrast to the findings of the interviews, Feeney (2011) stated that usually only boys received physical punishment in schools, and usually only at secondary school age. However, all of the participants in this study either witnessed or experienced physical punishment first hand. Physical punishment was ineffective as an approach to education: children only tried to achieve out of fear. Strict fathers who had been to war had been regimented and disciplined themselves; thus, this approach to disciplining children was deemed necessary and acceptable.

Mrs M attended a private school and recalled disliking mathematics because she was forced to do mental arithmetic, and, if she got the answer wrong, she would be hit by the teacher across the knuckles with a ruler. She stated: 'I permanently had black knuckles'. She said that many 'things' went on within the private school system that would not be acceptable in society today. Logan (2011, p.10) highlighted the characteristics and traditions that private schools tried to maintain during the 1950s, including the 'prefect system, basic military training, corporal punishment' and a 'formal and authoritarian' environment. However, much of this punishment also occurred outside of the school environment. Mrs M's mother sent her for additional piano lessons, she recalled,

I'll never forget her she was the most cruel woman I have ever met ... she used to, every time I played a wrong note she'd thump me on the, on the knuckles, so I went on having black knuckles and I spent all my time with her lesson saying, 'Sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry.' Every time I made a mistake I'd say 'Sorry,' it was an automatic reaction I think.

There was little regard for people with learning difficulties: punishment was given out readily for not understanding. Today we understand that sometimes children cannot fully grasp certain tasks and give additional support to children who need it and we can see that this approach enables children to reach their full potential when supported correctly.

In the 1950s many schools were still practising a rather Victorian approach to schooling and discipline was predominant. Many teachers were ex-army and took a disciplinarian approach to behaviour in the classroom. Victorian characteristics included children not speaking unless they were spoken to, partaking in regular prayers, looking their best and receiving physical punishment if they misbehaved, did not pay attention or behaved inappropriately or disrespectfully. Wombwell (2006) explained that if a child was physically disciplined at school they could expect a repeat scolding from their parents when they returned home at the end of the day. Many implements were used to punish children physically at school such as canes, board dusters or even walking sticks. There was always an element of fear and children learned by this approach.

According to Mrs E punishment was emotional as well as physical, inducing long term suffering beyond 'having the board duster thrown at you'. Her parents were insistent on making children aware of action and consequence. Mrs E explained that children who made noise in the classroom at school would get something, such as the wooden blackboard duster, thrown at them. She recalled,

Fanny, she used to literally throw and her aim was very good and quite a lot of little boys with sore heads and one master thought

nothing of caning behind back of the legs with a big ruler which really, really hurt, I didn't get it but the boys cried ... I mean punishment was just dished out willy nilly, boys tended to get punishment more than the girls ... don't remember ever getting punishment like, we didn't get lines or anything like that it was physical ...

Mr M recalled getting caned in secondary school. He explained that caning was 'rife' and even though he was in the top stream he would be caned two or three times a week. He recalled:

We had one particular teacher who caned us alphabetically... luckily my mate, Stanley Hall being an H, when it got to H he just told the teacher unceremoniously to F-off he wasn't gonna be caned and that was it stopped, it stopped at that, he didn't carry on. But, poor old Jimmy Aspinall he was the first boy to be caned for every class we went to Jimmy Aspinall got the cane, poor old Jimmy.

Three of the participants commented on the cruelty they experienced during childhood and their belief that adults had abused their power. They are exploring physical punishment from a contemporary perspective: children never reported it to anyone at the time, because it was not seen as wrong or unusual. Mr T remembered there being severe physical punishment enacted by the teachers in his school:

In those days you got six of the best and they were dished out, six of the best, they really hurt there was none of this, 'not allowed to do anything.' And when the teacher said, 'shut up.' The whole class shut up. And I can remember, that's one of the things it's probably lacking a bit today, when the teacher walked in the room the whole class went silent because there was that respect, and also you knew that if you didn't you were gonna be punished.

Some people in positions of power took physical punishment to extremes and suffered no consequences. Feeney (2011, p. 174) stated that:

> There is no doubt that the use of corporal punishment in schools was practiced with great enthusiasm by some cruel and cowardly teachers who took pleasure in beating even the frailest boys ... Clouts across the back of the head for not paying attention were commonplace, and there was an unending supply of chalk, blackboard dusters and other missiles thrown.

However, Mr M commented that 'I can generally say, even including all the canings I got [laughs] it was fabulous really and I wish I could do it all again [laughs]. God almighty, when you think of how many times ya got battered'. His comments oppose the view of the literature and questions whether the experience of corporal punishment has impacted on him in any way. Mr R, for example, commented that the strict secondary school environment contributed to his flourishing education during his adolescence not just by encouraging his own achievement but also by forcing the other children in the school to be respectful and studious.

Mrs J recalled a period when she did not attend school because she felt lonely and inferior to the other children. She felt this way because her mother could not afford the uniform. She decided not to go to school and instead went on the ferries and bus rides by herself.

> They sent two detectives to arrest me dad in the end because it was against the law. I didn't know that ya know, suppose I still would have done it [laughs]. But, they sent these two detectives oh I got battered and me hair got cut and everything. And then I went back to school...

Mrs J explained that her mother cut her hair, of which she was very proud, as a form of punishment. She explained that nothing else could be taken off her because she had nothing to give; she commented that her mother could lose her temper

very easily. At that time it was not just parents and teachers who could give out punishment: policemen also used to give children a clip around the ear if they stepped out of line (Feeney, 2011). The fact that the police inflicted violence as a form of punishment shows how acceptable the physical punishment of children was to the law and provides insight into the social tolerance of such behaviour at that time.

Many children opted not to tell their parents if they had been punished by the police or at school because the likelihood was that they would receive another belt from their parents for getting into trouble in the first place (Feeney, 2011). Mr T recalled:

> We never had much money but I had a caring mother and father ... who tried to do their best for us and our experience of life was knockin' around the streets and we got up to some mischief, as kids did then, and ... was many a time were the policeman would give ya a crack across the back of the head and then take ya home and ya dad would give ya another belt for bein' a naughty lad ya know.

From this, we can learn that physical punishment has no place in modern society. In keeping with the child in focus era of the 1950s, children were now seen as important for the future of Britain and in need of protection. According to Feeney (2011), the psychological effect of physical punishment is just as bad as, if not worse than, the physical experience itself. However, interestingly Mr R actually endorsed the strict environment and believed that it contributed to him doing well at school.

However, Mr M did not experience corporal punishment in his primary school years; he attended a Roman Catholic primary school and remembered being taught by nuns. Mr M commented that the nuns never hit the children and never used a cane or ruler to punish them; he explained that he respected the teachers and one in particular who got him interested in acting. Mr M used to attend a dinner club and he recalled one of the Nuns saying to him,

Don't be late for the dinner club today, something special!' So we all sat there wondering what was going to happen, and she wheels in this, well I call it an Elizabethan record player, and she said, 'I've got something for you.' She opened it up, she put this record on, and it was, 'Goodness Gracious Great Balls of Fire; by Jerry Lee Lewis [laughs], and when it finished [laughs], we must've all been sitting there with our mouths open [laughs] and she said, 'Children, that's Rock and Roll you're gonna love it!' [laughs], Fabulous! She was a cracker!.

Lees (2011, p.125) explained that 'Revolution inspired by the power of music was close at hand. A new tolerance of ideas and individualism was on the verge of being born.'

The stiff upper lip, respect and getting on with it.

As discussed in the previous memoir, Mr R recalled being bullied at school by a gang; he was in the park with his friend during the school holidays, sitting on the swings and the bully came over to him and threw a packet of cigarettes onto the floor. Mr R refused to pick them up and consequently was beaten up by the other lads in the gang. Mr R explained that he did not tell his parents what happened. This suggests that Mr R preferred to 'get on with it' and deal with the situation himself, which he saw as a strength.

Mr R explained that the bullies left him alone after that; he believed that it was because he had gained respect by standing up for himself. From then onwards he enjoyed school. Mr R provided both an example of respect and the use of 'the stiff upper lip' by 'getting on with it' and not telling his parents what had happened. By standing his ground and not giving in to the pressure of the bullies he managed to gain a level of respect. Although he managed to hide his emotions, Mr R stated that it was an experience that hurt him a lot and impacted on his childhood in a negative way. Rigby (2002) explained that victims of bullying show emotional weakness and this in turn gives the bully an overwhelming sense of power and achievement. Mr R reflected:

One of the things I look back with a little bit of sadness is my father could never show his feelings, he was a very reserved man, and now he's gone I don't know whether he was proud of us, you know you hope he was and you know you hope he appreciated what we'd done but it was never said. Feelings were never talked about and you know that's sad in a way because you never really know what somebody thought about you.

He explained that children today are encouraged to share their feelings more openly.

Reflective summary

Values learned during childhood influenced the participant's outlook in later life and contributed to their ability to cope with different situations. Honesty, trust and respect were all important values mentioned during the interviews. They were most commonly described by those who had experienced working class childhoods, and the participants believed that they had shaped their childhoods and indeed, their identities.

As discussed, extended family, particularly grandparents, were involved in children's lives which meant there was still a Victorian influence encouraging children to be seen and not heard. There was also strict discipline from regimented fathers and legal corporal punishment. Values were instilled in children throughout their everyday lives from other generations, family, peers, Sunday school, church, school and the wider community.

The working classes supported each other through times of hardship, which they believed made them easier to cope with. Such support shows that everyone understood what everyone else was going through, thus maintaining strong community ties and support networks. Many of the participants (n=7) explained that they did not know they were poor during their childhood; it is only now, on reflection, that they can judge the difference.

Many parents knew the value of education and that their children would need an education to have a better future. Mr T realised this on reflection. He wished that he had studied more and his own children have therefore been encouraged to achieve.

Although the 1950s are represented as a time of trust and honesty, these values seemed to apply only within the community. Working class communities would unite against outsiders or authority figures such as police or bailiffs to ensure their own survival.

Todd (2008) investigated the post-war working class in Liverpool and argued that a historical approach is needed to investigate poverty and class. She commented that previous researchers of post-war affluence and the working class have failed to acknowledge the importance of economic change '... in shaping working-class life' (p.3). Economic change, particularly in Merseyside, would have been a significant factor in people's lives. Todd (2010) also acknowledged the importance of the working class in these developments. She argued that, in fact, the mass move from the deprivation of inner-city Liverpool to the wider, more affluent suburbs, broke down the communal, close-knit lifestyle, support networks and kinship groups that had been central to the survival and happiness of its people. Todd (2010, p.502) explained that 'Despite an increase in state welfare provision, and high labour demand, vulnerability to poverty continued to characterise post-war working class life – in suburban streets as well as within inner cities.'

The findings highlight the importance of the effects of childhood social class experience on shaping identity and later life. Todd (2010) found that many of the social surveys of the 1950s portray poverty as the norm for society at that time. The lifestyle of the immediate post-war years was nonetheless a vast improvement on the inter-war years. It was believed, in society, that the increase in labour opportunities and the welfare state would abolish poverty for good (Todd, 2008). Rowntree and Lavers (1951) highlighted 'the end of poverty' in their 1951 social survey of 'York, Poverty and the Welfare State.' However, the existence of the problem family, poverty and the juvenile delinquent continued (Todd, 2008).

From the findings, it is evident that there were poverty-stricken childhoods in Merseyside. Merseysiders developed coping mechanisms: a spirit to get on with it, to not be defeated and to make the most of what they had. Although each of the participants opened up about negative times, every one of them dealt with it using humour and followed each negative experience with memories of happiness and joy. Mr H concluded his interview by saying,

> We never had much but we all helped each other out and we ... got on with it ya know, and if you could help anybody out you would. If you had any cardboard over you'd give him a piece for his shoe and things like that [laughs]. But yeah we used to help each other out and as a crowd of people, they were the best really you know, they were happy days.

MEMOIR 3

LATCHKEY KIDS: WORKING MOTHERS OF POST-WAR MERSEYSIDE

Overview

This memoir explores 1950s family values, as portrayed by the participants, in relation to social experiences such as latchkey kids, deviant behaviour, punishment and discipline. The researcher discusses how people conducted their day-to-day lives with respect for others and by getting on with it 'with a stiff upper lip'. Sebag-Montefiore (2006) mentions this attitude of bearing hardship with particular reference to British soldiers at Dunkirk. The literature portrays the stiff upper lip as a particular characteristic of the people of Britain, associated with endurance and hiding emotion (Briggs, 2007; Candappa, 2007; Else, 2010). This attitude stems from the difficult circumstances of British twentieth-century history, in particular the two world wars and the inter-war years. British people used the stiff upper lip as a coping strategy and as an emotional barrier for self-preservation. Furthermore, this ideal was cultivated in wider society using the slogan 'keep calm and carry on', which illustrates how people were instilled with a coping mentality. These attitudes have influenced the generational transfer of family values, traditions and behaviours, which are here explored and analysed in relation to the participant's reflective responses.

The concept of a 'latchkey kid' is an important development in the social history of childhood. Social history novels portray latchkey kids as the norm for children of the post-war era (Worth, 2009; Forrester, 2010). The phrase, also known as 'latchkey child', varies depending on geographic location and refers to children returning home with a latchkey to the door, often on a string around their neck or hidden under a door mat. The child would return to an empty home, usually because both parents were at work, and had to care for themselves. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) suggested early uses of the term in 1944 in the USA and 1945 in Australia, where it meant '... children left at home on their own by mothers engaged in war industry' (OED, 1989). Many people in contemporary Western society today would be disgusted by the idea of children fending for themselves;

however, people tend to look back on that era sympathetically because women, rather than being negligent, were supporting the war effort (Khatkar, 2010). During the 1940s British fathers were often away fighting, so mothers worked to support the war effort, and childcare was not widely available (Khatkar, 2010). Women filled job vacancies that men left behind. The 1950s saw an increase in females in the workplace, as they opted to continue with employment, increasing the number of latchkey kids.

Respect and how to treat other people

According to Wombwell (2006), a fifties child was instilled with a firm sense of respect for their elders both at home and at school. Hewitt and Leach (1993, p.7) maintained that:

> Children shared the fortunes of their families and were subject to the social injustices inherent in society's social class system. Attempts to correct those injustices inherent for children – through non-selective education and universal provision for child health, for example – were attempts to change the whole society rather than to alter the position of children in it.

Mrs E spoke of her parent's generation being strict and said that children were expected to remain respectful and would be thought to be showing off if they spoke out of turn. She commented that 'Children respected the older people, we gave way on buses, we picked up things for them if they dropped them and were generally polite'. Pressley (1999, p.24) stated that 'Parents in the fifties were regarded with a kind of awe by their children'. Respect was given to elders and mothers were voices of authority. As mentioned in the previous memoir, corporal punishment was seen as socially acceptable and was the norm for disciplining children. Mrs E believed that her own level of respect and good behaviour during her childhood stemmed from her fear of the consequences of misbehaviour. She said that children did not question the word of their parents or disobey their rules.

An example of respect in the community was recalled by Mr T; he remembered getting his 'longies' (long trousers) at the age of thirteen and thinking that he was mature. When his neighbour came out of his house, Mr T addressed him by his first name, and consequently was slapped around the head by his father, who stated, 'Mr Ferber to you'. Mr T laughed while recalling this memory. This suggests that children were regarded as children until they were quite old, with associated expectations of behaviour.

Mr R explained that there was also a lot more respect for the police in society in the post-war years. He recalled walking to his grandmother's house one Saturday morning. His father was a butcher and had given him some meat in a suitcase to take to his grandparents' house for the weekend; he was approximately seven years old and his sister was about five years old. A policeman stopped them walking over the Penny Bridge.[22] Mr R went on:

> I remember this policeman saying, 'Hang on a minute you two, where do you think you're going.' And he beckoned us over to his little hut that he used to stand in and we, I remember feeling very frightened because you were frightened of the police. They were the authority and we went over to them and he said, 'What's in this?' I said, 'It's meat for me nan's dinner.' Anyway he took the case off us and he opened it up, he didn't open it right up he just peered into it and we looked at one another as, expecting to be in trouble for something and he gave us the case back and he said, 'Ok,' he said, 'But you hurry along, go straight to your Nan's and make sure she has a nice dinner on Sunday.

One might consider this respect to be as a result of the fear of physical punishment. However, this also shows that people were not afraid to let children travel alone, in stark contrast to today's society.

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[22] Penny Bridge: an ornate dock-side bridge in Bidston, Wirral, which has since been replaced.

Being 'socially well-adjusted', the extended family and the 'rights and wrongs of life'

Extended family can refer to several generations of the same family living together or nearby and having close contact (Keene, 1995). Keene (1995) stated that this is a network that can provide invaluable support and was a typical structure of working class families in the United Kingdom, particularly during the 1950s.

Dr E explained that his parents were considered older parents when he was born: his mother was 43 and his father was 46. He felt that this had a direct impact on the way he was 'brought up' because his parents had a different outlook and set of values to those who were younger. After the war, houses needed partial repair or rebuilding so Dr E's maternal grandparents and aunt lived with them; being an only child of older parents, he believed, '…don't lead necessarily to somebody who is socially well-adjusted'. Dr E stated that although the extended family lived upstairs, 'there was … very much an overlapping in my upbringing between the grandparents, my aunt and my own parents'. Therefore his Mother decided when he was 13 that it would be better for him to attend a boarding school, so sent him to Rydal School in Colwyn Bay.

Although Dr E felt that living with extended family was detrimental to his social development, Moore (2001) highlighted the benefits of extended family members living together: they offer additional child care provision and income, as well as a supportive community (Moore, 2001).

Young and Willmott's (1957) study of Bethnal Green in East London depicted the close-knit community of the 1950s as supportive for all, mainly as a result of the females, who built close mother-daughter relationships. The majority of the participants spoke (n=9) about the central influence of female family members in their upbringing. For example, Dr E who had his maternal grandparents and aunt living in the family home; evidenced matriarchal leadership, describing his mother as the 'power house' of the family. Similarly, Mr H spoke of his grandmother, who he referred to as his 'Ninny', describing the 'good times' he spent with her and how she taught him the 'rights and wrongs of life'. He also remembered her death as the

saddest time of his childhood because they were very close and she had lived with him in the family home for many years.

Passing on family values, traditions or stories, which Mr H referred to as 'the rights and wrongs of life', is a generational process. Schrum et al. (2011, p.499) who stated that 'Oral history means many things. It is a record of oral tradition, compiled of stories handed down from one generation to the next, as well as the recording of personal history or experiences'. The literature on moral development explained the passing on of values as providing a learning experience through which the individual develops moral fibre, empathy, self-discipline and a comprehension of society and the world around them. The individual will take many of these values with them into later life (Volling et al., 2009; Narvaez, 2013). The findings show the importance of passing on values and morals at the time. Several of the participants believed that the values instilled in them during childhood made them who they were and affected their decisions in adult life. Many of the participants (n=9) experienced good times and learned many valuable lessons from extended family members. The participants also felt that the way they were brought up influenced how they have brought up their own families.

Mr R was one of the participants who spent a lot of his time living with grandparents; he commented that he really enjoyed living there:

> I can remember when you used to wake up in the bedroom and the house was very well furnished and carpeted, and you'd wake up to the smell of bacon, porridge, always had a full breakfast that may start with porridge and then bacon, eggs and fried bread, everyday. Me nan did a lot of home cooking we'd eat a lot of homemade pies, always had a lovely roast dinner on a Sunday ... so really had a nice time there at me nans and I used to enjoy going there.

This is a common theme of the findings: many of the participants (n=7) lived or spent a significant amount of their time with extended family members.

Mr R believed that his grandparents took over the role of his parents due to the amount of time he spent with them. This could infer an overlapping of upbringing, in some cases over three generations; this meant that there was a variety of values passed on to Mr R particularly strong discipline, religiosity, etiquette and aspirations. He recalled his grandmother being religious and keeping a jar of money in the hall for lepers. However, his grandfather lost his faith because of the First World War. Snape (2005) commented on the likelihood of soldiers losing their faith due to the overwhelming feeling of loss, pain and brutality. He focused in particular on experiences of the First World War however, citing Gibbs (2005, p.233):

> Close to death, in the midst of tragedy, conscious in a strange way of their own spiritual being and of the spirituality present among masses of men above the muck of war, the stench of corruption, and the fear of bodily extinction, they groped out towards God. They searched for some divine wisdom greater than the folly of the world, for a divine aid which would help them to greater courage.

Mr R explained that his grandparent's views, both religious and non-religious, greatly shaped his own views of the world today.

Families: 'Six of one and half a dozen of the other'

During the war years, while men were away fighting, women were required to fill job vacancies. These included working as munitions factory workers, air raid wardens, ambulance and fire engine drivers and ship builders. Initially, only single women between the age of 20 and 30 years old were employed (Lewis, 1992). Although some married women also joined the workforce to support their families financially, many women only agreed to take on jobs specifically related to the war effort, including in air defence and the land army. Women also helped with farming to increase the amount of food produce being grown in Britain (Jarratt, 2009). This initial work effort was welcomed and indeed needed, but women still had to maintain domestic life and care for their families.

One theme that emerged from the interviews was that of the working mother. Some authors refute this change in family role, writing of the 1950s that mothers were housewives, fathers were breadwinners and the nuclear family was the norm (Dillon, 2003; Sherratt and Hughes, 2004). Sherratt and Hughes (2004, p.42) refer to the era as the 'golden age of the traditional nuclear family'. Although the majority of the participants (n=7) came from a nuclear family, three of the participants experienced family separation or disruption due to the loss of a father figure, either due to death or separation.

Bott conducted a study of 'Family and Social Networks' in 1957 which explored gender roles within 20 London based families. The study developed the concept of segregated and joint conjugal roles as a way of identifying key changes in the familial behaviours of men and women. She noted that social networks played a significant role in families, and argued that families that lack a strong and close support network are more likely to develop conjugal relationships. Bott (1957) explained that families, typically from the middle classes, tended to adopt a conjugal role which entails shared domestic responsibilities. Additionally, social networks are usually more widespread rather than community based and as a result individuals within that network are less likely to know each other.

In contrast to the joint conjugal role, the segregated conjugal role is based on gender interests and assigned responsibilities, thus this meant that men had very little involvement in domesticity. However, the family social network is usually more close-knit and familiar with each other. Both genders share a highly connected social network and people known to the family are often known to each other. This pattern is more typical of the working class, and was evident in the findings: the majority of the participants (n=9) spoke of their parents socialising within the confines of their community and commented that the neighbours knew each other and each other's business. Bott (1957) measured changes in social life against idealised social constructions within society at that time. Changes within family structure, including the breakdown of the traditional nuclear family, contributed to gender equality, in particular to the economic independence of women and children.

The extended family was also a core element of fifties family life. Extended family can be vertical, including grandparents, or horizontal, including brothers and sisters (Dickinson and Leming, 1995). Dickinson and Leming (1995) highlighted that social surroundings, in conjunction with class, culture and the societal implications of a specific era, influence family existence. This foreshadows Welshman's (2010) argument that wartime disruption, hardship and evacuation had a major impact on societal restructuring after the end of the war. Brook and Davis (1985, p.11) stated that "Normal family life' was disrupted and the inadequacy of existing state and voluntary provision was exposed'. Bee (1992, p.519) argued that 'Family systems are strongly influenced by the particular subculture in which they are embedded'.

Parsons (1949) maintained that the nuclear family initiated a structural isolation within Western societies. The care, demand and responsibility for immediate relations including husband, wife and children meant eliminating all responsibility towards extended kin (Parsons, 1949). Although Parson's perspective is dated, it is contemporaneous to the 1950s society being studied. It is important to acknowledge, however, that this perspective potentially alters across different social contexts. Gender roles in many instances stayed the same, and mothers often had to conduct domestic duties in addition to any job roles they were fulfilling. However, some of the participants (n=3) recalled this changing during the post-war years and could remember their fathers becoming more involved, spending quality time with them and doing chores around the house, such as washing dishes (Mrs M). This demonstrates an interesting shift in conjugal roles in post-war family life which has remained in the participants' memories of childhood.

Wilmott and Young (1974), in their study 'The Symmetrical Family', identified three significant changes in family structure in the twentieth century: the pre-industrial family, the asymmetrical family and the symmetrical family. They viewed the symmetrical family as the most stable, child-centred model and as the beginning of gender equality. However, they found that asymmetrical families,

with absent fathers and an emphasis on the woman's role as mother and domestic labourer, were common. Willmott and Young (1974) maintained that class variation impacted on family relationship behaviours in British society. They believed that upper classes gradually adopted joint rather than segregated conjugal roles and eventually the middle and lower classes would follow suit; they called this process the 'trickle-down effect'.

All of the participants explained that the values they were taught during childhood shaped how they had lived their lives and the decisions they had made. Norms and values are learned through socialisation, initially primary socialisation in the family unit by observing parental behaviour and then secondary socialisation through the shared norms and values of wider society (Browne, 2011). During the 1950s these values, due to the existence of close-knit communities, were uniform.

Community in the 1950s comprised families, both nuclear and extended, and people socialised between families. Men would meet up in their local public houses, women would drink tea and gossip in their neighbours' homes or in local shops and children would play together on the streets where they lived. Mrs L recalled there being a sense of togetherness in the community and stated that everyone knew everyone else's business: 'I think families were more intermingled then because ... there wasn't that much social life as there is today you know'. Later work by Jenks (1996) focused on primary socialisation within the family, which provides the initial principles instilled in the child. Jenks explained that primary socialisation takes place during early childhood, aiding children in their social transition and in learning the values and norms of the society in which they exist. Thus, the values of both the family and wider society influence the experiences of childhood (Rhodes, 2000a). This is a key theme in the majority of the memories shared. An example of this is the way in which a poignant negative childhood experience influenced participants' later life decisions. For example, once the recorder was turned off, Mrs E chose to divulge further about the car accident that she mentioned during the recorded interview. She explained that the negative experience she had at the hospital influenced her decision to choose nursing as a profession in later life. She wanted to 'make a difference' and felt that she would

have the opportunity to help others. Similarly, Mrs J had helped to care for her grandmother during her childhood, keeping her company and helping her to attach her prosthetic leg. She too chose to go into the nursing profession in order to 'give something back' to the National Health Service. Both of these participants came from separated families, and had a lot of involvement and support from extended family members.

Peplar (2002) argued that the family was redefined in the post-war period following initial changes that can be identified before the war. From a social history perspective, Cunningham (1991) maintained that the nuclear family began to disintegrate, leaving society fragmented with many broken homes, dysfunctional families and underachieving children. Some families separated out of choice, others lost their spouses in the war, through ill health or accidentally due to poor safety on the docks. It is evident that fictional accounts avoid these aspects of a changing 1950s society that had a knock on effect to the structure of society. However, Williams (2004 p.18) highlighted them, stating that:

> The nuclear family of the post-war world, with its male breadwinner, was a construction of what family life should look like. There were single parents in the 1950s (many were war widows and more never-married lone mothers lived with their parents then than do now) and there were also working mothers, and same-sex relationships, but these did not fit the normative picture of family life.

Women could rarely manage to support their family on their own so many women chose to remarry. Two of the participants spoke about their mothers remarrying after losing their husbands to fatal accidents on the docks. Mrs J recalled:

> Me father was in the army and he left in 1947 and married me mum then and she'd already been married previously, she had four children to a previous marriage. Her first husband unfortunately was killed during the war on leave to come home and look after her, because she was having a baby and she had a goitre and she lived in

a tenement and it was five stories high, so she was getting heart conditions you know, with walking up and down the stairs. But he came home on leave to look after her and support her but they put him on the docks 'cause they wouldn't just let him be there to look after me mam, but he got killed loading a ship, he got dragged under and got decapitated. But, subsequently she married me dad and when her first husband got killed she was carrying me youngest brother Bill so he's a few years older, about three years older than me, but me dad took on four young children and then subsequently mam had another three ... me, and two younger sisters.

The men became father figures, not only raising their own children, but also the children of the mother's previous marriage. The participants commented that women needed the support of a man to help raise their children, which is why they remarried. However, social patterns changed, and women become more financially independent in the post-war years, although, as Spencer (2005) stated, women were still bound by marriage and motherhood.

Authors such as Macrae (2010) explained that contemporary society is returning to the latchkey culture due to the expenses of daily living, separated families and the austerity triggered by the recession. Children are left to care for themselves when they return from school, leading to other issues such as obesity as a result of eating junk food and spending too much time watching television (Macrae, 2010). Also many children chose to hang around the streets, exacerbating gang culture (Jarvis et al., 2009). From a sociological perspective, gangs represent social change, just as they did in the 1950s. Thrasher (1927, p.33, cited in, Issaacs et al., 2015) stated that 'the gang provides refuge for marginalised minority youth and provides them with a sense of belonging and safety; in essence it is a substitute for what society fails to give', or, in this instance, perhaps what their family fails to give. Young people seek to belong in a gang, which often involves anti-social behaviour.

This is a stark shift in culture from the free, unsupervised, street play of the post-war years and mirrors a more brutal, deviant and thuggish behaviour of the

children who frequent the streets in more recent decades (Valentine, 2004). However, as was established above, there was also such an unruly culture in the fifties. Stealing and gambling were the norm and communities were united against the police.

Mr R commented that, although he had experienced being a latchkey kid first hand, he always knew there was someone to whom he could go to if he needed help. Many of the other participants (n=8) similarly explained that neighbours' doors where always open and that they knew everyone in the community. Mrs L who recalled:

> If there was any trouble my brother would always run straight to Mrs Robinson or Mrs Parry and … say, 'Can I come in?' The door was always open you just used to run into the kitchen and say, 'They're chasin' us, can we come in here?' And they used to look after you ya know. You always used to look after each other … all the mums used to look after each other's kids and make sure they were all ok and no problems.

Mrs L spoke of gangs chasing her brother through the streets. This proves that gang culture existed during the idealistic friendly community of the 1950s. Macilwee (2008), in his exploration of the criminal history of Liverpool gangs, described the juvenile street gangs that terrorised the streets of Liverpool in the late forties and early fifties, which he referred to as tearaways. Mrs L recalled:

> There used to be a gang, the gang of boys down our end of the estate and the boys down the other, never got into any serious trouble, just mischief. But two of the houses, sort of half way down between the two, the two gangs so to speak where the police houses used to be … I think it was two or maybe four police houses[23] there and there was always a copper around the cross, Moreton Cross … big handle bar

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[23] Mrs L refers to the housing accommodation allocated to police employees.

> moustache and ohh he'd clip you round the ear if there was any
> trouble, not that I was ever in trouble, it was always the boys.

Mr R described himself as 'one of the first latch-door key kids': because both his parents worked, he looked after himself during the day, got himself ready for school and bought his lunch from the corner shop. He explained that he would get either soup or cakes and recalled liking mince pies in particular. The food would be kept 'on tick' and the bill settled by his mother at the end of the week. Due to his parents working long hours, he also spent a lot of time at his grandparents' house on weekends and school holidays. He explained that it was a long walk to get to his grandparents' house in Birkenhead from Seacombe. He remembered his grandparents have a higher standard of living, the house being better furnished than his own and there being plenty of good food and days out. He commented that his grandparents had more money than his parents. Mr R demonstrated an awareness of class variation during his childhood. Brewer (2000, p.173) supported this by stating that: '... Class consciousness is not the exclusive preserve of adults. Children also inhabit and experience the social world ... teaching them about their position in the social and economic hierarchies which govern the world outside the family'.

Juggling domestic service and family life

By the 1950s, the part-time domestic cleaner had taken over the role of the live-in domestic servant or housemaid. Todd (2009) focused on this transition as a turning point in the development of class in British society. Cleaners would travel to the home during the day and do cleaning and household chores for the homeowner. Mrs L explained that her father worked a lot in order to provide for the family and her mother also went to work as a housekeeper in Hoylake and West Kirby. However, she commented that her mother would always be back at lunchtime when her and her brother returned from school to have their lunch. She had an awareness that her mother was always available when she needed her and was not a latchkey child. Her father would sleep during the morning, get up in the afternoon to do gardening for people in Hoylake and West Kirby to earn extra money and work nights at a chocolate factory. Mrs L commented: 'Basically,

between my parents they ... worked really hard to give us a lot and we never went without ... we had the television from the start'. Mrs L's parents chose to take on extra work in order to live the best lifestyle they could, but they also ensured that someone was with the children out of school hours. Todd (2005) wrote that women had gone to work during the war years and enjoyed it. It had given them a sense of independence and of the world outside the domestic sphere. The researcher was unsure as to whether Mrs L's mother enjoyed working, but the money would have improved the family's lifestyle, as Mrs L suggested. Mrs L recalled that in addition to her mother working in domestic service, she would get scraps of material from the market and make aprons out of them with a Singer sewing machine. She would then sell the aprons to the ladies she cleaned for, or her father would take them with him to the houses where he gardened in the afternoon.

Mrs J's mother worked in what was still regarded as domestic service in a big house in Southport. Mrs J recalled her mother bringing home seven silver shillings, one for each of her children, in appreciation of her work.

During the 1950s, on the whole, there was an ideological assumption that domestic work was women's work that was common across class divides. Although today this attitude can be considered sexist, Oakley (1974) believed that housework actually possesses a level of autonomy that other forms of work do not. Oakley argued that the difference between housework and other forms of employment is that housework is unpaid, leaving the woman financially dependent on the man. However, Mrs J and Mrs L spoke of their mothers engaging in paid domestic work, thus, using their experience of housework to their advantage. This represents a change in the power relationship, because initially housework was a necessity yet was undervalued and underappreciated. It can be difficult to define the length of women's working hours because household chores are a part of women's everyday life. Oakley drew upon the work of Goldthorpe on affluent workers (1968) to show that domestic work actually created monotony and pressure in women's lives. Loneliness was also a factor in the role of housewives, and negatively impacted on their mental health and emotional

wellbeing, particularly among the working class. Browne and Harris (1978) found that 50% of working class women were suffering from depression, exacerbated by an ideology that gave them no options but domestic work. Pat Mayes (1986, p.42) argued that:

> Images of being a wife and mother are part of women's subjectivity. They are the only occupations into which workers are socialised from birth and the only occupations so bound with notions of love and duty, and with romantic illusions about women's reproductive functions ... Given the strength of the ideology, the role of women within marriage is highly resistant to change.

Women were socialised to the idea that domestic labour is part of being female, so it became part of their sense of identity. This socialisation began in childhood as the child is exposed to the idea of male and female roles and even encouraged to engage in certain behaviours, mirroring the behaviour of their mother or father and in turn reaffirming the characteristics or traits that comprise the societal ideal for each gender. Females develop an emotional connection with doing housework for their family and often complete chores based on caring for and looking after their loved ones.

Marxist theories understand domestic labour under capitalism: 'men perform productive work which makes surplus value for capital and women perform the tasks of social reproduction as they cook, clean and generally care for the labour force' (Mayes, 1986, p.38). Such a perspective enables us to understand the social construction of the domestic role. Both Marxist and Functionalist theories 'describe economic features of social life as if they had a force over and above individuals who comprise society' (Mayes, 1986, p.38). Neither theory considers the power relationship between men and women or capital and non-capitalist societies. Due to high expectations, women now have a dual role and face more responsibility and pressure than ever before.

Towards the end of the war and into the 1950s and 1960s, the role of motherhood continued to change. According to Fulcher and Scott (2011), society believed that as a direct result of mothers working, children were being deprived of maternal attachment which was deemed essential for successful socialisation. Thus, the separation of the mother and child was thought to lead to the child becoming anxious, depressed, socially withdrawn and, in the most severe cases, physically or mentally ill, ultimately impacting on their adult life. In an address to the World Health Organisation in (1951, p.11), Bowlby stated:

> What is believed to be essential for mental health is that the infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his mother (or permanent mother substitute) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment ... A state of affairs in which the mother does not have this is termed 'maternal deprivation'.

Bowlby presented empirical evidence to support his claims, but was criticised for attributing responsibility and blame solely to the mother. However, Bowlby later claimed that the child could be mothered by a mother substitute, but stipulated the importance of gender roles in this process. Sociologists such as Rutter (1972) have claimed that the father can provide adequate nurturing care for the child and that gender is not significant. Therefore, the idea of mothering is a social activity which has been socially constructed and shaped by the prevailing ideologies and cultural norms of society (Fulcher and Scott, 2011). While it is evident from attachment theory that the child does not have to be mothered by its biological mother, in Western society, motherhood was understood as 'a gender task' (Fulcher and Scott, 2011, p.131). Mothering is socially constructed and links directly to the role of femininity and the wife, just as fatherhood is linked to masculinity and the husband. Such roles are governed by expected behaviours and in turn impact upon the upbringing of children. An example of the changing nature of gender roles from the findings is when Mrs M met her father, for the first time when she was three years old in 1946, in Prestatyn, North Wales, as he disembarked the train on the final stage of his return from military service in India:

Apparently I looked at him and said 'Oh you've got legs.' Well the origin of this is obviously the fact that any photograph I'd seen of him was just from the waist upwards. So I had no idea he actually had any legs, and the second question was, 'Can you wash up?' Because I'd been told that men do the washing up or the drying up of the dishes, so I thought that was a good thing to ask.

Gradually fathers began to take responsibility for some of the household chores in order to help their wives manage their time. This was the start of the reallocation of responsibilities for housework and childcare:

The 1950s were the years in which men's attitudes to what had previously been seen as 'women's work' began to change and their contributions began to increase ... Prior to the 1950s there is little evidence to show that fathers were actively involved in child care to any significant degree at all (SIRC, 2011, p.2).

The government advised that children benefited from their mother being at home, which tied in closely to Bowlby's emphasis on communicating with babies and developing a maternal bond. In the 1950s, the psychologist Winnicott used the term 'good-enough mothering' to describe the adequate care given by mothers to enable the child to develop and fully thrive (Williams, 2004, p.85). It is interesting to note how the psychological theories at the time closely mirrored the governmental ideal of encouraging women to become re-socialised into their domestic role of housewife and mother. Mrs L recalled an example of maternal bonding from her childhood:

I used to be very obviously close to my mum when I was small and I remember... we used to sit in ...the front room with the coal fire and watch, ... Watch With Mother, we used to see Rag, Tag and Bobtail, the Wooden Tops and Andy Pandy ... We used to love watching that with the fire on and sitting there with me mum. And she used to be knittin' always knittin' me mum, and that's where I learned to knit, and she bought me one of these small knitting sets with tiny needles

and she taught me how to knit and to this day I still knit. Anyway, I used to love doing that, I just used to love having that one to one with me mum all the time and of course when I started school, although I made friends I did miss those days and I didn't do so well in the infants and junior schools.

Mrs L's use of the phrase 'very obviously close to my mum when I was small' contradicts Bowlby's theory. Mrs L had experienced one-to-one maternal bonding with her mother but failed to develop and thrive in the school environment. Maternal deprivation is caused by the continual disruption of the child's attachment with their mother figure (Bowlby, 1953). However, in Mrs L's childhood this was not the case: her mother did not allow employment to interfere with the daily routine and her contact with her children.

Women: Career versus domesticity

Patterns in women's employment changed during the post-war years. 'In 1956, [women] accounted for 32 per cent of wage earners, but by 1963 they made up 38 per cent' (Todd, 2008, p.505). There was also evidence of more married women taking up part-time employment; roles included shop assistants, factory workers and cleaners. This proved useful for many families, especially when husbands were unemployed. However, those households that had a male earner were better off financially than those that did not (Todd, 2008).

Spencer (2000) discussed the fictional portrayal of women during the 1950s, arguing that they had to choose a career or a life of domesticity. She described men as the sole breadwinners and the exploitation of women in the workplace – women were paid less than men during the war. Spencer (2000, p.329-330) highlighted the primary turning point for women of the 1950s:

> Paid employment was no longer likely to be regarded as a stop-gap between school and marriage; after a period of full-time housekeeping, women were returning to their jobs, at least part time, once their children were grown up.

Summerfield described the emergence of dual roles for women in the 1950s. Womanhood and the emergence of a 'dual role' possessed a set of ideals 'inherited from the iconographic figure of the patriotic women in wartime' (Spencer, 2000, p.330).

Mrs E concluded her interview by explaining that, by looking back on her childhood, she realised how her mother must have struggled to keep the household running and to feed the children with only one income (Mrs E's father experienced financial trouble). In her later childhood, Mrs E recalled her mother holding down three jobs to keep the family fed and cared for. Todd (2008, p.506) stated that 'Most households reliant on a single male wage earner lacked a margin to cover increases in rent, fuel or travel costs, or to survive a period of unemployment'. Mrs E explained that her mother would not have left her father because the family came first and that she would not have been able to afford to do so because there was no social benefit system to support the family. Furthermore there was social stigma attached to leaving the nuclear family, and it was more challenging for a woman to support herself alone with children because she was less welcome in the workforce, paid less pay and lacked access to childcare. A recurring theme of female reliance on men is evident. The change in the circumstances of women's employment provided a change in living standards and offered at least some financial security (Todd, 2008).

Mr H explained that after his stepfather had left his mother needed additional support. He also had to help with his grandmother 'Ninny' who lived with them. His mother had no time to herself. From the findings it is evident that some children were expected to take on responsibility at a young age. This was often a necessity if their parents were to make ends meet.

Mr T recalled his mother working hard both at home and at the Jacobs factory; she brought home marshmallows for the children on their street, who would queue up and wait for their marshmallow. Mr T's mother was a housewife, but she worked in a munitions factory during the war and then chose to work in a place he referred to as 'the tinworks', followed by the Jacobs factory. Even though people

were struggling financially, there is still evidence of generosity. Mr T recalled the benefits of his mother working in the 'tinworks' for playing 'jinx':

> Me mother worked in the tinworks so I was ok as such ... all the little off-cuttings of steel, they were flat like a little pancake ... and you'd throw them and ya mate'd follow ya and if he could get near it and span with his two fingers like that, [shows me with his hand] ... that was his, but if he couldn't get near it, you'd take his, you know what I mean. So you would end up with more jinx then ... But some fellas had big hands [laughs] and they didn't have to be as good players ya know, some kids, it was all part of growing up.

He could see the benefit of his mother's employment, although as a child it was the freebies rather than the financial element that proved to be more significant.

It is important to acknowledge that there was more unsupervised and often risky play as a result of mothers working, often on derelict land or old bomb sites from the war (Feeney, 2009). Mr R remembered playing in a field near where he lived. There were old lime pits there and he explained that if he had fallen into them he would have died. Although it was dangerous, children still played there; he would spend all day looking for wildlife. Mr R recalled: 'The whole day would be spent away from home, nobody worried, you just felt safe, and there were no issues. I mean there must've been bad people about in those days, but for some reason you never thought about it and you felt safe.' Mr R could remember cycling to the 'Brek', which was marshland by the side of a railway. He would spend the day there looking for newts and frogs with jam butties and a bottle of water:

> As long as you were back you know, but we didn't even have watches and you used to head back when the sun was at a certain position in the sky and hope you'd got it right [laughs] but you know people didn't worry as much in those days.

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Similarly, Gleave (2008, p.14) commented that: 'In the 1950s, people acknowledged risks as a natural part of life, and accidents were seen as random spells of bad luck'.

Mrs J spent much of her time going on adventures with her older siblings; freedom and unsupervised play are common themes of the interviews. Lindon (2001) discussed the vast change from the freedom granted to unsupervised children in the 1950s to the growing parental anxiety towards safety in modern British society. The free, worry-free mentality and general feeling of safety in the community gave post-war mothers the opportunity to get on with their domestic chores.

The 1950s was said to be a turning point for women's domesticity. The emergence of domestic appliances in households such as the vacuum cleaner and cleaning products alleviated some of the strenuous chores. Also, the replacement of the re-washable, pinned nappies, with disposable alternatives saved time as women preferred to pay more instead of re-launder nappies. The washing machine began to make appearances in middle class households in the 1950s which made washing easier and less time consuming (Pressley, 2002). Some women were reluctant to change and did not embrace these technologies, preferring to carry on with their traditional approaches to housework. None of the participants recalled changes in domesticity.

The amount of time British women not in paid employment spend on housework has remained quite constant over the past half century. Household appliances eliminated some of the heavier chores, but new tasks were created to take their place. Time spent on childcare, stocking up the home with purchases and meal preparation all increased (Giddens, 2006, p.743).

Changes in social attitudes and practices did not create changes in social conditions, they only altered the way in which domestic tasks were carried out and freed some time for women to do other things, such as spending time with their children, which became increasingly socially expected.

Many mothers looked to their extended family or neighbours for help with childcare or to borrow household items or food in order to 'get by'. Many of the participants (n=6) spoke about being sent on errands and borrowing sugar or knitting needles from their neighbours. Many also recalled spending time in neighbours' homes, staying for meals and watching television with those who had been able to afford one. In Bethnal Green after the war, Young and Willmott (1957) found that the mothers who lived in the same block of flats as their own mothers had close contact within 24 hours. For mothers who lived elsewhere in Bethnal Green, the contact rate within 24 hours was 67%, which dropped to 16% and 8% for those with mothers in neighbouring boroughs or further respectively. Young and Willmott (1957, p.58) commented:

> The mother is the head and centre of the extended family, her home is its meeting place. 'Mum's' is the family rendezvous, as one wife said. Her daughters congregate at the mother's, visiting her more often than she visits any one of them: 68 per cent of married women last saw their mother at her home, and only 27 per cent at their own.

Reflective summary

There is a wide span of literature covering the lives of working mothers in the 1950s (Braybon and Summerfield, 1987; Lewis, 1992; Lees, 2011), and a growing interest in the role of fatherhood (Hobson, 2002). Roberts (1984) argued that working class women have always had additional paid jobs and that the housewife is solely a white, middle class stereotype. Additionally, feminists such as Gieve (1987) argued that all mothers are working mothers. The idea of mothers working hard to make ends meet or striving to improve their family's lifestyle is a common theme of the interviews. In some cases families had to 'make do'. The roles of women – the mother, the domestic cleaner, the housewife, the employed woman – were all shaped by the ideology of femininity which is socially constructed by society and historical era (Mayes, 1986). 'Given the strength of the ideology, the role of women within marriage is highly resistant to change' (Mayes, 1986, p.42).

Another theme was the importance of the family unit and of not leaving the family when times got tough. In many of the interviews the mother was depicted as a strong woman, and as the central focus in the discussions on family life.

From the findings, it is evident that in some cases women still relied on men financially to raise their children, remarrying where necessary. Not all women worked during the war years: some were reluctant and adverse to change, while others refused to work in poor conditions for poor pay. However, in 1943 7,750,000 women entered paid employment (Braybon and Summerfield, 1987, p.168). In turn, this led to a huge demand for day nursery places which incurred costs for both the government and mothers themselves. Once children reached school age, mothers were more inclined to leave children under the general 'lookout' of neighbours, relatives and siblings, giving children a key to let themselves into the house after school. Mr R felt that his experiences as a latchkey kid gave him a sense of responsibility and that spending additional time with his grandparents gave him the morals and values he has taken into later life.

Some children such as Mrs L were lucky enough to have the lifestyle that two working parents could provide. Her mother also made sure that her working hours were while the children were at school so Mrs L felt supported. Bowlby believed that maternal bonding was essential for the child to flourish, although this research has identified circumstances when a child was not successful at secondary socialisation despite close maternal bonding. It is evident that popular theories of the time mirrored the ideals of the post-war government's strategy for rekindling the nuclear family and the re-domestication of women.

This chapter has explored the turning points for women in the 1950s. 'Working mothers' gave some families the opportunity to make ends meet and others an improved lifestyle. Mrs L in particular commented that, on reflection, she realised how lucky she was compared to many of her peers. By contrast, Mr H missed out on some of his education to help his mother in times of hardship, adopting a man's role in the absence of his father and taking on responsibility and offering additional support to his mother at the expense of his education. Another

important theme emerging from the findings was of family coming first, before education.

The findings depicted women juggling paid employment and domesticity, as well as women who could not cope in times of hardship. Three of the participants spoke about this, explaining that their mothers could not cope financially after their fathers had left. So, although the fifties initiated a turning point for women both in employment and domestic life, there was still a reliance on men for financial support. During these discussions there was a limited focus on their mother's emotional wellbeing, although this might be due to adults not showing their emotions, as discussed in Memoir 2.

All of the participants engaged in unsupervised and sometimes risky play. However, many commented that they had learned from these experiences and that they had made them who they are today. Others experienced a balance between being a latchkey kid and spending a lot of time with extended family members, explaining that this too had instilled them with what they believe to be important morals and values. These are interesting points relating to autobiography and subjectivity: the participants explained themselves in terms of their past but their understandings were also shaped by current discourses.

Three of the participants began to sense class variation as social mobility triggered by re-housing schemes meant that children started to experience a life outside of their close-knit community. When they had been in the same community, they had not realised that they were poor – later in life they became aware of the depth of hardship and austerity they had experienced, and this proved to be a particularly emotional experience for many of the participants (n=8).

These are important insights into childhood, presenting both the living memories and the participants' comprehension of them, both shaped by modern discourses and perceptions.

CHAPTER SIX
IDYLLIC CHILDHOODS: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE, SELF-DEFINING MEMORIES

'Days were always sunny' (Mrs L).

'Today we live in a climate of heightened risk awareness coupled with a nostalgia for an imagined past in which children played safely throughout a carefree innocent childhood' (Lupton, 2013, p.87).

Overview

This chapter explores the participants' tendency to share idyllic childhood memories during the phase one interviews. The impact of nostalgia and its implications for the participants' experience of engaging in the reminiscence process are analysed using different theoretical stances including autobiographical memory and the functions and practice outcomes of a heuristic model of reminiscence and linking them to the positive and negative memories from the research findings. The chapter highlights the significance of the reminiscence process for the development of a sense of self and identity.

Jenkins (1996) believed that individuals categorise themselves in order to distinguish their own identity, both independently and collectively. Life events shape individuals' identity through the life course. According to Birren and Svensson (2013, p.4), 'the selves we tell ourselves we are have an influence on our behaviour'. This indicates that people can relate to the circumstances in which they find themselves and even adapt their behaviour in order to cope with life experiences.

Social identity can be shaped by education, employment, housing and geographic location, and social inequalities in relation to class, community and gender can also influence self-perception (Rogaly and Taylor, 2009). Social identity can also be shaped by the ways in which individuals perceive the world around them, including their understanding of what constitutes a community or society. Mr M

chose to begin his interview by discussing his comprehension of society before focusing on his experiences of society during childhood: 'Right, "society," that's a funny name isn't it, "society," what does that mean? The world we live in, the way we were'. Mr M stated that society is where we live but also 'the way we were', inferring that behaviours, including adherence to norms and values, are also an important part of society.

A recurring theme that was evident throughout the interviews was the continual reference to childhood as being 'idyllic', 'joyful', and 'crackin''.[24] This corresponds to work by Pressley (1999) who depicted the fifties as a golden era, and some authors refer to the era as nostalgic (Hennessy, 1992; Pressley, 2003; Feeney, 2009).

Nostalgia and being nostalgic – The role of nostalgia in the participants' memories of childhood

In modern western society, nostalgia or being nostalgic has become a valued experience which fosters the fond sharing of living memories and the unearthing of emotions. Nostalgia can relate to both positive and negative memory recall and refers to the 'personal contemplation of a valued experience in the past' (Dickenson and Erben, 2006, p.223). Dickenson and Erben (2006, p.227) expressed that: '...a nostalgic memory yearns for something that is gone forever, except in memory'. In this instance, childhood, as a stage of life, can never be revisited. Many of the participants (n=8) expressed a yearning to relive and re-experience their childhood: Mr R commented '...so that was my childhood, loved it. I'd live it again tomorrow if I could'. Being nostalgic is not linked to memory recall alone, but also triggers a feeling rather than just a cognitive process. However, according to Dickenson and Erben (2006), this is not necessarily just an intensity of emotion about past events, but rather a 'tender feeling' that may be accompanied by feelings of regret that the reminiscer is unable to experience that time again. Dickenson and Erben (2006, p.223) further stated that: 'Nostalgia is a

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[24] 'Crackin'' or 'cracking' is a regional term meaning excellent or sensational.

bittersweet emotion, that is in part consciously constructed and that can be reflected upon at will.'

The nostalgic experience can be triggered or occur spontaneously; it triggers a feeling that is unique to each individual and can be joyful and sorrowful simultaneously. As Gibson (2011, p.31) stated, 'Memories are not neutral but come wrapped in emotion'. Nostalgic reminiscence can unearth a wide range of emotions, from grief to sheer joy, and can cause an individual to cry. Indeed, some of the participants (n=7) did cry during the interviews, both due to sadness and happiness, and each of them felt that crying acted as a form of release. Vingerhoets and Cornelius (2001) also found that crying during memory recall can act as a release, particularly after negative experiences. However, some authors disagree with this theory, believing that crying during reminiscence is not beneficial and can stimulate the onset of depressive thoughts and encourage people to regularly recall negative memories (Martin and Labott, 1991). These findings link to the practice outcomes suggested by the Heuristic Model of Reminiscence of Webster et al. (2010), which recommends both positive and negative memories, emotional regulation and the maintenance of psychosocial health. The participants each recalled both positive and negative memories, which enabled them to regulate their emotions by coming to terms with past events; in turn, this had an impact on their feelings both psychologically and reflectively as they tried to make sense of their childhood memories. Mrs J described the experience as 'a weight being lifted off her shoulders'.

The findings of this research refute Martin and Labott's perspective. Even after the six month gap between the interviews, the participants still felt that the OH interview had enabled them to release negative emotions that they had not shared before. Additionally, they felt that the second interview, which focused on the reminiscence process itself, enabled them to organise their thoughts systematically and express their reflective feelings about the experience. Some of the participants' emotions had been triggered by a sense of loss and a realisation that some people were no longer in their lives.

Nostalgia occurs as part of autobiographical reminiscence that recalls memories relating to one's own past life experiences. This research, by encouraging such reminiscence, evidently had an impact on the participants. One of the benefits of this experience for the participants was that they felt good about the life they had led, giving them a sense of achievement and satisfaction. This links to Erikson's theory about accepting one's life and reflecting on it in a positive manner to in turn stimulate a feeling of satisfaction. Butler (1981) elaborated on this further by stating that reminiscing in later life contributes to a full sense of satisfaction for the life that the individual has led.

On the other hand, the interviews did also trigger very mixed emotions for the participants. Interestingly, the male participants (n=5) were surprised that they became emotional because they had not expected to feel that way; the female participants (n=5) cried and expressed their emotions openly, commenting that reminiscence had proved to be a therapeutic experience. Although surprised by his feelings, Dr E also found the experience to be therapeutic; although he did not cry during either interview, he did feel overwhelmed by the feelings triggered. The male participants may have held back their emotions as a result of social and cultural norms in western society, in particular the idea that, for males, exposing emotion signifies weakness (Galdas, 2009). This also ties in with the findings, because the male participants who did cry actually apologised for doing so. Such attitudes are particularly common among men from the 1950s; Mr R commented that his parents, in particular his father, never displayed emotions and maintained a 'stiff upper lip' at all times. This links to the psychosocial practice outcome of the HMR, based on the psychological impact of reminiscing about a memory which stimulates emotion both at the time of the experience and during the reminiscence process itself.

According to Gibson (2004), when people engage in reminiscence with others, they automatically combine autobiographical anecdotes with social history. In turn, this brings history to life, while presenting the characteristics and personality of the person sharing the memory (Gibson, 2004). Mrs J was aware of her own nostalgic reflection, commenting that 'Maybe I've got rose-coloured glasses on, I

don't know'.[25] She acknowledged an awareness of being nostalgic and the influence that had on herself and her responses. This relates to both the identity and conversational functions of reminiscence (Webster et al., 2010), whereby the individual identifies the ways in which memories and past experiences have impacted on their lives, often by taking a storied or conversational form and drawing on present and later life experiences.

Many of the participants (n=9) shared anecdotes of happy memories of families, close-knit communities, borrowing from neighbours and having lots of friends. Some participants (n=9) described immense freedom, particularly playing outdoors and feeling safe. They believed this had contributed to a 'joyous' and 'idyllic' childhood full of friendships and opportunities for play. Mr M described his childhood as an 'absolute joy': 'Childhood was a real delight, I look back on my childhood, it has been probably the best, best time of me life 'cause it was so free...'.

Self-defining memories: The significance of the reminiscence process on developing one's sense of self (Function: Identity)

Self-defining memories are a central component of the recall of autobiographical memory (Conway et al., 2004) and also a key function of reminiscence (Webster et al., 2010). Self-defining memories are memories that define who we are and contribute to our own sense of self, identity and uniqueness (Wood and Conway, 2006). There are memories that we forget and those that we hold onto, and it is the latter that contribute to the understanding of the self (Singer, 2005).

According to Conway and Pleydell-Pearce (2000), autobiographical memories fall into three categories: lifetime periods, general events and event-specific knowledge (ESK). Conway and Pleydell-Pearce created a Self-Defining Memory System (SMS) that represents how new and stored memories are constructed as internalised images of the self in order to produce a long term sense of self with on-going life goals (Conway and Pleydell-Pearce, 2000). Self-defining memories possess five components: vividness, emotional intensity, links to similar memories,

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[25] The participant referred to 'rose-coloured glasses', more commonly referred to as looking 'through rose-tinted glasses', i.e. only seeing the pleasant things.

repeated recall and a focus on unresolved conflicts (or lasting goals) (Singer, 2005). This links to the HMR practice outcome of dealing with unresolved conflict in life (problem-solving). The participants engaged in problem-solving as they endeavoured to establish meaning based on their reminiscences. Part of this process is coming to terms with past conflict: reminiscing about such occasions enabled the participant to overcome them in their own minds, allowing them to move forward in their future life experiences. An individual might revisit a particular memory several times before gaining closure.

From the findings, it is evident that many of the participants (n=9) felt that childhood experiences, and indeed childhood memories, have contributed to the people they are today. Self-defining memories possess a heightened vividness and emotionality, offer insight into a specific episode in someone's life and contribute to the creation of identity formation (Conway et al., 2004). Personality can also affect the way in which memories are perceived, constructed and shared: it is a formation of who we are and how we think, which affords the ability to perceive our own experiences and attempt to perceive the experiences of others. Haber (2006) indicated that people sometimes consider what their memories contribute to their lives and referred to this construct as a life review. Furthermore, Blagov and Singer (2004) believed that a self-defining memory can change with age, and will not necessarily continue to be self-defining. It is evident from the findings that the participants recalled memories that were of particular importance during childhood but took on emotional significance in later life.

People can organise their memories into lifetime periods by categorising them within a particular timeframe, in this case childhood (Singer, 2005). As a timeframe, childhood can present itself in the form of categories such as friendships, holidays or days out. The findings presented numerous recurring themes, some of which have been discussed in Chapter Five. Event-specific knowledge (ESK) refers to the smaller details of a particular memory, including sensory details, which can add to the clarity and specificity of a recalled memory (Conway and Pleydell-Pearce, 2000). In other words, the more detail participants can recall, the more accurate their autobiographical memory will be. The

participants clearly demonstrated both episodic memory recall and ESK. All began by recalling general childhood memories and, as the interviews progressed, started to focus on more specific details such as smells, sounds and descriptive visual images, as well as feelings and emotions. This progression could be a result of the length of the interviews (one hour), which enabled participants to engage in an in-depth session of reminiscence that progressively stimulated emotion and ESK, or of the researcher's developing rapport with the participants, which helped them to feel comfortable sharing additional personal thoughts, feelings and emotions. This reflective aspect of the research has afforded the opportunity to explore self-defining memories in more depth.

The emotion shared during reminiscence affects the way in which individuals retrieve and construct memories. According to D'Argembeau et al. (2003), memories that hold sentiment or emotion can often be remembered more clearly and efficiently than those that do not. In turn, memories of success or failure can affect self-esteem and self-perception. This can also trigger negative association: for example, some participants (n=3) revealed that enduring physical punishment at school caused them to hate certain topic areas until their adult life. This suggests that life experiences, particularly during childhood, contribute significantly to defining an individual's behaviour, both positively and negatively.

Table 4: Functions of autobiographical memory

Autobiographical function	Autobiographical Outcome	Heuristic Function (Webster et al., 2010)	Heuristic Outcome (Webster et al., 2010)	Emergent themes from the RW interviews
Directive	Using memories as a base for problem-solving in present life and to control actions in the future. Employing memory recall to develop schemas of behaviour which can be applied to similar circumstances (Pillemer, 2003).	Problem-solving, teach/inform	Unresolved conflicts	Making sense of memories by being reflective and discussing thoughts, feelings and emotions.
Social	Maintaining relationships with others. Using social interaction to share personal memories. The level of personal memory shared creates and sustains intimacy (Williams et al., 2008).	Intimacy maintenance, conversation	Emotional regulation	The participants realised that they did not engage in reminiscence with their family enough.
Self-representative	Autobiographical memories maintain a sense of self-identity (Williams et al., 2008).	Identity	Psychosocial health	Childhood memories directly impacted on the participants' sense of self-identity and contributed to "who they are" in their adult lives.

Adaptive	Mood maintenance (Robinson and Swanson, 1990).	Bitterness revival	Emotional regulation, psychosocial health, positive/ negative, increased rumination and anxiety	Positive and negative memories acted as a release function both nostalgically and for coming to terms with past experiences that had not been acknowledged for a long time.

Table 4 presents functions of autobiographical memory and emergent themes from the RW interview findings. The directive function helped with problem-solving and facilitated the individual's ability to build and learn from previous experiences, which are held in the form of memories and act as reminders (Pillemer, 2003). The participants attempted to establish meaning from their childhood memories, which at times stimulated emotions. Many of them shared memories of surviving in times of hardship and suggested that such memories have enabled them to develop coping strategies.

Many of the participants (n=7) spoke about passing on their knowledge and wisdom to future generations by discussing their experiences with their children and grandchildren. This links directly to the second function of autobiographical memory sharing, the social function. Individuals share their memories, develop relationships and maintain a personal level of intimacy (Williams et al., 2008). The participants realised that they rarely reminisced with their families and that doing so is a valuable part of building and maintaining relationships. Furthermore, the function was present during the interviews: the participants built a rapport with the researcher as they engaged in the reminiscence process.

The self-representative function is most common in autobiographical memory (Bluck et al., 2005). This function contributes to self-growth, development and self-reflection (Bluck et al., 2005). All of the participants philosophically explored their sense of self, believing that their childhood memories had contributed to their identity in adult life. This notion, as defined by Brewer (1988), is related to an individual's episodic past as the individual relays memories from different periods within their life.

The fourth and final function is adaptive (Conway and Cohen, 2008). This function refers to the ability to recall positive memories in order to alter or maintain one's mood, particularly positively (Robinson and Swanson, 1990). According to Williams et al. (2008), the ability to maintain or alter mood is based on control of one's own memory recall and can be used to override feelings of negativity or to support an individual in coping with life challenges. Although some of the participants shared negative memories or even cried during their interviews, they all concluded that they had experienced a positive outcome overall from taking part in the study and that they had enjoyed recalling their childhood memories. Mood maintenance was a common theme that emerged from the findings. For example, the participants often followed the disclosure of negative memories with humour or a positive memory, almost as if to create a balance between their emotions.

A study conducted by Zelick (2007) found that older adults have a tendency to share fewer negative memories than younger adults. According to Joormann and Siemer (2004, p.313), 'Unpleasant events fade faster than do memories of pleasant events.' Mrs L recalled that she 'Can never remember rain that's one thing I can't remember as a kid, I can't remember it ever being rainy and being stuck inside ...it was always sunny, always sunny and warm'. This demonstrates the retention of positive memories: it did of course rain during Mrs L's childhood, but her memory has not retained this information.

Some participants chose to recall positive memories, corresponding with Zelick's perspective, but others chose to reflect on negative memories in more depth.

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Interestingly, although they knew that the second interview involved sharing feelings and emotions in more depth, they still opted to share a negative memory, showing that they felt comfortable revisiting that memory a second time. Another explanation for this may be that the participants deemed the release response to be therapeutic. The participants felt better after sharing the negative memories in the first interview, and therefore wanted to feel that therapeutic feeling again. Another factor could have been the era in which they were raised: the participants were not encouraged to share emotion during childhood, and thus many of them had never divulged their negative memories or, indeed, their other childhood memories, to anyone else before. This was clearly acknowledged by Mr H, who explained that he had never spoken about his childhood to anyone before. The social culture in which the participants, particularly the men, experienced childhood caused them to lock away their memories, as discussed in the previous chapter. For example, ex-servicemen chose not to share their negative experiences of the war unless they were talking to someone who had endured similar experiences themselves, suggesting that withholding memories was seen as a form of self-preservation and was used as a coping strategy. This is an important characteristic of people from that era and has played a role in the way in which the participants shared their memories.

Positive and negative memories (practice outcomes)

Leist et al. (2010) explained that engaging in positive reminiscence can enhance moods therapeutically. Alternatively, negative memories can be used to regulate emotions by comparing them to positive outcomes (Leist et al., 2010) such as by reminiscing about negative memories in order to achieve closure on negative past events. Gibson (2011) explained that some people use reminiscence as an outlet for the release of negative energy and to off-load their worries. Memory sharing allows events to be compared in order to gain insight into the emotional aspects of a person's life. Some of the memories shared in this study had never been shared before and the participants described the experience as 'therapeutic', 'a release' and 'emotional' (Dr E; Mrs J; Mr R).

When conducting interviews, it is necessary to consider how to react if negative memories are disclosed (Davies and Wright, 2009). Sharing intimate parts of a person's life can result in the disclosure of personal and sensitive memories. This is a reminder of the emotional implications of work conducted in the field of reminiscence. According to Bornat (2001), the researcher needs to observe the circumstance and context when dealing with negative or traumatic memories and judge how to react during the specific situation. During the interviews some negative memories were shared; the researcher gave the participants the opportunity to take a break, but all of them wanted to continue with the interview.

Researchers in the field of psychology have found that memories that hold the strongest emotional significance are likely to be remembered most vividly (Weymar et al., 2009; Lindon and Rutkowski, 2013). According to Webster et al. (2010), more mature adults tend to reflect more on positive life memories or important events than on negative ones. However, Linden and Rutkowski (2013) believed that negative memories are often forgotten due to the individual's selectivity and preference for forgetting troubled times; individuals are therefore more likely to recall positive memories because of the pleasurable experience triggered by positive reminiscing. Sometimes people do not want to reminisce at all: 'Some people can only keep the painful past in its place by ignoring it' (Gibson, 2011, p.45).

Research shows that individuals are more likely to remember and preserve positive rather than negative memories (Walker et al., 2003). According to D'Argembeau et al. (2003), positive memories often possess more details than negative memories. This was particularly evident in two of the interviews: the participants kept their disclosure of negative memories concise, with minimal description or expression and frequent pauses. Positive memories contained more description, anecdotes, sensory details, feelings and emotions and were characterised by a sense of yearning to revisit childhood. According to D'Argembeau et al. (2008), individuals usually opt to share positive memories because doing so triggers increased self-esteem and feelings of joy and encourages the emergence of positive personality traits. D'Argembeau et al. (2008) noted that

those who have a tendency to engage in positive memory recall are more likely to preserve a positive sense of self and well-being. When asked to conclude the interviews, all of the participants expressed that they had enjoyed taking part in the research and that they felt it had been a positive experience. This supports the notion that reminiscence can be therapeutic in nature and can have a positive influence.

According to Walker et al. (2003), negative memories fade more rapidly than positive ones. This can be due to the memory lacking emotional significance to the individual, but also for reason of self-preservation or to avoid reliving the emotional pain that accompanies the memory. Walker et al. (2003) explained that the brain has the ability to fade unwanted memories selectively and that it employs this as a coping strategy. However, the findings refute this idea: Mrs E was able to recall a negative childhood memory about being run over by a car in great detail and with great expression of emotion. In support of this, Tiedens and Linton (2001) believed that deep expression of emotion does not hinder the accuracy of memory recall. However, others may argue that depth of emotion can affect a person's ability to narrate the memory. For example, during the interviews some of the participants took time to pause and in some cases cried; this was the case for Mrs E, but after taking a moment to pause she then wanted to continue with the interview. According to Salaman (1970), spontaneous memory recall can also trigger strong emotion. This aspect of the findings is very relevant to the pursuit of a heuristic approach to the reminiscence process. The expression of emotion, both positive and negative, helps to regulate feelings about a particular aspect of life and the impact it has had on the individual (Webster et al., 2010).

Participants may be worried about recalling negative memories. Thus, pre-conversations and debriefing were essential as a way of putting the participants at ease and addressing any concerns they may have had. Once the reminiscence session begins, there is no amount of planning that can predict the behaviour and responses of participants. It was important that the researcher 'let the stories be told – even painful stories and the associated feelings aroused with all their unanticipated surprise and force' (Gibson, 2011, p.75).

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D'Argembeau and Linden (2008) maintained that negative memories can remain poignant and accessible for years after the event. Such memories are often part of a learning curve to ensure that the same mistakes are not repeated. However, according to Kendall (2000), negative memory recall on a frequent basis can trigger conditions relating to depression and irregularity in mood frequency. This was not the case for the research findings; participants in some cases had not shared such memories before.

The findings refute D'Argembeau et al. (2003) belief that positive memory recall is more detailed than negative memory recall: the negative memories shared during the interviews proved to be very detailed, perhaps because of their significant impact on the participants' later lives. However, according to D'Argembeau et al. (2003), if a memory has been particularly poignant to a person, impacted on them and been rehearsed through thought processes over the years, it can remain vivid. Lemogne et al. (2006) explained that this can also be a characteristic of people with depression, who continuously revisit negative thoughts and memories.

Singer (2005) believed that self-defining memories, either positive or negative, can trigger an individual to strive to achieve in life. An example of this from the findings is that the childhood experiences of two of the female participants had affected their choices in later life. Mrs J had helped her grandmother with a prosthetic leg and remembered being the only child in the house who was allowed to help her. Mrs E had been run over by a car, badly injuring her spine and legs; she recalled spending a lot of time in hospital and experiencing cruel treatment from the nursing staff. Both of the women had chosen to become nurses in later life and stated that their childhood experiences had contributed to the decision.

Mrs E's accident was a life-threatening experience. Thorne and McLean (2002) conducted research into gender differences and the level of emotion triggered by life-threatening events. This emotional stimulation was found to contribute to the formation of self-defining memories, particularly during adolescence. Thorne and McLean (2002) found that female narrators tend to be more detailed and lengthy than their male counterparts.

In this research, none of the male participants disclosed life-threatening memories and in fact showed an unwillingness to recall negative memories altogether, preferring more positive and humorous topics. However, it is important to acknowledge that memory sharing is dependent on what is important to the particular individual regardless of gender. There is also an ongoing debate about whether individuals have the capacity to remember traumatic memories or whether the mind protects us by forgetting about such events. According to McNally (2005, p.3), remembering traumatic memories 'can foster psychological healing', helping the individual to 'recover' from the experience. In contrast, Kennerley (2011, p.13) explained that overcoming trauma from childhood can be particularly challenging because the 'brain tends to replay emotionally charged memories'. Kennerley also expressed that for many such memories will eventually fade. Furthermore, Wong and Watt (1991) referred to negative recall as obsessive reminiscence, whereby an individual regularly reminisces about negative memories.

Mr R spoke about the ease of accessing positive memories and believed that unpleasant memories were not so easy to uncover. However, some participants (n=6) expressed their relief after they had shared negative memories, explaining that they could recall such memories just as vividly as positive ones. Mrs J believed that the process was therapeutic and also expressed a sense of relief when sharing such memories:

> It's like a form of therapy because you're unloading, not unloading nasty things like but you are just getting rid of something you want to share and now the people of my generation aren't that close to me anymore if you know what I mean, me sisters and brothers. They're with their families and things like that you know.

The reference to therapeutic positive and negative memory recall links to autobiographical memory. Autobiographical memory is part of the process of self-comprehension and refers to the role of memory in constructing knowledge and awareness of life history. Arbuthnott et al. (2013) explained that recalling

memories from earlier life often links to more positive memory recall and in turn this regulates our mood. However, if an individual is depressed, he or she is far more likely to recall unpleasant memories. Arbuthnott et al. maintained that negative memories can be recalled just as vividly as positive memories; Mrs E felt that she could recall negative memories just as vividly as positive memories, if not more vividly.

The study afforded participants the opportunity to draw out their emotions. The participants felt that they had benefited from the experience and that it had given them clarity about how the reminiscence process impacts on them and their identity. The findings suggested that recalling negative memories during the interview had a positive outcome after the interview had taken place. The participants felt that they had come to terms with unresolved conflicts in their own mind, another practice outcome of the HMR (Webster et al., 2010). However, the participants also acknowledged different emotions. The participants contemplated "what ifs" and considered how things could have been if they had occurred differently; implying feelings of guilt or regret. An example of this was Mr T's regret about his lack of educational opportunities during his school years and the social class divisions which impacted on his later life and job prospects.

Many of the participants (n=9) were surprised at the depth and breadth of memories recalled during the interviews. Mr H commented that many of the memories had been locked away and never shared before. This research provided an open forum for their process of reminiscence.

Empathy

The researcher felt that her Merseyside roots, personality and approach to the research were important factors in encouraging detailed, open and honest responses from the participants. Preliminary research, pre-interview conversations and a flexible approach enabled the researcher to build a rapport with the participants throughout the research. Some of the participants (n=7) said that they would have conducted their interviews differently and shared less detail if they had not felt so comfortable talking to the researcher.

As the interviews progressed, the researcher came to understand the importance of thoughtful pausing, listening without interrupting and remaining objective. It was important for the researcher to comprehend the importance of the words spoken but also the poignancy of the silences so that she could allow the participants to find their own direction and form their own approach to sharing their reminiscences. In turn, this prevented the researcher from overly influencing the participant's responses. The interview process was a shared experience and involved a heightened level of empathy and respect. As Smith (2012, p.490) stated, 'Empathy and shared experiences should be acknowledged as positive attributes in engaging in the research relationship'.

Reflective Summary

Phase two of the research findings captured living memories through the use of a pictorial tool to support participants during the reminiscence process. The study became less concerned with the validity of the information shared and more concerned with the ways in which the participants perceived their childhood memories and their impacts. This chapter explored the thoughts and feelings that accompany the recollection of memories and analysed the rich findings shared during the interviews and the reminiscence process itself.

The researcher has discussed the role of nostalgia in the participant's accounts of childhood and the significance of the reminiscence process in developing and defining a sense of self. She has considered the different ways in which the participants constructed their memories, both positive and negative, including emotions and anecdotal details. Many researchers believe that memory recall is influenced by the personality of the individual and thus that any memory shared will vary greatly from one individual to the next.

Another theme evident from the findings is that there are therapeutic qualities associated with using memory recall to solve problems. The researcher found that recalling memories was an effective release function for those who engaged in the process. Although the study had a small sample, it provided insight into the

importance of the reflective thought process and of the nostalgia which accompanies reminiscence. According to Dickenson and Erben (2006, p.225), this area of research seems to be neglected and there, 'may well be the need for interdisciplinarity in researching nostalgia'.

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the reasons why the participants referred to their childhood memories as idyllic and happy even though the majority endured prolonged periods of poverty and hardship. The participants recalled memories that were particularly poignant or emotionally significant. This significance is due to the emotion triggered at the time of the childhood experience, which is then rehearsed and embedded in the mind (Kennerley, 2011). As discussed, this form of memory gives insight into a person's emotions, characteristics, personality traits, motives and life goals (Gibson, 2004). Looking back on the past influences how we view ourselves in the present day and shapes our existence in the future.

CHAPTER SEVEN: RW FINDINGS (PHASE TWO)
REFLECTIVE RESPONSES: USING THE MTM TO SUPPORT REMINISCENCE.

Overview

Reflective themes emerged consistently throughout the interviews conducted in phase one, so the researcher decided to revisit the participants to explore them further. Since the interviews had accessed personal memories, the researcher felt an extra duty of care to support the participants during reminiscence and throughout the interview process. Because they were emotional, the researcher endeavoured to handle the interviews sensitively and professionally by remaining quiet and avoiding probing, interjecting and attempts to sympathise, judge or prompt responses, thereby letting the participants speak on their own terms. This approach ensured that the findings were not directly influenced by the researcher's reactions and in turn enabled the participants to share their memories without following cues given by the researcher.

This chapter presents and explores the responses to the RW interviews (phase two). The influence of reminiscence on identity is discussed and the effectiveness of using a Memory Tree Model to support the reminiscence process is considered. The chapter highlights the benefits of reminiscence and reflection when recalling childhood memories. The researcher explored the outside influences that can impact on the way in which individuals recall both positive and negative memories. The memories shared have been analysed by considering the participants' reflective comments, which describe how they perceived their feelings at the time, during childhood, and in the present, during adulthood. This enabled the researcher to explore the impact that engaging in reminiscence had on those involved. Each of the emergent themes have been analysed heuristically in comparison with the practice outcomes, research outcomes and reminiscence functions outlined in the Heuristic Model of Reminiscence (HMR) (Webster, et al., 2010). The HMR comprises practice outcomes such as positive reminiscence, which regulates emotion and manages psychosocial health, and negative reminiscence, which can identify unresolved conflict or increase rumination and

anxiety. The researcher also gave the participants the opportunity to share their own concluding thoughts. This brought to light the participants' own evaluation of taking part in the research and enabled them to reflect on the support they had received throughout the study.

The participants were given the opportunity to read and validate the transcript of their first interview (phase one) and were then asked to select one memory from the transcript that was particularly poignant to them. They were given a Memory Tree Model on an A4 sheet of paper and asked to write notes about the particular memory, including any thoughts or feelings that it triggered (see appendix A). The audio-recording equipment was switched off for this part of the interview.

Once the participants had finished making notes, the audio-recorder was switched on. The participants stated their name, date of birth, location and chosen childhood memory, and briefly described that memory. The researcher then proceeded to ask the following questions:

Could you give me a brief overview of the memory you have chosen, as you remember it? You can use the memory tree to help you, if you wish.

Do you remember your feelings at that time?

How did you feel recalling the memory just now?

Can you tell me how you felt after the first interview and did you reflect afterwards?

Has taking part in the interview impacted upon you in any way?

How did you find using the Memory Tree Model for reflection, in comparison to the spontaneity (open microphone) of the first interview?

Are there any concluding thoughts you would like add about taking part in this interview?

In every form of research, particularly qualitative research, there are unique participants and a researcher with his or her own distinctive conversational style (Roulston, 2010). With this in mind, it is important to consider what a researcher brings to their research and how this can overlap with the thoughts and responses

of the participants. Responses can sometimes – as in this study – be emotional, which some researchers see to be problematic. However, according to Roulston (2010, p.5), 'problematic interactions and difficult data are collaboratively generated by speakers. Researchers can reflect on the answers to these questions and inform decision-making concerning research design and methods, the formulation of interview questions, and appropriate ways to analyze and represent interview data'. This was the case in this study, which utilised the reflective responses from the first phase of interviews to inform the researcher's approach to the second phase of interviews, including the formulation of interview questions and the researcher's decision to employ a RW approach to analyse the findings. This enabled the researcher to incorporate effectively the reflective element of the memories shared during the interviews.

As discussed in the previous chapter, reminiscence can be a nostalgic experience and can also impact on identity and the way people change within time and space. The literature reveals many nostalgic testimonies about life experiences in Liverpool, particularly rose-tinted recollections about "Scousers"[26] who stood together through the hardest and the best of times (Kelly, 2006). The researcher tried to maintain an awareness of the ways in which people attach meaning and nostalgia to memories, and revisiting the participants' responses proved to be particularly beneficial in terms of exploring this further. This chapter details significant reflective findings and provides insight into the impact taking part in this type of research had on the participants.

A six month break between the first and second phase of interviews allowed time for reflection and for the participants to notice whether taking part in the first interview had had any impact on them. There were some interesting outcomes from taking part in the research, as presented below in accordance with heuristic reminiscence functions and outcomes (Webster, et al., 2010).

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[26] 'Scousers' can be determined by where they are born or by their vernacular, the latter can sometimes be falsely assumed based on dialect alone (Boland, 2008).

Reminiscence functions

'Why you are who you are?' (Identity)

Do memories impact on our comprehension of self and identity? As discussed in the previous chapter, memories enable humans to build an awareness of self through their life course. Reminiscence contributes and maintains identity (McDowell, 2002) and shapes human experience, recognition and self-worth (Arciero, 2009).

Defining one's self in relation to others or within a situation is often referred to as 'identity' or 'identifying'. Lawler (2008, p.2) stated that 'we share common identities- as humans... however, there is another aspect of identity, which suggests people's uniqueness, their difference from others'. The development of identity begins in early childhood, through socialisation, when children are told who they are (Jenkins, 1996), what their names are and what their genders are, and the foundations of 'me' and 'you' are distinguished. People begin to categorise themselves. In turn, categorisation contributes to identity. Jenkins (2000, p.12) maintained that:

> We are not simply taught how to see ourselves in the world and empowered to make choices accordingly, but rather face a world in which widely shared categorizations such as rough/respectable, undeserving/deserving and unreliable/reliable influence processes of identification... [and] have material consequences.

Identity in both OH and RW is a phenomenon with multiple meanings, both for the researcher and the participants. Some see identity as an ongoing, formative process, whilst others see it as simply comprehending of the self, having a sense of self and recognising what the self represents (Jenkins, 1996; Rogaly and Taylor, 2009). Jenkins (1996) viewed the concept as the continuous reformation and reconstitution of existing through an individual's own conscious and unconscious choices.

The participants were particularly aware of how their memories contributed to their identity and had their own perceptions of how the memory process works. Mr R began his second interview by reviewing his own comprehension of this process:

> Your memory, it starts off a bit like a seed...it's the smells, it's the furniture...but it grows as you start to think about it and then you start to think about days out that you had, bigger experiences, and it's almost a bit like opening a flood gate because from that initial thought...it's like opening a door and all these other thoughts keep rushing in. I think, the only thing I can describe... in modern day terms is...a bit like having an application on your computer that you don't use, you know it's there, but you never open it and when you open it you realise how useful it is and I think it makes you realise why you are who you are, by recalling those memories, but for some reason you naturally lock them away and don't recall them naturally unless something triggers the need to open that door. So it's almost as though your mind locks them away but there's a huge amount of memory in there... I think the frightening thing about it is that they are not just pictures they are emotions, feelings and smells. You can almost be where you were then and that, I think, started me thinking more about it, once I'd had the session with yourself, because I don't know whether men are worse than women, but I don't particularly recall things unless I have to. I put things in boxes, it's almost as though I have lived that part of my life now, that goes in a box and that gets filed away in my mind and it's not until something causes you to open that box that you actually look at what's in there. But I did find it very, very beneficial (Mr R).

Mr R gave this process a lot of thought and clearly believed that it was beneficial for him.

It is common for people to view memories metaphorically in order to comprehend their meaning. For instance, one metaphor regularly used for forgetfulness is having a mind like a sieve. The holes in the sieve represent the falling away of memories, which are lost and hence forgotten. Another popular metaphor is a filing cabinet, where many memories are stored away. According to Taylor (2013), these are spatial metaphors in which people locate their memories and comprehend the process of accessing them. The psychologist William James (cited in Taylor, 2013) described memory as a lost object in a house, and described the process as rummaging to find a missing object, uncovering other objects throughout the house and finally finding the one for which you are searching. However, the metaphor that Mr R used is known as the Modal Model of memory: the rememberer[27] stores his or her memories in boxes and these memories can move from box to box depending on topic area or value (Taylor, 2013). Mr R referred to his memories being stored in boxes, but he also described the memory process as a computer application. This is another popular metaphor, which draws on the function of short term memory, working memory and random access memory in a computer. The metaphor can also refer to long term memory that is stored on a hard drive and not always easy to uncover. Creating concepts for memory retrieval enables humans to make sense of the complex phenomena of the reminiscence process.

Once the participants had reflected on the process itself, they turned their attention to the impact and purpose of the process. All of the participants believed that they had developed their morals and values during childhood and the experiences they encountered had helped to shape who they were today. Mr R spoke about this at length:

> I think the experience of staying with my grandparents, now I realise looking back, just shaped the way I turned out. I wouldn't have been the person I am today if I hadn't have stayed with them and it's only about thinking about the memories that we had you know, I can

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[27] "Rememberer" –person recalling their own memories

think, why I like certain things is because of the things that I did with them at the time and when I've recalled that memory it almost links into the way that I live today and I can think, yeah, that's why I am who I am.

How you perceive memories is affected by how you are now. I mean I mightn't feel the same way about some of these memories in a different setting or if I was a different person now. But, I do because I feel that those memories did add real value to who I am now. If those memories hadn't added value and made me into a horrible person or whatever, then I think that you would probably have a different perception of those memories.

Once an individual begins the reminiscence process, it can often become easier to recall more memories. Recalling memories did stimulate more reminiscence for the participants, and their speed of recall increased as the interview progressed. Some of the participants (n=7) engaged in personal reminiscence during the six month break between the first and second interview and some used it to research their own history. For example, one of the participants chose to conduct research into her family history because she wanted to discover her ancestry. It is important to acknowledge that developing knowledge of ancestry can contribute to identity and the construction of selfhood and provide a sense of belonging (Zerubavel, 2012).

Some studies link reminiscence to identity formation and self-conception, particularly during adolescence (McClean and Thorne, 2003). However, engaging in reminiscence at any age can impact on a person's sense of self and self-awareness (Webster et al., 2010). Researchers in RW focus on its effects on relationships and identity (Webster and Haight, 2002; Johnson et al., 2005; Gibson, 2011). Often generational memory sharing can trigger a strong internal sense of identity and life direction, which is significant for learning and personal development (Gibson, 2011).

Time and socialisation provide the basis for continuing to enrich internal and external self-perception. A variety of life experiences can affect our view of the world and how we position ourselves within it. A people's approach to a situation, or in this case, an interview, can also change the way in which they project their personality and convey their identity (Leary and Tangney, 2012).

During reminiscence an individual develops an essentialised view of language, place and those who live there. For example, Liverpool is a multicultural city, so the lived experience of Liverpool is unique. Yet, people possess a very stereotypical view of what they expect of Liverpool and its people, including of accent, language and character. According to Crowley (2012, p.137):

> For every witty Scouser there was the lippy, aggressive, Scally; for every friendly generous and good-hearted Scouser there was the self-privileging whiner; for every compassionate Scouser there was the self-pitying sentimentalist; for every Scouse challenger to the social order there was the petty robber...

Identity and moving histories

Moving histories in relation to migration is relevant to this study because Merseyside has had continual integration of different cultures over the decades (Feeney, 2009). The post-war years saw the migration of men in the armed forces as they left to fight during the Second World War. Migration also occurred through the evacuation of children from inner cities to the suburbs and surrounding countryside. These are examples of the spatial mobility that occurred within the north-west and indeed all over Britain during that time. This impacted on identity because it led to changes in lifestyle and represented highly emotive experiences. For example, child evacuees' experiences of the impact of being separated from their families were often very emotive, and result in these emotions being felt when these experiences are recalled in later life.

By contrast, immobile histories – the histories of those who grew up in the same place, surrounded by close-knit communities – also impacted childhood

reminiscences. Rogaly and Taylor (2009) discussed the commonality of certain individual's inability to move with the times because they have not experienced life outside of a single environment. This was typical for many people in post-war society: many people experienced life within their own communities and did not venture outside of them. It was not until the introduction of re-housing schemes that people gradually dispersed, breaking down inner city communities and community identities. Thompson (2000, p.7) acknowledged that, while OH is important for allowing individual expression of experienced history, it also acts as a means of exploring history within wider society by 'informing and moving the writing of broader history'. OH is an important tool for accessing the history of community and for broadening our comprehension of social history (Thompson, 2000).

Crowley (2012, p.135) argued that: 'Identity isn't a natural or a historical thing, but a social process from which emerge certain (precarious) modes of cultural stability and fixity that are posited over and against changing historical, political and ideological realities'. A person's social culture develops within an ever changing society. Identity is subjective, based on the way we each individually experience the world around us. From these experiences, people create a personal narrative that constructs and conveys their experiences to others and thereby allows them to comprehend their own identity, which constantly changes within the different circumstances of their life (Webster et al., 2010). For example, an individual's social class, ethnicity and age can all link to a variety of life experiences, such as discrimination. Rogaly and Taylor (2009, p.viii) highlighted that: 'Identity is at the heart of some of the most intractable and troubling contemporary social problems – community conflict, racism, discrimination, xenophobia and marginalization'. Identity studies brings together an interdisciplinary mix of sociologists, educationalists, anthropologists and historians, each of which contributes in some way to the impact of all societal being (King, 2000). According to Rogaly and Taylor (2009, p.4), 'Life histories reveal the migratory patterns of individuals over the course of their lives and, crucially, when taken together, can show shifting patterns across generations'. Some of the participants (n=3) spoke about the migratory patterns of their family

during and after the war. Some families moved to North Wales seeking safety from the bombs, while others moved after the war in the hope of finding a better life and a fresh start. Two of the participants chose to investigate their past life and ancestry further, using online resources to explore their childhood area or their family history. Mrs L explained that taking part in the research had contributed to her decision to conduct some research into her own family history: talking about her childhood and family life triggered a desire to find out more about her own family roots.

> I know a lot about my father's side of the family but not a great deal about my mum's so I have been doing that, I've actually contacted a local historian and he is emailing me. He is trying to find out some information with regards to my grandfather on my mother's side that used to have a shop ...where we live in this town and I've actually dragged my daughter round the grave yard to see if we can find, any significant headstones that might relate to our family. I am doing that now (Mrs L).

Similarly, Mr M went in search of more information about his past; he found photographs of his childhood and explored the internet. He made some personal observations and stated that memories should be readily accessed and not forgotten.

> Well I started to think more about ...days gone by. How can you look back, obviously old photographs, I dug out old photographs and things. I went on the [inter]net and looked to see if some of the places were still there, you know what I mean. Some of them are still there and some of them are not. But that wouldn't be the world if it always stayed the same would it... So yeah, it made me reflect on you know, maybe we shouldn't forget all these things you know, and you shouldn't just put them away in the drawer maybe we should get them out and maybe meet up with a few people again after all these

years. Swap stories, see if our memories are the same, I bet you they're not [laughs] (Mr M).

An individual's personal views about where they come from contribute to their outlook and experience of life. However, Rogaly and Taylor (2009) argued that this is also impacted by the norms and values of society (i.e. the reputation of a certain geographic location or housing estate and the expected behaviours, norms and values with which people grow up). People are impacted by the subcultures of an area and the social problems associated with it, including poverty, criminality, deviancy and the breakdown of family structures (Rogaly and Taylor, 2009).

Subcultures were formed as part of post-war society in Britain. As a consequence, society attached labelling to groups based on their image and behaviour such as 'Teddy Boys', who are comparable to the modern day 'Chavs',[28] developing stereotypes and with it expectations of associated behaviours. Rogaly and Taylor (2009) acknowledged the importance of capturing people's experiences of their own moving histories in their own words. Categories are formed for certain identities under the umbrella of a specific label within public discourse (Hanley, 2007). Jenks (1996) wrote that categorisation is an ongoing occurrence and that people will continue to categorise and judge others.

The categorisation of individuals enforces structural inequalities that limit people within the social boundaries of their societal identity (Jenks, 1996). An example of this would be the limitations of housing, jobs or educational opportunities due to the standards or expected ability of individuals in a certain geographical area. Educational opportunities in certain areas cater for the societal expectations of the children in that area. Working class education, for example, often leads to working class jobs (Rogaly and Taylor, 2009). These assumptions directly impact on identity and self-worth and create a demoralised mentality (Collins, 2004), linking directly to the childhood experiences of some of the participants. Mr T had limited

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[28] Use of such terminology is derogatory due to the inference of anti-social behaviour and the underlying connotations of worthlessness and a lack of aspiration. The term also links to physical appearance and behaviour including speech, dress code and patterns of social and familial being (see Jones, 2011).

job prospects because of his class, geographic location and level of education; he felt particular regret about this and reflected on how things might have been different if he had lived somewhere else. Categorisation also contributes to a sense of belonging to a social category in which individuals familiarise themselves and their role. This form of identity channelling is also typical within certain races, nationalities or districts (McDowell, 2008).

The benefits of reminiscence: Reflectivity, identity and self-hood

Self-defining memories (SDMs) are autobiographical and personal life memories that individuals believe define who they are (Singer, 2005). Identity studies explores the significance of memory recall for the formation of self (King, 2000). Many factors can influence SDMs, including age, gender, culture, mood, identity and personality (Arciero, 2009). The idea that personality is linked to memory recall is not new. Over the last few decades, much research has linked memory and selfhood (Conway and Pleydell-Pearce, 2000). In the field of personality psychology, there has been much research that investigates the role of life stories in identity development (McAdams, 1995; 1996). The relationship between memory and selfhood has also been prominent in the literature about memory, personality and identity (Conway and Pleydell-Pearce, 2000; McAdams, 2008). McAdams et al. (2006) maintained that telling a life story is a narrative and constructive process that constantly contributes to an evolving identity, evoking insight into personality and personal change. McAdams et al. (2006) believed that the stories we tell form who we are and how we view ourselves, and that over time they change, opening new possibilities in life such as new aspirations or life goals.

Researchers from multiple disciplines are showing greater interest in the use of life stories, narrative and autobiographical memory to understand the life course and human behaviour (McAdams, 2001). Change in social behaviour can contribute to the construction of narratives about a particular era, reflection on personal memories allows individuals to define themselves and position themselves within that era and within their life course. Adler (1962, p.3) referred to this as 'the story of my life'.

Conway and Pleydell-Pearce (2000) created the Self-Memory System model (SMS), which presented two dimensions of self-memory: autobiographical memory, which is organised hierarchically and includes life episodes, general life events and event-specific detail, and self and autobiographical memory which focuses on identity and selfhood. According to Conway and Pleydell-Pearce (2000, p.261), 'Autobiographical memory is of fundamental significance for the self, for emotions, and for the experience of personhood, that is for the experience of enduring as an individual, in a culture, over time'. Personal memories hold great psychological and emotional significance. However, personality theorists believe that the personality of individuals determines how they recall such memories (McAdams, 1996). Individuals respond to triggers or cues and reflect as memories flow. This occurs frequently during autobiographical recall in particular. Conway and Pleydell-Pearce (2000, p.261) argued that:

> Autobiographical memories are transitory dynamic mental constructions generated from an underlying knowledge base. This knowledge base, or regions of it, is minutely sensitive to cues, and patterns of activation constantly arise and dissipate over the indexes of autobiographical memory knowledge structures.

When accessing personal memories, individuals can use the experience positively within their everyday life. Mosher-Ashley and Barrett (1997, p.93) highlighted that 'benefits range from an improved ability to cope with ageing and death to an improved self-concept'. Additionally, Gibson (1997, p.138) maintained that reminiscence acts as an aid to reducing levels of 'stress, threat, anxiety and failure'. Furthermore, Chiang et al. (2010) found that the process of RW decreases feelings of depression, stress and loneliness, thereby aiding mental health and psychological well-being. However, Pasupathi and Cartensen (2003) criticised RW, believing that it was responsible for purposely triggering intense emotion. In some cases this can be a positive experience, but it can also be a negative one. A study conducted by Bohlmeijer et al. (2009) examined the effects of integrative reminiscence on depression in mature adults. They found that this form of reminiscence reduced levels of depression, but not significantly. Bohlmeijer et al.

(2009) suggested that these findings were limited due to the small sample population.

Wong and Watt (1991) found that both integrative[29] and instrumental[30] reminiscence positively aided individuals in successfully aging and having a positive mental attitude. However, they also stated that this could simply be due to participation in any form of RW, rather than indicative of the specific approach.

Cappeliez et al. (2008) highlighted the link between narrative and integrative reminiscence and the trigger of positive emotions for those who take part. Pasupathi and Cartensen (2003) maintained that the use of narrative reminiscence in the form of positive storytelling was linked closely to the participant's feelings of euphoria after the reminiscence had taken place. This euphoria can contribute to an immense appreciation for past life experiences (Kearney and Trull, 2014). The experience can provide both therapeutic and positive reflectivity for the participant. Furthermore, the literature suggests that engaging in the process can be beneficial and a positively reflective experience for the listener (Wrye and Churilla, 1977; Killick and Allan, 2001). In this instance, engaging in OH and RW interviews was an emotive experience for both the participants and the researcher. Mr H stated: 'I felt very emotional to be honest with you. Because you don't talk about your past. I've never talked about my past like that before, to anybody and quite emotional deep inside you know'. Mrs W said:

> Quite emotional. It brought other things back...made you think about your mum and dad again and that you'd lost them so that's, you know that was quite sad...and also it lingered with you for the next day or two. And when I went for a walk. We go to Caldy beach and we always do this walk and must have passed these weeds hundreds of times, the little, we called them 'sticky backs' I think. They're like a weed that stick to you, we used to throw them as darts at each other.

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[29] Integrative reminiscence is the 'constructive re-appraisal of interpretations and emotions to past self-defining events' (Watt and Cappeliez, 2000, p.166).
[30] Instrumental reminiscence uses memories from the past to create coping strategies.

But it took me right back to the corners of the street where they called them 'the bombdies' where buildings had been bombed in the war so they were taken over by weeds and grass and it used to be full of these sticky back weeds and I was just back there. Suddenly I was back there on the corner of Flint Street, like as a child, seeing these weeds (Mrs W).

The participants also felt that the interviews had enabled them to think about the impact of reminiscence on their identity. Courage and Cowan, (2009, p.1) noted that 'Memory is not only the food of mental growth; it is the repository of our past that helps shape the essence of who we are'. Configuration of memory, categorisation, recall and the establishment of identity formation are all congruent in reminiscence. As Schacter (1996, p.169) concluded, 'we are what we remember'.

Bitterness revival: Gender and negative memory recall

Reminiscence can uncover many memories, some of which may be negative and may have psychological implications. Sometimes sharing negative memories can prove to be a positive experience due to the release of emotions (Killick and Allan, 2001; Ulvik, 2010). However, reminiscence that consists of excessive negative memory recall is referred to as obsessive reminiscence and involves the individual returning to negative memories over and over again (Wong and Watt, 1991). Cappeliez et al. (2008) referred to considerable negative memory retrieval as bitterness revival, which is also identified as a function of reminiscence in the HMR (Webster et al., 2010). Gibson (2004) maintained that it is important to reminisce about negative memories because this process serves as a release function and a channel of expression. Avoiding such reminiscence can prove detrimental over time due to pent-up emotion. The level of expression and emotion can vary and be dependent on many factors, including age, personality and gender.

Gender can influence the reminiscence process in many ways. According to Webster and McCall (1999), women are less likely to engage in bitterness revival reminiscence, although other researchers have found no specific differences in autobiographical memory sharing between the genders (Webster et al., 2010).

This corresponds with the researcher's perspective: it is evident from the findings that both genders recalled both positive and negative memories. In fact, two of the female participants recalled very detailed negative memories, referring to them as vivid and like they had happened yesterday.

Another factor that can influence memory recall is family reminiscence. Some studies show that parental reminiscence can affect a child's ability to reminisce. According to Webster et al. (2010, p.540), 'parents act as scaffolds for reminiscence behaviour by eliciting, editing, and reinforcing autobiographical recall in structured ways'. The maternal figure will unconsciously interact differently with male and female children, thus influencing the child's memory recall from an early age. Often mothers encourage female children to be elaborate in their reminiscence style, tuning into finer details. Webster et al. (2010, p.540) explained that 'Mothers model to their daughters an enjoyment of reminiscence and the importance of weaving autobiographical details into an emerging life story'. With this idea in mind, RW can present itself differently with regard to gender difference, particularly when recalling memories that were formed during childhood. There are two factors to acknowledge here: adult identity formation in relation to the childhood memory style; and all the gender-related influences that an individual has experienced throughout his or her life course. In the majority of the interviews, the participants believed that family structure and gender related behaviours had influenced their life choices and the decisions they had made in their later life.

Conversation, boredom reduction, death preparation and intimacy maintenance

Conversational reminiscence serves many purposes, particularly for more mature adults (Webster and Haight, 1995). It can reduce boredom by engaging in the act of sharing memories, through conversation with others or simply by recalling memories privately. In their personal lives, the majority of the participants (n=7) did not engage in the reminiscence process either conversationally or privately, a circumstance they regretted.

Death preparation reminiscence does not refer to imminent departure from life, but to one dealing with the fear of death as the later stages of life are neared. The majority of the participants (n=9) spoke about missing others, and some spoke about their feelings of bereavement after the loss of close family or friends. None of the participants expressed thoughts about nearing the end of their own lives.

Intimacy maintenance refers to maintaining friendship or relationships through the use of reminiscence. It is mostly achieved through family reminiscence. Some of the participants (n=7) rarely engaged in this activity. Mrs J stated that her family had moved away and that she rarely spoke to them, let alone reminisced with them. Dr E expressed that his family preferred not to listen to him reminiscing, referring to it as 'maudlin'; this overlaps with the idea of reminiscence as death preparation from the perspective of younger generations. None of the participants described times of positive reminiscence with other family members. The majority of the participants (n=9) believed that this was because younger generations did not want to listen to the hardships they had endured in the past.

Problem-solving

Memory can be accessed for practical, everyday purposes or enjoyed nostalgically (Dickenson and Erben, 2006). According to Webster et al. (2010), problem solving is a regular function of memory. Anecdotal memories are often shared among family and friends for their entertaining qualities (Dallos, 1997). The practicalities of the memory system act similarly among people, but can be approached differently by different individuals as a result of their past or their ability to share memories with others.

Memory storage, particularly the detail or vividness of a memory, is often correlated with the memories' level of importance or relevance to the individual. A person's notion of self can also influence memories, interlinking with self-value, confidence, motivation, goals and life-long learning (Webster et al., 2010). Many of the participants (n=8) used their memories to reason or to comprehend situations; they used reminiscence to come to terms with times of hardship, channelling the negativity into something positive. For example, Mrs E had a negative experience

of being in hospital during childhood, when the nurses had been cruel to her. From this she decided that her life goal was to become a nurse herself and provide a positive experience for people during their time in hospital.

Teach/Inform

Dr E spoke of a particular occasion that was influenced by taking part in the first interview.

> I reflected very much on the first interview and this happened particularly when I has my seventieth birthday party at the Floral Pavilion in New Brighton with family and friends, and I was allowed to reminisce and I'm not allowed very often to reminisce by my family, because they just think I'm getting maudlin...but it was an opportunity really to recall some of the topics I had discussed in the first interview and I think that I have reflected a lot on it because it is very rare that we older people are allowed to sit down in front of an open microphone and just talk about our past without people getting too bored.

It is interesting to note his use of 'allowed' in this passage: Dr E explained that he is not allowed to reminisce very often with his family and therefore this triggered more reflection for him after the first interview. This links to several comments made during the interviews relating to the lack of respect and care shown towards older generations today. It also shows us that being able to share memories of the past was important to the participants.

Mrs L explained that it is rare to think about childhood and that this research has given her the opportunity to reflect on her memories.

> Your memories are hidden somewhere deep and you're all with today, what's happening today, and what's happening with your own family, and what their issues are. You very rarely sit down and think

back to when you were a child. ...I was thinking about it when I got home actually you know, it brought everything back and I thought, you know some of the children playing today they've got nowhere to go or nothing to do, nothing like that, and yet we had nothing at all. But I don't begrudge the children of today you know, it's just that things were very difficult when I was a young child.

In some capacity these findings were particularly sad, because those who were closest to the participants did not allow them to reminisce. Webster (2002) stressed the importance of memory recollection as a regular family exercise. Cultivating quality reminiscence encourages use of all the functions included in the heuristic model of reminiscence (Webster et al., 2010). It enables people to form and maintain an identity, problem solve, build and maintain relationships, teach others using their own wisdom and life experience, engage in conversation, reduce boredom, confront negative memories and deal with the concept of nearing the end of life. Reminiscence is important at any stage of the life course; this importance is often forgotten (Gibson, 2011). Reminiscence is a liberating process, as is the process of 'recalling, reconstructing and sharing memories at every age' (Gibson, 2011, p.14).

Practice outcomes

Positive (psychosocial health/emotional regulation)

Mr R recalled feeling happy as he recalled memories during the first and second interviews: 'Once I started to remember or recall the particular episodes, it was comforting and I felt happy if you like, or pleased. I felt comfortable within that memory recall'. Dr E also spoke of his positive feelings when reminiscing, although he added that it is not until later in his life that he realised the level of hardship he had experienced: 'I always felt, comfortable and secure, I never really was aware of the degree of hardships until I looked back, because everybody was experiencing the same and I think that was the thing that people had in common'. Both participants used the word 'comfortable' to describe their feelings related to their particular childhood memories. Being and feeling comfortable are an essential part of the reminiscence experience (Gibson, 2011) and enable participants to feel at

ease while sharing memories – and evidently the memories themselves can induce feelings of comfort and security.

Mr H commented that he rarely reminisced about his past; he also explained that he had never spoken to anyone about his past before. Yet he felt comfortable sharing his childhood memories. Mrs J found that the interview had triggered strong feelings: 'To be honest after the first [interview]... speaking about my family and my mother and father have long passed away now, because quite emotional to tell you the truth and it did bring back memories. I must say most of them were good memories you know'. Reminiscence is often carried out by counsellors, psychotherapists and care workers solely for its therapeutic and health related benefits. It helps people to cope and deal with deep, sometimes painful, unresolved issues from the past (Gibson, 2011). This form of therapy is conducted by clinically trained professionals. However, RW can be conducted by anyone, including community volunteers, family members and researchers, who usually carry out RW with the intention of positive reflection, although negative memories may also be shared. Therefore, although RW is carried out with positive intentions, it does not always result in positive memories being shared, so it is important to note the possible therapeutic benefits that, unlike intervention therapy, which can only be conducted by a clinical professional, can accrue to non-professional RW. Gallagher and Carey (2012, p.577) referred to reminiscence as a therapeutic intervention that enables participants to develop '...a willingness to overcome painful aspects of reminiscence'. So, rather than blocking negative memories from one's mind, reminiscence actually provides an opportunity to cope and deal with issues from the past.

According to Haight and Webster (1995, p.xvii), 'In late life, people have a particularly vivid imagination and memory for the past and can recall with sudden and remarkable clarity early life events'. There are several forms of reminiscence therapy, two of which relate closely to the outcomes of this research: instrumental reminiscence, which involves accessing past coping strategies to deal with stressful life events or deal with problems in present day life (Watt and Cappeliez, 2000), and integrative reminiscence, which uses a cognitive behavioural model

based on the individual conducting a re-appraisal of emotions linked to various life events. Both of these approaches are used to deal with life challenges (Watt and Cappeliez, 2000). So, although it was not a primary aim, the research acted in a therapeutic capacity.

Negative (increased rumination and anxiety/unresolved conflicts)

Mr R spoke about not knowing what memories will surface, including positive and negative experiences:

> I think when somebody first asks you to recall something or to bring something back it's in a way difficult because you're not sure whether you want to because you don't really know what you might know... it's a pleasant memory but you don't know all the details until you open the box, and you open the box and you are suddenly back there thinking, wow yeah it was good, but there could have been things in there you didn't want to remember and you do shut it away.

He also made an interesting personal observation relating to ease of accessing positive memories and the difficulty of recalling negative memories:

> It's easy to open pleasant memories, not so easy to open difficult memories...I'm not medical but I don't know whether there is a reason for that but... I think sometimes when you do open an unpleasant memory you still only see a little bit of it. You would really have to push yourself to go into it deeper. So that is why I think we tend to sort of say, 'The Good Old Days,' because we recall quite easily all these pleasant moments but we don't recall the difficult ones and there must have been some you know because we know we weren't happy all the time but we don't recall them, we almost need a special jolt to recall those unpleasant ones.

Sharing both positive and negative memories can help individuals to develop coping strategies, particularly by stimulating self-awareness (Gibson, 2011). This also works by encouraging the individual to re-kindle self-esteem and self-worth and to value their own past life experiences (Cappeliez et al., 2008). The support given during this process is also important, because it allows all the participants to feel at ease and be able to engage fully in sharing personal childhood memories.

Research outcomes

Successful tool for supporting the reminiscence process
The participants were given the opportunity to comment on the effectiveness of using the MTM as a supporting tool during the reminiscence process. This enabled the researcher to gain evaluative feedback on the general success of the MTM in supporting the reminiscence process and an opportunity to share any opinions on potential improvements or changes to the model. The majority of the participants (n=9) felt that the MTM had proved beneficial in supporting the process.

Dr E felt that he preferred the spontaneous open-microphone approach to memory sharing, but others were indifferent. Some of the participants (n=8) felt the memory tree gave them time to reflect and structure their thoughts without losing any smaller details, as had been a problem in the first interview.

The reminiscence process leads to wider outcomes than memory retrieval alone. A variety of outcomes can occur, both for the person reminiscing and for the listener. Due to the importance of this, the participants partook in an additional reflective interview (phase two) to consider these outcomes further. In turn, this has contributed to constructing the theoretical interpretation of the study and creating a model to expand on the rich data collected and support individuals during the reminiscence process via a form of mind mapping.

Although RW can give insight into an individual's personality and the impact it has on the success of memory retrieval, other factors such as humour, mood, energy and health can all influence the memories retrieved. Mental health such as

depression and issues with self-esteem can in particular impact on the depth and detail of the memories shared. Furthermore, the process itself could have altered these factors, for example by changing the person's mood for a significant amount of time after they had engaged in the reminiscence process. These emotions can be positive or negative or have elements of both. Positively, the participants gained satisfaction from the experience. Negative memories effectively provided a release function, leading to the development of individual problem solving and coping strategies.

Abrams (2010) explained that the participant will experience emotions during reminiscence. It is important to remember that the experiential impact of the study is just as important as collecting the memories. Abrams (2010, p.79) acknowledged that: 'Memory –both individual and collective- exists in a symbiotic relationship with the public memorialisation of the past.' However, OH research will continue to include a degree of personal and unique experiences, which manifest themselves when reminiscing about family, childhood, education and society. In addition, Abrams (2010) highlighted that memories will manifest themselves with a level of unique detail in the light of socio-cultural and historical representations (i.e. the 1950s) and in accordance with recent media representations, nostalgic reflection with others and representations of the resilience and humour of Liverpudlians. This can have a significant impact on the content of an individual's oral testimony.

Recalling memories through the process of telling prompts the reworking and reimagining of past experiences. This triggers reflection and contemplation of ourselves as we were, as we are now and as we have yet to become. Some recollections can initiate feelings of anticipation for the future. All of these elements shape the construction and sharing of memories. Looking at the wider process, including the support given during the reminiscence process, has been significant because it has provided insight into what influences memory and thereby improved approaches to supporting individuals in future research.

Memory Tree Model (MTM)

The MTM ties into the idea of family trees and revisiting one's roots. The researcher designed the MTM using the tree as a recognisable symbol in an attempt to be more accessible for the participants. However, Mrs J initially found it daunting: 'I was a bit apprehensive when I started but then it just seemed to flow so, it doesn't always make sense, but it did...That's very good actually, it is a good tool'.

Mr R referred to the MTM as being 'structured and systematic' and he utilised the tool by working his way around it in 'stages'. Due to the speed of his memory recall, the model allowed him to slow this process down in order to reflect in more detail.

> I think just by starting with how you trigger that memory and then working your way round the tree helps you itemise the different phases that you go through in that memory process ... once you've captured that it is useful to talk about it afterwards, because you almost go through these stages quite quickly in the memory process. So, in some ways difficult to break them down into those layers so you've actually got to almost do it as you're thinking through the memory, 'Oh I'm thinking of this, I'm thinking of that.' Because it moves so rapidly (Mr R).

Similarly, Mrs L commented that the MTM afforded more time and encouraged more detail:

> I find the memory tree, it gives you time, it's hard to just reflect spontaneously... the tree triggers me into more thought, more detail, thought about the situation at the time, and with it now being in front of me I'm actually remembering other things you know, like the colour of the carpet in front of the fire, the fact we used to have the guard off the fire 'cause we liked to watch the flames of the fire and then this mat in front of the fire used to end up with all sparks on it

and burn marks and things like that, you know little things like that that you don't think of, you know the colours of things, the tree, the Christmas tree, the curtains open, you know things like that...

Initially, Mrs J found the MTM daunting, but she explained that this feeling lessened once she started using it: 'I was a bit apprehensive when I started but then it just seemed to flow so, it doesn't always make sense, but it did... That's very good actually, it is a good tool'. Mrs M explained that the MTM allowed her to make a story out of the memory and that it acted as a tool for structuring her thoughts. She commented that some people would find the tool beneficial when reminiscing and felt that it helped to uncover more memories.

> I think this is a help it's like an aide memoire, you know, it sort of triggers things ...I mean the way I've written it, it's like a sort of story of the day I took this exam. I think it's easier than trying to pull it out of thin air...Yes, I suppose it could help some people, it depends, some people are very spontaneous and can just grab things out of their memories, other people need a bit of, just a bit of prompting I suppose ... maybe I needed it 'cause it depends how deeply it's buried doesn't it really (Mrs M).

Mr M took a similarly narrative approach to using the MTM by creating a beginning, middle and end. He explained that the tool helped to bring back his memories. Mr M reflecting on his introduction to Rock 'n' Roll:

> Well, because you have got all of these little bubbles here, I knew I couldn't get it all into one, so I just decided to start at the beginning and do that one, and then the end one, did that one, and then I thought well what was the central thing? The central thing was the music starting, bang, you know, and then it sort of brought back memories. I can actually see some of the people in that room. You know, actually see them, sitting looking at me, me looking at them, as I say, we were like grinning, I wonder what she's going to do

[laughs]. We hadn't got a clue what she was going to do. She just told us to get there 'cause there was something special, and that's what it was, pretty special (Mr M).[31]

Participants' concluding comments

Mrs L found the experience beneficial, which encouraged her to research her family history:

> Well I think the whole experience has been really, really good that you know ...it's triggered me into thinking more about ...looking at the past, looking at family history, trying to establish more information for my family, for them to tell their families and if I hadn't done that initial interview I probably would never have bothered...

There was evidence of rapport from the participants, who indicated that they had felt comfortable to share their personal childhood memories. 'You've been a very nice girl and you have been very patient with me and I have enjoyed it very, very much and I have spoken to all my family about it' (Mrs J). Mrs E echoed a common theme, that families do not want to listen to the older generation's memories; she pinpointed the technological difference between then and now and believed that today's children 'haven't a clue'.

> I think it is very good actually because we try to talk to our children about these things every now and again but they go, 'Oh, yeah yeah yeah, get the violin out' sort of pretend to play and think 'we know it was bad in your day,' but they really haven't a clue, they really haven't, living in today's society with everything so fast and they've grown up with. I mean for us today we didn't have a television our grandchildren actually are more fascinated that we didn't have television because they find that impossible to believe, of a life

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[31] This particular reflection links to the participant's memory of the nuns introducing him and the other school children to rock and roll music for the first time (see memoir 2).

without trailing wires, so we stopped trying to tell our children what, well they've never asked us what it was like so we've never really told them so this was an opportunity, if you like, for our own reflections so I think in that way it's been good (Mrs E).

Like some of the other participants, Dr E concluded by speaking about the therapeutic qualities of engaging in the reminiscence process:

I think that it is an experience that a lot of people of my age should have. I think it should ideally be provided on the National Health Service or as a Social Service because I think it is actually quite therapeutic for people to think about their past. There are some things that they don't want to talk about or things that they may have suppressed for years but it is often good to try and look back and say, 'oh why are we the people that we are?' And I think this has been a very important benefit from undertaking this exercise.

A common theme that emerged throughout the research is the therapeutic nature of reminiscence. Clark (2010) wrote about the benefits of reminiscence for internal well-being and for the maintenance of engaging in memory recall. Clark also stressed the importance of creating a non-judgemental and comfortable environment in which to achieve the best results, which thankfully was successfully achieved in this study.

The majority of the participants (n=9) stated that they had enjoyed the experience of taking part in the research. Mrs W concluded with a poignant realisation of the importance of memories and how they become history:

Well, I have enjoyed taking part, as I say it did make me think and reflect on my childhood and realise how much of that kind of life is gone now. You think it's only yesterday. You think everyone knows about this kind of thing, but you suddenly realise that what you remember is now history and you're that old person [laughs] you

know, you think wow fancy being alive then when it was like that and you think gosh I've been through like sixty years and things change so much – it's amazing.

Researcher's concluding thoughts

Common themes drawn from these extracts included the limited opportunity for the participants to reminisce in their everyday lives and the intensity of emotions felt after they were given the opportunity to reminisce. Clark (2010) explored the impact of research engagement and considered why people engage in what is essentially a voluntary and time-consuming process that usually involves sharing personal information in some capacity. He found that people are often willing to engage in the demands of research in their own home or community (Clark, 2010), but that such research will always have an impact on those involved, as is apparent from the findings in this study.

The research showed the ongoing impact experienced by the participants during and after they engaged in the reminiscence process. It is important to recognise that participants need a certain level of reassurance to ensure that distress does not occur and, if it does, that it is reduced immediately (Clark, 2010). From this research, it is evident that the participants felt that the experience was a therapeutic one. Moreover, this knowledge can act as a motivation to engage participants in future research because it may provide benefits to all involved. Clark (2010, p.402) described it as an 'enlightening experience'.

In the field of health and social care, Tarpey (2006) explored individual motivations for taking part in research, including both social and personal motives. Personal motivations included having a voice, maintenance of well-being, fulfilling a personal need, development, frustrations and self-esteem and empowerment. Social motivations included conveying perspectives and relating to others, developing research knowledge, making changes to service provision and altruism (Tarpey, 2006). Rapport and building trust during conversational research are also an achievement for all involved (Mauthner et al., 2002).

Clark (2010) acknowledged that, while some literature explores the researcher and participant rapport, there is limited consideration of the reasons why the participants themselves choose to develop this rapport, often with great enthusiasm. It is an important part of the process; in this research, the more the participant got to know the researcher, the more information and open expression occurred.

Another interesting point is that the participants are mature in age. Clark (2010, p.414) explained that 'older people, for instance, are more likely to be motivated by a desire to "give something back"; wanting stimulation; and wanting to make a difference'. All of the participants felt that they had been given a valuable opportunity to contribute to a part of social history that they believed was unique and of great value. They felt that taking part and sharing their memories was beneficial, for themselves and for the contribution they had made to research (although some had initially needed some reassurance).

CHAPTER EIGHT
EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM OF LIVERPOOL LIFE

Overview

Research is an essential part of progression, comprehension and development; it provides answers, gives insight and broadens knowledge. This knowledge is then shared academically between colleagues, at conferences and through publication. The researcher contends that although research, particularly research about social history, is disseminated academically, it should also be made available to the public. This chapter details the planning and execution of a participatory exhibition at the Museum of Liverpool Life at which the findings of this research were shared in a public forum.

Reminiscence and memory sharing

'Reminiscence builds bridges between people' (Gibson, 2011, p.9).

Reminiscence enables us to share personal memories and life experiences with others; it helps us to understand ourselves and the world around us better and develop meaningful relationships based on shared morals, values and experiences. As discussed throughout this thesis, reminiscence is a reflective process that draws on experiences from the past, but it also influences the way we approach the present and, indeed, the future. Gibson (2011, p.35) noted that 'Reminiscence work is based on respect for each person's unique individuality; it recognises the interdependence of people within relationships and within families and communities'. Wang (2008) highlighted the importance of generational memory sharing for defining individuality. Thompson (2000, p.2) explained that 'Family history especially can give an individual a strong sense of a much longer personal lifespan'. These points highlight another impact of the reminiscence process on those who engage in it; it is much more than just recalling memories of the past.

Although RW is often carried out with individuals in later life, it is important to acknowledge that it is relevant to people of all ages. Indeed, it is important for

people of all ages to share their memories with each other (Gibson, 2011). It is evident from this study that reminiscence and life review work blur many boundaries and are multifaceted. Gibson (2004, p.xiii) identified reminiscence as 'multidimensional, multiprofessional, multidisciplinary and multicultural, reminiscence is also intergenerational and international'. Reminiscence can be either private or shared; it is both intrapersonal and interpersonal and can promote personal private reflection and social engagement. However, sharing reminiscences can also help people to find common ground and relate to each other through shared experiences. This can occur across cultures and generations, enabling people to feel enriched as they share their memories together. In the words of Gibson (2011, p.20), 'They begin to share a journey which, while beginning in the past, takes place in the present; this becomes a journey which moves forward in new, exciting and unexpected directions'.

People share the information that is most important to them, and the researcher, oral historian, or anyone else listening to or working with reminiscences, has a responsibility to be respectful towards the person who is sharing personal information. Reminiscing affords older people the opportunity to share their wisdom with younger generations, not only sharing valuable information, but also enabling them to connect to their earlier life (Gibson, 2011; Zipsane, 2011). Bornat's (2003) work supports this notion: she explained that reminiscence is a social movement that gives voice to ordinary people. Just as OH has become a respected part of historical research (Thompson, 2006), reminiscence has become valued for its contributions to community development and social inclusion. Unwin (2009) argued that society has lost its ability to connect on a friendly, kind and considerate level. Taylor (2009) believed that there has been social erosion in a culture so that people now lack trust and interest in each other. These attitudes and behaviours lead to social fragmentation and the widening of social inequality (Taylor, 2009). Involving communities in research relating to social history can help to reconnect people, build networks, share values, diminish discrimination and bring together diverse cultures and age groups.

It is apparent from the findings that reminiscence can trigger many emotions and thoughts which can impact directly on the person engaging in the process. The researcher felt an extra duty of care to support the participants. She achieved this by facilitating the opportunity for participants to engage in reflective reminiscence during the second phase of the interviews. Following this, the researcher sought an opportunity to celebrate the participants' memories and return them to the people of Merseyside, so she organised and project managed an exhibition of the research findings at the Museum of Liverpool Life. As the study had focused on Merseyside's social heritage, the Museum of Liverpool Life was the ideal venue for disseminating the research findings. The museum is 'the largest newly-built national museum in the UK for over a hundred years' (Carr, 2012). It represents 'the people's social history' and focuses on interaction with the public as an integral part of historical education and discovery (Museum of Liverpool Life, 2014).

Due to the interactive learning ethos of the museum and LJMU's strategy for encouraging public engagement, the researcher was not satisfied with producing display stands alone. The researcher intended to put on a publically interactive event over a two-day period. The researcher secured exclusive use of the large Education Suite, situated on the first floor of the museum building. This was a very large space to fill, so the researcher drafted many ideas to ensure that the exhibition was inspiring and would create an appropriate atmosphere for reminiscing.

Planning and copyright

OH and RW have different approaches to the dissemination of research findings. 'Giving voice' is a common phrase used amongst oral historians (Perks and Thomson, 2015, p.85). Bornat (2001, p.234) explained that 'Debates within oral history centre on separation between subject and the researcher, and on the additional separation where presentation involves the mass media or public settings such as museums and exhibitions'. Turning three hundred-plus pages of academic writing into an interactive event was challenging, so planning was important. There were numerous things to consider in planning the exhibition.

The exhibition needed to be inspirational, to engage the public and encourage interaction, but it also needed to be educational and transmit knowledge to the public. Durbin (1996) maintained that exhibitions are for sharing information and for learning, and can be a core educational tool. The exhibition used written, visual, and audio sources to convey the research findings. However, the information shared was personal, so confidentiality and copyright issues had to be clarified.

As part of the organisation of such an event, the researcher considered the ethical implications of publically sharing the research findings and the ownership of copyright. Legal copyright (1988 Copyright Act, UK) means that the spoken word is owned by the speaker, but the copyright of an audio recording belongs to the person or organisation who arranged the recording (Oral History Society, 2015). This enables researchers to use audio recorded material in presentations and to share their research. From the beginning, the participants were informed that any information they shared might be used in future presentations or publications, both academic and public. The researcher made the participants aware of her intention to use extracts in the final write up of the thesis, future presentations and publications. The participants assigned copyright to the researcher, enabling her to present the memories as part of an exhibition in a museum setting. After discussing the copyright details with the participants, they agreed for the audio versions of their interviews to be preserved for posterity. They also agreed that verbatim extracts could be used in the write-up of this thesis and future publications.

The researcher contacted each of the participants to tell them about the event and to invite them as guests to celebrate the childhood memories they had shared. The majority of the participants (n=9) felt that publically sharing memories was essential for 'keeping history going' (Dr E). Indeed, this remark reflects one of the main objectives of this research.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the Liverpool Women's History Group (2011) highlighted the importance of social history and public interaction. As a group it passes on its knowledge to children in a fun and entertaining way. It explained that

children show genuine interest in and enthusiasm for learning about history. LWHG (2011, p.21) commented: 'The reader may ask how we acquired all the information to impart to the children. The simple answer is – we lived it'. LWHG demonstrated the importance of making the event fun, vibrant and interactive to ensure that it appealed to a wide age range, including children.

Sharing research and information through an exhibition is a beneficial and informative way of making the public aware of social history; The Museum of Liverpool Life was an ideal venue to host the event due to its interactive, educational ethos. The Museum of Liverpool (2012) displays the growth and decline of Liverpool and captures the essence of the lives of the people who have lived in the city. It also gives people the opportunity to voice themselves by offering educational events that appeals to different generations. 'The Museum of Liverpool is a living biography of the city that is honest, created people who love living here, many who were born here, and which will change as the city continues to change' (Museum of Liverpool, 2012, p.7). Sharing social history is essential to tracking and understanding change over time. The researcher contends that academic research can be both informative within an academic institution and appreciated by the wider public. Jackson (2011, p.13) called this approach 'Public verification: Presenting research to the public so that it can be observed, replicated, criticized and tested'. Jackson explained this in relation to scientific research, but the idea can also be applied to the dissemination of oral history in a public forum. The event enabled the findings to be discussed by members of the public, some of whom also experienced their childhood in post-war Merseyside. This then led to debates and discussions, bringing the exhibition to life.

The exhibition

There is limited literature about structuring a museum exhibition based on oral testimonies. However, Green (1997) explored the importance of returning history to the community in a museum setting in New Zealand. In a similar fashion to this research, Green had provided participants with a list of themes to guide interviews and felt that it was essential that the participants share information they regarded as important. Following Green's practice, themed extracts were used to shape the

content of the exhibition, based on the themes that emerged from the findings and topics that seemed to be particularly poignant to the participants.

Display boards

The exhibition had a variety of display boards that presented the themes of the research, including numerous interview extracts printed in speech bubbles. The participants had shared many childhood photographs and signed the copyright to the researcher,[32] so the extracts were illustrated with images in the hope of adding a personal dimension to the interview extracts while at the same time triggering the memories of attendees at the event. To set the scene, additional historical information, literature, images and poetry were also displayed. Background information about the war itself and insight into community life during the 1940s/1950s provided some context as the visitors walked through the exhibition. One display stand described the mass devastation of the May Blitz on Liverpool and Merseyside. The display stands were set out chronologically, creating a journey through the years.

Other display boards covered themes including the end of the war years, Churchill and Eisenhower, the home guard, rationing, family life, school days, play, days out, Christmas and the National Health Service. The display boards were staggered in different areas of the room so the public could walk around the displays at leisure, avoiding crowding.

There was a display board that described the methodology of the research and a double display board with a poster that detailed the research process and a large print of the memory tree model that was used in the second phase of the interviews. Many of the visitors were very interested in the process and discussed it with the researcher, asking many questions about how to conduct research with oral testimonies. Surrounding the posters were a variety of reflective comments from the second phase of interviews and some information about using a heuristic approach to reminiscence research.
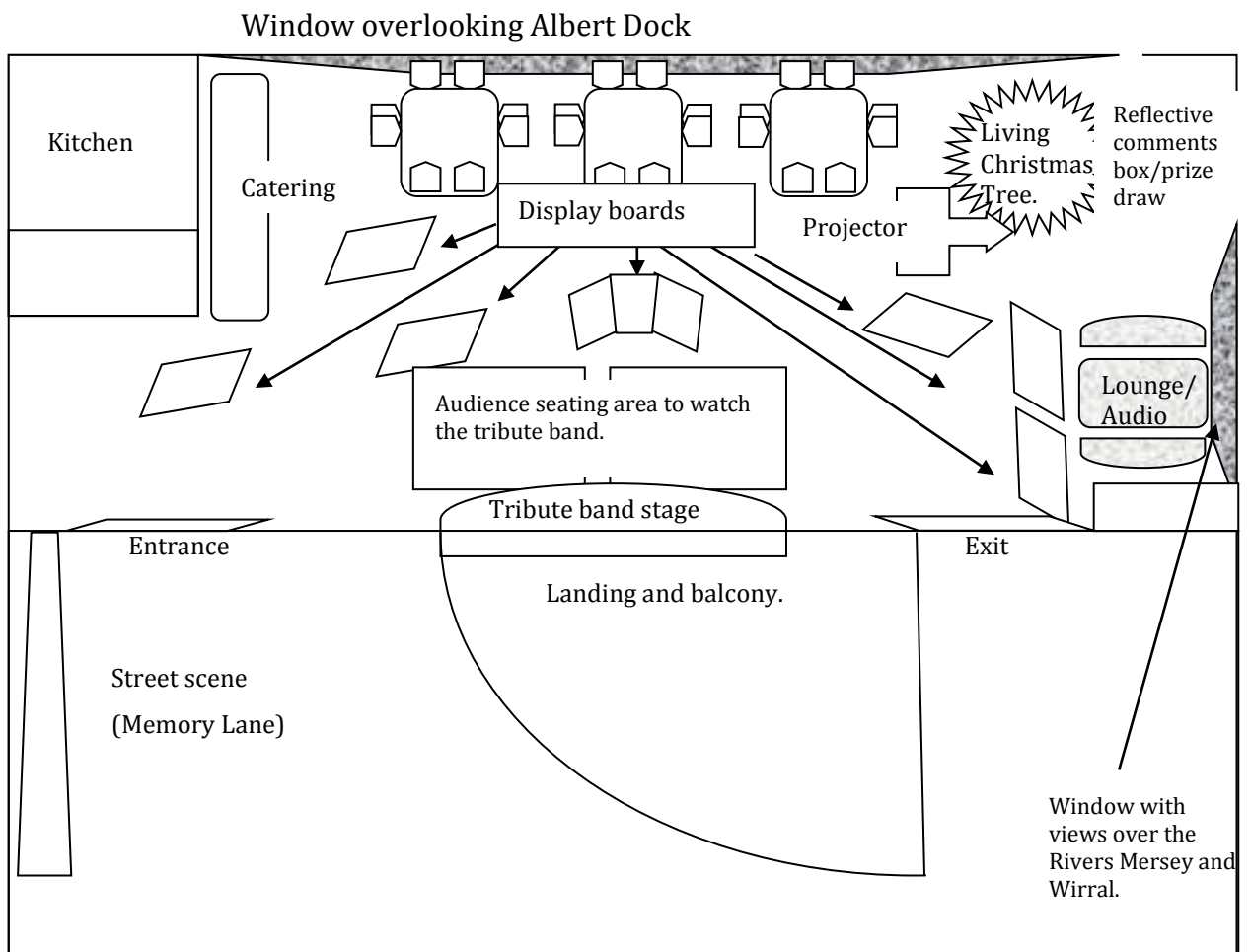
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[32] When the participants were contacted about the event they were also asked for verbal permission to use their photographs and extracts as part of the event.

One of the display boards was interactive. The title 'Please share your memories of visiting Father Christmas' invited people to share memories by writing them on Post-It notes and sticking them to the board. This allowed others to read and share memories together. Many people laughed and talked to others they had just met, sharing their childhood memories across different generations and cultures. Simon (2010) discussed the importance of creating an interactive and participatory experience in museums and the role of doing so in reconnecting the public to culture and history. People enjoy the experience of being involved, rather than merely observing. Within society expectations have changed, as Simon (2010, p.ii) highlighted: 'community engagement is especially relevant in a world of increasing participatory opportunities on the social Web'. Simon centred his approach to exhibitions on three themes so that it was audience-centred, allowing visitors to construct their own meaning and visitors' voices to shape the meaning of the exhibition. In the words of McKenna-Cress and Kamien (2013, p.1), 'it is no longer "enough" to simply keep and display things for a casual observer'.

Participatory techniques in museums focus on facilitating a unique experience for each individual, providing a forum for sharing thoughts, memories and ideas and, in turn, meeting the individual expectations of each person in attendance. Ultimately, the researcher aimed to create a platform for the public to express themselves and share their own childhood memories and also for other academics to network and share research ideas. Not every visitor wanted to interact; participation was not compulsory and the event created an atmosphere in which people could comfortably and privately reflect on their own if they chose to do so.

Window overlooking Albert Dock

Kitchen

Catering

Display boards

Projector

Living Christmas Tree.

Reflective comments box/prize draw

Lounge/ Audio

Audience seating area to watch the tribute band.

Tribute band stage

Entrance

Exit

Landing and balcony.

Street scene

(Memory Lane)

Window with views over the Rivers Mersey and Wirral.

Figure 7: Education Suite 3 Room Layout.

Living memory tree

The living memory tree was an idea created early in the planning stages of the event. The memory tree was both an important tool in the research and a symbolic representation of capturing and preserving childhood memories. The attendees made Christmas decorations, wrote their childhood memories on them and hung them on the tree branches. Due to the event being held in December, Christmas was used as a theme for the event; this proved to be a particularly nostalgic time for reminiscence, and Christmas had featured in many of the participants' childhood memories. A living Christmas tree was used to assemble the memories. The tree was donated by a Merseyside based horticultural company on the understanding that the tree would be treated with care and replanted as soon as

possible after the event. The tree was replanted in the grounds of Liverpool John Moores University and had an electric point for lights. The tree will remain there to grow and flourish over the years as a reminder of the success of the event.

Craft area

The craft area was supervised by the Museum Education Team. Together with the researcher, they came up with the concept of making a Christmas decoration on which to write childhood memories and to put onto the living memory tree. The tree collected and displayed the memories of the people of Merseyside and beyond. There was also the option of making memory chains, which involved writing or drawing memories onto strips of paper and then joining them together. This activity could be completed alone or shared by linking one's memories to another family member's chain or to that of someone they had met for the first time at the event; this activity prompted many conversations and it was fascinating to watch strangers sharing their personal childhood memories with each other. There were 200 decorations made over the 2-day event, and many more memories shared verbally by people as young as 4 and as old as 90.

Figure 8: 'Making memory decorations to hang on the living tree.'

People from different generations and cultures sit together to share their childhood memories.

Prize Draw

In order to thank those who took part in the memory sharing craft, people were given a free raffle ticket for a prize draw. The prize was a replica of a traditional 1950s brown bear, one of which was given away on each day of the event. A ticket was drawn by a member of the tribute band from the tickets that accumulated on each day.

Catering

To mirror best practice, in line with Gibson's advice, tea and biscuits were provided at the opening of the event, creating a welcoming environment in which people felt comfortable and relaxed before they reminisced and shared their memories (Gibson, 2011). The event was an opportunity to gather and engage in memory sharing, although many individuals also used the time to reflect alone.

Audio clips

The Education Suite had a comfortable seating area with views overlooking the River Mersey and Wirral. A sound system was set up in this area with headphones, and a selection of audio extracts from the research were played on loop. This gave people the opportunity to listen to extracts from the interviews and gave insight into the vocal tone and emotional expression of the memories. Often, the meaning of testimonies can be lost in the transcription; hearing the audio version can therefore bring new meaning to the memories shared (Green, 1997).

Music: Triggering reminiscence

A particularly fascinating memory was shared by one of the participants, Mr M, who described his introduction to music and in particular to rock and roll. Some of the other participants (n=3) also spoke of listening to music and of the various sounds that they remembered vividly. Thus, music and sound were essential elements in bringing all dimensions of the event together whilst also providing a backdrop and setting the scene for reminiscence. Schweitzer (2007) maintained that music is a stimulant for reminiscence. Music can transport individuals back in time, to a particular era or moment. Music can often be used therapeutically (Grocke and Wigram, 2007). Often songs can represent a life journey and hold great significance, reminding people of key events or periods in their lives like childhood, adolescence, courtship, marriage and starting a family. Such relevance can link to both celebratory times and grievance; song lyrics can also be very poignant (Grocke and Wigram, 2007).

In order to find a suitable band or musician the researcher approached local colleges, universities and music groups, advertised on a music website and had her contact details forwarded via email to a variety of instrumentalists, ranging from string quartet to jazz and rock bands. Eventually, the lead singer of a band called Shooter, who played 1950s and 1960s rock and roll music, got in touch. The band's expertise was perfectly suited both to the era of the research and to the atmosphere the researcher hoped to produce. After holding discussions with the band, they confirmed that they would like to be involved over the two day period. They explained that the event was different to anything else they had done in their

musical careers. The lead vocalist stated that 'The people of Merseyside have given us so much over the years; we are delighted to give something back to the people of Merseyside'. Shooter played over the two day event, leaving regular intervals to give people quiet time in which to share memories. The music enticed people from other areas of the museum into the Education Suite and created a vibrant atmosphere.

Triggering emotion

Many people found that the event triggered emotions. The researcher witnessed people crying as they read some of the display boards. Within minutes, after moving from one board to the next, the same individuals were laughing at the humorous extracts displayed. Such emotion also triggered conversations between strangers and people from a variety of generations and cultures. According to Gibson (2011, p.53), 'Reminiscence, once begun, develops a dynamic of its own. If a show, book, exhibition or other product is produced, it in turn will stimulate further reminiscence by the audience, reader or viewer'.

Reflective comments ballot box

Attendees were given the opportunity to share memories and reminiscence; they were also encouraged to share their thoughts and comments about the event. A ballot box was placed next to the memory tree; many comments were left and a sample is presented below.

> A lovely exhibition, band really good, it would have been lovely to keep exhibition for longer for more people to see.

> Very good to see things like this in a museum.

> Really enjoyed the exhibition. Thanks to all involved. Especially to the people who shared their memories. Really helps keep history alive. Brought back fond memories of people we have loved.

Reminiscing made me feel happy, sad, emotional, all at the same time. What a wonderful experience to share, especially with my husband, remembering games we played. All those memories and experiences make you what you are today.

My mum and I enjoyed looking back in time. Mum was a teenager during the 50s and seeing some of the old photos made her smile, which made me smile, as she has suffered a stroke.

The benefits of presenting research results in a public forum

The research was a people-orientated study that looked at the childhood experiences of the people of Merseyside. It has contributed to social history by collecting, preserving and presenting post-war childhoods as experienced by the people who lived them. This not only advanced knowledge but also gave insight into social history.

The event was educational: it enticed school pupils into the education suite and engaged them in memory sharing with older generations, proving that reminiscence can be beneficial for people of all ages, generating interest, discussion and debate. Non-British visitors also attended the event; they discussed their childhoods from around the world and also took photographs of the displays and commented on how 'good' it was for Liverpool. Other researchers and historians asked the researcher's advice on producing displays for research.

Constructing the exhibition was a learning curve for the researcher, who had not had any prior experience in this area. Initially, the researcher felt fear and apprehension and realised that innovation would be the expectation, not necessarily from the academic institution or even from the museum team, but from the public and also from herself. She looked to McKenna-Cress and Kamien's book *Creating Exhibitions* for advice and guidance. As with research, often the focus lies with the end product, when in fact the creation of an exhibition is a collaborative process made up of many steps and challenges, including finding

funding, meeting high expectations and being creative (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013).

The researcher created a model that included all of the areas that needed to be considered when putting together an exhibition using human responses; this model could be used by future researchers to present their findings in a public forum.
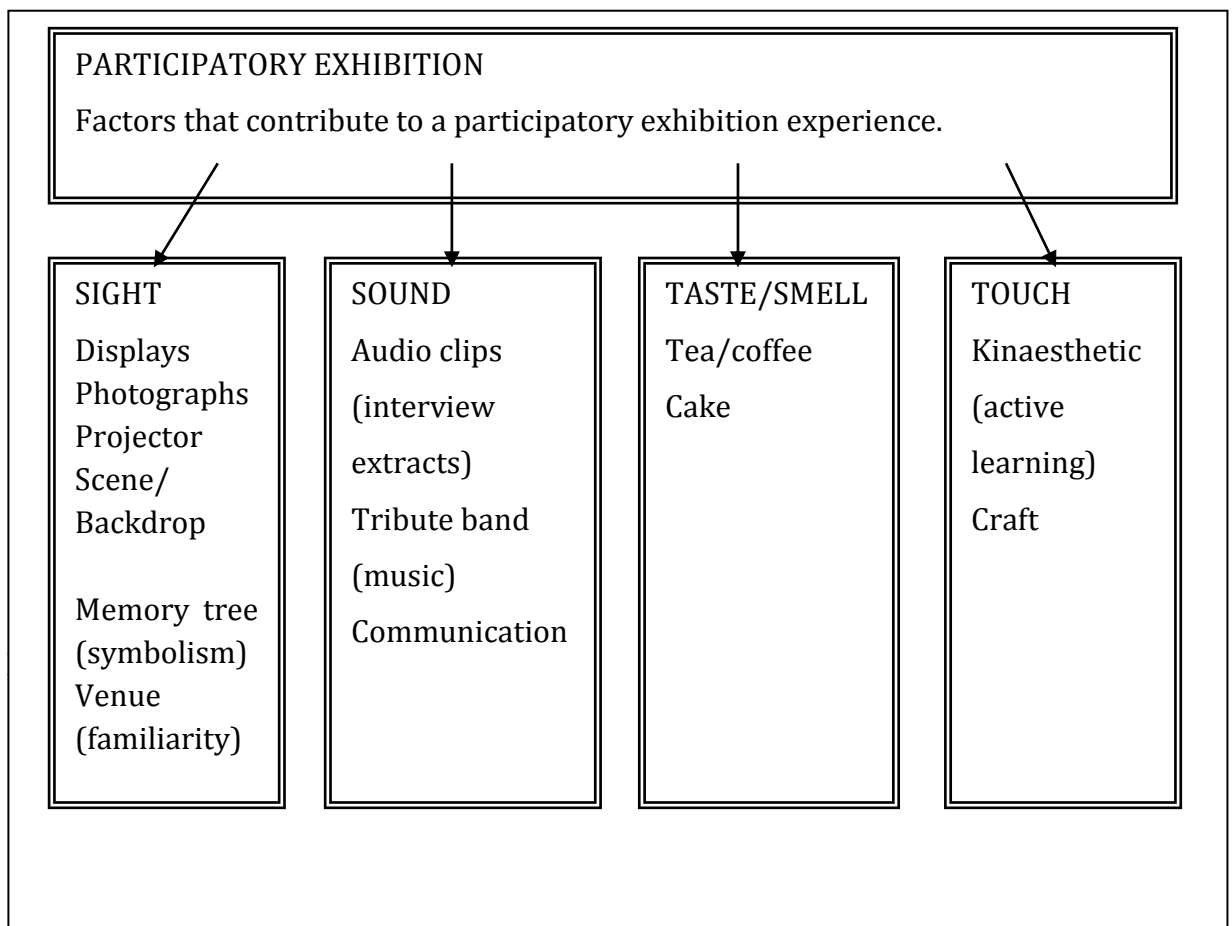

Figure 9: Participatory Exhibition Experience

What has resulted from this event?

Reunion

Three individuals were in attendance on separate days of the event, a married couple aged 82 and 87 and a widowed gentleman aged 85. Through having conversations with each of them about their youth, certain similarities and names

emerged. After further discussions, it became apparent that they had known each other in their youth. After the event the researcher assisted in reuniting the friends after 65 years apart. The widowed gentleman expressed his particular appreciation for this, explaining that he had recently lost his wife to Alzheimer's disease; he said that being in contact with the friends would allow him to reminisce about his youth and that there was no one else with whom he could do that.

Media interest and coverage

The event generated significant media interest and coverage including from Liverpool 360, the Liverpool *Echo*, Live BBC Radio Merseyside, City Talk, Bay TV and BBC North West Tonight. There were radio interviews with the researcher, one of the research participants and the Senior Education Manager of the Museum of Liverpool. BBC television showed interviews with the researcher and two research participants as well as footage of the band, members of the public dancing and the memory tree. The television report was aired along with clips from British Pathé and post-war photographs that were featured at the event. Special or specific exhibitions attract media interest; they also attract people to travel further afield in order to see them (Macdonald, 2011), usually because of their short term of residence.

Presenting research

Presenting research is a key skill and a requirement of the PhD research process. The research was disseminated in numerous settings including conferences, seminars and poster presentation events. After the museum event, the researcher presented at the quarterly faculty seminar and spoke about the importance of research both within the academy and for wider public engagement. If left to do so, research can remain on a shelf, gathering dust, and only occasionally be used as a point of reference for academic purposes; this research has been appreciated by the public, who were given the opportunity to access it by the museum event, which enabled the researcher to exhibit her work to university dignitaries, colleagues, friends, family and the wider public. It also afforded the opportunity to

recreate an animated version of the PhD research that was both interactive and visually stimulating.

The PhD combined a balance of writing, images and sounds, and this could be turned into interactive displays with broad appeal. According to the comments shared on the day, both verbally and in writing, the extracts and anecdotes from real life experiences had the most impact, closely followed by the music of the tribute band.

The researcher planned, designed and delivered the event with a beginning, middle and end format. It started with an introduction, moved onto the main content and ended with a conclusion. The introduction consisted of a walk down 'memory lane' using a printed terraced house street scene as a backdrop to the entrance walk way, with pop-up displays and banners introducing the event. Additionally, on the opening day of the event, the researcher gave a speech, as did the Vice Chancellor (LJMU), Faculty Director (LJMU) and Museum Curator.

The main content included the display boards, living memory tree, Christmas decoration making (craft), memory sharing, audio area, music and interaction with colleagues and wider public. The concluding element of the event was the opportunity for attendees to share their thoughts, opinions and reflective comments in the designated ballot box before leaving the event. Although the event presentation came to a conclusion, the interest in the research and the sharing of more unique memories continued long after the event was over via email, social networking websites and conversations.

The participants were invited to the event to celebrate the reminiscences they had shared. Some of the participants who experienced their childhood in post-war Merseyside experienced or witnessed times of hardship or poverty, and coming together to talk about this at the museum event enabled them to share some common ground. As discussed in Chapter Seven, reminiscing about such experiences can unite people. In turn, it can help to support people when they are confronted with memories of traumatic times. Confronting such memories in a

group environment can promote self-worth and help people to make sense of their lives. Integrative reminiscence is a psychological intervention used with older adults. It demonstrates and promotes positivity, life satisfaction, self-esteem and psychological well-being (Moral et al., 2014).

Intergenerational memory sharing

Many people found that the event generated discussion with different generations or within their own families. One member of the public left the following comment about attending the event with her son: 'A great event to attend with my son. I had the opportunity to share my memories with him and with a friend from university days. I feel that it brought my son and I closer together, especially the opportunity to create our decorations together'. Gibson (2011) stated that memory sharing between mothers and their children can support identity formation, encouraging them to organise their memories and appreciate the emotions triggered. Gibson (2011, p.173) stated that this ensures that the child is '...better equipped to regulate their future emotions rather than being overwhelmed by them, such reminiscing provides the basis of longer-term autobiographical memory, the development of a dynamic yet enduring a stable sense of self and for sustaining well-being'.

Another member of the public commented that 'It was really enjoyable writing my memory decoration and seeing all those people, young and old, smiling as they wrote theirs and decorating your living memory tree with memories. Lovely!' As discussed earlier, taking part in reminiscence has many benefits for those involved. The event gave people the opportunity to compare their experiences with others and brought together a social group that would not have otherwise met. Events such as this create the opportunity for many levels of social and generational interaction (Clark, 2010).

Gibson's (2011) book *Reminiscence and Life Story Work* is care-orientated and gives a practical and supportive guide to practitioners. It promotes a person-centred approach to reminiscence and highlights its success as a therapeutic tool. Gallagher and Carey (2012, pp.576-577) referred to reminiscence as a 'therapeutic

intervention' which initiates the 'discovery of the value of intergenerational interaction and relationships'.

Intergenerational memory sharing highlighted the importance of family reminiscence. The event set the scene for reminiscence and encouraged interaction between families and different generations as they made their memory tree decorations. Gibson (2011, p.173) noted that 'Planned intergenerational projects utilising older people as living resources, models and mentors have much to offer both young and old, individuals, families, neighbourhoods and society'. Older people should not feel like they are burdening others with their memories. Reminiscence is widely used in many ethnic minority groups to teach younger generations about their cultural traditions, values and beliefs, but this function has been lost somewhat in British culture (Taylor, 2009). Engaging in reminiscence with elders can help to encourage value and respect. Furthermore, younger generations can teach older generations about the social values of contemporary society. All generations can promote life goals, create aspirations and help to overcome prejudice and discrimination. There is always a risk when encouraging intergenerational memory sharing of lack of interest, or increased alienation between generations and even rejection. However, this was not the case at the event because the researcher had made efforts to ensure that the event appealed to children and young adults by valuing their memories and recollections at the same time as valuing those of the older generation.

Encouraging intergenerational activities such as memory sharing can help to use community space productively. People are now living for longer, so there is an increased number of elderly people and therefore an increased volume of social heritage that can be captured and preserved using reminiscence. In addition, RW is a valuable therapeutic tool for improving mental health and well-being (Zipsane, 2011). The Nordic Centre of Heritage Learning in Ostersund, Sweden, created the 'Senior Citizens Heritage Learning Initiative', which uses archives, museums, genealogy, reminiscence, oral history, local history, art and research to 'persuade policymakers to stimulate heritage organizations to make a difference in life quality development of senior citizens' (Zipsane, 2011, p.91). This is in-keeping

with Paul Thompson's ideal of 'People's History' (Thompson, 2000) and gives voice to ordinary people whilst stimulating mental exercise and positive well-being (Schweitzer, 1993; 1995).

The museum as a learning environment

Museums are collaborative learning environments that fuel the imagination, providing emotional stimulation and offer numerous learning opportunities, in turn triggering enthusiasm (Schweitzer, 1995). Liverpool Museums are already involved in a project called 'House of Memories' which specifically works with people who have dementia. They hold regular reminiscence workshops, using resources such as objects and photographs as stimuli to generate memory recall. Using museums as an educational space not only promotes inclusive learning but also 'uses the past as an aid to understanding and communicating in the present' (Housden, 2007, p.12). Such work connects communities, people, schools and even families; this was evident in the exhibition, which brought together attendees to celebrate the memories of the research participants and share their own memories of childhood. Reminiscence adds to family history and in turn adds to identity and a sense of self. The preservation of archives helps to illustrate change over time and initiate a sense of belonging, and can give a sense of how a community has developed over time (Housden, 2007). This research has captured memories and preserved unique experiences of childhood, thereby providing unique experiences and different insight into the participants' lives.

Conclusion

The researcher developed project management skills by learning to account for resources, keep records, secure sponsorship and develop partnerships for learning and multi-disciplinary and interagency working. Collaboration between the university and the museum was important because it enabled the researcher to share her research with the public in an organised and professional way. The Museum of Liverpool Life demonstrated a willingness to support an academic in exhibiting her work and stated that it would do so again in the future.

The dissemination of research in a public forum was extremely successful, not only because it shared information with the public but also because it celebrated the lives, memories and experiences of the past. The interactive event brought memories to life using audio, photographic and musical components to fully represent a diverse range of oral testimonies. It highlighted the value and importance of the personal, private and unique childhood memories that the participants were kind enough to share, not only with the researcher, but with thousands of others through the museum and local media. Visitors were also encouraged to reflect on their own childhood memories. Overall, the exhibition was a vibrant forum that allowed the attendees to converse about and reflect on their lives and experiences and the function of reminiscence in their everyday lives.

The OH interviews identified major shared events on Merseyside in the years following WWII. The reflective feedback of the RW interviews also gave insight into the lifestyle children led during that era. This was particularly significant on Merseyside, where there was a strong community identity, community ties and shared deprivation and hardship.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

Overview

This final chapter draws on the key findings of this research to evaluate how they have contributed to the body of knowledge in the fields of OH and RW. The key findings include: the ways in which childhood memories and reminiscence can impact on identity; how geographic location and social circumstances can contribute to childhood experiences; the role of nostalgia in reminiscence; and the importance of memory sharing in the community for bridging gaps between cultures and generations.

This chapter explores the context in which the study was based and the importance of ethical planning when conducting research that accesses personal memories. It then discusses how a multi-method approach has shaped the research, and how this study can act as a guideline for future research of the same nature. The importance of the researcher's role in this process is also highlighted. Finally, the researcher considers the limitations of the study by reflecting on the methodological approach and how, in hindsight, the study might have been improved. The research aims including implications for best practice, are revisited, and recommendations for future research are made.

Triggers, modes and moderators

The study itself acted as the trigger for the participants' reminiscence by initiating the circumstances in which the individuals were asked to remember experiences from their childhood. In the second phase of interviews, the participants were also triggered by a series of questions that aimed to pinpoint additional reflective thoughts and feelings about engaging in the reminiscence process. In this instance, the mode of reminiscence was public, based on the idea that the participants were sharing their memories with the researcher. The moderators were based on age range, gender (there was coincidentally an equal gender split) and nationality (all the participants were British and experienced their childhood on Merseyside).

The context of remembering

It is important to acknowledge the context in which the research has been conducted in order to fully comprehend the factors that may have influenced the findings. This includes the reflexivity of the research, the environment in which the participants were interviewed and the impact of the researcher on the research.

The researcher initially aimed only to explore the social conditions of childhood on post-war Merseyside, but the study evolved to consider the impact of the reminiscence process on the participants as well by creating and implementing a reflective tool. In order to achieve this, the researcher broadened her methodological research boundaries and adopted a multi-method approach that used both OH and RW to gain a better insight into the socio-historical and psychological experience of the participants. The reflective element of this study would have been excluded by taking only an OH approach. The researcher contends that being restricted by research boundaries set by other academics can only hinder progression in future research and limit access to valuable findings.

The researcher has maintained a balance by capturing both the participants' social experiences of the past and their reflective contributions in the present; she achieved this by providing a safe place in which participants could comfortably reminisce. The fact that the participants shared their candid and emotional testimonies and stated their profound enjoyment from taking part in the study evidences the success of its methods.

Rapport building played a significant role in this process. The researcher contends that a conversational approach to engaging participants before, during and after the interviews was most effective in ensuring that ease of access to personal memories was achieved. This is because the participants felt comfortable and had developed trust in the researcher. Having an awareness of rapport building in both OH and RW ensured best practice was followed from the outset, and the Oral History Society protocol on privacy and confidentiality was adopted to facilitate this aim.

Providing reassurance was also beneficial, particularly when participants chose to share sensitive memories such as Mrs E's car accident and subsequent experience of cruelty in hospital; Mr R's experience of being bullied; Mr H's experience of hardship; and Mrs J's experience of punishment. It was also evident when Mrs W asked for a particular piece of information to be withdrawn from the transcript of her interview out of respect for her father.

Sharing sensitive memories demonstrated the participants' openness with the researcher and established that rapport building and trust had been accomplished successfully. Like other oral historians and reminiscence workers, the researcher valued the participants' experience of taking part in the research. The majority of the participants (n=9) spoke of the therapeutic qualities of reminiscing, both in relation to positive memories and the emotional release of recalling negative memories. All of the participants were thankful for being given the opportunity to take part in the research. This heuristic approach to the research, by basing knowledge on lived experience and using lived experience to learn, was advantageous for both the participants and the researcher.

Context: Uncovering sensitive memories

This study has accessed very personal, sometimes sensitive memories. Sharing such memories with a stranger is not natural or easy, so the chosen approach taken to OH and RW research is important. Everyone has some memories that they regard as happy and some that are not so happy, and this was true of the stories told by the participants in this study. They shared diverse memories, giving insight into joyous, humorous and also unfortunate experiences during childhood in the post-war years, helping to describe the lived experience of the years immediately after WW2 in Merseyside. In some cases, despite experiencing the depths of poverty, all of the participants described a happy childhood or a free childhood and even responded humorously or with laughter to some of the trials and tribulations they faced growing up. During these times, 'Scouse humour' was developed as a coping strategy, a way of keeping the spirits of its people up and of coping with the negativity faced in everyday life. Lees (2011) referred to this sense

of humour as 'Scouse banter'. Liverpudlians developed an attitude that suited the difficult times (National Museums Liverpool, 2012).

Not only does sharing sensitive memories inform us of unique, poignant lived experience, but it also portrays the reflective journey, personality and emotion that the memory triggers. This was highlighted by the important contribution of the RW approach to this research.

Context: Giving people a voice

Two of the main aims of this research were to give a voice to ordinary people with which to express ordinary lived experiences and to give these voices the value, respect and credibility they deserve. The findings have given insight into the social conditions of childhood, while the creation of the MTM ensured that the reflective element of the reminiscence process was represented and supported. This support was important to many of the participants, some of whom had not shared such memories before; others, such as Dr E, said that their families would not listen to their recollections: 'I'm not allowed very often to reminisce by my family 'cause they think I'm getting maudlin... It is very rare that we older people are allowed to sit in front of an open microphone and just talk about our past without getting too bored'. These feelings are concerning, and represent modern families' changed priorities. As a whole, the participants spoke of the community spirit, united society and close family life of the past, which they compared to a rather distant, lonely, undervalued existence in present society. For example, Mrs J commented that '...a lot of old people are left with no one to look after them' and that '...I think people fly away too soon' (Mrs J). These responses reflect a sad predicament and indicate the poor state of intergenerational communication in society. If we are to overcome this, we need to give older generations a voice and credibility by celebrating our social heritage and engaging communities in this process. We also need to encourage researchers to push the boundaries of out-dated methodological approaches so that they can work to bridge gaps and break down barriers and perhaps in doing so, prevent discrimination, juvenile crime and antisocial behaviour. There is a lot to be learned by listening to our elders. Reminiscence is not just concerned with recalling memories of the past, but also

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with enabling people to teach, transmit and preserve knowledge and values. Gibson (2011, p.43) stated that: 'Those who have lived history are its best teachers'.

Practice outcomes: Positive

Overall, the participants found that taking part in the research was a positive experience; they recalled positive experiences from childhood and some memories that they referred to as being nostalgic, and they yearned to revisit such times.

Psychosocial health and emotional regulation

The participants found that reminiscing was therapeutic and made them feel good. Reminiscing can empower individuals and increase their feeling of self-worth (Webster et al., 2010). The participants recalled certain memories linked to the formation of their identities and they realised that certain experiences during childhood had impacted on their adult selves. All of the participants found that the conversational approach and rapport they developed with the researcher were important parts of the experience. However, this is common when sharing personal thoughts. From a counselling perspective, Nathan and Hill (2006) explained that it is important to establish a rapport with the client because doing so encourages them to open up and talk freely. This can also be achieved by meeting the individual prior to the interview and using a conversational approach (Mauther et al., 2002). An empathetic and friendly approach entices an open, frank response from the participant (Clark, 2010). It is also important to note than older people often appreciate the opportunity to share their knowledge and in turn reap the psychological benefits of taking part in reminiscence (Clark, 2010). Although many of the participants (n=6) were discouraged from showing their emotions during their childhoods, the participants felt comfortable expressing emotion with the researcher. Mr R explained: 'Today people are more open and share their feelings, are more emotional and that's a really good thing but I think in our childhood it didn't happen the same and perhaps that's something we missed'.

Practice outcomes: Negative

All of the participants shared negative memories at some point during the interview, but they explained that sharing such memories felt like a release; indeed, some of them had never shared such memories with anyone before. As a result of sharing their memories, some of the participants showed emotion, either by pausing or crying. At this point the researcher suggested that they stop the interview, but each participant wanted to continue. Nostalgia also influenced the reminiscence process: although some participants believed that they recalled some memories through rose-tinted glasses (Mrs J), they also felt some regret that they were unable to relive the past, which triggered more emotion. No issues relating to rumination or anxiety were found.

Unresolved conflicts

Mrs J and Mr, T shared memories of events they had wanted to forget that they thought they had 'buried' a long time ago. However, interestingly, they felt better having revisited such memories. Reminiscence can help individuals to come to terms with certain issues from the past. Again, this process acts in a therapeutic capacity, enabling individuals to come to terms with personal crises. Unresolved conflict can lead to a failure to understand one's identity fully or to create meaning from situations in life (Webster and Haight, 2013). Many of the participants (n=8) spoke of their childhood experiences "making them who they are today"; some also made links between their childhood experiences and their adult behaviour.

Research outcomes

Using OH and RW approaches to qualitative research

The methodology of this research was qualitative, using both OH and RW approaches to collect and analyse the findings. These approaches have different values, but they also overlap: OH is concerned with social historical experiences rather than factual evidence, whereas RW focuses on the reflectivity of that experience and on the reminiscence process itself. When used together, these approaches provided a fuller picture and enabled the participants to share their voice and reflective thoughts truly. This became particularly apparent through the

participants' responses: they themselves recognised the impact reminiscence was having on them and saw how it could benefit others. Dr E commented:

> I think that it is an experience that a lot of people of my age should have. I think it should ideally be provided on the National Health Service or as a Social Service because I think it is actually quite therapeutic for people to think about their past. There are some things that they don't want to... talk about or things that they may have suppressed for years but it is often good to try and look back and say oh why are we the people that we are? And I think this has been a very important benefit from undertaking this exercise.

Reminiscence can help people in their everyday lives, through problem solving, as a coping strategy, for dealing with anxiety or depression and also to prepare for future life events. It can enable people to understand where they have come from, who they are and what they anticipate happening in their futures. Reminiscence can encourage relationship building, relationship maintenance, networking, friendships, support and shared emotion. Identity is formed and maintained from memories and our reminiscence of those memories; it provides us with a comprehension of self, our unique identity, our self-worth, self-esteem and well-being; as we become older, we become more aware of times in our life that have been poignant or times when there were unresolved matters. Erikson (1982) suggested that people go through stages throughout their lifespan, facing changes and challenges and learning to cope with life experiences, both good and bad. He believed that many people try to resolve issues in their later life and referred to the concept as 'death preparation'.

Using OH and RW has allowed the researcher to explore this broad array of concepts in the findings. Researchers who choose to use multiple methods may lean towards one more than the other. In this case, the researcher embarked on the study as an oral historian, looking to explore the social conditions of childhood in a particular era and geographic location. However, as the research progressed the researcher began to explore the reflective elements of the findings, and thus adopted many principles and values of reminiscence work. According to Gibson

(2011, p.45), 'Reminiscence undertaken within a community-development framework is more often described as oral history but its objectives and many of the methods used closely resemble reminiscence work'. Researchers who work with reminiscences need to understand that many factors influence the sharing of memories. OH alone would have restricted the researcher's access to the reflective findings, thus excluding a large portion of the participants' responses.

Conducting two phases of data collection and analysis

Conducting two phases of data collection and analysis has enabled ideas and material from both disciplines to be included without excluding important elements from the study. For example, social scientists cannot solely focus on contemporary social structure without first considering historical influences (McDowell, 2002). Although the true historical facts cannot be extracted from such data, the researcher focused on the effective portrayal of how the period was experienced by the people who lived through it. McDowell (2002, p.33) argued that 'A social historian will focus on different themes and arguments'. Two analytical approaches can be utilised within this research format: a cyclical view, which relates to the cycle of change and the connection of social events from past to present day, and a sequential view, which focuses on the sequence of events in a linear progression (McDowell, 2002). Many historians opt for a chronological approach to research; those who take a social history approach prefer to analyse using a thematic framework (Bernard, 2006). A heuristic approach was most beneficial to this study due to its interdisciplinary nature. The researcher developed an MTM tool to allow the participants to organise their memories in whichever format they preferred, either cyclical or sequential. This also allowed the participants to consider the connections between past and present experiences in a more structured format.

The limitation of a heuristic approach to data analysis is its inability to pinpoint one specific area of research. The study explored a wide range of information and in return collected broad and detailed findings. In this instance, the researcher deemed this approach to be most appropriate because it gave the participants the opportunity to share the information freely, voluntarily and in as much detail as

they wanted. Admittedly, this approach was time consuming, particularly during the transcription and analysis stages of the research (Gillham, 2000). However, the approach afforded gradual development, enabling the research to change and be shaped along the way, and thus allowing the research to flourish rather than be constrained by research boundaries.

Key findings

The participants began their interviews by depicting children as 'all being in the same boat' growing up on Merseyside, but it was evident from the findings that this was not the case. The participants' childhoods were all very different depending on gender, religion, social class and the area of Merseyside in which they grew up.

Community life was a central theme that emerged from the interviews. Merseyside was made up of many communities, including inner city, urban, rural and dockland communities. Community life was affected when the government introduced the re-housing schemes after the war. The intention was that this would allow everyone to have a better future, but poverty was still widespread and the ensuing fragmentation of communities took away a valuable support network that had been a lifeline for many families, who were left struggling to cope. Many people carried on and used humour as a coping strategy in hard times.

Although every childhood experience was unique, the memories provided insight into childhood experienced on post-war Merseyside. There were many shared values that emerged from the interviews, and many of the participants agreed that such values had shaped their identity. They had to abide by strict rules and at times received punishment, often physical punishment, if they did not. The working classes were not encouraged to strive beyond their means and were expected to find jobs suited to their social class.

In pursuit of a better life after the war, many women chose to continue working. According to the findings, the participants' mothers took on a dual role of domesticity and paid employment. One result of the mothers working was the

"latchkey child", the child who was responsible for looking after him- or herself after school. The findings indicate that popular theories at the time mirrored the ideals of the post-war government's strategy for rekindling the nuclear family and re-domesticating women. Regardless, many women continued to juggle domestic life and paid employment, which limited the time they could spend with their children. The societal consensus at the time was that this led to juvenile delinquency and risky behaviour, two things that were also evident from the findings.

However, there was also evidence of double standards in the participants' reminiscences. Many of them recalled engaging in delinquent behaviour and described widespread illegal gambling. Although gambling was illegal it was deemed acceptable in society (particularly among working classes). At this time, there was also a rise in problem families (Rose, 2003) for which mothers, particularly working class mothers, were thought to be responsible. This led to some mothers being stigmatised (Browne, 2011).

The findings gave us some insight into the social conditions of childhood on post-war Merseyside from the unique perspectives of those who experienced it. The participants chose the memories they wished to share and constructed those memories from their own adult perceptions of their childhood experiences. The researcher disseminated the memories via three memoirs that capture and compare the participants' childhood experiences. There was a wealth of information shared during the interviews, of which only a portion has been disseminated in this thesis.

Disseminating the findings academically and in a public forum

The researcher disseminated the findings in three different ways. Firstly, some of the findings have been presented in the discussion chapters of this thesis. Presenting people's voices in written format, without intonation or expression is challenging; the researcher met this challenge by writing a series of three memoirs, which covered different themes that are essential to post-war

Merseyside childhoods. Secondly, the research has been presented to an international audience through a workshop and oral presentation at the International Multidisciplinary Conference in Malta in 2013, and subsequently the researcher published an article in the conference's peer-reviewed journal (see appendix F). Thirdly, because the study was specific to Merseyside's social heritage and community life, it would be apt to also present the findings to the public. This presentation was both a celebration and an informative way of bringing the information back to the people of Merseyside. The researcher's passion and enthusiasm for the project engaged the Museum of Liverpool Life (MLL) in collaboration with LJMU, allowing her to organise an interactive event. She went on to secure funding and sponsorships from local companies in the Merseyside area. The event possessed the emotive, expressive elements of the findings, bringing the participants' voices to life through pictorial, audio and creative portrayals. This interaction with the community, including school children, highlighted the need for events and workshops that bring the community together to celebrate social history, while at the same time preserving valuable archives for future generations.

The researcher contends that sharing research within the community is necessary to broaden knowledge and awareness of our social history, our identity, worth and culture, and for changing how we value these things. She created a model for participatory exhibitions to help to guide other academics in putting together an exhibition using human responses.

The role of the researcher

> 'Like the layers of an onion, writers peel back the inherent difficulties of such research when trying to situate themselves as useful and unoppressive, only to find more to question underneath' (Selby, 2004, p.144).

In OH research in particular the power dynamic between the researcher and the participants can fluctuate (Yow, 1994). The researcher reflects a dominant

scholarly persona, which can cause the participant to retreat and be reluctant to share information with any enthusiasm (Yow, 1994). The researcher hoped to overcome this boundary by putting participants at ease so that they would feel comfortable sharing their memories. Through prior experience of OH interviewing, it is evident that a successful collaboration between researcher and participants is an essential component of any such research.

Building a successful collaborative relationship with participants, however, is not always straight forward because of this power diversity (Smith, 2012). In this instance, the researcher guided the interviews, but allowed participants to choose what responses they shared. After this, the power and decision making, including how to best present the data, were left to the researcher; this role is crucial and involves interpreting the research findings. In this research the participants were encouraged to share their perceptions; as Smith (2012) explained, shared perceptions are an asset to research. However, deciding the extent to which the role as the researcher was to interpret the findings and most importantly represent the voices of the participants was of central importance to this research. Some of the findings proved to be contradictory, starting with a negative tone and ending with a positive summary of the experience. Interpreting the data involved considering the researcher's own perception as part of the process.

The researcher contends that the relationship between the researcher and the participant contributes to the success of OH and RW research. Whether it is based on social history or health and well-being research, the personal nature of accessing people's data necessitates finesse and tact from the researcher. It was evident from this research that nostalgia emerges from reminiscence; thus, it could be argued that memories are beautified, and initially this beauty could hinder the emergence of detailed memory recall. However, this study has been structured in such a way as to encourage the participants to dig deeper.

All of the participants stated that they felt comfortable and relaxed sharing their memories. The first interviews allowed the participants to visit their childhood memory (some of which were negative) almost as a trial run. It gave them insight

into the researcher's reactions and showed them how they felt as they shared negative or personal memories. They therefore knew what to expect during the second interview, and could explore their feelings and emotions in more depth. The participants were given a free choice about which memories to explore.

The research has developed and changed throughout the duration of the study. It is important for researchers who are undergoing OH or RW research to be prepared to change the course of their original research design. Not only this, but also prepare for a variety of unanticipated developments to occur during the interview itself due to the unpredictable nature of memory recall.

Employing a dual approach was enlightening, and doing so produced research findings that exceeded the researcher's expectations. The initial research objective was to collect and capture childhood memories and explore the social historical implications of experiencing childhood on post-war Merseyside. However, the findings uncovered other significant themes, including the therapeutic benefits of memory sharing and the profound emotional impact it had on the participants. Researchers often collect data without considering the impact of the experience on the participants. This research has developed a new approach by developing a rapport between the researcher and the participants and creating a MTM to support the reminiscence process. Using a familiar environment was crucial to the research's success because it facilitated the collection of oral histories and reminiscences and ensured participants' well-being. The familiar environment enabled the participants to relive their childhood memories comfortably. The researcher created such an environment by conducting the interviews in the participant's own familiar surroundings, either at home or at their local community or social centre. This allowed the research to dig deeper into their childhood memories and therefore uncovered more detailed childhood memories, including feelings and emotion.

One can never say with certainty that a memory contains no hint of nostalgia, but it was evident that towards the end of the interviews the participants were sharing negative memories and reflecting more about how recalling the memories made

them feel. Other researchers may find that this approach has a learning curve: although many people begin by sharing positive memories, a sufficiently long interview can encourage them to share a greater variety of memory. The interview needs to be long enough that the participant can feel confident sharing more personal, rich and detailed memories. This may be achieved by allowing them to determine a suitable duration for the interviews themselves, by using warm up conversations about other topic areas and, when appropriate, by conducting a series of revisiting interviews. It is evident from the revisiting interviews in this study that the participants had become a lot more comfortable, and they shared their memories freely. This was also true when disseminating the research in a public forum at the MLL; people who attended the event read extracts from the research findings and many of them were emotionally moved and laughed or cried.

Engaging in discussions with event attendees emphasised that people had forgotten aspects of their social history. People commented that the event triggered many memories and enticed them to share their own personal experiences from childhood. It also encouraged social awareness and celebrated the sharing of memories. It made many feel proud to be from Merseyside, while showcasing a portion of its social heritage to those who were visiting from other places. The event was promoted with media coverage, and people travelled to the museum to share their memories.

This research has proven that in an organised environment in which individuals feel valued and supported, there are therapeutic and positive benefits for those involved in research and indeed for the wider community. This study found that male participants were initially reluctant to share their emotions; this was particularly evident during the recruitment process, in which men required more reassurance; the researcher reassured them that their memories were worth capturing and recording both for preservation and for research purposes.

Other academics may want to design their questions around this approach; they can model their interview in a similar way, helping to tap into different memories of the past. Also, alternative dissemination approaches can encourage researchers

to embrace different ways of sharing their findings with a wider audience. Research does not have to be restricted to academia alone.

Another interesting point for future research is that the participants found sharing negative memories to be a positive experience. In terms of the exploratory techniques used by the researcher, this means that negative memories do not need to be avoided: if they arise, it is important to deal with the situation in an appropriate manner such that the participant benefits from the experience. This study demonstrates how negative memories can actually become self-defining and have a long-lasting impact on the participant. Thus, the researcher has shown, it is both essential and beneficial to take special care for the participants' well-being, this was achieved using conversation and the MTM, as well as revisiting interviews and, with the blessing of all of the participants, by celebrating their memories at the MLL, sharing them with others and receiving valuable feedback. All of these attributes have contributed to a well-rounded experience for all involved in the research.

There have been many issues with conducting a multi-method study which accesses personal, sensitive memories, but there have also been many benefits associated with such a broad and flexible approach. The researcher contends that her involvement has been an important part of conducting the research, although there was a learning curve associated with organising and controlling the influence of her own personal values and biases. The researcher argues that OH affords a scope for exploring subjective realities and that, in order to get the most out of their research, academics need to accept the validity of other people's truths and perceptions. According to Tversky and Marsh (2000) validity can be compromised if people choose to change, embellish or re-author their stories, particularly if they are retelling stories. However, given the nature of the rapport built with the participants they had no reason to be untruthful; furthermore, many of the participants explained that they had never shared some of the memories before.

The researcher's open-ended approach allowed participants to explore their own sense of self and the meanings attached to the memories they shared, which can and inevitably did have a varying impact for each participant. OH and RW have a unique flexibility that affords the collection of complex details and authentic emotions associated with human experience. The participants were able to take part in the interviews in a familiar environment in which they felt relaxed and they also had the opportunity to build a rapport and trust relationship with the researcher. Incorporating these steps into the research process fostered the best quality stories from the participants; this was evident because they shared such detailed and personal childhood memories.

The researcher has collected the perspectives of the participants, not just the interpretations of the researcher. This is beneficial for the development of research practice and generates positive outcomes for all who are involved. It has proven that the perspectives and interpretations of the participants can enable the research to reach its full potential.

Anonymity, ownership and copyright

An important element of this research was treating both the participants and their responses ethically and respectfully. The researcher used the Oral History Society's guidelines for practical steps towards guaranteeing these legal and ethical responsibilities when conducting this research. It is important to capture, preserve and archive reminiscences for future generations, but it is also important to ensure that best practice is maintained whilst doing so. In this case, best practice included informing participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any point and asking them to sign ownership and copyright of material they shared to the researcher.

The researcher discussed the concept of anonymity with the participants, explaining that pseudonyms would be used to represent them in the thesis. Each of the participants wanted to be able to identify his or her own testimony in the final write-up of the thesis; so the researcher decided to use Mr, Mrs or Dr and each

participant's initial; this ensured that the participants remained anonymous, while at the same time allowing them to identify their own responses.

Archiving and the importance of preserving reminiscences

Both OH and RW share an interrogative approach and use audio facilities to record the data; the researcher then transcribes the recordings (Bornat, 2001). For this study, the findings were recorded on a digital audio recorder and uploaded to a computer. Digital recording made the process of transcribing easier and enabled the researcher to revisit the interview numerous times, gaining familiarity, and ensuring that no information was excluded. It is important to note that, although it is an integral part of the research process, the written transcript loses some of the unique characteristics of the voice in audio version (Bornat, 2001). Reminiscence plays a key role in this aspect of the process, in the telling of personal testimony, in which personality, emotion and identity are attached, while 'Transcripts reduce language to written symbols. Audio recordings convey tone, rhythm, volume and speech patterns' (Ritchie, 2003, p.134). Digital technology enabled the researcher to capture voices and detailed information for valuable research analysis. Brown (2002, p.2) contended that digital technology, 'represents the bringing together of a whole range of new and old technologies in ways that can further the traditional yet also enable new approaches to conducting qualitative enquiry'. The researcher considered whether digitally recording the interviews enhanced or restricted her ability to capture oral histories and reminiscences in relation to Brown's 'go digital and stay qualitative' ethos (Brown, 2002, p.2). Research is increasingly becoming digitised and it is important for researchers to be aware of the impact digitisation has on qualitative research. The researcher opted to record the reminiscences on a dictaphone. After an exploration of the impact of using an audio recorder it became clear that it was the only way in which data could be captured sufficiently and in real time. The reminiscences were successfully collected and revisited numerous times during the analysis process, which ensured that they were explored thoroughly and in-depth (Crombie and Davies, 1997).

Participants were made aware that they could stop, pause or ask questions throughout the interview and also reassured that any information they wanted to

withhold would be removed from the final audio and transcript versions of the interview. The researcher did this to reassure the participants so that they felt free to express themselves without being influenced or constrained by the presence of the audio recording equipment. Ondarra (1997) noted that the presence of technical equipment can initially induce feelings of anxiety or stress, but that, in most cases, participants relax and go on to enjoy the interview experience after they have been reassured.

Hutchinson et al. (1994) argued that successful interviews are those which outline what the researcher is investigating. It is important to acknowledge that interviews can become time consuming and elicit a breadth rather than depth of information (O'Leary, 2004; Bernard, 2006). Revisiting interviews ensured that this was not the case. It afforded precision and accuracy (Finnegan, 1992), enabled versatility and accommodated the editing or removal of information, if required. One of the participants did request the removal of a piece of information from her interview. This request was met and the information removed from the transcript and the audio recording. Audio recordings capture voices, depths of expression and even emotion. MacKay (2007, p.50) stated that: 'The audio recording provides the listener with not only the narrator's story, but also his unique way of telling it – repetitions, pauses, laughter, tears, distractions in the room, interactions with the interviewer, and unique speaking patterns'. None of these details can be expressed or experienced in a written format. All of these elements were present in the interviews and thus contributed to the researcher's decision to further explore the emotional and expressive elements of the findings.

Ulvik (2010) argued that public libraries are a vital part of any local community. Libraries have a direct link to public engagement, encouraging enthusiasm for the preservation of social history. Thus, it is essential for interdisciplinary collaboration and partnership to ensure that social history does not disappear. Armistead and Pettigrew (2004, p.571) defined partnership as a 'cross-organizational group working together towards common goals, which would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to achieve it tackled alone'. This definition is poignant and stresses the essentiality of collaboration in preservation, particularly

that of individuals' personal memories (Thompson, 2000). Collaborations in this instance can include libraries, museums, community centres and wider public establishments. There is unequivocal value for involving the public in heritage preservation work. Enthusiasm and involvement generates an ongoing mission in preserving local history (Sassoon, 2010; Yates and Ioannou, 2010).

Contribution to the body of knowledge

The research has given insight into a unique set of childhood memories that were experienced on post-war Merseyside. It has provided insight into the social conditions of childhood in the immediate years after the Second World War, in a location that had endured mass devastation and subsequent austerity.

By employing a multi-method approach to the collection of data and the analysis of the findings, this study has broken down the barriers of typical single-method approaches to qualitative research. The researcher has created a resourceful, pictorial tool to support the reminiscence process. This reflective method of conducting research, along with the MTM, can be used by other academics conducting research in the fields of OH and RW. This approach ensures the well-being of the participants is paramount and gives them the valuable opportunity to reflect on their memories and their experience of recalling them.

Furthermore, this open, flexible and supportive approach to capturing childhood memories led to collaboration with the wider community in the MLL. This research was developmental and broadened its boundaries beyond the researcher's initial expectations. The success of the event at the MLL proves that, with the right attitude, resources, support and enthusiasm, communities can be brought closer together. By communicating, we can overcome discrimination, learn about our ancestry and appreciate the lives we live today. We can overcome or support those with mental health issues like depression and regulate emotion. We can engage children in memory sharing and generate a more positive environment based on communication and support.

So, how does a researcher include all of these elements in one study? In this instance, by conducting separate interviews, holding meaningful conversations,

respecting and listening and, ultimately, by not shying away from exploring detailed findings by opting to conduct revisiting interviews. The researcher's decision to conduct a second phase of RW interviews did not detract from the aim of the OH research; rather it enriched it: the researcher and participants reached back together and gave meaning to these childhood memories.

Limitations of the study

Ten participants were recruited on a voluntary basis; although the sample population was small, it was adequate for a study like this one that focused on capturing unique childhood memories. Group reminiscence could have increased the number of participants, but it would also have influenced the responses and led to fewer unique or personal memories being shared due to a change in the interview dynamic, which, among other things, would be far less private in a group setting.

The study was reliant on being able to conduct a second phase of interviews after six months. This may not always be possible because some participants might drop out of the study. In this instance all of the participants were able to take part in both phases of interviews.

The positivist argument is that the subjectivity of the researcher influences the findings in predominantly qualitative research approaches and that these therefore lack objectivity. The researcher contends that in no research setting that involves individuals, personal reflections, memories and emotions can one be completely objective. Thus, this research has been presented and analysed from a personal yet professional perspective. Although it employed a flexible approach, the researcher remained rigorous in her interpretation of the findings.

The researcher collected a wide range of oral histories that would be suitable for book length presentation; however, due to the word count restraints of this thesis, she has limited the presentation to smaller extracts.

Recommendations for future research

Having explored the benefits of OH and RW research, the next stage would be further research to find out more information about childhood during the post-war years, either on Merseyside or in other areas. It would be interesting, for example to conduct a study with individuals who experienced the immediate post-war years in an area in Germany.

It would be useful to explore the impact of the reminiscence process further by developing other supportive models, such as using trigger tools such as memory boxes or creating reminiscence support groups and workshops in local communities. Future researchers may benefit from creating an online forum for memory sharing, which could involve people in harder to reach areas, giving more people globally the opportunity to share their memories. It is important to encourage people from diverse backgrounds, cultures and age groups to engage in reminiscence. According to Webster et al. (2010, p.538), 'It is imperative if we are to develop a complete understanding of reminiscence that both the childhood antecedents and adult sequelae are integrated into a comprehensive model'. It may also be useful to conduct a series of RW interviews over a longer span of time to see the therapeutic elements of long-term RW intervention. Evidently, there will always be further research to be done in the fields of OH and RW. Portelli (1991) explained that OH provides a wealth of knowledge and is an inexhaustible approach to research. This wealth of knowledge is positive, but it also brings with it many complexities: 'Issues such as contexts for remembering, the effect of trauma on remembering, storytelling, the interview relationship, ethics, the nature of memory, the role of remembering in establishing identities and finally, outputs and dissemination' (Bornat, 2001, p.219).

The researcher embarked on research that would not only collect childhood memories but would also capture the experiences of those childhoods, preserving a portion of social heritage and engaging wider society in exploring its social heritage. This research has highlighted the importance, value and impact, for all who were involved, of engaging in OH and RW research. Digging deeper into the

impact of memory sharing enables researchers to see the importance of social interaction and uncovers the meaning of the shared memories.

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Appendix A: The Memory Tree Model

Post-War Childhood Memories.

Reflectivity of the Reminiscence Process.
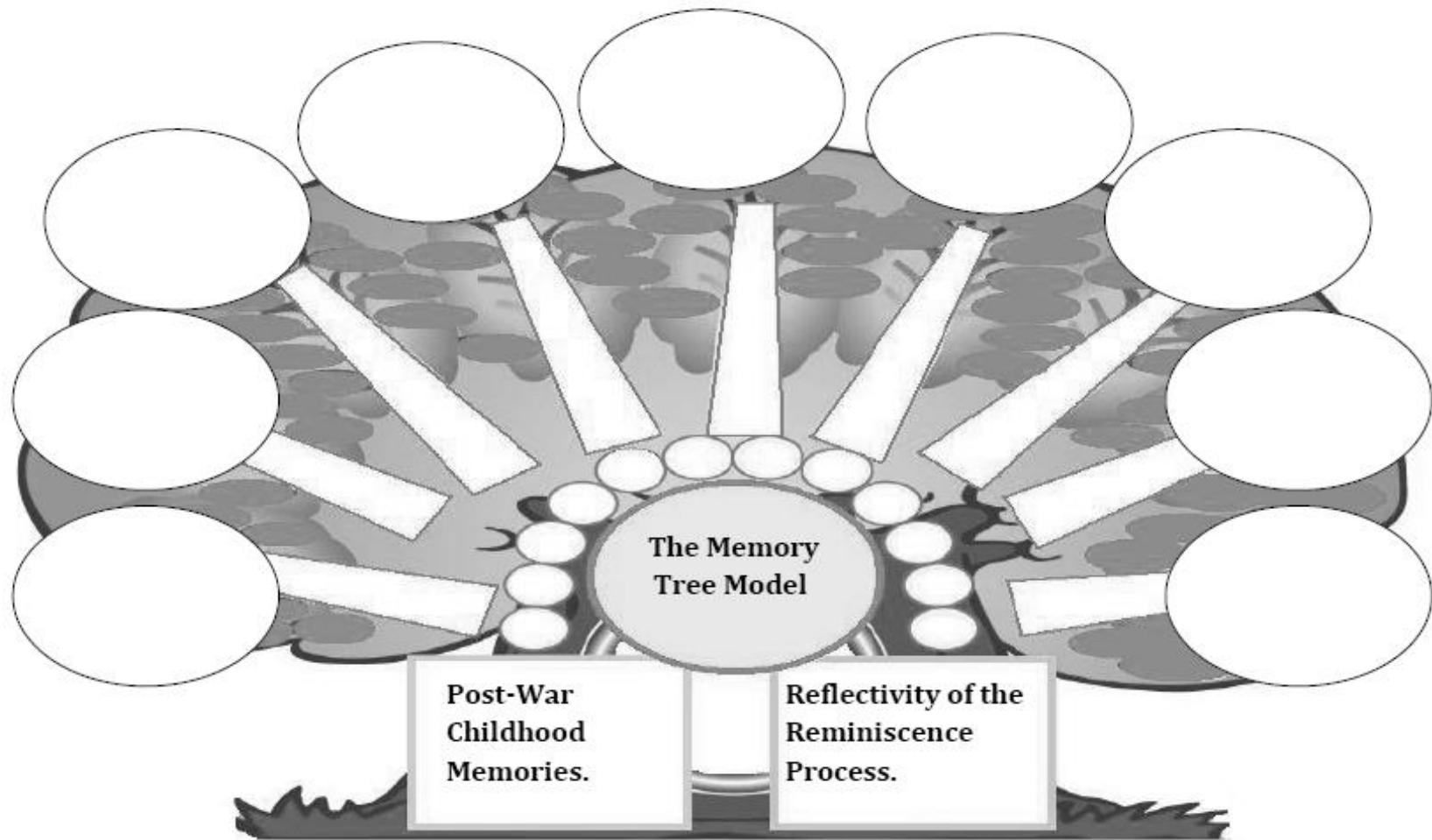
Participant Ref: _____   Duration of Interview:_____

D.O.B:_____   Participant Signature:_____

Appendix B: Relationships between the emergent themes: Interview 1.

Family	Education	Society	Childhood
		Weather (cold/sunny)	Weather (cold/sunny)
Extended Family		War	
		Employment	
Religion (Christmas/Easter)	Religion (Christmas/Easter)	Religion (Christmas/Easter)	Religion Christmas/Easter
			Unique
			Memories/Experiences/Emotion
			Positive/Negative Memories
Rationing (food, coal)		Deviancy	Deviancy
		Rationing (food, coal)	
Health	Health	Health	Health
			Play (Toys)
			Sensory Memories
Hardship		Hardship	Hardship
Trauma	Trauma (punishment/bullying)	Trauma	Trauma
Link to present day	Link to present day	Link to present day (Technology)	Link to present day
Humour	Humour	Humour	Humour
			Days Out
Being in the same boat		Being in the same boat	Being in the same boat
Freedom		Freedom	Freedom (safety)
		Class variation (social mobility)	
			Adolescence
Discipline (strict)	Discipline (corporal punishment)	Discipline (neighbours/police)	Discipline (respect)
Gambling	Gambling	Gambling	Gambling

Gender roles (differences)	Gender roles (differences)	Gender roles (differences)	Gender roles (differences)
		Politics	
		Transport	
Marriage			
Community	Community	Community	Community
Money			
Loss/bereavement			
Impact of events on later life	Impact of events on later life	Impact of events on later life	Impact of events on later life
	Regret/lack of opportunity		
Liverpool Docks	Liverpool Docks	Liverpool Docks	
			Identity
Friendship	Friendship	Friendship	Friendship
Values	Values	Values	Values
Television		Television	Television
			Sensitive memories
			Reflective responses
	Music		
Women working	Women working	Women working	Women working
		Rag and bone man	Rag and bone man
		Street play	Street play
Therapeutic qualities of reminiscence	Therapeutic qualities of reminiscence	Therapeutic qualities of reminiscence	Therapeutic qualities of reminiscence

Appendix B: Relationships between the emergent themes: Interview 2.

Identity	Positive/Negative Memories	MTM	Reminiscence Experience
	Nostalgia		
	Revisiting memories	Revisiting memories	Revisiting memories
	New triggered memories	New triggered memories	New triggered memories
	Spontaneous memories		Spontaneous memories
		Support (Tool)	Support
		Trigger	
		Reflective	
			Valued opportunity
Education			
Employment			
Geographic			
Community			
	Release		
	Therapeutic		
	Sensitive/Trauma		
	Self-esteem		
	Wellbeing		
Humour	Humour		Humour
	Regret		Regret
	Closure		Closure
	Triggered emotion		Triggered emotion
Life satisfaction	Life satisfaction		Life satisfaction
	Freedom		

Personality Mood			Personality Mood
		Organising and sharing memories	
	Problem solving Conversation Family reminiscence (not always encouraged). Learning curve Teach/inform Felt comfortable to share memories	Learning curve	Problem solving Conversation Family reminiscence (not always encouraged). Learning curve Teach/inform Felt comfortable to share memories

Hayley Wilson
By email
Thursday 22nd April 2010

Dear Hayley,

Provisional Approval
With reference to your application for Ethical approval:
Lost Voices of Post War Childhoods: An Oral History of Childhood in Post War Liverpool
Ref.: 08.43

Liverpool John Moores University Research Ethics Committee (REC) has reviewed the above application at the meeting held on Thursday 15th April 2010. The Committee would be content to give a favourable ethical opinion of the research subject to receiving a complete response to the following request for further information:

To approve subject to amendment of the Participant Information Sheet, to provide full details of the Interviews e.g. venue, duration, dates as this may influence recruitment. Section B10 of the application should address the issue of sensitive topics being addressed. Please confirm that data collection has not commenced prior to Ethical approval being granted, as Section B lists a Start Date of April 2010.

When submitting any revised documentation with your response please underline or otherwise highlight the changes you have made.

No participants should be approached or recruited prior to receiving confirmation of ethical approval from LJMU REC. Please note that failure to obtain full ethical approval from LJMU REC may invalidate any insurance cover provided through LJMU.

Yours sincerely

Brian Kerrigan
Chair of the LJMU REC
Tel: 0151 231 3119
E-mail: j.m.mcwatt@ljmu.ac.uk
CC: Supervisor

Hayley Wilson
By email
Tuesday 8th June 2010

Dear Hayley,

Satisfaction of Provisos - Full Ethical Approval
With reference to your application for Ethical approval:
Lost Voices of Post War Childhoods: An Oral History of Childhood in Post War Liverpool
Ref.: 08.43

On behalf of Liverpool John Moores University Research Ethics Committee (REC) the Chair of the Committee has reviewed your response to the request for further information related to the above study. The Committee is now content to give a favourable ethical opinion and recruitment to the study can now commence.

Approval is given on the understanding that:
- any adverse reactions/events which take place during the course of the project will be reported to the Committee immediately;
- any unforeseen ethical issues arising during the course of the project will be reported to the Committee immediately;
- any substantive amendments to the protocol will be reported to the Committee immediately.
- the LJMU logo is used for all documentation relating to participant recruitment and participation eg poster, information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires. The JMU logo can be accessed at www.ljmu.ac.uk/images/jmulogo

For details on how to report adverse events or amendments please refer to the information provided at:
http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/RGSO/RGSO_Docs/EC8Adverse.pdf
Yours sincerely

Brian Kerrigan
Chair of the LJMU REC
Tel: 0151 231 3119
E-mail: j.m.mcwatt@ljmu.ac.uk
CC: Supervisor

Ethical approval to conduct further interviews

From: Spiers, Sue
Sent: 12 April 2011 17:34
To: Wilson, Hayley
Cc: Williams, Mandy
Subject: RE: Ethical Approval

Dear Hayley

  10/HEA/094 - Lost Voices of Post-War Childhoods: An Oral History of Childhood in Post-War Merseyside

Thank you for notifying me of your proposal to conduct further interviews as part of the above study. I am pleased to inform you that ethical approval for further interviews has been granted.

Best wishes
Sue

Dr Sue Spiers
Head of Research Programme Development

Appendix D: Consent Form

'LOST VOICES': AN ORAL HISTORY OF CHILDHOOD IN POST-WAR MERSEYSIDE.

I _____ agree to take part in the above study.

I understand that the research is part of the PhD coursework requirements and I have been fully informed about the project.

I understand that:

- The names of the participants will remain confidential and anonymous.

The only exception to these conditions would be if the researcher felt that the participant was at risk of harm. In this case the student would consult their supervisor.

I understand that:

- Participation is entirely voluntary.
- I have the right to withdraw at anytime.
- I can request information about the project at any time.
- My responses will be used in the final write up of the thesis.
- My responses may be used in future publications or exhibitions.

Participants Signature: _____

Researchers Signature:_____

Witness Signature:_____

Appendix E: Information Sheet and Aide Memoire

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

'LOST VOICES': AN ORAL HISTORY OF CHILDHOOD IN POST-WAR MERSEYSIDE.

My name is Hayley Wilson and I am currently studying for my doctorate at Liverpool John Moores University. I am required to carry out research and I would like to ask for your time to participate in an individual interview relating to your recollection of childhood memories and growing up in post-war Merseyside.

I am interested in finding out your experiences and perceptions. I am also hoping to compare these experiences with other participants to draw upon similarities/differences of childhoods in post-war Merseyside.

I would like to audio record the interview in order to return to the responses when writing up my thesis. However, I would like to assure you of the confidential nature of the study, that no one else apart from myself would have access to the audio clips, and that they will be kept in a secure file while not in use. You are entirely free to choose whether you wish to volunteer to be a part of this project and I am more than happy to answer any questions you may have. You also have the right to withdraw at anytime without prejudice.

If you agree to take part please complete the following:

- Ensure you fully understand the interview procedure and what you are being asked to do.
- Complete the consent form.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this information and I will look forward to seeing you soon if you choose to participate.

Yours Faithfully,

Hayley Wilson

Name of Supervisor: Dr Conan Leavey
Contact Number: ....

Aide Memoire

Aide Memoire

'LOST VOICES': AN ORAL HISTORY OF CHILDHOOD IN POST-WAR MERSEYSIDE.

- Family

- Education

- Society

- Childhood

Appendix F: Publication

Wilson, H. E. (2013) A Heuristic Approach to Reminiscence: Using a Memory Tree Model to Access Childhood Memories *International Journal of Arts and Sciences* 6, 2, pp.61-72

Appendix G: Link to the Exhibition Facebook Page

https://www.facebook.com/ChildhoodMemoriesOfPostWarMerseyside/

Mrs E

Childhood nickname: Flossy

Born: October 1943

Siblings: One brother

Education: West Kirby Grammar School

Traumatic childhood memory: Mrs E was hit by a car (by a bookmaker on his way to the Grand National); she spent 6 months in Alder Hey Children's Hospital. The doctors did not think she would be able to walk again due to the spinal damage caused. Mrs E's mother almost had to put her and her brother into Barnardo's as she could not afford to look after them properly.

Enjoyed: Playing in the street; hopscotch; going to church; playing tennis.

Adulthood: Employed as a nurse, married and has three children.

Dr E

Born: July 1941 in Denbigh North Wales (his parent temporarily moved there as their house in Wallasey has been bombed. They stayed in Wales for one year before returning to Merseyside; on returning, they moved into rented accommodation in Wallasey).

Siblings: None

Education:

Primary School (Edgerton Grove school in Liscard)

Junior School (Kindsmead school in Hoylake)

Senior School (Rydl boarding school in Colwyn Bay, North Wales)

Dr E's parents where 43 and 46 years old when Dr E was born and due to circumstances, lived in the same house as extended family (Dr E's Auntie and maternal Grandparents). Due to this, Dr E's parents felt that it would be better for him to move away to boarding school as living under such circumstances may be socially detrimental to him.

Religion: Christian

Enjoyed: Days out in New Brighton; going to the fairground (although his mother felt it was 'un-Christian' to spend money in fairgrounds).

Adulthood: Dr E was employed as a Doctor of medicine; married and has three children.

Mrs M

Born: July 1943 in West Kirby

Siblings: None

Mrs M did not meet her father until she was three years old as he had been working away in India (with the army).

Education: Mrs M's maternal grandmother's sister ('Aunt') paid school fees so that Mrs M could be privately educated at Avalon school, Caldy, Wirral.

Senior School (West Kirby Grammar School)

Enjoyed: Tennis, ballet, days out to Hilbre Island with a picnic, bike rides and climbing trees.

Adulthood: Mrs M was employed as a short hand typist, is widowed and has two children.

Mr T

Born: August 1948 in Walton, Liverpool

Siblings: Two sisters

Education: St Francis DeSales School (Mr T felt he had a poor education)

Religion: Catholic

Enjoyed: 'Knockin'' around streets and getting upto 'some mischief', football, table tennis, snooker, ollies, and swimming. He recalled going shop lifting and stealing produce of the back of lorries in the docks.

Adulthood: Mr T was employed as a dock worker; he was sacked in 1995 for not crossing the picket line.

Mrs J

Born: 1948 in Liverpool ('Sir Thomas Way Gardens' tenement blocks).

Siblings: Seven (four half siblings and two sisters).

Education: Roughwood Comprehensive School

Religion: Protestant

Enjoyed: Roller skating, hopscotch, rounders and football. Mrs J did not have much free time as she did household chores for her mother who had a mental health condition.

Adulthood: Mrs J left school aged 15 and worked as a machinist in an underwear factory.

After looking after her paternal grandmother, when she turned 18 she decided to become a nurse.

Mr H

Born: 1948 in Liverpool

Nickname: 'Fage' due to his mother's previous marriage (even though it was not his surname).

Siblings: 12

Mr H's mother had 5 children with her first husband and 6 with his father; thus, he had seven brothers and five sisters (four died from Diphtheria or Pneumonia).

Education: Saint John's School

Religion: Catholic

Enjoyed: Chasing rats in the field behind his house, watching street gambling (Toss), playing football (he was trialled at Melwood by Bill Shankly). Mr H also enjoyed days out to New Brighton with a bottle of water and jam butties.

Adulthood: Mr H took his father's book (employment) on the docks at Blue Funnel Line.

Mrs L

Born: May 1949, Meols, Wirral

Siblings: One brother

Education: Lingham Lane School in Moreton

Religion: Christian

Enjoyed: Playing on the sand hills; playing alone in the backyard with dolls and pushchairs; going on holiday to Scotland on the steam train; being taught how to knit by her mother; and going for days out to Delamere forest by car.

Adulthood: Mrs L did not really talk about her adult life.

Mr R

Born: July 1950, Wirral

Siblings: One sister

Education: He described going to a rough school which was particularly strict.

Religion: Protestant (and felt isolated in a predominantly Catholic neighbourhood because of it).

Enjoyed: Playing ollies and steelies, learning about nature and animals, spending time with his paternal grandparents (always ate well when he stayed with them), days out in New Brighton or West Kirby, homemade food, making his own bicycle, keeping caterpillars until they turned into butterflies and letting them go, spending time with his dog, Mandy.

Adulthood: Mr R trained to become an electrician.

Mr M

Born: August 1948, Rock Ferry, Wirral

Siblings: Four (3 sisters and 1 brother)

Education: St Anne's Roman Catholic School (Primary School) and St Hughes' (Secondary School).

Religion: Catholic

Enjoyed: Playing in Lairds Ship Yard and Tranmere shore, getting up to mischief, football and playing cowboys and Indians. Mr M enjoyed days out to New Brighton or getting a charabanc to Rhyl.

Adulthood: Mr M became employed by Shell oil.

Mrs W

Born: December 1950, Birkenhead, Wirral

Siblings: Two sisters

Education: Mrs W did not enjoy school and cried when she had to go (therefore she did not mention the type of schools she attended).

Religion: Protestant

Enjoyed: Playing in the street, particularly swinging from a rope attached to the street lamp. Mrs W also enjoyed days out at Moreton Shore and skipping.

Adulthood: Mrs W did not talk about her adult life.

Appendix I: Personal Research Journey
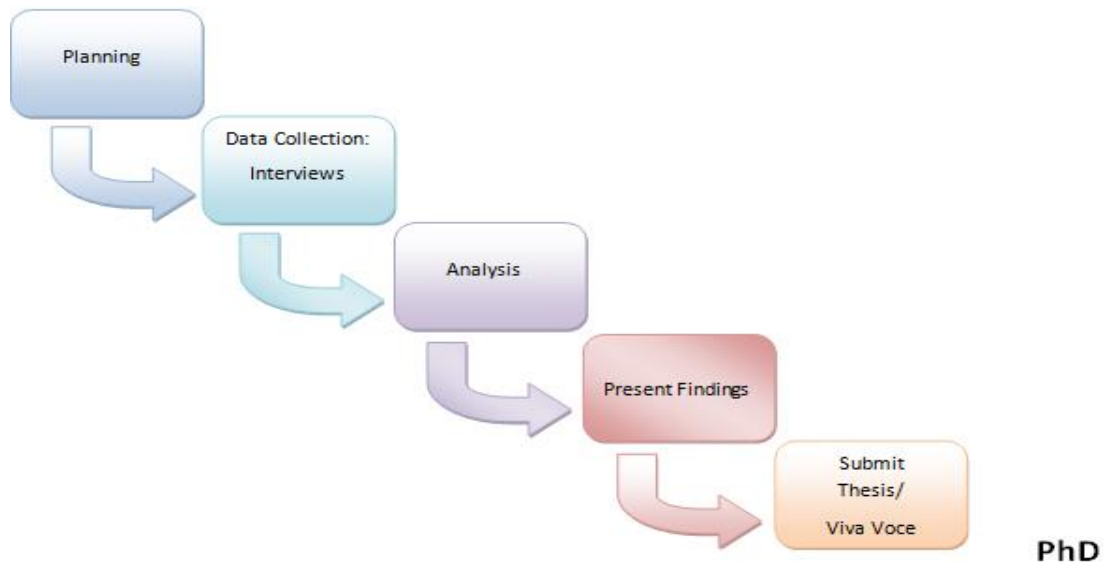
Embarking on a PhD was both a personal and professional commitment over a significant period of time (seven years in total). For me, completing a PhD was the next natural step of career progression and an important stage in my own continuing professional development. I believed that completing a PhD would give me the skills I needed to excel in a career that I am most passionate about which is helping others to learn in Higher Education. Additionally, being given the opportunity gave me a feeling of personal fulfilment and a chance to accomplish my own personal and professional aspirations.

Initially, the PhD journey was mapped out in anticipation (as above); however, the journey did not go to plan. Although the structure did flow from one stage to another as shown in the diagram above, some of the stages took longer than expected or took a different line of inquiry to the one already intended.

On reflection I made many mistakes, made some wrong choices or took on board other peoples' advice instead of using my own intuition. Due to many set-backs, the journey was an emotionally draining one; it is important to acknowledge the personal impact studying for a PhD has on the researcher. Gaining a PhD has been a life changing experience for me, certainly a learning curve and has also enabled me to acquire a broad range of transferable skills. In this section I will outline the

stages shown in the diagram to explain what I have learned as a researcher both personally and professionally.

Planning

With good intentions and naivety I had planned my PhD from beginning to end. I had decided that I would collect oral histories of childhood experienced in post-war Merseyside, analyse the interviews thematically and disseminate the findings in my thesis. This plan did not come to fruition; however, the planning stage was useful as it gave me the opportunity to conduct a literature review and to explore the research that has already been done before.

Data Collection: Interviews phase 1 & 2

As explained in detail in Chapter Three the research took a different line of inquiry after the first phase of oral history interviews. When transcribing the results I realised that I was excluding a large amount of the findings due to them being particularly reflective in nature. Because of this, I decided to revisit the participants to conduct a second phase of reminiscence work interviews.; I created a memory tree model (see appendix A) to help support this process. The second phase of interviews enabled me to explore the participants' reflective responses in more depth which aided the heuristic exploration of childhood memories. At this point it was clear to see that a different theoretical framework was forming and the research became more participatory in nature. The participants had expressed the importance of their reflective responses and believed that I should include the importance of the reminiscence process as part of my thesis. I took this advice on board and this was perhaps the most important decision I made throughout the duration of my PhD.

Analysis and presentation of findings

The interviews generated an extensive amount of findings which, in turn, took hours of transcribing. Transcribing verbatim is a skill in its own right; however, I feel that patience was the true skill I developed over the days it took me to transcribe each of the interviews. Listening to the interviews privately proved to be a very moving and emotional experience and gave me the opportunity to really

listen to the candid details that had been shared by the participants about their personal memories. From a heuristic viewpoint, this gave me the opportunity to truly immerse myself in the research.

I decided to present the findings as a series of memoirs to capture the themes that emerged from the interviews. Due to the large volume of findings I could not include everything thus, gave a flavour of the detailed memories shared. The memoirs were a successful way of presenting the findings as it gave insight into the different childhood experiences on Merseyside at that time – it captured the essence and authenticity of the participants' childhoods.

In addition to the memoirs I also wrote two reflective chapters to present the reflective responses captured in the second phase of interviews. These chapters allowed both the participants and me to create meaning from the childhood experiences and reflect on the nostalgia, humour and influence that stemmed from them.

Due to the changing nature of this research I had to write the thesis in a way that would be clear to both me and the reader; this proved to be particularly challenging. Initially, I decided to write the thesis in first person narrative. On re-reading my first draft, it became apparent that it was not a wise decision due to being particularly repetitive; I also felt that the writing style did not enable the voices of my participants to shine through. I did not want my own voice to over-power the participants' authentic responses, thus, opted to write the majority of this thesis in third person narrative.

Using third person narrative can convey objectivity (Webb, 1992). Although I was very much involved in the research, I still wanted to ensure that I did not influence the participants' responses. In part, the decision to write in third person narrative was also based on my experience as an academic. It is indeed important for academics to be able to express their opinions in a justifiable way, however, in this instance I did not want my writing style to detract from the meaning of the participants' responses.

Heuristic Research

> In heuristic research, the research journey 'begins and ends with the researcher' (Djuraskovic and Arthur, 2010, p.1579).

The importance of fulfilling my intention to bring the research back to the people of Merseyside was achieved; to give people a voice and engage people in memory sharing within the community, whilst preserving their social heritage. That achievement has also been self-fulfilling for me and been a valuable experience I can take forward into my future career.

I faced many challenges when conducting heuristic research; however, I realised that it would enable me to follow the line of inquiry suggested by the participants. A heuristic approach has also enabled me to consider my own experience of the research process, of meaning making and listening to my own perceptions of the findings. Although my ability to remain objective has been tested, due to the interpretation of findings being my responsibility, I was able to embrace the participatory element of heuristics which enabled the participants to guide the dissemination of the findings. The informative nature of the interviews, particularly the second phase of interviews, highlighted that there was risk of digression. However, the questions I put together enabled me to redirect the conversation when necessary.

Presentation of findings: Museum event

Finally, as discussed in detail in Chapter Eight, I was given the opportunity to plan and project-manage an event to disseminate my research in a public forum at the Museum of Liverpool Life. This enabled me to think about presenting findings to different audiences, both academic and public. I had to develop leadership skills in order to organise and collaborate effectively with museum staff, fellow academics and the general public. Developing these skills led to successful public engagement and created a platform for others to share their memories. Problem solving was also a central component of the success of the event as I had to secure funding and use my assertiveness to overcome obstacles including time frame restrictions, budgeting funds, and liaising with the marketing team to ensure than the event was widely publicised.

Key things I have learned during my PhD journey.

1. **I am robust and resilient**

   Dedication- completing a PhD is challenging and takes a long time. I had to be motivated to conduct independent research and the process proved to be emotionally and intellectually draining.

2. **The importance of a support network**

   Family and friends provided a support network which I became very reliant on, due to feelings of isolation, self-doubt, self-criticism, and an overwhelming need for support, reassurance, praise or just someone to tell me that everything was going to be ok.

3. **Career development**

   The PhD instilled a broad array of personal and professional skills that will help me in my future career.

4. **Rejection and criticism**

   I have learned to deal with constructive criticism and the realisation that I might not always get it right. This has enabled me to learn from my mistakes – and understand why things did not always go to plan; this helped me to identify what I could have done differently in hindsight.