



**“There’s no handbook for this”: An exploration into
mothers’ experiences of the Incredible Years Parents
and Babies Programme.**

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Abstract

An interpretative phenomenological analysis approach was taken to explore the lived experiences of mothers who attended the Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme (IYPB) and their perceptions of parenting following IYPB. Current evaluative research has received mixed results regarding the impact of IYPB, yet mothers' personal accounts of their experiences have been unaccounted for. With calls for more research in this area alongside the promotion of working in a more person-centred way in Wales, exploring mothers' experiences, and how they understand these experiences, appears pertinent for the work of Educational Psychologists (EPs). The findings from semi-structured interviews with 7 mothers highlighted that the mothers were on their own individual journeys of development as parents. Yet, common themes were also portrayed, both during and following IYPB. The findings are discussed in relation to wider psychological theories and the implications for future EP practice and research are considered.

Declaration

This work has not been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award.

Signed: (candidate) Date: 1st May 2019

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Summary

This thesis consists of three parts: A literature review, an empirical paper and a critical appraisal.

Part One: Literature review

The review begins with the rationale behind the purpose of exploring early parenting. A critical exploration of psychological theories and research is given regarding child development and early parenting, parental experiences and parenting programmes, before focusing specifically on parenting during the early years and early intervention. The review ends by providing a basis of the current research and research questions as well as identifying the relevance for practicing Educational Psychologists (EPs).

Part Two: Empirical Paper

The empirical paper provides an account of the current research which explored the lived experiences of mothers who attended the Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme (IYPB). A review of the existing literature is given which leads to the rationale of the research and research questions. The methodological approach taken within the research is then described, which includes the research design and the ethical considerations made. Following a portrayal of the findings, which are evidenced by citations elicited from the interview transcripts, the findings are discussed within the context of relevant psychological theories and research. Limitations and possible areas of future research are considered as well as implications the findings may have on EP practice.

Part Three: Critical Appraisal

The critical appraisal gives a reflective and reflexive account of the research process. A critical discussion of the research process is provided, including a critical exploration into the research design and the methodological decisions made. Although discussed throughout the appraisal, specific reflections are then made on the unique contributions this research may have in terms

of what it may add to the current literature and areas of future research. Contributions this research may have on EP practice and my own professional development are also considered.

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Firstly, I would very much like to thank the seven mothers who participated in this research for their time and for sharing their stories, thoughts and feelings with me during the interviews. Their openness and honesty was very much appreciated and it was a privilege to learn more about their lives. It was a pleasure to meet them all and I wish them and their babies all the best in the future.

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List of Abbreviations

ASC	Autism Spectrum Condition
ECBI	Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory
IY	Incredible Years
IYPB	Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme
IYPP	Incredible Years Parenting Programme
UK	United Kingdom



Part One: Major Literature Review

(Word count: 9955)

1. Introduction

1.1 Amplification of the title and rationale for the research

The quote from the title, “There’s no handbook for this”, comes from one of the mothers who participated in this research. As will be discussed during this literature review, it encapsulates underlying themes within the reflections the mothers gave of their experiences of parenting as well as highlighting the perception that perhaps a generic handbook for supporting parenting would be inappropriate.

This research intended to explore the parental perspective, specifically mothers, of attending an early years parenting programme. Within current research, comparatively little attention has been paid to the experiences of parents, particularly in a way which captures experiences as parents understand them. Moreover, with increasing recognition of the importance of the early years in children’s development within research and guidelines (e.g., Allen, 2011; Borden, Schultz, Herman, & Brooks, 2010; Britto et al., 2017; Goldblatt, Yahav, & Ricon, 2014) it is perhaps relevant to explore parents’ experiences and perceptions during this time. As Bornstein et al. (2003) proclaim, only in gaining this knowledge can one better understand, predict and support parental behaviours and, consequently, learn more about the nature of these behaviours and how they may contribute to child development.

The focus on Incredible Years Parenting Programmes (IYPP), specifically Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme (IYPB), was considered pertinent as this research was conducted within Wales and the Welsh Government has promoted and funded IYPPs, including IYPB (Jones, 2013). IYPPs form part of a franchise of Incredible Years (IY) programmes which have been created to support children from birth to 12 years old (Borden et al., 2010; Webster-Stratton, 2010; Webster-Stratton & Herman, 2010). Therefore, IYPPs are not stand-alone programmes and form part of an evidence-based approach currently being used to support children in Wales (Jones, 2013).

1.2 Structure of the literature review

This literature review begins with an examination of how relevant literature was sought. As promoted by Baumeister and Leary (1997), this literature was then conceptualised into themes which, subsequently, led to the format of this literature review. Thus, the entire literature review is a tapestry of existing literature which emerged from the initial search terms (see section 1.5).

The literature review begins with an exploration into child development and the importance of early parenting according to relevant psychological theories and research. A critical appraisal is also undertaken on potential influential factors within early childhood. With growing interest in the early years, national incentives to support child development and parenting during this time are discussed.

The possible experiences of parents themselves are then considered. Reference is made to constructions of the parenting role, parental knowledge and parental self-efficacy, all of which may be linked in dynamic and complex relationships. This leads on to a discussion of parenting programmes in general. A summary of the purpose of such programmes is provided followed by a consideration of the parents who have access to parenting programmes, how programmes are implemented and their perceived effectiveness. After each of these subsections, a specific exploration into IYPPs is described. The focus is on IYPPs at this stage as they have been more extensively researched in comparison to IYPB (Jones, 2013).

The review ends by focusing on the growing interest of supporting children and parents during the early years. This is followed by an introduction to IYPB and an exploration into the current literature available regarding the impact of IYPB for parents and children. Finally, the review concludes by indicating the identified gap in the literature and the purpose of the present research, before highlighting the possible implications for Educational Psychologists (EPs).

1.3 Databases, web-based sources and search engines used

Research was sourced using the PsychINFO and PsychArticles Full Text databases as these databases are relevant for locating research articles on areas broadly relating to psychology (American Psychological Association, APA, 2017). The Google Scholar search engine was also used for increased access to peer reviewed journals.

1.4 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Initially, relevant literature was filtered using the following inclusion criteria:

- Published in 2007-2019.
- Published books, academic journals and doctoral thesis.
- Focus on parents or parenting. Alternatively, on mothers or mothering.
- Focus on early years, preferably babies.

The initial searches excluded literature using the following exclusion criteria:

- Published before 2007.
- Not including parents / mothers.
- Focus on children over the age of 3.

However, research articles were considered despite the exclusion criteria if the title and abstract were considered relevant to the literature review. Both quantitative and qualitative research articles were considered within this review if the area being researched was consistent with the purpose of this review. Also, due to the lack of qualitative IYPB research, qualitative IYPP research articles were included.

1.5 Identification of studies relevant to this literature review

A narrative literature review was conducted to allow for a broad search of the literature (Baumeister & Leary, 1997). Baumeister and Leary (1997) suggest that the purpose of a literature review is to explore the available literature in order to survey, integrate and critically review the research available and to identify any gaps in the current knowledge base. The focus of this literature review was to explore research relating to IY, particularly on parenting and IYPB.

The literature considered was primarily academic, peer-reviewed journal studies, doctoral thesis and published books on child development and parenting. Selecting research was based on the review of titles and abstracts and, accordingly, selecting appropriate journals to read in full. The initial search parameters went beyond research conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) and relevant journals were selected from other countries, including the United States of America, Ireland and Denmark. Literature from the last decade was preferred, although older journals were considered if deemed relevant to the area of interest. Moreover, qualitative, quantitative and systematic reviews were incorporated in the literature review if consistent with the inclusion criteria.

As this review intended to explore parenting and IYPB, the initial search terms were “Incredible Years”, “Incredible Years Parenting”, “Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme” and “Qualitative”. It was felt that broader IY terms would capture the ethos and evidence-base of IY programmes which may be appropriate in an attempt at understanding the experiences and perceptions of parents attending IYPB. The “Qualitative” search term was used in an attempt to uncover research exploring the subjective experiences of parents. Boolean phrases (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) were used in some of the searches.

From the initial research identified as being relevant for the purpose of this review, a ‘snowballing’ or ‘backward-chaining’ (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) approach was used. Within this approach, pertinent references from the initially selected research, plus any relevant references within these references, were sought and considered. Greenhaigh and Peacock (2005) highlighted that a snowballing method of literature searches produce a greater yield and efficiency from a search effort. For example, this method enabled references within this literature review to include sources of grey literature, e.g., government policies and documents, which are not found in peer-reviewed journals. The snowballing method was considered completed when the research, and references within it, were no longer considered relevant to

the purpose of this literature review. The initial searches were completed in July and December 2017, with follow-up searches in November and December 2018.

Following the guidance of Baumeister and Leary (1997), the literature review was led by the research available. Therefore, once the initial searches had been completed, a literature review map was developed to provide a visual grouping and overview of the literature identified. A summary can be found in Table 1.

Initial search terms	"Incredible Years" "Incredible Years Parenting" "Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme" "Qualitative"			
Themes from literature search	Child development and early parenting	Parental experiences	Parenting programmes	Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme

Table 1. Literature search procedure and literature review map.

2. Child development and early parenting

2.1 Children's early environments

Much research exists highlighting the importance of the early years in children's developmental journeys (Barlow, Smailagic, Ferriter, Bennett, & Jones, 2010; Jones, Erjavec, Viktor, & Huthings, 2016; Pontoppidan, 2015). For example, Jones et al. (2016) maintain that the early years impact individuals' development throughout their childhood and into their adulthoods. Such impacts include emotional, social and cognitive functionality (Barlow et al., 2010). Pontoppidan (2015) suggests that this period is important due to it being a time of rapid growth and development.

Consequently, a child's primary caregivers, usually parents, are significant figures in this period as the child's main providers of care, safety, identity and love (Barlow et al., 2010; Evans, Davies, Williams, & Hutchings, 2015). For the purpose of this review, all caregivers will be referred to as 'parents'. Goldblatt et al. (2014) advocate that parents offer the greatest amount of influence on children's lives. Through the development of their relationships and interactions

with their children, parents help them to develop their skills, including the skills needed for learning, social interaction and emotional resilience (Barlow et al., 2010). Indeed, Goldblatt et al. (2014) describe parenting as a necessary component in child development, without which children are unlikely to thrive in their complex and dynamic worlds.

The importance of the ability to thrive in complex and dynamic worlds is echoed in research surrounding the impact of adverse life experiences on child development. The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2015) claims that there is a well-documented connection between adverse life experiences in the early years and later difficulties. Such difficulties include vulnerabilities to health and well-being (Bellis et al., 2015; Pontoppidan, 2015). Yet, the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2015) also recognise that there needs to be a better understanding of why some children thrive even in the face of adversity and others do not.

As well as growing research on the impact of adverse life events, neuroscience research and technology are also developing. From such studies it has been documented that early experiences shape brain development with the brain developing twice the size in the first year of life (Gerhardt, 2004) as well as indicating the malleability of the brain during the early years (Gardner et al., 2018). Interestingly, the findings from neuroscience research have mirrored the findings from adverse life experience research, i.e., that children who experience disruptions in their early lives may have altered brain development to what might be expected, as well as weakened physiology and health vulnerabilities (Bellis et al., 2015; Center on the Developing Child, 2010). Yet, due to the malleability of the brain during the early years, it has been suggested this is a good time to offer support to parents, with Kolb (2009) promoting parents as the best support their children's brains can have.

2.2 Theoretical background

There are numerous well-known theories as to how parents develop relationships with their children, including the theories offered by Bowlby (1969), Ainsworth (1974, 1979) and

Winnicott (1960). Whilst it is not intended to discuss these theories in great depth, an overview appears pertinent for the purpose of this literature review in relation to understanding the theorised importance of parenting.

Firstly, Bowlby (1969) contends that everyone has an innate ability to parent. This innate ability is evoked by the arrival of a child, although a parent's response to a child will be dependent upon his/her prior individual experiences (Bowlby, 1988). Moreover, Bowlby (1969) theorises that children are born with the innate ability to form relationships, particularly to their primary caregiver, as this will enable them to survive. Thus, both parent and child, according to Bowlby (1969), have an inherent capacity to form a relationship, or 'attachment' with each other, hence the aptly named 'Attachment Theory'. Bowlby (1969) additionally stipulates that the relationship children form with their parents will provide an 'internal working model' for how they view themselves and others as well as their world and their position within it, highlighting the great importance parents can make in their children's lives beyond their initial relationships.

Adding to Bowlby, Ainsworth's (1974, 1979) studies with infants and mothers resulted in the identification of different secure and insecure attachment styles between parents and their infants. Other researchers have now advocated that perhaps attachment styles are not distinct groups, but are on a continuum of security (e.g., Cummings, 2003). Therefore, although Bowlby (1969) advocates that parents are inherently pre-programmed to form attachments with their children, and vice versa, there appears to be other factors involved which contribute to these relationships, resulting in vastly different experiences for children and their parents.

Thirdly, Winnicott (1960) coined the term 'good enough' care when considering the facilitation of children's development. Winnicott (1960) describes this as the primary caregiver, usually the mother, as providing a safe physical environment and protection, as well as constant, reliable and empathetic care which alters according to the child's needs. Yet, there could be a presumption here that parents, as well as having an innate ability to form attachments with their

children, possess the complex and wide range of skills needed to parent (Goldblatt et al., 2014) in the way Winnicott (1960) appears to suggest. Ainsworth's (1974, 1979) idea of secure and insecure attachment styles may suggest this is not always the case.

2.3 Moderating factors within children's early environments

Goldblatt et al. (2014) state that parenting approaches are influenced by a range of factors and the interaction between them. Thus, it could be asserted that the reasons why parents and children develop varying attachment styles may be due to the range of factors they experience. Indeed, Belsky (1984) advocates that individual differences which determine approaches to parenting are centred around three domains: personal psychological resources of the parents; characteristics of the children; and contextual sources of stress and support. Although recognising that approaches to parenting are determined by multiple factors, Belsky (1984) identifies that the psychological resources of parents are more effective at buffering stress than the other two domains, suggesting the potential benefits of supporting parents as a protective factor for children.

Yet, moderating factors may be negative as well as protective. For example, when discussing risk factors associated with parenting, Jones (2013) lists possible factors as including, living in poverty, teenage parents, mothers with depression and substance abuse (see Appendix K). Within the literature later described in the current review, protective and risk factors are sometimes referred to by other researchers as being 'moderating factors', indicating their presence, or lack of, as having an assumed role in the effectiveness of parenting programmes. Thus, there is a call within research recommendations, policies and guidance, to increase positive, protective factors to support parents and their children, particularly during the early years (e.g., Allen, 2011; Bellis et al., 2015).

2.4 National incentives supporting parenting in the early years

Support targeting both parents and their children in the early years is in line with Winnicott's (1960) claim that young children should not be seen as on their own, but always as in a relationship with their parents. Jones et al. (2016) also allude to how the well-being of children and their parents is intertwined. Thus, whilst parents are trying to meet the needs of their children, their own needs need to be factored in. Indeed, Winnicott (1960) advocates that mothers who can provide 'good enough' care to their babies can be supported in doing so better if they themselves are cared for.

National initiatives within the UK have recognised the need to offer support to parents and children during the early years in order to promote and enhance children's development (Allen, 2011; Bellis et al., 2015; Cymru Well Wales, 2017; Department for Education and Skills, 2004; Irwin, Siddiqi, & Hertzman, 2007). For example, within the First 1000 Days report (Cymru Well Wales, 2017), 141 mothers from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds in Wales participated in focus groups and in-depth interviews either in pairs or as individuals. The aim of this research was to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities during the early years. The overriding theme from this research was that parents wanted what was best for their children. Consequently, the recommended outcomes for national and local policy was to promote systematic change to support parents.

This recommendation echoes those made within the Public Health Wales' long-term strategy to promote a healthier Wales (Public Health Wales, 2018) which includes investing in the early years to secure a healthy future for the next generation by working with parents and services. Moreover, Allen (2011) produced an independent report for the British Government which highlights the need for preventative, as opposed to reactive, intervention during the early years, identifying parents as key change agents in supporting children. However, what is less clear is what this support may look like and how services can work with parents in their unique, complex and dynamic systems to support children during the early years.

3. Parental experiences

3.1 Constructions of the parenting role

Whilst Bowlby (1969) advocates that humans have an innate ability to parent, approaches to parenting may be dependent upon the constructions held by wider systems, such as family and community (Reder & Lucey, 1996). For example, Crompton and Harris (1999, as cited in Maher & Saugeres, 2007) claim that social, economic and cultural changes have impacted mothers' constructs of their parenting role within Western societies. Furthermore, Whittingham (2014) suggests that parenting behaviours may be dictated by the 'verbal rules' and expectations written by the culture of the parents. On the other hand, Furlong and McGilloway (2011) raise the point that no culture presents a homogenous set of values, including parental values. Thus, parenting ideals may be under various contextual influences, or not, and, consequently, perhaps the constructions of the parenting role described in theories or policies are not consistently appropriate to parenting practice in parents' unique worlds.

To explore how the parenting role was being constructed in Australia, Maher and Saugeres (2007) conducted semi-structured interviews with 100 women (52 with at least 1 child, 48 without children). Interestingly, less idealised views of mothering were held by mothers who did not feel constrained by 'good mother' expectations, in comparison to non-mothers. Every interview referenced 'cultural ideals' but it did not have as much weight for mothers as non-mothers, highlighting how constructions of mothering may change after becoming a mother. Whilst these findings shed some light on the constructions of the parenting role, this research was focused on the decision to have children in regard to employment and the questions within the interviews presumably tended this way, although they are not reported within the study. Neither is the type of analysis used to interpret the transcripts, only that the analysis was performed by a team of researchers. This holds the caveat that the transcripts may not have been consistently analysed. Yet, Maher and Saugeres (2007) offer an insight into how mothers may be taking some control over the ideals they have of the parents they want to be despite external ideals.

Added to this, Pedersen (2016) explored the constructions mothers held about parenting by using the online forum 'Mumsnet', which is a platform for mothers to share knowledge and experiences. Conceptualisations of a 'good mother' and 'bad mother' were identified on the forum and uncovered that the mothers were actively reframing the construct of what an 'ideal mother' is, with indications that this concept is changing over time. It was additionally noted that the mothers' felt pressure to be a 'good mother', e.g., from the media. Mello and Tan (2016) also suggest that the media plays a role in framing social issues which influences perceptions of parental responsibility. However, Pedersen's (2016) study relied on the contributions of mothers who accessed Mumsnet and, therefore, may only be representative of a specific sample of mothers. Moreover, the information was written without the intent of being used in this way and perhaps the results would have been different if the mothers had been aware when they wrote their comments. Yet, Pedersen (2016), like Maher and Saugeres (2007), presents the idea of the evolving conceptualisations mothers may have of parenting and highlights the external pressures they may experience.

Despite there being much research on parenting, Belsky (1984) suggests that there is not much research available on why parents parent the way they do. From the literature discussed thus far in this review, it appears that parents may be taking a central role in determining their approaches to parenting, although their approaches may be moderated by numerous factors. Both may need to be recognised when offering support to parents.

3.2 Parenting knowledge

How parents conceptualise the parenting role may be dependent on their depth of knowledge of child development (Bornstein, Cote, Haynes, Hahn, & Park, 2010). For example, Zand et al. (2015) claim that greater parental knowledge of child development enables parents to hold more realistic expectations of their children, which presumably is reflected within their approaches to parenting. Bornstein et al. (2010) add that parents with limited knowledge may

hold unrealistic expectations of their children's development, which, again, may have implications on parental approaches.

To explore the level of parental knowledge in Canada, Pujadas Botey et al. (2017) conducted telephone interviews in two random samples in 2007 (n = 1443) and 2013 (n = 1451) with parents and non-parents (47% and 51% respectively). Participants were asked about children's physical, cognitive, emotional and social milestones and child-related issues and when they typically occur. Pujadas Botey et al. (2017) described knowledge as being poor overall, with less than 25% correct responses from participants. It is notable that responses for physical milestones were higher (48% in 2007, 44% in 2013) in comparison to social, cognitive and emotional milestones (less than 21%). Such findings suggest that knowledge of child development is generally low, which suggests a need to increase parents' knowledge of child development.

Yet, Scarzello, Arace and Prino (2016) advocate that the interaction between knowledge and parental practice is not a simple, linear process and that parental practice is moderated and mediated by other factors. For example, Teti and Gelfand (1991) indicate that, as well as parental knowledge, parents' perceived ability to implement this knowledge in their intended behaviour is also important.

3.3 Parental self-efficacy

de Montigny and Lacharite (2005) base their conception of parental self-efficacy on Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy (1977), describing it as beliefs or judgements parents' hold in relation to their ability to parent. Coleman and Karraker (1997) advocate that this is pertinent as parental self-efficacy beliefs are a powerful factor in influencing parental behaviours.

For example, Bornstein et al. (2003) used an ecological framework to examine the roles of various factors (including socioeconomic status, child temperament, parenting support and parenting knowledge and style) to investigate what may be central to mothers' self-perceptions

of their parenting. European-American mothers (n = 234) who were first-time mothers (children aged 20 months) participated in 4 waves, which included interviews, questionnaires and video recordings. Bornstein et al.'s (2003) findings highlighted unique responses for individual mothers' regarding their self-perceptions of parenting. Yet, constant contributors to self-perceptions were parenting knowledge (i.e., higher knowledge linked with higher self-perception of parenting ability) and dissonance between ideal and actual parenting practices (i.e., lower dissonance linked to higher self-perception of parenting ability). However, although much literature is discussed, it is not clear how Bornstein et al. (2003) determined the factors explored in their research. Moreover, as they sought to investigate self-perceptions, exploring specific factors may have been to the detriment of capturing wider factors underpinning the mothers' self-perceptions. Nevertheless, Bornstein et al.'s (2003) findings appear to be consistent with de Montigny and Lacharite's (2004) definition of parental self-efficacy, though Bornstein et al. (2003) do not attribute it as such in their research.

Spoth and Convoy (1993) believe that self-efficacy is positively related to parental efforts to engage in learning about parenting, including attending parenting programmes. This adds to Bandura's (1989) speculations on the importance of believing that performance is due to skills as opposed to external factors. This raises several questions, including how to support parents with low parental self-efficacy and, generally, how parents can be empowered with greater parental self-efficacy.

4. Parenting programmes

4.1 Brief summary of parenting programmes

Goldblatt et al. (2014) describe how parents need a wide range of skills to enhance their children's development and, also, to cope with the demands of parenting. Gilmer et al. (2016) recognise that this can be a demanding realisation, with Pontoppidan (2015) adding that having children is a significant life transition for parents. Considering the aforementioned literature on

parental role constructions, knowledge and self-efficacy, and the increasing awareness of how additional support for parents may be beneficial, it may be reasonably asserted that parenting programmes may offer this.

Gardner and Leijten (2017) describe parenting programmes as having a general, central purpose of supporting parents to develop their parenting skills and adapt their approaches to parenting which, in turn, should enhance their children's development. Goldblatt et al. (2014) explain how this can be achieved by either supporting the parent with parenting their child or by focusing more directly on the parent. The psychological theories underpinning parenting programmes vary, but may include Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) and Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977; 1989; 1995), all of which have already been discussed within this review as being influential models to consider within the parenting literature.

Allen (2011) counted 72 different types of parenting programmes, indicating a broad range of support available to parents. Moran, Ghatge and van der Merwe (2004) list that parenting programmes may differ according to: theoretical underpinnings; being preventative or responsive; recruiting at a targeted or universal level; attendance being mandatory or voluntary; and support being facilitated by professionals or volunteers. There are many parenting programmes available which provide support specific to the early years. Such programmes include, 'Triple P – Positive Parenting Program' (Sanders, 1999), Solihull Parenting Programme (Douglas & Brennan, 2004) and 'Incredible Years' (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010b).

In their attempt to identify effective parenting programmes which could be implemented during the transition to parenthood, Gilmer et al. (2016) reviewed 72 papers and concluded that there is an underlying assumption within parental education that parents who are experiencing challenges with parenting are doing so because of a knowledge deficit. Gilmer et al. (2016) additionally highlighted that parental knowledge is rarely ascertained prior to starting the programmes, although Pujadas Botey et al.'s (2017) study would suggest that knowledge on

child development may be generally low. Thus, being aware of this assumption may be important to consider with research and guidance advocating for programmes to be more readily available to parents (e.g., Allen, 2011; Bellis et al., 2015; Cymru Well Wales, 2017) e.g., when justifying why and for whom parenting programmes should be supporting.

Furthermore, although Allen (2011) suggests that what parents do is more important than who they are, it could be queried as to how simple it is in reality to compartmentalise this considering the complex multitude of factors already discussed within this review. Therefore, it could be inferred that an attempt at gaining a greater understanding of parental perspectives and experiences may be informative for designing, delivering and monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of parenting programmes.

4.1.1 Introduction to the Incredible Years Parenting Programmes

The Incredible Years Parenting Programmes (IYPPs), developed by Webster-Stratton (1981, 1982), aim to increase positive parenting by promoting parent competencies and strengthening family support networks (Webster-Stratton & Herman, 2010; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010a; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010b). IYPPs form part of a systemic, evidence-based approach to supporting children by working with their parents (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010c; Webster-Stratton, 2015) and have been developed alongside complementary programmes for teachers and children (Webster-Stratton & Herman, 2010). There are 5 BASIC IYPPs available aimed at supporting children aged from birth to 12 (Baby, Toddler, Pre-school / Early Childhood, Early School Age and Pre-adolescence) as well as more targeted programmes, such as ADVANCE, School Readiness and Autism Spectrum Disorder (Pidano & Allen, 2015).

Webster-Stratton and Reid (2010c) outline how the fundamental premise of IYPPs is that parents care about their children and want to facilitate their children's development, thus, assuming parents' intention to change. Yet, it may be inferred from this literature review that

any motivation behind this intention is likely to be personal and reflect their complex systemic dynamics.

Nevertheless, Webster-Stratton and Reid (2010c) conclude that comprehensive and empirical validation has been provided through programme development over 20, now 30, years. Pidano and Allen (2015) add that IYPPs have extensive empirical support, from independent researchers as well as from Webster-Stratton and her colleagues, with research evaluating IYPPs on a broad variety of parenting populations, settings and group aims. Schoenwald and Huagwood (2001) suggest that very few parenting programmes have the same level of empirical support as IYPP. However, Webster-Stratton, Rinaldi and Reid (2011) point out that a great deal of the focus in the current literature has been on child outcomes, with little attention paid to subjective parental experiences. Yet, with such an evidence base, IYPPs are recommended by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence Guidelines (NICE, 2006) and, according to Jones (2013), the Welsh Government has supported the provision of IYPP training for group leaders as part of the Welsh Government's Children's and Families (Wales) Measure (2010).

Webster-Stratton (2015) advocates that IY programmes have a psychological foundation which centres around cognitive social learning theories, including theories on: cognitive development (Piaget & Inhelder, 1962); attachment theories (Ainsworth, 1974; Bowlby, 1969); self-efficacy theories (Bandura, 1977); cognitive strategies (Beck, 1979); modelling (Bandura, 1986); and principles from motivational interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Moreover, Webster-Stratton (2015) indicates that the programmes are appropriate considering the growing evidence from neuroscience. Thus, the psychological theories underpinning IYPPs would appear consistent with some of the pertinent theories highlighted earlier within the child development literature.

These psychological theories feed into how the course is delivered and structured. For example, Webster-Stratton and Herbert (1994) explain how an interactive model of learning is

used within IYPPs. Reece, Ebstein, Cheng, Ng and Schirmer (2016) portray this approach as empowering as it enables parents to recognise skills and to learn strategies for themselves and their children. Videos and discussions are also used within the sessions to provide opportunities for practice-based learning (Gardner & Leijten, 2017) and for personal reflection (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010c). According to Borden, Schultz, Herman and Brooks (2010), this format enhances the concepts being delivered. Furthermore, Webster-Stratton and Reid (2010a) describe how the group focuses on personal goals and uses a strength-based approach. Collectively, this suggests that parents may incur personal and unique experiences whilst attending IYPPs.

4.2 Who are parenting programmes supporting?

Bunting (2004) indicates that 60% of parents in the United Kingdom show interest in attending a parenting programme but only 20% of parents attend. Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe (2004) add that attracting and engaging parents to attend parenting programmes can be challenging. Of this 20% of parents that participate in parenting programmes, Ng and Weisz (2016) point out that not all families will benefit from this attendance and, further, that it is difficult to predict who will benefit.

Commenting on this finding, Leijten et al. (2018) highlight the need to understand the factors underlying why parenting programmes are successful for a proportion of parents. Yet, it may be important to be mindful of what researchers have determined as success criteria. This, again, suggests the potential benefit of exploring parental perspectives of their lived experience of parenting programmes, which may include subjective success criteria. Indeed, Hickey et al. (2016) describe the growing recognition that parenting programmes impact different parents in different ways and that this impact is dependent upon, and moderated by, a variety of factors, such as those referenced earlier in this review.

A further factor to consider is whether the programmes have been delivered at a targeted or universal level. Offord (2000) explains that parents are usually targeted due to concerns that the children and/or the parents, are at risk. Thus, there appears to be a sense that targeted programmes may be perceived as being reactive, whereas perhaps universally accessible programmes may be seen as being more preventative. Indeed, Allen (2011), in his guidance for early years support policies, advocates for the need for support to become available at a more universal level for the purpose of early intervention.

Yet, reviews of parenting intervention research are inconsistent regarding the effectiveness of targeting certain populations of parents due to perceived risks. For example, Pontoppidan (2015) highlights how low socioeconomic status is perceived as a risk factor for children, yet there is no consistent evidence of this in evaluations of parenting programmes. This reaffirms the importance of paying due consideration to wider factors when evaluating parenting programmes, as proposed by Hickey et al. (2016). It also raises the questions of who decides who is at risk and would, therefore, benefit from a parenting intervention and on what basis are these constructions developed and evidenced. It may be that offering parenting programmes universally, as suggested by Allen (2011), is beneficial due to the unknown dynamics of factors present in children's and parents' lives.

4.2.1 Who are IYPPs supporting?

Originally, IY programmes were developed to reduce behaviours associated with childhood conduct problems (Webster-Stratton & Herman, 2010). Risk factors associated with such behaviours have been deemed to lie within the family (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010c), thus, suggesting the appropriateness of intervening at a familial level, i.e., through IYPPs. For example, the areas IYPP research has focused on have included: child protection services (Letarte, Normandeau, & Allard, 2010); welfare services and foster care (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010a); and maternal mental health risks (Baydar, Reid, & Webster-Stratton, 2003). Yet, the families, parents and children believed to be at risk appear to be a judgement which is not

consistently validated in the research (e.g., Hickey et al., 2016; Pontoppidan, 2015). Moreover, IYPP research appears to have a tendency to focus on one or two risk factors and, therefore, may be reductionist as it is potentially omitting the holistic and dynamic complexity of the situation for parents and children.

Yet, findings from IYPP evaluative research hold fairly consistent conclusions that IYPPs have been beneficial according to the measured child and parental outcomes (e.g., Baydar et al., 2003; Letarte et al. 2010; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010a). Furthermore, despite IYPPs being originally developed as targeted programmes, research has indicated that there is little difference in the measured level of impact across different groups of parents. For example, Baydar et al. (2003) found that mothers with mental health risks engaged in an IYPP (measured by the completion of homework and involvement in group discussions) and benefited at comparable levels (measured by parental reports and independent observations) to mothers without such risk factors. Therefore, suggesting that IYPPs may be beneficial for parents with and without perceived risk factors.

Accordingly, in an attempt to understand who benefits from parenting interventions, Leijten et al. (2018) looked at family data from 786 families, 452 of which had participated in IYPPs in the Netherlands and were part of 4 studies (3 randomised control trials and 1 matched control trial). Some of the parents attended the BASIC IYPP whilst others completed the ADVANCED IYPP, and the programmes were offered either as a prevention provision or as targeted treatment. Consequently, parents may have had very different experiences prior to and during the course. Indeed, the findings indicated that parental education and ethnic background did not moderate the effects of IYPPs, yet there was also a substantial variation in the extent to which families were perceived as having benefitted. However, limitations of this research include the challenges Leijten et al. (2018) described regarding comparing the different measures used across the 4 studies and there being no indication as to why these measures were chosen. Presumably, they were taken from the original data which would have also had

different research questions. Leijten et al. (2018) concluded that future research needs to consider different moderators, such as parental value of the programmes and family characteristics. This recommendation is consistent with the notion of exploring parental perspectives and experiences in more depth.

4.3 Implementing parenting programmes

As well as considering for whom parenting programmes are available, regard can also be paid to how the programmes are implemented. For example, Squires et al. (2015) indicate the importance of developing, refining and validating evidence-based frameworks for parenting programmes which can be adapted to meet the needs of parents. Aarons, Miller, Green and Perrott (2012) add to this by stating that evidence-based practice needs to be adaptable to fit in the real world. This correlates with the importance of recognising the dynamics in which parents live, as discussed throughout this review, whilst simultaneously being mindful that implementing parenting programmes should be done with fidelity.

It could be queried whether adapting to the needs of parents is reflected within policy guidance and recommendations which advocate the use of evidence-based frameworks within parenting programmes (e.g., Allen, 2011; Shonkoff, 2011). Perhaps the term 'evidence-based frameworks' needs to be operationalised to determine the extent of fidelity and flexibility being promoted.

As well as considering how the programmes are implemented, following the programmes it is assumed that the information and strategies discussed will be implemented at home. It may be valuable, therefore, to explore parental perspectives of how parents experience implementation after the parenting programme has ended. Indeed, Anderson, Aller, Piercy and Roggman (2015) discuss the influence of the 'fit' between existing parental beliefs and programme strategies. Freeman, Newland and Coy (2008) further imply that if parents

participate in programmes without aligning their beliefs with the ethos of the programme and related strategies, it is less likely that there will be a sustained change in behaviours.

4.3.1 Implementing IYPPs

Gardner and Leijten (2017) emphasise how IYPPs, like all IY programmes, have a strong emphasis on fidelity. On the other hand, Gardner and Leijten (2017) also maintain that IYPPs have a moderate ability to adapt according to the diverse needs of the group. For example, the sessions are all manualised but there is inbuilt flexibility within this, which is consistent with the guidance advocated by Squires et al. (2015) and Aarons et al. (2012).

In an exploration into group leaders' facilitation of an IYPP, which included observations of sessions, field notes and evaluation checklists, Aarons et al. (2012) found the fidelity to the programme varied dependent upon the activity. For example, modifications made to programme delivery and content were driven by the organisation, provider and consumer. However, the programme evaluated in Aarons et al.'s (2012) study was not run with fidelity itself, as one course facilitator ran the programme as opposed to the recommended two. Nevertheless, Aarons et al.'s (2012) findings suggest that it may be beneficial to consider the needs of the group, not only from a parental perspective but also wider factors, such as who is facilitating the programme.

As well as acknowledging wider factors during the programme, it may also be beneficial to consider how one can distinguish the contributions of implementing IYPP strategies from those from any moderating factors which may be involved. However, within some conclusions of IYPP research, there appear to be presumptions that any behavioural changes observed in the child are due to the adaptations in parenting following IYPP. For example, at a 3-year follow-up of 83 families, Webster-Stratton (1990) concluded that two-thirds of children had clinically significant behavioural improvements, attributing the changes to attending IYPP. This finding is consistent with McMahon (1994) who believes that 50-70% of families who attend parenting programmes

maintain clinically significant improvements after up to 3 years follow-up periods. However, wider factors contributing to these improvements are not highlighted.

Yet, Webster-Stratton (1990) suggests that the families who continue to experience problems are characterised by externalising problems and are more likely to experience 'risk factors', such as marital distress, lower socio-economic-status, single-parent families, mothers with depression and spouse abuse. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to view this as conjecture as the parental perspectives of contributing factors were not accounted for to clarify whether this may be the case within this study.

To explore such factors, Trotter and Rafferty (2014) used semi-structured interviews with 7 mothers who had attended IYPP 1-2 years earlier. Additionally, 26 mothers completed the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI, Eyberg & Pincus, 1999) and the Incredible Years Questionnaire of Parental Experiences and Growth. The latter was developed by the researchers and there is no reference within the study as to how this questionnaire was developed or validated. It is worth noting that the 11 interview questions used presumed a change had occurred. Trotter and Rafferty's (2014) used thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) on the findings and indicated that the overarching theme was a change in the mothers. There was also an observed change in: the children; their approaches to parenting and relationships; and an increased amount of social support. Notably, the interviews lasted on average 34 minutes, so it could be queried how much depth the interviewees were able to go into with each of their 11 questions. Moreover, Trotter and Rafferty (2014) reported that they stopped interviewing after 7 interviews as the same themes started to emerge within the data. However, with literature pointing towards a multitude of dynamic factors within parents' lives, perhaps the saturation of results described by Trotter and Rafferty (2014) was due to possible rigidity of the questions.

In another attempt to explore the effects of parenting programmes on family life, Mockford and Barlow (2004) conducted semi-structured interviews with 24 parents who had attended IYPPs and had children between the ages of 2-8. The study does not outline what the 24

questions were or how long the parents had to give their answers. The transcripts were analysed using a thematic approach with a constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The findings indicated that, although there was an overall increase in confidence, reassurance and control over challenging behaviours, some of the parents experienced difficulties applying the strategies at home. These were largely around parenting collaboratively with their partners, with indications that they would have liked their partners to attend IYPP too for consistency and support at home. Perhaps factors such as these may underpin the variance of impact or effectiveness of IYPPs in evaluative research.

Adding to this research, Furlong and McGilloway (2014) used a qualitative approach to explore the key facilitators and barriers associated with maintaining strategies from IYPPs for parents in disadvantaged areas of Ireland. Mothers were interviewed 12 months (N = 20) and 18 months (N = 8) after the programme. Although the interviews were described as in-depth, the interview questions were not shared. Furlong and McGilloway used a constructivist grounded theory approach to the analysis (Charmaz, 2006), concluding that most of the parents reported positive changes in their children's behaviours despite experiencing challenges. Challenges appeared to be underpinned by the strategies being perceived as 'hard work'. Those who overcame such challenges reportedly modified the skills to tailor them to their own lives, as well as using internal and external resources to cope in difficult times. On the other hand, others reported that during difficult times their skills reduced, they were unsupported by their environment and/or they perceived themselves as having ineffective parenting approaches. These findings suggest that facilitating a more flexible approach to attaining mothers' experiences of implementing IYPP strategies may elicit more varied and personal accounts.

4.4 Parental experiences of parenting programmes

Kane, Wood and Barlow (2007) point out that not a lot of research exists exploring parental perspectives of parenting programmes using purely qualitative approaches. Kane et al. (2007) used an ethnographic method, in which qualitative research studies are synthesised and

comparisons and new insights are developed (Noblet & Hare, 1988, as cited in Kane et al., 2007). The literature search unveiled only 4 studies which met the inclusion criteria ('group based', 'parent views', 'perceptions' and 'qualitative'). The most common reason for rejecting studies from the review was that they were not genuinely qualitative, e.g., narrative literature reviews of quantitative data, signifying the lack of research exploring experiences from a parent-led perspective.

Nevertheless, a range of new, overarching and interconnected themes emerged from Kane et al.'s (2007) data, which were underpinned by the idea of a progression or journey of experiences or perspectives. The data implied that, initially, mothers felt like they had inadequate knowledge which led them to feel powerless, but through the parenting programme they gained knowledge, reduced their feelings of guilt and were enabled to develop self-confidence and coping strategies. However, the studies Kane et al. (2007) found were nearly or over 20 years old and Kane et al.'s research itself is now over 10 years old. As the importance of social and group influences on the experiences of parenting programmes have been highlighted (e.g., by Crompton & Harris, 1999, as cited in Maher & Saugeres, 2007; Pederson, 2016), it could be deemed as pertinent to seek parental perspectives continuous with their changing and complex social worlds.

Indeed, social and group influences have been highlighted as integral factors within parents' experiences of parenting programmes, as well as in their experiences of parenting generally (e.g., Belsky, 1984). In her thesis research exploring parental experiences of the group aspect of a parenting programme, McPherson (2014) used semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with parents who had (n = 7, all mothers) and had not (n = 20, 17 mothers) attended a parenting programme. It is suggested that McPherson was known to the participants who had attended the parenting programme and, therefore, caveats of interviewer and participant bias may exist within the findings. Nevertheless, a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke,

2006) on the data indicated that the group parenting programme enhanced knowledge, therapeutic factors, hope and opportunities to normalise experiences.

Adding to this, Levac, McCay, Merka and Reddon-D'Arcy (2008) claim that the group element of parenting programmes increases awareness of others' perspectives and can encourage personal reflections. Thus, taken together, these findings imply the pertinence of exploring the personal experiences of parents attending parenting programmes, as such reflections are likely to be unique and valuable in enabling a deeper understanding of what may, or may not, be happening for parents during these programmes.

It could be that offering opportunities to reflect is in itself beneficial. To explore this, Smaling et al. (2017) used interviews and observations of 96 first time, young mothers when their children were 6 months old as well as maternal reports of aggression at 6, 12 and 20 months old. However, the study focused on the development of aggressive behaviours which may be to the detriment of understanding more holistic factors. Yet, it was concluded that maternal reflection developed the quality of the parent-child interaction and child development indicating the potential benefits of providing parents with an opportunity to reflect. But whether parents view this reflective practice as beneficial to them personally was not accounted for within this study.

4.4.1 Experiences of IY Parents

Attempts have been made to capture the perceptions of the effectiveness of attending IYPPs through quantitative approaches. For example, Letarte et al. (2010) used an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to compare pre and post-measures from 35 parents who had been designated to an IYPP intervention group (n = 26) or wait-list control group (n = 9). These measures related to parenting practice, parental self-efficacy and parenting satisfaction, as well as parents' perceptions of their children's behavioural problems at home (see Appendix K). It is not clear how many of the final participants were mothers, but all were being monitored by a

child protection service and had children between the ages of 5 and 10. Although results were not statistically significant, Letarte et al. (2010) concluded that attending IYPP had had a positive impact on parents' perceptions of their parenting practices and their children's behaviour. However, no change in parental self-efficacy was revealed as a result of attending IYPP, which is interesting as it suggests that there was a perceived effect on parenting practice but not on their perceived ability to carry this practice out.

On the other hand, Seabra-Santos et al. (2016) found slightly different parental perspectives. Seabra-Santos et al. (2016) asked parents (121 mothers, 2 fathers and 1 grandmother) of 3-6-year-olds to complete a range of scaled questionnaires relating to child and parental outcomes alongside observations of parent-child interactions (see Appendix K). Parents were either assigned to an IYPP intervention group (n = 68) or a wait-list control group (n = 56) and pre and post (12 and 18 months) measures were taken. All the children had been identified as having disruptive behaviours. The results indicated that IYPP had increased the social skills and reduced behaviour problems in children and improved parents' parenting and self-confidence. Unlike Letarte et al. (2010), Seabra-Santos et al. (2016) highlighted the importance of parental self-efficacy developed from IYPP, by concluding that changes in parental self-efficacy had led to changes in parental practices which caused changes in children's behaviour. However, both studies aimed to explore perceptions using quantifiable means and, thus, any conclusions have been developed without the parents having the opportunity to share their experiences as they understood them, but rather through the measures presented to them.

Indeed, Levac et al. (2008) felt that more attention needed to be paid to the views and experiences of parents. Levac et al. (2008) employed semi-structured interviews with 37 parents (25 mothers) within a month of completing IYPP. Their children were between 4-12 years-old. Content analysis on the data suggested that the parents' confidence and awareness in their approaches to parenting had increased. Moreover, they strongly valued the support within the group, as they felt accepted by others and the group made them feel successful. Importantly,

the parents demonstrated how they were intentionally utilising strategies and behaviours learned from the sessions. However, although Levac et al. (2008) intended on exploring parental experiences, the transcripts were analysed in groups of 5, not individually, so it may be that individual voices were not captured. Moreover, the questions asked presumed a change and were framed positively and, therefore, may be a tinted reflection of their experiences of IYPP.

A more open-ended questioning approach was adopted by Patterson, Mockford and Stewart-Brown (2005) who wanted to gain an insight into parents' experiences. Thirty-one parents (30 mothers) participated in semi-structured interviews and/or open-ended questionnaires 2-10 weeks after completing one of five IYPP groups, although, of these parents, there were 3 non-IYPP attendees and 1 who dropped out. Children were aged between 2-8 years-old. Patterson et al. (2005) used grounded theory (Glasser & Strauss, 1967) to analyse the data and concluded, akin to Levac et al.'s study (2008), that parents felt that they had developed confidence, better relationships with their children and successful parenting strategies. Parents also highlighted their appreciation of the non-judgemental support and the opportunities to normalise their experiences. However, each interview informed the next one and, therefore, it could be queried whether this captured individual parents' experiences. Yet, what Patterson et al.'s (2005) study offered was the opportunity for parents to share their experiences more openly within the research, which appears to have allowed for a deeper appreciation of parents' understanding of their own experiences of attending a parenting programme.

5. Focus on the early years

Some early years research has already been interweaved into this literature review, but the following section will focus solely on research surrounding supporting parents and their children during the early years.

5.1 Early intervention

The benefits of intervention whilst children are in their early years are reported in many research articles and policy guidance (e.g., Allen, 2011; Goldblatt et al., 2014; Shonkoff, 2011). Borden et al. (2010) explain that early intervention at a familial level has the potential benefit of promoting positive development at the start of a child's life. Cummings (2003) affirms this by describing how babies learn through their experiences with others and that they need such experiences consistently and frequently to develop their neuronal pathways during the early years of life. Moreover, from their longitudinal studies, Britto et al. (2017) further emphasise that early intervention has the capacity to alleviate the impacts of early adversity on child development.

Yet, Maughan and Barker (2018) advocate the importance of being mindful of current findings on early intervention research as 'like-for-like' comparisons may not be appropriate due to children's developmental levels being markedly varied at different ages. Maughan and Barker (2018) also highlight how research comparing the impacts of earlier and later interventions tend to focus on the collective outcomes reported in the studies, as opposed to looking at individual child data, which may mask some results. Furthermore, when considering programmes that are designed to work with parents and not children directly, it may be queried whether it is entirely appropriate to just report findings and make comparisons on children as they are being supported indirectly. Although arguably, the parents are attending programmes in order to support their children which may make such findings and comparisons relevant.

Maughan and Barker (2018) additionally promote the need to maintain any changes following an intervention and ponder whether parenting programmes offer enough support to enable this. Moran et al. (2004) suggest that early interventions are more durable in comparison to parenting programmes for older children. A possible explanation for this is Heckman and Masterov's (2007) assertion that early intervention offers parents support and strategies that can be implemented from the start of their parenting journey, as opposed to changing behaviours later on.

5.2 The Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme

The Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme (IYPB), like other IYPPs, was developed as a group-based intervention for 'at risk' families (Webster-Stratton, 2008), although, again like other IYPPs, the content has been deemed appropriate for all families (Evans et al., 2015; Webster-Stratton, 2008). IYPB is aimed at parents of babies aged between 4 weeks and 9 months at the start of the programme. The programme usually entails 2-hour sessions for a period of 8 weeks which are facilitated by 2 IYPB trained leaders (Webster-Stratton, 2008). Importantly, and consistent with the early intervention research described above, Borden et al. (2010) describe the purpose of IYPB as intervening early to promote the positive development of children and to prevent early problems from forming.

In light of this, the Welsh Government have supported and funded the delivery of IYPB across Wales (Jones, 2013). However, Pontoppidan (2015) notes that very little is known on the impact of IY for children under the age of 3. Pidano and Allen (2015) add that IYPB is under-researched in comparison to other IYPPs, with most research being completed on pre-school and primary aged children (Gardner & Leijten, 2017). Webster-Stratton (2015) agrees that, due to IYPB being one of the newest IY programmes, more randomised control trials are needed to evaluate it. Yet, from the previous IYPP research discussed within this literature review, it may be suggested that a qualitative approach may be beneficial to ascertain the unique perspectives of the parents experiencing IYBP.

From the literature search for this review, the existing IYPB research appears to be exclusively quantitative to date, as no qualitative research was uncovered. For example, Jones (2013) conducted what she describes as the first known evaluation of IYPB. Mothers were recruited into IYPB intervention groups (N = 39) or a wait-list control group (N = 24), who were later offered a place on the IY Toddler Programme. Their babies were between 2-16 weeks old at the time of the baseline measures. All mothers came from socially disadvantaged areas within Wales. Measures selected were chosen to reflect the content of IYPB, including: parent

observation, parental confidence; parental well-being; home-environment; safety awareness; parental demographics; and infant development (see Appendix K). All areas were measured using self-report or researcher completed questionnaires and scales. Thus, although the mothers were asked for their perspectives, they were required to give their views through pre-determined means.

The scores for both the intervention and control group were high at the baseline and no significant findings for maternal confidence, well-being and safety awareness were found 6 months later. However, maternal sensitivity to their babies increased in the intervention group relative to the control group ($p < 0.001$). Nevertheless, Jones (2013) speculated that the results may be illustrative of the mothers changing their behaviours as their babies became more alert with age. This suggestion highlights a potential limitation of using static means for comparisons for children during the early years as it is a time of rapid growth and development (Kolb, 2009), making it hard to control for the contribution of developmental and intervention impacts.

Unlike Jones (2013), Evans et al. (2015) found significantly positive benefits from IYPB offered universally in Mid Wales as part of the parenting support offered within a service. Most of the 79 parents who were included in the evaluation were mothers, although the exact number is not reported. Self-report scaled measures of parental confidence and mental health and well-being were taken (see Appendix K), which indicated that there was a significant increase in parental self-confidence ($p < 0.01$) and well-being ($p < 0.05$) post-intervention. In comparison to Jones' (2013) study, the parents in Evans et al.'s (2015) study had lower perceived self-confidence prior to starting the intervention and the research does not state how long after IYPB the post-intervention measure was taken, which may perhaps account for some of the differences between the two studies. Furthermore, this literature review has outlined many factors which may contribute to the maintenance of strategies developed during IYPP, such as perceived challenges and parental self-efficacy, which are not considered in either study. Again,

this highlights the potential benefits of exploring the unique experiences of parents who have attended parenting programmes.

This idea is perhaps made further pertinent by Pontoppidan's (2015) research which used a randomised control trial to evaluate the impact of IYPB in comparison to usual care offered universally to all mothers in 2 municipalities of Denmark. Self-report, scaled questionnaires were used to measure parent-child relationship, parental mental health, child social-emotional development, child cognitive development and child health (see Appendix K). Background questionnaires, e.g., ascertaining parental demographics, were also completed with the 112 mothers who participated in the research. Outcomes were measured 20 weeks after baseline and were repeated when the children were 18 months old. The findings were mixed, leading Pontoppidan (2015) to conclude that there was no clear impact of IYPB on child development and parent-child relationships, although the IYPB parents reported having a small network of support for practical issues in comparison to the usual care mothers ($p < 0.05$). Yet, the research discussed throughout this review would suggest that the mothers who participated in this research were likely to have had very different experiences prior to, during and following the groups, perhaps contributing to the mixed results described by Pontoppidan (2015). Therefore, exploring parental experiences of IYPB as they understand them, not led by a researcher, may lead to a clearer understanding of any subjective 'impacts' of IYPB.

5.3 What is unknown?

Much of the research considered within this review has measured impact using quantitative means and the methodology within the qualitative research discussed have largely prevented parents' ability to share their experiences and understanding of their experiences in a way that was meaningful to them. To date there has been little qualitative data in general on parents' experiences of parenting programmes, with some researchers calling for more research in this area (e.g., Belsky, 1984; McPherson, 2014). Bornstein et al. (2003) describe parenting as a

unique and personal journey, yet, it appears that parental experiences and their impact on parenting following IYPB have not yet been captured in the current research.

Bornstein et al. (2003) state that by gaining such knowledge, one can better understand parental behaviours and how they may impact child development. With research and guidelines advocating the importance of early years and the pertinence of supporting parents and children from the beginning (e.g., Allen, 2011; Borden et al., 2010; Goldblatt et al., 2014) this suggests the need for further exploration in this area.

With this in mind, the current research intends to adopt an exploratory approach to gather mothers' experiences and their understandings of these experiences, specifically around attending IYPB and parenting. Consequently, the research questions are:

1. What are mothers' experiences of attending IYPB?
2. What are mothers' perceptions of their approaches to parenting following IYPB?

5.4 Relevance for Educational Psychologists

Exploratory research is relevant with the changing legislation in Wales (Welsh Government, 2018) with a move to working in a person-centred way. However, as infants are dependent upon their parents (Barlow et al., 2010; Evans et al., 2015), working closely with parents seems appropriate for this early age range. Moreover, there is limited mention of EPs working with parents and children in the early years in the current parent intervention data. Therefore, exploratory research into the experiences and behaviours of parents of children in infancy may be informative for future EP practice.

This research is also compatible with the role of EPs considering they have the capacity to work with various systems, including parents (Farrell et al., 2006). Moreover, with an increased understanding of parents' experiences of parenting, EPs may develop their capacity to work within an early preventative approach to supporting children's development.

6. References

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Part Two: Empirical Report

**“There’s no handbook for this”: An exploration into mothers’
experiences of the Incredible Years Parents and Babies**

Programme.

(Word count: 6032)

1. Introduction

Early childhood is a crucial time in human development (Pontoppidan, 2015). During children's early years, the main providers of care, safety, identity and love are children's primary caregivers, usually their parents (Barlow, Smailagic, Ferriter, Bennett, & Jones, 2010; Evans, Davies, Williams, & Hutchings, 2015). Parents also provide the social foundation of their families which become the main learning environment for young children (Goswami, 2014). The combination of these early parenting and learning experiences play a significant role in child development (e.g., Borden, Schultz, Herman, & Brooks, 2010; Goswami, 2014; Webster-Stratton, 2011). For the purpose of this research, all caregivers will be referred to as 'parents'.

Early experiences of being parented provide children with an internal working model of how they view themselves and the world, affecting how they feel, think and behave (Barlow et al., 2010). Belsky (1984) posits that cognitions, self-confidence and social-emotional development are enhanced by attentive and positive parenting. In contrast, inattentive and inconsistent parenting may lead to future negative cognitive and emotional outcomes (Goswami, 2014). Yet, it is important to consider that the early experiences of parenting also influence how parents view their role and approach to parenting (Evans et al., 2015; Bornstein et al., 2003). Thus, there has been a call for changes to provide additional support for parents and their children in the early years (Allen, 2011).

Jones (2013) suggests that if parents can provide supportive relationships and environments to their children during the early years they can increase children's emotional, social and cognitive development despite risk factors, including mothers with depression, living in poverty and substance abuse. Borden et al. (2010) agree that early support at a familial level is beneficial to promote positive child developmental trajectories with Goswami (2014) supplementing that, due to the malleability of children's early brain development, interventions in the early years should always have an effect if parents engage.

Such conclusions have led to many national initiatives within the United Kingdom to recognise the benefits of offering support to parents and children during the early years (e.g., Allen, 2011; Bellis et al., 2015; Cymru Well Wales, 2017; Department for Education and Skills, 2004; Irwin, Siddiqi, & Hertzman, 2007). There are many early years parenting programmes available, including, 'Triple P – Positive Parenting Program' (Sanders, 1999), Solihull Parenting Programme (Douglas & Brennan, 2004) and 'Incredible Years' (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010). A general aim of parenting programmes is to prevent a 'cascade model' of difficulties which may develop over time (Borden et al., 2010), whereby behaviour affects parenting which impacts behaviour in a circular relationship.

1.1 Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme

The Incredible Years (IY) franchise consists of evidence-based programmes offering support for children from birth to 12 years old (Borden et al., 2010; Webster-Stratton, 2010; Webster-Stratton & Herman, 2010). IY offers multiple progressive and complimentary programmes, aimed at parents, teachers and children, which aim to strengthen positive and protective factors in order to improve child outcomes (Borden et al., 2010; Webster-Stratton & Herman, 2010). Webster-Stratton (2015) advocates that IY programmes have a psychological foundation which centres around cognitive social learning theories, including theories on: cognitive development (Piaget & Inhelder, 1962); attachment theories (Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlby, 1969); self-efficacy theories (Bandura, 1977); cognitive strategies (Beck, 1979); modelling (Bandura, 1986); and principles from motivational interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2002).

The goals of the Incredible Years Parenting Programmes (IYPPs) are to promote parental competencies and strengthen family systems by increasing: positive parenting; self-confidence; parent-child relationships; and support networks (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010). The Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme (IYPB) is one of the latest programmes developed by Webster-Stratton (2008, 2011). It was originally designed as a group-based intervention for 'at risk' families, although it can be offered more universally (Evans et al., 2015;

Pontoppidan, 2015). A summary of the programme is given in Table 1. According to Jones (2013), the Welsh Government has supported the provision of IYPB training for group leaders as part of the Welsh Government’s Children’s and Families (Wales) Measure (2010).

<u>Aims</u>	To support parents in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping their babies to feel safe, loved and secure. • Promoting their babies’ physical, emotional and language development.
<u>Structure</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight weekly sessions (sometimes biweekly). • Usually 6-8 parents per group. • Facilitated by 2 trained group leaders who follow a manual to ensure fidelity to the programme. • Parents can arrive 30 minutes early to have lunch if they wish. • Babies also attend the groups. • Both parents are encouraged to attend the sessions. If a single mother is attending, she can bring a parent or sibling. • Parents are given the Incredible Babies handbook (Webster-Stratton, 2011) which includes information about promoting child development and a journal. • Parents are encouraged to practice new skills with their babies during the sessions and at home. • A safe space is developed for parents to share updates on themselves and their babies’ development. • Vignettes are used to demonstrate real-life situations, support the training and provide a basis to discussions.
<u>Content</u>	There are 6 parts to the Programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting to know your baby. • Babies as intelligent learners. • Providing physical, tactile and visual stimulation. • Parents learning to read babies’ minds. • Gaining support. • Babies emerging sense of self.

Table 2. Summary of the Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme, as cited on the Incredible Years website (2017)

As IYPB is a relatively new programme there is little evaluative research available in comparison to other IYPPs. Jones (2013) conducted what she describes as the first known evaluation of IYPB in which mothers were assigned to either the intervention (N = 39) or wait-list control (N = 24) groups. The mothers came from socially disadvantaged areas within Mid and North Wales. Self-report and researcher completed questionnaires and scales were used to measure parental confidence, parental well-being, home-environment and infant development. Although maternal sensitivity to their babies increased in the intervention group relative to the control group ($p < 0.001$), no other significant results were found 6 months later. Jones (2013) speculated that the results may be illustrative of the mothers changing their behaviours as their babies became more alert. This suggestion highlights a potential limitation of using purely

quantitative analysis during the early years as it is a time of rapid growth and development (Kolb, 2009), making it hard to account for the contribution of natural development or parenting programmes.

Yet, unlike Jones (2013), Evans et al. (2015) found significantly positive effects from IYPB offered universally in Mid Wales. Most of the 79 parents included in the evaluation were mothers, although the exact number is not reported. Self-report scaled measures indicated that there was a significant increase in parental self-confidence ($p < 0.01$) and well-being ($p < 0.05$) post-intervention.

Pontoppidan (2015) added to the quantitative research by using a randomised control trial to evaluate the impact of IYPB in comparison to usual care offered universally to all mothers in 2 municipalities of Denmark. Self-report scaled questionnaires were completed by 112 mothers 20 weeks after baseline and again when the children were 18 months old. The measures included: parent-child relationships; parental mental health; and child cognitive development. The findings were mixed leading Pontoppidan (2015) to conclude that there was no clear impact of IYPB, although the IYPB parents reported having a small network of support for practical issues in comparison to mothers in the usual care group ($p < 0.05$). It was not clear to Pontoppidan (2015) why a variable pattern of results was found.

As the parents within all three of these studies were required to give their perspectives through pre-determined means thought pertinent by the researcher, the findings may not capture their individual experiences. Therefore, exploring parental experiences of IYPB as they understand them, not led by a researcher, may lead to a clearer understanding of any subjective 'impacts' of IYPB. Indeed, according to Bornstein et al. (2003), there are highly differentiated patterns of experiences which provide multiple contributions to beliefs about, and experiences of, parenting. It may be asserted that these experiences and beliefs impact how parenting programmes are experienced. Anderson, Aller, Piercy and Roggman (2015) also highlight the influence of the 'fit' between existing parental beliefs and programme strategies. Freeman,

Newland and Coy (2008) add that if parents participate in interventions without aligning their beliefs with the ethos of the programme and related strategies sustained behaviour change is less likely.

Therefore, it appears pertinent to add to the existing research by exploring how parents experience IYPB and how they understand these experiences. Indeed, Bornstein et al. (2003) suggest that by gaining such knowledge, one can better understand, predict and support parental behaviours and, simultaneously, learn more about the nature of these behaviours and how they may impact child development.

1.2 The present research

As there is limited qualitative data on parents' experiences of parenting programmes, there has been a call for more research in this area (e.g., Belsky, 1984; McPherson, 2014). This appears important as Bornstein et al. (2003) describe parenting as a unique and personal journey, indicating that parenting programmes may be experienced differently. Whilst current IYPB research has provided a quantitative analysis of the impacts for parents (e.g., Evans et al., 2015; Jones, 2013; Pontoppidan, 2015), the detailed experiences of parents have not yet been captured.

Exploratory research appears relevant considering the changing legislation in Wales which promotes a move to working in a person-centred approach (Welsh Government, 2018). Therefore, working with parents seems appropriate for the early years age-range with the construction that an infant's world is their parents (Barlow et al., 2010; Evans et al., 2015). This is compatible with Farrell et al.'s (2006) depiction of the Educational Psychologist (EP) role as including the capacity to work with various systems, including parents. Moreover, exploratory research into the experiences of early years parents may be pertinent for EP practice as it may enhance awareness of various psychological aspects of parents attending and implementing

knowledge from parenting programmes. An enhanced awareness may then elicit future directions EPs may take to support parents and children during the early years.

This research will focus on mothers' lived experiences as researchers have suggested that mothers and fathers may have different familial and caregiving roles and will, consequently, experience IYPB differently (e.g., Anderson et al., 2015; Pedersen, 2016). Further exploration into why this decision was made is discussed in Part 3.

1.3 Research questions

Considering the current literature on IYPB, and the intention of conducting exploratory research into parental experiences, the research questions were:

1. What are mothers' experiences of attending IYPB?
2. What are mothers' perceptions of their approaches to parenting following IYPB?

2. Methodology

2.1 Theoretical framework

Embedded within this study's research strategy (Silverman, 2000) is the philosophical basis demonstrated in Figure 1.

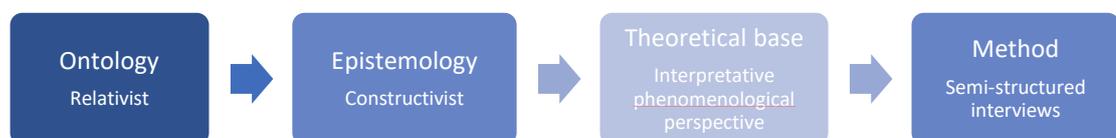


Figure 1. The philosophical basis of the current research study.

2.2 Ontology and epistemology

This research has a relativist ontology as it is assumed that there are multiple constructions of reality (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Robson, 2003). A relativist perspective also holds the assumption that research can be an exploration of a person's unique perspective of his/her

experiences (Willig, 2008). Thus, in this research, reality will be represented through the voices of the mothers.

The research takes a constructivist epistemology as it is assumed that reality is individually constructed and that learning is an active process whereby individuals construct knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Robson, 2003). This subjective representation of knowledge, as portrayed within the data, may be a product of mothers' past and present experiences and their understanding of these experiences.

2.3 Method

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) involves an exploration of how a person experiences a life event and how he/she makes sense of this experience (Smith, 2004; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). This is consistent with the purpose of this research.

In terms of hermeneutics, i.e., the theory of interpretation, the researcher offers an interpretation of the mothers' experiences, providing a new objective which the mothers could not provide themselves. Thus, there was a double hermeneutic, in which the researcher interpreted the mothers' understandings of their experiences.

2.4 Data collection

Smith et al. (2009, pg.57) describe a qualitative research interview as a "conversation with a purpose", with semi-structured interviews being the preferred method of data collection for IPA. Therefore, semi-structured interviews which followed the same interview schedule (Figure 2) were employed. In terms of phenomenology, i.e., the study of experience, Smith et al. (2009) emphasise the importance of capturing how participants understand their experiences by allowing them to be described in their own terms, as opposed to being directed by the researcher. This thinking was recognised in the design of the interview schedule.

The interview schedule:

1. Can you tell me what it was like for you attending the Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme sessions?
2. Can you tell me about what it has been like for you parenting your baby following the Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme sessions?

Figure 2. The interview schedule (see Appendix B).

It was felt by the researcher that two, narrative interview questions were appropriate as additional questions may have prevented the mothers from sharing their perceptions of their experiences in a way which was purposeful and meaningful to them. Prompts and probes were used, dependent upon the answers given by the mothers, to gain further insight or clarification, e.g., asking the mothers to contrast, evaluate and expand, depending on what they had just alluded to.

2.5 Participants

IPA is viewed by Smith et al. (2009) as an idiographic approach for understanding particular phenomena within particular contexts. Therefore, small and homogeneous samples are appropriate for IPA. Accordingly, a small, convenience sample of mothers was recruited.

Eight mothers from an IYPB group initially volunteered to participate in the research, although 7 completed the interviews. All the mothers interviewed had a partner and 6 were first-time mothers, with 1 being a second-time mother. Three of the mothers originated in European countries outside of the United Kingdom but all now resided in Mid Wales. The mothers' babies were between 6 and 8 months old at the time of the interviews and all were present for all or most of the interview.

2.6 Research procedure

An IYPB group was identified by the Local Authority's Regional Director for IY as a group that was being delivered with fidelity and, thus, an appropriate reflection of IYPB. Approval from the group leaders (Flying Start) was firstly sought by the Regional Director before the researcher made contact. The researcher met the mothers twice at the start of 2 sessions but did not stay

for the session content, therefore, she was not part of their IYPB experience. It was hoped that the initial visit (session 5), where the researcher introduced the mothers to the research and distributed the information sheets (Appendix C), would help her to build rapport with the mothers. The researcher returned for the final session to recruit volunteers for the research. The mothers were offered a £10 voucher as a gesture of thanks for participating.

Interviews were arranged to take place at the mothers' home or the Family Integration Centre, as was convenient for the mothers, between 8 and 26 days after the final session of IYPB. The interviews lasted between 34 and 52 minutes. Prior to starting the interviews, the information sheet and consent form (Appendix D) were read together to enable any queries to be addressed. All interviews were audio-recorded using a portable recording device. Following the interviews, the mothers were debriefed by the researcher and were given a debrief form (Appendix E).

2.7 Analysis

The audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher, following which IPA was used to analyse the data (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009). The analysis was thorough and systematic in accordance with the step-by-step guide to IPA research advocated by Smith et al. (2009) (Appendix F). The final themes are reflective of an iterative process, whereby in order to understand any given part one needs to consider the whole and to understand the whole one needs to consider the parts.

2.8 Ethical considerations

This research met the criteria for Cardiff University's Ethics Committee. It is also in adherence to the ethical practice guidelines for the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2009, 2014). Ethical considerations which were considered pertinent are outlined in Appendix A alongside the actions taken to remedy them. The ethical considerations included the need to:

maintain privacy and confidentiality; gain informed consent; ensure self-determination; and maintain integrity when analysing the data.

2.9 Validity

Yardley (2017, pg.295) advocates that qualitative research is “an attempt to explore how psychosocial processes are shaped by people, activities and understandings that make up their ever-changing context”. As such, Yardley (2000) developed 4 key dimensions in which quality of qualitative research may be demonstrated: sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; transparency and coherence; and impact and importance. To adhere to these key dimensions, a chain of evidence for the IPA process was developed (Appendix F) and the exploratory comments (Appendix G), initial noting (Appendix H) and thematic maps (Appendix I) have been shared. A full description of how these dimensions were met is given in Appendix F.

2.10 Researcher’s position

Due to the double hermeneutic approach described by Smith et al. (2009), the researcher would like to highlight her position in relation to the research. Firstly, the researcher does not work in the local authority in which the mothers were recruited. It may also be pertinent to note that the researcher is not a mother herself, therefore, there are no reflections of her own mothering experiences included in the data analysis. This is discussed further in Part 3.

3. Findings

The findings section is presented in a way as to demonstrate the double hermeneutic inherent within IPA (Smith et al., 2009). Within the tables, the citations from the interviews portray the mothers’ description of their own understanding of their experiences and perceptions, whilst the ‘interpretation’ column gives the researcher’s interpretation of these experiences. Consistent with the iterative methodological basis of IPA (Smith et al., 2009), the tables are representative of the parts whereas the narrative provided outside the tables is representative of the whole.

3.1 Research question 1: What are mothers' experiences of attending IYPB?

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Learning opportunities	Enhancing existing parenting knowledge
	Opportunities to reflect on approach to parenting
Increased feelings of confidence in parenting	Gaining reassurance
	Given confidence
	Journey to feeling more confident
Support within the group	Developing a social group
	Experiences of feeling supported

Table 3. Superordinate and superordinate themes for research question 1.

3.1.1 Superordinate theme: Learning opportunities

3.1.1.1 Enhancing existing parenting knowledge

Some of the mothers indicated previous feelings of being somewhat overwhelmed by parenthood. Yet, it appeared that these feelings were alleviated by opportunities to broaden their parenting knowledge within the IYPB sessions. The experiences of gaining information were personal, yet, a commonality was the mothers' intention and willingness to enhance their knowledge. They reflected that enhancing their knowledge was supporting their current parenting as well as helping them prepare for future parenting.

Furthermore, having opportunities to learn from one another was interweaved into this theme for most of the mothers. Within this, there was an appreciation of feeling included and involved in their learning experiences, as opposed to being told how to parent, suggesting an interactive learning experience and reciprocity. Opportunities for validation and the normalisation of experiences were also valued by the mothers. Thus, the group provided a platform for the mothers to enhance each other's knowledge and to empower each other.

Mother	Quote	Interpretation
3 (151-154)	<i>I needed this information because we don't get a handbook, a how to be a mum book when they're born, you just have to go with the flow [Laughter] but getting information from the group helps.</i>	Mother 3 suggests that there was not readily available information for her when she first had her baby. There is a sense that "we", as mothers, are not taught or coached on how to be mothers. The use of the word "flow" suggests that she felt she had to parent using the knowledge she had and, therefore, appreciated the information shared within the sessions.

4 (362-364)	<i>So that was nice to have that awareness, second layer of awareness that I hadn't had before.</i>	Here, mother 4 depicts how the sessions allowed her to develop the knowledge she already had by providing her with more information and, consequently, a deeper understanding. This mother had a personal journey through the course of learning not to criticise herself. Thus, this quote illustrates how she was provided opportunities to broaden her knowledge without being self-critical about her approach to parenting.
5 (29-31)	<i>It was just so interesting. You think you know it all and then you go there and it's like, "Oh, I didn't know that". [Laughter]</i>	In contrast, Mother 5 describes how she thought she knew everything but realised she did not. Mother 5 infers that she broadened her knowledge by the sessions challenging what she already knew and that she was accepting and welcoming of this new knowledge. There is also a sense of surprise that there was more to learn, yet she demonstrates a willingness and openness to broaden her knowledge within the sessions.
7 (337-341)	<i>Obviously, I haven't done the weaning session part yet but that was the first time I was actually like, you know, given some sort of information about weaning because, you know, otherwise you don't really know where to start.</i>	Broadening parenting knowledge also extended to preparing mothers for future parenting, as mother 7 indicates. Mother 7 alludes to feeling more prepared for aspects of parenting following information being shared in the group, describing it as the first time she had received such knowledge. The term "given" is used suggesting that information was imparted to her to broaden her knowledge as opposed to her seeking it herself. Within the wider content of the interview, this mother describes herself as having been daunted by the prospect of weaning prior to starting IYPB but following the information in the sessions she felt "really excited" to start.
3 (48-51)	<i>It was good because it wasn't just all... Bullet points, so all the time, we could interact with each other and everything and talk. Even though they were talking we could talk to each other and just get to know each other and get informations on what to do.</i>	Mother 3 describes how information was accessible through interactive learning experiences. It appears that this style of learning opportunity was perhaps unexpected and that she appreciated being able to talk to the other mothers, suggesting the importance of being involved in the learning as opposed to being delivered information.

Table 4. Citations relating to the subordinate theme 'broadening parental knowledge'.

3.1.1.2 Provided with opportunities to reflect

The mothers highlighted how the group provided them with opportunities to reflect. For example, the mothers' descriptions implied they were able to consider different approaches to parenting within the group, which they compared with their own. Moreover, there was recognition of the long-term impact of parenting choices they were making now on their children's continuing development. Some of the mothers reflected on being parented, or

growing up, themselves. The outcome of such reflections being the mothers' apparent openness to learn and adapt their parenting approaches.

Mother	Quote	Interpretation
2 (407-411)	<i>And then when they were like... Talking about overstimulating babies and we saw that the baby was on the mat and there was loads of toys and the baby was crying it was like, "Alright, now I can see that sometimes I'm overstimulated *baby* as well". Show *baby* too many stuff. So, it's like I learn more one or two toys with *baby* sometimes even nothing just the floor and *baby's* happy.</i>	Mother 2 shares how she had reflected on herself as a parent as well as on her baby's development. This extract is taken from mother 2's reflection on watching the vignettes within the sessions and comparing her approach to parenting with the parents she was watching in the videos. It appears that watching the vignettes enabled her to reflect on what was happening for the baby and how she could then transfer that reflection on to her own approach to parenting. It, therefore, demonstrates how mother 2 was willing and ready to make changes following the delivery of information and time to reflect on it.
4 (357-360)	<i>So, whilst they're happy in the baby frame or the baby walker, they're fine or enjoying themselves so you let them play not realising there are side effects of it, and they might be enjoying it but you have to stop them for their sake.</i>	Mother 4 highlights her reflections on her increased awareness of the possible impacts of how they, as mothers, choose to parent their babies. Her description implies her recognition of how current parenting choices can have long-term impacts on child development and the need to be mindful of this. This perhaps links to this mother's reference to developing a "second layer of awareness" mentioned earlier.

Table 5. Citations relating to the subordinate theme 'provided with opportunities to reflect'.

3.1.2 Superordinate theme: Increased feelings of confidence in parenting

3.1.2.1 Gaining reassurance

Several of the mothers reported that they had had limited support outside the group which, for some, led to them experiencing a lack of reassurance about their approaches to parenting. The group enabled the mothers to remove doubts around their parenting. Within their descriptions, polarised constructs emerged implying that parenting was either 'right' or 'wrong'. It appears that the mothers were not able to reassure themselves, i.e., through reading literature, and needed reassurance to be more personal. Yet, the source of reassurance appears to be important. Several of the mothers commented that the guidance offered from their own mothers or mothers-in-law was outdated and they felt that they needed more up-to-date information.

Some of the mothers described the reassurance they felt about their babies' developmental progress from attending IYPB, i.e., through group conversations and observations. This reconstructed previous perceptions that their approach to parenting was 'wrong' because their babies were struggling in certain areas. There was an underlying sense of relief from this reassurance.

Mother	Quote	Interpretation
2 (83-89)	<i>So, that's really good because before it's like when you can't talk about things like that with anyone it's like strange because you don't know if you are doing it right, or not, even if you've read it hundred times about it that its good you still don't know, and then when, when someone can tell you that, "Yeah that's good job that you doing" it then you feel like, "Yeah, that's right".</i>	There is a sense from mother 2 that she did not trust herself that she was "doing it [parenting] right" without confirmation from someone else. She describes not having anyone to validate or reassure her as "strange" which may pertain to feelings of uncertainty. Yet, although she had been diligent in trying to ascertain information to reassure herself, she suggests that these attempts were unsuccessful, highlighting the importance to her of social support for reassurance. Upon reassurance from within the group was she satisfied that she was "doing it right".
7 (197-204)	<i>And you feel like dead excited because you think, "Oh my god, I'm doing it without knowing that I'm doing it!" And then it's, it's a reassurance that, "Oh yes, I am doing it right". Because I actually like most sessions made me feel proud of myself and my little *baby* because I thought, "Yeah we are actually doing all right, we are doing all the right things what we're supposed to be doing". So yes, that's, that's what it made me feel like.</i>	Mother 7 describes how the reassurance gained from the group confirmed that she was a good mother. Her explanation suggests a sense of relief and perhaps also a sense of surprise by being reassured that she was "doing it right" in terms of parenting. The word "right" is repeated, indicating a polarisation in the concepts of parenting in a way that is "right" and "wrong". Like mother 2, in the wider content mother 7 alludes to literature she had read about being a parent, yet she had been unable to gain reassurance from the literature, indicating, again, the importance of social support. Moreover, mother 7 proclaims that she is proud of herself and her baby. This suggests the feeling of achievement following efforts being made in her approach to parenting. Interestingly, there is a switch from the use of "I" to "we" during this passage which may suggest that because she is parenting in a way that is correct, they are responding together, as mother and baby.
4 (163-169)	<i>So yes, it makes you feel more, because you're not thinking, "What I'm doing differently the other babies are sleeping and mine doesn't sleep so I must be doing something wrong and they're doing it right and I'm not getting it again". And you work yourself up about it and then you realise that no *baby* doesn't sleep but *baby* settled down in another area and they're not and...</i>	Mother 4 also highlights the reassurance felt from observing that all the babies are different. She compared her baby with others in regard to sleeping, which her baby finds challenging, and being settled, which her baby is. This appears to have reassured her that her baby being a poor sleeper is perhaps part of her baby's temperament, rather than a reflection on her parenting. Consequently, from her description of her self-appraisals, there is progression from questioning

		her approach to parenting to feeling reassured. She seems to have held the perception that others must be parenting “right” whereas she was doing it “wrong”. Moreover, her use of “...and I’m not getting it again” indicates that she may have frequently criticised herself.
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Table 6. Citations relating to the subordinate theme ‘gaining reassurance’.

3.1.2.2 Given confidence

As well as gaining reassurance, the mothers described how the course had given them confidence in their parenting. Words such as “gave” and “made” were frequently used in reference to how the sessions had enabled them to feel confident as parents. There was also a sense that the mothers were given confidence that they were doing a “good job” of parenting, with the assumed polarised concept being a ‘bad job’. Thus, it appeared that their experiences of the course had given them the belief that they could rely on themselves in their approach to parenting, i.e., self-autonomy.

Mother	Quote	Interpretation
5 (114-116)	<i>What I’ve got... Just confidence, new friends, obviously, confidence and... Yeah, I dunno, it makes you feel like, they make you feel like you’re doing really good job.</i>	The repetition of the reference to confidence given by mother 5 when summarising what she felt she had gained from IYPB, indicates that it was an important feature of the sessions for her. There is also a change for the use of “it makes you feel” to “they make you feel” suggesting that her increasing feelings of confidence were given to her by the group.
7 (237-238)	<i>Most definitely. It gave me like that boost that I’m doing a good job.</i>	Mother 7 also repeated this concept of being given or made to feel confident through attending the IYPB sessions. She describes the increase in self-belief, or confidence, as a ‘boost’ suggesting that it was an active impact given to her.

Table 7. Citations relating to the subordinate theme ‘giving confidence’.

3.1.2.3 Journey to feeling more confident

Some of the mothers alluded to the idea of a progression to becoming more confident through their experiences of IYPB. The difference here is that these were experiences that appear to be more internal, or self-driven processes, within the mothers’ constructions for themselves. The journey to feeling more confident appears to be interlinked with developing

self-efficacy and perhaps a reconstruction of the expectations they held for themselves as parents.

Mother	Quote	Interpretation
3 (29-30)	<i>Because that's the worry you get, that you're doing something wrong and you're not.</i>	Mother 3 describes the worry she had felt prior to attending the course about doing things wrong as a parent. She further highlights the realisation from that she "was doing everything really good" after comparing her experiences and approaches to parenting with the other mothers in the group.
5 (125-135)	<i>Umm... I don't really know actually, because I've always been pretty good with babies and stuff like that, but having your own it's like different because it's like, "Am I doing it right?" Like, "Why are they crying?" Kind of thing, like... And then you do get frustrated after they cry, and you change them and fed them and they're still crying and you're like, "What's wrong?" [Laughter] But then you go into the IY group and that's like, because you're learning more stuff. Like, you can help soothe, stop them crying when you do stuff like this or keep them calm by doing this. So, it does, it brings you out your bubble. So, it's nice.</i>	Mother 5 reflects on her own journey to feeling more confident through her experiences in the group. Her description alludes to a sense of 'then' and 'now', as in 'then' she had felt frustrated and overwhelmed and 'now' she felt confident and assured. She also indicates that perhaps she had felt less confident in parenting her baby than she had expected considering that she had believed that she was good with babies. This reflection could suggest a sense of disappointment and frustration, especially when she felt that she could not understand her baby's needs. She explains that her confidence had increased by being given suggestions of strategies she could employ to overcome the frustrations she had been feeling. Although IYPB is described as providing these strategies, the development of confidence in this case appears to be more of an active process within her. Lastly, mother 5 uses the phrase "brings you out your bubble" which implies a journey from feeling a low confidence to feeling confident in her parenting. Being "out" of the bubble gives a sense of being free or liberated from previous constraints inside the bubble.

Table 8. Citations relating to the subordinate theme 'journey to developing confidence'.

3.1.3 Superordinate theme: Support within the group

3.1.3.1 Developing a peer social group

All the mothers highlighted how they had developed a social group from attending IYPB, with many describing a shift from previously feeling socially isolated or having little support. Whilst they may have had social relationships, they still felt alone in parenting their babies. These feelings appeared to be maintained by not having a shared identity with their existing social groups. It was depicted how the mothers saw themselves as being different because they

were mothers of young children. Yet, with the realisation that there were others who were going through comparable experiences, there was a self-reported reduction in feelings of social isolation. Within this developing shared identity was the feeling that the mothers were not being judged within the group, which appeared to contrast with some previous social experiences.

Mother	Quote	Interpretation
1 (55-61)	<i>Only like sharing the problems as well, you know what I mean, you know, you got someone to talk to when something's wrong. And I got family and friends but, you know, like they are like older or something like they've got have no kids it's harder, and all the mums are all the same age group as well so and we shared loads of ideas about prams and everything...</i>	Mother 1 explains that she did not have a mother peer group outside of the IYPB group. Outside of the group, it seems that she had no one to talk to if she had concerns. Whilst she has friends and family, it appears that she valued this specific social group to feel supported, i.e., with overcoming challenges she may be experiencing with parenting. Her description suggests that she had a shared identity with members of the group as a mother of a young child, which is an identity she did not share with her friends and family. There is also the indication that she was able to contribute in the sharing of ideas within this peer group, which may further consolidate her feelings of having a shared identity with the other mothers.
4 (211-224)	<i>...I've got amazing friends but they are all they're all my mum's the age, I'm like the adopted daughter. So, their children are my age, so there's no one you can really go, even though I meet up for them for a coffee, I have no mummy friends. Because all their children are 20 or 30 years old now. So, I was in that sense... [Baby interaction] I was in that sense quite alone. Because you see parents in town and they have like three or four buggies together... [Baby interaction] And they would always be in the group and you'd see them with their babies and taking pictures and I was always... We'd go on little dates to *town* or *shop* as well, it would always be just me and *baby* because there was no other mums, everyone else was working, so I was very much alone.</i>	Mother 4 describes herself as having felt "alone" several times whilst describing her early experiences of parenting, indicating that she felt that she had no one. Yet, this 'no one' appears to be specific to a peer group, suggesting the importance of having a social group who are going through similar experiences. Although she describes her friends as being "amazing", it is apparent that she did not have friends who shared her "mummy" identity. She actually describes them as having a different identity to her, with her being the "adopted daughter". She also compares herself to how she saw other mothers with their mother friends who were apparently sharing their experiences. There is a sense of longingness to this type of interaction with other mothers within her dialogue. However, she uses the past tense to describe these feelings, eluding to her not feeling alone anymore.
5 (88-93)	<i>I dunno, I think it's just because we all got on so well as well, and like, yeah, there was no one there judging you or looking down their nose like, "You're not very good mum" and stuff because that does put you off. No, it was, it was all nice, positive atmosphere and... Yeah.</i>	A recurrent concept throughout mother 5's interview relating to her experiences of attending IYPB was not feeling judged by others. In contrast, she describes how she enjoyed the positive ethos created within the social group. This quote gives a sense of a previous concerns about, or previous experiences of, being made to feel smaller or subordinate in comparison to others. Yet, this concern was not realised from her experiences of attending IYPB, with her

		description eluding to her feeling supported by her social group.
6 (212-216)	<i>Yeah, I just really enjoyed going every week. You know, it was just something to do on a Thursday. We enjoyed meeting up together, you know, as I say, having a chat, because it wasn't just really for us like learning stuff about the group, it was like a get together as well, you know.</i>	Mother 6 describes how she enjoyed the sessions reasoning that they gave her "something to do". This suggests that otherwise she might not have something to do. She further highlights that the groups were not just about learning but also about opportunities for social interaction. Her description of "having a chat" suggests that the interaction she valued within the group was not formal. Within the interview, mother 6 compares her experiences of YPB with her past experiences and implies a reduction in her feelings of social isolation as she now has a peer group of mothers.

Table 9. Citations relating to the subordinate theme 'developing a peer social group'.

3.1.3.2 Experiences of feeling supported

Some of the mothers added how the sessions were flexible as adaptations could and would be made to meet the needs of the mothers. Thus, whilst the sessions had a purpose and built on each other, there was a sense that they were personalised to support the mothers too.

Furthermore, the sessions appeared to have evoked a recognition in some of the importance of meeting their own needs, including valuing self-care as well as baby-care. The group also offered opportunities for the mothers to do something for themselves, from being able to express concerns to having opportunities to feel good about their appearance. For some, it was an opportunity to be looked after themselves, e.g., given food. Therefore, attending the group met some of the mothers' needs, whilst they were meeting their babies' needs.

Mother	Quote	Interpretation
4 (870-874)	<i>If that went on longer than it should have done, that's fine, you know, this group is first and foremost here for you, so if you need to talk, she just focused around us, what we needed and we just nattered and nattered and nattered, didn't we? [To baby]</i>	Mother 4 highlights how the course could be flexible in its structure and adapt to the needs of the mothers. This appears to have been facilitated through the group leaders. This support could be viewed as echoing the support that the mothers were giving their babies. Moreover, mother 4 indicates in her description that her needs were to engage in social interaction and this was facilitated within the structure and inherent flexibility of the group.
1 (399-402)	<i>Yeah it was here in the group because every, every week they were asking us, "What have you done for yourself today?" and it was like, "Oh my god". It</i>	Mother 1 described her realisation that she was not looking after herself. She implies that she felt that her life was being driven by looking after her baby, but the group gave her the realisation and insight of the importance of self-care. This

	<i>was like you realise I didn't do nothing. It was all baby.</i>	realisation appears to have been a surprising revelation to her, as if she had not realised this had happened. Within the wider interview, this mother also portrays herself as feeling “guilty” for leaving her baby to feed herself, but that she had been reassured by the group, which she described as being “a little piece of my mind gone”. This suggests that meeting her own needs may have been a constant source of worry or guilt to her.
2 (184-191)	<i>And it was good because at least this one time in a week where I could just do something for myself as well, so I was just like I'll be meeting people so I'll just make my hair up and put the make-up on to get there. Because then at home I don't need that. So, then it's good to have that meeting because we can all put up hair really nice and like wearing nice new clothes just to show off. [Laughter]</i>	A pertinent concept within mother 2's interviews was feeling like she was doing something for herself within the group. This contrasted with feeling like she was only doing things for her baby and doing things for herself was a rare occurrence. Moreover, in her preparation in getting ready for the group, she was engaging in something that was for her. Thus, from her description, attending the sessions appears to have felt like a special occasion for her, perhaps due to having people to meet, or perhaps just because it was perceived as being something for her.

Table 10. Citations relating to the subordinate theme ‘experiences of feeling supported.

3.2 Research question 2: What are mothers’ perceptions of their approaches to parenting following IYPB?

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Increased confidence in being a parent	Feeling reassured in their approach to parenting
	Increasing self-autonomy
Adapting parenting	Having options following the sessions
	Continuing to reflect on their approaches to parenting
	Developing coping strategies
Having a social peer group	Social connectedness
	Constant support available from peers

Table 11. Superordinate and subordinate themes for research question 2.

3.2.1 Superordinate theme: Increased confidence in being a parent

3.2.1.1 Feeling reassured in their approach to parenting

For some of the mothers, the validation gained within the sessions was leading to feelings of increasing reassurance in their approaches to parenting outside of the group. Linked to this, the concept of being ‘wrong’ in their approach to parenting appears to have been a construct they had given themselves when they did not have the reassurance that they were ‘right’. Thus, they were never ‘wrong’ in their approach, but they lacked confidence in their own ability. This

suggests increasing self-efficacy in their ability to parent. As well as feeling more confident in their current approach to parenting, this reassurance had led to the mothers describing how they felt more prepared for parenting in the future.

Mother	Quote	Interpretation
2 (371-381)	<p><i>It's because it's not like umm... I'm not scared of doing something wrong. It's like, whatever I'll do for *baby* and I'm doing because I want to *baby* good, so I'm doing fine. And I'm more like... Sure... I'm not sure... It's like I'm not that scared of like giving *baby* different things to eat or like... Making more of a routines... In *baby* life, so *baby* will like know what time is for food and when *baby's* going to sleep. So, it's like... Now, I can feel like it's umm like right it's time to do it for try to do something different and it's like not scary that much because before it was all, "Oh my god how will I cope with like feeding *baby* and *baby* had breast and then... What now, what should I start with".</i></p>	<p>Although mother 2 appears to have found it difficult to clarify what she meant, considering the number of pauses, her description depicts how she has become more reassured about her approach to parenting.</p> <p>There are contrasting concepts here between what is 'right' and 'wrong' in terms of parenting, and it could be queried whether she saw any area in between these two concepts. Yet, from her experiences of the group, she has had the reassurance that, because she wants to do the best for her baby, she is right.</p> <p>Moreover, there appears to have been a shift or a journey from being scared of doing things wrong to feeling sure that her approach to parenting is right. From her description, this seems to be achieved through gaining validation about her approach to parenting from IYPB.</p> <p>There is also a sense of feeling reassured from being prepared of future stages in her baby's development. So, even if she is introducing something new to her baby, she has gained confidence that her approach would be considered as being right. This may be seen as a substantial shift from feeling scared of doing things wrong.</p>
3 (281-285)	<p><i>Umm... I... Umm... I think it has just improved me a lot more. I know I was doing, I know I was doing everything right, but now it's just... Ensuring that I am doing everything right and... After and during the course is just like, I know what I'm doing, I know what the next stage is.</i></p>	<p>Mother 3 describes how she feels that she has improved in her approach to parenting, but also that she knew she was doing everything right. Whilst these may appear to be somewhat contrasting concepts, her description alludes to gaining reassurance about her approach to parenting and that having such reassurance led to her feeling like she had improved.</p> <p>Like mother 2, there is reference to her feeling more reassured in her preparedness for the future. This was a shift in her perception in her belief of her ability to parent, as she also reflected on how difficult the unknown was to her during her pregnancy, i.e., what to expect and how she was going to parent, which had previously made her worry.</p>
7 (519-524)	<p><i>I can't exactly say that I panic but you know when you feel a bit anxious and you think, "Ooh am I, hmm what am I gonna do? How am I gonna tackle the situation? Or am I doing the right thing?" But now I just feel like, "Yeah, just chill out, it'll be fine, you know,</i></p>	<p>Mother 7 also reflects on a change. For her it was from feeling anxious to feeling relaxed as a mother. There is a sense that she feels reassured that she can manage situations using a range of strategies.</p> <p>Furthermore, her reference to the concept of the 'right' approach to parenting is perhaps more</p>

	<i>we'll sort it, everything gets sorted in one way or the other."</i>	open than the other two mothers in that she appears to construct 'right' as more flexible, i.e., there are lots of ways which could be successful.
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Table 12. Citations relating to the subordinate theme 'feeling reassured in their approach to parenting'.

3.2.1.2 Increasing self-autonomy

The mothers' descriptions alluded to a continuation of their personal journeys in developing confidence in their approaches to parenting with depictions of having moved from states of feeling unconfident and dependent to those of feeling confident and independent. Thus, their developing confidence appears to be linked to becoming more self-autonomous. Increasing self-autonomy was also reflected in the highlighted difference between the mothers having support and needing support. Whilst the mothers appreciated the new-found support provided by the group, there was a recurring feature of the mothers feeling confident that they can parent without needing the support of others. For some of the mothers, this shift coincided with a sense of liberation and empowerment.

From several of the mothers' descriptions, a sense of motivation can also be inferred. For example, in continuing to apply knowledge and strategies despite unknown outcomes and success rates. This motivation appeared to be fuelled by their increasing levels of confidence and parental self-autonomy, suggesting circular causation between the two.

Mother	Quote	Interpretation
5 (186-188)	<i>I don't know it just seemed, I came out my bubble a bit more and like I felt more confident around doing stuff and... Yeah, it's just nice.</i>	This mother refers to her developing confidence as coming out of "her bubble". This implies a shift in states, i.e., inside the bubble she felt unconfident and reliant and outside the bubble she feels confident and independent. From this mother's depiction, it appears that the shift to feeling like she is out of the bubble was through developing self-confidence within the group.
3 (188-192)	<i>And I know what I'm doing. That I'm not just stuck or phoning up asking someone, "What do I need to do? What do I need to do?" I know what to do. So, I don't have to like call up my mum or my sister or other mums. If I'm stuck I do know what to do.</i>	Mother 3 describes how her experiences of IYPB has impacted on her feelings of self-autonomy as a mother. She repeatedly refers to the word "stuck", which was a word she used frequently to describe her experiences of parenting before the course. Yet she reported that since IYPB she has moved from this feeling. As opposed to 'unstuck' being the opposite of the feeling of being 'stuck', the contrasting concept appears to be closer to the sensation of liberation.

		Added to this, mother 3 previously referenced the benefits of having support from the others in the group after describing how she was on her own frequently before attending IYPB. Therefore, there appears to be a distinction between the confidence of having support and the confidence felt by believing she does not need support.
1 (445-451)	<i>Its brilliant, because I don't have to go and like go and ask my mother-in-law. I know there's nothing wrong with asking but it's nice to have your own knowledge as well, you know what I mean? It's like, like... I know it sounds silly or something but it give me more like, you know, capable of taking care of *baby* as well. Yeah, so it's I don't have to rely on other people as well as much as at the beginning.</i>	Mother 1 describes how she does not feel like she has to rely on support from others, which is a change to her previous references of having needed to rely on others in the past. There are repetitions of filler phrases along with her reflection in which she also attempts to discount, i.e., "I know it sounds silly". This gives the impression that she may have believed that she should have felt "capable" prior to the course. However, it is not clear who these expectations may have belonged to, herself or others. Within the wider context of the interview, she infers that her expectations of being a parent and having a baby had not initially been met.

Table 13. Citations relating to the subordinate theme 'increasing self-autonomy'.

3.2.2 Superordinate theme: Adapting parenting

3.2.2.1 Having options following the sessions

Some of the mothers described the benefits of having an increased number of options available to them which enabled them to overcome previous uncomfortable feelings, such as feeling "stuck" or "scared". With this, came a sense of empowerment and an enhancement in their motivation to adapt their parenting. The wider range of options available to them was largely attributed to gaining knowledge from other mothers within IYPB, who appeared to be an ongoing trusted source of information.

For some, applying these options related to the reflections within IYPB of the impact they may have on their child's development. Any adaptations appeared to be personal, linking to salient aspects of their parenting or something which became meaningful for them having reflected on their approach to parenting during IYPB. Thus, adaptations made were consistent with their experiences of parenting, as opposed to being novel approaches, suggesting that applications of knowledge following IYPB were generally an extension or revision of their previous approaches to parenting.

Mother	Quote	Interpretation
3 (348-352)	<i>The, yeah, getting information from other mums, trying this and then another mum would say, "Oh try this one as well". If that doesn't work, try this or try that. You're getting a bit of what you need to do, and if it doesn't work, try what they what they suggest.</i>	The feeling that she had an increased number of options was a concept which ran through mother 3's interview. Here she describes the different options she could use in her parenting. There is a contrast between the reference of her having "plenty of options" as opposed to her previous feelings of being "stuck". Thus, there is a sense of empowerment from the options that have been given to her through sharing with the other mothers in the group.
4 (502-506)	<i>You know what it was quite nice and that sense, because they've been so positive it was just trying to continue after. And having *IYPB leader 1's* voice in the back of your head and go over a few of her lines just trying... I mean, you've had 3 hours sleep what would she say? [Laughter]</i>	Mother 4 discusses how she was trying to continue to positively reframe her thoughts following the course. Thus, she demonstrates how she was applying strategies to herself as well as her parenting. Yet, she also reflected during the interview that she feels that it will translate into her parenting, as well as herself, and that she wanted her baby to grow up in a different way to her. Therefore, it appears that she is choosing to adapt her parenting to benefit herself and her baby.

Table 14. Citations relating to the subordinate theme 'having options following the sessions'.

3.2.2.2 Continuing to reflect on their approaches to parenting

The reflections of some of the mothers indicated an evolving perception of their approach to parenting following IYPB. For example, there appeared to be a shift in the construct of parenting moving from that of being "stressful" to "easier". This was evident within descriptions of increasing awareness of what their babies were communicating to the mothers (mind-mindedness) alongside increased options of how they could respond.

Their reflections also highlighted a continued awareness that their approaches to parenting have an impact on their babies' development. Consequently, an intention to adapt their parenting appeared to be driven by the desire to enhance their babies' development, indicating a sense of empowerment, i.e., because what they do is important.

Mother	Quote	Interpretation
6 (427-431)	<i>It makes you feel great, well not great, but, you know, you don't have to worry, you're not stressed because you know what your baby wants and you know how to, to, to give what *baby* needs then because you understand *baby*. Umm, so yeah. It just makes the job easier really in general.</i>	Mother 6 explains how learning new information during the group had enhanced her understanding of her baby's needs. An impact of this increased understanding was "...*baby's* quite easy to understand now" which suggests that her baby had not been easy to understand before. Being better able to recognise the needs

		of her baby appears to have led to the reflection that parenting had become easier. From this description, it appears that “easier” is the contrasting construct to “stressed” in relation to her response to being able to understand her baby’s needs.
5 (237-239)	<i>Yeah, it’s just like... Interacting with them and like learning stuff, like learning then, because really, you’re then teaching them really, aren’t you? So, it’s like they’re learning off you.</i>	Throughout this quotation, mother 5 appears to be reconstructing her role as a mother to being her baby’s teacher as she seems to be appraising herself as the source of her baby’s learning and development. There is a sense of empowerment within this reflection due her heightened responsibility within her role as a mother.
2 (307-310)	<i>It’s like paying more attention now on what I’m doing because they were, like everything, every little bit of what we are doing, what we’re talking about the baby, what we’re showing the baby, it’s like... It’s making changes, if you know what I mean...</i>	Mother 2 reflects on her intention of being more vigilant in her approach to parenting with the recognition that her approach leads to changes in her baby’s development. The use of “everything” and “every little bit” highlights her reflection that all aspects of her approach to parenting is having an impact. Although such a reflection may be overwhelming, mother 2 appears to frame it as empowering.

Table 15. Citations relating to the subordinate theme ‘continuing to reflect on their approaches to parenting’.

3.2.2.3 Developing coping strategies

Following the recognition of the importance of self-care during IYPB, several of the mothers commented upon their new priority of looking after themselves as well as their babies following IYPB. It was considered, by some, that looking after themselves is foundational in them being able to care for their babies. Furthermore, it appeared that ongoing reflections and experiences were enhancing reconstructions of themselves as parents, as well as their lives with children, which were enabling them to make adaptations to cope with any challenges.

Mother	Quote	Interpretation
1 (372-375)	<i>So, and like our time as well not only baby, baby and we need our own time as well between *baby*. That *baby* is the important thing, but we have to take care of ourselves as well. So, if I’m not going to be well who take care of *baby* as well, isn’t it?</i>	The recognition of the importance of self-care was a prominent feature in mother 1’s interview and this recognition appears to be influencing her approach to parenting following the course. As well as adapting her parenting directly, she also had made changes to adapt her approach to her own self-care. The repetition of the phrase “as well” seems to reinforce her reflection of the importance of looking after herself in addition to her baby. There appears to be the emergence of the recognition of a circular relationship within her interview between how she feels impacting parenting, which would then affect her baby and, subsequently how she feels.

1 (326-330)	<i>I know I think my patience was... I think it's still one of the... Because I think mentally strong person but since *baby* was born it was like a shock of situation as well and, you know, you know, like thrown into the deep end and even though we prepared for it for years it's still, it's still change of life, isn't it?</i>	Mother 1 additionally reflects on her developing patience. There are indications that she was trying to make sense of her own reflections during this part of the interview due to the number of pauses and fillers used in her description. Perhaps this is due to the ongoing reconstruction of her expectations of herself as a person and as a mother. For example, she held the self-perception that she was a strong person, but her early experiences of parenting had challenged this construction. Furthermore, there is a sense that having a baby had a wider impact beyond her expectations of herself but also her expectations on what life would be like, i.e., through the use of “shock”, “still change of life” and “thrown in the deep end” to describe life with a baby. The latter suggests that there was a big, sudden and overwhelming difference in her life when her baby arrived. Thus, the development of patience appears to be a coping strategy to overcome challenges relating to previously held expectations, suggesting an ongoing progressive shift over time.
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Table 16. Citations relating to the subordinate theme developing coping strategies

3.2.3 Superordinate theme: Having a social peer group

3.2.3.1 Social connectedness

The mothers described how they built a sense of social connectedness within the group which had continued after the IYPB sessions had finished. Social connectedness was depicted as having a peer group to whom they related. Consequently, some of the mothers described that by having a social peer group they no longer felt alone in parenting. This contrasted with the feeling that they did not have a social group prior to attending IYPB. Furthermore, having social connectedness led to reassurance that they had support and that they were valued within the group. It was felt that this was not possible from their relationships with others, e.g., family, other friends and early years professionals.

Mother	Quote	Interpretation
4 (799-801)	<i>It's just nice that there's always someone there on the end of a message. Because I would never, I would never message my mum-in-law.</i>	Mother 4 describes how she feels constantly supported now outside of IYPB by other mothers. There is a contrast in language between her depiction of “always” having the support of her peers and “never” going to her mother-in-law for support. This suggests that, alongside other passages from her interview, that she had limited

		support and felt isolated prior to attending the group and developing this social network.
6 (461-469)	<i>It's good because you've got something in common. My other friends, they've either got older children or they haven't got any children and like they're not really interested really. Because all you're on about is your baby, "Baby, baby, baby", you know, and they're just like, "Yeah, whatever". [Laughter] Umm but with these baby mummy friends like, you know, we've got the same, they're all the same roughly age. We get information from each other, we help each other, umm and we just, we just have so much more in common I suppose.</i>	Mother 6 highlights the importance of having something in common with the other mothers, i.e., having young children. From her description, she did not feel this social connectedness with a peer group outside of the IYPB group. There is a sense that there is a difference between her social groups, with friends outside of the IYPB group being uninterested in her baby, whereas those from the group are interested. It appears that this contrast has led to her feeling like she is not approaching parenting alone. For example, within the interview she goes on to outline how having a social group with more in common with her can share information and support each other.
7 (617-623)	<i>No, I don't actually because we set up the Mummy Mail as well. Yeah, so, that's quite good because, well to be fair like that helps, that helps me even more now, because I know the people in Mummy Mail, I know them personally. I am also part of a Facebook Group which is about like parenting and pregnancy and that which I joined, but it's one of those where you don't really know the members.</i>	Mother 7 reflects on her current feelings of social isolation, as she had described earlier in her interview. Her description highlights how she no longer feels socially isolated. There is a sense that she takes some ownership over the support she is now receiving, i.e., "we set up the Mummy Mail...". Mother 7 also indicates the importance for her of knowing the mothers personally. It appears that this is important because support is more meaningful. She compares the IYPB mothers to an online general parenting group where she does not have social relationships with those in the group. Although this demonstrates her motivation to seek support from others, her depiction suggests that she feels more social connectedness with the IYPB mothers.

Table 17. Citations relating to the subordinate theme 'social connectedness'.

3.2.3.2 Constant support available from peers

As well as feeling social connectedness, there was a strong sense from all the mothers that they were experiencing support from the group which was impacting positively on their lives. Therefore, this theme relates to what the group could do. For example, several of the mothers indicated the availability of constant support, whatever their needs were, from the other mothers. This contrasted with their previous experiences of not feeling supported. Support was available either from opportunities to interact with the mothers personally or through an online group they had set up. From the availability of this constant support came the impression that

these mothers no longer felt “stuck”, in terms of social support and/or in doing things for themselves.

Mother	Quote	Interpretation
6 (485-491)	<i>Yeah, yeah! But no, it's great, you know, and, and umm we all get to know what each other are doing and yeah if there's anything that we need to ask, we ask them. And there's always somebody, because obviously not everyone's on the same time, there's always somebody that will come back to you and give you information or help or anything that you need, you know, it's good.</i>	Mother 6 indicates the continued contact with the mothers outside of the group. The repetition of the word “always” suggests that she feels that she is constantly supported by the mothers with whatever her current needs are. This description of support is in contrast to her depiction of the lack of interest her other social groups have in her baby. Furthermore, within the interview mother 6 continues to describe how she does not “feel like I’m bored stuck inside with a baby looking at the four walls”. The use of the word “stuck” suggests that there was not a way out prior to developing the support from the mothers in the group, as well as giving her an opportunity to leave the house.
5 (494-499)	<i>And sometimes it's not all about baby, baby, baby [Laughter] so it's nice. It's nice to meet up and say, “Do you fancy a drink or going for a coffee or something?” It's nice to know that you're not alone and you can like, like, you wanna get out the house as well, you don't wanna be stuck indoors all the time in the same four walls kinda thing...</i>	There is an indication from mother 5’s description that following IYPB she feels more supported in doing things for herself following the group. Like mother 6, mother 5 highlights previous feelings of being “stuck”, suggesting that there was no way out and that the other mothers provided a means of getting out of this state. This gives the impression of there being a need for her to have support in doing things to support herself, which she would not have done without the support from the group. Furthermore, mother 5 implies that the social support from the group makes her feel like she is not alone. The use of “alone” appears to be in relation to being constantly with her baby and without peer support. Mother 5 later describes how much she enjoyed being able to have adult conversations, which was again seen as something for her.

Table 18. Citations relating to the subordinate theme ‘constant support available from peers’.

4. Discussion

This exploratory research used IPA methodology to encapsulate the experiences of mothers during and after they attended IYPB. Therefore, it offers another branch to the current literature on IYPB. Each of the mothers gave personal and unique accounts of their perceptions, although there were notable key themes within the data set, relating to internal and external aspects of their experiences.

For example, within IYPB, there was a sense of personal journeys in developing their knowledge and understanding. Moreover, in different ways, the mothers all related to experiencing increased confidence in their parenting and they all described how they valued the support offered within the group. Following IYPB, it was inferred that the mothers were adapting their approaches to parenting based on what was important to them. The mothers also highlighted feelings of developing confidence, which was underpinned from gaining reassurance and increasing feelings of self-autonomy. Furthermore, the supportive nature of the social group developed within IYPB was being maintained outside of IYPB. These key themes will now be discussed further, in terms of how these findings may sit within the wider IYPB and psychological literature.

The findings complement some of the current IYPB research as it was also found that parental self-confidence and well-being increased following IYPB (Evans et al., 2015) and that IYPB increased mothers' support networks (Pontoppidan, 2015). However, the present findings offer a more detailed description and, consequently, further insights into psychological aspects which may influence parental experiences of, and parenting following, IYPB.

Firstly, the mothers depicted how the course enhanced and built on their existing knowledge. Their descriptions gave the impression that they experienced mediated learning experiences (MLEs, Tzuriel, 2013) within IYPB which facilitated cognitive modifiability. According to Tzuriel (2013), cognitive modifiability is an individuals' inclination to learn and adapt their cognitions following new experiences and learning opportunities. Within the interviews, the mothers appear to have had different MLEs during IYPB considering their unique experiences and knowledge prior to starting IYPB. Tzuriel (2013) highlights that a lack of MLEs can occur from limited environmental opportunities and an inability to benefit from interactions that are available. Respectively, the mothers described how they had limited social support prior to IYPB and that they had not valued the guidance offered by their mothers and mothers-in-law. Moreover, the theory advocates that a 'More Knowledgeable Other' (MKO) facilitates the MLE

(Tzuriel, 2013). The findings would suggest that the MKOs for the mothers could have been the group leaders, the other mothers or a combination of both. Therefore, implications for group leaders may be the need to reflect on their role and how they facilitate cognitive modifiability within the sessions.

Adding to this, Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist and Target (2002) highlight that parental reflective functioning has an important role in enhancing adaptations to parenting. According to Fonagy et al. (2002), parental reflective functioning is parents' ability to appreciate the thoughts, feelings and beliefs of themselves and others. This was described within the mothers' reflections depicting their enhanced perceptions about themselves as parents, particularly relating to growing confidence, and a sense that they were going to become the mothers they wanted to be.

In order to achieve this, the mothers appeared to have actively engaged in the acquisition and application of knowledge. Enhancing their knowledge occurred alongside continued reflections on their approaches to parenting in the present and future. This may be important as Zand et al. (2015) claim that greater parental knowledge of expected child development leads parents to harbour more realistic expectations of their children. Moreover, Teti and Gelfand (1991) assert that the development of parental knowledge is important in the development of parental self-efficacy.

The Theory of Parental Self-Efficacy builds on Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy (1977) and describes the beliefs or judgements parents hold in relation to their ability to parent (de Montigny & Lacharite, 2004). The enhancement of self-confidence described by the mothers may be synonymous to parental self-efficacy. Teti and Gelfand (1991) add that parental self-efficacy beliefs are powerful factors in influencing parental behaviours. Therefore, it could be that there is a circular relationship in which parents are empowered through the development of knowledge and self-efficacy. From the experiences highlighted by the mothers, it appeared

that it was a combination of their holistic experiences within and following IYPB which fed into the development of knowledge and parental self-efficacy.

The mothers also alluded to the recognition of the importance of self-care within IYPB and, consequently, developing coping strategies. Armstrong, Birnie-Lefcovitch and Ungar (2005) depict coping as a complex interaction between the individual and their environment. This was demonstrated within this study by the mothers who were actively making changes to enable better coping, e.g., through self-care (individual) and/or social support (environment). Gottlieb (1983) operationalises social support as verbal and non-verbal information, support or action offered by a social group which has beneficial emotional and behavioural impacts on an individual. Moreover, the environment of the group was portrayed as having a positive ethos, which had been facilitated by the group leaders and maintained by the mothers. The maintenance of positivity appeared to have been underpinned by the social aspect of the group, i.e., through the availability of reassurance and development of social connectedness.

Tajfel and Turner's (1986) Social Identity Theory highlights the importance of people feeling like they belong to a social world. It was evident that some of the mothers developed this social connectedness as mothers of young children through attending IYPB, which is something they had not felt previously. Tajfel and Turner (1986) further stipulate that group behaviours arise from a shared sense of identity. Therefore, it could be that the positive ethos and the shared social identity enhanced within the sessions were related in a reciprocal cycle, with both elements feeding into each other.

As well as social identities, Cast (2004) adds that parents seek to verify their individual parental self-identities within interactions with other parents. As the mothers reported that they did not have a social group prior to attending IYPB, it could be that they had been unable to clarify their parental identities previously. Indeed, this is suggested within their reflections, as the mothers appeared to be redefining their expectations of themselves as parents and reflect that what they were doing was "good" or "right". Yet, there is also a recognition that each

mother had their own personal identity as a mother and that they were all “right”, which suggests an expansion in their initial polarised constructs of parenting as “good” and “bad”, “right” and “wrong”.

The collective opportunities depicted within and following IYPB appears relevant to Deci and Ryan’s Self Determination Theory (2000), which advocates that people can be proactive or passive, largely due to the social conditions in which they develop and exist within. They further propose that people have three innate, psychological needs for proactive, intrinsic motivation (i.e., driven from internal factors as opposed to external factors): competence; autonomy; and relatedness. From their described experiences, it appears that all three of these needs were satisfied for the mothers within and following IYPB, for example, through parenting knowledge, self-confidence and social connectedness, respectively. Thus, the group facilitated the social conditions which, in turn, empowered them to make adaptations based on what was important to them as mothers.

Acknowledging the unique experiences of mothers was a consistent thread in the data set and has been repeatedly referenced throughout this section. This may raise the enquiry of whether practitioners should be promoting evidence-based practice or practice-based evidence when supporting parents. Fox (2011) states that the rationale for evidence-based practice is to ensure that professional practice is based on evidence of what works based on research findings. What the present research suggests is that a ‘one size fits all’ evidence-based intervention is unlikely to be appropriate to support all parents.

4.1 Limitations, strengths and areas for future research

With research and guidelines advocating the importance of early years support for children and parents (e.g., Allen, 2011; Borden et al., 2010; Goldblatt et al., 2014), this purports the need for further exploration in this area. Limitations, strengths and areas for future research are considered in Table 19.

Limitations of the research	Strengths of the research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data for this research was collected shortly after IYPB ended. Consequently, the longer-term experiences of the mothers were not accounted for. There may also be changes in parental perspectives over time. • The sample of mothers within this research consisted of a small sample from the same IYPB group. The findings of this research would imply that a different sample of mothers may have recounted different experiences based on their unique circumstances and perceptions. • It may be asserted that there could be differences in perceptions and experiences of mothers who want to attend parenting groups to those who are advised to attend parenting groups. However, such background information was not explicitly ascertained from the mothers during the interviews. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current research findings provide a unique insight into the identified gap in the literature. • Mothers' experiences and their understanding of these experiences were captured in an open, exploratory approach. The methodology of an IPA qualitative approach was beneficial in gathering the experiences of mothers. • Although the participants were a small, homogenous group, this is appropriate within IPA methodology (Smith et al., 2009). • Attempts have been made to ensure the validity of the research (Appendix J). • Due to the epistemological and ontological stances taken within this research, the findings within this research are reflective of the understandings of the mothers interviewed and it is not suggested that they are representative of all mothers. However, what the research offers is a deeper insight into the experiences of mothers which have been interpreted alongside psychological theories and research, which may be relevant to other mothers.
Areas for future research	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the intention of early intervention is to have a long-term, positive impact on child development (Britto et al., 2017; Heckman & Masterov, 2007), it would be appropriate to explore the lived experiences of parents who have attended IYPB more longitudinally. • It may be interesting for this research design to be replicated with mothers attending different IYPB groups. Moreover, this research design may also be used to explore parental perspectives of alternative early years programmes to explore whether they elicit similar themes considering they have different theoretical underpinnings and structures. • It may also be pertinent to explore the lived experience of fathers attending parenting programmes as it is suggested that mothers and fathers perceive themselves as having different parenting roles (Anderson et al., 2015; Pedersen, 2016). <p>The collective themes uncovered could contribute to a growing understanding of how parents experience support and how practitioners may facilitate support in the future.</p>	

Table 19: Limitations and strengths of the research and areas for future research.

4.2 Implications for EPs

This research offers an insight into how EPs may support children and parents within the early years. For example, considering parental support networks, parenting knowledge and parental self-efficacy should allow EPs to appreciate the parents' holistic situations within their formulations.

Moreover, the findings of this research advocate for the availability of flexible support for early years parents. Therefore, EPs may need to be mindful of the balance between facilitating parenting programmes with fidelity with making adaptations to meet the needs of those they are

intending to support. It may also be appropriate for EPs to appreciate how they might facilitate MLEs accounting for parents' unique perceptions and experiences.

Furthermore, drawing on the positive experiences described by the mothers within this research, it may be pertinent to reflect on how such support could be echoed through other mediums. Considering that not all parents attend parenting programmes, a valuable question may be in what ways could EPs offer parents support during the impressionable early years of their children's lives.

4.3 Concluding Summary

The research questions within this study explored mothers' experiences of attending IYPB and their perceptions of their approaches to parenting following IYPB. The findings uncovered that the mothers' experiences during and after the group were part of ongoing, personal journeys. The mothers each experienced IYPB differently depending on their prior experiences and values and, likewise, approached parenting following IYPB in a unique way consistent with these experiences. Yet, whilst there was individuality, there were also common themes for all the mothers, such as increases in social support, self-confidence, self-autonomy, reassurance and learning opportunities, albeit in different ways. The themes concurred with some of the current quantitative IYPB research and have been further discussed alongside relevant psychological theories. Thus, this research offers a deeper insight into the lived experiences of mothers attending IYPB and the findings, alongside the subsequent discussion, portray possible areas of consideration for EPs when working with parents of children in the early years.

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Part Three: Critical Appraisal

(Words: 5964)

1. Overview

This critical appraisal contains a review of the researcher's reflections throughout the research process alongside a discussion into the unique contributions this research has made to the literature. It has been written in a way which intends to highlight the personal development and reflections of the researcher intertwined with the unique aspects of this research as they emerged through the research process.

The appraisal begins by exploring the process through which this research was developed before taking a critical approach to describing how the methodology was undertaken. Although unique aspects of this research are considered throughout, the appraisal ends with a more in-depth exploration into the apparent uniqueness of the research and how this contributes to existing knowledge of parent's experiences of the Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme (IYPB) and parenting during the early years. The appraisal will be written in the first person as it contains my reflective and reflexive thoughts as the researcher.

2. Research development

2.1 Initial conceptions of research topic

I have a long-held preference and professional ambition to take a preventative approach, as opposed to a reactive approach, to supporting children. Consequently, I decided that I wanted to focus on preventative work within my thesis research, specifically exploring early support for children and their parents.

The Incredible Years (IY) series offers support for children aged birth-12 years old through the provision of programmes for parents, teachers and children (Webster-Stratton, Borden, Schultz, Herman, & Brooks, 2010; Webster-Stratton, 2010; Webster-Stratton & Herman, 2010). Within the Local Authority the research was conducted in, IY strategies are used in the majority of primary schools with many of the schools running IY Parenting Programmes (IYPPs). The support offered by IYPPs has been recognised by the Welsh Government, who,

according to Jones (2013), have offered funding and resources to run IY groups as part of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure (2010). This included the IY Parents and Babies Programme (IYPB) which fitted with my aim of exploring the experiences of early support. My intention within this research was not to promote IY programmes per se: IY was considered to be an intervention which was already embedded within the support offered within this local authority, therefore, making it an appropriate programme to focus on.

During an initial search of the current literature, it was apparent that there is little evaluative research on IYPB and no qualitative studies on IYPB was found. Therefore, with the gap in the literature being identified as exploring parental experiences of IYPB, I considered numerous areas of potential research topics. These included: comparing experiences of mothering from mothers who had attended IYPB and mothers who had not; exploring constructs around parenting and whether constructs changed after attending IYPB; and exploring perspectives of second-time parents attending IYPB. However, considering the limited research in this area, ultimately, I felt that an open, exploratory research design would be most appropriate.

I also linked this area of research to the new Draft Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales (Welsh Government, 2018) which advocates person-centred practice. As parents may be considered as being the entire world to their babies (Barlow, Smailagic, Ferriter, Bennet, & Jones, 2010; Evans, Davies, Williams, & Hutchings, 2015), directing support to parents appears relevant in supporting children during the early years. Furthermore, when considering the 'so what' questions in relation to my research, I reflected that I did not know what, as I could not find research dedicated to exploring the perspectives of parents attending IYPB. Moreover, research which utilised a qualitative approach to exploring IYPPs (e.g., Furlong & McGilloway, 2014; Levac, McCay, Merka, & Reddon-D'Arcy, 2008; Patterson, Mockford, & Stewart-Brown, 2004) used questions which may have inhibited parents' ability to share their experiences as they understood them, instead having their responses led by the interests of the researchers.

Therefore, I felt that exploratory research into parents' experiences of parenting and attending IYPB may elicit potentially new and deeper understandings of parental experiences and increase awareness of support Educational Psychologists (EPs) could offer parents and their children during the early years.

2.2 Researcher's position

Clarke (2009) stipulates that the process in which one understands perspectives of others is inevitably influenced by their own experiences, values and understandings. Heideger (1962) adds that it is important to bring one's own pre-conceptions to light which may be relevant for interpretation. Therefore, I believe that it is important to clarify my position as a researcher, particularly in reference to the current research, and how this position has developed over time. This is consistent with the concept of reflexivity, i.e., the active acknowledgement that one's actions and decisions may inevitably have an impact on the interpretation and understanding of the content being explored (Horsburgh, 2003).

My undergraduate degree research was underpinned by a positivist approach. However, when I started practicing applied psychology within schools, as a teaching assistant, assistant EP and then trainee EP (TEP), I moved to naturally adopting more social constructionist and constructivist positions.

This was reinforced as a TEP through the use of the EP model of practice used by Cardiff University, the Constructionist Model of Informed, Reasoned Action (COMOIRA, Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008). Within this model, social constructionism (Burr, 2015) is at the forefront of considerations for exploring various elements which may facilitate change.

Also, relevant to applied psychology is Fox's (2011) comparison of the use of evidence-based practice (EBP) and practice-based evidence. Fox (2011) describes the former as being thought of as the 'ideal' within the literature, although he argues that the complex dynamics of the world for individuals and systems are too multifaceted to fit with evidence-based interventions with fidelity. Indeed, I had often observed this tension within my own practice.

This is relevant as IYPB, along with the other IY programmes, is described as an evidence-based programme (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010; Webster-Stratton, 2015).

To gain a deeper insight into what IYPB entails I attended the two-day IYPB training course, although I have not since facilitated a group. Moreover, I did not attend the group the mothers in my research attended as I wanted to avoid a chance of interviewer bias from being seen as linked to the group.

I feel that it is also pertinent to mention that I am not a mother myself. Therefore, any interpretations made are not reflective of, or biased by, my own mothering experiences. Equally, perhaps an interviewer and researcher who was a parent may have elicited different responses or interpreted the transcripts differently.

2.3 Rationale for qualitative research

With the various areas of interest in the initial planning stages, I considered different research approaches. For example, I contemplated using a mixed methods approach (i.e., collecting pre- and post-scores as well as qualitative reflections), a nominal group technique (i.e., consistent with the group aspect of IYPB) and collecting data at different time intervals (i.e., to explore any differences in perceptions over time). However, through supervision and personal reflection, I came to realise that I wanted to explore the mothers' experiences and how they understood these experiences. Therefore, my approach to the research needed to ensure that the mothers were able to reflect and share openly.

Furthermore, I wanted to steer away from the assumption that the mothers would have experienced change through their experiences of IYPB. If my methodology had assumed a change, it would have led the mothers to answer in a particular way. This was a common feature within the qualitative data on IYPPs appraised within the literature review (e.g., Furlong & McGilloway, 2014; Levac et al., 2008).

Therefore, using a qualitative approach which allowed for the exploration of experiences was deemed appropriate for the purpose of this research. Indeed, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) advocate that qualitative data is rich in exploratory power, enabling the researcher to gain meaningful data. Smith and Dunsworth (2003) add to this by highlighting the usefulness of qualitative research when investigating a novel area. I considered that the area under investigation in this research to be novel as the methodology of previous qualitative research on IYPPs has not been exploratory. Furthermore, I could not find any published qualitative research on IYPB within the literature search.

On the other hand, there have been some concerns that qualitative research is not compatible with EBP (Fredrickson, 2002). Condelli and Wrigley (2004) further stipulate that findings from qualitative research are hindered by methodological issues such as, sample sizes, lacking the ability to generalise and interpretation bias. However, this research intended to explore the personal perspectives and understandings of a select, group of mothers, not all mothers. As such, attempting to broadly generalise such findings would be inherently inappropriate, although it may be useful to consider any key findings in future work with parents and babies.

3. Methodology

3.1 Interpretative phenomenological analysis

According to Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), the aim of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is to explore participants' experiences and understandings of a life event. This was consistent with the aim of my research. Therefore, through the use of IPA, there is permission for the researcher to make sense of the participants making sense of their own experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

As the unique experiences of parents attending IYPB were not captured within the literature reviewed, using IPA to explore parental experiences seemed appropriate. During the literature review, there appeared to be assumptions regarding what may impact parenting

(e.g., Jones, 2013) although, equally, there were also claims that such assumptions are not evidenced within research (e.g., Pontoppidan, 2015). Admittedly, using an open exploratory approach to interviewing parents may not yield such information, which is not to say that such factors do not exist. In other words, the findings may be inhibited by what the mothers chose to share.

Nevertheless, Heidegger (1962) advocates that a person is an individual in context and, as such, their perception of how they relate to the world is a pivotal aspect of being himself/herself. Satre (1956) adds to this by stating that an individual has the ability to choose the aspects of his/her perceptions and understanding which impact him/her. Thus, different aspects of IYPB may be salient to different mothers depending on what is pertinent to them. It could be argued that this is missing from research methodologies which may have led participants.

Despite these advantages of using IPA for this research, an underlying assumption of IPA I was hesitant about was the stipulation that IPA is used to explore 'major life events' (Smith et al., 2009). I queried whether attending IYPB would qualify as being a major life event for the mothers, reflecting that what constitutes a major life event is surely a subjective construction depending on who is making it. Yet, in retrospect, I would argue that IYPB would have been construed as a major life event for the mothers interviewed, as were the births of their babies.

3.2 Ontology and epistemology

Smith et al. (2009) suggest that it is logical to choose a data analysis approach as a starting point as the approach taken is likely to impact the planning of the research in the early stages. Smith et al. (2009) further highlight that the idiography within IPA involves a thorough and systematic analysis of how the life event being explored has been perceived and understood. Therefore, this needed to be reflected in the ontology and epistemology adopted within this research. In order to make an informed decision, I developed a table comparing different ontological and epistemological stances which could be taken within research. Something I

noted during my investigation into different positions is that there are inconsistent definitions of the positions which could be taken, thus, suggesting that there is a level of subjectivity within the various positions.

3.2.1 Ontology

A relativist ontological stance was taken for this research as it was assumed that there are multiple constructions of reality and what is 'real' or 'true' differs in time and context (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Robson, 2003; Willig, 2008). Moreover, Braun and Clarke (2013) describe relativism as assuming that reality is dependent upon the ways a person comes to know it. Therefore, it was assumed that the mothers may have had unique experiences of the same event (i.e., IYPB) and this position allows for these experiences to be captured.

An alternative stance considered was critical realism which holds the assumption that there is a real and knowable world underpinned by socially-developed knowledge which can only be partially accessed by a researcher (Bhaskar, 1989; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Robson, 2003). However, I assumed that knowledge is individually constructed, consistent with the literature review which highlighted the existence of parents' unique and complex worlds. Although parents' perceptions may be partially contrived through social experiences, I also held the assumption that individuals choose what impacts them, consistent with the claims of Heidegger (1962) and Satre (1956).

3.2.2 Epistemology

I believed that a constructivist epistemological stance complemented the relativist ontological stance for the purpose of this research. Therefore, it was assumed that reality is individually constructed and that learning is an active process in which people construct their own knowledge, allowing for subjective interpretations of their 'objective reality' (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Robson, 2003). A constructivist stance further assumes that people hold a subjective representation of knowledge resulting from past experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Robson, 2003). Thus, it was assumed that the mothers in this research may have

experienced IYPB and parenting differently and this needed to be appropriately captured within my approach to data collection.

Adopting a social constructionist epistemological stance was considered. Berger and Luckmann (1991) stipulate that this stance assumes that individuals and groups participate in the construction of their perceived social reality, which is derived from, and maintained by, social interactions. However, as the research was intending to explore individual realities as opposed to social realities, it was ruled out. Moreover, the mothers may have come from very diverse backgrounds (which was, indeed, true within the sample of mothers) in which case utilising an approach which focused on the social constructions, as an alternative to individual constructions, would have been inappropriate.

3.3 Research questions

Designing research questions which accurately reflected what I wanted to achieve within this research took many revisions. Initial drafts had an undertone of leading or presuming which was something I wanted to avoid. I seem to have had an inner battle with the feeling like something purely exploratory was not enough. Perhaps this was a reflection on my experiences of research during my undergraduate research or because I have never held the epistemological and ontological positions adopted within this research before. However, through supervision, I was given the confidence that two exploratory research questions were sufficient.

Reassuringly, Robson (2003) indicates that the development of research questions is not a single decision but evolves from a process. In retrospect, I am pleased that I took the time to develop my research questions, as I believe that they enabled the subsequent interviews to be personal and as they were led by salient aspects experienced by the mothers.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

Langridge (2007) advocates that a phenomenological approach to research, such as IPA, requires a data collection method which enables participants to give first-hand accounts. Therefore, individual, semi-structured interviews were utilised. I believed that this approach to data collection was also consistent with my ontological and epistemological stances.

Although the interviews were with individual mothers, their babies were present for most or all of the interviews and the mothers were assured that they could care for their babies as they needed to. This may be perceived as a distraction from the content of the interview, but I noted that in most instances the interactions between the mothers and their babies appeared to enhance their reflections of IYPB and their approaches to parenting (see Appendix G).

3.4.2 Interview Questions

Two open interview questions were developed which mapped on to the research questions. Prompts and probes were used to explore further into the mothers' experiences and how they understood them. Akin to the research questions, I did not want the interview questions to lead participants in a direction, I wanted to give them the opportunity to share what was important and/or relevant to them.

I recognised that an approach which focused on certain aspects, such as cost analysis and statistics regarding impact post-intervention, may be deemed relevant to future research and policy development, but it was not the intention of this research to explore such aspects. But, what these interview questions could potentially offer was the groundwork for later probes into specific areas of interest based on mothers' lived experiences.

3.5 Participants

3.5.1 Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for participants were mothers who had attended an IYPB programme. Background information on the mothers was not explicitly collected as part of

the research process as I felt that any collection of background data would again be me, as a researcher, leading what the participants had to tell me. Interestingly, background information, which the mothers felt was pertinent to their understanding of their experiences, came out within the interviews and encompassed information that I may not have asked, e.g., where they lived as children and salient childhood memories.

3.5.2 Recruitment

The Regional Director for IY in the Local Authority was approached and she identified a group which had been running with fidelity. Whilst this support was much appreciated and it was desirable that the group was being run with fidelity, it could be that this group also contained a bias as it was also identified as a successful group. However, as this research sought to explore a small group of mothers' personal experiences of parenting and IYBP, as opposed to aiming to make general conclusions on the experiences of all mothers, perhaps such a bias, if it existed, does not hold as much concern in this context. Moreover, this construction was held by the coordinator, which may not have been consistent with the constructions of the mothers attending the group.

I first met the mothers at the start of session 5 where I introduced myself and the research and distributed the Information Sheet (Appendix C). It was hoped that this introduction would build rapport with the mothers ahead of recruitment. Giving additional time for the mothers to reflect on their experiences and what they might say may be deemed as a limitation, yet reflection is part of the IYPB process albeit for a different purpose (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010). I think this was an advantageous thing to have done as the mothers appeared to be less wary when I returned to the group at the start of the last session. I did not stay for the content of either session to avoid being viewed by the mothers as part of their IYBP experiences.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

This research met the ethical guidelines for practice as determined by the Cardiff University Ethics Committee and the British Psychological Society (BPS) ethical guidelines (2009, 2014). How ethical considerations were eliminated or reduced are described in detail within Appendix A. However, there were several ethical-based decisions which needed to be made during the research process.

For example, I had hoped for between 3-5 mothers, but 8 mothers volunteered. I considered my options and reflected that I could not ethically say no to any of the mothers on the basis that: I would not be able to ethically choose who I would and would not interview out of the volunteers; by dismissing some of the mothers it could be interpreted as me being uninterested in their stories; and because there was a £10 voucher involved some of the mothers who volunteered would not have received this token of appreciation. After accepting all 8 I clarified with university about whether I would have to return to ethics and it was decided that I would not.

Also, although I had already planned on omitting identifiable information to ensure anonymity for the mothers and their children, what I had not fully considered prior to starting the research was the consent of the mothers' partners. Several of the mothers referenced their partners during their interviews, however, I felt that these references could not be included within the citations used in the empirical report as their partners had not given their consent to be part of the research. Citations chosen for the findings section to evidence themes were also carefully considered to maintain anonymity for the mothers and their children.

3.7 Trustworthiness

Rodham, Fox and Doran (2015) discuss how establishing the quality of qualitative research is challenging and how terms such as 'validity' and 'reliability' may be more appropriately termed as 'trustworthiness'. To achieve trustworthiness, Rodham et al. (2015) emphasise the need to clearly explain the research process to readers, especially considering that IPA is based

upon hermeneutics, i.e., the science of interpretation, and, therefore, data may have been interpreted differently by another researcher.

To achieve this, Yardley's (2000) 4 key dimensions, in which quality of qualitative research may be demonstrated, were adhered to: sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; transparency and coherence; and impact and importance. To enhance validity and to overcome any potential bias, I was mindful of these dimensions throughout the methodological design of the research, facilitation of the interviews and in the analysis and reporting of the data. A detailed description of how Yardley's (2000) key dimensions were met is given in Appendix J.

3.8 Difficulties Encountered During the Research Process

3.8.1 The Interviews

As a developing researcher, and having never conducted IPA interviews before, during the first interview I was struck with the realisation of the difference between a consultation-style interview and an IPA interview. For example, as an EP practitioner during consultation-style interviews, such skills as forming hypotheses, exploring intention and ability to change, etc., become inherent within your practice when adhering to COMOIRA (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008). However, according to Smith et al. (2009), the somewhat opposite could be thought of within an IPA interview in which the aim is to enable the participant to interpret their own understandings. I found myself initially trying to restrain from analysing as the interview progressed as opposed to automatically probing into more depth about what was being said. As this started as a conscious effort, it may have been advantageous to practice these skills during pilot interviews prior to data collection. However, perhaps the additional, conscious reflection during the initial interviews helped to ensure that I was conducting the interviews with fidelity to IPA practice.

Another surprising challenge arose in the reflection that I had assumed that the mothers would be easily able to reflect on their experiences. During the interviews and, again, through

the linguistic analysis within IPA, I felt that some of the mothers had found it difficult to reflect on their experiences and how they understood them. However, the linguistic analysis also suggested that the mothers' reflections were more fluid and detailed as the interviews progressed.

3.8.2 The IPA Process

Although gaining more participants than I had intended meant that I had a wider wealth of experiences described to me during the interviews, it also made the analysis process challenging as I had a vast amount of data. I felt considerable tension and concern regarding interpreting and reporting the mothers' understandings in a way I felt accurately portrayed them when I needed to condense so much information within a restricted word count. However, I was reminded by my supervisor that I had permission within IPA to interpret the mothers' understandings of their experiences and to present what I, as a researcher, felt were pertinent aspects of the data.

To effectively interpret the understandings of the mothers in a way which remained close to the voices of the mothers, I was very conscientious during the entire analysis phase and took a great deal of time to complete the process. This became significantly harder when I went back on placement as I felt that I could not fully immerse myself in the data. To overcome this, I arranged my research days to coincide alongside weekends so I could feel more connected to the data for longer periods of time.

Despite these difficulties, I do believe I committed myself to give an interpretive reflection of the data and I found the process of exploring the interviews at a deeper interpretative level to be rewarding. These rewards were exemplified when returning from the part to the whole (hermeneutic circle) within each interview and when reflecting across the entire data set. In other words, I feel that the final analysis is reflective of the mothers' voices, which is what I wanted to achieve.

4. Contribution to knowledge

4.1 Contribution to literature

From the results of the literature search, I believe that this research offers the first qualitative study into the experiences of mothers who have attended IYPB. Furthermore, this exploratory research offers an insight into mothers' experiences of IYPB and parenting from their own perspectives and understandings. Through this approach, the mothers' personal experiences prior to, during and following IYPB were highlighted. This is important as it identifies how the same experiences, i.e., being a mother of a child in their early years and attending IYPB, had been experienced differently by each of the mothers, indicating a need to consider personal experiences when measuring the 'impact' of early years interventions, such as IYPB.

Therefore, something distinct about this piece of exploratory research is that it is just that: It offered the mothers an opportunity to share their accounts as they experienced and understood them. Yet, links were found between the current findings with previous IYPB quantitative research (e.g., Evans et al., 2015; Pontoppidan, 2015), although the current findings may be seen as offering a deeper understanding of what the mothers experienced and the dynamic relationships between these experiences.

Threads running throughout this data indicated that the mothers were on personal, ongoing journeys with the mothers describing how they experienced IYPB and parenting in different ways. For example, the use of IPA highlighted that mothers' construction of knowledge during and following IYPB was personal depending upon their previous experiences (e.g., experiences of being parented), values (e.g., what is important to them as mothers) and personal circumstances (e.g., support available). Such findings have not been referred to within the IYPP qualitative research discussed within the literature review.

Furthermore, Jones (2013) lists a multitude of risk and protective factors to parenting within the existing literature. However, the mothers within this research highlighted factors which enhanced and inhibited their perceptions of their ability to parent (such as, social

isolation, availability of social support and validation of parenting approaches) which are not included on Jones' (2013) list. Such findings may signify the value of conducting exploratory research to understand the potential impact of early years parenting programmes.

4.2 Contribution to future research

I believe that this research offers the first qualitative approach to investigating parental experiences of IYPB. As such, it presents an initial insight into the lived experiences of mothers parenting during and after attending IYPB. It would perhaps be interesting to use IPA to explore whether attending different early years programmes for parents elicit similar themes considering they have different theoretical underpinnings. If similar themes are uncovered, perhaps it may further enlighten practitioners with evidence-based ideas regarding support for parents during the early years and what this may look like from a parental perspective.

Perhaps, within future research, it may be interesting to use a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to further explore the psychology behind parental experiences. Glaser and Strauss (1967) advocate that grounded theory is a method that enables researchers to progress from data to theory, so that new theories, specific to the context in which they were developed, could emerge. Such an approach may give researchers, practitioners and policy makers a clearer insight into how parents may be supported during the early years. However, the purpose of this research was to be exploratory as opposed to explanatory. Moreover, by taking a relativist position, I assumed that there are multiple constructions of reality depending on how people come to know it.

The varied experiences the mothers' described prior to and during IYBP, appeared to feed into their continuing journeys of parenting and making adaptations following IYBP. Therefore, it may be pertinent to further explore the implementation of knowledge and strategies following an early years parenting programme. This could include exploring whether the implementation of knowledge and strategies is maintained over time. The mothers within the present study suggested that they were motivated to maintain any changes following IYPB,

although for different reasons and in different ways. However, the interviews took place a short period after the final IYPB session. As early interventions, such as parenting programmes, are intended to have a long-term impact on children's development (Britto et al., 2017; Heckman & Masterov, 2007), it would appear to be appropriate to also explore the mothers' perceptions of IYPB and parenting more longitudinally.

As well as further exploring mothers' experiences, it may be interesting to explore fathers' experiences of parenting programmes, such as IYPB. Anderson, Aller, Piercy and Roggman (2015) and Pedersen (2016) claim that mothers and fathers may perceive themselves as having different parenting roles. Consequently, fathers may experience IYPB differently. If this was the case, perhaps it may have implications on how early years parenting programmes are facilitated for fathers and/or how fathers may be supported during the early years.

Furthermore, it may be beneficial for future researchers to contemplate what is deemed as 'success' or 'impact' following the completion of a programme described as being preventative, such as IYPB. For example, it may be that limited changes or differences are found on quantitative measures if parents have not rated themselves as being low on the specific areas of impact being explored prior to starting the programme. Moreover, as infancy is a time of rapid growth and development (Kolb, 2009), it may be challenging to decipher the impact related to the natural development of children and parents from any impact after attending a parenting programme. The findings within the present research would suggest that there may be an advantage of using a qualitative approach to explore the impact of early years parenting programmes in order to capture personalised constructions of what 'impact' means to parents.

In summary, this research may open doors to other research which further delves into what parents may be experiencing when parenting children in the early years and in attending and implementing knowledge from parenting programmes. From this, practitioners may gain a deeper understanding of the support parents and children may benefit from during these

impressionable years. Indeed, the findings from the present study offer an insight into experiences which can be considered and further explored to the benefit of supporting parents and their babies. This would be relevant with increasing voices calling for policies and support of parents in the early years (e.g., Allen, 2011) as well as researchers advocating for research into qualitative data in general on parents' experiences of parenting programmes as this has been limited to date (e.g., Belsky, 1984; McPherson, 2014).

4.3 Contribution to EP knowledge and practice

The Welsh Government's new Draft Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales stresses that "One way of ensuring the child's and the child's parent's or the young person's views, wishes and feelings are taken into account and that they are able to participate as fully as possible in decisions is to adopt person-centred practice" (Welsh Government, 2018. Pg.26). As parents are thought of as a child's world during the early years (Barlow et al., 2010; Evans et al., 2015) working directly with parents appears appropriate for EP work. However, EPs were rarely referenced within the studies covered within this literature review. Yet, as the EP role is listed as being intervention, training, research, consultation and assessment (The Currie Report, 2002), work around IY programmes may be asserted as being relevant to the interventions and training aspects of the role. Moreover, IY is described as having a psychological foundation and is deemed as an evidence-based programme (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010; Webster-Stratton, 2015). What this research may then offer EPs is a consideration of the possible psychological influences underpinning experiences of parenting programmes, such as IY, as well as other areas of psychological theories which may be pertinent in supporting parents and children in the early years.

This research could also give EPs further insight and deeper understanding of the multitude and complex factors mothers are experiencing during the early years. I additionally reflected that perhaps it would be apt to consider that this insight would also be relevant for parents of children of all ages. For example, it raised the question for me of whether EPs are

fully considering the experiences of parents, and how these experiences have been understood, during consultations and how this may be facilitated. This research would suggest that factors influencing experiences may include, social support, parenting self-efficacy and self-autonomy. Moreover, within the COMOIRA framework for EP practice (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008), such information may also enhance EP formulations by enabling their understanding of social constructions and systemic thinking.

This line of thinking may be linked to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) in which the interaction between systemic levels is depicted. Within this model, I reflected that Bronfenbrenner's (1994) 'chronosystem' is compatible to the sense of a journey depicted by the mothers, which may be argued is an important aspect for EPs to consider. For example, considering how parents develop social support, self-autonomy and parental self-confidence and how EPs can complement this journey.

The findings may also suggest that early years parents may appreciate EPs facilitating opportunities to: share their experiences; provide social support and development for themselves and their babies; increase their feelings of parental self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-autonomy; and enable them to become the mothers they want to be.

4.4 Contribution to professional development

This process has been enlightening for me as a practitioner and a researcher. Firstly, maintaining the research journal throughout the process really highlighted to me the connections between the proposed approach to the research and how this translates into how the research may look like in reality. Therefore, I needed to be confident in the positions I adopted at the start of the process as I could see how this could impact subsequent decisions made regarding the research and what my research would be able to potentially contribute. I also intend to be mindful of these reflections within my professional practice and future research. For example, by considering the positions researchers have taken within a piece of research and the implications this may have on using the findings in my professional practice.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, I was not sure what to expect as an outcome of the interviews. What became evident to me was the range of experiences the mothers' described. I would like to be more reflective of this within my professional practice, i.e., to explore parents' perspectives and understandings of themselves as well as their children. Such information may also be used to develop formulations reflecting the wider systems around children consistent with systems theories (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

A method which proved useful during the interviews to enable and encourage reflection was to 'be ok with the silences' as opposed to asking another question to prompt further, as advocated by Smith et al. (2009). I was surprised by how the silences allowed the mothers to reflect further in ways I may not have prompted. This allowed for more in-depth reflections on what had previously been described. Whilst I would like to do this more within my professional practice, I recognise that it may be challenging to control the silences within a group-consultation format.

Moreover, during the interviews, I was mindful that any prompts or probes I used may lead participants. However, when I listened back to the interviews, I was relieved when I then heard myself prompting the mothers to expand their descriptions in the same way I would have done with more opportunities to reflect on the content of their answers. This gave me confidence that my prompts and probes had largely been appropriate. However, I do feel that my interviewing skills could be improved, and I would like to develop these skills in future research I am involved with.

Importantly, considering my initial rationale for this research, I feel I can take a lot of the information from the literature review, empirical report and critical appraisal forwards into a preventative approach to working with parents and children during the early years within my professional practice.

5. Concluding comments

I believe that this research has portrayed the value of adopting an exploratory approach to researching the lived experience of early years parents. It was evident that the mothers experienced early years parenting and IYPB in different ways, highlighting the pertinence of recognising the unique journeys of parents within any support offered to parents and future research. Importantly, the mothers portrayed their positive experiences of having support available to them through IYPB and conveyed how this support had enhanced many aspects of their parenting and their babies' development. As well as filling a gap in the current literature, the findings from this research may contribute to future research and offers considerations for EP practice when working with parents during the early years.

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Appendix A: Ethical considerations and subsequent researcher action.

<u>Ethical Consideration</u>	<u>Researcher Action</u>
Need to maintain privacy and confidentiality.	Mothers were informed that the audio-recordings from the interviews would be held confidentially, and that the data would be anonymised during the transcription process. After this point it would not be possible to delete their data as the data could not be traced back to individuals. Participants were also informed that the audio-recordings would be kept by the researcher for up to 10 days and would be deleted after transcription. The transcribed data will be kept for 5 years in case the research is published in the future.
Need to gain informed consent from participants and to avoid deception.	Mothers were provided with an information sheet outlining the aims of the interview prior to signing the consent form. Following the interviews, mothers were given a debrief information sheet outlining the purpose and a brief summary of the research.
Mothers may believe that their involvement will include an evaluation of their engagement with the IYPB and their future access to the programme as a result of their involvement.	Mothers were provided with the information sheet and consent form outlining what would happen during the interviews. Mothers were also reassured verbally by the researcher.
Need for self-determination, i.e., participants know about their rights to withdraw from the research.	The information sheet, consent form and debrief form gave mothers information about the aims and outlined their rights as participants. All three documents described the process, i.e., what will happen to the data during collection and transcription. The debrief form explained the purpose of the research and provided mothers with the contact details of the researcher, research supervisor and ethics secretary. Contact details were also included on the information sheet.
Need to inform participants about potential risk.	Mothers may have become distressed if they perceived parenting as an emotive topic. Mothers were given an information sheet before the interviews and a debrief sheet once the interviews were completed. It was not felt that this research would incur any risk to the mothers, and this was stated on the information sheet. However, if a mother had started to show symptoms of distress, the researcher planned on pausing the interview to ensure her well-being, which may have led to the interview being terminated.
Mothers may struggle to read the participant information sheet and consent form.	Documentation used simple, accessible language and the researcher read through the information and consent forms with each mother prior to starting the interview.
Identifiable information may be elicited during the	Any identifiable information given during the interviews which may have been directly linked back to individual participants,

interview which effects confidentiality.	e.g., names of babies, parents, family members and other IYPB group members, were removed from the transcripts.
The gift voucher may be seen as an inappropriate form of payment.	The voucher was not in any way linked to risk. The voucher was small and appropriately proportionate to the time needed for taking part in the research. The mothers would still have received the voucher if they had not completed the interview or had later withdrawn from the research. Mothers were informed that the voucher was unconditional, and were given the voucher before the interview began. The mother who did not meet the researcher at the predetermined time did not receive the voucher.
Need to maintain integrity when analysing the data.	The researcher used IPA (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009) to analyse the data. The data will not be used for other reasons other than those stated in the research aims and purpose.

- *Can you go into more detail?*
- *How did it feel?*
- *What did that mean to you?*
- *Can you tell me more about this?*
- *Can you tell me what you were thinking / feeling?*
- *What do you mean by...?*

Record observation during the interview.

Ending the interview:

- Ask the participant if there is anything else she would like to tell me.
- Thank participant for their time and wish participant and their family all the best for the future.
- Ask participant if they have any questions.

Appendix C: Information Sheet

School of Psychology, Cardiff University Information Sheet

Thank you for showing interest in this research.

The aim of this research is to explore the parenting experiences of mothers attending the Incredible Years Parents and Babies Program (IYPB).

What happens if I volunteer?

If you volunteer for this research you will be asked to participate in a 45-60 minute interview with the researcher, Kathryn Morgan (Trainee Educational Psychologist). The time and date of each interview will be arranged to suit you, and, if possible in the home setting for your convenience. Your babies may be present during the interview, but otherwise a quiet environment will be needed for the interviews.

Participating in the research is voluntary and your decision to volunteer, or not, will not affect your place in the IYPB group. There are no likely risks to you for taking part in this research.

If you decide to volunteer, we would like to thank you for participating in the research with a £10 gift voucher. This will be given to you before the start of the interview. If you then feel you cannot continue with the research, for any reason, you will not be asked to return the voucher.

What will happen during the interview?

During the interview you will be asked questions about your experiences as a parent and of attending the IYPB.

A debrief sheet outlining the research title and purpose will be given to you by the researcher after the interview.

What will happen with the information?

The interview will be audio recorded. The recording will be transcribed by Kathryn following the interview and no one else will hear the recording: All information from the interview will be held confidentially.

During transcription, all data recorded will be anonymised, which means that it will not be possible to trace the information back to individual mothers. Once the recordings have been transcribed they will be deleted. You have a right to withdraw up until the data is anonymised as, after this point, it will be impossible to identify individuals in the data.

The results of this research will form part of Kathryn's Thesis for her Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) Programme at Cardiff University, and may be published

or presented. The research will be supervised by Dr. Dale Bartle, Professional Tutor on the Cardiff University DEdPsy Programme.

Ethical approval

This research has been reviewed and ethically approved by the School Research Ethics Committee (SREC).

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact myself, Kathryn, or my supervisor, Dr Bartle. You may also contact the secretary of the ethics committee if you have concerns about this research. Contact details can be found below.

Thank you for reading this information sheet.

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Secretary of the Ethics Committee

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The data controller is Cardiff University and the Data Protection Officer is Matt Cooper CooperM1@cardiff.ac.uk . The lawful basis for the processing of the data you provide is consent.

Appendix D: Consent Form

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Consent Form

If you would like to volunteer for this research, please read and tick each statement and then sign underneath.

- I understand that my participation in this project will involve taking part in a 45-60 minute interview reflecting my experiences of attending the Incredible Years Baby Program (IYPB).
- I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study after the interview before the data is transcribed without giving a reason.
- I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to withdraw from the interview and/or discuss any concerns with the researcher, Kathryn Morgan.
- I understand that the information provided by me will be held confidentially, and that the audio-recording will be held by the researcher for up to 10 days until the data is transcribed.
- I understand that my data will be anonymised after the audio recording of the interview has been transcribed and that after this point it will not be possible to trace my information back to me.
- I understand that I can ask for the information I provide to be deleted/destroyed at any time up until the data has been anonymised.
- I understand that it will not be possible to remove my data after the audio-recording has been transcribed.
- I understand that I can have access to the information up until the data has been anonymised.
- I understand that, in case the research is published in the future, the transcription information may be retained for up to 5 years before it is destroyed.
- I understand that, after the interview, I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.

I, _____(NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Kathryn Morgan School of Psychology, Cardiff University with the supervision of Dr Dale Bartle.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

**The data controller is Cardiff University and the Data Protection Officer is Matt Cooper
CooperM1@cardiff.ac.uk . The lawful basis for the processing of the data you provide is
consent.**

Appendix E: Debrief Form

**School of Psychology, Cardiff University
Debrief Form**

Thank you for participating in this study.

The title of this research is: 'An interpretative phenomenological analysis exploring how mothers experience the Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme'.

The research is exploring mothers' experiences of attending the Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme (IYPB) and perceived approaches to parenting following this attendance. This research is being conducted because the lived experiences of mothers in the early years is under-researched, with the vast majority of research focusing on evaluating success of parenting programmes as opposed to mothers' experiences of them.

It is hoped that an outcome of this research will be to inform professionals on how mothers may experience parenting programmes, such as IYPB, and, consequently, how they may be able to support mothers and infants in the future.

An audio-recordings was made of your interview. The researcher, Kathryn Morgan (Trainee Educational Psychologist) will transcribe the interview within 10 days of the interview: Your name, and the name of your baby, will not appear in the transcription. You can access or destroy the audio-recording of your interview, or withdraw from the research, until the data is transcribed. The audio-recordings of all interviews will be held confidentially until transcribed. Once transcribed, all data will be anonymous meaning that it will not be possible to trace information back to you.

The final research report will form part of Kathryn's Thesis for her Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) Programme at Cardiff University. The research may also be published in the future. No identifying information will be included within the report.

If you would like a copy of the summary of the final research report, please inform Kathryn and she will send you a copy once the research has been completed. You may also contact the researcher or her supervisor to request a copy of the summary of the research report in the future. Contact details can be found below.

You were given a gift voucher before your first interview. This was given to you unconditionally to thank you for your time and participation in the research.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact myself, Kathryn, my supervisor, Dr Bartle, or the secretary of the ethics committee. Contact details can be found below.

Thank you once again for your participation.

Researcher

Kathryn Morgan
Trainee Educational Psychologist
Educational Psychology
Doctorate

Research Supervisor

Dr Dale Bartle
Professional Tutor
Educational Psychology
Doctorate

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Appendix F: IPA Procedure

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis procedure as outlined in Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009).

Step	Procedure	Description
1	Transcription of the interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interview data was transcribed verbatim from the audio recording taken during interview (see Appendix G for excerpt). • All seven interviews were completely transcribed. • Key: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Pause] = significant gap in mother's response ... = short gap in mother's response [Baby interaction] = mother interacting with her baby [Laughter] = mother's laughter
2	Reading and re-reading the transcript	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be immersed within the data and to ensure that the individual mothers were the focus of the analysis, the researcher listened and reread the transcript repeatedly. • The researcher reflected on the social cues given by the mothers during the interview which added meaning to the transcripts. • One transcript was considered at a time.
3	Initial noting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The researcher explored the semantic content and language of the interview transcript to identify specific ways the mothers talked about, understood and thought about IYPB. • As described by Smith et al. (2009), a layered approach to this level of analysis was used with the researcher making descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments regarding the content of the transcript (see Appendix G for excerpt). • A detailed set of notes were made with a phenomenological focus but remaining close to the experiences of the mothers. • Following the initial noting, the researcher moved on to step 4 with the same transcript, as opposed to reviewing another transcript.
4	Developing emergent themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The researcher focused on the notes produced in step 3, attempting to reduce the volume of data whilst still maintaining the complexity by looking for interrelationships, connections and patterns between the initial notes (descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments). • Whilst there was a focus on the local level (the part), attention was paid to how it fitted in relation to the rest of the transcript (the whole). • Following guidance from Smith et al. (2009), emergent themes linked to the original transcript of the mother's lived experience whilst acknowledging the researcher's role and interpretative nature of this stage of analysis.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of the emergent theme was to be a concise statement of what was important to the mothers, capturing their understanding,
5	Searching for connections across emergent themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This stage involves mapping how the emergent themes in stage 4 may fit together. It drew together the emergent themes from across the themes. • All emergent themes were written out and spatially re-organised according to themes that were similar or dissimilar in context, understanding or by their contradiction in meanings. • Clusters of emergent themes were grouped and labelled under a superordinate theme. • During this process there was close consideration of Smith et al.'s (2009) processes of abstraction, subsumption, contextualisation, numeration and polarisation processes.
6	Moving on to the next case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stages 2-5 were then repeated for the next transcript. • Each transcript was analysed individually to maintain its own individuality, with themes emerging for each mother.
7	Looking for patterns across cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The superordinate and subordinate cases were then looked at collectively to explore potential themes across the data set. • Again, themes were written out and spatially re-organised to explore connections. • Attention was paid to the part within the whole transcript and across the data set.
8	Writing up the themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPA is considered an iterative process, therefore, the themes were adapted and rearranged throughout the writing-up process to ensure that they continued to encapsulate the parts within the whole, maintaining the mothers' experiences and the researcher's interpretation.

Appendix G: Sample Interview Transcript, Exploratory Comments

Interviewer: Mother 3

Initial notes – descriptive notes, linguistic analysis, deeper conceptual thinking

Emergent Themes		Transcript	Exploratory Comments
<p>Already had positive feedback about her parenting. Feeling more confident in parenting: Validation.</p> <p>Finding reflecting on her parenting challenging.</p> <p>Feeling like she knows what to do: No longer stuck.</p>	<p>177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186 187 188 189 190 191 192 193 194 195</p>	<p><i>Umm so, you've already talked a bit about umm I guess the kind of practical aspects of the course, that you had this information, so I'm just wondering how parenting has been for you after the Incredible Years Parents and Babies Programme?</i></p> <p>Umm well, according to my health visitor I was doing everything like the class does. It has made me more confident. I made me realise that what I'm doing is right... And it just made me more confident that I know what I'm doing, so yes.</p> <p><i>So, can you tell me in a little bit more about that?</i></p> <p>Umm no it means that umm... [Pause] I don't know how to say it... It just means that when she grows, grows up and a little bit more... More independent. And I know what I'm doing. That I'm not just stuck or phoning up asking someone, "What do I need to do? What do I need to do?" I know what to do. So, I don't have to like call up my mum or my sister or other mums. If I'm stuck I do know what to do.</p> <p><i>What does that mean to you?</i></p> <p>What does it mean to me? It just means that... It means I know I'm doing a good job and I'm being a good parent. Doing the right</p>	<p>Why was her health visitor saying she was doing everything right enough to make her feel confident about her parenting? Feelings of being confident in her parenting (repetition of the word 'confident') after attending the group. Lack of confidence beforehand? Is this in opposition to some of what she's previously said? Was the confirmation / validation of what she thought she knew by a group of mothers an important aspect? Why would this be? Is this in reference to the earlier mention of isolation and/or not having a handbook on being a mother?</p> <p>"...umm... [Pause] I don't know how to say it..." suggests that she finds this level of reflection challenging / she has not thought about it before.</p> <p>Starts by describing benefits to her baby and then switches to how it has impact herself as a mother. Use of the work "stuck" but feeling like she will be able to manage herself without relying on others' support. Previously referenced the benefits of having the support from others after suggesting she was on her own a lot with her baby. Distinction between having support and needing support?</p>

Does not need to rely on others: Know she's doing the right thing.	196 197 198 199	things. Because that's what I was concerned about when I got pregnant, would I be a good mum? Would I be able to do this? Would I be able to do that? I was worried. Even my partner was worried, and sometimes he thinks he is not doing it... He's, he's	"I know what I'm doing" and "I know I'm doing a good job and I'm being a good parent" implies confidence in parenting ability, "I'm being a good parent".
Knows she is being a good parent. Progress to knowing she is a good parent.	200 201 202	not been a good dad. But he is. I encouraging him when he comes home I pass her straight over to him [Laughter] like, "Your time, here".	Reflection on the concern felt about her ability to be a good parent during her pregnancy: Journey / progress. What support is available during this time? Is further support needed?
Now supporting her partner.	203 204 205 206 207	[Baby interaction] But if I'm confident then she knows that, the she knows that she can umm look, what's the word, rely on me to do what she needs and give her what she needs... Yeah, it just makes me happy that I know that I am doing a good job.	"Even my partner was worried..." an attempt to normalise the worry felt? "I encouraging him..." suggests that she is now feeling confident enough to support her partner.
Feeling reliable as a parent: Confidence and empowerment.	208 209 210 211	<i>That's good.</i> Yes. <i>So, you talked about your partner a bit then, can you tell a bit about attending this?</i>	"Rely on me..." suggests confidence and empowerment. Link to, and contrast with, earlier references of not having anyone to go to herself. "...Makes me happy that I know I'm doing a good job" suggests a sense of relief and overcoming worry. As opposed to being worried. Can there be a universal definition of what this means? Link to Winnicott's 'Good Enough Parenting'.
Did not attend the groups without company.	212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219 220 221	He did come to a few classes, and they do give us like what the topics were in the class booklets, there were booklets given to us or I'd tell him. He prefers me to tell him and stuff, but he liked it. He, he went to the first to groups with me because usually I went with my sister. But he went to the couple the groups and he enjoyed it, he liked the atmosphere, he really did. <i>How do you think this had an impact on his parenting following the course then?</i> Yes, he really, certain things that were happening in the group he was like, "So, I am doing it". It's like I was, I'm not that,	She did not attend the groups alone (took her partner or sister). Consider why it was important for her to go with someone and not alone. Link to previous comment about knowing someone already in the group.

<p>Recognising similar parenting styles. Normalising fear of becoming a parent. Shared responsibility of parenting: Both doing it right. Were scared, now reassured.</p> <p>Wanted someone to tell her information.</p>	<p>222 confident for a while, like I was scared of being a mum, he was 223 scared about being a dad. We didn't want to mess her up and 224 everything... He knows that he's doing it and, he's doing the right 225 thing. And he's happy, he's plays with her, he playful with her. 226 She loves him to bits, she falls asleep watching him. [Laughter] 227 So yes...</p> <p>228 <i>Umm it might be quite difficult, and you have already touched</i> 229 <i>on bits already, but you did feel, I think you used the word</i> 230 <i>'scared' during your pregnancy. Can you tell me a bit more about</i> 231 <i>that journey and whether attending Incredible Years related to</i> 231 <i>this?</i></p> <p>232 Well, I didn't have, I couldn't go to groups when I was pregnant 233 but I wanted to, but I couldn't because I was sorting out moving 234 and everything, so moving from one town to another town. And 235 I couldn't get the information I needed. They gave us booklets, 236 but you need someone to tell you... I was scared about being a 237 mum. And then I got diagnosed with an illness which would 238 affect me and her. And that scared me even more. And I was 239 just, didn't know what to do. I was worried 24/7. And then she 240 came, and I was stuck in hospital for a week by myself. And I was 241 scared then because she became ill, she stopped breathing on 242 me, and that scared the living hell out of me. And then she had 243 an infection and we stayed in a week and she came out. And she, 244 I was up, up like every few hours watching, checking if she was 245 alright... And then I go to the group I realised I was not the only 246 one doing it. Other mums would do it. First time mums were 247 doing it and doing the same thing, they was worried. They 248 checked on the babies... And make sure they're still breathing</p>	<p>Doing the same as other parents "...so I am doing it". Reflection that previously she had not felt that confident and was scared of being a mother. Contrast with her statements of now feeling confident and that she feels like she knows what she's doing.</p> <p>Normalising fear of being a parent "...I was scared of being a mum, he was scared about being a dad". Reflects on impact of their parenting "We didn't want to mess her up and everything..." A suggestion of diffusion of responsibility: She is not the only parent. Suggests a journey from being scared to knowing they are doing it right.</p> <p>Wanted to attend groups during pregnancy but could not. Is there any support available for mothers in this position (i.e., moving house and areas during pregnancy)? "You need someone to tell you..." is in contrast to how she appeared to value being able to contribute to the sessions during the group. "Someone" suggesting the need for interactive support: The information alone was not enough. Are different types of support needed at different times? Description of feeling scared of being a mum, and how this was exacerbated by being diagnosed with an illness. Implies that things felt out of her control (overwhelmed?) and perhaps worried about the unknown. "I was worried 24/7": Contrast this with her feelings of being confident in her parenting following her experiences within the group. Use of "stuck" again: Was stuck but now unstuck? "And then I go to the group I realise I was not the only one doing it" suggests the experience of having her concerns and worries normalised, "...it made me feel like I was not alone".</p>
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Had felt out of control: Reassured by the group.	249 250	and everything. I was not, it made me feel like I was not alone. It wasn't just me that panicking, it was everyone else as well ...	<p>Highlights importance of having opportunities to share experiences with other mums: Although this mum experienced a lot of worry during her pregnancy and her baby's early life, other mothers worried anyway.</p> <p>"It made me realise it was normal" indicates that she had been worried about her ability to parent (despite being reassured by her health visitor?) but that this was also felt by other mothers. Importance of being able to share experiences with peers: Consider the impact sharing those experiences and realising others were experiencing the same had on this mother's self-confidence, and how this increase in confidence makes her feel she is going to parent her baby (i.e., "she can rely on me").</p> <p>Although she had a traumatic experience, her baby is now healthy and happy: Reframe thinking to that she does not have to worry anymore.</p>
Normalising worrying: Sharing experiences.	251 252	<i>And what was that like for you, that realisation that there's other people going through the same things as I am?</i>	
Not feeling alone.	253 254 255 256	It made me realise it was normal [Laughter] I was not being overprotective, I was being normal, normal and... Yeah, I was just umm everyone else is doing, so it wasn't just me. I'm keep repeating that...	
Feeling more confident in baby's development	257 258 259 260	No, no, no, no! Umm, and in the end, there was nothing to really worry about. She was healthy, she's happy, she is trying to roll away! [Laughter]	
Reframing her worries.			
Reframing her baby's development.			

*Full Exploratory Comments tables can be found within Appendix G on the external memory stick.

Appendix H: Sample Transcript, Emergent Themes

Sample of themes taken from Mother 3's interview.

Research question 1: What are mothers' experiences of attending IYPB?		
Subordinate themes	Page no.	Quote
Superordinate theme: Having options		
Previously feeling stuck	3	No, I was happy because... It was just me for a while, stuck in the flat, just me and her, and I'm like, "We can't keep doing this, she needs other babies. And I need other mums". So, I need grown-up time and she needs baby time.
	4	I don't mind spending time with her and everything, I love it, but because my partner is in work all the time it's just me and her most of the time, and it does get a bit boring. Because you've got to do stuff and you need to do it, but then you need to entertain her as well, and now she's worked out how to entertain herself.
Having choices within the group: Not stuck	6	It wasn't, like I said, it wasn't bullet points, "Do this, do that, do this and do that". They just suggesting, "you need to do this, you could do that" or... "This is how sometimes people do it, you don't have to do it this way but it would be helpful if you did". They weren't just throwing it in your face, they were letting you digest it.
	6	It was good. It wasn't just all information piled at once. You could process it, and each class was different, it wasn't the same, the same thing over and over again. It was different topics, topics and everything, and then you could discuss it with the other mums.
	5	Or if she was asleep I would play with another baby while she was asleep, whilst the other mum could carry on and do something she wanted to do.
Having choices outside of the group: Not stuck	4	And now we do groups, we so our own little groups now too, we go swimming, to *soft play venue* and we still go for walks, it's just put us altogether.
	4	Yes. Yes, so we go, some of us go swimming on Thursday and then we meet them after at *soft play venue* then.
	19	But yeah, you know, it was it was something for you to do. Not just for you and your child to be at home. Just you and your, your child interacting with other people.
Developing coping strategies	4	It means I get 5 minutes break [Laughter]. <i>And what was that then like for you having that break and what did that feel like?</i> Nice! [Laughter] I can either wash up or do some cleaning or cooking. Yes, it's just nice. I don't mind spending time with her and everything, I love it, but because my partner is in work all the time it's just me and her most of the time, and it

		does get a bit boring. Because you've got to do stuff and you need to do it, but then you need to entertain her as well, and now she's worked out how to entertain herself.
	2	So, what to do when she's teething and she doesn't stop, or to let her soothe, if you get stressed and she's crying I can walk out and leave her and walk out the room and then calm myself again and then come back.
	6	I needed this information because we don't get a handbook, a how to be a mum book when they're born, you just have to go with the flow [Laughter] but getting information from the group helps.
Subordinate theme: Developing self-confidence		
Previous worry	1	Because that's the worry you get, that you're doing something wrong and you're not.
	2	Because my sister had kids already, so I knew stuff about that... But having your own is completely different!
	7	Because that's what I was concerned about when I got pregnant, would I be a good mum? Would I be able to do this? Would I be able to do that? I was worried.
In her parenting ability	1	Umm the thoughts I had were like... I was doing everything really good [Laughter]. And that I wasn't messing anything up or doing anything wrong.
	2	You see that everyone's doing it and I think, "Oh, that's fine then".
	7	It has made me more confident. I made me realise that what I'm doing is right... And it just made me more confident that I know what I'm doing, so yes.
	7	What does it mean to me? It just means that... It means I know I'm doing a good job and I'm being a good parent. Doing the right things.
	18	Getting information you need, and giving me the confidence as well.
In her baby's development	1	It was alright because I noticed some of the babies weren't that much older than *baby* so it was alright.
	3	I was proud! [Laughter] No, I was happy
	4	Umm, well since she's been going to the group she's more chatty... Umm she's more playful [Laughter] and I can leave her by herself for a bit and she would just wonder at random and play with a toys and she's happy.
Some insecurities	3	It just showed what different things they are doing and everything.
	6	It's just like having a little guideline, just a little one, what needs to be done and then I think...
	3	So she got to interact with other kids, play with them, maybe kick their heads in by accident, but watch, watch them crawl, walk, lift their heads up, and it encourages her at the same time.

	4	No, she was doing, she was progressing but she's done it a lot more now she's been with babies. She was doing it at the right stages, doing what she needed to do, but she's gone a little bit further.
	8	He, he [father] went to the first to groups with me because usually I went with my sister.
Superordinate theme: Learning from each other		
Interactive learning experiences	2	It was good because it wasn't just all... Bullet points, so all the time, we could interact with each other and everything and talk. Even though they were talking we could talk to each other and just get to know each other and get informations on what to do.
	3	The vignettes, that's it. And just to show what you could do in that situation,
	3	And then I go to the group I realised I was not the only one doing it. Other mums would do it. First time mums were doing it and doing the same thing, they was worried. They checked on the babies... And make sure they're still breathing and everything. I was not, it made me feel like I was not alone. It wasn't just me that panicking, it was everyone else as well ...
	6	They wouldn't say, "Oh, stop talking". It's not like when you're in class! [Laughter] Like when you're in school. It's nothing like that. It was just chilled and relaxing.
Empowered in the learning experiences	2	We would, if the babies needed attention we were allowed to pay attention, change nappies and things, and just listen and give feedback, and what else, we could...
	6	It was different topics, topics and everything, and then you could discuss it with the other mums. They would let you discuss it with the other mum.
Feeling like part of a group	4	Yes. Yes, so we go, some of us go swimming on Thursday and then we meet them after at *soft play venue* then.
	4	Instead of being stuck in four walls it got me out, and it's wasn't just me by myself, it was other mums. And now we do groups, we so our own little groups now too, we go swimming, to *soft play venue* and we still go for walks, it's just put us altogether.
	5	It was good. It wasn't just me would play with, it was the other mums as well, so she would interact with other mums, and they would interact with her. Or if she was asleep I was would play with another baby while she was asleep, whilst the other mum could carry on and do something she wanted to do. We just took it in terms roughly.

**Full Emergent Themes tables can be found within Appendix H on the external memory stick.*

Appendix I: Thematic Maps

The tables below summarise the process in which the superordinate and subordinate themes were developed, condensed and operationalised over the research process. Some description is given of the thought processes behind the decision making.

The Thematic Maps are presented as tables as opposed to images as I felt it was clearer and easier for the reader to track and compare the development of the themes over time. Furthermore, whilst it was apparent that complex dynamics existed within and between the superordinate and subordinate themes, the nature of such dynamics were personal for each of the mothers. Therefore, I did not feel that it was appropriate for me to make these links within the presentation of the findings, and instead used the Discussion section (Empirical Report) to explore these links further.

Draft 1:

These are the themes which initially came out of the whole data set.

Research Question 1:

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Support from the group	Little support outside of the group
	Developed a social group
	Sharing experiences
Baby development	Baby learning from other babies
	Baby had opportunities for social interactions
	Increased confidence in baby's development
Increased confidence in parenting	Previous feelings of concern
	Lack of reassurance outside of the group
	Given confidence
	Shift to feeling more confident
	Feeling proud
Learning opportunities	Previous feelings of being overwhelmed
	Wanting to learn
	Broadening knowledge
	Valuing self-care
	Opportunities to reflect
	Learning from others
	Preparing for the future
Group leadership	Supportive group leaders
	Valuing guidance of professionals
Session structure	Sessions had a purpose
	Facilitate social interactions
	Given time for themselves

Research Question 2:

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Becoming the mother she wanted to be	Managing expectations
	Increased self-determination

	Reframing thinking
	Sharing heritage validated
Increased confidence in being a parent	Feeling reassured
	Shift from feeling unconfident
	Developing confidence
	Given confidence
	Parenting is more enjoyable
Having continued social support	Limited support outside of the group
	Ongoing contact with the other mothers
	Social connectedness
	Constant support available
	Babies have a social network
Adapting parenting	Initially scared of applying new strategies
	Better recognition of baby's needs
	Applying strategies from the sessions
	Reflecting on being a parent
	Developing coping strategies
Changes within the family	Enhanced joint parenting
	Sharing knowledge with partners
	Noticing changes in family dynamics

Draft 2:

I considered having super-superordinate themes. However, on reflection I felt that super-superordinate themes could be perceived as carrying more weight which was not consistent with the findings of the analysis.

Research Question 1:

Super-superordinate themes	Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Support from the group	Mothers developed a social group	Little support outside of the group
		Sharing experiences (normalising)
	Enhancing baby development	Baby learning from other babies
		Baby had opportunities for social interaction
Increased confidence in approach to parenting		Reassurance regarding baby's development
		Previous feelings of concern
		Lack of reassurance outside of the group
		Given confidence
		Shift to feeling more confident
Learning opportunities		Feelings of pride
		Previous feelings of being overwhelmed
		Wanting to learn
		Broadening parental knowledge
		Recognising the importance of self-care

		Provided with opportunities to reflect
		Learning strategies from the other mothers
		Preparing for future parenting
Supported by the IYPB process	Session structure	Sessions had a purpose
		Facilitated social interactions
		Given time for themselves
		Positive ethos within the group
	Session leadership	Supportive group leaders
		Valuing guidance of professionals

Research Question 2:

Super-superordinate themes	Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
	Becoming the mother she wanted to be	Managing expectations
		Reframing thinking on being a mother
		Increased self-determination
		Sharing heritage
	Increased confidence in being a parent	Feeling reassured
		Shift from feeling unconfident
		Confidence continuing to increase
		Given confidence from the sessions
	Adapting parenting	Initially scared of applying new strategies
		Better recognition of baby's needs
		Applying strategies from the sessions
		Reflecting on approaches to parenting
		Developing coping strategies
Feeling supported	Having a social peer group	Limited support outside of the group
		Ongoing contact with the other mothers
		Social connectedness
		Constant support available
	Babies have a social network	
	Changes within the family	Sharing knowledge with partners
		Noted alterations in family dynamics

Draft 3

The themes were organised back into having superordinate and subordinate themes. Reflecting on, and talking about, the themes allowed me to start condensing and merging themes together.

Research Question 1

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Peer support within the group	Little support outside of the group
	Mothers developed a social group
	Sharing experiences (normalising)
Increased feelings of confidence in parenting	Previous feelings of concern
	Lack of reassurance outside of the group
	Given confidence
	Shift to feeling more confidence
Baby development	Feelings of pride
	Baby learning from other babies
	Baby had opportunities for social interactions
Learning opportunities	Reassurance regarding baby's development
	Previous feelings of being overwhelmed
	Broadening parenting knowledge
	Recognising the importance of self-care
	Provided with opportunities to reflect
Session leadership	Sharing with the other mothers
	Supportive group leaders
Session structure	Valuing guidance of professionals
	Sessions had a purpose
	Facilitated social interactions
	Given time for themselves
	Positive ethos within the group

Research Question 2:

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Becoming the mother she wanted to be	Managing expectations
	Reframing thinking on being a mother
	Increasing self-determination
	Sharing heritage
Increased confidence in being a parent	Feeling reassured
	Shift from feeling unconfident
	Confidence continuing to increase
	Given confidence from the sessions
Adapting parenting	Initially scared of applying new strategies
	Better recognition of baby's needs
	Applying strategies from the sessions
	Reflecting on approaches to parenting
	Developing coping strategies
Having a social peer group	Limited support outside of the group
	Ongoing contact with the other mothers

	Social connectedness
	Constant support available
	Babies have a social network
Changes within the family	Sharing knowledge with partners
	Noticing alterations in family dynamics

Draft 4:

During the process of writing up the themes within the findings section, I realised that some of the themes were interlinking in such a way that they could be described within the same themes. The 'Becoming the mothers they wanted to be' theme was removed as a superordinate theme as I felt it was inherent within numerous other themes, as were the subordinate themes which had initially been captured under this superordinate theme. I also reflected that what was highlighted within the 'Changes within the family' superordinate theme fitted within the superordinate theme relating to 'Having a social peer group'.

Research Question 1:

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Peer support within the group	Mothers developed a social group
	Sharing experiences
Increased feelings of confidence	Gaining reassurance
	Given confidence
	Journey to feeling more confident
Learning opportunities	Previous feelings of being overwhelmed
	Broadening parenting knowledge
	Recognising the importance of self-care
	Provided with opportunities to reflect
	Sharing knowledge with other mothers
Session structure	Sessions had a purpose
	Facilitated social interactions
	Given time for themselves
	Supportive group leaders
Baby development	Opportunities for babies to develop their skills
	Reassurance regarding baby's development

Research Question 2:

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Increased confidence in being a parent	Feeling reassured
	Developing confidence in parenting
	Given confidence from the sessions
	Increased self-determination
Adapting parenting	Initially scared of applying new strategies
	Better recognition of baby's needs
	Applying strategies from the sessions
	Reflecting on approaches to parenting
	Developing coping strategies
	Becoming the mothers they wanted to be
Having a social peer group	Constant support available from peers
	Social connectedness

	Increased support at home
	Babies have a social network

Draft 5:

Further condensing of themes. As described within the critical appraisal, considerable tension was felt during this process as I did not want to lose the detail shared by the others in the reporting of the findings. Some of the wording of the themes were operationalised to more concisely reflect the content of the themes.

Research Question 1:

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Learning opportunities	Broadening parenting knowledge
	Recognising the importance of self-care
	Provided with opportunities to reflect
	Sharing knowledge with other mothers
Increased feelings of confidence in parenting	Gaining reassurance
	Given confidence
	Journey to feeling more confident
Peer support within the group	Mothers developed a social group
	Sharing experiences
Session structure	Experiences of having their needs met
	Supportive group leaders
Baby development	Opportunities for babies to develop their skills
	Reassurance regarding baby's development

Research Question 2:

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Increased confidence in being a parent	Feeling reassured in their approach to parenting
	Developing confidence in parenting
	Increased self-autonomy
Adapting parenting	Having options
	Applying strategies from the sessions
	Reflecting on their approaches to parenting
	Developing coping strategies
	Becoming the mothers they wanted to be
Having a social peer group	Social connectedness
	Constant support available from peers
	Increased support at home
	Babies have an ongoing social network

Draft 6:

Further condensing of themes as part of the iterative process and reflection on the use of language within the themes. Superordinate theme relating to babies were removed as the research questions related to mothers' experiences of IYPB and parenting following IYPB.

Research Question 1:

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Learning opportunities	Enhancing existing parenting knowledge
	Opportunities to reflect on approach to parenting
	Opportunities for babies to develop their skills
Increased feelings of confidence in parenting	Gaining reassurance
	Given confidence
	Journey to feeling more confident
Peer support within the group	Developing a social group
	Sharing experiences
Session structure	Experiences of having their needs met
	Supportive group leaders

Research Question 2:

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Increased confidence in being a parent	Feeling reassured in their approach to parenting
	Increasing self-autonomy
Adapting parenting	Having options following the sessions
	Reflecting on their approaches to parenting
	Developing coping strategies
	Becoming the mothers they wanted to be
Having a social peer group	Social connectedness
	Constant support at home
	Babies have an ongoing social network

Final Draft:

Further condensing of themes as part of the iterative process. Subordinate themes relating to babies removed for the same reason as given above. Subordinate themes relating to partners also removed due to the ethical concern that they had not given consent to be part of the research.

Research Question 1:

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Learning opportunities	Enhancing existing parenting knowledge
	Opportunities to reflect on approach to parenting
Increased feelings of confidence in parenting	Gaining reassurance
	Given confidence
	Journey to feeling more confident
Support within the group	Developing a social group
	Experiences of feeling supported

Research Question 2:

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Increased confidence in being a parent	Feeling reassured in their approach to parenting
	Increasing self-autonomy
Adapting parenting	Having options following the sessions

	Continuing to reflect on their approaches to parenting
	Developing coping strategies
Having a social peer group	Social connectedness
	Constant support available from peers

Appendix J - Core Principles for Evaluating the Validity of Qualitative Research (Yardley, 2000)

Core Principle	How this study meets criteria
<p>Sensitivity to context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research is contextualised relevant to theoretical and empirical literature. • Sensitivity to participants' perspectives and socio-culture contexts. • Consideration of ethical issues. • Awareness of relationship between research and participants and potential power imbalance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to remain close to the data, the extensive literature review was completed after the transcripts were analysed. As well as the literature review in Part 1, relevant literature is discussed in the introduction and the findings sections within the empirical report are linked to appropriate psychological theories. • An appropriate sample of participants were selected according to the guidance of Smith et al. (2009) for IPA research. A basic description was given of the mothers and their babies within the 'Participants' section of the methodology in the empirical report. • Semi-structured interviews were utilised with 2 interview questions allowing for an open exploration of the mothers' perspectives. • The purpose of IPA is to explore participants' perspectives and understandings (Smith et al., 2009). • The research met the ethical guidelines for practice as determined by the Cardiff University Ethics Committee and the British Psychological Society's (BPS) ethic guidelines (2009, 2014). How ethical considerations were eliminated or reduced are described in detail within Appendix A. • Ethical considerations were also made throughout the process, as described in 'Ethical Considerations' within the critical appraisal. • The mothers volunteered to participate within the research and the interviews took place at a time, date and venue which best suited them. • The researcher and mothers went through the information sheet (Appendix C) and consent form (Appendix D) together before the mothers gave informed consent. The mothers were informed that they could stop the interview at any time to care for their baby or to withdraw from the research. They were also informed that their data could be withdrawn from the study prior to transcription.
<p>Commitment and rigour:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough data collection. • Depth and breadth of analysis. • Methodological competence and skill. • In-depth engagement with topic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher. • The semi-structured interviews followed the same 2 question interview schedule to allow for an open exploration of the mothers' experiences. Prompts and probes were used to gain further clarification and insight into the mothers' perspectives and understandings. • The IPA analysis procedure as described by Smith et al. (2009) was used (Appendix F).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A research journal was kept recording reflective and reflexive thinking throughout the data collection and analysis process. The process was also discussed between the researcher and research supervisor. • The researcher conducted all the interviews and listened and read through each interview numerous times during the transcription phase and before starting the analysis. The researcher frequently moved between the part and the whole of a transcript throughout the analysis phase. The researcher did not move on to the next transcript until the current transcript was analysed and the themes for that participant were complete.
<p>Transparency and coherence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity and power of description / argument. • Transparent methods and data presentation. • Fit between theory and method. • Reflexivity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst Smith et al. (2009) maintain that there is no prescriptive method for IPA and, therefore, no right or wrong way to conduct IPA, the procedure for IPA they suggest was followed. Appendix F gives a clear and coherent outline of the procedure taken. • The researchers' position was established (Part 2, section 2.10; Part 3, section 2.2). This is important as the researcher took on the role of making sense of the participants' experiences consciously as systematically, as advocated by Smith et al. (2009). • The interview questions have been shared within section 2.4 (Figure 2) of the empirical report. • The rationale for the ontology and epistemology stances taken was given in empirical report (section 2.2) and further described in the critical appraisal (section 2.5). • Sections of the transcripts and emergent themes are shared within Appendix G and Appendix H. Full transcripts have also been provided as additional Appendices. • Thematic maps demonstrating the process in which the final themes were arrived at have been shared within Appendix I. • Citations are given within the findings section of the empirical report to evidence the themes and the description given within the main text. • To ensure transparency, Rodham et al. (2015) recommend that researchers should include a reflexive account of how the data was analysed. This was completed and referred to during the analysis and write up of the findings, discussion and the critical appraisal.
<p>Impact and importance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theoretical: Enriching understanding. • Sociocultural. • Practical. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact and importance of this research and the findings have been considered within the findings and discussion section and, again, within the critical appraisal. • This research was developed following a literature review which highlighted a gap in the literature. • The findings sections of the empirical report and the critical appraisal outline the possible practical applications for Educational Psychologists. How the research adds to the current literature and areas for future research are also discussed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The validation of using an exploratory approach to this research was alluded to throughout the literature review.• Smith et al. (2009) advocate that it is not appropriate to generalise findings from IPA research as the purpose is to explore lived experiences which are inherently unique and personal and, consequently, may not be relevant to other populations or contexts. Yet, the findings from the present study may open up new possibilities and areas of thinking which may not have been uncovered using alternative methodological approaches.
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Appendix K – Further Detail of Studies within the Literature Review

Study Author(s)	Detail	Reference(s)
Jones (2013). Research on risk factors relating to parenting.	Teenage parents.	Osofsky, Hann, & Peebles (1993).
	Mothers with a diagnosis of depression.	Field, Heal, Goldstein, Perry, & Bendell, (1988). Murray, Kempton, Woolgar, & Hooper (1993).
	Parents who are substance abusers.	Zuckerman & Brown (1993).
	Parents living in poverty.	Dickerson & Popli (2012) Halpen (1993) Katz, La Placa, & Hunter (2007) Kiernan & Mensah (2009, 2011). Waldfogel & Washbrook (2010). Washbrook (2010).
Letarte, Normandeau, & Allard (2010). Measures used in study.	Parenting Practice Interview.	Webster-Stratton (1998).
	Parenting Self-Agency Measure. Items were adapted from the Maternal Confidence in Toddlerhood and from questionnaires.	Dumka, Stoerzinger, Jackson, & Roosa (1996). Gross & Rocissano (1988). Jones (2000).
	Eyberg Child Behaviour Inventory (ECBI).	Eyberg & Pincus (1999).
	Parent satisfaction questionnaire.	Reid, Webster-Stratton, & Beauchaine (2001).
Seabra-Santos et al. (2016). Measures used in the study.	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).	Abreu-Lima et al. (2010). Goodman (1997).
	Stressful Life Events subscale of the Parenting Stress Index (PSI).	Abidin (1983). Abidin & Santos (2003).
	Preschool and Kindergarten Behavior Scales – Second Edition (PKBS-2).	Merrell (2002).
	Beck Depression Inventory (BDI).	Beck, Ward, Mendelson, Mock, & Erbaugh (1961). Vaz-Serra & Abreu (1973).
	The Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI).	Canavarro (2007). Derogatis (1993).
	The Parenting Scale (PS).	Arnold, O’Leary, Wolff, & Acker (1993).
	Parenting Sense of Competence scale (PSOC).	Johnston & Mash (1989).
	Dyadic Parent-Child Interaction Coding System (DPICS).	Robinson & Eyberg (1981).
Jones (2013).	Parent Infant Play Observation code (PIPOc)	Jones, Hutchings, Erjavec, & Viktor (submitted).

Measures used in the study.	Karitane Parenting Confidence Scale (KPCS).	Črnčec, Barnett, & Matthey. (2008).
	Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale (WEMWBS).	Tennant et al. (2007).
	The Hunt the Hazard posters.	Royal Society of Prevention of Accidents: RoSPA.
	The Infant-Toddler Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment inventory (IT HOME).	Bradley & Caldwell (1976). Caldwell & Bradley (2003).
	Personal Data and Health Questionnaire (PDHQ).	Hutchings (1996).
	Mothers were asked how many social contacts with friends, family and others they had in the previous seven days.	
	Parents were asked, after excluding housing costs working tax and family credit, how much weekly income (wages or social security payment) they had to pay their living expenses.	
	British Griffiths Mental Development Scales- Revised: Birth to 2 years (GMDS 0-2)	Griffiths (1954).
Evans, Davies, Williams, & Hutchings (2015). Measures used in study.	Karitane Parenting Confidence Scale (KPCS).	Črnčec, Barnett, & Matthey (2008).
	General Health Questionnaire 30 (GHQ 30).	Goldberg & Williams (1988).
Pontoppidan (2015). Measures used in study.	Karitane Parenting Confidence Scale (KPCS).	Črnčec, Barnett, & Matthey (2008a).
	Parental Stress Scale (PSS).	Berry & Jones (1995).
	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSS).	Rosenberg (1965).
	Being a Mother Scale (BaM-13).	Matthey (2011).
	Parental Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (PRFQ-1).	Luyten, Mayes, Nijssens, & Fonagy (n.d.).
	Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC).	Johnston & Mash (2010). Ohan, Leung, & Johnston (2000).
	Sense of Coherence Scale (SOC13).	Antonovsky (1993). Eriksson & Lindström (2005) Feldt et al. (2007)
	Ages & Stages Questionnaires: Social-Emotional, Second Edition (ASQ:SE-2).	Squires, Bricker, & Twombly (2015). Squires et al. (2002).
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).	Goodman (2001). Janssens & Deboutte (2009). Niclasen et al. (2012). Obel et al. (2004).	

	Cognitive Development Questionnaire (CDQ).	Baker, Schafer, Alcock, & Bartlett (2013).
	Mother and Baby Interaction Scale (MABISC).	Hackney, Braithwaite, & Radcliff (1996). Høivik, Burkeland, Linaker, & Berg-Nielsen (2013).
	Coding Interactive Behavior (CIB) system.	Feldman (1998).
	Irish Preparing for Life program.	PFL Evaluation Team (2011).
	Major Depression Inventory (MDI10).	Olsen, Jensen, Noerholm, Martiny, & Bech (2003).
	World Health Organization Well-Being Index (WHO-5).	Bech (2004, 2011).
	Background information included, parent age, education, occupation, ethnicity, number of children, household status, housing situation, household economy, substance abuse, child birth weight, child gestation at birth and child health.	