MEN WHO REPORT DIFFICULTIES IN ADULT RELATIONSHIPS AND THE LINKS THEY MAKE TO THEIR BOARDING SCHOOL EXPERIENCES: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS

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Thesis submitted in part fulfilment of the degree of Doctorate in Clinical Psychology
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DECLARATION

I confirm that this thesis is an original piece of my own work. It was written and submitted in part-fulfilment of the degree of Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. It has not been submitted for any other academic award and was checked prior to submission.

Craig Harris

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Men who report difficulties in adult relationships and the links they make to their boarding school experiences: a thematic analysis

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THESIS ABSTRACT

Systematic Literature Review: Twenty-six articles investigating the psychological experiences of boarding students were identified and subjected to a systematic analysis. Some studies indicated that boarders experience higher levels of psychological distress (especially soon after boarding transition), experience greater incidences of bullying victimisation, engage in more bullying perpetration, and may be at a higher risk of presenting with eating disorder psychopathology. However, other results reported general parity between wellbeing outcomes for boarders and non-boarders, or modest benefits for boarders measures of wellbeing and personality characteristics. Analysis highlighted the lack of research conducted in UK boarding schools, and the need for further research with extended follow-ups. Limitations of the literature and recommendations for professional practice and future research are discussed.

Research Paper: Thematic analysis was used to explore the experiences of male ex-boarders who had identified experiences of difficulties in relationships. Three superordinate themes were presented: *Disempowerment* depicted how participants felt powerless or controlled by others, and the impact this had in later relationships; *Suppressing aspects of self and personality* related to how participants described hiding emotions or parts of their personality to 'get by', and how these strategies presented in adulthood; and *A process of recovery* was concerned with how participants sought ways to 'recover' from their experiences. Findings were discussed in relation to existing theory and literature and highlighted the importance for educational and care institutions to recognise ideological powers, as well as the use of therapeutic interventions that are underpinned by theories of attachment.

Acknowledgments

Without the willingness of eleven men, who showed bravery and resilience to share with me their story, this research would not have been possible. Thank you.

To my supervisor, Dr Alice Welham, for remaining optimistic and supportive throughout. You said it could be done, and here it is. Thank you.

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To my wife, and family. Without your love, encouragement and unwavering support, this would not have been possible.

To Teddy. Daddy can come out of his room now.

This thesis is affectionately dedicated to Helen Smith.

I know you would have been proud of me, too.

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Chapter 1

THE SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF BOARDING SCHOOL STUDENTS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Prepared for submission to Educational Research Review
(please refer to Appendix G for submission guidelines)

ABSTRACT

Aim: The aim of this paper was to systematically review quantitative literature investigating the psychological experiences of people who were attending, or had attended, boarding schools.

Method: Four electronic databases (PsychINFO, Medline, BEI and ERIC) were searched and potentially relevant papers were screened for eligibility for inclusion, first at title and abstract and then at full text level. For papers meeting inclusion and exclusion criteria at both stages, relevant data were extracted, studies were quality appraised, and findings were synthesised narratively.

Results: Twenty-six articles, from research in a variety of geographical locations, met inclusion criteria. A number of studies indicated that boarders experience higher levels of psychological distress (especially soon after boarding transition), experience greater incidences of bullying victimisation, engage in more bullying perpetration, and may be at a higher risk of presenting with eating disorder psychopathology. However, other results reported general parity between wellbeing outcomes for boarders and non-boarders, and in one large-scale study, modest benefits for boarders on a number of wellbeing and personality factors. Few studies assessed wellbeing in boarding institutions in the UK.

Conclusion: Further research is required to operationalise the experience of boarding, using existing research to identify key variables that may moderate the relationship between boarding and wellbeing. Longitudinal research with extended follow-ups would be beneficial in understanding long term impact of boarding. Limitations of the literature and recommendations for professional practice and future research are discussed.

1 INTRODUCTION

Boarding schools have existed in different forms for centuries. The term itself often refers to the traditional concept of a classic British boarding school, an institution with an extensive history dating back over 1000 years (Flanagan, 2004). There are currently approximately 150 boarding schools in Australia (ISCA, 2019), 340 in North America and, in the UK, as of April 2019, there were a reported 473 Schools with almost 70,000 boarding pupils in attendance (ISC, 2019).

The term 'boarding school' refers to an environment where students live and are educated on the same premises. The term therefore also encapsulates therapeutic or residential schools for children in care, and schools which combine education with therapy for emotional, behavioural and psychological needs. Boarding also has a long association with children with physical needs, such as schools for the deaf and blind.

1.1 THE NATURE OF BOARDING

Literature on the outcomes of boarding is scarce, is based largely on anecdotal reports and case studies, and often presents a polarised perspective. Boarding has sometimes been presented as a positive, "character-building" experience that provides opportunities to develop individuality, independence, empowerment and tolerance of others (BSA, 2007; White, 2004). Conversely, case studies of former boarders paint a picture of emotional deprivation, loneliness and strategic survival (Duffell, 2000; Poynting & Donaldson, 2005; Schaverien, 2011, 2015).

The psychological implications of attending boarding schools have also been studied in certain specific contexts. For instance, a considerable body of research specifically explores the trauma and abuse experienced by indigenous families and communities in Canada, forced to attend boarding school as a result of colonisation (Elias *et al.*, 2012; Hacket *et al*., 2016; Ross *et al.*, 2015; Wilk, Maltby, & Cooke, 2017). This research suggests some boarders survived boarding school without considerable impact on their wellbeing, whilst the traumatic experience of many has resulted in "intergenerational trauma", a form of posttraumatic stress passed on to their children and grandchildren (Bombay et al., 2014; Elias et al., 2012)

A number of factors contribute to the potentially different experiences of boarders as compared with day pupils. The nature of transitions and relationships with peers may differ, and new factors may also be introduced due to parent-child separation. These factors are now considered in turn.

1.2 TRANSITIONS

Transition to secondary school is a critical moment for adolescence (Hanewald, 2013) and requires negotiating an unfamiliar environment, fostering social networks and relationships with peers and teachers and managing new academic demands. Transitioning to a secondary boarding school may add further complexity. Students are required to adjust into a setting where home and schooling are merged together, with greater autonomy and less dependence on parents (Lester *et al.*, 2015; White, 2004).

1.3 PEERS

Evidence indicates that contact with similar-aged peers provides an essential source of emotional and psychological support for adolescents (La Greca & Harrison, 2005) and such contact is an important contributor to a successful school transition (Crockett *et al.,* 1989).

Arguably, boarding allows greater opportunities for peer bonding. On the other hand, it may also provide a greater opportunity for bullying behaviours, due to the increased time spent with peers (Poynting & Donaldson, 2005; Shaverien, 2004). The period of transition to secondary school (see above) is also the peak for bullying victimisation. Exposure to bullying behaviour can have major, long-lasting impact on academic, behavioural, emotional, physical and mental health outcomes for adolescents (Carney, 2008; Johnson, 2009; Lester *et al.*, 2012).

1.4 ATTACHMENT RELATIONSHIPS AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

Given the widely accepted role of family in children's social, emotional and psychological development (Bowlby, 2005; Ainsworth and Bowlby, 1991; Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Groh et al., 2017), long periods of absence from the family environment may have significant implications for boarders' developmental outcomes.

A sociological study by White (2004) found that although adolescents tend to form a primary bond with home and family, boarders formed two kinds of primary bonds, one with their family and the other with their boarding house. Boarders drew personal values from both environments. This highlights the importance of boarder relationships with staff, and supports the concept of boarding school being considered a 'home from home' (Bramston & Patrick, 2007; Cree, 2000).

Research into the impact of parent and child separation has often focused on experiences of children in care. A meta-analysis by Lionetti et al. (2015) reported that institutionalised children were more vulnerable to developing insecure and disorganised attachment styles, compared to children at home with family. Quiroga and Hamilton-Giachritsis (2016) found attachment styles in children living in

alternative care (such as residential care provisions) differed from those observed in children living with biological or adoptive families. Authors acknowledged, however, that attachment outcomes may be mediated by key factors such as the characteristics of settings, children, and caregivers, and separation due to boarding school is likely to differ in a number of ways from separation due to being placed in care.

1.5 RATIONALE

To the best of the authors' knowledge, no systematic reviews have been conducted on the psychological experiences and wellbeing outcomes of boarders. Since evidence suggests that being apart from biological family may in some circumstances impact on child and adolescent mental health and development, a review of the psychological impacts of boarding was considered instructive. Scoping searches identified that qualitative research on the topic was limited, therefore a review of quantitative research was preferred.

1.6 AIM OF THE CURRENT REVIEW

The aim of the current review was to evaluate quantitative research examining the psychological experiences of boarders and ex-boarders, encompassing factors such as bullying, homesickness and prevalence rates of depression, anxiety and stress. The review sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is known about the psychological experiences of boarders?
2. In what way do the psychological experiences of boarders differ from those of day scholars?

The current review does not consider literature addressing boarding at institutions designed primarily to cater for children and young people with special or additional needs, nor those with a specific focus on the role of boarding in indigenous communities. In these cases, additional issues are likely to be relevant, and warrant independent reviews.

2 METHOD

2.1 SEARCH STRATEGY

A systematic methodology was adopted to identify published research articles with relevance to the topic of interest (Moher et al., 2015). It was anticipated that relevant papers may have been produced in a variety of research disciplines and therefore journals, including those in educational, sociological, psychological, and healthcare fields. PsychINFO, Medline, BEI and ERIC databases were used to conduct searches. Grey literature was searched using Google Scholar and ETHOS. Key search terms included boarding/residential school and various terms relating to mental health and psychological well-being. A rationale for database selection and detailed list of search terms used are presented in Appendix A.

2.2 INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

Studies were considered for eligibility if they: (1) Were written in English; (2) Report quantitative data; (3) Used a sample of boarding students; (4) Included at least one assessment/measure of wellbeing or difficulty, and (4) Were published after 1950. Studies were excluded if they were: (1) based on a sample of students with special or additional needs, or (2) specifically explored the impact of residential schooling on indigenous first people.

2.3 STUDY SELECTION

Initial searches yielded 3933 results. Results were then exported to Mendeley for electronic management. Duplicates were removed (n = 510), leaving 3423 papers for screening. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were utilised to review titles and abstracts, indicating the potential relevance of 166 articles. All 166 articles were read fully and assessed against the detailed inclusion/exclusion criteria, resulting in the exclusion of 140 articles (see Appendix B.)

2.4 DATA EXTRACTION

A data extraction table was developed and included: title; author; main theme; sample size; study design; main questions; outcomes and measures (Appendix C).

2.5 QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Using the STROBE checklist as a guide (Knottnerus and Tugwell, 2008), a simple traffic light appraisal tool was developed and utilised to assess the quality of and risk of bias in the research articles (see

Appendix D). The STROBE checklist was reduced from 21 to four items in order to create a tool that allowed for effective appraisal of and comparison between quality and bias of chosen studies. The four questions in the tool assess features of the study design (including choice of measures, participants, and study design), and risk of bias specifically in relation to the aims of the current review. Where papers explored more than one theme, they were rated against the same criteria under each relevant sub-heading.

2.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

Wide variations in participant demographics and study methodology precluded conduction of a meta-analysis. Results of studies were therefore synthesised into key themes and reported narratively. Where results relevant to the current review were not clearly reported, attempts were made to statistically analyse reported data to better answer the review questions.

3   RESULTS

3.1   CHARACTERISTICS OF REVIEWED STUDIES

Detailed characteristics of all papers, including sample, method and results are presented in the table in Appendix C. A table presenting the research questions, findings and quality appraisal ratings can be found in Appendix E. Detailed description of measures used by reviewed studies are reported in Appendix F.

3.1.1   Location

Studies were conducted in various countries, with some countries represented more than others. These are shown in Table 1 below. Corresponding letters are matched to papers in Appendix C.

Table 1: Sample location of reviewed studies

Location	Studies
Australia	B,G,H,L,M,O,P & Q
China	D,E,J,Z
United States	F & W
Germany	U & V
Kenya	K & R
UK	I & N
Turkey	A
Taiwan	C
Uganda	S
Pakistan	T
India	X
Malaysia	Y

3.1.2   Samples

Several papers shared the same sample: Lester and Mander (2015); Lester *et al.* (2015); Mander et al., 2015) and Mander and Lester (2017) used secondary data from a large sample (n = 3462) of students in Australia. Pfeiffer *et al.* (2016) and Pfeiffer and Pinquart (2014) also used samples from the same German school data.

Table 2: Sample characteristics of reviewed studies

Sample/method	Studies
Only boarding students	I, J, L, S, X & Y
Boarding and non-boarding students	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, M, N, O, P, Q, R, , T, U, V, W & Z
Single time-point	A, B, C, D, E, F, H, K, N, R, T, U, V, Z
Multiple time points	G, M, O, P, Q, W, M & O
One school	H, X & Y
Two schools	C, E and G
Three or more schools	B, D, K, M, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, Z, A & N*

*sample included students that had previously attended boarding schools

The majority of studies collected and reported data on boarding students or day scholars whilst still in primary or secondary education, with the exception of two. Limbert (2001) used a sample of university students to compare differences based on previously attended school-type, whilst (Perveen & Kazmi, 2011) included participants up to 30 years old in a sample of Madrassah and Public-school students in Pakistan.

3.1.3   Source of reviewed studies

Of the 26 studies included, 23 were sourced from peer-reviewed published journals, whilst three were unpublished PhD theses: Crosby (2005); Downs (2001) and Stump (1995). 15 reported factors related to mental health and well-being (depression, anxiety and distress); three assessed body dissatisfaction or eating psychopathology, five assessed self-concept, self-esteem and personality traits and five focussed on bullying perpetration and victimisation. In terms of cross-over, one study with bullying as the main theme measured the role of students' mental health and wellbeing in bullying victimisation (Lester & Mander, 2015), one addressed both distress and homesickness (Downs, 2001), and one paper examined both wellbeing and personality traits (Martin et al., 2014). Studies measuring more than one theme are explored in each relevant section.

3.2   RESULTS OF STUDIES

Results below are structured first by theme or focus of the study (e.g. psychological wellbeing or bullying), then further organized by methodology (e.g. boarding only or comparison studies). In addition to the main data extraction in Appendix C, key summary information for each area of assessment is given within each of the following sections. Quality appraisal scoring is represented for

the following characteristics: Representativeness of sample; measurement of outcome or experience; appropriateness of comparison group and comprehensiveness of analyses (see Appendix D).

3.2.1 Mental Health and Wellbeing

A total of 14 studies reported on the psychological wellbeing or distress experienced by boarding students.

3.2.1.1 Boarding students only

Table 3: Key features and quality appraisal of boarding student-only wellbeing articles

Title & Author	Geographic setting	Participants x Time Points (TP)	Sample Size & Mean Age	Main findings	Quality Appraisal			
					Sample	Measurement	Comparison	Analyses
(J) Gao et al., (2019)	China	Boarders at 1TP	521; M = 13.47 (SD = 1.04)	- Significant relationship between negative life events and depression (β = .62, p < .001)* - Direct negative effects of peer support on depression (β = −.45, p < .001)* - LMS models revealed that active coping moderated the association between negative life events and depression (β = .14, p = .06)*	🟧	🟩	🟥	🟩
(L) Lester and Mander (2015)	Australia	Boarders x 4TP	150; Mean age 12/13/13/14	- Students reporting higher levels of depression (OR = 1.12 (1.06, 1.18) p<.001), anxiety (OR = 1.14 (1.07, 1.22) p<.001) and stress symptoms (OR =1.14 (1.07, 1.21) p<.001) were significantly more at risk of frequent bullying victimisation at start of Grade 8.	🟧	🟩	🟩	🟩
(X) Urmila et al. (2017)	India	Boarders x 2TP	130; M = 15.32 (SD = 0.66)	- Prevalence: 57.7% of students met criteria for 'moderate depression' at first time point, 43.3% met criteria after 1 year. - Change in scores over time was not significant.	🟥	🟩	🟥	🟧
(Y) Wahab et al. (2013)	Malaysia	Boarders at 1 TP	350; M = 16.0 (SD = 0.81)	- Prevalence of: stress (44.9%), Depression (39.7%) and anxiety (67.1%). - Stressors (academic, teacher, intrapersonal etc.) were significantly associated with depression, anxiety and stress. - Linear regression showed that intrapersonal, learning and teaching related stressors were 2.8 and 2.0 times more likely to cause depressive symptoms. - Interpersonal stressors 2.9 times likely to cause anxiety. - Academic stressors strongest association with all symptoms.	🟥	🟩	🟥	🟩

*β represents standardized coefficient

Wahab *et al*. (2013) and Urmila *et al*. (2017) restricted data collection to one boarding school setting, significantly limiting their generalisability. Urmila *et al.* (2017) and Lester and Mander (2015) recorded data at more than one timepoint, providing better evidence for the role of boarding in affecting wellbeing factors.

3.2.1.2 Boarding and non-boarding Comparison Studies

Table 4: Key features and quality appraisal of wellbeing comparison studies

Title & Author	Geographic setting	Participants	Sample Size & Mean Age	Main findings	Quality Appraisal			
					Sample	Measurement	Comparison	Analyses
(A) Ak and Sayil (2006)	Turkey	Boarding, bussing and day students	438; M =11.35	- Boarding students were most disadvantaged in terms of behaviour problems, social support, and school adjustment.* - Primary age boarders` total adjustment scores were lower (S (2, 425) = 2.93, $p < .05$) and problem behaviours (internalizing (S (2, 425) = 4.13, $p < .05$), externalizing (S (2, 425) = 4.03, $p < .05$) and total (S (2, 425) = 12.42, $p < .05$)) were higher than secondary boarders.	Yellow	Green	Green	Red
(B) Bramston and Patrick (2007)	Australia	Boarders and Non-boarders	255; M = 14.6	- T-tests revealed no significant differences between boarders (n = 36) and non-boarders in life events scale, or on the DASS (p>.05)	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
(F) Crosby (2005)	United States	Boarders and non-boarders	2240; Age 13-19	- No significant differences between boarders and non-boarders in the number of 'personal problems' experienced; but the type of problems varied depending on context: significantly more students in strictly boarding environments reported "being taken advantage of by friends" (26%; p =.00); "noticed for physical appearance" (17%; p = .026) and "not having right clothes" (17%; p=.02).	Green	Yellow	Red	Yellow
(K) Khasakhala et al. (2012)	Kenya	Boarders and non-boarders	1276; Age 13-22	- Prevalence of depressive symptoms 26.4%; - Boarders had more clinically significant depressive symptoms (CDI total; M = 20.12, SD = 0.18) than day students (M = 18.63, SD = 0.39) (X^2 =6.091, df = 1, p<.014) - Significantly higher proportion of boarding students had suicidal behaviour compared to day students (X^2=6.760, df=1, p=.047)	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green
(S) Nalugya-Sserunjogi et al. (2016)	Uganda	Boarders and non-boarders	519; M= 16 (SD= 2.18)	-Sample included boys only boarding, girls only boarding, mixed boarding and co-ed day school. - Prevalence: 21% (109) overall had significant depression symptoms on CDI. 74/109 evaluated with MINI-KID: 11% met criteria for major depression and 8% dysthymia.	Yellow	Green	Red	Red
(Z) Wang et al. (2016)	China	Boarders and non-boarders	37181; Aged 8 - 15	- Boarders scored significantly higher on the MHT (M=40.52) compared to non-boarders (M=39.42; p<.05) and in all sub-tests except impulsive tendency and personal anxiety (p<.05).	Yellow	Green	Green	Green
*Attempts to retrieve figures and tables of results from author and journal were unsuccessful								
DASS: Depression and Anxiety Stress Scales (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) MHT: Mental Health Test								

In Nalugya-Sserunjogi et al., (2016) the variable of 'boarding' was not assessed in the analyses. Data from Table 3 (page 6) made it possible to conduct a Chi-square analyses comparing the frequency in which boarders overall and non-boarders met criteria indicative of depression on the CDI. This was found to be non-significant (X^2(1) = 0.04, p>.05). Further analysis compared results from the mixed day school and mixed boarding school. This too was non-significant (X^2(1) = 0.36, p>.05).

Crosby (2005) showed no significant differences between the number of problems experienced by boarding and day scholars but did not sufficiently differentiate between boarders and day scholars, therefore findings must be interpreted cautiously.

A large sample size in the Wang *et al.* (2016) study ensured the study had statistical power, however mean differences between boarders and non-boarders appeared small, with effect sizes not reported. A comprehensive table of results could not be accessed for the Ak and Sayil (2006) study in order to fully scrutinise data.

Bramston and Patrick (2007) reported that although a very small sample of only 36 boarders submitted fully completed measures, a matched sample provided enough power to detect a large effect size (1 - b > 0.8). No significant differences were found.

3.2.1.3   Longitudinal comparison studies

Table 5: Key features and quality appraisal of wellbeing temporal follow-up comparison studies

| Title & Author | Geographic setting | Groups (G) x Time Points (TP) | Sample Size & Mean Age | Main findings | Quality Appraisal | | | |
					Sample	Measurement	Comparison	Analyses
(G) Downs (2001)	Australia	Boarders and non-boarders x 6TP	42; M = 12.8 (SD = 0.6)	- Comparison of day and boarding students elicited no significant differences in levels of depression or coping, nor any significant differences in changes over time.	🟧	🟩	🟧	🟩
(O) Mander and Lester (2017)	Australia	Boarders and non-boarders x 4TP (sub sample)	3462 (150); M= 12/13/13/14	- Boarding students reported significantly higher levels of anxiety (p = .009) and stress (p = .045) at the end of the first school year, and significantly higher emotional symptoms at the beginning of grade 8 (p = .042) and end of grade 9 (p = .039). - No significant difference in change over time on depression measure between boarders and non-boarders.	🟧	🟩	🟩	🟩
(P) Mander et al. (2015)	Australia	Boarders and non-boarders x 2TP (sub sample)	3462 (150); Mean age 12/13/13/14	- Boarders reported significantly greater levels of depression (p=.013), anxiety (p=.006) and stress (p=.026) than non-boarders after transitioning. - Significantly higher proportion of boarding Students (39%; X^2=22.604, p<0.001) experienced a difficult/somewhat difficult transition experience compared to non-boarders (23%). - Boarders reported greater emotional difficulties (β = 0.66, CI (0.24,1.08); p<.01) and overall total difficulties (β = 1.42, CI(0.38,2.47), p<.01) than non-boarders. - no significant difference was found between boarders and non-boarders on social wellbeing measures.	🟧	🟩	🟩	🟩
(Q) Martin et al. (2014)	Australia	Boarders and non-boarders x	5276 (2002); M = 14.88	- Boarders significantly outscored non-boarders on meaning and purpose (β = .07, p<.05); life satisfaction (β = .06, p<.01); participation in extracurricular activities (β = .10, p <.001), and parent relations (β = .13, p <.001).	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩

		2TP (sub sample)		- Only significant difference in gains or declines across academic year: boarders experienced significant decline in absenteeism from school (β = -.09, o<.01) and increase in extracurricular activity (β = .11, o<.001).				

In the Mander et al. (2015), mean scores did not meet clinical cut-offs. Using the same sample, Mander and Lester (2017) reported trends towards greater scores for boarders than non-boarders on measures of stress, anxiety and emotional symptoms, but these were not consistent across all time points. In both samples, there were significantly fewer boarders in comparison to non-boarders.

In Downs' (2001) study, the total mean score for the sample (M= 57.1) did not meet cut-offs for clinical depression. Participation retention issues meant that a significant number of female boarding students withdrew from study leaving only five female boarding students in the comparison group (from an original n=17).

3.2.1.4 Mental Health and Wellbeing Summary

Three studies sought to explore how different factors related to levels of depression, anxiety, and stress for boarding students. High peer support and fewer negative life events were found to have a significant negative effect on depression (Gao et al., 2019); academic factors were the set of stressors most strongly linked to depression in boarders (Wahab et al., 2013), and Lester and Mander (2015) reported that those experiencing stress, depression and anxiety symptoms were most vulnerable to bullying victimisation.

Of the studies reporting on prevalence of depression symptomology in boarding schools, two reported prevalence rates that were either modestly higher than (Wahab et al., 2013) or within a wide range of, regional prevalence rates reported in other research (Urmila et al., 2017). One comparison study found that there was a greater prevalence of depression in boarding compared to non-boarding students (Khasakhala, Ndetei, Mutiso, Mbwayo, & Mathai, 2012), whilst another found no difference between groups (Nalugya-Sserunjogi et al., 2016).

Six studies compared levels of depression, anxiety, stress, or difficulties between boarding and non-boarding students. Four studies found that boarders either scored significantly higher (indicating greater levels of difficulty) on mental health measures than non-boarders (Mander et al., 2015 and Wang et al., 2016); were more disadvantaged in terms of adjustment (Ak & Sayil, 2006); or showed a trend towards higher scores on measures of stress and anxiety (Mander & Lester, 2017). Although this latter finding was not consistent over a two year period.

Two studies found no significant differences between boarders and non-boarders with respect to the number of difficulties experienced (Crosby, 2005) or scores on mental health and wellbeing measures

(Downs, 2001). Martin et al., (2014) controlled for a number of covariables in a comprehensive analysis and found modest but significant differences benefitting boarders over time.

3.2.2   Bullying

Five studies specifically focused on the prevalence or impact of bullying in boarding school settings.

Table 6: Key features and quality appraisal of boarding student-only bullying study

3.2.2.1   Boarding Students Only

Title & Author	Geographic setting	Groups (G) x Time Points (TP)	Sample Size & Mean Age	Main findings	Sample	Measurement	Comparison	Analyses
(L) Lester and Mander (2015)	Australia	Boarders x 4TP	150; Mean age 12/13/13/14	- Frequent victimisation increased from 1 in 6 prior to transition, to 1 in 5 by the end of Grade 7 and Grade 9. - Peer support (p = .024) and feeling safe (p = .005) were found to be factors most likely to be associated with a decrease in frequent victimisation.	🟧	🟩	🟥	🟩

Good retention of participants in the Lester and Mander (2015) study (89% completing questionnaires at three or more data collection points) allowed for a comprehensive analysis.

3.2.2.2   Boarding and non-boarding Comparison Studies

Table 7: Key features and quality appraisal of bullying comparison studies

Title & Author	Geographic setting	Groups (G) x Time Points (TP)	Sample Size & Mean Age	Main findings	Sample	Measurement	Comparison	Analyses
(E) Chui (2015)	China	Boarders and non-boarders	365; M = 12.95 (SD = 1.86)	- Boarders (N = 52) scored significantly higher on measures of bullying behaviours (t = 5.07, p < .001) and tendency to fight (t = 3.24, p < .001). - Boarders scored significantly lower in self-control dimensions of risk-seeking (t = -3.71, p < .001) and lower in self-centredness (t = -3.40, p < .001) - Low self-control associated with the manifestation of bullying behaviour, specifically risk-seeking behaviour (B = -0.54, p< .001), self-centeredness (B = -0.60, p< .001), and volatile temper (B = -0.31, p< .05).	🟧	🟩	🟧	🟧
(R) Mucherah (2018)	Kenya	Male boarding, female boarding,	2273; Aged 13-18	- Participants at boys-only boarding school less likely to report bullying behaviour	🟧	🟩	🟩	🟩

Title & Author	Geographic setting	Groups	Sample Size & Mean Age	Main findings	Sample	Measurement	Comparison	Analyses
		and non-boarders						
(U) Pfeiffer and Pinquart (2014)	Germany	Boarders and non-boarders	706; M = 15.5	- Boarders show more relational aggression (p<0.001; n²=0.03) and overt bullying (F(1,694)=7.4; p<0.01; n²=0.01) - Boarders more often victims of relational aggression: (F(1,694) = 64.61; p<0.001; n²=0.09 and overt aggression: (F(1,694)=30.61; p<0.001; n²=0.04). - No significant difference in overt bullying when controlled for those who transitioned to boarding due to behavioural problems. - Full time boarders reported higher levels of being relationally bullied in comparison to boarders who went home at weekend: (F(1,283)=3.98; p<0.05; n²=0.01) - Effect sizes were reported to be small to moderate.				

Chui and Chan (2015) used a translated IBS and self-control scale with good reported reliability (Cronbach's x = 0.87). Groups in the study were not equally represented, with far more non-boarding participants in the sample. Boarding students reported significantly higher rates of delinquent behaviour than non-boarders (28.8% vs. 2.2%), and higher levels of parental past criminal history (22.6% vs. 12.6 % for fathers' criminal history) – factors likely to influence behaviour.

3.2.2.3   Boarding and non-boarding changes over time

Table 8: Key features and quality appraisal of temporal follow-up comparisons of bullying

Title & Author	Geographic setting	Groups (G) x Time Points (TP)	Sample Size & Mean Age	Main findings	Quality Appraisal			
					Sample	Measurement	Comparison	Analyses
(M) Lester et al., (2015)	Australia	Boarders and non-boarders x 4TP	3462 (150); Mean age 12/13/13/14	- No significant differences pre-transition - Boarders reported more frequent victimisation at beginning of Grade 8 (X2=21.97, p<.001); end of Grade 8 (X2=17.88, p<.001) and end of grade 9 (X2-14.32, p=.001), when compared to non-boarders. - Similar increase for the first two years for both boarders and non-boarders, but by the end of 9, twice as many boarders (20.4%) reported being frequently victimised compared to non-boarders (10.5%).				

In the Lester *et al.* (2015) study (as in Mander and Lester, 2017 and Mander et al., 2015), analyses did not distinguish between boarders who returned home regularly, or those who remained at school throughout the year, a factor reported to influence reports of relational bullying (Pfeiffer & Pinquart, 2014).

3.2.2.4   Bullying Summary

Four studies compared boarders to non-boarders on measures of bullying behaviours. Both Pfeiffer and Pinquart (2014) and Chui and Chan (2015) found boarders were more likely to display bullying behaviours, with Pfeiffer and Pinquart (2014) reporting boarders were also more likely to be victimised. Mucherah et al., (2018) found students in boys-only boarding schools were significantly less likely to engage in all types of bullying perpetration than girl-only boarding and co-ed day students. Lester *et al.* (2015) compared experiences of bullying over four time points across two years after transition. Boarding students experienced significantly higher victimization and perpetration of bullying behaviours than non-boarders at all three points after transition.

Lester and Mander (2015) found a spike in the prevalence of bullying perpetration immediately after transition, with a further increase in perpetration over the following two years. On average, boarders reported low levels of loneliness, high connectedness with the school and high peer support.

Significant issues with samples and comparison groups in a number of the studies present barriers to untangling specific school factors and their impact on bullying behaviours and prevalence. For example Chui and Chan (2015) and Mucherah et al., (2018) used samples of only two or three secondary schools.

3.2.3   Body dissatisfaction and eating psychopathology

Three studies looked at differences between boarding and non-boarding students on measures related to body dysmorphia and eating psychopathology.

3.2.3.1   Boarding and non-boarding Comparison Studies

Table 9: Key features and quality appraisal of body and eating psychopathology comparison studies

Title & Author	Geographic setting	Groups (G) x Time Points (TP)	Sample Size & Mean Age	Main findings	Quality Appraisal			
					Sample	Measurement	Comparison	Analyses
(C) Chang et al., (2016)	Taiwan	Boarders and non-boarders	821 (none reported)	- Mean total on the BSQ was significantly higher for boarders (N=199; M=91) than non-boarders (N=622; M=84.3; p=.013) - total was also higher for boarders in the primarily non-boarding school (p=.022)				
(N) Limbert (2001)	UK	Previous boarders and day scholars	647; M = 23.4	- Participants who had attended boarding school scored higher on total score (M = 37.1) and three subscales of EDI: Drive for thinness, ineffectiveness and Interoceptive awareness, compared to previous non-boarders (Total score: M= 28.1; t=-2.8, df=101.4, p= .006)				

Although Limbert (2001) found significant differences in eating disorder psychopathology, the mean total scores of both groups in were below the EDI clinical cut-off. Participants were selected through opportunity sampling at UK universities, and led to previous day scholars (N = 372) significantly outnumbering ex-boarders (N = 83). Retrospective data collection also introduced potential bias due to a large proportion of respondents (29%) not reporting the type of school they had previously attended.

Table 10: Key features and quality appraisal of temporal follow-up comparisons of body and eating psychopathology

3.2.3.2 Boarding and non-boarding changes over time

Title & Author	Geographic setting	Groups (G) x Time Points (TP)	Sample Size & Mean Age	Main findings	Quality Appraisal			
					Sample	Measurement	Comparison	Analyses
(W) Stump (1995)	US	Boarders and non-boarders x 2TP	325; Aged 13-18	- A two-way ANOVA (boarding or day, by grade) with (F=6.60, df = 1, p= .01) and without interaction (F=6.11, d f= l, p=.01) revealed that Boarding students had significantly higher scores on the EDI-2 than Day students. - No significant differences in changes over time				

Stump (1995) also found that differences between groups remained after controlling or SES, increasing the chance that differences were related to environment.

3.2.3.3 Body dissatisfaction and eating psychopathology summary

All three studies suggest that boarding students may be at greater risk of developing or presenting with symptoms related to body dysmorphia or eating disorders. Two studies captured data from only one timepoint (one from a sample of females who had already left school; Limbert, 2001), making it difficult to infer environmental impact on eating pathology, whilst Stump (1995) found boarders scored significantly higher (subclinical) but no significant differences in changes over time between boarders and non-boarders.

3.2.4 Self-concept, self-esteem, and personality

Five studies used measures related to self-concept, self-esteem, and personality traits with samples of boarding students.

3.2.4.1 Boarding and non-boarding Comparison Studies

Table 11: Key features and quality appraisal of self-concept, self-esteem and personality comparison studies

				Main findings	Quality Appraisal

Title & Author	Geographic setting	Groups (G) x Time Points (TP)	Sample Size & Mean Age		Sample	Measurement	Comparison	Analyses
(D) Chen (2019)	China	Boarders and non-boarders	493; M = 13.9 (SD = 0.71)	- Emotional intelligence more strongly associated with resilience among boarding students than among day scholars, suggesting that if perceived friend support is low (p =.005) to moderate (p=.003), adolescents with higher trait EI are more resilient in the boarding environment.	Orange	Green	Green	Green
(T) Perveen (2011)	Pakistan	Boarders and non-boarders	168; Aged 15-30	- Boarders scored significantly higher on Overall Personality Dynamic scale (t = 5.34)*, and on Neuroticism (t = 7.45)*, agreeableness (t = 51.73)* and conscientiousness (t = 7.26)* sub scales. - Day scholars scored higher on Extroversion (t = 9.56)* and openness (t = 4.27)*	Green	Orange	Orange	Orange
(V) Pfeiffer et al., (2016)	Germany	Boarders and non-boarders	701; M - 15.41 (SD = 1.87)	- Day scholars reported a greater sense of peer group integration (F = 12.13, p<.001) and social support from parents (F=11.57, p<.001). Boarders reported greater social support from teachers (F=72.53, p<.001) and success in gaining autonomy from parents (T=28.52, p<.001) - No significant difference in social support from peers or prosocial behaviour. - Students who stay in a boarding school at the weekend reported higher levels of success in developing close friendships than their classmates who spend the weekends at the parental home, (F(1, 264) = 3.09, pone-tailed < .05; η^2 = .01;Mweekend stay = 2.16 vs. Mhome stay = 2.05).	Green	Green	Green	Green
(Z) Wang et al., (2016)	China	Boarders and non-boarders	37181; Aged 8 - 15	- No significant difference in self-esteem.	Green	Green	Green	Green

*p=.000

Chen (2019) conducted a comprehensive analysis, however relied only on self-report measures of emotional intelligence.

3.2.4.2   Boarding and non-boarding changes over time

Table 12: Key features and quality appraisal of temporal follow-up comparisons of self-esteem and personality changes over time

Title & Author	Geographic setting	Groups (G) x Time Points (TP)	Sample Size & Mean Age	Main findings	Quality Appraisal			
					Sample	Measurement	Comparison	Analyses
(Q) Martin et al. (2014).	Australia	Boarders and non-boarders x 2TP	5276 (2002); Mean age = 14.88	- Boarders scored higher than day students on adaptive motivation (p<.01) - Interactional analyses showed that for day students scoring higher on agreeableness reported more positive relations with peers (p<.001) and greater cooperation (p<001) than day students lower on agreeableness and boarders.	Green	Green	Green	Green

| | | | | - No significant differences between boarding and day students in gains or declines over one academic year. | 🟩 | 🟩 | 🟩 | 🟩 |

3.2.4.3 Self-concept, self-esteem and personality summary

Pfeiffer et al. (2016) found that there were different potential benefits for both boarders and day scholars on a range of measures of identity and development. Authors also analysed differences between boarders who regularly return home for weekends, and those that spend longer periods in the boarding environment. Findings suggested that the effect of boarding may be complex and highlighted the potential impact of factors unique to the boarding experience (such as greater independence from parents and increased support role for teachers).

Perveen and Kazmi (2011) found that boarders and non-boarders differed on major dimensions of personality , whilst Chen (2019) and Martin et al., (2014) both found that individual characteristics (such as trait emotional intelligence and agreeableness) may have varying impacts on students' resilience or success in navigating different school environments. Martin et al. (2014) reported the only data at more than one timepoint. They found no significant differences between groups in the degree of change over time, suggesting that the impact of boarding may be temporally stable.

Comparison and generalisability of results was limited due to the age of participants (Perveen and Kazmi, 2011) and the nature of regional representation in the samples (e.g. metropolitan areas of China; Chen, 2019).

3.2.5 Homesickness

Three studies gathered and reported data on experiences of homesickness by boarding students living away from home.

3.2.5.1 Boarding Students Only

Table 13: Key features and quality appraisal of studies into homesickness in boarding students

Title & Author	Geographic setting	Groups (G) x Time Points (TP)	Sample Size & Mean Age	Main findings	Quality Appraisal			
					Sample	Measurement	Comparison	Analyses
(I) Fisher et al. (1986)	Scotland	Boarders	115; Age 11-14	- Incidence of homesickness 71% - Main features of homesickness were: 'Missing parent family'; 'longing for people at home' 'Missing home environment'; 'missing house, home, area, etc.' 'Wanting to go home'; 'feeling a need to return home' - Previous boarding school experience had an ameliorating effect (P<.05)	🟧	🟧	🟥	🟧

					Quality Appraisal			
				-Those who reported that they wanted to come to school were less likely to report homesickness.	🟧	🟧	🟥	🟧
(H) Fisher et al. (1990)	Australia	New boarders, previous boarders, previous day pupils	112; Age 14-16	- 78% reported homesickness (75% of boys, and 83% of girls - no significant difference). - New pupils reported higher incidences (91%), previous day pupils lowest (59%) - Previous boarders and previous day pupils reported lower frequency of homesickness (Mann-Whitney U = 1342, p<.01).	🟥	🟧	🟧	🟧

3.2.5.2 Boarding and non-boarding Comparison Studies

Table 15: *Key features and quality appraisal of Homesickness comparison studies*

Title & Author	Geographic setting	Groups (G) x Time Points (TP)	Sample Size & Mean Age	Main findings	Quality Appraisal			
					Sample	Measurement	Comparison	Analyses
(G) Downs, J. (2001)	Australia	Boarders and non-boarders x 6TP	42; M = 12.8 (SD = 0.6)	- Boarders experienced higher levels of homesickness than day students and this pattern continued throughout the year (although reduced from 90% to only 20% perceiving it as problematic).	🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧

Although the homesickness measure in this study was well described and intuitively utilised, authors reported no evidence that it is psychometrically robust. A small sample size also limits statistical power and generalisability.

3.2.5.3 Homesickness summary

Two studies (Fisher et al., 1986 & Fisher et al., 1990) were conducted at one timepoint, whilst Downs (2001) collected homesickness data at six timepoints across three years. All studies found that boarders reported high levels or incidences of homesickness, although data from Downs (2001) suggested that for a significant number of boarders, it felt less problematic over time. Generalisability of two of the studies are limited (Fisher et al., 1986; Fisher et al., 1990) due to the age of the studies, and as both used relatively small samples from one or two schools, but findings were consistent across settings that were culturally and geographically different.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 MAIN FINDINGS

Twenty-six studies met inclusion criteria for this review, with included papers assessing a variety of areas of psychological experience, which could be classified as mental health and wellbeing, bullying, eating psychopathology/body image, personal characteristics/identity, and homesickness. The consistency of findings varied between these different areas. The studies were from a variety of locations globally, leading to extra caution in drawing comparisons between studies. Notably, only one study was based in the UK.

4.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIENCES OF BOARDERS

A number of studies reported the experiences of boarders, without comparison with non-boarding groups.

Four studies reporting the prevalence of psychological distress (Wahab et al., 2013; Urmila et al., 2017; Khasakhala et al., 2012 and Nalugya-Sserunjogi et al., 2016) all indicated that a high proportion of students at boarding schools met clinical cut-off criteria for depression (RANGE) or anxiety (RANGE). However, the estimates were either in line with or only modestly higher than prevalence rates of similar adolescent populations. Given that the prevalence rates of psychological difficulties such as depression vary significantly regionally, nationally and internationally (reflecting not only possible differences in psychological experiences, but also differences in diagnostic processes and more generally how meaning is attributed to experience), comparisons between these studies should be made only cautiously. The high reported prevalence is, however, still concerning, due to the risk of psychological problems in adolescence leading to later mental health problems in adulthood (Dylan et al., 2018). Of additional concern are findings in the Lester and Mander (2015) study, indicating that boarding students experiencing stress, depression or anxiety were also significantly more vulnerable to bullying victimisation, a finding in line with previous literature on bullying in adolescents (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2010; Meland et al., 2010), and which may reflect a complex bidirectional relationship between bullying and mental health.

Two studies found that negative life events, poor peer support (Gao et al.,2019) and academic stressors (Wahab at al.,2013) had a significant impact on levels of depression in boarders. Again, these findings support research that show that negative life events (Ge et al., 1994) and lack of peer support (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2001) are significant predictors of distress and depression symptomology in

adolescents more generally. It is not possible to say on the basis of this study whether additional factors are at play for boarding students.

The student experience of transition from primary to secondary school was the focus of a number of papers. Lester and Mander (2015) found that there was a spike in reported bullying victimisation after students transitioned to secondary boarding school, whilst three studies reported that students reported higher incidences of homesickness directly after transition (Fisher et al., 1986; Fisher et al., 1990; Downs, 2001). Downs (2001) found, however, that after two years, only 20% of students felt their homesickness was problematic (down from 90% after transition), whilst students who had already boarded reported far fewer incidences than new students (Fisher et al., 1990). These findings support a hypothesis that after a significant and potentially distressing transition, adolescents may be gradually able to adapt and adjust to their new environment.

4.2.1   Comparisons between boarders and day students

Several studies sought to compare the psychological experiences of students in boarding and non-boarding settings. Findings from 10 studies suggested boarders were disadvantaged in comparison to non-boarders on measures of depression, anxiety and stress (Wang et al., 2016; Mander et al., 2015; Ak & Sayil, 2006; Mander & Lester, 2017); body dysmorphia and eating psychopathology (Chang et al., 2016; Limbert, 2001; Stump, 1995), and experiences of bullying (Chui & Chan, 2015; Lester et al., 2015; Pfeiffer & Pinquart, 2014). Three other studies, however, found that outcomes for boarding students were at parity with non-boarders on measures of depression and anxiety (Nalugya-Sserunjogi et al., 2016 and Downs, 2001) and problems experienced at school (Crosby, 2005). Given the numbers of different variables differing between studies, it is difficult to conclude what may undelie the range of results. It is possible that findings represent some cultural variance, or key differences in the time of academic year data was gathered.

In one large scale study based in Australia, findings suggested boarders were better off in domains of both emotional wellbeing, self-esteem and personality (Martin et al., 2014), findings which align with research that suggests some ecological settings present developmental opportunities that yield positive effects in adolescents (BSA, 2007; White, 2004).

4.2.2   Temporal follow-up comparisons of boarders and day students

Whilst the majority of studies assessing students more than once identified differences between boarders and non-boarders at two or more time points, few studies analysed between-group differences in gains or declines over time. Those that did found that there were no significant differences between boarders and day pupils in change over time on depressive symptomology (Downs, 2001; Mander and Lester, 2017), eating disorder psychopathology (Stump, 1995) or

personality characteristics (Martin et al., 2014). These results suggest that any influence of boarding in these areas may be relatively stable over time. It also remains possible that different characteristics of boarders and day students pre-existed their schooling experience. The results from the Martin (2014) support research that self-concept and self-esteem is largely stable over the course of adolescence (Trzesniewski et al., 2003).

There were some areas in which boarders experienced greater change over time: Lester at al., (2015) reported that boarders experienced a greater and significant increase in boarding victimisation compared to day students, whilst Martin et al. (2014) reported significant gains for boarders on wellbeing measures (decrease in absenteeism and increase in extra-curricular activity). The temporal gains for boarders reported by Martin (2014) are consistent with boarders having access to a wide range of extracurricular activities on a site where they spend the vast majority of their time (White, 2004). The cause of the increase in bullying victimisation (Lester, 2015) is not clear, and should form the focus of future research.

4.3   STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

To the best of this author's knowledge, this is the only review to systematically evaluate research into the psychological experience of boarders. The review's inclusion of a broad range of psychological factors is a strength in its comprehensiveness. However, this is also a limitation, as reviews with greater focus on more specific factors may elicit more in-depth analysis in specific areas. It should also be noted that key words during searches were mostly negative (e.g. distress, anxiety and trauma), and positive key words, such as resilience, were not included. Whilst potentially problematic, a comprehensive search using broad terms related to emotional development and wellbeing is likely to have identified all relevant papers in these areas.

Selected studies varied in quality, focus, sample size, demographics, and methodology, as well as the time period during which they were conducted. Studies reviewed had varying degrees of success in isolating boarding as a singular concept or experience, with the most significant issue identified being that many studies were conducted without control groups, thereby limiting the researcher's capacity to draw meaningful conclusions from the data. All longitudinal comparison studies used data from schools in Western Australian secondary school with a number of studies using data the same sample. Whilst this helps develop a rich picture of outcomes for Australian students (especially those in Western Australia), one should be cautious in generalising this beyond the specific context. It is also not possible to assume that variance between students is fully attributable to the unique processes involved in boarding, as this may be related to other factors not measured or adequately controlled for.

It was beyond the scope of this review to include studies on other variables such as academic achievement, socioeconomic status or gender differences. Additionally, whilst reviewed studies have international span, only English-speaking articles were included, therefore findings are not truly representative of the international nature of boarding. Comparisons across countries may also be confounded by how education systems utilise boarding – i.e. high performing students, all academic abilities or children transferred due to behavioural difficulties or parental loss (not consistently clear in articles). Quantitative data only were considered, risking a loss of nuance of experience from examination of qualitative studies.

4.4 CLINICAL AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings reported in this review are potentially valuable to both private and state-run education settings that provide boarding to students. Although this review does not present consistent differences between the wellbeing of boarders and non-boarders, it suggests that there are a number of areas in which boarders may face extra challenges. It also highlights experiences for boarders which have significant potential to impact wellbeing at a critical period of development – specifically around the transition to boarding for students new to the environment. Specific support may be offered in the form of mentoring, buddying systems or, for those with continuing difficulties, access to counselling services within or outside of the institution. Schools that provide boarding should also develop policies and frameworks that identify students most at risk of difficulties both early in their schooling life (such as during their transition), and specifically outline how support will be targeted at the most vulnerable.

4.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies should also aim to compare measures of day and boarding students in the same environment. This allows for more reliable inferences based on boarding status, as any differences should represent non-academic (beyond school) factors. There is also clear benefit in conducting longitudinal research with longer term follow-ups to explore the impact of boarding over time. It is also acknowledged that whilst quantitative reviews allow for systematic analysis and comparisons of numerical data, qualitative methodologies offer rich, in-depth explorations of boarder experiences, and should be considered for future reviews. It is also noted that UK studies are scarce, and thus the psychological impact of boarding within the context of the UK remains relatively unstudied despite the strong history of boarding in certain parts of UK society.

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Chapter Two: Research Paper

Men Who Report Difficulties in Adult Relationships and the Links They Make to Their Boarding School Experiences: A Thematic Analysis

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Research has suggested that boarding may be associated with a number of psychological difficulties. Despite boarding being a significant mode of education in the UK, and a significant number of male ex-boarders attending therapy or support groups, the experiences of boarders have limited representation in research. This research explored the experiences of males at boarding school, and the difficulties they faced in later relationships.

Method: Eleven male ex-boarders were recruited through support organisations or on social media and participated in a semi-structured interview. Data was analysed using Thematic Analysis.

Results: Three superordinate themes were presented: *Disempowerment* depicted how participants felt powerless or controlled by others, and the impact this had in later relationships; *Suppressing aspects of self and personality* related to how participants described hiding emotions or parts of their personality to 'get by', and how these strategies presented in adulthood; and *A process of recovery* was concerned with how participants sought ways to 'recover' from their experiences.

Discussion: Findings were discussed in relation to existing theory and literature and highlighted the importance for educational and care institutions to recognise ideological powers, as well as the use of therapeutic interventions that are underpinned by theories of attachment.

1 INTRODUCTION

"Everybody is homesick at first. You have to stick it out. And don't blame your mother for sending you away to boarding-school…Life is tough, and the sooner you learn how to cope with it the better for you". – Dr Dunbar

"Unless you have been to boarding-school when you are very young, it is absolutely impossible to appreciate the delights of living at home."

Extracts from Roald Dahl's autobiographical book "Boy" (Dahl, 1984)

1.1 HISTORY OF BOARDING SCHOOLS IN THE UK

Boarding schools have been an integral part of the education system in the United Kingdom since the 16th Century. Whilst the first boarding schools in England were set up to provide religious education - King's Grammar school was founded in 597 with the primary goal of preparing boys for the life of clergymen (Flanagan, 2004). Later, schools such as the New King's school in Stratford were set up offering free education to boys who could demonstrate that they could read or write (Gillard, 2018).

As of 2020, there are approximately 500 boarding schools across the United Kingdom (ISC, 2020). The most recent figures indicate that 69,680 are classed as 'boarding pupils', highlighting that a significant number of children continue to board at education settings in the UK.

Boarding provision represents a changing picture. In 2020 there are fewer boarding only schools, fewer same-sex schools, a significant increase in international pupils, and an increase in campuses set up worldwide (Independent School Council; ISC, 2020). Whilst full boarding remains the most popular boarding type, there has been a shift in recent years to weekly and flexi boarding, with the proportion of weekly and flexi boarders increasing for four consecutive years (ISC, 2020).

1.2 SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS/IMPORTANCE

Fee-charging private boarding schools have long been associated with privilege and wealth, and for a considerable period of time have provided a gateway to elite further education, such as Oxford and Cambridge universities, and into positions of power and high office in institutions such as the army, the judiciary and government (Gillard, 2018). Whilst the landscape of boarding appears to be changing, Boris Johnson is the fifth prime minister since the Second World War to have been educated at Eton College and the 20th British Prime minister to have passed through the Eton ranks. Almost two-thirds of his cabinet were also privately educated (Montacute, 2019).

1.3 Representation in the media and literature

During the last decade, media coverage of boarding schools has often been set around historic allegations of physical and sexual abuse at the hands of staff (Hogan, 2018). In light of high-profile investigations (such as Operation Yewtree), the police and media spotlights were shone onto a variety of institutions that had failed or continued to fail to protect children from abuse. Previous boarders continue to write about difficult and challenging aspects of their boarding experiences, in newspaper articles (Byron, 2020) or biographies (Dahl, 1984, quoted above).

Boarding schools, like any educational setting in the UK, are subject to national minimum guidelines for the provision of education and accommodation of children (UK Department of Education, 2015). Minimum guidelines are set to promote the welfare of children in areas relating to family contact, activities and free time, safeguarding and supervision, and there is a some evidence that the boarding sector is modernising (Anderson, 2004; M. A. White, 2004).

1.4 Previous research into experiences and impact of boarding

The experience of boarders may differ in a number of ways from that of day students. Boarders are separated from family, spend significantly more time in an environment with their peers and away from their parents, and are subject to greater structure and more rules and expectations about how and where they spend their time (Hodges et al., 2016; White, 2004).

Staff in boarding schools are required to take on many of the day-to-day caring roles often taken on by parents, providing boundaries, responding to students' needs, offering emotional and social support, and facilitating their development (Hodges et al., 2013). White (2004) reported results suggesting adolescent boarders formed primary bonds with both family and boarding house, with boarders drawing personal values from both. Research has also shown that while boarding may place children further away from potentially important relational assets, for some children it may represent a more stable environment than their home or community (Scott & Langhorne, 2012).

However, quantitative research to date suggests that boarding may be associated with a number of psychological difficulties (see Chapter One of this thesis for a review).

In addition, case studies of psychotherapeutic work with previous boarders by Schaverien (2011 & 2015) evidenced a common cluster of behaviours centred around problems with intimacy. Boarders were reported to find intimacy dangerous or threatening, were unable to talk about or share feelings, and oscillate between a desperate need for love, and rejection or abandonment of their partners (Schaverien, 2004). For over 20 years, Nick Duffell, a psychotherapist, has conducted workshops for

'boarding school survivors' in the UK. His work has sought to describe the traumatic early experience of boarding, and how it later shapes boarders' relationships and identity (Duffell, 2000). Whilst Duffell recognises that many boarders recall happy experiences of school, he describes how many also develop 'strategic survival personalities' as a means of protecting themselves. He also suggests that cultural and societal narratives around privilege have significant role in shaping how boarding experience impacts boarders' identity and relationships.

Evidence from a number of research areas may be consistent with the notion that boarding affects later relationships. For example, how separation from caregivers can affect attachment (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991), early experiences affect adult relationships (Daniel, 2006; Feeney & Noller, 1990), and that separation can be experienced or conceptualised as a type of trauma (Chapman et al., 2004), which is associated with variables affecting adult relationships (Busby et al., 2011; Purnell, 2010). Furthermore, events such as bullying have been posited to have more significant effects when children are unable to access parental attachment figures to help them to make sense of their experiences and cope with distress (Bryant et al., 2017). Whilst clearly additional factors may be at play here, wartime evacuees displayed different reproductive and marital behaviours than children who had not been evacuated (Pesonen et al., 2008).

A significant body of research also explores the intergenerational effect of boarding (trauma) in native populations in North America and Australia (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2011; Chief Moon-Riley, Copeland, Metz, & Currie, 2019; Patrick, 2018), suggesting long-term negative impacts in these contexts.

Other research directly assessing the manner in which relationships may be affected by the boarding experiences is scarce. This may be partly explained by the difficulties accessing information from these institutions, as the schools act to ensure the privacy and reputation of the school and its students (Poynting & Donaldson, 2005; Schaverien, 2004, 2011). However, if boarding does, indeed, impact how people relate to each other, the fact that a significant number of the British ruling class have experienced boarding may have far broader socio-political implications. Quantitative literature has not thus far fully explored the complex ways in which previous experiences might be perceived to impact later emotional and interpersonal processes. Qualitative analysis offers the opportunity to explore this richly at an experiential level.

1.5 RATIONALE

To the best of the author's knowledge, no qualitative research to date has specifically explored the individual experiences of male ex-boarders who may report later experiences of difficulties in relationships. The current study examines these issues.

2 METHOD

The current study aimed to explore male ex-boarders' experiences of boarding school and difficulties in later relationships. A qualitative methodology was chosen based on the potential to capture detailed, descriptive data on a complex phenomenon, and the capacity to explore the meanings that participants give to their experiences (Biggerstaff, 2012).

2.1 DESIGN

Qualitative interviews were conducted with male participants who had previous experience of boarding. A single interview design was employed, with each interview lasting between one and two hours. Thematic analysis (TA) was chosen as an approach to analysing interview data as it provides a theoretically-flexible approach suitable for different epistemological positions. TA is a distinct analytic method in which the researcher is responsible for deciding the underpinning theory that shapes, informs and guides the analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2018). Due to this flexibility, TA can produce analyses that range from descriptive accounts of the surface or semantic meaning of data, to complex conceptual interrogations of the underlying or latent meanings in data.

2.2 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

As this study aimed to produce a rich, detailed analysis of participant perspectives, it was important that sampling was purposive and participants shared enough homogeneity to present some patterns of convergence, but not too homogeneous that psychological variability was overly restricted (Benoot et al., 2016). Eligibility criteria were as follows:

1) Male

Male participants were sought to take part in the study due to the number of historically all-male and gender-segregated institutions.

2) Aged 30-65

In order to capture rich experiences of relationships, careers, family and other significant life events, participants were aged between 30 and 65, meaning a considerable length of time had passed since participants had left boarding school. Given that evidence suggests boarding school environments may have changed over the period of time that different participants attended (due to social, cultural and/or political influences), it was acknowledged that this may be reflected in themes derived from the collected data.

3) Experience of attending boarding school(s)

2.3 RECRUITMENT

Ten of 11 participants recruited responded to advertisements distributed by directors of boarding school support organisations (see Appendix T). One participant responded to me directly after seeing the same advert shared on social media. I contacted all interested individuals to discuss participation and share study information (see Appendix J). Full informed consent was obtained before a face-to-face or video-call interviews were arranged.

2.4 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

A total of 11 participants took part in the study. In an effort to contextualise the analysis of the data, participants were asked to provide quantitative data relating to their age at interview, at initial transition to boarding school, type of institution attended and length of attendance. This data is presented in Table 1 below. All participant names have been pseudonymised.

Table 1: Characteristics of participants

Participant (Pseudonym)	Age	Type of institution	Length of attendance
Theo	35	Co-ed boarding	10 Years
Alan	45	All-boys boarding	10 Years
John	36	Co-ed boarding	7 Years
Daniel	36	Co-ed boarding	7 Years
Lucas	65	All-boys boarding	7 Years
Michael	64	All-boys boarding	10 Years
David	37	Co-ed boarding	3 Years
Andy	45	All-boys boarding	6 Years
Steven	36	All-boys boarding	11 Years
Martin	57	All-boys boarding	5 Years
Nathan	37	All-boys boarding	10 years

2.5 THEORETICAL POSITION

This research was conducted from a contextual constructionist epistemological position, described in further detail in Appendix H. A Contextual constructionist approach assumes that there is no one reality that can be revealed through analysis, (Madill et al., 2000). This position was chosen to ensure the voices and individual, rich subjective experiences of the participants were not lost in the analysis.

2.6 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Qualitative interviews were semi-structured through the use of an interview schedule (See Appendix U) Questions were developed to facilitate a comfortable interaction with interviewees allowing for the gathering of a detailed account of experiences. Questions in the draft schedule are informed by the research question, theory, and boarding school literature. The interview schedule was reviewed by supervisors and an expert in qualitative research.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face where possible (five), with those unable to travel interviewed via video-calling software (six). Participants were asked about their experiences of boarding, relationships with family, friends, and partners, and their sense of how early boarding experiences had impacted later relationships. Audio data was transcribed and analysed following the principles of conducting Thematic Analysis using interview data (Braun et al., 2014). All interviews were audio-recorded onto an encrypted electronic recording device or laptop before being individually transcribed into word documents.

Analysis

Transcribed data was analysed using principles derived from Braun and Clarke (2006; also Braun et al., 2014). Transcripts were coded line-by-line to identity: participant experiences of boarding school; experiences of relationships whilst boarding and as adults and the links participants made between these. For further description of the process of analysis, see Appendix O.

2.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study was reviewed and approved by the University Ethics Review Committee, University of Leicester, UK. Given the sensitive topic area of this research, participants were informed and regularly reminded of the boundaries of confidentiality. A Participant Information sheet (Appendix J) covered issues such as confidentiality and it's limits, the storage of confidential materials and the voluntary nature of participation.

A distress protocol was developed to ensure a consistent response to participant distress during interviews (Appendix K). This protocol encompassed responses to emotional distress expressed by participants during in-depth research interviews, and guidance around the decision making and review process for determining if an interview should, or can continue safely (Draucker et al., 2009).

2.8   QUALITY ISSUES

In conducting this study, efforts were made to ensure the research met the appropriate quality criteria of sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance (Yardley, 2000). Supervisors reviewed initial coding and themes developed from the data. Further detail relating to this quality framework can be found in Appendix Q.

In recognising the important of reflexivity, a reflective journal was kept, keeping track of thoughts, reflections and biases during study design, interview and analysis stages. Paragraphs were written about each participant after interviews were coded, and an audit trail was kept of key analytic decisions (Appendices P and S).

3 FINDINGS

An in-depth analysis resulted in three superordinate themes, and nine subordinate themes (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

3.1 DISEMPOWERMENT

All participants shared experiences from their early childhood, at school and at home, where they felt powerless to influence decisions or events in their life. This superordinate theme encompasses participant experiences of feeling disempowered by those with more power: participants talked of feeling controlled, unable to articulate distress or feel heard (Subtheme 4.1.1), growing up in a masculine dominated environment (Subtheme 4.1.2) and of how this impacted their later relationships (Subtheme 4.1.3).

3.1.1 Controlled and out of control

This subordinate theme is about participant experiences of how the sense of being controlled, or out of control impacted their boarding experience, and how it threatened their need to have some control over their environment, shape their meaning of their experience, and their ability to articulate distress to adults.

Participants experienced their childhood selves as having little to no ability to impact the decision to go to boarding school.

I mean as a Fait Accompli my parents put my name down pretty much when I was born. So, over the years I was in the stream. I went to prep school, so for five years old. You know you are in the stream and you know where this is heading. (Martin)

There was no way whether I had any choice whether I went to boarding school not as an eight year old. (Nathan)

Participants describe an environment where they were fearful of staff, how violent or threatening behaviour of staff and peers was normalised, and how this often felt unsafe.

Punishment was still used in a very aggressive way [...] You don't have to hit someone to make people feel scared or worried [...] We had teachers who would shout to the point where you believed that they might do something to you (Theo)

And I remember sort of when I was yeah just gone into senior school. A few of us got beaten [by peers] until we fell asleep effectively. And just thinking back on it, it's just like, it's just like it's so brutal (Steven)

As a response to feeling controlled and constrained in the environment, many participants talked of 'mini rebellions', how they fought back against the system in small but meaningful ways.

When I ran away from home at the end of that half term, I was trying to communicate some anger. But umm.... It's actually fucking annoying because I wish I had been more angry (laughter) because I wouldn't be having this feeling now. But I was eight what else could I do? (Nathan)

The kind of mini rebellion was to go and listen to you know anarchy in the UK or something, being within the heart of the establishment [...] Then on the surface I guess we come out and we'd be prefects and we would be presented to the whole school, presenting the public image of conformity. (Martin)

Whilst all participants talked of limited freedom whilst boarding, several also spoke of how greater freedom was afforded to boys as they moved their way through school and how much this was enjoyed.

We were still managed from hour to hour, but we had a little more freedom, especially as we got older (Theo)

In my top year, my dad bought me a car and I used to drive back and forth, which was a great freedom (Alan)

3.1.2 Hegemonic masculinity

This subordinate theme is about participants' experiences of a culture where boys were expected to become leaders and powerful men, where there was limited space for vulnerability and masculine traits were celebrated. In contrast, limited opportunities to learn about the opposite sex led to stereotypical views of women: that they were weak, emotional, and mysterious creatures.

> *If you were bigger and older. Yeah, size and age…. It did get pushed by staff, I mean I was encouraged by two members of staff to basically do more bullying when I was…was in the top year….You know, if these young guys step out of line, get too cheeky, well, you know what to do. Just do what happened to you when you were that young (Alan)*

> *…it was dominated by all masculine teachers and masculine energy…So it was just a whole culture of the place in my situation. It was competitive, […] we were sort of pitching against each other to some extent to perform. And they were there to prepare young men going into military situations and defending their country, leading other men into battle and running the Empire and all that stuff. […] There wasn't room for any softness (Michael)*

Participants had shared experiences of a hierarchical system where boys were often placed in roles of leadership in lieu of adult supervision, and how the culture of the school was maintained by peers in hierarchical positions of power.

> *It's about making sure the school runs; it's about making sure people do what they are supposed to. I was a prefect, and I became a part of the establishment [Theo]*

> *I think I wasn't assertive enough to be a very good candidate for that role really. In fact someone was encouraged… Someone from the year above me…was encouraged to stay on school because he was a more assertive character. And he became the school captain, because I wasn't seen as being strong enough to be the school captain. (Lucas)*

Participants also expressed how growing up in a predominantly masculine environment provided them with limited experience and understanding of women through childhood and adolescence, often only seeing women in stereotypically female roles.

> *Matron…she provided a very small amount of femininity in the environment, but not much really. She wasn't really there. But I can remember her, probably just because she was the only woman in the place (Lucas)*

You know as far as we were concerned their bodies changed shape and they became interested in boys at some point (Theo)

One interviewee also shared his personal experience of abuse for 'looking feminine' in the all-male environment.

I went into that school looking young and looking feminine, looking innocent, looking vulnerable probably. And I was quite quickly picked out as one of a few boys who were given the name bum boys, which is a very shaming nickname […] And so I was caught up in that, in a way that was emotionally and psychologically abusive to me. I wasn't allowed to forget 24 seven, the whole time I was at school that they saw me as a girl really. And that potentially could be hit on by other boys (Michael)

3.1.3 Need for control: difficulties in later relationships

This subordinate theme captures how participants made sense of their early experiences of being powerless or controlled and made links to their relationship with power in later relationships. Some participants noted how the experience of having such little agency may have led to a desire to take firm control over their lives, noting how patterns of control had emerged in relationships with partners and children.

I hate losing control, I hate someone driving me. I hate not knowing where I'm going. I have to be in control […] And that's probably why I just go to the complete other extreme of being probably quite selfish and hurting people because I just do what I like. (John)

Maybe I'm just a controlling person anyway but somehow the defences I'd put in place to survive boarding school, somehow made me defended against my daughter when she was a teenager […] something was going on that made me get very angry with her when she was a defiant teenager (Lucas)

Participants also described how following these experiences, they went through life fearful of authority and people in power, unsure of how to relate to them or manage them in work environments.

I naturally have an anxiety of people who are in power. I struggle with people in power, especially people who use their personality traits as a way of getting power. And by that, I mean there are people in the workplace who use their reputation to manage people…I struggle with people like that. (Theo)

Some participants also developed a sense that others would be unwilling to listen or unable to understand their experiences of distress or continued to be sensitive to feeling 'not listened to' in future relationships.

> *[sharing my experience with others was difficult because] they would have probably belonged to the category many people would belong to, which was…your parents sent you…that you were privileged to go so don't complain (David)*

> *When we have an argument, she just maintains her calmness […] And I'm just there about to explode and she…I'm wanting a reaction…clearly linking back to boarding school again where you try and get a reaction out of your parents. You're getting dropped off, you're crying your eyes out. Come on, why aren't you listening to me and off they go (Daniel)*

3.2 SUPPRESSING ASPECTS OF SELF AND PERSONALITY

This theme encompasses how participants felt they needed to alter their behaviour, suppress or hide emotion and parts of their identity to 'survive' the boarding school experience (subtheme 4.2.1); how participants experienced balanced their need for close relationships with the threat that they were not always safe (subtheme 4.2.2). For many this led to a confused or fragmented sense of identity, and with learned strategies that although once helpful, provoked difficulties in subsequent relationships (subtheme 4.2.3).

3.2.1 'I had to survive'

This subordinate theme, entitled with a quote from Lucas, draws together how participants felt the need to change, act, or relate to others. It encompasses participants' description of creating a 'masked self', and how this was driven by the need to get by or 'survive' in the boarding environment. Several participants talked about having the sense that emotions signalled vulnerability, and that by showing vulnerability, they would be seen as weak, and become a target for victimisation.

> *You don't show your feelings, you can't show your vulnerability because other boys will project their own fears onto you and then you will get picked on for it, as the weak one (Michael)*

> *And I can remember really clearly that, that's what it took for me to shut down. So realising very quickly that actually I had to change, I had to do whatever I needed to do to survive […] for the next five years I kept my head down and did what I needed to do to get through. (Martin)*

Theo described the task of 'making sense' of his experience, and how he had no sense what was happening might be wrong or could be different.

> *But I think I just sort of…accepted…I had no other world vision. We had nothing to compare it with, so why would I have thought this is not normal…but I think just the way it was set up, the system is designed to take very very very young children and mould them whilst they are mouldable… (Theo)*

Many participants also felt unable to speak openly with parents about their experiences for fear they (the participant) would be blamed, criticised or seen as failing.

> *[boarders] never tell their parents…hardly ever. And that's the mysterious thing because it seems obvious that that's what they should be doing, but they don't. And I didn't. And it's to do with lack of agency in a young person or agency on a deep psychological level to process and articulate stuff like that and to make statements and to explain to people, the lack of ability to explain what's going on in your inner world. And some kind of sense that some people say…well it must be your fault if you're not coping. (Lucas)*

> *So I didn't communicate it no, I just cried. I said I missed home you know, and they [parents] would go I know you do, but don't worry there's no need to cry. (Nathan)*

3.2.2   Needing others, but fearing intimacy

This subtheme encompasses participant experiences of moving away from their family and missing the nurture, care and safety derived from being 'home'. Participants described how they still needed to be with, connected to, or close to others in order to feel safe. For many participants this was a double-bind (derived from a quote by Michael, below), as close relationships often evoked feelings of vulnerability.

Some participants talked about how the experience of being 'dropped off' triggered painful emotions.

> *Like something had been taken from me…ripped out of me like a real kind of loss…(Theo)*

> *it was a constant feeling of anger and feeling I guess abandoned I think (Daniel)*

Participants described how they often felt distant and disconnected from the safety and nurture of their family, especially mothers.

[I was] out of reach of the love and support and safety of my family home and particularly my mother (Michael)

I just missed them; I wasn't really angry at them… I remember wanting mum to just like appear you know? (Nathan)

Some participants described how relationships with peers offered a sense of protection, and closeness, and how these relationships were deemed necessary for 'getting by'.

I did make friends with one or two people […] We didn't talk about school […] it was almost like an escapism. That's how we related to each other. We didn't sort of talk about what teachers…I think we joked about it. We knew who…who the teachers to watch were, and we would talk about it. We would give each other the heads up. (Theo)

I think there was a lot of camaraderie […] And alliances between friends and things like that, which probably meant so much more than anything that was explicitly shared, but can be felt, subtly felt. (Michael)

But participants also shared how close relationships felt dangerous, and there was an inherent risk in forming bonds with peers.

I couldn't trust anyone; I didn't know what their motives were being friendly with me. And I was in this double bind, that I wanted to hide so that I wouldn't attract this unwanted attention, and at the same time I was so starved positive attention, of being appreciated. (Michael)

I think I didn't want to be in the mix in the dynamics in my year, because they'd get to know you too well, you know, like if they got to know you too well then your weaknesses would show (Alan)

Whilst the majority of participants often talked of constantly wanting to be at home with family, some also shared that this didn't always offer the contrasting warm, safe and loving environment they craved.

In my family there were no, you know, there were very few sort of soft moments or vulnerabilities or hugs or, no I love yous, or no sensitivities […] When I was at school I wanted to be at home, and when I was at home I wanted to be at school, which is just an awful situation to be in (Alan)

There was times where I was home and didn't feel relaxed, it didn't feel like I was home. (Daniel)

3.2.3 Ongoing difficulties with emotion and identity

Participants talked about how their adult relationships were often still shaped by behaviours that were learned and employed to maintain a sense of safety. They spoke of how their boarding experiences led to a confused sense of identity. For some, it prompted questions around whether they had masked their 'true self', or if boarding had become an integral and inflexible part of their identity.

I think the one thing overall like in amongst all of the confusion about where I, who I was as a result of the boarding school experience. And I think that's another key theme…something that I feel very strongly about is this confusion of like who am I? If I am not this person that has been imprinted so strongly. (Steven)

[I'm] trying to step out from behind this false self that still jumps in, to protect, to get me to withdraw, to find safety. Which doesn't help (laughter) in a relationship. (Michael)

Some participants noted how they (or their partner) had noticed a constant or desperate need for love, attention, and nurture from their intimate relationships.

I feel the need for constant attention…not…and constant comfort as well. Like…most people would need a hug once a day from the person they love. I need to be hugged 15-20 times a day. It sounds a really odd thing, but I need to be constantly hugged, and I need to be told constantly that she loves me. (Theo)

So one thing I was struck by with my experience as well is that there is this sort of desperate […] need for connection and the need for loving (Steven)

Others spoke of a pattern of repeatedly ending relationships at the point of feeling 'close', and how closeness in relationships prompted feelings of vulnerability, and leads to barriers.

We'll have a great time and then as things get too close, personal, then the contact is pretty much broken. And that's a pattern which in retrospect has happened throughout my life. (John)

I can feel overwhelmed by the other in an intimate relationship quite easily. The intimacy is too much… I can't bear it. And I can't respond with it either. But equally I can feel abandonment very easily as well. (Michael)

Whilst often the impact of these strategies seemed to have long term negative effects for participants, a number spoke of how the learned strategies held some value for them and could still be employed in situations or relationships as a protective strategy.

> *Whatever trauma you go through, and whatever sort of survival mechanism there are some benefits to these processes because everything that doesn't kill you makes you stronger in a way. Or opens up to new areas of your personality or something. So there are some benefits to all this stuff. (Lucas)*

> *I can still hook into it now, you know workaholism, or stretch myself, or not getting involved in emotional type situations, you know I can still call upon it now. […] it's a very successful technique because it gets you through, it protects you. (Martin)*

3.3   A PROCESS OF RECOVERY

This subordinate theme captures how participants have sought out ways to 'recover' from their experiences, and the challenges this poses to them (Subtheme 4.3.1), it also encompasses how relationships in adulthood have helped them to understand, and in many cases, reappraise their experiences (Subtheme 4.3.2).

3.3.1   Acceptance and anger

This subordinate theme captures participants' experiences of 'recovery'. It encompasses how some participants were left with anger towards parents or teachers, whilst others spoke of having made peace with what had had been done to them.

For some, the process of recovery from the perceived impact of boarding school has been long and enduring.

> *It's been my modus operandi pretty much. It hasn't been career or money or prestige, it's been how am I going to continue to emotionally recover from, you know, this, you know, these institutions, this situation that just sapped my whole spirit (Alan)*

Some continued to feel an ongoing sense of anger at what they deemed to be unfair, neglectful, or wrong.

> *It's not gone away now, it's, as I kind of alluded to, it's part of who I am. I'm pissed off I was sent away as an eight year old; I'm pissed off that everyone thought it was kind of normal and yeah… That they don't just sort of fucking shut down the system or make it illegal to do that. (Nathan)*

Two participants talked about how ongoing anger prevented them from moving forward or expressed empathy for their parent's decision as a way to make peace with what happened to them.

> *So I can see that as an option, and if she didn't know what the dangers of it were then it seems like a sensible decision to make (Alan)*

> *The institution doesn't care, you can kick as much as you like (laughter) they're not interested in you being angry about it or not, it's about our personal interaction about it I suppose, making some personal peace. (Martin)*

Theo described how finding peace was necessary, as it would be too painful to acknowledge that his parents did not have best interests in mind when sending them to school).

> *I think your parents fundamentally is where you learn how to love, how to relate, how to care, and if you're basing that on the fact that your parents made decisions that were not based on that, then [...] that completely blows wide open how you relate to others. And I think I have to think about it like that, and I genuinely believe that whatever may have happened, whatever happened, whatever he may not have done, fundamentally he made a decision based on care. It was a loving decision even if it was the wrong decision (Theo)*

3.3.2 Restorative relationships

This subordinate theme encompasses how participants reported experiencing restorative relationships with understanding others, be they partners, people from support groups, and or therapists. Through feeling listened to, understood and with guided reflection on their own behaviours and interactions with others, participants talked about having made significant positive changes.

> *I've worked in men's groups, been to psychotherapy [...] I've been involved in all that kind of thing quite a bit. So all the countering positive forces of life...have been enough to keep the relationship going (Lucas)*

> *I consider myself very lucky to have a partner who is very understanding and she's like... She is fully abreast of all the impacts that can result for me, and for me have resulted. (Steven)*

Some participants also talked about the powerful restorative value of discovering that others had shared their experience through attending conferences, talks or engaging with literature about ex-boarders.

Having talked to other people who had been to boarding school, and actually been a bit more open with my wife, umm yeah it's kind of flipped it all on its head almost (Theo)

The influence of boarding school on my life is profound. Knowing and recognising that that is the case has helped me understand myself better, has allowed me to forgive myself a bit better because, the guilt that you feel...(Andy)

4 DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to highlight the experiences of men who, having attended boarding schools during their childhood and adolescence, later experienced difficulties in relationships that they attributed to these early experiences. Eleven men were interviewed, and using thematic analysis methodology, three superordinate themes were developed: *Disempowerment* depicted how participants felt powerless or controlled by others, and the impact this had in later relationships; *Suppressing aspects of self and personality* represents how participants described hiding emotions or parts of their personality to get by, and how these strategies presented in adulthood; and *A process of recovery* alluded to how participants sought ways to 'recover' from their experiences, individually and through relationships. These findings will be considered in relation to existing research and theory. Study strengths and limitations are discussed ahead of consideration of clinical implications and ideas for further research.

4.1 RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING THEORY AND LITERATURE

Quantitative research to date (reviewed in Chapter One of this thesis) suggests that boarding may be associated with a number of psychological difficulties.

In line with the literature of Schaverien (2011) and Duffell (2000), all participants identified difficulties in later relationships, which they attributed at least in-part to their years at boarding school. Schaverien (2011) who, through her work with ex-boarders as a psychotherapist, described how the experience of boarding school, and child-parent separation may cause significant trauma and long-term repercussions for boarders. Duffell, (2000) described how boarding schools replaced the character of boarders "with a coat of armour filled with fear, loneliness and alienation", and in response to this, develop "strategic survival personalities", that allow them to navigate life through boarding school, but introduce ongoing and repeating difficulties in later relationships.

Given the centrality of the operation of power in the accounts of participants (theme 4.1), the Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF; Johnstone & Boyle, 2018) is suggested as a useful lens from which to make sense of participants reported difficulties in relationships. This framework posits that power is intrinsically linked to the meanings a person can attribute to their experiences, and the responses they have available to mitigate against the threats posed by power to core human needs (i.e. 'threat responses'). Power permeated every aspect of the children's experiences, from the absence of say in the decision to for them to go to boarding school through to control over most aspects of their lives such as who they spent time with and when they could see attachment figures (*subtheme 4.1.1*). The

PTMF highlights how ideological power, whilst more oblique, has some of the most important influences on people as this acts to constrain and shape how people make sense of their experiences. The dominance of hegemonic masculinity discourses to which they were exposed, that they should not show emotion, that vulnerability portrays weakness, and that 'boys don't cry' (*subtheme 4.1.2*) may have prevented them from making sense of their experiences in a way that did not locate the problems within themselves (*subtheme 4.2.3*). The term 'hegemonic masculinity' is used according to the definition proposed by Connell & Messerschmidt (2005). In relation to the data it describes patterns of practice, in addition to role expectations and identity, that pressure men to be a particular way, and maintains men's oppression of women in society. The participants seem to have experienced themselves as incompetent or failures when experiencing distress or thoughts that did not fit with the constructed ideals of competitive masculinity that engulfed them. Meaning may have been further constrained by the relative powerlessness of the boys to their parents. Attachment theorists have commented on how, when experiencing rejection from caregivers, it can be more adaptive for the child to experience themselves as the source of the problem because it is less damaging for them to think that they can change and secure nurture than to think that this is something beyond their power to secure (e.g. Golding, 2008)

Thus, the boys may have experienced a number of threats to core needs, and in response, developed ways to mitigate their impact. In immediately having limited or no access to home, or within safe proximity to primary caregivers, boys were deprived of the love and physical contact of family (*subtheme 4.2.2*). Whilst research suggests that the boarding environment becomes a 'home from home' for boarders, and that primary bonds, are formed with both family and boarding house (White, 2004)**,** the need for physical contact and nurture could not be adequately met by staff. Boys were left feeling unsafe, and lacking the secure base required for the healthy development confidence, competence, and resilience (Van der Kolk, 2017). For some, the prolonged experience seemed to pose a significant threat to their identity (*subtheme 4.2.3*). Disentangling the behaviours learned as responses to threat, and the 'true self' became a source of distress. It could be conceived that the experiences of prolonged threats, during adolescence, a key period for the development of identity (Erikson & Erikson, 1998) had long lasting impacts on participants' sense of identity, and provoked states of 'identity distress' (Berman, Montgomery, & Kurtines, 2004). To enable them to build or maintain relationships with peers, boys suppressed their distress – a response similar to an avoidant attachment pattern, where a child suppresses an emotion such as distress in order to keep a caregiver close (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991) This also relates to the concept of "Strategic survival personalities" described in literature by Duffell (2000). But boys found themselves in a double bind. Whilst they were desperate for connection, relationships with peers were intrinsically risky. They had to be distrusting,

hypervigilant to the motives of others, and keep parts of themselves hidden. These behaviours could be said to share commonality with disorganised attachment patterns (Main & Solomon, 1990) – where children oscillate between nurture seeking (the need to love) and the need to survive (to protect the self). The experience of an adult in the role of caregiver causing harm is often considered an antecedent for disorganised attachment patterns (Bacon & Richardson, 2001), and may explain why this was a shared experience for many participants. The boys will have entered the school with various different patterns of attachment behaviours, but the threat of isolation may have forced them to either continue to use them or adapt to do so.

Whilst a sense of powerlessness was prevalent amongst the participant narratives, many also spoke of 'little rebellions' that offered them small but meaningful resistance against the system. This is described in detail in research around survivors of childhood sexual abuse, for example, drawing upon Foucault's notion of 'Where there is power, there is resistance' and is a key idea underpinning many trauma informed perspectives (e.g. Warner, 2009).

Whilst living in the boarding environment, the behaviours developed by boys to mitigate the relational, emotional, social and environmental threats, seemed to work well enough for most, but these were patterns that may have become second nature, or internalised in the boys understanding of how to relate to themselves, to others and the world around them. Participants may have continued to employ previously learned strategies in situations where the threat was no longer present, and in some cases this introduced difficulties or further barriers to them meeting core needs.

The experience of getting close to partners, before feeling vulnerable and pulling back, was described by many participants as a repeating pattern that emerged in romantic relationships soon after leaving school, and continued for many years into adulthood. Fraley et al. (2005) describe how avoidant or dismissive patterns of attachment in adults is often characterised by the avoidance of intimacy (due to a fear of rejection), an over-focus on own needs, difficulty disclosing thoughts and feelings to partners and a vulnerability to slights and rejections. These were common patterns in the experience of participants (*subtheme 4.1.3*) and appear to be in line with the experience of boarders described by Schaverien (2004). For some, these difficulties were felt to be the barrier to experiencing close, intimate relationships, whilst others found enough resource through an experience of a healthy relationship to overcome these challenges. Many participants also discussed finding it unbearable to feel out of control in relationships, and how this often provoked a controlling response – to be independent and take control of their lives.

Some participants described how they continued to go through life fearful of authority and people in power, unsure of how to relate to them or manage them in work environments. This response to

power is understandable, given their experiences, but was not a universal theme amongst participants. This may be in part linked to how society is Influenced by neoliberalist ideas of 'survival of the fittest', and how some coping strategies (overworking, maintaining emotional distance in relationships or conducting tasks without emotion) are more subtle, and more accepted by society. Thus individuals may be less likely to experience these as a 'problem' or make links between these and their past experiences.

Although seemingly impacted by these early experiences, the majority of participants interviewed were in work, had partners, children and had avoided the need for contact with specialist mental health services. This too may relate to the degree to which participants were somewhat privileged: they were all white men, had access to paid education, job opportunities and personal wealth. These factors have been shown to be significantly associated with reduced distress (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010) and may act as protective factors against the early, and ongoing threats to participant's core needs.

4.2 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

To the best of my knowledge, the current study is the first to specifically explore male ex-boarders' experiences of difficulties in relationships through thematic analysis. The sample size was appropriate for thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and allowed for an in-depth exploration of an under-researched phenomenon.

Whilst initial recruitment was not aimed specifically at those identifying as having had significantly negative relationship experiences, in an effort to ensure successful recruitment the study was advertised through ex-boarder support organisations that play a key role in lobbying for change in the provision of boarding. It is therefore acknowledged that the homogeneity of participant experiences is both a strength and limitation of the current study in that findings will unlikely be generalisable to the wider population of UK boarders, many of whom will not identify relationship difficulties as linked to boarding experiences. The homogeneity did however allow for a richer exploration of these factors for the sample of men who had identified such implications for later relationships.

The inclusion criteria for age was set purposefully wide (in order to capture a range of relationship experiences), however it should be noted that between participants there were differences in age at interview, the age they first boarded, and number of years spent boarding. There is evidence that modern boarding environments have changed in response to legislation (UK Department of Education, 2015) and therefore there may have been significant differences in the environments that participants were schooled in.

Around half of participants were interviewed in person. Whilst remote interviews were vulnerable to issues related to technology and lack of control of participant environment, the remote interviewees demonstrated an obvious willingness to discuss and share their experiences of boarding. This, and that many participants had previously reflected on or spoken of their boarding experiences, acted as a catalyst to ensure remote interviews provided equally rich and valuable insights into participant experiences as face to face interviews, and therefore the quality of interview was not adversely affected.

Transparency of the data analysis process and careful consideration of reflexive and epistemological influences on the analysis provides strength to the current study.

4.3 CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

Findings shed further light on the complexity of the experience of males growing up in a boarding environment, and the difficulties they face in later relationships. They have valuable implications for clinicians working directly with male ex-boarders, support groups or organisations that offer education and intervention, and schools that continue to offer boarding as a facet of their educational model.

For therapists working with males who previously boarded, especially those presenting with relational difficulties, it feels pertinent to consider attachment informed approaches to therapy. The described difficulties of participants may present in therapy; the push and pull as a therapeutic relationship develops, the hidden distress beneath a hard exterior, or challenges related to the power dynamics in a therapist and client relationship. Despite these potential challenges, a theme of participant experience post-boarding was the value of relationships they have developed romantically, through therapy and in support groups, and how they have provided a new framework for understanding and re-appraising their experiences (*subtheme 4.3.2*).

Of relevance to therapists and dedicated support groups, was the fact that most participants referenced having seen, read, or engaged with materials created to support previous boarders. Responses in interview suggest that the narrative around being a boarding 'survivor' is one that has been incorporated into participants' new sense-making of their experiences. 'Re-authoring' is a narrative technique that allows for the collaborative reauthoring of 'problem' stories (White, 2007). Although likely challenging, this could be a valuable therapeutic activity for ex-boarders who have internalised their difficulties.

Whilst the boarding 'survivor' or 'syndrome' narrative may make sense and provide relief for ex-boarders with ongoing difficulties, therapists and support organisations should be cautious not to promote over-identification of 'normal' behaviours being compromised by early boarding experiences

(Warner, 2009). Describing ex-boarders' behaviours as a syndrome, could risk further location of the source of the difficulties as being within the person due to invoking the language of 'disorder' – Supporting men to see the impacts and their ways of being as adaptive strategies to survive school could support a less stigmatising approach.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, is the need to ensure schools continue to be aware and thoughtful of the nature of boarding environments, and how they can create spaces where the culture and practices of teaching and support staff are underpinned and informed by theories of attachment. Good practice may involve schools ensuring that staff are trained to provide an attachment informed approach to the children in their care and educated to identify and support students who may be experiencing difficulties related to parental separation or distance from home. Additionally, schools would benefit from deconstructing and reflecting upon masculinity, and how messages about how to be a boy or man are communicated at different levels. Schools may demonstrate an understanding of these factors by ensuring they are written into policy, openly discussed, and regularly reviewed by senior leadership staff. Further demonstration of good practice would include opportunities for students to learn about and critically discuss factors related to power, masculinity and emotional development within the school curriculum.

4.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

A suggested direction for future research would be to explore experiences of boarders who do not identify as having difficulties resulting from their boarding experience. In order to capture these experiences, it may require a researcher to take an interpretive stance, as participants may present as being more guarded. Further ideas for research include the experience of female boarders, or how cultures have changed in boarding schools over time. Of particular value would be research that explored ways that literature around boarding could be implemented by those running the schools.

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APPENDICES

To ensure coverage of these areas, specialist library staff were consulted in choice of search engines and terms.

Rationale for choice of database:

Database	Rationale
PsycINFO	Comprehensive collection of psychological articles with extensive coverage of related disciplines
Medline	Provides access to articles across life sciences
ERIC	Education related database that mainly provides access to articles published in the US
BEI	Education database that provides access mainly to articles published in the UK
Grey Searches	
Scholar	Provides access to scholarly literature across an array of publishing formats and discipline
Ethos	British Library access to completed theses that may not yet be published
Prospero	Database of systematic review protocols in order to identify any current reviews into any linked area of research

Context	*How*	*Issues*	*Population*
boarding	Qualitative	psych*	Boarders
boarder*	Quantitative	well-being	Students in transition
"resid* school"		wellbeing	Ex-boarders
		"well being"	
"Private School"		Health	
"Public School"		mental	
		behav*	
		distress*	
		anxiety	
		depress*	
		distress	
		Trauma	
		attachment	
		personality	

relation*
emotion*
development*
Social*
Homesick*
Transition*

Rationale for inclusion / exclusion of studies

Studies were included if they were available in English, used quantitative methodology, used a sample of boarding students and included at least one assessment/measure of psychological wellbeing or psychological difficulty (e.g. anxiety, depression, distress or self-esteem). As searches of the Cochrane Library and Google Scholar yielded no existing systematic review of this area, a decision was made to include all papers meeting criteria published after 1950. To minimise the effects of publication bias, unpublished studies were included providing they met inclusion criteria.

Scoping searches identified several articles with a focus on the impact of residential schooling for Canadian indigenous first people between 1880 and 1930. A similar process of Indigenous assimilation took place in Australia between 1905 and 1969 (Ellinghaus, 2006). This area of research focusses on a specific historical practice which involves complex issues around culture, language, colonisation, and choice that differed substantially from other boarding school research. Papers focusing on this phenomenon were therefore excluded.

Studies which investigated the experience of attending residential schools for children with special needs (e.g. learning difficulties or behavioural problems) were also excluded for a similar reason. Furthermore, studies were excluded if they used qualitative methodology or a case study design.

Record of Searches

Searches completed on 22/10/19

		Number of Results from Database			
Primary search term	**AND**	**PsycINFO**	**Medline**	**BEI**	**ERIC**
(boarding OR boarder* OR "resid* School")	(psych* OR well-being OR wellbeing OR "well being" OR health OR mental OR behav* OR distress* OR anxiety OR depress* OR distress OR trauma OR attachment OR personality OR relation* OR emotion* OR development* OR social* OR homesick* OR transition*)	1,725	1075	185	948
Filters applied: • 1950- present • English language					
Total		3,933			

Additional searches: Potentially relevant additional terms were identified following the selection of the articles. Bullying and eating pathology emerged as themes in the psychological experiences of boarders, prompting further searches of relevant databases to ensure all pertinent papers had been identified (see Appendix A), since these terms had not been included specifically in the initial searches. No additional papers were identified after screening these searches.

Searches completed on 8/11/19

Search Terms		Number of Results from Database			
Primary search term	**AND**	**PsycINFO**	**Medline**	**BEI**	**ERIC**
(boarding OR boarder* OR "resid* School")	(anorex* or "anorexia nervosa" or bingeing or binging or binge bulimarexia or bulimia or "compulsive eat*" or hypheragia or pica or purging or "eating disorder*")	15	9		

(boarding OR boarder* OR "resid* School")	(bully* or bullied)	25		5	9
Filters applied: • 1950- present • English language					
Total		63			

Papers identified through references and grey literature searches

Paper	Reason for not showing in main search
Downs, J. (2001). *Coping with change: adolescents' experience of the transition to secondary and boarding school.*	Unpublished theses from James Cook University in Australia.
Urmila et al. (2017). *Prevalence and risk factors associated with depression among higher secondary school students residing in a boarding school of North Kerala, India*	Indian study published in International Journal of Contemporary Paediatrics. Key words in title but did not show in Medline search.
Wang, A., Medina, A., Luo, R., Shi, Y., & Yue, A. (2016). *To Board or Not to Board: Evidence from Nutrition, Health and Education Outcomes of Students in Rural China.*	Number of key search terms in title and abstract, but not present in main search. Published in China & World Economy.
Perveen (2011). *Personality dynamics of boarders and day scholars who belong to madrassah and public school.*	Key search terms in title and abstract. Not present in search results. Published in Academic Research International journal.

Search results
n = 3933

Papers identified through additional searches using key terms
n = 63

Articles identified through references
n = 5

Exported to Mendeley

Duplicates removed
n = 510

Duplicates removed
n = 60

Title and abstract screened = 8

Titles and abstracts screened for suitability
n = 3423

Excluded
n = 3265

- focus on assimilation of Native Americans n=519
- used children with special needs as sample n=890
- commentary, case study, book or book review n=351
- used Looked After Children as sample n=127
- 'boarding' used in non-educational context n=665
- focus on a model, history or policies n=274
- focus on physical health and epidemiology n=285
- no focus on psychological well-being n=154

Articles read in full and assessed against inclusion / exclusion criteria
n = 166

Excluded
n = 140

- not available in English n=2
- qualitative methodology n=18
- sample did not include boarding students n=24
- no measure of psychological well-being n=59
- focus on cultural assimilation n=10
- focus on children with special needs n=5
- book commentary, review, discussion paper or editorial n=18
- focus on looked after or left-behind children n=4

Articles included in review
n = 26

	Title & Author	Theme	Type of sampling	Design	Geographic setting	Sample Size; Mean Age; % male/female	Groups (G) x Time Points (TP)	Measures
A	Ak, L., & Sayil, M. (2006). Three different types of elementary school students' school achievements, perceived social support, school attitudes and behavior-adjustment problems.	Depression, Anxiety and Distress	Purposive or opportunity sample	Cross-sectional	Turkey	438; M = 11.35; 47%/53%	3G	TRF Form for CYP; Social Support Scale; School Attitude Scale (2004)
B	Bramston, P., & Patrick, J. (2007). Rural adolescents experiencing an urban transition.	Distress	Purposive or opportunity sample	Cross-sectional & Thematic	Australia	255; M = 14.6; 48%/52%	2G	Self-report questionnaire battery; life events and psychological distress: DASS1
C	Chang et al. (2016). Boarding school influence on self-reported concern for perceived body and face morphology in Taiwan	Body dissatisfaction or ED	Purposive or opportunity sample	Cross-sectional	Taiwan	821 (none reported)	2G	Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ)
D	Chen (2019). Chinese Adolescents' Emotional Intelligence, Perceived Social Support, and Resilience-The Impact of School Type Selection.	Self-concept, self-esteem and personality	Purposive or opportunity sample	Cross-sectional	China	493; M = 13.9 (SD = 0.71); 50.3%/49.7%	2G	Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Adolescent Short Form (TEIQue-ASF; Petrides et al., 2006); The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet et al., 1988) and Resilience Scale for Chinese Adolescents

							(RSCA; Hu and Gan, 2008
E	Chui (2015). Self-control, school bullying perpetration, and victimization among Macanese adolescents.	Bullying	Convenience sample	Cross-sectional	China	365 ' M = 12.95 (SD = 1.86); 100% Male	2G	The Illinois Bully Scale (IBS) & the Self-control scale (1990)
F	Crosby, E. M. (2005). Self-reported personal problems of adventist academy students	Wellbeing and distress	Purposive or opportunity sample	Cross-sectional	United States	2240; Age 13-19; 46.6%/53.4%	3G	Personal Problems Checklist for Adolescents (PPC-A)
G	Downs, J. (2001). *Coping with change: adolescents' experience of the transition to secondary and boarding school*.	Distress (& Homesickness)	Purposive or opportunity sample	Longitudinal	Australia	74; M = 12.8 (SD = 0.6); 39%/61%	2G x 6TP	Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale (RADS) Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI) Self- Description Questionnaire- II (SDQ-II); Impact of Life Events Scale
H	Fisher et al. (1990). Homesickness in a school in the Australian Bush.	Homesickness	Purposive or opportunity sample	Cross-sectional	Australia	112; Age 14-16; 67.8%/32.2%	3G	Five category rating scale assessing homesickness
I	Fisher et al. (1986). Homesickness and health in boarding school children.	Homesickness	Purposive or opportunity sample	Cross-sectional	Scotland	115; Age 11-14; 50%/50%	1G	Developed own questionnaire (No ref); Cross-referenced with pupil's definitions of homesickness
J	Gao et al., (2019). The promotive effects of peer support and active coping in relation to negative life events and depression in Chinese adolescents at boarding schools	Depression	Stratified cluster sampling	Cross-sectional	China	521; M = 13.47 (SD = 1.04); 48.9%;58.1%	1G	Negative Life Event Scale, Peer Support Scale, Simple Active Coping Style Scale, and Children Depression Scale

K	Khasakhala et al., (2012). The prevalence of depressive symptoms among adolescents in Nairobi public secondary schools: Association with perceived maladaptive parental behavior	Depression	Stratified then random sampling	Cross-sectional	Kenya	1276; Age 13-22; 58.5%; 42.2%	2G	Egna Minnen Betrafande Uppfostran (EMBU) and The Child Depression Inventory CDI)
L	Lester and Mander (2015). The role of social, emotional and mental wellbeing on bullying victimisation and perpetration of secondary school boarders	Bullying (wellbeing predictors)	Secondary Data (not clear)	Longitudinal	Australia	150; Mean age 12/13/13/14; 50%/50%	1G x 4TP	Bullying Victimisation (adapted); Peer Support (PSSS); Loneliness (LSS); Connectedness (SCS); Safety; Pro-victim Attitudes (PVS); Mental Wellbeing (DASS); Emotional Wellbeing (SDQ).
M	Lester at al. (2015). Bullying behaviour following students' transition to a secondary boarding school context.	Bullying (Prevalence)	Secondary Data (not clear)	Longitudinal	Australia	3462 (150); Mean age 12/13/13/14; 50%/50%	2G x 4TP	Bullying victimisation Self-report questionnaire
N	Limbert (2001). A comparison of female university students from different school backgrounds using the Eating Disorder Inventory	Eating Disorder	Purposive or opportunity sample	Cross-sectional	UK	647; M = 23.4; 100% female	4G	Eating Disorder Inventory (EDI)
O	Mander and Lester (2017). A longitudinal study into indicators of mental health, strengths and difficulties reported by boarding students as they transition from primary school to secondary boarding schools in Perth, western Australia	Anxiety, distress and depression	Purposive or opportunity sample	Longitudinal	Australia	3462 (150); Mean age 12/13/13/14; 50%/50%	2G x 4TP	SDQ and DASS
P	Mander et al. (2015). The social and emotional well-being and mental health implications for	Depression, anxiety and stress	Purposive or opportunity sample	Longitudinal	Australia	3462 (150); Mean age	2G x 2TP	Peer support at school scale (PSSS); SDQ

	adolescents transitioning to secondary boarding school.					12/13/13/14; 50%/50%		
Q	Martin et al. (2014). Boarding School, Academic Motivation and Engagement, and Psychological Well-Being: A Large-Scale Investigation.	Self-concept, self-esteem and personality And Wellbeing	Purposive or opportunity sample	Longitudinal and Cross Sectional	Australia	5276 (2002); Mean age = 14.88; 57%/43%	2G x 2TP (sub sample)	Motivation and Engagement Scale; Engagement Measures (designed); Student Approaches to Learning (SAL); Quality of Life (WHOQOL); SDQ-II; Teacher-student relationship scale; Extracurricular Activity; International Big-Fave Mini-Markers (IEBM)
R	Mucherah (2018). The relationship of school climate, teacher defending and friends on students' perceptions of bullying in high school.	Bullying (prevalence)	Purposive or opportunity sample	Cross-sectional	Kenya	2273; Aged 13-18; 49%/51%;	3G	Adolescent Peer Relations (Parada, 2000); My Class Inventory (Fraser, 1998),
S	Nalugya-Sserunjogi, J., Rukundo, G. Z., Ovuga, E., Kiwuwa, S. M., Musisi, S., & Nakimuli-Mpungu, E. (2016). Prevalence and factors associated with depression symptoms among school-going adolescents in Central Uganda.	Depression	Purposive or opportunity sample	Cross-sectional	Uganda	519; M = 16 (SD = 2.18); 58%/42%	1G	Children's Depression Inventory (CDI); (MINI-KID)
T	Perveen (2011). *Personality dynamics of boarders and day scholars who belong to madrassah and public school*.	Personality types	Probability Random sampling	Cross-sectional	Pakistan	168; Aged 15-30; 50%/50%	2G	NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI)

U	Pfeiffer and Pinquart (2014). Bullying in German boarding schools: A pilot study.	Bullying (pravalence and impact on life satisfaction)	Purposive or opportunity sample	Cross-sectional	Germany	706; M = 15.5; not reported	2G	Social Experience Questionnaire – self report. (SEQ-S); Satisfaction with Life Scale.
V	Pfeiffer et al. (2016). Social Relationships, Prosocial Behaviour, and Perceived Social Support in Students From Boarding Schools.	Prosocial behaviours (personality)	Purposive or opportunity sample	Cross Sectional	Germany	701; M - 15.41 (SD = 1.87); 53.4%/46.6%)	2G	Development Task Questionnaire; BSSS; Prosocial subscales of SDQ
W	Stump (1995). Women's eating attitudes and body image in coed and single sex high schools: An exploration of social contagion	Eating Disorder	Purposive or opportunity sample	Longitudinal	US	325; Aged 13-18; Not clear	2G x 2TP	Eating Disorders Inventory 2 (Gamer, 1990); Personal Appearances Comparison Scale
X	Urmila et al. (2017). Prevalence and risk factors associated with depression among higher secondary school students residing in a boarding school of North Kerala, India	Depression	Purposive or opportunity sample	Cross sectional	India	130; M = 15.32 (SD = 0.66); 62%/38%	1G	Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-DC)
Y	Wahab, S., Rahman, F. N. A., Wan Hasan, W. M. H., Zamani, I. Z., Arbaiei, N. C., Khor, S. L., & Nawi, A. M. (2013). Stressors in secondary boarding school students: association with stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms.	Stress, anxiety, distress and depression	Purposive or opportunity sample	Cross-sectional	Malaysia	350; M = 16.0 (SD = 0.81); 60.6%/39.4%	1G	Depression Anxiety and Stress Scales (DASS-21)- Malay Version
Z	Wang, A., Medina, A., Luo, R., Shi, Y., & Yue, A. (2016). To Board or Not to Board: Evidence from Nutrition, Health and Education Outcomes of Students in Rural China.	Mental Health, anxiety & Self-esteem	Purposive or opportunity sample	Cross-sectional	China	37181; Aged 8 - 15; Not clear	2G	MHT (Mental Health Test) – (Zhou, 1991) variation of the CMAS (anxiety scale); Self esteem scale. WISC (WMI and PSI)

Representativeness of Sample

1   Single school recruitment
2   Multiple schools within a specific region
3   Multiple sites nationally

Measurement of outcome/characteristic/experience

1   Inappropriate/not stated
2   Broadly appropriate but not psychometrically robust or used with new population (subjective/no psychometric properties known for this age group/poor psychometric properties in some areas)
3   Strong psychometric properties, well established, appropriate measure

Appropriateness of comparison group

1   No comparison group
2   Comparison group not well matched
3   Comparison group matched approximately by at least 2 key variables (e.g age/gender/SES)

Are analyses comprehensive in addressing the research question?

1   No/Not clearly reported
2   Somewhat (some areas not explored through analyses),
3   Analyses are comprehensive and reported clearly

	Title & Author	Main Question(s)	Outcome(s)	1	2	3	4
A	Ak, L., & Sayil, M. (2006). Three different types of elementary school students' school achievements, perceived social support, school attitudes and behaviour-adjustment problems.	1. Are there any differences in adjustment between students from boarding, bussing and regular schools? 2. What are the environmental and psychological predictors of achievement? 3. Was there a difference between genders?	1. Results indicated boarding school students were most disadvantaged group in terms of behaviour problems, social support, and school adjustment. More so in primary than secondary. 2. School achievement was the same across all settings. 3. Girls scored higher on total adjustment, boys scored higher in externalizing and total problems.	orange	green	green	red
B	Bramston, P., & Patrick, J. (2007). Rural adolescents experiencing an urban transition.	1. Are there differences in levels of distress between students who transition to urban boarding, and those who don't? 2. What are the factors affecting transition?	1. No differences in life events scale, or on the DASS. 2. Themes included widening opportunities for education and friends, leaving family, homesickness, and lack of freedom.	green	green	orange	green
C	Chang et al. (2016). Boarding school influence on self-reported concern for perceived body and face morphology in Taiwan	1. Is there an influence of boarding school on self-perceived body and facial morphology in girls attending secondary schools in Taiwan?	1. Mean total on the BSQ was higher for boarders than non-boarders; total was also higher for boarders in the primarily NB school (evidence against confounding variables of school type); No differences in perceived orofacial area concern.	orange	green	green	green
D	Chen (2019). Chinese Adolescents' Emotional Intelligence, Perceived Social Support, and Resilience-The Impact of School Type Selection.	1. What relationships exist among emotional intelligence (EI), perceived social support (from friends and family), and resilience for Chinese Boarding and non-boarding school students? 2. Does school type have a moderating effect on the relationship between trait EI and resilience, when perceived social support varies?	1. Social support from family was non-significant; support from friends moderated the relationship between trait EI and resilience 2. For students with lower perceived support from friends, boarding school provided stronger relationship between EI and resilience than day school.	orange	green	green	green
E	Chui (2015). Self-control, school bullying perpetration, and victimization among Macanese adolescents.	1. What is the effect of self-control on bullying perpetration in all-male boarding and non-boarding schools in Macau (China)? 2. What are the differential effects of self-control indicators in predicting bullying behaviours, tendency to fight and likelihood of being bullied?	1. Boarders scored significantly higher on bullying and fighting subscale, and significantly lower on self controlling risk-seeking behaviours and self-centeredness. 2. Regression models showed living arrangements are significantly associated with involvement in bullying perpetration.	orange	orange	orange	green
F	Crosby, E. M. (2005). Self-reported personal problems of Adventist academy students	1. What 'personal problems are experienced by Adventist academy students? 2. Are there differences in boarding and day school students?	1. Results show top 10 worries for academy students. 2. No significant differences between the number of problems experienced; but the type of problems varied depending on context (more detail in word doc).	green	orange	orange	orange

G	Downs, J. (2001). *Coping with change: adolescents' experience of the transition to secondary and boarding school*.	1. How do adolescents perceive themselves and their social contexts of home and school during transition to secondary school? 2. Are there any differences between day students and boarders?	1. No differences in levels of depression, self-concept and coping between day and boarding students. However, boarders experienced higher levels of homesickness than day students and this pattern continued throughout the year (although reduced from 90% to only 20% perceiving it as problematic).	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber
H	Fisher et al. (1990). Homesickness in a school in the Australian Bush.	1. What are the differences in incidences of homesickness reporting in an Australian Bush Boarding school, between new boarders, previous day schoolers and previous boarders? 2. What are the differences in frequency? 3. Does high perceived demand (requirements of the school) and low perceived control (personal discretion) correlate with homesickness reporting?	1. 78% reported homesickness (75% of boys, and 83% of girls - no significant difference). New pupils reported higher incidences (91%), previous day pupils lowest (59%). 2. Previous boarders and previous day pupils reported lower frequency. 3. Preferred demand found to be lower for those scoring themselves as frequently homesick; disparity between perceived and preferred demand greater for the homesick (may be linked to sex diff).	Red	Amber	Amber	Amber
I	Fisher et al. (1986). Homesickness and health in boarding school children.	1. What is the incidence of self-reported homesickness by boarding school pupils in their first term at a new boarding school? 2. What are the main features? 3. Are there factors which differentiate those who report home sickness from those who do not	1.. Incidence of homesickness 71% 2. 'Missing parent family'; 'longing for people at home' 'Missing home environment'; 'missing house, home, area, etc.' 'Wanting to go home'; 'feeling a need to return home' 3. Previous boarding school experience had an ameliorating effect (P< 0-05); Those who reported that they wanted to come to school were less likely to report homesickness.	Amber	Amber	Red	Amber
J	Gao et al., (2019). The promotive effects of peer support and active coping in relation to negative life events and depression in Chinese adolescents at boarding schools	1. What is the relationship between negative life events and depression experienced by Chinese adolescents at boarding schools? 2. Does peer support and active coping moderate the relationship?	1. Significant direct effect of negative life events on depression. 2. Peer support had direct negative effect on depression; for adolescents with low levels of coping, negative life events was related to more depression; no significant relationship in adolescents with high level of active coping.	Amber	Green	Red	Green
K	Khasakhala et al., (2012). The prevalence of depressive symptoms among adolescents in Nairobi public secondary schools: Association with perceived maladaptive parental behaviour	1. What is the prevalence of depressive symptoms among adolescents in Nairobi public secondary schools? 2. Are there differences between day school and boarding students? 3. Is there an association between maladaptive parental behaviours and depressive symptoms?	1. Prevalence found to be 26.4%; higher in girls than boys 2. Boarders had more clinically significant depressive symptoms compared to day students. 3. Correlations between perceived maladaptive parenting behaviour (rejecting, no emotional attachment paternal and maternal and under protective paternal behaviour.)	Green	Green	Amber	Green
L	Lester and Mander (2015). The role of social, emotional and mental wellbeing on	1. What is the prevalence in bullying for two years following transition to Australian secondary	1. Frequent victimisation increased from 1 in 6 prior to transition, to 1 in 5 by the end of Grade 7 and	Amber	Green	Red	Green

	Study	Research Questions	Findings				
	bullying victimisation and perpetration of secondary school boarders	boarding schools? 2. Which social, emotional and wellbeing factors influence the victimisation or perpetration of bullying?	Grade 9 when students were boarding. Significantly greater proportion of males reported frequent victimisation than female boarders. 2. Greater peer support, school connectedness and safety had decreased odds of reporting bullying at beginning of Grade 8. Students reporting higher levels of depression, anxiety and stress symptoms were significantly more at risk of frequent bullying victimisation at start of Grade 8.	🟧	🟩	🟥	🟩
M	Lester at al. (2015). Bullying behaviour following students' transition to a secondary boarding school context.	1. Are there differences in the prevalence of bullying victimisation and perpetration for students transitioning to boarding and day secondary schools? 2. What type of bullying is experienced most by students?	1. No significant differences pre-transition; boarders reported more frequent victimisation at beginning of Grade 8, end of grade 8 and end of grade 9, when compared to non-boarders. Similar increase for the first two years of both boarders and non-boarders, but by the end of 9, twice as many boarders reported frequent victimisation. 2. Most common form of bullying was verbal and relational means (being ignored, excluded or lied about). *Boarders reported significantly higher victimisation than national data (no analysis reported)	🟧	🟩	🟩	🟩
N	Limbert (2001). A comparison of female university students from different school backgrounds using the Eating Disorder Inventory	1. Do differences exist in eating pathology between female UK university students who had attended single sex, coeducation, day and boarding schools?	1. Participants who had previously attended single sex schools found to score significantly higher than previously co-ed students; Participants who had attended boarding school scored higher on three subscales of EDI: Drive for thinness, ineffectiveness (sense of control over one's life) and Interoceptive awareness.	🟩	🟩	🟧	🟩
O	Mander and Lester (2017). A longitudinal study into indicators of mental health, strengths and difficulties reported by boarding students as they transition from primary school to secondary boarding schools in Perth, western Australia	1. Are there differences between indicators of mental health for same age boarding and non-boarding students over a 2 year time period pre and post transition to boarding school?	1. Both boarders and non-boarders reported significant increases in depression, anxiety and emotional symptoms over time, and decreases in prosocial behaviour; Boarding students reported significantly higher levels of anxiety and stress at end of Grade 8, and higher emotional symptoms at end of Grade 9.	🟧	🟩	🟩	🟩
P	Mander et al. (2015). The social and emotional well-being and mental health implications for adolescents transitioning to secondary boarding school.	1. Is boarder status a predictor of social and emotional wellbeing and mental health following a transition to a secondary boarding school?	1. No differences post-transition; after a year, boarding students reported experiencing a significantly higher incidence rate of emotional difficulties and greater levels of depression, anxiety and stress than non-boarders. These factors mediated an overall sense of wellbeing more than	🟧	🟩	🟩	🟩

			social factors (sense of connection with peers and school).	🟧	🟩	🟩	🟩
Q	Martin et al. (2014). Boarding School, Academic Motivation and Engagement, and Psychological Well-Being: A Large-Scale Investigation.	1. Are there differences between boarders and non-boarders in outcomes related to motivation, engagement and psychological wellbeing? 2. Are there any increases or declines over a 1 year period for boarders or non-boarders?	1. Boarders scored modestly higher on adaptive motivation, academic buoyancy and lower on absenteeism. On wellbeing, boarders scored higher on meaning and purpose, life satisfaction, extracurricular activities and parent relations. 2. No significant increases or declines over 1 year for self-concept or wellbeing measures. Interactional analyses showed that the effect of school achievement on parent relationship was significant and positive for day students, but not for boarders.	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩
R	Mucherah (2018). The relationship of school climate, teacher defending and friends on students' perceptions of bullying in high school.	1. What is the relationship between school climate, teacher behaviours toward bullying and friends on bullying? 2. How does school type (all girls, all boys boarding, co-ed day) influence these relationships?	1. Positive school climate associated with less bullying behaviour and victimisation; teacher interventions result in lower bullying behaviour. 2. Boys only boarding school less likely to report bullying behaviour.	🟧	🟩	🟧	🟩
S	Nalugya-Sserunjogi, J., Rukundo, G. Z., Ovuga, E., Kiwuwa, S. M., Musisi, S., & Nakimuli-Mpungu, E. (2016). Prevalence and factors associated with depression symptoms among school-going adolescents in Central Uganda.	1. What is the prevalence of depression symptoms among school-going adolescents in Uganda? 2. What factors are associated with significant depressive symptoms (including school comparison)	1. 21% (109) had significant depression symptoms on CDI. 74/109 evaluated with MINI-KID, 11% met criteria for major depression and 8% dysthymia. 2. Significant depression symptoms associated with single-sex schools, loss of parents and alcohol consumption	🟧	🟩	🟥	🟥
T	Perveen (2011). *Personality dynamics of boarders and day scholars who belong to madrassah and public school.*	1. Are there significant differences between Madrassah and public school boarders and day scholars on the Personality Dynamic scale? 2. What differences exist between boarders and day scholars on Personality Dynamic sub scales?	1. Boarders scored significantly higher on Overall Personality Dynamic scale. 2. Boarders scored higher on Neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness; day scholars scored higher on Extroversion and openness.	🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧
U	Pfeiffer and Pinquart (2014). Bullying in German boarding schools: A pilot study.	1. Are there differences in levels of bullying between boarding and day schools? 2. Are there differences when movers due to behavioural or family problems are removed? 3. Do weekend boarders experience more bullying than those who return home? 4. Does bullying create a stronger negative association with life satisfaction for boarders?	1. Adolescents from BS show more relational and overt bullying; are more often victims. 2. Adolescents from BS still showed higher levels of relational bullying, but no longer a difference in overt bullying. 3. Weekend boarders reported higher levels of relational bullying, but no others. 4. Stronger negative correlation for overt bullying, but not for relational bullying.	🟩	🟩	🟧	🟩
V	Pfeiffer et al. (2016). Social Relationships, Prosocial Behaviour, and Perceived Social Support in Students From Boarding Schools.	1. Do boarding students report greater success in achieving autonomy from parents, belonging to a group of peers and forming relationships compared to day scholars? 2. Do boarders	1. Boarding students report greater autonomy from parents and success in developing romantic relationships. Day scholars reported greater peer-group integration. 2. Boarders report greater	🟩	🟩	🟧	🟩

ID	Reference	Research Questions	Findings				
		perceive greater social support from teachers, and less from parents in comparison with day scholars? 3. Do boarders and day schoolers report different levels of prosocial behaviour? 4. Do boarders who remain at school on weekends report higher levels of success in gaining autonomy and developing relationships than those who return home at weekends?	support from teachers, day scholars report greater support from parents. No significant difference in social support from peers. 3. No significant difference in prosocial behaviour. 4. Students who stay in school at weekend reported higher levels of success in developing close friendships than classmates.	green	green	yellow	green
W	Stump (1995). Women's eating attitudes and body image in coed and single sex high schools: An exploration of social contagion	1. Do female student's shift eating attitudes and body image towards those of friendship groups? 2. Do students shift friendship groups if EDI score differs from the mean of their friendship group? 3. Are there significant differences in eating attitudes between female students in boarding and day schools?	1. Students shifted towards mean friendship cluster attitudes 2. No significant shift of friendship groups if EDI score differs from mean. 3. Significant differences in eating attitudes between students at boarding and day schools (more pathological eating attitudes)	yellow	green	yellow	green
X	Urmila et al. (2017). Prevalence and risk factors associated with depression among higher secondary school students residing in a boarding school of North Kerala, India	1. What is the prevalence of Depression among secondary school boarders? 2. Which factors are significantly correlated with prevalence of depression?	1. 57.7% of students met criteria for clinically significant depression at first time point, 43.3% met criteria after 1 year. 2. Depression in female students was statistically higher than boys (at second time point)	red	green	red	yellow
Y	Wahab, S., Rahman, F. N. A., Wan Hasan, W. M. H., Zamani, I. Z., Arbaiei, N. C., Khor, S. L., & Nawi, A. M. (2013). Stressors in secondary boarding school students: association with stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms.	1. What is the prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress among students attending a boarding school in Malaysia? 2. Which fators correlate with stress, depressive or anxiety symptoms?	1. Depression (39.7%), anxiety (67.1%) and stress (44.9%). No statistical comparison with norms. 2. All stressors (academic, teacher, intrapersonal etc.) and sex were significantly associated with depression, anxiety, and stress. Family income associated with anxiety, age with stress. Linear regression showed that intrapersonal and learning/teaching related stressors were 2.8 and 2.0 times more likely to cause depressive symptoms; interpersonal stressor 2.9 times likely to cause anxiety. Academic stressors strongest association with all symptoms.	red	green	red	green
Z	Wang, A., Medina, A., Luo, R., Shi, Y., & Yue, A. (2016). To Board or Not to Board: Evidence from Nutrition, Health and Education Outcomes of Students in Rural China.	1. Are there differences in mental health, academic and physical health (i.e. nutrition) outcomes for children in boarding schools, compared to those in day schools?	1. Boarders have poorer health and nutrition outcomes (WZ, HAZ and STH infection); Boarders outperformed in most cognition and performance assessments; Boarders scored significantly higher for overall and for all MHT subscales (except personal anxiety and impulsive tendency); No difference in self-esteem.	yellow	green	green	green

Psychometric Measures

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Reviewed studies used a variety of standardised and validated measures to measure aspects of mental health and wellbeing (see table 3). Whilst the majority of studies relied on self-report measures, one study gathered teacher reports of participant characteristics (A; Ak & Sayil, 2006).

The majority of studies used standardised and validated measures with good psychometric properties. Sources of social support were measured using an adapted Peer Support at School Scale (Ladd et al., 1996) in two studies (L & P), with a reported average alpha of 0.88.

Measure of Mental Health and Wellbeing	Studies Utilising all or part of measure
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 2001)	L,O & P
Depression and Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995)	B,L,O & Y
RADS- Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale (RADS; Reynolds, 1987)	G
Peer Support at School Scale (Ladd et al., 1996)	L & P
Teacher Report Form for Children and Youth (Achenbach et al., 2001)	A
The Social Support Scale (Harter, 1985)	A
Child Depression Inventory (CDI; Kovacs & Preiss, 1992)	J & K

Table 3: Measures utilised by papers exploring mental health and wellbeing of students

Homesickness

Two studies employed category rating scales to measure homesickness (Fisher et al., 1986; Fisher et al., 1990). In both studies, researchers employed a qualitative methodology to ensure the measure had internal consistency i.e. that all students shared the same understanding of the term 'homesickness'. Psychometric properties of the measure were not reported.

Eating Pathology and body Image

Both (W & N) utilised the Eating Disorder Inventory II tool (EDI-2; Garner, 1991), a well-used measure with good validity (Schoemaker et al., 1997) and reliability (Thiel & Paul, 2006). Stump (1995) also utilised the Physical Appearance Comparison Scale (PACS; Thompson et al., 1991), a measure with good internal consistency (alpha=.78) and reliability (.72). To measure self-reported concern for body and facial morphology, (C) used the Body Shape Questionnaire (Cooper et al., 1987) which was also reported to have good concurrent and discriminant validity (Rosen et al., 1996).

Self-concept, self-esteem and personality

The Motivation and Engagement Scale (MES; Martin, 2009) is a measure reported to have strong factor structure and reliable dimensions was used by (Martin et al., 2014). Personality covariates were collated using the International English Big-Five Mini-Markers instrument (IEBM; Thompson, 2008), a measure which also demonstrates good reliability and predictive validity. (T) used a translated NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI) with a reported reliability of 0.53 to 0.72 (notably lower than the reliability of the original version; 0.75 to 0.83).

A translated version of The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (SES; Rosenberg) was used to assess self-esteem by Wang et al. (2016), although no psychometric properties were reported.

(D) utilised the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Adolescent Short Form (TEIQue-ASF; Petrides et al., 2006) and the Resilience Scale for Chinese Adolescents (RSCA; Hu and Gan, 2008). Both measures had previously been used widely and have been shown to have good reliability (Petrides, 2010; Wen et al., 2015).

(V) used the Development Task Questionnaire (DTQ), a self-report measure where participants assess their perceived developmental states. This measure was reported to have good concurrent validity (Pinquart & Pfeiffer, 2013), as did the prosocial subscales of the SDQ, with a fair to good internal consistency (alpha =.63).

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https://www.journals.elsevier.com/educational-research-review

Contextual constructionism: Inter subjective meanings

A Contextual constructionist approach assumes that there is no one reality that can be revealed through analysis, (Madill et al., 2000) that there are multiple realities, and all are meaningful. As I (the interviewer) and participants (interviewees) were both conscious beings capable of interpreting, responding to and acting on the world around us, the 'production of knowledge' is impacted by participant understandings; my interpretations; the cultural meaning systems that inform both our interpretations. Rather than seeking objectivity, contextual constructionism expects a level of permeability – that what is being observed is not seen through a clear glass window, but rather one which is clouded by subjective interpretation and context (Burningham & Cooper, 1999).

This approach was chosen for this research as firstly, within the methodological framework of TA there is considerable freedom around taking positions as a researcher, and secondly, I wanted to ensure the voices and subjective experiences of the participants were not lost in an analysis that adopted a more critical realist approach.

Prior to commencing the study I had worked in psychological services for a number of years. This work required me to build therapeutic relationships with children in residential care settings, and later with at least one adult who had previously boarded. My previous experience as a teacher informed my views of the private educational system, although I had never worked within a private setting. The topic of this study fascinated me as it drew together two areas of my experience – residential care and education. Whilst I had an interest in boarding and the participant experiences of relationships, I was a relative outsider to cultures of boarding.

Research Stage	Timescale
Consultation with academic supervisor	October 2017
Developing initial research proposal	December 2017 – May 2018
Internal panel review at the University of Leicester	June 2018
Re-development of research proposal and development of research documents	June 2018 to December 2018
Peer review at the University of Leicester	December 2018
Service User Reference Group (SURG) review	January 2019
Refinement of research proposal and development of research documents	January – February 2019
Recruitment and interviewing participants	April 2019 – September 2019
Analysis	September 2019 – March 2020
Write up	March 2020 – June 2020
Thesis submission to the University of Leicester	June 2020
Preparation for viva	June to July 2020
Dissemination of findings	July – September 2020

Research Study

Experiences of close personal relationships after boarding: From the perspective of former male boarders

You are being invited to take part in a research project that explores experiences of boarding, and later relationships. Before you decide on whether to take part, it is important for you to take time to read the following information carefully, in order to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.

You are welcome to discuss this project with others if you wish before you make your decision. Please contact ch452@le.ac.uk if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Purpose of the research

Boarding schools have existed in different forms for many centuries. The classic British boarding school, an institution with a rich history, has laid the blueprint for boarding schools worldwide. Despite this rich history, research into the influence of boarding on the social, emotional and personal development of boarders is scarce.

The aim of this study is to explore how adult males experience close personal relationships after attending boarding schools during childhood.

Why have I been chosen?

Some participants have been recruited through organisations such as [redacted]. We are recruiting through these organisations as they offer support, advice and signposting to a growing membership of former boarders.

Other participants have been recruited after responding to an online advert requesting males between 30-65 with experience of boarding school(s) to contact the lead researcher.

In addition to your participation, a further 10-15 participants will be interviewed as part of our study.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you do decide to participate you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in any way. You do not have to give a reason at any time.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Participation in the study will involve:

- Between one and two face-to-face interviews with a trainee clinical psychologist.
- These interviews are expected to last around an hour and will take place in an agreed location where you feel most comfortable.

- The interview will take a conversational form, and questions will enable in-depth discussion in relation to your experiences and relationships at home, in school, and in your life after boarding.
- Interviews will be audio-recorded for the purpose of analysis. Once all the interviews are collected, they will be transcribed and analysed to identify key themes in participant experiences.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will have value to ex-boarders who share elements of experiences with interviewed participants; aid in developing professional's understanding of ex-boarders who may present to therapy with difficulties that may be related to these experiences and current boarders, teaching staff and stakeholders in public and private boarding institutions.

What if some of the things I talk about are difficult or distressing?

Given the nature of discussions, there is a chance that some of the topics discussed may provoke different levels of emotional distress.

Participants are under no pressure to answer questions, nor continue interviews should they become uncomfortable.

A protocol has been created to ensure responses to any distress are appropriate and allow for interviews to be conducted safely.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

The audio recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis, with non-identifiable quotes used for illustration in the final research paper, conference presentations and lectures.

No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

Where will data be stored?

The data collected will be kept in locked or password protected storage at the University of Leicester.

All information gathered about you will be stored separately from any information that would allow someone to identify who you are (this is known as personal identifying information, e.g. your full names, your address, your contact details).

Your personal identifying information will be stored in a locked space at the University of Leicester and only members of the research team will have access to it.

Personal identifying information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Audio Recordings

The audio recordings are considered to contain necessary personal identifying information. We will therefore store the recordings of you separately to the other information we have collected about you.

These recordings will not be labelled with your names or any other personal identifying information but will be labelled with a special reference number.

Recordings will also be stored in a locked cabinet at the University of Leicester and only members of our research team will have access to it.

All audio recordings will be deleted once transcribed and analysed.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

All the information that we collect about you during the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications.

All participants will be given a time-limited right to withdraw (up to a month after interview) and the option to review data extracts from interviews prior to any publication into the public domain.

Transcripts of interviews will be retained for a maximum of 2 years following their collection.

Who is organising/ funding the research?

The University of Leicester is the sponsor for this study based in the United Kingdom. We will be using information from you in order to undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. This means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

Contact for further information

Should you require further information, please contact Craig Harris (Trainee Clinical Psychologist, University of Leicester) at ch452@le.ac.uk.

Next steps

If you agree to take part in the study, you will be given a copy of this information sheet and a signed consent form to keep.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Craig Harris
Trainee Clinical Psychologist
Doctorate of Clinical Psychology
University of Leicester
Ch452@le.ac.uk

Dr Alice Welham

Research Supervisor

Clinical Psychologist

University of Leicester

Akw12@le.ac.uk

Distress Protocol
(Modified from Haigh & Witham, (2013)

Distress
- A participant indicates they are experiencing a high level of stress or emotional distress OR
- exhibit behaviours suggestive that the discussion/interview is too stressful such as uncontrolled crying, shaking etc

Response
- Stop the discussion/interview.
- One of the researchers (who is a health professional) will offer immediate support
- Assess mental status: Tell me what thoughts you are having? Tell me what you are feeling right now? Do you feel you are able to go on about your day? Do you feel safe?

Review
- If participant feels able to carry on; resume interview/discussion
- If participant is unable to carry on Go to stage 2

Stage 2 Response
- Remove participant from discussion and accompany to quiet area or discontinue interview
- Encourage the participant to contact their GP or mental health provider OR
- With participant consent contact a member of the health care team treating them at for further advice/support

Follow up
- Follow participant up with courtesy call (if participant consents) OR
- Encourage the participant to call either if he/she experiences increased distress in the hours/days following the interview

Experiences of close personal relationships after boarding: From the perspective of former male boarders

Consent to take part in research

Please Initial Box

1. I ………………………………………… voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

2. I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

3. I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

4. I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

5. I understand that participation involves face-to-face interviews with a trainee clinical psychologist exploring my experiences of boarding and later relationships.

6. I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

7. I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.

8. I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

9. I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

10. I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the final research and thesis presentation.

11. I understand I have the option to review data extracts from my interview prior to any publication into the public domain.

12. I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

13. I understand that original audio recordings will be retained in a locked cupboard in the University of Leicester until transcription and analysis has been completed.

14. I understand that my signed consent form and a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for up to 2 years before being destroyed.

15. I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

16. I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Craig Harris
Trainee Clinical Psychologist
Doctorate of Clinical Psychology
University of Leicester
Ch452@le.ac.uk

Dr Alice Welham

Research Supervisor

Clinical Psychologist

University of Leicester

Akw12@le.ac.uk

Signature of research participant

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Signature of participant   Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

--   --------------------

Signature of researcher   Date

University Ethics Sub-Committee for Psychology

08/03/2019

Ethics Reference: 18266-ch452-ls:neuro',psych&behaviour,deptof

TO:

Name of Researcher Applicant: Craig Harris

Department: Psychology

Research Project Title: Experiences of close personal relationships after boarding: From the perspective of former male boarders

Dear Craig Harris,

RE: Ethics review of Research Study application

The University Ethics Sub-Committee for Psychology has reviewed and discussed the above application.

1.   Ethical opinion

The Sub-Committee grants ethical approval to the above research project on the basis described in the application form and supporting documentation, subject to the conditions specified below.

2.   Summary of ethics review discussion

The Committee noted the following issues:

The amendments do not pose ethics issues.

3.   General conditions of the ethical approval

The ethics approval is subject to the following general conditions being met prior to the start of the project:

As the Principal Investigator, you are expected to deliver the research project in accordance with the University's policies and procedures, which includes the University's Research Code of Conduct and the University's Research Ethics Policy.

If relevant, management permission or approval (gate keeper role) must be obtained from host organisation prior to the start of the study at the site concerned.

4.   Reporting requirements after ethical approval

You are expected to notify the Sub-Committee about:

- Significant amendments to the project
- Serious breaches of the protocol
- Annual progress reports
- Notifying the end of the study

5.   Use of application information

Details from your ethics application will be stored on the University Ethics Online System. With your permission, the Sub-Committee may wish to use parts of the application in an anonymised format for training or sharing best practice. Please let me know if you do not want the application details to be used in this manner.

Best wishes for the success of this research project.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Panos Vostanis

Chair

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER   University Ethics Sub-Committee for Psychology

08/03/2019

Ethics Reference: 18266-ch452-ls:neuro',psych&behaviour,deptof

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The Committee noted the following issues:

No ethics issues arising

3.   General conditions of the ethical approval

The ethics approval is subject to the following general conditions being met prior to the start of the project:

As the Principal Investigator, you are expected to deliver the research project in accordance with the University's policies and procedures, which includes the University's Research Code of Conduct and the University's Research Ethics Policy.

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Yours sincerely,

Prof. Panos Vostanis

Chair

Gathering and analysing data using Thematic analysis methodology is a collaborative process involving both the interviewee, who is sharing their experience, and the researcher, whose job it is to interpret these experiences before presenting in a structured way. The participant and researcher are therefore both interpreting the meaning making (double hermeneutic). The steps involved in this analysis were as follows:

Transcription of data: All audio data was transcribed to produce a rigorous and thorough orthographic transcript of the interviews.

Immersion in data: Once all interviews were conducted, and data collected, reading and re-reading of all transcripts allowed for a deep understanding of the data, providing opportunities to generate initial lists and mind maps of ideas about what was in the data and what was interesting about them (see appendix)

Initial coding: Initial line-by-line coding was made in the first right hand margin, staying close to the content/participant meaning.

Candidate themes: Candidate themes were created within each interview to reduce data (in the second right hand margin)

Reviewing themes: This stage involved the refinement of the above candidate themes. Candidate themes were reviewed for coherence and distinctness from one another

Defining and naming themes: This stage involved identifying the "essence" of what each theme was about and determined what aspect of the data each theme captures.

Super-ordinate themes and extracts: I selected which higher order or super-ordinate themes at a group level to include in final report and picked the best supporting extracts to present in the findings.

Deciding on a research question

I feel genuine excitement about this topic, but when I spend time looking through research and literature, I can find myself feeling quite overwhelmed. There are so many different directions I can go in, as there's so little research that looks in depth at boarder's experiences. I am no expert in this topic, but I am motivated to explore it further – maybe it helps that I'm not already an expert?

I've settled on a focus on the impact of experiences on relationships. I want to find out how participants experience the boarding environment and how that then impacts other relationships. I recognise at this point that I'm partly driven by literature around the 'boarding school syndrome', so I must be cautious in my interview and analysis that I am not too focused on the negative impact.

Recruitment of participants

The focus of the question has shifted somewhat to 'difficulties' in relationships. It feels like that acknowledges the literature around how boarding can lead to negative outcomes and helps to reduce some of the researcher bias (I hope). I will be recruiting from organisations that offer support to ex-boarders. There is a bit of me that is concerned about producing asking questions/producing research to fit an agenda. I talk to my supervisors in more depth to explore this, and I am left feeling reassured that my focus and research question allows for me to be selective of participants. I'm acutely aware that I'm recruiting from a population that have engaged with a support organisation and are more likely to be individuals who are already open and willing to talk about it. In lots of ways, that should help me in gathering rich data. I'm looking forward to interviews.

Methodological approach

Initially I had hoped to use IPA to conduct my study/analysis. On reflection, this was putting the cart before the horse. Following further conversations and reading about IPA and TA, I've decided that the question fits nicely into a TA framework and allows me more flexibility in my position. Qualitative research is very new to me, and learning about double hermeneutic analysis, epistemological positions and reflexivity feels a lot to take in and understand. I feel tentative about locking in an approach/position, but I feel it's what is needed to move forward.

Designing an interview schedule

Once again, I am reminded of how big a topic this is. I've had conversations with supervisors, friends, ex-boarders, and colleagues about my project, and each have had suggestions of things that could be explored. I find it interesting that everyone has a unique perspective about what boarding school is, and the salient features of boarding in society. One or two course staff have shown a real interest in the study, particularly from a position of being curious about 'the ruling class'. It becomes apparent that these are conversations that are happening across the societal and political spectrum – there are new articles being published on both the Guardian and Independent, and topics on forums such as Mumsnet popping up about people's experience of boarding (or having a partner who boarded).

My questions are initially broad, but they are open and allow for discussion. I'm quite pleased with my initial draft schedule, but I still feel I'm in the dark – how do I know these questions will elicit the responses I need for a good analysis?

Reflections prior to first interview

The first participant to get in touch and arrange an interview found out about the study through a support organisation for ex-boarders. My initial emotional reaction is excitement, then apprehension – will I be able to maintain conversation with him? Will the interview feel sluggish or awkward? How to I listen and ask questions and notice my urge to counsel, reflect or formulate? I try to consider how I would like to be treated in this situation, thoughtful about how participants will be bringing deeply personal experiences and are showing a willingness to share them with me. My clinical psychology skills are valuable in this, but I will aim to be reflective in the moment and resist the temptation to off formulation.

Reflections after first interview

Interviews have gone well! Participants were open, thoughtful and it seems like I'm getting some really rich data. Hard to tell if this will answer my research question, but many of the things he talked about seemed to 'make sense', as if he's already spent time thinking about it (having been in therapy for a number of years, it seems this is likely to have had an influence on how he now makes sense of his experiences). Must be cautious not to side with participants in their critique of institutions and be aware of my own bias when thinking about the current socio-political issues.

Reflections after third interview

That interview went on forever. Need to consider how long is 'enough' for an interview – but everything seemed so relevant and participant would have carried on talking for hours. Important to note that – there was a distinct willingness to talk about these experiences and ensure they were heard by me. Participant keen afterwards to enquire about publication – shared that he has had a role in activism to raise awareness about the impact of boarding school. Likely to be evident in the data, but good to hold in mind when analysing/discussing.

Exert from 'personal paragraphs' – written after each interview

"Theo": Theo feels he missed out on a childhood. He didn't learn how to relate to others, he found relationships confusing and unpredictable, and many of his thoughts, feelings and responses to the world went unexplored, without reassurance from a caring and nurturing adult. Theo spent much of his time at school just getting by. He quickly learned what he needed to do and to say in order to survive. He didn't talk about how this made him feel, nor did he feel safe enough to show it. In an environment where he was hyper vigilant of everyone, he struggled to experience any closeness with peers or staff. He was wary of the actions of certain staff, who were thought to prey on vulnerable children, or show little restraint in punishments, which on occasion were physical beatings.

"John" After boarding, John found it difficult to acclimatise to the outside world – specifically missing the containing element of being structured and regimented in school. He talked about emotions and his way of dealing with them as being 'typically British'. He found he wanted to talk through things with others, but completely closed off as this would have flagged him up as vulnerable (and therefore made him a target). John struggles to move on from aspects of his life and is incredibly protective of happy memories – as the risk of tainting them is enormous. So much so, that he will often refuse to go to places where happy memories have happened, as they may be overwritten.

"Lucas" Lucas comes across as insightful, intelligent and keen to explore/understand more about his boarding experience and the impact it has had on him (and others). Lucas had engaged in a significant amount of therapy and had been involved in many conversations and support groups

around ex-boarding as a phenomenon. Despite feeling isolated, dropped, abandoned, and distressed, Lucas sought to reduce his mother's distress by letting her know everything was fine at boarding school. He experienced great distress, loneliness, and unhappiness at school, but never shared this with adults. He talked of a structured and power-driven environment, where other students were a constant threat to his wellbeing and safety. Whilst he felt physically safe, he was particularly precious about his possessions – which at times had been stolen, taken from him or damaged. Lucas explained how this felt like a symbol of the loss he felt in attending boarding school

"Daniel" Daniel experienced a relatively happy home life. He lived on a farm with his sister and parents and had close relationships with grandparents. His father and paternal grandfather were also ex boarders, and he described them as being 'typical' males showing little emotional expression. At school, Daniel struggled with the transition, often being tearful and homesick for the first few terms. He reached a point where he felt he needed to 'switch off' his emotions, as his pleas to be returned home were not being heard. Daniel spent the majority of this time feeling unheard, not listened to, and isolated at school. Every time he returned home; he would dread returning to school. Whilst school was not a wholly negative experience, Daniel experienced some bullying (related to his physical appearance) and had to work hard to develop strategies to stay out of trouble, manage his emotions and just get by. Daniel bottled up his emotions and did not share them with anyone. This often led to outbursts (of anger or tears) when it became overwhelming.

This research used the four essential criteria (Yardley, 2000) as a structure for maintaining and evaluating high quality and validity at all stages of the research process. These are described and discussed below.

Sensitivity to context

The context of this study was considered throughout the research journey. In planning and conducting interviews I carefully considered the potential harm (and possible benefit) of asking participants to talk about their intimate experiences, and ensure that my questioning style and the way I related to them in the context of the researcher/interviewee relationship was considered and thoughtful. I thought about how to utilise personal skills in the role of researcher and draw upon clinical skills to ensure I was warm, welcoming, open and non-judgemental in my interactions. During data analysis, I tried to maintain a sense of each participant throughout, in an effort to stay close to the subjective experience of them, rather than just my own subjective interpretation of their experience. During the discussion, existing literature was explored, and theoretical frameworks were considered as lenses to make sense of findings. This process required me to be thoughtful to ensure I did not take too critical a position to the data and remain sensitive to how and why these experienced were shared with me.

Commitment and Rigour

Whilst I did not attend any specific thematic analysis training, I ensured I had read the available literature, and also consumed several videos of Braun and Clarke describing TA and how to apply it in different areas of research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This provided me with a good sense of the framework, the structure of the approach, and my flexibility within it. I was also supported by engaging with a supervisor with significant experience in qualitative research approaches, which allowed me to collaboratively explore my responses, interpretations, and sense-making at each stage of the analysis. These discussions allowed for a critical analysis of my approach and ensure my subjective interpretations did not drown out the experiences of participants.

Transparency and Coherence

Contextual constructionism is an approach that acknowledges the subjective role of the researcher in the interpretation of data/experience. In taking this approach, I was able to attempt to recognise and reflect on how my own experiences and values influenced my interpretation of the data. In order to demonstrate my reflexivity and aim towards transparency, a reflective journal was kept throughout the research process. This included reflections during the planning stages of the project, and throughout interviews and data analysis. An audit trail was kept of the analysis process, partly due to thematic analysis requiring a bidirectional process of interpretation, but also to maximise transparency. Quotes are included in the findings to demonstrate how findings were grounded in data.

Impact and importance

From the point of initially proposing the study, to the final stages of analysis and write up, the importance and potential impact was considered. Engagement with extant literature and theory, conversations with professionals and colleagues with direct or indirect influences of boarding in their lives, and the sense of privilege in being able to hear the voices of participants, were constant reminders of the impact and importance of this work.

Reference

Yardley, L. (2000). Dilemmas in qualitive health research. Psychology & Health, 15(2), 215-228.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

This appendix considers this thesis in relation to the standards for appraising the quality of qualitative research developed by the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP, 2013).

10. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research? *What was the goal of the research? Why it was thought important?*	The aims of this research have been stated clearly in both the introduction and discussion section of the thesis. These aims were felt to be important due to the limited structured qualitative research that had been conducted in this area.
10. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate? *If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants* *Is qualitative research the right methodology for addressing the research goal?*	This research aimed to illuminate the experiences of boarders when they were at school, and later experiences of difficulties in close personal relationships. Qualitative methodology was felt to be the most appropriate approach to develop a rich experiential narrative of the processes.
10. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? *If the researcher has justified the research design (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use)?*	The research design was described in detail, as was the reasoning behind choosing this approach (in methodology and appendices).
10. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? *If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected.* *If they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study.* *If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part).*	The recruitment for this research is described in the method section of the thesis. The reasoning behind recruitment decisions is also clear. Participants were recruited through organisations that engage with, and support ex boarders. It was felt that these individuals would be more willing to respond to adverts, and the organisations presented good access to participants who had both boarded, and likely had rich experiences of difficulties in relationships (in relation to previous research).
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? *If the setting for data collection was justified.* *If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.)* *If the researcher has justified the methods chosen.* *If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews were conducted, or did they use a topic guide)?*	Data was collected through semi-structured interview. This approach to data collection was a good fit for the research question as it allowed for detailed exploration of participant experience, and a good fit for data analysis, as it provided a significant amount of rich audio (then orthographic after transcription) data to analyse. Whilst the interview schedule was not modified throughout the study, it is acknowledged in my epistemological position

If the methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why? *If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc).* *If the researcher has discussed saturation of data.*	that my interpretations were subjective, and context dependent. Questions and approach to questioning likely had variance between individual interviews, and so participants would have experienced their interviews differently.
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? *If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) Formulation of the research questions (b) Data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location* *How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design?*	Excerpts from my reflective journal are included in appendices. These demonstrate thoughts around relationship to participants, my role as a researcher, and reflexivity.
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? *If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained*	Ethical approval and amendment documents are presented in Appendices. One amendment was made during data collection to widen reach of recruitment.
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? *If there is an in-depth description of the analysis process* *If thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data?* *Whether the researcher explains how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process.* *If sufficient data are presented to support the findings.* *To what extent contradictory data are taken into account.* *Whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation.*	The results section and numerous appendices reflect the rigour of data analysis. Each stage of analysis is represented with pictures or excerpts of the coding process. Contradictory data were included in analysis. Although main themes predominantly led to a coherent narrative of accounts, attempts were made to interpret experiences that differed from these.
9. Is there a clear statement of findings? *If the findings are explicit*	See results and discussion sections for explicit discussion of the findings and their implications.

If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researchers' arguments. *If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst).* *If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question.*	
10. How valuable is the research? *If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing* *knowledge or understanding e.g. do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy or relevant research-based literature?* *If they identify new areas where research is necessary* *If the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used.*	The discussion includes a description of these findings in relation to extant research and theory, and clinical Implications for clinicians and schools.

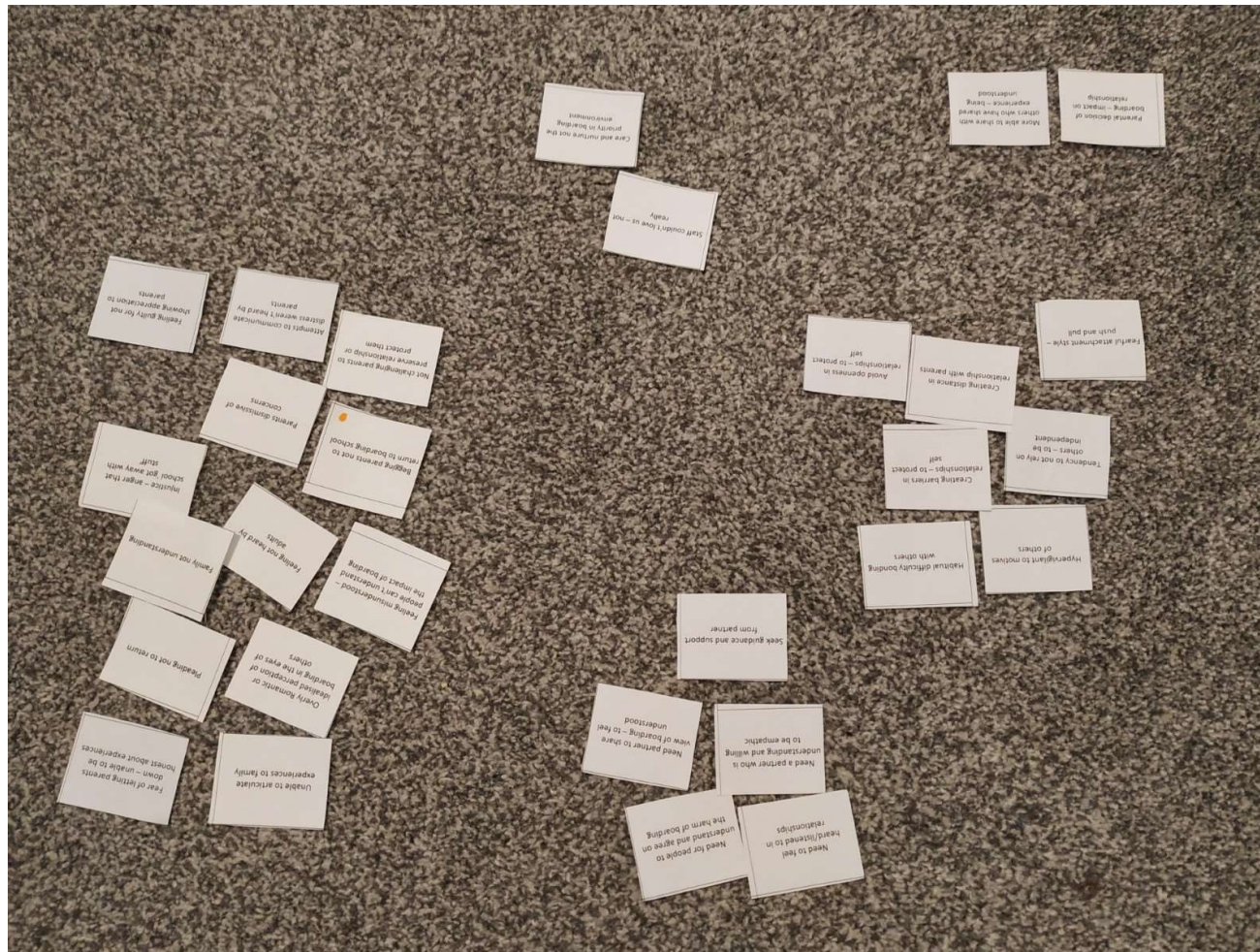|	
economically or emotionally strong enough to resist my dad or go against the kind of	Mum felt unable to challenge father
family tradition kind of thing. So yeah, you know it's a loss, it's a loss for her. And you	Family unable/unwilling to break family tradition. Empathise with mother's loss
know, yeah, yeah I guess I've explored that more with my mum, but dad… The other	Unable to explore with Dad
relationship that was affected was with my brother, who is 20 odd months younger	Boarding impacted relationship with brother – sibling relationship
than me. So… He followed me to school almost immediately and you know I can say	
from the time that he came to school, that's when our relationship didn't finish, but	Relationship significantly changed
it was severely affected to this day. You know because in that situation, and we were	Sibling relationship still severely impacted by boarding experience
in the same dormitory and use the same changing rooms and all the rest of it, certainly	Together with brother at boarding school
during that first year when the new boys are being inducted and being pushed around	New boys pushed around – example of hierarchy
and all the rest of it. I had to sit back and watch and let that happen to him. Because	Had to sit back and watch – powerless bystander
to interfere would have attracted even more attention to also. So that's pretty painful,	Interfering would have made me target
	Painful – guilt, shame
to what your brother, and being the older brother, I should be stepping up and	Should be stepping up – guilt
protecting him, but actually in that situation protecting him would have probably	Role and responsibility as brother
	Dilemma – rock and a hard place
made it worse. You know, it's really messed up but it's that kind of hierarchy. Like	"Messed up"
	Hiearchy
when I said earlier, after lights out especially it was left of the boys to administrate	After lights out – boys in charge – dangerous and unsafe
the whole system and it's a pretty dodgy you know, strange place to be.	Pretty dodgy – strange environment

I don't think I was ever actively a bully, but I probably wasn't strong enough either to challenge somebody who was showing bully behaviour. Actually at my prep school, I don't remember much bullying to make the teachers were actually quite good intervening if there was any of that going on. But I can give you a little story, which might be relevant to what you're asking away. It may not be specifically addressing that. But I have a clear memory of the very first nights of after my parents had taken me to the school and the headmaster somebody had sort of led me into meet the other new boys and we had been gathered and taken up to this dormitory… I forget how many beds but there were at least six beds in there, in an attic room in this sort of labyrinthine big building. It seemed to be that to my younger awareness. So it was all a bit overwhelming scary, but in a way exciting as well. And then the whole process of being told that it was bedtime, getting into bed and having this little space for our belongings, which is the bedside locker, which is really very few little spaces that we could call our own, but the key point being that it was time for lights out. So the teacher comes round and says okay boys it's lights out time this dive you to go to sleep. Plunged into darkness, within a few moments, I was lying there sort of dazed really, within a few moments I could hear one and then a second boy sobbing under the blankets. Actually genuinely feeling what we should have all been feeling. And I remember lying there and thinking, going into my head, which is something else I'll talk about in a minute, and saying to myself when I'm not crying so I must be okay. And then being able to get to sleep on that, with that thought. And that's how it continued really, so I could compare myself to someone who showing or feeling to me use it to comfort myself, I didn't necessarily need to take out on them. And I don't think I was aware then, I think my mother was probably aware, I'm not sure actually how aware she was, but I know and have known really since at least the age of 13 or 14 that I am, and was a very sensitive child really. And that this was a huge challenge to manage. And I have this sense of the whole of the way through 10 years of boarding school, of carrying this little flame, which is like my true self, my authentic self, my soul if you like. Holding this flame trying to stop it being blown out, but also trying to hide it from everyone else. Because they should be allowed to see it, otherwise it would blow out. Just about managing to keep the flame going, you know against all the odds really. So in a way I'm saying it didn't	I did not bully Not strong enough to challenge bullying Teachers good at stopping bullying at prep school Memory of first night is clear Labyrinth in my younger awareness Scary, overwhelming, yet exciting Told it is bedtime Very little space that was your own Bedtimes and other aspects of life rule-bound and controlled Dazed – transitioning to new rule-bound culture Other boys crying – genuinely expressing what we felt Going into my head – defence Rationalising – If I'm not crying I must be okay' Convincing self okay because not expressing distress; disconnect allows to sleep Comparing self to others expressing distress helped cope Did not need to take out others because knowing coping 'better' than them = enough Unaware then I was sensitive; Aare sensitive from 13-14 Carrying true flame of self Holding onto fragile true identity… ..whilst hiding it from others Showing 'true self' would result in others attacking; eliminating me. Keep flame going, against the odds

Transcript	Exploratory Notes		Emergent Themes
myself. Not least because my parents are probably doing that as well. Because we weren't talking about that so much and no talking about we will come and visit you in five weeks time, that came out in conversation on site at the school. And it was like what? What does five weeks mean in a seven year old mind? And yeah just... I don't look I never thought it was forever, but I thought... I still depend on you so who am I going to turn to? So yeah I was going to say it was like a punch to the stomach, but it	No discussion about the difficult feelings it was provoking No discussion about visiting – too close to the pain? 5 weeks – long time in the mind of a child to be separated from parents Disbelief – I still depend on you – who am I going to turn to?		Processing relationship difficulties as a child without support
was more like my stomach falling out. I remember feeling like almost a sense of	Stomach falling out		Sense of powerlessness
disempowerment and just really like this, being utterly ungrounded, like all fucking hell it's getting away from me. And the emotions coming up here, uncontrollable sobbing	Disempowerment – totally ungrounded, unstable, terrified Uncontrollable sobbing		Outbursts of emotion – pain of arrival
and just trying to fight as much as I could to keep them from going. So the classic fight flight mode kind of thing, just like immediately fright but the just trying to fight you	Trying to fight to keep parents from leaving Fight and flight		Not in control / controlled
know stay with me stay with me don't go, repeating that. I mean I was physically taken upstairs to the dormitory upstairs where everyone was going to sit down. There was a	Fighting parents to stay – sobbing Physically taken upstairs – staff had to intervene		Females as replacement maternal figures
young gap year student who was staying over who was really fortunately for that first year, she was a very warm character and she was very receptive. So it was like, I guess easy to form like a bond with of sorts. So kids used to sit in with her and we would sit	Gap year student – female – provided some comfort Warm character – receptive -needed Easy to form a bond with – lack of other female relationships – offered nurture		Seeking intimacy in school environment

Generating themes

Assumptions / what I'm bringing

Out of control/Controlled

Missed childhood

Disempowered

Sense-making

Suppressed emotion

Masked Identity

Surviving / Getting by

Segregation or division of sex	Importance of stating impact	Personal trauma outside of boarding	Ruptured relationships and loss	Making sense of experiences	Masked effects of school experience	Being open and honest about experiences	Boarding developed strategies to be safe in relationships	Learned to survive
Geographically close to parents	Desire to talk about experiences	Feeling alone	Reflecting on experience is key to recovery	Getting better at managing/dealing with emotions – recovering	Easier and safer to show masked self	Seeking control in relationships	Suspicious of others	Recognition that own behaviour is irrational
Family geographically close but out of reach	Females as replacement maternal figures	Stereotypical female roles	Challenge of transitioning	Recovery requires significant effort	Sending own children away to board would be an unimaginable situation	Blaming others for difficulties in relationship	Need partner to share view of boarding – to feel understood	Masculine traits were dominant and valued
Excitement of joining sibling in boarding school	No access to siblings or parents	Pain of siblings being sent away	Prep School prioritised achievement	Explored experiences through therapy	Fear of failure	Anger and resentment	Not stable enough to have children	Creating barriers in relationships – to protect self
Transition between prep and high school triggered difficulties	Discovering experiences were not 'normal'	Conflicting feelings – wanting family but angry	Impacted by experiences at home	Seeking to understand experiences and impact	Feeling sexually and emotionally underdeveloped and immature	Escaping	Questioning whether others hide the damage better	Uncertain why – things got easier over time
Changing school experience with age	Difference in school with age – greater freedom	Impact of family loss on relationships	Parental decision of boarding – impact on relationship	Questioning of self and identity	Internalised difficulties – problem sits in me	Challenge to be completely open and talk about past experience	Ways of relating to others to feel in control	Change behaviour to fit in – to survive
Uncertainty around cause of damage / difficulties – home or school	No safe environment to develop in	Activism – raising awareness about damage of boarding	Critical of parent decision	Suspicion that parents are not being honest	Habitual difficulty bonding with others	Sensitive to externalised emotion in others	Need for people to understand and agree on the harm of boarding	Learned how to act / behave to protect self
Public school was lawless - jungle	Neglected and abandoned	Bullying was normalised – a way of life	Repeated experience of being in an alien place	Collapsed under pressure due to lack of nurture / support	No sense of home	Seeking nurture (outside boarding environment)	Avoid close relationships in school – made you vulnerable	No discussions about feelings or emotions
Distance from family	Geographically close to family	No tradition of boarding in family	Realisation that boarding is being away from home	Understanding impact on relationships	Strategies not well suited for later life	Making friends through shared interests	Valuing learned relationship strategies – serve(d) a purpose	Not being open and truthful about experiences
Compliant – not in control	Geographical distance from friends	Boarding siblings	A point of loss – painful – ripped out of me	Questioning identity	Unable to show the 'real self'	Comradery in aid of safety	Explicit dismissal of emotions	Emotions get in the way
Unspoken rules around emotions - culture	Seeking opportunities to use power for good	Family trauma outside of boarding	Homesickness	Confused sense of belonging / identity	Continued difficulty with emotions	Division of power and hierarchy	Ongoing fear of authority	Shut down emotions to survive

- Care and nurture not the priority in boarding environment
- Staff couldn't love us – not really
- More able to share with others who have shared experience – being understood
- Parental decision of boarding – impact on relationship
- Feeling guilty for not showing appreciation to parents
- Attempts to communicate distress weren't heard by parents
- Not challenging parents to preserve relationship or protect them
- Parents dismissive of concerns
- Begging parents not to return to boarding school
- Fearful attachment style – push and pull
- Avoid openness in relationships – to protect self
- Creating distance in relationship with parents
- Injustice – anger that school 'got away with' stuff
- Tendency to not rely on others – to be independent
- Creating barriers in relationships – to protect self
- Family not understanding
- Feeling not heard by adult
- Feeling misunderstood – people can't understand the impact of boarding
- Habitual difficulty bonding with others
- Hypervigilant to motives of others
- Pleading not to return
- Overly Romantic or idealised perception of boarding in the eyes of others
- Seek guidance and support from partner
- Fear of letting parents down – unable to be honest about experiences
- Unable to articulate experiences to family
- Need partner to share view of boarding – to feel understood
- Need a partner who is understanding and willing to be empathetic
- Need for people to understand and agree on the harm of boarding
- Need to feel heard/listened to in relationships
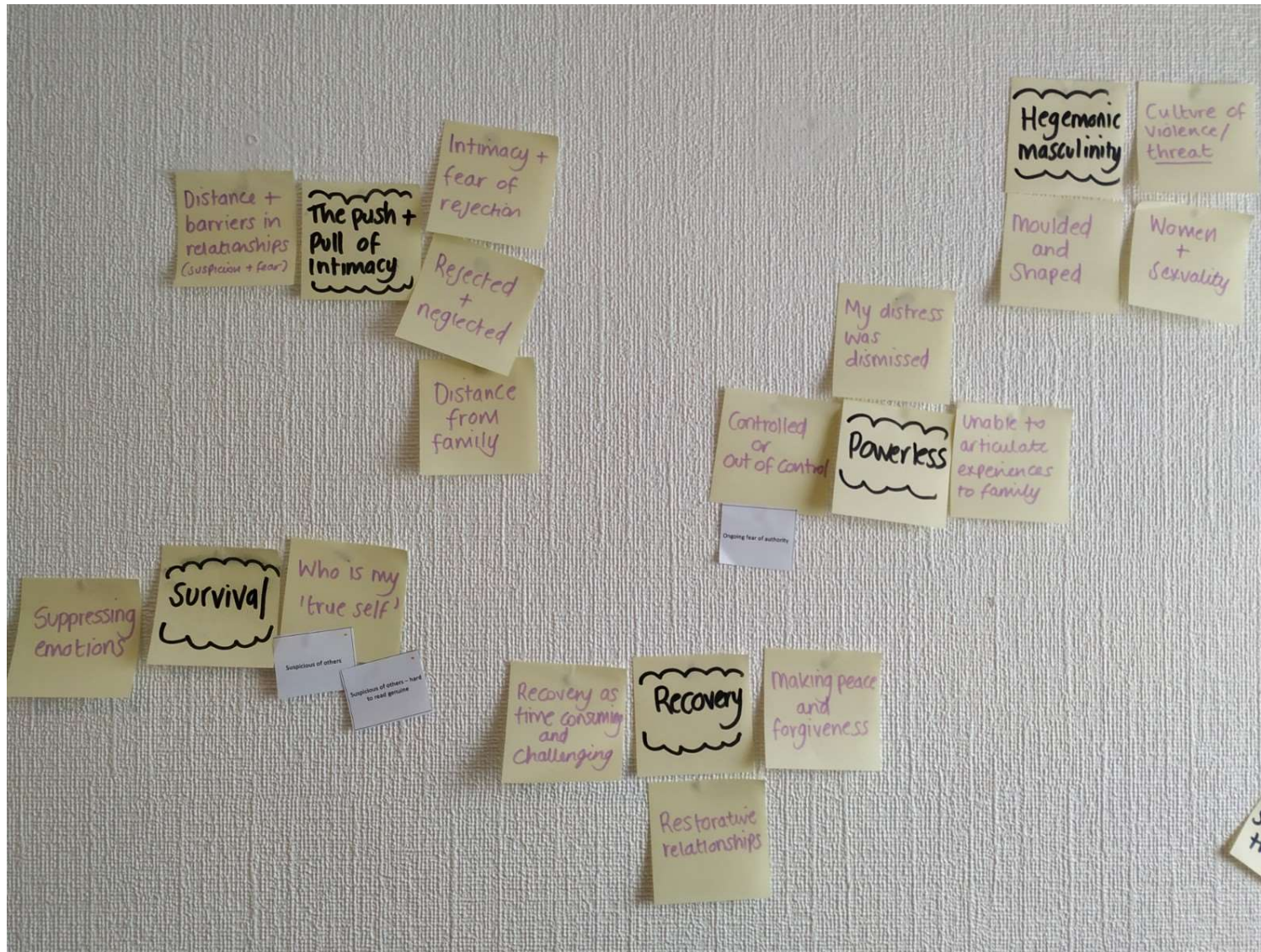
Theme and sub themes	Brief description
Surviving Masculine culture of violence, fear and intimidation – maintained by staff and peers Learning how to act and behave to 'get by' Conform with culture or be pushed aside Relationships as necessary for survival	In an environment that often felt unsafe, threatening, and dangerous, many boys had to adapt quickly in order to 'survive'. Strategies were learnt to keep boys safe – safe from physical or emotional harm from staff or peers. These strategies felt both necessary and valuable, but often presented as barriers for, or challenges in later relationships.
Being controlled, or out of control Powerlessness in decision making process A system designed to shape children A military-like environment (rules, routine, and hierarchy) Wrestling back control – rebelling against the system Freedom after boarding (Control in relationships – might fit under a different theme)	From the initial decision of whether boys would attend boarding school or not, to the daily regimented routine of waking, washing, and heading to breakfast, a feeling of powerlessness developed. Whilst freedom increased as boys grew through school, much of their experience was determined with military-like precision. For many, especially during adolescence, this provoked a fire within – a desire to fight back against the system and those who represented it. For others, a sense of feeling out of control (or desire to stay in control) continues throughout life.
Feeling not heard or listened to (May also link to feeling powerless….) Unable to articulate honest feelings to family My distress was dismissed An overly romanticised view of boarding The need to feel understood *Rejected, neglected and abandoned*	Many boys spoke of being 'sent' to boarding school – after having begged not to go, sobbed uncontrollably in an effort to persuade parents not to leave, and repeatedly pleaded with parents to not send them back after holidays. Many felt these feelings were dismissed, that their emotional wellbeing was not the priority, that a drive for well-educated children was more important
Recovery Making peace and forgiveness Recovery as a process – time consuming and challenging Therapy and self-reflection The drive to, and power of making sense	Many participants talk of a point in their life often a breakdown in a relationship, multip clarity. Those who identify as having suffere boarding often pursue therapy – individual powerful it is to make links between past ex since faced. This is often a long, challenging requires an element of acceptance, forgiver

Lost sense of home	Growing up in an environment that wasn't home – and the feeling that home was
Lost sense of home The loss of everything I was familiar with Distance from family (growing apart) Growing up somewhere that isn't natural An unnatural blueprint for future relationships *Missing nurture and care* *Making sense of the world without support to understand*	Growing up in an environment that wasn't home – and the feeling that home was never the same again. This theme encompasses how the boys learned about relationships in a limited, constrained way – and this set the blueprint for all future relationships. Nurture and care was hard to come by. One participant described how his experiences would have been far less impactful had he been given a key to return home whenever he liked. There is an overarching sense of 'missing out' on a normal childhood. Not sure how to include it as a theme…maybe it is the real theme?
Suppressing emotions An (un)spoken culture of emotional suppression – crying, weakness and vulnerability Shutting down emotions/switching off feelings Dealing with bottled up emotions The ongoing damage of emotional suppression	Outbursts of emotions happened – many of the boys couldn't help it. But after a few weeks of 'settling in', it was clear that crying outwardly would single boys out as vulnerable, and they would become targets. Boys learned to keep emotions locked up safe, bottled up, shut down, or switched off. For many, emotions 'got in the way'. This theme also presents how this emotional suppression caused ongoing damage.
The push and pull of intimacy Seeking intimacy in an environment where nurture was not prioritised Intimacy and the fear of rejection Creating distance and barriers in relationships –driven by suspicion and fear	This theme encompasses the feeling of rejection, neglect and abandonment felt by many of the boys when dropped off at the school. Many were left confused about why they had been left, despite being clearly unhappy. In later relationships, they were suspicious of closeness, of intimacy, and fearful of feeling that rejection again. The ongoing push and pull in relationships (wanting intimacy but being fearful of it, and pushing partners away). Intimacy was hard to come by, and was sought out wherever possible – through family, peers, staff and parents of friends. However intimacy, nurture and care did not seem to be the priority for staff. This may fit better in the 'missing out' theme…

Distance + barriers in relationships (suspicion + fear)

The push + Pull of Intimacy

Intimacy + fear of rejection

Rejected + neglected

Distance from family

Hegemonic masculinity

Culture of violence/ threat

Moulded and Shaped

Women + Sexuality

My distress was dismissed

Controlled or Out of Control

Powerless

Unable to articulate experiences to family

Ongoing fear of authority

Suppressing emotions

Survival

Who is my 'true self'

Suspicious of others

Suspicious of others – hard to read genuine

Recovery as time consuming and Challenging

Recovery

Making peace and forgiveness

Restorative relationships

So the

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

Details
No payment is offered for participation, but reimbursements for travel can be arranged.

If you are interested in taking part, please contact Craig Harris (project lead) ch452@le.ac.uk for further information.

Who?

Males aged **30-65** Years old

Experience of attending **Boarding school(s)**

What?

Participants will be asked to take part in one or two **face-to-face interviews** with a researcher

Interviews will focus on **experiences of boarding**, and later **relationships**

Ethics Reference: 18266-ch452-ls:neuro',psych&behaviour,deptof

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

Appendix U: Interview Schedule

Demographic questions:

1. How old are you? ___
2. At what age did you start boarding? ___
3. How long did you board for? ___
4. What type of institution did you attend? (Check box: All boys/mixed gender/All boarding/boarding and day school)

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1. This is a study about how you think boarding has impacted upon your relationships as an adult – can you tell me a bit about why you decided to take part in it?'

   a. Were there some experiences that you have had that you think are relevant to the topic?

2. When you think back on your time at boarding school, what are the events, or experiences that come to mind?

   i. How was it at the beginning? How did it go on from there? How was it when it came to leave?

   ii. What were your relationships with other people like at school? How about the teachers? What about other staff at school?

   iii. What was a typical day like? How did days vary – was it always like that?

3. Could you tell me about the culture of the school?

   i. Did you find that all the pupils were treated in the same way from staff, or by each other? Can you say more about that?

   ii. Can you tell me about how you were asked to behave with staff? Were all staff alike in this? Were all pupils treated the same? What were the differences? Were there 'unwritten rules' as well as the formal rules? Can you say more about that?

   iii. Can you tell me about the people who were important to you at school? What were the relationships like? How did they develop? Important relationships – were they positive or not?

     iv.   What is your sense of how pupils at your school were encouraged to think of themselves compared to pupils at state schools? Can you remember some events or examples?

4. How would you describe life at home around this time?

     i.   How did your parents relationship seem? Were there any other things going on, bereavements, moving house, changing job, illness etc?)

     ii.   Relationship with siblings? Who else was important at home? Who did you miss most?

5. How do you think your experience of life at affected how you managed things at school?

     i.   Why do you think that is / how have you made sense of this?

6. How do you think the various experiences at boarding school changed you as a boy / young man?

     i.   Given those changes, what would you say about the influence that's had on you in how you form relationships as an adult?

     ii.   So, thinking about the experiences at school you have told me about, are there any that you think were particularly formative in shaping what you are like now? How you think about yourself? How you engage with other people?

7. How would you describe your relationship with your parents / partner / children / siblings now? Which relationships are most important to you now, how, why? Etc.

8. How do you imagine your life would be now if you had not gone to boarding school? Why? If you have children (now or in the future), would you want them to go to boarding school? Why?

9. We've talked about a lot of things, but I don't want to miss anything that may be helpful to know. Is there something else from your experience of boarding school that we haven't included?