
# Empowering families through social tourism

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## Abstract

The family holiday characterises the essence of what it means to be a family in contemporary Western society. It exudes family togetherness, strong family bonds, happy memories, and an opportunity to escape from the drudgery of ordinary life (Gram, 2005; Schänzel et al., 2012). Yet, this is by no means the case for every family, and in this research project, I investigate the impact of a short break on families that do not normally go away. Although family tourism has become the norm it remains at the periphery of tourism research (Obrador-Pons, 2011). Receiving even less attention is social tourism which refers to the practice of providing travel opportunities for people who are normally excluded for various reasons including social, economic, cultural or physical (McCabe, 2009; McCabe and Diekmann, 2015). In the UK, charities such as the Family Holiday Association provide short breaks to low-income families (Hunter-Jones, 2011). Often, these families are living in challenging situations such as caring duties or feeling isolated. Consequently, social tourism aims to provide families with the same opportunities to travel and explore new places as other families have (McCabe, 2009). Social tourism has shown to have many benefits, research shows benefits to subjective wellbeing (McCabe and Johnson, 2013), increasing social and family capital (Minnaert et al., 2009), improving older people's wellbeing (Morgan et al., 2015; Ferrer et al., 2016) and also playing a part in respite care services (Hunter-Jones et al., 2020). However, although there is a growing body of research into social tourism, there is little known on the familial processes that take place whilst on holiday and how they influence family efficacy and family functioning. In addressing this gap this study brings together a critical social psychological framework with a critical realist methodology. Through this approach I present social tourism as a family centric intervention that can empower families.

This thesis reports findings from a collaborative qualitative multi-level study where participants consisted of families who had shared in a Family Holiday Association (now known as Family Holiday Charity) short break. Data collection was obtained from semi-structured interviews (n=26). Interview data

were analysed using thematic analysis through a critical realist analytic lens. Results suggest that the holiday provides families with the opportunity to participate in normative family activities, that not only reaffirms family identity but gives families a sense of purpose that, in turn, can help families become more future-orientated.

The findings of the study indicate social tourism can act as a powerful holistic family intervention and that it can instigate changes in family members facilitating efficacy beliefs and capability. However, through a critical realist understanding it is recognised that any benefits from such interventions are capped by wider structural inequalities that continue to persist.

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Project rationale

My first job out of university was at the Benefits Office, in between processing claim forms I would listen to fellow colleagues talk about their children, pets, and upcoming holidays. As a 22-year-old the latter amused me particularly since it was culturally unfamiliar and what at home would be described as Western frivolity. Yet it is commonly understood that going away on holiday is 'a characteristic of modern citizenship which has become embodied into peoples' thinking about health and well-being' (Urry, 1990: 24). Holidays have come to epitomise a time away from the usual mundanities of life, relaxing and recuperating as well as experiencing new things, having fun and general enjoyment (Iso-Ahola, 1982; Ryan, 2002; Gilbert and Abdullah, 2004; Krippendorf, 1987). Nevertheless, a holiday is by no means universal, for many it continues to be a luxury that is out of reach and this thesis is about those people who are not normally able to participate in a holiday (Hunter-Jones, 2004; Minnaert et al., 2009; McCabe, 2009; Hughes, 1991). Given the current economic climate this group will undoubtedly become larger. *The Trussell Trust*[1](2022) reports that more than 5.7 million people are on Universal Credit in the UK, and more than half of these are struggling with the essentials including being able to keep up with bills. A holiday then becomes very low on the list of priorities for people, and the first thing to be sacrificed in times of financial hardship (Hughes, 1991; Smith and Hughes, 1999; Hazel, 2005). In this introductory chapter I briefly sketch out the main objectives of this research project, the research questions, and finish with a summary of the main chapters.

The family holiday (with children) is an important fixture in the annual calendar, it represents a united time away from the usual demands of life, such as work and school (Schänzel et al., 2012). Given the changing nature of family composition, the family holiday is more important than ever (Yeoman et al., 2012). There is greater emphasis on 'family time', and the need to spend more

[1] *The Trussell Trust* is an NGO and charity that works to end the need for food banks across the UK.

time together than we would have in the past. For families with the economic means a holiday becomes symbolic of who they are, helping reinforce family identity, and focusing on creating memories (Gram, 2005; Schänzel and Yeoman, 2015; Schänzel, 2013; Schänzel and Smith, 2014; Schänzel et al., 2012). However, academically there is less interest about family holidays since they are regarded as mundane and trivial compared to traditional travel (Schänzel and Smith, 2014; Bærenholdt et al., 2004). The family holiday stands in contrast to a traditional conception of travel, since it focuses on family togetherness (Schänzel, 2012), rather than escapism (Iso-Ahola, 1982). Tourism research has traditionally prioritised individual conceptions of travel at the detriment of the social nature of travel, however, tourism by its very nature is group based (Obrador-Pons, 2011). Therefore, research in tourism needs to move beyond the single subject position (Small, 2008). Hence, families on the move have not featured prevalently in tourism research, yet there is something important that can be learned about familial processes in the context of tourism. Families on holiday together offer a distinctive interface where inter-familial interactions, not otherwise available, can be investigated. If there is a paucity of knowledge about families who holiday, then even less is known about families who never have the opportunity go away and to this group I now turn my attention (McCabe and Qiao, 2020).

Social tourism refers to initiatives aimed at including groups that would otherwise be excluded from participating in travel (Minnaert et al., 2011). In many parts of Europe social tourism programmes are more prevalent, but in the UK, this has never been the case (McCabe et al., 2012). Instead, responsibility falls to the charity sector such as the Family Holiday Association (FHA[2]) to support families in need of a short break. Research shows the benefits of a short break to disadvantaged families: improving relationships, participating in leisure activities and a chance to get away from the usual stresses (McCabe et al., 2012; Minnaert et al., 2010; Smith and Hughes, 1999). In the UK, offering funded breaks to families is challenging to justify in public

[2] Family Holiday Association now known as Family Holiday Charity

discourse and this is reflected in the lack of interest at policy level. Yet, research shows the benefits outweigh the costs (Minnaert et al., 2009); consequently, this study intends to add to this body of research by investigating the potential positive outcomes a holiday has on families that would normally not participate in tourism.

Literature on social tourism indicates that family wellbeing improves after a holiday, with many positive consequences including children gaining confidence, behaviour improving, and school life being more positive (Bos et al., 2015; Minnaert et al., 2010). However, there is little in terms of research into how a holiday can lead to changes in attitudes and behaviour in families, such as self-beliefs. By working collaboratively with the Family Holiday Association, a leading charity in the field of social tourism, this research sets out to examine the effects of a holiday on family efficacy and family functioning and gaining a deeper understanding of how social tourism can be a powerful intervention in tackling inequality and reducing the welfare bill (Cole and Morgan, 2010).

Traditionally, families that are socioeconomically marginalised have been framed as 'problematic' by policy makers (Lambert, 2019). Academic theory and research do not fair much better, historically focusing on pathological aspects of family life (Crossley and Lambert, 2017), to the detriment of what most of us devote most of our time to, the everyday practices of normal life (Kantor and Lehr, 1975/2003). This research is embedded in a strength-based account of ordinary processes that *all* families engage in, in the context of social tourism (Powell et al., 1997). Research by Kakoudakis et al., (2017) highlights the positive impact social tourism can have on self-efficacy beliefs leading to changes in job search behaviour. However, self-efficacy beliefs at a family level have not been explored. Families living in disadvantaged communities often display very low self-efficacy beliefs, this can have a detrimental impact on family life. Families that display high self-efficacy beliefs tend to promote positive family functioning, as well as act as a buffer in difficult times by promoting resilience (Maddux and Gosselin, 2012). Although,

previously, research has shown the benefit of social tourism to disadvantaged families (McCabe and Johnson, 2013, Minnaert, 2012), family efficacy and family functioning have received less attention, thus the need for the project.

The project draws together a number of overlapping social-psychological approaches, that broadly fall under the umbrella of a critical social psychology (Fox et al., 2009). The study is set within a Positive Psychology paradigm (e.g., Seligman, 2002a; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), applying a strength-based approach (Dunst and Trivette, 2009; Dunst et al., 1994a; Dunst et al., 1994b), utilising the extensive work of Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1977b, 1982, 1986, 1995, 1997, 2011), Family Systems Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979, 1986, 1996). The usefulness of these approaches is that they recognise the complexity of families, their inevitable interdependence and dynamics. Underpinning these theories is the focus on prevention and centring on human strengths, promoting good living and enabling people to be at their best (Linley et al., 2011). The goal of social psychology is to work with families, schools and communities to foster human strengths (Gable and Haidt, 2005). Social tourism offers just such an avenue to families, yet as an intervention a family holiday has received little attention.

Interventions tend to focus on behaviour change without considering self-efficacy beliefs which, according to Bandura (1997), are a precursor to behaviour change. Being highly efficacious gives people a sense of control over thoughts and behaviour, which is essential to happiness and wellbeing (Maddux, 2005). If we are in an environment that is predictable and controllable, we are able to meet the normal day to day challenges that come our way and are better at building and maintaining relationships. The holiday provides just such an environment and, thus, the underlying rationale of the project is to examine how a family holiday promotes better family efficacy and family functioning leading to positive behavioural outcomes.

Furthermore, there is a general acceptance that families need to be studied in their natural context rather than an artificial setting (Kantor and Lehr,

2003). The family holiday offers a natural laboratory, self-contained and limited (Stringer, 1984), and a unique window into common-place family processes that take place in daily life (Lashley et al., 2007). Families eligible for a short break are usually referred by a social worker, teacher, charity worker, etc., known in this project as the 'support worker'. Working in collaboration with the FHA the study employs a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews with families and support workers to ascertain how a short break can have an impact on families living in disadvantaged environments. The families in the sample predominantly live in under-resourced communities with many additional problems such as poor mental and physical health, disability, caring obligations, care leavers, and domestic violence, all of which make them especially vulnerable to further problems. In assessing family functioning and family efficacy we are looking at outcomes for families that we can reasonably expect to change with a relatively short-term intervention such as social tourism. This also requires further understanding of the effects of poverty and intergenerational disadvantage on a family's ability to make positive changes and how reasonable it is to expect families to solve problems on their own (Pecora et al., 1995). Being able to ascertain behavioural and attitudinal changes in families and any longer-term effects is important since these questions help support evaluation and outcome work, which is increasingly crucial not only for convincing policy makers but is also significant in contributing incrementally to the knowledge base. The purpose of the research is to deepen our understanding of how social tourism influences familial processes and although there is an emerging body of research on social tourism, there is little research that investigates the effects of social tourism on family functioning and family efficacy. Furthermore, the study utilises a critical realist framework which is less exploited in tourism research and even less so in social tourism. Critical realism allows the family to be understood as an open, dynamic, complex and relational entity connecting familial factors to wider structural forces.

## 1.2 Research questions

In the previous section I have offered a brief synopsis of the main issues pertaining to this research project. In the remainder of this chapter, I detail the research questions and chapter outline.

The main aim of the research stems from the literature review (chapter 2) which is to:

> *Investigate how families living in disadvantaged circumstances are affected by participating in social tourism, with particular attention to family efficacy and family functioning.*

This aim is operationalised into three research questions:

*1. To what extent does participation in social tourism lead to better family functioning for families from disadvantaged backgrounds?*

*2. How does social tourism develop family efficacy beliefs amongst families from disadvantaged backgrounds?*

*3. What are the underlying generative mechanisms through which participating in social tourism advances and/or impedes family efficacy and family functioning for families?*

## 1.3 Organisation of the thesis

In the next chapter I detail the main academic literature relating to the family, which charts the main changes to family structure, and the evolution of policy discourses in the UK. This chapter then goes on to detail the theoretical perspectives on the family, in particular it engages with positive psychology, family systems theory, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory and social cognitive theory. Next, I bring in family tourism literature highlighting a gap in family research on disadvantaged families. The chapter ends with positioning social tourism as a strength-based family-centric intervention.

In chapter three I establish the philosophical and methodological approach of the thesis. This chapter endeavours to explain the use of qualitative interviews with critical realism as its philosophical underlabourer.

Furthermore, a critical realist ontology overlaps with the theoretical framework that provides the project with a framework from which to understand families. A multi-level approach involves a post-holiday semi-structured interviews with families and support workers.

Chapters 4 and 5 consist of findings from the semi-structured interviews, where data are analysed via thematic analysis embedded in a critical realist framework. Chapter 4 (*Insights into Family Life*) deals with the contextual texture of family understood mainly at the empirical and actual level, which provides understanding of family processes on a daily basis before the holiday. In chapter 5 (*Holiday as an Intervention*) depth of family life is explored, unearthing the mechanisms occurring in the *real* domain whilst away on holiday and the longer-term effects of the holiday on family life.

Finally, in chapter 6 I offer a synopsis of the findings and addressing the research questions. The theoretical framework is then further considered including contributions to knowledge, and implications to both theory and practice. I finish with discussing the limitations of the study as well as the many possible future areas of exploration.

# Chapter 2 Understanding families in context

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter is organised broadly into three sections as follows. The first section details family theory, beginning with a brief history of the origins of family research, moving on to provide a theoretical framework that underpins the project with the conceptual foundation from which to understand and explain the nature of family life. The second section considers the development of family intervention work in the UK, followed by the final section which examines the role tourism can play in family life, which directs the project and its purpose, ending with the project rationale.

## 2.2 Theoretical framework

This section begins with a brief overview of the foundations of family research, detailing its recent history, before moving on to discuss key theoretical approaches pertinent to the project which include Positive Psychology, Family Systems Theory, Ecological Systems Theory and Social Cognitive Theory.

### 2.2.1 The origins of family research

To make sense of current issues within family research it is useful to explore its recent history. Although the majority of this chapter focuses on theoretical approaches from the 1950s onwards, concerns over the family can be traced back to *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918-1920). *The Polish Peasant* was not only a pioneering and influential work in sociology (Krajewska, 2020), it was also important in conceptualising family in a community context before the split between the private and public sphere emerges (Doherty et al., 1993).

The first academic course on families was taught at the University of Chicago in 1917 by Ernest Burgess, who is regarded as the father of family studies (Crosbie-Burnett and Klien, 2009). Burgess (1926) defines family as “a unit of interacting personalities” (Burgess, 1926 cited in Doherty et al., 1993: 16) and, more importantly, family scholarship also enters the psychological domain. Family theory in the 1920s and 1930s reflected broader cultural ideas of self-fulfilment and interpersonal communication, with the idealisation of the privatised family coupled with a newfound faith in science and quantitative

research methods (Doherty, 1993). However, post-war brought tremendous change, instability and demographic changes; there was no doubt that society had changed.

In response to this, what followed was the most prominent conceptual framework to emerge from American sociologist Talcott Parsons and, subsequently, sociological explanations of the family were dominated by Parsonian functionalism throughout the 1950s and 1960s (Gilding, 2010; Goldthorpe, 1987). This reflected a shift in what social science of the family was asking because, whereas symbolic interactionists had focused *on "How can family provide emotional happiness for family members"*, by the 1950s it was about *"How can the family preserve the health of increasingly fragile societies?"* (Doherty et al., 1993: 10). For Parsons the family was universal, and he offered a very simplistic and optimistic view of family life (Parsons and Bales, 1956). The nuclear family that emerged after World War II had adapted and evolved to meet the needs of modern industrial society. The family functioned to socialise children and stabilise adult personalities; women worked within the home, bearing and rearing children and men worked outside the home as the main breadwinner. In line with functionalist social theory, the family as an institution played a critical role in maintaining social consensus, order and preserving the status quo (Gillies, 2003).

A sense that a weakened American society had emerged after the War was not only a source of concern for sociologists but also for academics working in family therapy and under the family systems paradigm. Family systems theory and family therapy were not initially connected to family studies, but family therapy theories combined with family systems theory and the medical model of treating mental illness, became very influential and went beyond sociological preoccupation with 'normal' family functioning. This synthesis also provided an alternative to the dominance of a psychoanalytic approach in psychology (Doherty et al., 1993). Additionally, family systems theory fitted well with the wider cultural context, the separation of private and public, and

the positive use of science to promote greater understanding and guided action.

In the UK, family sociology in the 1950s focused on the maternal role in children's early development, with the influence of John Bowlby's work on the impact of maternal deprivation, influential crucially for its social policy implications (Goldthorpe, 1987). There was greater emphasis on the importance of keeping children with their biological families and for women with young children to stay in the home (Goldthorpe, 1987). Underlying this was the general belief that what happens to children when they are very young can cause lasting damage. Furthermore, that a 'bad home' was better than a 'good institution' (Bowlby, 1951). Much of Bowlby's work has since been challenged; especially, the primacy of the 'maternal role' has been called into question. Later, others suggest Bowlby had used the term 'monotropy' and supported a primary bond with another person, not necessarily the mother (Rutter, 1972; Goldthorpe, 1987). Furthermore, children's experiences of family are enriched if they have contact with other family members, as well as friends and neighbours. The irreversibility of early 'damage' has also been called into question (Wootton, 1959 cited in Goldthorpe, 1987) and Bowlby certainly did not imply that the family *per se* was good or had some 'mystical' quality (Rutter, 1972). The debate around the removal of children from their biological family remains and resurfaces whenever there is a high-profile child death (Butler, 2021); this, along with women's role inside and outside the home, remain contested issues.

The mid-1960s represented a cultural turning point in both in North America and the UK, not only with a change in social attitudes and the challenging of traditional institutions (Crosbie-Burnett and Klein, 2009), but the family also experienced its own revolution with divorce rates rising before tapering off in the 1980s (Teachman et al., 2013). By the late 1960s structural functionalism had begun to decline in popularity and symbolic interactionism became more prominent again. In particular, phenomenology and ethnomethodology provided a more radical shift away with a more subjectivist

approach which overlooked the larger social context. By the 1970s the prevailing understanding of the family was coming under increasing attack, most portrayals of the family were regarded as overly optimistic and many of the negative aspects of the family had been completely ignored (Morgan, 1975).

In the early 1970s feminist critique also arose, for example Jessie Bernard (1972/1982) *The Future of Marriage* and Ann Oakley's (1974) now classic study, *The Sociology of Housework,* exposing the many myths that were perpetuated about the family, motherhood, and the role of women. With the women's movement coming to the fore, feminists such as Millett (1971) and Mitchell ([1971] 1986) were very vocal about the darker side of the family. This was further supported by the radical psychiatry movement, offering its own unique critique of the family from the likes RD Laing (1971), purporting to show the relationship between the family and mental illness. African American scholars were also finding a voice in the family field, criticising the reliance on white middle-class families as the norm when evaluating black families (Allen, 1978). For a time, family systems theory seemed to be able to rise above these critics as it did not emphasise traditional family forms and gender ideology; however, the focus for family systems theory was on the micro dynamics of the family, the wider issues such as class and gender were largely ignored (Doherty et al., 1993). By the early 1980s, the New Right movement had arisen, creating a moral panic around the downfall of the conventional family, and advocating a return to the traditional family values. Murray's (1996) 'underclass theory' proved particularly controversial, highlighting family breakdown and increasing dependency on the welfare state as being especially harmful to the moral fabric of society.

Although sociological explanations of family life such as that presented by the New Right were criticised for being simplistic and presenting a particular normative, there were huge gaps and omissions on all sides (Gilding, 2010). The wide range of families and households emerging called for a less dogmatic approach to studying the family, thereby shifting the focus on to 'family

practices' rather than any particular structures (Morgan, 1996). This led to the understanding that families are "something you *do* rather than something you *are*" (Gillies, 2003: 8). Thus, family life was regarded as an interactional process, with the focus on quality rather than structure, leading to a new direction in sociology (Jamieson, 1987, 1998). This new approach was underpinned by change within social sciences which seemingly "emphasised a changed consciousness in Western societies" (Gillies, 2003: 9). This is further supported by other well-known theorists such as Giddens (1999), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995/ 2015) claiming a new social order which, at its very heart, has 'reflexive modernity'. This enables individuals to be free from many of the constraints, obligations and loyalties to the family that past generations would have been bound by, we are permitted to *choose*, the only obligation we seem to have is to ourselves (Giddens, 1999).

However, even these accounts of the family have been criticised. Giddens new 'democratic' family again resonates more with white middle-class parents, with alternatives often pathologized (Edwards and Mauthner, 2002), regurgitating highly gendered and class-based activities which filter through into activities such as child rearing. Even the concept of individualisation itself is highly ethnocentric, private lives are more complex than any of these accounts give credit for. However, far more significantly and perplexing is that the ideal of the family and commitment prevails (Edwards and Mauthner 2002; Weeks et al., 2001). Marriage remains culturally and personally valuable to many people; tradition remains important and, responding to Giddens, others have argued that we have always been reflexive, this is not something newly discovered in the last 30 years (Adam, 1996). Rose (1996) challenges this linear narrative approach and argues we should consider a more Foucauldian approach that looks for a critical understanding of self and others, focusing on practices rather than broad structural changes. Rose (1996) continues to argue that notions of subjectivity under postmodernity does not represent a distinct new era, and that the history of subjectivity is far more heterogenous. Rose points to critical history, to suggest our current experience of 'ourselves' is not

so different from before, referring to Ancient Rome to suggest the notion of individualisation as not new. Furthermore, in early Christian teachings there also appears to be much diversity to be found in guidance on sexuality and marriage (Brown, 1988). These examples from historical texts suggest that the analytic category of individualisation is inapt, along with 'detraditionalisation'; it is further argued that these notions of plurality of voices are not specific to our current era (Rose, 1996). There is no significant ontological shift; rather, we have found new ways of thinking about our experiences (Rose, 1996). As we see families continue to evolve in the 21st century, so too will academic thinking on the matter, thereby leading to the possibility of new paradigms (Crosbie-Burnett and Klein, 2009).

So far, in reviewing the literature on families' key changes in both the family and wider society have been highlighted. These changes also influence academic thought on the subject with both psychology and sociology offering much potential in theoretical input, to which I now turn.

### 2.2.2 Positive psychology

The preceding section has offered a brief outline of the roots of family research, incorporating both psychological and sociological aspects. The review now centres in on key psychological theories, beginning with Positive Psychology, since its core tenets underpin the project, pertinent to both the study of the family and social tourism.

Positive psychology is about what makes life worth living and identifying the enabling conditions that allow people to flourish (Seligman, 2011). Traditionally psychology as a discipline has been accused of fixating on the pathological nature of human behaviour. The Second World War had understandably prompted the focus on human problems and how to treat them (Peterson, 2006) but the disease model had filtered into the mainstream world view, particularly in the United States. For some this has been at the expense and neglect of what can go right in people's lives and, thus, there was a call for psychology to redirect its energy looking at what makes life 'better' for human beings (Moneta, 2013). Many social psychologists began to look at

the positive aspects of human behaviour such as what contributes to a happy and satisfactory life (E.g. Seligman, 2002a; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000); what followed was a new distinct field in psychology labelled 'positive psychology'.

The term 'positive psychology' first rose to prominence in 1998 by Martin Seligman at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, followed by a millennium edition of *American Psychologist* (2000), which laid much of the theoretical groundwork and research agenda for positive psychology. Positive psychology has been described as having a "very short history with a very long past" (Peterson, 2006: 4;) as many of the underlying concepts of positive psychology have intrigued philosophers since ancient times and more recently can be traced back to William James (1902 [2015]) writing on "healthy mindedness" (Gable and Haidt, 2005). A closer ancestor can be found in the 1960s, within the humanist tradition; when the prevailing paradigms, namely psychoanalysis and behaviourism, were losing their momentum, humanism seemed to address some aspects of human behaviour that had been neglected. Early exponents were Carl Rogers (1963) and Abraham Maslow (1966), emphasising that people's needs, and values should take primacy over material things. In fact, it was Maslow who first used the term 'positive psychology' in 1954 (Lopez and Gallagher, 2011).

The influential nature of Maslow's work can be seen through its prominence across disciplines, with the pyramid-shaped hierarchy becoming a very familiar sight in the social sciences and beyond (Abulof, 2017). Maslow argued that people are driven by a five-tier model of human needs: at the most basic innate physiological needs for survival such as food, to safety, followed by love and belonging, then esteem and, finally, at the top of the pyramid self-actualisation. Its significance can be seen well beyond academia and possibly because as an explanation of human nature it tells us something we can all relate to (Abolof, 2017). Yet, whilst some of us in the West may feel ourselves moving up the pyramid, others highlight that the reality for many is very different, for example, for millennials[i]. Nevertheless, the need for social

belonging is inherent to the human condition (Le Penne, 2017), families need to feel part of positive wider communities. This makes Maslow's pyramid still relevant today despite its weaknesses.

Maslow and his contemporaries also made other important contributions, especially offering a critical view of the scientific tone psychology had taken. In particular, fixating on cause and effect and ignoring the active nature of the human being's capabilities for making decisions and choices (Bandura, 1986a), something that later positive psychologists would take issue with (Seligman, 1992). Humanists proposed a different world view for psychologists that they claimed could lead to changes and have wider positive ramifications for society. By refocusing psychology on neglected aspects such as making people more productive and actualising human potential, this could ultimately lead to physically and mentally healthier people. Humanistic psychology also overlaps with the ideas of existentialism, which emphasises a person's experience, ability to make choices and understanding people subjectively or "inside out" (Peterson, 2006). Both traditions are critical of 'scientific' study of people, which they argue neglects to deal with what is most important to people (Maslow, 1966). The world should be seen through the eyes of the individual which reflects phenomenological traditions that focuses on lived experiences.

Although Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) recognised that positive psychology is not a new idea, their key concern with humanism was its abandonment of what they regarded as the scientific model. For Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi humanism is on precarious empirical ground, lacking in scientific rigour and, thus, proposing a far more experimental approach to social psychology, utilising quantitative techniques. Others have insisted that this is rather reductionist and a short-sighted view (Taylor, 2001) particularly from the European perspective which maintains that North American social psychology has become fixated with 'scientific methods' at the expense of accessing the whole of human experience. Peterson (2006) argues that a more 'relaxed' and 'inclusive' approach of science is required. There is, of course,

much that can be learnt from laboratory experiments, but equal merit needs to be given to other methods such as interviews or case studies.

These methodological disagreements will be further explored in the subsequent chapter, what is important, here, is the key shift in thought, with the notion of prevention as a critical tool for psychologists; by focusing on human strengths, buffering can be created that prevents mental illness. This is a critical change in direction as it takes the focus away from the disease model that had preoccupied psychology for much of the 20th century (Gable and Haidt, 2005). Not all have welcomed this shift; positive psychology is often criticised for focusing on individual well-being, rather than how the individual can contribute to other people and society as a whole. However, this not an accurate representation of what positive psychology stands for. If we look back to the original mission of positive psychology, it was three-pronged:

(i) happiness and well-being,

(ii) positive traits and engagement in absorbing activities, and

(iii) the development of meaningful positive relationships, social systems and institutions (Snyder and Lopez, 2009; Seligman, 2002b).

Yet, positive psychology has become synonymous with: (i) happiness and well-being, with the neglect; (ii) positive traits and engagement in absorbing activities; and (iii) the development of meaningful positive relationships. The discipline is, in fact, committed to building healthier societies (Diener, 2011). According to Diener (2011) it is true that positive psychology has focused on the individual and factors within people, and less scholarly attention given to the latter two objectives. However, positive psychology is about promoting good living and enabling people to be at their best (Linley et al., 2011). Facilitating optimal living cannot only be done at the individual level but also through "group, the organisation, the community, or in the society" (Linley et al., 2011: 35). Gable and Haidt (2005) discuss how linking to this third dimension via 'positive sociology or anthropology' has not come to much fruition, but if psychologists work with families, schools and communities there

is an avenue to foster human strengths. Thus, if we look at a definition of positive psychology it is defined as "the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions" (Gable & Haidt. 2005: 103). Thus, "positive psychology needs to address the question: what are the characteristics of families that produce happy, well-adjusted offspring who contribute meaningfully to society?" (Snyder and Lopez, 2002:760).

Furthermore, positive psychology is very different from psychoanalytic and behaviourist traditions, importantly "recognising that people and their experiences are embedded in social context" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000: 8). Additionally, they understand that the way to a good life is not always simply a matter of choice, given that the external barriers and circumstances can hinder individual well-being. Others, particularly in popular media, depict positive psychology as "happiology" or "study of fluff" (Peterson, 2006: 7). Yet, given that positive psychology has numerous 'real world applications', such as healthcare, education, communities (Donaldson et al., 2011), and more crucially to tourism too, it should be taken more seriously by public policy makers. Moreover, as we will see later, social tourism slots well into core positive psychology aspirations.

### 2.2.3 Family systems theory

The non-pathologizing nature of positive psychology provides a different lens through which the family can be examined. The focus of the project is on the family and for this we need to look to other psychological models. Systems theory is one such framework (a meta-theory) that can be found in family scholarship originating from General Systems Theory, a trans-disciplinary field that offers theoretical frameworks known as 'systems theories'. Systems theories aim to explain phenomena across the spectrum from amoeba to complex organisations and looks at the world in which objects are interrelated with one another (Whitchurch and Constantine, 1993). Systems thinking has been utilised by psychology, psychiatry and in family

therapy since the 1960s, gradually making its way to sociology and then family social science in general.

At the core of systems theory is the idea that the whole must be understood and not simply the component parts, proprieties, and behaviours, as these do not emerge from component parts in isolation but, rather, can be described as emergent because they exist through the relationship between parts (Whitchurch and Constantine, 1993). In this way systems theory can be used to understand intrafamilial processes - such as family functioning and family processes, understood as products of the entire system. Thus, family systems theory not only moves away from the deficit model prevalent in traditional psychology but also the individual orientation that many psychological theories have taken, replacing a linear causal approach to explaining behaviour with a more circular conception that explains individual behaviour in terms of context (Johnson and Ray, 2016). The family, then, can be understood as an organised hierarchy of subsystems, including individuals, subsets of individuals and blend of family members (Bonomi et al., 2005: 1128).

The usefulness of this social-psychological approach is that it recognises the complexity of families, their interdependent relationships, and dynamics. Under this strategy, determining whether a family system is operating 'well' can be decided by looking to the internal functioning of the family (Wollny et al., 2010). A family systems approach defines the family as a "functional unit" (Walsh, 2016: 20), and individual problems can only be understood in terms of looking at other family members. The family is more than the aggregate of individual members (Bonanno et al., 2015) and the psychological health of family members emerges via interactions (Simon et al., 2005) with emphasis laid on the interactional dynamics of family members. How we define healthy family dynamics is open to much debate, but there are some broad universal constructs such as warmth, support and cohesion, and family health and adaption, these will be further explored next.

#### 2.2.3.1 Family functioning

Family studies has made some progress in terms of theoretical and methodological underpinnings, yet there is no clear agreement on the exact

nature of family functioning and fundamental aspects, such as definitions of key concepts (Draper and Marcos, 1990). Consequently, family assessment has grown in a laissez-faire manner (Grotevant and Carlson, 1989), that has on offer a plethora of family functioning measures (Pritchett et al., 2010). However, the lack of theoretical consensus has resulted in many of the assessments not explicitly linking family theory with assessment (Cowan, 1987; Grotevant and Carlson, 1989). Of course, families are complex, and it would be foolish to think that one theory could fully explain the multifaceted nature of families (Grotevant and Carlson, 1989) but it does, however, create particular issues for family researchers aiming to define constructs, and identify variables for research (Draper and Marcos, 1990).

This lack of theoretical consensus in conceptualising family functioning in non-clinical research has resulted in researchers having to make their own decisions as to how family functioning is to be measured. Wollny et al's (2010) review of the literature suggests no single framework is suitable for studying the family but linking to existing theoretical frameworks, such as the ecological model, with insights from family systems can determine appropriate measures. As discussed in the preceding section, family systems theory locates behaviour of family members in relation to other members of the family, any intervention that overlooks family relationships will limit its effectiveness (Grotevant and Carlson, 1989). Furthermore, there is a clear move away from problems residing uniquely in the individual to looking to broader environmental factors, which marks an important step forward for family studies.

Within the family systems perspective there is a broad agreement that all families must perform identity tasks; set boundaries; provide emotional support; manage household tasks and manage change (Sabatelli and Bartle, 1995). In evaluating the impact of an intervention such as a holiday break on a family, the focus must be on those domains of family functioning that are most subject to change such as the immediate environment or the internal relationships within the family (Pecora et al., 1995). Operationalising the domains of family functioning requires constructing devices that allow us to

make qualitative judgements regarding strategies families employ (Lebow and Stroud, 2012).

#### 2.2.3.2 Strength-based approach

Approaches to family functioning and assessment may vary, as highlighted in the previous section, but the need to focus on a strength-based approach is more prevalent and dominant (Powell et al., 1997). It is understood that interventions must focus improvement on overall family functioning, as well as problems that were originally identified. Simply targeting a specific problem has limited value, whereas the whole family support model attempts to "a more permanent impact on the way in which family members live their lives on a daily basis" (Powell, 1997: 10). Critical to a strength-based model is outcomes that go beyond the current needs and issues of the family, but look long-term to "acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities that will prevent future problems; promote family stability; enable parents to nurture their children's development; and promote the personal development of family members" (Powell, 1997: 10). However, rather challengingly, these outcomes are difficult and slippery to measure and there is a need to shift away from traditional ways of thinking about outcomes.

Other issues are, of course, to do with how we define family, since the family cannot be predefined in family support models (Bernheimer et al., 1990; Powell et al., 1997), the emphasis shifts to asking families themselves to identify who they consider family to be. There is a realisation that what constitutes healthy family functioning may be different from how experts may define it and the need to be open to diverse ethnic and cultural values (Allen and Petr, 1996; Bailey et al., 1992; Daro, 1988; Hanson and Carta, 1995; Singh, 1995). In committing to a strength-based model family diversity needs to be accepted and valued unless "safety, legal, or ethical concerns contradict the family's approach" (Powell et al., 1997; Kaiser and Hemmeter, 1989). Nevertheless, even this can be open to many issues for those working on the front line and it is tricky to navigate successfully.

Project outcomes such as family empowerment, building capacity and optimum functioning require definition and further development to aid measurement. It helps if the focus shifts, less so on whether a family is at some idealised state but, rather, to look at how the family functions in different domains and how the family itself would like to function (Allen and Petr, 1996). The most crucial issue is the shift in exclusionary to inclusionary practices that act as a basis to planning, delivery and evaluation. Evidence showing 'front-end' investment in family works and is cost-effective (Powell et al., 1997). It may well be initially more expensive but investment in human capital "promotes the stability, integrity, and capacity of families to support their own members" (Powell, 1997: 16). The strengths-based approach focuses on identifying the strengths as well as the needs and difficulties of children, young people and families, but also looking to prevent future needs. This is not a new approach but is a rapidly growing template of social care practice that aligns well with the positive psychology principles outlined earlier and ecological systems theory which are discussed next.

### 2.2.4 Ecological systems theory

Family systems theory highlights the complex nature of family life, especially when it comes to defining and assessing family functioning. What is clear is the embeddedness of family life that requires us to consider the wider context in which families exist. For this we need to draw on ecological systems theory and the work of Urie Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 1979; Bronfenbrenner and Evans, 2000) who emphasised that child development should be understood in terms of time and place, that is the wider context of the family (Arney and Scott, 2013). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory places children within the context of the many interactions between family, school and community (Bronfenbrenner, 1996; Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta, 2000; Sheridan and Burt, 2009). Ecological theory has its origins in Lewinian field theory (Lewin, 1936). From Lewin, Bronfenbrenner took the idea that human development should be studied in the broader context (Bronfenbrenner, 1996, 1986, 1977, 1979). To develop this point, he initially borrowed from (Brim, 1975) four organisational principles - microsystems,

mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems and, in later work, chronosystem is also included that, together, describe the structure of the ecological environment (Bretherton, 1993). Central to ecological theory is the premise that families are an inseparable part of a larger social network consisting of these five interrelated systems (see figure 2.2).

**Figure 2.1 Bronfenbrenner's ecological paradigm**




Figure 2.2: Adapted from Bronfenbrenner's ecological paradigm
Source: Penn (2005)

| |
|---|
| **MICROSYSTEM**<br>"A microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 22).<br>Proximal context, consists of active members e.g., home, school, work, social groups. Needs to be calm, stable and predictable – conducive to development (opposite can also be true).<br>Layer closest to individual (home, school) immediate environments in which individual's function (Bronfenbrenner and Evans, 2000). |
| **MESOSYSTEM**<br>"A mesosystem comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations among home, school, and neighbourhood peer group; for an adult, among family, work, and social life)", (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 25).<br>Connections and relationships between micro-system members -parent/child, child/school, school/family.<br>Individuals belong to more than one micro-system and the intersection of two or more microsystem is a *mesosystem*. When there is good interaction between microsystems they can be reinforcing (again the opposite can also be the case) (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998).<br>Often microsystems are seen to "sit" within mesosystems; but instead, mesosystems exist at the overlap between two or more microsystems (Jaeger, 2016). Thus, much more than a simple nesting system. |
| **EXOSYSTEM**<br>"An exosystem refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person" (1979: 25).<br>Larger social systems in which microsystems and mesosystems exist – but does impact on individual functioning directly. Systems where children are not members, e.g., workplace. |
| **MACROSYSTEM**<br>"The *macrosystem* refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 26).<br>Cultural values, customs and laws that influence interaction through all systems<br>Surrounds all other systems. E.g. language patterns of communication. |

According to ecological theory home life continues to be significant to family functioning at the microsystem level, and the influence of family composition, support mechanisms, social class, poverty, and culture on family practices cannot be underestimated (Sheridan & Burt, 2009). In order to understand and support families, broader social, economic, and cultural factors must be considered as they are infused in all family experiences. Through an ecological framework we can develop a much clearer vision of the developing person as situated in a multi-level interwoven and dynamic network of social relations (micro, meso, exo, and macro-systems; Bretherton, 1993).

Bronfenbrenner's theory evolved throughout his lifetime and, although Bronfenbrenner did not carry out much empirical research himself, his theory did influence policy (e.g., Head Start program in the US). In later work Bronfenbrenner was concerned with de-emphasis of agency in many interpretations of his research (Jaeger, 2016). To this end, he further emphasised that child development varies widely because of biological and psychological characteristics – so, children raised in a similar context have very different paths because they are active agents (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998). Force characteristics (a combination of cognitive, social, emotional and motivational most closely associated with temperament and personality) was particularly prevalent in Bronfenbrenner's later work with growing interest in processes between person/context transactions. Bronfenbrenner argued that proximal processes that are responsive to children's needs will assist in developing self-control, and the ability to cope in times of stress. Thus, proximal processes can buffer the effects of the environment, but the opposite is also true, in that a harmful environment can hinder child development. Bronfenbrenner identified proximal processes within the microsystem as the most important influence on child development. It was because of this focus on process that chronosystem was added in the mid-1980s since processes occur in an historical period. By 1998 Bronfenbrenner's theory had fully matured and is often referred to as a bioecological model (process-person-context-time PPCT model). Although, in later writings he did use ecological and

bioecological interchangeably and thus much research based on Bronfenbrenner continues to use the label ecological (Jaeger, 2016; Tudge, 2016).

As stated previously, Bronfenbrenner carried out very little empirical research himself, but his theory has been utilised extensively in the social sciences, enabling some useful research findings on the application of ecological theory to the study of the family (Hayes et al., 2007; Voydanoff, 2001; Wollny et al., 2010; Zimmerman, 2003). In particular, the focus has been on how family wellbeing and environments are linked via interactions and interdependent relationships. The success of any intervention has been shown to be influenced by 'community', even when interventions are targeted at the family level (Wollny et al., 2010; Voydanoff, 2001). Parents are part of a larger society and subgroups that have rituals, values, and beliefs they pass down through the generations. The social support that families receive through extended kinship networks may be vital especially when other wider societal connections may be weak.

Other useful extensions of Bronfenbrenner's work can be found in Garbarino and Kostelny's (1992) application of the ecological model to problems of child abuse and neglect (Arney & Scott, 2013). Garbarino (1995) coined the phrase 'socially toxic societies' referring to communities with low levels of cohesion, trouble and violence, all of which were correlated with child abuse, crime and substance misuse (Arney & Scott, 2013). Other problems such as low academic achievement and mental health problems can result from similar risk factors (Durlak, 1998), such as social isolation and poverty (Arney & Scott, 2013). These applications highlight the interconnectedness of families and how family functioning cannot be considered in isolation. In sum, ecological systems theory offers a useful framework where family life can be examined.

### 2.2.5 Social cognitive theory

The final theory to be considered is Social Cognitive Theory, which has its origins in 1940s Social Learning and Imitation Theory (Pálsdóttir, 2013 cited

in Middleton et al., 2019). Later adaptions of Social Learning Theory were revised by Albert Bandura (1925-2021), with the basic premise that we learn by observing others, through modelling and imitation. This was influenced by the behaviourist paradigm but, subsequently, social learning theory evolved into social cognitive theory which, importantly, included the cognitive component (thoughts and feelings) that social learning theory had failed to account for. A key aspect of social cognitive theory is how social and cognitive factors interact. Bandura (1986a) refers to this as a causal model 'reciprocal determinism' or 'triadic reciprocal causation', through "triadic codetermination…human functioning is a product of interplay of interpersonal influences, behaviour individuals engage in and environmental forces that impinge on them" (Bandura, 2012: 11, see also figure 2.3).

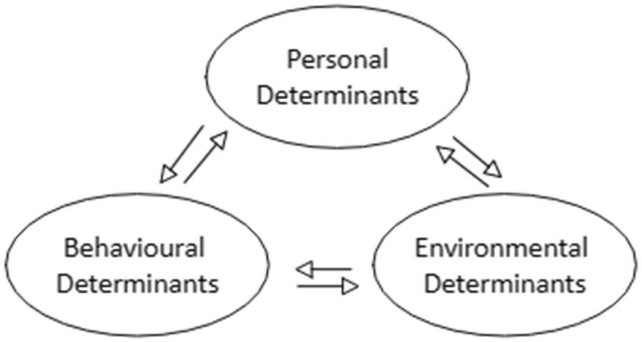



**Figure 2.2 Bandura's Theory of Reciprocal Causation**

The emphasis placed on agency is significant since early psychology had been susceptible to the criticism of ignoring individual agency. Bandura's social cognitive theory is rooted in an agentic perspective stating that, as agents, we act intentionally and this impacts on life events (Bandura, 2008, 2006b). At the heart of social cognitive theory is the idea of the individual as an agent, who has control over mental and physical wellbeing, as well as the environment. Individuals are the product of reciprocal interplay of cognitive, behavioural, and environmental factors and shape their own lives by cultivating efforts and competencies at all three levels. Additionally, individuals have the ability to self-regulate, to choose and pursue goals, based on past experience and future expectations. Furthermore, individuals are socially embedded, our sense of self and development of personality comes about as a result of our interactions

with others. Moreover, they are also “created in these interactions” (Maddux, 2005: 279) and, thus, further shaped through these interactions.

#### 2.2.5.1 Self-efficacy theory

The previous section has provided a brief overview of social cognitive theory, that forms the foundation of self-efficacy theory. Social cognitive theory informs us that early childhood experiences and the quality of family life sets the course for how well a child is able to function as an adult. A critical factor in determining the behaviours people choose to engage in and persevere with, are self-efficacy beliefs. These beliefs are a key ingredient in the mental and physical health of individuals, they begin in childhood, developing over time and through experience. Although the self-efficacy construct has become more prominent in the last few decades, in terms of its history it has a long past both in philosophy and psychology (Maddux, 2005).

Philosophers such as Spinoza, Lock and Hume also grappled with understanding ‘the will’ and role of ‘volition’ (Russell, 1945; Vessey, 1967; Maddux, 2005). More recently theorists have studied links between perception of personal proficiency and behavioural outcome (White, 1959). It is this scholarship that Bandura (1977a) drew on when he developed a more thorough theory of self-efficacy, examining how it is formed and influences human behaviour. The principal idea of self-efficacy theory is quite simple, "perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997: 3), or “a self-efficacy belief… is the belief that I can perform the behaviour that produces the outcome” (Maddux, 2005: 278). And the “truth is that believing that you can accomplish what you want to accomplish is one of the most important ingredients—perhaps the most important ingredient—in the recipe for success” (Maddux, 2005: 277).

A person’s belief in their self-efficacy can vary greatly depending on effort, perseverance and thought patterns which can either hinder or aid when coping with external demands. For Bandura, an individual’s belief in their efficacy is the foundation of human agency, signifying people can, in fact, produce effects through their own actions. More importantly, individuals are

seen as significant contributors to their life circumstances rather than simply products of them. Nevertheless, humans need to create environments that are hospitable and enabling. The concern is with how people judge their capabilities, the self-precepts of efficacy will undoubtedly affect motivation and behaviour. Our environment is not fixed, and it is not a simple case of knowing what to do, but involves our ability using cognitive, social, and behavioural skills to follow through a course of action (Bandura, 1997). Our ability to do something is only as good as its execution. Through our daily lives we are making judgements on personal efficacy; if we get it wrong, there are consequences. Thus, it is important that we can make accurate discretionary judgements about our ability to complete tasks successfully and avoid tasks in which we risk failure. Bandura (1997) argues that those with high self-efficacy may persist with greater effort; conversely, those with low self-efficacy may put little effort in and, in addition, may dwell on environmental demands and psychological barriers that impairs performance.

Self-efficacy does not have a genetic basis but develops through experience over time. Self-efficacy beliefs in children can only develop if the environment is responsive, as a receptive environment will facilitate development of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1977b). Parents play a key role in encouraging and maintaining a child's self-efficacy beliefs, and this sense of agency and self-belief will continue through the life course (Maddux, 2005). Early development of self-efficacy develops through our capacity of our understanding of cause and effect and ability for self-observation and self-reflection (Maddux, 2005). In childhood we begin to understand the causal relationship between events and that our actions produce results (Bandura 1997, Maddux, 2005). The capacity for symbolic thought also increases, raising self-awareness and sense of personal agency (Bandura, 1997, Maddux, 2005). Efficacy beliefs are thought to develop in four ways (Maddux, 2005; Bandura, 1997; Maddux and Gosselin, 2012):

(i) Mastery or performance experiences - by attempting to control our environments, mastery works as the most powerful source of self-efficacy information (Bandura, 1997). When an individual is

successful in performing a particular behaviour or domain, this will strengthen the self-beliefs in ability but conversely the reverse is also true, that is perceptions of failure in ability will diminish self-efficacy beliefs (Maddux and Gosselin, 2012).

(ii) Modelling or vicarious experiences – self-efficacy beliefs can also be shaped by observing other people's behaviour. This will inform our expectancies about our own behaviour and the consequences that follow (Maddux and Gosselin, 2012). The effectiveness of vicarious experiences is dependent on whether we believe we are similar to the person we are observing.

(iii) Verbal persuasion – this is about the influence that others can have on our self-efficacy beliefs, the verbal persuasion of others will depend on whether we regard the source as trustworthy or an expert (Bandura, 1977).

(iv) Own psychological states – this involves our own physiological or emotional states influencing our self-efficacy beliefs. When we do well this arouses pleasant feelings and when we perceive failure this will lead to less pleasant psychological states further impacting on self-efficacy beliefs (Maddux and Gosselin, 2012).

Interestingly, these four sources are hierarchical, as the first is most powerful and the fourth least, thus suggesting that self-efficacy is more than just a cognitive state, in that it is affected by the environment that surrounds us. Furthermore, efficacy beliefs will determine how we may judge a particular hurdle or an opportunity. This will affect how much effort we put into a course of action, those with low self-efficacy will convince themselves that any effort is pointless, whilst those with high efficacy beliefs will see much to the contrary. Efficacy appraisals can be partly influenced by vicarious experiences, that is, seeing similar people to yourself perform successfully raises expectations. Behaviour corresponds very closely to level of self-efficacy, regardless of the method by which self-efficacy is enhanced. The strength of efficacy also predicts behaviour change. The stronger perceived self-efficacy, the more likely an individual is to persist with efforts until success (Bandura, 1997). However,

the inability to influence events and social conditions significantly affects one's life, leading to futility, despondency, and anxiety, whereas high personal efficacy within a responsive environment leads to the best outcomes.

Self-efficacy beliefs are important, and there are hundreds of articles written across many disciplines from sociology to medicine demonstrate this (Maddux, 2005). The plethora of research into self-efficacy indicates the role self-efficacy beliefs can play in overcoming common psychological problems; for example, research into depression (Maddux, 2005; DiClemente et al., 1995; Maddux and Meier, 1995; Bandura, 1997), anxiety (Maddux, 2005), substance misuse and eating disorders, indicates the potency of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997; DiClemente et al., 1995). Therapeutic interventions that enhance the self-efficacy of individuals facing such problems have played a key role in the success of interventions (Maddux and Meier, 1995; Bandura, 1997).

However, as the research above indicates, the focus of many self-efficacy studies has been on psychopathology, but this is due to the interests of researchers rather than the nature of self-efficacy theory itself (Maddux, 2005). Self-efficacy research into education, health, exercise, diet, and smoking cessation among many others show the crucial role self-efficacy beliefs can play in changing and maintaining behaviour (Bandura, 1997; Maddux and Meier, 1995). Importantly self-efficacy theory suggests that any interventions should not "simply resolve" problems but provide people with capacity and a sense of efficacy to solve the problems themselves (Maddux, 2005: 282). This is why interventions, such as social tourism, can target self-efficacy beliefs and may be more successful in changing long term behaviour than other interventions. For example, research on the benefits of social tourism on unemployed individuals suggests a holiday provides an enabling environment that positively effects self-efficacy beliefs leading to changes in job-search behaviour (Kakoudakis et al., 2017). Thus, being highly efficacious, gives individuals a sense of control over behaviour and thoughts, which is essential to happiness and well-being (Maddux, 2005). If we are in an environment that is predictable and controllable, we are able to meet the normal day to day challenges that come our way and are better at building and maintaining healthy relationships. Thus,

Maddux (2005), argues that social cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory align far better with the positive psychology principles outlined at the beginning of this chapter. Furthermore, it connects to a strengths-based approach to family functioning, aimed at empowering and enabling individuals to live more successful and fulfilling lives (Bandura, 1997; Maddux, 2005). However, people do not live in isolation, the strength of a group often lies in collective efficacy, the ability to overcome difficulties and improve lives together (Bandura, 1982).

#### 2.2.5.2 Family efficacy

So far, the discussion on self-efficacy has focused on individual self-efficacy beliefs. However, as stated earlier, positive psychology, family systems theory, ecological theory and social cognitive theory stress the social embeddedness of the individual (Maddux, 2005). Efficacy is not simply "locked inside" the individual (Maddux, 2005: 284), such an approach would limit its utility. Self-efficacy theory recognises that there is a limit to what a person can achieve alone. Thus, the key to shaping the future environment is by exercising collective agency, pooling knowledge, skills and resources (Bandura, 2012). Social cognitive theory extends the conception of human agency, rooted in people's beliefs in their collective efficacy (Bandura, 2000), to allow for group-level analysis. Research also supports the positive relationship collective efficacy has on various outcomes in the group context such as educational, sports and military settings (Bandura, 2000; George and Feltz, 1995; Zaccaro et al., 1995). Through collective efficacy, people pool knowledge, skills and resources, provide mutual support, form alliances and work together to secure what cannot be accomplished individually. Moreover, the more interdependence within the social system the higher perceived efficacy of the collective group (Stajkovic et al., 2009). In addition, social cognitive theory tells us "The higher the sense of collective efficacy, the better the team performance" (Bandura, 1997: 470). A group's belief is important because collective efficacy, a task- and context-specific variable, influences a group to initiate action and will determine how much effort they will exert and how long the group's effort will be sustained.

In similar fashion, families are more than the sum of individuals and do not work autonomously (Caprara et al., 2005). Many things that families seek are only achievable if they work together through interdependent effort. There are multiple interdependent subsystems operating within families that work together, that manage difficulties and promote each other's well-being. Bandura et al. (2011) found that collective family efficacy contributed to parents' and adolescents' satisfaction with their family life directly through its impact on the quality of family functioning. The family system affects virtually every aspect of personal development and well-being during the formative period of life (Bandura et al., 2011). The relationship between parents and children is changing and can be described as bidirectional in terms of influence (Maccoby, 2003).

In testing the conceptual model of interplay of perceived dyadic and collective efficacy within the family system, Bandura et al., (2011) found the centrality of families' beliefs in their collective efficacy to manage their quality of family functioning and satisfaction. Where families perceived high collective efficacy there was high family satisfaction for all concerned. The study found a positive effect on open communication, self-disclosure and satisfaction with family life – especially for fathers and adolescents. Bandura (1997) also found that collective family efficacy was an emergent belief that encompasses the coordinative and interactive dynamics among its members rather than simply the aggregate of individual efficacies. In particular, adolescents positively benefited from collective family efficacy, and this directly related to family satisfaction. Adding an agentic function, adolescents were assured in their efficacy to manage relationships with their parents contributing to open communication and sense of collective family efficacy (Caprara et al., 2002; Caprara et al., 1998). Children disclosed more to parents in enabling and supportive environments that felt less intrusive and more open (Caprara et al., 2012). The enabling and protective function contributed to a resilient sense of personal efficacy in adolescent self-development, adaption and change (Pajares and Urdan, 2006). Even issues such as economic hardship were not

regarded as objective hardship but created a subjective financial strain that impaired parenting self-efficacy. Hence, low levels of self-efficacy impair the ability to manage various stresses in life and have a knock-on effect on the rest of family. In family settings, parents feel responsible for offering an encouraging and enabling environment, but there are many environmental factors that can inhibit this that are beyond parental control.

Nevertheless, where family and parenting efficacy is high it can act as a buffer in teenagers that may be at risk from inner-city strains (Jarrett, 1997). Furthermore, in families with supporting parenting efficacy, children are more likely to complete high school and less likely to participate in risky behaviour (Lac et al., 2011). Thus, family efficacy is an important construct that could be used to promote healthy family functioning. However, research in this area has been limited. For example, Caprara et al's (2012), study sample is drawn from what is referred to as 'intact families' (married couples with children); this terminology is, in itself, value-laden. As stated earlier, the traditional nuclear family is on the decline and other variables such as single-parenthood, socio-economic status or ethnicity may impact on how a family functions, but these need to be addressed in a far more sensitive manner, recognising that "family functioning may be defined very differently according to family culture, structure, and needs" (Kao and Caldwell, 2017: 219).

To summarise, this section began with the roots of family research, incorporating both psychological and sociological aspects, highlighting the paradigmatic pluralism that characterises the social sciences (Ritzer, 1975). Sociology for this project offers a starting point, relating large scale social factors to the personal and the local. Sociological theories guide social policy to benefit the family in general; psychological theories, on the other hand, are about prevention, remedy and can be adapted to the particular. Interestingly, for sociologists, the family is the smallest unit of analysis but for psychologists it is a large unit of analysis (Crosbie-Burnett and Klien, 2009). Family studies combines both sociological and psychological theories because it reflects the diversity of families and society (Crosbie-Burnett and Klein, 2009). The family

operates at multiple levels and since there is no requirement to choose between theories the project draws on a number of overlapping social psychological theories, these include Positive Psychology, Ecological Systems Theory, Family Systems Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory. Each perspective brings a unique aspect to the study of the family (Klein and Jurich, 1993) and inform family interventions. Figure 2.4 provides a diagrammatic summary depicting how the various theories come together.

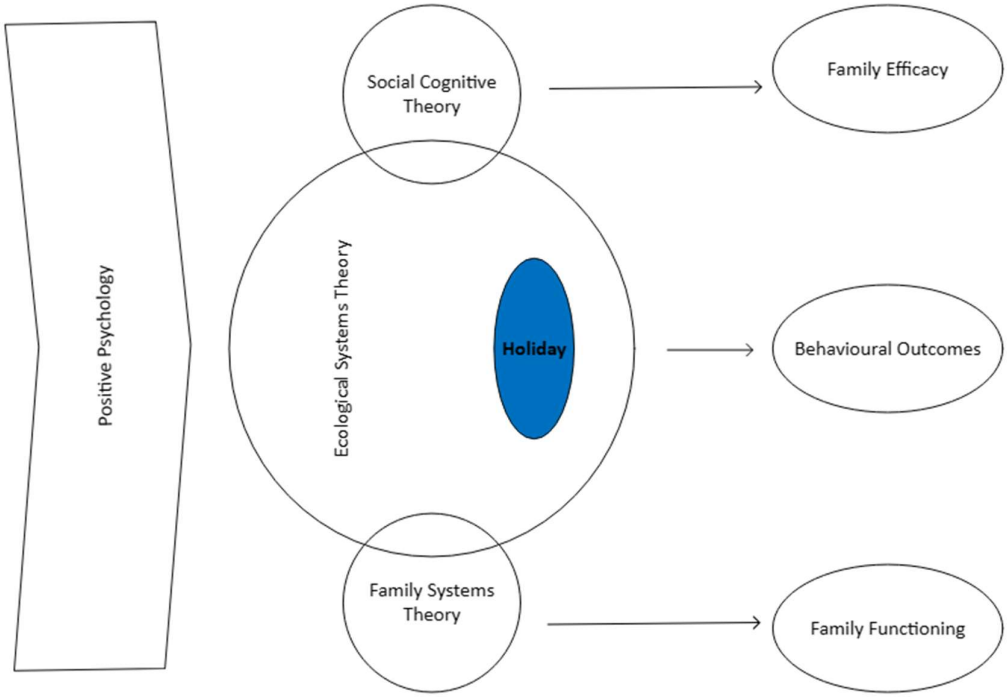



**Figure 2.3 Theoretical Framework**

There are increasing calls for multidisciplinary theoretical and empirical work and the multifaceted nature of the project makes it ideally suited for such an approach. In the next section of this chapter, I move on to discuss the nature of family interventions.

## 2.3 Family interventions

Concern for families whose functioning appeared problematic can be traced back to the 19th century, the idea of 'friendly visiting' evolved from the work of philanthropist Octavia Hill (Davies, 2015; Payne, 2005). Over the years successive policies have 'problematised' certain families mainly because they are economically inactive (Lambert, 2019; Welshman, 2013), with various

developments consisting of new(ish) approaches to old problems (Lambert, 2019: 86). In this section a brief overview of the key principles and influences of family interventions is examined, before moving on to discuss how social tourism as an intervention sits within the theoretical approach outlined in the previous section.

### 2.3.1 Policy and context

'Problematising' the family deemed difficult is a recurrent theme in family policy; in particular, certain families are defined as troublesome, considered distinct from the rest of society and in need of policing (Lambert, 2019). This has been linked to the 'underclass' thesis that reprises itself on a regular basis in policy discourse (Macnicol, 1987; Welshman, 2013). The underclass notion lurks behind the notion of 'residuum' in the 1880s, all the way to the 'troubled families' programme in the 2010s. In between there are the 'problem families' of the 1950s; a 'culture of poverty' in the 1960s; a 'cycle of deprivation' in the 1970s; the 'underclass' in the 1980s; and 'social exclusion' in the 1990s (Lambert 2019; Macnicol, 1987; Welshman, 2013). The 'underclass' discourse gains particular momentum in policy when it concerns the family because the family is regarded as a unit of reproduction and the worry centres around intergenerational transmission of problems (Lambert, 2019). In the UK family policy has also been shaped by child welfare concerns (Hendrick, 1994), usually gendered approaches pushing for behavioural change that focus on parenting (mostly mothering (Gillies et al., 2017; Jensen, 2018; Starkey, 2000)).

### 2.3.2 'Problem' families

Historically, the notion of 'problem families' is most evident during the wartime evacuation of working-class children from towns and cities to the countryside, resulting in a 'moral panic' with regards to their physical and mental health (Welshman, 2010). The reports about deprived children were most likely exaggerated (Macnicol, 1986), but it did have a significant impact on how the issue was conceptualised, with the focus on poor parenting rather than poverty (Lambert, 2019). Post-1945, two major reports influenced policy

development: first, the 1946 Curtis Report (Lynch, 2020) that focused on residential care for children; and second, the 1945 Monckton Report (The Therapeutic Care Journal, 2011) into the death of a child at the hands of his foster parents. This triggered (and many times since) public enquiries, media attention and the shaping of British child welfare policy development (Bullock and Parker, 2017). 'Problem' families, however, at this time were not solely the responsibility of the children's department (Lambert, 2019); the newly emerging welfare state, meant that a range of statutory and voluntary organisations could be involved in intervening with 'problem families' (Macnicol, 1999; Welshman, 1999). Local authorities tended to take responsibility for identifying 'problem families', but there was limited range of interventions, most of which focused on mothering with little attention to other factors (Lambert, 2019).

The creation of a *family* social service practice was a recommendation of the Seebohm Committee in 1971 (Petrie, 2003). Social Service departments were originally envisioned to be a progressive and universal service, one which thought the family and State could work together to optimise conditions for children (Parton, 2001). The 'problem' family now also included an emphasis on 'risk' (Lambert, 2019). However, the role of the State in family life is one that has since become increasingly strained and disputed, highlighted by The Cleveland Scandal in 1987. Changing governments have led differing approaches, often fostering conflicting approaches between economic liberalism and traditional Conservative authoritarianism (Featherstone et al., 2014).

Many of the current policy responses can be seen to be emerging from the 1970s onwards with a significant shift to market forces (Featherstone et al., 2014). 'Traditional family values' coupled with state non-interference remained crucial during the 1980s and 1990s via the Thatcher and Major governments. Critically, this was a determination to cut state costs, encouraging parents into work but, at the same time, hostility towards lone parents and urging mothers to stay at home. At the core was the continued

commitment to a *laissez-faire* economic philosophy (Bagilhole and Byrne, 2000; Lister, 1996: cited in Skinner, 2003) and the shift in responsibility to families, away from the state. For many there seemed to be little support for families other than promotion of traditional values. Various legislation followed detailing statutory requirements namely *The Children Act 1989, Community Care Act and Health and Social Care Act 2001,* along with a range of initiatives and practices that have been implemented by successive governments. The focus has been on protecting children whilst also recognising the need for family autonomy and parental responsibility, this tension is one that continues today (see Petrie, 2003). Children's welfare remained a dominant theme, placing a duty on local authorities to safeguard children but underpinned by the fundamental belief that children are best looked after by their families. However, despite this, the focus on much social work during the 1990s was on protection from families (known as Sec. 47 enquiries). There was also an emphasis on working collaboratively across service providers although, in reality, this proved very difficult (Featherstone et al., 2014).

### 2.3.3 'Supporting families' to 'troubled families' and back again

The debate refocused when New Labour came into power in 1997, with a policy shift to family support and early intervention (Bell and Wilson, 2003). By 1998 an *explicit* family policy was outlined in the *Supporting Families* document (Home Office, 1998). Although not a coherent approach, it was important in raising the status and commitment to family policy that was a more welfarist approach, willing to share the costs and responsibilities of parenthood. During their time in government New Labour offered financial support as well as implementing new initiatives to try and reconcile the demands of work and family life (Skinner, 2003). After 18 years of a Conservative government the UK was behind many EU countries in terms of resolving the balance between work and family life but, more worryingly, there was an increase in child poverty (Bradshaw, 2002). The *Framework for Assessment* (Department of Department of Health, 2000a) highlighted the role that environmental factors such as poverty play in family functioning and, thus, the need to be included in family assessment. New Labour instigated a number

of initiatives in an attempt to eradicate child poverty, such as Child Tax Credits. There were also attempts to tackle social exclusion and promote community regeneration. The *Quality Protects* (Department of Health, 1998) programme was intended to raise standards of care for children who were deemed vulnerable. There were also community-based initiatives such as *Sure Start* targeting pre-school children in deprived areas (Bell and Wilson, 2003). Further developments included *Working Together* (Department of Health, 2000b), and *Framework for Assessment* (Department of Health, 2001), all of which highlight the need for a child-centred and interagency approach to assessment and intervention.

Historically, the UK government's discourse has often espoused duties and responsibilities on families themselves, especially when they are seen as dysfunctional. During Major's government the 'Back to Basics' campaign, emphasised traditional family values, with strong undercurrents "law and order, personal responsibility and moral probity" (Daly, 2010: 438). New Labour closely aligned with this rhetoric, that a liberal welfare state model is best when it differentiates between the *deserving* and *undeserving*, with emphasis on muting the latter. New Labour policy on family drifted into justice policy (Daly, 2010; Lister, 2006), such as Parenting Orders, and courts enforcing parenting classes and other similar measures. Furthermore, New Labour's attempt on reforming aspects of the welfare state was, in many ways, impressive with initiatives that focused on children's early education and care, family relations especially for those in low-income sectors, parental employment and work and family-life balance (Daly, 2010). According to Daly (2010) the UK has never had "policies orientated to the protection and support of family as a social institution", unlike many other European countries (Daly, 2010: 433). However, since 1997 the family can be seen taking a more central prevalence in social policy. Nevertheless, at the same time, UK social policy has been rooted in a strong liberal heritage, meaning that the state's role in family life has always been seen as one that should be limited and intervene only when most needed.

New Labour's policy was, in part, an ideological project too, the family is not simply an economic unit but also serves important social functions (Daly, 2010). The purpose of policy for New Labour was to "effect change in individuals' behaviour and to locate individuals and families closer to the market, and also to enhance the social integration functions of the family" (Daly, 2010: 434). This was not significantly different from previous governments and, thus, cannot be labelled an ideological shift. For example, if we look at the programmes implementing early years education, the underlying approach is one of not only introducing market forces but deepening marketisation of childcare provision (Lloyd, 2008: 482; Daly, 2010). New Labour policy on childcare included the ideal of mixed economy of care, public/private partnership, but this resulted in eliciting "classic divisions in the UK" (Daly, 2010: 438), where default class lines emerged. In more affluent areas childcare provision was left to the market, and in 'deprived areas' was dependent on government intervention and a mix of public and voluntary-sector providers.

Further class divisions can be seen, as low-income and low-qualified women were encouraged to follow a middle-class model, which for low-income women resulted in exchanging caring for their own children, which is culturally and emotionally valued, to working in low paid and low qualified jobs (Saraceno, 2008). New Labour attempted to integrate everybody into the market, where the state does not provide security but, rather, the capacity for people to re-skill themselves – investing in human capital rather than direct economic payments (Featherstone et al., 2014; Giddens, 2000). The focus was on investing in people's future and the promise that holds, with the spotlight on paid work – to support oneself, one's children and create the right sort of environment. This related to child protection discourse, which was active and fairly loud, yet the poverty of parents remained silent (Lister, 2006).

Skinner (2003) draws similarities between the political rhetoric of New Labour and previous Conservative governments, in terms of welfare policies and policies on welfare-to-work. Although poverty is identified as an issue it is

not *per se* the problem but, rather, failure of individuals to grasp opportunities available, that would enable them to be independent of the state. Thus, many argue that the primary aim of Labour policies to support families was to relieve pressure from the state (Bagilhole and Byrne, 2000; Land, 1999; Daniel and Ivatts, 1998). Levels of inequality and gaps between groups in society did not appear to worry New Labour too much (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). Furthermore, much of the work remained under a child protection paradigm rather than framed in child welfare terms as in many countries (Lonne et al., 2009). It continued to be about managing risk and attempting to identify problems early rather than looking at holistic family needs with parents being either invisible or having an instrumental role (Featherstone et al., 2014).

#### 2.3.3.1 'Troubled Families'

By the time the Coalition Government took office in 2010, Prime Minister David Cameron believed the toxic mix of economic liberalism and social liberalism weakened civil society, and the development of mutualist structures could combat this, by transforming the public sector into a civil state (Featherstone et al., 2014). Cameron's pre-election softer edge soon faded, especially in light of the riots in England in August 2011, comparable to 'moral panic' associated with the evacuation of children during World War Two (Lambert, 2019). This led to a commitment to 'turn around' the lives of 120,000 of the most troubled families by 2015 (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015). The *Troubled Families Programme* defined 'troubled families' as those that have problems with youth offending, antisocial behaviour, school truancy and unemployment. The government estimated that these families were costing the state £9 billion a year, the majority of which was being spent on reacting to problems rather than solving them. The rationale behind the programme was that if more was invested in proactive and preventative intervention, it could save the state £2.9 billion a year (National Audit Office, 2016).

The 'troubled' families programme was founded on earlier schemes such 'social exclusion' under New Labour (Ball et al., 2016; Butler, 2014) but

with a sharpened focus (Featherstone et al., 2014). It was intended to target families with multiple issues, such as the 53 *Family Intervention Projects* in England from 2007 onwards, aimed at tackling antisocial behaviour and *Think Family*, which laid much of the groundwork. However, these projects were much smaller in scale and had run out of steam but, for the coalition government, these initiatives provided ample evidence that such an approach was effective and thus rolled out the 'troubled' family's programme. The 'troubled' families programme was based on a payment by results system, this meant that local authorities were able to claim once families had met the criteria and were seen as no longer 'troubled'. The emphasis was, in particular, on anti-social behaviour, school attendance and employment for adults.

In 2015 the government announced that 99% of the original 120,000 'troubled families' (DCLG, 2015) were turned around in the timescale originally set out in 2011. However, The *National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme – Final Synthesis Report* (Day et al., 2016) reveals no statistically significant outcomes for families after 12 to 18 months of participating in the programme. Amongst the key objectives of the *Troubled Families* programme – employment, benefit receipt, school attendance, safeguarding and child welfare – there was found to be no "consistent evidence that the Troubled Families Programme had any significant or systematic impact" (Day et al., 2016: 49). Although key objectives showed no significant effect of participating, this is not to say that there were no changes in the outcomes (benefit receipt, employment, criminal behaviour, school attendance and child welfare), but only that it cannot be attributed to the programme because similar changes were observed in the control group (Day et al., 2016).

Interestingly, some statistical significance was found on more subjective and attitudinal measures, in terms of confidence and expectations when compared to a matched comparison group (Day et al., 2016). Nearly all families on the programme felt more positive in comparison to the control group. However, these 'softer' outcomes are often overlooked and not seen as important as 'hard' outcomes, which raises some important issues in how we measure the success of an intervention and what we mean by behavioural

change. Although critics of the 'troubled' families programme have been quick to point to its failure, there are a number of issues regarding measurement of outcomes that need to be considered. For example, local authorities were able to exercise substantial discretion in how they implemented the programme, hence making it difficult to meaningfully measure impact and have robust objective measures. This rendered any evaluation ineffectual as there was little standardisation of how family intervention was implemented at a local level. The quality of the data also limited analysis; for example, the comparison group for school attendance was a poor match (Bewley et al., 2016). There may also have been an issue of timing, as data evaluation may have started too early to capture the full extent of the potential positive benefits of the programme for families (Purdon and Bryson, 2016). Additionally, dependent on what outcomes are being measured, there may be different optimal times to evaluate impact.

Furthermore, what often fails to be considered in such interventions is that many families have deep-rooted problems, that makes it far more difficult to see changes in outcomes within the programme's timeframe. The 'troubled' families programme had a 12–18-month time frame to 'turn around' families, this was perhaps an unrealistic expectation especially when structural elements such as poverty and disadvantage were not addressed. A fairer assessment would have been that families are 'helped' rather than 'turned around' as the government claims (Davies, 2015). Furthermore, a key issue to emerge was that traditional approaches that focused on 'fixing' single issues do not work, but there is a need to recognise the connected and reinforcing nature of the problems (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012). This has led some commentators to accuse the 'troubled' families programme of being habitually neoliberal, ignoring structural inequality whilst individual responsibility is stressed (Sayer, 2017). Essentially, societal factors are downplayed or deemed non-existent (Bunting et al., 2017). Furthermore, whilst the 'problem families' of the 1950s were based on a pluralist social democratic consensus, the 'troubled families' programme was very much a 'neo-liberal statecraft' originating from the centre (Crossley, 2016: 86;

Lambert, 2019). Additionally, 'troubled' families implemented a top-down approach utilised as a mechanism to police families (Lambert, 2019), with a standard template, having set targets assessed via behavioural outcomes.

In sum, from the 'problem' families of the 1950s to the 'troubled' families in the 2010s, both offer a gendered, behavioural interventionist model; however, the relationship with the state differs – the neoliberal state model being strongly centrist about policing and control, with little regard for professionals and their experience and expertise (Lambert, 2019), and listening to families themselves does not feature. In March 2021 the 'troubled' families programme was renamed *Supporting Families*, to better reflect the role of key workers play in aiding families (MHCLG, 2021). The recognition of professionals is promising, as is the less pejorative language; however, the programme itself seems very similar in terms of focus, locating problems within families and their behaviours and away from wider societal inequalities.

Policy implementation in the UK has been grounded in muddled and confusing agenda (Hayden and Jenkins, 2013). This reflects neo-liberal social policy implementation that has persisted. The lack of a clear theoretical base for family intervention work does not help (Boddy et al., 2016). In this section, a brief overview of family intervention work has been outlined, it shows the difficulties that practitioners face in work that is undeniably challenging. Furthermore, much family policy and practice continues to be embedded in a deficit discourse that stigmatises and marginalises the very families it aims to help (Morris et al., 2018). In the subsequent section it is argued that social tourism offers an alternative form of intervention, one that is theoretically informed directing a strength-based approach that enables and empowers whole families.

## 2.4 Tourism and the family

In this section I begin by discussing the importance of the family holiday in contemporary society. Yet, we know that this is not a reality for many families on low incomes (Hunter-Jones, 2011), thus the need for social tourism, which is detailed next. The chapter then draws to a close with a discussion of

the role social tourism can play as a strength-based intervention for families living in disadvantaged environments.

A holiday is not exactly necessary to live, but for an increasing number of us a holiday is a normal part of life (Gram, 2005). A holiday by its very nature is seen as a time where one is free from the normal constraints and structures of life and can be "defined as a distinct break away from everyday life, routines and chores" (Gram, 2005: 3). The holiday represents a time of enjoyment and relaxation (Urry, 2002). Traditionally, the focus in tourism has been on the individual and established theories that characterise the tourist as an abstract figure that is temporarily free from the material and social demands that overwhelm everyday life (Obrador-Pons, 2011). Urry's notion of the tourist gaze is well known; meanwhile, others like MacCannell (1976/1999) describe it as a contemporary form of pilgrimage, where one escapes from the ills of modern living. Both Urry and MacCannell view the tourist as masculine, an independent being escaping the mundanities of everyday life. These accounts can be traced back to the nineteenth century portrayal of the *flaneur*, a masculine literary figure that is a forefather of the twentieth century tourist (Wearing et al., 2019). The tourist, here, also travels to escape the obligations and duties of everyday life, which are located outside the home and everyday life and, thus, very different from the notion of mass tourism.

The idea of mass tourism contradicts these traditional notions of tourism and, perhaps in part, met with some disdain (Turner and Ash, 1975). The distinction with the middle-class solitary traveller and working-class tourist enjoying the crowds (Obrador-Pons et al., 2009), is both ideological and social, aligning with Urry's romantic gaze and collective gaze, the latter having a carnivalesque feel to it. The understanding of the crowd is dominated by negative conservative bias, shown in theories by Le Bon and Tarde (Obrador-Pons, 2011). Historically, mass tourism in crowds gave temporary release to the working-classes from the harsh realities of industrial town life. However, there is no room for domesticity in these accounts, which is perplexing since the annual visit to seaside towns was not only a family event but also a community

ritual. Part of the issue is because tourism continues to be seen in relation to work, and tourism is distinct from this everydayness, which includes the family (Franklin, 2003; Uriely, 2005). However, when families go away, they take their domestic life with them. This includes the home that is more than a household, it is about belonging, desire and intimacy (Johns and Gyimóthy, 2003). This makes the family holiday paradoxical because there is the escape from the everyday but, at the same time, families take many aspects of homelife with them.

Although many of these classical figurations of tourism may not be relevant to family tourism, Obrador argues that there is some usefulness in keeping hold of some concepts such as Wang's (1999) existential authenticity, referring to a special state of being and togetherness. In particular Wang's concept of inter-personal authenticity, where the holiday represents for the family a time to "reinforce a sense of authentic togetherness and an authentic 'we relationship'" (Wang, 1999: 364). Family holidays are more than seeing sights "but also simultaneously experiences intensely authentic, natural and emotional bonds, and a real intimacy in the family relationship" (Wang, 1999: 364). Obrador's study of coastal mass tourism is not so much about escaping but a period of heightened family life. This is further supported by Carr (2011) describing tourism as a key part of maintaining a happy family. Thus, families holidaying relies on more than simply what tourism is about in modernity but, also, what home and family means today. This is further supported by the Minca and Oakes (2006) study of how tourism should consider how homes are made and remade.

### 2.4.1 The family holiday

Family holiday (travelling with children) represents one of the biggest markets, yet research into children's and families' experiences is limited (Carr, 2011; Obrador-Pons, 2011; Schänzel and Smith, 2014; Schänzel et al., 2012). Holidays with children can be a very different experience from holidays without children and, often, what is characterised as a successful holiday from a parent's perspective can be very different from a child's point of view. Parents

tend to feel responsible for the success of a family holiday and warrant it necessary to "cover up realities" of the holiday (Gram, 2005: 8). There is an expectation that a family holiday should be synonymous with positive experiences, and almost forbidden to detail anything other than "good times" (Inglis, 2000). The family holiday is a unique balance of a "phantasy version of a holiday" and the actual reality (Gram, 2005: 17). This may involve clashes and frustration with parental pursuit of "happy memories". Family holidays present a unique situation for families, the needs of different members can be at odds. In part the issue is that a family's everyday life tends to be very "segregated and individualised" (Gram, 2005: 20) but, during a family holiday, parents seek "togetherness". The family holiday is regarded as the highlight of the year, essential to solidifying the family unit and creating lasting memories (Shaw, 2008). Even when holidays do not go according to plan, children do not dwell on bad experiences, and parents feel the holiday is still worthwhile because it "offers anti-structure" (Gram, 2005: 17). This is supported by Gram's (2005) study of German and Danish families, where virtually no families perceived the holiday as a failure.

The fluidity of contemporary family life, where 'choice' is paramount, taking priority over tradition (Giddens, 1992), results in family holidays becoming more important in legitimising and bonding families that are biologically and culturally embrittled (Haldrup and Larsen, 2003: 26; Smart and Neale, 1999). Gram (2005) states that, in our postmodern lifestyle, a holiday, is not only consumed but an important part of identity formation. The holiday becomes a key feature of how we define successful family life; thus, if a holiday fails to live up to expectations it may bring into question the happiness of the family itself. This is reflected in Daly's idea of "the family paradigm", which encapsulates ideas and beliefs about the family, that are consolidated through family spending time together (Daly, 1996). Furthermore, family tourism not only offers a lens on the family (Lashley et al., 2007) but also provides insights into family functioning (Schänzel and Smith, 2014). Families spending time together can be seen as an indicator of a well-functioning family (Lehto et al.,

2009). Schänzel and Smith (2014) develop an interesting conceptual framework for understanding group sociality and family functioning, by offering a critical and holistic approach, capturing the intricate interplay of individual and collective experiences and their interrelationships. This moves away from the mainly male perspective, in attempting to capture the family group perspective. This fits into Obarador-Pons (2011) call for including the rich sociality of family tourism, where the holiday becomes a time of heightened family life. Moreover, a family holiday is potentially a key aspect of maintaining happy family life (Carr, 2011).

The mainly male gendered perspective in tourism has, to some extent, been replaced with feminist gender representations focusing on the role of mothers. Many argue that family holiday voices are dominated by women (Schänzel and Smith, 2011; Small, 2005), focussing on the physical and emotional labour of what motherhood entails whether at home or on holiday. Fathers' voices remain absent but need to be included if we are to have a holistic understanding of family functioning. By offering an inclusive triadic family group perspective, Schänzel and Smith (2014) argue that the unexplored group perspective needs to take centre stage and shift to a "we-perspective" (Schänzel and Smith, 2014: 130). The family tourist gaze needs to include all voices: male, female and children. The family gaze is about ordinary family life (Schänzel and Smith, 2014; Haldrup and Larsen, 2003), and family group dynamics remain underexplored.

The family holiday experience consists of different expectations and strains between the collective demands and individual needs. Through a triadic exploration (parent(s) and children) we are able to hear multiple voices that are inclusive and capture the sociality of family holiday experiences. This can lead to the strengthening of family relationships and integrating people which forms social capital, "(re)connecting social relations on holiday is behind the meaning of social capital construction here which make a valuable part in the social identity formation" (Schänzel and Yeoman, 2015). There are other dimensions that can be included such as culture, class, ethnicity, and sexual

preferences as factors that shape family experiences of tourism that require further research (Schänzel & Smith, 2014), which is where this project sits by exploring how families facing multiple disadvantages function away from home. The majority of the accounts to be found in family holiday literature is based on middle-class families with little regard to families that do not fit into these notions. In part, the issue is that many families who are socio-economically strained are unable to participate in tourism and this is where social tourism plays a part.

### 2.4.2 Social tourism

Research into family tourism reports the positive benefits in terms of mental and physical health, well-being, happiness, and quality of life (Dolnicar et al., 2012; Gilbert and Abdullah, 2004; McCabe and Diekmann, 2015; Hunter-Jones et al., 2020). However, at the same time, we know that tourism participation is by no means universal, for many it is still considered a luxury item, and making an alternative case is challenging (McCabe and Diekmann, 2015; Minnaert et al., 2006). Social tourism is not a universal concept (McCabe et al., 2012), and the exact meaning of social tourism is not always clear, varying depending on where you are in the world and in many parts of the world it remains undiscovered. From the onset social tourism was a complex notion that included elements of participation in travel for those that were economically or socially disadvantaged. One of the earliest definitions of social tourism can be seen in Swiss academic Walter Hunzicker's work (1951 cited in McCabe and Qiao, 2020). Four main interpretations are currently evidenced in social tourism programmes across Europe (Minnaert et al., 2011):

1. A participation model which encourages and targets tourism to those groups that are disadvantaged in some way and, therefore, not able to access holidays in the same way as the rest of the population.
2. An inclusion model which encourages tourism participation for all, as it can see the universal benefit of travel.

3. An adaption model which is tourism that is specifically designed for those missing out and, thus, limited to that specific target population.
4. A stimulation model focusing principally on promoting economic opportunities to those that are economically disadvantaged, and value social tourism in terms of sales and employment.

There is some evidence of each of these models manifesting themselves across the world but, for Minnaert et al., social tourism is "tourism with an added moral value, of which the primary aim is to benefit either the host or the visitor in the tourism exchange" (Minnaert et al., 2011: 407). The moral dimension is a significant component because the primary aim of social tourism, should be a social rather than economic benefit, such as, stimulating local economies (Minnaert et al., 2011).

Further support comes from the European Economic and Social Committee (2006), which identifies social tourism as a right that should be universally accessible. However, in the global context it is easy to see how tourism may not be regarded as a high priority in terms of inequalities (McCabe and Diekmann, 2015), making it difficult to make a case for tourism in welfare provision discussions. So, while holidays are now a 'socially perceived necessity', the absence of one is rarely included in debates about social exclusion and disadvantage. This may be due to the fact that leisure and holiday have evolved to have meaning only alongside work (Glyptis, 1989; Smith and Hughes, 1999), hence the sense of entitlement to take a holiday only if one is working. Others argue that the exclusion of people from tourism is, in fact, perpetuating global inequalities (McCabe and Diekman, 2015).

Minnaert et al (2011) draw on ethical models and argue that in most societies it is agreed that all citizens should have the same rights. However, where ideas diverge is the question of how the strongest in society should support the weakest. *Do we have an a priori moral duty to help the weakest members of society?* (George, 1999). If we look to the rights discourse, this can be broadly grouped into three eras: first, rights based on the American

Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution which drew on Lockean philosophy which emphasises the rights to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness (Locke, 1960/1690 cited in McCabe and Diekman , 2015); the second, came into being after World War II, that are known as 'welfare rights' (Griffin, 2000), these incorporate social, economic and cultural rights. These rights have been associated with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948); the third set of rights emerged in the 1970s that are based on "solidarity and environmental issues, including rights to social development, a healthy environment and the right to participation in cultural heritage" (McCabe and Diekman, 2015: 197). Certain rights such as liberty are considered universal, applying to everyone, and are protected under international law. Meanwhile, other rights may be contingent on priorities of government, for example the right to welfare. It seems intuitive to group tourism rights in the latter welfare category, but others have argued that they can be underpinned in universal rights: the right to free movement and the right to rest and leisure but as part of the right to work (Breakey and Breakey, 2013).

However, given the unequal economic development, and vast number living in poverty globally, it would be difficult to make the case under universal rights. Yet, in countries which can be described as economically advanced, such as the UK, tourism has become a central feature to people's daily lives. Thus, according to McCabe and Diekman (2015) tourism as a right can be justified as a social right but not as a universal human right. It was a British philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, who memorably claimed that without a social contract (Alston, 2018), life outside society would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes, 1651/2017: 103). Tourism in the UK needs to be considered a social inclusion issue, its absence increases marginalisation.

However, in the UK we have tended to follow an Anglo-Saxon model which is a far more individualised model compared to a European social model. In particular the dominance of neo-liberal ideology has enabled a marked shift away from social rights of welfare to most civil rights being reduced to the economic kind (Smith and Hughes, 1999). Thus, a holiday may well be regarded

as a commodity in today's world. Given the discussion in earlier sections regarding approaches to welfare in the UK by successive governments, what people are entitled to is forever shrinking and the right to tourism becomes difficult to put forward. Although, the right to tourism is already legally acknowledged in many countries and by international organisations such as the UNWTO, this has not translated into tourism social science literature. According to McCabe and Diekman (2015) this may be due the historic unevenness of global economic development. As a consequence, tourism has become a practice for affluent countries, whilst many developing nations are still struggling to meet basic needs of their population.

Nevertheless, even taking a utilitarian perspective involving cost-benefit analysis, it can be shown that economic and social impact of tourism outweighs the costs (Minnaert et al., 2011). Social tourism has the potential to act as a powerful force in reducing inequality and fostering positive community relations (Cole and Morgan, 2010). Minnaert et al., (2011) argues that within the current economic climate, where reducing the welfare bill is high priority, governments have become keen to engage with local communities and charities. If we consider the positive impact of holidays on subjective wellbeing (McCabe and Johnson, 2013a) and the financial repercussions for social welfare and health organisations, a powerful case can be made for including social tourism in the welfare debate.

The issue of social justice is an emerging area in tourism research, with many stressing it as a route to a more just society (Ateljevic et al., 2007). However, others go further and argue that it is not simply a social justice issue but a global justice issue (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010) and call for 'ethical and equitable tourism' (Scheyvens, 2002). Since inequality surfaces in many different forms "these include but are not limited to, relations of class, nation, ethnicity, 'race', gender, disability and age, as they relate to social justice initiatives incorporating poverty alleviation, social inclusion, fair trade, ethics and human rights" (Morgan and Cole, 2010: 214). Research into tourism practices shows how prejudice limits those from ethnic minority groups from

participating in tourism (Stephenson, 2006) and disability research points to a similar verdict (Darcy et al., 2020). Furthermore, where these different factors intersect, such as disability with poverty or age or even all three, it places multiple disadvantages on individuals accessing tourism. Nevertheless, with the 'critical turn' in tourism studies there is growing concern for the environmental impact, as well the negative social and cultural consequences, marking a significant shift in thought (Ateljevic et al., 2007). Inequality in tourism is a multidimensional phenomenon, being excluded from it in countries where it is regarded as a social right may be regarded as a sign of poverty and, hence, it needs to be included in social policy discourse, particularly considering its potential benefits both for the individual and wider society.

However, the lack of comprehensive mapping of social tourism and detailed statistics, makes it difficult to convince policy makers, but what does seem clear is that there are wide ranging benefits to participating in a holiday and an emerging but strong body of empirical research (for example Bos et al., 2015; Ferrer et al., 2016; Hazel, 2005; Kakoudakis et al., 2017; Minnaert et al., 2010; Minnaert, 2012; McCabe, 2009; McCabe and Johnson, 2013a; Morgan et al., 2015; McCabe et al., 2010). For the individual, it offers a break from home, reality, and routine, particularly for families facing multiple challenges but there are also other wider implications that should interest policy makers (McCabe, 2009) such as improving health including mental health and well-being, and respite care (Hunter-Jones et al., 2020); for children there is an additional educational component that tourism offers (Bos et al., 2015), but also promotes family stability and cohesion, thereby improving quality of life (McCabe et al., 2010). Nevertheless, what we know about tourism continues to come from a very narrow perspective (Khoo-Lattimore, 2015) and disadvantaged families have been particularly ignored (McCabe et al., 2012). Given how the market forces approach continues to dominate the field, it should be asked: *how do we include those families who have very little socioeconomic power in the debate?*

In this section I have attempted to begin to make the case for social tourism supported by an emerging but strong body of empirical research, evidencing the benefits of tourism to those with weak socio-economic positions. Yet, policy makers remain unconvinced, hence the need for the project.

### 2.4.3 Social tourism as an intervention

This chapter began with a review of the family literature, starting with an overview of how the family has evolved and the accompanying academic developments highlighting key theoretical perspectives underpinning the project. Theoretical explanations of the family, such as family systems theory detail the importance of viewing the family holistically rather than as component parts. Through a strength-based approach families are seen as a source of knowledge, skills, strengths and assets, but also embedded in a larger ecosystem, thus the ecological approach is useful to our understanding of family life at the family level. Social cognitive theory places the spotlight on agency, with the concept of self-efficacy at its centre, emphasising what is possible for people when efficacy beliefs are strong. However, efficacy beliefs can vary, and it is not as simple as simply knowing what do; environmental demands can hinder self-efficacy beliefs and family functioning, especially for those living in disadvantaged circumstances.

Yet, welfare interventions continue to focus on parents and how they raise their children, especially on mothers, with little attention given to unequal distribution of material and social resources (Gillies et al., 2017). Successive governments have deployed similar reasoning in their approach to families, the family remains a self-contained model, where families are expected take care of their own, yet this goes against what it means to be human and the "socially grounded nature of raising" a family (Gillies et al., 2017: 165). This is particularly noticeable when families are living in multiple deprivation environments, the theoretical approaches outlined earlier indicate this, but welfare interventions involving families do not always ground approaches in theory. Healthy family practices are vital but there is also a significant role to be played by support services in fostering and enhancing these assets. Interestingly, the UK *Care Act*

*2014* requires local authorities to implement a strengths-based approach within the care and support system.

Next, I examined tourism in relation to the family, which is often regarded as a luxury with little consideration or priority given to its importance in family life. Yet, empirical research offers a contrary view, highlighting the holiday as a key event in the family calendar. The family holiday has become a significant normative practice in the UK, but a substantial proportion of the population are unable to participate, for many this is an economic decision, for others cultural or practical (e.g., disability). For families excluded from such practices, wider societal discourse and government policy lay this at the feet of individual families. Where conventional family interventions may continue to contain a deficit lean, social tourism as an intervention offers a positive alternative.

In synthesising the various social psychological theories and concepts, in relation to the family, the overlap to tourism is also pertinent. In tourism studies, links to positive psychology are growing and there is recognition of its usefulness to studying tourism. Vada et al.'s, (2020) systematic review of positive psychology and tourist well-being highlights this (E.g., Filep and Laing, 2019; Filep et al., 2017; Pearce, 2009). The project is ideally suited in the call for 'hopeful tourism' (Pritchard et al., 2011), by placing the project under the umbrella of positive psychology, the 're-imagined' welfare model can be envisaged (Williams, 2001). As discussed earlier, positive psychology (see section 2.2.2) is often dismissed as 'feel good psychology' because of its over emphasis on emotional states, but positive psychology does not need to stop at pursuing happiness, it can be so much more (Bandura, 2011). Simply being happy does not lead to personal growth or make society better. If we view positive psychology through a social cognitive lens, taking on Annas's (2004) argument of broadening what we perceive as well-being - "a society in which individuals strive to maximize their well-being with little regard for others would become an egocentric and divisive one. In contrast, a society in which individuals invest their wellbeing in the well-being of others as well would function more humanely, equitably and with a sense of civic commitment"

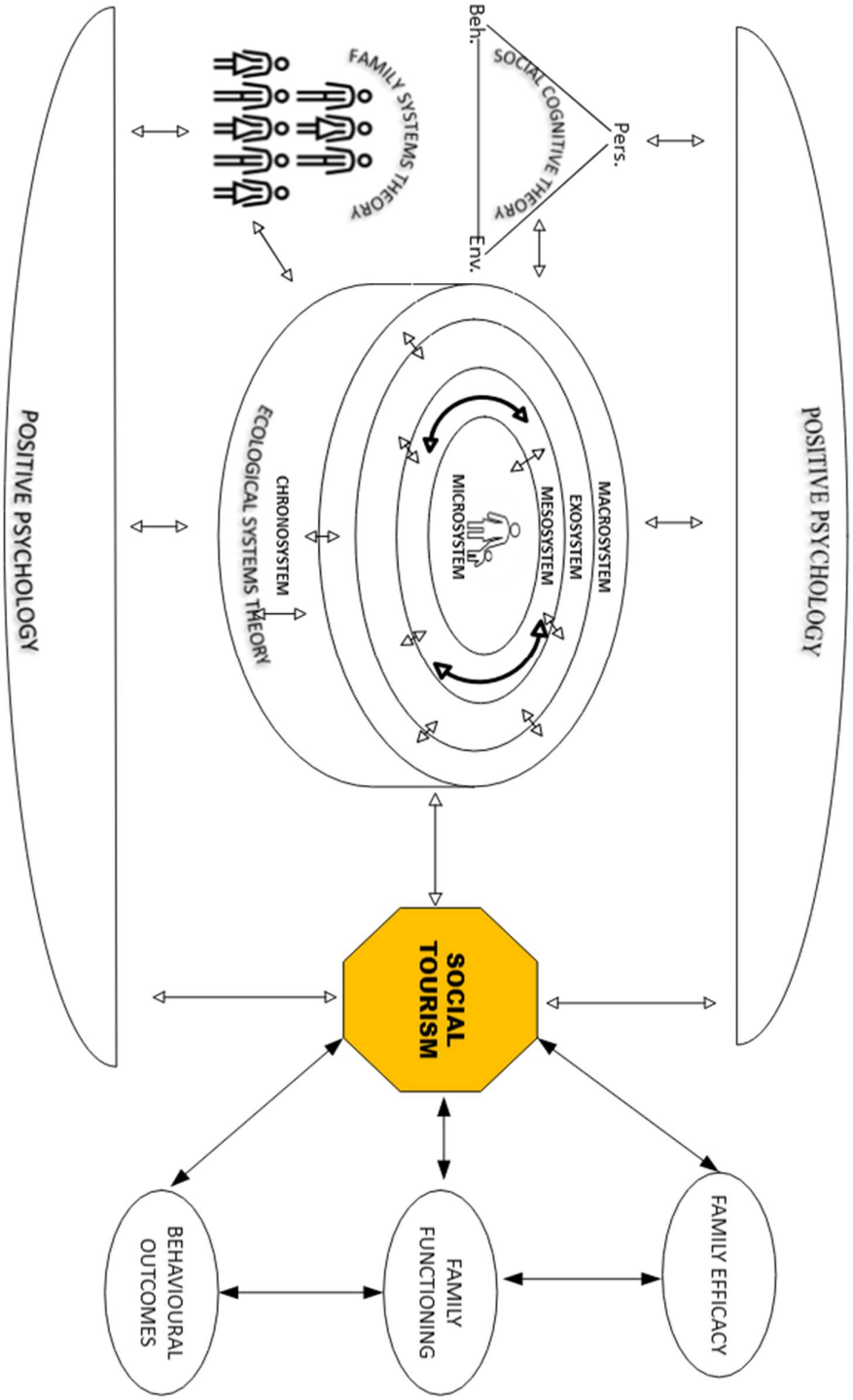
(Bandura, 2011: 12). Bandura's agentic perspective visualises a psychology that aims not only to enhance people's wellbeing but to also enable them to make social reforms that improve the quality of life for all.

To this end, social tourism attempts to offer a social solution to a social problem rather than privatised solutions to social problems. Furthermore, social tourism could be regarded as relational welfare in contrast to the 'transactional' welfare model espoused by successive governments (Cottam, 2011). Social tourism recognises whole family inclusion, and moves away from individualised responses, acknowledging both parents and children as autonomous individuals and relational beings (Featherstone et al., 2014). "Thinking beyond individuals, supporting the capacity of families to care, recognising and building the capacities of communities, using state service … good quality care in imaginative ways, and also as part of widening opportunities and responsibilities" (Featherstone et al., 2014: 32). The advantage of social tourism is that it does not simply intervene and solve problems for families but offers time and space for families to discover what they need for themselves.

The project precis is captured in figure 2.5. The research project aims to investigate the effects of social tourism as a theoretically informed intervention for families living in disadvantaged communities. The literature review highlights key aspects of family processes such as family functioning and family efficacy that can be difficult to maintain when living in weak social environments. In this study family processes are investigated in the context of social tourism. To this end the following overall research aim is to be addressed:

> *Investigate how families living in disadvantaged circumstances are affected by participating in social tourism, with particular attention to family efficacy and family functioning.*

**Figure 2.4 Conceptual framework**



## 2.5 Conclusion

This chapter began by reviewing the literature on families, drawing on both sociological and psychological perspectives. Next family intervention work in the UK was examined, indicating the problematic way families living in disadvantaged environments have been treated over the years by policy makers. Lastly, family tourism was reviewed, and it was argued that social tourism offers a holistic strength-based approach to supporting families. Finally, the research aim was detailed. In the next chapter the methodological approach will be discussed.

# Chapter 3 Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter moves on to describe in detail the methodological approach encompassed by the project. The chapter begins by outlining the philosophical approach taken, with emphasis on highlighting the role critical realism plays as an underlabourer. The theoretical lens is then detailed, which incorporates a number of social psychological approaches, namely Social Cognitive Theory, Family Systems Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory, as outlined in the previous chapter. Next, the methodological approach includes a discussion of the research design with focus on the use of a qualitative approach, in which I specify the method of data collection and approach to analysis, finishing with research ethics and integrity.

## 3.2 Research rationale and research questions

Following on from the literature reviewed in chapter 2 the main aim of the research is as follows:

> *Investigate how families living in disadvantaged circumstances are affected by participating in social tourism, with particular attention to family efficacy and family functioning.*

In the remainder of the chapter, I put forward my philosophical and methodological justifications for choices made in answering the following research questions:

*1. To what extent does participation in social tourism lead to better family functioning for families from disadvantaged backgrounds?*

*2. How does social tourism develop family efficacy beliefs amongst families from disadvantaged backgrounds?*

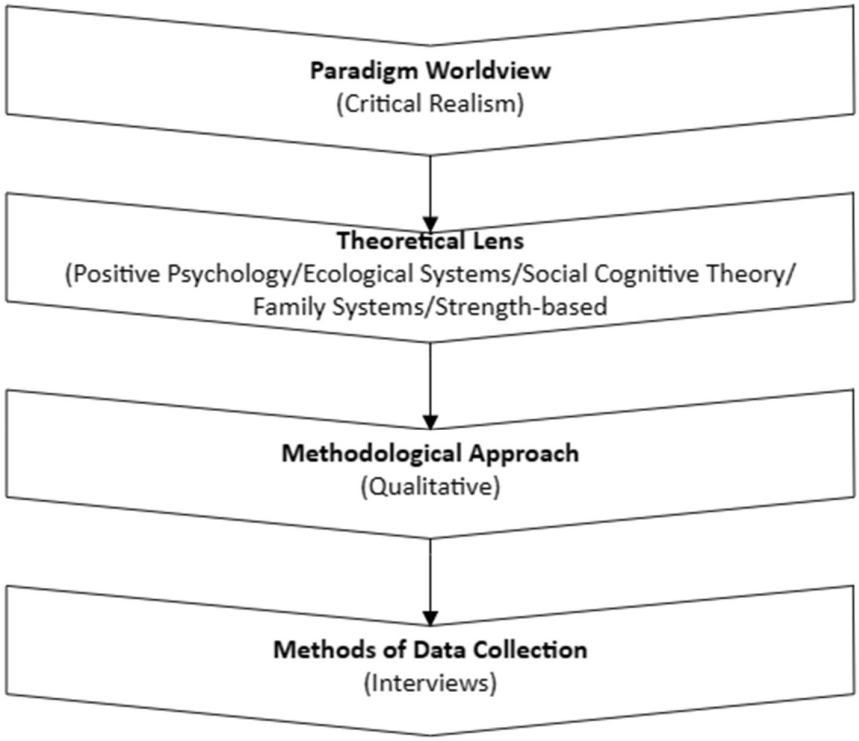
*3. What are the underlying generative mechanisms through which participating in social tourism advances and/or impedes family efficacy and family functioning for families?*

## 3.3 Philosophical background

This section outlines the philosophical background that informs the project. Figure 3.1 provides a useful representation of how to "position

philosophy within a … study", and how the various elements of a research project are connected (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011: 38). There are four main aspects: worldview; theoretical lens; methodology; and, methods, that need to be considered when designing a study; each one in turn informs the next position, this chapter will broadly follow this outline:

**Figure 3.1 Positioning a qualitative study.**




Source: Adapted from Crotty, 1988; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011

### 3.3.1 Paradigm worldview (ontology and epistemology)

At the most abstract level there are philosophical assumptions, that guide the research (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). This is often referred to as a worldview, that tells us something about the nature of reality (ontology) and how we gain access to knowledge (epistemology). Ontology refers not only to the nature of social reality, but also to the kinds of social phenomena that can exist and the conditions for its existence. Broadly speaking there are two views on ontology: first, a positivist ontology that sees the world as out there, real, and completely separate from us humans. This sits well with natural science

but, as Schutz (1962) recognises, this becomes problematic for social scientists whose subject matter involves studying other humans. This leads on to the second position, which is a constructivist ontology that, in contrast to positivist ontology, argues that the world is as we humans know it, we can only study the meaning we humans attach to the world, and the signs and symbols we use to communicate them (Stainton-Rogers, 2006).

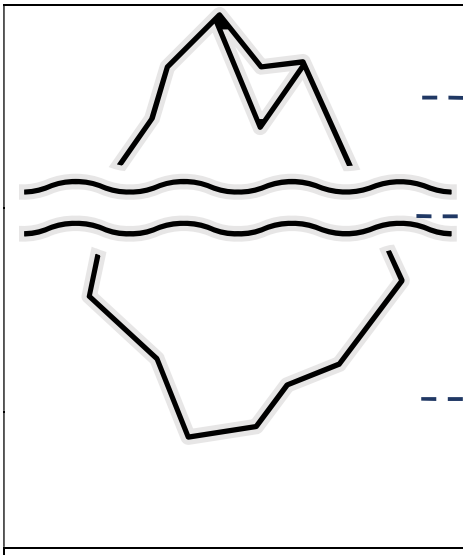
Alongside ontology we must also consider epistemological positions. Epistemology refers to how we can acquire knowledge, what kinds of knowledge are possible and what the criteria might be. Similar to ontology, epistemology falls broadly into two camps: first, positivist epistemology claims that knowledge can only be gained through gathering facts, in a systematic and objective fashion via the experimental method. The alternative is a constructivist epistemology, that highlights the role of the researcher in knowledge construction, which is not simply discovered by researchers but constructed and a representation with others going as far as to say, they are merely the stories we tell (Haraway, 1984; Stainton-Rogers, 2006). This latter position has a more prominent postmodern influence, in particular highlighting the links with power, and the realisation that scientists are human and have a stake in the tales they tell (Stainton-Rogers, 2006).

Moreover, where a researcher positions themselves philosophically has important implications in directing the research and how it is conducted. What is more, the selection of research instruments is often rooted in how the world is viewed and what can be known about that world (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Hughes and Sharrock, 1997). Consequently, when a method is chosen, we are also saying something about the nature of reality (Blaikie and Priest, 2019). In addition, there is a marked move away from displaying allegiance to any specific method or paradigm but, instead, maintaining flexibility when it comes to methods, where the research questions guide the methodological path (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 15). Thus, the choice of paradigm should be determined by the research problem and not the method, or theoretical lens (Hanson et al., 2005; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003).

### 3.3.2 Critical realist ontology

Critical realist ontology departs from both positivism and constructivist ontology, in stating that ontology is not reducible to epistemology (Fletcher, 2017). This is what Roy Bhaskar refers to as "the epistemic fallacy" (Bhaskar, 2015: 155), limiting reality to what can be empirically known (Fletcher, 2017: 182). According to Mingers (2014) critical realism bridges the gap between positivism and interpretivism with a "realist ontology, an epistemic but not judgemental relativity, and methodological pluralism" (Bygstad et al., 2016: 83). Additionally, critical realism overcomes the inconsistencies posed by positivism and interpretivism by offering a stratified notion of reality that splits into three levels: empirical, actual and real (Bhaskar, 2016; Alderson, 2021). The real level consists of the structures of objects, consisting of both physical and social mechanisms. These mechanisms may trigger events in the actual level. At the empirical level these events may be observed (Bygstad et.al, 2016), but these structures are not deterministic; instead they have the potential to act as enablers or constrainers depending on the context (Archer, 1995; Bygstad et al., 2016; Sayer, 2004).

Fletcher (2017) uses a three-layered iceberg metaphor of reality (see figure 3.2), emphasising that all levels of the iceberg are part of the same reality. Yet, the metaphor also depicts the limitations of the epistemic fallacy whereby causal mechanisms only exist because of what they govern. Causal mechanisms are essentially social products that exist because of the empirical level (Fletcher, 2017). The real causes exist in the deeper level (*real* domain) and represent structures and powers that may or may not be observable. Furthermore, the actualisation of these causal mechanisms, that is to say, whether phenomena are observable at the empirical level depends on the conditions in the world in which they exist. Alderson (2021) states that the greatest scientific and medical discoveries come about not by empirical observations but by investigating real causes that are normally not visible.



**Empirical Level**

- Experienced and observed events.
- Events understood through human interpretation.

**Actual Level**

- Events occur whether observed or not.

**Real Level**

- Causal mechanisms within objects or structures cause events at empirical level.

**Figure 3.2 Realist Ontology**

Source: Fletcher (2017: 183)

A critical realist ontology, thus, has important methodological implications (Zachariadis et al., 2013), since the aim of critical realism is to "use perceptions of empirical events to identify the mechanisms" (Volkoff et al., 2007: 835). Furthermore, the critical realist view on causality is not about the relationship between two distinct events, for example, how "A" is followed by event "B" but highlights the process and conditions under which "A" may cause "B". Since reality is open and complex these mechanisms, powers and structures are much more difficult to identify. Aligning with interpretivism, social phenomena are concept-dependent and need interpretive understanding (Giddens, 1979). Yet, unlike interpretivism there is a relational intransitive domain in social structures and, also, underlying social structures that influence people's behaviour (Granovetter, 1985; Zachariadis et al., 2013). This highlights a further important realist distinction between intransitive and transitive domains. In the intransitive domain reality exists independent from our knowledge or perception of it (Bhaskar, 2008; Archer et al., 2013). In contrast, in the transitive domain knowledge is generated by people in a certain time and place. This analytic distinction is useful because it acknowledges a degree of epistemological relativism, but this does not mean that all knowledge is equally fallible. Critical realism recognises that some explanations may be

more valid than others that "approximate the intransitive domain with more probabilistic accuracy than others" (Zachariadis et al., 2013: 857).

Furthermore, the critical realist notion of causality has additional practical implications since different modes of inference are required to explain events "by postulating (and identifying) mechanisms which are capable of producing them" (Sayer, 1992: 107). Retroduction is a logic of inference that allows the researcher to move between the knowledge of empirical phenomena to forming explanations that have ontological depth and have potential to give indications on unobservable entities (Downward et al., 2002). This is dependent on how and whether these mechanisms interact and, hence, empirical events can provide us with limited information about the mechanisms at work. Therefore, retroduction is required to investigate the social context under which the casual mechanisms actually take effect.

What is more, critical realism "treats the world as theory-laden, but not theory-determined" (Fletcher, 2017: 182), that is, the world is out there for us to try and understand, but some knowledge is closer to reality than other knowledge. The use of theories is important in getting closer to reality, they help identify the causal mechanisms of social phenomena (Archer, 1998). Moreover, critical realism allows the researcher to engage in explanation and causal analysis, that makes it useful in analysing social tourism as a research problem.

Additionally, critical realism blends a realist ontology with an interpretative epistemology (Bhaskar, 2015). Bhaskar's critical realism avoids judgemental relativism, since some theories are closer to explaining reality than others and, thus, there is a rational way to assess knowledge claims (Bygstad et al., 2016). Reality extends beyond what is observable which includes mechanisms, structures and powers which may influence what can be observed (Bhaskar, 2015). There tends to be a focus on prediction in science, when we should look for causal explanations (Lawson, 2003). To explain a social phenomenon, we need to identify underlying factors (Clark et al., 2007). In a generative ontology, phenomena have emergent properties, and under the

right conditions may result in a specific outcome (Clark et al., 2007; Pawson, 1997). In the case of this project, we are investigating social tourism and how it might create conditions for families that enable them to make positive changes to family efficacy and family functioning. However, there are specific methodological implications that need to be considered first.

### 3.3.3 Mechanisms and interventions in open systems

In the previous section some of the philosophical issues concerning critical realism were discussed, in this section I turn my attention to some of the methodological implications in relation to interventions. In traditional positivism it is assumed that an intervention itself will create a positive change in the individual or group without considering the context or individual/group characteristics (Clark et al., 2007). This is frequently the case in health interventions (such as RCTs) where often homogenous programmes are applied to passive and decontextualised individuals. Such an approach cannot account for the role that other contextual issues play when it comes to intervention implementation. Furthermore, core positivistic assumptions ignore that which cannot be observed, with an over-reliance on a narrow body of empirical evidence (Clark et al., 2007).

Yet, at the same time, a constructivist intervention is difficult to justify in the eyes of policy makers since it appears to offer no meaningful way to measure the impact of interventions. Funding bodies are reluctant to support programmes that have no agreed specific impartial measures of objective evaluation. Furthermore, interventions that do not utilise an evidence-based approach will have limited public engagement and appeal (Clark et al., 2007). Of course, knowledge is not infallible or universal but, at the same time, it is equally questionable to conclude nothing can be known (Clark et al., 2007).

Furthermore, any intervention should not be considered as some external encroaching ‘force’ to which a family may simply ‘respond’ (Pawson and Tilley, 1994). For an intervention such as social tourism to work, those involved need to make them work and the right conditions need to exist to enable families. For Pawson and Tilley (1994) the process of ‘constrained

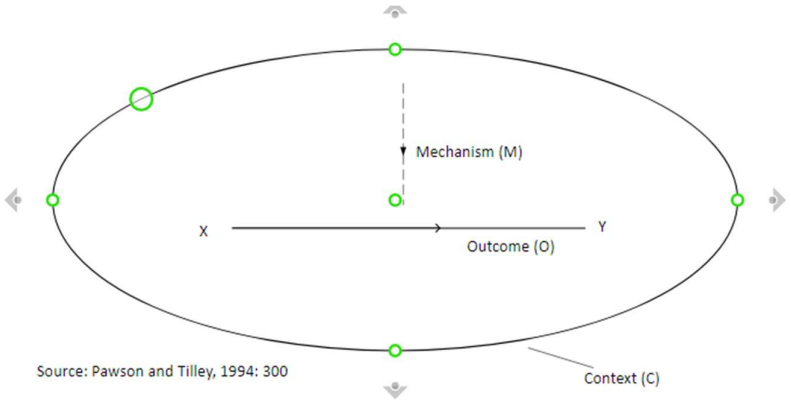
choice' is at the heart of social and individual change to which all interventions aspire. However, not all mechanisms can be captured in the form of before-and-after controlled comparison investigation, sometimes important aspects may need to be sacrificed; for example, the need for control (Pawson, 2019). If interventions are reduced to a set of mechanical operations, the complexity and multifaceted nature of the real world is overlooked. Reducing interventions to a set of steps, e.g., T1, T2, T3, glazes over the real question, concerning what it is about social tourism that could lead to changes in family functioning and family efficacy. The input-output method in evaluation research reduces interventions themselves as a variable, where wider conditions are not addressed. We need to know not only about the character of the family to which this intervention is introduced but, also, the wider community in which they live and what other contextual conditions exist that makes this intervention effective (Pawson, 2019).

Critical realism recognises that phenomena exist and operate within an open system; thus, any number of contextual factors and mechanisms can affect intervention outcomes (Clark et al., 2007). These contextual factors present themselves in a variety of forms such as environmental, cultural, social, historical and geographical (Sayer, 2000). Moreover, any intervention exists amongst these factors which then can support or inhibit an intervention's effectiveness (Pawson, 1997). Furthermore, the intervention is not likely to be fixed or stable. This generative conception is different from a successionist view of causality that incorporates the positivist notion of linearity and observable sequence of cause and effect that make up causal relationships (Maxwell, 2012). By virtue of the stratified ontology (see figure 3.2), outcomes and events can be causally linked in a generative manner to underlying powers and tendencies that may be 'activated' under certain conditions, allowing explanation of outcomes. Thus, there is less focus on the objective characteristics of an intervention and, instead, what lies underneath that can push people to make changes (Pawson, 2002). It is the job of the researcher to find out 'what works for whom, when and why' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

There is then a measurement of impact but not in a dichotomous manner (this works/that doesn't) and not overly deterministic either, since intervention success is determined by a range of contextual factors. In this sense critical realism avoids notions of control or attempting to simplify issues (in the positivist sense) but, instead, embraces complexity as such critical realist approaches aim to be post-disciplinary which are methodologically eclectic using both qualitative and quantitative approaches as necessary to provide triangulation (Sayer, 2000; Clark et al., 2007). A part of this complexity is to draw on experiences and views of agents while also recognising these as fallible. This research project recognises the complexities not only of the family holiday as an intervention but also wider factors such as the project setting, and other organisations involved. By taking a critical realist approach, the context and mechanisms take priority as "infrastructure of investigation" (Pawson and Tilley, 1994: 300).

In figure 3.3 we can see that, for a realist, outcomes (O) are understood and investigated bringing to the centre of investigation certain hypotheses about the mechanisms (M) through which a programme seeks to bring about change, as well as considering contextual conditions (C) which may or may not be conducive to that change.

**Figure 3.3 Realist experimental design**




Source: Pawson and Tilley, 1994: 300

The CMO configuration was popularised through the work of Pawson and Tilley (1994). This has been utilised extensively in realist evaluation programmes

(Marchal et al., 2012), particularly health programmes. Since its conception it has evolved, for example Eastwood et al. (2019) use CIMO-logic (Context, Intervention Mechanism, Outcome) in their work on child and adolescent interventions in their extensive work in the field of social epidemiology. CIMO-logic hypothesises that a change (O) is the result of the action of an intervention (I) on an underlying mechanism (M) operating in particular contexts (C). However, although this sort of realist evaluation analytic framework was considered in the research and provided a useful lens in the initial analysis of interviews, it became apparent that CMO configurations were too limiting. Alderson (2021) notes that realist CMOs appear to emphasise the need for control and, thus, are not able to include wider influences such as political or global. For example, a realist study of childhood obesity may consider the role walking to school plays but fail to include factors such as air quality (Aicken et al., 2008). In essence, what differentiates realism from critical realism is their view of reality; whereas realist evaluation works at the empirical and actual levels, critical realism also includes a real level which consists of unseen real causal mechanisms (Alderson, 2021). Realist evaluation programmes operate in semi-closed systems or are quasi-experimental whilst critical realism acknowledges, fully, the complex and unpredictable open world. In sum, critical realism provides the research with more breadth to explore how social tourism can lead to not only change at an individual family level but wider social change (Hinds and Dickson, 2021).

### 3.3.4 Emancipatory potential

This leads on to the final section on critical realism, that is, its emancipatory potential. Significantly, critical realism endeavours to offer individuals hope to turn around their predicament, thus promoting agency, which is also embedded in the theoretical perspectives detailed in the previous chapter. For example, critical realism can align with positive psychology since "realism also supports the idea that individuals', social and physical contexts have a causal influence on their beliefs and perspectives" (Maxwell and Mittapalli, 2010: 157). Critical realism is especially appropriate in studying self-efficacy beliefs because "a realist perspective can provide a framework for

better understanding the relationship between individuals' perspectives and their actual situations" (Maxwell and Mittapalli, 2010: 157). Furthermore, critical realist approaches can incorporate both environmental circumstances in which people exist, and the influences that may be placed on people without any ideological leaning. Since the focus is on causal processes rather than regularities or laws in explaining sociocultural phenomena, it can account for why people or individuals may behave differently in response to similar situations, depending on individual personal characteristics. A critical realist position accepts the logical ties between ontological, epistemological and methodological premises that underpin research.

In brief, within the critical realist approach there are important connections that can be made with the emancipatory paradigm and promoting social justice (Houston, 2001), that runs to the heart of this project. It is not only the role of social science to "uncover psychological and structural mechanisms but challenge their existence where they lead to human oppression" (Houston, 2001: 851). Critical realism emphasises the transformative nature of human agency, focusing on empowerment whilst also looking for the deep-rooted causes of inequality, affecting marginalised people (Houston, 2001).

## 3.4 Theoretical lens

In the preceding section I outlined how a critical realist position underpins the research, I now move on to discuss the theoretical position the project will follow (see figure 3.1). A theoretical perspective can provide a lens through which the study can be viewed and is narrower than the worldview (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). This project incorporates an integrative theoretical framework, utilising a number of theories from social psychology (ecological systems theory, family systems theory and social cognitive theory), as detailed in the preceding chapter. This provides a multilevel perspective that contextualises the family in a wider framework of community and society (Prilleltensky and Nelson, 2009). These perspectives have been utilised, in part, because they challenge traditional psychology and align far more closely with

critical realism. A major issue for psychology has been its close alliance with traditional science, a focus on the deficit model of humans and failure to acknowledge unequal social structures or the moral and political implications of psychological research and practice (Fox et al., 2009). Fine (2012b) argues that social psychology has lost its way because, whereas early social psychologists offered theoretical and empirical interventions challenging injustice wherever they found it, psychology, for the most part, fails to question the status quo. The 'critical' needs to be put back in critical social psychology, which engages in interdisciplinary discussions and inquiry. The focus needs to be on social movement and solidarity, group relations and our interdependence. Furthermore, a critical social psychology questions the hegemony that prevails, that of self-interest and self-protection which are assumed as the basis of human motives. Fine (2012b) argues that, in the US at least, research programmes are geared towards the interests of the few, which Teo (2009) refers to as epistemological violence.

In part, the issue is because social psychology as a discipline has always lived in the in between worlds, what can be referred to as a scholarly double helix - person/social, field/lab, numbers/narratives, politics/bodies and social critique/engagement (Fine, 2012a: 418). However, social psychology can meet the challenge because it can reframe individual issues into the social landscape. It was sociologist C Wright Mills (1959) who first discussed translating 'private troubles into public issues'; yet, it many ways the opposite has happened when problems are increasingly being shunted into the private sphere. Psychology increasingly attempts to solve problems at the individual level, overemphasising individualistic values particularly pertinent in the West. Thus, not only has the state abandoned those with 'private troubles', but psychology has too, through methodology employed, since "methodology is not ontologically neutral" (Danziger, 2000: 332).

Furthermore, very little is free from history and context, yet science privileges methods such as RCTs which are seen as the 'gold-standard' along with 'evidence-based practice' (not practice-based evidence; see Fine, 2012a,

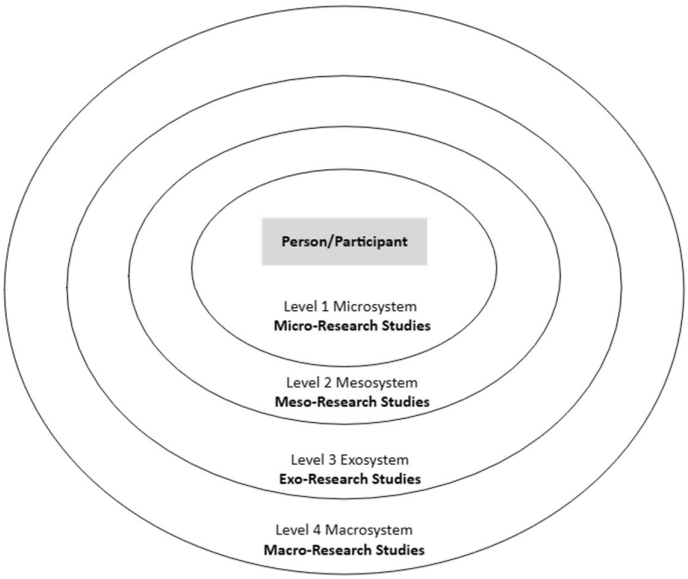
2012b). In this framework, what is regarded as 'legitimate' research diminishes alarmingly. Yet, as Fine suggests, science on these terms is enticing - randomisation, standardised outcomes and so on are appealing, especially since one does not need to worry about issues such as structural inequalities. This scientific gaze is favoured over the messiness of the open world that we live in, yet we need to consider structure, context and history (Fine, 2012).

In a similar vein, tourism knowledge has come under increasing scrutiny (Filep et al., 2019). Tourism knowledge has traditionally been rooted in two main schools: Business and Social Science (Jafari, 2005; Tribe, 2010). Whereas business schools stress the economic value of tourism rooted in neo-liberal philosophies, social scientists (sociologists, geographers, anthropologists) worry about the negative impact tourism can have on people and places (Pezzullo, 2007), and contributing to the power imbalances in the world (Higgins-Desbiolles and Whyte, 2013). Nevertheless, through positive tourism there is scope for change, since it recognises the potential of agency (Filep et al., 2017; Croall, 1995; Higgins-Desbiolles and Whyte, 2013). This also fits with 'hopeful tourism' (Pritchard et al., 2011), discussed in the literature review (section 2.4.2), that, in short, challenges the existing dominating systems of knowledge, social, political and economic systems (Ayikoru et al., 2009). Hopeful tourism is eager to create a more just and sustainable world (Pritchard et al., 2011). This project sits within hopeful tourism where both wider structures are recognised, as well as individual agency. Moreover, societal progress should be measured through quality of life (Pritchard et al., 2011) that encompasses empowering and egalitarian values. To this end tourism as a discipline is positioned well to contribute to the current epistemological and ontological debates in the social sciences (Pritchard et al., 2011). Furthermore, social tourism research firmly aligns with critical social psychology since it challenges false consensus and aims to intervene theoretically, empirically and, potentially, politically (Fine, 2012: 435). The value of a psychological theory according to Bandura (2006) is not only in explanatory and predictive capacity but also its operational capacity to bring about change.

Social cognitive theory as espoused by Bandura emphasises the causal model of 'reciprocal determination', that sees human functioning as the interplay of personal, behavioural and environmental determinants (Bandura, 2012). Self-efficacy theory is embedded in an expansive theory of human agency, that details sources and processes of self-efficacy to bring about varied effects. Through a family systems theory, the complexity of families, their interdependency and interactional dynamics are also recognised. Family systems theory determines whether a family is operating well by looking to the internal functioning of the family (Wollny, 2010). This can be further supported and contextualised within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory which recognises that families do not exist in a void, but in a wider social network consisting of five interrelated systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem). The ecological systems theory makes sense theoretically but also experientially, the ecology of individuals and families matter and have an impact on social and behavioural outcomes (Prilleltensky and Nelson, 2009). Furthermore, the ecological systems theory can be utilised in the research process (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013).

Additionally, according to Onwuegbuzie et al., (2013) we can go further and utilise ecological system theory in the research process. The five environmental levels (the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, the macrosystem and chronosystem) all impact on the individual and families. At each level research could take place (i.e., micro-research, meso research, exo-research, macro-research) and, usually, research only takes place at one level, but can also include two or more levels (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013: 5-6). See figure 3.4:

**Figure 3.4 Bronfenbrenner ecological systems and levels of research**




Source: Onwuegbuzie et al., (2013: 5)

An important aspect of Bronfenbrenner's ecological levels, is that they are interconnected and permeable, as are qualitative methods, that enable us to examine the family at the same or different levels. Onwuegbuzie et al., (2013) application of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system to the research process is important because it has implications for generalisation, which not only depends on sample design but level of research phase that is intrinsic to the study (e.g., micro-research or meso-research). This allows generalisations to be made both within-level and across-level generalisations so that findings from one level can be combined with another research level; thus, in this project, families are studied at micro, meso and exo level via interviews of both family members and support workers (social workers, teachers, etc). This allows the research to examine situatedness of family life in the context of wider societal factors.

Thus far I have discussed the how the theoretical framework overlaps with a critical realist approach offering a more fruitful approach to research in the real world. Next, I discuss specific details of the research design.

## 3.5 Methodological approach

In this section the methodological approach is discussed. This begins with a brief overview of the the FHA before I move on to justify methodological choices.

### 3.5.1 Family Holiday Association (FHA)

Given that the project was set up in collaboration with the FHA, it may be useful at this stage to provide a brief overview of the charity before the sampling technique is discussed. According to the FHA website 4,821 short breaks were provided to struggling families in 2019, a 26% increase on the previous year. Families are usually referred to the FHA from support professionals (such social workers and teachers) who work with disadvantaged families. The FHA can offer access to a short break within the UK, sometimes this may be as a simple as a daytrip away from home.

The FHA entitlement criteria are as follows:

- All families are referred by a support professional, they cannot apply directly
- Support professionals assess the suitability of family to go away and identify risk factors
- Families are defined as those with a child or children under the age of 18 and their carers such as parents, grandparents, or older siblings
- Families must be on low income, that is, less than £24,000
- Families must not have had a holiday in the last four years

Most families described as “struggling” face issues such as:

- 59% have mental health issues
- 42% isolation
- 29% experienced domestic violence
- 25% physical health issues
- 19% inadequate housing

(Family Holiday Charity, 2023)

The support professional plays a key role in preparing families for the holiday from supporting practical arrangements like planning and bookings, to managing expectations. Most of the communication with families is through the support professional rather than directly with the family. The FHA normally opens for applications in December and breaks take place between mid-March to October the following year. The planned sample would have been from those families accepted in 2020. However, as previously stated this was not possible and, instead, data collection was staggered over the period September 2020 – March 2021.

The FHA and Nottingham University Business School have a very well-established relationship and have worked on a number of projects in the past. Thus, from the onset, this project had worked closely with the FHA, as well as the support professionals who refer families. Two focus groups and a number of interviews were held with support professionals during the first year of this project that have directly fed into the development of the project. However, after March 2020 the FHA underwent significant structural and staffing changes which had a considerable impact on the project.

### 3.5.2 Research design

In this section the qualitative research design is discussed detailing how data were collected and analysed. I explain the usefulness of utilising semi structured interviews before moving on to discuss how thematic analysis was employed within a critical realist analytic framework.

The research aimed to explore the impact social tourism has on disadvantaged families, and whether there was lasting impact on key elements of family life such as family efficacy and family functioning. Existing studies show the difference a holiday can make to disadvantaged families, but long-term benefits are not as well researched (Minnaert et al., 2010). Furthermore, exploratory research undertaken by the researcher in 2019 with support professionals, suggests that there are longer lasting changes that families make to their lives after the holiday (ESRC Business Boost Project, 2019: Kosar, 2020). This project aimed to document these more systematically to lend further

support to the argument. Although longitudinal design can be an appropriate measure of response to intervention and can examine patterns of change over time (Plano Clark et al., 2015) and, additionally, can capture "how change is differently experienced and acted on by individuals and groups" (Holland et al., 2006: 2). Time and cost constraints make this less utilised and is particularly challenging in a time-limited PhD project such as this. Research carried out by Holland et al (2006) suggests that a 3-5-year cycle is the norm for ESRC funded research, which constrains and has an impact on the quality and rigour of the research produced.

Initially two time points were proposed, with first set of interviews due to take place in March 2020, however as a result of Covid-19 the researcher was unable to collect data since no FHA holidays took place. Thus, most things after that were dictated by what was practically possible given the circumstances. So, in September 2020 interviews were held with families and support workers who participated in a holiday in the 2019 season.

**Table 3.1 Proposed and actual research implementation**

| | ***PROPOSED*** | | | **ACTUAL** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **T1** | *March 20 onwards* | *Pre–holiday Interviews* | *Purposive nested, multi-level sample (2020 cohort)* | | |
| **T2** | *August 20 onwards* | *Post-holiday interviews with families and support professionals* | *Same sample followed* | Sept 20 – March 21 | Telephone interviews (2019 cohort)<br>14 Families<br>12 Support workers |

### 3.5.3 Data collection

As previously stated, (see table 3.1), T1, pre-holiday interviews were originally planned (March 2020) to be followed by post-holiday interviews. Instead, families and support workers were interviewed (by telephone) who had participated in an FHA holiday in 2019. However, the original purpose of

the interviews, to some extent, could still be met in that it allowed the researcher to dig deeper, with a pluralistic position that permits the use of whatever method helps answer the research question (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Interviews enabled the gathering of data related to the family experiences of the holiday, "incidents, events and stories" (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 637). Qualitative interviews captured the 'heart and soul' of family life and the spirit of what has taken place, that simply measuring frequency cannot (Mason, 2006) and, thus, offered an enhanced understanding (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Qualitative interviews was directed via inductive and deductive logic (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), which allowed further exploration and the ability to address the overall aim of the project and research questions 1, 2 and 3. *Q1 To what extent does participation in social tourism lead to better family functioning outcomes for families from disadvantaged backgrounds? Q2 How does social tourism develop family efficacy amongst families from disadvantaged backgrounds? Q3 Does social tourism lead to changes in family efficacy and family functioning for family members?* Qualitative interviews encourage direct discussion of the issues unearthed and plug into participants perspectives in a way that quantitative methods are not able to.

### 3.5.4 The interview

According to Becker and Geer (1957) nothing is better than participant observation in terms of acquiring in-depth information, listening to and observing people in their natural environment is the most valuable. However, choice of method also needs to take into account practical constraints (Taylor et al 2016) and, as such, a qualitative interview is the next best thing. The interview has been described as the "favoured digging tool" for social scientists (Benney and Hughes, 1956 cited in Taylor et al, 2016: 101): the interviewer is the research tool, and a process of learning 'how to interview' takes place, learning what, when and how to ask questions, which is not always easy.

For qualitative interviewing it is important philosophically, methodologically, and strategically to minimise predetermined responses. This

type of in-depth interviewing involves "learning about events and activities that cannot be directly observed" (Taylor, 2016: 103); furthermore, we cannot "observe feelings, thoughts and intentions" (Patton, 2015: 426). In qualitative research of this nature the participant is the eyes and ears for the researcher, since the participant is not only expected to tell their views about the holiday but also how other family members viewed the holiday. The purpose of the interview is to try and enter into participants' world and perspective through what is told (Patton, 2015). In an intervention such as a family holiday, the aim is to capture the perspective of families; how did the holiday "look" and "feel" to the families (Patton, 2015). The researcher then has the challenging task of trying to capture family experiences, thoughts, processes, and outcomes. As an interviewer this is a huge responsibility trying to provide a framework for the participant, to respond accurately, appropriately and honestly (Patton, 2015).

A standardised interview offers structure, questions can be asked in exactly the same way every time allowing for comparable findings. However, qualitative interviewing for this research needed to be flexible, being part of a larger mixed-methods study, and the proposed survey method would be able to provide structured and comparable findings (Taylor et al., 2016). A qualitative interview is about understanding the lived experience and the meaning participants make of their experience (Seidman, 2013) and, thus, a little less structure is required.

Nonetheless, as with any method, there are many limitations. The interview is an artificial setting and responses participants give may not naturally and accurately reflect actual behaviour (Deutscher, 1973). LaPiere's (1934) classic study of proprietors' attitudes and actions clearly shows the difference between what people say and do (Taylor et al., 2016) as the researcher is not directly observing what went on during the holiday and so, in this sense, is deprived of context. One can easily misconstrue language, at times make assumptions, dialect and even regional accents can lead to misunderstandings. It was important to create an atmosphere where participants felt comfortable to be able to speak freely. To this end the

telephone interview had advantages, since participants were in their own home, thus, we can presume were more relaxed.

The interview is often described as just a conversation or 'chat' between equals particularly when recruiting participants. However, often the one-sided nature of the interview makes this a less than accurate description. By asking participants to contribute, there can be a feeling that one is impinging on participants, particularly as the interviews were carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic (September 20-March 21). Participants are people and not simply sources of data, and there is an issue of how you relate to them as fellow human beings (Taylor et al., 2016). The families in the study, by virtue of their socio-economic status, were society's underdogs and often powerless (Becker, 1967). Furthermore, Covid-19 has shown to have had the worst impact on those most vulnerable in society (He et al., 2021). Participants do not all have an equal ability to provide detailed accounts, in terms of what they had been through and how this made them feel (Taylor et al., 2016). Some issues from the past can be distressing, and it was difficult as a fairly inexperienced researcher to know when to probe further and when to let be. Although participants were aware they could decline to answer any of the questions, it still can be very difficult. It may be the case that simply asking questions may cause distress or embarrassment or lead to participants revealing more information than they are comfortable with later. The nature of the interview means that participants may be thinking about their experiences in ways they would not have otherwise. However, I found those agreeing to participate were willing to talk quite openly about themselves. For some it was there way of giving something back, as they had gained so much from the family holiday.

As stated earlier, the interview was conducted over the telephone and both the interviewer and participant were at home. Interviews were arranged at times that were convenient to participants. As there was no face-to-face encounter, the initial few minutes were very important in making a good impression, what participants report depends on what they think of the interviewer (Goffman, 1967). Through a telephone, gesture and tone may be

lost, along with aspects of speech that hold other cues. As a semi-structured interview rooted in the qualitative paradigm, talk needed to be as "natural" as possible, aspiring for a conversation amongst equals. Yet, at the same time, language is never neutral, thus questions and sentences need to be phrased to limit expressing personal views. Furthermore, since researchers are told that the quality of information gathered is largely dependent on the interviewer, establishing rapport is key. Building rapport does not undermine neutrality, instead building rapport means there is respect for the people being interviewed, what they say is important and, at the same time, it is important to relate to people on their own terms, without judgement (Patton, 2015).

### 3.5.5 Interview schedule

An interview schedule was produced through discussion with supervisors and the FHA (see appendix 1). The interview guide consisted of four main questions excluding the introductory questions and closing comments. The questions were shaped by the literature adapting established measures on family efficacy and family functioning. All the questions were intended to be open ended and more detailed questions were asked based on responses, prodding for details and specific descriptions. This probing then makes an interview very different from everyday conversation. In everyday life assumptions tend to fill the gaps whilst in an interview one has to probe to fill gaps in knowledge, peeling back the common-sense understanding and the taken for granted (Taylor et al., 2016). After listening to the first few recordings whilst transcribing, I was able to reflect before proceeding with further interviews. For example, I realised I was moving through questions too quickly and needed to use silences between questions more effectively so that participants could add further thoughts if they so wished.

The interviews were audio recorded and after each interview a few notes, comments and thoughts were written down, what Patton (2015) refers to as post-partum reflection. I also referred to Patton's (2015) interview principles that note the importance of asking open-ended questions, relevant, and meaningful that elicit in-depth responses. Being clear, is ever more

important over the telephone, listening and responding appropriately so participants know they are being heard. However, this was much more difficult over the telephone; in-person a simple nod of the head may be enough to let participants know you are listening, but over the telephone it may mean interrupting them. Sometimes interruption was needed to probe as this was the only way to gain greater depth from answers but, at the same time, to be flexible and adapt in response to participants, showing empathy and encouragement and minimising interviewer effects. With some interviewees there was some more informal conversation at the end, some wanted to know more about the project and others simply wanted to chat. Thus, there was an advantage of not using a closed instrument because the respondents did not necessarily have to fit their experiences and feelings into my research categories (Patton, 2015). Instead, a framework is provided so that participants can "express their own understandings in their own terms" (Patton, 2015: 442). This can be observed in asking participants at the end of the interview if they would like to add anything further, which often extended the interview by 10-15 minutes offering important additional insights.

### 3.5.6 Sample size

The sample size for interviews is not as critical as it can be for other methods, the number is not always important, unlike quantitative research there are no equivalent formulas to determine sample size. In qualitative research *N* can be as little as 1 and still be as illuminating as a large scale. Rather, through theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) or 'saturation' one stops when no new insights are yielded. This has been referred to as the "gold standard" in purposive sampling (Guest et al., 2006: 60). The patterns and themes seem to make sense, but there is no *a priori* estimation about the amount of data that is required under each theme. Rather no data must be disregarded, making every effort to give consideration to all. Saturated data is normally rich and complete, when the emerging theory makes sense, with no gaps (Morse, 1995). According to Guest et al (2006) after undertaking thematic analysis from 60 in-depth interviews, they concluded that data saturation had occurred within the first 12 interviews; however, their sample was relatively

homogenous. So, in terms of sample size for the project with a total of 12 interviews (with support workers) this seems to be adequate considering that support workers were a fairly homogenous group. In case of interviews undertaken with families, 14 may be on the small size due to the range of variability within the sample (Collins, 2010). However, whereas a small size in quantitative research can reduce statistical power, in qualitative research an inadequate sample size can limit theoretical saturation (Collins et al., 2006).

### 3.5.7 Participant demographics

In total, 26 semi-structured interviews were conducted during September/October 2020 and January and March 2021: 14 interviews with family members who all partook in an FHA holiday during the 2019 season and 12 interviews with support workers. The main characteristics of the families who participated in the holiday are shown in Table 3.2. Five of the support workers interviewed were working with or had been with the families interviewed. Letters were utilised to indicate family participant quotes and numbers were used to replace support worker names. Although pseudonyms could be utilised and would portray the participants in a more human light, it was felt by the researcher that given that names are never neutral and participants were from diverse backgrounds different from the researcher, letters were more functional and appropriate.

**Table 3.2 Characteristics of families interviewed**

| Characteristics | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Child with autism | 3/14 |
| Asylum seeker/refugee status | 5/14 |
| Domestic violence | 3/14 |
| Lone parent | 9/14 |
| Mental health issues | 5/14 |
| Childhood in care | 2/14 |
| Significant past trauma | 3/14 |
| Substance misuse | 2/14 |
| Homelessness | 1/14 |
| Social housing | 10/14 |
| Not working | 9/14 |

*Please note in addition to the 14 families interviewed, 12 support workers were also interviewed*

### 3.5.8 Data analysis: thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is widely applied in the field of psychology, popular amongst those with realist-orientated research questions, and where qualitative research is part of a larger mixed-method design (Terry et al., 2017). Thematic analysis is also one of the most widely used qualitative analytic methods (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis should be regarded as a foundational method for qualitative analysis and considered as a method in its own right. Thematic analysis is flexible, in that it is independent of theory and epistemology, this freedom allows rich, detailed and complex accounts of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). However, this lack of rigidity has been interpreted as an 'anything goes' approach of lending support to critics of qualitative research (Antaki et al., 2002). However, the diversity and flexibility within thematic analysis means that it can be used within most theoretical frameworks, and its accessibility makes it particularly useful for a novice researcher (Terry et al., 2017). Furthermore, Braun and Clarke's extensive work in the area offers numerous worked out examples aiding a beginner. Since Braun and Clarke's foundational 2006 paper their approach has developed and in latter papers is referred to as 'reflexive thematic analysis'. The reflexive approach to thematic analysis underscores the researcher's active role in knowledge production (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Critical realist frameworks can then be used, "which acknowledge the ways individuals meaning of their experience, and, in turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings, while retaining focus on the material and other limits of 'reality'" (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 9).

### 3.5.9 Data coding

The interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher and entered into the NVivo 12 software program. At this stage I referred to Clarke and Braun's extensive writing on the matter (including Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2020; Terry et al., 2017), whose approach falls very much in the qualitative paradigm (Terry et al., 2017). Starting with an inductive approach that involves familiarisation with the data, coding was "organic and flexible"

(Terry et al., 2017: 20), with detailed engagement, and repeated immersion in the data – which for Braun and Clarke is better than a code book approach (Terry et al., 2017). Since there is no right way to analyse the data, the subjectivity of the researcher is integral to the process of analysis (Terry et al., 2017). Codes and themes emerged through an interpretative process and, hence, subjective. Yet quality remained a concern, as Braun and Clarke (2006) argue, through "reflection, rigour, a systemic and thorough approach, and greater depth of engagement, rather than focusing on coding 'accuracy'" (Terry et al., 2017: 20). This fits with a 'Big Q' approach to thematic analysis that works within a qualitative paradigm which is discerned by theoretical independence and flexibility. This is a very different kind thematic analysis to a 'small q' thematic analysis that falls under the positivist traditions (e.g., Boyatzis, 1998) and more concerned with establishing code reliability (Terry et al., 2017). This distinction between Big Q and small q is important, because the role of the researcher is very different; in Big Q the researcher role is more creative than technical, less so sifting through data than making discoveries (Terry et al., 2017).

**Table 3.3 The Reflexive TA Process**

Six Phases for Analysis

(Source: Clarke and Braun, 2023)

| Phase | | Description of the process |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Familiarizing yourself with the data set | This phase involves reading and re-reading the data, to become immersed and intimately familiar with its content, and making notes on your initial analytic observations and insights, both in relation to each individual data item (e.g., an interview transcript) and in relation to the entire dataset. |
| 2. | Coding | This phase involves generating succinct labels (codes!) that capture and evoke important features of the data that might be relevant to addressing the research question. It involves coding the entire dataset, with two or more rounds of coding, and after that, collating all the |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | codes and all relevant data extracts, together for later stages of analysis. |
| 3. | Generating initial themes | This phase involves examining the codes and collated data to begin to develop significant broader patterns of meaning (potential themes). It then involves collating data relevant to each candidate theme, so that you can work with the data and review the viability of each candidate theme. |
| 4. | Developing and reviewing themes | This phase involves checking the candidate themes against the coded data and the entire dataset, to determine that they tell a convincing story of the data, and one that addresses the research question. In this phase, themes are further developed, which sometimes involves them being split, combined, or discarded. In our TA approach, themes are defined as pattern of shared meaning underpinned by a central concept or idea. |
| 5. | Refining, defining, and naming themes | This phase involves developing a detailed analysis of each theme, working out the scope and focus of each theme, determining the 'story' of each. It also involves deciding on an informative name for each theme. |
| 6. | Writing up | This final phase involves weaving together the analytic narrative and data extracts and contextualising the analysis in relation to existing literature. |

This six-phase analytic process is not strictly linear, but iterative and recursive (see table 3.2). The familiarisation with the data began with transcription, listening to the recordings several times to not only ensure accuracy of transcription but also pick up subtle aspects like pauses and tone, which listening to the recording a few days/weeks/months later gives a slightly different perspective – for example, on what might have been meant by a sigh or laugh. This familiarisation process is referred to as the "bedrock" of thematic analysis (Terry et al., 2017: 23). It involves active reading, gaining a first sense of patterns and starting to ask the data questions. Once the familiarisation

process was complete, codes were generated, these were meaningful labels attached to segments of data ended with an enormous number of codes. This was a largely inductive or 'bottom up' approach – understanding of course the researcher is never completely starting from a blank slate, your own position and theoretical lens will influence the analysis, but the aim at the beginning was to be as data-led as possible. A critical realist ontology directs data analysis which begins at the empirical level, what is referred to in some of the literature as demi-regularities – tendencies not laws – rough trends or broken patterns that appear in the empirical data.

At the beginning, coding was largely semantic and in vivo – with phrases and words such as 'being near the sea' or 'relax'. Moving on to grouping codes together, there was some repetition. Initially I organised the codes into three groups: (i) codes relating to before the holiday; (ii) those about the holiday; and, (iii) those relating to after the holiday. At this stage there was a lot of clarifying and modifying of codes and more latent codes began to emerge that linked back to the theoretical framework and the research questions. Refining and developing codes continued throughout the research project, feedback from supervisors and annual progression boards pushed more to deductive coding and constant referring back to the theoretical literature. This interrogation by others in the team (Barbour, 2014), is necessary because of the very subjective nature of coding and interpretation. Furthermore, there is no getting away from the issue of codes reflecting your own background, professional and personal. This coding process felt long, reflecting that coding data comes from a lengthy process, very messy, going back and forward, a challenging process that will get forgotten, what is referred to as 'backstage' work (Barbour, 2014). In the end, the entire dataset was coded, first inductively then deductively, before moving on. I then attempted to use the realist heuristic tool CMO configuration, placing codes under 'context', 'mechanism' and 'outcome' (see appendix 5). From a table of codes this was then transferred into a mind map. This 'mapping' of codes in diagram form was helpful in clarifying thoughts and ideas (see appendix 3). However, the CMO

configuration and its various off shoots proved too confining to capture the complexity of an intervention such as social tourism.

Referring back to critical realist literature highlighted that although critical realism is philosophically and theoretically well developed, empirically it is still emerging. At this stage a number of key sources proved helpful. Fletcher's (2017; 2020) study on farming women in Canada explicated clearly the steps taken in analysis. Her approach highlighted the pliability of critical realism, where not only can inductive and deductive logic be utilised but also abduction and retroduction. Danermark et al. (2002) and Danermark (2002) analysis shows the role previous theory can play in being used as a lens to infer from data through logic of abduction. Retroduction, in contrast, tells us how to use the results of abduction; the theoretical redescription and analysis of the empirical data (Fletcher, 2020). So, abduction allows use of theory to shed light on phenomena under study, asking the 'what' question, whereas retroduction builds on this theoretical explanation and prompts us to think about the causal mechanisms that may support the explanation put forward, and is able to answer 'why' questions (Fletcher, 2020).

The next intuitive step was to organise codes in critical realist terms: empirical, actual and real. Again, mapping codes in diagrammatic format aided thought development (see appendix 4). I was able to then identify causal mechanisms and conditions. The goal of retroduction is to identify the necessary contextual conditions for a particular causal mechanism to take effect and result in the empirical trends seen (Fletcher, 2017: 189). It moves from concrete to abstract and back again in reasoning terms; moving from empirical to deeper levels of reality the search for deeper causal structures by placing families within a macro-context. For example, inequality is happening at the real level, but its effect can be experienced at the actual and empirical.

The layered ontology is key to a critical realist methodology (see figure 3.2) the aim is not only to investigate regularities at the empirical level but also to uncover the mechanisms that cause these events (Bygstad et al., 2016). The mechanisms are what will trigger changes in family efficacy and family

functioning. This mechanism is contextual and dependent on other mechanisms; so, a mechanism can produce different outcomes dependent on the context. This is referred to as contingent causality (Smith, 2010) and intrinsic in all open systems so that we use mechanisms to explain phenomena rather than predict them (Bygstad et al., 2016).

## 3.6 Research ethics and integrity

In line with University of Nottingham requirements, prior to data collection the Nottingham University Business School Research Ethics Committee (NUBS REC) was approached for guidance and ethics approval for the research (see appendix 2). NUBS REC has set out clear policies, procedures and regulations based on the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics 2015 for non-NHS research and this, by and large, covered the legal requirements for the researcher. Participants were given project information and consent forms in advance via email, in some cases this was not possible as participants had no email address and, here, support workers were forwarded the information. At the beginning of each interview the researcher clarified the project intentions and confirmed consent before proceeding. One of the main concerns was the vulnerability of many of the participants due to their socio-economic background and life experiences. In some ways the telephone interview mitigated some of these concerns since participants were in their home and this offers more anonymity and security than an in-person interview. However, there are still many issues that need to be considered and these will now be discussed in turn.

### 3.6.1 The role of ethics in research

Ethical concerns arise throughout the research process; compliance and achieving ethical clearance is one initial aspect of ethical practice (Edwards and Mauthner, 2002). From a critical, post-structuralist (Christians, 2011; Cannella and Lincoln, 2011), feminist (Olesen, 2011), and transformative paradigm perspective (Mertens, 2010; Mertens et al., 2011), the researcher is ethically obliged to also address issues of rights and inequality. Existing ethical frameworks utilised by ethics boards are influenced by utilitarianism and deontological philosophical frameworks (Brooks et al., 2014; Pring, 2001;

Stutchbury and Fox, 2009; Head, 2020; Fox et al., 2009). Utilitarianism bases decisions on maximising good and minimising harm, whilst deontology is about adhering to general rules as moral duties regardless of the consequences (Brooks et al., 2014; Pring, 2003; Stutchbury and Fox, 2009; Head, 2020). Furthermore, ethical protocols in the social sciences have originated as offshoots from the life sciences and, thus, call into question their applicability to social science research (Science Europe, 2015).

There are alternatives to normative ethics such as the feminist *care ethic,* deriving in the work of Carol Gilligan (1982, 1993). A care ethic stresses care and responsibility rather than focusing on outcomes, justice, and rights (Edwards and Mauthner, 2002). Projects such as this one aim to present marginalised voices and have an emancipatory underpinning (Mertens et al., 2011), thus they need to show more awareness and reflexivity. Many questions and issues evolved throughout the project which highlights that ethical dilemmas in the social sciences are much more dynamic and context-dependent (Baykara et al., 2015; Esposito et al., 2017; Head, 2020). Many ethical conundrums that arose were not necessarily covered by university regulations (Head, 2020), for example, the current ethics process does not tell researchers how to use quotations ethically, or how to protect participant confidentiality whilst at the same time writing up with integrity; much of this fall on the researcher and supervisors to deal with (Head, 2020). Underlying many of these issues are values, beliefs, and experiences of the researcher and those being researched – they will not always be shared and have implications in terms of power relations (Smith, 2016; Esposito et al., 2017). Furthermore, the "creation of a population is itself an exercise of power" (Head, 2020: 81). Some of these concerns can be addressed with the ethic of care, thinking about one's own place, position and values (Gregory, 2003; Head, 2020). It is inevitable that we are not just describing but evaluating human behaviour (Alexander, 1988) and one can never fully transcend our specific social cultural context.

It is also argued that research should improve the quality of life of participants (Pendlebury and Enslin, 2001). Of course, there is a recognition that participants are more than data sources; yet the researcher is intruding on people's lives and, in many ways, researchers need participants more than participants need the researcher (Head, 2020). Furthermore, the researcher also stands to gain more than participants. Likewise, "who decides what is beneficial, for whom and for what purpose" (Head, 2020: 76). The vulnerability and power imbalance, was exemplified when one participant during the interview, became suddenly more aware that what they were telling me was all being recorded and needed further reassurance that all quotes used would be anonymised. We may not, as Smith suggests, "rewrite the other's world" (Smith, 1990; Smith, 2004: 30) yet, at the same time, have an obligation to reflect accurately families' diverse voices and experiences.

Furthermore, although there is not capacity, here, to undergo such a thorough discussion, the project by its very nature is within the emancipatory paradigm, attempting to go beyond knowledge creation and, thus, having responsibility to address issues of human rights, social justice and inequality (Mertens, 2010; Mertens et al., 2011).

## 3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the philosophical and methodological approach underpinning the research. I started with a philosophical approach, explaining why critical realism suits the qualitative nature of the project and research aims. A realist ontology complements the multi-dimensional nature of family life which, in turn, can be used alongside a multi-theoretical lens. The project espouses a critical social psychology, that blends various elements from positive psychology, social cognitive theory and ecological perspectives that can address these challenges, placing social justice at its heart and encompasses psychology's emancipatory potential (Teo, 2009).

By and large, in the end data collection was dictated by the pandemic, yet still through the approach taken I have tried to show that critical realist intervention work is an attractive approach that funding bodies and

governmental departments should find appealing (Clark et al., 2007). Data collection comprised of semi-structured interviews with families and support workers. The chapter finished with a brief discussion of the role of ethics in research.

# Chapter 4 Insights into family life

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of two chapters that present the data from this research. In this chapter I begin discussing the findings, detailing the contextual factors that influence family life and delving into circumstances in which families find themselves, this chapter begins to address research questions 1 and 2:

*1. To what extent does participation in social tourism lead to better family functioning for families from disadvantaged backgrounds?*

*2. How does social tourism develop family efficacy beliefs amongst families from disadvantaged backgrounds?*

This adds context to the second findings chapter where I dig deeper by examining the impact of social tourism on family efficacy and family functioning by identifying underlying causal mechanisms (Bhaskar, 2008).

In chapter 3, I discussed that thematic analysis was chosen because of its flexibility, allowing consistency with the philosophical and theoretical orientation of the project, combining ontological realism and epistemological relativism, with judgemental rationality (Fletcher, 2020). Thematic analysis was undertaken broadly along the principles of (Braun, 2006; 2016); Clarke and Braun (2017) but I also drew on a range of critical realist methodology such as Bhaskar and Danermark (2006); (Danermark et al., 2002; 2019); Bygstad et al. (2016); Fletcher (2017; 2020) and Porter et al. (2017).

Fundamental to critical realism is its stratified ontology, with family life occurring at the empirical (experiences) and actual level (events), and additionally exploring what might be happening at the real level by identifying generative mechanisms. This laminated ontology tells us that what happens at the real level can be felt at empirical and actual domains. For example, self-efficacy or inequality can be experienced in the empirical and actual level but also exist in the real domain (Walker, 2021). In the real domain these entities can stay dormant or become active but are only experienced, if at all, at the empirical domain (Fletcher, 2020). This chapter focuses on the empirical and actual domains of family life which comprise feelings, perceptions, and

experiences of the family before participating in the holiday. The families interviewed faced multidimensional disadvantages living with acute levels of mental stress brought on by financial and structural inequalities. Under a critical realist framework, social structures are trans-factual and, thus, exist independently of being at the empirical level (i.e., whether we experience them or not), but are also real and causal (Fletcher, 2020); hence, they have a very real impact on families. Families interviewed were left with little agency and control over their lives, but those families who were in contact with a support worker were able to access interventions and support, enabling some positive changes to family life.

The key issue needing further exploration was whether a marked difference could be seen in family efficacy and family functioning for families participating in social tourism. To assess this, different theoretical perspectives (social cognitive theory, family systems theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory) were utilised because they address the different domains of social reality that are needed to encompass the complexity of families. Cognitive or psychological constructs such as self-efficacy can manifest in experiences and events (empirical and actual level), but the self-efficacy construct is also ontologically real and has causal power (Booker, 2021) that may not always be empirically accessible (Groff, 2004); nonetheless, when enriched, it can elevate higher-level functioning.

Thus, in the remainder of this chapter I present the first set of qualitative data, that predominantly discuss families' experiences and events prior to the holiday. I then offer a theoretical redescription, giving the explanation greater ontological depth, with the aim to understand how social tourism as an intervention benefits family life. To this end, this chapter is structured into three main themes: family worries (subthemes: financial strain and mental stress); role of support worker (subthemes: support worker as enabler; friendship, care and belonging; and proxy role); role of structure and agency.

## 4.2 Family worries

To understand if and how social tourism has an impact on family functioning and family efficacy, we need to first consider why families feel they need a holiday in the first place and what daily life is like for them. The key challenges facing families in the study were: substandard housing, housing insecurity, growing up in care, parent or child with mental health issues, parent and/or child with physical disability, relying on welfare benefits, substance misuse, asylum status and domestic violence. Although adverse living conditions are experienced at an empirical and actual level, their causes can be buried in the real domain.

In the sections that follow the theoretical perspectives outlined in chapter 2, namely family systems theory, ecological theory and social cognitive theory offer a lens through which we gain a better understanding of the implications for families living with acute levels of mental stress and financial strain. In subsequent sections I utilise ecological theory, since the application of ecology as a holistic theoretical approach is crucial to studying families as it underscores that families do not exist in isolation but are rooted within larger social structures. As described in chapter 2 Bronfenbrenner's ecological model consists of five subsystems (micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono), which are interdependent. Families belong within the microsystem, but their social experiences cannot be understood without reference to the interconnectedness between the multiple layers of the social structure (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Paat, 2013). Each system can add explanatory value in understanding family life (Bronfenbrenner, 1977); namely, the impact it may have on family efficacy and family functioning, inhibiting agency and control and, thus, having a detrimental bearing on the quality of family life. In this section I detail two main issues experienced by families in the microsystem that also belong in the empirical and actual domains: financial strain and mental health.

### 4.2.1 Financial strain

Financial insecurity was a key overriding concern for all the families, accompanied with constant worry and guilt, especially in not being able to sufficiently provide for their children. Under a critical realist framework, the concept of 'absence' is important. Absence is regarded as more important than presence, in that critical realism is more concerned about "resolving hostile absences of lack and need" (Alderson, 2021: 147). Financial stability acts as a mechanism that affords families security and stability, yet its absence leaves families feeling disempowered and marginalised. Families living in adverse social circumstances are more likely to be affected by negative psychological and physical health: thus, many families reported feeling mental stress, tiredness, anxiety and experiencing isolation. Although much of this was due to structural factors, this is seldom acknowledged by policy makers when evaluating intervention and implementation success (Clark et al., 2007). The focus is primarily on the intervention and the individual (or the family) without due regard to the wider context in which families exist.

For 11 out of the 14 families interviewed, their sole source of income was welfare benefits. Their limited finances had a constant presence due to its notable absence; this is implicit in the comments of *J* and *D* below:

> *J: I don't know, I'm on my own with the kids now, so it's just like everything, so it is money, money …money is something I've always struggled with, always. Debts. That's just things coming up from nowhere, yeah well, I just always kind of like struggling to make ends meet, all the time.*
>
> *D: Yeah, whenever it's um once a month when I get my benefits, it always like robbing Peter to pay Paul.*

*J* and *D* are both single parents and money is always an issue. Both *J* and *D* have grown up in care themselves. This is mentioned only in passing, but it is an important element in understanding their current predicament since they lack external support networks, which can act as safety nets. For individuals growing up in care there are long term implications, such as poor mental health and far worse educational outcomes (Berlin et al., 2011). Scotland's Independent Review (2020) describes systemic failures that lead to young

people leaving care more damaged than when they go in. This is discussed further in section 4.3 where I argue that the support worker acts as proxy family in the absence of family and support networks.

The financial constraints put significant practical limits to what families can do together, as support worker 8 states:

> *Support worker 8 (for K): Time out is in the back garden or going to the park... They they don't go to a cinema. Those [things] are just out of their budget. They can't contemplate doing that… 'mum can't even afford to take us out to McDonald's, let alone you know, you know our holiday is going to the park'*

*K* and her family arrived as refugees in the UK eight years ago and has never been outside their allocated city. Five of the 14 families interviewed, like *K,* were awaiting decisions from the Home Office, this meant that they were on a very limited income as they were not able to work[3]. Families relied heavily on food banks, although this was not limited to refugee families. Furthermore, for families claiming asylum payments they were restricted to payment cards and not cash. Payment cards not only limit use to specified stores but also allow the Home Office to track individual movement (Privacy International, 2022). This significantly limits agency as well as having personal and psychological implications for individuals. This further impacted on families' ability to prepare and plan for the holiday, relying heavily on support workers to book train tickets on credit cards:

> *I put that on my credit cards, and they have to pay me in cash, which I'm sure like my boss did not agree with… if you haven't got a credit card you can't book these things. This is another thing if you're an asylum seeker…You can't get access to a credit card, so it's against them at every opportunity really. (Support worker 8)*

[3] People seeking asylum in the UK are not allowed to claim mainstream benefits or gain employment. All support received is through the Home Office. This means that the majority live on £5.66 per day to cover food, clothing, transport and medicine. Housing is provided but they have no choice as to where it is. Many wait years for a decision about their asylum claim (Refugee Council. (2023). *The truth about asylum* [Online]. Available: https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/the-truth-about-asylum/?gad=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwkeqkBhAnEiwA5U-uM-HVxKmlorGLwJ_Ng2f5wsO8rfW98CZdT3wFUny_8rPJVjbGJFHvKhoCKOoQAvD_BwE [Accessed 09/05/2023], ibid.Action).

The external controls (the Home Office) over finances are happening at a real level, something that families have no control over, but this has an impact on their agency at an actual and empirical level. The restriction on paid work and consequently not being able to provide for children in a way that they would like, causes families further psychological distress. The families awaiting status from the Home Office appeared especially vulnerable and particularly blocked by structural constraints. For others, work is restricted because of caring duties such as the case of *B* caring for her disabled child, which has meant that where she once worked in a professional role, she is now reliant on benefits to top up her household income.

Another consequence of finances being very limited was that families spent an extensive amount of time within their own homes, often feeling quite isolated, with little support around them, where the school run or weekly shop were the only time many families would leave the home. Some families were not particularly connected with support services and traditional family support structures for most did not exist. The immediate neighbourhood did not always feel safe, and most families did not possess a car; relying on public transport, adding to their inability and unwillingness to leave the home. However, many of the families never actually used the word *home* but only *house* to refer to their current dwelling, possibly inferring their connection to home was less personal. This may be because families escaping domestic abuse situations or claiming asylum are rarely given a choice over where they live. Support worker (9) who works with trafficked women (also support worker to *J*) commented:

> *I mean, you know, for their kids to experience, that's kind of strange for kids growing up with a mum who's been trafficked... it's bound to have an impact on him, and he is growing up, his idea of what the world is like... they get taken to somewhere where they you know that's supposedly safe, but it's just a random place that's been chosen for them. (Support worker 9)*

However, for others the sheer unpleasantness of the physical environment is enough to push them outside:

> *J: I'd be out for the crack of dawn, I come in like stupid times at night…I'll take pyjamas out with them so they would be ready for bed*

*when we got in the house...I can't stay in. It's like I'm trapped in a box. Yeah, well, I've got rain proof overalls for the kids. We don't have to care about the weather, and wellies and stuff right ... and the little one, she's amazing, she could like walk for like three hours … I've just found like moving and fresh air … kind of coping mechanism like … you just feel the benefits from just walking and like just breathing and exercising.*

J used the phrase 'trapped in a box' several times during the interview and it was only later when speaking to her support worker that shed further light on her surrounding environment:

*Support worker (9 for J): The very first-time round…It was a really hot summer's day and I said to her what a beautiful blue sky and she said it's not the sky, it's Ikea. I thought it was just amazing blue sky out the window… So, she's got Ikea right behind her and in front of her house is a huge flyover. She's right underneath the flyover. It's horrible. There's loads of rats running around … loads of homeless people…loads of like rubbish… lots of people living in tents and things. It's vile.*

The financial precariousness of families is a significant factor in the cycle of disadvantage for families. Ecological systems theory tells us that families do not live in a bubble, the wider environment matters (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Furthermore, family systems theory informs us of the interrelated nature of family, thus each member's behaviour impacts others. Hence, the effects of deprivation such as changes in physical health, child neglect, mental health issues, social isolation, and poorer educational outcomes come from both within and outside the family (Butler et al., 2012).

For many of the families I spoke to, many of their problems were deep-rooted and the concern was that they may be transmitting this disadvantage on to their children. Causal mechanisms can act as inhibitors or facilitators, impacting family life at different levels of social reality, psychological, structural, and social. In this case, financial insecurity can be seen to inhibit family efficacy and family functioning. The families I spoke with had limited access to resources for many this was rooted in the structure of the welfare system and general social exclusion from society. This results in limited opportunity and ability to build psychological and family capital that would act as a buffer. Thus, for families such as these, low family efficacy and family

functioning appears the most likely reaction. Financial constraints sit in the structural mechanisms of inequality that families interact with every day that contributes to their disadvantage. When income is unpredictable and work is insecure it is the most stressful position a person can be in, the issue of economic precariousness of the most vulnerable should be a key issue for politicians and not unrelated to mental health (Davies, 2015).

### 4.2.2 Mental stress

At a micro level, living in low socioeconomic circumstances can be mentally draining for families. For example, *D* refers to her head feeling 'frizzled' and like a 'sieve'. *D* is a single mother who has left a domestic abuse situation and struggles with her teenage daughter's behaviour, often finding it difficult to cope. *D* describes feeling quite down, focusing on what is going wrong in her life which can act like a catalyst, elevating levels of stress and anxiety and producing the very reactions that she fears (Bandura, 1997). This has had an impact on her relationships with her children; as a single parent daily life can be a struggle, for example, she struggles to get her children to school in the morning. A number of parents reported being concerned about their child's mental health and refusing to go to school was one of the outcomes. Transitional periods such as moving to high school and entering teenage years can be particularly demanding and challenging processes (Paat, 2013). Four of the families mentioned children struggling with school routine (*A, D, E* and *P*), all of whom had experienced or been exposed to early traumatic experiences, such as poor parental mental health and domestic abuse. Children from these families reported their children having particular difficulties adjusting to high school. Covid-19 has exasperated the problem, with reported increase in school absenteeism since before the pandemic (Major and Eyles, 2022). The time out of school has made it harder; *E* and *A* also describe similar situations, where they are unable to persuade children to go to school. This not only raises concerns about children's mental health but the impact it has on parental mental health too.

Research shows that children can be quite resilient and overcome traumatic childhood experiences; where children are subsequently exposed to a stable and sensitive homelife, they can thrive (Schofield and Beek, 2009). However, for many of the families, this support is not always available, and the problems can be ingrained going back many years. In the extract, below, support worker *7* discusses his work with families experiencing domestic violence and enabling male partners to uncover their ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences):

> *So, so why would they now, it's of course they've grown up with that. They were almost saying that the negatives that their parents are coming from become OK because that's what they witnessed as a child. Of course, what they do is they bury all the ACES [Adverse Childhood Experiences] … tends to bring them out and … in the program really… they realise that they're buried and hidden. They're able to face up to and move on, and that allows change. (Support worker 7)*

Support worker *7* goes on to discuss what he refers to as the dreaded three: *'alcohol, drugs and mental health'*, that surface in almost all the cases that he works with. Secure supportive family relationships are key in minimising the long-term effect of early life trauma (Schofield and Beek, 2009). Although theoretical and empirical evidence supports this, this is seldom prioritised in practice (Schofield and Beek, 2009). The programme that support worker *7* runs is fairly unique in the UK, as the programme is delivered over 18 months which is fairly long in intervention terms.

Other research shows how people who grow up in unstable and insecure environments, such as foster care still seek reassurance and availability from their foster families well into their twenties (Schofield, 2003). For children who grow up with a secure base that promotes secure attachment (Ainsworth et al., 2015), there are less problems later in life. Although the families I spoke to were in their biological family membership groups, for the most part, some were unable to provide a secure base for their children, in part because of their own difficult childhoods which influences mental wellbeing. This becomes an issue for families when it impacts family functioning and self-efficacy, such as in the case described below:

> *That was one of the major issues with the children they got removed because the kids weren't getting fed properly. There were no planned meals, you know. Mum took a back seat, didn't have the energy or the willingness to actually cook a meal…* [children] *were slightly isolated in school because they were going into school with uniforms not clean as they could be, and I think they just got a wee bit of bullying going on at the school… it was more mum and dad not being able to cope, and I think it was important because they were lovely girls and you just wanted mum and dad to appreciate what lovely children they had. (Support worker 1)*

The children, here, were taken into care for a short period of time and placed with extended family members. Mum suffered from anxiety and mental stress that resulted in her being housebound most of the time and, although dad tried, the children were going to school hungry and dirty. There were other families in a similar situation, not quite able to cope with responsibilities of having children. Support workers described parents in these circumstances as "hibernating"; for example, support workers *3* and *4* both mention parents unable to get out of bed some days. Families who experience high levels of anxiety and stress makes them more vulnerable to dysfunction. It is the interlocking nature of different types of adversity that families encounter that permeate in health and social difficulties. For families facing multiple disadvantages a 'compounding effect' can be created (Eisenstadt, 2007; Butler et al., 2012) that limits agency.

Multiple disadvantages faced by families emphasises the situatedness of families which is supported by theoretical positions outlined in chapter 2. Additionally, families operate in a multilevel social system, where relationships interlock and are interdependent. The impact of poor parental mental health has a detrimental impact on parental efficacy beliefs, whereas stronger beliefs in parenting efficacy lead to more positive emotional well-being (Bandura, 1988), which subsequently impacts other family members. Evidence indicates that mental health problems such as anxiety can be reduced through the behavioural control that comes from being able to anticipate events rather than simply reacting to them when they occur (Bandura, 1988).

Interventions targeting parenting efficacy for mothers with children has shown to lower familial stress and reduce behavioural problems in children (Sofronoff and Farbotko, 2002). Strong parenting efficacy acts as an enabler, protecting against emotional instability resulting in parents being better advocates for their children. In part this is to do with perceptions of powerlessness and low self-efficacy (Dupéré et al., 2012). According to Bandura (1988) people who believe they have control over their environment, can also exercise control over negative cognitions, whereas when people focus in on their deficiencies, they are able to conjure up all sorts of threats. It is the inefficacious train of thought that can further hinder family efficacy and family functioning since perceived family efficacy is an emergent group belief as it incorporates interactive dynamics of the family system working collectively (Bandura, 2006a), where family members need to be mutually supportive and enabling.

For many of the families interviewed they felt little control over their own environment compounding mental health difficulties. Furthermore, contrary to pathological accounts which locates mental health problems within individual personalities of the family, research also shows geographical context matters (Dupéré et al., 2012). The previous section detailed the unpleasantness of the environment for many of the families, the social world in which families reside contribute to cognitive processes such as self-efficacy which, in turn, affect emotional health. Research into residential mobility suggests changes in neighbourhood environments can have a positive impact on attitudes and behaviours (Rosenbaum et al., 2002). Moving to a new location, especially to higher socioeconomic areas where people feel safer, affects perceived efficacy. This indicates that where environments are unpleasant and prohibitive, individuals can conclude that they lack control over their lives. Yet, when in environments that permit individuals to improve their life, and they can see that coming and link this to their own actions, they can conclude that they have control over their lives (Rosenbaum et al., 2002). Thus, moving to better

neighbourhoods results in psychological distress going down (Dupéré et al., 2012).

From an agentic perspective individuals play a proactive role, able to navigate and structure their environments (Bandura et al., 1999). In subsequent chapters it will be detailed that social tourism can act as an enabler, providing families with resources and temporarily selecting an environment where they can cultivate competencies. In this way social tourism can be a proactive intervention aligning with a strength-based approach with families.

### 4.3 Role of support worker as resource, belief, and care

So far, I have explained how the families interviewed experience financial strain and mental stress with contextual factors impinging and having a very real impact on family life. Most of the families have little support from extended family and friends, which can put further stress on family and social functioning (Zubrick et al., 2000). The family ecology paradigm states the interrelatedness between family and other ecological systems such as school, neighbourhood, and peer network (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Paat, 2013). In this section I would like to turn my attention to the exosystem where remote social systems belong such as the support worker.

Research suggests the positive influences that family, friends and neighbours have on well-being (Bjornskov, 2008) but, for many, there is little opportunity to make those connections and build support networks. In the absence of familial and friendship support, the support worker often plays a significant role in facilitating family life. Support workers consisted of social workers, teachers, support staff and charity workers. As stated earlier in the chapter, 12 support workers were interviewed, five of whom were or had been working with the families interviewed. The support worker played a key role in ensuring the success of the intervention, in particular the holiday, by offering not only resources but friendship, care and belonging.

### 4.3.1 Support worker as enabler: resources and friendship care and belonging

At a most fundamental level the support worker was invaluable in linking families to avenues of support and resources. This can be as basic as providing weekly groceries for refugee families to save them money:

> *Support worker (8): We know what they need …which was food, clothing, access to a telephone device… like today's Monday so most of my morning I've been distributing food… That allows them to save some money.*

For others, such as *F* support enabled him to access funds which contributed to him rebuilding his life after leaving a long stint in rehabilitation, he had moved into a new flat that needed redecorating:

> *F: I've had lots of support from Council. Yeah, yeah, I got like a grant check for painting. [Support organisation] have been absolutely amazing in helping me you know get the carpet. What you get sort of like a move-on budget, yeah, so yeah, it's all been recarpeted. I've repainted everywhere right redone and everything in it, and the other thing is just the bathroom. I've got to finish off. No, but yes, it's got brand new carpets down is totally repainted. Yeah, so I'm quite pleased with it.*

Later in the interview, *F* explains how the support worker also helped him buy a bicycle, that not only means he has transport for day-to-day life but is an important component in building his relationship with his young son, as they can go cycling at the weekends together. Access to support such as this is vital in enabling and empowering individuals. When basic needs are met, it allows families to start thinking about other things too (Butler et al., 2012). According to Maslow's well established model, hierarchy of needs, human beings have an innate desire to be self-actualised, but basic needs need to be met first (Maslow, 2013 [1943]). For many families the most pressing are first level needs which can only be achieved through the work of the support organisations. This underscores the importance of resource inequity that existed amongst all families interviewed that also reflects the distribution of power in society (Muntaner and Lynch, 1999; Lynch et al., 2000). Through the support worker, families can access both material and non-material resources.

At the beginning, the relationship with the support worker can be one of resource point, functional and practical in that professionals can access resources that families cannot access alone. Yet, when relationships have time to develop and evolve it becomes more akin to friendship:

> *Support professional (8): When we're actually making an application to Family Holiday, we actually really know the family … some of them actually rely on us as a key person of contact in case of emergency. That's not uncommon. Just because we know the family situations very well, and they're not only engaged in the helping them with their immigration matters, but also in their emotional wellbeing.*

In the case of support worker *8* he seemed to be an extended member of the family, helping new arrivals (mainly refugees) in the UK, many of whom have not had time to develop support networks yet. Support networks exist in a social context that facilitate families, offering a positive nurturing and mutual support, these persons can become 'fictive kin' who become as important as family members (McAdoo, 1990). McAdoo (1993) suggests those from minority ethnic backgrounds may rely more heavily on the social network than families who are more readily accepted within the context of society and have greater control over resources.

However, again, those with close relationships with their support worker were not limited to refugee families; for *J,* her support worker became her friend:

> *She just she just really liked me coming to visit her and be her friend. You know we used to go for coffee every couple of weeks and she'd chat, and chat and chat and you will find she talks a lot, and she just really enjoyed it. I think and it was really hard her for when we had to stop and she kind of avoided me for weeks, 'cause I was trying to make an appointment to see her for the last time 'cause she really didn't want to. (Support worker 9)*

In the above extract support worker *9* has been helping *J* for over a year. For the support worker, the intervention is coming to an end because *J* no longer needs support to the extent that other women on her waiting list do. However, *J*, who has grown up in care, has little in the way of extended family support,

hence her wishing to continue to meet her support worker for coffee. Through support workers, many of the parents I spoke to gain a friend, but also a sense of belonging and care:

> *H: We were very, very appreciative. It kind of felt like someone had our back and someone was supporting us … quite special in that way and made us feel sort of like you know quite special [talking about holiday here]*

Here, *H* and her family had experienced some traumatic events that had left the family quite isolated; however, contact with the support agency had opened up links to further support or simply someone to chat too. For example, *G* will pop by the office:

> *You know when we're in the office, he would pop down and see, have you got five minutes or can I come and see you soon ... and it really is just off loading and I'm just sitting there listening to him nodding, like a dog, but it just if he can off load periodically then that helps, him. But he just takes the girls down, the beach, and let's say the cobwebs flow away, which seems to work for him. (Support worker 3)*

The multi theoretical approach underpinning the project (positive psychology, social cognitive theory, family systems theory, strength-based approach) all emphasise that people need to have a sense of belonging and feeling valued. For many of these families this was lacking and, as such, support organisations offer a sense of belonging and care. In the case of *J* family membership was absent yet this is an important dimension of life (Schofield and Beek, 2009). Those growing up in care like *J* may never have had the opportunity to make sense of their past and, subsequently, find it challenging building a life for themselves (Schofield and Beek, 2009):

> *Support worker (9): [J] Never told me the circumstances of why she went into care … she tries really hard with her family, but that and she always gets kind of let down by them. She thinks things are going well, you know her dad can be a bit supportive for a while and then he lets her down again and that's the kind of reason that she can't really rely on any of them and that's really hard for her.*

Families such as *J* living with multiple disadvantages can feel invisible and uncared for, the offer of support from professionals and the holiday itself (as discussed in the next chapter) symbolises recognition and value very different from the usual demonising discourse they encounter. Thus, the support worker also offers care and a sense of belonging; to feel accepted by others can especially be pertinent to care leavers but also applicable to other families coming from a less secure base.

Family intervention work that support workers carry out can vary in nature and duration. In some cases, the intervention is something that has been flagged up by external organisations and, for a few, there were self-referrals. Support work can also cease for various reasons. For many of the voluntary organisations I was in touch with, their work was very precarious and fraught with funding difficulties. During Covid-19 this was further exasperated and resulted in some projects I had been in contact with being closed. Many support workers provided support that went beyond their original reason for referral, some would continue more informally long after the family were officially off their books. This may be in the form of phone calls, or doorstep visits just to 'check in' to see if everything is okay:

> *We were doing the welfare pack drop off and things. So, it was like a two- minute, on the doorstep. You know, how you doing? (Support professional [3 for G])*

Support professionals were often seen as going above and beyond what was required of them. In the above extract support worker *3* works for a very small local charity but the extract shows the extent of their commitment – during the first lockdown she carried out doorstop visits.

Furthermore, the length of intervention work is not always determined by need, as increasingly support workers are under immense pressure to turn around families with short term quick fixes as was the case with the Government's *Troubled Families Programme*. It is largely regarded as a failure because, as is often the case, problems were located within families without

due regard to wider socio-economic considerations (Crossley and Lambert, 2017). Coordinated interventions are key to helping families and interventions need to personalised and targeted (Rankin and Regan, 2004). This is where social tourism might plug the gap; as detailed in the next chapter, holidays are planned and coordinated by the family but supported by the support worker/referral agency (Minnaert et al., 2009). Thus, for *E* the referrer looked up all the train times:

> *E: I forgot to say [referrer] like told me what train to catch … she looked all that up for me and everything and bus that I caught when I got to … She told me what we what to catch and time and everything where to go and which were so supportive. So, she looked everything up. … Which were really helpful and obviously and so I thought that was really good of [referrer], you know… finding that all that information out, to put my mind at rest.*

What appears to be simple things such as ensuring families catch the bus or train on time or encouraging families to 'save up' a little spending money or start to buy additional food items to take with them on holiday, are essential components to ensuring the holiday's success. These elements can make a holiday run more smoothly that families who are mentally exhausted find difficult to manage. The support worker offers warmth and support but also some authority at times, this close connection may raise expectations, which can be an important factor in pushing families to make changes. For example, not all families are open to the idea of a holiday and need lots of reassurance right up to the trip:

> *So, we worked all out for them, let them have a wee think over it and [mum] spoke to me a number of times before they went for reassurance that they could do this…So eventually they went. (Support professional 3)*

Sometimes it can be younger members of the family that need reassurance too; below, the support worker is encouraging the daughter in the family:

*So, I made her [daughter] look at the website of [site] well, you could do this, and you could do that. So, we were encouraging her to get excited about it…And just worked with him on doing positive things, talking about the holiday, and continuing to do that when he was at home with her so... What we did do obviously works 'cause she did get excited about it, and they did go. (Support professional 2 to A)*

Although, the role of the support worker can vary, as does the length with each family, one thing all the families shared was how it builds trust is wider societal structures:

*I think it helps build our relationship even though it [the holiday] usually is towards the end of the support. And I think that trust, and I think you know, we really care because we've got, you know, gone to all this trouble doing these applications ...quite a big thing to get a holiday, not a small thing really … So, so I think for professional working relationships, I think it's very good that they view the professionals. So, you know we can go above and beyond to do the application. (Support professional 6)*

This section has highlighted the important role support workers can play in family life by providing not only access to resources but also friendship and care. However, in supporting families one has to be careful not to do too much for them and, consequently, disempowering them. The issue of proxy control is discussed next.

### 4.3.3 Support worker: proxy role

Despite the positive nature of support work, there can be adverse implications for individuals with low self-efficacy becoming over-dependent on proxy control, which can further debilitate individuals' ability to access opportunities and acquire the skills needed for efficacious action (Bandura, 1997). Support worker (*7*) works with couples with a domestic violence history:

*The idea is to obviously empower the parents to make the choices themselves, but there the majority of them are in such a rut. Their expectation is resolution by professional, not by themselves … I mean, a lot of the guys don't work. And they're comfortable with that. So, it's about changing that persona around … But why would I work and get*

*wet and work two hours a day when I can sit here and get more money from the government. …their support networks normally mirror the same behaviour. (Support worker for H)*

The extract, above, emphasises how challenging work with families can be, especially when attitudes and behaviour are deeply entrenched. Proxy control gives individuals security and frees individuals of demands and potential hazards; however, this may restrict self-efficacy with over reliance on the competence and favours of others (Bandura, 1997). Furthermore, perceived inefficacy fosters dependence on proxy control and will only further reduce a person's opportunities to build the skills needed for efficacious action. Families with over-dependence on support workers will give protection without any risks of failure (Bandura, 1982). Social cognitive theory informs us that if you believe you have superior coping ability you are more likely to handle difficult situations yourself, whilst those with little belief in themselves are more likely to turn to others for help. In addition, individuals that are more dependent, benefit from the protection without having to deal with any of the demands that come with risk but, often, people are not aware that they are conceding control of their action, since self-debilitation occurs largely inconspicuously (Bandura, 1997).

Furthermore, sometimes it is easier to relinquish control and have other people do things for you, but this is not without consequence, since it sets people up for future poor performance, and believing in their own incompetence (Bandura, 1997). A good intervention promotes individuals, making them rather than the professional responsible for what happens. This shifts the balance in the professional-family relationship with the emphasis on competency enhancement, thus avoiding families becoming too dependent on a support worker, whereby families become self-sustaining. The support worker has a key role in how interventions are implemented within families. Establishing relationships takes time and where that is possible it is easy to see the benefits it has to families in terms of identifying needs and aspirations and building family capacity. In the extract, below, support worker (*1*) describes a

successful intervention highlighting capacity-building as both a process and benefit of family systems intervention (Dunst and Trivette, 2009):

> *Rather than just accepting uh, if we had meetings here you know. If there was an option ... um they would just maybe accept it but the last couple of weeks, they vocalised themselves. What they felt needed to happen in the family and it was much better coming from mum and dad. Where they really wanted support, where they didn't need support, so that you know you are targeting the areas that actually do need to change rather than just doing a blanket thing…Right this way we actually work with them, we're getting the parents to vocalise where they believe they need help and seeing if that is feasible, in order to discuss it over the table I think that is quite important rather than just social work stepping in and you know saying everything got to change, when in actual fact not everything had to change because they were doing pretty well in certain aspects you know, but they just needed support in other ones. (Support worker 1)*

The role of the support worker in determining the success of a family intervention depends on how the support is structured. Interestingly, research has shown where support to a family is offered, and there is a need indicated from the family, there are positive consequences; meanwhile, if an intervention is offered and the family has not identified a need themselves then there are negative consequences (Affleck et al., 1989). As discussed at the beginning of the chapter, systems theory framework informs us that the family unit is influenced by events that occur beyond the family setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), any behaviour is a joint outcome of environmental experiences and the person themselves, thus any opportunity given to a person and its likely success (i.e., capacity build) will be determined by the need being initiated by the person themselves (Dunst and Trivette, 2009). Since the holiday, in most cases, is introduced at the tail-end of the intervention, families have an active role in planning and preparing for it with appropriate scaffolding offered by the support worker (Porpora, 2015).

This section has examined the important role support workers can play in aiding families. In this way, the support worker constitutes a social mechanism that enables and supports families, through affording resources, showing care,

and making families feel valued by giving a sense of belonging that is often lacking in their normal life. The support worker also has a precursory mode of influence in that the social power, and credibility of them, matters and can convince families they can cope (Bandura, 1988). However, if the support worker can motivate and encourage family members to make individual changes, then structures need to be malleable too because there is no point in motivating families if things do not change (Bandura, 2008). Through interventions such as the holiday, families can realise change both in themselves and wider structures. In the final section of this chapter, I look to move further into the real domain by exploring the relationship between structure, agency, and culture.

## 4.4 The role of structure and agency

In the previous sections I have described the significant role the support worker plays in the family. The chapter began by discussing some of the factors that impact on the quality of family life for those living in environments in which they face multiple disadvantages. From a critical realist perspective such disparities are rooted in structural inequalities belonging in the domain of the real, thus not always visible. Social science research has a tendency to take a piecemeal approach when discussing inequalities, this leads to a failure in radical reform, as insights are reified into policies and little changes (Higgs, 2004).

In part, the issue is a result of traditional dichotomies between structure and agency being too simplistic and unhelpful in real world research. Instead, a more sensible and fruitful approach can examine the intricate “dialectic interactions” in family research (Alderson, 2021). A critical realist understanding of families includes a stratified ontology and an analytic separation of structure and agency (Higgs, 2004), which can situate the social causes of differential outcomes for disadvantaged families.

Furthermore, it is important to consider the effects of the structural inequalities and how structural relations reproduce inequality (Sayer, 2017). The social world is described as open and complex characterised by

interdependence of agency and structure. The interaction of structure and agency is paramount since they can change over time by the causal influence of emergent properties (Archer, 1995). Critical realism recognises the influence that structures have, and families are embedded in wider structures that they interact with and, as such, influence (Kjørstad and Solem, 2018). From a critical realist perspective, social disadvantages such as those described in section 4.2 are tendencies and processes that can determine outcomes but are not deterministic (Alderson, 2021). In similar vein, social cognitive theory rejects dualism of human agency and disembodied social structures. It, too, sees human agency operating generatively and proactively on social systems, not simply reacting to them (Bandura, 2006a).

The advantage of utilising both psychological and sociological theories in the project is to try and offer some accordance between agency and structure (Booker, 2021). In this manner, a critical realist view of agency can accommodate Bandura's agentic perspective (1997). According to social cognitive theory, to be an agent is to be able to intentionally influence how one functions and deals with life circumstances (Bandura, 2002). By exercising agency, one can influence one's own behaviour as well as the environment around them. Control is a core aspect of human life, and the ability to exercise control enables individuals to foster particular outcomes for themselves, as well as avoiding undesirable ones (Bandura, 1997). This sort of control has considerable social and psychological functioning, especially in exercising personal agency. People who believe they can exercise control over any potential threats are less likely to think up calamities and distress themselves (Benight and Bandura, 2004).

However, although the families faced different challenges and had diverse histories, when they encountered wider structural systems, particularly at the macro level, their experiences and encounters were very similar. This can be exemplified if we consider the issue of employment and work. The stigma attached to being a refugee can pose specific challenges, particularly in relation to gaining employment (Baranik et al., 2018). For many, access and opportunity

are reported as the most common stressors, more so than financial. This is echoed in the project's findings where many of the refugee families reported the inability to work as a major factor contributing to their current stress level that, in turn, has an impact on their mental health. As Baranik et al (2018) report, refugees face numerous difficulties when trying to create a comfortable environment for themselves. Refugees then seek opportunities that provide them opportunities to reflect and relax, social tourism acts as just such a coping mechanism. For refugee families their issues were different from native families as many were quite efficacious in most aspects, and were able to function, but the wider structures impeded them. In this way family life is shaped by wider structures that families themselves have little control over.

Although in the discussion, above, I focus on refugee families, similar structural constraints were placed on other families. For example, *E,* a single mother with physical and mental health difficulties, is currently claiming PIP (Personal Independence Payment) alongside her other benefits, but this is due for renewal soon. The thought of her next medical assessment is terrifying, as it may result in her payments being stopped if she is deemed 'fit to work'. Across the spectrum, experiences of welfare, immigration and social support left families full of fear and uncertainty. Whether it was waiting for decisions from authorities about disability claims, entitlement to support, financial, social or asylum claims – all were very similar - families had limited agency and control over their lives. Not only do actual experiences of support services leave families feeling mentally and physically drained, but also the wider societal discourse around those needing support from the state can leave families feeling humiliated and embarrassed. Policy implementation and wider discourse around those seeking benefit has similar undertones, whether it is asylum seekers or a disabled person, resulting in *N* stating:

> *N: It's like a crime being an asylum seeker. And the way they treat you, really take away your dignity and stuff so where you … you just feel…maybe you feel like you are dying everyday by the system.*

This feeling like a criminal was reported in other research (Butler, 2012), especially when trying to navigate the benefits system and getting things 'wrong', leaving individuals feeling frustrated and quite desperate. This demonisation of those needing support from the state is well documented yet continues to occur at all levels. As outlined in the literature review, successive government intervention targets families deemed 'troubled' or 'problematic' with a quick fix approach and short-term interventions that fail to address wider structural inequalities.

This also highlights the important role that *culture* plays alongside structure and agency. Drawing on the work of Archer (1988; 2003) culture is the "subjective meaningful context produced through human intentions and hermeneutics" (Alderson, 2021: 78). Culture provides a set of beliefs in society, in this case which families need supporting and how they should be supported. Wider societal discourse, values and norms symbolise, reflect, and reinforce which families are valued and why. Social attitudes towards families living on the margins of society shape and are shaped by the related structural, political, and economic structures; for example, media backlash on what may be perceived inadequate government response to a refugee crisis (e.g., the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015). This highlights that structure, agency, and culture are distinct, separate but interacting. Both structure and culture hinder and facilitate individuals who can adhere to the status quo but, equally, can challenge and change it (Archer, 1988; Alderson, 2021).

It is important to note that some of the families did work, those that did not were unable to either because the Home Office restricted them, or through caring/disability limitations. Although paid work may not be a suitable goal for everyone, work provides more than only income, it offers structure, identity and an important source of social relationships (Bandura, 2002). The ability or capacity to get jobs plays an important role in how individuals see themselves as capable and financially independent (Rosenbaum et al., 2002). Other research supports the role employment can play in people's happiness,

providing skills and capabilities and greater control over one's life (Clark, 1997; Clark and Oswald, 1994).

Work also offers an avenue to social contacts, opportunities, and information in the form of social capital which can lead to new behaviours and actions but also social structures to support them (Rosenbaum et al., 2002). Since traditional extended family support networks have disintegrated this leaves many of the families, I interviewed feeling very isolated. The theoretical framework detailed in chapter 2 tells us that "places matter" (Rosenbaum et al., 2002: 81). The characteristics of localities, and the experiences that offers families, can have a deep impact on a person's capacity and ideas of what can be achieved. In summary, this section has offered a theoretical redescription of family life that, although they include diverse experiences, all encounter similar structural and cultural forces.

## 4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have given an overview of some of the contextual factors experienced by the families interviewed. The primacy of financial strain permeates through every aspect of life for families, coupled with the mental strain; this limits the families' ability to participate fully in society. If families feel disempowered and experience low self-efficacy, one has to question why this is so. The impact of income inequity on health and wellbeing is strong yet, at the same time, we know that in most countries' inequality is increasing (Pickett and Wilkinson, 2015); furthermore, migratory pressures will continue as long as large economic disparities continue between nations (Bandura, 1988). Many of the issues family face stem from social, political and economic structures rather than family behaviours (Davies, 2015); hence the need to include macro forces in any explanation.

As ominous as life sounds for the families interviewed there are important elements in the family ecology that are positive. Namely the family's relationship with their support worker. All the families in the sample had significant contact with support agencies; this often begins as a practical necessity which then evolves into friendship and respect. For families living in

difficult circumstances this can be an important steppingstone in creating trust with external agencies, which is often lacking. This is further reinforced with the opportunity to go on holiday, something that for many is a remarkable prospect.

Furthermore, social cognitive theory stresses an agentic model of adaption and change rather than reactive one (Bandura, 1997; 2001; Benight and Bandura, 2004). Through this lens an individual has influence over one's own actions and life's circumstances (Benight and Bandura, 2004). Bandura (1995) describes this as multicausality in which people can control some things by exercising agency and, thus, are able to change their conditions. Social systems can and do impede, and it is only through collective efficacy that prevailing institutional practices can be influenced (Bandura, 1995). In the subsequent chapter I will outline how social tourism aligns with this agentic perspective because it enables families, rather than simply protecting or buffering them from contextual factors. This is because buffering families may be protecting them to some extent, but enablement is far better because it equips families with personal resources to cultivate competencies.

# Chapter 5 Holiday as a family intervention

## 5.1 Introduction

Most family interventions tend to target specific family members. The uniqueness of social tourism is that it not only encompasses *all* members of the immediate family, but it can also include extended family and friends. This aligns with family systems theory that describes the family as the most intimate of microsystems set within a wider ecosystem responsible for healthy family functioning and positive psychological adjustment, that can have profound and lasting effects on child outcomes (e.g., Guryan et al., 2008; Harper and McLanahan, 2004; Kowaleski-Jones, 2000). Furthermore, social tourism orientates well within a strength-based approach where all families have strengths, and it is simply a matter of providing conditions that can allow positive qualities to emerge.

Through a critical realist lens, it can be seen that, at an empirical and actual level, the holiday provides opportunities that families living in disadvantaged circumstances would not otherwise experience. As the previous chapter has shown, families with limited financial, family, and cultural capital face more challenges (Lareau, 2002, 2003; Paat, 2013), which can compromise levels of family efficacy and family functioning. Yet, the "tyranny of normality" prevails in all aspects of life (Bowring, 2000: 313) and the family is no exception, where emphasis can be placed on socially acceptable versions of family life (Hamilton, 2009). If we draw on social exclusion literature, deprivation consists of identifying items that 50 percent of the population define as a necessity but are unable to access because of financial resources (Gordon et al., 2000). Furthermore, the things that people hold as essential are multi-dimensional and include 'social customs, obligations, and activities' (Gordon et al., 2000: 16; Hamilton, 2009). It can be argued that a family holiday falls in this arena; thus, when families fail to meet this ideal, they are subject to a stigmatising discourse (both internal and external).

In the subsequent discussion, I explore the familial processes at work when social tourism temporarily changes the families' structural, social and

cultural contexts. The social reality of family experiences whilst on holiday are examined by surveying everyday family practices. However, since understanding and explanation cannot emerge from empirical data alone, theoretical perspectives are also drawn upon (Robert et al., 2017). By analysing familial processes whilst on holiday I am able to reveal via abduction and retroduction the causal mechanisms that exist in the domain of the real. In critical realist terms a mechanism causes something to happen in the world and can vary in kind (Danermark et al., 2002). During the abductive process, the empirical findings were compared with theoretical approaches outlined in chapter 2 alongside other empirical research in the field, leading to development of explanations of changes in family efficacy and family functioning. The findings can be grouped into three key themes: (i) *Feeling better as a family;* (ii) *performing 'normal' family life; and,* (iii) *families reaching out and looking forward*. These themes encompass the generative mechanisms, (social and psychological) through which families are able to actualise.

## 5.2 Feeling better as a family

In this section I detail how social tourism can improve family outlook through providing with something to look forward to; a time to relax, think and reflect; and alleviate parental guilt. These are key socio-psychological mechanisms that enable families to start feeling better about themselves.

### 5.2.1 Having something to look forward to

Getting away from the daily grind and the change in environment was critical and urgent for all the families interviewed. As detailed in chapter 4, families struggled on a daily basis, whether it was caring responsibilities, financial struggles, or mental health issues. Thus, having something to look forward to and the chance of being away from their current environment, even for a few days, was reason enough to become excited:

> *H: Excitement of when the details of the holiday came through*
>
> *The whole excitement of packing a case, getting on a train, getting to the place, you know, it's a bit of an adventure. (Support worker 1)*

For the families' interviewed, daily life was such that there was nothing normally that generated excitement, hence the reason for the emotional reaction. The thought of being able to get away from their current environment had an almost instant psychological uplift for families, who normally felt stressed, tired, and anxious.

The idea of escaping from the day-to-day worries is well established in tourism literature (e.g., Urry, 1990), as well as in social tourism research (Minnaert et al., 2009). Similar findings were found by Hazel (2005), where tourism provides a form of enactive experience that is more apparent for families on very low income. Thus, it was not surprising to see that for many of the participants the benefits of the holiday started long before the holiday had even begun. Most of the participants had never been away and the benefit can be seen as *D* states:

> *D: To be honest when I found out they offered me the holiday, I cried my eyes out, I couldn't believe it.*

*D* is a single mother who has left a domestic abuse situation and struggles with her teenage daughter's behaviour, often finding it difficult to cope. Simply applying and being accepted for a holiday, represents a positive experience in itself for *D*, it has an almost instant impact of reducing many negative emotions:

> *D: Well to be honest with you, I wasn't sure who was more excited me or the kids.*

Living in challenging circumstances for long periods of time can be debilitating and experiencing high levels of anxiety and stress make families more vulnerable to dysfunction (Bandura, 1997). The idea of the holiday produces immediate changes in emotive states which can also impact on self-efficacy beliefs. *D* reports how it made a difference to all of the family, and especially in her children's behaviour. During the holiday *D* was relaxed and happier, this was in contrast to how she normally feels.

### 5.2.2 Time to relax, think and reflect

According to family systems theory the family is a multifaceted social unit in which family members interact and influence each other's behaviour, thus if inefficacious trains of thought prevail for adults in the family, then this

has collective consequences for the rest of the family too. For example, extensive research informs us the negative impact parental stress has on child outcomes (Jones et al., 2021). The constant stress encountered by families living in difficult circumstances leads to the shrinking of already waning resources. For the families interviewed, they do not always have the strategies in place to cope with the demands that their life makes on them. However, whilst on holiday, as with any holiday, normal life demands are temporarily suspended (Urry, 1990), leaving the mental distance to enable positive cognitions and psychological mechanisms, such as self-efficacy to be prompted. The holiday thus changes affective cognitive processes and lowers stress levels, thereby renewing efficacy beliefs; families are able to put stressors into perspective and manage them rationally. The holiday presents a time when families are able to relax and enjoy time together:

> *J: It was nice because…when I got there … they just felt. Oh gosh, I remember thinking that, um, like we like, relax for a moment. Um, I guess being I was just not worried about the stressors at home and everything. I yeah, probably put in my whatever issues were in my mind aside for a minute and just kind of making the most being there with them.*

*J* noticed how there was just '*less shouting'* whilst she was on holiday. Feeling more relaxed and this of course impacts on other members of the family too.

As stated earlier, social tourism as an intervention fits the template of a strength-based approach which begins with the premise that families have existing capabilities that need to be unlocked (Rappaport, 1981). In the extract below family *H* have, up until the last few years, been fairly efficacious and functioning well and the holiday helps them draw out their strengths and not just focus on problems:

> *H: Of course, we're on holiday, we're washing up, it's different. It's so different. You know that you won't worry about mess…it's not the same as all the toys, so you just think about all the things you have to do to the house, all the things that are wrong, you know…. just totally just feels totally different. It's just it's a different experience…. We just felt 'cause we're in that sort of different frame of*

*mind. We could be more imaginative about what we wanted and talk to my daughter about… it wasn't just an everyday drudgery of oh God, we will get the dinner ready yet, but what we're gonna cook today. It was exciting. Or, you know, we're going to go to the shop. Just for those three days …it just for her [daughter]. So, it was a bit more exciting, and I've always loved going away. I've always loved being away*.

In the extract above *H* describes how the usual domesticities of family life continue whilst on holiday but it feels different. This shift in affective cognitions seems critical in feeling more efficacious, in the case of *H* the holiday provides the right conditions to unlock capabilities that she had forgotten she had. Individuals feeling inefficacious when performing tasks will heighten the level of subjective stress, but where self-efficacy beliefs are stronger anxiety levels are shown to be lower (Bandura, 1997). The holiday environment raises expectations both for themselves and others - they can influence and make expectations in a way they could not before.

The ability to self-regulate thought processes plays a critical role in maintaining emotional well-being too (Benight and Bandura, 2004). Many of the families disclosed issues with mental health and generally depressive episodes as detailed in section 4.2.2. This becomes problematic when individuals are unable to rid themselves of faulty or negative cognitions, they can preoccupy the mind and lead to further anxiety (Kent and Gibbons, 1987; Salkovskis and Harrison, 1984; Benight and Bandura, 2004). For example, *N* is seeking asylum and currently experiencing acute levels of stress due in part to the prolonged asylum application process, but she also goes into detail about the challenging political climate in her country of origin. It was apparent that these issues played on her mind, and she felt overwhelmed by them to the extent that it impacted on family life. Yet, many of the issues *N* was referring to she had little control over, since they are occurring at a macro level, for example the historical geo-political forces of her home country reside in the real domain, even though its impact is very real and experienced by families. In the same way, when *D* discusses her domestic abuse situation, this involves socio-economic and patriarchal forces outside her control. This becomes

increasingly problematic when it impacts on family efficacy and family functioning. Yet, whilst on holiday the families can for a short while feel less burdened by these worries:

> *D: I left sort of aggressive relationship um four years ago and I moved to …, with my daughter and my son, and I've just had quite a lot of problems with my daughter, so I've been so stressed out yeah so, they've done a lot to support me and help me really since I've lived here. Because I'm in an area where I don't know anyone, I don't drive, it just, it's all been kinda stressful and they just thought it be good, it would help us out and it did... I'm so grateful ... Because it did give a really good weekend yeah, it's lovely… improved our relationship because we was away from the house, just away from, you know, ...doors banging, things being thrown about and we got to spend time in uh happy surrounding you know, sort of uh, bit of um sand, bit of sea shells, lovely view, there was like the arcades there, we seen boats, we've done things we wouldn't have done in my house.*

The holiday then presents as a unique experience since families are away from the usual social and structural factors that impede them, this can trigger psychological mechanisms that are normally curtailed. Issues that can stifle normal life, on holiday become almost benign, since families are not immediately confronted by them. For example, *B* describes how the needs of one of her children takes over their family life. However, whilst on holiday the physical distance allows her to do and think about other things. She has better control over her thoughts, seeing herself on holiday with her able-bodied child minimises stress and anxiety. This can release the mind of unhelpful thoughts, positively impacting families emotionally, psychologically, and behaviourally (Benight and Bandura, 2004). The holiday as an enactive experience gives families confidence and individuals are able to distinguish between genuine threats compared to those cognitively induced.

> *N: We are focusing on that time, not there, not about this situation we're in, so I suppose like a very good distraction.*

For others like *C*, also seeking asylum, whilst on holiday she can sit down and make a list:

> *C: …when we were at the holiday because I had time to like sit down. Do some list of things I want to do, and when I was at home, then I didn't even think of anything like that. So, I was able to write some things down.*

This may seem quite simple but being able to sit down and make a list was the result of her feeling more relaxed. This list included all the things *C* wanted to do when she returned home. In later sections (5.5.1) I discuss the importance of planning but the pertinent point, here, is that during the holiday parents tend to be more relaxed, calmer, and able to provide a positive proximal process that can permit family members to unwind and enjoy themselves:

> *J: There were moments where like I was like oh my God. But like for how stressed I was before, you know, when I was there, there was definitely like more moments of just feeling like sitting on a beach, lying there with the sun on you in know what I mean and then the kids, I get all that. I got some amazing photos; you know when you just got them in the distance on the beach and then. Like just watching them building a sandcastle over there while messing around with the waves over there. You know what I mean like, like those moments like I would not have had that at home like if I was shouting at them would just and move on to the next incident.*

In the extract above the simple act of watching her children play on the beach provides *J* with a sense of ease and fulfilment that is normally not possible. There are significant relational processes at play, in particular how family members are interacting; each member of the family will have their own sense of self-efficacy but in a positive environment they will nourish each other's, something that, normally, is limited. For example, *D's* daughter is helping out at mealtimes on holiday - something that never happens at home. This makes *D* feel better too:

> *D: She was happy, she was getting involved, and making the food, clearing up …we come back positive, with a clear mind, we've been out house, we had problems in, away for a weekend, new surroundings, lovely things to look at, lovely genuine people, that was probably in the same situation as us, just getting away with their kids and we forced to spend time with each other altogether rather than this one marching off to her room, or this one going out, it was just nice, we gelled back together.*

Family interactions and processes are important, and how families interact during the holiday form part of the contextual mechanisms that

promote family efficacy and family functioning. Most of the families have never had an opportunity where autonomy and self-direction can be utilised. The holiday presents a microsystem where proximal processes take place and contextual mechanisms are activated, for example, children playing (proximal process) on the beach (contextual mechanism).

There is an interplay between environmental stressors and psychosocial factors (Benight and Bandura, 2014). In accordance with social cognitive theory people are agents, proactive in their adaption, and do not have to let environmental stressors turn into personal vulnerabilities. For enablement to protect and to equip individuals to construct and select the environment, they require self-efficacious beliefs. It is argued that guided mastery experiences instil strong efficacy beliefs which means they are able to dismiss perturbing thoughts that may otherwise infringe on family life (Benight and Bandura, 2004). Social tourism provides just such a guided mastery experience.

### 5.2.3 Alleviating parental guilt

As soon as families are accepted for a holiday they begin to feel better as the holiday provides families something to focus on and look forward to, this is very similar to any other family looking forward to a holiday. However, the families I spoke to are different since their finances prevent them from participating in a holiday without the help of organisations such as FHA. Yet, prevailing societal discourse holds parents solely responsible for providing for their children and when parents are unable to live up to these expectations embarrassment and worthlessness compound low self-efficacy. Parental guilt surfaced numerous times, as many parents felt responsible for not being able to provide for their children in the manner they would like to:

> *…'cause they say they all feel like they're letting their children down, especially the ones who are very poor. (Support professional 9 for J)*

Poor mental health can be further exasperated with feelings of guilt around parents not being able to provide for their children in the way they would like to:

> *K: I am not able to provide…things which they deserve.*

*B: I think as she gets older it becomes more difficult because she sees other families how they interact, how they are, and she can see the difference. She is more aware of the difference I think now...She's at that resentful stage, just a lot more aware.*

In this extract most of *B's* psychological, social, and economic resources are spent on her child with autism thus leaving her other children feeling neglected. This not only impacts the child but parents as well as they have little to feel good about, which lowers parental efficacy. In enabling *B* to take her child away for a short break is not only a disparate experience for the whole family, but also an immensely empowering experience for parents who normally feel they are unable to provide the way other parents do:

*B: It just gave us a massive positive boost um because been years since we've been on holiday, we're not able to afford it anymore.*

The holiday then becomes an enactive mastery experience in itself, boosting their self-esteem (Minnaert et al., 2010) and parental efficacy:

*J: I mean just being able to be away with them. Proud as well as to take them away… I think when I came back, just knowing that I've done that with them, I think was like I don't know, we were buzzing for ages really afterwards.*

The 'buzzing for ages afterwards' shows that, in the short-term at least, families felt the positive effects of the holidays on wellbeing. Many of the families reported that the effects of the holiday continued for a few months after the holiday. This may, in part, be due to the distinctive nature of the event. Normally there was little opportunity to exercise parental efficacy, thus further exasperating feelings of despondency. However, when the opportunity of the holiday presents itself, parenting efficacy is triggered:

*J: Just knowing that I've done that with them, I think was like I don't know… maybe I shouldn't put this pressure on myself, but I don't want to feel like they're missing out, yeah. So that kind of worries me a lot what they're missing out on. I guess when they got on the holiday for moment they weren't missing out. They were like lucky…proud as well as to take them away.*

Furthermore, it is natural for parents to compare themselves with others around them and since holidays, going away, and participating in leisure

are normalised activities this can add to the mental stress many parents feel. Holidays are always painted in an idealised light in family lore with the focus on togetherness, shared experiences and opportunities for family bonding (Hilbrecht et al., 2008). Social modelling through vicarious experiences is an influential way of creating and strengthening efficacy beliefs. By seeing others similar to them succeed they believe they can too.

In addition, not only do children experience a holiday, but they are also able to participate in other leisure activities. Children were able to take part in activities that otherwise would not be open to them. For example, swimming was a primary activity for most families; as *D* states, they stayed right to the last swim:

> *D: We loved it best time of my life, it just went so quick too quick [laughs] we stayed right to the end got our last swim in.*

However, for the families in the research - this is far from normal. For example, many of the families enjoyed swimming whilst they were away but something could not carry on when returning home. The cost of taking your child swimming is out of reach not only for families on welfare benefits but also those on low incomes. Thus, there remains this mismatch between psychological mechanisms and structural mechanisms since there is only so much that an individual can do when structures are inflexible. Nonetheless, whilst on holiday families notice a change in emotional and psychological states and, although often these are described as the weakest influence on self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997), they are still quite powerful as the interview extracts suggest.

### 5.3 Performing 'normal' family life

At a physical level families exist through family practices (Morgan, 1996, 2011), as detailed in chapter 2. A family's perceived socio-economic position in society will influence how they are treated and the resources to which they have access. These relations are reinforced through family practices. A holiday is a key family practice and when families are unable to participate, they are deemed failing or deviant. However, social tourism aims to address this gap. At a macro level, it addresses socio-structural inequalities, by enabling families to

participate in a holiday that they would otherwise be excluded from. However, equally important to the project is the role social tourism plays at a micro familial level, that facilitates normative familial processes. The holiday provides an opportunity to fulfil family potential that the confines of their everyday life do not always allow:

> *It was fairer on the kids that they were able to tell their friends look oh we're going to a caravan on holiday, and when they came back from the holiday that was one of the things in school you know they were able to speak to teachers about it and tell their story and draw their pictures. (Support worker 1)*

As much as a holiday represents escape it also represents spending more time 'with' the family, enabling fun activities and creating positive memories (Schänzel, 2012; Shaw, 2008). Families value spending time together (Lehto et al., 2009). 'Togetherness' and 'family time' are entrenched in Western family discourse (Daly, 1996; Shaw, 2008). Yet, at the same time, there is a perception that families are too busy to eat, have fun and play together (Schänzel et al., 2012). During the holiday families are able to reconnect, bond and generally spend more time with children when parents are less stressed and more relaxed (Schänzel, 2013):

> *B: Yes, it was a special time, also we've just got very disconnected from one another because of the way it has to be. You know our lives have been dictated by [child's] needs, and my husband has to do the night shift so we're all just passing ships. You know he works at night and then he's around to help with [child] in the day.*

Here, B details how life is dictated by one of her child's needs, leaving little time for their other children to have a 'normal family life', thus it was:

> *B: It was just lovely to have some normal family time.*

As detailed in the previous chapter all of the families had limited resources both socially and psychologically that inhibited their ability to participate in what they regarded as normal family activities. However, the holiday offers an avenue through which they are able to experience stable family life for a short while. In subsequent sections I detail family routines, family being active together and displaying family as a key social mechanism through which they are able to perform 'normal' family life.

### 5.3.1 The role of family routines

It is suggested that children's primary goal from a holiday is activities (Gram, 2005). Children are not "burdened by cultural ideals" (Gram, 2005: 4) in the same way as adults; 'things to do' and 'beaches' seem to be key the ingredients of a good holiday (Cullingford, 1995). Many of the families interviewed had a beach holiday, and they are the preferred holidays for families with children. Those that opted for short city breaks usually resided in coastal towns, thus looking for something different from their normal environment (e.g., family *B* and *G*). Mikkelsen and Blichfeldt (2015: 252) suggest that what is meant by 'children having a good time' depended on specific holiday contexts and settings. Their research focused on what they describe as a 'mundane' family caravan holiday, where the focus is on families strengthening bonds by engaging in activities and also 'doing' sociality, part of which is carrying out the mundane every day, such as, cooking and clearing up. Many participants reported how children helped with the cooking and even looking out for younger siblings:

> *D: She was happy, she was getting involved, and making the food, clearing up. Make sure everything was spotless before we left.*

Here, D is referring to her teenage daughter who normally does not help around the house but, on holiday, was happily involved. This all contributes to children's learning experiences that, in normal day to day life, there is less opportunity to share mundane chores, it is often easier and quicker for parents to complete tasks themselves. Everyday simplicities are part of wider developmental processes (Mikkelsen and Blichfeldt, 2015). As Carr (2011: 18) suggests, the freedom and exploration of the holiday allows "the development of children into functioning members of adult society". Thus, a caravan site also offers safe boundaries, where the mundane, playing, riding a bike, or helping with dinner has potential for wider developmental implications (Mikkelsen and Blichfeldt, 2015). For many the pace of everyday life did not allow children to engage in these processes, but when it does it enhances family efficacy and family functioning.

What is regarded as quality time on holiday can vary, and research shows that ordinariness and routine is important for children in normal life but on holiday this is suspended (Christensen, 2002). Hilbrecht et al. (2008) suggest children look forward to participating in activities that they previously experienced, and it is not so much about day-to-day routine but just the chance to participate in some familiar holiday experiences. Yet, for some of the families interviewed, the day-to-day routine was also important; furthermore, families who had previously lacked good routine, 'picked-up' some good habits (support worker 3).

> *When you have hotel breakfasts and at a certain time dinners at a certain time and things like that. They just related to it to actually the girls are enjoying they have to get up for their breakfast.... I think it helped with their routine. (Support worker 3)*

Families found set mealtimes at hotels particularly good for their young children and so this carried on when they returned home. Although this was not always identified by the parents, the support worker had noticed the change:

> *Strangely, I think they were just more organised when they came back... And they didn't look … really bad from being stuck inside for months on end. So that was pretty good, and they were full of energy, which is always another good sign that everything's OK. Yeah, I think they went from 'this is too much of an effort to do anything to actually, if we make the effort to do it, we feel better'. So, I think that's probably what they probably don't even realise they've picked it up from that holiday, but I think that's where it came from. (Support Worker 3)*

Furthermore, children also expected meals at set times and felt more confident asking parents when they returned home (support worker *1*). As the majority of children in the research were young - under 10 with a few just hitting their early teens - routine can still be really important. Family routines have been shown to be important for development of social skills and academic success (Arlinghaus and Johnston, 2019; Spagnola and Fiese, 2007). For example, bedtime routines have been shown to improve family functioning

(Mindell and Williamson, 2018). Although routines were difficult during Covid-19 lockdown, family *G* still managed to maintain some routine for the children:

> *He has been making a concerted effort to get up, get breakfast, not necessarily get dressed, but then to go out bit midday or something in, you know, leave late noon, and if you like, late morning early afternoon. He's been taking them out and they were telling me that they had. (Support worker 3)*

This particular family went from:

> *This is too much of an effort to do anything, to actually, if we make the effort to do it, we feel better. So, I think that's … they probably don't even realise they've picked it up from that holiday, but I think that's where it came from. (Support worker 3)*

Here, the support worker is discussing a young family (*G*) again, a couple with two young girls. Both struggle on a day-to-day basis, with a complex mix of physical and mental health issues that means that they are unlikely to work in the near future. However, the holiday did have a positive impact in terms of routine, especially for their children, even if they were not aware of it themselves. Self-efficacy is a cognitive construct that has a strong affective element and, accordingly, the change in environment can modify how one feels and thinks (Bandura, 1997). The change in physical environment for many of these families had almost an instant impact on affective disposition. There were changes to their pragmatic efficacy which can lead to longer term changes to family functioning. Pragmatic efficacy is a domain of family efficacy that essentially involves establishing rules to keep family members safe (Kao and Caldwell, 2017). Hence the organised nature of the holiday helped families build pragmatic efficacy too. Support worker *3* for *G* had recently visited them, delivering a support pack during Covid-19, and had noticed that the girls were up, ready and keen to speak to her at the doorstep, something that in the past was unlikely.

Furthermore, the scheduled nature of the holiday proved particularly beneficial for those with children with autism, as the stresses of normal day to day life make routines difficult:

> *A: …normal day … at the minute it's just when this is ongoing with her medical problems, she'll have like 40 hours of being awake, like and then*

> *maybe like sleeping like through the daytime, so it's all up and down, um, she hasn't got much. Um, a like a daytime plan because … she'll just physically exhausted, but on the holiday was sort of gotta her back bit of a routine um and then first thing in the morning we were out with plans. You had to sort of make plans to tell like what's gonna happen no surprises sort of thing but yeah, we thought about it more, about her routine, will do this and then do that and then go back for tea then go out in the nighttime. You know like a bit of structure which is missing that were hoping to get back um obviously she's got her issues and that that's why she's got a psychiatrist.*

Here, *A* is describing what a typical day can usually mean for him and his family. *A's* daughter had been out of school since before the pandemic, with issues particularly spiralling when she started high school. However, during the holiday the days were planned in advance, this allowed *A* to see what was achievable with his daughter, some of which was then implemented back home. Participant *A* was one of the parents especially anxious about taking his daughter away, mainly worried about how she would cope being out of the home environment. However, this was one family that particularly benefitted from the holiday, which is reflected by the following:

> *He went away with one child, quite angry, quite anxious, and very argumentative, she was quite argumentative with his girlfriend, and he says when she got there it was like completely changed her whole personality. So, they went with a horrible child and came back with a lovely child*. *(Support worker 2)*

Although her health concerns mean she is not still at school when I spoke to them last, the behaviour that was particularly troubling such as sitting in her bedroom all day and self-harming had significantly reduced. *A's* daughter was now receiving one-to-one online tutor support and was also involved with things around the house such as cooking with her dad.

It is often completing ordinary household tasks together that builds family relationships. In theoretical terms this is referred to as filial efficacy, which falls under the umbrella of family efficacy, referring to a child's capacity to establish and maintain good relationships with parents whilst maintaining autonomy, and is linked to better communication and fewer family conflicts (Caprara et al., 2005). There were clear, noticeable changes in both filial efficacy and behaviour with regard to *A's* daughter, observed by both her father and support worker. A closer parent child relationship means children engage

in less risky behaviours in adolescence (Lac et al., 2011; Mogro-Wilson, 2008; Turner and Sanders, 2006). *A's* daughter was just at the beginning of adolescence, so timing of the holiday was critical as in any intervention. High filial efficacy equates to better relationships with parents and children are more likely to confide in parents, all of which contributes to a sense of family efficacy where the family believe they can manage their affairs (Bandura et al., 2011).

However, many of these changes are not instinctive, and participating in social tourism in itself does not bring about positive changes. Instead families required a significant support and encouragement from the support worker. Often changes to routine are initiated when families are advised by support professionals to start planning for the holiday, even advising them to start thinking about the food they are likely to need on holiday:

> *In the run up to it, you know they had been making sure that there was stuff in for dinner. I mean, you know, and it was basic things like you know, pasta or just having cereal in … the basics milk bread eggs and so they will be able to take this on holiday with them… (Support worker 1)*

Importantly, this then filtered into normal daily life:

> *Once they realised … you know … just say I can write a menu thing and repeat every fortnight or something like that. Yeah, you know it's not it's not too difficult… Food items in your cupboard you know, so yeah, yeah. I think ...they learned a lot. And I think the children have as well learned for themselves expectations of having a breakfast, lunch, and dinner and hopefully that'll carry them on into adulthood themselves. (Support worker 1)*

Here, the support worker is describing a family that were caring and loving in most ways, but the children were taken into care for a short period as the parents neglected to provide the basics, such as substantial meals or clean school uniforms. The holiday was offered to the family as a result of lots of input from the support worker and the holiday seemed to cement many of those key skills and routines needed with young children.

Thus far I have demonstrated the role routine plays in building family efficacy and family functioning. Pragmatic family efficacy concerns how a family operates as a unit, their rituals, routines, spending time together, maintaining family boundaries and parents monitoring. During the holiday parents were

present in all aspects of family life providing structure and security (Kao and Caldwell, 2017). As one parent notes:

> *D: Just getting away with the kids and we were forced to spend time with each other altogether rather than this one marching off to her room, or this one going out, it was just nice, we gelled back together.*

Being together in a different space means that the family can then draw strength from spending quality time together. Parents can set boundaries and expectations; it appears easier to change 'the rules' or 'new rules apply' whilst on holiday. Subsequently, some families participate in regular family activities, such as involving the children when preparing meals or going cycling each week. The consistency that rules and clear boundaries provide offers families stability and strength (Kao and Caldwell, 2017). Through such parenting practices family efficacy can be established which, in turn, has implications for the behaviour of children especially when they reach adolescence (Kao and Caldwell, 2017).

Bronfenbrenner viewed such proximal processes as the 'engine force' driving development (Jaeger, 2016). The proximal processes that occur on holiday are situated within the microsystem and act as mechanisms, for example, positive proximal processes that occur between children and adults that contribute to development (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994). According to Bronfenbrenner, microsystems need to be calm, stable, and predictable which need to include routines such as bedtime routines (bath, story) all of which facilitate positive development in children. For many families in the research, normal life can be less than stable and more unpredictable - all of which undermines child development and generally has a negative impact on family life. Where parents provide authoritative parenting (establishing rules, monitoring, consistent discipline), this is actually an expression of parents' affection and support of the child (Simons et al., 2005). Furthermore, authoritative parenting is positively associated with school achievement and psychological and social well-being (Steinberg et al., 1992).

### 5.3.2 Practicing family togetherness

In the previous section I have detailed how family identity is consolidated by engaging in everyday proximal processes such as daily family routine. In this section I move on to discuss the importance of families being active together.

A key proximal process during the holiday is families being active together. Families, through physical processes such as going for a walk or cycling, can improve psychological well-being and, consequently, become more efficacious. Studies show that, for children, holidays are about being physically active and having fun (Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Small, 2008). Swimming was the main activity families participated in. Others mentioned cycling, walking, camping and lighting bonfires. These "core" family activities such as camping, or swimming were dominant because it was not simply about experiencing new activities but the stability the family holiday offered. Poor weather did not seem to have an impact on the holiday, with the focus on doing activities together, being together, trying something different (although nothing too different or unusual was mentioned), e.g., sitting on the beach, and the general change from the usual routine. Social tourism families like the reassurance offered by doing normal activities, these core activities are enough; as one support worker stated, families she works with do not really ask for much because they are used to so little (support worker *9*).

The activities were important in sharing and reinforcing a family's sense of identity (Hilbrecht et al., 2008). Even when the trip was cut short (e.g., through illness, e.g., *H*) families still experienced something rewarding and would like to repeat if possible. Furthermore, the holiday in itself was a novel or different activity for families - simply going away was all that was needed. As discussed earlier this provides a mastery efficacy experience in itself, for parents knowing that they are able to provide normal family activities offers reassurance to parents, thus improving efficacy beliefs. Parents prioritise the family holiday as being about experiencing family togetherness in a stress-free environment (Shaw, 2008).

A question that arises is whether families already function quite well or do the shared experiences on holiday create positive family functioning (Hilbrecht et al., 2008). How much do pre-existing dynamics determine the family holiday experience? Although Hilbrecht suggests that the family holiday has little effect on usual sibling dynamics, for the families interviewed it did seem to improve sibling relations. *A's* daughter was very unaccepting of a new baby sibling, but spending time on holiday together – by simply sitting together on a ride - appeared to trigger changes in the daughter to the point that the support worker described them as:

> *A quite fractious family and came back with very happy family and that's continued since the break. (Support worker 2)*

It has been suggested that, on holiday, families are often in closer proximity than in their normal home environment (Carr, 2011). For example, many of the families shared a caravan:

> *But the dad certainly helped out and uh he was kinda doing his best from his limited parenting knowledge. Um so um they were as excited as the children actually getting away you know the novelty of being in a caravan and uh you know just um all the things that go with it, nice place to sleep a few nights and uh you know the facilities round it. (Support worker 1)*

> *B: We were all looking through this booklet and planning out what we'd like to do and we picked an activity we liked, it was just lovely and then we go to the holiday she was so excited to be sleeping in bunk beds, even just something simple as sleeping in bunk beds. She couldn't wait to get to bed that night. So, it was just lovely.*

The novelty factor, coupled with the reassurance that they are 'doing' normal family activities seems to absolve many issues. Through activities such as swimming or walking there is time to work on intra-familial relations that otherwise are overlooked.

The holiday thus serves to guide and strengthen family relationships with immediate and extended family (Schänzel, 2013). Having fun, feeling happy, a sense of adventure, new experiences in a secure and stable environment are all very important (Hilbrecht et al., 2008), working as emotive mechanisms that enable families to feel more efficacious. Although some parents may have used the opportunity to purposively develop skills or

educational aspects (a few mentioned this) this may have happened unintentionally. Family identity and social cohesion through having fun and being a family together was more important. Whilst in this research I was not able to speak to younger members of the family, parents' narrative is congruent with other research about children's experiences (Hilbrecht et al., 2008). Interventions work if they are parent-driven, respecting the intimate nature of family life and are not as simplistic as focusing on parenting skills (Hartas, 2014). This is why social tourism works so well as an intervention – it is family-driven, this gives families ownership and a stake in their own life.

Family efficacy theory informs us that being task-orientated, is a good way to maintain connection with children especially having a shared interest. Families are often defined by what they do together. However, for many of these families' financial restraints inhibit what is possible:

> *D: We go to the park, that's all I can really afford to do. When we went away, it was amazing 'cause everything was there to hand, like we didn't need like loads of money because there was only 2ps arcade machines, obviously if we had more money, we could have done a lot more, but I didn't really have the funds. There were swimming facilities there, so we went swimming everyday, it was nice, but I try to keep my kids busy at the moment especially the little one at the weekend. But there is only so much walking you can do round where I live and the parks and 'cause I don't drive it's just awkward but yeah that was just lovely it was amazing.*

Swimming was mentioned by nearly all the families and something they would continue to do if there were not the financial restraints:

> *M: Definitely I'm looking … for swimming it's really cost us £8.00 for a family… so …they could eat well, or they can, you know, go for something extra… [such as swimming]*

Being active together also boosts confidence as well as allowing parents to be seen in a positive light by their children:

> *It was the dads showing the kids … So, what we do is we look at the skills that these dads have or these parents you know, and we introduce it 'cause it's you're allowing children to see that. The parents take control 'cause it shows them that they are appreciated, and they need it and it makes the kids feel great. OK dad can do that … If you are working with dads that have low self-esteem and you give them that control … You've got this boost, it makes them feel that bit better you know, so works on their self-esteem. (Support worker 10)*

Here, support worker *10* works in supporting dads, and being active seems particularly vital:

> *Building dens from fallen trees and stuff and how to cook outdoors... it's you know it's all about being fun and educational … I did introduce camping to a lot of the families that that we support. And when we go out, we borrow tents … and sleeping bags and we just go somewhere local ... we introduce different activities, and it sets them up for life…We're gonna put up a tent right? So, there's order. You need to communicate. Otherwise, that tent is gonna collapse and you're going to get wet at night. (Support worker 10)*

The lack of familiarity coupled with financial constraints inhibits families from participating in many activities but once introduced, these activities can play a key role in strengthening family efficacy leading to positive behavioural changes. Camping seemed to offer many benefits to family life, a simple task of putting up a tent requires families to communicate and coordinate themselves. Some of the families went on to purchase their own camping equipment or borrowed equipment to regularly go camping:

> *…'cause they had seen it we introduced that, and we had families such as oh can we borrow tent … we want to go camping with the pal and blah blah blah so so you're making them independent as well. (Support worker10)*

A camping holiday, here, appears to provide a unique and powerful ecology to promote family efficacy, as families are required to acquire and use skills to overcome a designated challenge which optimises experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). When efficacy beliefs are established, they may then be relevant to other areas of family life such as resolving conflict. Furthermore, camping also offers an opportunity for mastery experiences which, according to Bandura, is one of the most powerful sources of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997). By overcoming the challenge of erecting a tent together, the family then go on to believe they are capable of achieving other things such as also being persistent when facing adversity (Wells et al., 2004). There are also further aspects that link to family functioning such as cohesiveness and communication. Camping stimulates family interaction (Wells et al., 2004), so families are more likely to resolve conflict, and search for alternative solutions because they believe in their ability (Bandura, 1997). Furthermore, camping provides a modality that promotes positive family interactions (Wells et al.,

2004), the skills learnt here can carry over into other aspects of family life and lead to long-term behavioural changes:

> *F: …light fires and stuff like that, also you could hire bikes which we did. We had mountain bikes... which when I come back from that actually invested with the help of [organisation] to get our mountain bikes, and I've carried on doing that with my little boy... and during the lockdown, it was great, it's what we did. We went out and found like country tracks and stuff, you know trails and things like that right out in the country.*

Being active together is a key component of the experiential nature of holidays. For participant *F,* here, it meant he was able to establish a relationship with this young son. Having spent most of his life struggling with substance misuse, he felt he had finally reached a turning point. The short break reintroduced him to activities he had participated in as a child such as biking and camping, which continued after the break especially during Covid-19:

> *F: We were going on bike rides into the countryside. I had the same old ordinance survey maps of the area and we was you know that, obviously restricted on how far we could go with the time we could go out. But we were finding new trails and now I'm finding new, even lakes that I didn't even know was in the area and woods in the you know, woodlands and things like that…We found all these farms and things like that, and where we used to see these cows and these even these cows got to know us …He loved to go and see the cows…*

Family efficacy as a construct suggests that families work collectively as an interconnected unit able to overcome any arising situations and conflicts. For participant *F* there was marked change in self-efficacy, his perception of parenting efficacy linked to positive parenting behaviours and constructive strategies (Leidy et al., 2010). Research has shown how higher family and parenting efficacy acts as a buffer for disadvantaged children living in an inner-city where there may be many potential risks (Leidy et al., 2010; Lac et al., 2011). Thus, there may be long-lasting implications when family efficacy and family functioning is improved.

### 5.3.3 Displaying family

A holiday not only allows families to reflect on what they value as a family but also tells them who they are in terms of identity. The idea of 'doing' family is a key priority for families, as discussed in the previous section, and far more important than structural aspects (Dermott and Seymour, 2011; Morgan,

1996). A related notion is Finch's (2007) concept of 'displaying families' that is "*families need to be 'displayed' as well as to be 'done'*" (Finch, 2007: 66). This 'display' is about individuals and groups expressing to relevant audiences that certain actions or behaviours constitute 'doing family' that then confirms family relations. Thus, emphasising the very social nature of family practices (Dermott and Seymour, 2011; Finch, 2007).

> *D: We've actually got the seashells that we collected we've put them in a vase with little battery-operated lights, as a nightlight in our bathroom, so every time you go in the bathroom, it's like oh yeah, that's... when we went away.*

In the extract above *D* displays her souvenir in the bathroom – the audience is, for the most part, her and her immediate family, within the family home. It is a reminder of the time she was able to take the children away:

*D: At least when my kids get older, at least they can say they had one holiday with me.*

An important element of the holiday is being able to tell others, as *B* suggests below, this is a family not simply defined by their child's disability:

> *B: So, it had a positive effect because the neighbours sort of shy away because it's all doom and gloom, this has happened that's happened. It was lovely to have something positive to talk to people about, so it was nice we had some good news to share so it was lovely to be able to do that.*

Being able to speak to friends and neighbours about the holiday experience can work as a key social mechanism in improving not only family efficacy and parental efficacy, but also increase confidence and create a positive family identity. As such, families with disability seem especially vulnerable; for example, in the case of *B,* the demands of a child can lead to social isolation for the parent and decreasing informal support networks (Kazak, 1989). For others, displaying family may be more considered; for example, sending photos to support workers whilst on holiday, which may also be about being positively observed by others. The holiday can also be a way of displaying a legitimate family or normal family (Heaphy, 2011), since the nature of contemporary families is so diverse and fluid there is a greater need to

*display* family; thus, the need to show that "this is my family, it works" (Finch, 2007: 69-70). Although broader social and cultural ideals and the meanings that imposes cannot be ignored, especially for families I interviewed, Weeks et al. (2001) research suggests some families need more recognition, especially if they do not fit heteronormative ideals. In the same way many of the families spoken to felt they did not fit cultural and social norms and expectations of wider society (Finch, 2007).

Additionally, there is a sense of pride in the achievement of the holiday — showing each other and wider society that they too are participating in what other families do. Not only do families confirm to each other that they are participating in a family holiday, but families are also opening themselves up to public scrutiny (Finch, 2007). There is not the space, here, to explore further the concept of 'performance', that can be linked back to 1960s sociology, and one can see the overlap, although the concept of display in Finch's sense goes beyond the limited 'performance' concept utilised in sociology. More recently, Butler (1990) describes practices as 'performative' and it is through enactment that families are made. A family holiday can be the perfect opportunity to enact and practice being a family.

For others there are increasingly complex family structures meaning that many parents do not always live with their children, especially fathers. For *F,* he was able to spend an extended period time with his son and by extension his paternal grandparents:

> *F: It was just a nice to to get away and have that little bit bonding time together, OK, you know, I'm a little bit of fun together, OK, you know. Yeah, and just try and rebuild that father son relationship.*

As stated previously, *F* has spent the best part of his adult life in and out of recovery (substance abuse); his young son is a good reason for him to stay clean. The holiday arose after a significant period in rehab and was key in developing interest in activities that would help him bond with his young son. For parents who are absent for large parts of their child's life, the time they spend together can be even more significant.

Furthermore, stories and narratives about family relationships provide an avenue through which the essence of family can be transmitted to others (Finch, 2007). Finch and Mason (2000) show the importance of narratives in inheritance practices; elsewhere it has been described as family lore but, essentially, it encompasses family stories that are created and recreated over time that develop along with family relationships. For these families the holiday provides an opportunity to create a new narrative and, more importantly, a positive one – this is what defines their family and now they are *a family that holidays*. Participating in social tourism gives families a new positive family narrative that cannot be underestimated; for example, in telling the researcher about their holiday this also affirms who they are. Many of the participants would ask if I had seen the photographs they had sent to the FHA. This offers an accepted and respected account of what their family consists of (Finch, 2007), compared to previous notions and accounts.

According to Finch (2007) many aspects of 'doing' family like routine and regular actions are embedded in family life, so there is no need to display them, they are taken-for-granted actions. There is no need to display the bedtime routine when it is an ordinary part of life; however, when one parent does not live in the family home this may then require displaying since it affirms to oneself and the outside world, that they are a good parent who reads to their child (e.g., displayed on social media). In the same way social tourism is out of the ordinary, so needs to be displayed and is almost as important as the 'doing'. The family must not just be done but be 'seen to be done' (Finch, 2007).

Likewise, many of the families referred to the photographs they had taken whilst away, often displaying them in prominent places in the home or using them as displays on mobile phones. Through these images this also reaffirmed them as a family, displaying to themselves and others cohesion and intimacy (Haldrup and Larsen, 2003). The holiday and photographs represent success and a high point of family life (Haldrup and Larsen, 2003). Again, for the families interviewed it represents a more significant event because it is such a novel and unique experience. Haldrup and Larsen (2003) argue that

family tourism is driven by desire for families to find a 'home' where they imagine themselves to be that loving family - doing the mundane together (Löfgren, 1999). It helps construct a preferable family narrative. If we live in an era of 'pure relationships' (Giddens, 1992), and what once tied us together appears to be losing its grip (biology and culture), then the need to reaffirm familial relations through activities such as family holidays are even more important. Through holiday photographs these times become timeless and fixed (Haldrup and Larsen, 2003) and in an age dominated by social media this has only been heightened, as is the need to display the perfect family.

Furthermore, Bandura (2008) states that social affirmation or recognition from peers is an important aspect of human behaviour. Many of the families mentioned how children will compare themselves to peers at school who go away on holiday. Research into social comparison on social media suggests links to depressive symptoms. Li (2019) found self-efficacy as a moderator between upward social comparison on social media sites and depressive symptoms, suggesting that enhancing self-efficacy may be a good way to reduce the negative effects of social media sites in relation to social comparison. In this sense parents are under increasing pressure and strain from social comparison. The holiday, thus, has a two-fold impact: in going away parental efficacy increases through mastery experiences; but, also, the increased self-efficacy buffers the negative effects of social comparison.

In sum, this section has highlighted the social mechanisms that come into play when families participate in a holiday. Families are able to not only *do* family but *display* family too, adhering to normative societal ideals of what family life entails which, in turn, enhances both family efficacy and family functioning.

### 5.4 Families reaching out

In this final section of the findings, I aim to examine how families are able to unlock mechanisms that allow them to reach out and look forward, something that was limited before the holiday break. They do this by reaching out to other people; this builds capacity and empowers families.

### 5.4.1 Support networks (reaching out)

Section 4.3 introduced the pivotal role the support worker plays at the exo level in family life in enabling families not only in locating resources, but also providing families with support, improving family functioning and family efficacy. In this section I extend that discussion by highlighting how the support worker also assists in building family and social capital, since giving access to resources alone does not guarantee equal outcomes (Hartas, 2014). For example, many of the support workers mentioned one of their key roles with families is putting them in contact with community groups.

Theories of social capital and ecological theory inform us of the importance of environments outside the family, but for families from disadvantaged backgrounds this can be limited. So far, I have discussed how social tourism facilitates families to relate and connect with one another, in this section I move on to explore how social tourism can also act as a vehicle that enables families to relate better with the wider community allowing them active participation in society (Parsfield et al., 2015). Research into families tends to focus on parent-child relationships, but as important is the relationship between parents and wider community members (Hartas, 2014). Families do not live in isolation, they belong to wider communities; however, through socio-economic disempowerment families can feel isolated. *E* described herself feeling quite alone, not speaking to her neighbours, yet whilst on holiday she made friends and exchanged phone numbers. Others reported similar experiences such as *D* who, at home, describes herself as a bit of a 'loner':

> *D: I've got no family, I've got a couple of friends that I've made through school and all that but because of bad things that have happened in my life I like to be a bit cautious, like some people you think you know them, and you don't… I like to come home with my kids and that's my private space, I shut my door, and no one comes into my house. I know it sounds a bit lonely, but I just think, I've come from [City] people ain't nice and I just think yeah, the less people know about you the better...*

For *D* growing up in care has had a lasting impact; she lacks the safety net that a network of extended family and friends can bring. However, whilst on holiday she is happy speaking and mixing with people:

> *D: It was just nice early evening, you just walked to the little shops to get your things, or whatever it was you need, your milk your teabags, and you come back a little stroll passed everyone else's caravan, they were like "hello", we were like "hi", "evening", when you don't always get that where you live do ya, everyone's all miserable and that. But yeah, it definitely made a big difference to our lives.*

*D* was not alone in encountering friendlier and nicer people whilst on holiday. In part, of course, this is to do with their own change in outlook whilst on holiday, families are more relaxed and have more time and openness to others in the way their normal life does not permit. The caravan/holiday site presents a makeshift community, where people talk to one another. Others like *H* reported their children making friends on the beach, and this was noted as an important outcome for families.

Furthermore, the holiday park can also be a safe place for families; for example, *P* is worried about teenage granddaughters 'hanging out' in the neighbourhood with friends. However, during the holiday the caravan park was seen as a "safe ecology" for families (Mikkelsen and Blichfeldt, 2015: 266). The usefulness of the collective efficacy construct is applicable, here, since it is based on the idea that trust and cohesiveness are the bedrock of viable communities (Simons et al., 2005). Thus, much like authoritative parenting (parental efficacy) is an expression of care, so too community control can be an expression of residents' concern and commitment to their community and, consequently, deterring deviant behaviour and promoting good behaviour (Simons et al., 2005). A level of trust and social cohesion acts as a mechanism of informal social control - i.e., looking out for each other's children and the likeliness to intervene for the common good increases (Simons et al., 1997). Residents care about the welfare of their community and will become involved in joint problem solving (Simons et al., 2005).

Whilst on holiday the whole family could relax and explore their surroundings, assured that they are able to cope and not become overwhelmed by their circumstances. The holiday also represents an acknowledgment for families with a sense of acceptance that is often lacking in wider society where they can be demonised, isolated and marginalised. For social tourists this can be crucial in regaining trust and belief in other people and a recognition from wider society that they too matter:

> *H: We've never been given anything like that before. I've never, certainly, and my husband had never, you know, been given that sort of opportunity, and we felt really grateful. You know, we can, you know that it was. We were very, very appreciative. It kind of felt like someone had our back and someone was supporting us. Know it was it was. It was nice. It was nice to sort of feel that way, but yeah, they've seen that that we needed it. And not only that we needed it but could give us that gift it was. Yeah. It was, you know, quite special in that way and made us feel sort of like you. Know quite special.*

*H* highlights the importance of recognition, value and acceptance that is often missing for families living in disadvantaged environments. Through social tourism families feel less vilified, more trusting and part of wider society. This has important implications for empowering families, which I discuss next.

### 5.4.2 Capability building (empowering families)

Capability building has the potential to bring out families' 'hidden wealth' (Rowson et al., 2010: 2; Hartas, 2014: 204), the holiday enables this because it supports people's abilities and capacity for social connections. From a strength-based perspective hidden wealth exists in the relationships and strengths both within families and outside - even those defined as 'disadvantaged'. Through social tourism, families temporarily reside in a place where they are not defined in deficit terms; instead, families find they too have the capacity to raise their children, and to live and be like other families. In the case of family *G*, mum was reluctant to leave the house most days, but during the holiday there is an additional element of anonymity:

> *She basically hibernates most of the time... But I just felt if we could get [mum] out of her comfort zone and experience something different, maybe she would be more prone to go out when she's at home...a bit of paranoia that people are talking about it ... so I thought if we could offer them*

> *something away from here, where they know no one, no one knows them. (Support worker 3 for G)*

Family *G* live in a small coastal town and have lived there all their life. Support worker 3 has worked with this family over two generations. The family participated in a city break, and as a family needed significant encouragement from the support worker to actually go away. However, they returned far more confident; support worker 3 noticed that both parents seemed much better in their overall well-being. There were also longer-term changes that the holiday initiated even though families may not be aware of them themselves:

> *I went round to tell them about this at the doorstep and she just seems to be so much better than she was in 2019. And I'm considering all that's happened and having the girls, home schooling and all the rest of it. I thought I'm gonna find them in bits. Have seen [dad] out and about, but hadn't seen [mum], but actually, no they're coping really, really well. (Support worker 3 for G)*

Despite the pandemic and subsequent lockdown, family *G* were managing family life. This is quite a contrast with what family support worker *3* described as a family 'hibernating'. The enactive experience of the holiday itself unlocks potential in families that they previously never had the opportunity to envisage:

> *Um holiday with a mixture of other things, the mum's confidence just absolutely blossomed, she doesn't need so much intensive support I would say, I'm still in touch with her. Um I would say boost her confidence and support I give them has gone down a bit. And it's such a shame because before Covid we were doing a cookery programme, and she came to that um always be definitely for her that was another turning point for her and boosted her confidence and I think it was just that fact that I can do this, I can go away, I can take my family, and we can go away as a family and just recognising what other families are able to do that so am I and it helped her I think, if I can do that, I can do other things that other families do as well. So, her boys have additional support needs as well so um I think it definitely helped her to realise I can do that, I can do other things that other families do as well. (Support worker 5)*

Many of these families have grown up feeling powerless to have an impact on their environment. In critical realist terms Power1 (P1) is supporting and enabling but Power2 (P2) is the opposite, destructive and coercive (Alderson, 2021). Historical political, economic, and social structures can act as P2 for

many families; this limits their ability to influence and change their circumstances, especially when these very structures lay responsibility on the individual with little reference to wider structural inequalities that may impede agency. In contrast, the holiday empowers families by giving them choice and potency, opening up avenues of possibility. Bandura (1997) states that self-efficacy is an emergent property building gradually, and the research indicates that the holiday is a safe space where all members of the family are offered a structured opportunity to feel efficacious that involves some risk; but, with adequate scaffolding in place, family efficacy and family functioning can be enhanced. Additionally, the holiday provides appropriate challenge, which is needed to build efficacy, but there is supported autonomy which can provide a highly successful step in self-management.

In the extract below support worker (5) explains how families she has been working with have grown in confidence since returning from the holiday. However, it is not purely financial but the lack of familiarity and awareness that can inhibit participation:

> *I do think that a lot of families think that it's something they can't do - we've not got the money, how would we get there, what would we do, how would we go about it so… Once they can see they can manage it, then it's just financial so we can look into things like the Sun vouchers …Yes you can get around the financial maybe and then, but it's but it's the mental barriers that sometimes harder to get around… 'cause it's not entered their radar, it's not something they do, once they realise, they are able to do it then…*
>
> *But then other families have - another family I'm thinking about they got away and had an absolute ball and they tried … they actually booked a holiday themselves the following year um and that just sort of spurred them on because they had such a great time, right we're gonna save and we're gonna get away somewhere with the boys. (Support worker 5)*

According to Bandura (2008) there is no point motivating people if things cannot change, hence the agentic perspective. Yet, when families are provided with appropriate resources and environmental supports, they can realise changes (Bandura, 2008). Many families returned from the holiday and continued with activities that they had started whilst on holiday. For example, *P* has continued canoeing with his step-grandchildren:

> *P: I bought a canoe and me and [grandchild] went canoeing…we've got to get a license for canoe on canals and that, but I'm looking into getting a dinghy with an electric motor on it so that we can just go up and down local canal…it's just like, it's calm ain't it like and it's like they've got no worries or anything. You just watch world go by just going up canal.*

*P* described some particularly awful events and circumstances, some of which continue to have an impact on the family. The holiday offered some temporary relief where they were able to explore what they can do and be. Canoeing becomes not only a core family activity (see section 4.3.2) but also builds family efficacy and capacity. The holiday has motivated other families to make changes too; *F* describes feeling more motivated, having spent most of his adult life with substance misuse problems, but over the last year seems to be making real changes:

> *F: …you know … just motivate it myself, to do things but for some reason after the holiday. ... definitely increased my motivation to do some activities.*

In other families, also, there was a marked shift in attitude as support worker *4* discusses one of her mums who went from *'why don't people help me, to how do I help others'*:

> *Definitely switched quite a bit, because when I first met her, she was not proactive at all. It was, you know, I had to do most of the paperwork for her. You know, she wanted people to help her and now she's doing helping of the others. She knows to go and ask for certain things and. Yeah, it's very much and that's changed. (Support worker 4)*

Here, support worker *4* is referring to a parent support group that this mum had set up. Before the holiday mum was described as very passive, with mental health issues and having days when she could not get out of bed. The holiday actually initiated her leaving her husband and since then she has been far more proactive, she still has mental health issues, but she now knows where to get help. Furthermore, she has set up a parent support group that she now runs.

Other families also reported significant changes to family life:

> *So, right before the holiday off they went and came back, and daughter is now interacting with baby brother and she's playing with him. She's accepted him. They've actually just been away on holiday again a couple of weeks ago. One thing that did occur to him. We need a family holiday, which he just actually does think about now and, and the family environment*

*is much better. And the relationship with his new partner has improved. And obviously the relationship with the daughters improved as well, and so it generally they went away a quite fractious family and came back with very happy family and that's continued since the break …It far less stress. It sounds like it's quite happy little household. Now she's engaging with the school actively ... and just gonna start learning a musical instrument and she's learning German, that wouldn't have been happening at all…It's like she's got interests all of a sudden, whereas before she would either sit in the bedroom, get angry. It's reduced self-harm as well, which hasn't happened. You know they play games now together… like board games at night-time…I think she's even starting to cook with him now as well … it's a massive change. (Support worker 2 to A)*

Since speaking to *A* I learnt from his support worker, the family had gone away again, just a short break, but it was self-funded. This is in stark contrast to the family who did not think they could cope with a fully funded holiday a year earlier. Dad just did not believe that his daughter would be able to cope with the change from home. The child is now also engaging with the wider family as well:

*…and where one time she wouldn't go with him, 'cause she would just go I'm not going to see Nanna and Granddad, but she does actually enjoy going now. (Support worker for A)*

The growth in family confidence is evident which is accompanied by a new way of thinking and living becoming possible:

*They wouldn't have absolutely wouldn't have, they wouldn't have had the courage to travel, worries and things you know it's like we can't afford that, we're on benefits. Actually, if you're careful, you can then you know there's not much out there. Then you can stay for as we can get wee cheap break. Then you can actually afford it. 'Cause you gotta feed yourself when you're at home anyway. Not necessarily cost more when you're away if you're careful. (Support worker 3)*

*The readiness to do more things with the children you know like. As I said, before like that. That's not much but you know to go swimming or save some money to take them to the pictures or um. Just even though they are going walking to the park. So, you know it's just the very simple things that really don't cost too much money so yeah, I think it impacts. (Support worker 1)*

This highlights the role opportunities can play when taken up and acted upon in building capabilities (Sen, 1985). Social tourism offers respite and relief for families and a chance to be able to promote the best about themselves. Families are responsible for what happens on holiday not professionals or

wider structural factors. There is a shift in balance in family relationships, with the emphasis on competency enhancement and limiting the family's dependence on others such as social workers. From a strength point of view family relationships are principally interpersonal and intrafamilial in nature, where capacity building is both a process and benefit of family systems' intervention (Dunste and Trivette, 2009). Families become far more self-sustaining, many for the first time. Hence, family functioning involves creating a positive family identity, fostering fulfilling interaction amongst family members, promoting potential both as a family group and individual members with the ability to deal well with stressful situations when they arise (Trivette and Dunst, 1990).

Social tourism offers *in vivo* mastery of family functioning through actual experiences (Benight and Bandura, 2004). The holiday becomes a focal point in many families that they can draw strength from, because they can see that life can be different, this can trigger longer term changes.

A final point in this section involves families' desire to reciprocate and give back as a result of the holiday. Families felt incredibly grateful for the opportunity and the assistance in general they received from their support worker. As a result, many families desired to contribute to the organisations that helped them and were also willing to help the researcher with later stages of the research and even agreeing to be interviewed was a way of giving back. What is more, people who actively participate in community groups are more likely to trust one another (Jupp, 2008).

A society that focuses on individual well-being without regard for others becomes egocentric and divisive (Bandura, 2008). In contrast a society in which the well-being of others is also considered can function more humanely and equitably, with a stronger sense of civic duties (Bandura, 2008). From an agentic perspective, increasing individual well-being will enable social reforms that improve the quality of life of everyone. Social change can challenge power relations that operate at the real level; old, entrenched practices that benefit

only certain members of society, to change our lives for the better, we must challenge adverse and inequitable practices.

Furthermore, the general belief in a just world idea seems also to provide disadvantaged people the possibility of "compensatory control" (Wu et al., 2013: 5), suggesting the world is fair and orderly, which can add to the sense of control in the social world when many aspects of personal life lack any control (Bègue and Bastounis, 2003; Jost and Hunyady, 2005). Although the studies Wu et al. (2013) refer to are based in more collectivist societies it can nonetheless show relevance to Western, more individualistic, societies (Sutton and Douglas, 2005; Sutton et al., 2008; Sutton and Winnard, 2007), since just world beliefs are important psychologically among people with a focus on the future (Hafer, 2000; Hafer et al., 2005). Furthermore, belief in justice also enhances self-regulation and the ability to invest in long term goals (Laurin et al., 2011), which I discuss next.

## 5.5 Families looking forward.

In chapter two I emphasised how this project is embedded in a critical social psychology that incorporates elements of positive psychology, developing this further in the remainder of this chapter I explore the fairly under-researched concept of prospection. I argue that through planning for the holiday families are able to think about the future in a positive manner, which can be useful psychologically.

### 5.5.1 Purpose and planning

Positive psychology is often dismissed as 'feel-good psychology' because of the focus on emotional states; yet, as argued at the beginning of this thesis (sections 2.2.2), positive psychology is not just about pursuing happiness. Being content does not lead to personal growth or improve one's life conditions; broader purposes of life must also be considered, such as well-being. To this end investing in a desired future, helps people organise their lives, deal with setbacks that may occur and offers motivation. Bandura (2008) argues that when people who have no commitment to anything, nothing is worth doing, individuals can get bored and apathetic:

*Perhaps nothing to look forward to or um nothing to achieve in their life and the ... even though they might not see it as achieving something obviously they had no goals, no aspirations… Getting away and on the holiday, it wasn't the turning point. As such, but it was like an end goal, yeah, and the family work towards it. (Support worker 1)*

However, it is not enough to have a vision of the future one hopes for or cares deeply about (Locke and Latham, 1990; Bandura, 1997, 2008), but long-term goals set the direction for one's pursuits. Too many long-term goals can be distracting, whereas short-term sub-goals or proximal goals can focus attention and effort, which can turn a distal goal into reality. For families in the research a holiday acted as a proximal sub-goal; through this accomplishment, self-efficacy is built. The holiday offers a positive experience that, for some, creates an intrinsic interest in not only holidaying but also a change in long-term aspirations.

The study of prospection is about how people's beliefs and expectations about their future influences their lives in the present (Gilbert, 2006; Gilbert and Wilson, 2007). People can think about future possibilities and use those thoughts to guide more immediate behaviour (Baumeister, 2016a; Coughlin et al., 2014). Bronk and Mitchell (2021) argue purpose needs to be thought of as a prospective construct. Purpose can offer a goal-orientated framework for families and having distal goals focuses and concentrates the mind on more proximal objectives. Furthermore, purpose in life not only gives meaning to one's own life but individuals are also able to contribute meaningfully to the broader world around them. Research shows that individuals with a sense of purpose have better psychological health (Bronk et al., 2009; Colby et al., 2018). In the extract, below, support worker (6) highlights the importance of giving families a sense of purpose:

*Um but I think the chance of a holiday, them having the responsibility of getting the responsibility of the kids being there that was aspirational for them so um and they took it and you know and um they did well with it, and I do think we would still have them here in this area and I think we still we would still have to have to have some ongoing issues with them if they hadn't had the chance of the holiday … because they had improved tremendously um. (Support worker 1)*

For prominent psychologists such as (Seligman et al., 2016) cognition about the future has not featured very much in the last 120 years of psychology; instead, psychology has been preoccupied with memory (the past) and perception (the present) yet, for the most part, humans are worried about the future. Moreover, it is a core element of human agency because we transform the past and present into our projected futures. It makes sense to think about the future, anticipation can be a very useful asset for humans - since we do not necessarily need to expend any further energy. Anticipating what others do also supports cooperation and coordination which really helps in times of scarcity and competition (Railton, 2016). A prospecting mind must do the 'seeing' and 'feeling' that stimulate what the future will be like, but we place the future in what is actually seen and felt in the present (Railton, 2016).

William James famously proposed that thinking is for doing - this also applies to thinking about the future (James, 1890 cited in Railton, 2016). When most of us think about the future we think about what can be done about it. This is the difference between the past and future, the past cannot be changed, the future can. Although we can fixate on the past, research shows that we tend think more about the future than the past (Baumeister et al., 2016). Prospection is fundamentally pragmatic; we think about the future because it enables us to steer away from one outcome to another. The future is full of different possibilities, we anticipate and adjust behaviour accordingly (Baumeister et al., 2016).

Through social tourism, families are offered a rare opportunity to plan and prepare for a positive future occasion. This can instigate a whole set of underutilised skills. Families participating in social tourism are required to plan and prepare, the skills they acquire, and subsequent achievements can translate into other domains of family life. The holiday break acts as a proximal goal where self-regulatory behaviours, preparatory and planning behaviour can be exercised. Families see the positive consequences of their own effort (Latham and Seijts, 1999), making behaviour change more feasible (Barz et al., 2016). Research into self-efficacy, planning and preparatory behaviour suggest preparatory behaviour mediates the relationship between planning and actual

physical activity. Furthermore, it has been shown that individuals with low self-efficacy beliefs are more active if they have participated in preparatory behaviour (Barz et al., 2016). Essentially, planning seems to stimulate preparatory behaviour which, in turn, makes future physical activity more likely. These are important steps forward to the enactment of behavioural goals; preparatory behaviour can be particularly useful for people with self-doubt, especially when behavioural change is the goal.

Furthermore, the most common type of prospective thought is planning. Planning can ensure one set of outcomes rather than another. Planning assumes that there are multiple possible futures – so that one can change action to get what one wants (Baumeister et al., 2016; Baumeister, 2016b). In normal life we need to be able to plan ahead but for most of the families I spoke to, thinking too far ahead, had limited value since this usually involves worrying about matters that they have little control over. As the findings have so far highlighted, for many of the families the circumstances that they find themselves in, result in life being quite short-sighted, often overwhelmed by circumstances and limiting the ability to think past the current predicament. To live in challenging circumstances needs a resilient sense of efficacy that is able to withstand the pressures of everyday life.

According to Bandura (1997), perceived self-efficacy and time perspective play key roles in motivating people's behaviour. Individuals can become motivated by how they view their future selves. In social cognitive theory the importance of future orientation impacts on the ability to set goals, plan and how they will be achieved, which also influences motivation (Karniol and Ross, 1996; Bandura, 1991). Families living in disadvantaged circumstances tend to live in a present orientation. Daily life is such that it may be a survival mechanism to live in the present - one cannot afford to think too far ahead (e.g., what if my benefit claim isn't renewed, what if the home Office refuse to give me settled status). As a result an individual's temporal orientation can become skewed and this can be problematic if it impacts on current behaviour (Epel et al., 1999).

Individuals who believe they can bring about changes in their life will regard a closer connection between their action and pursuing the future they desire (Bandura, 1997; Locke & Latham, 1990). This is in contrast to those who have low self-efficacy and, thus, do not believe their actions will have an impact; consequently, they have little incentive to set distal goals for themselves which can lead to a rather fatalistic present-orientated outlook on life (Epel et al., 1999). A future perspective can play a key role in motivation, cognition and affect (Trope and Liberman, 2003; Gilbert et al., 2000). Psychological resilience is also shown to be stronger in people with a stronger focus on the future (Lerner and Miller, 1978).

Research shows people who approach life with the future in mind (Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999) or believe that their future will turn out well (Scheier and Carver, 1992), are more likely to be better adjusted psychologically and have better physical health. Mental practice benefits later performance (Jeannerod and Frak, 1999), in other words, preparing yourself helps and can be seen as an extension of a behavioural intention. A plan produces mental representation of a situation that is required for behaviour performance (Gollwitzer, 1999). So, when a specified situation occurs - in this case the holiday - behaviour will require less effort if planning has taken place. Individuals with lower self-efficacy beliefs might need more detailed preparation:

> *The whole process of being organised…It just changed everything. It just made such a huge impact because they had to get into some sort of routine to actually get away on holiday they had to organise themselves to save a bit of money to try get some uh new summer clothes even if they got a bit of support to buy them um just to pack a case to organise to tell the school my children are going on holiday, we won't be here…You know, just you know all the wee things that if you're in a normal state of mind not depressed they don't really bother, but they had to take all that you know that wee bit of responsibility um you know. (Support worker 1)*

In the extract, above, support worker *1* explains how the family starts planning for the holiday months ahead, the whole application process can take several months but also preparing the families both mentally and practically

can be crucial in the success of the break. One of the first steps is putting money aside each week, although the cost of the trip is covered by the FHA, families are asked to contribute towards spending money they may need on holiday. Given the financial constraints that families face this can be big ask but most families do:

> *A suggestion from the Family Holiday Association that you know you're in encouraged just to get that money by each week and you know, and then when you knew that they were going which I think is a is a good suggestion, although they gonna have an allowance. It's nice to know that they had made an effort like other families do if you are going on holiday … some money aside ... a tenner here or five pounds there … just get that we get that wee bit more cash. (Support worker 1)*

Planning is mental work and not always easy. When planning, people exert more control over thoughts than when they have other thoughts about the future. The mind does not drift into planning in the way that it may drift into mind wandering (Baumeister et al., 2016). Thus, planning needs mental effort because when people are mentally fatigued, they do not make plans; thus, in the extract below, *H* explains the change in outlook on the trip back:

> *H: Then on the drive back we were really positive… had fairly good kind of chat and we sort of looked at all the places, regions we were going through 'cause we went through lots of villages, and we talked about or when we're older, you know when the kids are older, and we've got some got some money…*

As much as planning is about mental effort it also makes us feel good. When people are planning, they report higher levels of happiness and, consequently, negative feelings are less likely during planning thoughts. Furthermore, making plans may actually alleviate stress. For many of the families, feeling overwhelmed was common, making their stress worse. However, planning helps manage perceived threats and issues. During the holiday families feel less mentally fatigued which enables them to plan for the future:

> *H: And we've always talked about travelling again together… you know, we just stop talking about stuff like that and … so, it's sort of recently we started talking about … we just don't talk about those things anymore because we're in the drudge of life and it's quite nice that we started to think about these.*

Thinking about the future is important in psychological terms, but the confinements of the environment, be that poverty or illness, inhibits thinking and planning for the future as one support worker put it:

> *It's like these families have lived their whole lives in lockdown.* (Support worker 9)

Furthermore, there is a pragmatic principle involved in thinking about the future since we can adapt behaviour accordingly. However, we also struggle to be accurate about the future; we know people are not always objective and do not forecast accurately so, generally speaking, most people are unrealistically optimistic (Weinstein, 1980). Nevertheless, thinking that the future is full of good things rather than bad has the advantage of making us feel good (Taylor and Brown, 1988). Usually, people predict more good things and fewer bad things. Yet, we are optimistic up until we need to make a decision and then we suddenly become more realistic and hold a less distorted view of the reality of what the future might hold (Gollwitzer, 1999; Gollwitzer and Kinney, 1989). Having positive (but possibly distorted) views of the future is advantageous because it makes us feel good, they are helpful and useful, and inspire confidence to try harder. For the families in the research there is usually little that inspires confidence in the future.

### 5.5.2 Prospection

The holiday offers a unique place where individuals are pulled by the future rather than driven by the past (Seligman et al., 2013; Bronk and Mitchell, 2021). Navigating into the future is a critical organising principle of behaviour (Seligman et al., 2013). Although individuals have a tendency to focus on the past, it is actually more useful to think about what lies ahead. This way people are not simply reacting to what happens to us and reinforcing old habits but, instead, using cognitive mapping enables individuals to be goal-directed. Cognitive mapping has shown to have therapeutic benefits, changing expectations through cognitive therapy which includes imaginative simulation of possible futures (Beck et al., 2015). Whilst on holiday, families are able to build an evaluative map of the possibilities that their environment affords them, it allows individuals to cognitively stretch beyond their actual holiday

experience and to begin to think optimistically and opportunistically about the future (Seligman et al., 2013). For some families this can instigate long-term change:

> *So it gave them a sense of purpose I think as well you know...when they came back we talked about other goals, mum wanted to move back to another area in [England] over the east coast near [city] to be nearer her family and I feel it gave her the impetuous to do this…so it wasn't just a holiday it was like opening a door to a whole new way of life for them um so other families that I've helped with they enjoyed taking on this responsibility …um I think it empowers them you know to try other things. (Support worker 1)*

According to Seligman et al., (2013) the prospecting brain allows individuals to free themselves from their actual conditions to a 'to do' mindset of possibilities. Prospection initiates powerful cognitive constructive processes, when thinking about possible futures individuals are going beyond the given evidence. Being driven by the past is not a suitable framework for human living. Instead "hoping, planning, saving for a rainy day, worrying, striving, voting, risking or minimizing risk, even undertaking therapy, all have in common the presupposition that which future will come about is contingent on our deliberation and action" (Seligman et al., 2013: 136). Prospection is, thus, a very fundamental human action that enables families to begin to contemplate what the future might look like:

> *They wanted to go again, and you know it really, really triggered something in them. You know they had got a lot from that experience that obviously they thought yeah, you know we want to do this again, so I think they would have gone on holidays. Well, perhaps not with Covid around. Perhaps in the future, definitely. I could see I could just tell they just had a really lovely time… You know it does improve their take on life and their aspirations and you know, they see things slightly differently, which can sometimes be enough, just to jolt them … 'I think actually that was good … I'm gonna do that again and I'm prepared, to save, open to do things differently … That might look like so we can go away … cause the children had such a good time. (Support worker 6)*

However, the future is created and mapped out not by individuals but by the social group. A solitary human being can accomplish very little. The

future is a product of collective imagination and agreement (Baumeister, 2016). During the holiday the family imagines together:

> *H: Well, we talked about, when we used to go away together and it opens up a whole different conversation of, you know. We were by a port, and you know we went for a walk and the you know you're by water and it it just opens up different conversations. Not much more positive conversation without analysing every bit of our relationship. Kind of, you know, talking about nice time that we had together and what we like to do with the kids. You know what we'd really love today, lots of other holidays we'd like to have with them, and it was all, yeah, much more positive.*

> *J: I should say … one thing I would say it did bring us closer to together and it gave us like … ideas for future like, I thought we want to do … often bring up my holiday that we did. When are we gonna go again, what they want to do the future and things like that you know. So, I think that I think in that way it bought us closer together. It's like you know possibilities, I guess. …. Yeah, it just kind of it, but I felt like it opened a new door, and I did I think what once you do something it just gives you a little bit of a drive right to say that I wanna do this again.*

For *J* basing her behaviour on the future rather than the past is highly adaptive. Having the mental capacity to think about the future and adjust behaviour accordingly gives her an advantage. At a familial level group planning and committing allows *J* to make plans and follow through with them. These same skills can help in wider groups outside the family and the ability to project forward is crucial in developing and building social relations. Furthermore, such an outlook connects with what Pritchard et al (2011) refer to as 'hopeful tourism', there is a tendency to limit our engagement with hope in tourism studies, but social justice movements have always underscored the importance of hope. Thus, if the project such as this one that has emancipatory aims, surely it must also offer hope for the people it aims to help (Hunter-Jones, 2003). Prospection is about hope and human possibilities, that can push the change and transformation that is so often talked about. In this way prospection can be seen as a generative mechanism that enables and empowers individuals and families to make changes to their own lives that can also impact on wider structures.

## 5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented a critical realist explanation of the impact social tourism has on families living in adverse circumstances. Through a stratified ontology a more nuanced picture of social tourism is offered, emphasising the structural and agential mechanisms at work. In this analysis I have tried to move beyond static sociodemographic characteristics of the families to look at the processes that are more proximal to daily lives (Simons et al., 2005). The holiday provides the context where these mechanisms can be exercised and actualised. The families interviewed lived in adverse conditions, suffered from mental exhaustion and, thus, often avoided situations, preferring to insulate themselves. Poor parental mental health can become more problematic when vulnerability is seen to be transferred to children (Bandura et al., 1999). Where families experience a low sense of efficacy to control things it can give rise to feelings of futility and despondency. Feeling inefficacious makes people believe they are ill equipped to cope and the inability to gain high value outcomes only worsens feelings of powerlessness. In a society where a holiday has become a norm, the lack of a holiday can contribute to unfulfilled aspirations, since satisfaction from what people do can be determined by the standards they set (Bandura, 1991). Certain values are standard, and a family holiday may be one of them, as a valued pursuit that generates positive motivations and improves mood.

Consequently, social tourism presents a time for families where the usual structural constraints are temporarily suspended allowing a number of psychological and social mechanisms to be prompted. The psychological mechanisms allowed families to feel better by giving them something to look forward to, time to relax and alleviate feelings of guilt. Families quite simply feel better whilst on holiday, feeling more relaxed and able to participate in 'normal' family activities. The social mechanisms facilitated the family's ability to perform 'normal' family life by establishing family routines, spending time together and permitting an acceptable version of family life to be displayed. During the holiday the families encountered numerous enabling experiences through enactive practises and also reappraised their own family's ability to

cope and function. The holiday allows families to engage in enabling modes of thinking and self-rewarding activities. The holiday as an intervention includes developing skills that conquer faulty thinking, supplant beneficial thinking and disconfirm faulty beliefs. Through mastery experiences provided by confirmatory self-efficacy, things that seem hopeless or difficult become achievable. Families know what to do but lack efficacy to translate knowledge into action. In this way social tourism implementation targets cognitive processes too.

A family holiday presents a time for families where they can be seen to be motivated, enabled, and guided to make positive changes to their lives. This enables families to reach out building support networks and capacity. Through planning and preparing for the holiday families were also more future-orientated, that is prospecting, which is a vital skill if we are to empower families. Thus, families are also able to look to the future positively.

However, one needs also to consider that the families may well feel biased towards providing positive evaluations as the result of the financial support received for the holiday (McCabe and Qiao, 2020). Many of the happenings and feelings experienced on holiday may not easily translate into normal life, where life continues to be challenging (McCabe and Johnson, 2013b), yet families may feel less inclined to report this to the researcher.

Nonetheless, the success of the holiday highlights that these are not 'problem' families, instead social tourism as an intervention tackles structural disadvantages giving families a more level playing field (Hartas, 2014). The onus then is not just on families to take care of their own since families cannot be expected transcend their environment. Families are vulnerable but not in pathological terms, rather as an aspect of the human condition, and all parents are anxious about ensuring they give their children a good life (Hartas, 2014). Social tourism as a family-centric intervention is underpinned by notions of equality, agency and supporting families. Social tourism is also about economic redistribution rather than solely focusing on parental ability. Social tourism highlights what is possible when families are supported and cared for. Effort

can increase if one sees that the effort exerted actually produces certain outcomes thus enhancing efficacy beliefs about how much control one has over life events. In this way, social tourism as an intervention represents something that can be quite powerful since it not only empowers families but begins to address some of the wider social and economic inequalities that often go unnoticed.

# Chapter 6 Conclusion

## 6.1 Introduction

The impact of disadvantage on families living in marginalised environments, has an enormous influence on the quality of family life. In our increasingly individualised society, responsibility falls on the family to take care of their own, when families are unable to do so they are deemed failures. Such families run the risk of being symbolic victims of a society that puts their inability to participate fully in society as a personal shortcoming. At the same time family ideology remains strong, existing societal norms remain pervasive about what a family should be, implying a universality of experience and the pressure for families to conform to the ideal notion of family. This includes the family holiday, which has become a key fixture in the Western family calendar. However, as detailed in chapter 2, a family holiday is by no means a universal feature; and when disadvantaged families are given the opportunity to participate in a holiday, the positive benefits are evident, but research is limited thus the need for the current study. The thesis responds by offering a multidisciplinary approach, piecing together family sociology with critical social psychology offering a comprehensive theoretical and empirical understanding of familial processes in the context of social tourism. In utilising a critical realist explanation, I have been able to relate macro large scale social factors to the personal circumstances of family life and, in the process, explain how and why social tourism can work as an intervention for the families interviewed.

In the previous chapter I presented the last of the results from the interviews conducted. In the remainder of this thesis, I sum up my main argument, bringing together the theoretical and empirical aspects, addressing the research questions posed at the beginning of the thesis. The theoretical framework is discussed, and contributions made to both theory and practice are highlighted. Lastly, the limitations of the research are identified and possible areas of future research.

## 6.2 Project rationale

The project originated from an established relationship between NUBS and FHA, encompassing a reputable body of research on social tourism (e.g.,

McCabe and Johnson, 2013; Kakoudakis et al., 2017). From the onset, the FHA had a clear vision of what they required from the project with a focus on the concept of self-efficacy. The subsequent literature review highlighted how a holiday could shed light on other family processes, too, such as family functioning. Drawing on a number of socio-psychological theories, the complexity of family life was investigated in the context of social tourism. The following research questions were proposed:

1. *How does social tourism develop family efficacy amongst families from disadvantaged backgrounds?*
2. *To what extent does participation in social tourism lead to better family functioning outcomes for families from disadvantaged backgrounds?*
3. *What are the underlying generative mechanisms through which participating in social tourism advances and/or impedes family efficacy and family functioning for families?*

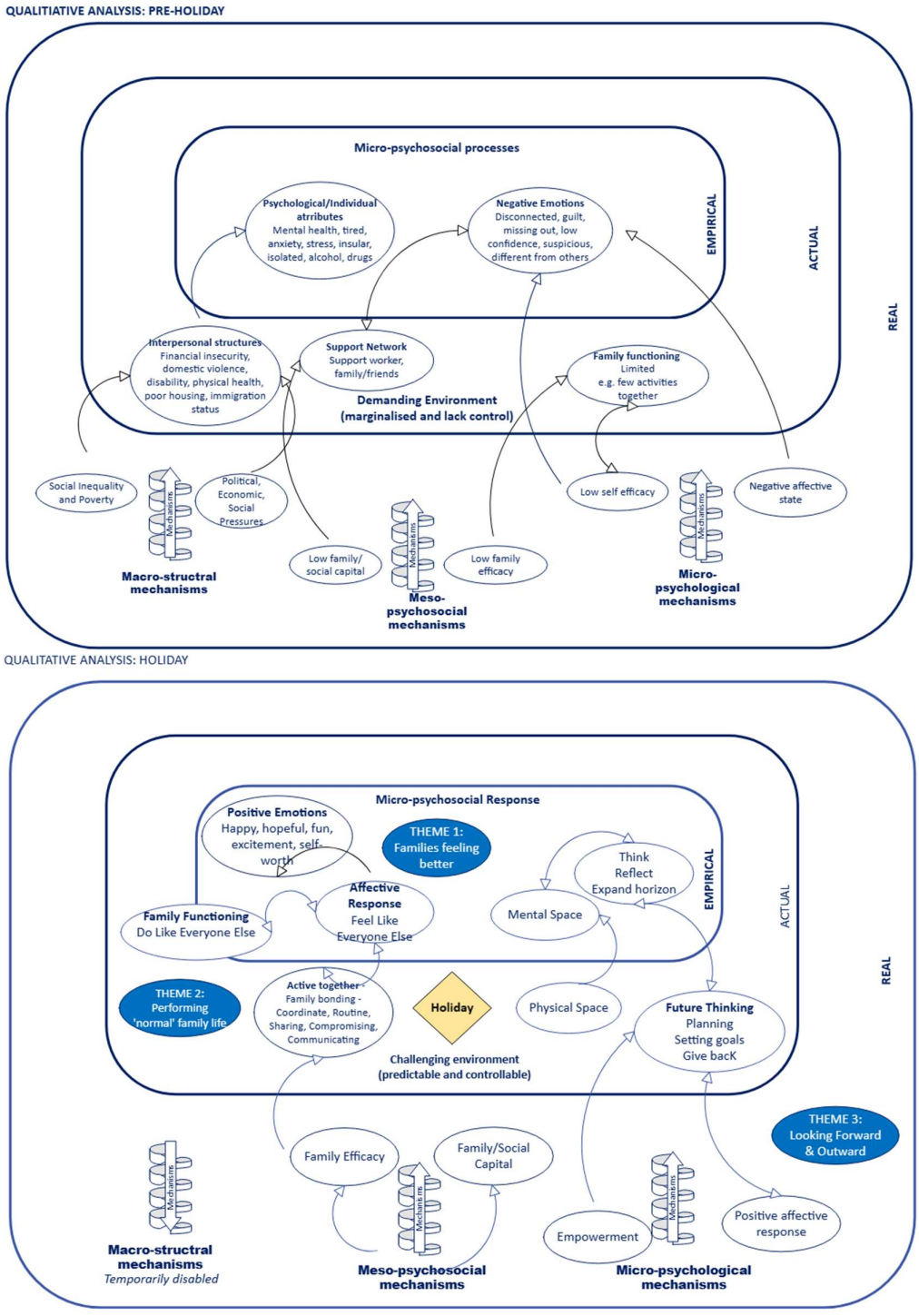
Initially, critical realism was intuitively appealing, but ultimately, played a far more vital role in the project. The stratified ontology fitted with the theoretical framework addressing the various strata of reality in which the family resides. Through the layered ontology, I was also able to frame social tourism as a unique type of intervention that, unlike traditional interventions, addresses families holistically and highlights the complex nature of social tourism involving interaction between families, places and interventions (Clark et al., 2008). Furthermore, I was able to acknowledge and conceptualise both agentic and structural factors, understanding and explaining complexity, thus being able to add to effective intervention design that promotes family life.

## 6.3 Key findings

The findings of the project are outlined in chapters 4 and 5 and are encapsulated in diagrams 6.1. In many ways social tourism presents a highly complex intervention and by using a critical realist approach I was able to explore this complexity, explaining how families interact with others and their environment to produce different outcomes. Using semi-structured interviews,

I was able to examine family processes in the context of social tourism and it was possible to explore how familial ecosystem and mediating social, psychological and structural mechanisms influence family efficacy and family functioning. The emergent ontology suggests phenomena arise from a combination of factors and between different domains. Thus, at a social level a holiday allows families to participate in what is deemed a *normal* family activity, at the psychological level this may reduce mental stress, giving opportunity for mastery experiences and, thus, increasing efficacy beliefs and family functioning. This captures the complexity of familial processes that are interdependent and dynamic. Therefore, the study was able to examine the effects of environment, implementation, and family perception. However, the macro structures are immensely powerful, whilst on holiday these are temporarily 'absent' for families, however, inevitably all families must return to their home environment, which for the most part remains unchanged, limiting the family's ability to make long-term changes. Thus, the positive experiences and feelings whilst on holiday may not easily transfer into normal life (McCabe and Qiao, 2020) especially since families may feel less willing to report this to the researcher.

**Figure 6.1 Qualitative Analysis – pre-post-holiday themes**



In chapter 4 the families interviewed reported living in challenging circumstances, becoming burdened by financial worries that pulled energy away from positive family activities to dwelling on financial troubles. The financial strain left families feeling mentally exhausted, resulting in poor mental health that not only affects efficacy beliefs, but can also impact on behavioural control (Bandura, 1988). The lack of control over the environment, resulted in less regulation over negative emotions and inefficacious trains of thought. This is problematic from a systems theory perspective since family systems are interdependent and interrelated indicating the ripple effect it can have on other family members. The prevalence of a strong normative family ideology in contemporary society can cause further mental distress to families deemed not living up to societal expectations. Traditional explanations rationalise this in individualistic and deficit terms, with little regard to the effects of enduring poverty or poor early childhood experiences (Arney & Scott, 2013). The role the environment can play is overlooked yet acts as an enabler when supportive and fully resourced but, equally, is disempowering when the opposite is the case. This highlights that the family is not a closed system but far more open than is often allowed for in public discourse. How the family interacts with other systems in society is critical, thus the need to include ecological theory in the explanation. Ecological systems theory stresses the embeddedness of families in wider social structures, where they may look for support and help to buffer the effects of their environment. Furthermore, families are also located through time (the chronosystem), where transmission and transition of intergenerational disadvantage can add further clues as to differential outcomes for families.

Support workers act as a key mechanism enabling families in many aspects of family life, from a resource point, functional and practical to friendship and care. All the families spoke of their close relationship with their support worker which can be useful in nudging families to make changes. However, some families may become too reliant on the support worker, which is not ideal since proxy control can further reduce the family's ability to build efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Several families needed to be encouraged to step outside their comfort zone and, for these families, social tourism proved a particularly beneficial

intervention because it promotes individuals, making them responsible for their own outcomes where the onus is not on the professional to solve the family's problems. In this way the holiday enables families to be more self-sustaining and it builds capacity.

In chapter 5 the focus turned to the holiday itself where I argued that the uniqueness of social tourism is that it offers a holistic approach to family intervention with a temporary change to the structural, social and cultural context. As a strength-based approach to family intervention, social tourism offers an opportunity where every day familial processes and experiences could be understood. Three main themes emerged: (i) Feeling better as a family; (ii) performing 'normal' family life; and (iii) families reaching out and looking forward.

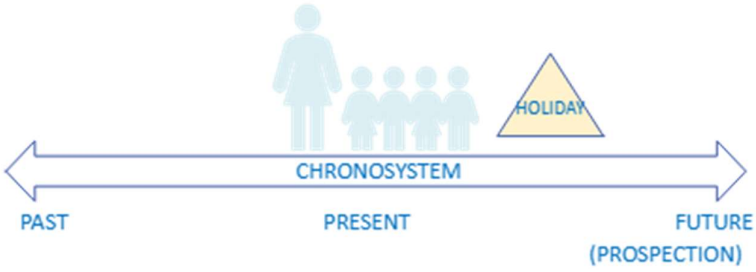
Families feeling better worked as a psychological mechanism, the holiday presents an event that families can look forward to, giving them time to relax and reflect, thereby relieving parental guilt. The 'feeling better' is important as it is a stark contrast to normal life where there is nothing, normally, to feel good about. Furthermore, the holiday itself is an enactive experience where families are able to perform 'normal' family life. This operates as a social mechanism, with the actual 'doing' of family at a micro level. For some families they were able to consolidate and strengthen family routines. Additionally, families experience togetherness through opportunity to participate in activities together, such as swimming or camping, which promotes family functioning and efficacy beliefs through *in vivo* mastery experiences (Benight and Bandura, 2004). If family is something you *do* rather than are (Morgan, 1996), then a family holiday encapsulates the essence of what families *do*. Moreover, whereas previously the family narrative may be defined in pathological terms, the holiday offers a new positive image for the family. Yet, it is not enough simply to *do* family, one must also be *seen* to do family, that is, *display* family (Finch, 2007). This feeds into a new positive family story, that can be told, retold and drawn on in the future. Thus, through participating in social tourism the family is able to present an idealised version of themselves, that is preferable to the reality they normally face. This confers agency to families.

Furthermore, the holiday also offers an opportunity for families to reach out and build hidden wealth. Through social tourism families are actively participating in society by connecting with others, making friends and being more open to other people. From a strength-based perspective, the holiday offers space and time for families to promote the best about themselves, families become more self-sustaining for the first time for some, fostering positive family identity and promoting potential. Furthermore, families also wish to give back, with many expressing a desire to volunteer with the organisation that has supported them and even speaking to the researcher about the holiday, is an act of *giving back*. As Bandura (2008) highlights, society needs to move beyond focusing on individual wellbeing; where we think about others we function more humanely and equitably with a stronger sense of civic duties (Bandura, 2008). From the agentic perspective, increasing individual or family well-being is not an end in itself but should also contribute to bringing about social change. Furthermore, the opportunity of a holiday tells families the world can be fair and orderly. This is important, psychologically, in promoting agency, social change and giving people hope.

Although, the holiday is, mostly, a short-term enjoyable experience for families, for social tourists it can also change long term aspirations. The preparation and planning for the holiday presents something new for the families interviewed and critically, planning suggests the possibility of multiple futures. From all the families interviewed only one mentioned having difficulties whilst on holiday that was due to insufficient planning and preparation. For the most part family interventions such as social tourism are about fostering agency, and prospection is a core aspect of human agency (Seligman et al., 2016). It is not enough simply to think about the future one hopes for but to also have long term goals. In this thesis I argue that the holiday and the planning that accompanies it, acts as proximal goal and, when accomplished, self-efficacy is enhanced. Bandura (1997) also recognised this and referred to it as a time perspective, which involves the ability to set goals and plan how goals are going to be achieved which, in turn, influences motivations (Bandura, 1991). Importantly, planning is mental work and not easy; when individuals plan, they have more control over their thoughts (Baumeister, 2016b). This then sets the course for thinking about the future, that is

prospecting, an important construct since is pulls families towards the future. In chapter 4, I discussed some of the environmental factors that affected families, that mainly focused on the family's past and the present, with little focus on the future. Here, I contend that the holiday can also enhance prospection, which also overlaps with the Bronfenbrenner concept of chronosystem, suggesting families are located in time. Whilst this does require us to consider historical factors that may have an impact on families such as intergenerational disadvantage, an equally important if not more important dimension is thinking about the future. Hence, prospection is about agency into the future (see figure 6.2). Prospection has been described by positive psychologists as a "21st century superpower" (Kellerman and Seligman, 2023: 139).

**Figure 6.2 Families through time**




In sum, families are embedded in weak financial and social resources, resulting in families, for the most part, struggling to meet the most pressing and immediate needs of their members. The findings present a more nuanced picture of family efficacy and family functioning. At a psychological level, we see that families with poor mental health can have an emergent effect on psychological resources such as self-efficacy. At a social level, family life is depicted as constrained and limited by the structures of disadvantage. This makes families extremely vulnerable to becoming 'problem' families. Yet, through social tourism, families experience a temporary reprieve which can activate psychological, social and structural mechanisms in the real domain that are experienced by families at an empirical and

actual level. Family processes are influenced by social and normative structures yet, at the same time, families show strength and agency. Parents work hard to maintain societal expectations of what family life should be, children's needs are prioritised above their own and, when given the opportunity, they can organise themselves, set goals and make plans for the future.

## 6.4 Analysis of key ideas and contributions

In the previous section the main empirical contributions have been discussed. In this section I discuss the various contributions which this thesis adds to the academic, theoretical, and methodological debates in both family research and social tourism fields.

The literature review in chapter two highlighted social tourism as an emerging field, showing encouraging results in terms of the benefits of holiday participation to disadvantaged groups. This research delved deeper into the social-psychological benefits in particular family efficacy and family functioning. Although self-efficacy in social tourism has been studied (Kakoudakis et al., 2017), family efficacy and family functioning has received less attention. In general, tourism in groups and family tourism has not interested academics as much as individualistic notions of tourism (Obrador-Pons, 2011). Yet, family tourism research confirms the vital role travel can play in family life (Carr, 2011), and the positive benefits of tourism to disadvantaged groups (McCabe and Qiao, 2020), this research adds to this body of research.

The research findings indicate that families in the sample generally manage well, exhibiting good levels of family efficacy and family functioning. The families benefited in some manner from being away. The semi-structured interviews offered a detailed explanation of familial processes that suggests that although families exhibit good levels of family efficacy and family functioning, family life can be challenging. Many struggled to meet the specific needs of their family, that is made harder by living in disadvantaged circumstances. The findings demonstrate that participating in social tourism offers families a conducive environment both mentally and physically, stimulating social and psychological mechanisms. Psychologically families feel better, efficacy beliefs are enhanced by the enactive and mastery experience of being able to partake in a family holiday. This is further reinforced by

participating in normative family activities whilst on holiday. The dominant narrative of what is regarded as normal family life remains strong and being able to do and display these behaviours is important. For families this can have an empowering effect, not only acting as positive affirmation for the family but also building positive relationships in wider society. Furthermore, many families begin to prospect, which is triggered when families start planning and thinking about the future. This may not be possible without the holiday break, since it is through planning for the holiday that prospection begins.

Furthermore, this research also contributes to our understanding of family intervention work. Family interventions from a policy perspective tend to be primarily focused on behavioural changes, without addressing other factors. This research shows, how social tourism works as a holistic strength-based family intervention, unlocking important psychological changes, that are often precursors to behaviour change. By using multi-theoretical framework, the research captures the multi-faceted nature of both social tourism and the family. In utilising Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory, overlapping this with family systems theory and Bandura's social cognitive theory, (Bandura, 1997), this provides the framework, within which we can understand families on the move. Through such an approach social tourism as an intervention can be demonstrated as a multi-level approach that can bring about psychological and behavioural changes. The current study has demonstrated the viability of a such an approach using clear methodological foundations that can be tailored for social tourism, which I discuss next.

A critical realist analysis of family interventions offers a more comprehensive account of family life for those living in disadvantaged circumstances. Although the overarching objective of the research was to contribute to our understanding of social tourism and its effect on family efficacy and family functioning, the study has also been able to advance a deeper understanding of how family interventions operate, and this has wider policy implications. A critical realist way of thinking about evaluation work (Parr and Churchill, 2020), lends focus to a 'critical' unearthing of the mechanisms that have an impact on families the most. The knowledge created through a critical realist study is more useful because it enables

us to understand how the change in environment (the holiday) and the characteristics of individual families influence family processes, which can play an important role in designing future interventions (Clark et al., 2008). Previously, little work has conducted that applies critical realism to the family and social tourism. By adopting a number of socio-psychological theories it enabled the examination of interactions between social structures and human agency given insights into the nature of interventions. The theoretical framework conceptualised family as a system, complex, interdependent, dynamic and embedded in a wider ecological system. This was integrated with a strength-based holistic approach to family intervention, looking beyond the immediate problems to offering long term support, skills and knowledge that prevent future problems. By examining social tourism, it provides insights into how families perceive the structural characteristics of their environment both as impediments and opportunities (Bandura et al., 2012).

Social tourism presents families with a significant opportunity to exercise agency at the micro level. In critical realist terms the intervention activates 'tendencies' working at certain times in certain ways depending on the circumstances. This is underpinned by a 'generative' theory of causality rather than a 'successionist' understanding (Parr and Churchill, 2020). The successionist view is problematic because behaviour change is conceptualised from within the system (Mason and Prior, 2008). Yet, we are in an open social world where individuals are agents and, thus, prone to interpretation and variation (Batty and Flint, 2012). As such, causal pathways are complex and dynamic, responding to both individual agency and wider social structures (Parr and Churchill, 2020). The mechanisms identified within the research show how change can take place at individual, family and societal level (Parr and Churchill, 2020).

However, many of the positive changes that occur whilst on holiday cannot be maintained after the holiday, quite simply because an appropriate ecosystem cannot be identified where they can continue. Since environment matters, the attributes of surroundings can have profound effects on one's capabilities and what people think they can accomplish (Rosenbaum et al., 2002). This indicates that it is not possible to consider how we

support families without considering contextual factors too. As much as agency is important, structures cannot be ignored, and income remains a key determinant of outcomes for families. Social tourism is part of this, providing families with resources to thrive and participate in everyday activities that are usually taken for granted. The importance of financial support is evidenced in numerous programmes across the world. For example, simply giving money to the poor helps families; for instance, Save the Children (2012) giving cash transfers to families in developing countries is shown to protect children. Canada's Child Tax Benefit in the 1990s was shown to significantly reduce poverty and raise educational scores (especially for boys). Wales Basic Income for Care Leavers, launched in 2022, offers an exciting opportunity to see whether offering a basic income to care leavers can improve outcomes (Howe, 2021). A similar pilot in Finland suggests that participants were happier with greater trust in others and confidence in the future (Fabric et al., 2020). This suggests that we need to include structural inequality in the discussion otherwise the silence becomes typically neoliberal (Sayer, 2017).

The issue is further compounded by how we conceptualise behavioural change as this is not simple and deterministic. The relationship between social disadvantage and family behaviour is complex, and "poverty and inequality tend not to be ennobling" (Sayer, 2017: 155). The behaviour families present can be down to injuries of class, but this is often ignored because policies tend to be about broader political strategies and worldviews (Sayer, 2017). In terms of social tourism, temporarily removing obstacles for families by enabling them to enjoy a holiday is beneficial but we also need to think about what kind of society we want, and what is desirable and feasible in terms of allocating responsibilities that benefits all groups (Gillies et al., 2017; Sayer, 1997) since some solutions have implications for other aspects of life, e.g., the role of the welfare state. "In this way an initial concern with what appears to be a limited problem affecting a discrete target group addressable by explanatory critique leads us into a much larger, open-ended series of normative issues" (Sayer, 1997: 485).

However, mainstream values become reified and preclude discussion or alternative beliefs. Similarly, the logic of family intervention is difficult to criticise or oppose because the language is seen as objective and neutral. The logic of economic capital has silenced everything else (Skeggs, 2011), "yet so much of what matters the most to people: love, care, kindness, generosity, loyalty, dignity and so on, largely operates outside this dominant framework of capital" (Gillies et al., 2017: 158). Public and welfare policy continues to be based on utilitarian philosophy and this dominates through cost-benefit analysis approaches. There are calls for a radical shift in relationship between state and citizen (Gillies et al., 2017), others promote a 'new social settlement' (Coote, 2015), prioritising wellbeing and equality, working within environmental limits, demoting economic growth, giving power to ordinary citizens, and fostering solidarity and reciprocity. Furthermore, feminists have long called for an 'ethic of care' (see section 3.7.1) to challenge the 'autonomous ego' underpinning the status quo (Sevenhuijsen, 1998), by replacing contract-based interpretations of subjectivity, morality and justice with mutuality, relatedness and recognition of the other's needs. Feminists argue that we exist through our relations with others and 'care' should be at the centre of public policy (Noddings, 2002). None of these ideas are new but, more importantly, there are alternative possibilities, in contrast to prevailing *TINA* (*there is no alternative*) discourse. Bhaskar (2016) referred to this as *concrete utopias*, that are not necessarily readymade and complete alternative societies but partial models that can be adapted (Elder-Vass, 2022). These may well be fallible as we can never know how things will actually work out in practice.

In a similar fashion, there have long been calls for a humanistic approach in tourism rather than on an economic basis (Hultsman, 1995) and, in many ways, social tourism sits comfortably within this alternative domain. Minnaert et al (2011) suggest the primary driver for social tourism should be the moral value whilst others see tourism as a force for good (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006). However, at the same time, philosophically tourism knowledge has not been able to shake-off neo-liberal inclinations (Tribe, 2009). Social tourism continues to be rooted within conventional social science thinking (McCabe and Qiao, 2020) faced with the

challenge of trying to appease policy makers and offer justification in neo-liberal terms. Moreover, as McCabe and Qiao (2020) argue, what is required is rethinking our approach to social tourism and pushing for 'tourism for all' which is less likely to exacerbate social segregation and is a more holistic and inclusive approach (McCabe and Qiao, 2020).

Furthermore, the project findings fit within the 'academy of hope' (Pritchard., et al, 2011: 942), contributing to the philosophical debate, within the tourism field. Pritchard et al., (2011) argued that a hopeful tourism should shape every aspect of the research process, and by employing a critical realist position we can see how this is possible. In adopting an alternative paradigmatic approach, provides an opportunity for not only empirical insights but theoretical inputs too, especially under researched concepts such as prospection. This project has attempted to step outside the prevailing current (Pritchard et al. 2011), in addressing the ontological foundations of both tourism and family studies, where arguably any change must originate from. Of course, Covid-19 has focused attention and highlighted that there are different ways of doing things including calls for 'socialising tourism' as a public good (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). This way, social tourism can be about promoting social good rather than optimising individual strengths and capacities (Gillies et al., 2017), inclusive of everybody in society, and independent of socio-economic background (Teuscher, 1983).

## 6.5 Limitations and future directions

In the previous section I offered a critical realist understanding of the family in the context of social tourism. The type of knowledge that critical realist research produces is more beneficial (Clark et al., 2008) since the research casts light on the mechanisms and processes that contribute to social tourism as an effective family intervention but also how to improve the effectiveness of interventions in general. Yet, it also draws our attention to the considerable gaps in levels of intervention evaluation currently being undertaken. As with any research there are a number of limitations some of which I have already touched upon in previous sections. In this section I look at some methodological issues, as well as further areas of research that could be fruitfully explored in the future.

The scope of this research was negotiated with the FHA, that gave the researcher access to a population defined as disadvantaged, mainly on socio-economic determinants, and needed additional support by virtue of being in contact with the referring agency. However, as access to families was limited to a single member for the interviews, this has implications for how we obtain a 'familial perspective' (Smith and Hughes, 1999). The issue, of moving beyond a single subject position, is of course, very familiar to family research, if the family is to be studied in its totality, then access is required to other members of the family; however, this is difficult both practically and ethically. This was to some extent addressed by including support workers in the research, which offered an additional account of the family. The study focused on families living in disadvantaged environments, in contact with support services and FHA – this is a methodological limitation. Given the changing nature and structure of families, future research could include different family types offering representation to diversity of family forms in contemporary society. In addition, the findings also highlighted a significant number of families living with some form of physical or mental disability, this is an area that could be fruitfully explored in the future.

Furthermore, a research project of this nature has competing demands of the stakeholders involved which adds further strain to the research process. The study needed to fulfil the requirements of the commissioning organisation that required evidence and outcome-based evaluation. Gaining access to vulnerable families was difficult, which this was further complicated by the pandemic, which created a unique set of challenges some of which have already been discussed in the methodology chapter, not only for the researcher but for the FHA as well.

In attempting to fulfil requirements of the various stakeholders, concepts such as family functioning and family efficacy were utilised, however, in assessing outcomes a more holistic approach could be used and one led by families. There is no escaping that the ruling practices determine the legitimate versions of knowledge (Smith, 1990). If we are to empower families, then they need to be included in every aspect of the research and not just at the data collection point. Intervention outcomes could be developed with families leading to a

more nuanced measure, advanced with the knowledge from families we are aiming to support. This could include a broader range of outcomes that are more complex, inclusive, and diverse when evaluating the impact of social interventions. Parenting and families in British policy has become about skills and expertise rather than characterised by love and care (Gillies, 2020). To this end there is a need to develop tools that are able to assess differently, and think more carefully about what, when and how to evaluate (Thoburn and Sexton, 2016).

Although semi-structured interviews proved beneficial, other methods could also have been used. The short time frame of evaluation research limits its usefulness in capturing the complex nature of familial processes when outcomes could be differentiated in terms of proximal and distal outcomes. Case studies would be a good alternative since case studies could capture the detail, complexity, and depth of family life over a longer period of time (Parr and Churchill, 2020). But there are other methods such as diary keeping, life histories (Daly and Kelly, 2015), diary surveys (Swendeman et al., 2020) or storytelling, which has shown to be an empowering tool in giving voice to participants otherwise not able to participate (Hunter-Jones et al., 2020). Furthermore, there are also other less invasive methods, especially with the abundance of technology and digital options on offer, there is far more opportunity for chronological data collection procedures, such as digital diaries (Brenner and DeLamater, 2016), that can capture family processes over time. This also has the benefit of overcoming some of the practical issues with interviews such as families feeling obliged to report positive outcomes because they have been offered an FHA holiday. Furthermore, there is always potential for unconscious bias within qualitative research (Hunter-Jones et al, 2020), for example, the research included 26 interviews which spawned over 100,000 words, all which cannot be included, so how one decides which extracts to include can become a challenging task.

Furthermore, research needs to move away from behavioural interventions evaluated using same successionist/closed system views of causation and methods (Clark et al., 2008). By adopting a far broader definition of family intervention and outcomes, it gives us a wider scope, important especially because of the diverse nature of the FHA sample. As Smith (1990)

argues, knowing differently is the basis of changing the conditions of people's lives (Cambell, 2003). Thus, if we are to promote social justice then this starts at the ontological and epistemological levels (Eeden-Moorefield and Shih, 2022), reconsidering what is considered legitimate (Battle and Serrano, 2022) and taking the opportunity to transform the methodology rather compounding the epistemological violence (Teo, 2009). For example, the use of Quantitative Criticalism can be used as underpinning for social justice-orientated quantitative research (Curtis et al., 2022) and developing more contextually relevant measures, by utilising participant descriptions to generate a comprehensive list of 'local indicators' (Puffer et al., 2021: 2).

Furthermore, through interviews with support workers there was clearly lots of good practice that remains unrecognised. Support workers have high caseloads, and this limits their capacity to help with research or to become involved in in-depth evaluation. However, support workers are uniquely placed within family ecologies and thus making the most of existing expertise is crucial. By working more diligently with those closest to the family, as well as social tourism providers, one can delve deeper into the contextual factors that impact the effectiveness of the intervention. This may involve including more contextual data that may already be available which can significantly enhance evaluative research, not only improving the theoretical base but also adding important elements to the evidence base that policy makers crave. For example, this may highlight an *optimum* window when a holiday is most effective for families. Since, a holiday is often employed right at the end of an intervention, this means that the support worker has very little contact with the family post-holiday. This restricts access to long term data of holiday impact and some outcomes can take time to surface; in critical realist terms it is not enough to know that an intervention works but we also need to know how and why. However, this raises difficult ethical and practical questions about sharing information about families, even with family consent.

Moreover, any intervention cannot limit the focus only to families since families cannot be targeted in isolation without acknowledging or addressing wider inequalities. Social tourism cannot inoculate families against the environment because entrenched problems will

not respond solely to short term solutions. Any intervention needs to be framed more widely otherwise we become complicit in the symbolic and practical violence inflicted on economically disadvantaged families. The disconnection between income and opportunity (Ball, 2010), is embedded in a dominant narrative of meritocracy and neoliberalism, which is all-encompassing and goes unquestioned; that, in turn, allows political discourse to preclude economic explanations of social problems. This fits with the idea of a meritocratic society and 'just world' (Lerner, 1998) and, on the whole, we believe people get what they deserve, and society is based on effort and merit. The absence of discussion of the economic processes that affect life chances, leaves families responsible for their own fortunes. However, when disadvantage (especially economic) is repeatedly unnoticed as a mechanism, we are also reducing family agency. It is thus necessary to include wider ecological and environmental factors and how they impact on psychological and familial processes.

## 6.6 Final comments

*Empowering Families* is quite an ambitious title for this research project. The concept essentially involves a family's ability to control their own lives. The theoretical and methodological framework selected, all advance empowering practices. Positive psychology, systems theory, social cognitive theory, ecological systems theory all espouse empowering individuals and families. For families living under extreme stress, it is easy to see how life is hopeless, contributing to inefficacious thought processes that can be self-defeating. How responsible are people to solving problems that are beyond their control, when formative experiences can have lasting impact (Sayer, 2017), and one thus has to question what we can reasonably expect from families. Yet problems are personalised in the UK, with the primacy of individualism, free market choice and social responsibility encapsulating the key elements of governmental approach over the last 40 years. Social tourism offers an alternative approach in supporting families; it realigns power, collaborates with families, validating family experiences but also recognising them as the experts in their own family lives. The family's strengths are promoted, with the temporary relief that offers them hope for the future. It has long been recognised that "these insights into the person's self, could not be achieved by

staying at home or visiting friends and relatives" (Crompton, 1979: 416), thus highlighting the unique role tourism can play in people's lives as captured below:

> *They were flabbergasted … you can see the sea from that caravan site… they just kept looking at the sea* (support worker 6)

Appendices

## Appendix 1 - Interview schedule

**Semi-structured Interview Schedule**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Introduction** | |
| **Purpose of research** | - *Introduce self*<br>- *Explain purpose of research*- investigate the impact a holiday break can have on family life.<br>- As a family who have been on an FHA holiday in the last year, you have been asked to participate in this research.<br>- The purpose of today is to carry out an interview that should last no longer than an hour, but you can stop at any time, if you wish not to continue or would like a break. |
| **Confidentiality and consent**<br><br>**Recording** | - Check that participants have received and understood consent forms etc., (emailed to participants in advance).<br>- Any questions regarding this information. |
| | - The interview will be audio-recorded and then transcribed. Check participants agree to be recorded.<br>- Inform participants that findings will be written up as part of the research project and participants will remain anonymous. |
| **Background information** | |
| Contextual information age, family characteristics, work<br>*Start with this as less threatening and easier to answer* | I will begin by asking some questions about your family.<br>- How many adults in the house, children, ages?<br>- Living arrangements, length of time in current abode<br>- Ethnicity<br>- Do you work outside the home? Employment history if applicable |
| **About the holiday** | |
| **Family functioning** areas:<br>- *Problem solving*<br>- *Communication*<br>- *Roles*<br>- *Affective responsiveness*<br>- *Affective involvement*<br>- *Behaviour Control* | Now will move on discussing the holiday<br><br>**1. How did the holiday come about?**<br>- why referred/ current problems<br><br>**2. What were you hoping to gain from the holiday?** |
| **Family Efficacy:** | The next set of questions are about the holiday break itself. |

| | |
|---|---|
| - *Parental connectedness*<br>- *Communication*<br>- *Cohesiveness*<br>- *Parental support*<br>- *rituals*<br>- *routines*<br>- *parental involvement*<br>- *spending time together*<br>- *boundaries* | **3. Can you tell me about your actual holiday?**<br>- a typical day<br>- changes to roles, routines, communication<br>- new experiences and activities<br>- changes to family relationships, flexibility |
| | Final part of the interview, will focus on how life has changed since returning from the holiday<br><br>**4. Has the holiday changed family life? If so how?**<br>- changes to roles, relationships<br>- changes in attitudes and behaviours<br><br>- Are planning another break soon? |
| **Close** | |
| *Spend several minutes at the end of the interview*<br>*Explain what happens next with regard to transcript etc*<br>*Thank participants* | Anything further details the family would like to add. |

*Further information*

| | |
|---|---|
| Key **family functioning** areas to be addressed:<br>- *Problem solving*<br>- *Communication*<br>- *Roles*<br>- *Affective responsiveness*<br>- *Affective involvement*<br>- *Behaviour Control* | *Problem solving*<br><br>How family deals with instrumental issues – day-to-day practical issues<br>How family deals with affective issues – dealing with emotions?<br>Roles<br>- Instrumental roles – provision of resources<br>- Affective roles – nurturance and support<br>- System maintenance<br>- Role allocation and role accountability<br>Social and cultural – maintaining relationships with extended family<br><br>*Affective responsiveness*<br>- refers to feelings a person experience<br><br>*Affective involvement*<br>– appropriate amount of interest and concern for each other<br>Dyads –<br>*Behaviour Control*<br>- Physically dangerous<br>- psychobiological needs<br>socialising<br>(Epstein et al., 1983; Kao and Caldwell, 2015) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Key areas of **Family Efficacy:**<br>Relational efficacy – resilience generated from family relationships<br>- *Parental connectedness*<br>- *Communication*<br>- *Cohesiveness*<br>- *Parental support* | Pragmatic Family Efficacy – competency generated by way family operate as a unit<br>- *rituals*<br>- *routines*<br>- *parental involvement*<br>- *spending time together*<br>- *boundaries*<br><br>(Bandura et al., 2011) |

Appendix 2 - Ethics approval

University of Nottingham
UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

**Faculty of Social Sciences**
**Nottingham University Business School**
University of Nottingham
Jubilee Campus
Nottingham
NG8 1BB

14 May 2020

To whom it may concern,

**Ethics Review Application No.: 201819068 - Tahira Kosar PhD - Empowering Family Self-Efficacy through Social Tourism**

I am writing as chair of the Nottingham University Business School Research Ethics Committee (NUBS REC) to confirm a favourable ethical opinion for the above research on the basis of the documentation submitted below. This opinion was given on the above stated date.

The School REC operates according to the University of Nottingham's *Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics, and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Framework for Research Ethics.*

The documents reviewed and approved are:

- NUBS REC Ethics Review Checklist
- Research Participant Information Sheet
- Research Participant Privacy Notice
- Research Participant Consent Form
- Research Participant Instructions

The following conditions apply to this favourable opinion:

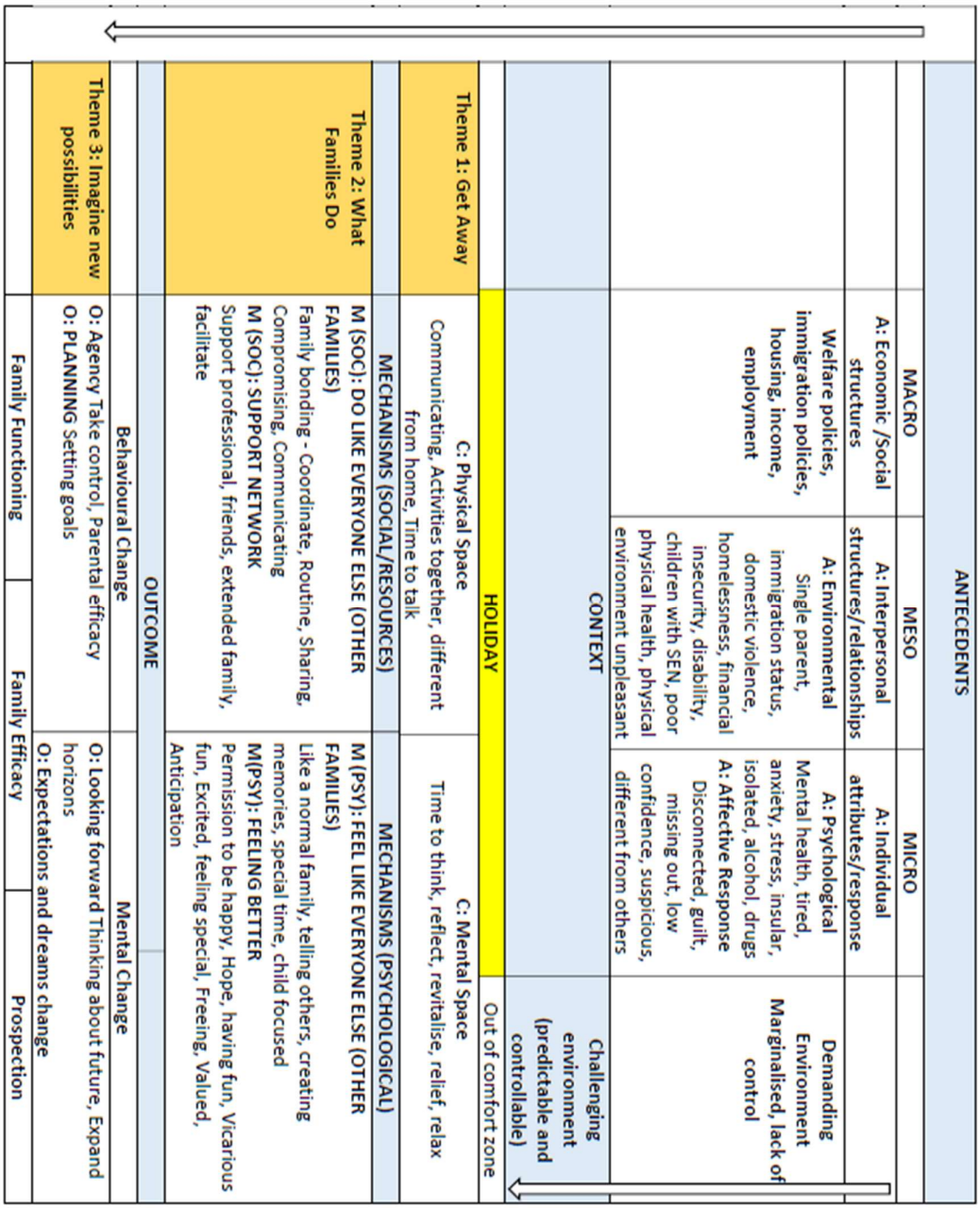
1. The research must follow the protocol agreed and any changes will require prior NUBS REC approval.
2. The appropriate NUBS REC documentation must be completed at the end of the research project.

For further information about the School's Research Ethics Committee or approval process, please contact the Research Ethics Officer, Davide Pero at davide.pero@nottingham.ac.uk or +44 (0)115 84 67766.

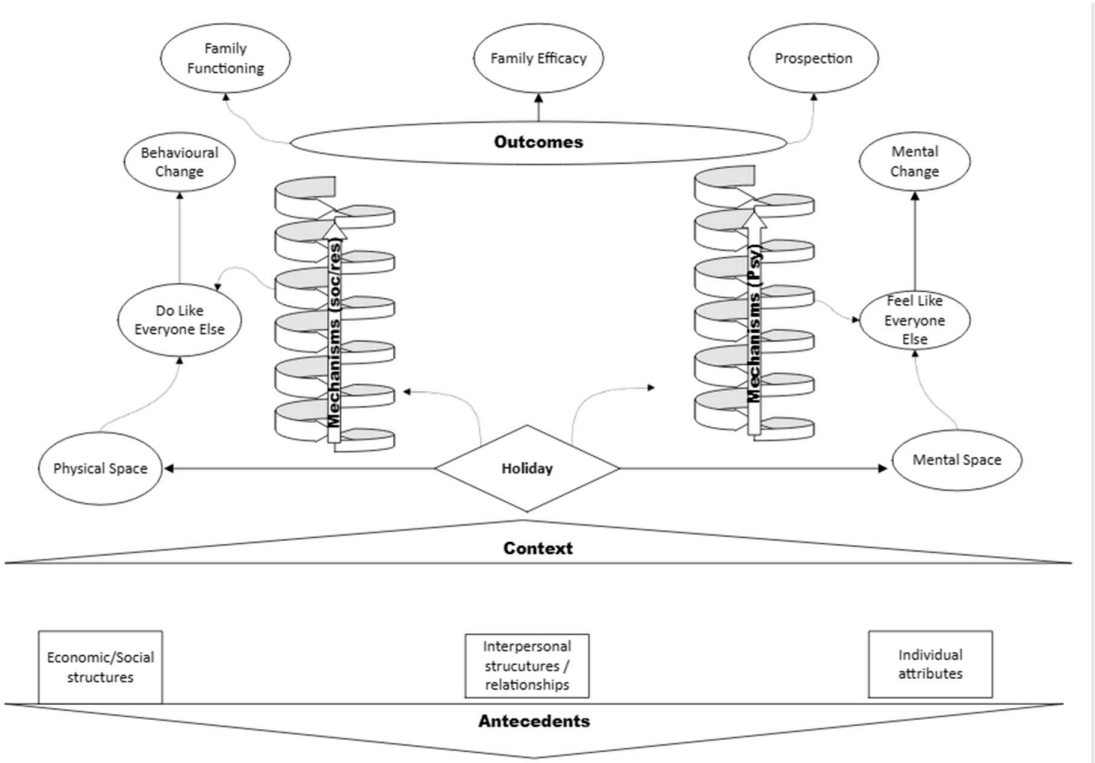
Yours faithfully,

Dr Amanda Crompton
Chair of Nottingham University Business School Research Ethics Committee

Appendix 2 – Initial coding



## Appendix 3 – Mapping codes



# Appendix 4 – Analytic coding

| | Empirical Domain<br>Subjective viewpoints, experiences<br>Intentions, hopes, concerns, feeling and beliefs | Actual Domain<br>Experiences and events | Real Domain<br>Unobservable causal mechanisms and potential powers |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Pre Holiday** | |
| **Theme 1**<br>**Understanding Family Life** | Mental stress<br>Tired<br>Anxious<br><br>Low confidence<br>Suspicious | Trauma<br>Single parent<br>Immigration status<br>Domestic violence<br>Homelessness/housing insecurity<br>Financial insecurity<br>Disability<br>Children with SEN<br>Poor physical health<br>Unpleasant physical environment | Psychological mechanisms<br>Structural mechanisms<br>Marginalisation<br>Low socio-economic power (wider political/economic forces)<br>Low psychological feeling?<br>Low self-efficacy<br>Low family efficacy<br>Income inequality |
| | | **Post Holiday** | |
| | Holiday/post-holiday<br>Excited<br>Anticipation<br>Feeling better | **Changes in Mental Space and Physical Space**<br>Controllable<br>Time to think<br>Relax<br>Revitalise<br>Reflect | Psychological release<br>Improved self-efficacy (through mastery and own psychological states)<br>Improved family efficacy |
| | | **Pre Holiday** | |
| **Theme 2**<br>**Holiday as an Intervention** | Feel different from others<br>Guilt<br>Missing out<br>Feel and Do Like Everyone Else | Little family activity<br>Low communication<br>Low coordination<br>Lack of routine and structure | Normative Family Ideology – 'What Family Is'<br>Low family functioning<br>Cultural expectations, class, gender, 'race', colonialism, disability |
| | | **Post Holiday** | |
| | **Feel Like Everyone Else**<br>Having fun<br>Vicarious fun<br>Child focused telling others<br>Creating memories, special time | **Do Like Everyone Else**<br>Physical Space<br>Communicating<br>Activities together<br>Different from home<br>Time to talk<br>Some activities continue after holiday<br>Talk about the holiday | **Normative Family Practices – ideology of family**<br>Improved Family Functioning<br>Micro, relational processes - Active together, family bonding, coordinating, sharing, compromising, communicating, routine,<br><br>Improved self-efficacy/family efficacy (mastery and own psychological states) |
| | | **Pre Holiday** | |
| **Theme 3**<br>**Looking outward & Forward** | Before<br>Feel isolated, insular<br>Disconnected<br>Limited network | Contact with support professionals<br>Friends and extended family – quite limited | Isolated<br>Insular<br>Inward looking<br>Poor social networks (social and family capital) |
| | | **Post Holiday** | |
| | Feel Special<br>Valued<br>Self-worth<br>Permission to be happy | Planning<br>Routines<br>Sense of control<br>expand horizons<br>Outward looking<br>Trusting others<br>Sense of community/belonging/feeling valued<br>Telling others | Looking outward<br>Trust (networks)<br>Inclusion<br>Trust support Network<br>Agency<br>Confidence<br>Expectations change<br>Looking forward<br>Emancipatory potential<br>Improved Family Efficacy<br>Looking forward<br>New possibilities<br>Hope<br>Give back |

## Appendix 5 – Final codes/themes

| Example extract | Preliminary codes | Secondary code | Analytic code Interpretation | Theme | Subtheme |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Whenever it's um once a month when I get my benefits, it always like robbing Peter to pay Paul* | Struggles financially<br><br>single parent | Benefits system | Structural mechanisms (Benefits system, Home Office)<br><br>Macro-level forces | **Family worries** | **Financial Strain** |
| *In an and out of addiction for all my life since I was 16 years old and you know, I do so far, with you know which goes along with the addiction is meant that his mental health depression, anxiety and everything and it goes hand in hand with that.* | Substance misuse<br>Mental health<br>Anxiety | Long-term/ deep-rooted problem | Psychological mechanisms (Poor mental health – low self-efficacy) | | **Mental stress** |
| *Today's Monday so most of my morning I've been distributing food. That allows them to save some money* | Help<br><br>Support<br><br>Agency | Limited resources | Social mechanisms (support worker)<br>Exo-level networks | **Support worker** | **Resource** |
| *You know, and and you know, the idea is to obviously empower the parents to make the choices themselves, but there the majority of us are in such a rut. Their expectation is resolution by professional, not by themselves* | | Empower<br>Build capacity | Psychological mechanisms – (increase self-efficacy)<br>Micro-level | | **Proxy role** |
| *have got nothing to look forward to, they've not had a holiday with this little girl…I think it was quite sad. The circumstances you know were really difficult and you know they didn't have anything to look forward to and I just thought you know they really engaged really well…I just thought it would be so nice, you know, for them to have a nice break away because they've never had that experience. You know, just remember she said she hadn't really had holidays when she was younger…* | Escape<br>Relax<br>Feel like everyone else<br>Doing family stuff | Looking forward<br><br>Out of ordinary | Psychological mechanisms-Prospection<br><br>Cognitive processes | **Families feel better** | **Something to look forward to** |
| *When I got there with that they just felt. Oh gosh, I remember thinking that, um? Like we like, relax for a moment. I mean just being able to be away with them.* | Relaxing<br>Getting away | Sense of control | Social mechanism – enactive exp<br>Psychological mechanisms – improved mental health | | **Time to relax** |
| *All that kind of stuff. I I feel like other people do. …This like I maybe I should have put this pressure on myself but I don't want to feel like they're. Missing out, yeah.* | Missing out<br>Not like other families | Doing family | Micro level family processes<br>Psycho-social mechanisms | | **Alleviating parental guilt** |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *The expectations of having a breakfast, lunch and dinner and and hopefully that'll carry them on into adulthood themselves.* | Routines<br><br>Activities together | Normal family processes | Social mechanisms<br>Family functioning | **Performing 'normal' family life** | **Family routines** |
| *It was just a nice to to get away and have that little bit bonding time together, OK, you know, I'm a little bit of fun together, OK, you know. Yeah, and just try and rebuild that father son relationship.* | Create memories<br>Have fun/enjoyment | Family practices<br><br>Agency | Psycho-social mechanisms<br>Family efficacy<br>Parental efficacy | | **Family togetherness** |
| *We just had a whale of a time and we're all talking about it for weeks months afterwards um so it had a positive effect because the neighbours sort of shy away because it's all doom and gloom, this has happened that's happened. It was lovely to have something positive to talk to people about, so it was nice we had some good news to share so it was lovely to be able to do that* | Telling others | Family bonding | Social and psychological mechanisms<br><br>Family efficacy<br><br>Display family | | **Display family** |
| *Little stroll passed everyone else's caravan, they were like "hello", we were like "hi", "evening", when you don't always get that where you live do .* | Connect with others<br><br>Belonging | Outward looking | Social mechanisms | **Families reaching out** | **Support network** |
| *Um holiday with a mixture of other things, the mum's confidence just absolutely blossomed, she doesn't need so much intensive support I would say, I'm still in touch with her. Um I would say boost her confidence and support I give them has gone down a bit. And it's such a shame because before Covid we were doing a cookery programme, and she came to that um always be definitely for her that was another turning point for her and boosted her confidence and I think it was just that fact that I can do this, I can go away, I can take my family, and we can go away as a family and just recognising what other families are able to do that so am I and it helped her I think, if I can do that, I can do other things that other families do as well. So, her boys have additional support needs as well so um I think it definitely helped her to realise I can do that, I can do other things that other families do as well.* | Trust<br><br>Confidence<br><br>Independence<br><br>Try new things<br><br>Like everyone else | Expand horizons<br><br>Increased self-efficacy | Psycho-social mechanisms<br><br>Hope<br>New possibilities<br>Family efficacy | | **Capability building** |
| *the whole process of being organised…It just changed everything. It just made such a huge impact because they had to get into some sort of routine to actually get away on holiday they had to organise themselves to save a bit of money to try get some uh new summer clothes even if they got a bit of support to buy them um just to pack a case to organise to tell the school my children are going on holiday, we won't be here…You know, just you know all the wee things that if you're in a normal state of mind not depressed they don't really bother, but they* | Planning<br><br>Organising<br><br>Responsibility<br><br>Change in expectations | Taking control<br><br>Agency | Social mechanisms<br><br>Family efficacy/ Self-efficacy | **Families looking forward** | **Planning and purpose** |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *had to take all that you know that wee bit of responsibility um you know* | | | | | |
| *Well we talked about, when we used to go away together and it opens up a whole different conversation of, you know. We were by a port and you know we went for a walk and the you know you're by water and it it just opens up different conversations. Not much more positive conversation without analysing every bit of our relationship. Kind of, you know, talking about nice time that we had together and what we like to do with the kids. You know what we'd really love today, lots of other holidays we'd like to have with them, and it was all, yeah, much more positive.* | Open communication<br><br>Positive thoughts<br><br>Think about future and possibilities | | Psycho-social mechanisms<br><br>Mapping into the future | | **Prospection** |

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[i] There is the ever-increasing gap between the rich and the poor, leaving individuals, families and communities not believing in their own future which has a ripple effect since they are less likely to want to invest in it (e.g. Urban decline in the UK, see Andrews, A. (2020). Dereliction, decay and the problem of de-industrialization in Britain, c . 1968–1977. *Urban history,* 47**,** 236-256. Andrews (2020) case-study of Liverpool). Furthermore, many millennials are experiencing rising inequality, reduced income in real terms - working poor, professional precariousness and generally falling behind their parents (Tréhu, J. (2017). The Shaky Foundations of Millennials' Basic Human Needs.(Symposium: Revisiting Maslow: Human Needs in the 21st Century). *Society,* 54**,** 533-534.2017), all of which have been compounded by the pandemic and now the cost-of-living crisis.