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Exploring the lived experiences of full-time world schoolers.

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Education (EdD)

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the lived experiences of five full-time world schoolers who have been world schooling for at least a year. World schooling is an alternative education and lifestyle practice adopted by families who travel the world and educate their children outside the mainstream schooling system. As world schooling is a relatively modern phenomena, it is an under-researched area of education although it has started to receive more interest in the last decade.

I conducted a small-scale study which explored changes and shifts in real time over the course of one year. A narrative inquiry approach was used, and data was collected through a series of semi-structured interviews. The use of serial interviews enabled the complexities of motivation, navigation and negotiation of the participants' lived experiences to emerge. Data was analysed using Clandinin and Connelly's three-dimensional space inquiry approach (2000).

The findings show that although the participants stories are quite idiosyncratic, they share similar motivations, opportunities and ways of framing and thinking about the world. The small number of participants in this study allowed for an in-depth exploration of each participant's experiences and how these were understood. However, the small number of participants means that any findings can only be indicative and tentative. Indicative themes arising from the study include a motivation to teach their children to love of the world, a disaffection with mainstream schooling in its current form and a focus on learning languages.

The dissertation concludes by offering recommendations for education policy makers as well as suggesting avenues for future research, ultimately aimed toward achieving a more holistic and compassionate definition of education.

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Author's Declaration:

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: Lesley Forsythe

Signature:

Date: September 2025

Definitions

Education:

‘is the process of facilitating learning or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits’ (UNESCO, 2023, online)

Holistic education:

‘is based on the premise that each person finds identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world, and to humanitarian values such as compassion and peace’ (Miller, 2000)

Homeschooling, elective home education:

is ‘a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home or in some other way they desire, instead of sending them to school full-time’ (GOV.UK, 2019)

Learning:

‘is the individual acquisition or modification of information, attitudes, values, skills, competencies or behaviours through experience, practice, study or instruction’. (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2011, p.7)

Schooling:

‘is a formal way of educating children in preschools, schools and higher education’ (Gobby & Millei, 2022, p.37)

Unschooling:

is the term given to unstructured, child-centered, interest-led learning outside the school system (Guterson, 1992; Holt & Farenga, 2003; Martin-Chang, Gould & Meuse, 2011)

Worldschooling:

‘is an alternative education and lifestyle practice adopted by families who take their children out of conventional school settings and educate them while travelling the world’ (Molz, 2017, p.16)

Chapter 1 Introduction

Here I offer an introduction to this study, which explores the lived experiences of five world schooling families. It presents my professional and personal motivation and interest in this field (section 1.1), followed by contextual information of globalisation and its effect on education (section 1.2). The aims and methodology (section 1.3) of the study and themes for questions that guided the research are discussed. This is followed by the theoretical and practical significance of the study (section 1.4) and a discussion of the limitations (section 1.5). Finally, an overview of the structure and content of the dissertation is provided (section 1.6).

1.1 Motivation for the Research

I was brought up by working class parents who believed that hard work and education were the route to financial security and a 'good life'. I underwent a conventional English education with one view of learning which was to attend school and follow the standard curriculum without question. After graduating with a degree in Microbiology and Genetic Engineering, I accepted a position as a volunteer teacher in China with plans to return to England after a year and study for a master's degree. I took the volunteer position to gain some 'life experience' and see part of the world before settling down to a master's and then hopefully, a career in my chosen field. At the time, I had barely travelled, having spent the majority of my summer holidays visiting family in Northern Ireland, and had never been abroad.

For my teaching position in China, I was placed in a university in a poor, rural province which almost no foreigners had ever been to. This was so far removed from my familiar home environment that the culture shock was immense and it took me almost six months to settle down and accept my new surroundings. The majority of my students were from small farming villages, had never seen a foreigner before, and were the first person in their family to leave their village and attend university. Despite all the drastic changes in lifestyle for both myself and my students, there were a few commonalities such as the fact that their parents also believed that hard work and education were the route to financial

security and a better life. My year teaching in China stretched into two, during which time I travelled extensively through China, Tibet and Nepal, and completely reformulated my outlook on life and education.

When I first arrived in China, I had considered myself a well-educated individual. However, the experience was a steep learning curve for me and my mind was opened to alternative forms of communication and knowledge, such as cultural sensitivity and tolerance. As time passed, I also began to notice the educational benefits of travelling as well as immersing oneself in a culture foreign to one's own. I never did return to the UK for the master's degree as I realised that there was a world of learning around me which I had only just begun to experience and I was highly motivated to explore further. Through my later travels and life experiences, including the development of this study, I have, and continue to, broaden my knowledge of alternative ways of learning and alternative forms of knowledge which are outside the institutionalized school system.

My daughter was born in Egypt and has never permanently lived in the UK. After she was born, we continued to travel extensively together while using a small town in Egypt as a home base. I often refer to her as an 'accidental world schooler' as her foreign travels were a natural extension of my life and I never intentionally attempted to world school her. At age 6, she requested to go to school as her friends in Egypt all attended school. I enrolled her in the British International School where she has continued to attend on a flexible basis. Her class has seventeen different nationalities in it which creates a much more cosmopolitan learning atmosphere than a British state school in the UK. Throughout the years, her teachers have always commented on, even from a very young age, how she is able to bring real world examples into the classroom and share knowledge that she has gained through her travels.

1.2 Background

Globalisation is the process of the increasing interconnectedness between societies and people around the world through the growing flow of people, services, finances, goods, and ideas across national borders. It is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon which has permeated almost all aspects of

modern life (Bakhtiari, 2011; Jindal & Kumar, 2023; Lingard, 2021). National borders are increasingly being eroded due to advancements in technology, international migration, increasing interdependence economically and culturally, changes in national allegiance of individuals and the publication of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948) (Banks, 2008; Giddens, 2002). All of these have led to a change in relations both within and among nation-states (Chong, 2015) and suggest a transformation in conventional modes of functioning for nation-states (Armstrong, 2006) as the connection between local and global, and national and international expands and intensifies leading to increased integration and interdependence around the globe (Malaviya, 2023).

Extensive debate surrounds the notion of globalisation and care needs to be taken. Many of the fundamental principles of globalisation have been the subject of criticism both conceptually and empirically. According to Ball (2021),

Globalisation can be used to ‘explain’ almost anything and, ..., is ubiquitous in current policy texts and contemporary policy analysis. Its deployment as an analytical tool needs to be careful and precise. (Ball, 2021, p.38).

Caution also needs to be practised when analysing the flow and influence of policies between nation-states. As with knowledge, ideas, and culture, nations do not adopt other nation’s policies uncritically or unreflexively, but rather position themselves according to their cultural and historical priorities. However, global organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) practice ‘a form of rational peer pressure’ (Ball, 2021, p. 41) by disseminating information on which policies ‘work’ and have been ‘successful’ responses to the international marketplace. Although the OECD cannot make legal decisions or issue compulsory policy proposals, they are advisors to policy makers. In this way, they indirectly exert a broad influence on economic and social policies.

Education policy is one area which has been significantly influenced by globalisation (Ball, 2008; Lingard, 2021; Olssen et al., 2004; Peters, 2003). It is a major factor in educational policy development and has replaced the nation-state as a framework for much educational policy discourse and formulation. Through the concept of the ‘knowledge economy’ (KE), the term that has been

coined to describe the idea that educational investment leads to economic success (Ball, 2021; Olssen et al., 2004), education is now an integral part of the processes and discourses of globalisation. However, as Kostrykina et al. (2018) suggest, the notion of the KE has become a ‘worn cliché’ (2018, p.58) and is rarely critiqued as it is now commonly accepted that knowledge and learning is ‘so utterly familiar and “good for us”’ (Robertson, 2008, p.2). Some researchers suggest that a ‘a very particular “knowledge” ... Western science and technology, now enabled by ICTs and a liberal market economy’ (Robertson, 2008, p.9) is privileged by the KE. Kostrykina et al., (2018) point out that this ‘neo-colonial approach’ (p.59) together with ‘neo-liberal imagery’ (Rizvi, 2014, p.140) does not consider cultural or regional specifics or attempts to cater to the requirements of other nations. According to Yang et al. (2017), this internationalization of a Western-centric view of education ‘has often been a painful experience for many non-Western societies resulting from historical facts of political colonization and cultural imperialism’ (p.145).

The rise of neoliberalism in the last few decades has led to it becoming established as the main political ideology worldwide. This has had a significant impact on education policy and practice although education is ‘particularly troubled by this impact’ (Connell, 2013, p.99) as the main driver behind curriculum and educational reforms has been to produce human capital in order to maximise financial gains. In accordance with neoliberal principles, educational systems have been marketized. Human Capital Theory (HCT) acknowledges education’s economic importance (OECD, 2001). ‘Neoliberal capitalist organisations’ (Hill, 2010, p.126) such as OECD, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have repeatedly highlighted and stressed the importance of developing ‘human resources’ via education and training (Peters, 2012). They emphasize that this development is important for increasing and improving the skillset and competencies of human workers as well as producing scientific knowledge and research which ultimately is the key to effective participation in the global economy.

Pedagogical aims are constantly being realigned to address the need to prepare individuals with the requisite skills to contribute to a national workforce which can compete in a global marketplace. Science, Technology and Mathematics (STEM) are considered to be the most useful subjects to achieve this and so

there has been a shift in favour of these with a consequent narrowing of the curriculum as more instruction time is spent on these three subjects (Wyse and Torrance, 2009). Also, since 2011, UK universities have experienced rapidly increasing numbers of applications for STEM subjects (GOV.UK, 2021a) and statistics show that STEM graduates generally earn more than their peers in other fields (GOV.UK, 2025d; OECD; 2023).

Educational aims which go beyond crude neoliberal drivers are discouraged by an over-emphasis on STEM, standardised quantitative testing and performance league tables. Non-scientific knowledge has been diminished due to the over-emphasis on technical knowledge (Nussbaum, 2009). Compulsory assessments in the current English primary curriculum test student's technical knowledge and cover STEM subjects only (GOV.UK, 2025c). These results are published for parents to consult when choosing a school (Morrison & Cowan, 1996). This puts great pressure on schools to achieve high SAT scores as the level of government funding provided is directly linked to the number of enrolled pupils. As Santos (cited in Dale & Robertson, 2004) explains, a broader approach to education is needed as the current focus on scientific and technical knowledge is too narrow. Presently, 'the so-called 'knowledge society'' is aligned with market needs and 'alternative knowledges for alternative societies and sociabilities' (p.18) are sorely needed. Various analyses of the contemporary system of education have shown that politicians do not act in the best interests of the students. Instead, they are considered commodities and future contributors to the nation-state economy (Ball, 2008; Olssen et al., 2004, 2, 2013; Robeyns, 2006).

Although increasing an individual's education and skills in order to enhance their earning potential is a relevant and valid aim, it may also be restrictive and damaging as it may not align with the ideals stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948) mentioned earlier in this section. Firstly, HCT is only concerned with the economic advantages of education such as increased productivity levels and improving wage-earning potential. It does not consider those individuals that have religious, emotional, social, moral, or other non-economic motives for education. Additionally, HCT is entirely instrumental and so the only measurement of importance is the degree to which education and skills are predicted to strengthen future earning potential and economic productivity.

In the current neoliberal climate, STEM subjects are the most highly regarded skills and considered to be the basis for providing increased earning potential and a stable economic future (Langdon et al., 2011; Xue & Larson, 2015). Many economically developed countries have promoted initiatives to encourage the study of STEM (Committee on STEM education, 2018; DeCoito, 2016; Even et al., 2023; House of Commons, 2018). For example, between 2007 and 2017, initiatives designed to encourage the study of STEM cost the UK government almost £1 billion (House of Commons, 2018). In the 2020 fiscal year, the USA allocated more than \$4 billion to support STEM education (Even et al., 2023). Initiatives include a Curriculum and Assessment Review which is due to be finalised at the end of 2025 (GOV.UK, 2025b), cultivating industry-school partnerships and improving career advice within schools. In the UK, STEM undergraduate enrolments have risen by 17% since 2005-06 and STEM degree enrolments in the USA rose from 18% in 2015-16 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018) to 21% in 2021-22 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). By 2022, 22.8% of all tertiary education degrees in the UK and 19.6% in the USA were in STEM subjects (World Economic Forum, 2023).

Despite this, many countries continue to report a ‘STEM skills gap’ (Committee on STEM education, 2018; House of Commons, 2018). Recent government reports state that this skills shortage causes recruitment difficulties for 49% of engineering and technology businesses (Greaves & Brawley, 2025) and 46% of roles requiring data skills (GOV.UK, 2021b). According to a 2022 Department of Education Employer Skills Survey, a lack of data skills accounts for 32% of all skill-shortage vacancies. This shortage of STEM skills causes the UK economy to lose approximately £1.5 billion every year (Greaves & Brawley, 2025) and as such, great efforts are being made to increase the number of STEM graduates (HM Government, 2017).

Labour market outcomes of students chosen field of study are important for education policy as well as the student. Data from OECD countries show that they vary greatly depending on the graduate’s subject area (Duquet et al., 2010; Even et al., 2023; Finnie & Frenette, 2003). The notion of ‘employability’ is noticeable in public discourse and education policy proposals which support continued and increased governmental funding for STEM subjects. In the USA, students face large fees and so, presumably, future earning potential is a

consideration when choosing a subject. Enrolment in the humanities has been decreasing annually with the biggest drops coinciding with the introduction of fees in 2008 and the increase in fees in 2012 (Roberts, 2021).

The UDHR (1948) states that in addition to preparing students for their future lives, the main aims of education are to strive for social justice and pursue human flourishing.

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups. (UNDHR, 1948, p.7)

Educational systems which adopt a primarily economic outlook have the potential to produce self-serving individuals driven by greed (Gaus et al., 2018) and as such, cannot progress towards social justice. The marketisation of education has led to a narrowing of the curriculum and has neglected the development of individual autonomy and critical thinking skills which is producing graduates who possess a narrow range of technical skills. In a world which is developing rapidly, the skills needed by the future workforce are unknown and so, a broader range of skills would better equip our children for the future.

A liberal education, with its broad curriculum and non-instrumental purpose, is the most effective method to achieve these goals (Nussbaum, 1997; Strauss, 2006). Liberal educationalists advocate learning for the sake of learning and promote critical thinking through a long-standing focus on individual autonomy as a fundamental principle and a valued aim of education (Levinson, 1999; Stefanou et al., 2004). Critical thinking skills are transferable across different subject areas and can be applied broadly across the whole curriculum. All subjects, including STEM, can be studied critically and do not need to be only factual, knowledge-based subjects. As Vaughn highlights,

Principles and procedures used to evaluate beliefs in one discipline or issue can be used to evaluate beliefs in many other arenas. Good critical thinking is the same everywhere (2005, p.8).

By developing thinking skills, students can learn how to question, investigate and

gain deeper knowledge into more areas than simply those studied.

Critical thinking is a fundamental characteristic of a global citizen (Ehigie, 2021; Nussbaum, 2019; UNESCO, 2025). Additionally, they are able to engage in self-criticism, view themselves as belonging to a diverse world and have the ability to empathise with those who are different backgrounds (Nussbaum, 2019). Obtaining global citizenship skills is a desirable quality for all children (Reay et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2025). Whether experienced at school or through travel, diversity is viewed as a source of ‘multi-cultural global capital’ (Reay et al., p. 1051) which enhances the present and future lives of children and provides them with a competitive edge in the neoliberal labour market.

In this study, Nussbaum’s concept of cosmopolitanism will be used to frame and understand the idea of global citizenship. ‘Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism’ (Nussbaum, 1994) was written as a response to Rorty (1994). He was calling for a stronger sense of national pride identity which he claimed was ‘an absolutely essential component of citizenship’ (1994, online). His nation-centred outlook concerned Nussbaum who saw the USA becoming increasingly disconnected from the rest of the world. She saw that instead of a choice between a political outlook based on difference or one based on national identity, this was a chance to expand the political outlook to one which was more global and shared as ‘both rational and mutually dependent human beings’ (1994, p.3). Nussbaum considered the project too ‘inward-looking’ and believed that it should look beyond the nation and acknowledge global commonalities.

Although more than 30 years have passed, Nussbaum’s response is still relevant to today’s global context. Since then, cosmopolitanism has helped inform educators on responding appropriately to ‘increasingly globalised relationships and responsibilities’ (Stornaiuolo & Nichols, 2018, p. 1). Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism directly challenges overly nationalistic perspectives and aims to stimulate debate around the nature of affiliation and allegiance in more global, diverse societies. Cosmopolitanism has been criticised for its resistance to national affiliation and patriotism. Despite this, cosmopolitanism has undergone a timely revival. In 1994, when the paper was published, the world was rapidly changing; the global economy was becoming increasingly integrated and mobile phones and the internet would soon be ubiquitously available. As a

result, people worldwide became more connected than ever before. These developments have been both positive and negative, however, as described earlier, the presence of global neoliberal organisations such as the OECD, are leading to worldwide transfer of educational policies which originate in the West and promote a specific, western-centric form of knowledge based on the concept of the KE.

Martha Nussbaum (1994) suggests that an outward-looking cosmopolitan orientation would be more effective in today's increasingly global society than an inward-looking nationalistic orientation as there is a need to be able to understand the lives of others and acknowledge and respond to moral obligations of not only one's local community, but also the wider community of humanity. Promoting a cosmopolitan view of citizenship over a patriotic and nationalistic one is at the centre of Nussbaum's (1994) cosmopolitanism. She believes that the patriotic pride that Rorty (1994) endorses is morally dangerous and destructive and posits that patriotic 'worthy goals' (Nussbaum, 1994, p.3) such as seeking national, unified standards of equity justice are undermined by patriotic pride. She suggests that the cosmopolitan principle of allegiance to the global 'community of human beings' (Nussbaum, 1994, p.3) would more effectively serve the patriotic aim of national unity. A broader allegiance founded on commonalities between mutually dependent and rational human beings, she claims, establishes a more international foundation for humanity.

The idea of citizenship goes back to ancient Greece and is more grounded in human development than globalisation. The word 'cosmopolitan' originated in the fourth century BCE when Diogenes, rejected his origins and local community membership and claimed to be a 'citizen of the world' with universal interests and hopes. This gave rise to the notion of world citizenship and the belief that humans lived in two communities. Not only do humans live in their birth community but they also live in a community of human aspiration and argument which is the source of moral obligation. As such, our primary allegiance and respect should be for humanity and its capacity for reason and morality. This stems from the reasoning that one's nation of birth is accidental and 'any human may have been born in any nation' (Nussbaum, 1994, p.4) so nationality, ethnicity, gender or class differences should not affect the fellowship of humanity (p.4). Nussbaum repeatedly stresses how crucial allegiance to

humanity as a whole is in order to be a citizen of the world. However, it is not necessary to reject one's local identity and affiliations as these enrich our lives and add to our individual identity (Nussbaum, 1994, p. 4).

Multiple countries are concerned about the use of school to promote national identity (Archard, 1999; Grosvenor, 1999). Globalization, increasing numbers of global migration and the tenacity of nationalism have led to these notions being challenged by new thinking in the field (Banks, 2014; Gutmann, 2004; Koopman et al., 2005; Torres, 1998). The nation-states are increasingly losing their power over the education system as it becomes more aligned with the interests of regional and supranational institutions as well as nongovernmental institutions which are driven by economic considerations such as the OECD, the World Bank and the IMF (Keating et al., 2009; Gaudelli, 2016; Goren & Yemini, 2017). As the concept of national identity has been challenged, so too has citizenship education which is now expected to include community, regional (such as European) and global citizenship as well as national citizenship (Stromquist, 2008). As much research highlights, this reality has presented a fundamental challenge to the traditional concept of citizenship education (Bauman, 2001; Robertson & Dale, 2008; Yemini, 2017).

Banks (2014) asserts that a transformative and effective citizenship education should equip individuals with the skills, values and knowledge that are necessary to function and participate effectively in their own cultural community, nationally and also internationally. This would also assist individuals to obtain the values and cosmopolitan mindset needed to support and seek social justice and equality on a global scale (Appiah, 2006; Nussbaum, 2002) and aligns with the UDHR (1948) which states that the fundamental objectives of education are to pursue human flourishing and to strive for social justice. However, technical and scientific education are the main focus of the current neoliberal model of education while 'the cultural, social and non-material dimensions of life' (Robeyns, 2006, p.72) are neglected.

According to Pigozzi (2006), 'the need to attend to global citizenship education is essential' (2006, p.1) as models of citizenship framed by the nation-state are no longer sufficient for current global subjectivities and scenarios (Bauman, 2001; Robertson & Dale, 2008; Yemini, 2017). An overemphasis on national identity has been the cause of many wars and violent happenings in the world

(Hutchinson, 2017; Mann, 2013; Van Evera, 1994). However, while the aim of defending one's identity is a valid need and aim, it should not be sought by resisting humanity's interdependence and globalised need to exist together. If we cannot learn to live together, then we 'will fall together, as the catastrophic world wars of the last century amply demonstrated' (Pigozzi, 2006, p.2). As societies become increasingly diverse, the need to learn to exist together is vital if peace is to be maintained. As such, this must be taken into account by educational systems (Pigozzi, 2006).

According to UNESCO,

the values of tolerance, universality, mutual understanding, respect for cultural diversity and the promotion of a culture of peace, which are central to UNESCO's mission, have acquired new relevance for inspiring action by international organisations, States, civil society and individual citizens (UNESCO, 2001 cited in Pigozzi, 2006, p. 2)

If mutual understanding is to be attained, commonly held values such as peace and tolerance are essential and must form the foundation of education (Ehigie, 2021; UNESCO, 2025). In order to respect both national identity and global citizenship, education needs to acknowledge and address the various dimensions of individual and group identity such as family, community, nation, and the world. UNESCO's vision for education aims to develop the whole child and addresses values formation and attitudes as well as skills and knowledge (Pigozzi, 2006; UNESCO, 2025).

As globalization progresses, individuals worldwide face an increasingly similar and common future. Violent solutions to problems are usually adopted by individuals with 'a lack of critical thinking and unquestioning obedience to rules' (Davies, 2023). If we are to live together peacefully and happily, then raising globally educated citizens with commonly held values and the ability to think critically is essential (Davies, 2023; Ehigie, 2021; Pigozzi, 2006; UNESCO, 2025).

1.3 Research Questions and Methodology

The title of this research study is 'Exploring the lived experiences of full-time, long-term world schoolers' and the primary aim is to explore and gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of families who have been living a world

schooling lifestyle for at least a year. A subsidiary aim is to identify some of the challenges which world schoolers face and explore the ways in which they attempt to overcome them.

I have chosen to locate this study within a constructivist paradigm, which acknowledges a subjectivist epistemology and is based on relativist ontological assumptions. Constructivism focuses on individuals and the meanings that they derive from their experiences and action. From this perspective, reality is never objective and the positivist view that ‘hard, tangible and relatively immutable facts that can be observed, measured and known for what they are’ (Sparkes, 1992, p. 20) is rejected. Instead, constructivism asserts that:

realities are social constructions of the mind, and that there exist as many constructions as there are individuals (although clearly many constructions will be shared)’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 43).

Subjectivism holds that knowledge is ‘always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 21) and as such, a subjectivist epistemology is ‘value laden’ (Levers, 2013, online) and open to individual interpretation rather than factual.

Located in the field of qualitative research, the study uses narrative inquiry as the methodology. This approach and the reasons for selecting it will be discussed in greater depth in the methodology chapter. There are multiple, different interpretations of narrative research so I will highlight the distinctions between them and indicate where this study is located. Various academics such as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Clandinin and Murphy (2007), in conversation with Donald Polkinghorne (2007), view narrative inquiry as the study of individual experience; as ‘a knowledge of the particular, the unique’ (2007, p. 633). For this reason, after considering various methodologies, narrative inquiry seemed the most appropriate methodological approach to understand and represent the lived experiences of the individuals taking part in this study.

As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain:

experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and key way of writing and thinking about it (2000, p. 18).

Narrative inquiry is thus a relational form of research so ethical considerations are an integral part of the research process. According to Richardson (1990), narrative researchers should always acknowledge that narrating other's life stories is 'a site of moral responsibility' (1990, p. 130). Ethical considerations will be discussed further in the methodology chapter (section 3.4).

According to Creswell (2014), narrative research enables the researcher to build a close relationship with participants who, by being able to tell their story, feel that their voice has been heard and is relevant. Elliott (2005) adds that it can facilitate empathy during interviews and encourage the interviewee to 'externalize his or her feelings and indicate which elements of those experiences are most significant' (2005, p.4). As such, not only is narrative research the study of experience, of 'stories lived and told' (Clandinin, 2000, p.20), but it is also a collaboration between the participants and the researcher 'which takes place over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.20).

Serial interviews with five participants are used in the data collection and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional space approach is deployed to help organise and interpret the data. These dimensions are sociality, temporality and place, and they are based on the philosophy of Dewey (1938) and his belief that 'an individual's experience was a central lens for understanding a person' (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002, p. 331). He claimed that individuals can only be understood through their social context and interactions and that their experiences are not isolated happenings but are all connected in time (Clandinin & Connelly (2000).

1.4 Significance of the Research

In the 21st century, many aspects of society, including education, are changing. The notion that knowledge is primarily obtained via compulsory state-mandated education is expanding and alternative sources of knowledge are increasingly being accepted as advantageous to individuals and society (Lester, 2004).

Although online schools have been available since the 1990s, the COVID-19 epidemic accelerated their use as many educational establishments were

required to migrate to online learning. With almost no advance notice, academic staff and families were forced to accept and rapidly adapt to changing circumstances. In many cases, this involved engaging in a combination of online learning and some form of home schooling. This has led to an increasing acceptance of online learning, improved digital education tools, and a wider variety of online schools being opened. Alternate forms of education, for example, unschooling and home schooling, were already growing in popularity (Busby, 2018; Hirsch, 2019; Mitic, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2016) and this growth was accelerated by the pandemic (Eggleston & Fields, 2021, Weale, 2021).

World schooling, which will be examined in more detail in the literature review chapter (section 2.4), is the combination of home schooling and travelling. It is placed 'at the intersection of alternative education movements ... and forms of educational travel, such as study tours and study abroad programs' (Molz, 2017, p.16) and has not been widely researched (Falk et al., 2012; Sotomayer, 2022; van't Klooster et al., 2008) as it is a relatively modern phenomenon. Although there is no official numerical data, the word 'world schoolers' has increasingly been appearing in mainstream media (Choat, 2016; Mannino, 2022; Yoshikawa, 2020). Online and social media searches for 'world schooling' now return a wide range of forums and personal pages and blogs which are primarily run by world schoolers for the purposes of connecting with other world schoolers, requesting and sharing advice. They share positive stories of their world schooling and also address the myriad of challenges, such as a lack of permanent community and regular activities and homesickness, that full-time travelling with children presents. A Facebook group called 'World schoolers', which was created by Eli Gerzon (section 2.4) in 2007 and had only 800 members in 2010, had almost 58,000 in 2022 and 73,500 in September 2025. While not all of the members are currently travelling or world schooling, as some are planning, dreaming or simply taking a break, this increase suggests that interest in the concept of world schooling is growing and that it is becoming more accepted as a viable educational alternative (Molz, 2017).

Educationally, world schoolers collectively reject orthodox, instrumental approaches and drivers of education and instead view learning as unrestricted,

experiential and relational. They frequently view travelling, cultural immersion and affective development as educational and, as such, oppose dominant neoliberal educational policy which views education as standardized achievements in preparation for labour market productivity (Molz, 2021; Riley, 2017). Ethnographic studies (Molz, 2017; 2021) of world schooling indicate that world schoolers prioritise self-directed learning, global citizenship and emotional intelligence. This directly challenges the neoliberal model of schooling based on standardized curricula and testing. In this way, world schooling aligns with critiques of educational instrumentalism (Sosnowska, 202; Marshall, 2011) that reject schooling in its current form with its narrow focus on employability and human capital production. Instead of viewing education as acquiring a set of measurable competencies, world schoolers value a more extensive view that transcends institutional boundaries.

In addition to the online resources mentioned above, some books and guides about world schooling have been published (Dymock de Tello, 2017; Harders, 2021; Molz, 2021; Revell, 2020; Roelants, 2017; Tyler et al., 2022). However, world schooling and its supporters need to be better understood from an objective, academic perspective as the majority of currently available information about world schooling is largely anecdotal and cannot be verified.

1.5 Limitations

Although the implicit value of this study is in its specificity, its limitations are also due to its specificity. While my relatively small sample size allowed me to explore the participants' experiences in detail, it limits the breadth and generalizability of the findings. I acknowledge that the potential to identify broader trends or subtle variations which may be present in the wider population of world schoolers is limited owing to the sample size (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Another limitation arises from the subjective nature of data interpretation in qualitative research, particularly narrative interviews. Also, not having a control group limits the depth of understanding of the educational benefits of a world schooling lifestyle. A comparison with homeschooled or unschooled non-travelling families would provide a richer context for comprehending the lived experiences of my participants. Additionally, this study relies on self-reported data which has the potential for biases, such as social

desirability bias and recall bias, which could affect the reliability and accuracy of the participants' stories (Furnham, 1986). To minimise potential biases, I held serial interviews with my participants and had regular consultations with my doctoral supervisor. These limitations need to be recognised and acknowledged to ensure that any conclusions made are understood within the context of these methodological limitations and any contributions to the discourse of world schooling and alternative education are academically responsible.

1.6 Thesis Structure

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. The first chapter (i.e. the current chapter) provided the motivation for the study (section 1.1) and contextual information (section 1.2). It also discussed the research question and methodology (section 1.3), the significance of the research (section 1.4) and the limitations of the study (section 1.5).

Chapter two presents a critical review of literature which covers the similarities and differences between learning and schooling (section 2.1), homeschooling (section 2.2) and unschooling (section 2.3). It also reviews previous literature on the topic of world schooling (section 2.4) as well as the educational benefits of travel (section 2.5).

Chapter three focuses on the methodology of the study. It starts with an explanation of the research paradigm (section 3.1), and how narrative inquiry is appropriate for this research (section 3.2). It discusses positionality (section 3.3). The tools used to collect data are described with respect to their appropriateness and implementation. It then describes how the data was managed and analysed before considering the ethical and research validity aspects.

Chapter four presents the participants stories. This leads into chapter five, where I discuss the key findings from the participants' stories and link them with published literature.

Finally, in chapter six I present a summary of the key findings based on the participants' stories (section 6.1). Then, I discuss the significance of this study

and the implications it has for education (section 6.2) before making some recommendations for how world schoolers can be supported (section 6.3). After that, I address the need for future research regarding world schooling as a form of education (section 6.4) and conclude the chapter by evaluating the methodology used (section 6.5).

Chapter 2 Literature Review

When writing a literature review, a fine balance often exists between understanding and being open to previous, relevant literature whilst being aware of one's own assumptions and identity and how they may influence the study (Butler-Kisber, 2010). In this chapter, I will analyse previous research and contributions to the field of study both critically and conceptually. I identified five main areas as being pertinent to my study and they are: the literature addressing the differences and similarities between learning and schooling (section 2.1); secondly, the literature pertaining to homeschooling (section 2.2); and closely related, the literature concerning unschooling (section 2.3); next, the literature pertaining to world schooling (section 2.4); and finally, the literature concerning the educational benefits of travel (section 2.5).

2.1 Learning and Schooling

'Learning' and 'schooling' are both forms of education, which 'is the process of facilitating learning or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits' (UNESCO, online). A child's right to education, although not the form it should take, has been recognised by international law. The UDHR acknowledges this,

Everyone has a right to education Elementary education should be compulsory ... Parents have a right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. (1948, p.7)

The European Convention on Human Rights, Protocol 1, Article 2 also recognises the right of a child's right to education,

No person should be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect (2013, p.33)

The term 'schooling' denotes 'a formal way of educating children in preschools, schools and higher education' (Gobby & Millei, 2017, p.37) It 'usually involves teachers instructing students in a formal curriculum or syllabus comprised of distinct subjects' (Ibid., 2017). 'Learning' refers to 'the individual acquisition or modification of information, attitudes, values, skills, competencies or

behaviours through experience, practice, study or instruction'. (UNESCO, 2011, p.7).

Although there are clear and distinct differences between the concepts of learning and schooling, the two terms are often used interchangeably especially by government advisers and education professionals who often do not acknowledge alternative forms of education outside the state school system (Petrie, 2001). Legislators often confuse 'compulsory education' and 'compulsory schooling' (Petrie, 1995; Tomasevski, 1999) which, in some countries, may lead to a smaller range of educational possibilities being available for parents to choose from and as a result, 'an increase in the powers of the nanny state' (Petrie, 2001, p.480).

Sociological scholars, such as Bourdieu and Passeron (1997) and Bowles and Gintis (1976), have focused on schooling's reproductive function and suggest that when learning happens outside a traditional school setting, it can be a form of resistance and agency as opposed to reproduction of, and submission to, the current state of affairs. The term 'cultural capital' was coined by Bourdieu and Passeron in 1977 to denote non-financial assets, such as experiences, knowledge, and skills, which benefit individuals in educational and professional settings. They argued that because institutionalised schooling valorises those assets which are congruent with the dominant culture's home culture, schools reproduce and maintain current social inequalities. The 'correspondence theory' of schooling (Bowles and Gintis, 1976) argues that schooling prepares children for hierarchical roles in capitalist economies by replicating workplace relationships. In this manner, they claim that schooling is more concerned with social classification and compliance training than it is with learning.

Nowadays, there is a growing number of private alternative schools, such as Montessori (Lillard, 2005), Waldorf (Ashley, 2009), and Summerhill (Stronach & Piper, 2008). Homeschooling (section 2.2), unschooling (section 2.3) and world schooling (section 2.4) are all forms of learning which occur outside the conventional school system.

The development of digital learning is changing the landscape of education and challenging the domination of schooling as a context for learning. The use of digital technologies for education has caused scholars to reconsider the purpose, design, and accessibility of education (Decuypere et al., 2021; Perrotta, 2024; Van Dijck et al., 2018). By utilising Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) (McAuley et al., 2010; Reich, 2015), self-paced learning platforms and online learning communities (Alphonse & Mwantimwa, 2019; Camilleri & Camilleri, 2017), learners can access knowledge at little or no cost. Goldie (2016) and Siemens (2005) state that digital learning is decentralized, networked, and learner-centred. Mitra's research (2005, 2022) showed that children were able to understand complex ideas independently (section 2.3) which suggests that schooling and direct instruction are not prerequisites for learning. Many studies on digital technology in education have focused on their potential to support and enhance learning. However, Selwyn (2022) believes that digital learning 'is becoming even more contested, ideologically driven and messy than ever' (p.viii).

Recent literature calls for a more holistic model of education that acknowledges both the limitations and affordances of schooling and recognises and develops multiple forms of learning (Mahmoudi et al., 2012; Miller, 2019). According to Miller (2012, online), holistic education

is based on the premise that each person finds identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world, and to humanitarian values such as compassion and peace' (Miller, 2012, online)

According to Biesta (2009), we 'need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education' (p.33) and broaden the focus of schooling beyond individual academic attainment.

2.2 Homeschooling

Homeschooling, also referred to as elective home education, is the term used when a child's parents or guardians decide to educate them at home, outside the conventional school system (GOV.UK, 2019). In 2014, home schooling was illegal in 28 countries (Bayer, cited in Miller, 2014, p.410) and now that number

has increased to at least 32. It is not possible to know precisely as statistics and information from some countries is varied, vague or, in some cases, non-existent. Despite this, the popularity of home education has been growing exponentially (Busby, 2018; Hirsch, 2019; Mitic, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2016) and in the USA in 2023, over 3% (3.7 million) of children were being homeschooled (Sempeles & Cui, 2023). In Britain, there was no legal requirement to inform authorities of the decision to homeschool one's children until 2024 (GOV.UK, 2025a) at which point 111,700 were reported to be homeschooled. However, the real number is likely to be higher as 'this is a relatively new data collection' (GOV.UK, 2025a, online). This is in contrast to various other liberal democracies such as Germany and Sweden, where home education is illegal and parents have no rights regarding home education.

The number of higher education establishments with admissions policies for home schoolers is also rising. In Gaither's (2017) study of US colleges, he found that

in 1986, 90% of the nation's colleges and universities had no explicit home-schooling admissions policy. By 2004, over 75% did, and the vast majority of admissions officers surveyed then, and again in 2013, reported very positive feelings about homeschooled applicants (2017, p. 273).

Riley (2020) reports that home schoolers are actively sought by US college admission officers, as they are often the most self-directed and creative college applicants. Katie Fretwell, Dean of Admissions at Amherst College in Massachusetts, stated that home schoolers are 'innovative thinkers that bring a lot to the table' (Slater-Tate, 2016). The Dean of Freshmen at Harvard reported 'a lot of success with students who identify as homeschooled' (Tong and Tuysuzoglu, 2017, online), while noting that homeschooling has evolved to include much more than simply being educated in one's home.

However, a trend towards stricter regulation of homeschooling can clearly be seen worldwide. Recently, Western European governments, in particular Germany and Sweden, have displayed increasingly hostile reactions to home education, forcing many homeschooling families to flee the country (Waldron, 2013) or appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (Donnelly, 2019).

Continuing to home school has led to situations in which parents have lost custody of their child[ren], either temporarily (Grunau & Schumacher, 2019) or permanently (HSLDA, 2019). In 2006, a rapporteur from the United Nations recommended drafting legislation allowing parents more rights concerning the education of their children (Martin, 2010). Despite this, it has not been repealed.

As Petrie (2001) asserts, government decisions regarding home schooling should be based on careful, reliable research. However, home schoolers are often dissuaded from participating in research (Webb, 2011) unless it is conducted by homeschool advocacy groups (Ray & Smith, 2008 cited in Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). This has resulted in a large number of advocacy-based studies which are not suitable for informing political decisions. On the other hand, many studies are isolated anecdotes which are often concerned with the extremes of home schooling for example, exceptionally gifted children. As a result, there is a lack of well-informed research on ‘the average home schooler’. Nevertheless, there is a growing body of literature which is beginning to provide a better understanding of the practice and its potential implications for society.

2.2.1 Motivations

In 1988, Van Galen explored the motivations of home schoolers and identified two distinct categories. They were the conservative Christians (the ‘ideologues’), with ideological motivations, and the liberal un/home schoolers (‘the pedagogues’), who saw home education as a protest against the regimentation of childhood and expertise based on qualifications and institutionalism. This basic distinction in motivations still exists although there is an increasing number of home schoolers who home school because their child has specific health or educational needs which are not being met by other available local options (Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). In the USA, 83% of parents of homeschooled children cite concerns about the school environment, for example, safety and drug issues as a reason for homeschooling (Sempeles & Cui, 2023).

Two independent meta-analyses of homeschooling survey-based literature on motivation found that, when presented with a predetermined list of reasons for

home schooling, one or more of four reasons were chosen. They were based on religion or morality, academic achievement, safety and wanting to strengthen family relationships (Murphy, 2012; Spiegler, 2010). However, critics claim that motivation is too complex and dynamic to be captured by quantitative surveys (Neuman & Guterman, 2019; Spiegler, 2010). If home schoolers are required to choose from a predetermined list of motivations, they need to accept ‘the researcher’s worldview and find a place for themselves’ (Neuman & Guterman, 2019, p.194) inside it. Quantitative surveys are also unable capture motivational shifts over time (Neuman & Guterman, 2019; Spiegler, 2010).

In 2019, Neuman & Guterman investigated motivation using qualitative interviews with twenty-five homeschooling mothers and avoided both using predetermined lists and assuming that motivation was constant over time. They determined four ‘themes’ (p. 197). The first two themes correspond with Van Galen’s ‘pedagogues’ and ‘ideologues’ but with ideology referring more broadly to the home schooler’s worldview than just religious perspectives. The third theme, ‘opportunity’, refers to unplanned situations which arise and prompt the transition to home schooling (Lois, 2013; Morton, 2010). The fourth theme, ‘flow’, is concerned with the fact that home education was not deliberately chosen but rather complemented and emerged naturally from the family’s lifestyle. Whereas the first two themes are the result of conscious decisions, the second two choices represent ‘randomness and lack of planning’ (Neuman & Guterman, 2019, p. 202-203) which led families to naturally transition to home schooling.

Difficulty gaining access to home schooling families and the fact that a range of approaches are categorised as home education (Neuman & Guterman, 2017) has made the everyday practice of home schooling difficult to study. Also, identifying individuals who can represent the diverse experiences and perspectives of home schoolers is extremely problematic (Knowles & Muchmore, 1995; Wright, 1988). However, as more former home schoolers enter post-graduate education, the amount of academic literature, although mostly small anecdotal studies, is increasing. What is becoming clearer is that a shift takes place over the course of home schooling with a move from formal to informal with regards to both pedagogical process and curricular context (Neuman & Guterman, 2017; Taylor-Hough, 2010). It has been consistently found that, after

trying to replicate school at home for a year or two, a more eclectic, less-structured approach is gradually adopted (Charvoz, 1998; Gray & Riley, 2013; Lois, 2006, 2013; Pattison, 2016). This is often a coping mechanism for the added burden of home schooling (Lois, 2006, 2009, 2013). Additionally, a less-structured approach recognises that educational opportunities arise from healthy family interactions, no matter how spontaneous and informal (Barratt-Peacock, 2003; Thomas, 1994).

A wide variety of curricular choices are available for home schoolers, ranging from a complete school curriculum prepared for home use to unschooling, in which learning is wholly child and interest-led with no external demands (Gaither, 2017; Gray & Riley, 2013; Taylor-Hough, 2010). Unschooling is discussed in more detail in section 2.3.

2.2.2 Academic Achievement

Many scholarly studies have focused on home schoolers academic achievement. However, the reliability and generalizability of most of the widely-cited studies is limited. The Home School Legal Defence Association (HSLDA) sponsored five major studies of home schoolers' academic performance (Ray, 1990, 1994, 1997a, 1997b, 2010) in which volunteers were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire, self-administer standardized tests and submit the results with the promise that they would be used for homeschooling advocacy (Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). After comparison with national averages, it was reported that homeschooled students routinely scored in at least the eightieth percentile in all areas. Both journalists and researchers have used these studies to assert that home schoolers outperform national schoolers academically and also continue on to be very successful adults (Ray, 2017a; Van Pelt, 2015). However, the results are problematic as the demographics of the volunteers do not match national averages. Also, the tests were self-administered and, as the volunteers were informed that the results would be used for homeschooling advocacy, then it is possible that only home schoolers who knew that their children would perform well volunteered.

Rudner's 1999 study 'Achievement and Demographics of Home School Students' collected data from 20,760 participants and is one of the most widely cited homeschooling studies (Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). Designed and commissioned

by the HSLDA, participants were recruited from the Bob Jones University Press Testing and Evaluation Service which is a prominent fundamentalist protestant homeschooling service. As with the HSLDA sponsored studies mentioned above, parents were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire and self-administer the tests at home. Students consistently scored in the seventieth and eightieth percentiles, but the demographic questionnaire showed that the sample was generally much whiter, wealthier, better educated nuclear families than national averages. Despite Rudner highlighting these limitations and clearly stating that the 'study does not demonstrate that home schooling is superior to public or private schools' (Rudner, 1999, p.29), it continues to be cited uncritically as evidence of home schoolers superior academic abilities (Boulter, 2017; Farris & Woodruff, 2011; Kostelecká et al., 2021; McCabe et al., 2021; Morrison, 2014; Sheng, 2013). However, multiple scholars have critiqued the study (Belfield, 2005; Dumas, Gates & Schwarzer, 2010; Hann & Cruickshank, 2006; Lubienski, Puckett & Brewer, 2013; Saunders, 2009-2010; Welner & Welner, 1999).

Several smaller-scale studies have been conducted which have accounted for family demographics. These have generally shown that homeschooling does not have any significant effect on academic achievement. Another consistent finding from previous research on scholarly achievement is that the parents' background, both educationally and financially, has a large impact on academic outcomes (Belfield, 2005; Boulter, 1999; Coleman, 2021; Kunzman, 2009; Medlin, 1994).

2.2.2 Socialization for personal interaction

Homeschooling has often been criticized for not providing children with the social competence necessary to effectively navigate broader society, cooperate with others and develop relationships. Brian Ray (1997a, 2004) has conducted some of the most widely publicized studies concerning homeschooler socialization and presented very positive findings. However, as with his studies on academic achievement which were discussed earlier in this section, they suffer from some serious methodological limitations (Gaither, 2008). Firstly, participants were not taken from random samples. The majority of volunteers were recruited directly by HSLDA via telephone and direct mail. In 1997, 5,995

surveys were sent out and only 1,657 (28.8%) were returned with respondents self-reporting the required data. In addition to this, no consideration is given to how long a child has been homeschooled, if they have previously attended state school or are engaged in flexischooling with a variety of different learning contexts. Another serious flaw in both of Ray's studies is that no comparison to a similar group of children in state school was used. Ray's self-selected volunteers from conservative, white, two-parent, middle-class families were compared to 'unselected, representative norms' (Martin-Chang & Levesque, 2017, p.124). These design flaws in the methodology are particularly problematic when considering socialization outcomes and limit the ability to draw any conclusions. Despite this, they continue to be cited as evidence for 'clearly positive outcomes' (Ray, 2017b, p. 604) regarding social and emotional development when compared to children in state schools (Ray, 2017b; Valiente et al., 2022).

In their smaller-scale research on long-term socialization outcomes, Knowles and Muchmore (1995) utilised a richer methodology than Ray but still relied on self-reporting. They mailed a 'a lengthy survey' (Knowles and Muchmore, 1995, p. 38) to 327 previously homeschooled adults in the USA and Canada. 53 (16.9%) responded and 46 of those agreed to participate in the next stage of the study which was a life-history interview. The primary aim of the survey was to help select 10 individuals, who represent diversity as much as possible, to actually interview. Family background, age, gender, ethnicity, periods of formal schooling, employment, and past and present residential locations (taking into account geography and whether urban or rural) were all considered when making the selection. All participants had been homeschooled for at least two years and most for much longer. One of the participants, a retired county judge who was homeschooled for four years, reflected;

I never felt I could have done better in school or achieved more in my profession if I hadn't been home-schooled. I just never felt that way. As a matter of fact, I always felt that I was better equipped than my contemporaries in most things (Knowles and Muchmore, 1995, p.43).

Another participant, who was homeschooled until age 12 and was a 24-year-old interior decorator at the time of the study, stated,

Home schooling made me who I am. It was my whole life experience ... It was how I looked at the world - what kind of values I had, what I felt was important, and my whole attitude toward education, learning, and being in the world. (Knowles and Muchmore, 1995, p.46)

Some of them, who grew up in an isolated environment, did express feeling shy in social situations but it is not possible to conclude that that is a result of their home education.

These findings have been echoed by studies investigating home schoolers' ability to socially integrate into public higher education (Galloway & Sutton, 1995; Sutton & Galloway, 2000). However, Medlin (2000) highlights that the institute in which Sutton and Galloway conducted their studies may have been a particularly appropriate choice for home schoolers as a large number had enrolled there. Other studies on home schoolers' socialization have relied on convenience samples and so their generalizability is limited.

2.2.3 Formation of values through socialization

In addition to the concept of socialization as the ability to effectively navigate societal norms, behaviours, and culture, is the notion of socialization for formation of values. Socialization is much more than interacting socially in different contexts; it is also about how children cultivate beliefs about what and why something is important to them. Such topics often diverge into philosophical discussions of social norms and have generated a substantial body of literature concerned with issues of religious inculcation, personal autonomy, and democratic citizenship preparations.

Despite the varied backgrounds of the participants in Knowles and Muchmore's 1995 study (section 2.2.2), they all held similar beliefs and values. They all expressed a belief in respecting individual differences and showing concern for others. Other common values were a sense of social responsibility and patriotism. Overall, Knowles and Muchmore (1995) found that home schoolers were not socially disadvantaged, none were unemployed or claiming benefits and they often attributed their independence and self-motivation as adults to their homeschooling experience. All parents who took part in the study had chosen home education for their own children.

Many theorists, for example Brighthouse & Swift (2006), Galston (2002) and Spinner-Halev (2000) have focused on education's role in cultivating personal autonomy. Rob Reich (2002, 2008) proposes that there are three interested parties in education (children, parents, and the state) and asserts that when identifying children's personal interests, they must be differentiated from their parents. 'Minimalist autonomy' (Reich, 2002, p. 20) is one such interest and refers to the development of the ability to critically reflect on one's own commitments and values while also having a variety of meaningful choices in life to select from and follow. Reich and various other academics (Bartholet, 2020; Blokhuis, 2010; Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Yuracko, 2008) are concerned that homeschooling contexts in which the parents are the only instructors could hinder the development of such autonomy as the children are exposed to a limited range of ideas and perspectives. However, other theorists such as Glanzer (2008) and Merry and Karston (2010) criticize his concerns about the homeschooling being too restrictive and wonder if minimal autonomy is more likely to be fostered in a public-school setting. Conroy (2010) and Kunzman (2012) both question whether the state, as guarantor of children's rights (Brighthouse, 2002), has the required knowledge or ability to decide if a minimum level of autonomy has been met by an individual.

Empirical research on home schoolers value formation is mixed. Steinberg (2000) informs us that autonomy tends to be more visible in teenagers with authoritative parents as they have clear expectations but also provide space for the adolescents to make their own decisions and form their own values as they mature in their responsibility and judgements. However, Cai et al., (2002) suggest that parents who are too authoritarian (for example, placing rigid demands and allowing minimal questioning) tend to discourage and restrict the development of autonomy. In a small-scale study of 11 conservative Christian home schoolers and 11 unschoolers, Averett and Lacy (2021) found that the conservative Christian home schoolers were a mix of authoritative and authoritarian while the unschoolers did not place as much value on parental control and allowed their children much more freedom. In a comparison with public school students, McEntire (2005) found that home schoolers were more settled in their personal beliefs, values, and commitments. However, it is not clear whether this is a result of strict adherence to their parents' values or

meaningful personal reflection. Kingston and Medlin (2006) reported no significant difference in responses to the statement “I want my child to decide for him/herself what values to believe in”, between thirty Christian homeschooling parents and fifty public school parents from the same local area. However, there has not been any follow-up to see whether what the parents said and what they did aligned.

In 2013, Hoelzle conducted a retrospective study of values formation in homeschooled Christians. He interviewed four young adults about their personal beliefs and values, how they viewed the role of homeschooling in shaping these and how they aligned or diverged from their parents. He believes that Reich’s (2002) worries about underexposure to alternative ways of life are exaggerated as participants asserted that they did not feel restricted in shaping their lives and acknowledged that they had met people and ideas not scripted by their parents. Their religious views differed not insignificantly from their parents, even though they still had a close relationship, which suggests autonomous functioning. Other studies have shown that the ideological influences of parents are not increased by the homeschooling environment (Uecker, 2008; Uecker & Hill; 2014) and parents do not need to homeschool in order to cultivate a particular set of values in their children.

Several, mostly quantitative, studies have investigated home schoolers’ social transition into higher education. In these, the researcher usually collects a convenience sample of previously homeschooled college students and compares them to a random sample of students, who attend the same college and have a similar background but attended public school. Little or no difference in the two groups experience of the social and emotional transition to college is reported in most of these studies (Bolle, Wessel, & Mulvihill, 2007; Saunders, 2009-10). White, Moore, and Squires (2009) reported that college students who had always been homeschooled were significantly more amiable, conscientious, and open to new experiences. Similarly, Smiley (2010, cited in Kunzman & Gaither, 2020) found that most of his participants reported that being exposed to alternative worldviews in college strengthened their personal values. Due to the small-scale nature of qualitative studies, it is not possible to generalise these findings.

As democratic societies depend on citizens who are informed and dedicated to respectfulness towards their fellow citizens, they are also concerned with values formation in their youth. Some academics view homeschooling as the most extreme form of a general shift towards private education and are worried that this reduces an individual's sense of shared civic duty and tolerance (Balmer, 2007; Lubienski, 2000, 2003; Ross, 2010). They are concerned that home schoolers may not be adequately exposed to a range of ethical and cultural diversity and so lack the critical self-awareness and respectfulness needed to engage with a multicultural, diverse society (Blokhuys, 2010; Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Reich, 2008). Apple (2000) expresses concern about this with conservative Christian home schoolers, especially homeschooling advocacy organizations such as HSLDA as they believe that the state and its schools are opposed to freedom and threaten a democratic view of the common good instead of promoting it. Home schoolers, however, do not consider avoiding schools and resisting contemporary culture as a rejection of community. According to Moss (1995, cited in Kunzman & Gaither, 2013), some homeschooling families believe that home education is a way of re-establishing local communities which have deteriorated in modern society. Dill and Elliot (2019) observe that state school uniformity suppresses politically healthy, countercultural civic outlooks in ways which homeschooling may facilitate.

Research regarding civic outcomes in previously homeschooled adults is not consistent. Brian Ray's (2004) well-publicized study claims that they vote and volunteer more often than the national average. However, as with his other studies regarding academic and socialization outcomes mentioned earlier in this chapter, he did not use random samples or took account of demographic backgrounds. In their study, Smith and Sikkink (1999) used a more rigorous methodology and found that state school families are consistently less involved in community activities than homeschool and private school families. What is unclear is whether these actions contribute to public life or further divide positions and perspectives. Robert Kunzman's (2009) research with six conservative Christian families suggested that children's political and religious values were moderated after exposure to alternative ethical and social influences, even though their parents had made concerted efforts to the contrary.

A more negative view of home schooler civic engagement is suggested from more recent research which used large-scale random samples. Hill and den Dulk (2013) used data from the National Survey on Youth and Religion to explore whether the form of education has any effect on continued civic engagement in adulthood. They observed that the likelihood of home schoolers volunteering was about half that of public-school students and even less when compared to Protestant or Catholic school students. Even when the data was controlled for a broad range of background demographics, the disparity remained. Similarly, data from the Cardus Education Surveys shows that adults from religious homeschooling families were less engaged with public affairs and politics than demographically similar alumni of public and private schools.

Cheng's (2014) small-scale study explored whether political intolerance was cultivated by religiously motivated homeschooling families. He defined political tolerance as 'the willingness to extend basic civil liberties to political or social groups with whom one disagrees' (p. 49). The political tolerance of 304 previously homeschooled college students attending a private Christian university were compared to those who had not been homeschooled. He asked them to select the political or social group whose values were most directly opposed to their own and asked questions to determine how politically tolerant they were of their chosen group. Results showed that those who had attended state school were less politically tolerant than homeschool graduates and that individuals who had been homeschooled longer were more politically tolerant. They also showed that political tolerance increased in line with numbers of year homeschooled, although this effect was significantly less than demographic factors such as family income, parental education level, ethnicity, and gender. However, it should be noted that the questions asked, for example, whether the chosen group should be granted basic human rights such as running for election, making a public speech and demonstrating publicly, fall far short of identifying the types of values required for a healthy democratic society founded on mutual understanding.

Values formation and how it is affected by parents and type of schooling is a complex matter. The majority of research is retrospective and so it is possible that participants were not able to always identify whether, and to what extent,

their parents had influenced their choices and perceptions. In both surveys and interviews, it seems that the likelihood of lack of awareness and self-deception is inevitable. Kunzman and Gaither (2020) suggest that perhaps a more compelling, richer understanding of socialization could be developed if adult self-appraisal and homeschooling memories were triangulated with participants perspectives on other matters. Further exploration of the complex issue of values formation using a combination of surveys to gain an overview and narrative inquiry to gain a more nuanced understanding is still a rich area to study.

2.3 Unschooling

Unschooling is the term given to unstructured, child-centred, interest-led learning outside the school system (Guterson, 1992; Holt & Farnega, 2003; Martin-Chang, Gould & Meuse, 2011). For legal purposes, it is a form of homeschooling. However, it differs in that unschooled families do not attempt to imitate school or school-like activities and unschooled children are not required to undertake academic assignments or assessments to measure their progress (Gray & Riley, 2013). Rather, they learn what they choose and follow their interests (Gray & Riley, 2013). This educational approach has been defined by one unschooling family as:

creating an enriching environment for our children where natural learning and passions can flourish. We want our life to be about connection - to each other, our interests and passions, to a joyful life together (Gray & Riley, 2013, p. 8).

Self-directed learning as an educational philosophy has been given various names, each with their own nuanced definition. Varieties of unschooling include hack schooling, life learning, free-range learning, democratic schooling, free schools, eclectic unschooling, radical unschooling, and the Reggio Emilio approach (Dodd, 2008; Morrison, 2016).

It was popularized by John Holt in the 1970s. He was a supporter of school reform, a former teacher, and an educational theorist. Unschooling is described by Holt (1981) as a means of giving children freedom to learn without an adult

adopting the role of professional educator. Instead, children can be themselves, learn and live together, pursue interests and questions as they arise and use conventional schooling techniques if and when needed. The parents' role is to facilitate learning by providing support and environmental context (Gray and Riley, 2013) because:

Life and learning do not occur in a vacuum; they occur in the context of a cultural environment, and unschooling parents help define and bring the child into contact with that environment (Gray & Riley, 2013, p. 7).

Children's choices can be influenced and guided by parents through a hands-on approach (Holt & Farenga, 2021).

There is a lack of well-informed research on unschooling (Thomas and Pattison, 2008) as outspoken advocates have conducted most of it taking samples from networks of like-minded advocates. Also, no clear data exists regarding numbers of unschoolers as surveys do not usually make any attempt to differentiate home schoolers and unschoolers. Martin-Chang, Gould and Meuse's flawed 2011 study (section 2.3.5) demonstrated how misunderstood unschooling is. Academics who conduct unschooling research are 'interested in documenting how the lives of children and families are enriched and expanded by an unschooling lifestyle' (Rolstad & Keeson, 2013, p.31) and do not focus on academic outcomes. As a self-identified unschooling parent quoted in Martin-Chang, Gould and Meuse's 2011 study explained, 'I think unschoolers by definition will be less inclined to want to participate in an education study', (2011, p. 201).

2.3.1 Context: The Informal 'Non' Curriculum

Learning among unschoolers is developmental and multidimensional. As an example, an unschooler who is interested in cars may decide to explore how cars work. This would fall under the topic of science. Their curiosity could then lead to a biographical study of who invented different types of cars. This could further lead to a historical study of when cars were invented and how they evolved. They could then choose to investigate the business aspect of modern car manufacturing or marketing in addition to multiple, alternative areas of knowledge (Holt & Farnga, 2003). As Holt and Farenga (2003) highlight,

unschoolers can conduct their study in any manner they choose, for example, by visiting relevant museums, reading or completing a project as the fundamental concept is that the topic and activities were chosen by the learner. In this way, learning is the same organic, natural process which occurs in early childhood.

In 2008, Thomas and Pattison interviewed 26 families. Although Thomas and Pattison do not use the term 'unschooling', they identified families whose children engaged in 'informal' learning with no school-like structure. Rolstad and Kesson, both professors of education and unschooling mothers, published a study of their experiences with their own children (2013). Looking back over her diary notes from her unschooling days in the 1980s, Kesson states,

One of the things that intrigues me is the way that my kids often figured out how to teach themselves what they needed to know
(Rolsad and Kesson, 2013, p.41)

Thomas and Pattison also noted similar instances of learning and termed it 'osmotic learning' (2013, p.144). Learning in this way provides such a wide range of various opportunities that attempting to analyse when and how they happen, if and how they interact and are engaged with is difficult as they are not isolated incidents. Thomas and Pattison (2013) suggest that this complex situation could be perceived 'as an extension of socio-cultural theory' (p. 144) which emphasizes that the learner's surroundings and how they interact with it is essential (Cole, 1998; Gauvain, 2001). Thomas and Pattison (2008) liken this type of learning to that which occurs when newcomers integrate with a community (Hodkinson et al., 2008).

The notion that children learn by participating in social contexts is commonly accepted but is generally restricted to aspects of socialisation, particularly the acquisition of cultural values, beliefs, and customs (Thomas and Pattison, 2013). The term 'developmental niche' was coined by Cole (1998) to describe a child's surrounding socio-cultural context. Any learning that happens is barely noticed as it is naturally embedded in the child's daily life. Instead, there is just a general underlying assumption that it is happening (Thomas and Pattison, 2013). As Super and Harkness (1988) state:

The most interesting aspect of parental values as they influence early socialisation is that their expression is not usually a direct effort to achieve some later effect. (1998, p. 37)

Thomas and Pattison (2013) noted that although ‘osmotic learning’ (p.144) is not extensively researched there have been a few studies exploring ‘street learning’ among older children. Mitra (2005) provided rural Indian children with access to a computer and they became computer literate in English without any guidance or teaching despite having no prior experience. This showed that children were able to understand complex ideas independently. These findings have since been replicated in Bhutan, Cambodia, several African countries (Mitra and Dangwal, 2021) and South Africa (Foko et al. 2017). As a result, Mitra and Dangwal (2021) report that when given access to a computer, children aged 8 to 14 can ‘learn basic computing skills on their own, irrespective of their social, cultural, religious, and intellectual background or their geographical location’ (p.210). In Brazil, Carraher et al. (1985) observed that children working in the markets developed mental mathematical strategies different than those taught in schools. These studies suggest that schooling and direct instruction are not prerequisites for learning.

For the families in Thomas and Pattison’s study (2008) and Rolstad and Keeson’s children (2013), their informal curriculum consists of the skills, beliefs, ideas, habits, behaviours, understandings, and cultural knowledge which they deem as necessary to be members of society, community, and a family. By being in the world with its ‘joyful diversity’ (Rolstad and Keeson, 2013, p.51), children are not only provided with constant demonstrations of these but are also continuously engaging with these situations in their own lives. When unschooling her own children, Rolstad frequently participated in homeschooling events in her area. She soon realised that many home schoolers were actually unschooling as they engaged in interest-led learning rather than follow any form of curriculum. She noted that these events contained

families from every socioeconomic level the ethnic diversity roughly reflected the norm of the area ... with a wide variety of other interests and lifestyles represented (Rolstad and Keeson, 2013, p.51)

Taking literacy as an example, family and community members provide

innumerable demonstrations of why, when and how reading is used in daily life (section 2.3.2) by naturally using the written resources which are present in everyday life. In this way, the materials, aims, and reasons for reading are connected (Riley, 2018). Knowledge, its presentation and experience are not discrete items of learning to be taught and experienced separately but rather all interwoven as a singular experience and no formal teaching or learning occurs (Rolstad & Keeson, 2013; Thomas & Pattison, 2013).

2.3.2 Engaging with the Informal Curriculum

Unschoolers do not follow any curriculum but rather find their own way as they follow their curiosity (Rolstad & Keeson, 2013; Thomas & Pattison, 2013). Instead of being a straightforward route going in a particular direction, gaining knowledge is ‘a pool of possibilities’ (Thomas & Pattison, 2013, p. 145) which unschoolers navigate in their own way. Likewise, for the families in Thomas & Pattison’s (2013) study and Rolstad and Keeson’s children (2013), the methods that children used to pursue learning were unpredictable and diverse with unclear outcomes.

In formal early-years education, learning to read is the focus of much attention and teaching hours yet it is seemingly accomplished by unschoolers without input or guidance (Riley, 2018; Thomas & Pattison, 2008). It has been suggested that reading is not a cognitive skill to be taught but rather is transmitted culturally through the fostering of an enriched literate environment (Pattison, 2016). In 2018, Riley interviewed 28 unschooled adults about their experiences of reading and learning to read. All participants were unschooled until at least high school age and the age of learning to read varied from age three to the early teenage years. They all ‘grew up in a culture of reading’ (Riley, 2018, p.26) and mention having books at home, often visiting the library and being read to everyday. The majority of them (71.4%) saw adults regularly reading. Almost half the participants reported learning to read naturally, without any formal instruction however, 60% of those “‘didn’t remember” or “‘couldn’t recall” exactly how they learned to read’ (Riley, 2018, p.10). However, most of those participants report learning to read at age 5 and below which is before the ability to accurately recall develops (Wang & Peterson, 2014). 35% of the participants received some level of facilitation with learning to read and the remaining few struggled to learn as they were not interested in reading. As

adults, they all enjoy reading to some extent, with over half stating that they are ‘avid readers’ (Riley, 2018, p.16).

Riley’s (2018), Rolstad and Kesson’s (2013), and Thomas and Pattison’s (2008) studies provide many examples of learning that defy the accepted notion of knowledge’s sequential, linear growth. Instead, they seem to fit Osberg’s (2009) complexity theory which proposes that understanding develops organically via dynamic interaction. As such, this type of informal learning is unpredictable and cannot be explained in a conventional manner. According to Thomas and Pattison (2013)

There is a richness and excitement to the uncertain world of informal learning in which everything within the child’s environment becomes a potential resource as they seek their own meaning, their own threads of relevancy and understanding from infinite possibilities. (p.146)

2.3.3 Informal Learning Processes

Analysing and explaining how children learn by themselves is a difficult task. The children that Thomas and Pattison (2008) and Gray and Riley (2013) studied and Rolstad and Kesson’s (2013) children were just living their lives. Occasionally, it was possible to identify occurrences of the type of ‘intellectual search’ that Tizard and Hughes (1984) describe. They also noticed that hobbies were pursued more purposefully and that research into a topic of interest was more prolonged. Kesson describes how her then 6-year-old son loved Geography and would study the atlas every day. Over the course of a few months, he progressed from building cities with blocks to drawing maps, including ‘the globe from the perspective of the sun at 3am’. He proceeded to learn about the solar system and astronomy, followed by concepts such as population, area, and boundaries.

He took special pleasure in comparing states and countries by size and population and found it necessary to learn alphabetical order (a discovery he made on his own) while doing this within the course of that year he taught himself to calculate sums and compare values using all four of the basic mathematical operations into the millions through studying the atlas (Rolstad & Kesson, 2013, p.43-44).

However, no specific learning behaviours were identified. When Rolstad and

Kesson (2013) and Thomas and Pattison (2008) tried to examine and find out how learning was happening, they did not uncover any explanations. Instead, the results simply consisted of a list of everyday activities which might have given rise to potential learning.

By following their interests and not being instructed on what they must study and by when, children have the freedom to explore the things they choose, talk with others, and practice skills for pleasure or necessity. They are free to observe the world; participate; listen; play; entertain themselves; acquire information from various sources or appear to do nothing. The relevance of these actions to learning is usually overlooked due to their ordinariness (Thomas and Pattison, 2013). These behaviours are what school children do in their free time at home and so are not considered to be connected to 'real learning' (Thomas & Pattison, 2013, p. 147). Rather, they are just what children do in their lives and might or might not provide opportunities for learning which might or might not produce learning. Not surprisingly, unschooling parents also struggle to explain how their children are learning (Rolstad & Kleeson, 2013; Thomas & Pattison, 2008).

2.3.4 Motivation

In a study of 232 unschooling families, Gray and Riley (2013) reported that parents were generally more motivated by cultivating their children's intrinsic motivation and autonomy than by obtaining high academic grades. Thomas & Pattison (2013) found that the children in their study stayed creative and maintained their curiosity about the world.

In 2015, Gray and Riley held follow-up interviews with 75 young adults who had been unschooled for part or all of their school years. As they wanted to focus on how unschoolers manage in higher education or employment, they recruited participants that had been unschooled for at least the last two years of traditional school which is grades 12 and 13 in the UK, grades 11 and 12 in the USA. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 49, with an average age of 24 and comprised of 58 women, 16 men and 1 who identified as gender queer. As there are no official records of unschoolers, it is not possible to know how representative the sample was. They found that a high percentage (83%) of the

interviewees had pursued higher education of some kind, and that 44% of them had graduated, or were currently enrolled in a bachelor's degree programme. Not only were respondents satisfied with their educational history, but they also believed that the self-direction and intrinsic motivation they had used while unschooling gave them an advantage in higher education. Also, they generally chose careers which were enjoyable and meaningful rather than well-paid (Gray & Riley, 2015a; Gray & Riley, 2015b).

2.3.5 Limitations

Limitations of unschooling have been identified by academic critics who do not have a personal stake in unschooling. In contrast to Gray and Riley's (2015) findings mentioned in the previous paragraph, Martin-Chang, Gould and Meuse (2011) and Martin-Chang and Levesque (2017) present evidence that unschooled children underperform academically. However, there are significant flaws with their research. Originally, Martin-Chang, Gould, and Meuse (2011) had planned to conduct a study comparing the academic achievements of children in public school with homeschooled children. Volunteers were recruited from two Canadian provinces, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. 74 children ranging in age from 5-10 years old participated in the study, 37 homeschooled and 37 public school pupils. The two groups were paired using age and same residential area as criteria. Both groups were very heterogeneous, even the public-school pupils came from a variety of school boards utilising widely differing curricula. All children except one of the public-school children had 2 or 3 siblings and two parents. However, when asking homeschooled parents about how much they used structured lesson plans or premade curricula, the majority (25) responded 'often' or 'always' and loosely used a 'school-at-home' methodology (Taylor-Hough, 2010). They viewed themselves as providing an important contribution to their children's education and had clear pedagogical goals. On the other hand, 12 of the parents stated that they 'never' or 'rarely' used structured lesson plans or premade curricula. Instead, their view of education was that it naturally resulted from their child's daily activities (Taylor-Hough, 2010) for example,

having classical CDs playing in the background gets listed as 'fine arts,' watching an episode of *Little House on the Prairie* counts as history, and figuring out how much they can buy with \$2.00 at the gift shop qualifies as the day's math lesson (Kunzman, 2009, p. 320)

As their study included only 12 unschooled children, it is not possible to make generalisations about unschooled children based on such a small sample. It also does not consider whether the unschooled children catch up with, or even surpass, the academic achievements of their peers when given sufficient time.

Green-Hennessy (2014) rigorously analysed data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health and found much higher incidences of delinquency, drug use, poor academic performance and social isolation correlated with potentially unstructured, less religious homeschooling. On the other hand, it has been countered that unschooling parents are uninterested in such academic measurements and so it is invalid to appraise their achievements using measures that they reject (Neuman & Guterman, 2016; Pattison, 2015).

2.4 World schooling

World schooling is a relatively modern concept. Eli Gerzon, an itinerant unschooler is generally credited with the term ‘world schooling’ (Ferraro, 2016) which he defined as ‘when the whole world is your school, instead of school being your whole world’ (Gerzon, 2007). He also created the Facebook group ‘World schoolers’ (section 1.4). There is no specific format to world schooling and many approach it in different ways. While some families travel permanently, others make a home base in another country and some only travel part time. Some families take a structured approach to education; others adopt an unschooling approach. Molz (2017) found that world schoolers tend to focus on emotional aspects of learning more than academics. For the purposes of this study, the participants are from five families which have been travelling permanently with school-aged children for at least a year.

Various scholars such as Molz (2017) and Mancinelli (2018) note that choosing to undertake alternative education requires a certain level of privilege and families often have to adapt professionally and financially. Mancinelli (2018) noted that this usually depends on marital status, financial income, and parents’ educational level. As world schoolers regularly travel, there are various layers of privilege and freedom. Mancinelli (2018) interviewed twelve ‘location-independent families’ (p.311) with children aged from one to seventeen and found that they often chose to leave a stressful work environment ‘mid-career’

(p.311) to have more quality time with their family. As such, they make appropriate changes to their existing lifestyle in order to start world schooling (Mancinelli, 2018). Mancinelli (2018) observed that the majority of world schoolers were ‘well-educated middle-class people from Western countries’ and had all been able to find ways to generate income while travelling. The ability to work remotely means that a mobile lifestyle is now more feasible than it used to be. Due to the global prevalence of the internet, it is now possible to work, educate your children and stay in touch with family and friends while travelling (Landin, 2015). Some world schoolers label themselves ‘digital nomads’, a contemporary term for remote workers who do not have a fixed workplace but instead travel to various locations and use telecommunication technology to earn a living (Müller, 2016; Thompson, 2019) while pursuing a holistic mobile lifestyle, characterized by relative freedom (Molz, 2021; Reichenberger, 2018).

Molz (2017) analysed 50 world schooling blogs and various world schooling social media groups over a period of twelve months. She also world schooled with her family in that year and ‘met, travelled with, and interviewed a dozen world schooling families in Argentina, Australia, Thailand, Singapore, and the United States’ (p.19). Like Mancinelli (2018), she found that the majority of world schoolers came from ‘countries in the Global North’ (p.16) and were ‘white, middle-class, professionals in their 30s and 40s’ (p.19). On their blogs, many world schoolers state that their lifestyle is often cheaper than living in their home country and as such, they can manage on a lower income. They fund their travels in a large variety of different ways such as, online freelance work, local teaching jobs, and savings. Their children range from babies to university age but the majority are ‘around elementary and middle-school age’ (p.19), which is from age 5-14. Most world schooling families are standard nuclear families as it is easier for two parents to share the load of working and looking after children in addition to the responsibility for organising travel. There are, however, some single-parent, same-sex parent, and adoptive and blended families as well as some families with special-needs children although they face additional challenges world schooling such as being responsible for all aspects of world schooling (single-parent families), potential discrimination (same-sex families) and practicalities of accessibility and providing adequate care for special-needs children.

A considerable level of economic, social, and cultural capital is generally needed by world schooling families as adequate financial resources, access to technology, passport mobility and the ability to earn money while being location independent are all required. For this reason, world schooling has been criticised for not being a universally accessible alternative to mainstream schooling but rather a privileged model of education which is enabled by unequal access to mobility and capital (Molz, 2017; 2021). According to Bourdieu (1986), world schooling could potentially be viewed as a way in which privileged families acquire various forms of capital which later translate into educational advantages and as such, contribute to the reproduction of inequalities.

World schooling's focus on interest-led learning draws on the fundamental principles of unschooling but also incorporates the educational benefits of travelling (Ferraro, 2016; Riley, 2017). As an example, a child in a conventional state school might learn about Ancient Egypt by reading about it and comparing it to other ancient civilizations or modern life. An unschooler might visit an exhibition about ancient Egypt at a local museum and then use that as inspiration to make some crafts (Ferraro, 2016). A world schooler would go to Egypt and get the full experience by visiting the ancient sites. Home schoolers, unschoolers and world schoolers are all united in their belief that attending a state-run school should not be the only educational option available.

After reading the current literature on world schooling as well as many blogs and world schooling forums, I noticed that two topics were repeatedly mentioned by almost all world schooling parents. The first was the belief that travel, both the positive and negative aspects, was educationally beneficial. The second was that, although they all had various reasons for starting their world schooling journey, they almost unanimously shared the desire to raise global citizens and believed that travel was the best method to achieve that. Rarely, however, did they expand on what they perceived to be the qualities and characteristics of a global citizen.

It is now commonly accepted that learning can occur in many contexts, not only classrooms. This includes travelling which is explored in greater detail in section

2.5. Yfantidou and Goulmaris (2018) posit that combining education and tourism not only makes learning more enjoyable, but it also builds on awareness and skills and expands learners' horizons in such a way that it promotes 'lifelong learning' (p. 8). For these reasons, many parents view travel experiences as an important aspect of their children's education (Fu et al., 2022; Wen, 2020). Pomfret (2019) proposes that combining education with the three aspects of escape, aesthetics and entertainment creates the richest travel experiences for families. Motivations and activity choices for families differ significantly from travellers without children as they are attracted to museums, historical sites, nature reserves etc. which offer educational value (Lee et al., 2008).

Some academic scholars (Young, 2008; Young & Miller, 2010) are concerned that world schoolers may not sufficiently obtain 'powerful knowledge' (Young, 2008, p.14) According to Young (2008),

Powerful knowledge refers to what the knowledge can do or what intellectual power it gives to those who have access to it. Powerful knowledge provides more reliable explanations and new ways of thinking about the world and can provide learners with a language for engaging in political, moral, and other kinds of debates (2008, p.14)

In educational institutions, this is the specialized knowledge learnt in different subject fields which aims to expand students' knowledge beyond personal, lived experiences and enable them to engage with abstract ideas, scientific reasoning, and theoretical explanations. World schoolers, on the other hand, tend to prioritise personal, lived experiences and informal, experiential learning over formal, institutionalised schooling. Young and Miller (2010) highlight the importance of powerful knowledge and raise the concern that world schoolers may undervalue it.

Most research on educational tourism has focused on its social and economic benefits (Hussein et al., 2021; McGladdery & Lubbe, 2017; Tang, 2020) leaving world schooling relatively unexplored (Sotomayer, 2022). According to Molz (2021), world schooling parents want to give their children the opportunity to become world citizens, experience different cultures, and learn multiple languages while enjoying time together as a family. Haverly et al., (2021) highlight that world schooling families connect and bond in significant ways due

to spending so much time together and sharing experiences as a family. They describe one family who had a negative experience in a particular country that they stayed in. Despite making appropriate cultural adaptations, they felt ostracised during their time there. They used this experience as a learning opportunity which ‘helped to build inner strength and tighter family bonds’ (Haverly et al., 2021, p.81).

Aspects of cosmopolitanism such as an increased awareness of cultural diversity and global interconnectedness can be produced by world schooling (Beck, 2006). A development of intercultural understanding and cultural pluralism, in which all cultural groups are treated and respected equally, is possible. This aligns with the educational ideals of cosmopolitanism (Nussbaum, 1997). However, from a postcolonial perspective, world schooling could be seen as a commodification of culture as cultures become educational resources (Huggan, 2001). In this way, it is possible that world schoolers may only develop a superficial form of cosmopolitanism and global citizenship (Andreotti, 2011) without gaining a deep and critical understanding global inequalities and colonial history (Kraftl, 2013).

World schooling can also occur with friends or in a more organised world schooling programme (Riley, 2017). Project World School (PWS) was the first world schooling temporary learning community (Ferraro, 2016) and nowadays operates several retreats every year in addition to family summits and virtual meetups. It was created by Lainie Liberti, a world schooler who closed her corporate branding business and sold or donated most of her belongings in order to start world schooling with her then 9-year-old in 2008. PWS is primarily a retreat programme for teenagers and young adults which last from 2-4 weeks and, depending on location, cost between USD2500-4500 which covers everything except travel to the retreat. According to the PWS website, the retreats are learning communities which aim to:

merge immersive hands on experiences with personal and social development focusing on global citizenship, cultural sensitivity and developing relationships through exploring ethics and conflict resolution (<https://projectworldschool.com/aboutpws/>)

Past participants can apply to be interns on future retreats and gain experience in facilitating groups and leadership (Riley, 2020).

Studies of PWS (Ferraro, 2016; Riley, 2017) found evidence of physical, academic, personal and social progress as well as learning. In 2016, retreats were organised in Mexico, Thailand, the Amazon, Peru and Wales. Gaining knowledge about Mexican and Mayan culture, exploring ruins, biking, climbing, and swimming with turtles were participant favourites in Mexico. Thai learning experiences included Qi Gong, Tai Chi, Muay Thai and rock climbing in addition to local cultural and household norms, Buddhist and Islamic cultural practices, batik painting and the power and significance of Thai prayer. During the Amazon Jungle retreat, learning about Amazon history, conservation, botany, mycology and bird behaviour was reported to be relevant and long-lasting. Additionally, participants reported learning life skills, for example, washing and packing their own clothes, wellness and self-care skills such as the importance of regular meals and hydration, and the importance of connection with nature and daily meditation. In Peru, participants learned about converting money, weaving and Peruvian art in addition to exploring the Sacred Valley and Cusco. In Wales, participants reported that constructing a roundhouse was particularly memorable. They also hiked, farmed and kept bees daily. (Riley, 2017)

Days at PWS always end with circle time in which participants have the opportunity to reflect on the day and receive information regarding the following day. Achievements and concerns are also shared. In the first week, Lainie Liberti leads circle time before allowing any participant or intern to facilitate it in ensuing weeks if they so choose to.

Lainie's son, Miro Siegel, has grown up with PWS and now co-leads it with his mother. He has grown up with PWS and, in 2019, wrote a blog post entitled '8 life skills teens learn through project world school retreats'

(<https://projectworldschool.com/8-life-skills-teens-learn-through-project-world-school-retreats/>). The 8 most powerful life skills which he has noticed PWS participants takeaway from the experience are: introspection, self-confidence, patience, self-care, problem-solving, accountability, cultural sensitivity and the ability to challenge oneself. He states that one of the main aims of PWS is to 'make the world a better place' and they believe that the best way to achieve this is by assisting teenagers and young adults to become 'more grounded, aware individuals' (Siegel, 2019).

There are multiple challenges for world schooling families. In her research, Riley (2020) discussed these with Liberti. According to Lainie, cost and time are two of the principal challenges (Riley, 2020). Also, for families considering the world schooling lifestyle, there is sometimes a fear of new situations and exploration. A further challenge, from Lainie's experience is that parents often do not trust the natural, organic learning process and attempt to replicate formal learning experiences. However, the greatest challenge of all is not being recognised as a valid form of education. Despite this, PWS and world schooling in general is growing in popularity as increasing numbers of parents are removing their children from conventional schools in search of viable alternatives. In 2017, PWS started organising family summits due to the increased trend in families wanting to travel together. These international gatherings offer both novice and experienced world schooling families the opportunity to come together and share experiences and knowledge about world schooling challenges and benefits, travelling with children, mobile lifestyles and self-care.

Nowadays, there are multiple temporary learning communities for world schoolers around the world and while many world schooling families regularly participate in these, there are many families who do not. Some families are able to become location independent and adopt a permanently mobile lifestyle. Others maintain a home base, either in their home country or abroad, and plan regular world schooling trips over the course of a year. For those interested in pursuing international homeschooling and unschooling opportunities, there are multiple websites and Facebook groups for house-swapping, pet-sitting, work exchanges, volunteering, and other resources available. However, it is often the parents' work and financial situation which is the primary deciding factor in how and when to world school.

For families that are interested in adopting a world schooling lifestyle but are overwhelmed by the prospect of researching and planning long-term travel with children and world schooling them, there is now an online course available entitled 'How to World school and Travel Extensively as a Family'. The course was designed and is run by Lizz Quain, a digital nomad, founder of <https://www.trailblazingfamilies.com/> and a solo world schooling parent of twins for over 7 years. In 2020, she started her Facebook group 'World schooling Travelling Digital Nomad Trailblazing FAMILIES' with the aim of helping parents

learn how to confidently travel and world school. As of September 2025, the group had almost 12,000 members. Lizz herself is active in the group offering advice daily and regularly hosts live videos in which she interviews experienced world schooling families or individuals and businesses who provide services that are useful to world schoolers, for example hub organisers, travel insurance experts or online education providers. There is even a video in which she interviews families who previously took her online course and are now world schooling. These videos contain a wealth of information and are freely available to any member of the group.

The world schooling course is preceded by a free, online ‘Masterclass’ with Lizz Quain. The class is approximately 2 hours and looks at the advantages and disadvantages of world schooling with the aim of trying to help families decide how to make world schooling possible for them. It addresses common doubts that many parents have before starting their world schooling journey including fear of the unknown, ruining their children’s lives, affordability, socialization, and preparing their children for the future while guiding them towards all the help and support that is available

(<https://resources.trailblazingfamilies.com/masterclass-sign-up>). There was a live masterclass on January 16th 2024 which I watched the following day via Lizz’s Facebook page. In less than 24 hours, 521 people had already watched it in addition to anyone accessed it via the website or email link. The course ‘How to World school’ usually runs approximately a fortnight after the masterclass and costs \$1000 for 12 weeks, although early-bird discounts are available. The course covers a wide range of topics pertinent to world schooling:

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION , OVERVIEW & MINDSET
FREE LIVE MASTERCLASS: Intro / What is World schooling / Benefits / Mindset / Overcoming Fear / Setting Goals / 12-week group course info and top tips
PART TWO: HOW TO TRAVEL AS A FAMILY
WEEK 1: Initial Planning, Budgeting and Taking Care of Home Base
WEEK 2: Further Planning, Things to Know, Making Decisions and Booking
WEEK 3: And you’re off! Launching, Airports, Borders and First Days
WEEK 4: Settling In, Activities, Immersing into the Local Culture, Finding Community & Volunteering
WEEK 5: Daily Life, Work, Relationships & Traveling Responsibly
PART THREE: EDUCATING / WORLD SCHOOLING KIDS
WEEK 6: Education System Overview & Homeschooling; 700+ Online Learning Apps with info and links will be shared

WEEK 7: Online Schools & Online Safety; *70+ Online Schools with info and links will be shared*

WEEK 8: Hiring nannies, tutors, teachers, etc. at destination, online or to travel with family; *40+ Online Tutoring companies with info and links will be shared*

WEEK 9: In-person local schools, classes & camps at destinations around the world; *100+ World schooler- friendly Local Schools around the world with info and links will be shared*

WEEK 10: World school Summits, Hubs and Pop Ups; *40+ World schooling hubs around the world with info and links will be shared*

WEEK 11: Unschooling / Self-directed / Child-led learning

WEEK 12: The Future of World schooled Kids
(Trailblazingfamilies.com, 2024)

On January 29th, 2024, the fourth cohort commence the course. Feedback from previous participants is extremely positive with many stating that the course was helpful, practical and informative. Experienced world schoolers have also taken the course and left reviews such as: ‘Although I’m already quite well travelled, and my eldest son had been to 33 countries before he was 7, I learned so much from your first video’, ‘I’m in Lizz’s course right now and am learning so much even though I’ve been in the community of world schooling for 7 years’ (https://www.trailblazingfamilies.com/world_school_course). However, reviews are only available on the website of Trailblazingfamilies.com, to which they are added by the course organizer and so cannot be verified.

2.5 Educational Benefits of Travel

2.5.1 Learning Theories

Perceptions of learning have, and continue, to evolve over time and it is currently believed by many to be an act of effort within formal educational systems (Werry, 2008). There are, however, discussions of learning as an informal lifelong process (Mitchell, 1998) and the educational benefits of travel have been extensively researched (Stone & Petrick, 2013). Through travelling, the mind is broadened as it interprets and learns from experiences (LaTorre, 2011; Steves, 2009). For this reason, it has been proposed that any form of travel provides educational benefits and researchers sometimes regard travel as synonymous with transformative (Pala & Cetin, 2022; Fordham, 2006; Morgan, 2010) and experiential learning (Falk, Ballantyne, Packer & Benckendorff, 2012; Kolb, 1984; Meyer-Lee & Evans, 2007).

Travelling in any form can provide transformational experiences for both

travellers and hosts (Fordham, 2006). Morgan (2010) suggests that travel changes an individual from a regular citizen to a traveller and then to a 'transformed home comer' (2010, p. 252). In Brown's (2009) study of international students, she found that the students' changing perspectives were similar to transformative learning. Werry (2008) observed that, while in the South Pacific on a travel study trip, the most transformative experiences often happened outside the classroom. In student interviews, conducted by Rowan-Kenyon and Niehaus (2011), several of them stated that they had been influenced positively by their experiences studying abroad in Prague and transformative learning had occurred. Nada et al., (2018) interviewed twelve international students in Portugal and found that the experience had transformed them.

Education can be an outcome of travelling and an inspiration to travel. Both Crompton (1979) and Shoemaker (1994) determined learning and education to be motivation for travel. Yet, education and learning are inherent in other travel motivators. Learning can happen during travel whatever the initial motivation (Falk et al., 2012). Ritchie (2003) states that there are two different types of educational tourism. The first is student travel, for example study abroad programmes, in which formal learning is the primary motivation and tourism is secondary. The second is general travel for education, such as study tours, in which tourism is the primary motivation and education is secondary.

2.5.2 Learning through Travel

Educational benefits have been shown to arise from the travel aspect of study abroad programmes and also from travelling experiences. According to qualitative research with 35 Americans studying in Ireland, most learning about cultures occurred as 'participant observers, interacting sojourners, and travellers' through 'serendipitous' travel (Langley and Breese, 2005, p. 317). Another study, which examined journals of students studying abroad, found that more was learnt through travel rather than academic experiences and that the journals revealed learning, not necessarily knowledge acquisition (Gmelch, 1997).

Laubscher's (1994) research focused on out-of-class learning experiences for international study students. He found that, while abroad, students' learning

was enhanced by travel with educational gains including new perspectives, personal development and several generic skills such as self-confidence, independence and autonomy. These benefits were obtained in travel both with and without learning objectives, but Laubscher suggests that independent travel may be more suitable for developing non-academic skills. Two international MBA programmes were studied by Paul and Mukhopadhyay (2003). They found that, as a result of the international travel component, cognitive, affective and general learning occurred. The destination had no effect on the outcomes. Coryell (2011) refers to the destination as a classroom in his reflective study of three-week study trips to Italy. He indicated that the students learnt from the 'sights, sounds, smells, physical sensations, cultural practices, and foreign peoples and languages' (p. 10).

2.5.3 Independent Travel

Academics have also explored the educational benefits of independent travel. Fifty New Zealanders who had been abroad for at least six months were interviewed by Inkson and Myers (2003). The majority of participants reported gains in self-confidence, communication, cross-cultural and interpersonal skills. Formal study abroad programmes also report similar outcomes which suggests that the educational benefits of travel can be obtained without a formal learning component (Stone & Petrick, 2013). Coetzee and Bester (2009) interviewed students from South Africa who took a year off from formal schooling to travel. They reported that travel experiences during that time had resulted in increased life skills and personal growth. 149 college students from various institutions were interviewed about out-of-class learning and 22% highlighted that travel had been influential in their personal development and learning (Kuh, 1995). Despite few outcomes directly resulting from travel, Kuh (1995) claims that travel is 'often a developmentally powerful experience' (p. 141).

This avenue of research appears to suggest that an organised study abroad programme is not the sole method of learning through travel, even for students. However, outside a student context, there are few empirical studies of travel gains. Pearce and Foster (2007) studied online travel blogs and found that learning certain generic skills such as social / interpersonal skills and problem-solving were reported by travellers. They also learnt cultural and social

awareness as well as general knowledge, for example, geographical and historical knowledge. 387 backpackers were also surveyed by Pearce and Foster (2007) who found that travelling strengthened development of individual skills. Twenty different generic skills such as open-mindedness, tolerance, adaptability, general knowledge, decision making, and interpersonal understanding were reported to improve by over 60% of respondents. Scarini and Pearce (2012) conducted a similar study which also showed that travel abroad assisted the development of generic skills including problem solving, communication and time management. They concluded that the gains from travel increase in accordance with the amount of international travel as significant differences in 14 of the 20 generic skills occurred based on time abroad. However, the study took place in a small college and the participants included 31% international students, so it is not possible to generalize on a larger scale.

In 2003, Richards and Wilson explored independent youth and student travel for the ISTC (Independent Student Travel Confederation) in a study with 2,300 international participants. Two of the three most popular motivations for travel, exploring alternate cultures and gaining knowledge, were echoed in the benefits acquired as more than 70% of participants claimed an increased appreciation of and interest in learning about other cultures, more self-knowledge and an increased tolerance for differences. Experiential learning can also result from family holidays. Minnaert's research (2012) found that self-esteem, confidence and independence were learnt by low-income individuals on recent trips. Overall, the benefits of independent travel and organised educational travel appear to be similar.

2.5.4 Children's Learning Through Travel

Travel gains for youth through family travel, educational exchanges, and youth and student group travel have been identified. Many parents perceive travelling as having educational benefits. Byrnes (2001) posited that travel can produce a broader world view, generic life skills such as patience, flexibility and problem solving, mathematics and other cultural values in children. She termed the education children received when travelling during the academic year 'travel learning' and presented suggestions for parents to give their children travel

learning experiences, but with no empirical research. When choosing a holiday location, parents view it as a learning experience and ‘the positive influence of pleasure vacations on children’s education’ (Crompton, 1979, p. 420) is a major motivator in selecting a destination.

A correlation between academic achievement and youth travel appears to exist although the educational benefits of travel are sometimes not clear and some trips, such as activity holidays, do not have any learning goal. Holecek, Nicholls and Collinson’s (2011, cited in Business Wire, 2011) research with youth and student travellers showed that 66% averaged B+ or higher while 82% averaged a B academically. In 2011, Explorica (cited in Stone & Petrick, 2013) surveyed 600 North American adults. 300 had travelled abroad between the ages of 12-19 and 300 had not. The results showed that those who had travelled internationally were much more likely to: obtain a university undergraduate or postgraduate degree (67% vs. 34%), be employed full-time (61% vs. 40%), and earn more (\$72,300 vs. \$52,200). However, this study is unpublished and not peer-reviewed so the reliability of this data cannot be verified and it is possible that the results could be attributed to other factors such as coming from a higher socioeconomic background which would allow for more travel and enhanced educational opportunities.

2.5.5 Youth Educational Exchange

Learning can occur through youth homestay and educational exchange programmes. In a study of long-term effects of student exchange programmes, Bachner and Zeutschel (2009) found that beneficial traits and abilities were obtained by approximately 90% of participants. In 1989, Stitsworth compared 154 American students who attended a Japanese homestay for a month with a control group of 112 American students. The homestay participants became more unconventional and demonstrated greater flexibility and independence. Stitsworth conducted a similar study in 1994 with 426 Japanese students who attended an American homestay and used a control group of 265. Participants demonstrated higher levels of personal growth and became more independent, competitive, informal, individualistic, self-confident, spontaneous, responsible, extroverted and sociable. Even outside the framework of a school curriculum, personal change can potentially come from travel.

In 2009, United States Department of State (USDOS cited in Stone & Petrick, 2013) started a youth study and exchange programme which allowed adolescents from predominantly Islamic countries to spend a year in the USA. 1,755 teenagers participated in a longitudinal study. The study showed that more than 95% improved their understanding of U.S. culture, people, economics, politics, and the government (USDOS cited in Stone & Petrick, 2013). Leadership skills and generic skills such as problem-solving, money management, and flexibility improved significantly in participants.

2.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the differences and similarities between learning and schooling (section 2.1); homeschooling (section 2.2); unschooling (section 2.3); world schooling (section 2.4); and the educational benefits of travel (section 2.5).

In the next chapter, I shall discuss the methodology used.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This study aims to explore the lived experiences of world schoolers. A constructivist paradigm (section 3.2) was used and data for this research came from a series of interviews with world schooling individuals (section 3.7). The interviews were video and audio-recorded, then manually transcribed (section 3.8). They were subsequently analysed using Clandinin and Connelly's three-dimensional space approach (2000) (section 3.9). Lived experiences are subjective given that they emerge from and are shaped by individual feelings and opinions hence a methodological approach which gives insight into an individual's multiple realities is needed. Creswell (2014) proposes that qualitative research methods are appropriate for understanding people's unique experiences. As exploring experience is the fundamental aim of this research project, I decided to use a qualitative methodology.

I will now explain why a constructivist paradigm (section 3.1) and a narrative inquiry methodology (section 3.2) were the most appropriate for this study before discussing researcher positionality (section 3.3). After that, ethical approval and issues (section 3.4), participant selection (section 3.5), data collection (section 3.6), transcription (section 3.7) and standards of academic rigour and quality (section 3.) are addressed before describing the data analysis technique used (section 3.9). Methodological limitations are discussed throughout and are summarised in section 3.10.

3.1 The Research Paradigm

The researchers 'intent, motivation and expectations for the research' (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p.194) are situated within the chosen research paradigm. The import and significance of research paradigms has been well-researched and, as demonstrated by Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2013), have evolved in line with methodological innovation. Mackenzie & Knipe (2006) suggest that the frameworks for locating research have become increasingly complex, especially within the field of Social Sciences. Each researcher has a unique perspective when approaching research, which influences the selected methods, including data collection and analysis.

This study was motivated by an interest in peoples' stories about their lived experiences, particularly in relation to travelling and education. From an ontological viewpoint, it accepts John Dewey's (1934) position that an individual's reality is constructed by their perception of 'ordinary experiences' (p.3). Additionally, it acknowledges Bruner's (2008) belief that a central aspect of the human existence is storying lives. As Bruner (2002) explains:

We are a species whose main purpose is to tell each other about the expected and the surprises that upset the expected, and we do that through the stories we tell. (p.8)

Connelly and Clandinin (2006, p.479) suggest that it is through stories that humans symbolically enter the world while Bolton (2006) proposes that stories are used in 'an attempt to create order and security out of a chaotic world' (p.204). Andrews (2007) observes that, as well as being documents of lived experiences, stories are a means by which we create our 'self' as 'we become who we are through telling stories about our lives and living the stories we tell' (pp.77-78). When I met my participants, we were all in the midst of living complex lives. My participants and I shared a research relationship for one year and, as we worked together, we storied ourselves in relation to world schooling, and to each other. Over the course of that year our lives beyond the research project continued. Locations shifted, schools changed, children grew up, and the world schooling landscape changed. Every time we met, my participants and I updated each other on what had changed in our lives and what we had been thinking about since the previous meeting in addition to any new thoughts that we had.

Taken in combination, these points suggest that reality and our concept of 'self' are composed of experiences and the stories told about them. Caine et al. (2013) contend that this view needs to recognise that experiences 'are continuously interacting, resulting in changes in both people and the contexts in which they interact' (2013, p.576). Likewise, stories are constantly changing as their contexts, time and space evolve (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.9). As a result, our conception of reality is continuously being recomposed in relation to the changes surrounding it. In each meeting with my participants, the relational

unfolding of our lives shifted with our retelling of our stories and opportunities for new stories were created. These retold stories were not simply the retelling of a story again but rather were reconstructions of stories which were informed by new or different experiences and thoughts which had occurred since the previous telling. As Clandinin and Caine (2013) explain, 'There is no final telling, no final story, and no one singular story that we can tell' (p.176). Attending to this continuity of ever-changing experience guided this research project as well as the ways in which we negotiated the meetings and worked together.

Caine and her colleagues (2013) posit that this 'ontological commitment underpins the epistemological commitment that experience is knowledge for living' (p. 576). As life progresses and is lived, experience and stories evolve as well as the knowledge which is contained in the stories. Together, the experience of being and living actively construct meaning. Based on the lived experiences of individuals, this study explores how meaning and knowledge are constructed based on these experiences as well as the interactions between the participants and researcher (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2013; Thanh & Le Thanh, 2015).

Influenced and guided by these perspectives, I have used a constructivist paradigm for my study as it acknowledges and incorporates aspects of subjectivist and objectivist epistemologies. It supports the concept that certain aspects of knowledge are subjective and cannot exist without perception while other aspects of knowledge exist in one form independent of an individual's perception. It suggests that individuals create their own narrative through their interpretation of the world while acknowledging that common conceptions of externalities in the world, for example politics and material culture, impose limits on their interpretations. As such, knowledge is a dialogical relationship based on an individual's values and fixed externalities (Greenfield, 1986). In contrast to the positivist belief that knowledge is objective (Greener, 2008), constructionism recognises that knowledge is dynamic and multiple conceptions of knowledge co-exist as individuals construct knowledge from their interactions with and subsequent interpretations of the world around them. An individual's interpretation is dependent on their own biography and as a result, different meanings of the same object or social phenomenon can be constructed by different individuals.

Constructivist researchers explore the different ways in which individuals construct knowledge and view the world, and constructivist approaches focus on social (Chatman, 1999) and personal constructions (Charmaz, 2003, 2006). Constructivist researchers engage with the participants and those encounters are interpreted by the researcher to co-construct knowledge and understanding within that particular context (Saunders et al., 2019). These interpretations are ‘value-laden’ (Levers, 2013, online) as they are based on the reality and positionality of the researcher (section 3.3). The realities of both the inquirer and the participants are affected by their interactions with each other (Walsham, 1995). Williams and Morrow (2009) highlight, an ‘inherent tension between researcher interpretation and participant meaning’ (2009, p.579) is always present.

In this section, I have discussed the research paradigm chosen for this research and why it was appropriate. This selection influenced the choice of a suitable methodology which would appropriately align with the ontological and epistemological assumptions. In the next section, I will describe the chosen methodology, narrative inquiry.

3.2 Methodology: Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is based on John Dewey’s theory of experience (1938) which claims that there is a fundamental, close and continual relationship between knowledge and experience. According to Dewey, human experience always consists of a social, temporal and relational dimension as well as being continuous. This means that experience always occurs within the context of previous experiences and also leads to other experiences

It is a well-established, commonplace practice for people to tell stories about their lived lives in an attempt to create meaning (Polkinghorne, 1988; Ricoeur, 1991). Collecting narratives and stories is an increasingly popular method in social science research to study experience (Clandinin, 2006). The idea arose from the fact that people, individually and socially in groups, ‘lead storied lives’ (Clandinin, 2006). Stories ‘offer an opportunity for the researcher to gather authentic, rich and ‘respectable’ data’ as they are ‘rich in the subjective involvement of the storyteller’ (Cohen et al., 2000, pp.454-455). Like social

scientists, educational researchers use narrative inquiry to study personal experiences in educational contexts.

According to Hargreaves (1996), all human voices deserve to be heard. However, not all voices are equal in every context. Those which have something germane to contribute to the topic under consideration and are potentially able to add knowledge/insight to the current known range of viewpoints, deserve to be prioritised over those which do not. For this reason, only people who had already been world schooling for a year were invited to participate. For the participants, it can be an empowering experience to have their voice at the heart of a research project, elevated and telling stories that might otherwise have gone unheard. According to Gottlieb and Lasser (2001), choosing to tell some individuals' stories over others can lead to systemic inequalities as it privileges particular voices (2001, p.192). However, Smythe and Murray (2001) assert that this could happen with any research methodology which maintains an emancipatory stance as ultimately, the inquirer chooses the participants and which aspects of the data to include in the final research project (2001, p.197). They propose that it is necessary to ensure participants comprehend fully and consent to the multiple narratives that could be presented during the course of the research project. I will discuss how I incorporated these notions in section 3.4 (ethical approval and issues) and section 3.5 (selecting participants).

Ollerenshaw & Cresswell (2002) suggest that there is no consensus on what narrative researchers do and what constitutes narrative inquiry although there are a few common features present in various narrative studies. For example, data is obtained from individual's stories of experience and context and setting are important. The data in the form of stories, also referred to as field texts, is then analysed and rewritten or restoried. In this manner, narrative inquiry documents and preserves the temporal context and complexity of lived experience.

This research project is based on Clandinin and Connelly's (1990; 2000) conception of narrative inquiry. This narrative approach was developed further by Clandinin (2006; 2007). He defined it as 'the study of human lives conceived as a way of honouring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding' (Clandinin, 2013, p. 17). Narrative inquiry, therefore, starts with

stories of lived experiences and not theory (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Theory follows experience so narrative researchers use existing literature as a way to understand and inquire

into experience ... situated in relationships, and in community, and it attends to notions of experience and knowing in relational and participatory ways' (Clandinin, 2013, p.13).

For this reason, literature and theory are examined alongside the participant's narratives.

As Clandinin & Connelly (2000) explain, a narrative inquirer is always 'in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling' (2000, p.20) as life is lived, and continues to be lived by individuals in their own particular contexts. This focus on the particular sensitizes narrative researchers to specific occurrences rather than generalities as they consider how an individual lives their life and constructs meaning from their interactions with people, places, objects and times. As such, it is the everyday experiences which are of interest to the narrative researcher (Caine et al., 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000)

Crites (1971) suggests that, when narrating their experience, people tell both sacred and mundane stories. Although the term 'sacred' is most commonly associated with religious matters which are worthy of great respect, in this context it refers to a framework of meaning that transcends the specific details of the story being told and is hence, also worthy of great respect. Sacred stories are those which 'lie too deep in the consciousness' (Crites, 1971, p.295) of people and shape our perceptions of the world. They form part of the knowledge inherently shared between people in the same context and are used to make sense of their world. As such, they are 'the fundamental narrative form' (Crites, 1971, p.295) through which individuals create their sense of self and the world. As he explains,

Such [sacred] stories, and the symbolic worlds they project, are not like monuments that men behold, but like dwelling places. People live in them [They] inform people's sense of the story of which their own lives are a part, of the moving course of their own action and experience (Crites, 1971, p.295)

These stories are not always told directly but instead serve as a foundation from which other stories of self are constructed (Aldredge-Clanton, 1988; Crites,

1971). For example, becoming a homeschooling parent as you hold religious views that state schools do not adequately address. Mundane stories, on the other hand, are more directly told stories of self which give insight into the sacred stories which guide and create identity. For example, being motivated to start a world schooling lifestyle because your job means that you are frequently changing locations and it is functionally easier for the family. People live inside their sacred stories and live with their mundane stories. By living inside sacred stories, we use these as a framework to constantly interpret the world and they form an integral part of our identity. Acknowledging this distinction obliges the narrative researcher to think with, and not about stories (Morris, 2004). Estefan et al. (2016) suggest that thinking about stories separates the researcher from the narrative and they engage with the story in an 'analytical and perhaps reductionist fashion' (2016, p.16). By thinking with stories, the researcher enters a reciprocal relationship with the participant and becomes more engaged and aware of the relational nature of stories. By researching in this manner, the relationship between sacred and mundane stories, between what is lived and what is told and between story and experience can be highlighted.

All narrative research starts with an interest in experience and concerns how people construct their sense of self in the midst of their experiences in relationships, contexts and time. As Clandinin (2013) reminds us,

narratives of experiences are both lived and told, that is, people both live out stories of experience and tell stories of those experiences (2013, p. 165).

Considering the researcher's own story and experience of the topic, or as Clandinin (2013) terms it 'narrative beginnings' (2013, p.55), is one of the initial steps in narrative research. This provides a means to explore and clarify the researcher's relationship with the study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Attending to my own comprehension of how I live and view the world has given me insight on my own thinking and inquiring narratively as a world schooler as people are 'in the parade [they] presume to study' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.83). During the research project, I enter the midst of my participants stories whilst in the midst of my own. I conclude the study still in the midst acknowledging that, although our stories converged for a while, they continue,

in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social (Clandinin, 2000, p. 20)

In this way, both I and the participants become a part of each other's stories. In order to ensure that my relationship with the participants did not affect how I viewed their stories, I regularly reviewed the transcripts and re-watched the interviews. If I was unsure of a participant's viewpoint, I was able to clarify this in subsequent meetings. I also maintained a reflexivity journal (see section 3.3) to clarify my thoughts and adhered to a clear analytical framework (see section 3.10).

During the study, the literature of Dewey (1938) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) assisted me in comprehending my experiences with the participants as I constructed the field texts. As such, I remained aware that every experience affects my perspective on 'the quality of the next experience' (Dewey, 1938, p.37). The notion of continuity of experience states that every individual experience is a mobile force which influences an individual's perspectives that consequently, affect purpose and desires. These perspectives have an effect on 'the quality of further experiences' (Dewey, 1938, p.38). It was necessary to remain aware of the fact that each experience consists of more than what happens to me internally. Reflexive journaling (section 3.4) assisted me in ensuring that I did not ascribe any of my views to the participants. According to Clandinin (2013), people only have their stories. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) highlight that to think as a narrative inquirer is to view experience as something continuous which generates new relations and, in turn, becomes a part of future experiences.

Narrative inquirers form extended and in-depth relationships with participants (Clandinin, 2013) in the process of exploring experience and sharing stories. Although I did not physically meet any of my participants, our relationships were formed online during our communications and meetings, of which there were between 2 to 4 with each participant lasting from 40 minutes to over 2 hours. During that period, I began to reflect on their experiences and how they related to my own. Aspects of their stories resonated strongly with me as I had lived and experienced similar stories. I recognised myself in their stories and saw them reflected in my own. Over the course of my meetings with the participants, we

reflected on the significance our stories had for us and what it meant to share them with each other. According to Lieblich, Tuval-Maschiach and Tamar (1998), this sharing of stories leads to a process of discovery for the participant and researcher as they reveal themselves to each other. Through this relationship, we were able to proceed towards co-construction of stories about lived experiences as a world schooler and start to understand what it is to be a world schooler.

As a world schooler who has travelled extensively and worked in education abroad for almost 30 years, I was familiar with the community that I planned to study and aware of common issues which the community faced and regularly discussed online. This familiarity allowed me to gain access to potential participants as I was already a part of their online community. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) highlight that sharing experiences involves ongoing negotiation. This concept became clearer as I noticed that listening to the participant's story elicited an emotional reaction or memories of my own experiences, which I thought that I had long forgotten. In this manner, the course of the conversation and the telling and retelling of stories was navigated as we pursued certain aspects of the discussion and not others. This relationship-building and continual negotiation was complex and unique to each participant. The use of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional space (section 3.9) to locate the generated field texts allowed for depth and richness and allowed me to represent and honour the participants narratives holistically.

3.3 Positionality

As a qualitative researcher, my study has been influenced by my positionality. This includes my perspective on the world which is a result of my current context and lived experiences as well as my 'beliefs, practices, standpoints' (Schwandt, 2007, p.11). Researchers become the instrument of analysis and the effect of the researcher's positionality on 'the totality of the research process' (Holmes, 2020, p.3) can be seen. During research, the researcher is responsible for designing, facilitating, collecting data and analysing it so positionality is particularly pertinent as major decisions which influence a researcher's positionality are made at each stage (Gill and Goodson, 2011).

Acknowledging positionality is essential for both the reader's and the researcher's benefit. While Holmes (2020) stresses how important researcher positionality is, he recommends making allowances for it as researchers cannot disconnect themselves from the research process. Reissman (1993) argues that this is a strength of qualitative research, especially storytelling as:

storytelling, to put the argument simply, is what we do with research and clinical materials, and what informants do with us. The approach does not assume objectivity but, instead, privileges positionality and subjectivity (1993, p.1).

Ultimately, the researcher becomes a part of the research and as such, must be cognizant of their subjectivity as they decide what is included in the final research report. As Peshkin (1998) puts it, 'one's subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed' (1998, p.17).

To acknowledge positionality, Merton (1972) suggests identifying whether or not the researcher is an 'insider' or 'outsider' (1972, p.15). He claims that insiders have access to the knowledge of the people who belong to the community being researched as 'you have to be one in order to understand one' (1972, p.15). An outsider, however, 'no matter how careful and talented, is excluded in principle from gaining access to the social and cultural truth' (1972, p.15). He believes that access to knowledge is gained by belonging to a group. However, in practice, I did not find this distinction to be so straightforward and clear-cut.

Throughout this research, I felt my positionality shift between feeling like an insider and feeling like an outsider. At various times, I felt like both an insider and outsider. As a world schooling parent, I was an insider with this group of participants. However, in my role as the researcher asking the questions and leading the interview, I was an outsider who needed to gain their trust. As the researcher initiates the interview and chooses the topics for discussion, they hold most of the power (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2005). In order to try and reduce the power imbalance, I used semi-structured interviews (section 3.6) and Zoom (section 3.6.2) which both give the participant more control over the interview. According to Deutsch (1981) 'we are all multiple insiders and outsiders', (1981, p.174). Instead of being two distinct positions, positionality should be viewed as existing along a fluid continuum (Collins, 2002; Merriam et al., 2001). According to Jacobson and Mustafa (2019), social beings possess 'a fluid nature to our

identities and the social spaces we traverse' (2019, p.2) which means that, depending on our current context, different aspects of our identity are highlighted.

Reflexivity has been suggested as a process which can support qualitative researchers in identifying their positionality (Holmes, 2020). As mentioned earlier in this section, positionality is present in all steps of practitioner research and so reflexivity is a continuous process in which the practitioner researcher questions and critiques their choices, including 'a self-monitoring of, and self-responding to, our thoughts, feelings and actions' (Corlett & Mavin, 2018, p. 377). In this way, reflexivity assists the researcher in recognising and identifying possible biases in the study and consider alternate ways (Hofer, 2017). As noted above, maintaining a reflexive journal of my thoughts over the course of the study helped me in the reflexive process and ultimately led to a deeper understanding of experiences. (Meyer & Willis, 2018). In the journal I considered my own beliefs on the topic, my relationship with the participants, and the methods which I was using throughout the study. I recorded how my own thoughts and insights evolved and how I developed as a researcher.

In this section, I have described positionality and drawn on the concept of 'insider' and 'outsider' positions (Merton, 1972, p.15). I have also described the importance of reflexivity (Holmes, 2020). In the next section, I will discuss the ethical issues and approval gained in order to undertake this research.

3.4 Ethical Approval and Issues

Human participants in qualitative research must be protected and there are ethical issues to consider. This research project was deemed low risk. All the participants were volunteers over the age of 18. Ethical approval was granted by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow (appendix 1). The ethical guidelines provided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) were referred to and followed during all stages of design, implementation and analysis. These guidelines explain how to 'balance maximising the benefits and minimising any risk or harm to participants' (2018, p.8). In 'Recommendations for Good Practice in Applied Linguistics' (2016), the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL) state:

The researcher must attempt to anticipate potential threats to both anonymity (for example, by removing names, locations and information contained in the data that might render informants identifiable) and confidentiality (for example, by making data secure) (2016, p. 6).

In order to maintain anonymity, I gave each participant a code (PT) and a number (e.g. PT1). To maintain randomness as much as possible, I allocated numbers based on the order in which I held the first round of interviews, with PT1 being the first participant that I interviewed, and PT5 the last. I used these codes for saving the recordings, on the transcripts and in the data analysis. No one else had access to the identities.

All participants received a soft copy of the Consent Form (appendix 2) which they signed electronically and returned it to me via email before the first interviews took place. At the beginning of the first interview, I recapped the contents of the Consent Form with each participant and gained verbal, recorded consent. I reminded them that their participation was voluntary and that they could end the interview or withdraw from the study at any time. I also highlighted the fact that they were not obliged to answer any particular question if they preferred not to and that appropriate steps would be taken to protect their identity. I reiterated this information at the beginning of all subsequent interviews also.

As Parsell et al., (2014) highlight, ‘ethical conduct is realised in the interaction between the researcher and the participant’ (2014, p.177). The onus for maintaining an ethical stance is on the researcher as no Ethics Committee can fully predict what may occur during the research process. (Guillemin & Gillam,

2004; Josselson, 2007). As participants risk vulnerability and exposure (Clandinin & Huber, 2013), the researcher must take the ‘ethical burden’ (Sikes, 2010, p.11) of remaining mindful of this at all stages of the research project. Ethics should be viewed as an orientation of research and not merely an administrative procedure (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007). Moreover, as constructing stories is an iterative process the ethical implications can evolve over the course of the research study (Bold, 2012) and need to be constantly re-examined. For example, Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007) point out that participants ‘reveal themselves’ (2007, p. 467) through narrative inquiry

interviews and there is a possibility that more sensitive or personal details are disclosed when stories are told orally as opposed to when they are written. (Bold, 2012). For this reason, I reviewed consent with the participants at the beginning of each meeting.

As well as taking the impact of sharing sensitive information into account, considering potential benefits of the research project is also important. According to Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2007), practitioner research should be accountable to, and only produce knowledge that benefits, the community of practice (2007, p.206). The potential of enhancing 'the human experience' (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p.46) influenced my decisions throughout the research process. Clandinin et al., (2018) propose that the ethical duties of researchers encompass more than morality and should include a genuine concern for the participants and their contexts through 'relational ethics' (2018, p. 6). Relational ethics acknowledges;

and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work (Ellis, 2007, p. 4)

During this research project, I aligned myself with the tenets of relational ethics and endeavoured to provide a beneficial experience for the participants in addition to beneficial results. All aspects of this study, including my role in the research process, were influenced by this commitment.

One way of demonstrating my concern for the participants and responsiveness to their vulnerabilities was by developing and maintaining a relationship of trust. In order to build this trust relationship, I fully informed the participants of my aims and intentions for this research project in addition to the particular themes we discussed. I constantly reminded the participants that they were under no obligation to answer any of my questions if they did not want to however none of them chose to opt out. On the contrary, as the trust relationship developed over the course of the interviews, participants became more relaxed and increasingly chose to share more information without being asked. For example, in the second interview, after some small talk, PT2 immediately opened up and started the interview,

I think since the last time I talked to you things have gotten ... life is more complicated. We have some anxiety, some depression, some issues with world schooling.

Throughout, I was respectful of participants' needs and remained mindful of the fact that I was entering their lives in the midst (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) while ensuring that they had sufficient ongoing information to comprehend my perspective and motivations in each interview. Bathmaker (2010) advises that this is vital as it is not ethical:

to offer a version of someone's life without making clear the nature of the gaze that is being brought to bear upon it (2010, p. 13).

In this section, I have discussed the ethical aspects of this research project and their implications. I will now discuss how the participants were selected.

3.5 Selecting Participants

Participants in qualitative research are selected according to a 'predetermined characteristic' (Vaughn et al., 1996, p.58) which in this study was that they had been full-time world schooling for at least a year. I started by contacting the administrators of the Facebook group 'World schoolers' and asking their permission to use their platform to recruit participants. After gaining their approval, I wrote a public post introducing myself and my research and asking for volunteers who, in addition to matching the research criteria, would be willing to undertake a series of interviews about their world schooling lifestyle. I also made it clear that this was an academic study and not an advocacy article for world schooling. In order to keep the selection of participants fair, I decided to contact them in the order that they replied to my advertisement.

I received almost 20 replies to my Facebook request for volunteers within 24 hours and so commented on my own post thanking everyone for their interest and stating that I would be in touch privately. As my respondents had connected with me on Facebook, I initially contacted them via Facebook messenger in order to check criteria fulfilment and share my email address. For all further communication, I used my University of Glasgow email address as it is more secure and less prone to cyber-hacking than my personal email address. Using my University of Glasgow email address was also the first step in verifying my

identity and building a relationship of trust with the respondents. They had placed their trust in my Facebook post and were volunteering their time to share their experiences with me and were mostly doing so for my benefit.

I contacted the first five on my list but found that some respondents were either world schooling part-time or were relatively new to the world schooling lifestyle which did not fulfil my criteria of having been a full-time world schooler for at least a year. I then continued contacting the respondents one-by-one in order until I had identified five individuals who matched my criteria. After sending the selected volunteers the Participant Information Sheet (appendix 3) containing further details of the study and reiterating the time commitment required, one of the volunteers decided not to proceed. I contacted the next respondent on my list who fortunately fit the criteria and agreed to the time commitment required to fully participate. I then deleted my Facebook post and decided that, if I needed another participant for any reason, I could post again on Facebook if necessary.

All participants were volunteers. The advantage of this was that they were genuinely interested in the study, and no one had been forced to participate. However, as Dörnyei (2003) states, a sample consisting solely of volunteers does not necessarily represent the target group. It could be that only those who felt as if they were ‘successfully’ world schooling volunteered, whereas those who were struggling with various aspects of the lifestyle did not. However, according to Robinson (2014), participants who have volunteered are more open and patient during the interview process. They also tend to offer more in-depth information than a more general or random sample does. For these reasons, I decided to work with self-selected participants. I had chosen to interview 5 volunteers as I wanted to not only conduct an in-depth study with my participants but I also wanted to be able to try and identify some emerging themes. Additionally, I was limited by finding suitable participants. Most respondents had not been world schooling for a year and I felt that they would not have sufficient insight into world schooling at that stage in their journey. Also, many long-term worldschoolers were not active on the Facebook page, or other world schooling social media sites, which I was using to recruit participants.

The 5 participants consisted of 4 females and 1 male, and apart from 1 English female, all of the volunteers were from the USA. I did not feel that this was a balanced representation, but as all the participants were volunteers, it was not something I had control over. According to Denscombe (2008), a sample's purpose is either exploratory or representative and depends on the research project's aims. As the purpose of this study was explore the lived experiences of world schoolers, then an exploratory sample was more suitable. Denscombe (2010) adds that:

The size of exploratory samples is not governed by matters of accuracy but by considerations of how informative the sample is (2010, p. 41).

Although my sample was too small to be representative of the world schooling community, it had the potential to be a good 'exploratory' sample capable of offering some indicative considerations. My small sample displayed more diversity in the family organisation. There was: an American female married to an American male, a single American female divorced from a Mexican male, a female American immigrant married to a male American immigrant, an English female married to an English male and an American male married to a female American immigrant. They all have 1 or 2 children who are not in the traditional schooling system and have been travelling with their family for at least a year. Table 1 summarises the participants' characteristics:

Participant code	Country of origin	Educational level	Family members	Children's ages and length of time world schooling
PT1	American immigrant from Russian enclave in Europe	2 bachelor's degrees obtained in different languages, trilingual	Husband is also an American immigrant from same country of origin, 2 children	From ages 6 and 9, for 3 years
PT2	USA	2 master's degrees	American husband, 2 children	Part-time world schooling since ages 3 and 5 (2016), full-time world schooling since 2022
PT3	USA	Bachelor's degree	Wife is a trilingual American immigrant, 2 children	From ages 7 and 8 (2019) to present
PT4	England	Unfinished PhD	English husband, 2 children	Part-time world schooling since birth, full-time world schooling from ages 5 and 8, for 2 years
PT5	USA	2 master's degrees	Divorced from a Mexican male, 1 daughter	Daughter born abroad and world schooled all her life

In this section, I have described how a small exploratory sample of participants were randomly selected using social media. I have also included some information about the participants nationalities, educational level, and marital status to show the different family dynamics. In the next section, I will discuss the research methods used.

3.6 Data Collection Method: Semi-Structured Interviews

According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2018), the most suitable method to explore and better understand people, their lives and experiences is interviews. I chose to use semi-structured interviews as they offer flexibility and versatility (Kallio et al., 2016). This is beneficial to participants as it allows them to guide the interview and have some control over the content. For researchers it enables them to adapt and change questions in response to what is said (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2018). As Angrosino (2007) states;

the semi-structured interview should develop naturally from out of an open-ended interview, following up and clarifying issues that came up in the more conversational format (2007, p.47).

This format not only allows the exchange to flow freely but also ensures that specific information is obtained.

3.6.1 Multiple Interviews

I decided to hold multiple interviews with participants in order to obtain in-depth data over time (Read, 2018). By meeting each participant more than once, we had the opportunity to build a rapport and, in follow-up meetings, conversation was often initiated by the participant, which suggested that they were more relaxed and willing to be more open than during the first interview. Subsequent interviews usually started with catching up with each other and sharing stories of what had happened since the previous meeting. This allowed me to explore change and variation in the participants' stories over time. For example, my first interview with PT2 was quite formal as I led the interview and asked the questions. In our second interview, PT2 initiated conversation and led the interview sharing recent difficulties and issues which the family had been

having. In our third meeting, PT2 also led the meeting and informed me about how they had overcome those difficulties and found a solution which worked for their family.

Another benefit of holding multiple interviews is the opportunity to follow up on and clarify issues from the first interview (Read, 2018). I often did this at the beginning of the subsequent interviews and sometimes these questions naturally led to further discussion. As much as possible, I gave the participants the flexibility to guide the interview. If a participant indicated that they had finished a line of conversation or there was some time remaining at the end of the interview, I used this to ask questions about themes which had not naturally arisen previously.

3.6.2 Online Interviews: Zoom

I chose to conduct the interviews over Zoom, a collaborative, videoconferencing cloud platform, as the nature of world schooling meant that the participants were not only in different countries, but also changing locations regularly. I used my University of Glasgow professional Zoom account as this was more secure

from the risk of cyber-hacking than my personal free account. Also, meetings held using the free account automatically end after 40 minutes (Zoom, online, 2023) which is disruptive in instances where more time is required, for example because the interviewee was late to the meeting or simply because they requested to continue. I had initially planned to hold 40-minutes interviews and, after 40 minutes, I always thanked the interviewee for their time and asked them if they would like to end the meeting. In all except one instance, the participants chose to continue and the majority of the interviews lasted approximately between 60-90 minutes, with the longest being over two hours. Generally, the participants informed me that they happy to continue and often the interview ended due to them (or myself) having another commitment. The only time that a participant chose to end the meeting promptly was when they had a poor connection and we were struggling to communicate.

Zoom is a cloud platform used for online, collaborative videoconferencing. Meetings can be recorded securely and transcribed synchronously (Zoom Video Communications, Inc., 2021). Videoconferencing is now commonly used for a multitude of reasons such as work, education and personal communication (Lo lacono et al., 2016). It is also used in research and has become an accepted alternative to traditional face-to-face interviews (Archibald et al., 2019; Oliffe et al., 2021) as conducting online qualitative interviews has numerous advantages (Akyirem et al., 2004). The recording function allowed me to rewatch the interviews and clarify certain issues which may have initially been missed or misunderstood. Cater (2011) highlights that it is also cost and time-effective for the participants as they only need to download the software and log on for the meeting rather than travel to a physical location. Additionally, 'time and space' (Burkitt, 2004, p. 222) are no longer an obstacle. This allowed me to conduct interviews with geographically distant participants which was particularly pertinent to this study as all the interviewees were actively world schooling when interviews were taking place between May 2023 and March 2024. During this period, my participants were located across the globe in North and Central America, Europe, The Middle East and Asia while I was based in Africa and Europe.

Technical matters can be an issue when using Zoom and signal loss or software glitches are always possibilities (Lo lacono, 2016). During this research project, I

was living in a fairly remote area of Egypt where the internet signal is often weak. In an attempt to avoid issues with connectivity, I did not use a shared WiFi signal for the interviews but instead deployed a portable 4G modem which was connected only to my laptop so I had the strongest signal possible. Only PT4 had issues with weak signals as she was in remote areas of Asia for two of our three interviews. For our first meeting, her signal was intermittent, but she chose to continue with the interview as much as possible although, after 40 minutes, we decided to end the interview and arranged to continue our discussion in the next meeting. For our third meeting, she was also in a location with a weak signal and so decided to turn her video off to preserve the audio quality.

As mentioned earlier in this section, online interviews are more flexible than face-to-face interviews. A convenient time and a safe, convenient location can be chosen (Hanna, 2012). If necessary, rearranging or postponing an interview is an easy procedure. This flexibility proved beneficial during a few of my interviews. In one instance, PT1 had arranged to meet me while her son was in a one-hour class. For her convenience, she had chosen to have the interview using her mobile phone while sitting in her parked car. Due to a confusion with the time zones, she joined the meeting an hour before me. She sent me a message stating that she was online waiting for me so I promptly joined the meeting and we were able to go ahead with the interview as previously planned. PT4 also contacted me an hour early as she was confused with the time zones. PT5 was running late for our second interview so she contacted me and we decided to postpone our meeting by one hour. She was still driving home an hour later so came online on her mobile phone and we engaged in some small talk while she drove home. She soon arrived home, made her coffee, at which point we ‘officially’ commenced the interview. Also, PT3 completely forgot about our second interview. After waiting 15 minutes, I sent a message, left the meeting and went to the beach with my daughter. He contacted me later that day stating that he had gone out with his family and they had been having so much fun that he lost track of time. He sent me a photo of the kids playing and asked to rearrange for the following day. I responded with a photo of my daughter and I playing on the beach and we rearranged the meeting for the following day. However, the next day, I joined the wrong meeting, which we quickly realised and rectified.

Archibald et al., (2019) propose that situations such as those described in the previous paragraphs have the unintended benefit of building rapport as they lengthen the initial ‘bonding’ period between participant and researcher and also provide an opportunity to collaborate as issues are solved together. I found this to be the case with all of my participants as we engaged in small talk, exchanged photographs and discussed potential solutions to issues which arose. We shared internet frustrations and laughed about time zone confusions, losing track of time and joining the wrong meeting. We shared experiences and laughed about how miscalculating time zones or losing track of time was a ‘world schooling problem’ due to changing countries regularly and not always having a fixed daily schedule. When PT4 had arrived at our third meeting an hour early she asked,

Can I just check times ... it’s 2pm here now but I usually work time zones from GMT and I think UK clocks went back this weekend so we’re still a bit out of sync.

This confusion had also led to her daughter missing a book club meeting the day before. After clarifying the issue she jokingly responded,

I’ve excused myself for this call and have taken myself away from the family for some quiet on the balcony so could happily sit out the hour until our scheduled meeting time.

After missing our meeting PT3 reflected on how much he had changed since leaving corporate America for a world schooling lifestyle,

I missed a meeting yesterday which never happens. I am always, I never miss meetings so I have changed quite a bit, since you know I missed a meeting yesterday [*laughs*] ...[because] ... Yesterday we spent, as you well know, we spent like 5 hours at lunch ... We had a lot of fun yesterday. Found a restaurant that we could just jump right into the ocean from the end of the bar. And the kids were loving it.

Not only did these situations provide an opportunity to build rapport and trust, they also provided insights into the everyday life of my participants and led into unplanned, interesting discussions.

Rapport is an important aspect of semi-structured interviews. According to Fontana and Frey (2005), participants are more talkative if there is a rapport. Since the aim of the interview is to understand the participants’ experiences

and perceptions, then good rapport is often associated with higher quality data (Barratt, 2012). Although Lo lacono (2016) claims that building rapport is usually easier in face-to-face interviews than online, Archibald et al. (2019) report that it is only more difficult to build rapport online when the interviewee is not confident or familiar with the technology being utilised. Cabaroglu et al., (2010) and Deakin and Wakefield (2013) found no difference in quality between online and face-to-face interviews while Deakin and Wakefield (2013) and Mabrugaña et al, (2013) found online interviewees to be more expressive and open. Lo lacono et al. (2016) propose that this might be as a result of not having to maintain eye contact. From my personal experience, I find online meetings more comfortable than face-to-face due to the lack of eye contact. During the first wave of COVID-19, Oliffe et al. (2021) used Zoom to interview Australian and Canadian males about relationship breakdowns and service providers who assist men to build better relationships. Both the researchers and service providers reported that conversation with the males was ‘candid’ and ‘free-flowing’ enabling the collection of rich data (2021, online). As one of the males shared, ‘I don’t usually talk that much but it was just an easy conversation’ (2021, online). Gray et al., (2020) also reported that feedback from interviewees in an online study about experiences participating in a parenting program was positive. When

asked how their interview experience could be improved, all responses related to the overall experience and not the use of Zoom for example, they would like to receive the interview questions beforehand and to be able to synchronize Zoom invitations with their usual online calendar. This is possibly a result of the fact that Zoom is now commonly used in many aspects of life (Lo lacono et al., 2016; Oliffe, 2021).

Both Gray et al. (2020) and Oliffe et al., (2021) found that participants were more comfortable discussing sensitive topics in a safe, secure location of their choosing which was usually their own home. Although this also occurs during face-to-face interviews held in the participants home, the formality of the interview is reduced when Zoom was used (Oliffe, 2021). Deakin and Wakefield (2013) suggest that being filmed may be embarrassing or uncomfortable for some interviewees. However, during a Zoom interview, participants can choose to turn video off if they prefer. PT4 did this for her third interview although it was to reduce the load on her internet bandwidth. On Zoom, it is easier for participants

to end the interview if they decide than if it were face-to-face. These possibilities allow the interviewee some control over the interview and how much is seen or said. As my participants were all volunteers and had previously used Zoom for work, online schools and maintaining contact with family and friends, then this was not an issue for them.

3.6.3 The Interview Questions

According to Kvale (2009), successful interview questions require thematic and dynamic dimensions. Dynamically, questions should contribute to promoting a positive relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. Thematically, questions should be relevant to the research topic and ensuing analysis. I used my personal experience of world schooling, relevant social media sites and literature on alternative education to identify pertinent themes for discussion. Concerning structure, Kvale (2009) suggests that questions should be ‘brief and simple’ (2009, p.57). Keeping this in mind, I prepared several questions and themes for use during the interviews. I prepared questions which were open-ended and broad so the participants had the flexibility to guide the direction of the response and continue speaking for as long as they wanted.

As Gray et al. (2020) suggests, I emailed the list to the participants before we met so that they had an idea of what the interview would entail. I also informed them that it was more of a guide or ‘a shopping list of topics’ (Robson, 2011, p.285) than a fixed set of questions to follow. As I had chosen to conduct semi-structured interviews, I could decide:

how closely to stick to the guide and how much to follow up the interviewees’ answers and the new directions they may open up (Kvale, 2007, p.57).

As such, I had the flexibility to modify both the questions and the order based on the participant’s knowledge, understanding, prior response as well as unexpected and unplanned situations (see sections 3.3 and 3.6.2). This allowed me to gain meaningful and worthwhile responses in sufficient depth.

I started the first interview with all participants with the question ‘Why did you decide to start world schooling?’ and then decided how to proceed based on the participants response. The themes which we explored during the course of the

interviews covered:

- motivations for world schooling
- how knowledge is accessed, developed, valued and used by world schoolers
- their educational background
- what is learned through travel
- the role of organised education such as online schools, learning hubs
- the role of informal learning
- perceptions of education and what they would like their children to learn / experience
- the role of community
- how they financially support the lifestyle

Some participants were naturally more talkative and organically incorporated several of the themes into their responses. Other participants initially preferred me to guide the interview although this changed in follow-up interviews as they started elaborating naturally and taking more control of the conversation. In the instances in which I led the interview, I chose themes to discuss based on what I felt was a natural progression from where the participant had ended their previous response. For example, when PT2 and PT3 mentioned that state schools in the USA are very different from when they had attended school, I took the opportunity to ask them about their own experience of schooling.

Having five participants meant that some interview questions were repeated in each interview (Carruthers, 1990), although scope was provided for participants to take the conversation onto aspects of world schooling and / or education which they wanted to discuss. Some participants were naturally less talkative and less inclined to expand on exactly what was being asked. In order to encourage participants to expand on and develop their responses, I used both spoken and non-spoken prompts such as nodding or leaving moments of silence (Adams, 2015). Some participants were more talkative and often digressed from the question. However, during previous research, I found that, even though digressions appeared initially not to be relevant to the research project, they often had the potential to be important. For this reason, I allowed the

interviews to develop naturally as much as possible and attempted to establish a conversational style of discussion that would generate further storytelling (Lieblich, Tuval-Maschiach & Tamar, 1998). Having an ‘insider’ (see section 3.3) understanding of aspects of world schooling and its challenges assisted with maintaining the flow of conversation as it reduced my need to interrupt and gain clarification on various issues that an ‘outsider’ may not immediately understand, for example, the role of world schooling hubs. In subsequent interviews, I started to share some of my own stories in order to maintain a more conversational style however I was always mindful of the fact that I was not only an ‘insider’ sharing stories but also an ‘outsider’ engaged in research. According to Atkinson (2009) there is a danger of researchers placing too much emphasis on the ‘empathetic appreciation’ (2009, online) of an individual’s story which results in an over-celebration of the narrative. In order to avoid over- (or under-) determining participants responses, I followed Atkinson’s (1997, 2017) advice of adhering to a clear analytical framework (section 3.10) and also maintained a reflexive journal throughout the study (section 3.4).

Additionally, to ensure that I did not influence the participants with my contributions, I attempted to share mostly objective information. For example, in my second interview with PT3, he mentioned that he was planning to extend his stay in Thailand so we shared stories about the logistics of extending a Thai visa. During the same interview, it transpired that we had similar plans for the summer so we discussed practicalities such as the cost of accommodation and which tourist areas were likely to be overcrowded during the summer months. If I chose to share more personal information then I did so only as a reaction to a participant’s story after they had completed a particular story or to acknowledge a parallel between our stories, for example, sharing the same career as PT5 or having a daughter the same age as PT4’s.

3.6.4 Generation and Development of Research Texts

Before developing the research texts, field texts were generated. Field texts are the written reconstructions of the stories told during the online interviews (section 3.6.2) and provide the data for later developing the research texts. By first generating field texts, a record of each specific meeting, that included my thoughts about particular happenings during the meeting, was developed. Field

texts were co-composed by the participants and the researcher and consist of reflections of the shared experience (Clandinin, 2013). This ensured that the research was grounded in the participants and my own particular experiences.

My relationship with the participants was a fundamental factor in generating the field texts. As a world schooling parent myself, discussing lived experiences with other world schoolers has shaped the field texts as I was empathetic to their lived experiences and challenges. In this study, the field texts remained as close to the participants experiences as possible. While being mindful of place, I looked forward and backward in time as well as inwards and outwards with relation to personal and social interactions. In this manner, the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (see section 3.9.1) was used as the framework for field text generation.

These field texts provided direction to subsequent interviews and highlighted aspects of the interviews which required further clarification or development (section 3.6.1). I heeded Mishler's (1986) advice that,

If we wish to hear respondents' stories, then we must invite them into our work as collaborators, sharing control with them, so that together we try to understand what their stories are about (1986, p.249).

The generation of field texts and research texts was thus a collaborative task as participants were involved in deciding the elements necessary to tell their stories. Within the collaboration, my responsibility as the researcher and a narrative inquirer was to compose the field and research texts which accurately and authentically told the participants stories.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), field and research text development is a tension-filled undertaking as narrative inquiry is relational. Narrative researchers

must become fully involved, ... yet they must also step back and see their own stories in the inquiry, the stories of the participants, as well as the larger landscape on which they all live (2000, p. 81).

Composing a coherent, chronological narrative for each participant, which encompasses sociality, temporality and place and presenting them as such was central to this research project. It was during this process that I started to think with and not just about stories (section 3.2) and consider the relational aspect

of the stories together with my own. I also considered the voices of the participants while taking into account potential readers of this study (Clandinin & Caine, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

I started constructing the field texts after transcribing the initial interviews (section 3.7). After transcription was complete, I reviewed any notes that I had made and added these to the transcriptions to generate interim research texts. I then shared them, via my University of Glasgow email, with the participants for review. As there had been issues with sound quality during some interviews, it was important that the participants checked that my text aligned with their stories. As mentioned in section 3.4, participants can sometimes reveal personal or sensitive issues during narrative inquiry so I asked them to review the field texts for any details which they may have disclosed during the course of the interview but would prefer not to be included in the final, written research text. No participants requested any changes or edits.

As I had manually transcribed the field texts, I already had a thorough knowledge of the data they contained. Field texts contain numerous embedded stories and are nested in the research relationship. The next step was to develop the field texts into interim research texts. I regularly reviewed them, and as such, I was able to start thinking with the stories. As I reviewed the field texts and attended to the three-dimensional inquiry space by ensuring that I had encompassed sociality, temporality and place, I began to see complete narratives of the world schoolers' lived experiences. As Clandinin (2000) explains, this is the initial step in data analysis and aids narrative researchers to identify and locate aspects such as characters, plot, scene, place and tensions in the narrative. The analysis is, however, not yet complete at this stage.

Building and maintaining a close relationship with my response community, with whom I was able to discuss the research project and ongoing concerns, played a significant part in developing the interim and final texts. A response community is a group of people that the researcher 'values and trusts to provide responsive, and responsible, dialogue about his or her unfolding inquiry' (Clandinin, 2013, p.210). During this study, I discussed, reflected upon and inquired more deeply into my research project with my response community as, 'it is in the living of this back-and-forth process that we gain new insights' (Caine & Estefan, 2011, p.968).

Clandinin and Caine (2013) advise that response communities help encourage and sustain narrative researchers through the iterative nature of narrative inquiry. My response community included two supervisors and a mentor from the University of Glasgow in addition to other homeschooling, unschooling or world schooling peers as well as friends and colleagues who were working as lecturers and study peers from my doctoral program. They were invaluable for supporting and challenging me as well as helping me to extend and expand my thinking. During these discussions, further thinking with the topic was possible and insights into further aspects of narrative inquiry were gained. This process allowed me to think about world schoolers' experience more thoroughly and make the complexity of the various participants stories visible to the reader (Clandinin and Caine, 2013). Developing the research texts not only made me aware of the complexity of the lives of the participants but also highlighted how those complexities were an integral part of their narrative identities as practicing world schoolers. As Clandinin and Caine (2013) advise, I was mindful of the need to engage the audience when working with the participants to compose the final research texts.

To write the interim research texts, I reviewed my notes and then engaged in some free writing sessions. This allowed me to clarify my thinking about the data and assisted me in gaining a deeper understanding. It also helped to highlight where further information and clarification was needed in subsequent interviews (section 3.6.1). It was during these periods of writing that I started to consider my lived experiences together with the participants' and attempted to think within their stories. Doing this helped me to identify tensions both in and between the stories as well as gain more clarity on my own stories and how they were located in this research project (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

At various points, I had a 'conversation between ... theory and the stories of life contained in the inquiry' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 41) in order to gain a deeper understanding of the data. Approaching theory in narrative inquiry like this is not the same as in formalistic research. In a formalistic, academic approach, theory (and not experience) is needed to validate knowledge. By interacting with the literature as an additional element of the study, I was able to 'play' (Clandinin, 2013, p. 206) with the existing literature and both across and within the dimensions of sociality, temporality and place. This was

particularly beneficial for locating and identifying various elements of the social and personal within the participants stories and assisted me in clarifying my relationship with their stories.

The final research texts were developed from the iterative field text reviews, the interim texts, journal notes and response community feedback. Clandinin (2013) reminds narrative researchers of the need to be ethically accountable for the process of how the participants' and their own stories are represented in the development of the research text. The interviews yielded large amounts of data which could not all be presented within the scope of this research project. Some stories gained prominence and were foregrounded while others were set aside. The presented stories in the final research text have all been co-constructed and negotiated within the three-dimensional inquiry space.

The research text's purpose is to:

critically and deeply represent the inquirer's and participants' experiences while also maintaining each person's integrity and their relationship into the future (Clandinin and Huber, 2013, p.13).

As such, the narratives presented are not an exact representation of life as it has been lived. Rather, they are accounts of experience that have already been interpreted by the narrator who chooses what to include, emphasize or omit (Bruner, 2004). In this study, stories of how and why the participants became world schoolers, the participants' own experience of education and how they choose to educate their children are foregrounded. My voice is included and woven into the participants' stories as an observer lens. By using this approach, my aim was to honour the participants stories and the rich detail of the happenings which occurred that led to their deciding to become world schoolers and their subsequent experiences.

Clandinin (2013) explains that it is 'important to attend to forms that fit the lives of the participants and the narrative inquirers who are being represented' (p207). The participants stories are presented individually in chapter four together with my voice as a thread which presents their stories in such a way that the positions of the participants and the researcher in the study are reflected. My interpretations are shared alongside the participants stories in an attempt to maintain transparency and my commitment to experience as

knowledge for practice. For the reader, being able to identify the researcher's voice and understand my story and my motivations for researching the lived experience of world schoolers is important.

World schooling storytellers locate their behaviours and actions in specific happenings and locations which are not currently widely known. Narrative research, as Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) explain, includes 'the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted' (2007, p. 42). Working collaboratively to generate the research texts, both interim and final, can be beneficial for both participants and researcher. For participants, narrative inquiry can aid them 'grasp what [their] deepest values are' (Morris, 2001, p.216). For the researcher, it provides the opportunity to explore 'inside the world' (Riley & Hawe, 2004, p. 241) of world schooling and gain deeper insights into the lived experience.

In this section I have discussed how the final research texts were developed from field texts through the use of interim texts. In the next section, I will describe how the interviews were transcribed into a written text.

3.7 Transcription

Transcribing the video-recorded interviews was the first step in data analysis. As Brinkman & Kvale (2018) point out, not only does the production of a written text make the data 'more amenable to closer analysis' but the process itself may be considered an 'initial analysis' (2018, p.107). In the literature surrounding transcription, it is commonly understood to be a 'theoretical, selective, interpretive and representational' process (Davidson, 2009). Although a researcher could potentially transcribe designated sections of the data, this is not respectful to the participants who volunteered their time to participate in the research (Bokhove & Downey, 2018). Additionally, when using a narrative inquiry approach, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest 'a sense of a search, a 're-search', a searching again', and 'a sense of continual reformulation' (p.124). I believe that fully transcribing each interview allowed me to 'search' each recording more fully in an attempt to uncover a greater complexity of detail, depth and meaning while ensuring that nothing was missed.

Before starting this study I had already decided that I would transcribe the audio data manually even though it would be very time-consuming. There are computer applications for transcription, such as NVivo, which ensure standardisation across tapescripts (McLellan et al., 2003) and save a lot of time (Bokhove & Downey, 2018). According to Gibbs (2007), transcribing without the aid of software takes approximately five or six times longer than data collection takes. Although I found the process very time-consuming, I also found it extremely beneficial as I immersed myself in the data.

Trippas et al. (2017) highlight the need for establishing and following a clear transcription protocol. Four transcription methods are specified by Kowal and O'Connell (2014). There is (1) the standard orthographic approach which does not include deviations from, or inaccuracies with, language or pronunciation. (2) Literary transcription, which takes those deviations into account. (3) Eye dialect, which records the exact pronunciation of the speaker and (4) a phonetic approach that records the data phonetically.

For this research project, I deemed the standard orthographic approach as the most suitable as this approach is concerned only with recording words as they are spoken and the focus of the study was on the content of the participants' speech. As a result, all of the interview quotes authentically represent and are true to the participants despite some potential grammatical inaccuracies in relation to standard English. I also decided to include laughter, body language and time stamps approximately every minute so that it was easy to go back and locate particular segments. For unclear words or phrases, I noted [inaudible]. I chose to include laughter as the spoken word was ambiguous sometimes, particularly when joking. Bailey (2008) advises that laughing and joking can be influential to data analysis although Mishler (1986) warns that these could be simply interpretations and that one should clarify with the original recording as often as necessary. Initially, I was not planning to include body language but one of the participants would occasionally use body language instead of words and so I decided to include it for clarity of meaning. I did not include 'multimodal features ... e.g. intonation, stress, rhythm, gesture, gaze' (Moore & Llompart, 2017, p. 411) as these aspects of speech would not assist in writing the participants' story. Although the context of some expressions may have been removed by this decision, having conducted and recorded the interviews on

video meant that I already had an understanding of the manner in which words were expressed. The one interview which was audio only was my third meeting with the participant and so I had the advantage of already having established a relationship and rapport with the individual which made understanding the context of expressions much simpler.

Transcribing the video and audio-recordings was time-consuming but I thoroughly enjoyed it and felt like I gained a deep understanding of the interviews. I repeatedly re-watched segments and re-listened which assisted with accuracy and validity. Listening multiple times is an essential practice for researchers to help them evaluate their judgements and interpretations on what has been written (Hammersley, 2010). I also found it beneficial to listen again a few days after finishing the transcription as I was able to listen more actively after taking a break from the data.

In this section, I have described how the interviews were transcribed. In the next section, I will explain how standards of academic rigour and quality have been applied to this narrative research project.

3.8 Academic Rigour and Quality

In academic research, rigour refers to a set of standards which are used to assess the quality of the research methods as well as its trustworthiness and value (Liu, 2017).

3.8.1 The Touchstones of Narrative Inquiry

Clandinin and Caine (2013) outline twelve touchstones for narrative inquiry which, when attended to and applied, ensure that academic standards of quality and trustworthiness have been adhered to by the researcher resulting in a research project of academic value. Although there is not a standard format for conducting narrative research, all narrative studies are relational. As such, ethical relational responsibilities must be demonstrated. Standards in research design and implementation must also be acknowledged and practiced.

3.8.1.1 Narrative Beginnings

Narrative inquiry begins with the researchers' own stories of lived experience. As narrative research is a continuous process of reflexivity and reflection, narrative researchers need to inquire into their own experiences, before, during and after a research project and attend to these using the three-dimensional inquiry space. A researcher's narrative beginnings are an important part of all narrative research projects, even if they do not, in their entirety, contribute to the final research project, as they help the reader to better understand the study and findings.

My narrative beginnings are shared in chapter one where I share examples of my experiences, how I live within my stories and have attended to them using the dimensions of temporality, sociality and place. Through these, I can now recognise how and when I acknowledged and turned to narrative knowing and started attending to knowing and learning through stories as well as thinking with stories.

3.8.1.2 Relational Responsibilities

Narrative inquiry is infused with ethical matters, particularly relational ethics. Throughout the research project, from its conception to submission, I attended to thinking in a relational manner. By doing this, I attended to who I was within the research project and, as the inquirer, how my presence shaped the participants experience when telling their stories. For this reason, I positioned myself alongside them and developed a relationship of trust which I then had an obligation to maintain. Relational ethics with the participants guided the relationship during co-construction of the field, interim and final research texts to make sure that anonymity was maintained and their narrative authority was honoured.

3.8.1.3 In the Midst

Narrative researchers enter research relationships in the midst of life as it is lived (Clandinin, 2000). In my introduction, I attended to this by sharing part of my journey to becoming a world schooler and how I arrived at my research project. In addition, every time I retold a story, I considered not only the point at which the telling happened, but also that that moment is in relation and in

the midst of the participants personal, professional and other aspects of their lives in the midst while they are also in the research story with me.

3.8.1.4 Negotiation of Relationships

Relationships are negotiated continuously throughout a narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Caine, 2013). Narrative researchers and participants negotiate all elements of a study together, starting from setting the parameters for participation, to co-constructing field, interim and final research texts. In this research project, participants were fully informed and involved at every step. Regularly, they were given the opportunity to review their participation in the study.

3.8.1.5 Negotiating Entry to the Field

In narrative research, the field is the relational inquiry space in which negotiations with participants take place. For participants, taking part in a research project and entering the field can be exciting or stressful. It could cause anxiety, uncertainty and be disruptive to their lives. As such, the researcher is obliged to negotiate entry into the field in a manner that makes the experience as easy as possible. For the duration of this study, control over how we communicated, when and how we met, the extent of my role in their lives for the twelve months of meetings, what our interviews comprised of and how they were composed was given to the participants. For this reason, the participants stories vary widely in length and depth of detail as their preferences concerning how often we met, which topics were explored and in how much depth shaped the stories told.

3.8.1.6 Moving from Field to Interim Texts

Conversations with the participants about their lived experiences shaped the development of the field texts. These conversations created the time and space necessary for the participants and I to share our stories with each other. All field texts in this research project were constructed together from these conversations.

3.8.1.7 Moving from Field Texts to Interim and Final Research Texts

To compose the research texts, I reviewed my notes and thought with my field

texts before drafting and then developing the interim texts and later, the final research texts. During this iterative process of composing texts, I had further conversations with the participants to engage in further telling and living within the three-dimensional inquiry space. I read the field and interim texts multiple times during composition of the research texts. At various points, I discussed the interim texts with my response community. This helped me clarify my thoughts on matters when thinking across the stories.

3.8.1.8 Representing Narratives of Experience in Ways that Show Temporality, Sociality, and Place

The dimensions of temporality, sociality and place are attended to in the telling of the participants' stories. By attending to the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, the quality of the narrative experience was enhanced. Also, the writing of this thesis, which tells the story of this research project, which was conducted in the three-dimensional inquiry space, demonstrates how the complexities of temporality, sociality and place have been attended to. The issues of signature and voice (Clandinin & Caine, 2013) are attended to in chapter four. I have attempted to honour the voices of the participants and represent their stories as authentically as possible.

3.8.1.9 Relational Response Communities

When I started this study, I had a response community of world schoolers, home schoolers and unschoolers already in place. As it progressed, members of the research community from the University of Glasgow were included which helped me to develop the level of detail and understanding throughout this research project.

3.8.1.10 Justifications: Personal, Practical and Social

In chapters one and two, I outlined my personal, practical, and social justifications for this research project. My own narrative beginning (section 1.2), discussion of the significance of the research (section 1.4) and aspects of the literature review highlight the importance of gaining a better understanding of the lived experiences of world schoolers.

3.8.1.11 Attentive to Audience

Throughout this narrative study, I have remained aware of the audiences that will benefit from this research. Clandinin and Caine (2013) state that shared research texts should be representative and respectful of the participants' lives. To be respectful, I have attempted to represent their experiences in a manner that is inclusive and not marginalized. The form used to represent the participants' authentic voices arose from the iterative process of text development. The stories are thus composed primarily in the participants' voices and my voice is woven through the text to demonstrate how it was jointly negotiated and co-constructed.

3.8.1.12 Commitment to Understanding Lives in Motion

During this research project, my commitment to comprehending lives in motion was grounded in my comprehension of experience as continuous. Being mindful that narrative inquiry is 'within a stream of experience that generates new relations that then becomes part of future experience' (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 41) helped me to clarify and comprehend that the participants and myself started this research project at a specific time and place. However, the location and time that generated the final research texts was not the same and as such, particular narratives will shift.

3.9 Data Analysis and Restorying: Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space Approach

Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) 'three-dimensional narrative inquiry space' (p.50) approach was used for the analysis. This approach provides a metaphorical framework for exploring participants' unique experiences. It is underpinned by Dewey's (1938) philosophy of experience which states that people are understood through their personal experiences and social interactions. Their experiences occur continuously, as they develop from previous experiences and also lead to future experiences, and in a particular context or locale. The framework consists of the three dimensions: temporality, sociality and place. Table 2 (Ollerenshaw & Cresswell, 2002, p.340), which is adapted from Clandinin and Connelly (2000), summarizes the three dimensions:

Table 2: The Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure

<i>Interaction (sociality)</i>		<i>Continuity (temporality)</i>			<i>Situation (Place)</i>
<i>Personal</i>	<i>Social</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Future</i>	
Look inward to internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions	Look outward to existential conditions in the environment with other people and their intentions, purposes, assumptions, and points of view	Look backward to remembered experiences, feelings, and stories from earlier times	Look at current experiences, feelings, and stories relating to actions of an event	Look forward to implied and possible experiences and plot lines	Look at context, time and place situated in a physical landscape or setting with topological and spatial boundaries with characters' intentions, purposes and different points of view

Using these three dimensions, individuals' experiences, feelings and sensations can be explored within their particular contexts (Clandinin, 2013). Like this, the researcher is situated within the metaphorical narrative space and can think within the experience and take a holistic approach to the story. Within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, narrative researchers can look at the participants' experiences backwards, forwards, inwards and outwards as they are lived, told, then re-lived and re-told through stories (Clandinin, 2013).

The sociality dimension enables the researcher to consider and explore the relationship between internal and external experiences. Narrative researchers direct this attention towards both themselves and the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). They do this to gain insights into their own responses to experiences and recognise the impact their own social, institutional and cultural narratives have on these responses (Clandinin, 2013). This study also explored the participants feelings about our shared experiences and how their understanding of the experience, their world schooling identity and implications for their actions as a world schooling parent were shaped by this. Example questions for exploring sociality include:

What does being a worldschooler mean to you?

Can you tell me about friendships that you have formed while world schooling?

Have your own values or beliefs changed during your world schooling journey?

Thinking and researching within the dimension of place is a valuable lens in a narrative inquiry into a worldschoolers' lived experience. Understanding how the context has influenced their response to particular experiences provides insight for researchers. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000) place is, 'the specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of place or sequence of places where the inquiry takes place' (2000, p.50). The dimension of place allows the researcher to identify how participants engage and interact with their environment to construct meaning (Estefan, 2008, p.75). Estefan and Roughley (2013) state that an individual's physical location is intrinsically connected to knowledge concerning how to act. As such, considering places and relational spaces, as sources of 'wisdom' (Basso, 1996) are crucial aspects of narrative research. Example questions for exploring place include:

How do different places influence how you learn?

How has travelling full-time affected your idea of what 'home' means?

Can you tell me about a place that made a strong impression on you?

In attending to the temporality dimension, the researcher is able to consider the past, present and anticipated, or preferred future. 'The way people speak ... bears the imprint of a time and place' (Crites, 1971, p. 291). Thinking narratively about world schoolers lived experiences is recognising that both individuals and situations are constantly changing and transitioning. By using these three dimensions in combination, situating experiences in their context while looking backward, forward, inward and outward, the researcher can navigate the narrative holistically and honour the stories of the participants. Example questions for exploring temporality include:

What were your expectations of world schooling before you started?

Has your approach to world schooling changed since you started? How?

The goal of working with a small number of participants, unlike those found in large-scale studies, is to "uncover dynamic patterns' (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006, p.491) by analysing participants' experiences. In order to do this, I created charts for the data that aligned with the three-dimensional space approach. These were adapted from Ollerenshaw and Creswell's (2002) examples. To start, I analysed participant 1's story thoroughly and completed chart 1. I then repeated the process for each participant in order to have a comparative analysis of experiences (Miles & Huberman, 1994). At this point, I was unaware of the extent of any patterns

between the stories and this approach aligned with Miles and Huberman's (1994) suggestions. I created two charts, the first (chart 1) for organising and analysing the interview data in-depth, the second (chart 2) to analyse the data backwards and forwards, inwards and outwards.

Chart 1 provided an overview of the interview data divided into past, present, and future. I included the concept of looking back from the present as participants sometimes spoke about the past from their current, present perspective. When completing the charts, I used a combination of notes, summaries, and quotes. For consistency, the extracts from charts 1 and 2 presented here include data from the same participant.

Chart 1: Interview data

Participant: PT1

Past	Present (and looking back from the present)	Future (continuity)
<i>Why did you decide to start world schooling?</i> -All family members tired and stressed in the 'never ending rat race' -family happiest and bonded well when travelling. -'discovered' world schooling on YouTube and loved the idea so investigated more - wanted to show her children that they should follow their dreams	-return to the USA as they wanted to be part of a stable community -still travel and world school during school holidays and weekends	- will continue to world school part or full time based on what is best for the children
Each subsequent question / topic discussed was listed at the beginning of each row and filled out across the columns.		

Adapted from Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002).

As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) highlight, all aspects of experience should be considered. Chart 2 was created in order to get a better understanding of each individual participant. The Backwards and Forwards columns focused on early experiences, the Inwards column focused on the participants' feelings, while the Outwards column focused on present actions.

Chart 2: Backwards, Forwards, Inwards, Outwards

Participant: PT1

Backwards	Forwards	Inwards	Outwards
-Grew up bilingual -Enjoyed learning English -Father choose her first degree major	-Emigrated to the USA after university -obtained a second degree in the USA	-believes that learning should be fun -feels happiest when exploring new cultures and connecting with other people -believes that all people are equal -believes that children learn through example	-sold the house and all belongings when started world schooling -destinations initially chosen based on COVID guidelines -husband ran an online business while she stayed full-time with the children

Adapted from Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002).

After completing chart 2 the following findings were clear:

- All participants had pursued higher education to some extent,
- All participants had positive international connections and / or experiences and wanted their children to experience the same,
- The decision to world school had not been taken lightly and only after applying for or attending collective mass schooling,
- Finances were often central to decision making at all stages,
- Finding community required time and effort,
- Finding what worked for their family was not always straightforward or quick,
- Rising levels of aggression in the world is concerning for many of them,
- Politics does not belong in schools.

3.10 Limitations

I have discussed the limitations of this study throughout the chapter. The voluntary nature of participation prevented pre-selection of participants and the small sample size prevents generalisations being made about the experiences of world schoolers. It is not possible to say how representative my participants' stories are of the wider world schooling community. Indeed, different findings would have been obtained from different participants. However, having a small sample size was a deliberate methodological choice which allowed more detailed, in-depth data to be obtained. Lack of generalisability is a feature of

narrative inquiry and overall, does not diminish the findings as the aim is to explore and understand individual experiences and perspectives.

A limitation of narrative enquiry and the broader 'narrative turn' is the inability to establish correspondence as their stories cannot be validated by reference to any external evidence. However, according to Riessman (2008), establishing correspondence between external sources of data and reported narrative experiences is 'sometimes even beside the point' (p.187) as narratives are not factual accounts of events but are told from the narrator's perspective which is their reality and truth. Cohen and Mallon (2001) believe that the value of the participants' perceptions is in the ability to connect their individual subjectivity to the wider cultural and social context. As such, the participants' perceptions should not be considered as truths that potentially represent the reality of all world schoolers.

Self-reported data has the potential for biases, such as social desirability bias and recall bias, which could affect the reliability and accuracy of the participants' stories (Furnham, 1986). Social desirability bias is the tendency to present oneself in a favourable manner and so to minimise this, I strove to create a safe, anonymous space for the participants and build rapport through trust. Recall bias occurs when a participant cannot accurately remember past happenings or chooses not to share certain details. Collecting data via interviews meant that the data was shaped by what the participants could remember and were willing to share with me, a researcher and fellow world schooler that they had connected with on social media. As the researcher, I initially guided the interviews and their stories may have been influenced by what they thought I wanted to hear. Information may have been forgotten, omitted or not fully explained.

The participants' stories are limited by what they were willing to share and what they could remember. Although I could have asked more follow-up questions in some of the interviews, I deliberately attempted not to direct the interviews too much as I did not want the participants to feel that I was putting words into their mouths. I wanted the participants' experiences and reflections to be the main focus and so adopted a less active and more supportive approach. Throughout, I strove to balance active listening and obtaining useful data by

asking questions which naturally arose from the conversation. To minimise this, I held serial interviews with my participants and had regular consultations with my doctoral supervisor.

My comprehension of the participants' stories during both the interview and analysis stages were subject to my own constructions. I was led by these and interpreted the participants' responses through the lens of my own assumptions, beliefs and knowledge. These affected the direction of the interviews and data analysis. All correspondence and interviews were conducted in English. As one of the participants was not a native speaker, some detail and precision may have been lost.

3.11 Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed why a constructivist paradigm (section 3.1) and a narrative inquiry methodology (section 3.2) were chosen to explore this topic. The use of semi-structured interviews (see section 3.6) was discussed by describing how this method supported the research aim and was appropriate for world schoolers. The rigour of the study was discussed with reference to the touchstones of narrative inquiry (section 3.8). This chapter also includes a discussion on positionality (section 3.3), ethical considerations (section 3.4) and participant selection (section 3.5). The three- dimensional narrative inquiry space approach (section 3.9) which was used for data analysis is then presented and the final section summarises the limitations (section 3.10) which I return to in chapter five.

Chapter 4 Findings

In this chapter, the participants stories are presented. Due to the diverse nature of the stories, they are presented individually and in such a way as to reflect the thing-in-itself. The stories vary greatly in length as, due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, some participants offered more detailed accounts than others. Also, as rapport was built, some participants became more inclined to digress to other topics. In addition, some participants chose to extend the timing of their interviews while others were available for additional meetings which allowed us to go into greater depth.

These stories are the research texts which form the basis for exploring the lived experiences of full-time world schoolers. I engaged with the participants by attending to the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space and its dimensions of temporality, location and sociality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) while co-constructing the research texts. This entailed looking backward and forward with the participants, reflecting on their social relationships and recognising the contexts in which they located their stories.

These stories consist of mundane stories of world schoolers' particular experiences, woven together chronologically. A glimpse of the participants' sacred stories is provided as each 'story must be set within a world' (Crites, 1971, p. 296). Insight into the world schoolers' lived experiences which assist in shaping their construction of knowledge are provided. They are framed within my perspective as a world schooler, parent and educator.

Clandinin (2013) informs us that a variety of media such as text, visuals and audios can be used to form narrative research texts. By using text, I aim to demonstrate how I began thinking with the participants stories. The textual form also allows me to provide as much depth and detail of the participants' lived experiences, which emerged during the interviews, as possible.

4.1 Participant 1 (PT1)

PT1 is a trilingual American immigrant with two undergraduate degrees. English is her third language and she opted to use English in our meetings. She emigrated to the USA by herself in 2008 after graduating from university in her home country, part of the former USSR. She met her husband, also an American immigrant from the same country, in the USA and they have two sons. She had been world schooling full-time with her family for 3 years when we first made contact. We had two 1-hour meetings, 5 months apart. For the first meeting, she was in her home country visiting family and for our second meeting she was in the USA. She actively shares many aspects of her family's world schooling journey on social media where I have followed her since our initial contact.

In 2008, PT1 immigrated to the USA by herself after graduating from university in her home country, part of the former USSR. Her father enrolled her in university and chose her course of study as that was the cultural norm at that time and alternatives were not considered. She was not interested in the course and, as a result, she reported that she did not study much and does not remember anything that she learned there. In the USA, she obtained another bachelor's degree of her own choosing so she understood why she was there and why she needed to learn certain topics. As the course was focused on her interests, she enjoyed the experience, worked hard and then pursued a career in her field of study.

She got married to another immigrant from her home country; they bought a house, had two children and professional careers. According to PT1, they had achieved their 'American dream'. However, it was a

rat race, a regular wheel, never-ending, spinning the wheels ... trying to pay for the mortgage ... and all the things

Both she and her husband had busy professional lives and had to work long hours in order to maintain the lifestyle. They would travel within the USA at the weekends and found this 'extremely energising... We all bonded so well and it was just so much fun all the time'. They wanted to travel more but holiday time in the USA is very limited and needs to be approved by one's employer, so it was very difficult to take extra time off work. As an immigrant,

it felt very strange like, I am feeling free, but I am not free with my time. I do not spend time with family. We all are very tired at the end of the day. We get irritated at each other because we are tired. We just wanna go to bed. And then in the morning, the kids don't want to wake up. I am already tired, right? So it's just never-ending loop and it felt so constricted. And restrictive. And extremely limiting

She felt the need to 'have a bigger life' and was passionate about travel but realised that she could not have a career and travel. PT1 also firmly believes that children learn from their parents' examples and what they do rather than what they say. She began to realise that what she had previously considered her dream life of buying a house and having a steady job was 'not, absolutely not for us'. She then began to wonder how she could teach her children to follow their dreams if she was not following hers.

Her youngest child attended a Montessori preschool and enjoyed it. However, her eldest attended a state school and, although he is a sociable child, he also needs privacy and space sometimes, which he did not get at school. He struggled with the large number of rules and even though he had great friends at school, he would always come home stressed out and very tired and sometimes asked to stay at home. In 2018, she came across a YouTube video of a German family that had been world schooling for several years and 'her paradigm ... exploded with the idea that there is another path that's available'. She researched world schooling further and felt energized at the possibility of an alternative. Educationally, she thought that world schooling would be the same as homeschooling but learning from real experiences in the real world rather than books at home. PT1 loved this idea because

I realized, you know what, in life, actually what matters is the life skills, is the critical thinking, is the ability to adapt to be flexible, to be comfortable with uncomfortable

Many studies claim that these are essential skills for the future (Dumbuya, 2023; Patcas, 2025; Prince, 2019) She believes that real growth occurs through

visiting other cultures, being exposed to different belief systems, different traditions, different outlooks, different perspective, all of that, it just makes you grow. Not necessarily the classroom. Like the school is not just the classroom, right? It's the whole world. At the end

of the day after school, we go out into the world, right? Not to another classroom.

After learning more about world schooling, 'it just felt so, so good. It felt like this is the right thing'. PT1 and her husband believe that happiness is the most important thing in life and so, as the family were dissatisfied with their current living situation, they decided to start preparing for world schooling.

After the decision to world school was made, PT1 'got so fired up' and 'that desire really helped ... strongly'. The first step was to transition out of their jobs and learn how to make money online. Both PT1 and her husband bought courses and participated in mentorship programs in order to learn the skills sets necessary. They both started online businesses before leaving the USA although PT1 decided to stop shortly after they started world schooling as the children were still young and needed a parent with them. They also paid off any outstanding debts and sold their house so that they did not have any remaining ties to the USA. After two years, they were ready to start world schooling.

Her boys were six and nine years old when they started travelling full-time in 2020. From the beginning of their world schooling journey, she was not concerned about her children following a formal curriculum or 'book work' although she did feel obliged to provide some form of education. For that reason, she attempted to use workbooks provided by the school. However, that only lasted a week as the children did not enjoy it and she did not want to force them into studying. After that, the workbooks were put aside as an optional activity to be used by the children if they chose. She also enrolled the children in Khan Academy (<https://www.khanacademy.org/>), a free, online learning platform. She allowed them to explore the site and choose what they wanted in the hope that they would do some schoolwork online. Her eldest enjoyed the history classes but other than that, it was also dropped after a few attempts in favour of YouTube videos as it was not very interesting. Aside from Russian, PT1 never forced the children to learn anything specific as she wanted the children to find what they were interested in and she is aware that everyone learns at their own pace. The children were still reading regularly in addition to visiting places of interest such as the Coliseum and learning from their experiences in

the world. On days when they did not have any family activities planned, PT1 still preferred to take them outside to play rather than stay indoors learning.

PT1 hired an online Russian tutor who was also a child psychologist. She describes this as the 'best decision ever' as, instead of implementing a generic curriculum, she identified the children's learning styles and adapted her teaching accordingly. From birth, the children have been brought up bilingual and the family use Russian at home. PT1 believes that there are several advantages to speaking multiple languages and wants her children to be fully fluent in both English and Russian. She believes that bilingual people can think differently as they have different neuropathways in the brain.

I can think in 2 languages and it's not gonna be the same. Like there are things that I can think better in English than then I think them in Russian so you know it's quite a wonderful thing so I wanted them to have that.

The benefits of bi- and multilingualism are corroborated in the literature by Marinova-Todd (2012), Scaltritti, Peressotti, and Miozzo (2017), and Thompson (2013). Additionally, she is aware that being bilingual provides opportunities to work internationally and connect with people. Numerous studies support the notion that bilingualism enhances employability (Claassen et al, 2017; Damari et al., 2017; Millar, 2017) and communicative and intercultural competence (Barski and Wilkerson-Barker, 2019; Coelho, Andrade & Portugal, 2018).

The Russian tutor taught them reading, writing and maths as well as talking to them about life. During the sessions, the younger child would do headstands and jumping jacks while the elder child enjoyed listening to stories and engaging in conversations about anything except schoolwork. Despite this, they successfully learned to read and write in Russian as well as improve their mathematical skills. They stopped tutoring after two years as, not only were the children both fluent in Russian by then, but they were starting to dislike studying in Russian and PT1 firmly believes that it is important to enjoy learning. Her instincts are largely corroborated by a number of studies on the importance of intrinsic motivation for effective learning (Oudeyer, Gottlieb & Lopes, 2016; Valerio, 2012).

For PT1, one of the most important lessons is connection with other people.

World schooling ... it's not about separation. It's about maybe finding more in common between all the people. Right? All different nationalities, because people want to be loved. They want to be safe. They want to be, to have this connection with each other. In every single country.

She believes that world schooling has made her children tolerant and accepting of all different types of people. As a dual citizen, she is very aware of and dislikes the 'strict division' between people, especially as it can lead to unfair judgement.

I have a good start because I'm based in the US, right? I have way more opportunities than some, than some other people, but it doesn't make them less. It doesn't make me bigger, right? Because we all citizens of the earth and I think world schooling really, really shows that intuitively. And I have to tell that to my kids, they see it and they feel it.

In 2023, they returned to the USA. PT1's older son, who was 12 at that point, was missing having friends his own age and the whole family was missing a sense of community. The boys have been attending a Waldorf school since August 2023 and are thriving in all aspects of their lives.

They're going to the Waldorf school, and they're loving it so much. And yeah, I'm just. I'm super happy. It's something that I feel we all needed. They made friends. They're so excited to learn. And you know the learning happens differently there. It's not, you know, to sit and learn and memorize. So they do a lot of things in the nature, like lots of handwork and music and crafts and cooking and like woodshops.

Academically, the youngest child has not experienced any issues readjusting to school life. The eldest was slightly behind in a few areas but both he and his teacher are unconcerned by that and are working to catch up.

The adjustment has been more difficult for PT1 and she misses their travelling life a lot. Despite being settled in the USA, she still considers herself a world schooler, 'we're still world schooling. It's just a bit more settled'. As much as possible, she continues to organise family trips at weekends and during school holidays. Her only regret concerning their world schooling journey is that she wishes she had known about the possibility earlier and had started when her

children were younger. Reflecting on her expectations prior to full-time world schooling, she states,

I think this were the best, the richest, the brightest years of my life. So many beautiful experiences, memories as a family coming to the new country. It's like you're coming on a different planet. Like, oh my gosh, everything is so different. Wow, there's different language. There different people are different, you know, the way people talk. Our children got very curious. They learned so much. They talk to locals. They they ask questions, that's amazing. The nature, the beautiful sights that we've experienced, the food, the all the cooking classes and things like that, you know, we try to like learn from. Regular things. Those were the best years of my life. They were rich, very, very rich. So that expectation was met and over delivered.

4.2 Participant 2 (PT2)

PT2 is an American citizen married to an American. I had three meetings over the course of eleven months with PT2. The first meeting was 1 hour, the second was 80 minutes and the final meeting was 20 minutes. For the first meeting, she was in Croatia, for the second she was in Sweden and for the third, she was in England. She has two master's degrees and had a professional career until 2016 when her husband was transferred to a military base in Belgium. At that point, she decided to become a stay-at-home mother to their two young daughters, aged 3 and 5, and started world schooling part-time. At the time of our first meeting, they had been world schooling full-time for one year. She has a social media page on which she shares insights into aspects of their world schooling journey. PT2 and her family are currently still world schooling full-time with no plans to stop.

PT2 would like her daughters to be multilingual, be able to write well, and have a structured path to university. She started teaching her children German when they were babies and continuing this upon arrival in Europe was one of her priorities. Her elder daughter attended a small German school on the military base for four years, starting from first grade. There was also a Belgian kindergarten in French with a small German section on base which her younger daughter attended. Although learning German was the priority, PT2 decided to send her younger daughter to the Belgian kindergarten for half a day so that she could be exposed to French and then to the German kindergarten for the other

half of the day. Her younger daughter did that for two years and then attended the German school for two years.

Neither daughter particularly enjoyed school, especially the younger one as she experienced some bullying and did not like the teacher who taught the combined class of grades one and two. In 2020, the school moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. PT2 found that her daughters adjusted well to online learning and decided to continue rather than return to school at the end of the pandemic. This was because not only did her daughters not enjoy school, but the majority of their friends had left the base as their parents had finished their contracts. PT2's husband had also finished his contract during that time but he accepted a civilian job on base and extended the family's stay in Belgium as they had no desire or need to return to the USA to live. In addition to having sold everything when they left the USA in 2016, they are not close with family members there. Also, PT2 is adamant that her daughters will never attend school in the USA due to the prevalence of school shootings and the resultant changes to school life.

Most school districts have plans in place, you know, just like you would practice a fire drill, you're practising a gun drill ... on a regular basis ... It's this terrorising culture of the guns itself. I mean, even that's traumatising. If I call in a gun threat, they're gonna lock down the school ... there was one district, they had 30 calls in a month ... And you have to take it seriously, because it does happen

PT2's daughters were so young when they left the USA that they do not ask about returning and have no patriotic feelings about being American. Instead, PT2 would like them to adopt a broader, more global approach to citizenship.

During the four-year period before the COVID-19 pandemic, they travelled extensively throughout Europe by car during the school holidays. PT2 chose destinations which she considered as having an educational focus, especially historical locations, as they

strongly feel that history is the key to [global citizenship skills such as empathy and tolerance], learning about what's happened in the past and giving some broader perspective to our lives, as well as we've also taught them like about their ancestors you know that, where everybody came from in Europe and how they got they got to the

United States and what their lives were like when they arrived and the challenges they faced to get us to this point.

The value of history for global citizenship is corroborated by Rüsen (2004) and Santiseban, Pagès, and Bravo (2018). As her daughters had adjusted well to homeschooling and her husband was approaching retirement age, PT2 started to consider full-time world schooling as a possibility. Her daughters are attached to their pet cats and they travel by car, so her plan was to stay in Europe. However, she knew that staying in Europe long-term would not be easy for American passport holders. As her husband's great-grandparents were Italian, he was able to apply for citizenship and as long as the family travel together, they would all be exempt from visa regulations for Americans. Once the citizenship application was finalised and PT2's husband retired, they set off on their world schooling journey.

They started full-time world schooling in 2022. Since then, PT2 has tried several different approaches to education in an effort to find what works best for her family. At first, she attempted to implement a full school day. The online school which she chose provided material, written feedback and only an occasional meeting with a tutor so she had to act as a facilitator and help her daughters with the material. However, they found that a full study day was not feasible as

the world schooling is, between my husband and I, is taking up a tremendous amount of our time ... arranging you know the travel and the academics for the kids as well as dealing with the emotional behavioural issues of our kids ... it's, it's a lot more work than I think we thought it would be

As a result, they decided to narrow the focus of studies to the core curriculum requirements and those subjects which her daughters enjoyed and chose for themselves.

PT2's elder daughter was taking an International History course at the time of our second meeting. At that point, she was focused on the Vikings and so the family was planning to spend the summer in Scandinavia and visit Viking sites and museums to help support her study. When they are not busy with online school, the family like to explore their surroundings. At the time of our second meeting, the family was in Sweden. They had already been canoeing three times

and had visited a fashion and design museum. In this museum, PT2 left the girls to look around at their own pace although if museums offer pre-prepared worksheets, then they will often complete those. PT2 believes that interactive experiences are not comparable to listening to a teacher in a classroom.

The reality of walking through Sarajevo and seeing the city and learning about the war or going into a mosque in Albania and learning about Islam, I mean that's totally different than sitting in a classroom.

She believes that by interacting with the environment and people, they learn and remember better. Both her and her husband have conversations with their daughters about their experiences later and can see the learning that has taken place.

PT2 enjoys visiting cathedrals and churches however, after being in Europe for so long, her daughters are tired of them so they usually just enter them quickly if they are free. She insists on certain activities as she can see how much her daughters are learning even if they are not happy doing it for example, visiting cemeteries. PT2 finds it

fascinating .. [to] reflect on like what we see in the cemetery you know like look, I mean here's a row of small children that died you know right around the time of the Spanish flu or you know, we see, oh look all these people died during the Balkan war and they were 20 years old.

They also went to a cemetery which was in the Croatian section of Mostar.

It was a WW2 Bosnian Muslim partizan cemetery that Croatians had destroyed all the headstones ... because the Croatians were pro-Nazi

It is this perspective of life through a historical lens which PT2 would like her daughters to understand.

Even if her daughters do not enjoy some activities, PT2 does not feel that the time has been wasted and believes that their lack of enthusiasm is due to their age and not the world schooling lifestyle. She generally finds her daughters very mature for their age. In comparison to when PT2 and her husband were 11 and 12, her daughters are more mature and much more knowledgeable about the world.

In my experience, we didn't have a lot of international education when I was [at school] it was mostly focused on American history, maybe some Native American history, a little bit about you know European wars but I mean that was the focus of it, they have a much broader education. ... the things they're learning about are much more global ... I mean American curriculum is not very globally focused in general, or at least it wasn't ...

They often have conversations with them about controversial issues such as wars and religious conflicts, for example her daughters learned all about the Balkan wars when they were travelling that region during the time of our first meeting. After much deliberation, PT2 and her husband decided to take them to a concentration camp as their daughters know the story and understand what happened at them. However, as they wanted to shield their daughters from the more horrific aspects of some concentration camps, they chose to visit Theresienstadt in the Czech Republic as it was a transit and labour camp only.

PT2 states that making social connections has been challenging for her daughters. After a few months of full-time world schooling, the family attended a pop-up world-schooling hub [see Introduction] in an effort to meet other world schoolers and find some community. This did not work out for them for a number of reasons. First, there were a large number of attendees who all arrived at the same time and some of the children were sick. PT2 and her family participated in about two-thirds of the hub before one of them got sick. Secondly, there was a large range in the ages of the children attending and her daughters had difficulty fitting in. Although her daughters were 11 and 12 at the time, they had already been in puberty for a couple of years and looked more like 14- and 15-year-olds, which meant that although they were not teenagers, they were also no longer young children. The other children their age either had not started puberty or were in the early stages of it and so, as they were at different stages of development, they did not connect with them. There were two teenagers there, aged 13 and 15, who her daughters enjoyed talking to and tried to make friends with. However, the teenagers did not want to hang out with 11- and 12-year-olds and; as soon as more teenagers arrived at the hub, they did not talk to her daughters.

In the weeks between our first two meetings, both of the daughters attended a horse-riding boarding camp in Germany. They both love horse-riding and speak

German fluently and so were optimistic about making some friends there. However, most of the other camp participants were from the same local area in Germany. They knew each other's schools and either were already friends or had mutual friends. As a result, her daughters had difficulty connecting with them and the elder daughter spent most of the camp chatting to strangers on her phone. She came back 'addicted to her phone and disconnected from everything else [they] were doing'. When we met for our second meeting five weeks later, PT2 immediately reported that they were facing some difficulties. Her elder daughter, who was 12 at the time, was

becoming anxious, depressed, wants friends, wants more connection that's led us down a path on the internet that we've now had to implement all these restrictions and get out of because it was making her more depressed and more moody

In addition to therapy, her elder daughter was visiting a medical doctor to address some of the more severe anxiety and depression issues.

She wants to have a more of a normal life. And that's hard. I mean, in the lifestyle we have set up here now. It's very hard to find ... to create that.

PT2 found this period particularly challenging because

as we've discussed going back to school, as I told my daughter, I don't know that there is a return to normal at this point because if I put you in a school, I mean with the exception of maybe some international schools, you're not going to be like the other children who maybe have attended that school their whole life or have lived in that country their whole life. You have a different viewpoint of the world and there's not really a way to go back from that.

While PT2 was willing to consider stopping travelling and finding a school, she was not sure that that would solve the underlying problem. Additionally, her younger daughter wanted to continue travelling as she had not enjoyed school and

is flourishing in world schooling. She loves this. She loves travelling, she loves doing all these things. She's not interested in going to a school.

Both daughters were aware of school culture in the USA and were not interested in returning to the USA for school which meant that they would either have to find a local school abroad or pay for a private school which was not in their budget. PT2 considered multiple possibilities, including splitting up the family so that one parent would continue travelling with the younger daughter while the other parent would live with the older daughter in a chosen location so that she could attend school. However, in addition to not having the budget, their priority was to find a solution which kept the family together.

It's difficult right because we've chosen this lifestyle as opposed to what would have been a normal lifestyle and so you have this sense of guilt or responsibility for 'am I doing the right thing? Should we have done this? You know, should we change how we're doing things? What's in the best interests of my child? What's in the best interests of the whole family?'

Unsurprisingly, they want their children to thrive and that is their primary focus in life but it is complicated by having two children who want different things. She also believes that the parents' needs are valid so it is important to find a balance. Despite these issues, PT2 acknowledges how fortunate they are to have these options.

They decided to look for an alternative online school which had live interaction in the hope that that would also help to address some of the issues. PT2 used Facebook World schooling groups to find recommendations and then contacted several of them. She had video calls with all of them before making her choice. By the time of our third meeting ten months later, PT2's daughters were happily settled into their new online school. Whereas the previous school only provided materials following the English curriculum and had an occasional meeting with a tutor, the new school has live online classes. The school is based in the USA and still fairly new so, at that point, did not have a European cohort. PT2's daughters joined the American cohort which was mostly Americans with a few Europeans. Ideally, PT2 would have liked more global diversity in the cohort and hopes that that will be possible in the future as the school expands. The class meets for two hours a day, four days a week at European evening time. It has the potential to be an important and interesting possibility considered that this works very well for the family as they often go out in the daytime and were usually home in the evenings anyway.

Prisma (<https://www.joinprisma.com/>) is an accredited project-based school which runs in six-week learning cycles and is organised thematically. Her daughters had recently completed a cycle about toys. They learnt about the history of toys, the physics of building toys and also the economics of selling toys. In addition to practicing economic simulations, they also had to design and build a toy. During the classes, the teacher will often present the task and then the children will be divided into groups to work on the task in a breakout room before returning to the class. Every cycle ends with a presentation of their material to the other class participants and parents are invited to attend. PT2 is impressed with how interactive the classes are and her daughters 'are excited to do the curriculum'. Despite being online, the students have plenty of opportunities to collaborate with each other, for example they often hold debates and have even put on a play.

Although the other children are mostly American, they are from a diverse range of backgrounds and;

it kind of caters to kids who maybe don't fit in a lot of places. I mean, several kids in the school have been bullied or have health problems or transgender. So it's a good mix of kids to kind of get exposed to different people.

It has been interesting for her daughters to meet a variety of different people and they have made friends within the cohort that they meet online for video calls outside of the scheduled classes. PT2 states that the new school has 'radically changed [the] children's well-being'. After a month of attending the new school, her elder daughter,

has come like a hundred 80 degrees. I mean, she comes out of school dancing like she's so happy. You know, she shares everything she's doing in her class with us. Yeah, I mean, she's, you know, she's motivated again. She's excited to talk about things. I mean, versus she was depressed and she didn't wanna do this and didn't know what she wanted to do. And so, I mean, it's like a completely different. And I think it also gave her the other thing it kind of gave her, which we kept trying to impart on her was this perspective about her own life.

Meeting the other children in the class has also helped her to gain a better perspective on and appreciation for her life. Most of the Americans in her cohort have never left the USA and one of them has never left Arkansas her whole life. Previously, her elder daughter had been asking to stop travelling because she wanted to live a normal life. However, she is now grateful for the opportunity she has to visit so many places and to learn so much about global history which is barely taught in the American curriculum. She was surprised to discover how little most of her cohort know about history for example, that Napoleon was a French Emperor and not just a rap artist, and is able to share knowledge that she has learnt through her travels.

PT2 reported that the main thing that she has learnt from their experiences is to be flexible and open-minded in their approach to world schooling. Whenever something is not working, they make changes and find a solution which is satisfactory for everyone. Another change which they have implemented is to slow down. When they first started world schooling, they were moving weekly but now they spend approximately a month in each location as

I no longer feel like a tourist, I don't feel like I need to see everything. I mean obviously, when we first arrived in Europe, we were definitely like that. We were up early, see everything, cram it in, but of course we came from American culture where like we had never had anything longer than a two-week vacation. We had our first three-week holiday and it was like, 'this is crazy' [laughs] ... it was like a totally foreign concept to us, and now, we're kind of travelling to just enjoy the travel and see the things that we're most interested in in the area

They have also found that this allows them time to focus on school while reducing the 'chaos of moving day'.

Financially, the family have prepared for world schooling. As PT2's husband worked in the military for over twenty years, he is eligible to receive 50% of his salary as a pension for the rest of his life. Although the family could live off the pension if necessary, they also have substantial savings which allows them to maintain their lifestyle without being too strict financially. They keep records of their budget every month to make sure that they stay within their allocated budget and make adjustments, for example eating out less, if necessary. As they have a car and pets, they usually stay in less central accommodation which is

cheaper and as they have slowed down their travelling, they often get a monthly discount.

4.3 Participant 3 (PT3)

PT3 is an American citizen married to an American immigrant and they have two children. I had two one-hour meetings with PT3. For the first meeting, he was in Malaysia and for the second, he was in Thailand. At that point, he and his family had been world schooling full-time for four years. He has an undergraduate degree and ran his own profitable business before selling it and embarking on a full-time world schooling journey with the whole family in 2019. Since starting his world schooling journey, he has had two extended trips backs to the USA. The first was during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the second was because of a death in the family in 2022. He is still world schooling and travelling full-time.

PT3 was brought up by a single mother who was often busy working. He enjoyed his time at school but did not focus on academics and was not a strong student. The family did not have much money which limited his further education options, so he joined the Navy as soon as he finished school. During those five years, he saw a lot of the world and left the Navy with an urge to see the rest one day. He also took some college courses during that time and, when he left the Navy, attended University and completed a degree in finance and accounting. Although the military contributed to the cost of the degree, he felt as though he had traded five years of his life for the opportunity and so he took university a lot more seriously than high school. He had a positive experience and enjoyed his time at university.

After graduation, he started working immediately. Unfortunately, his position, working with American employer pensions, did not allow for international travel and his urge to see the rest of the world went unfulfilled for years. He started his own small business which was financially very successful but occupied a lot of his time. He would often not see his children for days, despite living in the same house. For his tenth anniversary, he went abroad for the first time in many years and thoroughly enjoyed his time. During that holiday, he and his wife had time to reflect and realised that they were not living the life that they wanted

despite being financially stable, successful and, to outside appearances, were living the American dream. Like PT1, they ‘felt trapped in a rat race’. A year earlier, he had received an offer to buy his business. However, he had rejected it because he thought that he was too young. After further consideration, he decided that his priority was spending more time with his family and so he sold his business and started his world schooling journey in 2019. His children were 7 and 8 at the time.

When the pandemic broke out in early 2020, they were in Bali and initially planned to stay there for the duration of the lockdown. However, by June 2020, they realised that the pandemic was going to last longer than they had expected and so decided to go back to the USA. They bought a house and a campervan in the USA and continued travelling part-time on the American continent for the next year. At first, he enrolled his children into the online school which the local district had started but found it to be an unsatisfactory educational experience. As the move to online schooling had happened so quickly, PT3 felt that educators had not had adequate time to make the transition smoothly and were poorly prepared. PT3 listened in to a few classes and found it chaotic, especially at the beginning, with large portions of the class time being spent in organisation. As a result, PT3 decided to return to homeschooling as they had previously been doing.

For PT3, there are two overarching skills which he believes are essential for his children to acquire. The first is the ability to be in control of their learning and be able to learn independently because

I don't know that any of us know what to prepare for in this kind of unknown period. So I think just learning how to learn, which I know that's a really broad thing to say. But I think I do think it's important.

Much research supports that idea that metacognition, the ability to understand and take control of one's own learning, empowers individuals to adapt to an unknown future in a constantly changing world (An, Ye & Liu, 2024; Lansdell & Kording, 2019). The second skill is self-discipline as PT3 believes that self-disciplined people can achieve whatever they want and he knows that he will not always be around to motivate them. In his experience, successful, happy people all possess this skill which has been the underlying prerequisite to their

happiness and success. He believes that the best way to achieve that is by setting a positive example in various aspects of life.

I still learn myself... I'm retired but I never want to stop learning, stop getting better. I'm really into fitness. We're into nutrition in the family. We hope you know, kind of instill that by example, I suppose. I get on my soapbox a lot. I'm not sure how effective that's going to be, but you know, I talk about self-discipline and I talk about a lot of the challenges that I faced in life and You know, we have family members and friends who kind of give us examples of what not having self discipline can look like. So we talk about those things.

PT3 and his wife both actively share the homeschooling responsibility. As a former accountant, he is very keen on mathematics as it develops logical thinking and problem-solving skills in addition to being a key skill for many careers. He also teaches them English, while his wife teaches them her native language and arts. As a family, they are 'trying to become fluent in Spanish'. He also covers American history and social studies so that his children could easily re-enter the American school system if that were ever necessary. Other than that, PT3 tries to give the children as much freedom as possible to choose what they would like to learn but admits that he struggles with that. He likes to maintain some form of structure with content and guide them as much as possible to ensure that they are continuously making progress.

I'd say it's a compromise ... I do want to move them forward. I mean, we're coming into a really weird, weird might not be the right word the world's changing fast and I really want them to be prepared for whatever it is to come because I think those who aren't prepared are gonna have a rough go of it in the next couple decades.

The internet is a valuable resource for the family and, at the time of our first interview, his daughter was participating in a debate class and a law class on Outschool (<https://outschool.com/>). This website is a virtual American marketplace consisting of a wide variety of online classes and courses for children. She chose both of those courses and, as PT3 felt like they had 'some opportunity for growth', he supported her choice. His son, who is younger, currently prefers video games to studying so PT3 tries to guide him and collaborate with him in choosing what to learn. Besides Outschool, they also use Khan Academy and YouTube as online educational resources. PT3 describes

himself as 'a bit militant' due to his military background and as such, he tends to make the final decision on what the children study virtually. He adds that an additional challenge with homeschooling is that it adds a different dynamic to the parent-child relationship and he sometimes finds it difficult to separate to roles of teacher and father.

Although PT3 monitors their homeschooling content, they do not follow any timetable and scheduling study is

fairly random ... I don't know that there's a ton of rhyme or reason to when we pick, but we try to just do a nice balance of having fun and you know, on days we're not out having fun we try to do the, put the work in.

As such, he is not too concerned if they don't study for a few days at a time. On the day scheduled for our second meeting, they spent five hours at a fun place they found for lunch, didn't do much schoolwork and PT3 forgot our meeting. Consequently, it was decided that the following day would be a full school day and our second meeting would take place at lunchtime. That morning his daughter did an algebra test and his son, some biology and reading. Then together, they did an hour of Italian in preparation for an upcoming trip to Italy.

PT3 and the family learn the basics of the language of each country they visit although he has been shocked at how easy it is to manage with just English. His wife is trilingual and speaks English and Russian as well as her native language. The family are also attempting to learn Spanish as he believes that, apart from Asia, they can travel easily with English, Spanish and Russian. PT3 used to think that it was very important to learn other languages. He has always been in awe of people who are multilingual and wanted his children to be bi- or even trilingual like his wife. However, with the rapid advancement of technology, he is now unsure as to the importance of learning languages. Despite this, they continue learning languages as 'learning is exercise for the brain'. If technology advances to the stage where this skill is redundant, then at least they have exercised their brains in the process and, as mentioned earlier, he believes that that in itself is beneficial.

PT3 finds that the world-schooling lifestyle offers ‘a lot of opportunity to learn so many things outside [school] books’ and prefers to focus their attention on those. When they arrive in a new location, one of his favourite activities is

just going to a market ... and telling the kids you got I'll give you 5 bucks I'll give you 10 bucks whatever it is well immediately they've got to figure out how many ringget how many bhat how many dinar you know that's gonna get them, they need to really start thinking about, you know, what are these different foods that they're seeing in this new country at a market? So that's one of my favorite learning experiences in each place. Is just going to several different markets. Have them thinking about currencies and exchange rates

For PT3, the benefit of this type of activity is that it ‘they don’t even know they’re learning ... it just kind of comes pretty naturally’.

They also engage in more traditional tourism activities such as visiting museums and seeing the local sights. World-schooling allows them ‘to lay hands on the history class, to see the pyramids, to see the Louvre’. For PT3, seeing these things in person rather than reading or watching videos is one of the wonderful opportunities of the world schooling lifestyle. Before going to a new place PT3 sometimes prepares but not always as he likes to try keep the sightseeing trips as natural as possible. Preparation can take various forms such as watching a video together as a family or writing a summary. As the children have gotten older, participating in preparation and research is not always as successful with them as it used to be. Sometimes it gets them excited with anticipation but at other times, it has made the sight or tour less enjoyable. His ideal scenario is to use a local guide as he believes that they can best explain the culture and sights of their own country. However, finding a guide that is good with children is a challenge. On some occasions, it is more enjoyable and less academic to just walk around a place and absorb it all in without any prior research or preparation. Occasionally, PT3 researches by himself so that he can answer the children’s questions and share information. After world schooling for so many years, they have tried many different approaches to learning and prefer to continue using a wide variety of learning approaches.

As mentioned above, PT3 started world schooling in order to spend more time with his family and see more of the world. Since then, he has developed a strong

desire to continue world schooling and not return to the USA for a variety of reasons. One of the main reasons is the ‘weird culture that’s going on in the US’, particularly in schools; for example, not long before our first interview, one of the deadliest school shootings occurred very close to his house in the USA. He recognizes that his perspective is

probably tainted because much of what I see is on the media and the media tends to portray everything in as worse light as possible. But just the polarization of everything. Everything’s black and white when in reality everything is gray, you know, so there’s just a lot of hate, you know, whether it’s political party versus this political party, this race versus that race. It’s just everything is polarized.

Neither PT3 nor his family are patriotic about being American and rather, like PT1, ‘I feel like we’re from Earth’.

For the first few years of world schooling, the children would often ask about the USA and when they would next be returning. However, this changed in 2023 after a 6 month stay in the USA with family. The children were very excited to return, thinking that they would be able to spend a lot of time with their friends and cousins. In reality, everyone was busy with their daily lives and they only managed to see the various friends and cousins at most twice a month. Since this experience, the children have stopped asking about their next USA visit and PT3 has been making more of an effort to connect with other world schoolers via social media groups. As a result, they have started connecting, and making friends with, other world-schoolers which has had a positive effect on the children.

According to PT3, world schooling offers ample opportunity to learn social and emotional skills naturally. He posits that, in this respect, world schooling is teaching him more than the children. However, forming and maintaining social interactions are a challenge due to the itinerant nature of the world schooling lifestyle. PT3 has been actively using Facebook groups to connect with other world schoolers as well as connecting with other families in the area. In addition to the social aspect, connecting with other world schoolers provides the opportunity to discuss different approaches to world schooling and learn from each other. During their world schooling journey they have developed good friendships but these require effort to maintain and reconnect. These challenges

though are balanced out by the possibility to interact with different people, cultures and religions which they would never have met had they stayed in the USA. Even though the USA is relatively diverse, world schooling provides the possibility to immerse oneself in another culture and gain a better understanding of it. PT3 believes that is the greatest opportunity that world schooling has given them. As a result, he believes that the children receive a much broader, and according to PT3, better social and emotional education than children in American state schools do.

PT3 believes that 'there is a problem with hate in some of our developed Western nations' and this is why world schooling provides a better social and emotional education than state schools in the USA. He wants his children to experience the world for themselves and doesn't

want to put any of my preconceived notions into my kids heads and I want them just to go and put their feelers out into the world and make their own decisions.

As an ex-military parent, he finds this aspect of world schooling challenging but, because of the potential benefits, he works hard to step back and allow this to happen naturally. He feels that the wide variety of people his children meet is a fundamental part of their education as it allows them to understand the world better. According to PT3, many Americans rarely, if ever, travel outside the USA, have a very restricted view of the world and do not appreciate what they have. However, for PT3 and his family,

seeing how so many other people live I think really gives us an appreciation for some of those things that we take for granted. So it can be beneficial in a lot of ways. I really liked my kids seeing... how fortunate we are you know, that they see the rest of the world and they know that we really are lucky.

As a result, he believes that his children are very carefree, open and non-judgemental. He often receives compliments that his children are well-behaved and are well-adjusted. Although PT3 loves that his children are like that, he worries that this attitude would make adjusting to life back in the USA difficult. When in the USA, his son is very open and is unaware of;

all the things that we're not supposed to say, And I think that's wonderful ... he's just so carefree he can walk up to anybody and start talking to them. He doesn't care if they're in full hijab, if they're green, purple, yellow. That might get him into trouble in the US. I remember being at my best friend's house, watching a football game and my son was like, hey, why are there so many more black people than white people on the football team? Merely observation and my best friend's son is like 'that's racist' and it turned into this whole thing and my son was so confused. He's like, I don't even understand what's going on dad. I'm like, yeah, it's a weird culture.

While PT3 thinks that 'it's really sweet that he doesn't think that way at all', he is unsure if he should make his children more aware of these issues. Compared to children attending a bricks and mortar school, PT3 sees more childish innocence and naivety in his children and loves that about them.

My 12-year-old daughter loves to crochet, still plays with Legos. She's still a child and I love that.

However, she is also comfortable participating in a conversation with adults in which she is often assumed to be older than she is. As a result, PT3 is concerned about how she would adapt to life in an American public school as she is culturally very different from a typical American 12-year old.

I'd be scared to death to drop her in a public school in America right now. I'm not, I won't do it, but like if my hand was forced and that were to happen I would be scared to death.

However, for social reasons, attending a bricks and mortar school is a realistic possibility in the next couple of years. PT3 is aware that while he has been focused on giving his children everything that he didn't have, he has

overlooked some of the things that I did have ... my basketball buddies, ... guys in the military like I formed long-standing relationships with, people I spent a lot of time with

His daughter has also been asking about school more regularly and, as she is now high school age, PT3 feels that it is time for him and his wife to step back from teaching and give their daughter the opportunity to broaden her education. Additionally, as mentioned previously, PT3 finds that being his children's teacher can change the dynamic of his relationship.

It is hard. I'm always on and I'm always dad, coach, teacher. And I think that puts a different kind of strain on a parent child relationship. I don't know if strain is the right word, a different dynamic

Although the pedagogical challenge of homeschooling has been researched (Lois, 2006, 2009, 2013), the emotional challenge of teaching one's own children has rarely been addressed (Lois, 2006). Homeschooling parents, even those who are certified educators, have also experienced similar challenges as they are emotionally connected to their 'students' (Lois, 2006). As a result, PT3 and his wife were currently researching a school for their daughter to attend at the time of our second meeting.

For a long time, PT3 was adamant that his children should attend a public school in the USA as he believed that 'public school had an edge, a kind of real-world education that private school lacks'. He thought that private schools were less inclusive and have a narrow view of the world whereas public schools contain a more diverse student body which is more representative of real life and, as such, better preparation for the real world. Academically, he acknowledges that private schools are generally better than public schools. However, PT3 believes that one's achievements are directly related to one's efforts so he was hoping that his children would put in the effort and reap the rewards. Additionally, there is a financial consideration. Previously, PT3 never saw the value of private schools although he is now willing to reconsider that aspect. Upon further reflection, he has realised that he was never particularly adamant about it being in the USA but had simply stated that due to its familiarity and it being their home base before they set off on their world schooling journey. His main concern was that his children attend a public school as he had had a positive experience in the American public school system and he wanted his children to experience the same. However, he is aware that there have been a lot of changes in American public schools and his children would probably not have the same experience as he did.

PT3 has found that as they travel for longer, they are staying in each place for longer. During their first year of world schooling, they were changing location every few days. As the principal planner in the family, he found this very tiring as it required a lot of logistical planning for transport, accommodation and visas.

As a result, he was constantly asking for help and it caused some arguments within the family. After approximately six months, they discussed this and all agreed that they would like to slow down and stay in places for more than a few days. A few months later, the COVID-19 pandemic forced them to slow down even more and stay in one place for a few months. The children enjoyed settling down and the family realised that staying for a month or two in a place is much better for them. Since then, they have considered staying more than a couple of months but visa guidelines do not always allow that. This was the case during our second interview for which PT3 was in Thailand. The family entered Thailand on a 30-day visa, had already gotten a 30-day extension and then had to leave when that expired. This decision to slow down has greatly helped reduce the amount of planning fatigue.

In addition to the logistical challenge of a travelling lifestyle and the previously mentioned challenge of adopting different roles such as teacher and parent within the family unit, PT3 states that the biggest challenge is probably being away from family. One of his parents passed away a little unexpectedly during their world schooling journey and they hadn't seen each other for 6 months. Even though they did not live near each other in the USA, they did manage to see each other every one or two months when they were permanently resident there. Conversely, constantly being with his immediate family can occasionally be a challenge, particularly if someone is having a bad day although, overall, that has not really been an issue. As we were discussing this, PT3's son interrupted our conversation to add that he would prefer having some other people around more regularly. PT3 stated that when the children were younger, they would easily make friends everywhere. However, that has proven to be a little more difficult as the children have gotten older although he was not sure if that was due to the children's ages or the fact that they, as a family, have not met as many friends recently as they usually do, particularly those with older children.

Financially, the family manage by living off savings and investments. During his working life, PT3 saved well and carefully invested. The sale of his business provided him with a sizeable amount of capital to reinvest. As a result, he

currently owns property and a stock portfolio which, thus far, is providing enough income to fund their travels.

4.4 Participant 4 (PT4)

PT4 is an English citizen married to an Englishman. They have two children. I had four meetings over the course of twelve months with PT4. She was in India for the first 40-minute meeting, then Malaysia for a 1-hour twenty-minute meeting, Cambodia for a 2-hour meeting and England for a 1-hour meeting. She has always world schooled her children part-time and started world schooling full-time fifteen months before our first meeting.

PT4 grew up in the Middle East. She attended an International primary school and then moved to the UK to attend secondary school. Travel has always been a part of her lifestyle. Growing up, she had opportunities to live, travel, and study abroad. At university, she and her now-husband took advantage of exchange programmes and research projects that took them overseas. After completing an undergraduate and master's degree, PT4 went full-time travelling for a year with her husband. During that time, one of her former professors offered her the opportunity to do a university-funded PhD so she returned to the UK. She started working on the PhD interspersed with a research career before having children.

PT4 and her husband question the value and benefit of their education and her research career. They have progressed through the English education system, obtaining undergraduate and master's degrees and PT4 attempted a PhD. However, she 'spectacularly failed' the PhD several times due to internal departmental politics which led to her being moved between 4 different supervisors and eventually exhausting all extension possibilities. Once she got pregnant, she reported, her professors lost interest in her research projects. Shortly after this, strict research grant regulations and restrictions were implemented due to Brexit, which made obtaining funding highly competitive and ultimately led to the gradual dismissal of the university research team. As she did not yet have her PhD, she was no longer able to get research contracts. She 'ticked every box ... [and] did everything right as far as the UK education system is concerned', and as a result, she has 'produced 3 PhDs that nobody read and started a research career that got interrupted by having kids.' She

cannot return to her field of engineering research because ‘the industry moves on so fast’ and it is based on obtaining research grants and funding which generally requires a PhD. As a result, she has often reflected on the effectiveness of the English education system.

However, she is still interested in her research project and has considered ways of locating a supportive supervisor and potentially obtaining the funding as, at the time of our second interview, she was travelling in the countries in which she had originally planned to carry out her field work. However, she is frustrated at the bureaucracy involved as her motivation has never been ‘just to tick off a qualification’ but rather, the knowledge and value of the research. During her research career, she volunteered at an engineering charity as head of their education department. The goal was ‘to get a more global dimension into engineering education at an undergraduate level’ as, PT4 finds that UK undergraduate engineering degrees are ‘incredibly formulaic’, equipping students with decontextualised engineering knowledge and formulas but no understanding of how to ‘apply it to the real world and real global issues’. As part of her work, she visited different universities to encourage them to participate in design competitions and international collaborations with NGOs. She received a lot of support from the academic staff at the various universities who also agreed that the degrees did not adequately equip students with the practical skills necessary to apply the taught engineering theory in the real world. Many of them wanted to collaborate further and potentially redesign some of their teaching modules. However, at job interviews these days she is always asked for the completed PhD and sometimes, if she is planning to have more children. This focus on having the PhD and her children has led her to wonder if her education has been of any benefit besides progression to the next stage of education.

PT4 and her husband reflected on their education and decided that school was beneficial until they stopped enjoying it, which happened at approximately 12 years old when they started high school and ‘our interests kind of got put to the wayside in favour of, you know, you gotta tick these boxes’, At this point, PT4 started questioning what she was being taught and also noticed that many of the teachers did not enjoy teaching. The only subjects which she enjoyed were

those which were ‘devalued by the school’ such as Design Technology as those teachers ‘genuinely cared’ and were not under any pressure to get high grades. Instead of blindly following the curriculum, they asked the students what they were learning in other subjects and made links across the curriculum, highlighting real-world applications of the skills that they were learning.

Both PT4 and her husband engaged in multiple activities outside school which were based on their own interests but were never valued or quantified. For example, while studying French and German at school, PT4 chose to study Arabic and Chinese by herself as she is interested in those languages and cultures. Ultimately, these have proven to be more useful languages to have as her personal interests means that she has often found herself in situations and locations which require those languages. Also, she enjoyed reading a lot and read extensively around the curriculum. She believes that these activities gave her ‘a better world view and perspective on what [she] was being taught’. As a result, she trusts and values her children’s interests and wants them to enjoy learning, remain curious and encourages them to follow what they are interested in. She would like them to continuously be exposed to new things, discover what they are interested in and decide how they are going to explore it. For this reason, she tries to cultivate an enjoyable learning culture at home in which the whole family enjoys learning, either together or alone. PT4 finds

that a lot of the things that we do are reinforced if we kind of bring games into it. So we travel with quite a lot of different sort of card games and board games.

Her daughter ‘absorbs things, and her mental, numerical literacy is so much stronger if she’s playing games’. Board and card games have been shown to have various educational benefits (Noda, Shiotsuki & Nakao, 2019). She encourages the children to clearly state what they would like to learn about and to learn from each other and from where they are because, reflecting on their own educational experience, these are the experiences that PT4 and her husband value.

Before they set off on their full-time world schooling journey, her daughter attended a local forest nursery school part-time in the UK. When she was 5, PT4 registered her with a UK state primary school. However, the forest school

decided that they would open a new group for UK Key Stage 1 children aged 5-7 and so PT4 decided to keep her daughter there as;

she absolutely thrived being in such an open space, being able to explore and ask questions, join in with activities and it's all on her terms. You know it was a lovely big open space, she loved being outdoors.

Several months later, the COVID-19 pandemic started and, as the forest school was able to continue operating, her daughter stayed there and was also joined by her younger brother. The forest school was not registered as an official school so attendance was optional. During that period, PT4 and her family would regularly travel within the UK and Europe. For her, travelling has never been about having a list of sights to see and things to do but rather the experience of being in a different place, getting to know the area well and exploring from there. In the UK, they lived in a small town which had easy access to cities and countryside and so they explored regularly when her children were very young. As the children got older, they started going on longer, more spontaneous trips while incrementally trying new things. PT4 always made sure that there was some constant element in the trip, for example, in Europe they would choose one location in which to rent accommodation for a month, hire a car and explore the local area. This helped the children to have a home base and feel settled.

Her daughter finished at the forest school when she was 7 which coincided with the end of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Although PT4 had previously been applying for state schools for her daughter, she had since decided against that. One of the reasons was that;

I think she would have struggled with a lot of elements of uk schooling, but I think she would have put her head down and got on with it. But certainly I, my husband and I, have our issues with the UK education system. I think my husband and I would have struggled in some ways more than probably our kids would, in terms of accepting what they had to do.

However,

I try hard to not let my educational experience kind of get in the way of the kids, because I've got a lot of complaints about mine in many ways.

Another reason for deciding against state school was that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, certain advantages of homeschooling started to be highlighted in mainstream media. These benefits included children having more time to ask questions and the ability to go at their pace. PT4 was interested and investigated the topic deeper. She was interested in a TED talk by Ken Robinson entitled 'Do schools kill creativity?'

(https://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_do_schools_kill_creativity) and decided to read his book 'Creative schools'. In it, he discussed the results of a survey investigating which criteria the biggest companies in the USA would like to see in future graduates. Instead of educational achievements, the criteria was a list of more personal attributes such as global awareness, adaptability, and creativity. This gave her some reassurance that educational achievements were not the most important skills that her children needed. She keeps a copy of the criteria with her and,

can see the foundations naturally of those, sort of building up in our kids and that's not you know through anything that [her husband] and I have really cultivated per se ... certainly I could step back and appreciate and think, yeah, actually the foundations are there for them to be adaptable and to, yeah, explore their interests.

As her daughter was not in school and her husband had just finished a work contract, they decided to start preparing for full-time world schooling. They set off approximately 5 months later in February 2022 when her children were 5 and 8. PT4 and her husband had always had the idea of travelling full-time as a family for an extended period of time but had assumed that that would happen when the children were high school age as they had previously thought that young children would not appreciate, remember or benefit from the experience. Additionally, they both enjoyed their time at primary school and so had considered sending their children to primary school and taking them travelling during their high school years which were less enjoyable. However, after completing some shorter trips with the children, they soon realised;

just how much benefit they get in a very different way. The kids absorb information and absorb cultures more than in a more adult way. We found that actually they were getting a whole series of other benefits.

The family set off on their world schooling journey with the idea that this was now their permanent lifestyle until they, as a family, started to feel that it was not working anymore and something needed to change. At that point, they would decide what changes they wanted and incrementally implement them as they continued world schooling. However, they had no intention of returning to the UK. They had no clear plan or expectations and were open to different possibilities such as potential job opportunities, staying longer in a place that they were particularly drawn to or even establishing a base so that the children could enrol in various activity groups or a local school.

PT4 describes her educational approach as ‘unschooling, but we have certain expectations in terms of from the travel perspective’, such as learning a foreign language. Both her husband and her are disappointed with their language learning experience within the English school system as, between them they have ‘5 language GCSEs but can’t put a sentence together in any of them’. As they spent most of their first year of world schooling in the Middle East, and PT4 has some Arabic from her childhood, they chose Arabic as a language that they could learn together as a family and had classes with an online tutor. Additionally, before going to a new country,

We do try and make sure that they get a bit of a sense of the history of each country that we go to. In terms of just, you know, basic day-to-day cultural respect, learn the absolute basics of please, thank you, hello, goodbye ... in the language of wherever we're going. And yeah, just a bit of an appreciation ... it's a bit of a balance sometimes depending on where we've been. I mean obviously Cambodia at the moment there's a lot of history and kid friendly stuff out there on Angkor Wat. But obviously, Pol pot and the genocide and so on is a, a factor and feature here and it's something that we kind of want kids to be aware of but certainly only aware of up to what we think that they can individually handle but a balance of them knowing it and being aware of it and understanding it as we come across it, but that isn't the entire what the country that they're in should be defined by.

PT4 feels that it is important to find a balance between raising a national citizen and a global citizen. As British citizens travelling in countries such as India, Jordan and Egypt, PT4 wants her children to know about the history of the United Kingdom in relation to the countries they visit. The colonisation of Africa and Asia has been a repeated theme during their travels as encountering those countries versions of British history has been unavoidable. When possible, she

takes the opportunity to discuss what the differences may be in how these ‘global shared histories’ are represented from the different perspectives involved. They experienced this first-hand as they were in Jordan at the time of the death of Queen Elizabeth and it was interesting to see how the Jordanians, as a former British protectorate, acknowledged it. To get the British reaction to the Queen’s passing, the family watched Blue Peter. The family watch Blue Peter weekly as it covers current events in a child-friendly manner as well as pop culture such as musical artists. Often, the children will be interested in something that they have seen on Blue Peter and chose to learn more about it, for example, Red Nose Day and the Woman’s Football World Cup.

Aside from these educational expectations based on their travels, PT4 does not follow any organised curriculum with her children. However, she does occasionally check the English curriculum to ensure that her children are generally on track. Her daughter has participated in a couple of online classes which she chose by herself. For example, she chose a Harry Potter book club that she was interested in and also a creative writing class that some of her other world schooling friends were participating in. If PT4 finds an interesting online programme, particularly one which involves learning through games, then she suggests it to the children but does not insist on any particular lessons. She also respects her children’s decisions to stop following any course or activity. In addition to that, the children read and play games a lot, which is how they develop their numerical literacy and English. During our first meeting, PT4 mentioned that the children had been asking to travel at a slower pace so that they can attend some interest-based online classes more regularly. By the time of our second meeting a month later, they had adjusted their travelling schedule to spend approximately 3 weeks in each place and the children had both signed up for some online classes. Due to their world schooling lifestyle, certain activities such as regular music or sports practice are not easily accessible although this is ‘balanced out by the things they are able to do and try and explore’. For example, her daughter enjoys art and has been able to study with a local artist in Siwa, Egypt as well as making jewellery, pottery, batik and silk paintings in Yogyakarta.

During their travels, the family have participated in two Workaway (<https://www.workaway.info/>) programmes. Workaway is an online platform which, for an annual fee, allows members to access volunteer opportunities, both skilled and unskilled. In return for an agreed amount of time working, the host provides accommodation and food. Although primarily targeted at adults, the website does have a few opportunities for families. PT4 selected programmes which accepted families and were based on her professional background. The first programme was in a very small town in Jordan. For a month, they worked at a small NGO which was concerned with sustainable energy farming practices. PT4 helped them write funding proposals in English while the rest of the family worked at the on-site café. The second programme was on a Malaysian island and researches and explores sustainable building techniques using bamboo. These opportunities allowed the family to experience different places in a new and interesting way and they would do it again if a suitable opportunity arose.

After ten months of travelling, they decided to attend a world schooling hub in Luxor, Egypt for a sense of community and social interaction for their first Christmas away from home. They chose this hub as they thought that it would be an interesting way to spend time in a typically very touristy area and the cost and timing worked well for them. It took a relaxed approach to education and also offered the opportunity to slow down for a while. The hub was based just outside the city in a rural location which allowed them to stay away from the main tourist areas but also visit the attractions. As they were a group, the children were able to relax, play and explore the sights together and the ‘adults could appreciate it on their own levels’. The children made some friends there who they have maintained friendships with and subsequently made arrangements to meet again in another country. The whole family enjoyed the experience with a good balance of activities, social interaction and education. They would attend another hub if it was organised in a similar manner and the location, cost and timing were convenient.

PT4 uses Facebook world schooling groups to try and organise meetings with other world schoolers. They organised their first meet-up with another family in Albania who had similar aged children. PT4’s daughter immediately became

good friends with the other family's daughter and so they met up again shortly afterwards. During their second meeting, PT4 mentioned that they were going to the Luxor world schooling hub and so the other family decided to join them in Luxor, after which both families travelled together for approximately a month. They also met another family in Luxor who they subsequently met up with once and, at the time of our third meeting, were attempting to meet again. In PT4's experience, coordinating meeting up with other world schooling families has, in many ways, been easier than with people back in the UK. She, and other world schooling friends of hers, have noticed that world schoolers tend to be more flexible and willing to work around plans whereas people settled in the UK usually have a fixed routine which they need consider.

At the time of our third meeting, they had not managed to successfully organise any meetings for a few months but overall, the family was fine with that. As her children were only 2 and 6 when the COVID-19 pandemic started, they were not accustomed to having regular meetups with friends and family and were still happy to spend time with their parents. According to PT4, her husband was missing socialisation more than the children as he had been used to working with a team of adults in the UK and so had undergone the largest change of all socially. Her son, who was 6 at the time of our third meeting, was still able to make friends anywhere irrespective of language barriers and had made multiple friends during their travels who he stayed in touch with. Her daughter, however, who was 10 by then, was beginning to find it more difficult to make friends with local children who did not speak English and was feeling a little lonely occasionally.

To combat this, PT4 set up various WhatsApp groups on her phone connecting her daughter with her friends in the UK and those that she had met while world schooling. Each evening, she gives her daughter her phone to read and respond to any messages that she may have. This idea was working well and her daughter was happy to have this contact with friends back in the UK as well as world schooling friends. As well as the WhatsApp groups, PT4 regularly organises video calls with friends and family members and informs her world schooling friends of any online classes which her daughter will join to see if they would like to participate also. Approximately two weeks after our third meeting, PT4's

parents were meeting them in Thailand. Since setting off for full-time world schooling, her parents had visited them approximately every 6 months. Although unexpected, this has been a wonderful experience for the children. In the UK, PT4 did not live close to her family and did not see them frequently, so in this way, they have maintained their face-to-face contact. PT4 is aware that 'quality regular time with peers of their choice' is one of the things which her children are potentially missing out on due to their lifestyle although she believes that this is 'balanced out by the people they are able to meet'.

PT4 states that they haven't had any major challenges and credits that to their 'laid back' approach to world schooling.

I think they, my daughter certainly, appreciates that she just wouldn't have that freedom to choose what her weeks look like in the UK where she would be expected to just slot into a more structured routine

Like PT1, PT4's biggest challenge has been 'being together 24/7'. After our first meeting, she stated that it was 'a nice break' and after the second, 'this is the most peace I've had since the last time we met'. It is particularly challenging when physical space is limited for example, when they are all sharing a hotel room. She states that her family members are all now aware of each other's boundaries and if someone needs space, then they 'find it in one way, shape or form' and the others all respect that. She jokes that spending so much time together is both the best and the worst thing about world schooling.

But I think it just comes down to adaptability. We're not going to look back in 10, 15 years' time and regret having spent this time together.

Before leaving the UK, the family sold most of their belongings and rented out their house. The rental income was covering approximately half of their expenditure during their travels and the rest was from savings. At the point which they decided to start their world schooling journey, PT4 had not worked for a few years and her husband had just finished a contract. Although they knew this is not a financially sustainable way to travel, they decided to fund it this way for a couple of years while they reassessed what they wanted to do workwise and considered what they wanted to do long term. By the time of our third meeting, they were considering going back to the UK for a year to work

and travel within the UK and Europe. They were also considering buying a second property in the UK so that they increase their income through rentals with the aim being that the next time they decided to set off world schooling full-time, finances would not be a limiting factor. All of the family members like the idea of having a UK base for a while and changing their mode of travel. The children were keen to stay in a smaller town with an active home education community and showed no interest in entering mainstream school. This was partially due to its negative portrayal in literature and media but mostly a result of negative feedback from UK family and friends. Speaking to parents of children who attended the forest school with her daughter, PT4 found that ‘there was an inevitability that their kids weren’t going to like school’ but they hadn’t questioned the process.

For our fourth meeting in May 2024, the family were back in the UK. PT4 was homeschooling her children and they were taking the opportunity to explore the UK. The children are ‘soaking up the physical comforts of being back’ and enjoy having more physical space.

4.5 Participant 5 (PT5)

PT5 is an American citizen who was previously married to a Mexican man. I had two ninety-minute meetings with PT5, two months apart. She was in Mexico for both meetings. She has two master’s degrees and has spent much of her adult life working abroad as a TEFL teacher. She has one child who was born abroad and has lived outside the USA and world schooled for the majority of her life. She actively shares many aspects of her world schooling life on social media where I have followed her since our initial contact.

PT5 grew up in a small American town and attended the same elementary and middle school, followed by four years of high school. She left feeling ‘utterly lost and uninspired’ and so decided

I want something different for my daughter I want her to know that there is way more out there. And I think she already does.

At school, she won a scholarship for social sciences which was one of the few classes which she enjoyed. She was fascinated by different cultures and always

had the desire to travel but was not allowed to. After high school, she went directly to university as that was expected of her and alternatives were not considered. She had no idea what she wanted to study and ideally wanted to take a year out to consider her options but that was also not allowed. As a result, she was extremely unhappy, which led to her initially changing majors before dropping out. She then took a year out to work and think about what she wanted to do. After that, she registered at a different university and graduated with a degree in Cultural Anthropology and Linguistics. PT5 tells many stories of friends who followed alternative paths and now lead more fulfilling lives because they had the time, space and freedom to discover who they are, what they like and what inspires them. As she did not have this time and space, she is determined that her daughter will have this freedom and space to find her own path in life.

After that, she still did not know what she wanted to do and so she got a job as an au pair and moved to Italy for two years. During that time, she became fluent in Italian and also started teaching English. She realised that she really enjoys teaching language and so enrolled for a Master's degree in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) when she returned to the USA. After graduating, she started a second Master's degree in Educational Leadership which included an overseas placement in Portugal. As an adult, PT5 lived in several countries working as a TEFL teacher. As a result of her travels, she is multilingual and greatly values this ability to operate in more than one language. She wants her daughter to grow up bilingual for several reasons. Firstly, as a Mexican-American child, it is an integral part of her heritage. Also, being able to speak both English and Spanish means that her daughter will be able to live, work and travel in many countries around the world. Finally, PT5 believes that 'being bilingual is such a huge asset in today's world and it really does open the mind'.

While working as a language teacher, PT5 has often been disappointed by the hypocrisy of other teachers who did not hold themselves to the same standards that they expect from learners; for example, teachers who criticised her for setting deadlines which were convenient for the students did not return graded assignments in a timely manner. PT5 believes that learners of all ages notice these double standards and, as a result, lose confidence in teachers. This is why,

in addition to assigning work, she firmly believes that it is an educator's responsibility to create a learning environment in which students have some agency and feel comfortable asking questions.

PT5 has many friends and family around the world and plans her trips around visiting them. By doing this, she hopes to demonstrate to her daughter that they are global citizens and not just Americans. Just before our second meeting, PT5 had hosted an old Mexican friend from Saudi Arabia and her Mexican-Saudi daughters in their home in Mexico. They had left Saudi Arabia five years earlier and moved to the USA where the daughters were enrolled in the American state school system. Her friend was hoping that her daughters could see their heritage and use their Spanish. However, the older daughters, who were teenagers by then, were 'uncomfortable. They were out of their comfort zone and they; they were uncomfortable. They were really uncomfortable' and unhappy during their stay even though the two eldest said that in high school 'everyone's depressed. Everybody's vaping. There's like, there's sort of a zombie like there's no inspiration'. They were not interested in exploring the local culture or food, instead choosing to only visit the mall and eat American food. It was during their stay

I said to my daughter. 'This is why we came back to Mexico. This is why I was so adamant about you learning Spanish and being and living in Mexico. Because I did not want you to grow up and reach the teenage years not being fluent in Spanish. And not feeling comfortable or even not liking Mexico.' And she was like, oh, I get it. You know, I totally get it. You know, I said I did not want that because you I want you to you know be fluent in English and fluent in Spanish and feel comfortable in the United States and feel comfortable in Mexico feel like ... this is so different. And she, it just kind of like it all clicked for her. To see an example. Like she couldn't understand why they weren't happy.

She could not understand why these girls, who ethnically are half Mexican, half Saudi Arabian but culturally US Americans, were not interested in their own heritage or functioning in a global world.

Her daughter is a Mexican-American who was born in Saudi Arabia. The family left Saudi Arabia and moved to Mexico before she was a year old. Their priority was that their daughter grew up to 'feel at home in both cultures that are very

distinct' and language was a large part of that. A year later, the family moved to the USA. However, after a few years, their daughter's Spanish level started to decline so they decided to return to Mexico and enrol her in a kindergarten there. They returned to the USA in 2016 to enrol in a Spanish immersion school but, due to changing regulations, her daughter lost her place. Instead, she was offered a place in a reputable English-speaking alternative which had a strong focus on literacy. However, PT5's priority was Spanish. Also, she believes that early-years education should be based more on creativity and play rather than on learning to read and write. She visited a private Spanish school but it was also 'very academically focused' as well as expensive. She decided that she could better use the money to return to Mexico. In addition to not finding a suitable school for her daughter in the USA, she

didn't want her to lose her Spanish so, and then the unfortunate results of the 2016 election in the United States made me go ...I think we'll go back to Mexico for primary school.

As a result, in 2017, she decided to return to Mexico, this time as a single mother. She refers to herself as 'an accidental world schooler' as 'when I went into it I wasn't thinking, oh, world schooling'.

PT5 moved to a small town in Mexico which was completely different from the previous few years in suburban USA and enrolled her then five-year old daughter in a local 'sort of very artsy eco-quasi Montessori school'. At the time, friends and family in the USA questioned her choice and expressed concern that her daughter would fall behind academically. However,

her birthday's in July, so she would have been barely 5 years old, I'm being pressured to learn to read and write, so ... I thought, I don't think it's necessary that she learns to read and write at 5.

Much research supports the notion that delaying formal, structured schooling for a year is beneficial (Dee & Sievertsen, 2015; Jaekel et al., 2015; Marcenaro-Gutierrez & Lopez-Agudo, 2021). However,

I didn't start all this with a with a with a distinct and clear plan. It was kinda like at that moment, I thought, no, she's losing her Spanish.

PT5 states that she occasionally worried about the long-term effects of an unconventional education and even though ‘it’s a little scary, it’s also incredibly liberating’ to step away from the public school system. She acknowledges that education is important but that it can, and will, happen regardless of the route taken. At the time of our first meeting, her daughter was almost 13 and ‘fully bilingual and biliterate’.

After moving back to Mexico, the initial plan was to stay there for the primary school years and then travel around the world for at least six months before potentially returning to the USA for high school. PT5 planned to take a trip around the world travelling visiting family and friends as not only does she have family in Sicily, but she also has friends all over the world as a result of her own international lifestyle. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic forced her to change those plans. As the school was closed, PT5 homeschooled her daughter using Outschool.com. PT5 was very thankful that they were in their small town in Mexico as Americans got ‘so contentious and political’ about the pandemic. She also found the idea of American children being forced to attend online school for a full day ‘absolutely absurd’, from her perspective as both a parent and an educator. It was this experience during the COVID-19 pandemic that cemented PT5’s decision to not return to the USA for high school.

Like PT2 and PT3, PT4 is now adamant that her daughter will not attend a public state school in the USA.

There is some extremism going on. You know, especially in the sociopolitical climate that we have now... .. There's a lot of angst right now ... there's a culture war going on now and it's really being played out of the schools ... the tense atmosphere that's going on in education and public education right now in the US is not a healthy environment

Conservative Christian groups;

are against teaching evolution who are against anything trans or or pride or LGBT. It just the culture. It's like, it's like a civil war. But it's being played out ... The battlefield is schools and you know, shopping centers and places where like, Target [a department store], They had a pride section this month. And there were people going in and thrashing the merchandise ... because people are thinking, oh, the schools are indoctrinating our children to be transgender Or they're

against white people in white culture. And there's crazy stuff going on right now.

As such, certain forms of literature which contain elements of LGBT are being protested against and sometimes banned. Additionally, school shootings are an issue;

That is just insane. That is just insane. And the fact that our politics just can't, just can't remedy that situation is, I think inexcusable.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, they felt 'relatively isolated' in Mexico as, aside from some road trips to the USA, they were at home and unable to maintain the same level of socialisation as before. PT5's daughter was 12 when the pandemic ended and at that point, wanted a stable group of friends her own age. PT5 recognises that this is an important developmental step at this age and, as her daughter is an only child, does not want to deprive her of that. For this reason, they decided to move to the mountains just outside a large Mexican City and found a local school which was not overtly focused on academics and was flexible on attendance. Her daughter started attending the school a year before our first meeting and had attended for most of the year in order to get settled. She had made some good friends and was thriving there. However, PT5 does not want to deprive her of the 'freedom and opportunities for growth that travelling offers' as well as the bonding time that they experience together when they travel. For this reason, the plan was to continue with school but take a few months each year to travel internationally as well as an annual roadschooling trip between Mexico and the USA. They also take shorter trips within Mexico during the school holidays.

Every summer, they go on a two-month road trip together from Mexico to the American Midwest where her daughter attends a residential summer camp in the forest,

for a month on her own, a sleep-away camp, and we road school on our way up there, so we take a different route every time, and we see, like this time we're going to go to San Miguel de Allende and see this crazy artsy house that's called 'Ranchito Cascabel' ... We're gonna visit a friend in Guanajuato, we'll go up and see, like historic or natural sites as we go. Last year we did a US Civil rights tour so we went through places in the South.

PT5 does not stay at the camp so this is an opportunity for her daughter to be independent, but in a safe space. They then return to Mexico for school in September.

The following March, PT5 took her daughter out of school to travel. First, they went to Saudi Arabia so that her daughter could see where she was born and PT5 could visit old friends. They then toured Saudi Arabia before going to Egypt. She went to the same hub in Luxor which PT4 had attended the year before as some of her world schooling friends had also been there the year before and highly recommended it. However, since PT4 and her friends had been there, the founder of the hub had left Egypt due to ill health and the hub 'just fell apart' in her absence. It was dirty, there was a lack of resources and food, activities were not well-planned, and several participants had issues with accommodation. All concerns were 'met with aggression'. PT5 only attended five of the fifteen days which she had signed up for and decided to explore Luxor independently. As a result of this experience, PT5 has decided that she will probably not attend more hubs in the future.

Financially, PT5 uses a variety of means to support her family. She has some family savings and also does some teaching. Also, by basing herself in Mexico and travelling by car rather than airplane, she is able to keep her costs low.

This chapter has presented the participants' stories. In chapter five, distinct elements of the narratives are highlighted and explored using the narratives and current knowledge.

Chapter 5 Discussion

This chapter summarises the key findings from the participants' stories and links them with published literature. The use of the three-dimensional space inquiry approach provided a window into each of the participants' narratives, allowing narrative links across the stories to be identified. With this lens, it is possible to gain an insight into the complexities of motivation, navigation and negotiation of five full-time, experienced world schooler's lifestyles. Distinct elements of the narratives are highlighted and explored using the narratives and current knowledge.

Social constructivism was used to frame the research, with a narrative inquiry methodology utilised to explore the experiences of five participants who were actively world schooling full-time at the time of the study and had been doing so for at least a year. They are all from the Global North, well-educated and in professional careers. They had all studied at university level with PT2, PT4 and PT5, having also studied at postgraduate level. The participants all had international connections beyond and before world schooling: PT1 is an adult immigrant, PT2 moved abroad for a military posting, PT3 travelled extensively with the military and married an immigrant, PT4 was born and attended school abroad and PT5 worked abroad and married a foreigner. All of the participants possessed sufficient material and cultural capital in order to be able to adapt to the world schooling lifestyle both professionally and financially. This demographic corresponds with Molz (2017) and Mancinelli (2008) previous studies (section 2.4).

5.1 Findings

The first overarching finding in the study is that there was no single, essential feature which could be identified as defining what world schooling is. However, although the participants' stories initially appear quite idiosyncratic, they share similar motivations, opportunities and ways of framing and thinking about the world. Each participant has an overriding driver, although they are all different, which is constructed from their own biography and everything else is shaped by that narrative. As such, the term 'world schoolers' describes people who have many similar characteristics but no singular, defining feature and the meaning of

the term ‘world schooling’ arises from the way in which it is used, rather than a fixed definition. For this reason, I used Wittgenstein’s (1953) concept of family resemblance, which states that some of the characteristics of seemingly different cultural objects/discursive practices may indeed be sufficiently shared as to allow for the definition of two things that appear to be different to be classified under the same terms, to frame the findings.

5.1.1 Motivation

In common with previous literature on unschoolers, my participants are all motivated in cultivating intrinsic motivation in their children rather than obtaining high academic grades (Gray & Riley, 2013). Only PT2 mentioned academic goals as she would like her daughters to have the option of attending university in the future if they so choose. Although previous studies on motivations of home schoolers and unschoolers revealed that parents usually had a singular motivation for their choice, these participants all had a concatenation of reinforcing motivations which led them to world schooling. All of the participants shared similar disaffections with the common conception of what is socioculturally and politically considered mainstream, including mainstream schooling.

PT1 felt like her family were in a ‘never-ending loop’, always working hard with few holidays, little time together and always tired. Her eldest son was not happy at school and the family did not have a lot of time together. They really enjoyed their weekends travelling together and, as she believes that happiness is the most important thing in life, she realised that the family needed a change. PT2 felt restricted by holidays in the USA and took the opportunity to move to Europe for her husband’s job on a military base. As they have no other close family, they cut all ties with the USA and have no plans to return. Her daughters did not enjoy attending school on the base but adapted very well to online learning during the COVID lockdown. During that period, most of their friends had left the base as their parents’ contracts had finished. Her husband, who was eligible for Italian citizenship, was nearing retirement so he took a civilian job on the base and applied for his citizenship. Once he received that and received his military pension, they decided to try world schooling. PT3 was busy running a successful business in the USA. He would often not see his children for days,

despite living in the same house. Like PT1, he ‘felt trapped’ and so decided to sell his business so that he could spend more time with his family. He had developed a love of travelling while in the military and wanted to explore the world more, so he sold his business and started world schooling. During the COVID-19 pandemic, PT4 started learning more about the benefits of homeschooling. By the end of the pandemic, her daughter had finished at forest school and her husband had just finished a work contract so instead of looking for work and starting state school, they decided to start world schooling. PT5 was already married to a foreigner and living and working abroad when her daughter was born. Although she returned to the USA and attempted to put her daughter into state school, she was not satisfied with the schools which she was offered and so decided to leave the USA again.

Another finding was that none of the participants initially planned to world school. All the participants’ children had either attended a state-run school for a period of time or, for PT4 and PT5, had applied to start school but never accepted the place although PT5 later enrolled her 12-year-old in a Mexican state-school on a part-time basis for socialisation. This is in contrast to previous literature on alternative education which suggests that most alternative educators do so for ideological reasons (Van Galen, 1988). My research shows that these world schoolers motivations were initially more pragmatic than ideological. However, their motivations became increasingly more ideological over time to the extent that, after at least a year of world schooling, they all held ideological beliefs for world schooling and the four Americans were adamant that they would never send their children to a state school. PT4, the only non-American participant, returned to the UK and allowed her children to decide if they would like to go to school. However, they decided not to as none of their British friends or family were happy in school and instead, saw it as something to be tolerated rather than enjoyed. Although PT1 returned to the USA for school, it was more for the socialisation aspect and sense of community rather than academics. She decided against mainstream schooling and put her children in a private Waldorf school as its creative educational philosophy aligns with her motivations for her children. PT2’s children never really enjoyed school but are thriving and happy world schooling. She believes that they are more mature and have greater knowledge of the world than their peers in state

schools in the USA. Also, due to the gun culture in US schools, she not only refuses to enrol her daughters in a US state school, but she also insists that she has no intention of ever returning to the USA. PT3 started world schooling to have more time with his family and, for the first year, he was adamant that the family would return to the USA and that his children would attend a state school. However, after 4 years world schooling, he decided that world schooling is 'better' as it offered his children a more expansive world view than they would receive in the USA. Although he had a positive experience at school, he is aware that schools are changing and there is now a culture of hate (section 5.1.3). PT5 feels like far too much politics are entering American state schools now (section 5.1.4) and 'there's a lot of angst'. Additionally, as a teacher herself, she started to recognise that there is very little genuine learning which goes on in schools now in addition to an overemphasis on academic grades and testing.

5.1.2 For Love of the World

The participants all mention how restrictive life felt before they started world schooling. PT1 felt like she was perennially working hard and unable to take holidays off when she chose. As a result, she only saw her children for a short period every evening when they were all tired. PT2 also felt restricted by holidays as her job in the USA only allowed 10 vacation days per year. PT3 was so busy working that he rarely saw his children or took holidays. PT4 felt restricted in her research and career. When PT5 tried to enrol her child in school in the USA, she was restricted in her options.

They all also believe that the world is a large place, full of opportunity, possibility and wonder which they embrace and enjoy exploring. As parents, they would like their children to experience this and see the education of their children as 'love of the world' (Arendt, 1958). For Hannah Arendt, love of the world is not sentimental but rather, is about understanding and accepting the world as it is, even when it is deeply flawed. According to Arendt, a Jewish survivor of Nazi Germany, we must become engaged, critical thinking citizens, acknowledge and accept what really happened and reconcile ourselves with the reality of the world. It is a commitment to engage with the world responsibly and critically, care for it, participate in its improvement and not abandon it

even during times of horror and despair. Her ‘love of the world’ is gratitude for the world and all that it contains.

These participants all mention that they would like their children to adopt a more global outlook and increase their cultural awareness. With a strong focus on achievement and individual success, a lot of modern educational practices teach people to possess the world. Even much that superficially passes as love of the world is merely avarice and a disordered appetite to possess it. However, these participants want their children to embrace it, not possess it, and so focus more on connection and cooperation, loving the world and accepting it as it is. For this reason, they all focus on developing them as people, rather than future employees, allowing them space to live their own stories and make meaning within their particular socio-historical contexts. In this manner, they aim to bring learning alive for their children.

These participants are all aware that they did not start world schooling as if it were a “*tabula rasa*”, as they have already experienced their own schooling and possessed a ‘cultural tool-kit’ (Bruner, 1990) consisting of their ‘personal, historical, and socially constructed world-view’ (Olson, 1995, p. 119). As PT3 expressed ‘I certainly don’t want to put any of my preconceived notions into my kids’ heads and I want them just to go and put their feelers out into the world and make their own decisions’.

When PT2’s elder daughter started online school in the time between our second and third meetings she recognised the opportunities that she had and what an expansive view of the world she had developed. Most of her classmates had never left America, and one female, who lived in rural Arkansas, had never left the state. Before joining the online school, PT2’s elder daughter was feeling depressed and ‘wanted a normal life’. However, she realised that her life was filled with wonderful opportunities, she had gained a lot of world knowledge and had a lot to contribute and share. This helped her to discover her own love of the world. PT5’s daughter also experienced a recognition of opportunities just before our second meeting when her mother’s Mexican friend came to visit them, from the USA, with her daughters. Despite being half-Mexican, they showed no interest in exploring the country, learning about their heritage or even trying the local food. Instead, they refused to go out and insisted that they

just wanted to return to the USA. After this experience, PT5's daughter fully recognised and appreciated the opportunities that world schooling had given her and recognised that the world was a big place which she was happy to embrace and explore.

5.1.3 Aggression in the World

Many of the participants express concern about the rising level of aggression in the world. PT3 mentions how 'everything is polarized' in the USA. As a result, 'there's a lot of hate' which is fuelled by the media portraying events in a negative manner. This can be clearly seen in the media's coverage of the recent Gaza-Israel conflict. Selective reporting and emotionally loaded language such as 'terrorist sympathiser', 'anti-Semitic mob' has led to clashes on college campuses and a 'with us or against us' mentality. Similarly, the recent discussions on transgender rights have been framed in a binary manner leading to a rise in hate crimes. According to PT5, there is 'culture war going on and it's being played out in the schools'. Extreme religious groups are protesting against and succeeding in some states, to have textbooks rewritten and particular novels banned to reflect their religious beliefs.

All of the Americans express concern at the gun culture which is present in schools and affects many aspects of school life. PT2 mentions the frequent gun drills and also prank calls claiming that there is a gun in the school which must be taken seriously and forces the school to close. For her, this is 'too traumatising' and the reason why she will never put her children in a US state school.

PT2 also highlights that many of the American children in her daughter's online class are there because they have been bullied at school or 'don't fit in'. These participants would like their children to treat everyone equally without judgement. When on a trip home to the USA, PT3's son described some people as 'black' and was informed by an American friend that that is racist. His son later asked him what racist means and explained that he used the term 'black people' as it was factually correct, and he did not understand what the issue was. In mainstream schooling, language used to describe minorities conflicts with the Arendtian concept of 'love of the world' and its foundation on 'plurality'.

These participants would like to their children to have a more psychologically integrated view of the world. They all believe that individual and cultural differences are important to maintaining a vibrant and democratic political society, a notion that Hannah Arendt termed ‘plurality’. As such, each person is deserving of their rights, dignity and a place in the world. Through world schooling, they aim to foster a more global perspective and acceptance of the world.

According to both Arendt and Nussbaum, the liberal arts are vital for human flourishing as diverse ideas and perspectives are introduced and understood through history, literature, art and philosophy. In turn, this understanding assists in cultivating empathy and tolerance for lives which are different from our own. It also aids in the capacity to embrace plurality. Both Arendt and Nussbaum believe that education should not be limited by that which is considered economically useful. Instead, they believe that education should aim to develop critical thinking skills through the liberal arts as it is in this way that children develop the capacity to responsibly navigate the complexities of an increasingly interconnected and diverse world and participate in political life. However, the current focus on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) and standardized testing has led to a narrowing of the curriculum in schools with increasingly less time allocated to the liberal arts which are studied only as a means of supporting STEM subjects. As a result, the diversity of ideas and perspectives that children are exposed to in school are limited. This narrowing of the curriculum reflects the appetite for possession of the world. These worldschoolers, on the other hand, regard the world as their curriculum and as such, cultivate epistemic pluralism through prolonged engagement with diverse cultures and communities. They view education as the practice of residing responsibly within the complexity of the world and loving it as it is, rather than reducing it to something which can be measured and controlled.

5.1.4 Education is Pre-Political

The participants in this study want to educate their children to not only be in the world but to come to it equipped, free from ideological bias and not constrained by a myopic vision of the world. They want their children to have a happy, rounded childhood and remain children for a while without being

politicized too young. Several theorists such as Arendt, Conroy and Purdy argue that children need time to develop before being exposed to political issues.

However, a lot of contemporary education (both left and right- wing) see education as a site of political contest and schools are being used to promote political agendas (Conroy, 2020) and are now ‘overtly politically activist’ (Conroy, 2025, p.1) A sense of polarization is propagated by creating ‘sharp us/them dichotomies’ (Burbules, 2024, online) in which an individual is either right or wrong. This consolidates group moral superiority and rejects alternative perspectives. Although current schooling curricula include minority perspectives, they are often studied because they are minorities and not because they have educational value (Burbules, 2024; Conroy, 2025).

Throughout her work, Arendt distinguishes between the public, social and private spheres in society. In a healthy democratic society, politics belongs in the public sphere. The private sphere is distinct and separate from public life and is (or, at least, should be) a safe space for family and raising children. In her 1958 essay, ‘The crisis in education’, Arendt argues that children belong in the private sphere until they have matured and are ready for the public sphere. Arendt believes that bringing politics into school could ‘erode the special and essential character’ of the private sphere (Arendt, 1958) which is vital for nurturing and forming identity.

School is a space of transition between the private and public spheres where children are educated to become engaged, critical thinkers before meaningful participation in politics can occur. Education should not be political as it an essential requirement to form the foundations on which political life can later be constructed. As such, education should balance protecting children from the burdens of the world and preparing them to take responsibility for it. The participants in this study preserve this transitional space by guiding their children through the world as a site of learning while avoiding premature political socialisation. Through guided encounters with diverse cultures, communities and perspectives, they cultivate their children’s capacity to develop critical thinking skills without guiding them to particular ideological ideas. As PT3 says,

I don't want to put any of my preconceived notions into my kids heads and I want them just to go and put their feelers out into the world and make their own decisions.

In this way, by fostering the developing of independent thought that is the foundation of democratic engagement, these worldschoolers prepare their children to participate in public life.

5.1.5 Language Learning and Bilingualism

All of the families, except PT4's, have at least one bilingual parent and the families of PT1, PT3, and PT5 have at least one parent whose first language is not English. Although the participants generally let the children choose what they want to learn, all of the participants insist on them learning a language. They all want their children to be bilingual and PT1, PT2 and PT5's children already fluently speak two languages. In addition to learning one language consistently, most of them also learn the basics of whichever country they are visiting. They believe that, in addition to its epistemic benefits, it is world-affirming and will help their children to flourish in the world. It also reflects the consistency with which they approach teaching their children to love the world. Language proficiency is also a tool for enjoying and appreciating the arts. PT2 describes how her older daughter enjoys reading German-language novels in their original form as, in this way, she can recognise some of the original meaning and depth is lost when a text is translated.

Research on language learning and bilingualism has shown a wide variety of benefits relating to cognitive abilities, academic achievement, employability, communicative and intercultural competence, enhanced creativity and health and aging (Fox, Corretjer & Webb, 2019). Despite this, the USA does not have any national policy regarding foreign language learning. Generally, American schools introduce a language in middle school (ages 11-14) and continue for at least two years. Over the last fifty years, the number of students choosing to continue learning a foreign language at high school and college has been decreasing (Wiley & Garcia, 2016). In the UK, many children start learning a language at primary school (ages 5-11). In 2004, learning a foreign language after the age of 14 was made optional (Ofsted, 2021). Since then, the number of students continuing to study a foreign language after the age of 14 has

significantly declined (Ofsted, 2011). In 2013, the European Survey on Language Competencies compared the foreign language skills of 13 to 16-year-olds in 14 different countries and found that overall, England was one of the lowest ranked (Burge et al., 2013). The UK has, by far, the worst language proficiency record in Europe. The USA's language proficiency is even worse than the UK's (Foreign Tongues, 2023, online) due to their hegemonic self-positioning.

Language learning as an aim of education is not directly addressed by Arendt or Nussbaum. However, its importance in cultivating empathy and acceptance of those different from oneself, rather than its economic benefit, is implied in their literature. Within cosmopolitanism, Nussbaum frames language study as a means of cultivating narrative imagination, intercultural understanding, and global citizenship. As such, it can provide learners with the ability to recognize their ethical obligations within a shared humanity. For Arendt and her notion of plurality, language learning has the potential to increase our ability to live in a diverse world. For both, the fundamental value of language education is not concerned with its potential economic benefits but in its contribution to the development of humanity; of individuals capable of meaningful and responsible engagement with cultural difference in an increasingly interconnected world.

At the moment, most formal schooling is focused on individual academic achievement, STEAM and employable skills. While STEM focuses on technical and scientific subjects, STEAM was introduced in 2007 to include the arts and humanities with the aim of enhancing creativity as a needed skill for success in STEM fields. As such, the purpose of the arts is to enhance interest and engage learners with STEM rather than as source of enjoyment. As Perignat & Katz-Buonincontro (2019) highlight, there is a lack of literature on STEAM learning outcomes beyond how it pertains to success in STEM.

5.2 Challenges

Most of the participants commented on how their world schooling lifestyle changed over time as the children got older. All of the families agreed that world schooling was easier when the children were younger as, from approximately ages 12 upwards, the children represented in this study started

requesting school and / or more freedom from their parents. While this is a natural development, it presents a particular challenge to world schooling families as the very nature of their nomadic lifestyle means that not only do they spend more time together than non-travelling families generally do but attending a school in person would require them to stop travelling. Many of the participants mention that being together all the time is very challenging and can be overwhelming. As PT4 said at the end of our third meeting, ‘this is the most peace I’ve had since the last time we met’. For, PT1 ‘being together 24/7’ was her family’s biggest challenge. In order to handle this, the family had to learn how to effectively communicate their feelings and respect others’ opinions. PT4 mentions that this is particularly challenging when physical space is limited for example, when they are all sharing a hotel room. She states that her family members are all now aware of each other’s boundaries and if someone needs space, then they ‘find it in one way, shape or form’ and the others all respect that. She jokes that spending so much time together is both the best and the worst thing about world schooling.

An additional challenge of the nomadic lifestyle is that world schoolers do not have the opportunity to make friends who they meet regularly or participate in particular activities such as regular sports training. World schoolers invest a great deal of energy in creating and finding socialization opportunities and a sense of community for their children. For PT1, this meant returning to the USA and enrolling her children in a private school which aligns with her motivations for her children. PT2 considered various options, including enrolling one or both of her daughters in a school before finding an online school which they were happy with. At the time of our final interview, PT3 was actively looking for a school for his daughter. PT4 often organised a lot of their travel to connect with friends and family. PT5’s daughter started attending school on a flexible basis a few months before we made contact.

World schooling hubs (section 2.4) are a temporary, and often expensive, option for finding community and PT2, PT4 and PT5 have all attended various types of hubs. PT4 and PT5 attended the same hub a year apart. However, while PT4 had a very positive experience, PT5 had an extremely negative experience. PT2 found that the hub was very busy but there were not many children the same

age as her children there. As a result, PT2 doesn't not want to attend any more hubs and PT5 is not as enthusiastic about them as she used to be.

Like all families who opt for alternative education, finances provide a challenge to world schoolers as they do not have access to many free educational resources (Lees, 2014). Although there are some free resources online, they are often not organised or exactly what one is looking for. As a result, world schoolers either spend a lot of time looking for, adapting or preparing educational materials or have to pay for a tutor or online classes or school. PT5 is an exception to this as her daughter is able to attend school in Mexico due to having the nationality. As with most home- and unschoolers, usually only one parent is able to work as the other parent is needed to either educate, co-ordinate or oversee the education of the children (sections 2.2 and 2.3). Additionally, due to the nomadic lifestyle, work options are restricted because of the regularly changing locations and time zones. Most of the participants have found different ways to finance their world schooling lifestyle. PT1's husband spent time setting up an online business before they set off world schooling. PT2 waited for her husband to retire and receive his pension. PT3 sold his business and invested in property and a stock portfolio which he manages himself. PT5 does some teaching, has used some savings and is also investing in some property. PT4 had some income from renting their house but also had to use savings. After a couple of years full-time world schooling, PT4 had to return to the UK until they could organise a more financially sustainable way to world school. Finances and the ability to support one's family while maintaining a world schooling lifestyle is one of the most common questions asked on world schooling forums and social media pages.

World schoolers, like all other parents who follow an alternative educational route, take the full responsibility for educating their children. However, for world schoolers, in addition to taking responsibility for their children's education, they also have the responsibility which comes with living a nomadic life such as travel arrangements, locating suitable accommodation and visas. Also, in each location they visit, they have to identify and access local learning resources and opportunities. For many parents, this is a heavy mental and emotional burden. The organisation of both travel and education is very time-consuming, emotionally demanding and can be overwhelming. Like most

home schoolers, both PT1 and PT2 initially attempted to replicate a school day before realising that the burden was too much and so moved to a less-structured approach (Charvoz, 1998; Gray & Riley, 2013; Lois, 2006, 2013; Pattison, 2016). This was not only a coping mechanism for the burden of homeschooling (Lois, 2006, 2009, 2013) but also a recognition that educational opportunities arise from all interactions, no matter how spontaneous and informal (Barratt-Peacock, 2003; Thomas, 1994).

Both PT2 and PT3 talk about the mental and emotional burden of not only being both a parent and teacher to their children but also how much time and effort was needed to organise the travelling aspect of world schooling. As neither PT3 nor his wife work full-time, they share the teaching load although now they are looking for a school because they would like to focus on being parents. They also decided to slow down travelling in order to have more time to handle their responsibilities. Although PT2's husband was retired, the children both wanted to study with her. PT2 says that the burden of arranging travel and academics takes 'a tremendous amount of time'. As a result, they changed online schools from one in which a parent was needed to go through materials with the children to one which had regular contact with a professional educator.

However, despite the myriad challenges delineated here, participants all spoke about the richness and variety of experiences which their children live by experiencing a range of socio-historical contexts and believe that the benefits of living this lifestyle far outweigh the negative aspects. As PT1 describes it, 'the best, the richest, the brightest years'.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This study has focused on the lived experiences of full-time, experienced world schoolers and used semi-structured interviews (section 3.7). Its aim was to better understand the lived experiences of world schooling families from the perspective of one of the parents.

In this chapter, I use the findings to address the research aims (section 6.1) followed by a discussion of the significance of this study and the implications it has for education (section 6.2). Next, I make some recommendations for how world schoolers can be supported (section 6.3) and outline changes to my practice (section 6.3). After that, I address the need for future research regarding world schooling as a form of education (section 6.4). Then, I evaluate the methodology used (section 6.5) and conclude the chapter (section 6.6).

6.1 Addressing the Research Aims

This study has explored the following research question:

What are the lived experiences of world schoolers?

The sub-question was:

What challenges do world schoolers face?

What is clear from this study and the rising numbers of people interested in world schooling (section 1.4) is that world schooling cannot be ignored. Together with all forms of alternative education, world schooling is an interesting educational practice with great potential. Through travel, worldschoolers have sustained contact with diverse environments. This provides the capacity to develop epistemic mobility; which is the ability to adapt to multiple cultural and social contexts. The element of travel transforms education from knowledge acquisition into a process of situated inquiry and adaptive meaning-making. For worldschoolers, travel and intercultural experiences are educational as they immerse learners in authentic contexts which require them to construct knowledge through their lived experiences. It is this educational contribution of travel which differentiates world schooling from other forms of education.

Exploring various modes of alternative education is not only valid research for

better understanding alternative education but also for improving state-mandated education which is currently failing some children and parents both practically and ideologically. This study highlights that mainstream state schooling in its current form does not suit every child or parent. The uniform rigidity of collective mass schooling is not for everyone and as such, people are looking for alternatives because the schooling system doesn't fit them. The participants in this study tried to find their place within the schooling system but they failed and so started exploring alternatives. Each worldschooler has a complex set of reasons and justifications. Whether these are due to lifestyle e.g. military family, or attitude, their reasons are not the same. The fact that these families are so different highlights and exemplifies why one schooling system does not fit all. As can clearly be seen in this study, every family and every child has different needs and so it makes no sense that one standardised schooling system should appropriately fit everyone.

This study also raises the question of whether the responsibility of educating children lies with the state or the parent and engages with debates on privilege, mobility, cosmopolitanism and inequality, especially with regard to whether world schooling assists in reproducing current social, economic, and cultural inequalities. This is because, in order to world school, sufficient economic, cultural and mobility capital is required and so it is not easily accessible to all families. As such, it could potentially be viewed as reproducing existing social, economic, and cultural inequalities as unequal access to international travel is used for educational gain and reinforces class distinctions and privilege. However, the families in this study take a different position with regard to the world and their place in it with their focus being on enhancing their love of the world. This is in contrast to mainstream education which often focuses on personal enrichment and obtaining our 'share' of the world.

World schooling is a process of learning and experimentation for each family to find what works best for them. It is notable that these participants have all spent a lot of time reflecting on their children's' education and have made conscious decisions to find the route which is best for them. None of these participants took the decision to world school lightly, especially as PT2 said, 'there's no going back to 'normal''. The reflection is ongoing and they have all

made changes along the way as their experience grows and to accommodate developments in their children and their living situation.

World schooling is not just a way of education but a lifestyle. The lived experiences of experienced, full-time world schoolers were found to be extremely diverse, consisting of a wide range of motivations, lifestyles and challenges which are unique for each family. While the participants all agreed that world schooling is, as PT3 stated 'better', they face multiple challenges. Despite paying taxes, world schoolers do not receive any financial or educational support. Governments do not provide any guidance or information on world schooling as a mode of education. Like all forms of alternative education, socialization and finding a sense of community is a challenge. These mental, emotional and financial anxieties, conflated with the anxiety of frequent travel can be overwhelming. During the 13-month period in which I was holding the interviews, two of the respondents had to stop full-time world schooling. This was due to one or more of the challenges mentioned and not dissatisfaction with world schooling. PT1 stopped full-time world schooling as the family, particularly the children, felt the need for a sense of community. For PT4, it was because they were not able to financially sustain their full-time world schooling lifestyle although they are currently focused on finding a sustainable way to generate income while world schooling full-time. They returned to their respective home countries but chose not to enter the mainstream state school system. PT1 enrolled her children in a private, Waldorf school and PT4's children chose to be homeschooled rather than attend a state school. They both still consider themselves world schoolers and world school part-time.

Despite the above challenges, all of the participants still world school even if it is part-time for some of them. Respondents all spoke about the richness and variety of experiences which their children live through experiencing a range of socio-historical contexts and believe that the benefits of living this lifestyle far outweigh the negative aspects. As PT1 describes it, 'the best, the richest, the brightest years'.

6.2 Significance of the study and professional implications

While my sample size was fairly small, I believe that the findings of my research open up some important and indicative insights and as such, provide an enhanced understanding of world schooling. This study is a first and has not emerged from previous research. Due to its specificity, a high level of detail has emerged together with some loose, but not definitive, themes. It offers a rare, detailed insight into the complexities of motivation, navigation and negotiation of five full-time, experienced world schooler's lifestyles. The findings have made a specific contribution to the field of education by exploring the lived experiences of world schoolers in-depth and plotting shifts in real time over the course of a year. The stories are of relevance because they highlight relatively unexplored, alternative ways of not only educating children but also living, an issue which, from my perspective, needs more focus. As world schooling is a lifestyle of educating while travelling, then choosing this mode of education entail a different mode of living. This study can increase awareness of issues concerning education and travel amongst a variety of people, particularly parents and teachers who may have an interest in the topic. I believe that this dissertation is relevant to all educators as it may prompt conversation and self-reflection on attitudes towards students and children.

The first contribution that my research offers reflects current mindsets amongst small groups of citizens. Some parents, in this case Americans, do not want their children to grow up in the current political culture in the USA. As elements of totalitarian thinking emerge in certain parts of the world today, Hannah Arendt's insights are particularly relevant. A persistent trend in late democratic bureaucratic cultures, as Arendt suggested, has witnessed the distinction between the public and private spaces gradually dissolved, resulting in government encroachments into spaces historically reserved for the family. For example, until the latter part of the 19th century, education, of whatever kind, was the prerogative of parents. In the first quarter of the 21st century, not only do local and national governments determine that a child shall be schooled but also what the curriculum will be and, in a further encroachment, the methods to be deployed in curriculum delivery. The result is that, with the collapse of the distinction, there is increasingly no public space to speak and act freely and

individuals have become lonely and politically isolated (Conroy, 2003). A further consequence of this has seen the rise of a potent mixture of widespread cynical disenchantment and sectarian protest. Hence, politics and society is increasingly polarized. Additionally, it is generally accepted that the lives of certain groups of people, for example, minorities, immigrants, refugees, are worth less than others and in some cases, considered to be superfluous. Interestingly, Arendt's 1951 book 'The Origins of Totalitarianism', entered the Amazon US bestseller list in 2016 after the election of Donald Trump. During his first year in office, sales rose by over 1,000% (Stonebridge, 2024). The book describes how historical conditions conspired to give evil a political platform in Nazi Germany and allowed political lies to triumph over facts. While Arendt predicted that the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century would fall, she warned that the thinking and contexts that gave rise to them could remain.

The current decline of reasoned public discussion, as evidenced on social media, is eerily similar to pre-war conditions which Arendt describes. By democratizing content creation, social media has made it easy for misinformation to spread quickly. As a result, the public is now unprotected against the dissemination of false information. According to Nakov and San Martino (2021), we are now in 'the Post-Truth Era' in which appealing to an individual's emotions is now more important than telling the truth. Disinformation, created specifically to influence people's opinions is proliferating and ultimately influencing major events such as political elections. Confidence in traditional forms of media has also decreased. In the USA in 1985, 45% of Americans believed that news outlets were politically biased in their reporting. By 2011, that number had risen to almost two-thirds (Pew cited in Nakove and San Marino, 2021).

Although twentieth century-style totalitarian regimes have not returned, various aspects of the type of totalitarian thinking that Arendt identified have reappeared in contemporary political culture. Arendt teaches that if we love the world, then we must have the courage to protect it. If we do not have free minds, then we are not free. As such, the priority of education should be to develop engaged, thinking citizens. Schools should focus on teaching critical thinking, reason, and ethics so that children enter the world equipped to love it

and improve it. As Arendt states in her 1954 essay, 'The Crisis in Education';

Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. (p.196).

The practical consequences of Arendt's theorising is foregrounded by the respondents in this study, where they explicitly reject some of the features of contemporary culture so cogently critiqued by Arendt. Hence, the second contribution that this study offers pertains to the future. It is that, in the voices of the parents studied here, mainstream state-sponsored education is challenged to recognise that if we do not assume responsibility for the world then, what they consider to be the current situation will continue unabated. Interestingly, it is not that parents in this study self-evidently reject state-sponsored schooling per se. Rather, it is the particular incarnation in the UK/US that they decide to 'reject'. And so it is that some of the participants mentioned that they would consider putting their children in school, but not in the current political climate in which gun culture is a part of school life and critical thinking skills are subordinate to compliance and grade achievement in an increasingly restrictive curriculum. While some radical suggestions like the abolition of schools have been proposed (Illich, 1971), concentrating on improving them seems like a much more sensible idea as not all families have the time and resources to educate their children.

At the moment, most education is focused on individual academic achievement, STEAM and employable skills. Is it possible to imagine a future where education teaches children to love the world? Can education be more holistic, compassionate and prioritise critical thinking? This does not mean discarding academic achievements but rather that children have time to experience and pursue other pleasures and topics for learning. This would produce well-rounded children and ultimately, a more well-rounded society. Children need to understand that success is not defined solely by academic grades and parents and educators need the confidence to put that into practice and not push children and themselves to compete against each other. Is a redefinition of success and what it means to be educated possible? Is a compassionate education and society achievable? If these issues are not made a scholastic

priority, then society may evolve in ways that do not serve the majority well. I believe that this is possible, but it is an issue which must be addressed at policy level.

For educators, reading Arendt's philosophy of education prompts us to ask ourselves if we are willing to love the world, with all its faults, enough to help students gain the skills they need to live in it.

6.3 Recommendations for Supporting World schoolers

Undertaking this study was enlightening and rewarding. World schooling is a valid, educational practice and through the narratives shared and my own world schooling experience, I have developed these recommendations for education policy makers.

6.3.1 Government provided Online Educational Materials and Classes

In the UK and the USA, the government has an annual budget for education and as such, provides a certain amount of funding to state schools for each student enrolled. In the USA, school funding varies between districts but, in 2025, the average was \$17,700 per student per year (Hanson, 2025). In the UK it is £8,210 for the school year 2025-26 (GOV.UK, 2025e). As I have already noted, there are a variety of both practical and ideological reasons why a parent may choose to not send their child to school and, as stated in the UNHDR, that is their right. However, this funding is only provided directly to the formal educational institution. As such, if a parent chooses an alternative form of education, then no funding or resources are provided and they are responsible for locating and providing their own supplies and teaching resources.

Given the growth of both digital learning and alternative forms of education, then government funding for online educational materials and classes seems to be the next logical step in ensuring that all children have access to an education. This would be beneficial for not only world schoolers, but also any children who are not attending state school either permanently or temporarily. Having access to an online collection of professionally produced and organised educational materials would help to alleviate the burden of teaching from

parents. Live, interactive classes and courses would also help with the socialization aspect of alternative education. These options would also reduce the financial burden of accessing private tutors and schools.

Naturally, the content of any government-provided courses and materials for home educators would need to address a broader curriculum than that currently offered in mainstream schools and assist children with gaining the skills that they need to love the world and live in it, rather than possess it. In addition to the information contained in this study, governments could conduct their own independent research to determine this. Courses would need to be flexible to suit the needs of world schoolers in different time zones and so could be offered at various times of the day and throughout the year. They could range in length from longer project-based courses, similar to those at PT2's daughters' current online school, to short courses on specific topics. More informal meetings focused on the interests of world schoolers, such as book clubs in various languages, could also be offered.

6.3.2 Access to Learning Facilities

Globalization is now a central part of much educational policy and schools aim to develop global citizens. Although world schoolers are learning outside the formal schooling system, they are also aiming to develop global citizens. However, world schoolers take a more active approach and travel to other countries to experience and learn about them directly.

Liberal democratic governments value the constructive contribution of the politics of difference as a way to promote justice and build more cohesive societies (Young, 1990). The politics of difference recognizes and accommodates differences and educationally, focuses on equitable access to education which transcends national borders. As such, it would be extremely beneficial if educational policy makers in various countries could demonstrate their commitment to inclusive education by cooperating and offering learning facilities such as libraries and museums to world schoolers visiting their countries. This could be achieved in various ways, for example by offering global library access and global museum membership.

Libraries offer various facilities which support education, such as a range of specialized books, novels and audiobooks in a wide variety of subjects and for all different reading levels (Miller & Veatch, 2020). Although libraries are free to enter and use, a library card is needed to borrow resources and they are generally only available to local residents. As world schoolers change locations regularly, it is not practical to buy and travel with many books. This makes the ability to borrow library books and other available resources extremely beneficial.

Museums provide an educational environment which allows learners to connect directly with art, history, science and other subjects (Wareath, 2022). Research has highlighted that museums can contribute to mental, emotional, cognitive and social development (Dogan, 2010) and enhance critical thinking (Falk & Dierking, 2018). Many museums charge an admission fee to enter. Some museums have educational worksheets and activities for children, either free or for purchase, which have been shown to provide educational benefits (Dogan, 2010). Providing global access to museums and ensuring that educational worksheets and activities are available, either on-site or online (section 6.3.1) would lessen the mental load of teaching and reduce the financial burden on world schoolers.

6.3.3 World schooling Hubs: Regulation and Availability of Information

In the UK and the USA, schools are regularly inspected and the results are published. Finding information about schools is a straightforward process. As such, parents have access to all the information which they need to select a school for their child. However, transparent information about world schooling hubs is difficult to find and booking a hub often requires an element of trust. World schooling hubs have no such regulation and this can lead to very different experiences for paying attendees.

Since I concluded the interviews with my participants, there have been increasing reports on Facebook world schooling groups of poor experiences with world schooling hubs due to negligence, misleading information and illegal activity such as not having official permission or permits to run a hub.

Additionally, as they are not regulated, hub owners can, and have, refused refunds even if the hub is not delivered as advertised. There have even been reports of hub organisers 'disappearing' once deposits have been collected. However, world schooling social media groups do not allow the posting of negative reviews as they are unverified and quickly remove any such posting. As such, it is extremely difficult to get transparent information and reviews. For this reason, accessible information and results of regular checks would be extremely beneficial to world schoolers.

In order to regulate world schooling hubs, an appropriate framework of inspection, different from that used in state schools, would first need to be established. This was previously done for Summerhill, a democratic private school in the UK, which operates significantly differently from state schools. In 1999, Ofsted, who are responsible for regulating educational standards in UK schools, deemed Summerhill to be a failing school which should be closed (Grenyer, 1999). Summerhill challenged the decision in the High Court and won the right to be inspected according to its own set of educational values and achievements (Cunningham, 2000). Since then, it has been deemed a good school (McCarthy, 2007).

6.4 Changes to my Practice

Although I am still in the process of considering the implications of this study for my own practice, I have already integrated particular aspects of the findings into my practice as a world schooler and an educator. This study has served as a reminder that I became an educator and world schooler because I wanted to direct my learners' attention to the world, guide them to find their own path and encounter new horizons of thought and possibility.

Using narrative inquiry and conducting research which follows changes in real time were both new to me and I am keen to use this methodology again. Although the initial meetings with the participants were informative and interesting, I was not prepared for how the follow-up meetings would progress. I am especially interested in conducting further studies using the same methodology as the details, changes and continuities that they revealed over time provided much deeper insights than one-off interviews.

I believe that my expanded knowledge on the subject is the largest contribution to my professional development as it has given me a more secure and profound understanding of the field. Going through the complete doctoral degree process and conducting research for a dissertation has added a sense of validity to my teaching and world schooling. Additionally, I have become more critically reflective on the topic. At the start of my doctoral journey, I did not think that I would be writing a dissertation about world schooling, but now I find the field more interesting than before.

6.5 Recommendations for Future Research

This study was small scale and only included experienced, full-time world schoolers from the USA or the UK who were active members of a particular Facebook group. The large numbers of world schoolers, both full- and part-time and at different stages of their world schooling journey, from diverse backgrounds would suggest that further research would be productive. A deeper understanding of the lived experiences of world schoolers and their motivations could be gained by conducting similar studies which follows changes in real time with world schoolers from a wider social demographic. This would provide the possibility to see if the overlaps and loose themes identified in this study are still there and if any patterns emerge. Additionally, future research could explore what worldschooling, by changing the spatial organization of education, reveals about educational space and identity in an increasingly globalised world.

It would also be of interest to study world schooling from the children's perspective, both those children which are currently world schooling and those who were world schooled in the past, given that there are an increasing number of young adults who have been world schooled. Future research could explore how they are navigating adulthood and life in the world and whether or not they have enhanced resources as a result of world schooling. It would also be interesting to explore how, as adults, they respond to the challenges outlined in section 5.2. Their reflections on how world schooling has shaped them as an adult and how they felt about their time as a world schooler would be insightful as well as investigating how many of them decided to enter mainstream education. For those who entered higher education, it would be interesting to

see which subjects they choose to study and how that compares to those who have attended state school.

In addition to applying this study's design to other world schoolers and contexts, future research could explore other aspects of the world schooling lifestyle which appeared to emerge from the data such as world schooling hubs. At the moment, there is no regulation of hubs and people book them in good faith and through word of mouth. An investigation into hubs and their value, both educationally and academically, could provide a wealth of useful information which could be of interest to parents, schools, youth groups and educational institutions.

World schooling could also be studied from a psychological perspective. In this study, most of the motives identified were practical. However, these practical motives could also disguise other forms of social and psychological dispositions. It would be interesting to see if there are psychological types which choose world schooling. Additionally, it would be interesting to explore family dynamics, relationships and community in world schooling.

6.6 Methodology Evaluation

To verify validity and ensure best research practice, it is essential to critique empirical studies and identify their strengths and limitations (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

6.6.1 Strengths of the Methodology

The uniqueness and complexity of lived experiences are well-suited to narrative research as they are approached through the individual lenses of the participants. In this way, it was possible focus on the participants as individuals and explore their stories. I gave the participants time and space to share their stories so that they could choose to share what was relevant, meaningful and memorable for them. An inductive approach allowed me to develop my understanding of the participants' lived experiences through their own unique lens. Social constructivism supported me in interpreting the meanings that the participants gave to their experiences and perceptions of their environment

which led to valuable insights into the participants' motivators and values. For example, PT2 strongly believes that learning history is the key to developing empathy as, through her military background, she has seen the consequences of a failure to understand and learn from history. Additionally, the reflexivity journal that I maintained during the research process enabled me to uncover and examine my own assumptions and values. This was particularly helpful during the initial interviews because, as a world schooler myself, I already had my own views on the topic. I also realised that I had some preconceived ideas about world schoolers.

Building rapport with the participants was essential to this narrative research. Throughout the study, I ensured that the interviews were a safe space for participants to share their experiences, challenges, beliefs and perspectives on world schooling. This allowed me to collect rich and meaningful data. Conducting serial interviews was another strength of my methodology as it meant that I had multiple opportunities to clarify and follow-up on information from the previous interviews. Most of the participants chose to extend the length of the interview, especially the follow-up interviews, and, as I had a small sample size, I was able to give each participant as many interviews and as much time as they wanted within the timeframe of this study.

Manual transcription was also a methodological strength as it gave me a detailed understanding of the data and the ability to identify key themes and ideas in the stories. Although it was time-consuming, the process of constructing multiple iterations in order to produce the final transcript was of paramount importance for the data analysis stage. By immersing myself in the data, I became familiar with the data in a way that I feel would not have occurred if I had relied on transcription software.

6.6.2 Limitations of the Methodology

As already mentioned (section 3.11), this study has some limitations. There are five limitations that warrant consideration. The first limitation of this study is the small sample size. However, this research does not claim to represent or be a grand narrative of the world schooling lifestyle. Instead, it provides an insight into the inscape of world schoolers and is indicative of particular themes which

have emerged from the detailed study of the lifestyles of these particular participants. As there are only five participants, any conclusions drawn from this research are not, and do not aim to be, generalisable. Rather, the objective was to explore the lived experiences of a small group of experienced, full-time world schoolers and better understand how they construct meaning and how that meaning consequently influences their motivations and behaviour. As such, a smaller amount of detailed, contextualized data was preferable over a larger amount of less rich data. The fact that these five participants volunteered their time to participate in multiple English-language interviews, attended all meetings, and maintained contact throughout the time period of the study potentially differentiates them from other experienced, full-time world schoolers. Chance encounters may have also played a role in their lived experiences so the stories told could have been different even with the same participants. What if PT2's daughters had made good friends at the horse-riding camp? What if the friends and cousins of PT3's children had had more time to see them when they returned to the USA? What if PT4's family had had a negative encounter with their first world schooling meet-up in Albania? Slight variations to chance encounters could have led to very different stories from the same participants. By their very nature, chance encounters cannot be anticipated but inevitably impact the participants' lived world schooling experiences and the experiences of any future replication studies.

The second limitation is the inability to establish correspondence as their stories cannot be validated by reference to any external evidence. However, according to Riessman (2008), establishing correspondence between external sources of data and reported narrative experiences is 'sometimes even beside the point' (p.187) as narratives are not factual accounts of events but are told from the narrator's perspective which is their reality and truth. Cohen and Mallon (2001) believe that the value of the participants' perceptions is in the ability to connect their individual subjectivity to the wider cultural and social context. As such, the participants' perceptions should not be considered as truths that potentially represent the reality of all world schoolers.

The third limitation is that, as data was self-reported, there was the potential for biases, such as social desirability bias and recall bias, which could affect the reliability and accuracy of the participants' stories (Furnham, 1986). Social

desirability bias is the tendency to present oneself in a favourable manner and so to minimise this, I strove to create a safe, anonymous space for the participants and build rapport through trust. Recall bias occurs when a participant cannot accurately remember past happenings or chooses not to share certain details. The participants' stories are limited by what they were willing to share and what they could remember. Although I could have asked more follow-up questions in some of the interviews, I deliberately attempted not to direct the interviews too much as I did not want the participants to feel that I was putting words into their mouths. I wanted the participants' experiences and reflections to be the main focus, and so adopted a less active and more supportive approach. Throughout, I strove to balance active listening and obtaining useful data by asking questions which naturally arose from the conversation. To minimise this, I held serial interviews with my participants and had regular consultations with my doctoral supervisor.

Another limitation was the small size of the research team. In narrative inquiry research, particularly during the analysis stage, multiple researchers are usually involved in order to provide alternative perspectives. However, in this instance, there was only myself and my doctoral supervisors. We maintained regular contact during the study and, although I was the primary researcher and conducted the interviews, all of the participants stories were shared with my supervisors for their feedback and objective perspective.

A final limitation for me, as the researcher, was the word count of this dissertation as this restricted the amount of detail in the participants' stories in chapter four. Although some researchers choose to focus on one participant in greater detail than the others, (for example Navarro, 2016), I wanted to represent all five participants' lived experiences to capture how unique they all are. As a result, certain aspects of the stories, which would have added even greater insights into the participants' world schooling lifestyle, had to be omitted.

6.7 Conclusion

Despite the many limitations, this study has provided valuable insights into the relatively unexplored lived experiences of world schoolers and highlighted some

of the challenges that they face. The use of serial interviews meant that the lived experiences and challenges were explored in real time providing an insight into the lifestyles of the participants.

The satisfaction of world schoolers with their lifestyle choice is clear from their refusal to re-enter the state school system. As such, it should be supported as a viable alternative to mainstream education. Ignoring its growth represents submission to the hegemonic globalization which is occurring in response to capitalist needs and does an injustice to ourselves and fails our future generations.

Appendix 1: Ethical Approval



ResearchEthicsSystem@glasgow.ac.uk



To: Lesley Forsythe (PGR)

Wed 14/12/2022 17:16

Dear Lesley Forsythe (PGR),

The following research ethics application has been approved:

Project Title	What are the lived experiences of worldschoolors? How, if at all, does worldschooling benefit both individuals and society, especially with regard to developing global citizens?
Application Number	400220109
Committee	College of Social Sciences
Submitted By	Professor James Conroy

Please [log in](#) to the Research Ethics System to download the approval letter from your Application.

This is an automated message. Please do not reply to this email.

If you need additional help, please contact your ethics administrator or visit the IT Services [helpdesk](#).

Appendix 2: Consent Form



College of Social
Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: What are the lived experiences of world schoolers?

Name of Researcher: Lesley Forsythe xxxxxxxx

Name of Supervisor: Professor James Conroy

I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

I acknowledge that participants will not be identified by name in any publications arising from the research.

- ♦ All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
- ♦ The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
- ♦ The material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research
- ♦ The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.
- ♦ I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.

I acknowledge the provision of a Privacy Notice in relation to this research project.

I consent / do not consent (delete as applicable) to interviews being video-recorded.

I acknowledge that copies of transcripts will be returned to participants for verification.

I consent / do not consent (delete as applicable) to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant Signature

Date

Name of Researcher LESLEY FORSYTHE Signature

Date 04/03/2023

Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet



University
of Glasgow

College of Social
Sciences

Participant Information Sheet

What are the lived experiences of world schooling families?

Researcher: Lesley Forsythe, EdD candidate, xxxxxxx@student.gla.ac.uk

Supervisor: Professor James Conroy, james.conroy@glasgow.ac.uk

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take some time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

The study

The purpose of the study is to explore the lived experiences of worldschoolers and how, if at all, worldschooling benefits both individuals and society, especially with regard to developing global citizens.

The researcher will use the data for a small-scale study which will be submitted to the University of Glasgow as part of the Doctorate in Education (EdD) programme. Participation is voluntary. Participation will entail a series of 40 minute interviews through Zoom which will be video and audio recorded. You may be contacted for clarifications after each interview.

Reflecting on your lived experiences will help you to develop a clearer understanding of your worldschooling experiences. This understanding will assist you to reflect on your motivations, your perceptions of education and your hopes for your children. It will help you to consider your future practice. You have been selected as you have been worldschooling for at least a year.

The study has been assessed as being low risk and should not cause any distress. If any distress should occur, the interview will be paused, and you will be asked

if you wish to continue, change the subject or stop the interview. If you become distressed, you will be offered advice about where to seek support.

Please note that confidentiality will be maintained as far as it possible and will be respected subject to legal constraints and professional guidelines. Confidentiality may not be guaranteed due to the limited size of the participant sample.

Your personal details will be kept confidential by allocating codes on transcription of the interviews. These codes will only be accessible by the researcher. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any point without providing a reason and with no prejudice. You have the right to decide if any data already provided before deciding to withdraw is used by the researcher or not.

Data will be stored securely by the researcher. All interviews will be recorded on the desktop version of the University of Glasgow Zoom client which requires a University of Glasgow email and GUID login. Recordings will be downloaded immediately and encrypted and any automated backups of audio-visual or audio files stored in the User Account will be deleted immediately. Recordings will be transcribed by the researcher.

This project has been considered and approved by the University of Glasgow, College of Social Sciences, College Research Ethics Committee.

If you are interested in participating in this research study, please fill in the form attached.

To pursue any complaint about the conduct of the research: contact the College of Social Sciences Lead for Ethical Review, Dr Benjamin Franks: email socsci-ethics-lead@glasgow.ac.uk

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