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A grounded theory: Realising family potential through choice of schooling

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CHAPTER 4

BASIC SOCIAL PROCESS: REALISING FAMILY POTENTIAL MAKING THE CHOICE

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Phase One: Making the Choice

Strauss and Corbin (1990) summarise process in grounded theory as the way in which the sequence of actions and interactions are linked over time. They describe this action/interaction of bringing process into analysis as an “essential feature of a grounded theory analysis” (Strauss & Corbin, p. 157).

Process is the linking of action/interactional sequences, as they evolve over time. Bringing process into analysis is an essential feature of a grounded theory analysis. To do so, the analyst must consciously look for signs in the data indicating a change in conditions, and trace out what corresponding changes in action/interaction that these bring. Once identified, there are two main ways that process can be conceptualised in grounded theory studies. One is to view it as stages and phases of a passage, along with an explanation of what makes that passage move forward, halt, or take a downward turn. Another way to conceptualise process is as nonprogressive movement; that is, as action/interaction that is flexible, in flux, responsive, changeable in response to changing conditions (Strauss & Corbin, p. 157).

In the present study, the process belongs to the former of the types referred to by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The process entitled *realising family potential* describes how the family makes a decision and then maintains or changes that

decision in respect to secondary schooling. Unlike the latter process described by Strauss and Corbin as a “nonprogressive movement” (Strauss & Corbin, p. 157), the process described in this theory has a forward movement towards an end result. Each family experiences this movement differently according to the factors that intervene to affect the process either by energising it to continue, to stop, or to change direction. This chapter describes the process. When causal conditions, such as those described in the previous chapter, are in place then the family must move into a double-phased, multi-staged process in order to solve their concern over being challenged to choose outside the education provided at the local level by the government. If these particular causal conditions are not present to a challenging extent, then the choice for government schooling will satisfy them. There is a nobility of choice in the vast majority of families educating their children. Some families will adamantly choose government education for philosophical and political reasons; some families will have historical and cultural reasons to actively choose their local government school. The present study considers those who move outside the system due to the causal concerns described in the previous chapter.

Although the process is similar to that of a passage, it is also flexible in that while some families will experience some phases and stages in great depth and almost bypass others, other families will experience it differently. The conceptualisation of this process has emerged from the data taken from families from both metropolitan and country locations who had engaged in making educational choices both within and outside the government system. This present study does not seek to discover a model that will predict the course of parents’ choices, but rather, one that interprets the data in such a way as to find meaning within their behaviour.

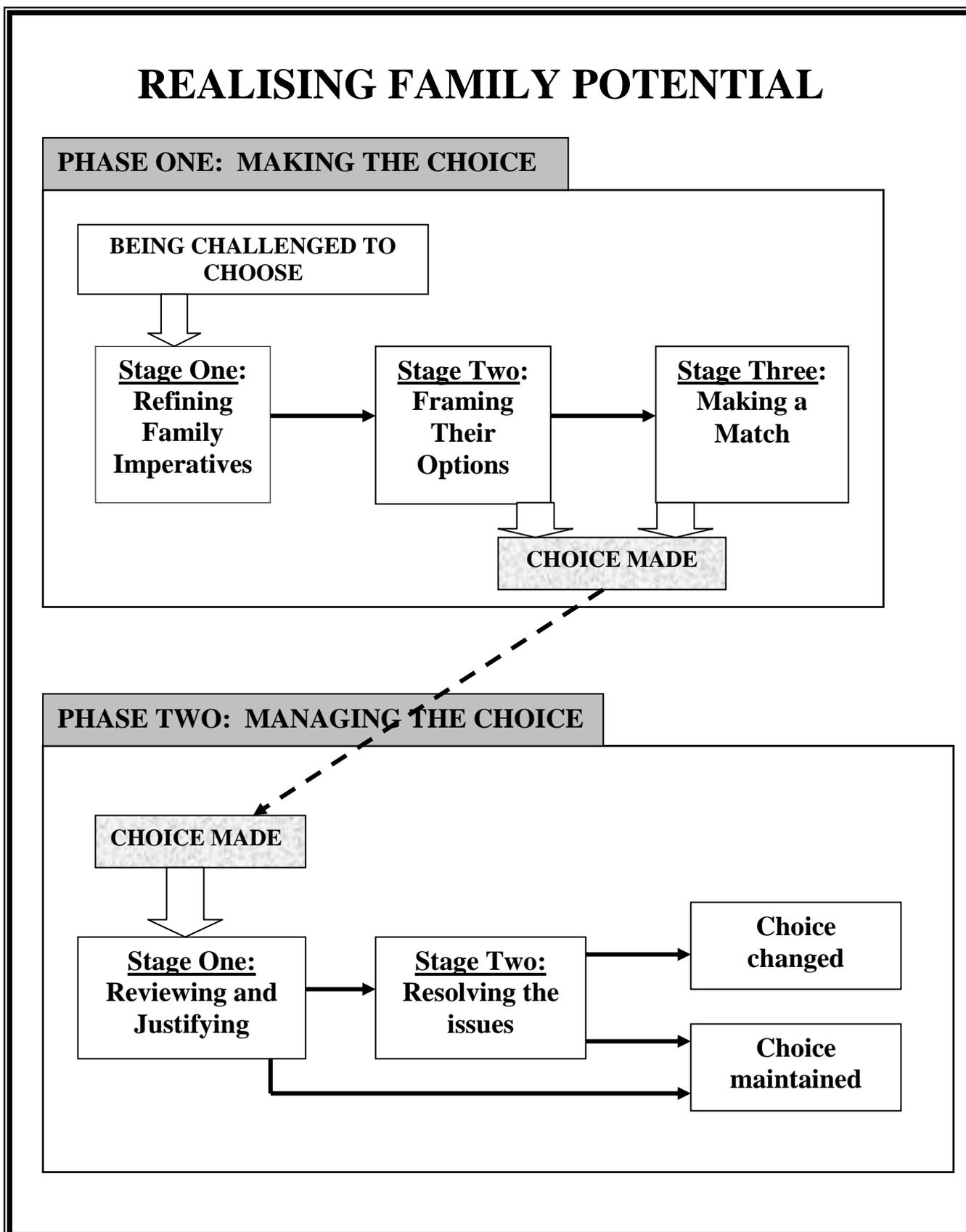
Realising Family Potential informs the conceptualisation of the core process of this theory. Family potential is being realised in the sense that the potential is being brought to fruition (Wilkes & Krebs, 1999, p. 1231) with the help of education. Realising the family potential through education continues throughout the process and, where there are challenges, changes are made. This process and the way it operates is the primary focus of the theory.

A dimension of the core process is the family's understanding of its own potential as it grows during this process, and the future possibilities that evolve. A further aspect of that dimension occurs when there is a growing understanding of a child's limited potential and its impact on the family's future educational choices, as well as other life choices. This aspect of the process reveals itself as a challenge and may cause the family to make changes that re-engage the process and refine their family's imperatives. A deeper explanation of this will unfold as the core process is presented through the data.

In *realising* their *family potential*, each family participated in the different phases at different levels. The action within one of the phases or goals could be of minor importance to a particular family's context, the level of engagement in each phase or stage being dependent on the goal orientation and any obstacles that were impeding the attainment of that goal. Some families needed to engage in the process only to a minimal degree while other families had to engage at a very high level, bringing to bear all of their resources.

Figure 4.1 describes the process schematically. The goal of the process is to realise the family's potential. It does not refer only to their educational potential, as many family needs must be balanced in the process. In the first phase, once the family has refined its imperatives, the relevant options are framed and the balancing process reaches its initial conclusion when a match has been made taking account of all possibilities. In the second phase, management of the result will then involve either maintaining the choice or re-engaging the process when, and if, the choice must be changed. This second phase is described in Chapter 5.

Figure 4.1. Basic Social Process – Realising family potential

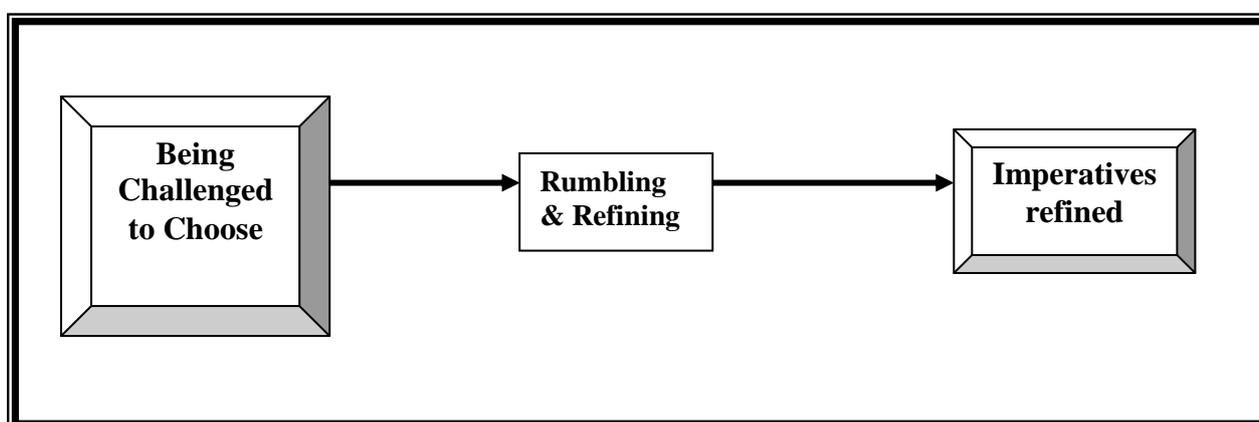


Stage One: Refining Family Imperatives

Although *refining family imperatives* is the first stage of the process, it is also an aspect of the decision that the family returns to time and again when challenges arise. The more challenges that intervene in the decision-making, the more the imperatives are refined and re-ordered. Family members' responses to their own personal histories intervene as a condition in the refinement of individual imperatives, along with the attitudes of others around them, their growing understanding of their child's needs, and the needs and influence of the wider family.

As will be shown, this stage begins with *rumbling*, then develops into *refining*, and operates as a continuum that concludes when the family's imperatives have been sufficiently refined that they are able to frame the options that are open to them (Figure 4.2). If the options within the frame are changed by some other intervening condition, then the family must re-engage the first stage of this phase of the process.

Figure 4.2. Stage One – Refining family imperatives



Rumbling and Refining

Refining is the process that the family enters into in order to reach a stage where their imperatives are sufficiently clear that they can identify options from which to choose a suitable school. Early in the analysis of the data, an *in vivo* code, named *rumbling*, emerged that described the beginning of the *refining* stage. It has an expressive nature that describes the action of the participants.

Rumbling gives the sense that the action is still a long way off and while there is no immediacy there is the sense that it is time to begin considering what to do. At this rumbling stage, parents are beginning the process of choosing a form of education for their children that they hope will realise their potential. They are aware that the need for secondary schooling is approaching and that a decision has to be made. For some families, the causal conditions have already established that there is a need, or desire, to move outside the schooling provided by the government at the local level. The participants then engage in what David described as ‘rumbling’.

I am pondering how other people, how parents choose. There's a kind of ruffling, a rumbling through the community about the kids in Year 6 and 7. Where are we going to send them? What are we going to do? What are you doing? What do you know? How do people choose? Where do they get their information? And their criteria. (David, p. 17).

Garry and his family needed to make schooling decisions governed by their country location and the lack of upper secondary schooling in the town and so they began their *rumbling* when their eldest daughter was in Year 8.

...when [our eldest] reached Year 8 we realised we had to make some decisions about whatever we were going to do and ah, as I started to say before, [our friend's] twins had gone off to boarding school... we then started thinking, gee we gotta start doing something, we've gotta decide ... and we both sort of thought they should move on to [the city] (Garry, p. 13).

A further example came from Samantha and her husband, Greg who were very mobile due to his profession and the associated need to move constantly within Australia. While *rumbling* about how they were going to realise their children's potential through education, they were constantly conscious of the reality of their mobility.

By the time[our eldest] is in high school, we want to be settled somewhere to get them through that high school period. That would be the perfect scenario. You just have to go from day to day in our situation. There are a lot of people like it - not just in [our employment situation]. There are people in banks. I've met so many people who are ... moving around (Samantha, p. 8).

Sally describes the *rumbling* stage as the first conscious expression of her original hopes and dreams.

My original hopes and dreams were that they'd go to a little Catholic primary school. I believed in that myth too – ha! (Sally, p. 15).

The realisation of those early dreams, however, did not eventuate, even though her underlying imperative remained in place. When Sally discovered that “little Catholic schools” did not exist in her area of suburbia, she had to refine her imperatives by bringing proximity, rather than Catholicity, to the top of her list, and subsequently to opt to send them to the local government primary school. The school was small and offered all that she desired for her children’s secular education while she attended to the needs of their Catholic faith by enrolling them in the Parish Religious Education Program (PREP). Further *rumbling* occurred when the need to choose secondary school came closer, because the PREP course finished in Year 7 and nothing further was provided for faith development for the older children in the parish.

That’s why secondary school is really important, because what do I do? There isn’t anything else (Sally, p. 10).

Tricia had begun the *rumbling* part of the stage in her concern for her children in their teenage years. She was content for them to be at their local government school for their primary years but her recognition of the potential pitfalls for their faith and values was addressed in her concern for their secondary education.

...I think from now onwards it’s going to be very hard for a child going through high school and the upper years of primary school. We always talk about sharing and caring and loving – you love one another as you love yourself. We try to endorse that. I think it is going to be hard for them. That’s why I would like the boys to go to the Catholic high school (Tricia, p. 9).

Tricia was working towards realising the potential of her family through education but also increasing her understanding of the potential of their faith development and obstacles to that development.

For the choice of secondary schooling, *rumbling* often begins when the child is in upper primary, as was described by Teresa.

You worry about, when they go to high school, who they'll make friends with; are they going to go in the right direction. ... Everyone usually rallies around in Year 6 and decides where they're going to go. You have to listen to everyone and make up your own mind. You hear good and bad about every school ... where some people have pulled their child out and put them into [another primary school]. You really have to make up your own mind by looking at your child and seeing what's best for them and not be swayed by other parents (Teresa, p. 18).

For some of the families the *rumbling* had started with the birth of their children. Diane describes how she had enrolled her daughter from the earliest opportunity, even though as it happened, she later had to cancel, and then reinstate, when her husband's employment mobility intervened.

[Our eldest] was booked in there from birth. We cancelled it when we moved over here because we didn't know what we were going to be doing. When I knew earlier this year that we were going to be moving back at Christmas time, I got on to them straightaway (Diane, p. 19).

David, too, spoke of early enrolment.

He's been on the waiting list for [the college] ...since he was practically born (David, p. 3).

David and his wife had chosen schooling outside the government sector, as dictated by their imperatives, long before being aware of the child's specific needs and, as with Diane, there emerged some intervening factors that subsequently realigned the enrolment and further refined their imperatives. *rumbling* is the beginning of the continuum that moves towards the *refining* of the family's imperatives, which once consolidated, then confirms a frame of options for the next phase.

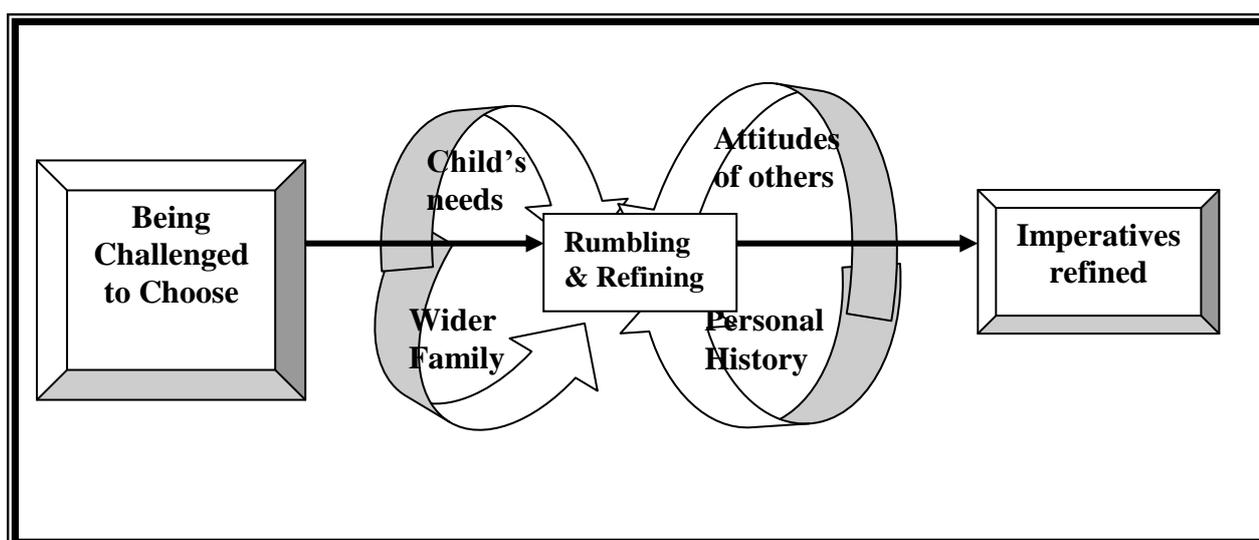
Intervening Conditions

The conditions that intervene to either facilitate or constrain the movement (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) towards the refinement of the family imperatives do not occur in a specific order and not all the conditions will be relevant to all participants. For those who were challenged to choose because of the high level of strength of their imperative, there was little room for further refinement of those imperatives and so they moved quickly into the phase of *framing their options*. For example, Tracey's family had two powerful imperatives: secondary schooling was not readily available because of the remoteness of their farm, and they were also determined to provide Catholic education. As we have already seen in relation to remoteness of location, Tracey acknowledged the inevitability that her children were going to go away. She added:

Specifically, I really wanted my children to have a decent Catholic education that they just don't get out here (Tracey, p. 14).

The strength of these two imperatives moved the family through the phase of *framing their options* more rapidly than other families.

Figure 4.3. Stage One – Refining family imperatives, with intervening conditions



While moving along the *rumbling and refining* continuum from *being challenged to choose* outside locally provided government schooling, to where

the family have their *imperatives refined*, the family is influenced by intervening conditions. These do not occur in any set order and not all are relevant to every family, but whether activated or not, they do influence the pace with which the family moves to the next stage.

Personal history includes each parent's own educational experience as well as their experiences in making educational choices for their eldest children, which then relates to choices made for their younger children. The condition influences how their imperatives are refined. Albert summed up this particular aspect of the decision making process in his response:

Well, you always tend to, well we do anyway, we sort of look at you know um what our parents did for us and sort of took the best out of it and you know, we said, well, you know the not so good things we won't bother about, the good things we will hold onto and cherish and make use of (Albert, p. 7).

Intervening conditions: Personal history.

Michelle and David's second son had very special needs and it became clear that the original enrolment was not going to be suitable. David had been educated at an elite government school where each student had to earn enrolment through an academic scholarship exam. Although David, as parent, was opposed to elitism through wealth, he was in favour of intellectual elitism to a certain extent, as he had experienced the benefits of such an education.

I guess I came from an education elite background ... it was scholarship only until the year I joined and the year I went there it was thrown open to everybody so I watched the transition from an exclusive intellectual school to a local high school.

I enjoyed it, I really appreciated what it taught me, we had a very stimulating class, and taught each other and stimulated each other, we had very good teachers, I was very appreciative of that education. I liked the fact that it was government and free otherwise I don't think my parents could have afforded to send me there, they both went there as high school kids, they won scholarships... ... we lived nearby and it would've been our local high school anyway. So I found myself pondering is it good to have exclusive, elitist schools for the intellectually able

or not, I've still got mixed feelings as you can see (David, p. 5).

Although, as a child, Michelle had been considered a good candidate for a scholarship to a school that had a high academic emphasis, she had, in the end, attended her local high school. As it happened she had still been able to move into an elite professional field. In describing her personal background, Michelle was very conscious of her working class roots and her peers' material poverty, and yet she had a powerful connectedness to family and a strong belief in education as a key to the advancement of the next generation.

My peers were children of immigrants really ... They'd grown up in things like garages with dirt floors and things like that ... They were also very bright kids and with a very different background to the average (Michelle, p. 13).

...I went to middle to working class high school that was by choice (Michelle, p. 12).

...it was a suggestion that I sat for the scholarships to go off to [a special high school] ...and my parents said no, they didn't want me to sit the scholarship or, I probably would've won them because they felt that I was moving out of my social class.....my uncle, Dad's uncle, lived next door to us and there was a cousin a block away and Dad built the house on land he'd bought from grandfather and had been born, sort of, just down the road (Michelle, p. 12).

Michelle was keenly aware that her strength in her current professional level was due in part to her particular personal history and this awareness governed what she felt was important for her children's education.

And I see a great strength in that background. I have a different language ... I have a working class language which is now modified too because of what I have done (Michelle, p. 13).

Michelle and David had decided that they wanted their eldest son to have a developed capacity for broad based social communication and felt strongly that it would not be possible to acquire that through private schools.

...I felt that it was very important that he learns to communicate... I wanted him to be able to have that kind

of communication skill as well ...which I don't think you get at upper, kind of private schools (Michelle, p. 13).

Michelle and David were responding to their own educational history as they refined their imperatives to frame a set of options for the enrolment of their sons in secondary school.

Teresa reflected on her husband's memories of his own educational history, the effect that it had had on his career and how it had affected his input to the decision-making for their children.

Peter said that when he went to high school, he messed around a bit. When [our eldest] was a baby, Peter went and did his degree at University... He looks back and thinks, "I wish I had worked harder." His brother is an engineer and is a partner in a firm...[Peter] looks back now (Teresa, p. 18).

Teresa's own education had been influenced by her mother's experience with nuns teaching her in the country.

She had a lot of years in [the country] with the nuns and everything. She used to tell me some horrible stories about the rulers hitting her knuckles and that. I guess she really didn't want that for me.... Therefore I didn't have that schooling. I think Mum wanted me home too (Teresa, p. 15).

Sally's own education had been influenced in an unusual way by her mother's experience, an intervening condition for Sally that had clearly refined the family imperatives.

On day one, I'd been enrolled so off she goes to do the rest of the hoo ha with the paper work, I suppose. Apparently the principal just took too long and she had to sit and wait for a while. She said this smell came back to her. She waited a bit longer and she got up and she came home and said, "I can't do it to you." So I went to [the] Senior High School (Sally, p. 4).

Sally's mother had had "fairly sad" experiences with the nuns and "she was of the belief that [the] nuns showed no mercy" (Sally, p. 4). Sally's personal experience was also a formative factor in refining her imperatives.

I think non-stop about the selection of a secondary school for my children. My mother thinks that I have a complex about the schools. It's not because I'm a teacher, it was because I was sort of removed, from Grade 1. I went to a country school for six months and came back again. She says that obviously traumatised me to the point where I refuse to take my children out of the school. We should be going to [the local primary school] at the bottom of this street, but they're still at [the other primary school] because I won't change them. So the decision about secondary school is really important because I won't change it – that's it (Sally, p. 23).

Mary spoke of her husband's desire for Catholic schools, implying that his own education had been a refining factor in their decision, along with their imperative of smallness in order that the children would get individual attention.

Why did we pick the Catholic school? ...ah. I suppose partly because [Gerard] had had that background that he'd...and I'd become a Catholic as an adult, and I thought that um hopefully if we sent them to a Catholic school they would receive the sort of values, or the reinforcement of the values that we'd given them at home, um I hoped that would be the case. [Gerard] seemed to think it was a benefit that he went through the Catholic system and he thought it was of benefit to him. And so yeah, I remember we talked about it because we didn't have any money and so it was a bit of a struggle to pay for it. Also, it was a smaller school than the state school would have been and we hope that they would get more sort of individual attention, or more opportunity for um, sort of understanding attention (Mary, p. 4).

Julie reflected on her own experience and that of her husband, John.

I was thinking about that and I think a lot of that, it's your own experience, [John] and I both went to Catholic schools and to Catholic high schools, and that's what you know and you're comfortable with. There is that element of fear about the unknown and um, and sending them to high schools (Julie, p. 3).

While Julie and John's imperatives dictated a choice of Catholic schooling, they had also been influenced by their own history that had encouraged social separateness through their Catholicism and so engendered a fear of the

unknown. Albert had a similar sense of his own education, but in this instance the value refined is that of co-education.

Well, I suppose because I went to a co-ed school and I, we, I did primary school at a Catholic school and my high school was done at a state school, not in Australia, and they were both coeducational and I couldn't see any reason for [being otherwise] (Albert, p. 3).

David was also aware of the issues involved with single sex versus co-educational schools. Even though he had been to an intellectually elite school himself, it was co-educational and through his own experience he could see the resultant social value.

Well, teenagers to learn to relate to people of the opposite sex in a natural way. Develop friendships instead of lacking exposure and I think, I'm cautious about homosexual development in all-boys schools. Not a big deal but it does involve a danger with experimentation with attitudes ...more of a tendency is it's a closed off school... I can see some sort of old fashioned value in strict moral code in separation of the sexes but I don't think that works in the 1990s because you can close them off for five years in theory but weekends they're out with their peers...they're destroyed if they haven't learned enough... My feeling is that a single sex school in our current society is an anachronism (David, p. 8).

Julie and John both went to Catholic single sex schools and through their experience they concluded that they wanted the opposite for their children and refined their imperatives accordingly.

I just.. I really liked the idea of them having a normal situation at school. I remember at, you know because you didn't interact with boys as a teenager it was too big a deal, it was just, people went silly and I just, I didn't like that. So and it seemed... when [our college], I suppose if [it] had've been a single sex school maybe we would've considered it because it was close but I don't think so, I think I wanted all my kids to go to the same school (Julie, p. 14).

When considering secondary education for her eldest son, Irene's brothers' experience was important.

...I liked the idea of co-ed. My brothers all went to a boys' school and they didn't like it. I went to [a girl's

college]. I always said I wouldn't send my girls there. I hear that all the time. But as I say, I was very unhappy with [the local primary school] (Irene, p. 3).

For Irene, her original desire, prompted by her own personal history, was to have Catholic co-educational secondary schooling for her own children. However, her imperatives had to be refined by the fact that her children were ineligible for the closest co-educational Catholic college and the only other realistic choice was for a girls'-only Catholic school.

Intervening conditions: Child's needs.

David and Michelle's imperative for private education was further influenced by the intervening condition of their child's specific needs. They were challenged to choose outside the local government system because their imperatives required a private education and because the specific needs of their two sons, for whom they had chosen secondary education, were dominant. As David stated:

[Our son] came with not with just my background and my knowledge and attitude but with an application to him as individual (David, p. 1).

David further describes his own attitude that had to change according to the needs of his son.

[Catholic education] was not on our agenda since we're not Catholic. My childhood was programmed anti Catholic, beware of Catholics. If someone had said to me when I was 15 "Your son's going to a Catholic high school" I would have screamed "No way!" (David, p. 4).

Michelle and David's second son had a rare disability that meant that he would require social and physical support but was intellectually very competent in some areas.

My thoughts were that our child would have particular needs which are definite and significant (David, p. 2).

They initially considered the local government high school, as David was still struggling with his concern over elitism in schools. However, considering his son's special needs that idea had to be dismissed.

So we, our initial thought was we'd put that to [our local] Senior High School which is one kilometre away, handy, convenient, free Government, but we thought "No way, he'd get killed there, eaten alive". ...it's a big high school, it's one of the biggest in the state, other people who have children there said it's pretty busy and it would be very rough so it wasn't based on going there or interviews (David, p. 3).

When Michelle and David approached the private school where their son had been enrolled since birth they were met with a patronising response that was most unwelcome.

Seemed to have a more compassionate pastoral care approach than we'd believed and detected earlier on but that was balanced by the negative "We will look after your son... We are very sensitive and in fact we would take pleasure in having him on our books. It would be good for us to be able to care for this poor handicapped child." It was slightly on the patronising and it'll be good for us. We'll get brownie points for looking after your ...child. ...It was terrible to treat him like a pawn (David, p. 3).

As a result, they turned to the Catholic system. Although this had originally been low in their priorities, the needs of Michelle and David's son refined their imperatives and turned their attention to a local Catholic College that was reputed to have an excellent support system for students. On visiting the school, they found compassion and sensitivity.

The first visit where we went to meet [the teacher] and the whole process of getting there, parking in the car park, being welcomed in, being conducted to his room by the volunteer helpers or parents, the whole atmosphere seemed to be one of consistent compassion and sensitivity. That's what I picked up (David, p. 4).

On the other hand, their eldest son had a high level capacity for languages and they were unable to find a suitable private school that had a specialist program in languages. Because they lived outside the catchment area of the government high school of high repute that did have a suitable language program, they had no automatic right of entry. Accordingly, they enrolled their son to sit for that school's scholarship exam and, happily, he was accepted on the strength of it. While Michelle and David's original preference had been for a private school,

the intellectual and social needs of their son intervened, and causing them to refine their imperatives so that a specialist government high school was appropriately valued.

Betty's firm imperative was that her children needed to receive a Catholic education. However, since she and her husband lived in a remote area of the country, it had to be boarding school. For their son, his personality influenced the particular choice of boarding school.

My son went to [a residential country Catholic Agricultural College] because he was such a larrikin. I couldn't imagine him being in a straight shirt and tie... Not his style. His style was riding bulls and things in the paddock. He enjoyed [the college]. He had a good time there (Betty, p. 10).

Their eldest daughter was intellectually handicapped and this presented special needs for her education in her adolescent years. Fortunately, she was able to live with her grandmother in a country town and attend a school that could provide for her needs.

Jenny had been *rumbling* about decisions for secondary school but was not actively concerned about it at the time she was interviewed for the study. Although the family's country domicile clearly meant there were limitations that would eventually have to be addressed, she seemed oddly reluctant to engage in the process.

...haven't really thought much about it. I should be but... Still got three years to think about it, so yeah. And then it's, and then it will depend on what she wants to do... Time goes so quickly, I mean it's amazing (Jenny, p. 7).

Jenny appeared to have very limited goal identification for her children and only became engaged when an obstacle (her son's health) forced her to be involved. Their youngest son was diagnosed with a serious, life long illness, which required daily attention and affected his schooling, which in turn will continue to affect his and his family's future choices.

[It has] a great control over your mood swings. If you're high it's very agitated, cranky, no patience, and low, he gets very cranky as well and lethargic and, ...

but he's very good with it, he knows when its low (Jenny, p. 11).

Her son's need for special care influenced the entire family as it necessarily involved substantial costs and considerable effort on Jenny's part and forced her to review her imperatives.

It probably costs us about, 'cause there's a lot of travel involved for clinics and things like that, costs between \$1500 and two grand a year. It's very expensive (Jenny, p. 11).

One of Jenny's prime imperatives is independence, a conviction that had been strongly inculcated in her by her own mother.

..but my mother insisted that you had to go away, leave home you know, get out, yeah so, and I was not an academic, so I decided on a tech course instead of going to fourth and fifth year...well not leave home but to get away from home, like boarding school and that 'cause she thinks, oh well you do, you do grow up a lot and you gotta learn to be independent and all that (Jenny, p. 3).

Jenny's son's illness, however, has made him very dependent on her, even though this ran counter to what she would have preferred for him. While she was keen not to deepen his dependency, she found that she needed to be directly involved in his other activities.

...even when he has swimming lessons in the pool, I've gotta be there, the education department won't take responsibility for him which means I gotta, well he didn't do it last year, I refused, which means you gotta go to town every day...(Jenny, p. 10).

Intervening conditions: Attitudes of others.

Garry found that the attitude of other families in their country town only served to intensify and further refine his own imperatives.

I have this argument regularly in [the town] with people who send their kids away in year 8 and don't have to. If you've got the opportunity. If it was [another country town] and they didn't have the opportunities, maybe you could think about it but gee, you don't have kids to get rid of them (Garry, p. 22).

Rachel and Damien, an American couple who had moved to Australia, sought to make educational choices for their children. Both being Catholic, they moved initially in that direction. However, new friends and work colleagues were subsequently influential in refining Rachel's imperative about faith education because their expressed reason for favouring Catholic education seemed to Rachel to be shallow and cynical.

It comes from a number of people we know through work and through socialising – that have sent their children to Catholic schools and they're not remotely interested in Catholicism at all. "I don't really believe, you know. I don't really believe in Catholicism". I've heard them say this, and it's not just one person either – several people (Rachel, p. 5).

The resultant choice for Rachel and her family was that the eldest boy was, at the time of the interview, attending the local government high school, receiving his faith education through the parish program and through his family. Rachel and Damien had taken this decision so that nominal Catholics who chose Catholic education simply to give their children a socially valued form of private education would not influence his faith education.

Intervening conditions: Needs and influence of wider family.

Mary and Gerard were *rumbling* about the possibilities for their youngest child, an only girl. They had limited availability of choice due to their country location and needed to *refine their imperatives* because of the different options available to girls. Their daughter was experiencing difficulties at primary school.

I don't know, [she] may be too sensitive, I don't know but she's very unhappy, often, and when she goes to school I say "Have a good day" and she says "I'll try, you know, I know I'm going to be teased". I think it's deteriorating, I really do. I think that the, oh, I think it's not where it was and ah, I mean she tries to play basketball and she's told to fuck off, that wouldn't have happened when the nuns were running the school. Those words would not have been uttered. If they would, they would have had their little mouths washed out and that would have been the end of it, you wouldn't come out with it again. But it's just like, tough... (Mary, p. 16).

Home schooling had been considered, as had the option of working overseas as they had done in their years as a young family. Their concern was exacerbated by the needs of Gerard's aged father, which intervened to refine their imperatives.

I guess the only thing that's holding us here is Grandpa, [Gerard's] dad is 92 and in the old folks home, there's nobody else so we can't go too far away, but otherwise we'd be well and truly looking for opportunities to work overseas again... anywhere you know, and she would be quite happy to come with us and to be home schooled and I would enjoy that, we'd both enjoy it, but while we're still here, I don't know (Mary, p. 16).

Belinda's capacity to refine her imperatives was influenced by her children's growing independence. While her imperative was initially anchored in Catholic education, it was refined when her third and fourth children were babies.

The older two went to [the local government primary school]... because it was closer. It was just down the road at the time. The other school was the [Catholic primary]. It was too far for me to drive because I still had two younger ones. So they went to the local primary school (Irene, p. 1).

Later, however, these circumstances within the family changed and allowed Belinda to fully comply with her original imperative, a Catholic education for her children. The eldest two children had started their schooling when the younger two were small babies, and this had limited Belinda's mobility. As the younger ones grew older and were less dependent the choices increased.

There are buses... By that stage my younger two were older, they weren't babies. There was a six-year gap from the older two to the younger two (Irene, p. 1).

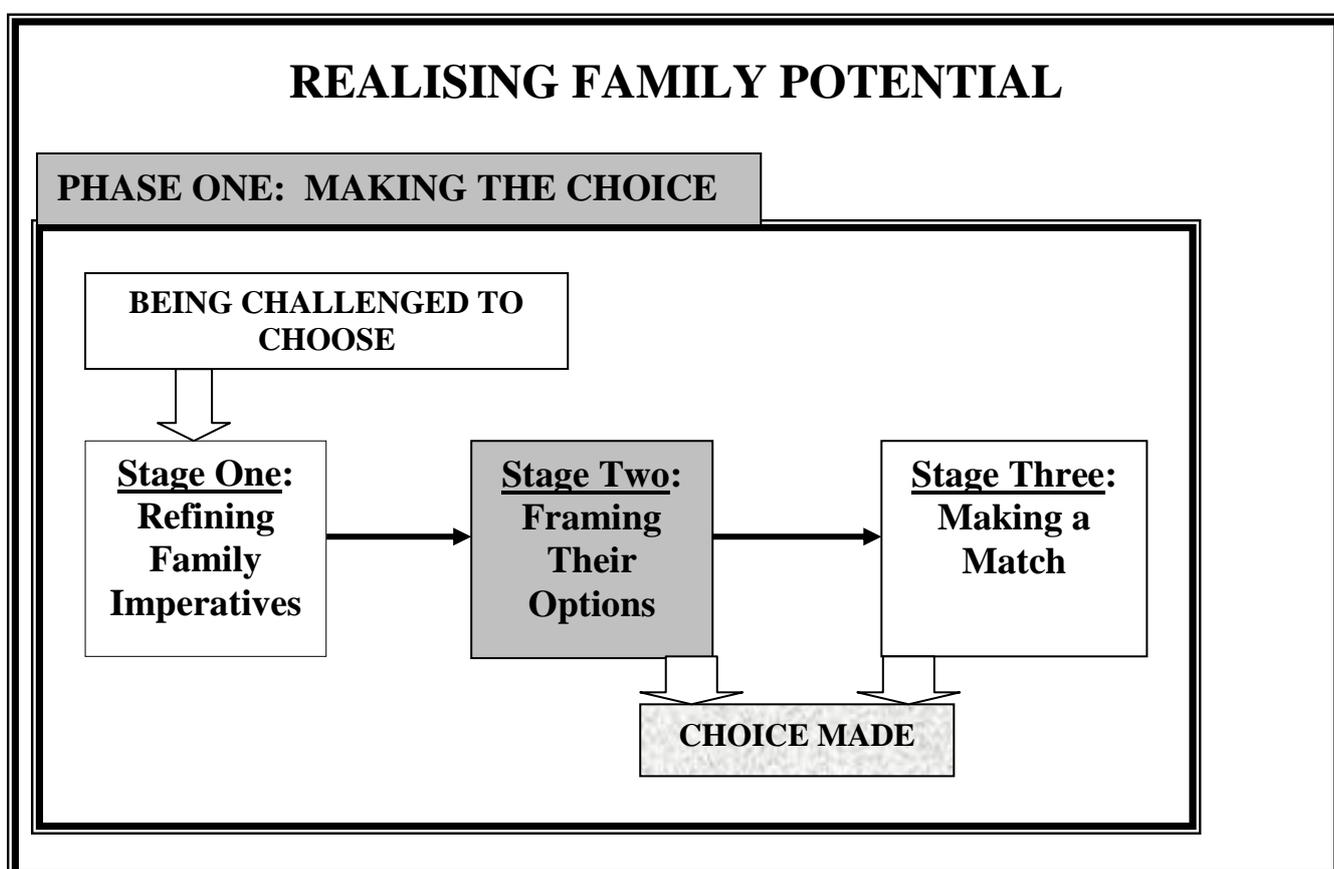
Stage Two: *Framing their Options*

In the second stage of the process of *realising family potential*, the family uses their refined imperatives to identify possible choices and source information about the schools selected for consideration. Intervening conditions that can affect the choices, made evident in this present study, are the availability of resources, geographical location, external factors, accessibility of the chosen school, and critical family events. The refined imperatives of the family,

combined with information about the candidate schools, leads the family into *framing their options*. In many instances, only one possible option was framed and in these cases the family moved directly to enrolling their children and managing the result of that enrolment. (If more than one option remained within the frame, engagement in the third stage was necessary so that a final choice of school could be made.)

A facet of the second stage is the degree to which the parents have engaged in deliberate sourcing of information to ensure that they have the greatest number of options available for consideration. Some are prepared to go to great lengths to ensure that the desired opportunities will be available, for example, by securing enrolment at birth in special schools, or by moving into a particular neighbourhood in order to be near a desired school. This level of engagement is related, as before, to the goals set for achievement, or to the magnitude of the obstacles encountered.

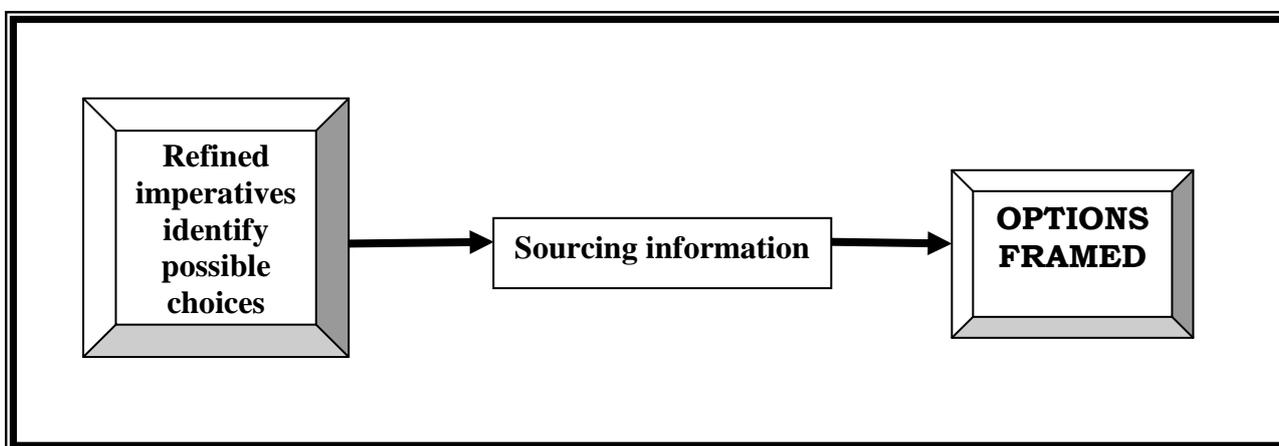
Figure 4.4. Stage Two within Phase One of the basic social process



Sourcing Information

Sourcing information is the procedural activity in which the family engages when *framing their options*. There are many and varied ways in which to gain information and the range of family engagement in this activity is extensive, from relying on one simple source only (family or friends) to multiple ways of accessing information that requires a great deal of time and energy. Once again, the level of engagement is governed by the family's goal orientation and by the nature and size of the obstacles encountered.

Figure 4.5. Stage Two – Framing their options



Sally, a qualified teacher herself, presented a very high level of engagement in the process of sourcing information. She had a strong professional interest in a holistic education.

I'm desperate to send them to a Catholic school but I won't do it unless I perceive that it is a good educational institution as well as ... I know that I'm going to get the spiritual side of it – that's a given. It's everything else as well (Sally, p. 7).

In her search for information she used many forms of investigation.

I've made it my business to find out. I've been on school tours, I've spoken to parents and staff. I'm making sure I make the correct decision about where my child goes. I'm involved in the state system... so I know what goes on (Sally, p. 2).

I've read all the information. From the standpoint of an ordinary person, I've been to the orientation day and I've read all the information. I don't really get a sense of what their package is. I have made my own inquiries. I pigeon-holed one of the heads of department at a conference and made him go through the mill. He gave very good answers – not a problem. I have a good friend who has just been employed there. If they've employed her, that's a very good indication (Sally, p. 3).

I had six months of long service leave last year. I went to nearly every school you can name and did the tour and interviewed them. I've got that many booklets and brochures. They were wonderful. I went on their little tour, I spoke to them (Sally, p. 21).

The result of her extensive investigation was the decision to enrol her children in a college that she considered to be the best option.

Francesca, who had migrated to Australia with her husband to join other members of her family, found her choice of preferred school quite readily. She evidently trusted the opinions of others in her local ethnic community and her primary interest was in the immediate happiness of her sons. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the level of engagement is determined by the goal orientation of the family and the obstacles that they encounter. Since the goal orientation was the immediate happiness of her sons, and because there were no substantial obstacles to challenge them, the family were happy to assume the same choices as the rest of their ethnic community.

My sister-in-law who was living here – her kids also attend state schools. We just put my boys into the same school as her kids. My boys were happy there and just love it there. Although I'd be happy to send my kids to a Catholic school because both my husband and I were attending Catholic school when were young. We thought that would be a good upbringing (Francesca, p. 6).

Michelle had enrolled her two eldest boys in a local private school at birth and later, when two further Christian schools were being developed in the area, she enrolled them in those schools as well. A prime source of information for her was a friend who taught at the one of the Christian schools.

...one of our good friends was a teacher at [the college] and she said not to send him [there] ... There's almost inherent bullying in the school that's not addressed and that he would be, he would be picked on and that there's not enough support for a child like him (Michelle, p. 7).

On the strength of this information about bullying from her friend, Michelle did not include that particular school in the family's frame of options.

Rebecca and Terry engaged at a high level in their search for information about possible choices. Their goal-orientation for each of their children was high, according to the ability of each child, so they engaged in sourcing information at a high level. Being fully committed to Catholic education, they did not want to think outside of that arena. They were aware of the differences in ethos of different groups of Catholic educators, and felt it important to ensure that their children were educated in a context in which they were comfortable and included. The town they had moved to was “very parochial and all the girls whose mothers ever went to [a particular College], they all go to [that College]” (Rebecca, p. 1). There was a variety available, including two very academic, single sex schools, and two vocational single sex schools that were amalgamating. Since their own personal history favoured single sex schools, they were inclined in that direction but clearly were prepared to look also at co-educational facilities. However, they perceived problems with the co-educational schools.

... the problem was because those two schools were amalgamating and taking two different charisms and ... trying to put them together into one new situation, with a lay principal, um, well we just decided to hold off, we'd better take a “wait and see” attitude on that one” (Rebecca, p. 2).

To source further information on one school where they had some prior sense of community they attended the 25th anniversary of the school. They had had connections in their home state with the founding religious order of the school and so felt very much part of that style of community. However, geographical issues made it a difficult choice. It was on the far side of a large country town and the buses would have made travel difficult and, with several other small

children, Rebecca was unable to drive them daily. To further source information, Rebecca rang two of the schools and asked for a prospectus to be sent out. The response from each school was revealing of their attitudes. The first school's response was:

"I'm sorry you'll have to wait 'til open day". When we rang the [other] school and said could we have the prospectus they said "We'll have it in the post this afternoon" and it was, it was there the next day (Rebecca, p. 3).

In making choices for the younger children in their large family, they had a further intervening factor in that for employment purposes they recently moved to Western Australia from interstate and thus had no knowledge about the local systems and no feeling of connectedness. Consequently, Rebecca felt that they had to "do their homework" to ensure they had an understanding of what was available to them locally (Rebecca, p. 1).

It was rather interesting, that experience, because I did a lot of searching on the Internet. Um, we had maps so we had a vague idea of where we wanted live north of the river, close to the beach 'cause that was the only way we could get [one son] to come happily, um, and so we sort of were looking from, I suppose from [among four colleges]. So I rang colleges up and I said you know can I get your prospectus and you get that same attitude of no, sorry, we can't send one because we are fully booked, in some cases, um, not even an attitude of well, let's try and see what's going on, I'm not saying that they should say if they don't have places, but an attitude that says well we don't have places, not we don't need you (Rebecca, p. 6).

Rebecca persisted in her information search.

... we had some that sort of said yes, and sent stuff over and we had a look at it and rang up and said that we'd be in town, could we have interviews, and the only ones that we actually had interviews were with [two of the colleges]. Um,[one] was um, quite an interesting, it looked as though it was going to be very academic which possibly was not going to suit our youngest son but would suit [our youngest daughter]. Um, it sort of looked a lovely school, we had a most interesting interview because we didn't meet a single educational member of staff (Rebecca, p. 6).

Mary, a country mother, also engaged to a very high level in sourcing information due to her goals for each individual child, her professional outlook which she shared with her husband, Gerard, and the obstacles that country living provided. With a large family to educate, she and Gerard sought information from a wide variety of possibilities.

I think I mainly just canvassed around every possible option, perhaps the different institutions got the information, I remember making a great big file of that. And we did check out every possibility because, oh we checked out... there's a couple of hostels in [the city] that send kids to the state government senior high schools, and um, they have a pretty good record, so we canvassed everything (Mary, p. 8).

With the information in hand, Mary enrolled each child in a school that each helped to choose. Each child was fully consulted and their own needs and personalities taken into account.

Rosa and her husband, holding high academic goals for their children, were challenged to work hard at choosing a suitable secondary school to further their dreams. Following careful research, they had decided that only private schools would be in their frame of options.

I attended open days for three private and three government schools plus arranged visits to two local catholic (sic) high schools. I methodologically (sic) researched the school options as I would anything I was unfamiliar with. We wanted our son to gain a "well rounded" education that included academics, music and sport. I met the headmasters or principals for each school and was most impressed by the headmaster of the school we eventually chose (Rosa, p. 2).

One of the ways in which Rosa ensured that options would be available for them was to have her son sit exams for entry scholarships.

Our son wrote exams for private school scholarships plus the government exams for enriched programs. He did not receive a private school scholarship but did well enough that they contacted us and offered him a place without our even applying. He did well in all exams and could have chosen enriched programs for two government high schools (not local) but we were not happy that the programs were streaming students into

science/maths or social sciences at such an early age. Our son did well in everything and we were not prepared to stream him (Rosa, p. 2).

Belinda depended on information gleaned from others.

[I gained information] from other parents with older children. They were very happy there and it seemed to have a good name – from general talking to people. People were happy with the school and that's where we wanted him to go (Belinda, p. 3).

Having moved to Australia when her children were small, Barbara's children were enrolled in a Catholic primary school by her husband who had arrived in Perth well before his family.

... when we moved here, my husband enrolled them in a Catholic school, because he knew I was Catholic. He had heard that private schools are better than government schools and that there would be a waiting list. He just went ahead and enrolled them (Barbara, p. 3).

Subsequent dissatisfaction with the school's academic program motivated the mother to move them into the government sector during their primary schooling and discouraged her from considering, or seeking any information about, Catholic secondary schooling. She declared "she didn't want to pursue a Catholic education after that" (Barbara, p. 11).

Intervening Conditions

Even though parents employed a range of strategies (as described above) to source information to identify their options in choosing a school, not all available schools were automatically included in the frame of options. Various conditions intervened to increase the attractiveness of some options, while other conditions provoked a negative view of some schools to the extent that they were not included in the final frame of viable options.

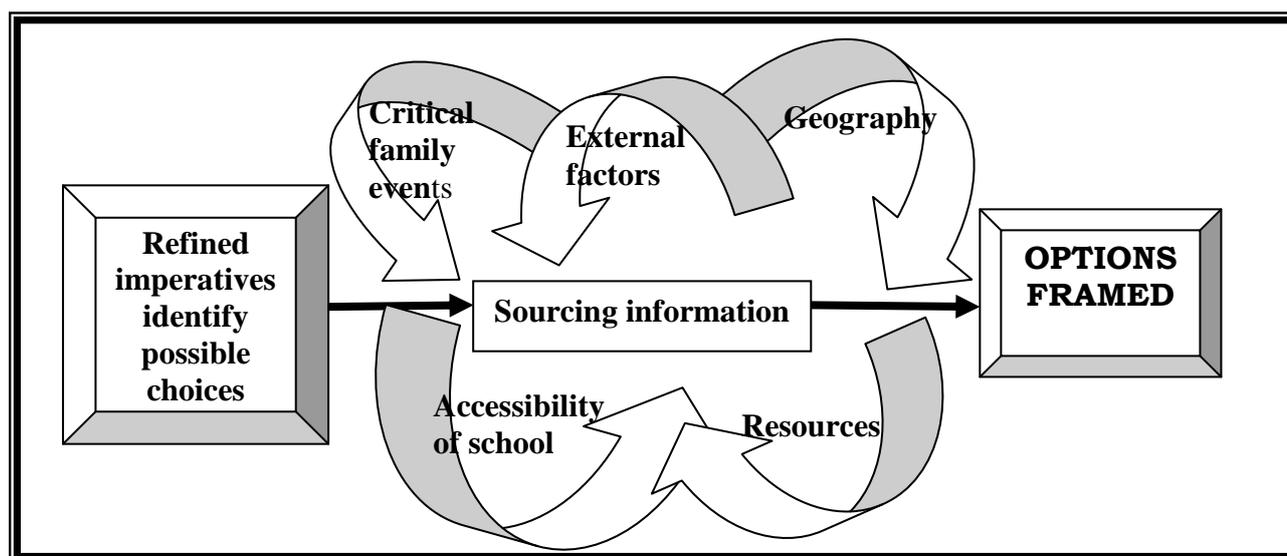
Intervening conditions: Resources.

A substantial intervening factor for families in *framing their options* was the availability of resources, in regard both to time and finances. Francesca and her

husband went no further than to listen to the assessment of others.

When we came from [our home country], we arrived in March and they were halfway through the first term. We didn't have time to look for schools. We were told by friends and relatives that private school are expensive, so we were put off by that (Francesca, p. 6).

Figure 4.6. Stage Two – Framing their options, with intervening conditions



Sally declared that finances were not a difficult issue as the family was “obviously not hard-pressed for money” (Sally, p. 18). However, even though the resources were readily available, she was keen to stress that she did not believe that expensive fees were a necessary indicator of value.

Although, I'm not stupid. I look at those \$10,000 a year schools and think, “Are you silly?” I know that you get a class of 25 and that's a big thing. I also checked out [another private school] and it's a much better school. It's a fine school. We checked out [the previous college I mentioned] and I wouldn't send anybody there.... A shocking atmosphere. Boys, hunched shoulders, looking down, shuffling. My mother and I were absolutely gob-smacked. We were absolutely horrified at the atmosphere and the way in which the boys – there wasn't a spark of life in any faces – dead – mullets (Sally, p. 22).

Sally managed to enrol her children in a college that she and her husband believed offered optimum benefits, but subsequent events created an intervening

condition related to their financial situation that prevented them taking up the opportunity.

If I could have my choice, it would be [this particular college]. We actually had the house up for sale. They were enrolled at ...a feeder primary. The only way you can get in is to be in a feeder primary. Circumstances happened – we didn't sell the house, GST came in – the whole thing stopped (Sally, p. 2).

For Julie's family, financial resources were clearly stretched, although they managed to maintain their choice for their five children, despite the financial challenge.

We did at one stage consider [sending them to a state school] not because we weren't happy with Catholic schools but there was a time when we were really struggling and were getting into a lot of debt and we had to kind of think about well, you know, a lot of this was happening because we were sending them to Catholic schools (Julie, p. 3).

We were fine until they went to high school. Then we had a year with three of them at high school and we just you know, got into more and more debt. [The College] were fantastic and they let us accumulate the debt but the debt's always there. That was a big deal and I went back to work which I didn't want to do and that was quite traumatic so it was a big sacrifice to keep them there and we seriously thought about taking them out but we couldn't do that so... and it's all worked out in the end. We've caught up [laugh] sort of! (Julie, p. 8).

A further issue for Julie's family was that their finances limited them to one car.

Cause we have one car so the location was quite important at that stage. John was working there, the kids [were] at [the Catholic primary school] and we had one car so that was very convenient (Julie, p. 2).

The imperatives for Teresa's family demanded that their sons not go to a large, local government high school, because they wanted better pastoral care. However, they realised this carried a significant financial burden. Fortunately, a grandparent assisted them.

I think it's mainly the size of it – and where would [my eldest son] fit in there? Whereas I know if he goes to a private school, they do look after them. And that's what you pay for. That is what the money is for.

It was [my husband's] idea so he's quite keen on that.... When [his] father passed on, he said, "I'd really like the boys to have a good education." So he made allowances. That money would go towards their education, whether it be high school or university (Teresa, p. 14).

Albert and his wife had to carefully consider the financial burden when considering schools for their four children.

...we came to question probably when he was in Year 4, Year 5 maybe, we won't be able to afford to send him to private school and that's why we looked at the different options, different schools, and I think in Year 5 we had to sort of make a decision. At that stage we said "yes we can afford it" um, I mean the choice would have been if we can afford it, they'll go to Catholic schools, if we can't then it'll be a state school and then we would have to find you know a good state school (Albert, p. 3).

Albert was also conscious that, as a shift worker on a limited income, the decision to enrol the children in a Catholic school would have significant financial ramifications for his family.

... we've been happy with it. Um the children are happy with it as well because you know sometimes they ask you questions like "why can't we go on holiday you know, so and so's been overseas last year and they're going next year again" but we say that's the choice they make, those children go to such and such a school you know. Both the mum and the dad work so it's quite different, they can afford it. With us it's different we can't. Our main priority is to put you through schooling make sure you have a good education, a good upbringing, and once that's been achieved then we can start going on holidays [laugh] (Albert, p. 3).

To assist with the financial burden, Albert's wife returned to the workforce when most of the children had reached high school.

Tricia had always wanted her boys to go to Catholic schools but was aware of their financial limitations.

We would have liked to afford for them to go to a Catholic primary school but the financial state was that we wouldn't afford it. My husband has just been given a career opportunity and he's been given a promotion. So

we're now in a financial situation that we will be able to afford to send the boys to a Catholic education. Really, the Catholic education is the cheapest of the lot anyway, if you ring around (Tricia, p. 9).

Tricia had sourced information about the financial implications for her family should they engage in Catholic education and it had a critical effect on *framing their options* such that Catholic education had at first seemed out of the question. Fortunately, with an increase in income and a strengthening of her imperative about Catholic education, Tricia and her husband were, in the end, able to include Catholic schools within the frame of viable options.

Nicole had had a great deal of difficulty in educating her two stepsons. When she and Graham's two younger sons (their third and fourth sons) were ready for secondary school, Nicole enrolled them in a large private boys' school. The financial cost was gladly borne, particularly when their third boy showed a remarkable difference in his behaviour and attitude shortly after commencing at the school. Nicole related how Graham responded to the financial challenge:

He just accepts, because of the problems we've had with the older ones that something else had to be done. When he saw how [our third son] was when he first started and just how excited he was and the whole thing, [Graham] said, "Whatever it's going to cost us, it's all worth it" - to see the different change (Nicole, p. 14).

Linda, a single mother, was working part time to care for her two sons. The second son showed clear sporting prowess and her concern was that at the local high school where the older boy attended there would not be sufficient sporting interest to stimulate and support the younger boy. Although she lacked the funds to pay private school fees, other parents in her son's local football team encouraged her to write to a large Catholic boys' school that had special facilities for sportsmen.

I spoke to a few friends who were going to [the College] - [my son] plays football with them. They just said to write a letter and tell them the situation, so I did. He had contact with the sports master there. I couldn't afford to send [my son] as a full paying student - he had to go on some sort of scholarship. I knew he was good at sport and I knew [the College] liked sports people (Linda, p. 6).

Using her ex-husband's name, since he had himself been a student of the college and was a prominent sportsman, she wrote and applied for her son to receive a scholarship and was successful. By using information gleaned from other parents, she was thus able to reduce the effect of her lack of resources by approaching the problem from a different angle.

Clarissa and her husband had migrated to Australia when the eldest of their four children was in primary school. Although her family origins were deeply rooted in Catholicism, and even though their son had attended a Catholic school before migrating, they enrolled him in the local government school when they arrived in Australia. The only information Clarissa had sourced was through a friend who had told her: "Don't put them in the [local Catholic school]" (Clarissa, p. 10). Clarissa and her husband's financial resources were very limited: "It was going to be hard, because we were just starting" (Clarissa, p. 10). Since the eldest child continued his schooling in the local government primary school and later in the government high school, it became the easiest option for the next son to follow the same path. Even though she would have liked her second son to be in the Catholic school, the significantly greater distance to the Catholic school would have further stretched their resources.

Well, less money to pay. Fine, he'll go with [our eldest]. It would've been a big effort for me anyway because I would have had one child here and one child there...Money does make it a big decision – it was for us, having three children at the time... (Clarissa, p. 11).

School fees are sometimes not the only financial burden to be carried by parents who choose schools outside those provided locally by the government. Tracey, for instance, spoke of the necessity to remain in close phone contact with her daughter while she was at boarding school.

We have huge phone bills, but I don't care because that's my support to them. If that's the way I have to give it, then that's the way it is (Tracey, p. 14).

Tracey and her husband farm within a family business and the education of the children is high in their list of priorities. "No matter what else, you educate your kids properly. That's a decision that we've made" (Tracey, p. 19). The cost of their boarding school fees is deliberately included in the family farm budget.

Intervening conditions: External factors.

External factors beyond the control of the family were also experienced as an intervening condition when some families were *sourcing information*. One such factor involved the long standing expectation by the Church, as described in Chapter 1, that children of Catholic families would attend Catholic schools. While its interpretation and application varied from place to place, the decision of the early bishops was still effective 100 years later. Hugh spoke of two incidences where parish priests excommunicated parents for not sending their children to the Catholic school.

This family friend of mine, this one guy, it'd be in the 1930s I suppose, where his parents get excommunicated, because they pull him out of the convent because he's being bullied by older boys and sent him to the state school and the parents get excommunicated by the parish priest ... Nobody could challenge what they could do. This guy was parish priest in the one place for 49 years and six months. Imagine how much control... in 1960 in [a country town]. [My friend's] mother was excommunicated because she sent him to the high school and not to the convent which had about six boys in it all doing the one stream of subjects (Hugh, p. 12).

The exercise of such power in the local parish system had an effect on what parents could view as their choices and, while it is not enforceable today, it exists to some extent in the collective memory of the Catholic community.

Another external factor impacting one country family revolved around the provision of Catholic schooling in their country community. In order to have a religious order of teaching sisters come to their town to help with the Catholic education of their primary school aged children, the parents were required to sign a contract to say that they would send their daughters to that particular congregation's city boarding school when they progressed to secondary school. Although Betty and her family, for instance, had their imperative of Catholic schooling firmly in their minds, being able to include a Catholic school in their *options framed* meant that it had to be the particular girls' boarding school run by the religious order that provided Catholic education for primary children in their town.

...we wanted to get the nuns here, one of our commitments through the parish council was to send our girls to [their boarding school]. We had to sign on the dotted line (Betty, p. 11).

Intervening conditions: Accessibility of school.

A causal condition for the families' *being challenged to choose* outside the local government schooling was described in the previous chapter under the sub-category of availability of schooling. A further dimension of this sub-category appears as an intervening condition during the phase of framing their options. While a lack of availability affected city and country families, an ability to access the schools chosen also intervened as a condition affecting their frame of options.

The experience for a number of families in the metropolitan area was that the excessive demand for Catholic secondary schooling made accessibility a problem in framing their options. Since most systemic Catholic schools provide non-government education at a low to medium fee level, they are very attractive to both Catholic and non-Catholic families (Independent Schools Council of Australia, 2006). Moreover, unless a Catholic child who wishes to enrol in a Catholic secondary school has attended a Catholic primary school, the chances of being accepted are reduced unless the family can show that the child has been attending a Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) and that the parents are committed and practising within their parish.

You had to be involved in the parish. I was a reader anyway, at the time, at the parish, and then I took on teaching as a catechist. I knew that would all help, and it did, because he got in (Belinda, p. 3).

Jane, for instance, had been unable to afford to send her boys to a Catholic primary school so she had engaged the boys fully in the parish religious education program and did everything that she could to access a Catholic secondary school.

I came home, promptly filled [in the application forms], sent in the deposit and waited for a couple of years for the interview process. We had an interview with the

priest, who was brand new. He didn't know us (Jane, p. 12).

The process is lengthy and has to be begun well in advance of the child's starting date at secondary school, requiring the parents to be fully aware of what is necessary and to be proactive for the future.

People were saying to me last year, "But he doesn't start until Year 8." "Yes, I know." "But how do you know you've already got a position?" Because they have to do it that far ahead. Whereas other schools are obviously just doing it this year for next year. You have to be one step ahead of yourself at all times. Are they going to do RE [in the parish]? Do you really want to ever look at secondary [schooling]?" You have to be one step ahead of yourself (Jane, p. 12).

Several participants reported that the enrolment system did not need to seek their enrolment, but rather they were required to pursue the various procedures that the secondary school had required. Jane's experience describes such a situation.

You're not in a system that guarantees you will get the prompt saying, "This is what you now do." You have to be aware. Obviously [the parish priest] had had to go back and look at our records as to how long we'd been going to RE. Fortunately again the coordinator was very familiar with them; she knew my boys, and she was brilliant. She said, "Look, don't worry, he's aware. I've got a list of who has been coming for how long and all of that." That was great because he'd been literally been in the parish about two months when the interview process began (Jane, p. 12).

Importance is also attached to the way the child presents at interview. Jane describes how her son participated in the interview and the importance of his response.

[Our eldest] interviewed brilliantly, he was great, our son. He was very very good. We must have [the priest's] support and then we went to the school and interviewed with the school and again [our son] was brilliant. He had a lovely report from school. His previous report was very good. You just provide the last report that the child received and fortunately that was excellent. We just waited and hoped (Jane, p. 12).

Sally, Michelle and David gave similar accounts about the need for the child to present well at the interview required by the secondary school in the enrolment process. Since availability of secondary school places in Catholic schools is at such a premium, parents face an anxious wait for confirmation of enrolment, or disappointment. Should the latter be the case they then need to return to the same process before they can ensure they have their *options framed*. As Jane explained:

We felt it was like a lottery. My husband would say to me, "Have we got a 50% chance or a 30% chance or a 70% chance? What chance have we got?" I said, "It's just like a lottery, as far as I can tell. He's not in a feeder school, he's done everything he can do to achieve it. He's done his RE, he's got his sacraments - we'll just have to wait and see." Very fortunately, he was offered a space. That is great for our second child, of course, because he's sort of halfway there having a sibling in the school. Not that it's guaranteed, but at least he has that as well and hopefully he will get in. I enrolled both at the same time. It's just a matter of waiting. They were saying in the newsletter at church last week that the interviews for the following year from [our eldest] are about to start happening (Jane, p. 12).

The level of Jane's engagement in the process, and the degree of her pro-activity in working towards enrolment for her sons in a Catholic secondary school, has been driven by the strength of her imperative. As described in the previous chapter, Jane's faith formed the imperative that propelled her to seek assistance in the faith education of her sons in their teenage years. With limited resources, she was content to engage in local government primary education along with the parish religious education program, so that she could conserve her resources for Catholic secondary schooling.

Teresa was aware that it would have been very hard to access the low fee paying Catholic school that is closest to their home.

We thought about [the closest Catholic College], but the actual interview process is very hard. They have feeder schools and the sibling rule, so it would have been very hard to get in. I heard what the interview process is like and it is quite rigorous (Teresa, p. 10).

Clarissa was not successful in her application to a Catholic primary school for her third son, which disappointed her because that would have ensured her sons' successful enrolment in the Catholic secondary school.

I was seeing [the previous parish priest]. I knew him because my children -- that was my church at the time because I was [living locally to his church] and that's where [our eldest] was going to have his religious education. I didn't know [the new parish priest] that much. That's when you need to have a priest, - for a reference. That's who I went to because that's who I knew. As far as I know, it was to go to [the nearest Catholic primary school] because we were moving from [our previous place] to live [near to Fr Y's parish school]. I don't think it was for [Fr X's parish school]. I had made the choice for [the other Catholic school] then, but he didn't get accepted (Clarissa, p. 11).

Fulfilling the eligibility criteria was difficult for Clarissa because they had had to move several times while they were renting, prior to buying their own home. She believed that accessibility to the Catholic primary school was governed, in the end, by one's financial contribution to the parish.

I feel because I wasn't paying, at the time, at the church. You know how you have the envelope that they hand out? ...I had an interview with [the parish priest]. That was the one thing, looking back, that made them take the decision that he wasn't accepted (Clarissa, p. 10-11).

Clarissa's inability to meet the admissions criteria governed much of her decision making for the schooling of their first three sons.

I would have preferred to put all my children in a Catholic school. We started here 12 years ago and we didn't have the money to put them in private schools. I'm definitely going to put [our fourth son] into a Catholic school (Clarissa, p. 1)

However, her underlying imperative for a Catholic education has remained strong, along with her own faith. At the time of interview, Clarissa's fourth son was still below school age and much younger than the other three boys but she was clear in her desire for him to become a priest, and in her mind this necessarily involved a full Catholic education.

I'd love him to be a priest. I'd love to have one child that really is so... how am I going to get that if they don't get it from the word "go"? I feel that life, basically here in Australia, is very far away from faith... At least in a Catholic school, I hope he'll have more contact (Clarissa, p. 14).

With increased financial stability due to her husband's improved employment, the eldest boy working, and finally being in their own home, Clarissa had every hope that her fourth son would now be assured of a full Catholic education since she had the necessary characteristics in place for a successful enrolment in the Catholic primary school attached to the parish that she now consistently attended.

Intervening conditions: Critical family events.

A further condition that influenced the framing of a family's options was the intervention of critical family events. For example, Geraldine and her husband had moved to Western Australia primarily for the academic goals that they desired for their children as they were convinced that such possibilities were unavailable in their home country at the time. Their family had been critically affected by discriminatory government policy. As Geraldine explains:

It's very difficult to compete with, in [our country]. For example you get A and the other fellow get C and you can't get into university. So that's why a lot of parents [from our country] they just sell the property just to send the children's so they know their children get an education (Geraldine, p. 14).

On arriving in Australia their first choice was for Catholic education but another Christian private school offered places to them for their two children and in their anxiety to have them placed they accepted.

...we send them there because when we immigrated here we put their names, rather my son's down at [the Catholic school] and then we didn't get a reply until, before we got a reply from [the other Christian College] so we grabbed that one and two weeks later we got a place in [the Catholic school]. But it was too late so we continued to put the boy there (Geraldine, p. 1).

Geraldine had always felt uncertain about the choice and when her husband died she felt that she needed to return to her original imperative and seek Catholic

education once again. In the year prior to her husband's death, Geraldine had been aware that her daughter seemed to become more remote from her Catholic faith practices.

...when she went to [the College] and gradually she lost that [Catholic way of praying] (Geraldine, p. 3).

With her husband's death, her need to be more connected to the Catholic community increased in intensity. The eldest of their two children, a son, had just graduated from Year 12 but her daughter was still in Year 9 at the time so Geraldine pursued an enrolment for her in the Catholic College and she was accepted.

While Michelle and her husband were living overseas, Michelle's husband died. Such a critical event seriously affected all her previous plans for her two sons.

I was living in Germany and my husband died and left me with the two older boys. They were seven, going on eight, nearly eight, and 15 months. The one who was 15 months is the fellow that we're talking about.... So when I came back...here to Perth ...schooling was a bit of a problem because we always expected to end up either, internationally or in Melbourne and the older boy had his name down for two [private schools] (Michelle, p. 1).

A critical family event that caused a change to the framing of options for one family was related to the employment of the mother. Anne had worked part time shift work as a nurse for many years as the family matured but finally reached a crisis point in the political upheavals in the work place.

What seemed like a great job that was just going along, all of a sudden became the ghastliest, political, yucky thing. I worked through that and decided I'd stay as long as I absolutely had to, and that I would ... sometimes you can't change things. It was either stay and be totally revolting or leave. I stayed as long as I could and we started a home-based business. That enabled me to leave. When I left work, I'd been doing it for 25 years in between having babies and going to school and all that. Then I stopped. It was an unbelievable change (Anne, p. 3).

The change that Anne referred to then opened the possibilities for a new range of options that included a change of school choice for her last two children if

that became necessary. She had found that the home business which she and her husband had begun was providing sufficient income for her to resign from her difficult position and engage in a much more flexible life style.

Diane's situation had always presented difficulties because her husband, Peter, travelled frequently for employment purposes. They had moved interstate to Perth and things had settled to the point that Diane felt that her children were settled in their education. However, pressure from Peter's employer was applied to her and to Peter in order to get them to move to yet another capital city.

All of our family are in [another capital city] ... so I prefer to go back there. It was offered... Peter's boss was desperate. He flew [over here] and wined and dined us, trying to talk me into going to [another major capital city]. The cost factor of Peter commuting between [capital cities] every three weeks was going to be an issue (Diane, p. 15).

The result was that the family moved back to their original state capital and resumed the educational choices that they had made prior to leaving.

The critical family event that intervened in the education of Rebecca's children was the shift in her husband's employment to Western Australia. Having moved from the eastern states where they had actively pursued the best possible Catholic education for their children, they were now faced with engaging in the entire process again for their two youngest children.

...that was the background for that change and then when I came across here we went looking again (Rebecca, p. 6).

Intervening conditions: geography.

Availability of schooling was one of the three causal conditions described in Chapter 3 that challenged the family to choose outside of the local government schooling. One dimension of that causal condition was the geographical location of the school in relation to the family home and it now reappears as an intervening condition when families source information so that they can frame their options of good available choices. The earlier discussion of resources as

an intervening factor had shown that geography was firmly enmeshed as a factor for some of the participants. The location of the school had to be considered in tandem with resources and other issues in order to discover whether the family could, or could not, access the desired school.

Mary described country life as being “in Siberia culturally” (Mary, p. 19). There were limited possibilities for education in upper school particularly, and in cultural areas.

...we think about it and we think are we depriving our kids by being in the country and being not, you know, they really haven't got the opportunities for that extra development in music and drama and all sorts of areas that they might be able to do if they were in the city (Mary, p. 18).

Mary and her husband faced difficulties when questions of upper schooling first arose. Their country town provided good schooling up until Year 10 at the local district high school but upper schooling became a problem. They could send them to other large country towns where there were boarding facilities but, as they wanted Catholic education, it was sensible to go to the city so that they had maximum possibilities. And since the city cultural life was a drawcard, it was clear that family needs would need to be pointed in the same direction. When they educated their eldest boys, options had been very limited.

... there were only two Catholic boys schools taking boarders at the time ... it was like 10, 15 years ago... but then the rural depression hit and people couldn't afford boarding school and also the population numbers dropped a bit I think (Mary, p. 8).

For their third son, given that he was very happy in the country school and because carpeted boarding facilities would be a problem for his severe asthma, Mary and Gerard decided that travelling by bus to the nearest large town would be the best alternative. The country location of the family home was a continual influence in all decisions that Mary and Gerard made for their children's schooling.

Betty spoke clearly about the difficulties that their rural, farm-based location posed when they came to frame their options for secondary schooling.

There is a three-year high school at [a large country town] and the bus comes out to [our town] and some of them go there – not very many.....it's an hour bus trip... The rest have to go to either [the city]...Then there are boarding facilities at the high school. The WA Hostels Association have a hostel.....two hours away again. Some of them go there because they can come home a bit more often. There are not many choices (Betty, p. 7).

When there is a combination of intervening factors, the choices become more difficult to make. Farming incomes are subject to many variables that are not within the farmer's control and when upper secondary school education is not available in their local area, the choices can become very difficult for the family financially.

Tom and Beth's rural location, combined with a difficult financial situation in the agricultural sector generally, greatly limited the available choices within their frame of options.

It's the cost of sending them away (Beth).

That's the trouble, we just haven't got the money to send them away (Tom).

We were lucky with [our second child] because we got assistance to send her away, and that was great. With [our other daughter], she's not quite sure where she wanted to go and I said to [Tom], well perhaps [the next country town] because she's a different child, not as worldly as [our eldest girl] and I think it's only an hour and a half away and I've heard good reports on the school, you know, and it's half the price (Beth).

Just mainly prices a common factor (Tom).

If you just haven't got the money you can't send them. It doesn't matter where they go but they have to go away...(Beth & Tom, p. 20).

While geographical location is of critical significance for country families, it is also an intervening condition relevant to many city families as well. Julie was conscious that the location of their chosen school was influential.

'Cause we have one car so the location was quite important at that stage. John was working there, the kids

at [the adjacent Catholic primary school] and we had one car so that was very convenient. ...the kids can get a bus. Yeah. And you know, like my sister's children go there so we sort of share driving and stuff like that if we need to (Julie, p. 2).

Teresa had considered the family's location in relationship to a very reputable government high school, which would be a possible option to consider.

Because we're on this side of the [boundary] road, we're not about to move so that we can go into the [school's] zone ...they're not taking any out-of-boundary students. That's how tough it is. We weighed all that up and decided that we'd rather -- we'd always had our hearts set on [one of the local Christian schools] (Teresa, p. 12).

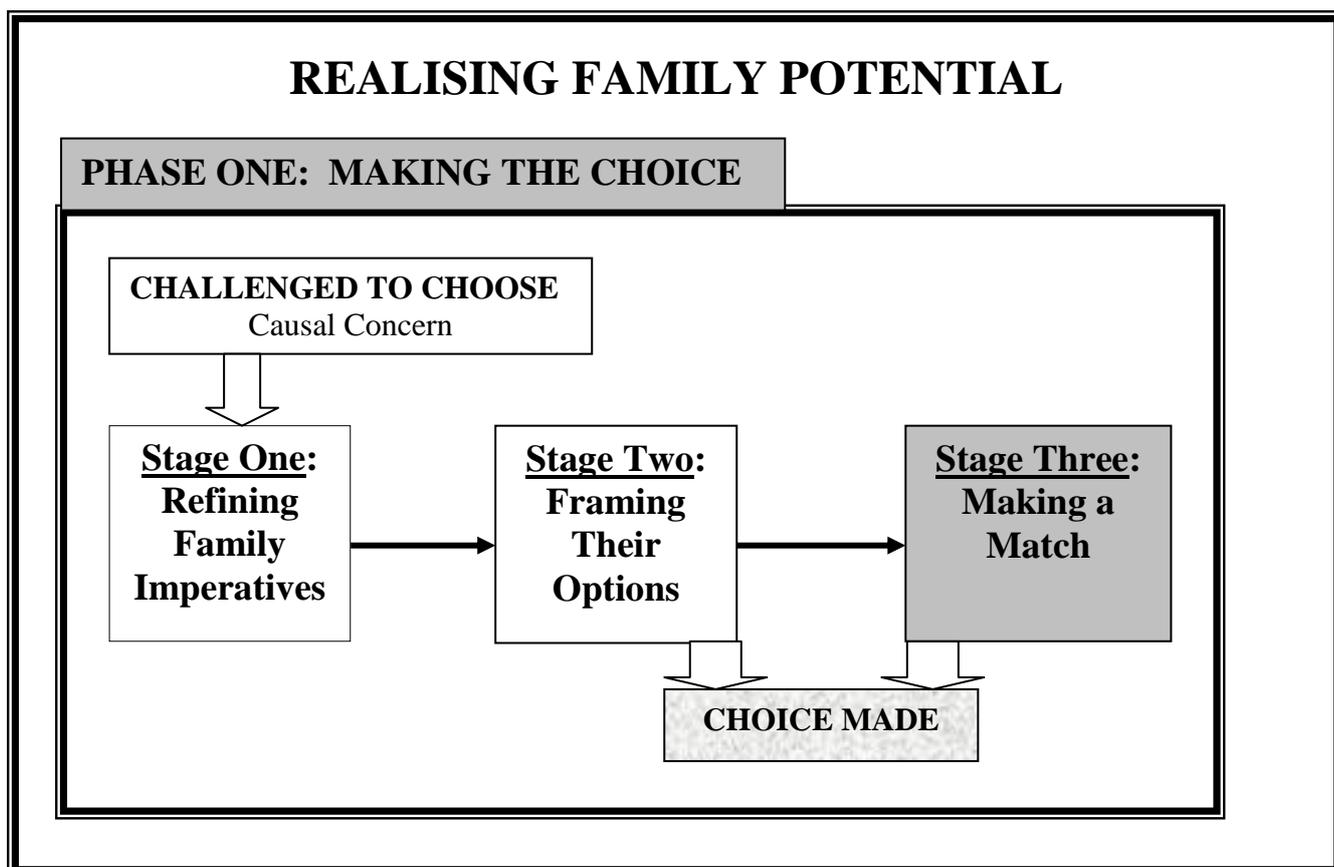
Because their geographical location excluded the state high school of their choice, it was then removed from their frame of options.

Stage Three: Making a Match

Stage Three of the process describes how the decision to commit to an enrolment in one particular school is made. Once the family have defined their imperatives, and formed a frame of options, they then need to make a match within their possible options by balancing all of the various intervening factors to deliver an outcome that provides the best prospects for realising the family's potential. Where the frame includes more than one candidate school, this 'matching' involves identifying among the set the single school that, if chosen, secures the best possible match between what it can offer the family and what the family is seeking to achieve in terms of family potential.

It is evident from the data described below that this phase for some families is encountered concurrently with the previously described phase because the framing of their options provides only one choice. It is therefore only the family with more than one option in the frame that must complete the third stage separately. Figure 4.7 illustrates this by depicting two pathways to the point at which the choice is made.

Figure 4.7. Stage Three within the basic social process



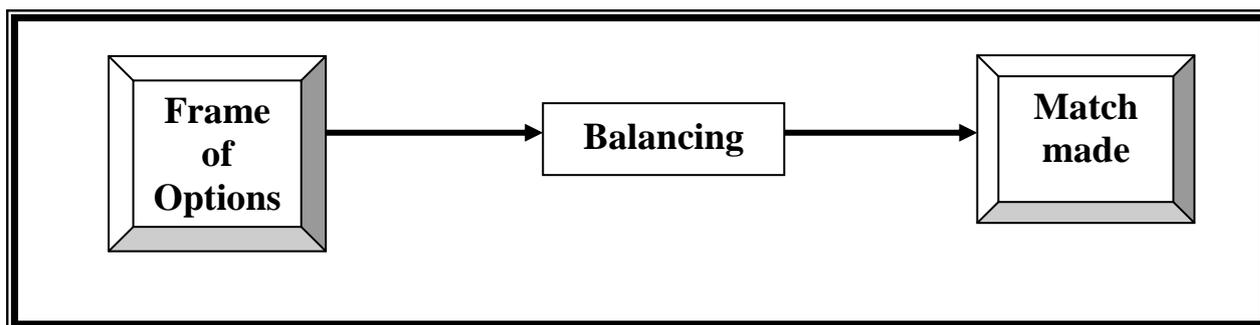
Balancing

Stage Three involves the parents, and possibly the children, in balancing the perceived merits of the available options (Figure, 4.8). At this stage it is possible that the family may once again have to re-engage and further refine its imperatives. The speed with which the eventual decision is made is dependent on various factors. Should there be only two schools in the final frame of options, there will eventually be a factor that will lead to a confirmation of enrolment in one of the two schools. Of course, if the final frame contains only one school, enrolment could be immediately confirmed unless the family are confronted subsequently by other critical events that require them to return them to a previous phase in the process.

Intervening Conditions

During the balancing process various conditions intervene in a way that tips the scales in favour of a particular choice. Time periods for enrolment, the attitudes

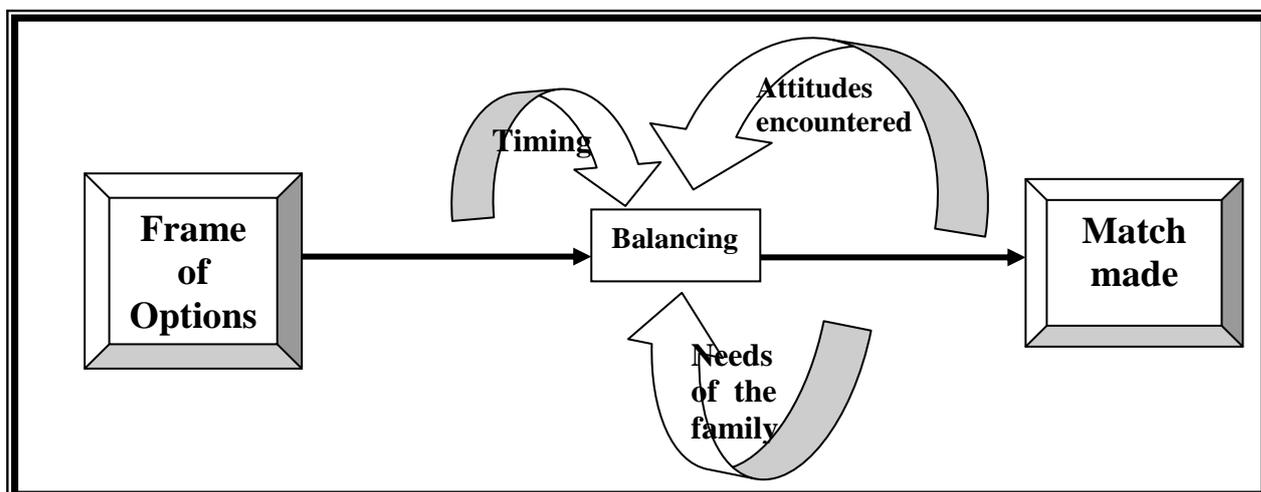
Figure 4.8. Stage Three – Making a match



of those involved in school communications, and the individual child's needs in relationship to family needs, all combine in varying degrees to influence the final choice. Initially it seemed evident that family resources also were an issue during the balancing phase but the data conclusively indicated that the issue of resources was usually resolved earlier as the family framed their options.

After completing this third stage of Phase 3, the optimum match is achieved (Figure 4.9) and the family concludes the enrolment of their child, or children, in the chosen school.

Figure 4.9. Stage Three – Making a match, with intervening conditions



Each of the intervening conditions in Figure 4.9, and the ways in which they can contribute to the balancing that eventually identifies the choice offering the best match in terms of the family's values and imperatives, will now be discussed in detail.

Intervening conditions: Timing.

Barbara and her husband Charlie were internationally mobile because of his employment. Charlie initially came alone to Australia in order to commence his new position, procure a home in readiness for the rest of the family, and enrol the children in a school so they could attend as soon as they arrived. Information from those around him suggested that the private schools generally offered the best education, and given that his wife was Catholic, the initial frame of options was determined. As Barbara explained:

We moved a lot, so she was in an international school at first. Then when we moved here, my husband enrolled them in a Catholic school, because he knew I was Catholic. He had heard that private schools are better than government schools and that there would be a waiting list. He just went ahead and enrolled them (Barbara, p. 3).

Timing was an important issue for Barbara and Charlie because of the circumstances of their migration and the reality that there was little opportunity for much investigation and balancing of options.

A similar issue of timing arose for Jane and her family, where a change of locality was necessitated.

We moved up; [our son] was starting Year 1 as we moved. We moved in the December and [he] started in Year 1 in the January. There had been a lot of uncertainty as to whether we were actually going to move into this house or not. From here, the [local government] primary school is like 50 steps and you're there. It was within the community and that sort of thing. So I guess for convenience, I didn't look any further (Jane, p. 3).

Although Jane would have considered Catholic schools, her limited knowledge of what was available, and the limited time available to them because of the lateness of their relocation, meant that there were few schools in Jane and her husband's frame at the time a decision had to be made. Later, Jane discovered that there was a Catholic school that could have been preferable had she been aware of its existence at the time. However, moving at the critical time when their son was starting school had a determining effect on their choice.

There is another Catholic primary school in [the next suburb] that, to be honest with you, I wasn't aware of when I first moved here...It's about the same distance, but I was working in [another suburb]. I just didn't look into it very well, I suppose. Had I realised, perhaps they could have gone there (Jane, p. 3).

Timing was also an intervening condition affecting Rosa's ability to achieve the best possible match for her son's secondary schooling. In framing their options they ended up with a co-educational Catholic school and a boy's Christian private school as their available options, but the time eventually ran out as far as the Catholic option was concerned even though enrolling their son in a Catholic school would have been their preferred choice.

The government option was not acceptable to us and the Catholic school option was not hopeful so we waited as long as we could for the Catholic school to accept our son but the deadline came and went. We chose a local boy's private school that promoted Christian ideals and provided a wide range of options (academically, musically and in the sporting area) (Rosa, p. 2).

Intervening conditions: Attitudes encountered

In Stage One on Phase One, where families are refining their imperatives, the attitudes of others is often an intervening condition that affects how individual families develop what they believe is essential to achieving the desired result from their choice of school. However, at the end of Phase One, when making a match, the attitudes of others once again can become important as the decision to finalise the eventual choice is brought to conclusion.

During the balancing stage, for instance, one final encounter that helped Rosa's family to confirm their decision to send their son to a particular school was the attitude displayed by the principal. His direct and evidently genuine efforts to make personal connections with their son impressed Rosa and her husband sufficiently to confirm their enrolment.

We arrived for an interview (myself, husband and son who was in Year 7 at the time) and as we walked into his office the headmaster went straight to our son, shook his hand and encouraged him to look him in the eye. He

addressed him "as an adult" and this demonstrated respect and caring to us. He also introduced himself to us but he kept the focus of the interview on our son by directly asking him questions and gently encouraging him to be involved in the conversation. We were impressed by this as it demonstrated to us how important our son was to him and it modelled to our son how he could/should behave (Rosa, p. 1).

Sally, similarly, was influenced by the attitude and appearance of staff when she went for an admissions interview at the Catholic secondary school that she had chosen for her son.

This may sound petty, but originally the interview was meant to be with the principal. That's fine; towards the end of the year she was busy, so it went to the deputy principal. It's fine that he took it on board and it's fine that he was actually in a rugby top and shorts. [As it was now] at the end of the year, he could have been packing boxes or playing with his staff – a myriad of reasons why. But he made no attempt at making apologies for his appearance. Then he almost had my son in tears because of the examination in which he went through his report. [My son] is just a fairly typical boy. He is bright, he's involved in the PEAC program, which [the deputy] did not know existed. Such a widespread government school program which is the gifted and talented program, and the deputy didn't know about it! (Sally, p. 3).

Although she had many negative things to say about the interview, she felt the need to balance her response against her very strong imperative for faith education at secondary level, and thus decided in the end to enrol her son in the school.

Although Rachel and her husband, who had migrated from a country where Catholic education was not easily available or affordable, would have preferred to send their sons to Australian Catholic schools, they were deterred by the attitudes of other Catholic acquaintances who had their children in Catholic schools. The perception within the community, as relayed by several participants, that the quality of government schools had diminished in recent years, was presented to Rachel and her husband as they were making a decision about schools for their sons.

I don't know if it's particular to WA but people seem to think the government schools are bad and the only way you get a good education in Australia is to buy it by giving your child a Catholic education, even though you might not necessarily be Catholic... It comes from a number of people we know through work and through socialising - that have sent their children to Catholic schools and they're not remotely interested in Catholicism at all.

The attitude of these acquaintances proved to be a negative influence for Rachel as she came to resent the parental indifference to the values that she associated with her Catholicism.

In fact, some of the mothers that I have met have actually happily sent their children to Catholic schools but actively discouraged any -- even when their kids say, "I might be interested in going to church", they actively discourage their children. "I don't really believe, you know. I don't really believe in Catholicism". I've heard them say this, and it's not just one person either - several people. So whilst on one hand I initially thought it was a good option, I began to think, "Why are people in Western Australia sending their kids to Catholic schools?" I changed my thinking about it a bit in the sense that I'm seeing a lot of people sending their kids there because they think that's the best thing to do. "It's the best thing to do."

The resultant lack of confidence in Australian Catholic education that Rachel and her husband found through the attitudes of others caused them to choose government schools for their sons.

... if the idea of me sending my child to a Catholic school is to get a Catholic education, then I don't know if I necessarily want my child rubbing elbows with your child, because your child is coming to school here, but he's hearing from you that Catholicism is not something that you endeavour to practice, it's something that you're just buying (Rachel, p. 5).

Garry and Judy, who were concerned about their daughter's move to a city boarding school, eventually reduced their frame of acceptable options to two schools, both girls' Catholic boarding schools. The differing attitudes they encountered when visiting the schools tipped the balance in favour of one as their final choice. In the first school, for

instance, there seemed to be a policy of not allowing prospective boarders and their parents to view the boarding facilities before making a commitment to apply for enrolment.

... the interview [at the school we eventually excluded] was great, I mean it was impressive, they, facilities around the office admin area was good but ah, they wouldn't take us to see the ah, they had a reason, but I can't remember what it was, I can't remember, but they wouldn't take us to see the accommodation part of it and the reason didn't go down, stick with me really. I just felt a bit uneasy about the fact that we couldn't at least walk down there and have a look, even if we didn't go through the rooms, I mean the privacy thing ... (Garry, p. 18).

The second girls' boarding school in their frame of options had an entirely different attitude to prospective boarders viewing the accommodation.

And I think also always in the back of [our daughter's] mind was the fact that [the boarding facilities at the first school] was the unknown, completely, whereas she'd up to, she'd been inside the rooms at [the second college], I mean she'd been up there to pick [our friend's twins] up, we'd always take them out when we went to [the city] ... We got an interview there, and, you know they took us through the boarding part which impressed, we'd already seen but they were keen to show off the whole school... there was no show put on, they weren't ashamed to show us the school... And, but they took us up to the boarding part, they were keen to show that off (Garry, p. 18).

The friendliness and openness of the second boarding college had so impressed the family, particularly the daughter, who felt she would be able to relax in such an atmosphere, that Garry and Judy confirmed their desire to enrol her there. The attitude of the school mirrored for them their values of country hospitality and so set them all at ease with the difficult nature of the change in their family life. Their daughter's attitude towards the decision was also crucial. The second college mentioned was already familiar to her because a long-time school friend was already in attendance and such familiarity eased her anxieties regarding her forthcoming separation from home.

Intervening conditions: Needs of the family.

The *needs of the family* are considered at many different levels of the process

towards *realising family potential* through education. In Stage One of the process both the child's needs and those of the wider family are considered in the refining of the family's imperatives. In Stage Two, where the family is framing their options, critical family events and the maximal use of the family's resources are important while information is sourced so that specific options can be placed within a frame of choice. In this third stage, the family's needs are considered yet again while they balance their options and finally make a match. The individual needs of the child are placed in relationship to the family's needs.

Julie and John, for example, were able to make a match with rapid ease as it clearly fulfilled all of the family's needs and satisfied their imperatives. Because of the strength of their faith imperative, they did not consider any options outside of the Catholic system, and since no obstacles were placed in their way, their enrolment in the Catholic college in their locality was immediate.

..we'd just moved into the area and [the college] was really the only school in this area. John got a job there straight away and the children got into [the parish primary school], which was the only Catholic school around. So, that was a natural kind of progression. We didn't know a lot about the school except that John worked there, and was happy with what was happening...We didn't really consider anything else (Julie, p. 2).

Because the school had been framed as the only meaningful option for them, they had no need to engage in *balancing* as there were no competing alternatives within the frame.

Albert and his wife had made a decision to engage in Catholic schooling while their children were very young and so when it came time for secondary schooling the needs of their family dictated that it must be available to them through public transport and be supported by the child.

...we spoke to [our eldest son] about it you know and told him that we think [this College] is where we're going to send him, he was happy with that because "oh yeah, yeah

I've got so and so, these few friends are going there, so it'll be OK" (Albert, p. 10).

Since the child was content to be enrolled along with his friends, there was no further issue for the family and the one school that was within the frame of choice as being Catholic and accessible through public transport accepted their enrolments.

Mary and Gerard had given considerable time and effort to finding a school for each of their seven children that would suit the child's specific needs. Their imperatives were strong and their goals for their children high and, as their financial resources strengthened over time, Mary was highly engaged in the whole process and spent considerable time and energy in sourcing information that would help determine the best possible option for each child. The first three sons had attended a Catholic boarding school in the city that had satisfactorily fulfilled the family's needs. Mary and Gerard's fourth son had particular gifts and easily outpaced his peers at the local district high school in their country town, but since he had made up his mind when he was only four years old to be a high level athlete, he chose a large metropolitan boarding school for the remainder of his schooling.

...he really made the choice. I suppose we wanted him to have the best possible opportunity to express all the potential that we knew he had and so it had to be a big school, it had to be a fairly high profile place where he would be able to excel. ... He went in Year 10, he had three years there. He only boarded in Year 10, he hated the boarding because it was so restrictive and his brothers were living across the river you know, a trivial bike ride away... so we let him go and live with them in Years 11 and 12 (Mary, p. 12).

The family's needs were satisfied and driven by their fourth son's natural drive, ambition and his proximity to his older brothers.

Mary and Gerard's fifth son also had different needs for his upper secondary education. They again went through the whole process of choosing so that his individual needs would be satisfied. There were several schools in the frame of options and so the family had to balance their various needs against what was

offered. To make a match, the concluding factor was that he did not want matriculation and so a country boarding facility at an agricultural college was suitable to all of their needs.

[Agricultural College] became the choice for him ...He was actually happier there than any of the boys had been at boarding school...it just seemed an attractive option for [him] because it gave him two further years of schooling, Year 11 and 12 but it wasn't the pressure of the TEE thing (Mary, p. 13).

Beth and Tom spent considerable time balancing their options. With a slump being experienced in the rural economy at the time, they were finding it difficult to provide sufficient resources for their second child, a daughter, to go to the city for schooling. With no upper secondary schooling provided locally, she clearly had to go away and the city was the most attractive option as she wanted to pursue tertiary education. Fortunately, financial assistance was made available by the government and this increased their frame of options. Their family's desire for unity was challenged in the balancing process in that one option they considered was to purchase a second house in the city. However, Tom rejected this idea as it would obviously have to split the family.

I could always buy a house in [the city], [my wife] could go up there and the kids could go to school from there or something, like a lot of them do, but I married [her] and I want her here. Right there, I don't want her, like one up there and one down here. That's no good. (Tom, p. 10).

Beth and Tom were eventually able to make a match with confidence when their daughter was able to live with Tom's sister in the city while she attended upper school.

George was confident that the local government high school was the appropriate place for his children's secondary schooling. He was mostly content with the primary schooling his three children had experienced locally but had also been looking at the possibilities of secondary schooling at an independent Christian school that was within their reach financially and geographically, particularly since it was of their own religious denomination. The local government high

school, other reasonably close high schools and the independent school were all in the frame of options. Referring to the independent school, he said:

But[we had] no real intention of sending her there. Um, even went to the parents' night, the introductory parents' night which is six or nine months ahead of the start of the school year, but with still no intention of sending her there even after that, but it wasn't until the pressure of what was happening to her, that we made a decision to put her into [the Christian] school knowing that the government high school...the same group of people that were pressuring her were going to be going to the local high school. We felt that it was important for her growth, her emotional growth, to extract her from that situation and the only other option...Other than to send her to another government high school was to send her to the [Christian school] ...and the reason for that was primarily that we are [of the same denomination] (George, p. 8).

The eventual match was made when George and his wife were confident that the school would meet the family's needs in line with their family imperatives, even when balanced against his general confidence in the government school.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the first phase of the process through which a family moves in order to realise their family potential. In this initial phase of the process, since they are challenged to choose outside the local government system, the family makes a choice about secondary schooling. Data gathered directly from the participants and presented has grounded the first phase emerging theoretical model of choice by confirming that families move through three identifiable stages towards their eventual decisions to enrol their children in particular schools for their secondary schooling.

PERSONAL NOTES

Delimiting the core process for this present study was less difficult than anticipated. Parents were very clear in describing what they did to secure the education of their children. Their ultimate goals and their deepest concerns were harder to clarify and more difficult to conceptualise. An exciting aspect of this part of the research was the brainstorming I was able to do with my supervisor. We would air the ideas and the codes and categories that I had established and then spend time moving the ideas in various directions until strong concepts began to appear. It was then a stimulating task to write memos of the ideas and form them into schema that began progressively to make sense of the data. Actually naming the activities and parts of the process was extremely important and using gerunds and gerund-like words to make sense of the data became a favourite intellectual exercise. I would find myself needing to record my ideas at different times of the day and night as they occurred to me, and made it a habit to carry a dictaphone with me whenever I was driving so that I could easily capture them for the record. As this area of the process developed into the thesis, further analysis progressively refined the ideas.