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A grounded theory: Realising family potential through choice of schooling

Angela McCarthy
University of Notre Dame Australia

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CHAPTER 5

BASIC SOCIAL PROCESS: REALISING FAMILY POTENTIAL MANAGING THE CHOICE

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Phase Two: Managing the Choice

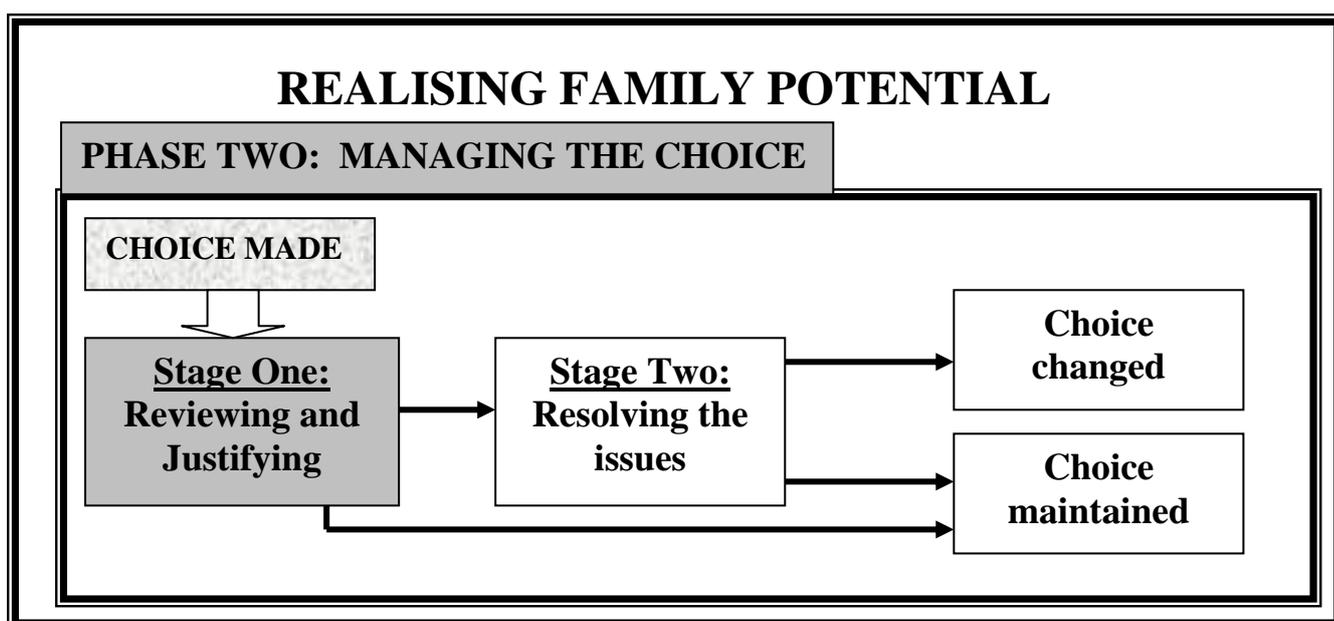
Phase Two of the basic social process concerns the family's management of the choice they have taken to enrol a student in a particular school and their ongoing evaluation of the efficacy of the original decision. When a family makes a decision to place their child in a particular school, their quest for the fulfilment of family potential has, in an important sense, just begun. Clearly, the decision to place a child in a school has not itself delivered the potential they are seeking to realise through the schooling of their child; it has only put the child onto a path which, in the light of what is known at the time, appears to offer the best prospects for fulfilment as the child's ensuing educational experience unfolds. The ultimate efficacy of the original decision will reveal itself only over time and may well be threatened from time to time along the way if conditions or circumstances change or the experience turns out for some reason to be other than expected.

Throughout the interviews and the analysis of the data it was evident that participants were engaged in an ongoing process of reviewing the efficacy of their original enrolment choice, reflecting more or less continuously on the extent to which the experienced reality was continuing to align with the family's current expectations. At any point in the process, this reflection leads them either to reaffirm the appropriateness of the present situation and leave things as they are,

seek to change conditions at the current school that seem to them to be threatening the child's best interests, or explore options for changing to another school.

Evidence from the interviews indicates that the maintenance of the original choice of school, or a decision to move the child elsewhere, is sometimes quite complicated and can cause significant strain on the family's resources. Moreover, not all participants in the study were equally concerned with or engaged consciously in the ongoing management of their original decision or its consequences. While some parents, for example, were extremely vigilant about the ongoing welfare and outcomes for their children, others appeared to be completely trusting in the professionals in whose care they had placed their children. The following discussion of *managing the choice*, Phase Two of the basic social process of realising family potential, exposes the variety of ways in which parents engage in continuing reflection on the suitability of their original decision and an assessment of how well the child's current experiences are matching the family's expectations. Figure 5.1 depicts that this second phase of realising family potential can lead either to a maintenance of the original decision or a decision to change to another school

Figure 5.1. Phase Two within the basic social process

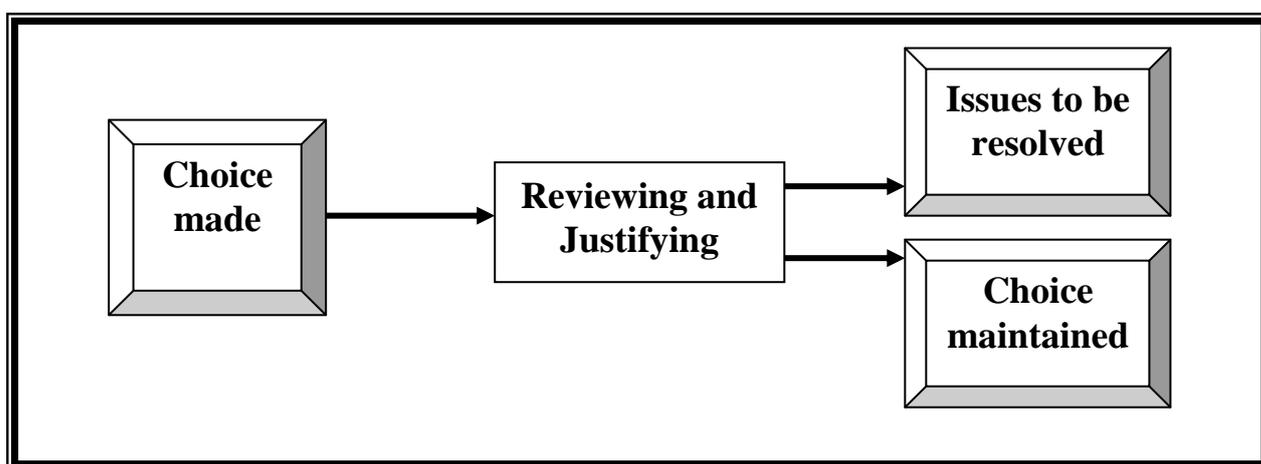


As seen in Figure 5.1, the theoretical construct of this phase, *managing the choice*, emerged as two specific stages and each has been dealt with separately in this chapter. The intervening conditions that affect the way in which each family manages the choices that they make in regard to secondary schooling requires Stage One and Stage Two to be dealt with separately. Describing the model in this way required the problems faced by families to be separated from the way in which the family managed to resolve those problems. While this necessitates some repetition of data, it allows the theoretical model to unfold with the best possible clarity.

Stage One: Reviewing and Justifying the Choice

Reviewing and justifying are joint activities in which the family engages during the initial stage of managing their choice. If the parents are not able to justify the continuation of their choice unchanged, their imperatives necessitate a change and they move to Stage Two where they resolve the issue and either change the enrolment or put strategies in place that can support the maintenance of the existing enrolment (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2: Reviewing and justifying the choice



The interview data confirmed that where a family deemed their choice to have been efficacious, they were content to continue without change on the grounds that it was continuing to satisfy their imperatives, their availability issues, or the special needs of their child.

Albert and Josie, for example, had enrolled their children in Catholic primary schools with the intention that they would continue, if at all possible, with Catholic schooling throughout their secondary years as well. Their family imperative was strongly related to their faith and they desired that it be nurtured in their children. They had been impressed with the culture of their children's Catholic schools and felt that there were currently no obstacles that challenged them in the maintenance their original choices.

I think it's probably a lot to do with the environment that the Catholic School embraces ... there was never any situation where I could see ... they had a friend or a friendship with someone who was you know, not in the same character, same expectation that we had of [our] children (Albert, p. 14).

Albert and Josie felt that their strong religious imperative was being well supported and they found that the resultant development of values in their children was very satisfying. Albert related an incident, for instance, where one of his sons asked whether another student who was living in a foster home could come to celebrate Easter with their family. The foster family were going overseas for the holidays and she would be alone. Albert commented: "So ... when things like that happen, you sort of see the benefits of [the College support] (Albert, p. 13). As with many families, Josie had to return to the work force to ensure the family had sufficient resources to cover payment of school fees, as they were confident that keeping the children in Catholic schools was well worth the cost.

Rebecca and Terry, similarly, were strongly engaged in their Catholic faith and this dominated their educational choices. Because their faith imperative looked for satisfaction beyond the years of schooling, they reviewed and justified their choices largely in faith terms even though they clearly had some concerns about academic outcomes.

...which is probably why we've made decisions not to run the schools, why we've stuck with Catholic education in spite of the fact that in some cases we would've thought that their academic work wasn't satisfactory. That within that environment there's going to be more given than would be given elsewhere even if the academics were greater. Make sense? (Rebecca, p. 11).

Rosa and Greg had chosen a private boys' college for their son. Even though they were confident of the choice that they had made, they evidently kept it under continuing review.

Fortunately he has thrived in the environment and we have carefully monitored his progress along the way. If we were not happy we would have made a change. Making this decision was a stressful time but once it was made we were prepared to support the decision as long as our son benefited. He is currently in Year 12, a school prefect, house captain and a grade A student! (Rosa, p. 2).

Barbara eventually withdrew her children from the Catholic primary school in which they had been first enrolled, because of her growing concerns about their lack of progress in numeracy. At the time of interview, her eldest daughter was in Year 8 at the local government high school and Barbara was keen to establish the efficacy of her choice. Although Barbara and her children were Catholic, she was influenced by her own personal history in her country of origin where Catholic education was not available and felt comfortable that her daughter was having an experience similar to her own high school life. Her daughter's new school had a very high reputation for excellence.

Yes, [she's] really, really happy there. I'm just so pleased with how she's settled in. She has really grown up. .. It's a pretty big school – there are 350 kids in her year. That's about the size I graduated with... I think the care has been great. Every parent meeting that I've gone to, I'm just real impressed with how the principal tries to make things better by getting parent feedback. If it's a good idea, she puts things into place right away. They have peer support groups. When [our eldest] first started, there were older kids that she met with every day. If she had questions, she could ask them (Barbara, p. 14).

Diane invested considerable energy in choosing a Catholic girls' secondary college for her eldest daughter. When she and her husband moved from another State their two daughters were in primary school and because they were unable to find a Catholic primary school with vacancies for both girls they enrolled their two girls in the local government primary school. When it came time for choosing secondary schooling, Diane was determined to enrol her girls in a Catholic school. Diane, who was evidently keen to emphasise the importance she attached to her decision, recounted it in terms of support for their faith as this was

their family imperative. She was also conscious of the support that she necessarily had to give continually to the school as they worked together to provide the education and formation that she so intensely desired for her girls. Her support contributed to the continued efficacy of their choice.

I want the kids to be surrounded by their faith on a daily basis – not just on Sundays when we go to Mass, but by the people they speak with, the things that they do and the things that they say.....But like attracts like, and things you do – at [the college] socially, everything is Catholic based. You all have the common goal, you're all wanting the same thing for your children and you're all coming from the same faith. You celebrate Mass together. [Our eldest daughter's] class celebrated a class Mass a couple of weeks ago. All we parents got out of bed really early and ... froze in the church, but it was nice, you know (Diane, p. 16).

Suzanne, a trained teacher, was determined to make sure that her children had the best education possible. Their original concerns had settled around the need for a “good school” that was close to where they were living. Proximity was a key issue, as she wanted to be involved on many levels in the children’s schooling. Financially, Suzanne had the opportunity to stay at home to care for the children’s needs and she felt strongly that this was an important ingredient of successful parenting. She and her husband had chosen a nearby Catholic boys’ college for the secondary schooling of their two boys and were clearly very pleased with the result.

[Our eldest] is in the First Eleven. He's done extremely well in his schooling. Both kids were lucky enough to be Head Boys in the junior school... Academically they're doing very well. [Our eldest] was lucky enough to be Dux of the year. Again I take it that the school's done well, but then he's got a particular talent as well....I suppose if he went somewhere else, he might do just as well – who knows? But my sort of thinking is that because it's a boys' school, the school itself is excellent... these kids, as I said, have flourished. But again, I take a personal interest and keep a tab on things.... The fact that it's a Catholic school – I like that too because they get religious education...I think they've seen the genuineness of it – that these people are genuinely looking after their spiritual and emotional needs (Suzanne, p. 10).

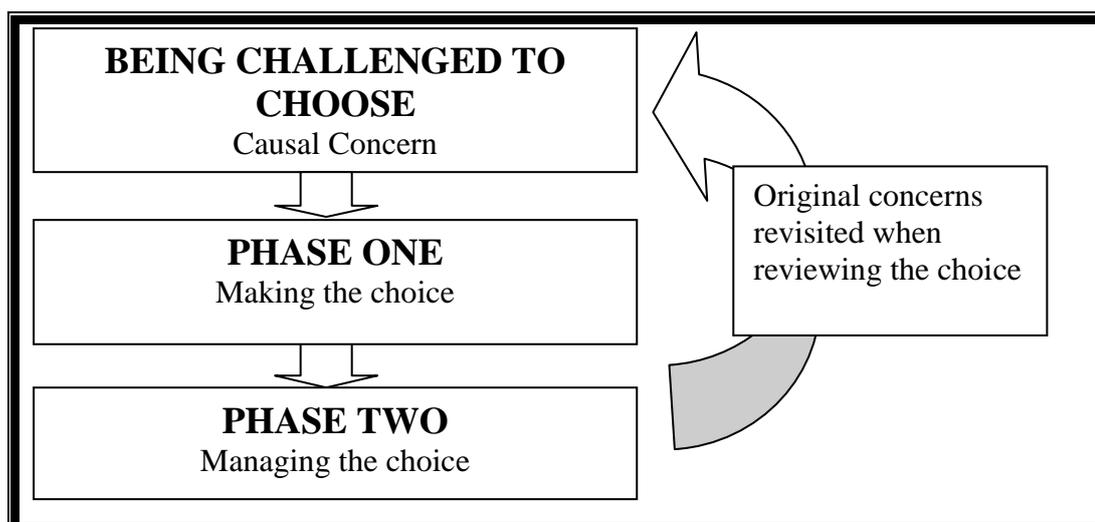
Michelle and David had chosen a Catholic secondary college for their son as their causal concern and their family imperative called for a situation where his fine motor skills deficiency could be met by the support unit provided within the school. They wanted him to be cared for and stimulated in those other areas where he was capable in order that he could achieve the potential he had.

It would be good if he could learn a language but I don't know that he could...I know another thing that's been really lovely. We wanted him to do some music because he actually is quite musical. We started him on keyboard but he wasn't able to, the fine motor skills were quite difficult with that and um, we looked at other kinds of instruments, so we went along and we talked over with the music department about what he could do and they tested him and they came back and said that his pitch and his musicality is excellent, he is really very, innately musical, and then they suggested that maybe he learn voice which is just wonderful...it gets away from the fine motor stuff and I was just so thrilled that that's, that's, a real breakthrough in one sense...He's having private tuition, his voice has actually broken or in the process of breaking so he's going to start learning voice stuff and he's just really enjoying it enormously...and that opens up a whole new range of things. That's just brilliant (Michelle, p. 21-22).

Michelle and David were pleased that the special needs of their second son, the reason why they chose a Catholic secondary college for him, were being cared for in a significant way, and reaffirmed for them the efficacy of their choice.

The evidence discussed above indicates that when a family reviews their choice of school they typically do so in terms of the original concerns that had challenged them to make that choice (Figure 5.3). The particular selections included above reveal families who, in their review, were clearly sufficiently satisfied with the continuing efficacy of their choice that they have continued with their original enrolment. However, not all families were content to leave the original decision alone. Intervening conditions, for instance, can sometimes cause a family to move into a subsequent stage in the management of their choice, as is discussed in the next section.

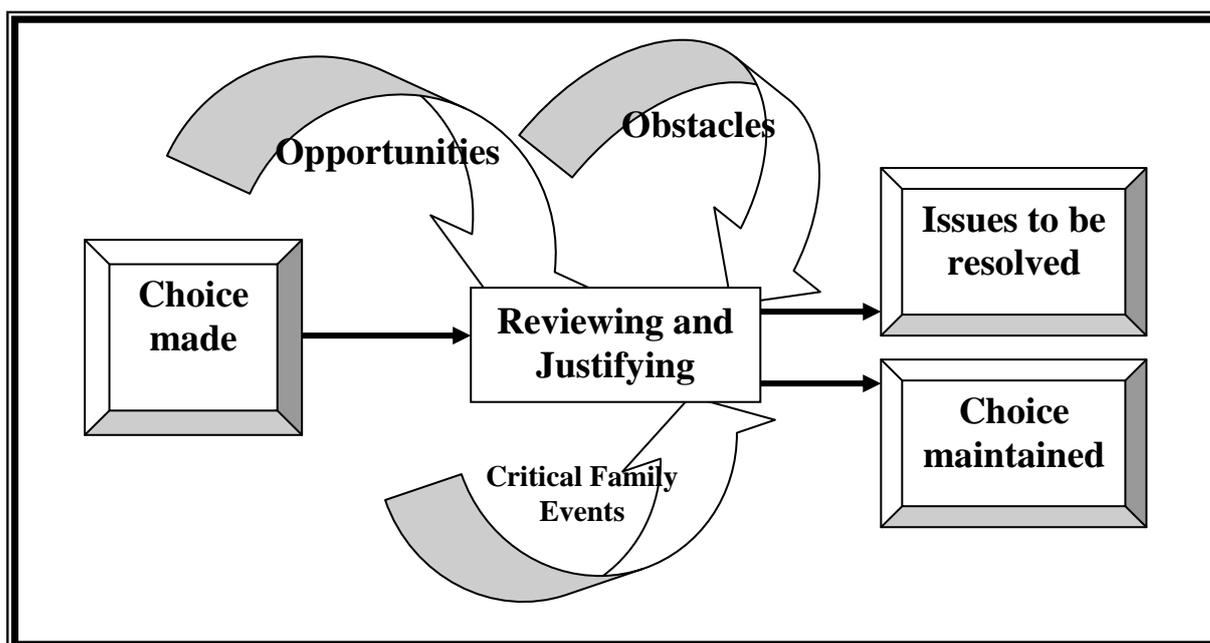
Figure 5.3. Relationship Phase Two to the original causal concern



Intervening Conditions in Stage One

If, and when, obstacles were presented, the family will usually engage initially in strategies aimed at resolving the issue and thus allowing them to remain with their current choice of enrolment. Where the issue was of a level that challenged the family equilibrium, the family typically had to review their family imperatives and possibly make choices about available resources and their capacity to overcome the problem. Depending on the outcome of this review, the family would then decide to either change or maintain their choice. In other instances, opportunities were offered or critical incidents occurred within the family that caused them to carefully review the child's, or children's, current enrolment. Such obstacles, opportunities or critical events occur as intervening conditions in the management of the choice (Figure 5.4). When one or more of the intervening conditions identified in Figure 5.3 are present, the family must move to the next stage, namely to resolve the issue. The intervening conditions that affect the family sufficiently to cause them to need such resolution are discussed separately below, and the resolution of their difficulties is presented in the Stage Two.

Figure 5.4. Intervening conditions within Stage One in Phase Two



Intervening conditions: Obstacles presented.

Some families experienced obstacles that presented difficulties for the maintenance of their choice. Mary and Gerard, for instance, were raising a large family in the country. For each of their children they expended considerable time and energy in deciding which upper schooling situation would be optimum. Their sixth son was to go to a boys' boarding school in the city where their fourth son had excelled in every way. Having a completely different personality, however, had made boarding school life extremely difficult for the sixth son. He suffered a great deal of bullying from the beginning of his enrolment in Year 11 and was ostracised by the other boys in his year group as the hero status of his older brother was still very evident in the upper school cohort. In the middle of the year, the tragic death of a Year 11 student eased the situation as the associated pastoral care initiatives produced a more cohesive and compassionate group of students.

By the time those kids had attended the funeral and memorials, any thought of bullying one another wasn't there. It sort of threw them together. It brought things into perspective for them a little bit. I really thought - not that you'd ever want that to happen - "Thank God that one little spin-off from the poor kid's death was that these kids had started to behave in a civilised manner towards one another" (Mary, p. 22).

At the beginning of Year 12 he was once again in difficulties and by midway through the year he was clinically depressed and required medication.

Year 12 kicked off and he just seemed to go straight into depression. Even though he wasn't dreading going back to Year 12, within a couple of weeks he was back into the same sort of depressed state as he was at the beginning of Year 11 (Mary, p. 1).

Such an obstacle caused the family to carefully reconsider their choice.

Beth and Tom were distressed by the necessity for all four of their children to leave the farm after Year 10 because of the lack of upper secondary schooling in their country location. With the price of wool and sheep at a very low level, the family was finding it difficult to provide for their children's education, but they were driven by a faith imperative as well as strong family values. When their second child, a daughter, began at a Catholic girls' boarding school they were distressed that she was unhappy, but the father was driven by his own values and his own family educational history and clearly wanted to keep her at the school if it was at all possible.

See, one way, my sisters went to [that boarding school], see, and I wanted to send her there, but in the long run she probably would have been better going to [Year 11 in the next country town] because they had a cookery course in that year whereas [the boarding school] didn't. And because she's gonna do the chef bit she woulda been probably better doing that but just because I's Catholic, I wanted to send her to the Catholic school but in the long run prob'ly she woulda been better off going to [the next country town] for this cooking and all that sorta stuff there. She woulda done some practical ...I jist got it in my head, I wasn't going to send her there you know because of the Catholic part of it. Maybe in hindsight prob'ly should have sent her somewhere else (Beth & Tom, p. 10).

As their daughter's unhappiness increased, Beth and Tom were forced to consider her needs above what they considered to be their family imperatives. It became an obstacle to the efficacy of their choice and therefore they needed to resolve the issue.

Anne and Michael and their six children were leading a very busy life with both Anne and Michael working in professional areas and the children all enrolled at Catholic schools. Their second child, a boy, had had problems in the classroom, through his dreamy personality, and this had caused substantial difficulties that Anne and Michael had to resolve. At the conclusion of their son's schooling, they were aware that he had been unable to realise his potential because of his different learning style that presented problems for his teachers, and this awareness significantly eroded their confidence in the efficacy of their original decision.

I knew he was smart, I knew he was more intellectual and had more capacity to do things if he was given the opportunity. So he did. He finished Year 12 and he did two TEE subjects purely because doing senior English wouldn't have been challenging enough. He went on to do drafting and now he's over in London earning way more than the average person here. I'm thinking... I just wouldn't accept it. He did have the capacity. He wasn't easy to teach and he did look like he was constantly in dreamland, but with the right style, and if you persevered, he actually... he started to realise that he actually could do a lot of things. I didn't want the same thing happening to [our youngest daughter] (Anne, p. 4).

Anne and Michael's two youngest children were twins, a boy and a girl. In Year 6 they were challenged by one of the twin's active behaviour that became an obstacle to her success in the normal classroom situation. She was an intelligent child but a highly kinaesthetic learner. With their older son's experience in mind, their review of the efficacy of their choice for the twins brought a serious obstacle to the fore. Anne described the daughter (one of the twins) as very active.

She's just more jumping-out-of-her-skin. She'd probably be branded as ADD or something. She has been accused by the teachers – "Have you been tested for ADD?" I'm saying, "That's a bit sad." We discussed it. I'd thought of home schooling a long time ago but it's one of those things like, "How could I?" I was working (Anne, p. 4).

Intervening conditions: Critical family events.

Critical family events can act as intervening conditions impacting both the original choice made by the family (discussed earlier in Stage Two of Phase One), and the subsequent management of the choice, as is seen here in the first stage of

Phase Two. Such critical family events can obviously happen at any time and therefore can potentially influence both the original choice and its maintenance. Depending on which phase the family is in at the time of the event, the family will respond within that particular part of the process.

Geraldine and her family had moved to Australia primarily for the education of their children since, in their country of origin, there was discrimination towards particular ethnic groups, including theirs. As Catholics they particularly wanted Catholic schooling but their first enrolment offer came from another Christian school and circumstances at the time dictated that they take up the opportunity. Over the years, however, Geraldine constantly questioned whether her two children were getting sufficient support for their faith.

It's different. And then... and also ... when she went to [the Christian school] and gradually she lost that thing, [that Catholic way of praying] (Geraldine, p. 3).

When the younger child, their daughter, was in Year 9 they tried to enrol her in the nearby Catholic secondary college but there were no vacancies at the time. Then Geraldine's husband died of cancer. It thus became increasingly important to her that her daughter would be in a Catholic environment for her final years of schooling where she would be supported in faith as she coped with the difficulties they were facing. At this time their son had already completed Year 12 and moved on to university and Geraldine had few concerns about his welfare.

Eileen had many challenges in her life as she had a disabled husband and four children and had to maintain employment to keep them all. She was very committed to keeping them within a Catholic structure. Her husband was supportive, although not actively so.

The thing is, my husband has this disability. We bought a house very close to the school so the kids could get to the primary school, and I could physically get there and back again, and they could get back by themselves. So we set ourselves up and I really wanted them to have this religious education. I wanted them to have faith but of course that's entirely up to the person. I also wanted them to know about God and that God loves them no matter what. You know, in troubled times - it doesn't matter if they turn away from their faith, they can come

back. There's always something to come back to - and there's life after death. There's something to work for too. Religion is really a structure of your life, it is the guidelines for how you live your life. I thought that was a good thing. When we looked at sending [our second child] to a Catholic school, I did look around and I found this school had a good reputation. I was very impressed with the principal and everything like that. It was a good school and there was a nice community. (Eileen, p. 2).

Eileen and her family continued to enjoy the benefits of living near to the Catholic school and being part of its parish community. They felt it was particularly important for their second child to be in the school as she had been born with a congenital difficulty and had already had substantial medical intervention. However, an accident at the school became a critical incident that intervened to challenge her initial confidence.

One day we got a phone call and they said that my daughter had been injured and I should come down to the school. When I got there -- I get really angry. She should have called an ambulance. Why they didn't call an ambulance, I don't know. So firstly, I don't believe the duty of care was followed through. She was sitting in the front office and she had a tea-towel on her mouth. So they didn't actually ignore it. She had braces on her teeth. If she hadn't had braces on her teeth, every one of the teeth in her mouth would have been on the ground. They were dislodged. Every tooth in her mouth was only in her mouth because of the dentures. When she opened her mouth and I could see this, I was nearly hysterical (Eileen, p. 3).

Eileen had serious concerns about every aspect of the accident. The specialist who was called cast doubt upon the school's version of events, as it seemed unlikely that a push in a classroom could have resulted in such an extreme injury to the child's mouth. Permanent damage had resulted. The wrong emergency number had been rung, no ambulance had been called, there was no teacher in the room at the time of the incident, the child was left alone with her injuries while the principal comforted the perpetrator. Over the next few weeks and months, no support was offered to the family by the school even though their daughter had to have emergency surgery. There was no adequate insurance cover and different groups within the parish and school would not communicate compassionately

with Eileen. This critical incident put the suitability and efficacy of their school choice in serious doubt and presented them with an issue to resolve.

Intervening conditions: Opportunities presented.

George described how a new opportunity had led him to change the enrolment of his youngest child. Although the child's older siblings had attended secondary school at a Christian College, she had been enrolled instead in their local government high school because it had advertised a dance program that would, George believed, suit her particular passion for dancing in ways that would not have been possible at the Christian school her older brother and sister had attended.

... the choice of high school was based upon the options being offered at the school. She's more of a um ... showed signs of being more arty person and [the local] high school, in her case particularly dance, she'd been doing all types of dancing since she was young, um and the [local] high school was offering the dance, such arts program, and so, since [the Christian college where the older ones went] was only offering it as an interest subject where the people, the observations of parent nights where we strut all our stuff, showed that the standard of dancewas well below what the youngest would've put up with (George, p. 13).

She was maintaining a B average academically as well as being heavily involved in the school's dance program and in a private dance studio that was some distance away. However, it was difficult for her parents to transport her to and from the studio after hours and she was relying on public transport. "She ended up having to catch two buses and a train" (George, p. 22). Fortunately, because of her excellence in dancing and leadership, a Catholic College near to the dance studio offered her a scholarship that covered the school fees.

That was based on ah the fact that several of the students at a particular ballet school that she was going to were already students at [the Catholic College] and had mentioned her to the deputy principal who happened to visit the ballet school one night and sent us a letter saying, or gave her a letter to bring home saying we'd like you to come to [our college] and lead our dance program (George, p. 14).

George and his family were faced with the need to resolve the issues that such an opportunity raised.

Diane and Peter had moved to Western Australia from the Eastern States when their girls were in primary school. Unable to achieve their preference of enrolling them in Catholic primary schools, Diane worked hard to ensure they had the opportunity of Catholic secondary schooling. However, Peter worked interstate 50% of the time and the company concerned wanted the family to move to another state to cut the ongoing commuting costs.

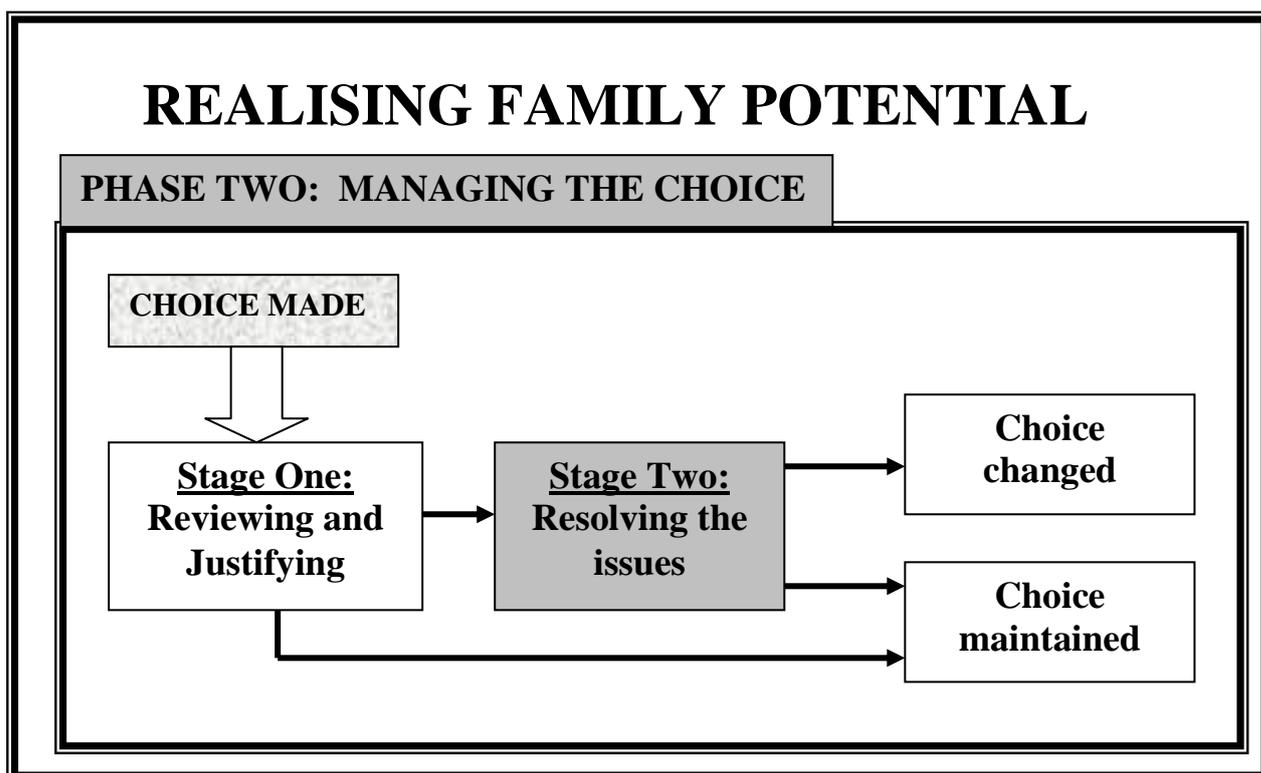
All of our family are in [another state] so I prefer to go back there. It was offered – my [husband's] boss was desperate. He flew [across the country] to here and wined and dined us, trying to talk me into going to [the city of their head office]. The cost factor of [my husband] commuting between [cities] every three weeks was going to be an issue. I said, "No. If that be the case I may as well stay here. I like [this place]. The weather is a bit sultry sometimes, but it's better than [where head office is]. I have friends here now, and the kids are in school. Why would I want to give that up to move...? For me and the kids, it would mean starting all over again. Not only that, once we were there, I would be loathe to leave until [our eldest] had finished high school. I'm not pulling her out of high school. That has a negative impact on them. No – once we move, that's it until the kids are through school (Diane, p. 15).

The opportunity offered to Peter, and the benefits being used to entice the family, had to be considered in the full context of the realisation of family potential and they had to resolve the issues raised by this opportunity.

Stage Two: *Resolving the Issues*

As depicted in Figure 5.5, families move towards resolving issues when they have been presented with obstacles, critical family events or opportunities that change the way in which they view the suitability or efficacy of the choice they have made. When the process of reviewing and justifying reveals no challenges that are sufficiently serious to encourage the parents to consider change, they typically implement support practices to counteract whatever difficulties had been presented and thereby resolve the issue with the need for a change of school.

Figure 5.5. Stage Two within Phase Two



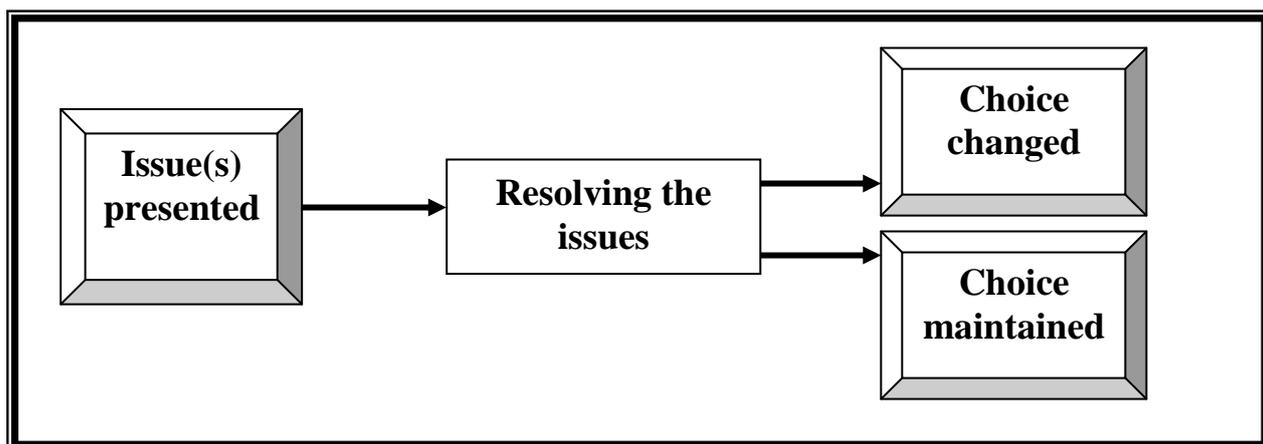
In Michelle and David's case, for instance, their eldest son had some homework related difficulties while in Year 9. He had received a scholarship in his area of excellence to attend a government high school outside their locality and Michelle and David were constantly reviewing his progress. Fortunately the school's internal discipline systems proved sufficient to rectify their son's problem and to bring him back into line with his studies.

...he went through a patch where he was telling them at school that all his homework was at home and he was telling us at home that he didn't have any homework. So, we talked with the Year coordinator and with people and they had organised a system where for about a term probably, at the end of each period he had to actually get the teacher to sign each period and sign what homework he actually had ... so that he had to make contact with the teacher at the end of every lesson and have it signed. At the end of the day we had to sign it ...So it was very close supervision ... and that really pushed him back on track. His marks started to go up and that gave him you know that was quite helpful (Michelle, p. 3).

However, as in the cases described previously, some challenges require substantial efforts for the resolution of the issues (Figure 5.6). Through Stage

One where the *reviewing and justifying* process is engaged, the parents either choose to maintain the current enrolment through providing extra support systems, or move to Stage Two where they will be *resolving the issues* that have been presented. How the issues are resolved depends on the particular conditions that intervene during the resolution process.

Figure 5.6. Resolving the issues



Intervening Conditions in Stage Two

Data from the interviews indicate that four intervening conditions affect a family's resolution of the issue confronting them at this stage: support available, cost (financial, social and opportunity costs), imperatives, and degree of challenge. Support can come from a variety of sources such as the family, school pastoral care system, extended family and resources within the wider community. A decision to change can have financial, social and opportunity consequences. Financially, change of enrolment can mean extra costs in administration fees, extended travel, new uniforms and books. Social cost may be evident when relationships are broken, new relationships are needed, and previous support networks are lost. It can also incur an opportunity cost where subject choices are not available in the new school and a different and unfamiliar school culture is encountered reducing the child's capacity to work within a known system. Imperatives that have been refined by the family can be challenged and face further refinement, or else indicate that a change of enrolment must be made. The degree of the challenge, and the family's resources available to face that challenge, will be very influential in the resolution of the issue. The family might

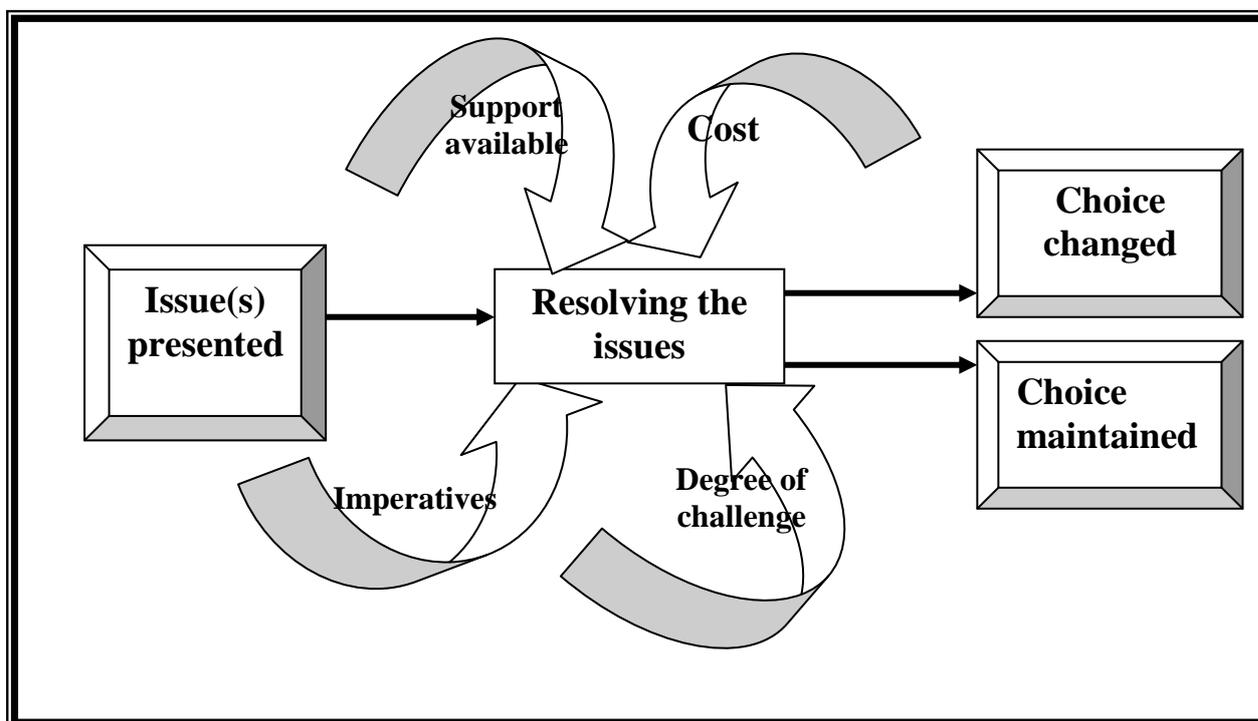
need to deal with more than one intervening condition as they resolve the issue, or issues, that they faced in the maintenance of their enrolment.

In the following section, the issues that needed to be resolved in the examples discussed in Stage One of Phase Two are dealt with in terms of the intervening condition that was most influential. As many of the families are influenced in this phase by more than one condition, their movement in the process is either facilitated or constrained by the particular conditions that occur within the context of the management of their choice of schooling (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 103).

Intervening conditions: Support available.

Geraldine and her husband moved to Australia to ensure that their children received a good education, with the possibility of going to university and gaining a high level of professional employment. With their particular ethnic origins, they

Figure 5.7. Intervening conditions related to resolving the issues



had been discriminated against in their birth country. Geraldine related how some families who immigrated for similar reasons have ended up regretting the move

because of the breakdown of cultural norms of behaviour that it produces within the family and the consequent diminution of traditional forms of support.

...some parents have regret that they've brought their children out here...they become more outspoken...I think it's because of the influence of the media, television... and I don't know, while this influence is good, what is it in fact, how big is the influence and how it affect them you know.

They do find it a bit difficult because a lot of them the husband are not here, they coming in and out because they gotta go to work in [the other country] yes, so that they can bring the bread in, as they say... the family split and the mother find it very difficult... The fathers are... some of the fathers are trying to fill their absence by material things for the children...and the mother is more... and this is very difficult for the mums. And subsequently because the children more outspoken it's very hard for the mother (Geraldine, p. 9-10).

For these families, however, making changes even within localised choices, would usually involve great social and opportunity cost and family distress. And to return to their country of origin would negate their very strong imperative for freedom of faith and education, as well as incur significant financial losses through re-location and asset transfer.

Geraldine was faced with an issue of serious concern when her husband died of cancer, as was described in the previous section in relation to critical family events. She had for some time been anxious about her daughter's faith expression, as the Christian school that she had attended since primary school was not able to provide the Catholic spiritual support that she desired for her daughter. Her son had completed Year 12 and they were happy with his completion of schooling but now could concentrate further on faith support. With her husband's death, she felt that her daughter needed the support of their Catholic faith community and was eventually able to gain her a place at the Catholic secondary college in Year 10. Geraldine had also been disappointed with the Christian college at which both her children were enrolled, as it offered no compassion at the time their father was dying.

I thought the principal was very cold, very odd. ...I did say ...you know, just let probably the tutorial, they have a

tutor in each group, let the tutor watch out for them and see how it goes but they offered us nothing. Even [my son] was in Year 12 there was no back up for him, nothing.... I was disappointed (Geraldine, p. 10).

With no support forthcoming Geraldine felt it necessary to change schools to resolve such a difficult situation.

As described previously in Stage One of Phase Two, Mary and Gerard were deeply concerned about their son in Year 12 as he was suffering clinical depression due to being bullied and ostracised at the boarding school that he attended. The social and opportunity costs that would be incurred by moving to another school at this time was considered to be too great, as his TEE was at stake. Another alternative was to rest for the remainder of the year and return the next year to matriculate, but the loss of the value of the studies already undertaken plus the energy required to recommence was considered too high. However, Mary was able to engage sufficient resources to support him in a way in which he could succeed in his quest to finish his matriculation and survive. Change of school was not necessary, but withdrawal from the boarding facility and arranging for accommodation with a friend who lived near to the school, was critical..

Three weeks into third term, we pulled him out of boarding school. It was either that or come home and quit Year 12, if we wanted to save Year 12 at all. By that stage the doctor had finally won the day and put him on antidepressants. He was home for a couple of weeks until they kicked in and then he was on those. We arranged accommodation for him with a friend of [our older son's] who lived [locally]- so he was riding his bike to school. He became a day scholar. Within a few weeks, he actually started to find some friends, thank God. It was touch and go for a while, whether he was going to sink or swim. He had the help of this young fellow, his brother's friend, who was 27 or 28, a happy sort of guy who kind of gee'd him up a bit. Then I suppose the antidepressants helped a bit. He started to find some friends. It was the best thing of all when the friends started calling around for him on a Friday night and taking him out somewhere for a couple of hours. It wasn't anything major, but the contact was just brilliant (Mary, p. 2).

At this point the bullying issues and depression were sufficiently resolved to be able to maintain the boy's enrolment as a day student. A further crisis presented itself as the TEE exam period approached and it was once again necessary to change living circumstances so that support was available to keep him sufficiently buoyant to complete his exams to the best of his potential.

Then for the exams, in fourth term I went up there. We used to get hold of a unit for a few weeks that belonged to some farmer down south. They rented it to us for that limited space of time...he was very much on the edge. It was on a knife-edge, just balancing between trying to keep him focused on the work. Actually he took himself off the antidepressants in the study break in October. He decided that he couldn't study. Okay, they improved his frame of mind a bit but they fogged up his brain too much and he couldn't focus on the study. So he said, "I'm going to have to go off them because I can't do TEE in this frame of mind. My brain just will not do it." Again that was a bit of a knife-edge situation, going off them (Mary, p. 2).

Mary was able to continue living in the city to support her son through the exam period where he needed to focus all his resources despite his battle with depression.

It was [a big risk], but he did it and he thought he'd have a go. He said, "If I'm going to do TEE at all, it's going to have to be without the drugs, because they don't help with the study." So he did, thank God, and got 90 or whatever - enough to get into [university] and be accepted into marine science (Mary, p. 2).

The support that Mary was able to offer was sufficient to resolve the problem and no change of school was necessary. The family's strongest imperative in realising their potential was to match the style of education to the individual needs of the child in the interest of their own personal, life long learning. This included a strong set of religious values and a profound respect for the unique qualities of the individual. Admittedly, this did cause a great deal of difficulty for the children at times.

It does seem to make them incompatible with the system. They're likely to run into trouble. No. 2 son has said the same thing. A couple of years after he left school ... I

remember him saying to me one night, “You know, Mum, you and Dad didn’t do us a great favour as far as school was concerned, because you brought us up to be lateral thinkers, to be individuals, to not follow the mob and do what you’re told, but to think it through.”

I said, “But [son], they were meant to be useful tools for life.” He said, “Yeah, but they didn’t do us a lot of good in boarding school.” And in fact they ran them into a lot of trouble (Mary, p. 24).

While such a comment indicated that the family’s choices of schooling were heavily formed through their family imperatives, Mary was able to engage sufficient support from her own resources, with the support of the rest of the family, to ensure that her children were successful despite issues needing resolution.

Julie and John had numerous children at Catholic schools and, with most of them at a secondary College, there was a serious financial challenge.

We did at one stage consider [pulling them out and sending them to high schools] 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. Um, but we decided that we weren’t prepared to take the risk and send them to government schools (Julie, p. 3).

John and Julie’s imperative about Catholic schooling propelled them to find other solutions rather than “risk” government schools.

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. 18).

The support of the college in being able to negotiate appropriate forms of payment made the difference for John and Julie’s family to be able to continue in

their choice of school. Julie's engagement in going back to work was also a support that they put in place to be able to continue with their particular choice.

Nicole and Graham had a blended family of four boys. The first and second sons were from Graham's first marriage and had had a very stressful early life with consequent schooling difficulties. Since Graham worked away from home for considerable amounts of time, Nicole had been responsible for much of the secondary education for the two older boys and was aware that their schooling was not able to assist them to realise their full potential because of their background difficulties. She therefore involved herself heavily in the education of the third and fourth sons.

A primary school class teacher created a very difficult environment for the third son and, since she was sensitive to any difficulties, Nicole was determined to pull him out of that particular school. However, she advisedly sought other help first.

Graham was [overseas] and I'd have this child so upset. I was sending him off to school, and then he hit a child and I pulled him out... I took him to a kinesiologist (sic.) and to various places to get help for him and got him fixed. He was right. He was never going back to that school when I pulled him out. [However, because of the circumstances] he went back, and within a week when someone pointed out [his] Medic Alert bracelet, he had a teacher say in front of the class, "[He's] got that because he's psychologically sick and damaged." I was furious (Nicole, p. 10).

Nicole tried speaking to the deputy principal of the primary school, she wrote to the Education Department, and even photocopied a newspaper editorial that she enclosed in a letter in order to reach some satisfactory result with the problematic relationship between her son and the primary teacher concerned. During these difficulties, a new principal was appointed for the primary school. Because the fourth son was very afraid of having bad experiences with the same teacher, Nicole asked for an interview with the new principal of the primary school to avoid any future problems.

I was going to pull the youngest out. He was terrified of going in and getting this teacher. Normally I don't interfere with that but he was just so upset, he wasn't going to school. We'd said, "All right, you don't have to have

him.” Since the new principal came in, I went for an interview. Instead of pulling him out like I was going to, he said, “Just give me a term.” Well, within the first week, he’d moved mountains. He just went at it all year. He did incredible things. He healed a lot of hurts and a lot of the damage that had been done (Nicole, p. 10).

With the support of the new primary school principal, Nicole and Graham were able to maintain their third and fourth son’s enrolment until they were ready for Year 8.

For their secondary schooling they chose a large boys’ private school. The third son flourished to the extent that Graham’s comment was, “Whatever it’s going to cost us, it’s all worth it” (Nicole, p. 14). Four years later the youngest of the four boys was also enrolled but was very nervous as he had a weight problem. Nicole became very involved with the school to help her younger sons and encouraged the fourth one to do the same so that this would ease his way into the school community. With Graham working away much of the time, a strong male influence was needed for the boys. With Nicole’s constant encouragement, the youngest boy, their fourth son, made positive changes.

He set a goal. He wanted to be in the swimming squad. He didn’t want to be in the swimming team as such – he knew he wasn’t fast enough – but he wanted to be in the squad. So he got that. He’s now doing quite a bit of community service. He put his name down. He’s been doing boat handling. On Saturday at the Head of the River, he’ll be one of the boat holders. He’s a Year 8. There are only eight or so allowed and most of them are Year 12s (Nicole, p. 15).

The support that Nicole had been able to provide her third and fourth sons by engaging herself in the school community and encouraging her sons to do the same had meant that possible difficulties could be avoided and their proactive stance could support the maintenance of their choice.

In Stage One of this phase it was shown that opportunities presented to the family could be an intervening factor when the school choice is being reviewed and justified. Diane and Peter had an opportunity presented to them when Peter’s employer made a very attractive offer to them to move to the Eastern States. The

enticements were offered as encouragement to move to the city where the company head office was, thus saving the cost of flying Peter across the country repeatedly. Since they had made a home in Western Australia and had successfully enrolled their eldest daughter in a Catholic girls' school, Diane was very reluctant to change unless sufficient support was offered. An alternative was to return to their state of origin and for Peter to commute to head office from there. The distance from head office would not be as great and there would be family support.

I'd rather stay here - I'd love to - than go back. [However] it won't be so bad [in our home state] because all the family is there and we all live just about within walking distance of one-another. It's like living in this estate, how close we all are. They will be back with their own things. If one of the kids is sick and I need a hand my dad can come and help out. He is widowed now. My mum passed away a couple of years ago. My sister and brother are close - it's all good (Diane, p. 5).

Because of the family support that was available, and with the company's acceptance, Diane and Peter decided to return to their home state and re-enrol their daughters in the Catholic high school where they had originally been enrolled.

Intervening conditions: Cost.

Choosing different schools for different children in the same family was, in some instances, a direct reflection on the schooling experience of an older child, in that even though the older child was not moved, different choices were now made for subsequent children. Choosing a new school for the younger child meant substantial change for the whole family, this was usually not done with ease and often required a high level of engagement of family resources. Some families instead worked hard to stay with their original choice, as this seemed to them to be a better option overall than to make a change.

For families that had moved from overseas for what they saw as the educational advantage available to their children in Australia, the opportunity to change an initial enrolment was often very limited, given the sheer magnitude of the relocation and other costs that had already been borne. Maura and Pat, for

example, were the only members of their extended family who had migrated to Australia.

...we're the only part of our families that have ever moved away... So we want him to still have something in common with all his cousins and some sort of 'relatability'. We want him to know what they're talking about in terms of Catholic life and spiritual life and all that sort of thing. That's another important aspect (Maura & Pat, p. 9).

On arrival they knew very little of the Australian culture of choice in schooling but were strongly aware that they wanted their two sons to be imbued with their Catholic faith in their schooling as well as through the family experience.

When we arrived we didn't know anything. A friend of our said, "There's a Catholic school just up the road." So we fronted up to this Catholic school. We didn't realise it was a private school and that all Catholic schools are private schools. We just fell into that; it wasn't a choice. Looking back, I don't think I would have changed it, because he made a lot of good friends there. He's kept his... he goes to church on Christmas (Maura & Pat, p. 7).

The school also provided a strong army cadets program, which the family found quite a paradox and distinctly in contrast to their cultural origins. However, to make changes would have meant engaging in a difficult process because they were already dealing with the major change of migration and so they maintained their enrolment, particularly since their son had established some valuable friendships. Nevertheless, certain negative aspects of their eldest son's schooling had been of sufficient concern that they felt they needed to consider a different choice for their much younger second son.

[Our oldest boy] didn't have such a great experience... In fact, it was kind of one of the reasons why we didn't put [our youngest son] into that environment (Maura & Pat, p. 7).

They also decided that the Catholicity that was being presented by the older boy's school was not to their liking.

... the school itself was very religious in the old-fashioned way, I thought. ... Taking them on retreats and, [our son] said, they put the fear of God in them all the time. He might just have been over-reacting anyway. How can I

describe it? There just wasn't – there was no feeling of community... (Maura, p. 7).

Their minds were effectively made up by the time their younger son was ready to start school and they were determined to try something very different. Pat and Maura felt that having decided to change they could now really move towards their ideal and engage all their resources. Given that their older son had finished school and was pursuing his own tertiary studies, they decided to move interstate to access a Montessori school and take on the full responsibility of their younger son's faith education themselves by engaging in the parish religious education program.

It's like Paradise. We've never, since the day he's gone [to the Montessori school] – he's been there right from kindy – had a day when we weren't thankful that he can go there. A lot of the children start off [at Montessori] in kindy but they have a break somewhere about Year 7 or 8 and they want to go out and see what the real world is like because [Montessori's] a bit of a cocoon. They go out and go to the state schools or private colleges or something. A lot of them come back – they don't stay out there (Maura, p. 20).

Intervening conditions: Degree of challenge.

As described previously in the section on critical family events, Eileen was faced with a very difficult situation to resolve when her second daughter was seriously injured in a classroom accident. The school community failed to support the family in their distress and behaved in a defensive manner.

There were a lot of things, and this thing that there was no insurance, this thing that there were no accidents on the ground. I felt very isolated. There was no parent support, there was no information in the school that this had happened. I wanted to go to the school board and talk about it. [The Principal] drilled it into me and told me that I was not allowed to approach the school board...

I started to tell one of the ladies that I was very close friends with about it, because I was distressed about it. She said to me, "Look, I don't want to hear anything about it. We want our kids to go to a Catholic school, and I don't want to hear anything other than... I don't

want to hear that it's a bad place; I don't want to hear anything." I felt very shut out of the community. I just couldn't believe it, we were totally isolated" (Eileen, p. 6).

While the perceived serious lack of support from the school was an intervening condition in relation to Eileen's capacity to resolve the issue, the greatest impetus came from the sheer magnitude of the stress and disappointment she had experienced over the school's response to the incident involving her daughter. The classroom incident where her daughter had been injured became too difficult to manage in every aspect. The lack of support experienced, the serious challenge to the family's imperatives and the cost already involved in sending the children to a Catholic school were all serious considerations, but it was the level of distress caused by the size of this particular challenge that eventually convinced Eileen that she needed to change her children's school enrolment to the local government school.

The teacher, in this interview [with the principal]. He just sat there and cried. My husband and I were just sitting there. [The teacher] never contacted us, he never did anything. From now, looking back, you can see that he wasn't accountable. [The principal] said he was not accountable. This whole thing - then all in the logistics of my husband saying, "I want the kids out of that school." I knew that if we took the kids out of the school that would be it, that would be the end of a religious school, that would be it. I fought for them and I kept saying to him, "No, no, it'll all sort out. They'll do the right thing, it'll all sort out." They never did the right thing - they never sorted it out. [The Principal] just wanted it to go away. She just wanted to sweep it under the carpet. She wasn't going to do anything and I wasn't strong enough to fight the whole school (Eileen, p. 7).

Eileen was under a great deal of pressure in being the sole provider for a family of four children and a disabled husband. However, the most difficult part of the issue for Eileen was her fear that it would happen again. While waiting for her children on another day she saw the same teacher concerned using exactly the same process of bringing the children into the classroom unsupervised that she felt had been the critical factor in her daughter's injury.

I was upset with the school board. I dealt with [the Principal], and basically she told me that I couldn't go

there, and I wasn't strong enough to fight her. I was a mess. I had all this other stuff to deal with. When [the classroom teacher] did the same thing, the same pattern again, I went home and said to my husband, "Right, we're taking the kids out of the school." I went and saw the social worker - they had a psychiatrist or social worker at the school for the students - someone to talk to. I made an appointment with her. I went to see her and asked her the best way of doing it. This happened halfway through the year. The kids attended school for another whole term while I was thinking it was going to be sorted out and it was all going to work out.

Eileen engaged the help of the social worker to see if the issues could be resolved as she evidently had an underlying hope that a positive resolution was possible.

The social worker said that the best thing would be to leave the children until the end of the year. I thought, "I can't. I can't guarantee that they're going to be all right." At that time I felt that - and I do believe any child in [that teacher's] care is at risk - just basic safety. Forget about whether they're learning anything in the classroom. Safety was at risk. I couldn't stand it. I just kept thinking something else was going to happen. So we did move the children at the third term. We took them out of the school. Before I took them out of the school, as soon as I mentioned it to my family that they were taken out of the school, I got hell for leather (Eileen, p. 7-8).

The degree of challenge was too great for Eileen to resolve at that particular time and, even though her extended family were distressed by her intention to move her children from the Catholic school, she proceeded with the change.

Intervening conditions: Imperatives.

As described in Stage One of Phase Two, Beth and Tom were faced with the distress of their daughter attending a city boarding school in which they had enrolled her with the view of maintaining their family imperative of Catholic education. Tom was highly engaged in the desire to have their daughter in the Catholic girl's boarding school that his sisters had attended, but her unhappiness increased to such a level that his imperatives had to be reconsidered. In the final analysis they decided that their daughter's happiness was the overriding consideration and that they had to look to other options. Fortunately, they were

able to optimise the situation by arranging for their daughter to move in with Tom's sister in the city and attend TAFE to undertake a cooking course.

*...she didn't want to do her Year 12 she just wanted to go and do cooking. So that's what she's doin' and she's doin' very well. Um, she's had three tests this year, 91% and 98% of her tests, so um, yeah.
And she's really enjoying it, very happy, like, yeah.
Always bored but happy [laugh] you know how they get.
I think [her mum] was really glad to get rid of her.
[laugh]
[She lives] with [my] sister ... They live together, just the two of those.
My sister's not married, but she's one of them girls that's gone all over the world. She can't settle down see, by the time she got back the [available] boys are too old (Tom, p. 10-11).*

As they were no longer able to justify their choice of the Catholic boarding school, and because their desire for their daughter's happiness and success had now become the priority, they chose to resolve the issue by changing her place of living and helping her to pursue a new educational opportunity.

Anne and Michael were presented with an obstacle that also required resolution through the management of their choice of schooling. They had already faced academic problems with two of their children who had been perceived by their school as less academically able than Anne and Michael knew them to be, and when their fifth child began to have difficulties they found their imperative about child centred education being threatened by the current arrangements. They had enrolled all their children in Catholic schools as the development of their faith life was very important. However, as their children's academic development was not being fulfilled to their satisfaction, they came to feel that they could take on the faith aspect themselves and, with that aspect no longer in the forefront, concentrate on resolving the academic issues separately. A change in Anne's professional life was also a contributing factor as she then had the time available to make home schooling an option, at least for their critical middle-schooling years, for resolving the issues that concerned them.

I started home-schooling because about five or six years ago I had a major crisis at work... ... 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).

They spent six months deciding whether taking them out of school for their two or three middle school years would be an advantage or disadvantage, as they also had to consider whether they would be able to enrol them in the Catholic high school of their choice for Year 9 onwards when home school would no longer be viable.

They were in Year 6. They'd started Year 6. I said, "Why don't we look into it?" We took six months to look into it. We took quite a few mental health days off school to go and suss things out, because if we did it - I said that if you come out, more than likely, you won't be able to get back into that school. So if you're going to do it, we're probably going to have to look at doing it until you finish primary school, because someone else will probably come in and take your place. You wouldn't want to go just to the school down the road; you wouldn't want to go to another school, so we'd really need to look at it. And you'd need to really be wanting to do it and we'd need to be really sure that that's what we wanted to do. It took us six months to decide that.

In their “mental health days off” Anne and the twins were able to work through the issues that would challenge them in the choice for home schooling.

... you can become compatible. You just have to understand each other. We did that and they decided that yes, [home schooling] would be a good idea and they wanted to do it. They were both quite keen. So then we did. They liked it. When it got to Year 8, we had them booked into [the Catholic high school]. We were saying, "Okay, so what do you want to do? I'd be prepared to continue if you wanted to, but it's up to you." [One of the twins] very strongly wanted to continue and [the other one] was not so sure. [She], thinking that all high schools had to be like the television - but what about a locker? Watching too much Sabrina. In the end, after lots of - and probably leaving it a bit late for the school, I went and said that no, they weren't going to be starting and that they'd decided they wanted to be home-schooled for another year and could we book them in for Year 9. He said, "Well, you know, chances are they could get in, but maybe they can't." I said, "We'll take our chances." So we continued [with home schooling]. Just finishing primary school, they both realised - [She] had completely decided she was no good at maths but she

realises she can do maths. They can do anything. They know that they can do anything if they want to, if they can apply themselves and if it's interesting enough (Anne, p. 4).

The family's educational imperatives were thus refined to the point that the children's achievement of academic potential became a more important determiner of the choice of mode of schooling given that other options were available for accommodating the faith development imperative.

George's daughter, Grace, had an opportunity presented that became an intervening factor when the school choice was being reviewed and justified. She had been invited to move from her local government high school and take up a scholarship at a Catholic secondary school in order to lead the school's dance program. George was determined that it should not disadvantage her as the family's foremost imperative was to get a good education that would lead to life long learning.

I was a bit ambivalent about it. But, as long as, I was very clear with my daughter, in fact I'd made her do an absolute promise, that if she didn't maintain her B average she was out of there and back at a school where she was going to maintain a B average. That wasn't a threat, it was a promise. [laugh]

I wasn't uncomfortable with it. Um, the [college] had had a long reputation at being good at, across the board of a wide range of things and they'd established scholarships in various areas, now the only two areas that I'm aware of but I believe there are far more, were in different sports as well as the arts. So they actually offered full fee scholarships to people who could enhance the school in those areas.

Well, of course she did maintain her B average, I mean this was quite surprising when kids are in the middle of a vigorous rehearsal thing and they just plonk themselves down and grab a history book out of the bag and start studying, you know, and that was the way they did their study. There was a whole environment of excellence. Ah, both in the dance which translated itself to the study. Like there was a peer group there that was operating ... (George, p. 14).

With the maintenance of their imperative for life long learning being unthreatened, the opportunity was accepted and the situation was resolved with a change of enrolment.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the second phase of the process through which a family moves in order to achieve family potential. As has been shown, once they have completed the first phase where the initial choice has been made, they then move to the second phase, during which the family engages in the ongoing management of their choice of secondary schooling. Data gathered in the study and presented here has grounded this theoretical model, indicating that all of the families involved in the study moved in various ways through two stages in the implementation of their choice of schooling: *making the choice* and *managing the choice*.

PERSONAL NOTES

The existence of the density and detail of this second phase of the process only became obvious when the thesis was being written. Many memos were written throughout the time of data collection and coding, and then further memos as discussions refined the concepts and categories. These were then extremely valuable during the writing phase as they tracked the development of thought and retained important ideas in a manageable way so that retrieval and inclusion in the thesis were possible. Early in the course of this research I gave considerable thought to the organisation of my data, memos, coded materials, transcripts, reference material and all the other necessary paraphernalia. Even the development of the information technology during the time has been extraordinary. Instead of storing precious material on a series of floppy disks to store at different locations for security purposes, it is now emailed to myself between home and the university, and also transported via one flash memory stick to be stored on my university computer and network space.