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# **The Experience of Managing Liminality**

## **A Portfolio of Research and Therapeutic Practice**

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**A portfolio submitted for the degree of Doctorate in Psychology**

**City University, London  
Department of Psychology**

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## Abstract

This portfolio explores the experience of managing living in liminality, and ensuing inter- and intrapersonal processes.

The first section is an empirical study entitled “Exploring the experience of relationships and identity in adult women living in the UK with a background of high Childhood Residential Mobility”. Due to increased globalisation, individuals are experiencing increased likelihood of moving as children, and there is a paucity of methodologically sound research into how this is experienced in adulthood, especially in non-American populations. As gender differences have been suggested regarding identity and relationship formation, this study included only women. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), main findings suggest this population develop an *incongruent social self* and *fluid identity* to manage changing social landscapes, resulting in an inconsistent identity which subsequently precludes the development of emotional depth in interpersonal relationships. Additionally, results suggest this population struggle to know where ‘home’ is, having felt ‘orphaned’ by both passport and host countries, and subsequently internalise the identity of ‘traveller’ which further challenges their ability to settle and develop roots.

The professional component is entitled, “An Integrative Approach to Depression: A Case Study”, which presents clinical work conducted with a man with a history of drug abuse. Therapy focused on supporting him to develop an internal locus of evaluation, and explore his identity post drug use.

The final section is a publishable piece focusing on one superordinate theme, “Managing the Self in Relation to the Other”, and is presented using guidelines for submission to the British Journal of Psychology.

## SECTION A:

### INTRODUCTION TO THE PORTFOLIO

This portfolio explores the experience of being in a state of 'liminality' and subsequent management processes. This word originates from the Latin word, *limen*, meaning "threshold", and contemporary definitions are 'relating to a transitional or initial stage of a process' and 'occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold" (oxforddictionaries.com). Identity can be conceptualised within this definition, especially during adolescence when it is forming and one is at the threshold of embarking on a journey to develop an identity and learn one's position in life. However, this process can be disrupted, exacerbated, complicated, delayed and even revisited depending on contexts such as changing social landscapes (see Section B) or relinquishing an activity upon which one's identity is based (see Section C).

Section B presents an empirical study exploring relationships and identity in eight adult women living in the UK with a background of high Childhood Residential Mobility (CRM). The concept for this study emerged during my first year of counselling psychology training. My course drew individuals from the world over, and I noticed feeling so comfortable within this international group. I started questioning why, as I had lived in London for the majority of my life, and at the time was living with English friends, and dating an English man. Yet, when I examined my friendship group and those I was drawn to, I noticed it was towards foreigners, travellers. I engaged in conversation with other students on the course who had similar international backgrounds to myself (see 3.1.3.2), and themes emerged of marginalisation, rootlessness and a different way of forming relationships to my stable English friends. I listened to stories of a lack of ability to assimilate in adulthood, whether in one's passport or host country, and noted a desperate resignation in their voices. I identified with this, and recalled spending my 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday alone in London as all my friends had repatriated to the USA upon completion of their education.

I started noticing in my clinical work clients who mentioned, almost offhandedly, that they had moved during their childhood, sometimes multiple times, and began to notice trends

in patterns of difficulty they reported in knowing who they were and where they fit in the world. As I had experienced a transient life in childhood, I picked up on those comments, understanding the gravity. However, I reflected on the paucity in my training and discourses from my supervisors (who were largely born and raised in the UK) on exploring how these experiences may have impacted the clients today. Each individual I discussed these themes with wanted to talk more about it. I felt it was important to provide this population with a voice, and so phenomenological research appeared most appropriate.

Section C is a case study of a male with a history of heroin addiction, and his struggles to define himself post-drug addiction. Having chosen to abstain from heroin, he found himself having to build a new identity, his previous self-definition no longer appropriate or congruent. He experienced being between states, one foot in the past, one in the present, his future unable to be considered in such a confused state of liminality. The case study explores how therapy focused on working to internalise his external locus of evaluation. Explorations of identity and defining the self in relation to the Other constituted the main content of the sessions, and his struggles to determine who he was, despite having had a very different path to the participants in the empirical research, were reminiscent of their challenges.

Section D presents the empirical study rewritten using guidelines to submit to the British Journal of Psychology. I feel it is important to disseminate these findings for a wider audience, as theses are often too long for professionals to wade through, and so results published in 8,000 words or less are more likely to engage the attention of professionals.

In summary, this portfolio explores how individuals experience their identity and relationships in the face of living a life of liminality. Just as the participants and client in this portfolio are working through a process of self-discovery through, sometimes painful, exploration, I too have worked, and am working, through my own parallel process to further my understanding of my own sense of self in the world, regarding both my relationship with myself, and with others.

SECTION B:  
RESEARCH COMPONENT

*“Balancing on Nothing because you haven’t got the  
Roots”:*

*Exploring the Experience of Relationships and  
Identity in Adult Women Living in the UK  
with a Background of High Childhood Residential  
Mobility*

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The last several decades have witnessed a marked increase in migration, dubbed by Castles and Miller (2003) as “the age of migration”. While in 1960, there were an estimated 76 million international migrants living outside of their passport country, by 2000 this number had risen to 175 million (International Organization for Migration, 2005). Recent data shows 500,000 people immigrated to the UK in 2013, and 250,000 emigrated *from* the UK (ONS, 2014).

Due to a rapidly globalising world, Childhood Residential Mobility (CRM) is progressively impacting individuals worldwide. This makes it increasingly pertinent to gain an elaborated understanding of the psychological impact of growing up with this kind of background, as this population may be increasingly accessing clinical services. Counselling Psychologists with an interest in how globalisation affects culture and identity can observe this first-hand in this population.

Research on this demographic has come from many different fields, with little integration of meaning and findings. Many studies suggest different difficulties individuals from this population experience, but tend to lack methodological rigour; information is often communicated and disseminated via email, word of mouth or casual conversation. It is important research is conveyed in a scholarly manner, to inform researchers interested in, and practitioners working with, this population (Sellers, 2011).

The clinical implications of this study hopefully will be of interest to Counselling Psychologists working with globally mobile individuals, by providing insight into how they make sense of themselves and their relationships. This population has the potential to be misunderstood and marginalised, if, for example, a therapist were to pathologise them by blaming relationship and identity formation issues on attachment issues or deficits in social skills due to lack of insight. By my providing a voice for this population, practitioners can

develop increased understanding to aid appropriate support of their therapeutic goals (see Chapter 5: Synthesis).

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

This section presents a critical literature review of relevant research to orient the study in the field of psychology. First, I review research on Childhood Residential Mobility (CRM), including the impact of globalisation, the role of the family, how it affects relationships, research on acculturation and assimilation, and familiarity seeking as a coping mechanism. I then focus on friendships, exploring its relationship with health, friendship choice, sense of belonging, and how CRM impacts friendships. The third section explores identity, focusing on what 'the self' is, several dominant identity models, and literature on national, cultural, ethnic and hybrid identities. The last section outlines research on Third Culture Kids (TCKs) (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009), as this population is similar to the current sample, and there is insufficient research on the current population. This last section covers TCKs and relationships, rootlessness, sense of identity and repatriation. This literature review aims to highlight gaps in the research that this study can address.

#### 2.1 Residential Mobility

Thirty years ago, Werkman, Farley, Butler and Quayhagen (1981) explored the 'psychological effects of moving and living overseas'. Of the statistically matched groups, one of 148 teenagers who had lived outside America for at least two years and one of 96 teenagers who had never lived outside America, the researchers collected data using a sentence completion task to determine ego strength, coping strategies and fears, and a scaling technique to determine attitudes. The results showed significant differences: mobile students exhibited less positive self-concept, were more insecure about their future, and exhibited a lower sense of agency. Importantly, they also valued intra- over inter-personal strengths, perceiving abilities and qualities to be more important than friendships. The researchers suggested moving had caused the individuals to turn *inward*, becoming less dependent on others for coping or intimacy. They observed, "A hint of depressive affect is noted in their views

of feelings, themselves, and the future” (p. 656), and they appeared to invest less in long-term, intimate relationships, afraid they would end. However, it is important to note that firstly there were many similarities between the two groups, indicating that those who moved appeared to share some common experiences with their stable peers; and secondly, some of the coping techniques they developed were actually quite adaptive for adulthood. Despite revealing such insight into this population, the study did not address whether the effects were long lasting, and called for further longitudinal research. Additionally, this research drew on the Semantic Differential Technique, used to capture opinions regarding concepts; as it employs a dichotomous scale (good-bad), it does therefore not capture the intricacies of one’s experience in the same way semi-structured interviewing allows. However, this study is pivotal in demonstrating that just *one* move abroad for two years away during adolescence can initiate such change, which is important to remember when considering the current sample who moved *at least* three times.

### **2.1.1 Globalisation**

Globalisation, a major contributor to the rise of CRM, has been implicated by Rizvi (2008) (who experienced CRM himself), for creating a much smaller world that facilitates regular interaction between individuals from different cultures and backgrounds. Arnett (2002) suggests adolescents are most vulnerable to globalisation as they have enough maturity to gather information and experiences outside of the family home, but have not yet developed set beliefs and ways of life. Through reviewing globalisation literature, he outlined what I feel is a useful way of conceptualising several types of identity engendered by globalisation:

- a. *bicultural identity*: part of one’s identity remains rooted in the local culture while another part is created through the relationship to the global culture
- b. *identity confusion*: individuals do not feel connected to either the local or global culture

- c. *self-selected cultures*: an identity is created with like-minded individuals to avoid identifying with the global culture
- d. *emerging adulthood*: explorations in love and work continue past adolescence (10-18 years of age) to a post adolescence period (18-late twenties)

I consider the concept of 'emerging adulthood' to be particularly pertinent to the population under study, as this is a concept that encapsulates the changes globalisation is having on individuals, particularly mobile individuals. Interestingly, the categories support Berry's (2008) argument that globalisation will not necessarily lead to a more homogenous society, corroborated by research by Branscombe, Schmitt and Harvey (1999), who collected quantitative data on discrimination and minority group identification from 139 African Americans. They found participants reaffirmed their identity with their minority culture when they felt their identity challenged, to maintain a stable sense of identity; this served to *enhance* self-esteem and psychological well-being, suggesting globalisation may engender *stronger* identification with one's culture, rather than weaker. This research highlights how cultural identity can be more or less salient depending on environmental cues, however as data was collected through questionnaires and imaginary scenarios, conclusions regarding how this malleability is *experienced*, and the process in which individuals engage in when confronted with certain situations, is limited.

### **2.1.2 Role of the Family**

In mobility, children often experience lack of agency, and Pollock and Van Reken (2009) observe children blaming parents for disrupting friendships due to moving, taking their anger and pain out on them. Werkman (1978) suggests high mobility causes a high level of emotional pressure on the family unit, as the usual social and familial support available in the passport country is lost. While this can result in bonding and reliance within the family that may not have otherwise occurred, Werkman argues the intensity of the emotional strain can damage the parent-child relationship as parents feel overwhelmed. Importantly, Campbell,

Adams and Dobson (1984) demonstrate lack of connection between parents and children greatly increases the difficulty in resolving adolescent identity crises.

### **2.1.3 Relationships**

The importance of peer engagement during adolescence is stressed by Brown and Larson (2009), who argue forming successful peer relationships is central to healthy child development. Indeed, a review by Hay, Payne and Chadwick (2004) found good quality relationships help protect against feelings of rejection and loneliness. For mobile individuals, moving may damage relationship quality, increasing susceptibility to these negative emotions. Depending on the distance of the move, peer groups and relationship quality may be compromised; establishing a new social network can be challenging (Brown & Larson, 2009) and stressful (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari & Blum, 2010). Indeed, Anderson, Leventhal, Newman and Dupere (2014) found a small but significant reduction in the number of peers mobile individuals had with each move; however, quality of these relationships was not assessed to determine impact.

Interestingly, mobile children appear more likely to be drawn towards delinquent peers, as reported by Haynie, South and Bose (2006); analysing 12,000 adolescents, they found mobile children more likely to affiliate with delinquent peers than stable children, and this effect appeared to last for several years. The researchers suggest movers experience increased difficulty in penetrating groups of high-achievers, and so seek belonging amongst deviants who are more accepting. However, the analysis did not take into account movers relationships *prior* to moving, so it is difficult to determine the impact of moving; also no longitudinal data was provided. This study is invaluable in terms of demonstrating a link between residential mobility and increased levels of delinquency, and had strong statistical power due to its large sample size; however, it is limited in its usefulness in capturing the experience of mobility and impact on relationships due to the fact that the data collected was broad in nature, and

therefore did not capture individual differences, such as distance moved, which perhaps may impact the individuals' experiences.

#### **2.1.4 Acculturation and Assimilation**

Importantly for the current population, considering how individuals manage when arriving in a new place is integral. *Acculturation*, as defined by Gans (2007), is the incorporation of new cultural behaviours, (e.g. learning a new language), and entirely depends on the individual how much or little, how slow or fast, it occurs; *assimilation*, however, is dependent on how accepting the dominant group is.

Acculturation models are either *unidimensional* (e.g. Park, 1928) or *bidimensional* (e.g. Berry, 1980), the former referring to models where complete assimilation into the host country is viewed as preferable, and the latter to models where aspects of the original culture are retained, the previous and new cultures integrated (Schwartz, Vignoles, Brown & Zagefka, 2014).

Acculturation research began with Robert Park (1928), an American urban sociologist, who researched migrant adjustment in America. Park introduced the term “marginality” (p. 893); his model (1950) views acculturation as a process of contact, conflict, accommodation, and ending in assimilation. Park’s mentee, Milton Gordon (1964), expanded, and proposed a detailed conceptualisation of assimilation, where acculturation is viewed as a *process* of assimilation. However, this model has been criticised by Ngo (2008) for being too linear, assuming acculturation is only complete once one’s own ethnic identity is erased and replaced with a mutually exclusive national identity, a criticism with which I concur.

In contrast, John Berry (1980), an eminent Canadian researcher in cross-cultural psychology, developed a well regarded and relevant ‘classification model’ of assimilation strategies, which is based on *two* dimensions: the maintenance of one’s existing identity and heritage, and the extent of identification with the new, dominant culture. Berry suggests four possible resulting assimilation strategies which I believe are useful to consider:

- a. *assimilation*: relinquishing one's cultural identity and adopting the larger society's identity
- b. *integration*: retaining one's own cultural identity and joining with the larger society
- c. *separation*: retaining one's own cultural identity and keeping separate from the larger society
- d. *marginality*: not identifying with one's own or the larger society's identity, leading to alienation and loss of identity (Berry, Kim & Boski, 1987, pp. 65-68).

Berry's proposition of bidirectional assimilation appears more useful in considering the process of change, as unidirectional models do not take into account the individual's needs, wants and desires, but rather focus only on the impact of the environment on the individual. Further, Berry (1997) argues *biculturalism* is preferable, acknowledging this can only occur if the dominant culture is accepting. Ngo (2008) criticises the model for not taking into account the fact that individuals may vary in their style of assimilation depending on context, and also that immigrants do not always *choose* how much they are accepted or rejected by the new dominant society, but rather "separation" may be forced marginality, which is a relevant point to consider.

Subsequently, Dr. Janet Bennett, a leading researcher on cultural diversity, proposed several *responses* to cultural marginality (1993), which are helpful to consider regarding the population under study. Bennett proposed two potential responses of marginalised individuals living on the precipice of several cultures, emphasising the development of a strong cultural identity as integral to healthy development (Econompoulos, 1999). Due to conflict between multiple cultures, individuals experience culture shock, which results in either 'encapsulated marginality', which Bennett argues is more likely to occur when an individual tries to construct their identity while managing two different cultures with varying views on assimilation, or 'constructive marginality', when individuals develop a stronger sense of identity, and are able to move between the different cultures with less effort:

1. *encapsulated marginality*:

- a. sense of isolation
- b. feeling experiences are unique and personal
- c. relating to a group is impossible
- d. uncertain of own individual and cultural identity
- e. constant sense of incongruence, as though wearing a mask
- f. not feeling “at home” anywhere
- g. difficulties with boundaries, decision making and delineating authentic self
- h. feeling isolated, upset, lack of agency, life lacks meaning

Bennett argues ideally individuals would gain sense of self-reference introspectively rather than relying on external definitions, and Yoshikawa (1987) agrees, arguing integration of different cultural perspectives can cause growth due to lack of restraint by the cultural beliefs of either culture. This may then result in:

2. *constructive marginality*:

- a. develops strong sense of self and boundaries
- b. uses experience of cultural marginality to understand self and others
- c. experiences “dynamic in-betweenness” (Yoshikawa, 1987), being “able to move easily and powerfully between different cultural traditions, acting appropriately and feeling at home in each, and in doing so simultaneously maintains an integrated, multi-cultural sense of self. Rather than the *either/or* identity of those who feel encapsulated by their marginality, constructive marginal experience their movement between cultures as *both/and*” (Schaetti, 2001, no page).

I feel this model can help to conceptualise responses the population under study may experience regarding managing several different cultures simultaneously.

A more recent model which is interesting and helps to make sense of the process of assimilation is Kim's (2008) *stress-adaptation-growth* model, where *stress* arises from conflict between learning (desire to change) and unlearning or *deculturation* (desire to stay the same). The individual desires to return to a state of homeostasis, through denial, withdrawal, or even hostility toward the new environment, or to return "home", to a place where they feel connected. Subsequently, Kim suggests "culture shock" (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001) is an inability to manage the new environment. However, this stress allows individuals to engage with the world in a new way through *adaptation*, where psychological *growth* can occur. The process continues until there are no new threatening experiences, and one has developed an intercultural identity. Kim argues that learning and deculturation, occur concurrently, at least for a period of time, after relocating. Changes may be external (clothing), or internal (a change in values). I resonate with this model due to my own experiences, and believe it is useful in helping conceptualise the process of change due to mobility.

### **2.1.5 Familiarity Seeking**

Moving can be both exciting, and stressful and anxiety inducing (e.g. Deane, 1990; Moyle & Parkes, 1999). Whyte (1956) observed increased probability that individuals experiencing stress following a move would seek familiar objects, possibly to decrease uncertainty (Lee, 2001), which was corroborated by multiple well-designed and fascinating studies by Oishi and Kesebir (2012). 128 college students were asked to imagine shopping in another state, indicating whether they would visit a national or local store. To control for CRM, the study was repeated with 102 students with mobile backgrounds. Both groups chose national stores, but the latter group had a stronger preference. To clarify the results, a further 88 students completed a writing task about being offered their dream job which required either staying *stable* for 10 years, or *moving* every year; the study did not yield any significant differences. Due to the lack of significant findings, the next study involved two parts: 148 students were presented with words either related to mobility (e.g. change) or stability (e.g.

community), or were neutral (e.g. flowers), and then shown various Chinese ideographs either one, three or five times, and asked to indicate how much they liked them. Results showed the more viewed ideographs were preferred, and those in the mobility primed condition showed the *greatest* preference for familiar ideographs than the other groups. Aware of the difficulty of generalising from Chinese ideographs, a further study was conducted on 173 students, who were asked to either write about the dream job outlined previously, or their current daily life. They were presented several faces, some more frequently than others, and rated how much they liked each one. The frequently shown faces were found to be preferable, *especially* in the mobile group, corroborating previous results. The researchers concluded a link between RM, stress and familiarity seeking. While the results are interesting, there were limitations: effect sizes were small to moderate, and generalisability was limited as participants were all American college students. Replication is necessary with different age groups and demographics. Additionally, the study does not take into account individual nuances and experiences, which can be better captured using qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews. The preference of individuals to seek familiarity when anxious appears common across the lifespan: attachment literature reveals infants are more likely to explore novel situations when provided access to a secure base (e.g. Ainsworth & Bell, 1970), and attachment figures are activated when adults are presented, both subliminally and consciously, with words that threaten attachment (e.g. death, separation) (Mikulincer, Gillath & Shaver, 2002).

## **2.2 Friendships**

### **2.2.1 Relationships and Health**

The importance of relationships for health was explored by Cobb's (1976) literature review which revealed strong social relationships were a protective factor for individuals experiencing stressful events (e.g. depression). A questionnaire based study by Buhrmester (1990) on 172 10-16 year olds, found closer bonds resulted in lower rates of depression and

anxiety, and higher levels of self-esteem, and vice versa; however, as the study was quantitative and correlational in nature, it did not reveal insight into *how* these correlations interact, or the process through which they occur, which can be attempted through qualitative methods. Similar results were found by Hagerty, Williams, Coyne and Early (1996) who, through a questionnaire based study on 379 college students found a link between lack of belonging and anxiety, depression and loneliness. However, results were not generalisable due to the sample consisting of students; additionally, due to the quantitative nature of the data collection, the measures were not able to capture individual nuances of the participants. Semi-structured interviews, such as in the present research, are able to explore the link between lack of belonging and negative emotions more sensitively. Indeed, a recent review by Heinrich and Gullone (2006) revealed loneliness negatively impacts mental health, well-being, and social withdrawal, and increases the risk of suicide. Due to high levels of disruption in relationships, mobile individuals may be at increased risk.

### **2.2.2 Similarity-Attraction Hypothesis Theory**

Regarding how people choose friends, practitioners can draw on a well-known, much researched and highly relevant hypothesis, the *similarity-attraction hypothesis*, or “the attraction paradigm” (Byrne, 1971), developed by Donn Byrne, a renowned personality and social psychologist. Byrne argued the more similar two people are, the more likely they are to be attracted to one another, drawing on Festinger’s (1954) theories of cognitive dissonance and social comparison; he argued it is reinforcing to have one’s ideas and attitudes confirmed, with cognitive dissonance ensuing when encountering others with contrasting attitudes and ideas.

An alternative view proposed by Duck (1977) agreed that while similarity is attractive as it is rewarding, attitudes and opinions are only sought at the beginning of relationships. As the relationship progresses, one’s ‘world view’ (e.g. core values, interpretation of experiences) becomes more pivotal. Therefore, according to Burleson, Samter and Luccetti (2009),

relationships are more likely to form between individuals with similar world views. Indeed, a 24-page questionnaire based study of 696 25-90 year old mobile individuals by Cottrell and Useem (1993) revealed greater preference for engaging and nurturing relationships with individuals of different nationalities, suggesting mobile individuals gravitate toward similar others to gain acceptance. While these results are pertinent to the current study and are able to inform further research directions, it is unclear how the data was collected other than through questionnaires; however, which questionnaires, and whether they have been validated, is unclear. Further support comes from a study by Sias et al. (2008) which highlighted how individuals choose to align themselves with similar/dissimilar others. Analysing interviews with 30 individuals between 18-75 years of age, they found individuals were drawn to others with whom they identified with *culturally*, for example being “non-American” as opposed to “Asian”. The researchers suggested this was due to a desire and interest in difference, having had previous, positive experiences in other cultures. The study was similar to the current study in the following ways: being qualitative in nature; employing the use of semi-structured interviews; including participants from around the world; drawing on retrospective memories; and comparing themes across participants. However, the semi-structured interviews focused on general rather than specific events that impacted the course of relationships, while the current study focuses solely on the impact of residential mobility. Additionally, the study only researched intercultural friendships deemed “successful”, so cannot draw conclusions about the experience of *failing* to develop friendships; and lastly, it is not generalisable due to its small sample size (n = 30).

### **2.2.3 Sense of Belonging**

Humans are social animals inherently motivated by sense of belonging; we have “a pervasive desire to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive and significant interpersonal relationships” (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497). Pertinent to the

population under study, Heinrich and Gullone (2006) found loneliness particularly high during adolescence due to shifting identities and the desire to belong.

A very interesting and pertinent concept, *conditional group identification* relates to how one identifies with a group based on that group's reputation (Cialdini et al., 1976), and has been explored in three related well-designed studies by Oishi, Ishii and Lun (2009). The first study provided 368 American and 167 Japanese college students scenarios of success versus lack of success regarding school alumni, and found American students more likely to identify with successful alumni, while the opposite held for Japanese students. To explore further, they gathered data of baseball game attendance and scores from residentially mobile and stable cities in both America and Japan; results demonstrated that in residentially mobile cities, fans more likely to attend baseball games when their team was winning, while in residentially stable cities, there was no correlation. The final study consisted of 102 college students, half of whom had never moved, and half who had moved at least once. Participants were provided (false) narratives about their university's ranking in the USA, either being #1 or having lost the #1 spot. When explored, participants reported stronger identification with their university when it was ranked #1, *especially* amongst those who had moved. They found no significant difference in non-movers regardless of which story was provided. The researchers suggest *unconditional* group identification is low in mobile societies due to transience of jobs and residences for inhabitants; as the groups have little lasting impact on them, mobile individuals are unconcerned with survival of that group. Therefore, they argue unconditional group identification is maladaptive in mobile societies. However, in societies where individuals live, have the same job and residence for many years, the group's survival signals survival of the self, rendering unconditional group identification adaptive and necessary in stable societies. These findings are very relevant to the current study and are highly interesting; they reveal important differences regarding cultural sense of belonging and motivations driving social interactions. They present interesting insights which have been drawn on when considering the topic of research at hand. However, the results are limited by their reliance on college level

students, and, due to the quantitative nature of the study, demands replication with different age groups, in various locations, and with more sensitive methods (i.e. qualitative) in order to reveal deeper insight into the experience of (un)conditional group identification.

#### **2.2.4 Impact of Residential Mobility on Relationships**

Moving makes maintaining long-term friendships challenging (e.g. Oishi & Schimmack, 2010). With such uncertainty and change, forming multiple friendships wherever possible would make logical sense, as social networks are inherent to human survival (Berscheid, 2003). This was demonstrated in two recent and related studies by Oishi et al. (2013). Firstly, 133 college students were asked to think about either having a mobile or stable lifestyle, and what kind of friendships they would have subsequently. They found thinking about mobility caused sadness and loneliness, and an anticipation of fewer friendships. In a follow up study, 168 adults were given the same task, but asked how *motivated* they would be to expand their social network. The findings replicated the previous study, but also showed those in the mobile condition were *more* motivated to expand their social network. In addition, further analysis revealed it was the *anticipation* of being lonely and sad that motivated individuals to expand their social network. Positively, this study used both college level and non-college participants, however there was no exploration of whether *actually* having a large or small network was more beneficial. In addition, the study was cross-sectional and hypothetical, and only researched the impact of *involuntary* moves; more research, preferably longitudinal, is needed to ascertain the actual impact of moving, both voluntary and involuntary. Qualitative research, such as the present study, can add to these findings by exploring the experience of forming social networks subsequent to multiple moves, to provide insight into how they are navigated as a result of high mobility. The researchers suggest the findings support the hypothesis that mobile individuals cast their social net wide rather than investing valuable time and resources in a select few (Granovetter, 1974), an interesting and relevant hypothesis. This was corroborated by a qualitative study by Adams and Plaut (2003) on 50 Americans and 50

Ghanaians, both students and non-students. The researchers employed the use of semi structured interviews, the same method used in the present study, to collect data on both quantity of friends and meaning of friendship, finding the Americans more likely to have larger social networks than the Ghanaians. The authors suggested it was less risky to have more friendships in residentially mobile societies as one could “escape”, while in stable societies “escaping” is more difficult, so members are more cautious as more friends implies more responsibility. The findings are very relevant to the current study as they indicate, keeping in mind that the sample was small and non-random, that residential mobility impacts how social networks are navigated and formed.

## **2.3 Identity**

### **2.3.1 Identity and the “Self”**

Drawing lightly on social constructionism (Gergen, 1985), the current study views social context as important in the construction of the self. What exactly ‘the self’ is, has been debated for decades. Early social psychology researchers, Asch (1952) and Sherif (1936) proposed a *collective self*, which incorporates its properties from ‘the group’ at hand, which consist of norms acquired from social interactions which are then internalised, contributing to one’s identity. This contrasts with an *individual self*, formed through self-identifying personal characteristics, independent of group membership (Crisp & Turner, 2007). Goffman (1959) observed “the self” as purely social, ever-changing from one social role/position to another, supported by Howard (2000) who argues for a fluid identity, claiming *role-identities* are organised hierarchically depending on their salience for the individual, forming the basis of his/her self-concept. This is further corroborated by de Munck (2013) who suggests the self engages with the external world through identity, consisting of various cultural models which enmesh to create a strong and dynamic whole. He argues identity functions to ground oneself in the world, and, due to multiple cultural models, change regularly within one’s daily life, depending on context.

The standpoint I adhere to which provides a framework to conceptualise identity is symbolic interactionism which views the self as the result of interactions 'between' people, rather than arising from 'within' individuals (Howard, 2000). As the phenomenological self is viewed as based on and within contexts and interpretations, and is therefore temporary, Turner (1982) argues individuals contain as many social identities as groups they feel they belong to, and as many personal identities as interpersonal relationships of which they feel a part. Social constructionists (e.g. Potter & Wetherall, 1987) believe the self is entirely dependent on situational contexts, arguing multiple selves are constructed through words, which is a more extreme standpoint than my own.

### **2.3.2 Identity Formation**

Phinney (2006) argues minority groups, within which mobile groups could be conceptualised, experience a greater period of identity exploration past their 20s due to continually having to redefine their identity in relation to the dominant culture. She suggests identity is called into question when adolescents are exposed to individuals with different backgrounds and ethnicities, engendering an awareness and questioning of their own identity. According to Helms (1990), the Other might marginalise or stigmatise the mobile individual if they are treated according to their appearance, as this assumption can be incorrect due to the social construction of identity. The challenge for these individuals, argues Phinney (2006), is to develop a strong enough positive identity to withstand challenge, not experiencing negativity toward the self due to one's ethnicity. Relevant to this population, Waterman (1982) argues the more differing identities an individual experiences during adolescence, the greater the probability of an identity crisis. As such, he argues homogenous cultures are more likely to produce strong and well maintained identities, while mixed communities are more likely to engender identity crises.

To provide context, I have chosen to present three well-known and relevant identity researchers: Erik Erikson, James Marcia and Carol Gilligan.

### **2.3.2.1 Erik Erikson**

The framework I feel encapsulates identity formation best is that of Erik Erikson (1902-1994), a developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst, who developed a theory of human psychosocial development over the life span which remains very influential albeit controversial, and is often overlooked in favour of Marcia's (1980) model (see 2.3.2.2). Erikson struggled with his own identity, finding himself between cultures in childhood, which resulted in him focusing his research on the influence of culture on identity development (Mitchell & Black, 1995). He outlined "Eight Stages of Man" in Identity: Youth and Crisis (1968), defining conflicts and goals of psychosocial development, including how people define the self, how the self develops in relation to others, and how personal and social selves integrate. Erikson assumes the stages are universally experienced and on a continuum, mapping onto each stage of life. Stages are triggered by a 'crisis', presenting the opportunity to learn new coping mechanisms, and are completed with successful resolution of the conflict; revisiting and working through resolutions from earlier stages is also possible.

The most relevant stage for this study is Stage 5: Identity versus Identity Confusion (Erikson, 1968, p. 94), when one's identity must be established before the next stage can be approached. It is believed this stage occurs during adolescence, between roughly 12 to 18 years of age, during which time the adolescent desires congruence with him/herself, particularly regarding peer relationships. Identity is formed both within the individual and grounded in the communal culture, and individuals begin to consider their political, religious and sexual views. Adolescents allowed to explore various roles and life paths will engender a stable sense of self, however, if forced into a specific role and prevented from exploring, identity confusion will arise. The successful resolution of this stage is an ideological fidelity (e.g. occupational, social, political) (Cloninger, 2004). Importantly, Erikson (1950) argued that developing healthy relationships relied upon developing a strong sense of personal identity.

Despite contributing much to the field, Erikson's model has been heavily criticised for being a "male model" by Gillian (1982) (see 2.2.2.3), and by Phinney (1993) for not taking ethnicity into account, having been largely developed based on white subjects. Additionally, numerous researchers (e.g. Marcia, 1980) have suggested Stages 5 and 6 (Intimacy versus Isolation) run concurrently for females, and therefore the model is not applicable to female identity development as it stands. However, I believe that as the model was developed based on much research, it is still useful in conceptualising subjective experiences of mobile individuals.

### **2.3.2.2 James Marcia**

James E. Marcia (1980) developed Erikson's model further, into what remains the most influential model of identity formation to date (Meeus, 2011). Marcia's model conceptualises 'identity' as a "self-structure – an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organisation of drives, abilities, beliefs and individual history" (p. 159), arguing that confusion about one's own uniqueness arises from a weakly defined self-structure, resulting in reliance on external validation. Marcia, as with other theorists (e.g. Erikson, 1968), argues that identity is predominantly formed during adolescence, as it is "the first time that physical development, cognitive skills, and social expectations coincide to enable young persons to sort through and synthesize their childhood identifications in order to construct a viable pathway toward their adulthood" (p. 159).

Marcia (1966) expanded Erikson's concepts, creating a well-regarded and useful empirical *identity status model* (Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer & Orlofsky, 1993), delineating four patterns of adolescent identity development. Marcia conceptualised this model as the extent to which the adolescent explores and commits to various aspects of life (e.g. religion, vocation, gender roles, relational choices) (Cloninger, 2004). The model outlines two key strategies: *exploration* and *commitment*. The former relates to a purposeful exploration of a variety of identities, the latter to having chosen a specific identity (Marcia et

al., 1993). Commitments can be made with or without exploration: the former is borne of an “identity crisis”, where individuals examine meanings and implications of their own ethnic group membership, leading to decisions about how to conduct life as part of the group (Phinney, 2004), while the latter results in life directions and values remaining unchanged from childhood (Marcia et al., 1993). The four patterns are:

- a. *diffusion*: no exploration or commitment to an ideology or role; a reluctance to commit to life decisions which could result in commitment to an identity
- b. *foreclosure*: commitment to various values, roles and future goals; decisions are commonly made on the basis of another’s desires; there is no identity crisis to encourage exploration of alternative options and identities; linked with high levels of well-being (Meeus, Iedema, Helsen & Vollebergh, 1999)
- c. *moratorium*: in the midst of an identity crisis; one’s current identity is in question, and others are being explored; linked with the lowest level of well-being (Meeus et al., 1999)
- d. *achievement*: completed moratorium; committed to a chosen identity (Whitbourne & Weinstock, 1979); linked with high levels of well-being (Meeus et al., 1999)

While presented as a ‘stage model’, longitudinal research by Adams (1988) (as cited in Stephen, Fraser & Marcia, 1992) demonstrates fluid fluctuation *between* stages rather than a linear progression, including status regression (e.g. Marcia, 1974), supporting the notion of fluid identity. Pertinent to mobile populations, transitions are implicated as triggers for the exploration process (e.g. Levinson, 1977): if one’s roles or values are no longer viewed as appropriate, one experiences loss of identity. Through this, the individual struggles to maintain a continuing sense of self, and a new identity is required (Stephen et al., 1992).

### **2.3.2.3 Female Identity Development Models**

#### **Carol Gilligan**

The first researchers to question Erikson's (1950) model were Douvan and Adelson (1966), whose questionnaire based research on roughly 3,500 American adolescents (aged 14-16) found females placed more emphasis on *interpersonal* relationships, whereas males placed more emphasis on the *intrapersonal*. These findings are supported by Carol Gilligan (1982), an American feminist, ethicist and psychologist. Gilligan presented a necessary and thought-provoking controversial counter developmental model in response to the failure of staged, linear developmental models for not including an independent perspective of women's identity development (pp. 11-12). Gilligan criticised other models for defining the process of maturation (identity development) as "separation and individuation", which she felt disregarded common experiences and developments of women borne of "relationships and attachment". Senchuk (1990) criticised Gilligan for seeming to exaggerate differences between males and females, and Deaux (1984) argues models like Erikson's (1968) and Gilligan's (1982) are too gender-specific and reinforce gender stereotyping, suggesting that a less dichotomous model would be more appropriate.

Marcia (1980) stresses the importance of considering male and female identity development models separately, arguing that in adolescence, boys tend to be concerned with occupation and ideology, while girls are more focused on forming and maintaining relationships. As this goes against the "accepted" models of identity development (e.g. Erikson, 1968), society then views the girl as having "failed" at successful identity formation. A mixed methods study by Hodgson and Fischer (1979) on 100 participants, split equally regarding gender, employed the use of a questionnaire on self-esteem, the Identity Status Interview and the Intimacy Status Interview, and found that "male identity development focuses on individual competence and knowledge [while] female identity development seems to revolve around issues of relating to others" (Marcia, 1980, p. 179). As such, Marcia (1980) argues female identity development needs to be understood from the viewpoint of inter- rather

than intra-personal relationships based on how society is currently constructed. It is worth noting a well-designed qualitative study by Archer (1989) which employed the use of semi-structured interviews with middle and high school American students did not find defined gender differences, suggesting the need for a less dichotomous model. Indeed, due to socialisation norms, results from a quantitative study by Lytle, Bakken and Romig (1997) found adolescent females manage both separation and connectedness tasks concurrently, while males only work to manage the former. Questionnaires were administered to 300 males and 300 females in 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade and was ethnically and racially representative. These results support the choice for the current study to focus on only one gender to explore. Limitation-wise, however, it was cross-sectional and only generalisable to midsized, Midwestern American cities based on its sample.

Ruthellen Josselson (1998) expanded on Marcia's stages and developed a more contemporary model of female development, also due to criticising the majority of models of identity development for being too male-focused, and ignoring the importance of the interpersonal in women's lives. To develop her model, Josselson conducted semi-structured interviews with nine white, college level educated women, and suggested four stages of development:

- *Foreclosure: Purveyors of the Heritage (Guardians)*: identity commitments, no identity crisis, standards adopted from parents, began exploring identity in 40s
- *Moratorium: Daughters of the Crisis*: internalised family value, struggle when learn other values, feel stuck between "shoulds" and "wants"
- *Identity Achievement: Pavers of the Way*: form individual identity, desire for internal rather than external validation, resilient
- *Diffusion: Lost and Sometimes Found (Drifters)*: no crisis or commitment, low psychological functioning, no control over life

This model delivers more depth and detail than Gilligan's model, and maps on well to both Erikson and Marcia's models, providing a female identity model that can be considered in

parallel to those two main models which are still highly influential today. Josselson's research however was conducted on a homogenous group of women, which needs to be kept in consideration when making generalisations.

### **2.3.3 National Identity**

Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind and Vedder (2001) define national identity as the incorporation of the values and practices of, and an increased sense of belonging within, a culture. McCrone and Bechhofer (2008) demonstrate national identity is largely ignored unless certain situations (e.g. wars or sporting events) arise which increase its salience and subsequent importance. A very useful mixed methods study on 120 Scottish individuals regarding issues of national identity by Kiely, Bechhofer, Steward and McCrone (2001) revealed national identity assumptions are based on assessing available *identity markers* (e.g. accent), which increase predictability of social encounters (McCrone & Bechhofer, 2008). Interestingly, based on Scottish survey data from 2003 - 2005, McCrone and Bechhofer (2008) found birthplace the most important indicator of nationality above accent, ancestry or race. However, the researchers caution that when identity markers are not obvious, (e.g. birthplace), other markers (e.g. accent) are used to ascertain where one is 'from', complicated by the fact that some markers can be altered, (e.g. accent) while others are permanent, (e.g. birthplace). It is so important to consider these findings when approaching the population in the current study, as a high rate of residential mobility may make it more likely that identity markers are unreliable and confusing; through qualitative research, the experience of how identity markers can both help and hinder can be explored more fully.

### **2.3.4 Cultural identity**

Cultural identity is defined by Jandt (2013) as "the identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has a shared system of symbols and meaning as well as norms

for conduct” (p. 7). Peter Adler (1975) presented a ‘new’ kind of person, a multicultural individual who “is always in the process of becoming part of and apart from a cultural context” (p. 26). This type of individual does not subscribe to the usual sense of “belongingness”, but rather has a “fluid and mobile” identity. Corroborating Adler’s view, Kim (2008) argues cultural identity is fluid, depending on the situation rather than being mutually exclusive, where individuals fit into one group only.

Useem, Donoghue and Useem (1963) define culture as “the learned and shared behaviour of a community of interacting human beings” (p. 169). For the stable individual, Arnett (2002) argues culture is unchanging and predictable; however, due to globalisation, mobile individuals are developing multicultural identities due to exposure to multiple cultures. Difficulty arises when different cultures with differing ideas converge and conflict. Arnett argues that if this conflict presents during developmental years when identity is not yet strongly formed, there is increased probability they will identify with the new culture.

### **2.3.5 Ethnic Identity**

Extensive work on ethnic identity has been conducted by Jean Phinney (1996), who describes ethnic identity “as a complex construct including a commitment and sense of belonging to one’s ethnic group, positive evaluation of the group, interest in and knowledge about the group and involvement in activities and transitions of the group” (p. 145). Phinney argues ethnic identity research has a weak empirical base, as most research is cross sectional which does not capture the fluidity due to being heavily influenced by social context.

Marcia et al. (1993) state ethnic identity is a dynamic, complex construct, evolving and responding to developmental and contextual influences. This idea is mirrored by Phinney (1996) who believes individuals can have strong, weak, confused, positive, or negative ties to their ethnic group, and these ties can change over time. Based on a review of the literature, Phinney et al. (2001) define immigrant ethnic identity as the ability to remain connected with

one's passport cultures values and practices. They suggest ethnic identities are likely to be stronger in situations where immigrants retain a strong desire to hold on to their identities and pluralism is encouraged. However, if hostility is present (real or imagined), ethnic identity may be downplayed or rejected, or proudly asserted and used to emphasise solidarity. However, Phinney (2004) states that while ethnic identity should predict positive outcomes if there is a strong supportive ethnic community, due to globalisation, it is becoming increasingly difficult to form a strong ethnic identity.

Exploring ethnic identity and self-esteem, Phinney, Cantu and Kurtz (1997) conducted a quantitative study employing questionnaires on identity and self-esteem on 669 American-born adolescents, which demonstrated strong sense of ethnic identity as a significant predictor of self-esteem. However, the study was correlational, so conclusions regarding direction of effect cannot be drawn; in addition, self-esteem only represented a small proportion of the variance, making generalisations hard to draw. However, a larger study by Roberts et al. (1999), also quantitative, on 5,423 adolescents from various ethnic groups explored ethnic identity, self-esteem, coping and depression, and found that strong ethnic identity correlated with ability to cope, self-esteem and optimism, while weak ethnic identity correlated with loneliness and depression. In their review, Phinney et al. (2001) revealed pressures to relinquish one's sense of ethnicity to assimilate are linked with anger, depression, and even violence. The findings from these studies suggest that self-esteem and sense of ethnic identity are related in some way; however, due to the quantitative nature of the studies, it is impossible to have further insight into this relationship. The current study, due to being qualitative in nature, will be able to explore this relationship in more depth.

### **2.3.6 Hybrid Identity**

Bhabha (2009) suggests global society's identity has become a *hybrid identity*, heavily influenced by politics and economics (Rizvi, Lingard & Lavia, 2006), which Pollock and Van Reken (2009) believe complicate sense of belonging for individuals. Arnett (2002) coined the

term *complex hybrid identity*, for immigrants managing both native and global identities. He suggests a global identity can be advantageous by providing young people with sense of belonging in a worldwide culture; however, if they feel on the periphery of several cultures, and view the global culture as more *relevant* than the local culture but also out of reach, they will identify with neither.

## **2.4 Third Culture Kids (TCKs)**

The majority of research on “people who move” (Sears, 2011) has been conducted on Third Culture Kids (TCKs) (Useem, 1975). Given the overlap in commonality, TCK research is reviewed to provide a foundation for this study. A TCK is defined by David Pollock and Ruth Van Reken (2009), leading researchers on TCKs, as:

A person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parent's culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership of any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCKs life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationships to others of similar background. (p. 19).

A recent estimate by Cottrell (2011) suggests there are several million TCKs in the world.

Research on TCKs began in the 1960s when Ruth Useem (1975) focused on cultural and identity issues for individuals with a ‘third culture’, introducing the term to describe children who moved abroad with their families, usually for business, government or military related services. She observed that in the process of moving and having to adjust to new cultures, countries, and communities, elements of the host culture(s) and passport culture became intertwined, producing a third culture (Cottrell, 2011). While each TCKs experience is different, they are *connected* by a theme of difference (Greenholtz & Kim, 2009).

Pollock and Van Reken (2009) state TCKs grow up in a *highly mobile and cross-cultural* world; often knowledge of the next move is unknown, and comes unexpectedly. They generally live in distinctly different host cultures to their passport culture, so look and think

differently to locals. The authors argue this transient background yields both richness and challenge, as TCKs often develop an expanded view of the world and hold multiple viewpoints on several topics simultaneously; however, this can cause confusion due to feeling connected to contrasting conceptions of cultures, identities and philosophies. They often feel connected to many different places, but feel they belong nowhere. The authors suggest TCKs experience marginalisation and loneliness due to feeling unique in their experiences of moving.

Useem, Useem, Cottrell and Jordan (1993) conducted a comprehensive questionnaire based study of 696 adult Third Culture Kids (ATCKs) between 25 and 87 years of age who had spent at least one year outside of their passport country. They found ATCKs: continued to have international experiences in their adult life; described themselves as adaptable; found it easy to relate to a variety of others; felt at home everywhere and nowhere; were often intermediaries; and experienced themselves as different, but not alone. Only a minority identified with their ethnic group, and almost half did not identify with any group (Cottrell, 1993, p. 4). Importantly, results showed females placed more emphasis on interpersonal relationships than males. These findings are so relevant to the current study as they suggest several possible impacts residential mobility may have on individuals; however, as it was a quantitative study, it could not explore these relationships in depth. Through qualitative research, such as semi structured interviews as are employed in the present study, it is more likely that this level of depth will be achieved, providing further insight into the relationship between residential mobility, identity and relationships.

Most research on TCKs is from personal narratives (Pollock, 1988), which, as identified by McClellan (2011), tends to lack analysis or synthesis. In addition, due to many varied terms used to describe this population (e.g. sojourner, TCK, global nomad, military brat, missionary kid), it is difficult to use this information reliably, due to difficulty locating available literature.

### **2.4.1 Relationships**

Literature reveals relationships for this population can be both beneficial and challenging. Pollock and Van Reken (2009) suggest TCKs develop resilience due to constantly changing relationships, making new friends easily, adapting to new social situations quickly, and having an increased understanding of different cultures and languages. However, they also observe how experiencing multiple losses negatively impacts relationship formation: TCKs find making close friends challenging, even avoiding commitment by keeping others at an emotional arm's length to protect against potential loss. Importantly, a survey of 300 ATCKs between 22 and 75 years old by Van Reken (1987) revealed almost half avoided intimacy for fear of further loss due to frequent childhood separations. However, it was difficult to ascertain what quantitative materials were employed and how participants were recruited. Nonetheless, Pollock and Van Reken (2009) suggest what is praised as independence may actually be detachment.

Pollock and Van Reken (2009) observe TCKs move to deeper levels of conversation than stable peers, (e.g. talking about religion or international politics), rather than engaging in "small talk", which they suggest develops out of necessity, due to many time limited social situations. However, although TCKs initially go to a deeper emotional level, they tend to hover around a medium level of depth, not getting too close or intimate, again to protect against future pain of loss.

Pollock and Van Reken (2009) outlined three ways TCKs manage feelings of emotional vulnerability to limit the experience of pain if relationships end: deny the extent of their feelings, remaining detached and non-committal; relinquish the relationship before it ends, pre-empting the ending to increase agency; or deny feelings of grief, deadening emotions. This method of disconnecting from and denying feelings can impact other areas of life, resulting in a disconnected social manner.

#### **2.4.1.1 Loss and Grief**

Due to multiple transitions, Pollock and Van Reken (2009) suggest TCKs experience greater loss throughout childhood; 'losing' school friends, but also 'losing' the sight of a familiar street vendor. And, unlike most experiences of loss, they are all experienced simultaneously:

With one plane ride the whole world as TCKs have known it can die. Every important place they've been, every tree climbed, pet owned, and virtually every close friend they've made are gone with the closing of the airplane door....TCKs don't lose one thing at a time; they lose everything at once. (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 76)

The authors suggest the losses are often invisible, leaving the individual to cope alone. Children can pick up unintentional messages from parents; in an attempt to console, they may say, "don't be sad, you'll love your new school", resulting in internalising the concept that grief is unnecessary or even bad. Pollock and Van Reken (2009) observed links between unresolved grief in this population and anger, depression, aggression, withdrawal, and even vicarious or delayed grief reactions.

A qualitative study exploring loss conducted by Gilbert (2008) collected data through both semi-structured interviews and email contact with 43 ATCKs; findings suggested that existential losses were the most keenly remembered – loss of identity, loss of safety in the social world, loss of roots and grounding. A follow up qualitative study by Gilbert and Gilbert (2011) on 29 ATCKs found similar results, and demonstrated individuals who viewed the world as unsafe and untrustworthy reported interpersonal difficulties. While they were able to dedicate themselves to a relationship once initial hurdles were overcome, they cut ties upon moving, and started over again. Both of these studies are relevant to the current study as they employed qualitative methods and explored adult TCKs, however, in the case of the latter study, it is unclear how data was collected, making it difficult to compare and critique.

#### **2.4.2 Rootlessness**

Pollock and Van Reken (2009) observed TCKs experience home everywhere and nowhere, leading to rootlessness and difficulty answering, "where are you from?". They

suggest that while appearing straightforward, this question is actually fraught with difficulty. The question functions to provide context for the listener to position the Other in, implying a collaboration between certain indices of identity, (e.g. nationality and language), which are often highly unreliable for highly mobile individuals. A qualitative study of 48 international school students by Sears (2011) found mobile individuals often present an autobiography in response to this question, to justify their complex identity.

Pollock and Van Reken (2009) suggest rootlessness is borne from high mobility, which disrupts connection to any one place, but through having to continually adjust and adapt, TCKs often feel at home in multiple places. A UK based qualitative study of 45 international school adolescents and their parents by McLachlan (2005) found adolescents formed 'roots' either through interpersonal relationships or geographical location. However, this study is not generalisable to populations other than middle to upper class families in UK international schools. Although the experience begins in childhood, research suggests long-term effects: a study of 696 adult TCKs by Cottrell and Useem (1999) found a subset of participants remained rootless into adulthood. However, it was unclear how this finding was ascertained and how many reported this. A more recent qualitative study on 30 ATCKs by Gilbert and Gilbert (2011) found they managed groundlessness by: seeking out a similar other as a life partner; becoming geographically stable; continuing mobility; abandoning the concept of 'home'; retaining artefacts from previous abodes; or developing a 'heart home' (p. 255-256). This study is interesting as participants mentioned only starting to process the impact of their background *after* the age of 30, which supports the rationale of the current study for only including participants over the age of 32. However, it is difficult to critique the study as it is unclear what questions were asked and what the analysis process was.

### **2.4.3 Identity**

Difficulties with identity development appear regularly in TCK literature (e.g. Schaetti & Ramsey, 1999). Common identity models (e.g. Erikson, 1968) suggest identity is established

during adolescence, however, Fail, Thompson & Walker (2004) argue TCK identity and self-concept is challenged with every move, as previously learned behaviour may become unacceptable, forcing repeated adjustment. Pollock and Van Reken (2009) argue the usual methods used to determine identity based on nationality, ethnicity or race are not applicable to TCKs as globalisation has challenged their concept of identity, resulting in a unique complex identity. They suggest the exterior of TCKs reflects little more than one facet of their identity.

Individuals with mobile backgrounds may hold citizenship somewhere they have no sense of membership or acceptance (Tilly, 1995). This ambivalence can be observed in TCKs who identify with their passport culture when in a foreign culture, and as from abroad when in the passport culture, thus constantly identifying as the “Other” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). In writing about counselling international students, Leong and Chou (2002) suggest developing an identity in a culture outside of the passport country results in culture shock upon repatriation, due to conflict between retaining aspects of the original culture and having to assimilate.

As Gardiner and Kosmitzki (2005) argue, identity is formed through several processes - judging oneself individually, comparing self to other, and comparing self to social and cultural norms - it follows that being exposed to multiple cultures would impact sense of identity. A continual need to adjust likely impacts one's identity, especially if the social worlds change culturally as well.

#### **2.4.3.1.1 Cultural Identity Model**

Several researchers (e.g. Schaetti, 2006) suggest “normal” models of development were based on mono-cultural individuals, and so may not apply to TCKs due to their multicultural backgrounds. To compensate, an extremely useful cultural model was developed by Pollock and Van Reken (2009) to describe four ways TCKs experience being in a dominant culture. However, how these identities are developed is not discussed, and there is a lack of empirical evidence.

- a. *foreigner*: looks and thinks differently to the dominant culture; others clearly perceive the individual as different, so make fewer incorrect assumptions about them
- b. *adopted*: looks different to the dominant culture, but thinks like them having lived there for a long time: may feel at home in this culture, but still be treated as a foreigner
- c. *hidden immigrant*: shares the same outward appearance as those in the dominant culture, however has a very different world view having lived in other places during formative years; often the recipient of incorrect assumptions by the dominant culture
- d. *mirror*: looks like those in the dominant culture, and has lived there for so long they think and act similarly (p. 53-54)

Pollock and Van Reken (2009) suggest TCKs are a *mirror* before they leave their passport country, a *foreigner* when they first move, develop an *adopted* identity to manage, and become *hidden immigrants* upon repatriation. They argue being a foreigner or mirror causes minimal stress and confusion, whereas being adopted or hidden leads to the most amount of cultural dissonance due to incorrect assumptions others make based on physical characteristics.

#### **2.4.4 Repatriation**

Useem (1993; 2001) suggested one of the most challenging experiences for TCKs is repatriation, often their first experience of cultural marginality. The majority of TCK literature has focused on repatriation, as reviewed by Schaetti (2000): the individual is often unprepared, returning to a culture they believe to be 'home', and therefore familiar. However, often they do not know their passport culture, having not spent much time there, and may not consider it 'home'. They may appear to be adjusting well externally, belying internal conflict.

Uehara (1986) analysed questionnaires from 58 students who had lived abroad compared to 74 who had not resided outside of America, to explore whether culture shock

impacted differently depending on whether mobility occurred domestically or internationally, including re-entry problems and any positives upon repatriation. Results suggested international sojourners experienced significant re-entry culture shock, changed values upon re-entry and had a long-lasting impact on perception of global issues. Uehara suggests a limitation of this study is its cross-sectional design, as readjustment is a *process*. Qualitative studies, such as the one presented, can explore the process of readjustment through gaining insight into the experience of mobility, both international and domestic. A more recent quantitative study on reverse culture shock by Huff (2001) included 110 participants, half of whom were missionary kids (MKs). Participants were administered four questionnaires from which the results were drawn; the MKs were found to experience much lower levels of identification with their passport country than stable peers. These results are relevant to the current study as they suggest a potential difference between how mobile and stable adolescents identify with their passport country, however, the study had several limitations: it lacked statistical power; had a self-selecting sample; and did not delineate between living at home and attending boarding school. As a result, generalisability is low. However, Gordon (1995) suggests the challenge to belong is paramount during adolescence, and being unfamiliar with popular culture (e.g. TV shows, music, clothing) due to mobility can result in marginalisation.

## **2.5 Summary, Rationale and Aim of this Research**

The research presented highlights identity as fluid, context dependant, culturally and socially influenced, rendering it important to explore how mobile individuals experience the “self” due to differing contexts and cultures encountered. Additionally, there are many models of acculturation, some leading to and ending in marginality, others resulting in dissolution of the self into the dominant culture, while still others leading to a new, intercultural, global identity. Additionally, the development of a strong ethnic identity appears to buffer against

negative emotion. Due to its qualitative nature, this study aims to explore the experience of developing various identities in individuals with a mobile background.

Due to increased globalisation, cultural identity may be blurred, highlighting the importance of gaining subjective insight into both the experience of encountering globalisation as well as sense of cultural identity through qualitative research necessary. As a newly introduced concept, it is also necessary to explore the experience of developing a hybrid identity. To contribute, this study endeavours to explore what it is like to experience these identity crises and subsequent changes.

While the various models presented vary in their route to identity, they all argue identity is formed through relationships with others. Available research appears to paint a picture of disrupted relationships impacting forming new, healthy and successful relationships upon moving. However, how these disruptions and the need for connection are *experienced* is lacking, which can be addressed by the current study.

The research presented suggests an inherent desire to belong which is often particularly complicated during adolescence. The experience of belonging appears to be influenced by the stability of one's environment, making it is more likely mobile individuals will demonstrate *lower* levels of unconditional group identification than stable peers. As such, although the importance of social support in managing transitions is emphasised (Anderson, Goodman & Schlossberg, 2011), due to difficulties forming and maintaining relationships due to transience (Werkman et al., 1981), it is likely mobile individuals will find this challenging. Additionally, there is evidence to suggest that mobile individuals form wide, weak social networks to guard against predicted loss. Exploring subjective experiences of loss and grief, and the subjective sense of belonging, in mobile individuals is a main aim of this study, to provide insight into how these situations are experienced and managed.

Regarding a mobile population, moving to new places where one may feel similar or different could influence who they gravitate towards, and the similarity theory may help understand mobile individual's friendship choices. Additionally, the difficulty with mobile

individuals is that the assumptions of others can be wrong and carry negative consequences. Employing qualitative methods, as this study does, can illuminate the experience of forming friendships in light of a background of CRM.

In summary, the exploration of both identity and relationships in mobile individuals whose environment is constantly changing is necessary, major motivation for the current study. A central tenet of counselling psychology is its focus on the subjective experience, being grounded in both humanistic and existential-phenomenological psychology (Strawbridge & Woolfe, 2003). This study employs a qualitative methodology informed by phenomenology to provide valuable insight into the experiences of adult women with a background of high CRM, further expanding the knowledge base for clinicians working with this population. This can help strengthen the therapeutic relationship by increasing levels of empathy through increased understanding (McClellan, 2011), forming the basis of the rationale for this study.

Most studies on this population are American-centric, and focus on children or young adults. No qualitative studies were identified on women in their 30s and 40s residing in the UK. Additionally, few studies in this area have been conducted on only one gender. It has been suggested identity and relationship formation may occur differently in men and women (e.g. Gilligan, 1982), and indeed an extensive review of data on 13,000 adolescents by South and Haynie (2004) found more pronounced relationship difficulties in mobile female individuals than males. To ensure a high level of homogeneity, I chose to include only women in this study. To address the gaps in the research outlined, the main aim of this study is: **to explore the experience of relationships and identity in adult women in the UK with a background of high CRM.**

## Chapter 3

### Methodology and Procedures

*(Note: to capture the reflexive nature of the research, this chapter is written in first person when outlining the research process and stages)*

This chapter aims to provide transparency regarding the rationale for choice of method, as well as a discussion of the validity for, and epistemological and ontological underpinnings of, the research. Additionally, my own background is presented to provide the reader the opportunity to consider any possible resulting biases, to safe guard for validity (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). My experience of conducting the research is presented to highlight how this research has personally impacted me.

### 3.1 Methodology

#### 3.1.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, drawing on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) to analyse semi-structured interviews conducted with eight participants.

#### 3.1.2 Philosophical Considerations, Overview of IPA and Choice of Methodology

##### 3.1.2.1 Philosophical Considerations

The underlying philosophical assumptions of qualitative analysis regarding the construction of psychological knowledge is reflected in what outcomes are produced; qualitative research does not “answer” research hypotheses, due to the underlying assumption that there is no “objective”, universal truth. Rather, qualitative methods assume knowledge and its production are heavily context-dependant (e.g. Willig, 2001). There is also a strong interaction assumed between the ideologies and social structures of both researcher and participant that are integral to the phenomenon being explored (e.g. Dallos & Draper, 2000). Subsequently, methods of conducting qualitative research are not fixed, but creative

and dynamic, each time different, depending on the phenomenon, the researcher, the participants and the context (Lyons, 2007). Which method to use should be based on what the *question* is, not what method the researcher desires to employ. Qualitative methods do not fit data into pre-existing structures, but work to explore meaning-making and subjective experience (Willig, 2001). Data is collected via face-to-face interviews, allowing the participant to continually revise their own sense-making during data collection, resulting in less chance of misinterpretation by the researcher (Storey, 2007).

Phenomenological approaches gather very detailed descriptions of experiences to achieve a sense of the essence of the phenomenon. The goal is not to arrive at an objective description, but rather to provide a subjective account (Coyle, 2007). The current study aims to explore in depth participants' experiences in an emerging area, and it has been suggested that a qualitative approach is the most appropriate method for this objective (Barker, Pistrang & Elliott, 2002). The aim is to explore how adult women with a background of CRM make sense of themselves and their relationships, in line with the nature of a phenomenological investigation (Giorgi, 1986). As such, this study takes an *emic* approach by viewing experiences from the perspectives of the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), rather than an *etic* empirical approach, which would quantify the experiences themselves (Hofstede, 1980).

The founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, argued against positivism (see 3.1.2.3) as he believed it disempowered and dehumanised. He was interested in exploring the essence of experiences, without being influenced by previously held knowledge or experience, which he called 'bracketing'. In his later work, he discussed 'lifeworld', which views individuals as 'body-subjects': we are social and use language to connect, and there is spatiality and temporality in this lifeworld (Finlay, 2011).

Hermeneutics concerns itself with the process of interpretation itself, working to reveal hidden intentions of the individual. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) argues our ability to access the world is *only* through interpretation, and focused his attentions on what it is 'to be'. He coined the term '*Dasien*' (1962; 1927), meaning 'being-in-the-world', linked with Time: according to Heidegger, we are always 'becoming', existence is not static. Heidegger

(1962/1927) conceptualises individuals as being 'thrown' into a world full of pre-existing relationships, history, culture, and so on, which places boundaries on the extent of one's independence. As such, over time individuals develop 'a way of being' in this world that is inevitably routine and mundane, engaged in without much reflexivity. The world is inherently social according to Heidegger, even when an individual is alone, as we understand ourselves in relation to others. Heidegger's concept of '*das Man*', or the '*they*' relates to the idea that conformity to at least some extent is essential in a social world; however, when conformity erases the individual self, one becomes inauthentic. By following *das Man*, the conformist '*they*', one becomes anonymous and alienated from themselves and others; the converse is acknowledging the meaningless of life, engendering *Angst*, which incorporates feelings of *unheimlich*, or not-at-home. Escaping from this existential anxiety, individuals run straight into the arms of the numbing *das Man*. Managing the tension between confronting the meaningless of life and owning ourselves and our situations authentically is a common, existential crisis (Finlay, 2011).

Another existential philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), coined the term 'bad faith', as a method to manage existential anxiety, defining it as "...our refusal to take responsibility for our choices, instead...accepting the social attributions of others by conforming to (self-)given roles" (Finlay, 2011, p. 60). When this happens, we identify so wholly with how others view us that we view ourselves this way, as an object, relinquishing choice-making (Finlay, 2011). Sartre also famously talked about his 'Look', where individuals experience shame through being objectified (Finlay, 2011), similar to the viewpoint taken by Merleau-Ponty.

### **3.1.2.2 Overview of IPA**

Jonathan Smith developed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in the mid-nineties to explore how people make sense of experiences (Smith, 1996), acknowledging that direct access to experience is impossible, but rather individuals make sense of experiences through a process of making meaning. Originally developed for health psychology (Smith,

1996), IPA has evolved into a useful tool for Counselling Psychology (Smith, 2004), especially when challenging taken-for-granted knowledge widely relied upon in psychology, providing clinicians further insight into individuals' meaning making systems (Strawbridge & Woolfe, 2003).

IPA has its foundations in phenomenology (Moran, 2000), hermeneutics (Palmer, 1969) and ideography (Smith, Harre & van Langenhove, 1995), and has a strong emphasis on the subjective experience (Allport, 1942; James, 1890). It is a holistic approach which explores participants' experiences by exploring cognitions and affects in an embodied and existential manner. The approach acknowledges the individual as a 'person-in-context' (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006, p. 106). IPA highlights a shift from "the descriptive commitments and transcendental interest of Husserl, towards a more interpretative and world position with a focus on understanding the perspectival directedness of our involvement in the lived world" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 21). As such, 'experience' is understood as a "lived process, an unfurling of perspectives and meanings, which are unique to the person's embodied and situated relationship to the world" (p. 21). The only way to understand another's experience is through interpreting their process of meaning-making. Rather than providing an objective commentary on the event itself, as is found in quantitative research, IPA uses a phenomenological lens (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003) to explore the individuals' subjective account (Smith & Eatough, 2007).

IPA aims to get as close as possible to individuals' experiences of phenomena, assuming interviewees' language provides access to the meaning individuals give to events/situations; however, the impossibility of *directly* accessing these experiences is acknowledged. The research process is dynamic and active for the researcher, who makes sense of participants' subjective experiences through their *own* interpretations, which are therefore affected by their personal experiences and conceptions (Willig, 2001; Smith, 1993). Subsequently, IPA draws on phenomenological (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003) and hermeneutic philosophies (Palmer, 1969; Ricoeur, 1970), employing 'the hermeneutic circle' (Smith, 2007), suggesting to make sense of any one *part*, the *whole* must be considered; and to consider the *whole*, it is imperative to explore the *parts*. This dynamic relationship between part and whole

is at the heart of the iterative nature of IPA. The researcher has to be aware of their own experiences and knowledge that influence their perception of the participants' accounts, and therefore are immediately implicated in the research process, known as a 'double hermeneutic' or a two-stage process of interpretation: the participant is working to make sense of their own world while the researcher is working to make sense of the participants' sense-making (Smith & Eatough, 2007). As such, *the participants' account* becomes the phenomenon with which the researcher is engaged. To achieve this, the researcher is necessarily reflexive and transparent about their own perspectives (Willig, 2001).

IPA blends both empathic and critical hermeneutics (Ricoeur, 1970). The researcher empathically strives to understand participants' experiences, whilst also critically questioning their accounts, asking: what is trying to be achieved here? Is there something I can sense that is unknown to the participant? (Smith & Osborn, 2008). While IPA assumes cognitions, feelings and speech interact, it does not claim this is a straightforward relationship: it can be very difficult for individuals to express these. Therefore, the researchers' role is to *interpret* participants' feelings and cognitions based on their narrative, by using their words to create a rich description and then develop a more interrogative account (Smith & Eatough, 2007). This has commonalities with discursive approaches as speaker's construct reality through language. However, IPA postulates the researcher can interpret motives and beliefs the participant is not explicitly expressing, either due to difficulty or unawareness, while discursive approaches focus solely on what and how language is used to construct realities (Lyons, 2007).

IPA employs an idiographic mode of inquiry (cases studied individually), rather than nomothetic (analysis at the group level to seek generalisability) (Coyle, 2007). IPA can be done on single cases, while quantitative studies employ large sample sizes which can, subsequently, lose the essence of the individual. However, most IPA studies are conducted with multiple cases, and so individual variation and shared themes between participants can emerge (Smith, 2004). IPA also has an inductive slant as it draws on existing literature to inform developing theories (Smith et al., 2009).

### **3.1.2.1 Rationale for Choice of Methodology**

IPA was chosen as the preferred methodology for several reasons. Firstly, Smith (2004) claims of all qualitative methodologies, IPA is most suited to studying identity as it regards the self as a whole unique identity rather than reducing it to specific variables; as this study explores individuals' sense-making regarding sense of self, IPA appears appropriate, especially due to its alliance with the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism (Smith, 1996). This perspective involves how meaning is constructed inter- and intrapersonally. Additionally, as this study aims to explore friendships, IPA is suitable as friendship is a construct best subjectively defined based on previous experience (Hinde, 1997).

Secondly, as IPA encourages both participant and researcher to examine their own processes in a reflexive manner, it is useful presently as questions regarding identity require reflexivity to answer. IPA can also reveal internal processes unknown to the participants (Lyons, 2007). As one aim of this research is to elicit participants' internal thoughts and beliefs, IPA again appears most appropriate.

Thirdly, IPA does not claim an objective reality that can be uncovered (Smith et al., 2009), but works to make sense of experiences through interpretation (Larkin et al., 2006), which concurs with the epistemological stance of this study (critical realist) (see 3.1.2.3).

Additionally, having an idiographic and inductive theoretical position, IPA complements the research aim by providing in-depth reporting of the perceptions of a limited group of individuals, rather than developing more generalised theories (e.g. Smith et al., 2009). It has been suggested, however, that in-depth exploration of individual experiences can provide insight into the universality and essential "essence" of their experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2008), which this study aims to achieve. IPA makes it possible to uncover both generic themes relating to a phenomenon and individual narratives (Smith & Eatough, 2007).

Lastly, IPA is appealing as it is an accessible methodology for novice qualitative researchers (Smith et al., 2009) such as myself. This is due to the availability of practical guidance on how to conduct IPA research (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Other qualitative methods (Grounded Theory, Discourse Analysis and Narrative Analysis) were considered and rejected:

Features of Grounded Theory (GT) and IPA are similar enough that Smith (1995) points researchers towards GT literature for guidance as it “adopts a broadly similar perspective” (p. 18). Both identify themes which are integrated into master themes to describe the essence of the phenomena in question; however, this study aims to access individuals “life worlds” (Smith & Osborn, 2008), rather than emphasise theory construction (Charmaz, 2008), more suited to GT. Additionally, it has been suggested IPA takes a more psychological approach while GT is more sociological (Willig, 2001). Practically, while IPA and GT have similar theoretical underpinnings and analytical structures (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), it did not feel feasible to obtain the necessary sample size to reach saturation within the time available.

Discourse Analysis (DA) emphasises how language is used to construct knowledge, meaning and identity (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). IPA’s emphasis, however, rests on understanding and making sense of peoples’ thought processes, including motivations and behaviours. IPA *does* acknowledge how language impacts participants making sense of their lived experience, and therefore could be viewed as taking a “light constructionist stance”, but not the strong constructionist stance favoured by DA (Eatough & Smith, 2006). As this study endeavours to explore participants’ meaning-making regarding sense of self, rather than analysing how they ‘use’ language, IPA appears more appropriate.

Lastly, while both IPA and Narrative Analysis (NA) focus on “retrieving the subjectivity” by focusing on participants’ lived experiences (Crossley, 2000), NA focuses only on the narrative, whereas IPA incorporates narrative as one way of meaning-making without being limited to this focus (Smith et al., 2009).

In summary, IPA appeared to be the most suitable choice of methodology due to time constraints and the desired outcome of the research.

### **3.1.2.3 Epistemological Standpoint**

'Epistemology' (Benton & Craib, 2001) relates to a philosophical understanding of the theory of knowledge, holding various conceptions of how language, cognitions and reality interact with one another. Epistemology questions how it is that we *know* what we know, and what *kind* of things we can know. When a research study defines its epistemological position, it provides a framework regarding the type of discoveries it can make. Subsequently, different epistemologies relate to different research methods (Coyle, 2007). IPA benefits from "epistemological openness" (Larkin et al., 2006), so a wide range of epistemological standpoints are available. This section describes the epistemological standpoint I subscribe to for this research.

One epistemological standpoint is 'positivism', which claims the possibility of gaining an impartial, objective and unbiased view of the world. Currently, it is widely believed that what is perceived is not factually correct, as all perceptions are subjective and influenced by what the individual attends to. "The scientific method" incorporates positivism, empiricism and hypothetico-deductivism, priding itself on neutrality and objectivity, arguing for the researcher to be as detached from the research as possible to keep the data "uncontaminated" (Coyle, 2007).

This standpoint starkly contrasts qualitative research where the researcher is viewed as an integral part of the process, bringing with themselves subjective experiences, understandings and cultural knowledge. Developing an understanding of phenomena can only be achieved through the researcher's interpretation in IPA (Smith et al., 2009). Subsequently, findings presented are reflexive due to the influence of the researchers own pre-existing knowledge and experiences. Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge the *axiology*, or influence of the researcher, on the data analysis (Ponterotto, 2005), and for qualitative researchers to reflect on their impact at all junctures (data collection, analysis, interpretation) (Lyons, 2007).

The epistemology a study assumes directly influences data collection, analysis and the role of the researcher. Epistemology is a continuum, from 'naïve realism' to 'radical

constructionism', the former assuming reality can be uncovered if the 'right' methods are employed, the latter assuming knowledge is dependent on the context and perspective of the viewer, pointing toward the role language plays in constructing reality (Lyons, 2007). The former sits closer to Husserl's realist assumptions, arguing possibility of overcoming the impact of cultural, interpretative and linguistic influences, whereas Heidegger would be more aligned to the latter, emphasising the interpretative and creative essence of experience. In between these two points is my standpoint, 'critical realism' which aims to achieve increased insight into what is 'really' happening in the world while acknowledging knowledge of the world is subjective (Willig, 2008). Critical realism is similar to a 'contextual constructionist epistemology', upon which basis IPA falls (Madill, Jordon & Shirley, 2000), "...based upon the assumption that all knowledge is necessarily contextual and standpoint-dependant." (Willig, 2008, p. 153).

A critical realist stance is appropriate within IPA, informed by the critical/ideological paradigm, arguing 'reality' is heavily influenced and constrained by political, social and historical factors. As stated by Gergen (2001), "The world does not speak itself though human beings. Rather, what one finds depends importantly on the theoretical and metatheoretical paradigms one has already embraced." (p. 808). As such, I believe the historical and sociocultural influences we hold are integral to how we experience the world, and therefore entangled with how we interpret our experiences (Eatough & Smith, 2007).

IPA assumes a realist approach regarding the study of knowledge (Willig, 2008), assuming a real, objective world separate to our experience of it (Ponterotto, 2005). It aims to access individuals' experiences through language (Willig, 2008), in line with the phenomenological stance, as the individual is trying to *understand* their experiences (Eatough & Smith, 2007). IPA does not claim reality is constructed by language, as hard-line social constructionism does (Eatough & Smith, 2006); however, I do concur with Eatough & Smith (2006) that language is key to how individuals experience the social world, and so spent a lot of time thinking about how my participants used language to share and make meaning of their experiences and their reflections (see Metaphor Poem Appendix M).

While epistemology questions “how can we know?”, ontology questions “what *is* there to know?” (Willig, 2008, p. 13). A ‘realist’ ontology postulates a cause-effect relationship between objects and structures, while a ‘relativist’ ontological position acknowledges the breadth of interpretations available that can be applied to the external world, rather than questioning the *truthfulness* of participants’ narratives. Ontologically, IPA assumes a relativist ontological position, and can be located within the interpretative/constructivist paradigm (Willig, 2008).

IPA states reality is produced depending on how one represents and accounts for a phenomenon (Burr, 2003), but due to its influence of a ‘symbolic interactionist perspective’ (Willig, 2008), it does not suffer ‘methodological solipsism’ (p. 70). Like ‘contextual constructionism’ (Madill et al., 2000), symbolic interactionism assumes there is no one reality to access, but rather researcher and participant co-construct the analysis, and all knowledge produced is context-dependant. Therefore, findings are necessarily influenced by the context of data collection and analysis, making reflexivity imperative for transparency (Smith, 2004). All accounts are therefore understandably co-constructed, developed from the relationship between research and participant (Larkin et al., 2006); to ground the findings, direct quotations from participants are provided (Madill et al., 2000).

### **3.1.3 Reflexivity**

Proposing researchers identify and put aside relevant beliefs and knowledge relevant to the research topic (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is idealistic, and impossible. A more feasible method is for researchers to explicitly discuss any experiences and beliefs they hold that might influence how research is conducted (Lyons, 2007), called the researchers ‘speaking position’: reflecting on the interpretative framework that influences their research question, and how this impacts data analysis. The aim is for the reader to be able to understand and critically evaluate the work due to researcher transparency (Coyle, 2007). IPA requires the researcher to put aside their own experiences and beliefs to gain access to the participant’s world, while also drawing on their background to interpret the participants’ narrative (Lyons, 2007). Despite

demarcating this difficult dual standpoint as necessary, there are insufficient guidelines on how exactly the researcher should incorporate their own insights into the final presentation of the research (Willig, 2001).

Researcher identification can severely influence the analysis presented (Storey, 2007). If over-identifying due to similar experiences, the researcher may inadvertently manipulate the data to fit his/her own experiences and framework; equally, negatively identifying can cause difficulty with empathy, leading to a barrier in accessing participants' experiences (Lyons, 2007; Storey, 2007) (see 3.1.3.2).

It is acknowledged conducting research engenders a power differential between researcher and interviewee, and, while this may be dampened somewhat in qualitative research, this does not automatically dictate a more equal power dynamic. Therefore, it is imperative the researcher is open and honest in their reflexivity, and critical of their role in the research (Smith & Eatough, 2007) (see 3.1.3.2).

I address both epistemological and personal reflexivity in this section, based on Willig's (2001) distinction. Epistemological reflexivity reflects on method of analysis, how this impacted the research findings, and how the findings may have been different had another method been employed; personal reflexivity reflects on how my values, experiences, and beliefs have impacted the research, and how the research has impacted me.

#### **3.1.3.1 Epistemological Reflexivity**

I was fortunate not to experience epistemological tension during my research, as the critical realist view is in line with my own beliefs. I believe this is a key aspect in my training to be a Counselling Psychologist, as, when I work with clients, I endeavour to access their world as best possible, to understand things as they are for *them*, rather than assuming reality is perceived similarly by all, or wholly constructed through language.

I am aware these findings cannot claim empirical generalisability as quantitative research can; they do not present a new theory as GT can; and they do not speak to how participants' words construct their reality as in DA. However, this study aims to describe the

essence of the research phenomenon, and using a phenomenological approach was best suited to this aim. I feel a critical realist approach positions participants as experts of their own experiences, a central IPA tenet.

Regarding the power differential, I was mindful to position participants as experts, allowing them to tell their story as detailed and lengthy as they desired. I did not purport to be more knowledgeable than them regarding the topic, and emphasised their freedom to answer what they wanted to, and to withdraw if desired. No participants withdrew or alluded to experiencing the interview as diminishing their sense of agency. Subsequently, I feel I minimised the power differential as much as possible, however it is important to consider the power differentials that can arise from ethnic identity as well. Whilst most of my participants were the same ethnicity as me, there were several who were of different ethnicities. At the time, I did not consider how this might impact on the process of interviewing and data collection, however subsequently I discussed this with colleagues and reflected on the impact that this might have had on the interviews, data collection and data analysis. As a White individual, I am in the ethnic majority in London; I interviewed several individuals from ethnic minority groups, and it is possible that this may have impacted on what was presented, and how I analysed the data. Those from ethnic minority groups may have perceived me as “dominant” or “Other”, and may have shared different memories and information with me than if they were interviewed by another individual from an ethnic minority. Additionally, those who were also White may have felt more “equal” to me due to having similar ethnic statuses. This is an aspect that could be explored in subsequent studies, by questioning participants about their feelings of being in a different ethnic group to the interviewer.

### **3.1.3.2 Personal Reflexivity**

I have felt out of place ever since I left my birth country, South Africa, as a toddler. Moving to Germany for several years before settling in London, I was enrolled in an American school in central London, where I remained for the duration of my education. There I learned

an American curriculum from American teachers, surrounded by American peers coming in and out of the school like a revolving door between the US and the UK.

After graduation, I moved to Italy, New York, and finally Vietnam before returning to London aged 23. Nowhere had I felt at home, and so I returned to where my parents were...and only my parents. I had no extended family or remaining friends in London, who had all returned to their passport countries after graduation, predominately the USA. I felt bereft, and lost.

Despite having spent 21 of my 32 years in London, due to my American accent I am quickly dismissed by British nationals as “one of them”. When in South Africa, my ignorance of how modern-day racism works quickly identifies me as an outcast, and in America funny words like “biscuit” and “lift” fall from my mouth, branding me an imposter. I fit in nowhere, and everywhere. I am not “from” anywhere, I am “from” all the places I have visited and the people I have met. And herein lies the struggle with which I am so taken.

I have few friends who are “truly” British or American, finding myself bonding best with those who are similarly displaced and uncategorised. Once my interest in this area was sparked, I sought out similar others to bounce ideas off. I noticed patterns in their interpersonal difficulties, and struggles to answer, “Where are you from?”. I realised I was not alone, rapidly altering my perception of my struggles from shame to intrigue.

I describe myself as a British woman who has been living in the UK continuously for eight years, however am aware my birth place is South Africa and my education has been largely American. Subsequently, I have a similar background to my participants, but as I moved, either before age 5 or after 17, I felt there would be enough significant difference to create sufficient distance so my own experiences would not provide too much similarity. Participants were not informed of my background to provide as blank a slate as possible to engender honest narratives, as I worried providing information about my background would induce collusion, and I wished to explore the participants’ experiences as unbiased as possible.

I was conscious of, and warned by colleagues, that my own experiences would likely engender preconceptions about the research and findings. Having strong similarities to my participants, it was important to remain aware of what has been described by Ranti Oguntokun (1998) as 'the seduction of sameness', referring to the tendency to look for aspects of similarity in the other which validate one's own experience. It was necessary to bracket my previous experiences so participants' voices could be heard (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999). However, as stated by Smith et al. (2009), it was not possible to fully predict these preconceptions until the analytic process began. Additionally, I had read a fair amount around the subject, and it was with a mind full of these cognitions and experiences that I embarked on the research.

Having a similar background to my participants, it is possible they may have felt an increased sense of comfort when talking about difficult experiences and feelings. However, feeling a sense of separation between myself and my participants, at least for the first few interviews, allowed me to engage with the participants and their experiences on a curious, not-knowing level. I worked to bracket my own thoughts, ideas and experiences as much as possible to be fully present in the interviews, careful not to influence them.

Some topics were difficult for the interviewees, and I had to be careful not to slip into counselling mode. It was important I remained professional and non-leading, while retaining a high level of empathy and curiosity. As per my training, it was difficult at times not to try to rescue my participants when they were trying to make sense of their experiences, or help them arrive at conclusions before they could develop them independently. I was conscious of the limited amount of time available to us, and perhaps rushed them at times to cover as much ground as possible. In retrospect, conducting several interviews with each participant may have been preferable, however due to time constraints for both myself and my participants, it is unlikely this would have been feasible.

As research progressed and my participants began describing the multiple identities they faced regularly, I began reflecting on my own fluid identities – as a woman, a therapist, a daughter, a fiancée, an immigrant. Additionally, as time wore on, circumstances placing me ever closer to my participants regarding similarities and differences continued to arise.

My research explores the meaning of roots and home. When research commenced, I was living in rented accommodation; when I began recruiting I was in the midst of looking for a flat to buy; halfway through conducting interviews I purchased the property I currently reside in. The irony of this was not lost on me: I had gone from being rootless to rooted, whilst researching the phenomenon of rootlessness. While I had had the option of buying a flat for almost a decade, I had been unable, psychologically, to engage in the idea of being “tied” to one place. Upon turning 30 and reflecting on my life and my desires, I began to acknowledge a deep seated desire to create a ‘home’ for myself, a place I could use as a secure base. Subsequently, my identity as “tenant” changed to “homeowner”. Conducting interviews while in the process of buying a flat was uncanny, and I was also conscious I was younger than all my participants, and had achieved something many of them craved but were unable, for various reasons, to achieve. However, other participants spoke of freedom in lack of ties, and this made me question both my own and their motives for roots, or lack thereof.

Another change that occurred half way through the transcription phase was getting engaged, again changing an aspect of my identity from “girlfriend” to “fiancée”. One major topic of this research is relationships, and again the irony of entering into such a serious commitment that provided me attachment and grounding was a source of great interest and influence on my experience of conducting the research.

This process has provided me time and space to reflect on what “home” means to me, who I am, who I was and who I want to be. I have gone on a journey during this research, a journey which evolved from a stance of questioning, to a stance of not knowing, and arriving at a stance of moderate clarity. Through the interviews and analysis, I found the courage to reflect on my own values and beliefs. Each participant provided their own subjective meaning of “home” and identity, which allowed me to search for my own, safe in the knowledge there is not only one, and without feeling “different” or “weird”. I have an ongoing internal dialogue regarding the meaning of these terms, and feel I have allowed myself the freedom to embrace my difference as something meaningful and valuable, rather than dysfunctional and abnormal. I can admit and accept I have a very fluid identity. I can throw my hands up in the air when

asked where I am from and just smile. The question does not hold the same ferocity, aggression or fear as it did previously, and for that I am eternally grateful; grateful especially to my participants for being so open and honest that I can be open and honest with myself. I feel I have been able to embrace physical grounding through buying property purely due to increased appreciation I can be *attached* to a place without being *tied* there; I can have mental fluidity regarding attachments rather than fearing I will *lose* myself in the attachments.

To explore my ongoing impact on the research process, I kept a reflexive research log, recording thoughts, experiences and feelings during collection, analysis and writing up (see Appendix L for excerpts).

### **3.1.4 Validity**

Several researchers (e.g. Giorgi, 2010) question how IPA demonstrates scientific rigour due to the flexibility provided to researchers during analysis. Smith et al (2009) respond, by emphasising the importance of researcher transparency throughout, and their responsibility to justify any deviations from the proposed process. I provide an outline of my process to provide this transparency (see 3.2.6), as researchers (e.g. Shinebourne, 2011) have responded to the criticism that ‘interpretative’ analysis is not subjective, but rather themes arise directly from the data itself. A central tenet of qualitative research is acknowledging ontological and epistemological positions as part of the research process. Transparency of the researcher’s background and preconceptions is imperative so interpretations are understood in this light, while the reader can subjectively decide whether they are plausible (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

IPA aims to explore lived experience in detail. Questioning *why* participants experience their world in a particular way is not of primary importance. Therefore, it is more appropriate to evaluate the rigorousness of the research itself rather than how accurately the research accesses the participants’ ‘real’ experiences, or to what extent it contributes to theory development (Lyons, 2007).

Whilst considering this idea of rigour, Smith et al. (2009) stress the importance for flexibility in how researchers analyse their data sets due to the complex and flexible nature of human experience. Subsequently, Smith argues replication in IPA studies is impossible and undesirable. This is alluded to by Gergen (2001), who states that "...one's taken-for-granted assumptions about mental life, along with one's methods of exploration, are saturated with Western values, along with an ontology and epistemology that are uniquely one's own." (p.809).

Several criteria exist regarding how best to evaluate qualitative research (e.g. Elliott et al., 1999; Yardley, 2008), and there is a lack of consensus regarding the "best" way to evaluate qualitative research. However, I chose to follow Lucy Yardley's (2008) evaluative scheme as it is widely considered a respected framework to use, as long as it is adjusted according to the qualitative method employed and the research topic.

Several ways I safeguarded for validity was by using supervision and peer review to corroborate the validity and credibility of my research, analysis and interpretations. My peer review group consisted of two colleagues completing IPA research concurrently. My research supervisor provided feedback and constructive criticism at various points during the research. Supervision sessions were invaluable for exploring emerging themes and convergences and divergences within the data which strengthened the validity of the data and analysis. Lastly, I kept a reflective journal for the duration of the research to record thoughts, feelings and experiences to remain aware of my influence (see Appendix L).

Using Yardley's (2008) framework, I outline further how I have attempted to meet the criteria:

### **A) *Sensitivity to Context***

Yardley (2000) argues for attentiveness to existing research and dominant socio-cultural contexts of the population under exploration, and being sensitive to data collected. As IPA is particularly interested in understanding specific phenomena from a specific individual

acknowledging context, Smith et al. (2009) feel strongly about the importance of sensitivity to context.

I reviewed relevant existing literature relating to this subject area (see Literature Review), worked to develop an increased awareness of the cultural, social and political contexts of my participants' experiences, and was continually reflexive regarding the influence of my own assumptions on their experiences to remain sensitive to context (see 3.1.3.2). This study identified a gap in existing research and theory, leading to the development of an un-researched question.

Yardley (2000) considers acknowledging power dynamics between researcher and participant important; I assumed my participants were experts on the phenomenon, not me. Additionally, participants *chose* to take part in the research, and I was conscious to allow them as much space and freedom for exploration during interviews as necessary. The interview was semi-structured to encourage participants to respond freely and share what they felt was important. Due to an extensive background in semi-structured interviewing combined with my current clinical training, I felt able to remain sensitive to my participants' feelings and needs throughout.

All participants bar one were interviewed in a room at City University to ensure physical safety. For the participant interviewed in her home, safety measures were put in place (see 3.2.3). Upon reflecting on this interview, I felt the participant was very at ease and comfortable sharing difficult thoughts and feelings. However, this participant was also training to be a Psychologist, and so potentially her openness, honesty and reflexivity was due to her training rather than difference in location, as no other participant had a similar experience. Subsequently, I feel even though location may have provided a safer environment for her to explore difficult thoughts and memories, regardless of where the interview had taken place, similar rich data would have emerged.

Remaining sensitive to the data is the most important aspect of IPA (Smith et al., 2009), and I endeavoured to achieve this by transcribing full transcripts, immersing myself in the data, providing myself ample time for analysis, exploring each transcript individually, and constantly

checking I was grounding themes in the data. I found this process vast and anxiety-inducing as I was so committed to ensuring the narrative did justice to the participants.

### **B) *Commitment and Rigour***

Explicit excerpts are presented to ensure the analysis remains grounded in the data. This was an iterative process, where I continually returned to the transcripts to make sure the analysis stayed close to participants' experiences. As such, I was fully immersed in the data for a lengthy period of time. I was careful not to impose my own preconceived notions on the data whilst also allowing it to develop interpretively, going beyond the text itself. I became more comfortable allowing themes to change and merge as analysis went on, and the writing up phase involved staying close to the data, using quotes to represent relevant themes (Smith et al., 2009). The reader can judge quality of analysis by reviewing the analytic strategy and the analysis itself.

Eight representative participants were interviewed. Due to the small sample size, only females were recruited to provide as homogenous a sample as possible. I am aware this limits the generalisability of the findings by not providing males with a voice, however this was done after deliberating the potential usefulness and validity of results if both genders were included. Future studies can build on the current study (see Synthesis).

### **C) *Transparency and Coherence***

To achieve transparency, a detailed description of data collection is provided (see 3.2.2) and my own reflexivity presented throughout, including my motives for conducting the research, and how it may be influenced by environmental constraints. A reflexive journal was also kept (see Appendix L).

To achieve coherence, Smith et al. (2009) state results must be congruent with IPA ethos. Thus, I position my findings as the *essence* of the phenomena under exploration, rather than as an empirically generalisable theory. I provide verbatim extracts to describe and bring to life participants' experiences. To illuminate complexities and differences, convergences and

divergences are also presented. I was conscious the reader would be able to follow the narrative from evolution of the research question to the writing up stage, using supervision and colleagues to discuss emerging themes more objectively. This data trail is important in being transparent so the reader can verify the work (Smith et al., 2009).

#### ***D) Impact and Importance:***

Yardley (2008) states the ultimate test of validity is whether presented research is interesting, insightful and useful for the relevant field. Lyons (2007) suggested each qualitative study increases the general picture of that population, to further inform clinical intervention. Warnock (1987) also argues that by exploring the individual, the universal can be further understood, as the aim of qualitative research is to provide findings that are theoretically, rather than empirically, generalisable (Smith & Osborn, 2008). While IPA interpretations are based on empirical evidence drawn from the data set, how they are formed are far from objective or neutral; to develop an interpretation, researchers deconstruct the data and reconceptualise it in a subjective account (Lyons, 2007). Therefore, I acknowledge the findings presented are tentative and subjective (Smith et al., 2009); they can only be used to draw conclusions about the sample itself and inform future studies, not claim generalisations about larger populations.

I believe research on this population is important as it is understudied and can be misunderstood. In addition, as CRM is increasing with globalisation, it is important to provide those with a background of CRM a voice to inform clinical interventions. Van den Berg (1972) emphasises the importance of seriously listening to our patients, working to access their reality rather than assuming we know them, trying to impose our own ideas. As such, clients' differences can be understood, embraced and supported by understanding both positive attributes and difficulties their background may have engendered. Sometimes referred to as the "so what?" question (Lyons, 2007), I hope to answer this sufficiently by discussing the relevance of this study to the field of Counselling Psychology (see Synthesis).

### **3.1.5 The Use of Language**

IPA relies on language as the medium researchers use to enter participants' life-worlds, making it imperative to attend closely to words and stylistic nuances employed, especially the use of metaphor. Metaphors can provide insight into unconscious, internal processes when description is lacking (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Through unpacking metaphoric language, a deeper layer of understanding can be revealed (Shinebourne & Smith, 2010). As stated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), "...metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices and spiritual awareness." (p. 193). Metaphors can provide a more richly textured style of communication (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), as they are more likely to engender some kind of feeling in the listener than a lone adjective might. They can also be employed as a safe way to describe novel feelings or reflections, providing distance between the individual and their experience (Levitt, Korman & Angus, 2000). Subsequently, metaphors may be useful to explore in qualitative research (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). As an integral part of the analysis, I attended closely to participants' metaphors, images and symbols to attempt to access their world more fully. I expanded on this by compiling a selection of metaphors into one poem to illustrate its power (see Appendix M).

While all participants spoke fluent English, it was a second language for several, unsurprising due to the international nature of the sample. It could be questioned whether participants could express themselves completely and take full advantage of metaphors as they were not communicating in their mother tongue. However, as I was unable to converse with them in any other language, and translating transcripts brings engenders its own methodological limitations, I feel to attain a representative sample of this population, it would have been too limiting to have only recruited participants whose first language was English.

## **3.2 Procedures**

### **3.2.1 Development of the Research Question**

The research I initially proposed aimed to explore the experience of attending American/International schools in countries other than one's birth country, and subsequent

meaning making of sense of self in adulthood. However, upon discussing this with my research supervisor, it was agreed this concept was more suited to Social than Counselling Psychology.

Upon my supervisor's suggestion, I conducted four exploratory interviews with two peers from my international school, and two colleagues from the Counselling Doctorate course who attended American/International schools worldwide. These interviews provided substantial insight into the views of similar others regarding inter- and intra-personal issues. I conducted a rough thematic analysis, identifying main themes of: issues around transitions; issues with roots/belonging; a sense of seeking out similar others; the impact of the others view; and positive/negative views of their background. One participant was an outlier; her experience at an American school did not appear to have had any lasting negative impact on her sense of self, whereas the remaining three experienced lasting issues. I reflected on this further, and I realised this participant was the *only one* who had not moved residence along with educational establishment. From this crude pilot, I started to consider the impact of *residential mobility* as a potentially interesting phenomenon to explore. Several quotes from the interviews stuck out in my mind, "Wherever I am, I'll be an outsider. Sometimes that's hard, sometimes it's not"; "I'm homesick for something that doesn't exist"; "there will always be *something* about me the other person will disagree with...so it's about damage limitation". I conducted a literature search and found a multitude of studies outlining the effects of CRM (see Literature Review). As a result of the exploratory interviews, I altered my research question to explore CRM. To make it as pertinent to Counselling Psychology as possible, I felt it would be useful to research sense of self and relationships.

Three pilot interviews were conducted. All participants reported the interview questions were helpful in allowing exploration of past and present experiences, and that they felt they were provided a safe, non-judgemental atmosphere to explore difficult topics. Participants accessed memories from childhood with little difficulty, expressing surprise at the many realisations they had not previously considered. This is in line with the aim of IPA to collect data on participants' sense-making, and so felt the questions would appropriately access rich data necessary for this research. Additionally, two participants in their 40s mentioned how

their inter- and intrapersonal relationships had shifted after the age of 30: while their 20s were experienced as a time of great turmoil and confusion, a sense of clarity was achieved from 30 onwards. As such, I felt the decision to exclude women under the age of 32 was further validated, rather including only those able to make sense of the phenomenon. One pilot was conducted with a woman who had spent most of her formative years in a boarding school; her responses were very different to the others as she attached herself to the boarding school, and so did not experience the same disruptions or experiences of having to start over multiple times. For this reason, I decided to exclude participants who had attended boarding school as this felt at odds with the phenomenon I was researching.

None of the pilot interviews were included in the data, as participants were previously known to me, and I felt this could taint my interpretation of the data.

### **3.2.2 Sampling and Procedures**

#### **3.2.2.1 Participants**

Inclusion criteria included being female, fluent in English, between the ages of 32-50, currently residing in and around London, and having moved both residence and education establishment concurrently, three or more times between the ages of 5-18 years of age. This is in line with previous studies exploring the impact of international schooling (e.g. Walter & Auton-Cuff, 2009). Number of countries resided in was not specified.

Exclusion criteria included males, women who had not moved education establishment and residence at the same time three or more times, or had attended boarding school between 5-18 years of age.

Participants were recruited through flyers (see Appendix B) around City University, through word of mouth amongst friends and family, the intranet of the international high school I attended, Facebook and snowball sampling. None of the participants were previously known to me.

There was an overwhelming response to this study, demonstrating the desire of this population to share their narrative. In all, I received 26 queries about participating in the study;

unfortunately, it was necessary to exclude six for not having moved school and residence simultaneously three or more times; five for being outside of the specified age range; three due to loss of contact; two as I was unable to locate a safe, convenient place to conduct the interview; and one for attending boarding school. Each excluded individual was offered signposting for support services and the option of receiving a copy of the results.

I chose to focus on just one gender as relationship and identity models suggest a difference between men and women; I chose to focus on women only as I was cognizant that my own experiences drove this research question and, as a woman, I felt it would be more pertinent for me to explore the experiences of females as a result. Eight eligible females were recruited, in line with recommendations that a sample size for an IPA postgraduate study should be between six and eight, to include ample participants to reveal similarities and differences, without the researcher becoming overwhelmed by the volume of data (e.g. Smith & Eatough, 2007). As IPA posits recruiting as homogenous a population as possible, participants in their 30s and 40s were chosen. Additionally, this age group was chosen as most research on this demographic focuses on those currently going through mobility, and this study aimed to explore the experiences of those in later life to explore how high CRM influences relationships and identity formation later in life. Interviews were completed between September and November 2013.

Participants had quite different backgrounds regarding birth place, age group, marital status and socio-economic status; all moved due to parental profession.

### **3.2.3 Interview Schedule**

Data was collected using individual semi-structured interviews, advantageous in allowing the researcher to follow an unexpected or interesting line of questioning. As it is not necessary to ask every question in order to every participant, the researcher has flexibility in how it is conducted based on the interviewee and what they reveal. The interview can move away from the interview schedule if an unexpected area of enquiry is presented that feels important to be explored further to increase richness and depth (Smith & Eatough, 2007).

Seven participants were interviewed individually in a private room at City University. One participant was interviewed in her home as she had recently had an operation and was unable to travel. Safety measures were put in place: the researcher's partner knew the address of the participant and conducted a safety call 15 minutes into the session, and the researcher telephoned her partner immediately upon exiting. Additionally, the participant lived within an educational campus so security was continuously available, who were aware of the interview taking place. Ideally, all interviews would have been conducted in participants' homes to provide as safe and familiar a place as possible, however due to safety and ethical considerations, it felt more appropriate to interview in a neutral setting.

Interviews lasted 60-90 minutes, during which a large amount of rich data was obtained. Participants were very willing to share experiences, perhaps indicating a need to share and make sense of their experiences and who they are today.

Using guidelines (Smith & Osborne, 2008), the interview schedule was designed (see Appendix D) to be as neutral as possible so participants could offer their own unique process of meaning-making rather than being forced into pre-determined roles. The questions focused on participants' subjective experiences rather than the experiences of those around them, covering:

- the experience of and reflections on CRM
- making sense of identity and relationships both past and present

Questions were phrased so participants could reflect without being limited to answering only about actions, thoughts, feelings or events. The interview commenced with a question involving memories of moving, exploring images and bodily sensations to achieve a more embodied response rather than a pre-packaged, stock answer participants were likely to have provided numerous times previously. This question aimed to help participant's access feelings and cognitions *at the time of* moving rather than drawing on current thoughts and feelings. Further questioning was similarly worded to encourage exploration in a fresh manner rather than drawing on pre-packaged answers. The interview schedule was not designed to test or explore theory, in line with my epistemological standpoint. As each participant brought different

material to the interview, questions asked varied from interview to interview; the schedule offering a framework rather than a fixed routine. After each interview, I made notes concerning my reflections on the interviews, which aided analysis.

### **3.2.4 Transcription**

Each interview was recorded using two digital recorders in case one failed, which happened in one interview. I transcribed audio recordings to help immerse myself in the data; transcripts were page and line numbered, identifiable by pseudonym, and included all vocal utterances, non-verbal communication and incomplete words and sentences (Smith et al., 2009). Recordings and transcripts will be deleted after 5 years in accordance with the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Ethics Conduct (2009).

### **3.2.5 Ethical Considerations**

Full ethical approval was granted by the Department of Psychology at City University (see Appendix A), and ethical guidelines outlined by City University and the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009) were followed continually. Due to the non-clinical nature of the population, no further ethical approval was required.

Confidentiality was explained and consent gained before interviewing commenced. Participants were provided an information sheet and consent form (see Appendix C, *adapted from Rafalin, 1998*). The information sheet outlined the nature of the study, topic of conversation, what the participant could expect, and contact details for researcher and supervisor. Participants were informed they could answer any questions they wanted to, and could withdraw at any time without consequence. They were provided ample time to read the documents, reflect and ask questions; all consented, and were provided copies for their records.

Participants were debriefed at the end of each interview, and asked whether they wanted any further support to ascertain any lasting negative effects arising from the interview.

Each was provided a resource list of local counselling services (see Appendix E). Seven participants accepted the offer of receiving a copy of the research findings, and one declined.

To adhere to strict confidentiality at all times, audio files were password protected, transcribed interviews and signed consent forms were stored in separate locked cabinets in my home, and all identifying details were changed.

### **3.2.6 Analytic Strategy**

Using the hermeneutic circle (Smith et al., 2009) as a guide, analysis moved from 'part' to 'whole', by analysing descriptions provided by participants, unpacking metaphors and language, exploring relationships between themes within individual interviews, and then analysing themes regarding identity and relationships between participants.

While steps on how to conduct IPA can be found in textbooks, it is not a rigid, linear process, but rather a meaning-making process by the researcher, who must immerse him/herself in the data to make sense of it. The researcher then assigns 'themes' to present the data in a useful and pertinent manner. This is a subjective process, and therefore there is no such thing as a 'correct' interpretation (Lyons, 2007).

Based on guidelines by Smith & Osborn (2008), the stages of analysis were: (1) multiple detailed readings of the transcripts to immerse myself in the data; (2) identifying initial themes, organised into clusters, making sure to stay grounded in the data; (3) refinement of themes, and connections between them identified; (4) presentation of a narrative weaving together participants' accounts using interpretations.

#### **3.2.6.1 Stage 1: Reading and Annotating Transcript**

Interviews were analysed individually on three levels: descriptive, linguistic and conceptual. Each transcript was analysed line-by-line to identify themes on a descriptive level through multiple readings to gain a better sense of the data. Readings were done whilst listening to the audiotape to retain a sense of the person speaking. Initial thoughts, feelings and ideas were noted in the left hand margin of the transcript, likened to a free textual analysis

where notes are made regarding how particular language is used, reflecting on what the participant might be trying to say, and identifying contradictions (Smith & Eatough, 2007). As I drew on my own resources to interpret what I felt participants were saying, I reflected on my own experiences, interests, assumptions, values and preconceptions to acknowledge how they might have affected my interpretations (Willig, 2008). The reflexive log was utilised to acknowledge the impact of my pre-existing assumptions, including my own personal issues relating to my identity, research interests, and theoretical orientation (see Appendix L).

After the initial stage, the transcript was read again, and emerging themes recorded on the right hand side of the text based on the initial notes from the previous stage (see table B.1). These themes were more analytical and interpretive, utilising psychological concepts and abstractions. Interpretations were constantly checked against the text to make sure they remained grounded in the text. This oscillation between being close and removed from the data is expressed well by Todres (2007):

In exercising 'closeness' I attempted to enter my informants' experiences and bring the heart of these textures to language. In exercising 'distance' I entered a more academic moment and attempted to tease out some of the meanings in a more thematic way (p.58).

Table B.1 is an example of an excerpt from Danielle's transcript. To illustrate how I went from the transcript to superordinate themes, we follow the quote in bold, "it's also kind of a keeping distant a bit, like being afraid to delve too much into something, cause you know you might have to, well, you *will* leave" which is analysed in depth on page 14 in the Analysis chapter.

| Descriptive, Linguistic and Conceptual Notes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Transcript                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Emerging Themes                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- protection being in multiple groups – less attachment = less pain when move</li> <li>- less attachment to many vs. lots of attachment to one = less pain on departure</li> <li>- knowing will leave</li> <li>- preparation for leaving</li> <li>– protective factor</li> </ul> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. did, if I was really really happy with one group</li> <li>2. maybe I would've been more a part of it,</li> <li>3. but maybe <b>it's also kind of a keeping distant a</b></li> <li>4. <b>bit, like being afraid to delve too much into</b></li> <li>5. <b>something, cause you know you might have</b></li> <li>6. <b>to, well, you will leave,</b> so it's possible (laughs).</li> <li>7. I: Hmmm. And how does it feel to think about</li> <li>8. that?</li> </ol> | <p><b>Self-protective mechanism – less attachment in preparation for ending</b></p> |

Table B.1: Example of Danielle's transcript with relevant quote in bold

This quote was identified as relevant due to several aspects: firstly, Danielle slips from first to third person (highlighted in red), which may indicate attempting distance. Secondly, her laughter (highlighted in red) is intriguing considering she is discussing leaving friends behind, something more likely to be regarded as sad than amusing, indicating perhaps an attempt to lighten the gravity of the situation. Thirdly, the content (in bold) is interesting – Danielle appears to be describing a process relevant to relationships, a focus of this research, delineating a coping mechanism to protect herself against pain, which also precludes being able to form close relationships. Danielle's emphasis on "will" further intrigues, indicating a strong feeling. The emerging theme assigned was "self-protective mechanism – less attachment in preparation for ending".

### 3.2.6.2 Stage 2: Clustering Emerging Themes:

Themes were typed into a word document, cut up and manually clustered. This stage required further reduction of data by clustering themes based on apparent connections, likened to "a magnet with some of the themes pulling others in and helping to make sense of them" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 70). Themes with a weak evidence base were dropped (Smith & Eatough, 2007). Danielle's quote was clustered with other similar emerging themes into the subordinate theme "weak attachments to self-protect against loss".

#### **3.2.6.3 Stage 3: *Clustering Subordinate Themes into Superordinate Themes***

Lastly, superordinate theme titles were assigned to clusters of themes that emerged, to capture the essential meaning of the text. These themes were compiled in a table together with associated sub-themes and key sentences from the transcript and corresponding line numbers. This process was conducted on each interview (see Appendix G). Each table "...is the outcome of an iterative process in which [the researcher] has moved back and forth between the various analytic stages ensuring that the integrity of what the participant has said has been preserved as far as possible. If the researcher has been successful, then it should be possible for someone else to track the analytic journey from the raw data through to the end table" (Eatough, Smith, & Shaw, 2008, p. 1773). This has been likened to an independent audit (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

#### **3.2.6.4 Stage 4: *Clustering Superordinate Themes across Participants:***

Once all interviews had been analysed individually, superordinate and subordinate themes from each transcript were examined and clustered. A master list of themes was developed, along with constituent subordinate themes for the whole group. Differences and commonalities were analysed, providing a holistic account of participants' experiences. Graphic models were created (see Analysis), and data was refined on all levels, from themes to quotes, to provide a relevant and coherent narrative, excluding themes and quotes felt to be less pertinent. Overall themes and labels were once again re-evaluated during the writing up stage, and quotes refined to include only what was relevant without impacting meaning. The narrative account provided in the Analysis section uses verbatim extracts from to provide transparency of the interpretations for the reader, and to make sure participants' voices remain prevalent.

## Chapter 4

### Analysis

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents various themes to offer insight into how adult women with a background of high CRM make sense of their relationships and identity.

Due to the breadth of the topic, there was a huge amount of raw data, resulting in necessary culling to identify themes relevant to the research question, and unique to this population. This process was extremely difficult, time-consuming and anxiety-provoking as every word uttered by my participants was precious to me. However, through this complex and undesired pruning process, I identified themes I felt appropriate to do both my research and participants justice. Four superordinate themes with various sub- and sub-subthemes emerged. The full theme list can be found in Appendix I.

- *Role of the Family in CRM*
  - *Coping Alone*
  - *Feeling Supported*
- *Managing the Self in Relation to the Other*
  - *(Dis)Connection*
  - *“Where Am I From?” Managing the Others’ Expectations*
  - *(Dis)Comfort in the (Un)Familiar*
- *Managing the Self in Relation to the World*
  - *“Orphaned” by Host and Passport Countries*
  - *“Citizen of the World” and the Meaning of ‘Home’*
- *Intrapsychic Understanding of CRM*
  - *Implications for Others*
  - *Reflections on CRM*
  - *Influence of CRM on Present Day Self*

## 4.2 Overview of the Analysis

Although presented separately, the themes interlink, continually impacting and influencing one another. A tentative, hypothetical model was created to encapsulate the findings into a comprehensive framework to aid understanding of the findings. Two diagrams are presented, one delineating superordinate themes and subordinate themes (see Diagram B.1), and one delineating subordinate and sub-subordinate themes (see Diagram B.2).

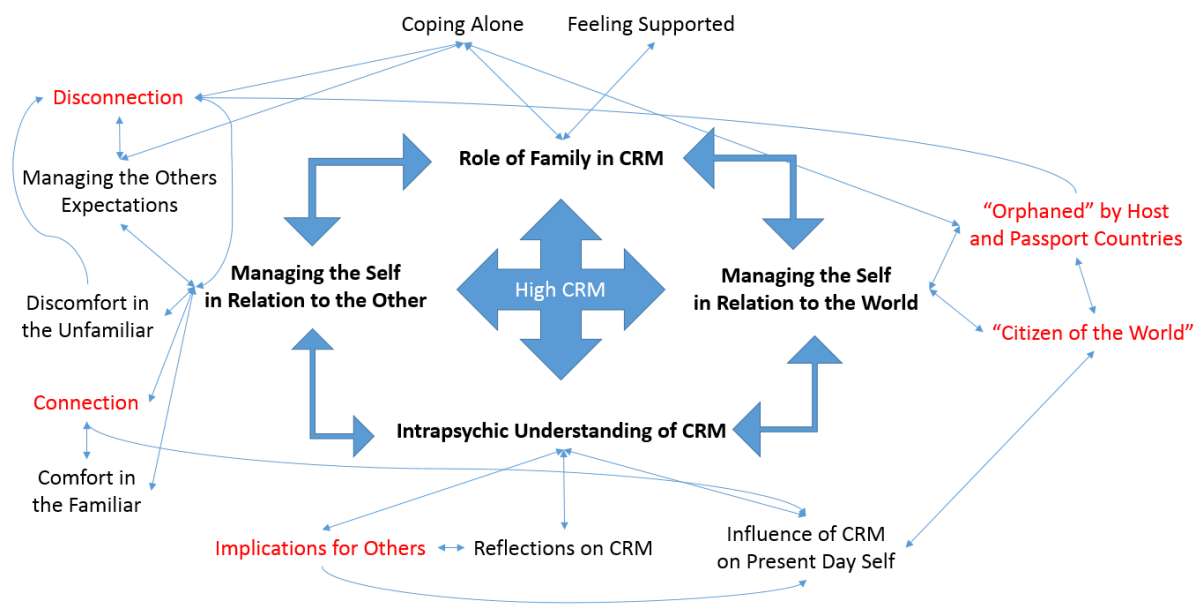


Diagram B.1: Relationship between Superordinate and Subordinate Themes (themes in red expanded in Diagram B.2)

'The Role of the Family in CRM' had wide-reaching implications for participants, as experiencing primary caregivers as absent, unable to help or neglectful resulted in participants turning inwards and develop their own coping mechanisms, initially adaptive (e.g. preventing emotional depth to self-protect), but ultimately maladaptive (e.g. preventing emotionally deep relationships). These coping mechanisms directly impacted how participants 'Managed the Self in Relation to the Other', and subsequently impacting how participants 'Managed the Self in Relation to the World', as having compromised their sense of self due to continuing geographical and interpersonal changes, their relationship with 'home' was challenged, calling into question their ultimate sense of belonging. Retrospectively, participants reflected on and

developed an 'Intrapsychic Understanding of CRM', amalgamating experiences of both home life and having to manage the self both interpersonally and geographically.

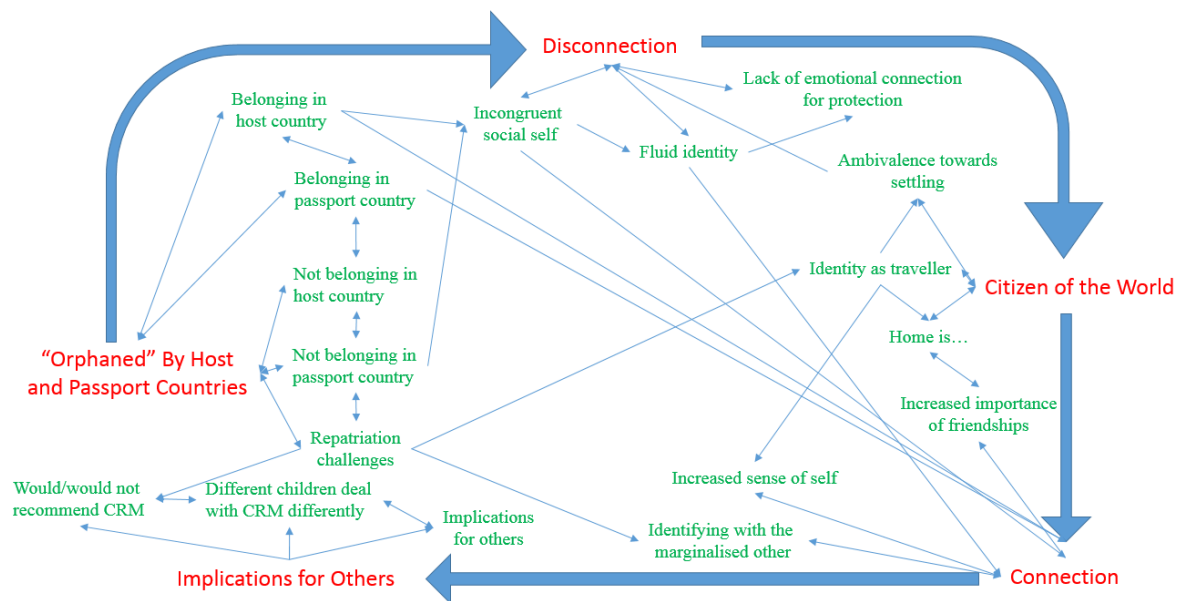


Diagram B.2: Relationship between Subordinate and Sub-subordinate Themes

The first superordinate theme, 'Role of the Family in CRM', comprises subthemes 'coping alone' and 'feeling supported'. Most participants reported the necessity of developing internal resources due to experiencing the environment as hostile, unsupportive and challenging, also reported in the literature (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Parts of the self were cut off or alienated to manage lack of familial communication, resulting in internalising the conception that feelings and needs were unimportant due to lack of space for expression, and feeling unconsidered. Parents' attempts to console resulted in internalising expressions of grief as negative, reinforcing the belief of having to cope alone. Participants experienced conflict upon learning of further moves, aware the current identity they had worked so hard to build was to be shattered, and would need rebuilding in the next environment. The necessary continuity required to develop a stable identity was missing, and participants felt unable to control their environment, or, indeed, their emerging identity. Participants denied access to aspects of themselves that required attention and management, replacing their congruent self with a masked self, belying their lack of internal coping. Subsequently, having developed such

strong coping mechanisms due to feeling unsupported, parents often viewed participants as coping, offering even less support, reaffirming the cycle. Unfortunately, what participants developed to cope prevented them from receiving much needed support. Only Naomi reported receiving consistently high levels of support, which bolstered her sense of agency in childhood.

The second superordinate theme, 'Managing the Self in Relation to the Other' incorporates various interpersonal management strategies and experiences, outlined in subthemes of '(dis)connection', 'managing the others expectations', and '(dis)comfort in the (un)familiar'. Participants felt alternately connected and disconnected, both with the self and Other. These experiences appeared to be heavily contextually influenced, induced either because of, or due to a *lack* of, a sense of agency. Disconnection from the self arose from an inability to show one's true self for fear of rejection, due to constantly changing environments which required a constantly changing self to assimilate. Participants found it necessary to develop an *incongruent social self* to manage, hiding or altering aspects of the self to gain a sense of belonging. This resulted in a compromised, and, at times, *erased*, sense of self; however, the need to belong was so great that this was accepted as an unpleasant but necessary side-effect. Development of this incongruent social self allowed participants to hold membership in multiple groups, altering aspects of the self depending on which group was being accessed, engendering a *fluid identity*. However, the fluidity and incongruence resulted in superficial relationships, as the development of "true" friendships was compromised by a continually changing social landscape, impacting participants' sense of self. Revealing different aspects of the self to different individuals, including hiding and altering aspects, precluded knowing *who one really was*, and, without this knowledge, relationships could not gain depth due to lack of intimacy. This lack of depth protected participants' emotional core, the superficiality making further mobility just about bearable. The desire for connection, albeit *weak* connection, caused internal conflict, leaving participants feeling incongruent and alone, yet having to engage in such processes to be able to bare the continued disrupted attachments over which they experienced lack of agency.

Participants experienced a sense of confrontation when engaging with others without similar experiences of mobility, feeling under scrutiny, 'different'. Aspects of the self that had been previously accepted and praised became embarrassing and marginalising; the self became something that required alteration, the continual need for a malleable identity became paramount. *Compromising* one's identity was hardly acknowledged, as one's identity was unknown. The Others questioning made participants' lack of certainty regarding their core identity salient, resulting in avoidance of those that engendered this threat. The body and its constituent internal and external aspects was treated akin to a piece of malleable clay, allowing imprints from others to continually mould and erase various identifying aspects.

Connection continued to be sought to gain sense of belonging and identification with others. Participants' shamed aspects of self could be revealed to similarly marginalised others, where they experienced safety in exploring these aspects within the context of acceptance and similarity. This resulted in identifying aspects of the self that were finally acceptable, both to the self and the Other, albeit only the *marginalised* Other, and participants experienced growth in their self-concept. Relationships were positioned as the platform that both hindered and helped development of the self, and, through experiencing supportive, accepting relationships, participants found themselves desiring stronger and deeper friendships, tentatively revealing aspects of the self to gain confidence in what was acceptable, positioning the Other as a means of learning about congruence rather than engendering falsity.

The third superordinate theme, 'Managing the Self in Relation to the World' relates to the experience participants had, and still have, regarding engaging in the world at large, characterised by subthemes of being "“orphaned” by both host and passport countries', and being a "“citizen of the world” and the meaning of home'. An inherent sense of belonging of the self due to the familiarity of one's passport country led at times to reject identifying with one's host country. The impact of multiple cultures inherently altered aspects of the self, including participants' life view, creating a boundary between oneself and peers from 'home'. The self, previously accepted, became a source of conflict due to rejection, misunderstanding

and marginalisation by the Other, causing participants to question their sense of belonging in the world. The rejected self was questioned, analysed; it became 'foreign', and a new identity was required. Various selves were employed in different contexts to explore this new, unknown "self". "Home", *conceptually* comforting and familiar, was in *reality* highly emotionally charged and confusing, inducing a lack of grounding and stability. Participants drew on their sense of difference, challenging the others' attempts to marginalise them based on difference, incorporating them to form a new identity. Moving, travelling, transitions – these made up the core of participants, provided the filter through which they viewed themselves, others and the world. Rejection of this aspect of themselves had not worked, and their differences remained visible. Shifting from hiding and altering aspects of the self, participants labelled and drew on these marginalised aspects of the self, internalising the identity of *traveller*, which provided at least *some* sense of identity, particularly one that exonerated them from having to *belong* to any one place. However, being a 'citizen of the world' paradoxically further complicated sense of belonging, as although they could now identify with everywhere, nowhere provided a stable sense of home; the continually changing environments continued to result in a continually changing sense of self.

The fourth and final superordinate theme, 'Intrapsychic Understanding of CRM', reflects participants' current cognitions and feelings about their experiences. Through a process of engaging with past experiences and reflecting on their current conceptions, participants identified aspects of themselves they believed developed in response to their background, and considered what had been absent in their childhood, reflected in the subthemes, 'influence of CRM on present day self', 'reflections on CRM', and 'implications for others'. The experience of CRM became somewhat conceptualised as a discrete object, at times perceived as benevolent and conducive to one's sense of self, such as developing the ability to befriend and understand others; however, at other times viewed with dislike and disdain, for example, for inducing the inability to bare the sadness of the Other. Subsequently, the objects' hindering and harmful side was never far from the surface. There appeared a

strong internal conflict regarding one's sense of identification with the object, not being able to distance oneself, but not always appreciating what was viewed to be a result of the objects influence. Trust in one's memories was questioned; participants queried whether they viewed their experiences through rose tinted glasses, which is supported by Pollock and Van Reken (2009) who suggest TCKs can be reluctant to share negative memories for fear of discounting the positive.

Although all four themes were equally relevant, due to space limitations, this chapter focuses on *Managing the Self in Relation to the Other* and *Managing the Self in Relation to the World*, as these two themes appear to present analysis that provide more clinically relevant information, while *Feeling (Un)Supported by Family* and *Intrapsychic Understanding of CRM* present analysis that appears more relevant for individuals *experiencing* high CRM, rather than practitioners. I have provided the full analysis of the former two themes in the appendix (see Appendices J and K).

Verbatim quotes were used, ensuring confidentiality through pseudonyms and changing or omitting identifying details, delineated by: \_\_\_\_\_. Quotes are provided along with participants' names, number, page and line number (e.g. Naomi, 3.23.13). Silences and pauses are indicated by: ..., and non-verbal reactions are placed within: [ ]. Words stressed by participants are in italics, and text added for clarity are placed within: { }.

As one goal of this research is to corroborate and add to existing literature, I include research and theory where appropriate. However, I tried to do this sporadically to position the narratives at the centre of the analysis. A more extensive synthesis can be found in the next chapter.

#### **4.3 Theme 1: Managing the Self in Relation to the Other**

Participants explored their self-perception regarding others, reporting themes of connection and disconnection with the self, family and peers. They experienced forming a

strong sense of self as challenging, which negatively impacted comfort levels around stable others. Subsequently, they experienced increased comfort with other mobile and marginalised others, due to having similar experiences. An increase in age engendered both increased sense of self and importance of friendships.

#### **4.3.1 Disconnection**

Disrupted childhood relationships due to high mobility resulted in the development of an *incongruent social self* (see 4.3.1.2) and *fluid identity* (see 4.3.1.3), resulting in a lack of emotionally deep relationships, causing sadness and regret.

##### **4.3.1.2 Incongruent Social Self**

Half the participants developed techniques and skills to manage a constantly changing social environment, where “rules” changed frequently and participants felt a strong need for adaptable and assimilation to minimise difference. To manage, an *incongruent social self* developed, linked with a *fluid identity* (see 3.3.1.2). For many, this developed from experiencing lack of support from others; however, despite being a successful coping mechanism, an incongruent social self engendered consequences.

Several participants recalled situations where they envisaged this incongruent social self developing and growing stronger. Emma felt it necessary to create a “character”, a façade, on her first day at school after her first move, borne of coping alone. Her account suggests an incongruent social self is context-specific, consistent with literature on identity (e.g. Goffman, 1959).

I just remember feeling just really by myself and just looking at the school [EXHALES] taking a deep breath, breathing out and going in and just being the biggest, the loudest, like “you wanna be my friend” character I could ever have been, it was very much about putting on a front. (Emma, 6.1.21).

Employing a mask may indicate *encapsulated marginality* (Bennett, 1993), feeling alone, unsure of one's authentic self, employing a façade to manage incongruence. Emma felt unable to be congruent for fear of rejection, so a mask helped gain acceptance and keep emotionally safe. Many participants expressed needing to act counter to their congruent desires to assimilate. Danielle reflects on having to compromise to assimilate, in hindsight struggling to understand why she acted as she did.

I kind of tried to be accepted by everyone, I tried to be likeable to everyone, and I don't really know why [LAUGHS], always trying to adapt and fit in rather than, being one certain way and making people adapt to me. (Danielle, 4.49.17)

Danielle's laughter may suggest a retrospective disapproval of her childhood actions, viewing the strong need for acceptance that compromised her identity as absurd. "Adapt" has both positive and negative connotations: while it may increase chance of survival, it also requires something is changed or lost, and is referred to as *deculturation*, the process of unlearning something (Kim, 2008). The ability to adapt instantaneously was paramount; Danielle reflects on disliking anything external that marked her as different; unlike certain *identity markers* (McCrone & Bechhofer, 2008) (e.g. clothing) that can be changed, others (e.g. tattoo) challenged adaptability. Danielle desired a unidimensional experience of assimilation (Gordon, 1964), to assimilate fully into the dominant culture without retaining parts of her previous self, changing from *foreigner* to *mirror* (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

The thought of having a tattoo {would be} the worst, because if you move somewhere else and it's no longer accepted then you can't get rid of it [LAUGHS]. (Danielle, 5.17.15)

A tattoo is positioned as identification, a permanent label, which can be compromising; in contrast, several participants addressed the *benefit* of quick adaptation through altering other identity markers such as accent.

It's one of those things I think that's come from moving, I pick up accents really easily, when I moved back here, I just started kind of assimilating back into an English accent [LAUGHS]. (Robyn, 8.10.5)

Robyn's awareness of changing her accent in an attempt to assimilate implies a conscious decision to adapt. However, while adaptation may decrease marginality, *substantial*

adaptation precludes development of a stable personality. Robyn reflects on this conflict, afraid to “stand out” – attention is unwanted and negative, and blending into the dominant culture preferable. However, by blending in, she compromises knowing who she really *is*.

Sometimes it's like I don't know what is my own personality, I just try to adapt to the people around me so as to not stand out. (Robyn, 8.34.15)

Robyn is unsure where her personality ends and others start; she draws on the environment as a guide, and, later in the interview, alludes to being able to mimic others, supported by Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which argues individuals copy observed behaviour. In adulthood, Robyn reflects on how she used others to adapt, however worries about the long-term impact. While Danielle felt her incongruent social self arose from feeling alone, Robyn alludes to lack of self-confidence engendering this need. Literature suggests low self-esteem is linked with a weak ethnic identity (Phinney et al., 1997), weak social networks (Buhrmester, 1990) and lack of stable identity (Branscombe et al., 1999), all with which Robyn experienced difficulty.

It would have been good to feel a bit more confident about who I was, I felt for a long time like I didn't really have a personality, I just became like the people around me and I didn't really know who I was, and I think that...has been...just not...very good for my development and personality [LAUGHS]. (Robyn, 8.61.4).

Several participants discussed the lasting impact of continual adaptation from childhood into adulthood, remarking how it has become so ingrained it requires regular monitoring.

I have to fight against it a bit, cause sometimes my impulse is to kind of fit in and do what other people are doing [LAUGHS]. (Robyn, 8.33.3)

“Fight” implies a battle, “impulse” implies something inherent; Robyn's ability to adapt has become so ingrained, a strong defence is necessary to counteract.

Only with age did several participants become aware of this incongruent social self; perhaps realising it earlier would have destroyed necessary defences against feeling different. Only in her mid-twenties could Emma appreciate the role her “mask” had played.

I had therapy in my mid-twenties and that's the first time I realised, 'oh my gosh I'm not being myself, I'm always putting on this front and then feeling terrible inside' it's kind of tactics, it's what I learned. (Emma, 6.15.11).

Emma's mask, while beneficial, causes discomfort within its falsity. While the "terrible" feelings may have been present for many years, only with insight into why and how it developed could she, like Robyn, understand and challenge the incongruence.

Incongruent social selves appeared to develop to manage both feeling alone in coping, and low self-esteem. To compensate and gain sense of acceptance, participants acted counter to their natural selves, taking cues from the external environment to "learn" how to act. However, as with many childhood coping mechanisms, while they were not only beneficial but necessary initially, the incongruence precluded the ability to know one's 'true' self.

#### **4.3.1.3 Fluid Identity**

Several participants held membership in many different social groups rather than subscribing to any one, supported by research by Oishi et al. (2009), who found mobile individuals more likely to exhibit *conditional group membership* due to less concern about the group's survival. Multiple group membership is suggested as preferable and more adaptable for mobile individuals, termed here *fluid identity*. Perhaps membership in multiple groups was possible due to an incongruent social self (see 4.3.1.2); involvement in several groups provided increased sense of belonging and connection, while committing to just one group would necessitate choosing just one identity, synonymous with social suicide.

This sense of fluid identity extended to various types of identity, including social, national and ethnic. Participants often moved to a new place where they were able to "hide" the customs and traditions of where they originated, allowing national and cultural identity to remain invisible and malleable, complicated by ethnic identity which could be misinterpreted by others. The majority of the participants were White and moved between countries where the dominant culture was White; as such, their ethnicity did not become salient in the same manner as for several participants who moved between countries and changed from being in the minority to being in the majority, or vice versa, as occurred with Ashley and Robyn.

Ethnic identity, as referred to in this analysis and discussion, refers to one's affiliation with a certain ethnicity based on skin colour and cultural heritage. Immigrant status, however, refers to the situation in which the individual experiences themselves in relation to the land on which they reside. These conditions can be distinct and mutually exclusive, such as when an individual is perceived to be *Other* based on ethnicity, but feels a sense of membership within the culture; additionally, there can be instances where an individual is perceived as *Other* both in terms of ethnicity AND culture, which can exacerbate the difficulty of experiencing acceptance. However, ethnic identity and immigrant status can also be experienced simultaneously, for example, where one is *perceived* as a local based on ethnicity, and also *experiences* sense of membership within that culture.

Engagement with multiple groups ensured continued independence and sense of agency, due to low levels of allegiance to any one group. Danielle reflected on how being part of a group resulted in labelling, compromising adaptability; consequently, she appeared to value the ability to engage multiple selves (e.g. Goffman, 1959).

I was friends with everyone, I suppose I didn't want to be labelled and identified as any one group, I quite liked being more independent, and my own person... I think maybe it's because I always wanted to be adaptable. (Danielle, 4.17.3)

Danielle protected her sense of identity by forming multiple allegiances, perhaps due to lack of certainty about her own personality; possibly different groups complemented different aspects of her personality, and so, by accessing various groups, she could maintain a multifaceted sense of identity. Danielle may have felt her personality too malleable to cope in situations where others' desires might compromise it. Having multiple friends but with only weak ties is found in mobility literature (Adams & Plaut, 2003), suggesting individuals in residentially mobile societies are more likely to have wide groups of weak social ties, as a larger network increases probability of gaining social support when necessary, while weak ties decrease possibility of heartache upon detachment (Oishi et al, 2009). Due to multiple experiences of loss, participants may have desired maintaining weak friendships to protect against future pain.

Similarly to Danielle, Emma felt a lack of allegiance to any one group was a way to, paradoxically, fit in best. She also describes a parallel process: the constant changes in friendship groups mimicked her constant residential changes.

Each year I'd change my group of friends, I'd move around *a lot*, and, I was friends with *everybody*, so I fitted in, cause I wanted people to like me, it's all really tactical [LAUGHS]. (Emma, 6.30.10).

"Tactical" suggests army lexicon, the cause of her family's regular moving; perhaps she devised her own "tactics" to learn how to survive and thrive on a social battlefield. The effect remained for several participants who continued to experience restlessness and desire to change their external environment regularly in adulthood (see 4.4.2).

To manage a weak sense of self, several participants remained unidentified with any one social group. Multiple group membership allowed participants to continue with a fluid identity, further protecting their incongruent social self, aiding adaptation.

#### **4.3.1.4 Lack of Emotional Connection for Protection**

Difficulty forming deep emotional connections was expressed by several participants. Having moved regularly, often against their will, and sometimes with little or no preparation, may have influenced how participants both engaged with goodbyes in childhood, and how they socialise in adulthood. Anya cannot recall a time when "goodbye" was associated with pain or sadness.

I was never fazed by it. I was like, 'ok see you later'. (Anya, 1.45.17)  
Possibly due to multiple moves, she did not experience goodbyes as difficult. Perhaps being able to disconnect easily was due to lack of strong connections initially. Indeed, several participants expressed keeping emotionally distant from others to protect against potential heartache.

It's kind of a keeping distant a bit, being afraid to delve too much into something, cause you know you might have to, well, you will leave. (Danielle, 4.17.3).

If you know that you are a short time somewhere, you don't tend to go very deep into a relationship. (Matilda, 5.35.3)

Danielle and Matilda consciously monitor levels of interpersonal connection to minimise future pain. Pollock and Van Reken (2009) found multiple relational childhood losses result in mobile individuals limiting intimacy levels to protect against future pain of loss. For several participants, this coping mechanism appears to have continued into adulthood.

A lot of people know me, but I don't have any close friends... (Ashley, 7.59.6)

I've always had a lot of different friends, {but} it's rarely been the case that I've had one close friend for many many years. (Danielle, 4.12.18)

Years of multiple group membership may have resulted in superficial relationships due to self-imposed lack of emotional closeness. Pollock and Van Reken (2009) found TCKs tend not to delve further than a medium level of depth interpersonally, to protect against future hurt. Perhaps Ashley and Danielle restrict the depth of their friendships to protect against future pain. Indeed, Danielle is aware of this self-imposed emotional detachment, having observed and considered the process.

I specifically *don't* make friends [LAUGHS] because I already know that I'm going to leave, it's too much of an effort, you end up missing people more. [LONG PAUSE] I just don't make the effort anymore cause I don't want to be sad. I don't want to have to leave people behind [LAUGHS]. (Danielle, 4.33.20).

Emphasising "*don't*" implies a conscious decision to enforce emotional distance, supporting research that found friendships decrease for mobile individuals with each move (Anderson et al., 2014). Danielle's laughter and shift from first to third person may be attempts to lighten, and distance herself from, sadness she feels about her chosen social disconnection. Despite being a choice, the lengthy pause may suggest she is either re-experiencing the pain of loss, or considering what it would be like to engage in a new, ill-fated relationship. Indeed, Oishi, Miao, Koo, Kisling and Ratliff (2012) have demonstrated merely thinking about moving can cause distress, sadness and loneliness. Danielle may be angry and resentful about feeling forced to keep emotionally distant. When describing her most recent sojourn, she positions herself as an active agent in her continued disconnection and loneliness.

They {other young professionals} would ask me to come out and I just didn't go out with them [LAUGHS]...I just thought "it's going to be another group of people that I'll be friends with and I'll have to email them and won't see them again" [LAUGHS] so...so I just sort of let it phase out, quickly quickly... (Danielle, 4.35.12).

Her laughter highlights the irony that after a lifetime of attempting assimilation, in adulthood she consciously rebuffs offers of friendship. For her, the possible pain of future loss is too much for the potential pleasure of the present to bear. Her attitude toward others is resigned; a familiar pattern, where she puts in effort and is disappointed, reminiscent of *social exchange and equity theory* (Canary & Stafford, 2001), where individuals desire to gain from relationships what is put in. Repeating "quickly quickly" may suggest the hint needs to be observed rapidly for fear of changing her mind and acquiescing, resulting in subsequent attachment and loss.

Attaching and detaching multiple times appears to have caused lasting difficulty and impact on several participants; to manage, several kept emotionally distant, protecting themselves from further pain.

#### **4.3.2 (Dis)Comfort in the (Un)Familiar**

Most participants spoke of feeling comfortable and congruent with familiar others, and discomfort with unfamiliar others. For this section, *familiar others* refers to those with relocation experience, while *unfamiliar others* relates to those without.

Commonly, participants reported increased comfort around familiar others regardless of nationality, culture or ethnicity, due to experiencing them as more open-minded and easier to befriend than unfamiliar others, and therefore easier to connect with. Matilda positions familiar others as easier to achieve sense of belonging:

People who have moved around throughout their life are more open, so we openly share our feelings, emotions, we will make friendships much easier and quicker, are more trusting, and are willing to give you a chance, and be your friend. (Matilda, 5.16.18)

Matilda begins by saying “people who have moved”, distancing herself, but quickly shifts, referring to “we”, perhaps indicating a strong identification with familiar others, corroborated by how Danielle perceives them. Similar world view is implied, allowing greater sense of connection.

I think people who have moved around can sort of see things similarly, they accept me more. (Danielle, 4.40.2)

Danielle says “*they* accept me more”, implying acceptance for her is unidirectional. Her phrasing implies being “seen” differently by familiar others, they “see” her congruent self, rather than the incongruent social self she presents unfamiliar others. Robyn similarly reflects experiencing sense of belonging with familiar peers, while previously unfamiliar peers had viewed her as “weird” (8.27.18).

People who’d also kinda moved and came from various places and it was just like I felt like I fit in there a bit. (Robyn, 8.21.1)

Being with familiar others provided Robyn sense of acceptance.

Most participants struggled to fit in with unfamiliar others, caused by differing world views arising from having experienced diverse upbringings, making salient their ethnic and cultural identities; half shared negative perceptions they felt locals had of them, using words implying marginalisation, which all relate to a sense of engaging with the unknown:

I was a bit strange for them. (Anya, 1.22.2)

For {the locals} I was like an alien. (Ashley, 7.26.9)

You’re like some weird exotic person, in {passport country}, I would’ve been considered {an} exotic outsider for having moved around a lot. (Danielle, 4.40.11)

Overwhelming it’s like you’re just seen as a bit of an oddity. (Robyn, 8.27.1)

Choosing words that position themselves as “different”, implying marginalisation and discrimination, may be difficult for participants, perhaps explaining why both Danielle and Robyn employ third person. In fact, Danielle shifts from third to first, perhaps indicating ambivalence in knowing how she feels about having been conceptualised in this way in childhood.

Most participants experienced connecting with unfamiliar others difficult, largely due to differing mind-sets which threatened sense of acceptance, making feelings of difference salient.

People who haven't really travelled at all won't understand where I'm coming from, very much. (Danielle, 4.21.6)

It was always difficult to approach things from the same, like, wavelength. (Danielle, 4.22.5)

"Wavelength" refers to peoples' ideas and thoughts complementing one another easily; the term 'mental harmony' (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2001-4) epitomises this: with harmony comes relaxation, peace and safety; the opposite is disagreement and incongruity, which participants experience with unfamiliar others. Due to feeling incongruent around unfamiliar others, Anya notices she is less drawn to them.

I tend to gravitate towards people who {do not have a local mentality}...um, because I just really don't like it-, it's not that I don't like it, it's that I don't agree with that mentality. I just don't relate to them. I don't feel part of it. And yea, I feel like an outsider, I just don't understand their mentality. I just don't like it. (Anya, 1.42.1).

Anya begins saying she does not like their mentality, but then says she does not *understand* it, positioning herself outside of their world, not feeling a part of it. Being with unfamiliar others makes Anya's differences salient, engendering sense of marginalisation. "*Just* don't like it" is almost dismissive, perhaps due to multiple unsuccessful years of assimilation.

Both Ashley and Anya express difficulty managing the difference in mind-set encountered with unfamiliar others. While Ashley's experience of CRM culminated in an adulthood love of travel, she, as with other participants, struggles to comprehend differing opinions; for her, travel is an inherent part of her identity (see 4.4.2.2).

Hard to believe that someone could live and work in a place for 30 years and never leave. And not even be vaguely curious. I find it hard when people don't have passports. I've had one since I was probably two years old [LAUGHS]. The minute I could afford a {plane} ticket, I bought {one} myself. (Ashley, 7.82.15).

Internalising travelling as an identity propels Ashley to continue mobility into adulthood, gaining ownership and agency lacking in childhood. Anya appears to experience difference in mind-sets as a barrier to forming friendships with unfamiliar others.

I feel like I never really, uh, formed very close or deep relationships...because, there wasn't that kind of like mutual understanding, it stayed very much on the superficial...level. I felt very alone the first year I was {in the host country}, even though I was always surrounded by people, I felt very alone. (Anya, 1.33.10)

I don't really click with people who are very local in a way [LAUGHS]. (Anya, 1.30.16)

Anya takes agency over this lack of fit: "I don't click with *them*", not "*we* don't click". Perhaps this is a protective mechanism: in difficult social situations she employs this belief to make sense of the situation. However, the belief precludes her from testing out her belief; from a cognitive behavioural approach, how individuals interpret relationships impact how they subsequently behave (Beck, 1988); Anya's beliefs about interacting with stable others is based on previous experiences of rejection, which she manages by rejecting the Other first.

Perhaps due to increased comfort with familiar others, most participants report familiar others comprise the majority of their social networks.

Pretty much all of {my friends} have moved as well [LAUGHS]. (Danielle, 4.39.11)

I would say that my *best* friends are people who have been brought up somewhere else and ended up living here, have a similar background where they've moved around. (Matilda, 5.23.7)

I don't have any...local friends [LAUGHS]. (Anya, 1.49.7)

Anya laughs, perhaps to lighten the gravity of the situation she has struggled with for so many years. These excerpts support *the similarity-attraction hypothesis*, demonstrating individuals gravitate toward others with similar world views and attitudes (e.g. Byrne, 1971). Indeed, Schaetti (2001) found mobile individuals were more likely to gravitate towards mobile over stable individuals. Anya also explains a physical response she encounters with familiar others, using the word "ease" multiple times in her interview to describe how she feels with familiar others.

I feel very at ease when there's people from a lot of different countries, if it's very homogenous, I tend to feel a bit out of place really quickly...and I don't really like it...that much. (Anya, 1.56.1).

I: So when you're in a situation where it's a lot of international people or that sort of thing, you feel a bit more...?

P: I feel totally at ease [SMILING] (Anya, 1.55.18)

Anya's discomfort when discussing experiences of engaging with unfamiliar others abates; she becomes visibly calmer, more relaxed. This physical manifestation of calmness mirrors the topic and her word choice: "ease". Ease denotes decreased difficulty, suggesting when with familiar others, the difficulties of social engagements experienced with unfamiliar others melts away.

Many participants report relying on their social network for support in the absence of local blood relations. Pollock and Van Reken (2009) suggest mobile individuals often find rootedness and acceptance in relationships due to lack of geographic connection. Matilda reflects on the social network she has developed, securing connection and security.

It's a very tight network I have established, people coming from a similar background who have moved around, there's no immediate family, so you do tend to rely most on friends to substitute for your immediate family. (Matilda, 5.32.12)

Matilda positions herself an active agent, constructing a 'family' of other mobile, displaced, uprooted individuals, seeking groundedness in one another. Shifting from first person when discussing a positive social experience (establishing a social network), she shifts to third when discussing lack of immediate family, perhaps to distance herself from the pain of separation from blood relations.

Of the participants, two expressed a preference for unfamiliar others, contrasting other participants.

I tend to not end up being friends with lots of people who have moved, or have moved around a lot. (Robyn, 8.72.2)

Most of my friends are from one borough, and raised in the same place. (Naomi, 3.41.13)

For Danielle, unfamiliar others are admirable, not threatening or stigmatising. She positions them as 'different', but in a positive manner.

I tend to admire people who are like super stable and have grown up in their neighbourhood and are really local and they like know the people in the shops on the corner and saying hello to the vicar and [LAUGHS] I find that like really fascinating and admirable. (Danielle, 4.20.4).

Danielle may be positioning unfamiliar others similarly to how she had been positioned before, as a "weird exotic person" (Danielle, 4.40.11); however, she is curious and admiring rather than stigmatising. Despite her choice of friendships, Naomi expresses ambivalence: while expressing a high level of comfort around unfamiliar others, she expresses a greater degree of *interest* in familiar others, leading to question whether her unfamiliar friends are due to circumstance or choice. She expresses a kindredship with, ownership of, familiar others, suggesting she may be more drawn towards them despite her friendship group consisting mainly of unfamiliar others.

I: When you meet people who've moved a lot, how do you sort of relate to-

P: I understand them, I think, somehow I feel, "ah, one of mine" [LAUGHS].

I: Yea. And so what's that like?

P: I like it...because somehow I feel they know how it feels...if you haven't done it, you don't know what it's like. (Naomi, 3.38.20).

Naomi, the only participant to move exclusively nationally, expresses ambivalence about her desire for familiar or unfamiliar others; perhaps having moved regularly but within her passport country, she may feel conflicted whether she herself is "familiar" or "unfamiliar".

Regarding romantic relationships, participants were split regarding attraction for familiar or unfamiliar others. Seeking unfamiliar others appeared to fill a gap for mobile individuals, providing stability they experienced as lacking.

{I} wouldn't be looking for someone international, I think I look for stable people [LAUGHS], who provide a sense of safety and stability. (Robyn, 8.69.16).

All my boyfriends have been really sort of local, and not international, and maybe it's because I wish I had that. (Danielle, 4.20.16)

Both Robyn and Danielle gravitate toward unfamiliar others to compensate for their own lack of stability, desiring and seeking rootedness and grounding vicariously. However, differing

experiences and mind-sets make this a difficult partnership; the differences that initially attract complicates the relationship as they become irreconcilable over time.

It's never worked out with {locals} because they're very different in the way they think. (Danielle, 4.20.20)

Two long relationships [LAUGHS] with guys that had a very like stable...past, but then it became an issue when they wanted to go back to it and I just didn't want it. (Anya, 1.39.6)

However, Sarah speaks of her current partner who "moved a lot" (2.52.3) and both Ashley and Emma express attraction to familiar others.

Obviously someone who has travelled a lot. (Ashley, 7.82.9).

Always drawn towards people who relationship-wise travel{s} for their job (Emma, 6.38.1).

Additionally, Emma prefers physically distant relationships which provide with emotional distance.

My last serious boyfriend lived in \_\_\_\_ so we'd see each other just on the holidays and that suited me just fine. (Emma, 6.38.20)

Emma is familiar with emotional detachment from childhood, repeating this in adulthood. Mobile individuals are often viewed as independent, but Pollock and Van Reken (2009) suggest this may actually be detachment due to frequent childhood disruption.

Being with familiar others with similar conceptions of mobility and relocation, provides sense of connection, belonging; vice versa, being with unfamiliar others results in feeling disconnected, different, "strange". Understandably, differences in culture, nationality and ethnicity made salient by unfamiliar others results in befriending familiar others. However, some seek safety and stability in unfamiliar others, struggling to attain this independently. Often this does not result in lasting acquisition of safety due to differing mind-sets which form an insurmountable social barrier.

#### 4.3.3 “Where *Am I From??*”: Managing the Others Expectations

“Where are you from?”, used to orient the other in context, is hugely challenging for participants, mirrored by TCK research (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Some participants experience it as confusing, not understanding its function or how to manage. Several allude to feelings of difference engendered by this question, resulting in introspection.

Most participants reported instant, negative feelings upon being asked; immediate reactions were a combination of dislike and feeling put on the spot.

The dreaded question. (Danielle, 3.26.5)

Ugh, I’ve got to explain it again. (Emma, 6.56.19).

I just don’t really like that question...because I feel like whatever I answer, it’s not really the right answer. (Robyn, 8.50.14)

Robyn’s suggestion of a “right” answer implies one can be wrong; with such complicated backgrounds, participants may experience this question as priming them for failure. Sarah stresses the importance of providing the “correct” answer to feel congruent with her identity.

I have a kind of story {that} involves having moved, I have to *make* that clear to people. (Sarah, 2.47.3)

{Others} would say “I’m from London”, but I can’t say that cause it doesn’t feel quite right, it’s not accurate [LAUGHS]. (Sarah, 2.50.17).

If explained inaccurately, Sarah feels deceitful and uncomfortable. To manage, she explains her background in great detail, even if not requested, found to be common amongst mobile individuals (Sears, 2011). Perhaps Sarah’s identity is strongly intertwined with CRM, and transparency engenders congruence. Being unable to answer what appears a simple question results in feeling different. Being unable to grasp the meaning of the question engenders feelings of confusion.

I don’t know what answer people want, I don’t quite understand what it *means* it makes me feel a bit silly, “why can other people understand that question but I can’t?” [LAUGHS]. Yea. And confused. (Sarah, 2. 49.1)

Sarah references not knowing what other “people want”, signifying a need to manage the others expectations. She ignores *her* desires, focusing primarily on the Other. Subsequently, she cannot comprehend the meaning of the question, her own differences made salient,

resulting in confusion and self-consciousness. This all occurs internally – the Other may have little concept of what Sarah is experiencing.

Both Emma and Danielle vocalise their thought processes when asked this question; themes of confusion and questioning the Others desires and expectations predominate. Danielle questions whether to share a more detailed response about her ethnic and cultural heritage and feelings of identification, or to provide a superficial answer. The latter engenders resignation, however, for Emma this provides an easy way to manage a complicated situation.

Do I elaborate, and go into that my parents are {from passport country} but I haven't spent very much time there...I'm not actually a very typical {passport country national}? Or do I just say 'Ok I'm {from passport country}'? (Danielle, 4.27.6)

I would say "I'm from {host country}" but I'm not from {host country} at all...if I didn't work here, I wouldn't be able to afford to live here for a start...but I don't mind saying, "I'm from {host country}". (Emma, 6.58.19)

While Emma embraces providing a somewhat superficial response, Danielle's response is muddled, reflecting the challenge this question causes, perhaps due to a weak national identity. However, Sarah desires to provide the most accurate version possible, including differentiating between birth place and "home".

I say "well I live in \_\_\_\_\_, I was born in \_\_\_\_\_, but I grew up in \_\_\_\_\_", I'm sure people are thinking, "for god's sake, why didn't you just say [LAUGHS], you don't need to tell me all that" (Sarah, 2.46.20)

Sarah empathises with the Other, aware their interest in her background may be limited, so draws on place of upbringing to manage.

I can say, "I grew up in \_\_\_\_\_", and that's true, I lived there from 5 to 25, so people aren't going to say, "Oh did you move a lot of times?" why would they? They probably think I lived in the same house all the time. (Sarah, 2.53.1.)

Sarah relies on what is invisible to satiate the other, hoping to terminate the line of questioning that would lead to further inner conflict.

For several participants, the question engenders deep questions about identity, about what being from somewhere even *means*, and its implications.

I think it makes me think, "where *am* I from?" I don't know. (Emma, 6.56.21)

I don't know where I'm from [LAUGHS]. I don't really know what it *means*.  
(Sarah, 2.48. 18)

Emma and Sarah express an inability to comprehend the question's meaning and how to answer. The question makes Emma's lack of clarity salient, while for Sarah it engenders complete incomprehension of what is required. Sarah's laughter may imply incredulity at having so little ability to manage what is perceived as simple.

To manage the conflict, Danielle and Naomi rely on birthplace, commonly viewed as the most important identity marker (McCrone & Bechhofer, 2008).

{I} say '{passport country}' because that's what my passport says. (Danielle, 4.26.6).

I always say I'm from {passport country}, I'm from {passport country}, I was born in {passport country}" (Naomi, 3.20.4).

Sometimes 'simple' answers are presented, (e.g. birthplace) while at other times information may be withheld, perhaps to gain agency, or limit anxiety and confusion, or to protect against stereotyping and negative responding.

Sometimes you might not even explain too much. (Naomi, 3.33.20).

Especially when I first meet people, I don't like to tell them everything about my life [LAUGHS], now I just keep it pretty brief. (Danielle, 4.297)

{I don't} tend to bring up my background in conversation with people unless I'm absolutely pressed. (Robyn, 8.49.3)

"Pressed" connotes feeling pressurised, forced into something, unable to escape, again perhaps indicating lack of agency.

To manage the conflict this question engenders, several participants developed vignettes containing just enough information to satisfy both the self and Other. Emma provides a tactical response, differentiating between where she grew up and where 'home' is, possibly as 'home' is something that she, along with others, struggle with (see 4.4.2.1); however this differentiation is invisible to the other.

'Oh I grew up in {host country}', but I don't say that's my home, I say "I grew up in {host country}, but I moved everywhere because {of my dad's profession}" would probably be a standard answer" (Emma, 6.56.12)

{I give} this kind of little potted history [LAUGHS]. (Sarah, 2.53.16)

‘Oh I have a very complicated background’ that’s the kind of answer I give to str-, many people. (Naomi, 4.39.19)

Naomi starts saying “*strangers*”, suggesting the questioner’s position is relevant to *how* she responds. This may link with an incongruent social self and fluid identity, as perhaps she finds it easier to share different sides of herself to different people, depending on whether they are familiar or unfamiliar. For the latter, Naomi provides birthplace, positioning this as is satisfactory for both herself and the Other.

When I confront people who has [sic] never moved, I always say “I’m from \_\_\_\_, I was born in \_\_\_\_”, that’s it. No need to explain more. (Naomi, 4.40.6)

Perhaps as English is not Naomi’s first language, ‘*confront*’ may have been used innocuously; but this word *appears* to encapsulate how participants experience this question. There are several definitions for “confront”: “*To come face to face with (someone) with hostile or argumentative intent*”. Indeed, participants find this question unwanted, invasive, and confusing. Confront is also described as “*(Of a problem or difficulty) present itself to (someone) so that action must be taken*”. When asked, participants feel forced to act – an answer must be provided. A third definition is “*Compel (someone) to face or consider something, especially by way of accusation*”. Participants feel this question forces them to consider their own identity, often in a perceived demanding atmosphere. Finally, “*Appear or be placed in front of (someone) so as to unsettle or threaten them*” (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/confront>) refers to the very question itself, placed in front of participants, resulting in confusion and conflict.

Robyn and Anya struggle to provide birthplace in response, fearing rejection or misunderstanding. Robyn protects this valuable information until safety is assured, reticent about sharing what often results in stereotyping.

If I say I’m from {passport country} they’re going to see me as a {passport country national} so it alters their view of me I think, I’m not {passport country national} person, I’ve not lived there since I was six and I don’t really identify with it very strongly, when I go there I feel, like, really weird (Robyn, 8.50.19)

By sharing birthplace, Robyn predicts misinterpretation from the Other. She feels a lack of connection with her ethnic and national identity, yet she has no other answer to give. She is

left feeling confused and uncomfortable, reminiscent of a *hidden immigrant* (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009): while having an outward appearance of her nationality, she has a very different mind-set having lived in other places during formative years, risking incorrect assumptions by the Other.

A further complication involves the Other having lack of knowledge of one's passport or host country. For Anya and Danielle, this made them 'annoyed' and 'unsettled'; neither experience strong sense of connection to their passport country, and so perhaps feel doubly disconnected when the Other does not know the country – first, they feel disconnected due to lack of belonging, and again when the Others lack of knowledge further relegates it to the category of 'unfamiliar'.

{They} always ask "where are you from?"..."where's that?"...made me feel unsettled. (Anya, 1.14.10)

Sometimes you also have to explain where {passport country} is which is also annoying. (Danielle, 4.27.12)

The Others' lack of knowledge triggers Anya's lack of clarity of where she *herself* feels she is from. When others are unfamiliar with the place provided, participants report something has been lost, erased.

When I would go back to {passport country} over the summer nobody knew where {host country} was [LAUGHS]. That really bothered me I guess it was like removing part of my identity in a way. (Anya, 1.13.15)

Anya says 'remove', implying the other has power to detract from her identity, possibly engendering an *identity crisis* (e.g. Marcia, 1966). While Anya says 'remove', Danielle says 'erased', connoting complete disappearance and eradication.

It was so different going to {passport country} after {host country}, nobody in {passport country} had ever been to {host country} it was just a completely different world that was totally erased. (Danielle, 4.43.9)

Danielle and Anya express lack of agency regarding their identities when encountering these types of situations, mirroring the lack of agency experienced in CRM (see Role of the Family in Appendix J). When Anya moved in adulthood, the locals were not curious about her

background; subsequently she was selective about what she shared, compromising her sense of identity.

I had a really hard time because {the locals} weren't curious about my background (Anya, 1.31.17)

Didn't end up telling to that many people...because they just never asked. (Anya, 1.32.5)

I felt I was completely losing my identity. (Anya, 1.33.1)

This process is at the heart of the struggle of connection for this population – an inability to connect congruently due to fear of rejection, and an ensuing facade for protection.

Several participants position self-labelling as a way to manage the others expectations. In attempting this, participants report experiencing confusion, drawing on superficial answers or even withholding information to alleviate the tension.

#### **4.3.4 Connection**

Participants experienced sense of connection with marginalised others due to shared experiences. With increased age, increased sense of self and importance of relationships developed.

##### ***4.3.4.1 Identifying with the Marginalised Other***

Half the participants expressed preferring marginalised others, either due to having had similar experiences during childhood, as demonstrated in TCK literature (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009), or because the other was perceived as needing support. Matilda interprets her attraction to marginalised others as a form of over-identification.

My friends tended to be sometimes trouble makers [LAUGHS], probably because initially I was not welcomed too, that probably changed me as a person, later on, and being drawn towards people who are different, they've had something emotionally probably deep down that I was more interested in, and more drawn to... (Matilda, 5.30.4).

Matilda conceptualises her attraction to troublemakers as a means to experience sense of belonging, reflecting research demonstrating mobile children associate with delinquent peers (e.g. South & Haynie, 2004). Emma's attraction, however, was borne of a desire to "rescue" in the way she herself had *not* been rescued.

I remember there was this one girl, \_\_\_\_\_, who joined in Year 9, she was military, and I remember feeling desperately sorry for her, and I just remember really thinking, "oh my gosh, I know how that feels" it's like a kind of dread for her. (Emma, 6.34.10).

Emma's distress is palpable; she feels the Others' perceived distress as her own, internalising and over-identifying with her. In de Munck's (2013) view, the self can access the Others' identity if they *also* possess that identity, engendering empathy with one another. Emma's own distress is channelled into this Other whom she feels she can care for, in the way she cared for herself in the absence of outside support. Emma desires to give the Other what she herself needed, regardless of whether it is requested. So as not to be positioned as 'victim', she positions herself as 'rescuer'.

Robyn's experience of the marginalised other involved her being on the *opposite* side of the underdog, after moving from a developed to a developing country, which she felt changed her from *being* marginalised to the one *doing* the marginalising. Robyn went from being in the majority ethnic group to being in the minority, and with this change she received attention and benefits due to her ethnic identity; she found this change uncomfortable and confusing, particularly as this was not something she had chosen.

I hadn't seen anything like that, I just hated it, and I hated it, it just made everything seem so kind of messed up like "how can this even be like this? How can we just live in this luxury surrounded by all the poverty?"...so that made me quite unhappy. (Robyn, 8.24.4)

Definitely had an impact in terms of just seeing the world as really unequal and *being* on the really privileged side of it [LAUGHS] and feeling like that isn't right. (Robyn, 8.45.22)

Robyn laughs when talking about being on the privileged side of the poverty line, perhaps due to discomfort of having been in that position, albeit involuntarily. Her experience forced her to

question, for the first time, both her ethnic identity and her role in society, and made salient the difficulty of challenging how she is viewed by the Other.

Having experienced marginality themselves, several participants empathised with similar others, desiring to assuage the others discomfort, knowing only too well how difficult the feeling was. Through this identification, participants experienced sense of connection lacking with stable others.

#### **4.3.4.2 Increased Sense of Self**

Several participants spoke of increased sense of confidence with age, associated with increased sense of self. While younger years were riddled with insecurity and low self-esteem, engendering incongruent social selves and fluid identities, with age several participants reflected on changes regarding both confidence and identity.

I think you gain confidence with age, I think I was more insecure when I was younger, it was more important to me that other people liked me and now I am confident enough to accept that I can have enemies [LAUGHS] and I can deal with it and I don't have a problem with it so... (Danielle, 4.51.7).

Shifting from first to third person may indicate Danielle's attempts to normalise her increasing confidence, providing an external underpinning to justify it and minimise guilt; having spent many years trying to please others, perhaps she worries her increased confidence could be perceived as selfish. Shifting back to first person, she takes ownership of her increased confidence and its ensuing consequences, one of which is having enemies. She experiences being able to bear not being liked by everyone as a great shift from her childhood self, where inclusion and assimilation were of upmost importance. She laughs when talking about being able to withstand enemies, perhaps to lighten the gravity of being disliked. Emma also expresses developing stronger boundaries due to developing greater congruence with her needs and desires.

I always wanted to do things for people but...that's changed in the last 10 years as well, that was very much...so I'd be liked in return, and I still see that in myself now, very much, but I'm aware of it and so I curb it a little bit...I've

definitely learned to be a bit more...selfish whereas before I would have done anything for anybody, but then sometimes...feel...feel let down. (Emma, 6.16.7)

Emma discusses a linear progression from being other-directed to more self-directed. She says “selfish” which can have negative connotations; however, there is a thin line between selfishness and self-compassion, and what Emma is describing appears to be the latter. By being ‘selfish’, Emma can concentrate on increasing congruence with her own needs and desires, consolidating her identity both inter- and intra-personally.

Robyn, younger than Danielle and Emma, appears to be in the midst of forming stronger boundaries, becoming increasingly more congruent with her needs and desires.

My impulse is to fit in, I have thought about that over the years, that's not necessarily what I want to do, I want to be my own person” (Robyn, 8.33.10)

I think I am more confident, as just my own person now, but, yea, {copying others is} definitely something that I had to consciously think about. (Robyn, 8.34.22)

Robyn alludes to a constant questioning of the self, regarding what she is doing, and why, and whether she actually *wants* to do it, or whether she thinks it is what she *should* do. Developing this insight is similar to the self-love Emma describes.

Several participants express insight into experiencing a greater sense of confidence and sense of self with increasing age. This would appear to concur with Gilligan's model of female development (1982), perhaps entering the *postconventional* stage, where one starts to take responsibility, make decisions and care for others.

#### **4.3.4.3 Increased Importance of Friendships**

In a population where relationships can be transient and superficial, several participants expressed noticing an increase in importance of friendships with increasing age. While this shift may be common in the general population, for this population, it appears particularly pertinent and meaningful.

The identity development model proposed by Gilligan (1982) appears to fit participants' accounts; many express increased desire for connection, where before this desire was lacking, perhaps to self-protect. While other models (e.g. Erikson, 1968) are male-centric, and propose identity is defined through a process of separation and individuation, Gilligan argues women's identities are formed through a process of interpersonal connection.

As you grow older, you need, I felt like I needed *more*, and then you learn to really appreciate those friendships. (Anya, 1.48.17)

Anya slips from third to first and back to third person, perhaps indicating an increasing desire for deepening relationships, but being cautious about this need; using third person both distances her from and normalises the desire.

It's only nowadays that I'm really {trying} to build on really good friendships, I don't know if it has to do with moving or just the age, but, rather than having a lot of friends you wanna build on just a few close friendships. I still like having a lot of people around but I'm definitely trying to consciously invest more in certain friendships so... (Danielle, 4.36.4)

Danielle expresses increased appreciation of friendships, and a conscious decision to act on that appreciation. She appears uncertain of the cause of this change, but is nonetheless aware of and sensitive to it. She appears to still value having choice of friendships despite wanting to develop a chosen few. This may indicate a desire to maintain connection with the part of herself that prefers a choice of multiple external others to experience a sense of freedom. Danielle achieved this through multiple group membership in childhood, supported by literature suggesting mobile individuals benefit from many, weak social connections (Oishi et al, 2009). One hypothesis could be that increased experience of settling is slowly altering Danielle's desire from many, weak ties to a few, strong ties. Both Danielle and Matilda say 'invest', framing friendships as quantifiable transactions.

Nowadays, when I tend to make a friendship, I invest more time and effort into that relationship because I want it to last. (Matilda, 5.37.7)

With age, Danielle and Matilda appear increasingly cognisant of their own interpersonal desires, while perhaps in childhood they accepted less equality. This links with social exchange and equity theory (Canary & Stafford, 2001), where a relationship is "equitable",

preferable and satisfying when what is received is equal to what is contributed. Matilda positions herself as an active agent in strengthening her friendships, perhaps suggesting having developed enough self-confidence to form deep friendships if desired (see 4.3.4.2), in contrast to childhood experiences, where she felt stigmatised and had to work very hard for acceptance.

It's only later in life that you think twice whether you want to spend the time and effort to making it a proper relationship, and you tend to choose your friends more carefully, whereas when you're young, you don't think about those things. It's easier in a way, you don't invest that much emotional baggage that comes with a relationship. (Matilda, 5.35.10)

Matilda's view of friendships appears negative: "spend time and effort", "proper relationship", "invest", "emotional baggage", suggesting her attitude towards friendship may have shifted from light-heartedness to a more meaningful experience, albeit with increased effort and risk. A "proper relationship" implies childhood relationships may not have been "real" or substantial enough for her, while "emotional baggage" implies previous friendships may have been wrought with vulnerability, hurt and loss.

Several participants reflect on a shifting view of friendships, framing them as more important, less willing to give without receiving an equitable amount in return. This ability to feel more deserving may to be linked with an increased sense of self (see 4.3.4.2).

#### **4.4 Theme 2: Managing the Self in Relation to the World**

Most participants expressed developing sense of belonging to a geographical place challenging, often arising from repatriation challenges combined with difficulty identifying with their host country. Struggling to clarify "home", many adopted the identity of "traveller", subsequently influencing their ability to settle regarding career, location and/or relationships.

#### 4.4.1 “Orphaned” by Passport and Host Countries

Participants often described processes of connecting and disconnecting from passport and host countries as negative, resulting in feeling “orphaned” and disconnected from a sense of national, ethnic or cultural identity. Comparisons between different places of habitat were drawn, at times favourably, other times negatively. Repatriation was described as challenging for most.

##### 4.4.1.1 *Belonging in Passport Country*

Half the participants referred to identifying with their ethnic identity at some point, based on the location and culture of their passport country. For some, however, this engendered pain, ambivalence, and confusion. Sarah spoke of a strong, painful, identification with her passport country, intensified by lack of identification with her host country. She recalls rejecting identifying with her parents’ nationality to define her own, unique national identity, based on birthplace.

Because I was born in {passport country}, I have always claimed that I’m not {host country} [LAUGHS] even though both my parents are. (Sarah, 2.43.22)

Sarah’s affinity with birthplace is strong, found in national identity research (McCrone & Bechhofer, 2008). However, in the following excerpt, Sarah alludes to her family *encouraging* this lack of identification, indicated by the word ‘pushed’. Sarah positions national identity as a dividing factor, marking her as “different”.

I feel like I was pushed into it because they were so sort of *madly* {host country}...I must’ve gotten the idea that I *wasn’t*, because I was born in {passport country}, so that sort of separated me from them. (Sarah, 2.45.5)

Sarah positions herself as having lack of agency in her national identification. For her, birthplace acts as a defining label, setting her apart from her family. She then regains sense of agency, saying it was her *choice* to remain marginalised.

I could easily have changed allegiance, but I never did, it became more and more sort of entrenched [LAUGHS] I was {passport country}... (Sarah, 2.46.2)

Based on the vacillating agency regarding identification with and rejection of host and passport countries, Sarah may have experienced confusion, her identity challenged and solidified through differences between herself and her family. 'Entrench' implies something deeply ingrained; her identification with her passport country may have been internalised due to rejecting her environment, a strategy found to be employed by individuals who experience identity threat to avoid marginalisation (Branscombe et al., 1999). Through strong feelings of ethnic and national identity, she became vulnerable to verbal attacks on her country's sports team, indicating a high level of unconditional group identification (Cialdini et al., 1976).

They used to lose all the time, I felt sorry for them, I used to get furious, *furious*, when my brother used to tease me, so, I just used to get *absolutely furious* about, you know, "it's not fair" and I'd burst into tears and stuff [LAUGHS]. (Sarah, 2.44.13)

Sarah experiences identification with her passport country as demarcating her from her brother. Matilda also identifies with her passport country despite having only lived there for a quarter of her life, expressing pride for her passport country, choosing to align with it.

I always say that I'm {passport country}, although I've moved all my life, I've probably lived most of my life somewhere abroad, I've only lived probably in total 10, 15 years in {passport country}, I always say that I'm {passport country}, I'm proud of where I come from, of my heritage. (Matilda, 5.13.5).

Matilda uses her passport country to provide sense of origin and belonging (McCrone & Bechhofer, 2008). Similarly, Emma, having spent little time in her passport country, recalls having "this sort of pain for being in {passport country}" (6.20.23), suggesting a strong sense of national identity.

When people used to, go from {host country} back to {passport country}, it would be like, "oh can you bring back some {locals sweets}", you know, all these like little things that are always so important to you as a kid. (Emma, 6.23.23).

Emma connects herself to her passport country through a virtual umbilical cord, using sweets as transitional objects to provide safety and consistency. In such a transient world, material objects may have provided familiarity she desperately craved to reduce anxiety (Oishi et al., 2012).

Several participants used location to define national identity, common in this population (McLachlan, 2005). Danielle's identification with her passport country is strongest when abroad, and threatened when in her passport country. While in the UK, she states, "I'm {passport country}" (4.3.8), however, she finds it challenging to maintain this sense of identification when *in* her passport country.

I'd be much more tolerant with people abroad whereas in {passport country}, it's supposed to be *my* country, and whenever I was abroad I was always thinking, "I'm {passport country}, I'm {passport country}", and then I would go back and, "wait this is not what I want to be", and how I am, so [LAUGHS], so... (Danielle, 4.4.11)

Danielle's identification with her passport country can only occur from a distance; when at "home", it is challenged, differences becoming salient; Pollock and Van Reken (2009) argue TCKs often identify as the "other", geographical location influencing sense of belonging.

Half the participants expressed experiencing strong ethnic and national identities, however this posed difficulty for most. Some experienced such strong identification it was painful and marginalising, while others found it safe and comforting, but only from a distance.

#### **4.4.1.2 Not Belonging in Passport Country**

Most participants experienced a painful process of realising a lack of identification with their passport country, indicating that their sense of ethnic and national identity had been challenged, and required analysis and revision. Difference in mentality between themselves and locals was largely implicated in lack of belonging.

People expect me to think the way they do, and I didn't [LAUGHS]. So often didn't feel like I was part of it, or didn't want to be part of it or sometimes disappointed that this was what I was supposed to be but it wasn't what I wanted to be... (Danielle, 4.3.21).

Having been born there and looking the same as locals, Danielle is viewed as a *mirror* but feels like a *hidden foreigner* (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009), an outsider due to difference in mentality. Her ethnic identity is not salient and so she is unable to rely on this for a sense of understanding from others. She struggles to decide whether this sense of marginalisation is

self- or other-imposed. Her disappointment perhaps suggests her expectations of her passport country remain unmet.

Anya's experience of detaching from her passport country appeared to be sudden, wrenching, involving unwanted violence and pain.

A bit of a hard process, you understand it when you're ready to understand it or when it hits you in the face [LAUGHS]. (Anya, 1.62.5)

Being "hit in the face" implies something unpredicted, perhaps exacerbating it when it did occur. Anya recalls the process of realising difference between herself and her local cousins, and the ensuing disconnection that occurred.

I started realising by speaking to my cousins how different we really were...and how differently we just...perceived...life. (Anya, 1.20.10)

Difference in perception made it difficult for Anya to connect as she had in childhood, irreconcilable differences stunting the development of relationships.

After the initial excitement of meeting new people the relationship didn't really...progress. (Anya, 1.21.15)

Unrequited friendships left Anya on the edge of group membership, feeling marginalised and separate.

I didn't...fit in their little world...so they never really...integrated me. I just never felt really accepted by them. (Anya, 1.22.6)

Referring to "their little world" may appear patronising, but also mirrors how this population view travellers as being more open-minded than locals, so it seems fitting Anya perceives the locals as having a world too small for *her*. Subsequently, she consciously decided to detach from them, indicating an element of forced separation (Ngo, 2008) and confusion about her own sense of ethnic and national identity.

After a while, I left it, I felt like it was always me making the effort. After trying for, like, three years, I kind of gave up [LAUGHS]. (Anya, 1.23.5)

"Gave up" implies an inability to continue, too difficult to manage. Like Anya, Robyn similarly experiences discomfort when in her passport country.

I definitely don't really feel at home in {passport country} and I wouldn't want to live there. (Danielle, 4.26.9)

I just feel really...like I don't fit into the whole like...culture, I just, I don't like it, and...um...yea...I just feel really uncomfortable. (Robyn, 8.59.4)

Robyn's halting speech may reflect discomfort she experiences regarding identifying with her passport country; this sense of difference appears to cause embarrassment, confusion and shame.

I always feel a bit out of place because I feel like I can't express myself properly, and I do speak {local language} more or less fluently, but my sister tells me I have a bit of an accent, which I didn't realise, I was like, "oh shit that's really embarrassing" (Robyn, 8.58.15)

Robyn's ethnic and cultural identity is called into question, as she does not quite fit into her passport country, yet this is the culture she has originated from. Her ability to be a *mirror* (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009) in her passport country was compromised by her mobile upbringing; she feels like a *hidden foreigner*, resulting in misunderstanding and mislabelling.

Several participants report having no remaining social connections in their passport countries, indicating complete social severance.

When I go to {passport country} now {I} don't really see other people. (Danielle, 4.41.18)

When I'm there I don't see anybody. (Anya, 1.27.10)

Drawing on an identity formation paradigm by Sue and Sue (1990), participants position themselves as *Rejectionist*, rejecting the passport culture, trying to accept the new. However, this can lead to lack of identification with both passport and host country, resulting in *Marginalisation*, which can induce an identity crisis.

Anya and Naomi query their ability to repatriate successfully; referring to her passport country as "home" may indicate a continued sense of strong ethnic and national identity for Naomi despite feeling unable to repatriate.

I'm not sure if I will be able to cope with relocating back home. (Naomi, 3.19.6)

Things are very familiar to me, but I don't know necessarily how to operate there as an adult. (Anya, 1.53.18)

“Operate” brings to mind an instruction manual; Anya may be implying not understanding the rules of her passport country, how things work there anymore. For her, it may be like a foreign language.

Emma describes lack of attachment with her passport country as having happened suddenly and unexpectedly. Having had good experiences there, she returned hoping to experience nostalgia and familiarity.

I went there as an adult and I was like “is this it?” cause I had so many fond memories that I couldn’t attach to it. It was a bit disappointing, definitely.  
(Emma, 6.43.23)

Similarly to Anya who sought and failed to reattach to her passport country, Emma was left bereft and disappointed. Often TCKs return to their passport country only to find their expectations were unrealistic, resulting in anger and disappointment (Gaw, 2000); the place they return to is often unfamiliar, and they are unprepared as they feel they “should” feel more at home (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

Naomi is the only participant who holds connection to both host and passport countries, identifying equally with both.

I’m in-between {host country} and {passport country}. (Naomi, 3.18.18)

I live here and I keep missing my country...and when I go to my country, there are many things that I don’t like anymore, and I miss from {host country}  
(Naomi, 3.19.3).

Due to Naomi’s joint membership, she misses whichever country she is not in; while she can appreciate the pros and cons of each, she aligns herself with neither. This may suggest *constructive marginality*, being able to identify with and feel at home within two cultures, incorporating them “both/and”, rather than *encapsulated marginality*, where individuals choose “either/or” (Bennett, 1993).

For participants, detaching from their passport countries came about in various ways, but a common feeling was lack of belonging, not understanding the local mind-set or “rules”, resulting in a weak sense of ethnic, national and cultural identity. The detachment appeared

to be mostly undesired, at times disappointing. Only one participant maintained a relationship with her passport country, however it was jointly shared with her host country.

#### **4.4.1.3 *Belonging in Host Country***

Participants appeared to experience a stronger sense of cultural and national identity with host countries *more* than in passport countries. For some, this was evident through nostalgia, or anger at parents for ripping them from a place of belonging. For some, being marginalised in other places allowed a newfound sense of belonging.

Oh I was very angry with my parents, that they've had to schlep me [LAUGHS] 3000km from my friends, I wanted to go back, I wanted to go every holiday back. (Matilda, 5.9.11)

I had a lot of nostalgia always for the other countries I was in. (Danielle, 4.5.4)  
“Other countries” refers to any country *other* than her passport country. To manage nostalgia, Danielle attempted to maintain connection with her host country through physical objects, similar to how children use transitional objects (Winnicott, 1971) to maintain sense of continuity and safety.

I would...feel very strongly about keeping a bit of my previous life, um...I wore this {host country} jacket in {passport country} that I never wore in {host country} [LAUGHS], cause it was sort of nostalgia and showing where I came from or something [LAUGHS] (Danielle, 4.42.6)

Danielle refers to “my previous life”, indicating the birth of a new type of identity upon moving, as her ethnic identity was challenged by mobility. Her previous self was important to her; she had to make this clear to others, to mark herself as different to protect her unique sense of identity.

Several participants expressed how language can both create and prevent identity formation. Matilda uses language to access new countries, influencing her own cultural identity.

I want to learn more about the language, I want to learn more about the country I live in, I want to adapt and integrate within that society. (Matilda, 5.22.11)

When you finally feel, as, “yes, I’m part of this group” or “I’m part of that group”, um, you don’t feel as a foreigner, you’re not excluded, um... (Matilda, 5.15.12)

Matilda’s goal of assimilation is to immerse herself until her original self is similar to the dominant culture, akin to changing from a *foreigner* into a *mirror* (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009), reflecting Gordon’s unidimensional model (1964). For Matilda, sense of belonging appears to indicate having assimilated through strengthening her sense of ethnic and cultural identity.

For Anya, a stigmatising experience in another host country helped her appreciate her previous host country.

I didn’t like the UK when I lived here, but now I love it because I think I found what I was missing so much in {host country}, it probably took the experience in {host country} to make me appreciate it... (Anya, 1.54.16)

Having experienced marginalisation in a rival host country, Anya attaches to a previously rejected country, similarly to how she re-attached to her parents following rejection from her extended family.

Host countries provided sense of home and belonging, manifesting in anger when moved, engendering a desire to hold onto the previous country through transitional objects. Assimilation was sought by “becoming like a local” through language, often due to having nowhere else to attach to.

#### **4.4.1.4 Not Belonging in Host Country**

Themes on detaching from one’s host country were less prevalent, perhaps indicating current attachment to at least one host country. Host countries were sometimes viewed in relation to the passport country, with attachment to it changing upon subsequent moves. Anya reflects on her superficial dichotomous childhood view of the two very different countries: her passport country as clean and perfect which emphasised the dirtiness of her host country. By aligning herself with her passport country, she created distance between herself and her host country, protecting herself from being “marred”, and preventing a deeper attachment which allowed a continued symbiotic attachment with her passport country; this supports literature

demonstrating that when identity is challenged, individuals often work to reaffirm it (Branscombe et al., 1999).

I did idealise {passport country} in a way. {Host country} was, developing, there was garbage everywhere, it was dirty...and {passport country} was like clean and nice [LAUGHS], super organised and developed and I was like, “why do we have to live here?” [LAUGHS]. (Anya, 1.14.17)

Anya’s attachment to her passport country continued due to rejecting her host country. She expressed an innate, natural desire to “belong”, which seemed to be the place most familiar to her - her passport country. Speaking of similarity, looking, acting and sounding like those around her, Anya likely desired to strengthen her sense of ethnic identity, which manifested in being a *mirror* in her passport country (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

I *wanted* to belong somewhere, and for me that was {passport country} because that was kind of the obvious place, I wasn’t going to feel like I belonged in {host country} cause the people were very different to me, and I couldn’t, didn’t speak their language even, so I idealised {passport country} and always wanted to go back, and that probably to some extent like...tainted the experience a little bit. (Anya, 1.61.5)

Anya speaks of being a *foreigner* in her host country, looking, acting and thinking differently to locals (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). She acknowledged her heart lay outside her current residence, precluding attachment to the host country. Emphasising ‘*wanted*’ implies her desire to belong was strong. By desiring to belong ‘*somewhere*’, she suggests sense of belonging can be chosen by the individual. Equally, upon repatriation, Ashley appeared to experience a shift in identification with her host country.

I wouldn’t consider myself {host country}. Maybe when I was younger, I would... (Ashley, 7.72.14)

Tailing off may suggest melancholy; Ashley described enjoying life before repatriation, and perhaps having been moved unwillingly, feels she lost that connection. Her comment suggests national, cultural and ethnic identities may be fluid.

Often sense of belonging was difficult to define; while Anya and Emma enjoyed living in their host countries, they always felt something was missing, something that prevented it from becoming ‘home’.

In {host country} even though this lifestyle was brilliant, it's always had this, you know, it didn't really feel like it was "home", it was never home, and um...yea... (Emma, 6.20.19)

I really liked my friends, it was just like this feeling that always kind of stayed with me a bit, and never made me feel like 100% settled there...really. (Anya, 1.14.19)

Despite enjoying the lifestyle and having a good social network, Emma and Anya still felt an element of belonging and connection missing. Neither appear certain *what* was missing, both seeming to question the meaning of "home" and geographic connection.

Identifying with one's host country appeared to be either less challenging or less of a problem for participants as it was a less prevalent theme. However, some participants appeared to use identification with their passport country as a barrier in connecting with their host country, while others felt unsure what it is that constitutes a connection. Others felt national, cultural and ethnic identities to be fluid, depending on one's experiences.

#### **4.4.1.5 Repatriation Challenges**

Several participants described extreme difficulty with repatriation, resulting in rejection and loss of identity. Repatriation has been found to be one of the most difficult experiences for mobile individuals (Useem, 1993), as it is often the first time they experience cultural marginality, resulting in confusion and alienation (Gaw, 2000).

While Anya initially approached repatriation with excitement and curiosity, she slowly realised she "didn't have anything in common" (1.21.20) with the locals. She says this with a tone of incredulity, suggesting a novel experience. She says she "just never really {felt} accepted by {the locals}" (1.22.11), "a bit rejected" (1.23.16). Ashley also experienced great difficulty repatriating, finding cultural differences particularly difficult to manage.

{Locals in passport country} can be very brash, I wasn't as brash, I wasn't the big confident kid, I wasn't that quick to 'come back' [SNAPS FINGERS]. (Ashley, 7.55.13)

'Come back' is being able to respond to insults; in Ashley's previous host country, this cultural aspect was not dominant, so she had not learned these skills, which disadvantaged her socially. Moving, especially cross-culturally, often results in confusion about "correct" behaviour in the new country. While identity is conceptualised to develop during adolescence, (e.g. Erikson, 1968), with each move, what was correct before may become unacceptable, and this repeated need to adjust can have a long-lasting impact on identity (Fail et al., 2004). Individuals who move may be unfamiliar with popular culture in the new country, resulting in peer marginality, especially during adolescence (Gordon, 1995); Ashley found her conception of beauty challenged upon repatriation.

I moved from a country where having a big butt was considered something that people would make fun of, and then {moved} to a country where *not* having a big butt was a reason why they *would* make fun of you. (Ashley, 7.30.18)

The unexpected change in social norms confused Ashley, and she remarks how lack of understanding social norms is akin to not being proficient in the dominant language.

It was like I was speaking *Greek*. How can I be speaking Greek when people are speaking Spanish?" (Ashley, 7.43.3)

(*Note: neither Greek nor Spanish were dominant languages in Ashley's passport or host countries*). Repatriation challenged Ashley's understanding of what was expected and acceptable. Although the antidote for culture shock has been suggested to access social support networks (e.g. Bochner, McLeod & Lin, 1977), this is challenging for mobile individuals (Werkman et al., 1981).

Repatriation was further compounded if participants' families successfully repatriated while participants did not.

I was the only one [LAUGHS] that was orphaned [LAUGHS] that never went back to {passport country}, never made my own friends. (Anya, 1.28.12)

I was the only one in my family who felt {attached to host country}, because my parents didn't really like {host country}, they were really happy to be back in {passport country}. (Danielle, 4.43.17)

Danielle's family considered their passport country to be "home"; subsequently, upon repatriation, her sadness and grief was not mirrored or understood. Mobile individuals report

struggling to repatriate for exactly this reason, resulting in feeling alone and confused (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Danielle reflects on the how differently her and her brother identify with their passport country.

We have the option to call {passport country} home if we wanted to, my brother did, and took that option, whereas, um, I didn't, I thought, I have a choice [LAUGHS]. (Danielle, 4.53.1)

Danielle chooses not to call her passport country 'home'. Developing a sense of agency regarding where she resides and identifies with in adulthood may be a reaction against having been moved against her will regularly in childhood.

Ashley's experience of repatriation engendered feelings of difference; she felt unable to fit in, desperately incongruent with herself.

{My peers} couldn't relate to {my experiences}...cause I didn't have {the same games} in primary school. (Ashley, 7.42.3)

Adolescence is a time of "fitting in", and popular culture is an important way to do this; for individuals who lack this aspect, the likelihood of marginality increases (Gordon, 1995). Cultural references so important in rooting oneself in a culture were missing for Ashley, contributing to feeling different.

They were talking about things that I probably hadn't experienced, I was now seen as the new person who hasn't experienced anything, seen as 'ugh'. (Ashley, 7.29.6).

This placed Ashley further away from acceptance amongst her peers – her memories meant nothing in her new life, leading to further displacement and marginalisation. De Munck (2013) suggests memories comprise sense of identity, allowing us to experience a continuous identity.

Especially with cross-cultural moving, individuals are often confused about what behaviours are "correct".

I got to a point where, whereas before I belonged, and all of a sudden I didn't belong. (Ashley, 7.24.15)

This status of unacceptance occurred overnight. After several years of bullying and feeling different, Ashley joined a different class, with other mobile students.

All of a sudden I met people that, things that I had kept hidden because other people would laugh at me, I mentioned it, they would understand what I was talking about. (Ashley, 7.26.17)

While Ashley initially hid aspects of her identity to fit in, she found she could now reveal previously hidden parts of herself and be accepted.

Would mention things like maybe certain cartoons, or certain mannerisms {and} they could understand what I was saying! (Ashley, 7.27.5)

“Where the hell were you guys all my life?? I mean four years of being, or trying to pretend I’m something I’m not, and then now I’m saying things, and you actually understand what I’m saying??” (Ashley, 7.26.21)

Ashley’s anger was palpable; I noticed feeling increased empathy as similar personal situations came to mind, feeling relieved yet angry, and wondered if she experienced a similar ambivalent response at the time. Ashley revealed parts of herself she had hidden for four years, only to realise she was acceptable, just not to local peers. They continued to bully her, but her newfound acceptance provided enough confidence to withstand the taunts.

I used to get comments, ‘why am I following their tail?’, I used to say, ‘I’m not following anyone’s tail, we have things in common’. (Ashley, 7.40.20)

Ashley could stand up to the bullies, feeling increased confidence having experienced a sense of belonging. Having her identity validated by the new social group provided her the ability to trust herself and be congruent, rather than trying to be what others wanted her to be. Consequently, she expressed anger and sadness at a more permanent change that exemplified the sacrifices she made to assimilate.

I just wish I hadn’t been in the other class... I wouldn’t have lost my accent” (Ashley, 7.27.9)

Ashley expressed grief over having relinquished her accent, an identity marker (Keily et al., 2001), to assimilate. She reflects on her experience of repatriation, working to make sense of how she was treated.

I think it’s because we just grew up different, when people are afraid, when people don’t understand something, or when you introduce something that has no bearing

with what they know...the only way they know how to respond is to bash you down (Ashley, 7.40.3)

Ashley describes herself as “bashed”; both parties replicate what they have previously experienced, however, their models of behaviour and culture vary drastically, leading to conflict. This supports the concept of *cultural distance*, having to manage two cultures that vary in beliefs and practices, which can result in identity confusion (Berry, 1997). One way to manage this is through accessing a social support network (Arnett, 2002), a challenge for this population.

Repatriation presented challenges for many, particularly lack of knowledge of the dominant popular culture, and an overnight change of what was acceptable, leading to feeling different and marginalised. Lack of assimilation in contrast to the one’s family further compounded the issue for some.

#### **4.4.2 “Citizen of the World” and the Meaning of Home**

All participants struggled with the concept and meaning of “home”. Some sought grounding through finding ‘home’ in multiple places, while others focused on one geographical location. Adopting an identity as *traveller* was employed to manage lack of identification with any one location; however, this compounded the ability to ground oneself.

##### **4.4.2.1 Home is...**

Home for most was a relatively undefined concept; all had considered the meaning for them, but few had a formalised definition. Most struggled with what ‘home’ meant to them.

If someone asks me where is home, I will shrug my shoulders, because I don’t *know* where home is... (Matilda, 5.33.12)

For several, “home” is found in multiple places, indicating a multi-faceted approach to geographical attachment, found in TCK research (e.g. Useem et al., 1993).

It's weird but when I go to Hong Kong I feel very...at home...but then also if I go to {host country} I feel very at home, if I go to the States I feel very at home, there's a lot of places that I feel very attached to... (Anya, 1.54.9).

It's difficult for me to define that; when I am here, home is here, when I'm back home, home is back home. (Naomi, 3.18.19)

I feel very at home in London, and also felt at home in {alternative host country}. (Danielle, 4.26.12)

For Anya, Naomi and Danielle, 'home' is not black and white, it involves various locations that provide belonging and attachment. This mirrors the fluid identity previously explored (4.3.1.3), where several participants preferred connection with multiple social groups rather than just one. Perhaps the desire for multiple groups continued for these participants: rather than committing to just one group, or nationality, and risk labelling and subsequent lack of adaptation, they developed a *complex hybrid identity*, not tied to any *one* place, but rather to *multiple* places (Arnett, 2002).

For several, 'home' is not material, but rather something that exists within the self and others. For Matilda and Anya, 'home' is their family, perhaps as this was the only constant during childhood transience, and therefore where the concept of "home" is focused.

"Home" is not the sort of 'bricks and mortar', as people say. (Sarah, 2.10.7)

I'm not attached to houses, I'm not attached to the place I live. (Naomi, 3.13.1).

For me, my home is where my family is. (Matilda, 5.20.3)

Home is always where my parents are. (Anya, 1.53.13)

Anya and Naomi experience "home" within their families, their one, safe constant in childhood, while Emma finds "home" within, having had to develop strong coping mechanisms in childhood, her sense of stability arising internally. Extensive disruption to connections with home and material goods in childhood, she reports feeling everything could disappear in a heartbeat, so lives in an unattached manner. Gilbert (2008) demonstrated that while as children TCKs find possessions very important, this dwindles in adulthood, likely due to increased experience of loss.

When you said "where is home?", it's just *me*, you know, all this stuff doesn't matter, it just doesn't because you know...it could go, I could move, and that's the feeling, constantly. There is that feeling that nothings forever, but *you* are,

and the things you've learnt, and all those things I've learnt, they're really valuable to me, I really hang onto them very tightly. (Emma, 6.54.9)

Emma switches to third person half way: "nothings forever but *you* are, and the things you've learnt". Having had to rely internally for sense of support in childhood, her utterance almost sounds like a positive affirmation; switching back to first person may indicate an internalisation of that positive self-voice. Similarly, a lasting sense of transience regarding the concept of home is alluded to by Naomi, whose transient life has continued into adulthood (see 4.4.2.2). Naomi speaks in third person, almost in a parental manner, and what she says is reminiscent of how she describes her parents' attitude towards moving. It is difficult to ascertain her feelings about having such a transient attitude towards moving, whether she is proud or concerned.

You need to settle where you are, need to work hard to feel at home wherever you are. Cause you don't know for how long you're going to be there, you need to regard it as home, and try to be happy. [PAUSE]. You know cause otherwise you can't be very happy [LAUGHS]. (Naomi, 3.36.14)

Naomi places herself as an active agent in creating 'home', positioning it as something that can be picked up and moved regularly, perhaps indicating lack of grounding.

'Home' was defined by several participants as a place of safety, either emotionally or physically. Sarah's concept of home recalls a "safe base" (e.g. Bowlby, 1988), providing safety and consistency.

It doesn't have to be one particular person, but it has to be somebody significant. (Sarah, 2.39.18)

Perhaps Sarah learned to gravitate toward a safe, familiar other to feel safe, as demonstrated by Oishi et al. (2012), who found the stress of moving influences individuals to seek out familiarity.

Somewhere where everything is familiar, fairly safe, you know, it's all fine, things are ok if you're at home, it's all alright. (Sarah, 2.39.12).

Home is in my flat that's where...I feel safe there. (Ashley, 7.75.8)

Like Sarah's safe base, Ashley requires knowledge of help to be accessible if she were to need support. Home thus takes on the role of protector and rescuer.

The meaning of 'home' for most was murky and undefined; some found it within, some within significant others, others within geographical locations, and still others as somewhere safe.

#### **4.4.2.2 Identity as Traveller**

Most participants shared a continued desire for mobility in adulthood, be it for work, residence or holidaying. Internalising "traveller" appeared to provide a sense of identity, something to define the self in relation to others. Naomi appears keenly aware others perceive her transient lifestyle as integral to who she is.

They think of me, "oh, Naomi is always moving, always travelling". Cause I travel a lot because of work, I travel a lot back home, so I'm always moving, travelling, and they think it's something that goes with me, "that's Naomi", because travel, all the time. (Naomi, 3.36.1).

Other participants appeared to share this continued desire to travel; the experience forced in childhood has become a choice in adulthood.

{I} travelled a lot with work, and specifically chose a job where I would travel a lot. (Danielle, 4.24.21)

{I chose} quite a transient job. (Emma, 6.39.8)

The minute I could afford a ticket, I bought a ticket for myself". (Ashley, 7.82.22)

I think I'm just used to moving. (Ashley, 7.2.2)

'Just' implies something well ingrained, a part Ashley does not have to question. It sounds almost resigned, perhaps indicating a part of herself that developed without sense of agency, but is now integral to who she is.

Several participants view their continued desire for transience as positive; Matilda's labels herself as a "citizen of the world", implying a feeling of belonging everywhere (see 4.4.2.1).

You're not just one ethnic group, you...tend to incorporate in your lifestyle and your way of life many other things that are typical for other societies, for other ethnic groups, whether its cuisine, language, the way you communicate with people, it makes you citizens of the world at the end of the day. (Matilda, 5.13.13).

Perhaps having experienced marginalisation in childhood, in adulthood Matilda has chosen to incorporate all her different experiences to form an identity she can *choose* to be proud of rather than allowing difference to marginalise her.

For several, moving abroad is something they would welcome, discussing relocation as commonplace. Being able to move unexpectedly was a necessary aspect in childhood, and this necessity has turned to desire.

I'm very open minded in terms of relocation which I think other people are not so much open about it, I'm not that afraid of travelling because of work, or if I have to relocate, I would approach it as something normal, for me that's not a big issue. (Naomi, 3.13.2).

If I got married and my husband was from China, I wouldn't be opposed to moving there. (Ashley, 7.75.3)

Participants regard relocating as easy to do for work or a relationship. Despite being in their 30s and 40s, this does not appear to engender fear or concern, but rather seems natural. Perhaps due to having weak social ties in adulthood, moving is less disturbing than for stable individuals who have strong social ties.

Only one participant, Robyn, expressed a strong desire for stability, preferring rather to maintain and invest in her life in London.

I've been really...adverse to moving, when I think about moving, being in a new place, and not knowing anyone, that actually makes me feel quite anxious about it and I get weirdly kind of, um...unsettled by even just travelling, just like to be at home and feel in my comfort zone. (Robyn, 8.17.20).

However, despite desiring to be stable, she still entertains the idea of moving.

I would probably feel really out of place and unsettled for a while, but then, I might like it after that [LAUGHS]. (Robyn, 8.19.16).

Having experienced such transience, it is unsurprising Robyn can so easily conceptualise relocating, acknowledging potential difficulties, but also aware of her ability to adapt.

Perhaps the struggle to identify 'home' (see 4.4.2.1) has engendered an identity as traveller; identity is a difficult concept and perhaps internalising an identity as traveller provides a sense of grounding. Rather than viewing the desire for mobility as negative, participants

view this as good, chosen, which is important for a population who experienced such lack of agency in childhood. However, whilst viewing oneself as a traveller satisfies a desperately desired need for identity, it may also compromise stability (see 4.4.2.3).

#### **4.4.2.3. Ambivalence Towards Settling**

A difficulty half the participants expressed was being able to settle, whether regarding jobs, locations, or relationships. For those for whom settling was desirable, knowledge of how to do this appeared lacking. Restlessness has been found to be a major issue for TCKs due to lack of experience of stability (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

Used to a life of transience and mobility, constantly learning and readjusting, several participants view moving as an antidote to boredom.

I wish I could buy a house [LAUGHS] and just stay in one place, but I don't know if even two years is gonna pass and I'm gonna be like, "ok now this is boring, let's go somewhere new." [LAUGHS] (Danielle, 4.24.4)

I become restless if we don't travel [LAUGHS] (Matilda, 5.38.3)

Both Danielle and Matilda laugh when talking about using moving to maintain excitement in their lives, perhaps to minimise the importance of the situation which has caused so much turmoil. Danielle expresses clear ambivalence about her desire to settle, wanting to, but worrying she will not be able to.

I still wonder now, cause I'm still not properly settled, and I have troubles choosing one place [LAUGHS], and moving around a lot still, and would like to at some point settle down [LAUGHS] and I hope that I am able to [LAUGHS]. Slightly worried that I won't but...hopefully [LAUGHS]" (Danielle, 4.19.1).

Wanting to settle "at some point" is vague, and Danielle laughs, nervously, several times; perhaps although *cognitively* she desires settling, she may feel an inherent desire for mobility. Perhaps this is the internal conflict for her, feeling on the periphery of settling, but held back by a lifetime of transience.

Several participants describe moving as a technique to gain the most in life, as though transience provides richness and depth to one's life. There is also a sense of being left behind,

of not experiencing life to the full, engendering urgency and potential regret. Danielle feels she's "never really content" with what she has, as though constant change and new experiences in childhood have left her addicted to moving, unable to appreciate what she has, always in search for more.

I always think there's going to be something better I'm never really content with what I have, and I'm always getting ready for the next thing. (Danielle, 4.23.13)

If I tend to stay in one place I feel as if I'm missing out on something. (Matilda, 5.38.20)

Having had mobile childhoods that altered life overnight, it is unsurprising participants experience excitement 'for what could be' in adulthood, which propels them to seek new and exciting experiences, but also leaves them struggling to manage the banality of life.

Several participants and a pilot participant expressed a need for change every three years or so, mirroring childhood experiences of regular change.

Every 3-4 years, I feel the urge of changing something in my life. I think that's, maybe, something that comes from the past, I get bored! So I keep having an urge of changing, even maybe just the place where I live, even if it's in the same city. (Naomi, 3.17.1).

If I was to move, it would probably be after three years. (Ashley, 7.81.17)

Naomi questions whether her difficulty to settle romantically is underpinned by this need for continual change.

None of the relationships I have had with men have last for very long. I don't know if it is because I've been unlucky, or maybe because I have this inner need of *changing*. (Naomi, 3.43.1)

Naomi struggles to understand her difficulty in forming long term romantic relationships, and questions the role of her background.

Half the participants appeared to experience an increased desire to settle with age. They discuss settling as though it is a choice, as though moving is something done in younger years, and maturity involves choosing to settle.

I'm thinking maybe I'm reaching an age where now I'd like to settle down [LAUGHS]. (Danielle, 4.25.18).

I'm at this point in life that I think it's been enough of moving around, I really want to take a step and decide where I want to live, where I want to stay, and where I want to settle. (Naomi, 3.16.13).

Naomi appears almost tired of the constant moving, and introspective about making long-term choices.

Only two participants expressed contentment about their current settled lives in London, based on length of time in the UK, as well as a desire for consistency.

Now I've been 13 years in the UK, and it's probably the longest I've been in a place...and I kind of like that feeling. (Naomi, 3.13.14)

I did definitely feel strongly that I don't want to move anywhere, I just want to stay here and have roots and friendships that kind of last, and just have a life in one place. (Robyn, 8.13.22)

Naomi and Robyn describe settling as something pleasing, chosen. Robyn alludes to settling as a way to amalgamate all the disparate aspects of one's self into one place – “just have a life in one place” – perhaps indicating the influence identifying with one geographical location can have on one's identity.

Feeling rootless and unsettled is an experience Emma describes having since childhood. She uses third person, perhaps to distance herself from the difficulty of what she is describing. She initially says “building yourself up as a person”, but later says “building something in yourself”, perhaps mirroring her childhood experience of drawing on inner strength and coping to deal with the transience, having felt so alone in coping.

All the time as you're growing up, you're kind of building yourself up as a person but all the time you're kind of balancing on nothing, because you haven't got the roots there, so you literally just have yourself, it's like you're a floating kind of thing that just moves around and you're building something in yourself but there's no roots to it. (Emma, 6.52.14).

Emma draws on the imagery of roots, indicating lack of grounding in childhood, feeling as though doing all the work, grounded on nothing, rendered roots unnecessary. Her imagery is very solitary and lonely, involving lots of work but little outcome, mirroring her account of her upbringing. High mobility has left Emma confused about where and how to put down roots; her confusion and desperation is palpable.

There's a huge part of me that, wants a home, a foundation, to put roots down, but I can't imagine where that would be after all this turmoil, where on earth, where would be the right place, and I think therefore I avoid it a little bit...? (Emma, 6.39.10).

The concept of settling is so overwhelming she is unable to directly confront it. However, the constant desire for transience is so strong, she believes the only antidote is to plant roots, to settle.

I could move, that's the feeling, constantly, which is why I would like to have a home, I would like to have roots. (Emma, 6.54.12).

Without roots, Emma fears constantly being blown around involuntarily, mirroring her mobile childhood experiences. Planting roots would allow mobility without fear of losing grounding. Anya also expressed concern that her ability and desire to settle in adulthood has been hindered by CRM, corroborating a theme from the pilot interviews.

I found it hard to find my own path and my own way...and...yea, maybe I haven't like...settled as fast as I would have if I had lived in the same place my whole life. Sometimes I struggle a bit now. (Anya, 1.52.15)

## **Chapter 5**

### **Synthesis**

The aim of this synthesis is to explore the meaning of the main findings, how they contribute to the field of global mobility research, and how they can be utilised by practitioners. The aim of this research was to explore the experience of relationships and identity in adult women who experienced high CRM.

In the sections below, I outline the main findings, including how they add to, corroborate or contradict existing literature, to situate them in the field of psychology, particularly Counselling Psychology, and how they contribute to existing theory, research and clinical practice, as one criterion to assess quality as stated by Yardley (2008), is contributing new findings to the field. This is followed by a consideration of the limitations and challenges of the research regarding transferability issues, including quality markers and reflexivity, and areas for future research.

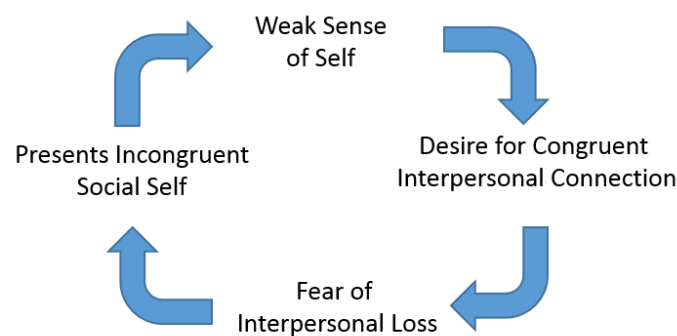
#### **5.1 Significant Findings and Contribution to the Field**

This study aimed to explore a popular concept lacking in methodological robustness, on a specific, under-researched population. I believe the findings contribute to current research by adding new insight into how this population conceptualise both inter- and intra-personal relationships. Hopefully these findings can inform practitioners working with this population regarding the process, potential goals and challenges of therapy, as it highlights some commonly identified challenges reported by participants.

These findings provide in-depth insight into how participants experience themselves both intra- and interpersonally in light of a background of high CRM. While most research conducted on this demographic has been restricted to anecdotal accounts, this study adds to the emerging field of global mobility, revealing strong processes individuals may engage in to manage constantly changing social and geographical environments during formative years.

Additionally, Werkman et al. (1981) found mobile individuals less likely to access support, so it is important practitioners both work to engage this population, as well as know how to engage with them if they do seek support, by providing relevant and useful interventions that increase the probability of providing effective therapy.

Four major themes arose from the data: ‘The Role of the Family’, ‘Managing the Self in Relation to the Other’, ‘Managing the Self in Relation to the World’ and ‘Intrapsychic Understanding of CRM’. Although individually labelled, they interact, represented in the models presented in the Analysis chapter (see Diagrams B.1 and B.2). Additionally, these themes can be interpreted further, conceptualising additional processes participants appeared engaged in. Diagram B.3 suggests a tentative hypothesis of how participants may experience relationships and identity.



*Diagram B.3: Delineating the interaction between identity and relationship*

Diagram B.3 delineates a process that emerged from the analysis, suggesting participants experience a constant interplay between sense of self and interpersonal relationships. The results suggest identity is found through, and corroborated by, the Other, that one can know oneself using the boundaries of the Other for self-definition, similar to how bats use echolocation with nearby objects to provide grounding and contextual positioning. Additionally, the Other serves to *reinforce* one’s sense of self, providing sense of continuity when managing contextual transitions. However, complications arose for participants when *the Other* became a constant transition, resulting in *unpredictable* echolocation, signals bouncing off objects which were at times accepting, at other times rejecting. The unpredictability of how the Other

would reply induced great uncertainty, resulting in the necessity of having many *different* selves to manage the constantly changing social landscape. Subsequently, a weak and fluid sense of self was necessary to cope, to transition seamlessly between unpredictable contexts. However, this constant change meant developing one's 'true' or consistent self was impossible, resulting in a constant state of incongruence as almost every 'self' employed was false.

To strengthen this weak sense of self, participants desire congruent interpersonal connections, attempting to 'learn' who they truly are. Ideally, through connecting congruently with others, they can begin to present aspects of the self to the Other for approval or rejection, subsequently deciding which to keep and which to relinquish. Concurrent with increasing age and instances of settling, the desire for increasing congruent connections similarly increases, as the adolescent ruthlessness of social acceptance and rejection have abated enough that the individual is able to withstand some sense of rejection in the quest to 'find oneself'. Through congruent connection, they hope to gain sense of belonging with an 'in-group', to provide context and grounding, increasing their sense of self.

However, past memories and experiences of multiple interpersonal disruption underlie all social interaction, and the pain of loss and grief from childhood, often unprocessed, engenders fear of further loss. To manage, they draw on their *incongruent social self* once more, limiting the depth of intimacy allowed, continuing to self-protect from further pain and loss. Consequently, their congruent self is yet again hidden, multiple selves drawn on instead to control levels of intimacy, and a weak sense of self continues. Thus, without congruent connection, they appear unable to know their congruent self.

The following sections outline the findings in more detail, specifically exploring sense of connection, sense of self, the role of the family and the therapeutic relationship in the context of current literature and consideration of clinical implications.

### 5.1.1 Connection

An overarching theme was having to 'Manage the Self in Relation to the Other', resulting in a struggle to connect interpersonally throughout the lifespan. As one's social self was experienced as contingent upon social interaction, participants' constantly changing social landscape meant one's social self required constant fluidity. Due to lack of continuity, participants struggled to develop a strong sense of self in relation to the Other.

Due to continuously changing environments and expectations, participants at times experienced aspects of their identities as damaging to their social world. To compensate, they experimented with either hiding (e.g. birthplace) or altering (e.g. accent) aspects of the self to assimilate, resulting in an incongruent social self. The process of managing the self in relation to the Other in this manner led to a sense of connection, due to facilitating some semblance of acceptance. However, it also led to a strong sense of *disconnection*, both with one's true, congruent self, and with the Other, as the accepted self was false. Consequently, participants felt their true sense of self was compromised to aid assimilation. Clinically, practitioners should be aware clients may have developed an incongruent social self to cope, and help them explore how hiding their true self from others precludes intimacy in relationships. Practitioners can praise clients for developing such coping mechanisms to navigate difficult childhoods, but also help them consider how it may be maladaptive in adulthood.

However, it is important to note that a positive impact of high CRM reported by participants was the ability to connect quickly to others, particularly similar others, due to a strong sense of open-mindedness and confidence. Whilst these connections were fraught with difficulty and anxiety arising from confusion regarding one's sense of identity, many participants reported an ability to enter a room of strangers and feel confident in being able to form connections quickly, and with a variety of individuals. While these connections may not always lead to emotionally deep relationships, they reported an ability to talk to others, at least superficially, without difficulty, as this was a trait that was necessary throughout their childhood to survive the constantly social landscape. They reported feeling more open-minded than

stable others, which they appeared to value highly, even though it set them apart from certain other populations. Clinicians can help support individuals from this population by bolstering their ability to be open-minded and confident by drawing on these skills to initiate friendships which can then be built upon through congruence and sharing of one's true self.

Another process engendered by participants to manage constantly changing social environments was the development of a *fluid identity*, alluded to in TCK literature (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009); developing a fluid identity provided participants sense of connection through gaining membership to multiple groups, whilst still maintaining a sense of independence due to lack of commitment to any *one* group. Oishi et al. (2009) found similar methods of relationship formation in mobile individuals, suggesting many, weak ties provide a necessary sense of connection whilst remaining superficial enough to allow subsequent moves to be emotionally bearable. This is further supported by Pollock and Van Reken (2009) who suggest TCKs do not surpass a medium level of friendship to attempt to self-protect against future pain of loss, which continues into adulthood, supported by the current research. Additionally, one hypothesis of the current research suggests multiple group membership maintains participants' lack of commitment to any one *identity*, as moving between groups necessitates movement between *different* identities, compromising the development of a strong, consistent sense of self. While participants found it difficult to connect to others due to a fear of loss, subsequently keeping themselves and disconnected, there was a sense that this was also viewed positively. Moving and being independent appeared to be highly valued for most participants, and the lack of deep emotional interpersonal connections provided the means to continue to explore the world and retain a sense of independence. Therefore, the lack of connection was viewed ambivalently by participants, rather than as purely negative. Practitioners should be aware clients might engage superficially with a wide social network, explaining the concept of *(un)conditional group identification* (Cialdini et al., 1976) to provide insight into *why* they engage in this way. Practitioners can explain how this is adaptive in mobile but not stable communities (Oishi et al., 2013). Having knowledge of techniques

outlined by Pollock and Van Reken (2009) that delineate several ways TCKs protect themselves against future harm (e.g. lack of commitment, denying negative feelings, relinquishing a relationship before it ends), practitioners can help clients explore how these techniques keep them isolated due to lack of depth and commitment to any one identity. By developing increased insight, clients can work to increase their internal locus of evaluation (Rogers, 1957), sense of agency and sense of self.

Previous research has offered insight into how heavily influential country of origin is on how individuals view, form and maintain relationships (Adams & Plaut, 2003). This is related to the concept of (un)conditional group membership, explored by Oishi and Kesebir (2012), who found individuals in mobile communities were more likely to exhibit conditional group membership, and resultantly have wide, weak social ties. The current study found some support for this through Ashley's experiences of moving from a country with high mobility to one where mobility was extremely rare. She found that when she moved, there appeared to be more value placed on acceptance, and a high level of socialising was expected. There was also a much higher incident of bullying, and individuals experienced "social suicide" much quicker and more often. There was more competition for acceptance, and much crueler consequences of lack of acceptance; her new peers had never moved and so had no conception of life outside of their own social cohort, and so hierarchies were much more prevalent and adhered to. Ashley's experiences hint at the influence of country of origin on sense of belonging, and a different way in which connectedness is achieved.

The current results also revealed a shift in priorities with age; perhaps due to an increased sense of self and security arising from *physically* increasing one's stability geographically, participants reported increasingly investing in select few relationships rather than continuing with a wide, weakly bonded social network. There appeared a parallel process, where participants found their sense of self strengthened over time due to increased congruent, social connections, allowing them to increasingly identify their needs and desires in relation to the Other. This study supports research by Schaetti (2001) which found mobile

individuals struggle to connect congruently with stable others due to differing world views, suggesting these interactions produce salience of difference regarding identity and subsequent mutual rejection. In contrast, participants experienced an increased sense of acceptance amongst similar and marginalised others due to having had similar marginalised experiences. Due to increased acceptance by the marginalised Other, participants felt able to present their congruent selves, resulting in relationships based on the true self rather than a façade. Experiencing connection to similarly marginalised others allowed participants to expose more of their congruent self in other relationships, perceiving their sense of self strong enough to withstand major threat or influence from the Other, which is suggested by Phinney (2006) to be the greatest challenge for mobile individuals. Practitioners can introduce definitions of 'TCK' and 'GN' to clients, as research by Cottrell and Useem (1993) found mobile individuals experience increased sense of community upon learning of similar others when previously they felt unique in their experiences.

Participants expressed feeling guilty due to desiring increasingly stronger boundaries to protect their weak sense of self from the Others influence, desiring to protect their identity being erased or altered, as had occurred previously. The guilt appeared to stem from an inability to delineate between "selfishness" and "self-love". Clients' needs and desires can be explored and addressed using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) (Beck, 1967) techniques, for example exploring 'shoulds' versus 'wants', and practicing assertiveness skills through role play and action plans. It will be important practitioners do not dominate sessions, which would compromise the clients' sense of agency in the relationship, but rather encourages them to make their own decisions, bolstering their sense of agency. The practitioner can draw on Person Centred Therapy (PCT) (Rogers, 1951) skills, supporting clients in identifying internal and external loci of evaluation, exploring what *they* want rather than what they think they *should* want based on the Other. This can be well integrated with Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (Harris, 2009), which combines mindfulness with value-driven

living; clients can be supported in considering *their* values, not just the values of those around them, and live their life according to those values.

Participants experienced much loss and grief due to transience. However, it was unclear how much was processed and allowed to be grieved. Practitioners can provide space for grieving, validating and normalising feelings, as participants were found to internalise the concept that grief was inappropriate, due to picking up unintentional messages from parents. Practitioners should explore clients' greatest losses, keeping in mind research by Gilbert (2008) who found ATCKs most often keenly remember existential losses (regarding identity, safety in the social world, roots and grounding). Practitioners can draw on the concept of 'transformational coping' (Aldwin, 2007), which argues through stressful experiences, individuals develop sense of agency and increased resilience, to help clients understand and appreciate their coping mechanisms.

### **5.1.2 Sense of Self**

Overwhelmingly, the results from this analysis support literature that TCKs struggle to form a strong sense of self due to high rates of mobility (e.g. Schaetti & Ramsey, 1999), appearing to dance between the salience of collective and individual selves (Sherif, 1936; Asch, 1952), depending on context. The struggle to know which self to rely on was complicated by the influence of multiple contexts and cultures during childhood, which Arnett (2002) suggests can contribute to an identity crisis, as previously acceptable behaviour suddenly becomes unacceptable (Fail et al., 2004), (e.g. Ashley's conception of beauty challenged upon repatriation). This second overarching theme relates to how crucial context is to one's sense of identity; participants experienced their sense of self as highly contextually dependent, supporting literature that suggests identity is fluid and context-specific (e.g. Howard, 2000). However, these contextual changes were complicated and exacerbated by the continuing change in geographical location and interpersonal relationships due to high mobility. In such a rapidly and habitually changing context, a changing self was required to manage, resulting

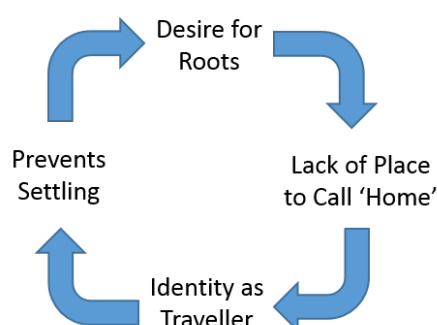
in a fluid identity and weak sense of self. Participants experienced continual challenges to their identity upon moving, feeling alternately accepted and 'special', or invisible and marginalised, based on external identity markers. At various stages of moving, participants expressed feeling either like a *foreigner*, *adopted*, *mirror* or *hidden immigrant* (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009), further complicating sense of self and experience of acceptance. Disrupted attachments and lack of knowledge of how to engage socially contributed to a tendency to look outward for validation of one's identity and behaviour, weakening their internal locus of evaluation; this corroborates Marcia's (1980) standpoint that confusion about one's uniqueness results from a weakly defined self-structure, resulting in reliance on external sources for evaluation. Indeed, Phinney's (2006) argument that the challenge for mobile individuals is to develop a strong enough positive identity to manage external challenge becomes pertinent here. The Other was positioned as validator, teacher and judge; participants used the Other to gauge their own sense of self, copying behaviour and external markers to gain acceptance, despite this engendering incongruence. Parts of the self unaccepted or not reinforced by the external environment were rejected, cut off, alienated. Essentially, the Other was relied upon to validate one's sense of identity. It is important practitioners are aware of this process, as participants reported such strong incongruence due to imitating those around them to achieve assimilation and acceptance, that their own sense of self was precluded from developing independently, well into adulthood. Practitioners should be aware clients may be continually fighting the urge to imitate others in their social world, working to increase their internal locus of evaluation by developing a stronger sense of self. Importantly, the therapeutic space can be used for clients to explore previously rejected and marginalised aspects of the self in a safe, non-judgemental, empathic environment, as parts of the self may have been hidden for years due to shame and embarrassment. Identifying, naming and exploring these hidden parts may lead to learning to accept them, increasing self-esteem and sense of self. This can be achieved by drawing on ACT techniques to encourage acceptance within a therapeutic space providing PCT conditions, namely empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1957).

The analysis suggests participants consciously alter behaviour to gain acceptance, supported by literature suggesting individuals control extent of acculturation (Gans, 2007). This study expands, suggesting that while adaptation is beneficial, and indeed, necessary, *too much* precludes the ability to know oneself. Participants struggled to conceptualise a consistent sense of self, due to constant manipulation of *identity markers* (McCrone & Bechhofer, 2008) to acculturate, most commonly taking advantage of the malleability of accent. Being viewed negatively was avoided at all costs, positioning various *permanent* markers (e.g. tattoos) as threatening, especially ones heavily relied upon by others to ascertain identity (e.g. birthplace). Subsequently, participants hid certain aspects of themselves to limit misrepresentation, to such an extent that at times they felt invisible. This process of *deculturation* (Kim, 2008) may be adaptive, but is also painful; participants expressed regret about ‘losing’ important aspects of the self in the process (e.g. accent), which they felt further compromised their sense of identity. In summary, participants were ambivalent about the impact of CRM on their sense of self: in one vein, they had been forced to learn to be flexible and adaptable, which was highly valued by participants, and was an aspect of themselves that they spoke of with a sense of pride; however, this same ability precluded the development of a continuous, predictable sense of self, which resulted in continuous change and malleability, confusing their “true” sense of self.

Several participants felt able to retain aspects of their previous identity upon moving, (e.g. Danielle). However, others felt it necessary to erase their identity to acculturate (e.g. Ashley), in line with Berry’s (1997) view of biculturalism that the dominant culture must engage in pluralism for assimilation to occur. Drawing on Kim’s (2008) stress-adaptation-growth model, practitioners can help clients understand and conceptualise the process of change, including how to manage subsequently, facilitating growth rather than avoidance. Clients may benefit from CBT behavioural experiments, practicing how they *want* to be, not how *others* want them to be, strengthening their internal locus of evaluation and increasing self-esteem.

Supporting literature by Pollock and Van Reken (2009), this study found participants struggle to answer, “where are you from?”, and identified several processes participants employed to manage, such as answering in great detail (Sears, 2011), a technique to maintain congruence with the self by providing the ‘right’ answer to be ‘seen’ accurately by the Other. Often the question was experienced as ‘confrontational’, as it required managing the Others expectations; in these cases, superficial answers were provided to appease the Other, or aspects of the self hidden for fear of misrepresentation or stereotyping. However, due to compromising the self, participants experienced incongruence due to being seen inaccurately, triggering further insecurity regarding identity.

Diagram B.4 delineates a push/pull dynamic regarding identity and sense of ‘home’ that arose from the analysis. This inability to define one’s sense of belonging in the world engendered the theme ‘Managing the Self in Relation to the World’.



*Diagram B.4: Delineating the relationship between desire for roots and identity as traveller*

There was a strong desire amongst many participants to develop roots and have somewhere to call ‘home’. However, a preference for continued mobility in adulthood found in both this sample and TCK research (e.g. Gilbert & Gilbert, 2011) is hypothesised to arise from a lack of clarity of where ‘home’ is, unsure of one’s national, social or ethnic identity. Resultantly, participants experienced lack of belonging, marginalisation and rejection, and internalised the identity of *traveller* to compensate, gaining some semblance of sorely desired identity, but complicating the ability to successfully achieve grounding. Restlessness in mobile populations

is documented (Park, 1928), and supported by this research; this study expands, finding restlessness provides boredom relief from managing the perceived banality of life, which mobile individuals are not used to experiencing due to constant transience. Indeed, in both the pilot and research sample, participants reported finding it difficult to settle anywhere for longer than three years. Despite an increased desire to settle with age, not knowing where or how to led to ultimately ignoring the desire, and participants continued with moving, the desire for roots remaining a desire rather than becoming a reality. Participants reported gaining much from exploring 'home' during the interviews as it helped them conceptualise their thoughts. Clients may benefit from exploring their fraught relationship with 'home' within a non-judgemental atmosphere, including both pros and cons of settling and continuing transience. Practitioners may find it helpful to draw on findings from Cottrell and Useem (1999) which suggest roots can be developed through seeking out a similar other as a life partner, becoming geographically stable or retaining artefacts from previous abodes when working with this population. In addition, this study suggests mobile individuals *choose* continued mobility in adulthood to regain sense of agency lacking during childhood. It is important clinicians are cognisant that the desire for control and continued mobility may be detachment *masked* as independence (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009), and acknowledge that what may be being presented may be superficial. Practitioners may want to help clients explore a middle ground, of having roots while remaining independent, much like how a safe base provides infants the ability to explore with the knowledge that safety and comfort is available (Bowlby, 1988).

There is extant literature on mobile individuals feeling at home everywhere, and nowhere (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009), the exposure to multiple cultures during formative years contributing to the development of a *complex hybrid identity* (Arnett, 2002). This study supports observations by Pollock and Van Reken (2009) that mobile individuals often identify in terms of the Other depending on location, adding insight that 'home' is anywhere that offers sense of belonging – within another, in a geographical place, or within the self. This is similar to the function of fluid identity, allowing connection to multiple groups rather than just one.

Most participants appeared to hover between the latter two stages of Phinney's (1989) ethnic identity model, 'ethnic identity search' and 'achieved ethnic identity', having experienced marginalisation and subsequently explored their own ethnic group membership. It appeared with an increase in age, they gravitate increasingly towards the latter. Clients can explore their own sense of ethnic identity by talking to others and reading about ethnicity, increasing their internal locus of evaluation.

### **5.1.3 Role of the Family**

This study supports findings by Pollock and Van Reken (2009) that TCKs internalise messages unintentionally sent by parents regarding grief not being allowed expression, leading to lack of processing. Additionally, being moved with little to no warning further compromised sense of agency, resulting in high levels of anger, which again was not provided space to process. This study found that upon realising they had to cope alone, participants developed *such* good coping mechanisms they convinced others they were coping so well they did not require support, and so further support was not offered; unfortunately, this further reinforced the individuals' belief of having to cope alone, which continued into adulthood. However, the experience of having to cope alone in childhood was also viewed as having several beneficial impacts on them in adulthood. Having reflected on how this had benefitted them in later life, they expressed that they felt, due to necessity, they were able to manage difficult situations independently, for example, coping with adversity innovatively, and managing change flexibly. These were skills that were highly valued for participants, especially regarding their professional lives.

Practitioners can help clients identify unprocessed feelings (e.g. anger, fear, guilt, regret) that may benefit from exploration in a safe, non-judgemental atmosphere. Many participants felt unable to discuss negative emotion with their families, so practitioners may help clients consider whether to share current feelings with others, either in person, using the 'empty chair technique' (e.g. Nichol & Schwartz, 2008), or writing a letter, which may or may

not be given to the addressee. Additionally, if they have children, clients can explore whether they have carried this inability to share negative feelings within the family intergenerationally, as Sarah felt she had; they may want to share their feelings and experiences with their children either within or outside the therapy room.

#### **5.1.4 Therapeutic Relationship**

Drawing on PCT humanistic values, practitioners can provide a non-judgemental and safe environment where clients can explore the meaning of their high CRM background and how it affects them in adulthood. Participants found it helpful to talk freely, explore feelings, and process difficult thoughts often for the first time with another. It will be important for practitioners to explore clients' backgrounds in detail rather than making assumptions based on *identity markers* (McCrone & Bechhofer, 2008), as they may be *hidden* foreigners, their exterior belying their mind-set and experiences, which can lead to misunderstanding and marginalisation.

Participants learned how to engage quickly but incongruently with others due to constantly changing social landscapes, supported by literature (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). As such, clients may appear to engage in therapy quickly and intimately, however this engagement may not be congruent with their sense of self, and the level of depth at which they begin may be the deepest level they allow themselves to go in therapy. Indeed, a pilot participant said she did not present her congruent self to her therapist, as she was conscious the relationship would terminate; instead, she employed a 'mask' for emotional protection, precluding the amount of work possible during therapy. Clients may not have had long-term relationships, and the prospect of meeting weekly with another and sharing deep and intimate feelings and memories may be terrifying. Practitioners should be aware clients may engage in this type of protective behaviour, but also remain aware this mask serves a purpose, and so not push so hard as to cause disengagement. In addition, the mask presented may suggest

fierce independence, but it is worth acknowledging this may actually indicate detachment (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

Participants and a pilot participant reported experiencing *goodbyes* as devoid of emotion, possibly resulting from maintaining superficial relationships to protect against emotional pain; therapy can be used to explore what endings mean to clients, including what ‘good’ and ‘bad’ endings are for them. Due to conditional group identification and ease of detaching, practitioners should be aware clients may terminate unexpectedly, and so work to maintain engagement and congruence. The termination of therapy can model a ‘good’ ending, encouraging clients’ sense of agency, rather than risking premature disengagement due to their anxiety about the ending.

## **5.2 Transferability – Issues to Consider**

I now consider issues regarding evaluating this research. Providing an objective ‘truth’ or generalising the results to all women with a background of high CRM was never the goal of this research (see Methods). It is important, however, to consider transferability issues, so methodological and procedural challenges are explored, as well as a reflexive investigation of the research process.

### **5.2.1 Quality Markers**

To properly evaluate validity and reliability, it is important to consider how they are defined differently within approaches. As expressed by Madill et al. (2000), it is important researchers clarify their epistemological position, maintain adherence to that position throughout data collection, and present findings in a way they can be evaluated. They state research can only be evaluated if knowledge of the epistemological standpoint is known, as research from a positivist position will understandably be evaluated differently to research from a critical realist position, due to differing aims and assumptions.

I outlined my epistemological position previously (see Methods), followed quality markers for qualitative research (Yardley, 2008), and have endeavoured to be transparent about my impact on the material (see reflexive diary in Appendix L). I attended regular meetings with colleagues familiar with IPA and my research supervisor to discuss my progress, taking on constructive criticism and feedback. I incorporated quotes throughout the analysis to provide grounding for my interpretations in the data, providing the reader the opportunity to judge how appropriate they appeared, allowing readers to form their own alternative interpretations. By exploring my assumptions and experiences through which all data “filtered” through, I worked to bracket these. I hope these techniques demonstrate my commitment to quality and rigour.

### **5.2.2 Limitations and Challenges**

This section refers to limitations and challenges regarding how robust and transferable the findings are to a general population, rather than seeking to prove or disprove the “truthfulness” of the findings, which would be expected in a positivist piece of research.

Regarding limitations, participants may have been selective regarding what was shared during interviews due to the effect of social desirability, or perhaps if they were unsure whether I was “similar” or “unfamiliar”. To counteract this, I worked to develop a strong rapport, displaying high levels of empathy and non-judgement, and resultantly felt they were open and honest about their experiences. This is partially reflected in the myriad experiences presented by each participant, suggesting an openness to exploration.

It could be argued the interview questions required participants to reflect on how they perceived themselves in relation to others, without seeking to gain information from the Other for corroboration. However, corroborating one’s account is not the goal of IPA, but rather to access each individuals’ subjective experience and their meaning-making. To capture the

richness of the participants' subjective experiences, IPA was employed, as the use of quantitative methods would not have yielded the same detailed, idiographic data.

I found it challenging to be a novice IPA researcher due to lack of guidance on how to move from individual themes to a “birds-eye” view of the joint narrative (Larkin et al., 2006). My findings are an attempt to weave together individual narratives and themes into a greater whole, and the graphic models of themes are an attempt to aid this narrative. It could be argued that this leans towards Grounded Theory (see Method chapter for a discussion of GT versus IPA), however I have been careful to present fluid models that appear to map onto the narratives presented by the participants.

#### **5.2.2.1 Methodological Challenges**

This section covers some criticisms of IPA outlined in the literature that impact how the quality of this research is assessed. Two main criticisms are how language and cognition are considered in IPA.

##### **5.2.2.1.1 Language**

IPA relies on language obtained through interviews or the written word (e.g. diaries), as it assumes language can be used to access participants' experiences (Smith et al., 2009). This assumption results from the phenomenological underpinnings of IPA, which argue understanding a phenomenon can only meaningfully arise through exploring how it is experienced, via language and the body (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962; Sartre, 1966/1943). However, Willig (2008) argues words hold different meanings for different people, and, when used, alter the meaning of the experience; therefore, everyone's conception of language is different. As such, she continues, how one constructs an experience may be very different to another due to the words used, and, indeed, the words they are familiar with. Subsequently, Willig (2008) criticises IPA for its lack of consideration of the role language plays. However,

this study aims to explore what meaning participants ascribe to their experiences, not simply how they use language. Indeed, Willig (2008) acknowledges IPA assumes the impossibility of directly accessing participants' life worlds, rather prioritising participants' meaning making of their experiences (see Methods for why DA was not employed for this study).

To manage this dilemma, drawing on IPA guidance provided by Smith and Osborn (2008), I tried to demonstrate my understanding that each excerpt could result in multiple interpretations, and therefore any meanings I present are subjective, a result of a co-construction between myself and the participant. In addition, I focused on what experiences arose within my own body during the interviews to gain further information for analysis, as well as noting non-verbal information in participants, as suggested by Finlay (2009).

Willig (2008) further criticises IPA for its dependence on descriptive narrative to develop rich analysis. Indeed, my sample only included individuals able to communicate articulately via the spoken word, suggested to encourage marginalisation of certain groups due to privileging only the articulate (e.g. Ashby, 2011). This has been challenged by recent IPA research with individuals with more limited communication skills, for example Pestana (2011) who conducted research on adults with learning disabilities, and Back, Gustafsson, Larsson and Bertero (2011) who conducted research on children.

#### **5.2.2.1.2 Cognition**

Smith (1996) links IPA with social cognition, due to its focus on how individuals think and feel about the phenomenon being researched. However, Langdridge (2007) argues that understanding phenomena through cognition conflicts with the concept of exploring phenomena phenomenologically, due to differing theoretical understandings. To expand, using cognitions to comprehend phenomena suggests meaning is found within the mind (Brown, 2000); however, from a phenomenological perspective, meaning presents through dialogue and is enmeshed with one's behaviour (Phillips, 1999). In addition, Willig (2008)

argues that another aspect of IPA in conflict with the assumption that cognition provides access to one's experience is its reliance on pre-cognition (e.g. hunches and gut feelings). Indeed, I relied on non-verbal information to gain further information from my participants, to gain as much phenomenological depth into their experiences as possible.

#### **5.2.2.2 Procedural Challenges**

IPA requires a small sample, due to the breadth of data collected from each individual, which will always preclude the ability to generalise the findings to a larger population. In addition, participants were accessed via purposive sampling, to research as homogenous a group as possible, who, to meet criteria, had to have experienced a very specific upbringing. It is possible participants who responded to the advertisement represented a subset of individuals who had particularly good or bad experiences of high CRM, as they were self-selecting. However, there appeared to be a spread, with one participant even reporting not having any particular feelings toward her background. It is necessary for the reader to remain cognisant of the sample when evaluating the transferability of the results to other adult women with a background of high CRM.

Despite homogeneity regarding age and gender amongst participants, ethnicities and experiences of CRM were varied; participants reported differing experiences regarding moving, reasons for moving, places they lived, and length of time in each place. As the focus of the study was on the experience of inter- and intra-personal relationships having moved three or more times in childhood, it was predicted participants would present with different experiences. In addition, some participants had 'settled' while others had not, perhaps influencing how they conceptualised the phenomenon under research. Due to the epistemological and methodological framework of the study, it could be argued that, as the main aim of IPA is participants' meaning-making of phenomena, the usefulness of the findings is not impacted by retrospective memory, the places they resided in, how long they resided there, or their current settled status. Epistemologically, as I believe that meaning is fluid and

context-specific due to arising from social interactions, the *details* of CRM were less important than the *experience* of CRM.

Participants were recruited through social media, flyers at City University, and my previous international school in London. Therefore, it could be argued I limited the pool of respondents largely to educated, middle class, and most likely, foreigners/immigrants. Due to the immense interest in the study and having recruited my entire sample within several weeks, I did not have the opportunity to advertise anywhere else, as I felt it unethical to turn away participants who met the criteria to search for more diverse others. However, advertising in different locations, or using methods not linked with educational settings or friends and family, may have yielded different perspectives.

Despite large amounts of data on this population available through personal narratives (e.g. blogs), I chose not to gather data through such mediums. Using these alternative methods to gather data may have added to the reliability of the data presented. However, these methods would have precluded the possibility of gathering non-verbal information, such as body language and tone of voice.

Each participant presented rich, detailed data, albeit having experienced different paths and processes. Smith (1993) advocates research of single case studies to access deeper explorations of phenomena, and this approach could have been used in this study, as perhaps having eight participants diluted the richness of the material.

As the interview schedule was developed at the start of the research process, with hindsight, it could have been designed to be less researcher-driven and more participant-led, explored in the research diary (see Appendix L).

While this study focused on only women to research as homogenous a sample as possible as preferred in IPA research (Smith & Osborn, 2003), this could be conceptualised as a limitation, as it is impossible to draw conclusions as to what male perceptions in this situation would be. However, the decision to focus on one gender was based on research

suggesting differences in how women relate inter- and intrapersonally during the life cycle (e.g. Gilligan, 1982). In addition, this study did not clarify whether the moves had to be international or not. Despite this, all but one participant experienced international moves. As the criteria was not strict regarding national versus international moves, this participant's data was retained in the analysis.

Due to the subjective nature of the analysis, another limitation is the biased nature of the interpreted findings; throughout the process, every attempt to remain unbiased was taken, and the process has been made transparent for the reader for their appraisal of the findings. Nonetheless, the findings as they are reported are subjective.

### **5.2.3 Reflexivity**

This section explores my role in the research process, to understand and be transparent about previous experiences and assumptions I had that may have impacted the research, from conception to writing up. I also explore how the research has impacted me (Willig, 2001).

#### **5.2.3.1 Professional Reflexivity**

In the Methods section, I was transparent about how the research was borne of my own personal experiences, and my pre-existing assumptions were outlined. I was humbled by the willingness of my participants, as, through their narratives, I was able to further understand my own assumptions about identity, relationships and CRM, through a process of trying to provide a space where they could share their experiences fully, in a valued, non-judgemental environment.

As I shared similarities with my participants, I held certain assumptions before the research was conducted: I assumed individuals would have experienced CRM as challenging; I assumed they would express challenges regarding clarifying their identity; and I assumed

they would experience interpersonal difficulties. For the majority of participants these assumptions were confirmed, leading me to explore how I felt regarding not feeling as alone in my experiences. In the Methods section, I explored the impact the research has had on me personally, and here I will emphasise my attempts to “bracket” my own experiences and assumptions as much as possible (Finlay, 2003), aware this is impossible to do completely.

I feel the combination of having similar experiences to my participants and holding the assumptions outlined previously have necessarily impacted how analysis was conducted and what interpretations were drawn. It was important I reflected on how much I felt my own assumptions were making me “look” for certain trends, so I reflected on this in my personal diary (see Appendix L), in research supervision, with colleagues and in personal therapy, to understand what were my processes and what were my participants’. As such, I attempted to analyse and interpret the data as unhindered as possible, reflecting on my influence. However, I am aware this has been very difficult for me, as I sought to engage as much as possible with the data; due to my enmeshment, it is difficult to ascertain whether I achieved this goal. No doubt, the research and findings have been influenced by my previous experience and knowledge, both professionally and personally. It is impossible to erase one’s experiences and knowledge, so every researcher impacts qualitative research in their own manner; neutrality can never be assumed, corroborated by Willig’s (2008) argument that the researcher’s point of view is implicated when exploring raw data. Subsequently, the findings likely reflect my role in the data, concerning the interpretations I have presented. Due to my own values, experiences and assumptions, despite efforts to bracket, it is possible I interpreted the data in line with my own “stuff”, unintentionally ignoring data that conflicted with my beliefs. As such, it is feasible to acknowledge that were another researcher to conduct the research, either using the same or new data from this interview schedule, different findings would be likely to emerge.

I found several interviews emotionally challenging due to the memories participants shared especially regarding feeling marginalised, neglected and rejected. At these times, I

used my reflective diary, spoke to colleagues and explored my feelings in supervision and personal therapy to manage.

I noticed when I first started interviewing how relieved I felt when participants spoke of a subject I hoped would emerge, or something I myself had experienced. I noticed as the interviews continued, I became much more interested when something novel arose. I believe the former occurred due to anxieties about engaging in an unfamiliar research process, and am aware that had I been as curious of the latter from the beginning, different themes may have arisen.

The process of completing this research has inherently altered how I regard qualitative methodology. Initially I was anxious about employing an unfamiliar method for such an important piece of research. However, I felt, and still maintain, that qualitative methodology is most suited to Counselling Psychology research, and is in line with my own personal values and beliefs. I feel employing semi-structured interviews for this research was appropriate as almost all participants expressed appreciation having been provided the opportunity to work through their own meaning-making in the context of the interview. In addition, I feel the ethos of IPA was well aligned with my own clinical approach.

Professionally, I work primarily integrating PCT and CBT, which may have influenced how I engaged with the raw data. Professionally, I am very conscious of the therapeutic relationship at all times, while being aware of opportunities to offer coping techniques, and perhaps I worked from this viewpoint when interpreting the data. At times I struggled to take on the role of “expert” with the data, preferring to prioritise the participants’ words, struggling to look past them for fear of misinterpreting, especially without the participants’ presence to counteract or corroborate my interpretations. In addition, viewing the data through a CBT lens may have led me to desire conceptualising my participants’ stories by searching for interactions between thoughts, feelings and behaviours, perhaps leading me to try to *understand* their experiences rather than *interpret* the data, as is required for IPA. As such,

the findings presented may be more of a reflection of my professional rather than research viewpoint.

Through engaging with participants' narratives, I have reflected on my own influence; having an American accent, it is unknown if I was perceived by participants as "one of them" or as "Other". If I was perceived as similar, participants may have been more open than if they were interviewed by someone perceived as "Other"; however, they may have wished for me to collude with them, both in how positive and difficult CRM can be to manage, or perhaps they assumed I 'knew' a lot about the phenomenon and therefore did not share as much as if I had been an 'unfamiliar Other'. It is difficult to ascertain the effect of this on data collection, and I can only hypothesise how different the interviews might have been had I had a different accent. In addition, I perceived participants as "similar" which may have impacted my interpretation of the data, as I may have been "looking" for similarities and discounting anything conflictual. Regardless of my influence on collecting and analysing the data, I found myself alternately intrigued and surprised by what emerged, allowing difference to present itself and challenging my pre-existing ideas about what "should" emerge.

Completing this research has been extremely challenging at times, necessitating high levels of motivation and engagement. Additionally, I find decision making difficult in general, so having to decide which themes and literature to retain and which to abandon was extremely tough. I was aware at the beginning of data collection of a hope that interesting and novel themes would emerge from the data, which caused considerable anxiety, and it was only through extensive conversations with my supervisor, colleagues and personal practitioner that I could appreciate this was a normal aspect of qualitative research. I learned to trust myself, aware the findings are a co-creation resulting from an interaction between myself and the data.

My hope is that these findings will provide practitioners working with this population valuable insight into their experiences, as, without having experienced it, it can be difficult to appreciate the long term effects, which are often invisible to outsiders. The aim of this study is to provide a valuable contribution to the field of Counselling Psychology through presenting

the subjective experience of relationships and identity in adult women with a background of high CRM. Due to the rise of globalisation, it is likely more individuals with this type of background will be accessing services in the coming years, making it essential for practitioners to appreciate and understand challenges clients might bring to therapy, especially as some difficulties may be invisible.

#### **5.2.3.2 Personal Reflexivity**

At the end of the study, it is important for me to reflect and consider where I am now regarding my previous conceptions and whether they have been changed, challenged or corroborated. It is also useful to consider how this research has impacted both myself and my participants.

As mentioned in the Methodology section, this research engendered growth in me, both professionally and personally. While participants sought to manage relationships and identity within the framework of high CRM, I sought to manage my own process of emerging as a qualitative researcher. I feel I experienced a parallel process, navigating challenges regarding identity and transitions, resulting in a sense of mirroring between my participants' narratives and my own sense of self-discovery.

I am on the cusp of submitting my research, my training is complete, and I have secured a job I will be starting imminently; as such, once again I find myself on the precipice of transition, the focus of this research. I reflect on my time during training, particularly the last eight months which have been focused on writing up my research, when so often I felt on the margins of society, my identity challenged daily. Through personal therapy and discussion with colleagues, I continually reminded myself this challenge was undertaken voluntarily, contrasting the moves which my participants (and myself) experienced as children, lacking in agency. This conflict helps me consider my sense of agency in adulthood, reflecting on what *I* want, rather than what *others* (e.g. society) want for me.

Having undergone such changes in the last 18 months since interviewing my participants, I wonder where their journeys have taken them – are they still in the UK? Have they ‘settled’ here, or become restless, drawn to different places in search of adventure? How are their friendships - do they have new ones, or have they continued building on the ones they mentioned? I admit their narratives on moving and transience ignited my travel spark, and thoughts of moving and travelling have been rife during this research as a result.

#### **5.3.4 Research Process**

Literature on the research process by Mitchell and Irvine (2008) explore the difficulty of researchers managing boundaries of being both researcher and practitioner, and how this can impact the research process. Finlay (2011) discusses the importance of using therapeutic skills during research interviews, and I believe I employed mine, particularly when participants were recounting difficult memories, providing a safe, non-judgemental environment which was useful in containing emotion. At times, I worried I was not containing enough regarding material elicited, as I allowed participants to diverge from the topic when and if they desired. I was aware this was in line with IPA guidance on building rapport, and allowing interesting, unpredicted themes to emerge (Willig, 2008), but still questioned whether it may have been preferable for me to be more guiding at times.

It is largely agreed there is no one way to collect data for IPA (Larkin et al., 2006), making it challenging to know when interviews were ‘finished’, to trust enough material has been collected. This was difficult and caused me anxiety, perhaps impacting data collection, again implicating my impact on the research.

As explored in the Methods chapter, due to my own personal interest in the research, it was unsurprising participants were similar to myself. Despite attempting to research a population slightly different to me (older at time of interview; older at time of CRM), the similarities became more apparent as the research continued. I noticed a definite shift in my own relationship toward the meaning of ‘home’, and how I viewed and formed relationships,

making me ponder the impact of research on the researcher, something I had not previously considered. The goal of qualitative research is not only the end product, but also the process through which the final results are developed, so it is helpful for both researchers and readers to appreciate the psychological journey undertaken by qualitative researchers which can provide an extra layer of richness to the final reading. Transparency about the process can also aid novice researchers.

### **5.3 Areas for Future Research**

Due to a lack of research on this specific population, this study aimed to be quite broad in its focus; as such, many follow up studies could be undertaken.

Due to the methodology, this study was conducted on a small, homogenous sample. Therefore, myriad studies would add to the findings, for example, expanding the sample regarding age, gender, ethnicity and passport country. This study was cross-sectional; longitudinal research would be fascinating to gain an even more in-depth understanding of the experience of high CRM. A longitudinal study might gather data from individuals before moving (possible participants could be identified as “at-risk” of moving), after each subsequent move, and again at ages 25, 35, 45 and 55, in order to gather data on the impact and experience of moving, focusing on identity and relationship formation. This type of study could benefit from a mixed-methods design, perhaps exploring personality types and attachment styles quantitatively, as well as employing the use of semi-structured interviews. The qualitative analysis employed could be one of several, depending on the aim of the research: if analysed using Grounded Theory, it would be possible to determine the process of identity and/or relationship formation in this population, using data from each time point to inform the theory. If analysed using IPA, interviews at various time points would be able to expand on the findings presented in this study, as more information about how CRM is experienced and the impact on adulthood would be available. Additionally, it would be interesting to note how the

interpretation of one's experiences may change over time with increased reflection and distance.

This research began to explore how adult women with high CRM experience identity and relationships, however much research is needed to explore this further, especially on a non-American population. Additionally, as this study focused only on women, future research would benefit from focusing on men, comparing the findings with these, adding further insight into the role of gender in high CRM. It would also be interesting to research both individuals whose families *chose* to move, as well as families who were *forced* to move, to explore whether this affects the experience and ensuing impact. Individuals may be forced to move due to situations out of their control, such as war, famine, genocide, or financial instability. It would be interesting to explore how those who are *forced* to move experience mobility, contrast to the current population whose families *chose* to move. The population in this study came from financially secure families, and did not mention financial difficulties. It is worth considering how low socioeconomic status (SES) might contribute to a higher mobility rate in families. A mixed methods study might suit the aims of this research. Data could be collected regarding socioeconomic status and whether their status of mover/non-mover is by choice or force, and questionnaires could be administered regarding personality type and attachment style. Qualitative interviews could explore reasons for, feelings about, experiences of and wishes/regrets around moving/not moving. The findings could inform clinicians working with those both forced and non-forced movers and non-movers, regarding increasing levels of awareness and understanding of clients struggles and experiences to help inform clinical practice.

Future research could explore differences between movers and non-movers regarding relationship and identity formation, to clarify whether the findings from this study are due to moving or whether there are other influencing factors. Whilst impossible to draw conclusions about causality, correlational conclusions can be made through the use of quantitative methods. To achieve this, a large population would need to be used to achieve sufficient

statistical power. Questionnaires could be administered, designed by drawing on the findings of this study regarding relationship and identity formation, and comparing one group of non-movers to one group of movers, to ascertain whether there are indeed statistically significant differences between the two groups. This process delineates the powerful interplay between qualitative and quantitative methodology, and how they enhance and challenge one another: qualitative research provides findings from a homogenous, small subset of the population, which can then be used to inform quantitative research, by “testing” hypotheses drawn from the qualitative findings. Subsequently, the findings arising from the quantitative study can then be used to inform further qualitative research, to explore the findings in an exploratory manner, providing further depth and insight from a select few participants. This hermeneutic cycle of part-whole-part continually provides more data and hypotheses to work with and fine tune, each methodology complimenting and challenging each other *ad infinitum*.

It would be helpful for future studies to research the experience of only romantic relationships, or only friendships in individuals with high CRM. Also, future research could choose to focus on exploring one type of identity exclusively (e.g. national, social, ethnic). In addition, the relatively newly introduced *complex hybrid identity* (Arnett, 2002) could be explored in further depth. Grounded theory studies would be helpful in delineating processes of identity and relationship formation for this population, and Narrative Analysis would provide a different way of capturing the stories of this demographic. Future research may focus on women who moved cross-culturally exclusively during childhood, while another study may focus on women who moved multiple times within their passport country.

IPA aims to provide a voice to participants to access subjective experiences, which this study aimed to do. However, perhaps a limitation of this study was interviewing only participants with a history of CRM; future research may benefit from incorporating interviews from best friends and/or romantic partners to gain further information about how this population is perceived by others.

As mentioned previously, the experience of conducting phenomenological research on phenomena that hold special meaning to the researcher is worth exploring in further depth. For example, this study researched identity and relationships, two areas I found affected in my personal life by the research process. It would be helpful to explore how conducting this type of research affects the personal life of the researcher.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

This study aimed to explore the experience of relationships and identity in adult women with a history of high CRM, due to a paucity of qualitative research exploring this phenomenon. It is surprising this phenomenon in this population has been overlooked, as Counselling Psychology mainly concerns itself with relationships and one's sense of self. Quantitative research on the phenomenon has been useful in understanding what challenges this population faces; however, it does not explore *how* these challenges are experienced. Through eliciting valuable descriptions and memories, I tried to convey processes these women engage in regarding themselves and others, in relation to how they experience relationships and make sense of themselves. This chapter aimed to address potential limitations and challenges of the study, while situating it in the current research to demonstrate its contribution to the field of Counselling Psychology. I hope I have made a convincing argument for the usefulness of this research for practitioners working with adult women with a background of high CRM. It is my humble hope that it furthers practitioners' insight into the experiences of this population, by outlining their past and present challenges of engaging inter- and intra-personally.

## Ethics Release Form for Student Research Projects

All students planning to undertake any research activity in the School of Arts and Social Sciences are required to complete this Ethics Release Form and to submit it to their Research Supervisor, **together with their research proposal clearly stating aims and methodology**, prior to commencing their research work. If you are proposing multiple studies within your research project, you are required to submit a separate ethical release form for each study.

This form should be completed in the context of the following information:

- An understanding of ethical considerations is central to planning and conducting research.
- Approval to carry out research by the Department or the Schools does not exempt you from Ethics Committee approval from institutions within which you may be planning to conduct the research, e.g.: Hospitals, NHS Trusts, HM Prisons Service, etc.
- The published ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society (2009) Guidelines for minimum standards of ethical approval in psychological research (BPS: Leicester) should be referred to when planning your research.
- **Students are not permitted to begin their research work until approval has been received and this form has been signed by Research Supervisor and the Department's Ethics Representative.**

### Section A: To be completed by the student

Please indicate the degree that the proposed research project pertains to:

BSc \_\_\_\_\_ M.Phil \_\_\_\_\_ M.Sc \_\_\_\_\_ D.Psych \_\_\_\_\_ n/a \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer all of the following questions, circling yes or no where appropriate:

1. Title of project

The Psychological Effects of Childhood Residential Mobility in Relation to Identity and Relationship Formation in Adult Women in the UK

2. Name of student researcher (please include contact address and telephone number)

Carrie Nakan

3. Name of research supervisor

Don Rawson

4. Is a research proposal appended to this ethics release form? Yes **No**

5. Does the research involve the use of human subjects/participants? **Yes** No

If yes,

a. Approximately how many are planned to be involved?

8

b. How will you recruit them?

Through City University's mailing list to students.  
Through BPS Counselling Psychology division mailing list.  
Fliers around City University.  
Through family and friends.  
Through International and American Schools alumni  
magazines/forums/newsletters/mailling lists.  
Through the use of the social medium Facebook.  
By using the "snowball" technique.

c. What are your recruitment criteria?

(Please append your recruitment material/advertisement/flyer)

Inclusion criteria: Females aged 32-50, who moved 3+ times between ages 5-18, both residence and school. 0+. Individuals will be fluent in English as translators are an expense that I cannot afford.  
Exclusion criteria: Individuals who are under the age of 32; males; individuals who did not move residence and school 3+ times between 5-18.

*Exclusion criteria: individuals who are under the age of 30; individuals who did not attend an International/American school for at least 3 years during the time specified.*

d. Will the research involve the participation of minors (under 18 years of age) or vulnerable adults or those unable to give informed consent? **Yes** No

d1. If yes, will signed parental/carers consent be obtained? Yes **No**

d2. If yes, has a CRB check been obtained? Yes **No**

(Please append a copy of your CRB check)

6. What will be required of each subject/participant (e.g. time commitment, task/activity)? (If psychometric instruments are to be employed, please state who will be supervising their use and their relevant qualification).

Participants will be invited to complete a semi-structured interview on the City University campus which will last around one hour and be audio recorded. They will be asked to read and sign a consent form. They will also be debriefed.

7. Is there any risk of physical or psychological harm to the subjects/participants?

Yes

No

If yes,

a. Please detail the possible harm?

If an individual contacts me after recruitment has already been completed, the individual may feel rejected as they will not be able to take part in the study. In order to minimise this happening, I will endeavour to withdraw/collect any advertisements that I have put out as quickly as possible, and I will also respond to each individual to let them know that recruitment has ended. I will offer to signpost them to a relevant service if they feel that they require further support. The participants may find talking about various experiences distressing and so I would leave each participant with appropriate information about support that they could engage with if needed as a result of the interview process.

b. How can this be justified?

In order to allow this demographic a voice, a qualitative research project is necessary in order to provide a space where they can talk freely about their experiences. In order to allow this to happen, risks such as those listed above are unfortunately necessary.

c. What precautions are you taking to address the risks posed?

In order to support and protect individuals as much as possible, they will be offered the option to withdraw at any time, without any consequence. They can also request to have some or all of their data destroyed. In addition, each participant will be debriefed fully at the end of the interview. They will be signposted to appropriate agencies (i.e. Samaritans). If the clients experience distress during the interview, I will work to contain the distress and allow them the opportunity to stop or take a break if necessary.

8. Will all subjects/participants and/or their parents/carers receive an information sheet describing the aims, procedure and possible risks of the research, as well as providing researcher and supervisor contact details?

Yes

No

*(Please append the information sheet which should be written in terms which are accessible to your subjects/participants and/or their parents/carers)*

9. Will any person's treatment/care be in any way be compromised if they choose not to participate in the research?

Yes

No

10. Will all subjects/participants be required to sign a consent form, stating that they fully understand the purpose, procedure and possible risks of the research?

Yes

No

If no, please justify

*If yes please append the informed consent form which should be written in terms which are accessible to your subjects/participants and/or their parents/carers)*

11. What records will you be keeping of your subjects/participants? (e.g. research notes, computer records, tape/video recordings)?

I will be keeping consent forms, computer records and tape recordings of each participant, as well as research notes.

12. What provision will there be for the safe-keeping of these records?

The interviews will be stored on my laptop which is password locked, in password locked files. All paperwork (i.e. consent forms) will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at my apartment, for which only I will have a key. All identifying data will be stored separately from the interviews and each participant will be assigned a research number in order to maintain anonymity. All interviews will be deleted from the tape recorder after they have been transferred onto my computer. All data will be backed up on an external hard drive which will also be password protected.

13. What will happen to the records at the end of the project?

The records will be stored securely and anonymously for a period of 5 years once the research project is completed, in line with the Good Practice Guidelines for the conduct of psychological research.

14. How will you protect the anonymity of the subjects/participants?

Each participant will be allocated a research participant number in order to protect their anonymity. In addition, all identifying data (i.e. consent forms) will be stored separately from the interviews. All identifying data will be deleted or changed in the research project in order to maintain anonymity.

15. What provision for post research de-brief or psychological support will be available should subjects/participants require?

At the completion of the interview, each participant will be debriefed and provided with details for psychological support services (i.e. the Samaritans).

*(Please append any de-brief information sheets or resource lists detailing possible support options)*

If you have circled an item in **underlined bold** print or wish to provide additional details of the research please provide further explanation here:

Signature of student researcher:   
Date:

**CHECKLIST:** the following forms should be appended unless justified otherwise

Research Proposal  
Recruitment Material  
Information Sheet  
Consent Form  
De-brief Information

### Section B: Risks to the Researcher

1. Is there any risk of physical or psychological harm to yourself?      Yes      No  
If yes,

a. Please detail possible harm?

There is always a possibility of being physically harmed by participants. In addition, as the research area is personal to me, I may experience some psychological harm whilst conducting the interview and listening to personal experiences from the participants.

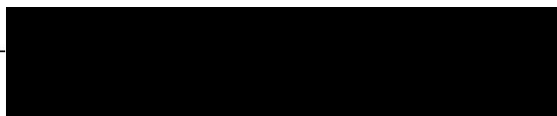
b. How can this be justified?

In order to conduct a qualitative research project about a subject area that is personal to the researcher, the researcher must be aware of the potential risks before undertaking the research and make sure that they have the appropriate support at all times. I feel that I have reflected on the potential risks and set up the appropriate support necessary, as detailed below, in order to conduct this research that I believe is necessary for the field.

c. What precautions are to be taken to address the risks posed?

In order to safeguard myself against any possible physical risk, I will only be seeing participants in rooms located within City University, where there will be other people around at all times. In addition, I will have a buddy system set up with a colleague who will know which room I am in, and I will call them after a predetermined period of time after the start of an interview in order to ensure my safety. I also have personal indemnity insurance that will cover me if need be. In order to safeguard myself against potential psychological harm as a result of content of the interview itself, I am in personal weekly therapy where I can explore and work through any difficult subjects raised during the interviews. In addition, I have a good support network through colleagues whom I can rely on in times of need, as well as a supportive personal tutor and, hopefully, research supervisor.

### Section C: To be completed by the research supervisor



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*(Please pay particular attention to any suggested research activity involving minors or vulnerable adults. Approval requires a currently valid CRB check to be appended to this form. If in any doubt, please refer to the Research Committee.)*

Please mark the appropriate box below:

Ethical approval granted ☒

Refer to the Department's Research and Ethics Committee

Refer to the School's Research and Ethics Committee

Signature:

Date:

**Section D: To be completed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Departmental staff member**

*(Please read this ethics release form fully and pay particular attention to any answers on the form where underlined bold items have been circled and any relevant appendices.)*

I agree with the decision of the research supervisor as indicated above

Signature: 

Date: 

# *Did you move a lot as a child??*

*Are you female between 32-50?*

*If so, I'd love to talk to you about your  
experiences both past and present!*

*I am conducting a research project looking at the experience of  
woman who moved (both residence and school) three or more  
times between the ages of 5-18, as part of my Doctorate at City  
University.*

*If you would like to talk about it, please email me on*

*The research is supervised by Don Rawson, (Tel. [REDACTED];  
email: [REDACTED])*

## Appendix C: Information Sheet and Consent Form

### Information Sheet:

This research project is being carried out by **Carrie Nakan** as part of the Doctorate of Psychology in Counselling Psychology at City University and is under the supervision of **Dr. Don Rawson**.

The title of the project is “**The Experience of High Childhood Mobility: a Qualitative Study**”. This research aims to explore how females who moved (both residence and school) three or more times between the ages of 5-18 years old experienced the moves and how they make sense of who they are today.

There will be a semi-structured interview which will last around an hour. The interview will be recorded on audio tape and later transcribed word for word. The purpose of recording the session will be for the researcher to be able to cite specific experiences to include in the final write up. The tapes will be kept anonymously at all times, and will be destroyed 5 years after submission, in accordance with the British Psychological Society ethical guidelines.

As mentioned above, your anonymity will be maintained at all times. In order to do this, **any identifying quotes about you, including names or specific locations will be changed**. Pseudonyms will be used and specific places will be altered. This process will continue throughout the entire research process as well as in any future write up of it.

Your participation in this study is much appreciated and entirely voluntary. If there are any interview questions that you would prefer not to answer, you can decline with no further consequence. In addition, if you feel that you would like to withdraw from the study at any time, you are welcome to do so. If you have any questions or would like any more information, please do ask the researcher before you continue.

## Consent form

I would like you to read the paragraph below. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. If you agree with the paragraph, please sign on the dotted line.

I am in agreement with the purpose of this research project. I have been explained what will be involved of me in a way that I understand and have no further questions. I have been made aware that I am here voluntarily, and, as such, can withdraw at any point with no further consequences. In light of this information, I am happy to consent to take part in an interview that explores my experiences of moving multiple times during childhood. In addition, I am happy for the researcher to make an audio tape of the interview and for the recording to be transcribed verbatim for the purpose of the research.

Signed.....

Date.....

---

As the primary researcher, I will maintain confidentiality regarding the audio tape(s) that will be made during the interview outlined above. In addition, the audio tape(s), transcripts and any other relevant material resulting from this project will be used for research purposes solely. I will also protect the anonymity of the interviewee stated above during the entire process.

Signed.....

Date.....

---

Once the report is written up, would you like to receive a copy?

If yes, please write your address here:

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If necessary, please contact the primary researcher, Carrie Nakan, on XXXX.

The Supervisor of the project, Dr. Don Rawson, can be contacted on



## **Appendix D: Interview Schedule**

Please tell me about which places you have lived in during your life (specifically 5-18).

### **MOVING:**

1. What comes to mind when you think about moving as a child? What feelings/sensations do you have in your body when you think about moving as a child? (Probe for thoughts, feelings, images; reasons for moving)
2. How did you experience the moves?
3. What images come to mind when you think about the first few days after moving?
4. Were there any methods that you used to keep you *you* when you moved? (Did you have a safe place?)

### **IDENTITY:**

1. How do you feel when people ask you “Where are you from?” and how do you answer? (Does it depend on who’s asking?)
2. Where is “home” for you now?

### **REFLECTIONS:**

1. If you could go back in time and speak to yourself as a child, what would you say, knowing what you know now?
2. If you had a friend with a young child who was about to embark on the same kind of life that you had as a child, what advice would you give them?

### **FRIENDSHIPS:**

1. How would your friends have described you as a child?
2. How would you describe the friendships you had as a child? (Did these friendships change with repeated moves? What kind of people were you most drawn to – mono/multicultural?)
3. How would those closest to you now describe you?
4. How would you describe the relationships you have as an adult? (What kind of people are you most/least comfortable around?)

### **LINKING QUESTION:**

1. How do you feel your experience of moving a lot as a child has influenced who you are today, and the relationships that you form?

## **Appendix E: Resource List**

### **Resource List**

#### **The British Psychological Society (to find a psychologist):**

Tel: 0116 254 9568

Email: [enquiries@bps.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bps.org.uk)

Website: <http://www.bps.org.uk/psychology-public/find-psychologist/find-psychologist>

Address: St Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester, LE1 7DR

\*\*\*\*\*

#### **The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (to find a therapist):**

Tel: 01455 883300

Website: [http://www.bacp.co.uk/seeking\\_therapist/right\\_therapist.php](http://www.bacp.co.uk/seeking_therapist/right_therapist.php)

Address: British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy BACP House, 15 St John's  
Business Park, Lutterworth LE17 4HB

\*\*\*\*\*

#### **The Samaritans (emotional support helpline):**

Tel: 08457 90 90 90

Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

Website: <http://www.samaritans.org/>

Address: Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK, Chris, PO Box 90 90, Stirling, FK8 2SA

\*\*\*\*\*

#### **WPF Therapy (talking therapies):**

Tel: 020 7378 2000

Email: [reception@wpf.org.uk](mailto:reception@wpf.org.uk)

Website: <http://www.relate.org.uk/home/index.html>

Address: 23 Magdalen Street, London, SE1 2EN

\*\*\*\*\*

#### **Cruse Bereavement Care:**

Tel: 0844 477 9400

Email: [helpline@cruse.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cruse.org.uk)

Website: <http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk/index.html>

Address: Unit 01, One Victoria Villas, Richmond, TW9 2GW

\*\*\*\*\*

#### **MIND Charity (mental health charity):**

Tel: 0300 123 3393

Email: [contact@mind.org.uk](mailto:contact@mind.org.uk)

Website: <http://www.mind.org.uk/>

Address: 15-19 Broadway, Stratford, London E15 4BQ

\*\*\*\*\*

#### **Relate (relationship counselling):**

Tel: 0300 100 1234

Website: <http://www.relate.org.uk/home/index.html>

Address: Relate, Premier House, Carolina Court, Lakeside, Doncaster, DN4 5RA

## Appendix H: Table of Theme 2 with Subthemes, Sub-subthemes and Quote Locations

| Theme                                             | Subthemes                        | Sub-subthemes                                | Quote Locations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Managing the Self in Relation to the Other</b> |                                  |                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                   | Disconnection                    |                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                   |                                  | Incongruent Social Self                      | 2.21.2, 2.21.8, 2.23.13, 2.23.16, 2.24.16, 2.24.22, 2.25.7, 2.26.10, 2.30.2, 2.30.11, 2.30.17, 2.31.3, 2.31.18, 2.59.18, 2.60.3, 2.62.16, 4.3.16, 4.17.13, 4.17.15, 4.32.8, 4.48.15, 4.49.2, 4.49.6, 4.49.17, 4.49.20, 6.2.2, 6.3.6, 6.5.13, 6.8.7, 6.8.11, 6.8.14, 6.8.18, 6.15.4, 6.15.14, 6.15.23, 6.16.1, 6.16.7, 6.16.10, 6.17.23, 6.27.1, 6.27.11, 6.27.14, 6.28.10, 6.29.12, 6.30.16, 6.36.12, 6.45.2, 6.45.17, 8.9.1, 8.9.10, 8.9.13, 8.10.4, 8.29.12, 8.33.3, 8.33.11, 8.33.16, 8.33.19, 8.34.1, 8.34.7, 8.34.15, 8.34.20, 8.35.2, 8.38.8, 8.39.2, 8.50.8, 8.60.8, 8.61.4, 8.61.9, 8.61.13 |
|                                                   |                                  | Fluid Identity                               | 4.12.7, 4.12.19, 4.14.15, 4.14.22, 4.15.8, 4.15.15, 4.15.19, 4.17.1, 4.17.5, 4.17.20, 6.30.10, 6.30.14, 6.32.1, 7.58.10, 7.58.17, 7.59.2, 7.59.6, 7.59.10, 7.59.17                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                                                   |                                  | Lack of Emotional Connection for Protection: | 1.45.17, 4.18.3, 4.18.9, 4.18.12, 4.32.15, 4.33.4, 4.33.20, 4.34.2, 4.35.10, 5.8.16, 5.35.3, 5.35.16, 5.37.3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                   | Managing the Others Expectations |                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                   |                                  |                                              | 1.13.289, 1.14.302, 1.17.373, 1.31.707, 1.32.715, 1.32.724, 1.32.731, 1.33.737, 1.39.878, 1.52.1196, 1.55.1248, 1.59.1342, 1.59.1355, 1.60.1367, 1.62.1420, 1.63.1430, 2.43.14, 2.43.21, 2.46.14, 2.46.20, 2.47.3, 2.48.8, 2.48.12, 2.48.18, 2.49.1, 2.49.9,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

|  |                                  |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |                                  |  | 2.50.17, 2.53.1, 2.53.16, 3.20.4, 3.31.1, 3.33.13, 3.33.20, 3.39.19, 3.40.6, 3.40.10, 3.40.16, 3.46.18, 4.3.16, 4.4.2, 4.4.15, 4.5.11, 4.7.11, 4.19.12, 4.26.5, 4.26.12, 4.26.17, 4.27.7, 4.27.12, 4.27.21, 4.28.7, 4.28.11, 4.28.22, 4.29.1, 4.29.6, 4.29.19, 4.30.2, 4.30.9, 4.30.14, 4.43.14, 4.45.19, 4.46.4, 4.46.13, 4.47.3, 4.48.2, 5.2.5, 5.17.16, 5.18.4, 5.18.21, 5.19.3, 5.20.15, 5.21.1, 5.22.7, 5.26.19, 5.27.10, 5.28.10, 5.43.16, 5.44.1, 6.52.16, 6.56.5, 6.56.11, 6.56.19, 6.57.5, 6.58.4, 6.58.13, 6.58.19, 6.59.16, 8.4.17, 8.9.20, 8.28.16, 8.29.2, 8.42.18, 8.49.3, 8.49.8, 8.49.20, 8.50.5, 8.50.14, 8.51.4, 8.51.13, 8.51.19, 8.52.7, 8.52.14, 8.53.1, 8.54.2, 8.54.8, 8.54.16, 8.55.1, 8.58.9, 8.71.16                                                                                                            |
|  | (Dis)Comfort in the (Un)Familiar |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|  |                                  |  | 1.21.9, 1.21.20, 1.22.5, 1.22.19, 1.23.5, 1.23.20, 1.30.14, 1.33.10, 1.33.19, 1.34.4, 1.36.16, 1.37.15, 1.38.9, 1.39.7, 1.40.10, 1.41.3, 1.42.1, 1.42.9, 1.42.20, 1.49.7, 1.55.1, 1.56.1, 1.56.10, 1.57.3, 1.57.15, 1.58.1, 1.61.8, 2.52.3, 3.39.3, 3.39.7, 3.40.21, 3.41.13, 3.41.17, 4.8.1, 4.8.10, 4.8.15, 4.19.19, 4.20.4, 4.20.16, 4.20.20, 4.21.1, 4.21.6, 4.21.11, 4.21.18, 4.22.5, 4.22.10, 4.22.15, 4.23.1, 4.39.8, 4.39.16, 4.40.2, 4.40.10, 4.41.3, 5.12.5, 5.16.5, 5.16.18, 5.16.22, 5.17.6, 5.19.7, 5.21.22, 5.23.7, 5.23.16, 5.24.1, 5.24.10, 5.28.7, 5.32.12, 5.33.5, 5.34.3, 5.34.16, 5.35.22, 5.47.5, 6.30.6, 6.37.18, 6.38.1, 6.38.20, 7.4.20, 7.11.12, 7.24.11, 7.24.15, 7.26.5, 7.26.10, 7.26.18, 7.27.2, 7.29.1, 7.29.6, 7.29.18, 7.30.1, 7.33.11, 7.36.1, 7.38.1, 7.38.7, 7.38.9, 7.38.21, 7.39.2, 7.40.3, 7.40.14, |

|  |            |                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--|------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |            |                                     | 7.40.20, 7.42.1, 7.42.18, 7.43.3, 7.44.11, 7.55.13, 7.58.1, 7.66.2, 7.66.13, 6.67.1, 7.68.2, 7.69.20, 7.82.9, 7.82.15, 8.9.15, 8.20.17, 8.21.1, 8.25.10, 8.26.15, 8.27.1, 8.27.18, 8.31.3, 8.31.16, 8.32.3, 8.32.8, 8.36.12, 8.36.18, 8.37.6, 8.39.1, 8.43.4, 8.43.9, 8.46.1, 8.47.1, 8.53.5, 8.55.5, 8.58.15, 8.69.11, 8.69.16, 8.70.20, 8.71.12, 8.71.18, 8.72.2 |
|  | Connection |                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|  |            | Identifying with Marginalized Other | 2.25.15, 2.44.16, 2.60.12, 6.26.4, 6.26.11, 6.26.16, 6.28.19, 5.30.4, 5.30.18, 6.34.13, 6.35.14, 8.22.18, 8.23.10, 8.23.18, 8.24.4, 8.24.8, 8.25.13, 8.45.21, 8.46.9                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|  |            | Increased Sense of Self             | 4.49.3, 4.50.2, 4.50.12, 4.50.20, 4.51.9, 4.51.13, 6.16.16, 6.17.1, 6.35.17, 6.36.7, 6.37.3, 6.49.1, 8.33.7, 8.34.22                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|  |            | Increased Importance of Friendships | 1.47.17, 1.48.16, 5.35.10, 4.36.1, 4.36.4, 4.36.9, 4.36.16, 4.36.22, 5.37.7                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

## **Appendix I: Theme List**

1. The Role of the Family in CRM
  - 1.1 Feeling supported
  - 1.2 Coping on own
2. Managing the Self in Relation to the Other
  - 2.1 Disconnection
    - 2.1.1 Incongruent social self
    - 2.1.2 Fluid identity
    - 2.1.3 Lack of emotional connection for protection
  - 2.2 (Dis)comfort in the (un)familiar
  - 2.3 “Where *am* I from?”: Managing the Others’ expectations
  - 2.4 Connection
    - 2.4.1 Identifying with the marginalised other
    - 2.4.2 Increased sense of self
    - 2.4.3 Increased importance of friendships
3. Managing the Self in Relation to the World
  - 3.1 “Orphaned” by passport and host countries
    - 3.1.1 Belonging in passport country
    - 3.1.2 Not belonging in passport country
    - 3.1.3 Belonging in host country
    - 3.1.4 Not belonging in host country
    - 3.1.5 Repatriation challenges
  - 3.2. “Citizen of the World” and the Meaning of “Home”
    - 3.2.1 “Home is...”
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    - 3.2.3 Ambivalence toward settling
4. Intrapsychic Understanding of CRM
  - 4.1 Influence of CRM on present day self
  - 4.2 Reflections on CRM
  - 4.3 Implications for others
    - 4.3.1 “I would recommend it” versus “The first thing that hit my mind was ‘don’t’”

4.3.2 “Different children deal with it differently”

4.3.3 Suggestions for others

## **Appendix J: Analysis of Theme: “The Role of the Family in CRM”**

### **Theme: Feeling (Un)Supported by Family**

Participants reported experiencing families as supportive or unsupportive during their transient upbringings. Support served as a protective factor against the difficulties of moving, however lack of support forced participants to develop coping mechanisms to survive socially, often through a painful process. Many participants report employing these coping mechanisms as adults, which can be both beneficial and detrimental.

### **Coping on Own**

The majority of participants reported coping alone with the experience of CRM, which is reported widely amongst this demographic (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Despite this often resulting in learning valuable coping skills, the process by which these were learned was often unappreciated even in retrospect. While some participants spoke of lack of communication as the cause of feeling alone, others expressed feeling unconsidered or neglected by their parents, resulting in a lack of agency.

Several participants discussed lack of communication in the family as a major cause of feeling alone and having to be self-sufficient. Robyn felt feelings were not encouraged within the family.

My family never really talk{ed} about difficult feelings, I never really...felt like...I could really...talk to them about how I felt about moving or whatever. (Robyn, 8.62.12)

Emma recalls attempting to gain support from her mother by sharing her feelings, but was unsuccessful. When attempting to console a child, parents may accidentally give off messages of grief being bad or unnecessary (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Subsequently Emma felt she only had herself to rely on.

P: I remember, absolutely balling my eyes out, so upset, and saying to my mum, “I’m really homesick, I’m so homesick”, and she said, “oh don’t be silly”, “you *are* at home”, and that was it, just “get on with it”.

I: How did you feel when she said that?

P: Oh horrendous, just “I’ve got to cope on my own then”, I remember it being horrendous. Yea. Just so lonely...[CRIES]. (Emma, 6.21.3).

Amongst TCKs, unresolved grief has been linked with feelings of depression and anger, and can lead to delayed grief reactions (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Indeed, Emma accessed therapy in her mid-twenties to address issues of unresolved anger and grief from childhood. Her memories of feeling alone and unsupported are riddled throughout the interview, often changing from first to third person perspective, perhaps to protect herself from deep feelings of sadness as a child which are still close to the surface for her.

When you turned up somewhere you were just completely on your own, you’d be in a new country, you’d be in a new school, it was terrifying, absolutely terrifying, it makes me upset just... [CRIES]. (Emma, 6.18.23).

Emma’s memories are raw enough to cause her immediate pain when thinking about moving, recalling the anxiety and fear she felt as a child.

Other participants expressed feeling unconsidered by their parents, resulting in feeling rejected and having to cope alone. Ashley and Robyn describe feelings of being unconsidered by their fathers.

My dad kept wanting to move because I think he was bored, he wanted a new thing, there was something in him that was wanting to move on, [LAUGHS], he didn’t *need* to move. (Robyn, 8.63.11)

The reason *why* the moves occurred are important for Robyn; she cannot appreciate the moves as anything but selfish, acts that had such great effect on her but with seemingly little consideration. Ashley recalls a physically and emotionally distant father, who sent her to boarding school and would seem to forget about her during school holidays.

Sometimes when we would begin term, they would be trying to reach my dad because they didn’t know what to do with us. (Ashley, 8.48.4)

Both Ashley and Sarah recount being moved unexpectedly, with little consideration to their feelings, leaving them feeling distraught and lacking in agency.

I got in the car, and it was just full of stuff, so I knew something was up, {mum} said, “we’re moving, we’re not living with daddy anymore”, it was just devastating, I reacted very quickly, crying and shouting and being upset. (Sarah, 2.11.12).

We were saying, “oh I wanted to get my stuff, we want to get this”, things that matter to us, and {dad} didn’t give a flying shit, cause he was almost like, “what’s that compared to having to move?”. Now I would say it was disrespectful. Then it was like it didn’t matter, all my books, my notes, was just trash for him. (Ashley, 7.84.7).

Ashley’s father’s apparent lack of consideration left her feeling confused, hurt and angry. Only as an adult is she able to label his behaviour as ‘disrespectful’; perhaps as a child this was too difficult to acknowledge.

Robyn recalls feeling paralysed after finding out about an imminent and unavoidable move after working very hard to assimilate.

I felt awful. I just stopped talking [LAUGHS], I just didn’t say anything for the rest of the evening [LAUGHS], and my parents just kind of left me to it [LAUGHS]. I was just, completely silent, we went back to the hotel, and after everyone had gone to sleep, I just cried [LAUGHS]. (Robyn, 8.4.21).

Robyn stopping talking when she was informed, suggesting perhaps employing a freeze, fight or flight response to the perceived threat (Cannon, 1929). Smaller and younger animals employ this method as a way to stave off danger by acting dead; perhaps Robyn’s only available response was to freeze, as she was unable to flee (she was too young to support herself) or fight (this method had proven unsuccessful previously). The threat did not pass and Robyn allowed herself to connect to her sadness later that evening, but alone.

Emma developed such successful coping mechanisms due to her parent’s lack of support that her parents perceived her as coping, and offered even less support, reaffirming the cycle.

I think {my parents} always saw me coping and thought that I was fine and there was never a question, you know, “is she struggling?” cause I was so good at putting on a front. (Emma, 6.45.21).

What Emma was able to achieve by adapting to the situation also served to keep her from receiving the support she desired.

The dominant reason why participants felt alone as children appeared to be a lack of communication in the family. This left participants feeling unconsidered and neglected, especially when moves were made abruptly, with little or no warning, compromising the child’s

sense of agency. Participants felt parents would try to console them which led to internalising the message that expressing grief was negative, leading participants to cope on their own. Sometimes, this ability to cope on their own precluded gaining further support as they were perceived to be managing well.

### **Feeling Supported**

Several participants recalled sporadic support; only one, Naomi, expressed feeling continuously supported. Participants felt supported by parent's efforts regarding education, friendships and roots. Consistency was viewed as the most important antidote to the chaos of moving.

Naomi reflected on what her parents did that made moving easier for her, including her mother quitting her job to settle them (3.20.18), her parents getting along well (3.21.14), not putting too much pressure on extracurricular activities (3.6.2) and encouraging them to interact with peers (3.11.11).

They told us in advance, "we are going to be moving next year, you'll go to new school, you've have more friends", you know, and I remember that. (Naomi, 3.2.21)

{My} parents were always trying to give me a lot of support at home with the moving, I think they were trying to minimise the impact it would have on me and in that sense I felt they did it quite alright. (Naomi, 3.10.13)

She felt her parents preparing her for the move was an example of them "keeping her in mind" (Sandler, 1980). However, she states the most important thing her parents did was provide her with consistency, and therefore predictability, in an otherwise chaotic situation.

Everything was changing but the reference that was them, and my little brother, they were still there. So I think that gives a lot of security. (Naomi, 3.30.8).

Despite so many changes taking place around them, Naomi experienced her family as constant and safe. Moving causes anxiety, which causes individuals to gravitate towards familiarity and attachment figures (Mikulincer et al., 2002). For Naomi, her anxiety was assuaged by the familiarity her parents provided her; her family functioned as a "safe base"

(Bowlby, 1969/1988). Anya experienced her family in a similar manner, providing her with a sense of security amongst transience.

I had blind trust in my parents, so whatever they decided was fine...and as long as I was with them, I was ok. I was terrified of being on my own [LAUGHS].  
(Anya, 1.43.11)

Having access to a safe base enabled Anya to explore the world, knowing she could return to gain security and reassurance (Bowlby, 1969/1988). Anya speaks of her parents in a childlike manner, needing them to feel safe, supporting the concept of this demographic experiencing a delayed “emerging adulthood” (Arnett, 2002).

Other participants were able to retrospectively appreciate efforts their parents made during their childhoods to mitigate the effects of CRM.

Every summer my parents would make sure that we'd go back and then I could see my friends. (Matilda, 5.9.19).

My parents definitely cared, they prepared and made sure that we had good schools to go to, so it's not like they didn't care about how we felt, they've always looked after us really well. (Robyn, 8.67.14).

Robyn identifies her parent's interest in her education as an indicator of their consideration. In contrast to the rest of her interview, here she says they cared about her feelings. Like Danielle, perhaps in retrospect Robyn can appreciate efforts her parents made at the time, which she was unable to do as a child. Danielle expresses gratitude towards her parents for providing her with the option to put roots down in her passport country, even though ultimately she did not take this option.

My parents always tried to make sure that we could have a home, we would go back to {passport country}, make sure we learned {native language}, they talked us into going to university in {passport country}, just so we have the option to call it home if we wanted to. (Danielle, 4.52.19).

It feels important to Danielle that her parents considered the impact moving had on her ability to feel grounded.

Anya found grounding and support in her nuclear family when she felt rejected by her extended family and passport country. Over time, she was able to appreciate how similar they are to her, providing a sense of belonging.

I've just learned also to appreciate {my parents} more, because in the end, when I felt a bit, rejected by my cousins and their friends, I always had them to go back to, and realised how much we had in common, they understand me, and they're in the same situation in a way. (Anya, 1.27.16).

Being understood holds high importance for Anya, as this leads to a sense of connection.

Anya's experience of realising difference and being marginalised helped her connect with her family.

Several participants experienced parents buying property as highly supportive. Anya states her parents "finally" bought a house to give them roots, indicating something sorely desired. She places her parents firmly in control of giving her roots, relinquishing responsibility.

My parents finally bought like a house in {passport country} because they felt that they needed somewhere to give us some roots [LAUGHS]. (Anya, 1.20.17)

I: And you said your parents bought a home, when you were 14, how did that feel?

P: A huge relief... like we were really important, I felt like for the first time we were really, really, really mattered, um... (Emma, 6.43.5)

Emma repeats "really" mattered three times, indicating a strong feeling of consideration. After a decade of moving, her parents buying somewhere indicated how important her sense of grounding was to them.

Most participants expressed an inconsistent level of support from their families. However, when this support was provided, it was greatly appreciated. Support included securing a good school, buying property to provide roots, and preparing the child for the move. Providing consistency and predictability from move to move was perceived as very containing, and parents often took on the role of a "safe base". A sense of belonging within the family was viewed as positive.

## **Appendix K: Analysis of Theme: “Intrapsychic Understanding of CRM”**

### **Theme Intrapsychic Understanding of CRM**

Participants reflected on their experiences of CRM, identifying both negative and positive lasting impacts on their relationships and identity. Participants were mixed in their feelings about others having the same experience as them.

#### **Influence of CRM on Present Day Self**

Most participants reflected on the effects of their childhood on their adult selves, sometimes taking responsibility for long-lasting effects, other times laying the blame on external factors, such as parents or school environment. Positives gained and negatives endured were explored in relation to one another, at times cancelling one each other out, and in others, highlighting the other deficits or benefits. One positive gained from moving a lot was the ability to engage with new people easily.

I've learnt to be more open with people. (Matilda, 5.11.1)

Having to move around so much forces you to be open because unless you make the effort to make friends, they are not going to come to you. I'm used to open a conversation, and not being too shy if I'm in a place where I don't know anyone. (Naomi, 3.9.8).

Naomi had to cultivate social skills as a child to survive socially, and appreciates the benefits as an adult. In adulthood, Emma also appreciates skills that helped during childhood.

I've kind of adopted skills that if I start a new job, um, if I go somewhere new, I have all the same feelings, and I *know* how to cope with it, its, I really, god, you know, these coping mechanisms set in really really early, of, 'ok, I'm in this situation, how can I survive, how can I make friends, how can I be popular'. (Emma, 6.5.9)

Unlike Emma, Naomi is unsure whether this openness was inherent, or whether it was engendered by the constant moving.

Both my brother and me we are quite open, I don't know if it is part of our personality, or was a bit promoted by all this change of location, in schools, in friends, new environments, I don't know if this is part of the personality or the

fact that we really needed to be open and nice to other children, because otherwise they are not going to be your friends [LAUGHS]. (Naomi, 3.11.5).

Emma links her well-developed coping mechanisms from childhood with a sense of independence as an adult.

I still feel like that now, as an adult, I don't want to say self-contained, but that feeling of just coping on my own, I'm very good at that. (Emma, 6.5.1).

Despite appreciating benefits from their childhood, it was not always appreciated how they were developed.

P: I'm really resourceful, I'm very independent, so there is good, but if I weighed up the two up, good and bad...

I: It doesn't outweigh the bad...

P: No definitely not [LAUGHS]. I'd rather be quite shy and not have all that put on me when I was a child, so yea [LAUGHS]. (Emma, 6.24.15).

Emma rose to the challenge of assimilating as a child, which has benefitted her as an adult, but is resentful of the path she had to tread to get through it. Robyn equally views her upbringing as something that has had a lasting impact, however this impact is both good and bad.

It shaped who I am, in both good and bad ways, I think it definitely... made me more...you know, open-minded. (Robyn, 8.65.13)

I'm really glad now in a way that I've been, I've been there {host country}, but I'm not necessarily sure that it did much good for my long term mental health [LAUGHS]. (Robyn, 8.22.1)

Other participants expressed liking the people they developed into as a result of their upbringing, seeming not to harbour resentment about the situation.

That particular time in my life, um, has affected me, but it has made me who I am, made me more resilient, and stronger. (Matilda, 46.21)

I'm quite happy with what {my family} have become. Highly flexible, highly adaptive, I think it helped, um, me personally, um having moved around at a very early age, throughout my life. (Matilda, 5.14.17)

I think I've gained from it, um, I don't think I was an extremely confident person to start out with, but I think being able to adapt to new environments it kind of forced me to be more, um...brave, and I think I grew from it more than I was hurt by it. (Danielle, 4.52.12).

Several participants spoke of negative lasting impacts of CRM. As a result of a traumatic unexpected move that separated her from her father, Sarah describes experiencing extreme

difficulty moving as an adult. She describes intense trepidation in the run up to the actual act, which quickly abates once the move is completed. This could suggest unresolved trauma from the difficult childhood move.

P: The emotions that I'm aware of if I think about moving are sort of dread and anxiety and sadness...and I think that's how it was you know, every time, I just, I hated it, and I didn't want to... (Sarah, 2.14.10).

It would appear that subsequently Sarah feels unable to move herself, perhaps as each time, re-experiencing the trauma of her first move.

I assume most of it is connected to when I was 10, you know, I don't know. Um. [SIGH. LONG PAUSE]. (Sarah, 2.10.2)

It felt like I couldn't do it, it wasn't that I just didn't want to, unfortunately that has stayed with me, um, and now when I move...I just get completely sort of paralysed, it's awful, I mean it's a really difficult thing for me to move house, yea. I mean it really, yea, it's, yea, I would, I wish I never had to do it again. (Sarah, 2.9.5).

Sarah uses the word "paralysed" to express her feelings regarding moving, implying numbness, and it is worth wondering whether she is highlighting *emotional* numbness. As a child when she was moved unexpectedly, she expressed anger towards her mother but did not feel it was sufficiently acknowledged. Expressing feelings of anger and sadness did not lead to a reversal of the problem, and so perhaps she subsequently felt it necessary to numb her emotions as they were unacknowledged and did not lead to any helpful resolution. In addition, paralysis implies an inability to physically move, which is interesting as it is the *physical* act of moving that Sarah struggles with. It is almost as though her body itself is revolting against the act of moving, perhaps due to trauma from the previous moves, but also as a way to indicate her lack of desire of wanting to move as a child. Perhaps her body is re-acting in a way she was unable to do as a child, when she was physically moved against her will, and her body now rejects being moved, even when she consciously desires it. An inability to pack and move in adulthood has been found in TCK research (Gilbert & Gilbert, 2011). Trauma work suggests the body holds onto a trauma long after it has occurred, and, with a relevant trigger, the fight, flight or freeze response can be activated (Rothschild, 2000). Sarah literally freezes when she has to pack to move, perhaps indicating some unresolved trauma.

Many participants spoke of feeling unsupported due to a lack of communication in the family while growing up. Sarah experiences difficulty talking to her daughter about sadness due to finding her own feelings of sadness as a child overwhelming. As a result, she unintentionally discourages her from expressing difficult feelings, reinforcing the intergenerational transmission of repressing emotions.

It makes me quite sad, thinking about myself then, I wouldn't want anyone else to, to feel like that, but I really found it difficult to see {my daughter} sad, I just found it unbearable, perhaps I ended up doing a similar sort of thing to her, not letting her express it because it was so upsetting for me. (Sarah, 2.35.2).

Sarah alludes to an inability to regulate her daughter's emotions, perhaps having not experienced this herself as a child.

In contrast to other participants, Naomi finds it difficult to ascertain any links between her background and who she is as a person today.

I never think about me being someone who has been moving a lot, ok? I never thought it could be something special, I always thought it was something that just happened to me, like the one who happens to be blonde. It's not particularly traumatic, it doesn't, it hasn't created major problems in my life, it's not something I carry any burden on my shoulder, a trauma, no. Not at all...I don't miss having been settled all my life in one place because I don't know what is that. So you don't miss things you don't know they exist. (Naomi, 3.46.1).

Naomi does not draw correlations between her upbringing and her adult self. She likens it to hair colour, something unavoidable and inevitable. Perhaps this refers to her feelings of lack of agency in her mobile childhood, or perhaps she genuinely experienced it as normal and not traumatic. Naomi views a "settled life" as interesting but lacking intrigue – it feels difficult for her to comprehend this other type of life, perhaps implying that as a child, she found it hard to even entertain the idea that a different kind of life was possible. This brings to mind children's egocentric view of the world; perhaps this type of thinking served to protect Naomi from feelings of marginalisation, as she did not appear to consider herself to be different when she was growing up. Perhaps holding onto this protective mind-set as an adult continues to serve as a protective lens through which to view her background, making it possible for her to incorporate her background into her present day life in a positive, successful manner.

Participants were mixed in their feelings about the impact high CRM had on their present day selves; many expressed a sense of liking aspects of themselves that grew from their childhoods, such as a sense of openness and ability to get along with new people instantly. However, they often did not feel the positives outweighed the challenges they encountered in managing their childhoods. For one participant, her ability to bear her daughters sadness due to have experienced such unmanaged sadness as a child is limited, and moving as an adult results in paralysis. In contrast, another participant finds it difficult to identify any lasting negativity from her childhood experiences.

### **Reflections on CRM**

Participants were readily able to access positive, negative and neutral memories regarding their experiences of CRM. Ashley, Robyn and Anya were positive about their experiences.

To be honest, I don't think I had any bad memories per se. (Ashley, 7.4.18)

I thought it was very exciting, I think I learned a lot from all the experiences (Danielle, 7.7.14)

I think it was a great experience, honestly. (Anya, 1.52.7)

{I} would recommend it. (Anya, 1.53.6)

Anya and Emma express a great amount of pleasure recounting their experiences.

I think about it a lot actually, and I talk about it with various people, I like talking about it, [LAUGHS]. (Anya, 1.64.1)

I'm happy to be talking about these things, I talk about it all the time [LAUGHS]. (Emma, 6.63.12)

However, Anya qualifies this at one point in the interview:

Maybe {I} idealise my childhood, and say 'it was great moving around' and stuff. (Anya, 1.61.2)

This may indicate an awareness that fond reflections of this time may be somewhat tainted.

Anya, Robyn and Emma reflect on an appreciation for host countries that only developed in retrospect.

Now I like it, but I remember when I lived in {host country}, I didn't really like it that much. (Anya, 1.13.10)

I am glad that I've been there {host country}, it's an interesting place, but at the same time I was so miserable [LAUGHS]. (Robyn, 8.22.11)

Now I look back on it as an adult and I think, ah, you know, the things we had there and it was so, it was so much fun. (Emma, 6.19.13)

Research suggests TCKs are reticent to share negative aspects of their background in case this appears to discount their happy experiences, or feel they are blaming their background for their difficulties, as they often feel they have gained much from experience (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). However, several participants recalled the moves as particularly negative.

I don't have any real sort of positive memories...either, they're either neutral or negative, you know, I haven't got anything sort of good to say about it really. (Sarah, 2.9.20)

The sort of readjusting all the time I think is probably exhausting, and you know, mentally, I think it's probably really hard work. (Sarah, 2.62.3)

Just sort of sadness, or depression or annoyance, or sort of...um, disappointment, sort of um, feeling sad, and annoyed, and um yea [LAUGHS]. (Danielle, 4.47.14)

Both Sarah and Matilda's emotions are close to the surface when talking about their past, indicating perhaps re-experiencing anxiety and fear that was present in childhood.

I do know that there are certain things that will make me upset, and you know, there are certain things that I *know* could *easily* make me cry, so I'll avoid quite a lot of things... (Sarah, 2.52.1)

It makes me still sometimes vulnerable, um, speaking about those early experiences early on. (Matilda, 5.46.13)

Naomi was ambivalent in her reflections on her childhood, struggling to understand whether her difficulties were due to moving or just natural teenage emotions.

I remember one year there was a bit of a rocky patch, not being very happy, quite melancholic, I don't know if it was because of the moving or maybe it was during the years I was kind of changing. (Naomi, 3.3.20).

I never kn-, have been able to decide what I was going through was because of the moving or just because something that everyone goes through. Changing from child to teenager, I don't know. (Naomi, 3.31.8)

Similarly, Robyn questions whether her unhappiness as a child was due to the regular moving or whether it was more to do with her age.

It might also have to do with the fact that I was a teenager so yea, I was blaming it all on the move, whereas, things might not have been so brilliant if I had stayed in {previous host country} [LAUGHS]. (Robyn, 8.10.23)

Participants held positive, negative and neutral emotions regarding their backgrounds.

Several questioned their current positive memories, wondering whether they were viewing their experiences through rose tinted glasses. Indeed, research suggests TCKs can be reluctant to share negative memories for fear of discounting the positive experiences they had (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009), which may explain retrospective positive memories. Several participants questioned how much age influenced their childhood difficulties, and how much was due to the high mobility.

### **Implications for Others**

Participants distanced themselves from their experiences to reflect on the impact high CRM could have on others. Despite drawing on their own experiences, there was a recognition that not everyone experiences situations in the same way. At times, this reflection resulted in low level resentment; at other times, a sense of hope that others would not experience mobility in the same manner.

### ***“I would recommend it” vs “the first thing that hit my mind is don’t...”***

Participants held varying ideas about whether they would recommend moving a lot with children. Two would definitely recommend it, four would not, one was ambivalent and one did not comment. Anya and Matilda would advocate moving.

I would recommend it. (Anya, 1.53.6)

If you want to move around and experience other cultures, that’s fantastic, so in my view I would encourage anyone who wants to move somewhere. Makes you whole as a person, um, every experience of a language, culture, um, makes you a better person in *my* view. (Matilda, 5.21.12)

Robyn comments slightly ambivalently, but still fairly positively:

I wouldn’t say to people “oh don’t move with your children”, I don’t think it’s necessarily a bad thing. (Robyn, 8.65.6)

Sarah, Naomi, Emma and Ashley explicitly say that they would not recommend it to others. In answer to the question, “If you had a friend with young children who was going to embark on the same kind of lifestyle that you had growing up, how would you feel about that, and what would you say?”, Sarah and Ashley answered in the negative.

[LONG PAUSE]. I mean I think I would feel, um...that it might be...quite destabilising for the child, I mean whether I would say anything I don't know [LAUGHS], um but I think I would certainly feel like that, I would, it would make me feel slightly anxious for the child, I think, perhaps for both of them, um...[LONG PAUSE]. (Sarah, 2.56.1)

Um, hmmm...that's a hard one...how would I say about that...the first thing that hit my mind is I would tell her “don't”. (Ashley, 7.77.22)

Naomi and Emma share their opinions on CRM at various points throughout the interview, unprompted.

It's something that...mmm, if I could avoid that for my children in the future, maybe I would avoid it, let's just put it that way, like half term moving's, not very good. (Naomi, 3.4.19)

It was really hard...I just, ugh, I just wouldn't recommend it for anyone. (Emma, 6.248)

### ***“Different Children Deal with it a Lot Differently”***

Half the participants felt all individuals experience CRM differently. Participants took into account various aspects of moving, including the child's personality, age and how the moves occur.

Several participants based their comments on experiences they have witnessed others have that were different to their own.

Not everybody who moves a lot has a terrible experience, maybe they do, I don't know, but, yea, that child's experience isn't going to be the same as mine, so I would perhaps also be a bit hopeful that it, if that is what's going to happen, then maybe they would have a different experience to me, um... (Sarah, 2.56.8).

There is an element of sadness in Sarah's words that the terrible experiences she had had could maybe have been avoided. Ashley struggled with bullying upon repatriation, and maintains hope that other schools may be different.

You can't really say, sometimes schools and environments are different for kids, it could be the circumstances are better for her. (Ashley, 7.78.2)

Danielle, Emma and Matilda allude to how personality can impact how a child responds to moving.

I think different children deal with it a lot differently, there are some kids that just take it really badly and...and they develop a lot more insecurities than they would have if they hadn't, my brother and another friend really suffered I think, but then there's other kids who really enjoy it and I think I've gained from it. (Danielle, 4.52.2).

I don't know a lot of other military kids, I suppose, or adults, I don't know if their experience is the same as mine, I think my sister's experience was very different to mine in fact. (Emma, 6.52.9)

It also depends I suppose a bit on the child as well, um, how you can manage to overcome all those difficulties throughout the years. (Matilda, 5.8.24).

Participants alluded to the fact that children deal with moving differently, which impacts on how their social network is affected. However, Anderson et al. (2014) found a small but significant reduction in the number of peers mobile individuals had with each move.

I didn't really have too much trouble, um, making new friends, my brother for instance really did, he sort of, he had sort of less and less friends, each time he moved [LAUGHS]. (Danielle, 4.14.9)

Research shows differences in how introverts and extroverts manage high CRM; correlations were found between introverts and a lower level of adult well-being (Oishi & Schimmack, 2010), possibly as they are not as adept as extroverts to making friends quickly (Oishi & Talhelm, 2012). Sadly, there has also been found correlations between introverts with a history of high CRM and early adult mortality rates, although the reason behind this is unclear (Oishi & Schimmack, 2010).

### ***Suggestions for Others***

Most participants were able to offer advice for others contemplating CRM. Most commonly, a high level of familial communication was touted as the most important aspect, along with a sense of continuity and stability.

Participants felt it important for parents to explain and include children in moving, as well as provide a safe environment to explore thoughts and feelings.

I just think it's so important to, for your children to think that they can talk to you, and that you'll listen to them. (Robyn, 8.62.21).

"Be as open as you possibly can, make a big deal of the fact that they are, leaving their friends, that they are going somewhere new, support them", cause I didn't feel like I had that, just be as open as you possibly can be, so if they are finding it difficult, then they're not on their own. (Emma, 6.12.4).

"Try to be aware of how your child is feeling about what's going on, explain what's going on and why you're doing it, try to judge how they are feeling about it as well, try to get a sense of, of what the impact is on them", which is, I suppose, what I think didn't happen to me. (Sarah, 2.57.19).

Sarah suggests increased communication and empathy from adults would have made her moving experiences much more bearable and less confusing. Robyn expresses the importance of preparing and including children in moving.

Don't tell them like two months before you move, don't spring it on them and just say, 'this is what we're doing'. (Robyn, 8.66.3)

Robyn's experience of lack of agency in this situation is clear, her anger still present 15 years later. She says "*spring it on them*", bringing to mind a springboard, which propels individual very far, very quickly. The lack of preparation and agency Robyn experienced in this situation made her feel she was on a fast-moving, unpredictable and fixed path. Importantly, lack of control can lead to depression and anxiety (e.g. Ross & Mirowsky, 1989). Conversely, Naomi recalls her parents meticulously explaining moving to her, and including her.

When my parents told me we are moving, they explained to me, "we are moving houses, we are moving schools", I remember very clearly an image in my mind, I could see my house inside a shopping bag...being carried somewhere else. (Naomi, 3.1.15)

Naomi recalls having no concept of moving, her earliest understanding as her house inside a shopping bag. This image positions the physical home as a symbolic transitional object (Winnicott, 1971) that bridges the gap between "here" and "there". Naomi's very clear memory of this image suggests this first experience of learning about "moving" had a profound impact on her, conjuring up very strong, important and lasting impressions. Despite her parents very much including her in the moves, she says this still did not clarify the situation, as her understanding of moving remained an enigma until it actually occurred.

I remember this new city a few months before we were in fact moving to look for a house where to stay, to look for accommodation, and they took me with

them, so I could maybe start seeing or understanding a bit more, and to be honest, I didn't understand anything. (Naomi, 3.29.11)

Naomi utilises this experience to help other parents comprehend how their children might interpret moving.

You need to be careful how you explain your child what is moving, because he's not going to understand it. It's something you don't understand until you move, until you see you are in a new place, in a new house, and everything changes apart from your parents. You don't understand anything else. And it doesn't matter how much your parents trying [sic] to explain you. (Naomi, 3.28.19)

Despite Naomi's parents' best intentions, she still experienced moving as confusing and unknown. She uses third person and refers to the child as "he"; perhaps she is trying to create distance between herself and memories she finds too painful to reflect on directly.

Naomi and Danielle comment on the importance of establishing as consistent an environment as possible when moving.

Things were not changing *that much*, of course the house was different, the friends and the school, but you will still go back home and have your routine, so the routine they were establishing on us was quite similar from one place to another and I think that helped us. (Naomi, 3.20.18).

Nowhere in the interview does Naomi express anger towards her parents for high mobility, however, at some points, certain phrases may suggest underlying anger. She refers to moving as "hassle", which her parents were "creating", firmly placing agency with them, and negatively referring to the moving experience. Research suggests mobile children may hold parents responsible for moving and feel anger towards them (e.g. Pollock & Van Reken, 2009); however, TCKs can find it difficult to share negative aspects of their upbringing for fear of discounting happy memories, or feeling they are blaming their upbringing for experiences of pain, despite often very much enjoying and appreciating the lifestyle itself (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Naomi alludes to positives she feels her parents provided her - a safe, secure family unit, and a predictable home life. Subsequently, even though the moves themselves were disruptive, this may have been counteracted by the stability her parents created as an antidote to the chaos. She refers to "the routine *they* were establishing on *us*", indicating that

although she felt little agency, this was something positive that her parents were doing, a way to counteract the disruption they were creating.

The important bit is that your core things do not change, for me everything was changing but the reference that was them, they were still there. So I think that gives a lot of security. (Naomi, 3.30.2)

Danielle also comments on the need for establishing as predictable an environment as possible.

If the child really suffers, then try to limit it, um, create a home, a stable home, stable surroundings, so... (Danielle, 4.53.17)

Most participants expressed a belief that CRM is experienced differently by different children. Research supports this (Oishi & Schimmack, 2010), demonstrating introverts fare worse in response to CRM than extroverts, as their social network dwindles with each move (Anderson et al., 2014). Participants emphasise the importance of communication within the family, regarding feelings about moving, and also the importance of including the child in the move, preparing them for it as best as possible. The importance of maintaining consistency and stability from one location to another was also expressed.

## **Appendix M: Poetic Condensation of Symbols**

I was struck when listening to the interviews of the many images participants employed to explain their feelings and experiences, both past and present, about moving, identity and relationships. Inspired by a form of poetry employing a phenomenological methodology by Ohlen (2003), I extracted all the metaphors, images and symbols from my participants' transcripts and collated them to form a kind of narrative of their journeys. I took poetic licence when doing this, moving some statements around so that they made more sense, however this did disrupt the linearity of the participants' stories. I hope the reader will agree on the necessity of this for readability rather than experiencing it as intrusive.

In the poem, the participants number, page number and line number is presented on the right.

### **Poetic Condensation of Symbols**

|                                                               |           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| They just kind of throw you in.                               | (1.6.18)  |
| The language barrier prevented me from making a good friend.  | (1.11.18) |
| It was like removing part of my identity in some way,         | (1.13.18) |
| my idealism flew out the window.                              | (1.17.15) |
|                                                               |           |
| I don't really click with people who are very local in a way, | (1.30.16) |
| I tend to gravitate towards people who are not like that.     | (1.42.1)  |
| I kind of distanced myself and we grew apart.                 | (1.26.3)  |
| I was the only one that was orphaned.                         | (1.28.12) |
|                                                               |           |
| I felt it always tainted their view of me,                    | (1.32.17) |
| I felt like I was completely losing my identity.              | (1.33.1)  |
|                                                               |           |
| Suddenly the rules were different,                            | (1.41.3)  |
| I don't know necessarily how to operate there as an adult.    | (1.53.19) |
| They will at one point try to put those tags on you,          | (1.60.7)  |

|                                                                          |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| They need those labels.                                                  | (1.60.12) |
| Erasing my childhood                                                     | (1.61.1)  |
| tainted the experience.                                                  | (1.61.15) |
| I lost my identity there.                                                | (1.33.2)  |
| It hits you in the face.                                                 | (1.62.11) |
| They felt they needed somewhere to give us some roots.                   | (1.20.18) |
| Whisked off in the middle of the night,                                  | (2.7.18)  |
| went a bit mad for a while.                                              | (2.19.17) |
| I'd gone too far.                                                        | (2.21.18) |
| I didn't want to be on the lower rungs of things,                        | (2.24.16) |
| I had to carve out some sort of role for myself.                         | (2.25.5)  |
| So I was a bit on the back foot                                          | (2.27.17) |
| once I'd shown my true colours.                                          | (2.32.10) |
| That was a part of me sticking up for the underdog.                      | (2.44.16) |
| I've always been quite open,                                             | (3.9.7)   |
| we were having an easy ride.                                             | (3.23.4)  |
| I could see my house inside a shopping bag being carried somewhere else. | (3.2.13)  |
| There was a bit of a rocky patch,                                        | (3.3.21)  |
| It took me a while to catch up with the other girls,                     | (3.5.16)  |
| I was kind of falling behind on the subjects from that year.             | (3.7.12)  |
| I was not still well established in my class.                            | (3.32.11) |
| It takes a year to settle, at least.                                     | (3.25.19) |
| The chain goes backwards and there is much more than meets the eye.      | (3.40.17) |

|                                                                            |           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Everything else changes but not the core.                                  | (3.30.16) |
| I have this inner need of <i>changing</i> ,                                | (3.43.6)  |
| I chicken out.                                                             | (3.44.10) |
| Whatever I told you it just came out as it was crossing my mind.           | (3.48.6)  |
| It's not something I carry any burden on my shoulder.                      | (3.46.16) |
| I often didn't feel like I was part of it,                                 | (4.4.1)   |
| wanting to get credit for having had all these experiences abroad.         | (4.5.9)   |
| I always wanted to be able to be adaptable,                                | (4.17.13) |
| I was never that deeply involved, I was able to step back.                 | (4.33.7)  |
| At some point you just generate a lot of friends if you move a lot,        | (4.34.20) |
| now I kind of let these friendships go a little bit.                       | (4.34.3)  |
| I just sort of let it phase out, quickly, quickly.                         | (4.35.18) |
| Really try to build on really good friendships,                            | (4.36.6)  |
| I'm trying to consciously invest more in certain friendships.              | (4.36.22) |
| It was just like a completely different world that was totally erased,     | (4.43.15) |
| I was always sort of still trying to hang on to it.                        | (4.43.21) |
| Time passed,                                                               | (4.44.7)  |
| felt like something had been taken away from you, taking a step backwards. | (4.47.3)  |
| I didn't sort of beat myself up about it,                                  | (4.49.16) |
| I think I grew from it more than I was hurt by it.                         | (4.52.17) |
| They're not at home anywhere;                                              | (4.53.9)  |
| create a home, a stable home, stable surroundings.                         | (4.53.21) |
| Having to adapt to different languages, a different system,                | (5.1.9)   |

that toughened me up. (5.3.2)

The initial trauma that I had went away. (5.3.10)

You have to be moved out of your comfort zone and put in a different country. (5.3.22)

I've had to fight some beliefs, some other prejudices, (5.7.23)

I've had to catch up on a few things, that was initially a struggle. (5.8.8)

All the time you have to battle with something. (5.8.21)

They immediately put you in a mould, (5.17.20)

they are so limited in their perception. (5.18.15)

Initially I was not welcomed, drawn towards people who are different. (5.30.6)

They've had something emotionally probably deep down that I was drawn to; (5.30.13)

it's a kindredship. (5.23.16)

I've learnt to be more open with people, (5.11.1)

we are citizens of the world at the end of the day. (5.13.14)

It makes you whole as a person. (5.21.14)

It doesn't go as deep, (5.32.4)

it's easier in a way, you don't invest that much emotional baggage. (5.35.15)

You lose that connection (5.33.11)

I was lost in a language, I was lost in a country, I was lost in everything. (5.46.20)

I was puzzled. (5.43.1)

There is always a way out, you got to figure a way out. (5.46.16)

I suppose that marked me as who I am. (5.43.11)

I become sometimes restless if we don't travel; (5.38.3)

if I stay in one place I feel I'm missing out on something. (5.38.19)

It was very much about putting on a front, (6.2.7)

it kind of makes me shudder a little bit; (6.7.16)

|                                                                         |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| just sort of weighing people up, I notice myself doing it all the time. | (6.8.14)  |
| Four individuals just sort of coping with this huge journey together,   | (6.7.2)   |
| everything was very military, in a box, matter of fact.                 | (6.9.10)  |
| "I'm really homesick, I'm really homesick",                             | (6.21.7)  |
| switch your brain off.                                                  | (6.23.3)  |
| Just absolutely balling my eyes out...                                  | (6.21.5)  |
| sometimes it's just a front, it's a mask, it's a put on.                | (6.15.9)  |
| It's a very military thing, very blinkered, literally like show horses. | (6.47.12) |
| I was so good at putting on a front,                                    | (6.46.1)  |
| "I'm gonna be caught out in a minute"                                   | (6.48.21) |
| I did circulate around lots of different groups,                        | (6.32.1)  |
| I don't like being smothered too much.                                  | (6.38.7)  |
| I've never had a solid friendship group,                                | (6.54.22) |
| I kind of drifted away from them.                                       | (6.32.17) |
| There's a huge rescuer in me;                                           | (6.35.13) |
| people make your world go round.                                        | (6.18.6)  |
| I really found my feet;                                                 | (6.33.7)  |
| it all just opened up, and just came out.                               | (6.10.15) |
| It's been a massive journey.                                            | (6.11.4)  |
| Building yourself up as a person,                                       | (6.52.18) |
| balancing on nothing because you haven't got roots.                     | (6.52.19) |
| You're a floating kind of thing that just moves around.                 | (6.52.22) |
| You're building up something in yourself but there's no roots to it.    | (6.52.23) |
| A huge part of me wants a foundation, to put roots down;                | (6.39.10) |
| I would like to have roots.                                             | (6.54.14) |
| All of a sudden I didn't belong,                                        | (7.24.15) |
| nobody would come to my rescue.                                         | (7.13.9)  |

For them I was like an alien, (7.26.9)  
it just made me feel small. (7.36.18)  
The only way they know how to respond is to just bash you down; (7.40.9)  
it was an eye-opener. (7.39.6)  
So I just brushed it away, (7.41.10)  
I suppose I just rolled with it to be honest. (7.58.2)

I'm glad I was colour blind and didn't see it, (7.22.16)  
Cause that's just too many battles for a child to fight. (7.78.12)  
A child shouldn't be fighting battles that at her age she doesn't understand. (7.78.16)

It didn't feel like a good time to move, (8.4.10)  
I was really settled there. (8.5.3)  
They'd taken us there under false pretences, (8.5.20)  
that's the way they'd framed it. (8.5.16)

I was just such a kind of oddity. (8.9.17)  
feel a bit out of place because I feel like I can't express myself properly. (8.58.11)  
I was trying to fit in and I didn't want to be the 'weird' one. (8.9.12)

I just wanted it to stop. (8.8.9)  
I just wanted to kind of *fit in*. (8.29.12)

I didn't know these rules that we were supposed to follow, (8.31.17)  
tried to just fit into her world (8.33.21)  
I just try to adapt to people around me so as to not stand out. (8.34.16)  
I find it really easy to slip into copying other people. (8.33.11)  
I have to fight against it a bit, cause sometimes my impulse is to fit in. (8.33.3)

I don't tend to bring up my background, unless I'm absolutely pressed, (8.49.4)  
sometimes I feel a bit like I'm overly hiding it. (8.49.8)  
It shaped who I am. (8.65.13)

|                                                                        |          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| There's something about being rooted in a community that's quite real. | (8.71.1) |
| I get weirdly unsettled by even just travelling.                       | (8.18.5) |
| I feel really out of place when I travel, really kind of unsettled.    | (8.18.8) |
| I want to stay here and have roots and friendships that last.          | (8.14.1) |

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