

Experiences of Coping in Young Unaccompanied Refugees in the UK

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ABSTRACT

Research with refugees tends to be dominated by mainstream medical and trauma models. However, development of resilience theories and research on coping increasingly find that such constructs can open up currently limited understandings of the refugee experience. This research took a culturally relativist approach to explore experiences of coping in young unaccompanied refugees in the UK.

Following extensive consultation, five young refugees were recruited, who were living independently or semi-independently having arrived in the UK without their family, at the age of 15 or 16. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to explore experiences and understanding of 'coping', whilst acknowledging the relative contributions of their own and my own cultural frameworks and the limitations of language; three participants made use of having an interpreter present.

The accounts are presented idiographically, under three major themes that were apparent on multiple levels of the refugees' lives, from the individual to the cultural: 'Adaptation in the context of hardship and loss', 'Beliefs and worldview in shaping a new life', and 'Building strength and self-reliance'. These findings contribute to research finding resilience in refugee lives, whilst not to the detriment of incredible loss and pain. The research attests to the significance of cultural frameworks in refugee coping, with religion playing a key role.

The themes are discussed in relation to existing literature and relevant texts, with implications for further research and clinical practice. The role of professionals as allies of refugees is suggested, in promoting socially inclusive practices that involves work both in the clinic and on community and social levels.

INTRODUCTION

The current research is a study of the meaning that young unaccompanied asylum-seekers make of coping with their experience following arrival in the UK, and thus is an exploration of resilience. The concepts of coping and resilience are explored within the introduction, along with other areas of theoretical importance to the research. I also introduce the researcher, the underpinning stance that guided the process, the context of global migration, and how refugees have been construed in public discourse. This is followed by a critical overview of the specific academic research that relates to the present research, identified through a literature search conducted using specific key terms. Conclusions of the literature review lead to the rationale of the current research.

1.1 Introducing the researcher

The present research is situated on the intersection between clinical work, social policy and politics. The acknowledgement of the political relevance of the work is in keeping with the overall philosophical stance I take as a researcher, which also contributes to the methodological design and writing style. Writing at times in the first person reflects the personal entering into the research, and a representation of the research as a co-construction between researcher and subject (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Arrival at this research topic was the culmination of multiple strands of interests and life circumstances, including the personal as well as the interpersonal; I would not have arrived at this project without the interest of those around me. Increasingly, migration was being reported and it was not possible to avoid hearing about the ‘migrant crisis’ in Europe, labelled as such by the media (Berry, Garcia-Blanco & Moore, 2016). Stories of unaccompanied children formed a personal resonance, as I was negotiating an evolving situation in my personal life towards increasing responsibility for children separated (although in different circumstances) from a parent, with the palpable presence of their corresponding emotions and challenges. Secondly, I had my own family history of dislocation, which brought me some sense of their loss through my own lack of belonging. Whilst not having parity with that of young people who have experienced war and conflict, and coming from a place of relative privilege, this authenticated my own curiosity in what it could mean to be unaccompanied and apart from home in the refugee context.

I may have doubted whether clinical psychology has a meaningful role within the topic of forced migration, given the political context of unfolding global events; the writing of this thesis had the backdrop of an evolving Syrian civil war, the vote for Brexit, and several acts of terrorism in the UK. However, I was encouraged by the enthusiasm that the idea for the project met with from tutors, and through academic groupwork. Without the resulting discovery of reasonable hope, this research may not have reached fruition: “Reasonable hope is a humble hope. It allows reasonable goals to trump ideal ones. It is satisfied to do less than everything that needs to be done in order to ensure that something be done.” (Weingarten, 2010, p.10)

1.1.1 Epistemological stance

I believe that the stories we hear have the capacity to change us; although our ability to hear them, and our interpretation of what we hear, is affected by circumstances and personal experiences. As a researcher I have always been drawn to idiographic research, despite the comprehensive undergraduate Psychology emphasis on the ‘nomothetic’ (Windelband, 1895/1998). This research is informed by a social constructionist approach, and in particular as a researcher I take a position of cultural relativism (Locke, 1944; Boas, 1940). Stated briefly this is the position that individuals’ experience and understanding of situations can only be understood in the context of their own culture, and thus that the way we each view the world is necessarily tied to our own social upbringing. This links to the idiographic, where the aim is to understand and draw out the complexity of individual experience, whilst acknowledging that experience is imbued with relational, social and cultural context. This position also informs the approach to the critique of existing psychological theory, as well as the methodological stance, as described in Chapter 2.

1.2 Forced migration

Migration has been a feature of human populations throughout history, however in recent years levels of forced migration have increased¹, primarily due to the global politics, inequalities and conflict. The present rise in migration to Europe, and consequently to the UK, is primarily from countries of ongoing or recent conflict, such as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, and Eritrea, or from Albania (Refugee Council, 2017).

¹ UNHCR records document up to the end of 2015, when there were 63.91 million total persons of concern, the highest yet recorded. Records show 54.96 million at the end of 2014, following a steady increase since recording began in 1951, when there were 2.12 million.

The UNHCR, which was set up following World War II, holds the “mandate to provide, on a non-political and humanitarian basis, international protection to refugees and to seek permanent solutions for them” (UNHCR, 2005, p.7). Of 63.91 million ‘persons of concern’ globally, just over half are under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2016).

The nationalities and composition of family groups have also seen a change, with a vast increase in displaced and unaccompanied young people (aged under 18), who are at risk of exploitation and trafficking (Europol & Interpol, 2016). Asylum applications to the UK from unaccompanied children reached 3,253 in 2015, an increase of 67% from the previous year, where recorded numbers have remained stable at 3,290 in 2016 (Refugee Council, 2017).

UNHCR defines a number of categories under the term ‘persons of concern’ (Refugee Council, n.d.), illustrated in Appendix 1.1. The main categories of relevance to the present study are defined as follows:

Refugee: Individuals recognised to have been granted a form of protection, including temporary protection, or in a refugee-like situation

Asylum-seeker: individuals who have sought international protections and whose claims for refugee status have not yet been determined

Unaccompanied children seeking asylum: Children who have applied for asylum in their own right, who are outside their country of origin and separated from both parents, or previous/legal customary primary care giver

Within this thesis I use the term refugee loosely to refer to those who are displaced from their country of origin, unless differentiation by particular labels is felt necessary.

1.2.1 Situating ‘unaccompanied children’

At the outset of this project I became aware of conflicting accounts of unaccompanied refugees both in the literature and in consultation. Whilst these are not all fully explored, some areas are highlighted that could play a significant part in the refugee experience.

There is limited consistency within the vast literature on the topic of refugees, which includes media coverage, research, and policy documents. Regarding policy in the UK, guidance for looked-after children recommends that social care services should have the capacity and expertise to work with young people and children who have diverse needs, including

unaccompanied children seeking asylum (NICE, 2010). Ongoing third sector research, however, finds children facing detention, deportation, living in destitution (e.g. Pintér, 2011, 2013; Crawley, Hemmings & Price, 2011), and missing or unaccounted-for (Simon, Setter & Holmes, 2016).

Social services are mandated to protect vulnerable children, through provision of stable and continuous relationships in care, with foster care being the primary housing recommendation (Department for Education, 2014). In 2012, Wade et al conducted a UK-wide mixed methods project to investigate what form of care works best for unaccompanied refugees. One of the descriptive findings was that the type of support offered was not based on need, but rather on chronological age, with most who arrive aged 16-17 being placed straight into shared accommodation. Thematic analysis found that although many experienced foster care as unfamiliar and anxiety-provoking, for others, foster carer was a vital source of support for integration, and for managing essential practicalities, such as finding a school place (Wade et al, 2012).

Regarding therapeutic support, guidance states that access to services for the most vulnerable takes account of need not demand (Department of Health, 2015), and that looked-after unaccompanied children may require specialist intervention (NICE 2010). For children and young people trauma-focussed CBT is recommended for those with traumatic stress reactions (NICE, 2005). However, in contrast to mainstream psychotherapeutic recommendations, researchers have outlined multiple individual and contextual reasons why refugees may find it hard to engage with therapy (e.g. Kohli & Mather, 2003; Stanley, 2001; Summerfield, 1999). Papadopoulos (2002) further suggests that therapeutic care, rather than therapy, may be a more useful concept. In contrast to the deficit or symptom-based model, supporting refugees has been argued to require a similar framework to that suggested for looked-after children (Kohli & Mather, 2003). This involves interventions aiming to develop resilience and improve functioning, through secure base, education, and social competencies (Daniel, Wassell & Gilligan, 1999).

A review of policy by Nandy (2005) finds a fundamental contradiction between statutory frameworks for protecting children and UK immigration laws and practices. On arrival, asylum-seekers over the age of 12 are interviewed as an important aspect of their asylum application, and may undergo age assessments to verify their status as a child; however, the manner of investigating disputed ages, including medical practices such as dental examination,

has long been contested (e.g. Crawley, 2007). Assessment processes are argued to require simultaneously that youth are apolitical, whilst political awareness is necessary to evidence the need for humanitarian protection (Crawley, 2011). For the young asylum seeker, the assessment experience marks the beginning of this new chapter in their life.

1.2.2 Acculturation

This section explores the processes of cultural adjustment, termed acculturation. Early models of acculturation conceptualise it as the degree of retention to culture-of-origin along a single continuum (e.g. Gordon, 1964). Later theories saw acculturation as bi-dimensional; on one axis, the degree of retention versus discarding of the original culture, and on the other axis, the degree of adoption versus rejection of the new culture, resulting in four quadrants (Berry, 1997). This model allows for the possibility of adhering to both cultures; a position termed ‘bi-cultural’ or ‘integration’. It also allows for the position in which people reject new cultural ways whilst at the same time losing touch with their original culture, which was labelled ‘marginalisation’. Whilst the bi-dimensional model allows this greater variation, an inference is that the way people enculturate is through individual choices, further inferring that there are better and worse degrees of acculturation. Later authors have moved towards a multidimensional position, suggesting that the concept requires emphasis on interaction with contextual factors, such as places of origin, degree of similarity between the two cultures, migration context, socio-economic status and resources, language, and the community of settlement (Rohmann, Piontkowski & van Randenborgh, 2008). Despite this, most research looks to measure degrees of assimilation in a uni or bi-dimensional way, resulting in generalised findings of the impact that degrees of acculturation have on migrant populations, but with limited understanding of the contextual influences (Schwartz et al, 2010).

If we understand ethnicity to be the shared specific cultural heritage, values, beliefs and customs of a social group (Phinney et al 1996), membership of an ethnic group depends on identifying with those shared characteristics. This is relevant to acculturation in terms of identification with ethnic cultural roots whilst adjusting to a new social context. In social psychology, it is widely held that people identify themselves by shared social identities and membership of social groups, rather than on purely individual terms. The Social Identity Approach includes two distinct theories: Social Identity Theory (Turner et al, 1987) suggests that positive values are attributed to groups we are members of so as to perceive ourselves in positive terms, often in contrast to other groups; and Self-Categorisation Theory (Tajfel &

Turner, 1979) explores the process of individuals defining themselves in terms of their social identities and taking on group characteristics, such as shared values. Given that identity understood in this way is a fluid rather than static way of being, this supports theory that the experiences of refugees and definitions they themselves hold is influenced by the communities they arrive into, the welcome they receive, and the messages received about who they are.

1.2.3 Constructions of refugees

Critical discourse psychology focusses on how language is used to construct ideas about the world, based upon the language that is easily available, and thus “how history or culture both impinge upon and are transformed by those performances” (Edley, 2001, p. 190-1). Similarly, Foucault (1980; 1982) argues that discourse is key in shaping how the world is constructed, through legitimising certain ways of being and doing over others. Thus, analysis of language provides insight into dominant power structures within society. The impact of this for refugees is illustrated by writer Hanif Kureishi:

In the current public conversation, this figure has not only migrated from one country to another, he has migrated from reality to the collective imagination where he has been transformed into a terrible fiction. (Kureishi, 2016, p.27)

The UK media has drawn attention to the plight of migrant children, using images of the tragic victim, such as that of Aylan Kurdi². Campaigns have been developed to remind the public that a child refugee is “a child first and foremost” (e.g. PICUM, 2013), and on this basis, the child is construed as separate from the political processes of forced migration (Doná & Veale, 2011). However, in response to such victim representations, anti-refugee memes abound on social media (Kleinfeld, 2015). For example, images of groups of male refugees can be seen to include the caption: “Go to safe country. Leave women and children in warzone” (Dearden, 2015). The corresponding public discourse of refugees as criminal and dishonest was found in a recent analysis of print media, with refugees typically construed as “unwanted invaders” (Parker, 2015, p.1). The media tactic of the use of metaphor to appeal to the public imagination, for example, “The Swarm in our Streets” (Ellicott & Wright, 2015), has the potential to contribute to out-group categorisation and exclusion (Allport 1954; Reicher, Haslam & Rath, 2008). Parker (2015) also notes that the media discourse largely parallels political and court decisions

²Aylan Kurdi was a 3-year old Syrian boy of Kurdish ethnicity, who was found in Europe in 2015 after drowning in the Mediterranean during his family’s attempted migration.

around care for asylum-seekers. For example, the discourse around dishonesty legitimises systems for age verification. Child refugees are therefore seen to be construed simultaneously as the weak and powerless victim, as well as threatening to (western) society.

During the time that I was helping at a youth club for young migrants, I learned that a member had recently been hospitalised due to a racially-motivated knife-attack. This brought home to me the context that young refugees can be personal targets of what are apparently widely-held societal beliefs, which have reportedly led to increased racist activity following the Brexit referendum in June 2016 (Khaleeli, 2016).

As professionals in health and as academics, we have the resources to challenge such discourses and critique the contribution that certain ways of talking contribute to marginalisation. I turn to professional perspectives on refugees and trauma, particularly regarding social and therapeutic support of refugees, and consider how the research body itself contributes to positioning refugees.

1.3 Constructions of trauma

A substantial body of research and literature focusses on prevalence of symptoms and treatments for trauma in refugees and survivors of conflict (Afuape, 2011), and refugees may rely on diagnoses such as Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to substantiate their claim for asylum protection. A meta-analysis of psychiatric survey-based research found that 10% of refugees meet clinical criteria for PTSD (Fazel, Wheeler & Danesh, 2005), and a systematic review of distress in child refugees found that studies varied from 19% to 54% meeting PTSD criteria (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011). Empirical research has led to theorising on factors contributing to development of psychiatric symptoms. Correlates with trauma symptomatology include level of exposure to traumatic events (Fazel, Wheeler & Danesh, 2005), and insecure asylum status (Heptinstall, Sethna & Taylor, 2004). In addition, unaccompanied children are found to report twice as many stressful life events and have a higher rate of traumatic stress reactions (Bean et al, 2007) as compared to counterparts who arrive with family. They are also found to be less likely to access mental health support, and more likely to drop out of therapeutic support even when this is provided by specialised services (Michelson & Sclare, 2009).

This literature is acknowledged to have increased understanding of the symptoms in refugee children, and drawn attention to the high levels of distress following experiences common to

those who flee conflict zones. At the same time, however, this gives a limited description of trauma (e.g. Papadopoulos, 2002) and, as Afuape (2011) argues, has arisen in a particular political context.

A diagnostic approach can contribute to internalising the experience and symptoms, and lead to perpetuation of labels, that pathologise individual experience rather than acknowledge adaptive responses to adversity, oppression and abuse. At its most unhelpful, diagnosis is taken as evidence for individual past trauma, and contributes to the search for individual models of intervention that may not be culturally appropriate:

Refugee people and survivors of war, organised violence and torture seem to be the fastest growing client group being written about with respect to clinical models of trauma...The search for simple and reducible models of intervention for PTSD has become an international, cross-cultural enterprise. I call this the burgeoning 'trauma industry'. (Afuape, 2011, p. 50)

There is controversy over the cross-cultural validity of PTSD as a construct (e.g. Young, 1995), with potential consequences of disregard towards cultural meaning-making, and traditional means of coping (Summerfield, 1999, 2001). It has been argued that, in particular, children can show a wide range of responses to potentially traumatic experiences (e.g. Greenwald & Rubin, 1999). Montgomery & Foldspang (2006) argue that the construct of PTSD is unfalsifiable, as associations of both cause and symptoms within the diagnosis are tautological. Research also finds that the most extreme difficulties young people experience can result from the abuse of power and general threat to security in an ongoing context (e.g. disappearance of father; torture of mother) rather than specific instances of personal threat. Trauma could equally be understood as "learning what a human being should never have to know: about vulnerability, about pain, about loss, and finally about the evil and vast carelessness of the world" (Alford, 2016, p. 18).

From a position of cultural relativism, the research appears to find that PTSD may not be a useful way to understand and classify the need demonstrated by refugee youth. In contrast to western individual constructions of trauma, Eisenbruch (1991) and Papadopoulos (2002) introduce terms implying that the impact of experiences can be construed in an interpersonal and community-centric way. In the next section alternative professional discourses to the trauma model are explored.

1.4 Post-traumatic growth, Resilience and Coping

Refugee people represent the maximum example of the human capacity to survive despite the greatest losses and assaults on human identity and dignity. (Muecke, 1992, p.520)

The dominant vision of the effect of refugee “trauma” is negative: that devastating life events contribute to suffering, positioning refugees as victims. An alternative position includes positive concepts of resilience and post-traumatic growth. Resilience is argued to be the most common trajectory in wellbeing following adversity (Bonanno, 2004), although it is variously defined as the absence of pathology (e.g. Agaibi & Wilson, 2005; Klasen et al, 2010), the presence of personality characteristics (e.g. Neria, Nandi & Galea, 2008), and a relational construct (Papadopoulos, 2006). The most prevalent theories view resilience as multidimensional (Bonanno, 2004), being influenced by personality variables alongside specific skills and cognitive-emotional characteristics, such as competence, tolerance and spirituality (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Measures of resilience also therefore tend to correlate with measures of psychological wellbeing, and negatively correlate with mental health vulnerability indices (e.g. Haddadi & Besharat, 2010).

The definition of post-traumatic growth is the “positive psychological change experienced as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances” (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004, p. 1). In contrast to resilience, post-traumatic growth is by definition something that occurs after or due to an adverse experience, rather than something that existed prior.

Despite the relationship to mental health, resilience and post-traumatic growth are regarded as separate constructs to that of PTSD due to findings that, for example, the existence of one does not preclude the other, lack of a consistent relationship in the empirical research (Zoellner & Maercker, 2006; Bensimon, 2012), and findings that PTSD symptoms do not necessitate poor day-to-day functioning (e.g. Hobfoll, 2011).

In line with the culturally relative position, these constructs could be viewed as both unique to individuals, whilst “dependant on a wide variety of factors that can best be addressed by perspectives that inter-relate the individual with his or her wider socio-political and other dimensions within which individuals are defined” (Papadopoulos, 2006, p. 6). Resilience could thus equally be viewed relationally, as people may make sense of events, ways of coping, and resilience through community, relationships, and mutual support (Papadopoulos, 2006).

A related academic construct is *coping*, which has a longer psychological history, albeit less closely linked to the trauma literature. Psychological literature has developed largely individual cognitive theories of coping, culminating in Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) appraisal-based Transactional Model. Constructivists advocate a model of meaning-making in which reconstruction of worldviews is required in response to events that put beliefs about the world in question (e.g. Stroebe & Schut, 1999; Holland, Currier & Neimeyer, 2006). Coping is defined as the ability to make meaning in order to "reconcile interpretations of major life events... with foundational beliefs about the world" (Lord, Gramling & Auerbach, 2012, p.37). However, critiques from community psychology, cultural psychology and sociological perspectives posit that these frameworks do not allow for the process of coping with extreme long-term adversity, as research in this area is instead dominated by the trauma framework (e.g. Schwartz, Tyas & Prawitasari-Hadiyono, 2014). It can thus be argued that the professional discourse on coping is itself a cultural process which sits within a western cultural system (Zaumseil & Schwarz, 2014).

A cultural view would situate coping in a collective way, for example with an alternative definition of coping as "the manner in which people act within the limits of existing resources and range of expectations to achieve various ends" (Wisner et al, 2004, p.100). In contrast to the Transactional Model, in which situational context is regarded only in terms of individual appraisal, cultural psychology instead views context and individual as mutually interactive (e.g. Cole, 1998). The coping that is sometimes attributed to individuals can instead often be a function of power relationships and, as such, the individuals' position as privileged or otherwise enables differential access to resources that enable coping (e.g. Hobfoll, 1998, 2002).

A discursive view would also position individuals as having opportunities to cope only within the context of their environment and social structures. Thus, our understanding of coping, alongside what it means for individuals to demonstrate what is observed as resilience, may be different according to the culture that has influenced them, and the social communities within which they find themselves. The way we understand coping will come through interpretation of the personal meaning as it is constructed and conveyed in the context of culture and language-use (Zaumseil et al, 2014).

The progression of theory and differing viewpoints on the refugee experience, from trauma as pathological symptom, to cultural understandings of coping with extreme hardship, has been discussed. Having outlined these main theoretical concepts and my own position, in the next

section I undertake a structured review of the research literature to-date, and use this to inform the aims of the present research.

1.5 Literature Review

A literature review was conducted in order to review relevant papers which focus on the experience of coping and resilience after seeking asylum. Due to vast research on coping and resilience, as well as on mental health of refugees, this systematic review aimed to review only such research with unaccompanied young refugees. The search strategy used the following search terms: refugee AND unaccompanied AND (coping OR resilience)³. The following databases were searched: Scopus, PubMed, PsycNET, and Social Care Online.

There were initially 196 papers identified, of which 21 were duplicates, leaving 175 (see flowchart in Appendix 1.2). After title screening, there were 114 remaining. Following abstract screening, a further 78 studies were excluded. Main reasons for exclusion at the abstract stage included: absence of resilience or coping as core to the research, with instead a focus on deficits; sample not primarily refugees and/or unaccompanied; evaluations of programmes specific to one location; political commentary or policy review; separation from family being temporary; research specific to educational outcomes; development of screening instruments.

The remaining papers were read in full, and at this stage nine papers were excluded on further detail emerging, and 27 papers were therefore included in the final review.

1.5.1 Current review

Of the 27 papers, six were quantitative, two mixed methods, one case file review, and the remaining 18 were qualitative. The countries of origin of the sample, as well as the country in which the research took place are also recorded, to provide some contextualisation. The included research took place in developed countries (Europe, the USA, Australia and Canada), mainly due to research in-transit or in developing countries having a different focus, such as conditions in refugee camps.

Papers are reviewed by methodology, starting with the quantitative studies, followed by qualitative. Guidelines were used for assessing qualitative research quality, including the CASP online tool and published guidelines (Elliott, Fischer & Rennie, 1999; Yardley, 2008),

³ Alternative variations of terms were trialled, including asylum-seeker, migrant, producing a volume of less relevant articles. These lists were scanned and all relevant papers found within searches using “refugee” as the search term (presumably due to “refugee” being used as a key term).

with a comprehensive checklist for each paper in Appendix 1.3. In line with recommendations, similar quality-checks were considered on review of quantitative research, for example, appropriateness and specification of method, clarity of purpose, respect to participants, and contribution to knowledge.

1.5.2 Quantitative research

Six papers used a quantitative approach to explore aspects relating to coping and resilience in young unaccompanied refugees. The specific aims and methods, as well as samples, differed and so the contribution of the research as a whole lacks coherence.

Three studies used pathology as a starting point; measuring PTSD or mental distress. A study in Australia (McGregor, Melvin & Newman, 2015) compared levels of PTSD symptoms and coping styles in refugee children who had undergone family separation with those who had not. A study in the UK (Hodes et al, 2008) also compared unaccompanied with accompanied refugee children, looking at levels of past adversity, levels of distress, and factors that may have increased or ameliorated distress. In Austria, Völkl-Kernstock et al (2014) also investigated PTSD symptoms, although without a comparison group, looking to understand how cumulative trauma affected rates of PTSD as well as coping strategies. As these three studies took place in different countries with potentially different social contexts and groups of refugees it is difficult to say how generalizable the findings are.

McGregor, Melvin & Newman (2015) found that family presence contributed to reduced symptomatology as expected, but did not find a significant difference between the groups' levels of coping. However, as the authors discuss, it could be that the measures were not culturally sensitive enough to identify relevant ways of coping. Alternatively, they discuss theory to suggest that if coping strategies develop during early childhood, then there should be no difference in coping between the two groups in adolescence, and separation from family should contribute independently to increased symptoms. This study is one of few in the wider literature which recognises the potential confound between the PTSD symptom of "avoidance", and "avoidance" as a coping method, and included statistical controls for this. The study however has low statistical power, with just 42 participants in total. Similarly, Hodes et al (2008) included a sample of almost all unaccompanied refugees living in a single London borough (n=78). They administered a large number of measures, with the main finding that there were differences according to gender and living situation; the cross-sectional data are unable to infer causality or to extrapolate how any effect of greater support might contribute to

reduced trauma symptoms. The Austrian study (Vökl-Kernstock et al, 2014) was also unable to contribute to understanding how coping strategies help, as multiple t-tests and correlations were performed on a small sample (n=41). Participants were asked to rate how often they would use a particular coping strategy and how helpful they found it, however these were not analysed in relation to other measures. It was not clear what the source of the list of coping items was, and there was no explicit cultural validation of the measure; there could furthermore be a potential social desirability effect given that the measures were administered in an interview, alongside finding that the least used coping strategy involved violence (Vökl-Kernstock et al, 2014).

Another study (Huemer et al, 2013), conducted in Austria, aimed to investigate whether unaccompanied child refugees exhibited higher levels of individual processes (including, for example, repression, as well as other personality characteristics) compared to an age-matched control group, as an explanation for the resilience observed in the literature. This study defined resilience as the absence of symptoms of trauma, although life satisfaction measures were also used. Unaccompanied refugees were found to show higher than expected population scores on measures of distress as well as reduced life satisfaction, *and* had higher defense/repression scores. The measures were not culturally validated and the authors report that due to fatigue and lengthy questionnaires (one of which had over 80 items), there were only 41 usable sets of data. It is not clear what the results suggest about active repression of memories as a coping strategy. The authors also discuss the possibility that these young people experience increased daily hassles (e.g. from discrimination, language and cultural adjustment) that could account for reduced life satisfaction, which could therefore be unrelated to coping mechanisms. This study contributes by questioning the assumption of resilience as equivalent to reduced clinical symptoms, by illustrating how complex coping responses could be.

A further study looked in detail at the association between daily hassles, coping disposition, life satisfaction and symptoms of depression in unaccompanied refugees (Seglem, Oppedal & Roysamb, 2014). This study included a comparison group and a control group, with a sample size of n=223. In line with the previous study, young people were found to utilise a high degree of coping, whilst also experiencing high levels of distress and depression, although there was also no significant difference in life satisfaction between refugees and the other groups. This study contributes that distress is not just due to past adversity but additionally impacted by current everyday experiences. The resulting model indicates that the main increase in distress

for the refugee group was the lack of impact of engaging coping strategies, and further study is suggested to look at possible reasons for this.

Another Norwegian study (Oppedal & Idsoe, 2015), looked specifically at the impact of perceived family support on acculturation and mental health. This study gives statistical support, with a large sample size (n= 948), for the link between family support and integration, including simply having contact with family members who remain abroad. Having social support in Norway also made a significant contribution, via pathways such as acquired knowledge of Norwegian norms and culture.

Altogether the quantitative research contributes a mixed picture of how young unaccompanied refugees cope. In part, this may be due to the broadly different contexts the research was conducted in, but it also points towards a complex picture of resilience and coping. The studies tend to lack culturally validated measures, with only Oppedal & Idsoe (2015) citing research on the cross-cultural psychometric properties of measures. Knowledge of particular coping strategies is limited as young people are typically asked to respond to lists of strategies, resulting in mixed findings. For example, Seglem, Oppedal & Roysamb, (2014) discuss the applicability of findings in relation to self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977), suggesting that individual factors appeared to be more important than context. In contrast, other studies claim evidence that context played a significant role. Other implications for the generalisability of studies to the UK context include social policy, housing, and asylum status.

1.5.3 Qualitative research

The contribution of qualitative research is reviewed, beginning with the earliest paper found to explore the concept of resilience in young unaccompanied refugees, in 1998. The review is organised geographically, with six papers in North America, eight in Europe, and seven conducted within the UK.

North America

An ethnographic study of young unaccompanied Somalian refugees in Canada was conducted by Rousseau et al (1998). A cursory review of research suggesting an emerging discourse in risk and vulnerability leads the authors to suggest that qualitative and ethnographic research is best placed to understand the protective factors that enable coping within the complex interplay of cultural and contextual variations. The aim of this research was to explore young people's stories of migration and ways of coping. Interviews were carried out with ten Somali refugees,

and later fieldwork in the Horn of Africa contributed substantial cultural understanding to the interpretations. Participant discourses of experience are understood in light of three core cultural traditions. Firstly, the traditional nomadic lifestyle leads to children by the age of 12 having long absences from home, with travel and separation viewed as leading to valued attributes, including wisdom. Secondly, the kinship organisation of Somali culture creates strong family lineage responsibilities, as well as children relying on each other for safety. Thirdly, adaptive strategies gained and valued in Somali culture include the ability to gather information rapidly, sudden mobility across vast distances, and verbal aggression to ward off adversaries. The authors note that in Canada, the refugees have a strong drive to locate family members, and often live together in peer-groups where they attempt to collectively pool resources. The findings illustrate how different expectations of parenting contribute to difficulties in foster care, and explain certain behaviours, that have been labelled deviant in western culture, as adaptive. Overall, this research questions simplistic assumptions of trauma in young children separated from family.

Five research papers are now reviewed which were conducted with one group of unaccompanied young refugees: 'The Lost Boys'. This group differs to the majority of asylum-seekers presently in the UK, as they were granted refuge whilst in refugee camps in Africa. However, they underwent hazardous journeys within Africa, during which at least half of the children are thought to have died. After living for years in refugee camps in Ethiopia and then Kenya, 3,800 of the surviving children were resettled in the USA (Luster et al, 2009). The research reviewed here spans over seven years, with some being conducted in the period shortly after arrival, and later papers investigating longer-term adjustment.

Goodman (2004) explores how the refugees coped with trauma, specifically looking at how meaning is constructed of hardship. Using a narrative approach, the findings aim to stay true to the young peoples' own cultural perspective and narrative account, weaving cultural awareness throughout. The author reflects on how the data fit into other broader models, for example, highlighting the need to consider cultural understandings of trauma. The study opens up different understandings of resilience, as being either cultural, culturally facilitated, and/or individual. This is demonstrated within the four main themes, illustrating survival strategies and the collective meanings that enabled coping, including the use of faith, in line with the Rousseau et al (1998) study. It is suggested that resilience is not a static phenomenon, that "the sociocultural context from which this group of refugee boys come might have fostered in them certain factors that contributed to their resilience" (Goodman, 2004, p.1194), and that therefore

support should be considered in terms of cultural strengths rather than with a focus on pathology.

Bates et al (2005) investigated experiences in foster care, looking particularly at contributors to placement success, such as how challenges were overcome. The mixed methods approach used objective measures of adjustment and symptoms, alongside qualitative data from focus groups and individual interviews. These enabled contrast, for example, between the views of foster parents and views of the young people. The secondary data was analysed thematically with the particular lens of identifying themes of resilience, offering multiple perspectives on relational issues in unaccompanied refugees from a particular cultural background. It also contributes to understanding culture in relation to difficulties in family life, as, for example, some developed better relationships with foster carers after moving away from the 'home' environment, implying difficulties in meeting complex relational needs.

In a follow-on study, Luster et al (2009) conducted an exploration of the experience of ambiguous loss and how young people cope following separation from family, looking at the role of the psychological presence of parents using Grounded Theory. As the study was longitudinal, they were able to develop close working relationships with young people. The paper contributes findings of cultural specificity; many coping strategies were traceable to the time spent in refugee camps when elders instilled in them various cultural ways of thinking and surviving: for example, the moral stories of their communities, and "any child is everybody's child" (Luster et al, 2009, p. 208). The research describes the intersection of culture with the individual, for example in describing the 'internalised parent' who, despite physical absence, can be psychologically present as a source of strength.

In another study with the same population, Luster et al (2010) makes a unique contribution in examining long-term adaptation of separated children, from youth and foster carer perspectives. Thematic analysis enabled contrast between youth and foster carer explanations, with findings fitting neatly into the 'resilience framework' (Masten & Powell, 2003). For this particular group, there had been favourable media coverage and therefore the host community was reported to be welcoming, although it is not clear if discrimination was still experienced as reported in other 'lost boys' papers. Importantly, this research found that there were subtle differences in the definition of success according to refugees in contrast to foster carers, and different explanations for reasons for different levels of adaptation. This was thought to have

potentially significant impact on how young refugees feel and behave in relation to expectations of carers and the host culture.

Carlson, Cacciatore & Klimek (2012) present a case study to illustrate the risk and protective factors common to unaccompanied refugee children. Although this is just one "success" case, the depth of description and reflection of the young person shows how different aspects of themselves and support enabled a positive outcome, whilst also providing insight on how others were less fortunate. The study separates the protective factors into three areas: individual, family and community. The young person attributes his own wellbeing mainly to having a stable early life and loving family, a caring foster parent, religious belief, and the ability to see the positive, thus highlighting individual resilience in the context of supportive early life and current context of support and stability.

Altogether, the Canadian and US studies contribute detailed accounts and themes of resilience in young refugees who arrive unaccompanied. Studies find that cultural resources are important in developing resilience to thrive in their new context, although many struggle to adjust to different cultural expectations. The use of culturally-congruent coping is widely utilised and at times misunderstood, while adequate support appears to be necessary but not always sufficient.

European Studies

Two research studies were conducted in Malta, an island state in the Mediterranean, in which some refugees travelling from North Africa find their first place of refuge in Europe. Other studies reviewed were conducted in the destination countries of Belgium, Sweden and the Republic of Ireland, each of which has its own individual policy on housing and support structures for arriving unaccompanied refugees.

The refugees participating in the Maltese studies were enrolled in education, although not all perceived Malta as their final destination. The first study (Spiteri, 2012) aimed to understand how young refugees' descriptions of themselves and their origins contributes to an experience of relative stability. The research question and methodology was confused, citing a phenomenological approach specific to individuals as well as aiming to use Grounded Theory to develop a theory of adaptation. The results do not clearly present an emerging theory, although useful themes can be picked out. For example, there seems to be a core overall concept of the shaping of a new identity, including the self in flux and the self in relation to others, in the context of hybridisation with traditional cultural values and expectations. The projection of

self in the future was characterised by hope, and a key mean to achieving this was through religion, but also relationships with others.

The second study in Malta (Spiteri, 2015), aimed to understand the lived experience and use of resilience in college life, using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The interviews were unstructured and additional fieldwork was carried out to gain access to a more natural experience of the youth perspectives. Being written largely in the first person allowed the reader to experience a closer representation of the author's experience, and the author refers to "bracketing" (Smith, Johnson & Flowers, 2009, p. 25) his own assumptions. Discussion drawing on cultural and political context was useful, however the value of the IPA approach was reduced as the youth experience became lost amidst academic discourse. Various themes were picked out including a theme of an emerging new identity amidst discrimination and social exclusion; the experience of stability, in contrast to previous life experiences; compounded trauma; and, building a new future.

In Belgium, Mels, Derluyn & Broekaert (2008) aimed to explore how unaccompanied refugees perceive different types of social support and what this implies about its role, i.e. whether it has a buffering effect (offering protection from the effects of stress), or a main effect (providing positive experience in itself). The measure was an innovative way to give clarity around how young people perceived the closeness of others, whilst the interviews add richness through discussion of what these systems of relationships mean, the difficulties in developing relationships, and experiences of holding onto past relationships. Thematic analysis was used, and the study highlights areas that are distinctly problematic in the Belgian context, for example, lack of contact with Belgian peers, and experiences of discrimination. The discussion makes some strong claims, such as finding "evidence for stress-buffering processes" (ibid. p. 760), although with a small sample of 15 this should be interpreted cautiously.

Malmsten (2014) used thematic analysis in a study of how unaccompanied refugees perceive daily life in transitional houses in Sweden⁴. Results are broken down into three key areas, including experiences on an individual, social and legal level. Individually, the meaning and structure experienced through education, and talking to one another were perceived as helpful, but participants were also affected by seeing peers being deported. This contributed to worry, alongside sleeping difficulties and nightmares. Socially, relationships were important with

⁴ Transitional houses are shared accommodation centres where refugees live whilst awaiting their asylum claim outcome.

staff, however creating strong bonds with peers was avoided due to anticipation of further loss. On the legal level, many found it hard to grasp an understanding of the asylum process. This paper discussed the use of interpreters and issues of power, and the findings are also situated politically, highlighting the effects of disempowered social positions on these individual refugees.

The experiences of male unaccompanied youth from Afghanistan arriving in Swedish society was explored by Thommessen, Corcoran & Todd (2015), who use IPA to study perceived support. The paper contributes the following themes: from danger to safety, which emphasises the loneliness prior to being offered support; living in limbo, referring to the experiences of waiting for asylum applications to be processed; guidance and social support; and, striving to move forward. The paper highlights that having support and someone to talk to is key, particularly in managing ambiguous loss. Levels of personal independence and responsibility were seen mainly to derive from the home family environment, lending them the ability to make use of support.

In Ireland, Abunimah & Blower (2010) carried out a comprehensive case file review, to examine the characteristics of unaccompanied refugees, and build a complete picture of their needs. As 100 cases were reviewed, a representative sample was acquired of the population of unaccompanied refugees in the region, however, the findings were dependent on the accuracy of written social care records and interpretation of these. The study captures likely proportions of young people with different problems, including physical health, past traumas, and mental health difficulties. It also documents the significant proportion who go missing, the minority who have any contact with family, the small number who give birth as a result of past sexual abuse, and that over a third miss school regularly. This illustrates the difficulty of capturing representative accounts from interviews as those who are willing to participate in interviews are likely to differ in being more able, trusting or motivated. The data clusters young people into four groups, and argues for different levels of need according to different experiences; importantly, it is not necessarily level of past trauma, but existence of health problems, pregnancy, and cultural factors that contribute to increasing need for support and likelihood of going missing from care.

Ní Raghallaigh & Gilligan (2010) conducted a study in Ireland aiming to explore coping in young unaccompanied refugees. It is inferred that a Grounded Theory approach was used, and authors discuss a position of respect towards difference and individuality, ensuring that

multiple perspectives are heard, and consideration given to cultural context. There was no description of the supported accommodation living situation and whether this is the usual arrangement for young people in Ireland. Various coping strategies are described, and the paper contributes a new way of incorporating religion as pervasive throughout all themes in the experiences of coping among young refugees. Themes appeared to suggest that independence and self-sufficiency were important, alongside avoidance. It was not clear how young people themselves perceive the coping strategies, and whether avoidance was an interpretation of participants' accounts or if it was something the young people themselves viewed as an effective strategy. The discussion draws the themes together in a theory and offers a thorough analysis of how the themes related to each other, as well as providing acknowledgement of the limitations and the contextual nature of these findings.

A second paper by Ní Raghallaigh (2011) used secondary data from the above study to develop an increased understanding of the role of religious beliefs in coping and how unaccompanied refugees make sense of religious coping. The intended analysis was not clear as the study had a specific focus on experiences of faith and religion, whilst citing Grounded Theory methodology. The paper contributes by emphasising the importance of religion as a core coping method for refugees, and presents this as multifaceted where previously the complexity of religion as a coping strategy has not been explored. There is limited detail of how the young people themselves conceptualise religion as a way of coping, however it highlights religion as an intrinsic part of the culture left behind, and arriving in Ireland with “a worldview with God at its centre” (ibid. p. 551). Young people also describe their faith as providing ongoing meaning and providing a sense of control, making it a useful coping resource. This is discussed in relation to practice, and acknowledges that, given the limited context, the study needs replication and further exploration in other young refugees in order to build a fuller understanding of the role of religious coping.

The European qualitative studies have included a diverse refugee sample, and have drawn out useful themes, including emerging identities, the value of social support, impact of political context and importance of cultural origin, in particular religious faith. The studies differ in the context and support that is provided. However, the young people appear to share the experience that support is both contextual as well as influenced by culture-of-origin. These qualitative studies present a useful thematic representation of coping, opening up areas for in-depth exploration of the young refugee experience and perspective.

UK

Seven qualitative studies are now reviewed, which took place in southeast England, Scotland and Wales.

Sutton et al (2006) conducted an IPA study in England, aiming to investigate how cultural factors influence the development of meaningful narratives that facilitate growth experiences in the face of adversity. Specifically, this research purported to investigate how unaccompanied refugees construct experiences of trauma, attach meaning to it, and what they consider to be growth experiences, with the aim of guiding therapeutic interventions. The results closely replicate an existing explanatory model (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004), which implies universality despite the role of culture not being discussed in depth. The research gains credibility through co-analysis of data, and through illustration of the researcher's own position and background, although reference was not made to cultural consultation or how cultural differences were managed. The paper contributes to understanding how young refugees experience growth, and what supports growth, including social support, activities, and religion, with growth also illustrated in the context of ongoing emotional pain.

To understand coping and adaptation in unaccompanied refugees in Wales, Maegusuku-Hewett et al (2007) conducted a thematic analysis of qualitative interviews with young people and professionals, through a psycho-social-ecological framework. The research aimed to illustrate both strength and vulnerability in coexistence, finding that there are individual differences, such as age and personality variables, but also the influence of social, familial and cultural norms and values on resilience. The importance of cultural identity in resilience, and how this is constructed actively, is discussed. Participants were aware of using these as active strategies, such as speaking their mother tongue, maintaining links with home, choosing to wear the hijab, and rejection of behaviours incongruent with their own cultural values (e.g. alcohol-consumption), to maintain their well-being. In this way, individual and collective cultural practices were valued in maintaining the self and social dimensions of identity, as well as in resistance to discrimination. The research contributes to the understanding of the interplay between identity, culture and environment.

In 2010, Hopkins & Hill conducted a study to assess needs, strengths and service availability to unaccompanied refugees recently arrived in Scotland. A strength of the study was the extensive use of consultation with service-providers, although there was no description of the sample, ethics, language or use of interpreter. The discussion brings together the data on the

wide range of topics, emphasising primacy of present needs, followed by the future, and finally, past adversities. The paper presents the most important needs of unaccompanied young refugees, including education, medical support and housing, whilst at the same time identifying the existence of resilience and strength, although lived experience of this is not explored in depth.

Groark, Sclare & Raval (2011) conducted an IPA study to gain in-depth understanding of the experience of unaccompanied refugees in the UK, how psychological wellbeing is impacted by their past and present situation and to explore psychological processes used to cope. With a large section on mental health, the paper has other clear aims of establishing what may help particular clinical presentations, while triangulation with mental health questionnaires reduces the closeness of findings to individuals' own experiences. As many young people scored above clinical cut-offs on the measures, the authors question the strength of their coping, thus positioning coping as an absence of symptoms. The paper outlines broad themes relating to the experience of seeking asylum, and elicits four coping strategies that the young people used: avoidance through distraction, acceptance of the situation, utilising support from friends, and support from professionals. The paper is limited in its contribution to understanding the extent that these strategies were useful and helpful.

Chase (2013) conducted a Grounded Theory study to develop a theory of how unaccompanied refugees conceptualise wellbeing in terms of identity and ontological security. This is defined as security in one's sense of self now and in the future, the ability to sustain a biographical narrative, sense of belonging and develop attachments, and the belief that life has a purpose and future trajectory. With a large sample, the study finds ontological security to be relevant and constrained for young refugees, with ongoing threats to security due to prospects of deportation. Traumatic experiences, lack of status, and mental health impacted ontological security, however, young people managed this through valuing things that enabled a sense of order, routine, physical security, people who are reliable, and personal space. Implications of this are that ontological security was prioritised over the need for therapy for past trauma, and which as a result is useful only as a limited part of a holistic package of support.

An exploratory study conducted by Allsopp, Chase & Mitchell (2014) looked at the ways that young refugees build a future, having 'aged out' of the system (reaching 18 before receiving a decision regarding their asylum status). Mixed methods incorporating Grounded Theory was used however a small unrepresentative sample was used (i.e. including only those who had

high aspirations and spoke English) and so a theory was not generated. There is useful discussion of the findings in relation to UK policy, previous research and theory, and how young people react to the immigration system in the context of age, and the passage of time. Young people were found to take risks in order to improve their situation and made attempts to speed up their asylum decisions; they strove to fit in and to live in the moment; they engaged in distraction and made effort to maintain a sense of going forward, even if this was illusory; and, finally, avoidance of the inevitable, living illegally in the hope that asylum policies will change. This paper is unique in offering the account and explanation of a young person living “in the shadows” (Allsopp, Chase & Mitchell, 2014, p. 178), avoiding the authorities and working in the underground economy. Altogether, it adds to the literature finding that young people actively respond to their situation, and suggests that further enquiry is needed into the lived experience of transitions in the context of precarious legal status.

Majumder (2016) conducted a thematic analysis to explore mechanisms behind unaccompanied refugees’ resilience in extreme adversity, in order to construct a wider theory of resilience. The sample was recruited from mental health services and the majority were Afghan and male, perhaps leading to limited generalisability. The paper contributes a number of themes that contribute to resilience in young people: family background, faith, adverse experiences, hope, and growing up. Links are made to evolutionary theory, although this is removed from the data and participant perspectives. There is also discussion around the source of resilience, and the paper contributes that the concept of resilience is complex and should not be individualised, concluding with recommendations for professionals to be trained in awareness of their own cultural lens.

Altogether, the UK studies vary in depth, with some studies mainly reinforcing general themes of coping and resilience, such as social support, faith, and hope. Maegusuku-Hewett et al (2007) contribute to understanding the construction and use of coping as an active response to the situation of oppression, while Chase (2013) introduces the important concept of ontological security, finding this to be a broad and defining contextual issue that shapes the need for many overarching coping responses described in the literature. Allsopp, Chase & Mitchell (2014) further contribute the active strategies that young refugees use, illustrating the perceived benefit they gained through coping in resistance to the ominous passage of time within the UK legal context.

1.6 Rationale

The literature review aimed to identify contributions from the research to-date, from which gaps waiting for further exploration are identified. Contributions were identified from the quantitative and qualitative literature, although reviews found that many studies were lacking quality, such as inadequate power and confounding variables for quantitative papers, and methodological issues such as lack of attention paid to culture and language in qualitative analyses. The research reviewed is therefore limited in its scope to achieve more than cursory overviews of general themes in the coping and resilience that young unaccompanied refugees demonstrate.

Whilst there is a broader literature available on refugee families, research with young unaccompanied refugees is sparser and is spread over multiple countries and contexts. The reviewed literature from within the UK does not always specify living contexts, and therefore the influence of social situation, input of social services, or foster care support, on experiences of coping is reduced. Despite this, studies tend to recruit participants through particular services, or select those with particular strengths or presentations.

Some areas the review points towards are needs for young refugees to obtain security in their current status due to experiences of uncertainty and loss, and variability due to context and background, such as childhood and prior experiences. However, where various studies attempt to understand the topic using different methodologies, differing themes have emerged. For example, some find religion to be of central importance throughout themes, whilst others find this to be one of many themes, and others do not discuss religion at all. As our core cultural values are often enacted outside of conscious awareness, a lack of depth of exploration could fail to elicit core sources of resilience.

The research which enables a culturally relative position tends to find alternative and culturally congruent understandings of resilience, compared to themes understood through western cultural lenses. Further exploration of specific cultural understandings that refugees bring to the experience in the UK is warranted on this academic basis.

Clinical psychology is concerned not just with experiences of mental distress, or with explicit therapeutic models, but additionally with social situations that push the limits of human resilience (Burman, 2004). This field of research therefore warrants the present shift from deficit to one which recognises strength and resilience, and the circumstances in which these can be realised for marginalised groups, such as refugees. There is a need for research to

address gaps in terms of refugees' own experiences in order to give due significance to their attempts to create the conditions for their own wellbeing. This will contribute towards an understanding of what psychology could contribute on a therapeutic level, whether through therapeutic support, community resources or other psychologically-informed programmes.

1.7 Aims of the present research

I have presented an argument that people make sense of experience through their own cultural lens, and that this may resemble the theoretical frameworks of trauma, coping and resilience that are known, or may not. The present study therefore aims to explore the lived experience of young refugees, and the meaning that is made of experiences of coping, specifically in the context of having arrived in the UK without family, and continuing to live without family, whilst giving appreciation to the cultural context of this experience.

The research aims to answer the following question:

What is the experience and understanding of coping among young unaccompanied refugees, living in the UK without family?

METHOD

This chapter will outline the methods used for the research, including rationale for the methodological approach taken, and the specific qualitative research method chosen, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA: Smith & Osborn, 1999; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). I will also describe ethical considerations, issues in cross-language research, data collection and analysis, validity and reflexivity, which were all central to the process.

2.1 A Qualitative Design

The use of qualitative methodology was my greatest certainty in beginning this project, as it resonates with me both in mind and in heart. On reflection, I now consider the purpose and values that drive us as health professionals to conduct research, and ways in which this is intrinsically linked to power.

Traditionally, the field of psychology has valued the development of an objective knowledge, and the contribution of such research is acknowledged. However, I also argue that a singular view of knowledge can lead to ethnocentric assumptions (Walker, 2005), contribute to the structural grouping of people and privileging on the basis of race and other forms of categorisation (Bartoli et al, 2015), thus concealing the role of power, inequalities and oppression in shaping scientific understandings (Foucault, 1982). In contrast to the positivist paradigm, in which values are “seen as confounding variables that cannot be allowed a role in a putatively objective inquiry” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.114), qualitative approaches consider values and ethics as intrinsic to the process of research itself. For a full critique of positivism within the social sciences I refer the reader to Guba and Lincoln (1994).

Where core ethical facets of the Clinical Psychology profession include respect, responsibility and integrity (BPS, 2010), and a core element of the role as scientist-practitioners is to further knowledge as well as to practice with competence, it is within our mandate to seek forms of understanding that do not privilege certain perspectives over others, and that do not assume possibilities of neutrality regarding politicised topics (including, for example, mental health and refugees).

In consequence, as has been articulated for social work research (Uehara et al, 1996), I advocate a values-based approach to research, in which researchers aim towards self-reflexivity,

collaborative approaches, and have objectives linked to “community empowerment, social justice and social transformation goals” (ibid. p. 614).

2.1.1 Qualitative methods considered

Harper (2011) advises a pragmatic approach to selecting research methods, and here alternative methods of data analysis are considered in terms of strengths I felt they would bring to the topic, and the reasons why each was not chosen.

- Narrative Analysis has not been used widely with the young refugee population, and this approach could contribute how young refugees shape their understandings of their experiences linguistically and through narrative storying (Ricoeur, 1988). I decided against this approach because, firstly, I was wary of the ethics in expecting young people to share narratives of possible vulnerability in the context of only one meeting. Secondly, I felt that it was outwith the scope of my doctoral research to study narrative in the context of multiple languages, and via interpreters.

- Discourse analysis (e.g. Potter & Wetherell, 1987) is a social constructionist approach which sees meaning and cultural realities constructed through language. The strength of this method is the acknowledgement of power, in that it draws on how certain structures (e.g. institutions, privileged speakers) enable or disable the perpetuation of particular knowledges. This would be valuable to shed light on how society has come to view refugees, nationhood, refugee children, and the influences on social policy in relation to these. This approach, however, was removed from my interest in coming closer to young refugees’ own experience in the UK, although I remained open to see whether, and how, discourses were influential in how young refugees make sense of their experience.

- Participatory Action Research, is an approach which acknowledges the position of traditional subjects of research instead as co-researchers (Christensen & Prout, 2002). This spoke to my ethical principles of collaboration and empowerment, and guidance on conducting research with refugee children strongly advocates making the research worthwhile to participants (Thomas & Byford, 2003), and addressing issues of power (Doná, 2007). However, this approach presents difficulties in regards positioning myself as author of the doctoral research, within the constraints of a doctoral programme. I found it useful to identify ways in which aspects of this research method could be used to inform my research, and gauge the strength of

the present research in terms of values such as collaboration. In particular, Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) discuss how participants can take active roles in the IPA process.

- An Ethnographic approach, as discussed by Reeves, Kuper & Hodges (2008), takes place through immersion within the natural surroundings of participants' lives, and aims to access understandings, meanings and social interactions within particular communities. I was drawn to the parallels with the aims of IPA: for example, entering the lifeworld of the participant, and use of reflexivity (meta-ethnographic). This approach appealed due to concerns with recruitment to interviews and what young people would feel able to share. However, this method brings ethical drawbacks regarding consent, as well as timescales and appropriate supervision.

2.1.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

At its heart, the topic and approach of phenomenology does, or should, connect with our everyday experience. (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 32)

The IPA approach has gained widespread recognition within the psychology literature, and is attainable within the parameters of a doctoral thesis. I take each aspect of IPA in turn:

- IPA is idiographic

In contrast to the nomothetic, which claims to draw conclusions applicable on the group or population level, the idiographic concerns a detailed understanding of the particular. This does not make it individualistic per se, as the thorough understanding of unique perspectives contributes to making sense of place and context, i.e. "it is thoroughly immersed and embedded in a world of things and relationships" (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2010, p. 29). The approach allows for reflection on what findings mean in relation to previously (and perhaps widely) held beliefs or assumptions, whilst the in-depth analyses aim to inductively generate understandings that can be applied more widely; thus it is argued that depth brings us "closer to the universal" (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2010, p.31).

- IPA is phenomenological

Phenomenology is the study of experience, and is concerned with what it is like to experience, or live through, particular situations. Philosophers differ, however, on how we can access the phenomenological. For example, Husserl (1927) said we must step outside of our experience in order to reflect on, and become conscious-of the things (phenomena) that we experience.

Heidegger (1927/62) added that there are limits to direct experiencing, as all experience is contextual. Experience must rather be construed in the context of objects, relationships, and language; it is therefore temporal, as well as perspectival (Nietzsche 1873/2006). Sartre (1943/92) also emphasised context of others and the world, but furthermore within the context of becoming. As the individual her/himself is shaped through experience, in addition to making sense of experience, *becoming* is contextual to the experience of the self in relation to others. In consequence, the process of making sense of lived experience is complex, relational, and relative. In IPA research this is guided by the theory of hermeneutics.

- IPA is hermeneutic

Hermeneutics is a theory of interpretation concerning relationships between the context of production and the context of interpretation. Schleiermacher (1998) differentiates between a grammatically objective reading of text and its psychological interpretation, as influenced by context, including the interpreter's understanding of language, cultural norms, and personal connection. Interpretation as a result goes tentatively beyond what is explicitly stated, and can draw an understanding of what was said greater than the understanding the speaker may claim to have.

Heidegger (1927/62) linked hermeneutics to phenomenology in discussing the coming into appearance of the phenomenon, which may manifest the phenomenon itself. What we study changes when spoken about or written down, and is further altered through the process of interpreting. Thus in research, the role of the interpreter (researcher), and particularly their preconceptions (fore-structure), need to be examined, rather than controlled. Gadamer (1960) develops this into the idea of dialogue between interpretation and fore-structure, in which relevant preconceptions might not be apparent until the process of interpretation begins, and a cycle of mutual influence ensues. Similarly, during data analysis, meaning is taken in the context of surrounding words and context, but the meaning of the full interview transcript depends upon the individual words it comprises. This has become known as the "hermeneutic circle" (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2010, p. 27), and applies throughout the research process.

In IPA, the researcher interpreting the participant's account, who is interpreting their own experience, is known as the "double hermeneutic" (Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 35). The additional layer of language interpretation in cross-language research will be further discussed.

Overall, IPA was chosen for a variety of pragmatic and value-driven reasons. Whilst other methods of research were equally valued, IPA was found to fit the requirements of scope, whilst enabling incorporation of other ideas into the reflexive process, notably reflections on processes such as acquiring experience within the community of refugees, and inclusion of extensive consultation. The drawback of IPA however, was the power imbalance, both in terms of refugee youth as participants in, rather than collaborators of, the research, as well as neglect of the broader societal discourses that contribute to what it means to be a refugee in the UK.

2.1.3 Semi-structured interviews

The method of acquiring data in IPA through individual interviews enables the participant to tell their own story. The interviews were semi-structured, in order to guide the participant towards the area of interest through use of open questions, while allowing the participant to raise unanticipated information. The interview is a two-way dialogue, in which topics may be followed up if they are seen as important to the participant, and thus the interview schedule is only used as a guide. This fits with the aim of collaboration and enables entering into the participant's experience as much as possible.

Consultation was an important part of constructing the interview schedule (see Appendix 2.1). After constructing an initial list of questions, these were discussed with an experienced caseworker. Adaptations were made in relation to simplifying language and considering how to word questions if concepts were found not to translate into participants' first language(s).

2.2 Cross-language research

This debate, however complex, about how to begin to discuss language difference should be brought into mainstream social science research and not remain the domain of sociolinguistics or anthropology or a matter of a methodological note. (Temple & Young, 2004, p. 175)

In this section I further discuss issues relating to qualitative research that takes place across a language divide. As IPA is a study of interpretations, adequate attention to issues of language is warranted.

2.2.1 Interpretation theory

Possible differences in the meanings of words or concepts across languages vanish into the space between spoken otherness and written sameness. (Temple, 2002, p. 844)

The traditional approach to cross-language research attempts to conceal the interpreter's role entirely, as the interpreter's influence on the data is seen as contaminating (Straus, 1969). The aim was to replicate intended meanings as exactly and as objectively as possible, to achieve conceptual equivalence. However, in arguing that language is a way of constructing meanings, this makes problematic the term conceptual equivalence (Phillips, 1960). The social constructionist approach to translation sees the interpreter as an active participant in the generation of data (Temple 2002), who deconstructs what is said, followed by reconstruction in a different language. The language interpreter's construal of meanings is influenced by their own linguistic and cultural understandings, and is relevant to their understanding of agenda, of the broader systems of meaning, and of how the participant positions themselves. The context is complex for young refugees, and in bridging cultural gaps, interpreters go beyond the literal meaning of words spoken. Regarding broader meaning structure, they may additionally be at risk of the influence of dominant discourses when choosing which words to use (Papadopoulos, 2003), such as the way that society talks about refugees or about mental health.

2.2.2 Power and interpretation

Loss of language refers not to the literal loss of the ability to speak, but to the loss of the opportunity to assert and exercise one's rights in exile, particularly when the dominant language is... unfamiliar. (Patel, 2003, p219)

There are two considerations of power in the use of interpreters: the importance of attending to possibilities of recreating disempowerment (Patel, 2003), and translations into dominant languages, that can reinforce the invisibility of less dominant languages.

In the case of one of my interviewees the language was one of four main languages spoken by Kurds, although the dominant language spoken within the wider country is Arabic. Kurds already live in places where their spoken language is subjugated, and the hierarchy of languages influences translation and can serve to reinforce established hierarchies, in this case, the translation of a subjugated language into a dominant one, English.

Regarding individual disempowerment, the concept of giving choice (either speak in English or be interpreted) is arguably a fallacy, as participants have no choice in how the interpreter conveys what they want to say. This may reflect their disempowered social position as refugees and corresponding lack of options.

However, I did not want to exclude participants and their perspectives on the basis of language skills. Power was pertinent even without use of interpreters; as none of the participants had English as their first language, they may go through their own process of interpretation before finding the words to respond in English (or struggling to do so). Use of the interpreter can free the participant to express themselves, without being constrained by language ability. If used collaboratively, interpreters can add great richness to understanding on both sides (Tribe & Morrissey, 2003). Potentially having insight into both cultures, as well as the experience of living as a migrant in the UK, the interpreter can also contribute safety, in terms of how to talk about difficult topics, and this can enhance research integrity (Berman & Tyyskä, 2011).

2.2.3 Translation Procedure

Translation itself has the power to reinforce or to subvert longstanding cross-cultural relationships but that power rests in how translation is executed and integrated into research design, not in the fact of translation per se. (Temple & Young, 2004, p.175)

The present research included three interviews with the use of professional interpreters. Translation into English was at the point of data collection, as my own language is English, and all subsequent analysis took place in the English language. Guidance and recommendations on the use of interpreters in research and in clinical practice were referred to (Raval, 2003; Patel, 2003; Plumridge et al 2012; Squires, 2009). Guidance, however, differs according to its theoretical foundation, and can be contradictory. Squires (2009) has reviewed methodological recommendations into a set of criteria, which I interpreted and incorporated where possible, and in line with social constructionist theory that underpins this research.

Due to time and financial constraints the interview schedule was also not pilot tested in each language. However, as IPA is methodologically an exploration of meaning-making, the issues around meaning were generally discussed during the process of the interview, and interpretations critically reviewed during analysis.

Riessman (2000) recommends to acknowledge and remind readers of what is being produced: the researcher's view of the translator's interpretation. Whilst it is recommended for interpreters to be fully integrated members of the research team, this was not possible, and nonetheless can still present problems with power differentials within teams (Berman & Tyyskä, 2011). As advised by Plumridge et al (2012), steps were taken to involve interpreters' perspectives. This involved meeting before and after the interviews to discuss: phrasing of questions, asking interpreters to raise any difficulties they have with the translation of particular concepts, raising interpreter awareness to cultural influences, the interpreters' and participants' cultural differences and similarities, and what the interpreter noticed about trust.

I established the level of qualification of the interpreters and their experience of interpreting. Whilst interpreters had at least five years' experience of professional interpreting and accredited qualification, none had interpreted for research projects before. The most common experience cited was supporting clients in appointments, and in interviews (including asylum interviews). I therefore took care to explain the purpose and rationale for the research.

Regarding the research meeting with the participants themselves, the following recommended ways were used to move towards safety and address power: establishing informality and rapport amongst all three present, and having an open discussion about the use of the interpreter. The latter included a more sensitive exploration with potential participants of how they would wish to make use of the interpreter, as well as explicitly stating allegiance to the voice and experience of the participant (Patel, 2003).

2.3 Participants

2.3.1 Sample: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Given its idiographic approach, a small and relatively homogenous sample is required, as drawing together such depth of interpretation with more than a few participants becomes increasingly problematic. In total five young people took part in interviews for this study.

Age

Participants were over the age of 16, as at this age young people can consent to medical treatment without parental consent. I was not able to seek parental consent, and I could not find a reason to suggest that participants below this age would need to take part. To maintain homogeneity, I planned to include participants up to the age of 21, as beyond this, young

migrants would be likely to have reached a different level of maturity before migrating. I was keen on ethical grounds, however, not to make an issue out of age, due to the prominence of age as a regularly contested subject during the immigration process (e.g. Michie, 2005; Crawley, 2007; Crawley, 2010).

Region of origin

I initially planned to include only migrants from Syria, due to the current escalating crisis in that country, however, due to limited numbers of available participants, and my increasing awareness of larger numbers of young refugees from other countries of ongoing conflict and human rights violations, the demographic was not limited to just one country of origin.

Living arrangements

Participants were all living in semi-independent living arrangements. This was a unique factor of this study, as the majority of children who arrive unaccompanied go into foster care, and then move into shared housing managed by the local authority when they are 16 or older. Those who I interviewed had either arrived at the age of 16 and were in shared housing from the outset, or were in foster care very briefly before moving into shared housing. I was not restricted by the boroughs the young people were living in as this study was not looking at care provided by a particular local authority.

Gender

For the purpose of not excluding potential participants on the basis of gender, I attempted to recruit both male and female participants, however I was only successful in recruiting male participants.

2.3.2 Identifying services for recruitment

I planned to recruit for the study via community organisations due to the number of undocumented migrants in the UK who would not be accessed if I was to recruit via local authorities. After initial difficulties with permissions and reluctance for organisations to support the research, which I reflect on in my journal (see Appendix 2.2), I also made links with two local authorities. The specific teams remain anonymous, however one team was a local authority leaving care team specifically for refugee young people, located outside of London. The other was the local authority within a London borough, and included the teams for looked-after children, however these teams did not become the source of any participants.

The majority of participants were recruited from a community organisation within a relatively deprived London borough. Caseworkers were requested to facilitate recruitment, and one participant was recruited in this way. Recruitment difficulties were discussed in-depth with caseworkers who I got to know during the time spent volunteering: the caseworkers were under increasing caseloads as new refugees arrived to the area in increasing numbers and with increasingly complex needs for support; facilitating research was not high on their agenda despite being in principle in favour of it; perceived vulnerability of the young people on their caseload; and, lack of funding putting the whole organisation at risk of closure.

The remaining two participants were recruited through the youth group that I attended initially for six weeks and then continued to attend around twice per month for about six months. The process was facilitated by the youth worker, who assisted with identifying young people who met the criteria.

2.4 Ethics

2.4.1 Ethical Approvals

Necessary approvals were obtained to go ahead with the research, and I was keen to attend to any issues of ethics. As I recruited through statutory services as well as the community sector, ethical approval was sought from the University of Hertfordshire Health and Human Sciences Ethics Committee with Delegated Authority (see Appendix 2.3). Approvals from the local Children's Board, and confirmation from the management of each service was obtained in order to acquire full University Sponsorship (see Appendix 2.4).

I was keen for the research to hold true to values that uphold good ethical practice, as recommended by Thomas & Byford (2003), and was influenced by important issues that were apparent to me through my training and consultation, particularly the issue of power (T. Afuape, personal communication, February 15, 2016; Doná, 2007). For example, Doná (2007) discusses, with reference to Foucault (1980), the multiple levels at which power plays a part in the lives of refugees, and makes problematic certain research processes, such as informed consent. Doná (2007) refers to “essentialising” (p. 216), whereby the practice of studying a category of people with a given label (such as refugee) ascribes them particular shared characteristics, and inevitably become othered. With refugee children, considering the age differential, any issue of power is further accentuated. Thomas & Byford (2003) suggest that research is needed in order to make visible the needs and difficulties faced by young refugees,

but that the research should have clear benefit to them. This feeling was echoed by community organisations and throughout the consultation process.

2.4.2 Consultation

Consultation was both a formal and an informal process, involving designing the project, specific consultation meetings, and the volunteering I undertook. During the project proposal stage, I attended a range of events including lectures and training workshops run by organisations including the University of Hertfordshire, the British Psychological Society, and the Refugee Council. I had contact with managers of four organisations that support refugee youth, who advised on ethics and opportunities for research. I encountered conflicting information, on the one hand learning about wide gaps in knowledge and need for research, and in contrast, a lack of commitment from services to facilitate research involving the youth.

Regarding the organisation I recruited from, members of the team gave informal advice around inviting young people to participate, and I met formally with one staff member, who gave extensive advice on running the interviews, cultural practices and language.

The organisation also requested my volunteering one evening per week for a minimum of six consecutive weeks, so as to avoid young people experiencing a transient relationship. Volunteering became a useful source of contact, enabling both identification of possible participants, familiarity with staff, and boosting my own energy for the project. I was part of the post-group reflections, in which the team and volunteers, led by the youth worker, discuss processes within the group, progress made by individuals, as well as any issues or concerns. My own reflective process (see Appendix 2.5) was also useful for identifying my relationship to the population, and observations. The limitations were that not all young refugees have access to, or choose to attend, such groups; this particular youth group is unique to the area (groups elsewhere differ in being more structured); and the group community itself was not the focus of the research. It did, however, enable me to observe coping, interactions amongst young refugees, changes over time, and breakdowns in coping, such as aggression, and disengagement.

2.4.3 Managing well-being

Due to the experiences that many young asylum seekers will have experienced, including, but not limited to, exposure to violence in their home country, separation from all family members,

a hazardous journey across Europe, followed by uncertain asylum outcome once in the UK, it was important to enable the young person to say what they wanted to say without feeling compelled to discuss topics that may be distressing. The interview schedule was designed to focus on strengths, although for many participants this naturally led to discussing difficulties and experiences of loss. Participants were reminded that they could refrain from answering questions, and could pause the meeting at any time.

Another consideration was to differentiate the meeting from interviews that comprise the asylum-seeking process. It is well documented that asylum interviews are stressful, leaving young people to feel that their story is questioned or certain facts disputed (e.g. Crawley, 2010). I therefore made explicit that the project was not linked to the asylum process, and I avoided use of the word “interview”. To enable participants to relate to me I was willing to self-disclose, and answer questions they had about me or why I was doing the project. I was also encouraged by research finding that participating in research in this way can be helpful as it provides an alternative experience to other meetings with professionals, and creates positive opportunities to share experiences (Dyregrov, Dyregrov & Raundalen, 2000).

Debrief information (Appendix 2.6) was shared at the end of each interview, and offered to be translated into the participant’s first language. I included a list of organisations that offer both generic support to young people in the UK as well as refugee support organisations.

2.4.4 Informed consent

As advised by Thomas & Byford (2003) I was keen for participants to take part freely with full understanding of the project, and how the data would be used. For those recruited through the statutory teams, social workers were given detailed information about the project, as well as the opportunity to ask questions. Recruiting via a person known to the young person and external to the research team seemed the best way of inviting participation whilst mitigating undue pressure. Two participants were recruited in this way.

For those recruited through the community group, I had informal conversations about the project at which point there was one who declined participation. For those who did agree I then gave more information and time to think before inviting them to meet. One participant agreed to take part but sent apologies on two occasions at agreed times, and so this was not pursued.

It is more difficult to gain informed consent from those whose first language is not English, as it becomes a lengthy process to explain everything adequately and ensure understanding. Due to being at the youth group, I found that those who were unsure were able to ask their friends and it became a group discussion of what was involved. For those who required interpreters I then spent time reiterating each point on the consent form via the interpreter to ensure understanding. Some participants asked many questions about specifics to do with the project and some asked about my own background, studies, and language abilities. Consent was revisited as part of the debriefing, including their rights to withdraw going forwards.

2.4.5 Confidentiality and anonymity

Principles of confidentiality were followed as explained in the information sheet and consent form (Appendices 2.7 and 2.8), and were explained again in the interview and understanding checked. Data was stored securely in line with university data-management policy, and was anonymised on transcription. Participants names were all changed to pseudonyms, and participants were asked to provide their own, which most of them did. Confidentiality agreements were also signed by all interpreters involved in the project (Appendix 2.9), although all were professional interpreters and assured me that this was a standard requirement of their role.

2.4.6 Remuneration

In order to express my appreciation and to give something to participants in exchange for their time, each participant was given a £10 voucher. Potential participants were not informed of the value during recruitment as I did not want to over-incentivise participation, however the information sheet stated that participants would be thanked for their time with a small value of vouchers. I was advised that this was appropriate as it may help young people to feel their contribution was of value. I was not aware of the vouchers being mentioned at all at the youth group, and one participant needed a lot of encouragement to accept their voucher.

2.5 Data Collection

2.5.1 Participant demographics

Five participants took part in the study, who had all arrived in the UK independently of their families and were living independently or in semi-independent accommodation. Further

demographic details are included in Appendix 2.10. Participants arrived in the UK between six months and two years ago, at the age of 15 or 16. The pilot interviewee was in his 20's, having been in the UK for a few years, having arrived aged 16.

Reflection was given to the fact that some interviewees were better known to me than others, due to my presence at the youth group over several weeks, and recruitment via several different avenues. However, there was no discernible difference in rapport or level of disclosure during the meetings according to the method of recruitment, both as a felt sense during interactions and on reviewing the data.

2.5.2 Interviews

Participants were given choice around location to meet, within constraints of availability, suitability and cost. Two interviews took place in meeting rooms at a library, whilst in another recruitment area a community resource venue was used.

The interview schedule, as previously discussed, was primarily used as a guide. Two participants preferred to be interviewed in English, while three requested use of interpreters. The interviews lasted between 45 and 93 minutes. Consent included use of audio-recording, and recordings were immediately transferred to encrypted storage.

Following the pilot interview feedback was discussed on the questions and format of the meeting. There were no significant changes to the protocol as a result of the pilot as the participant reflected that it had been a positive experience. Data from this participant was included in analyses so as to include the useful data shared. As this participant was a little older and had spent more time in the UK, the contribution of this data was considered during interpretation and analysis.

2.6 Analysis

Data analysis was guided by the steps set out for IPA by Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009), and these are summarised below. It should be acknowledged that the steps are not necessarily sequential, with a high degree of moving forward and back between the steps, achieving a balance of interpretation with closeness to the spoken words.

2.6.1 Transcription and analysis

I transcribed all of the interview data, enabling a high level of immersion within the data. Following transcription, full transcripts were read through whilst listening to the audio. Notes were made on each transcript that enabled me to set aside initial impressions and interpretations.

The first stage of analysis was done for each individual case in its own right, keeping close to the raw data. Comments were made on three levels: descriptive, relating to the content of what is said; linguistic, relating to how meaning is conveyed; and conceptual, making sense of the overall meaning. At this stage, a large number of comments are made, significantly expanding the volume of data for further analysis.

With regard to linguistic interpretation, I was concerned that this would not be possible due to the cross-language nature of this study. However, rather than attempt to negate this, I acknowledged its importance, and the limitation to fully recognise linguistic meaning. For those interviews where the words analysed are those of the interpreter, interpretations are acknowledged to be limited by concepts potentially lost in the translation process. In these cases, relating specific meanings to overall narratives across the interview was particularly important.

The expanded dataset was then reviewed and notes were reorganised to identify relationships between comments, creating a conceptual map. This was used to form initial emergent themes within each individual interview, and how these relate to each other. Links between emergent themes were conceptualised into superordinate themes, and examined in context of the overall interview. Particular attention was paid to the double hermeneutic, the lens through which I was interpreting the data through my own culture and expectations. Once each interview was analysed, patterns were examined across the full set of cases. Ways in which cases differed or shared concepts was considered, and conceptualisations from each were considered in informing understandings of other cases.

The process was reflexive, and cannot be clearly described in a linear sense, as every stage involves a deconstruction of data followed by a holistic perspective of the overall data. For example, I went regularly between my own notes to remind myself of what I was bringing to the analysis, and reviewing interpretations against the data. As Smith (2004) explains, the interpretative account should be “based on a close reading of what is already in the passage,

helped by analysis of what the participant said elsewhere in the interview and informed by a general psychological interest but without being influenced by a specific pre-existing formal theoretical position” (p.45).

Following several iterations of analysis, comparisons of conceptual maps across cases, and cross- participant interpretations of subordinate themes, three major themes were arrived at. Thematic presentations of the initial analysis across cases was trialled before thorough reworking, and the final analytic stage created an idiographic presentation of each major theme. Largely this was due to interpretations of meaning within lower level themes becoming generalised across cases, and thus conceptually distanced from participants’ accounts. With the main themes being the “more powerful organising device” (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009), p. 109), the final presentation sought closeness to each lived experience whilst linking cases through shared, albeit distinctive, experiences of these main thematic areas.

2.6.2 Quality assurance

Validity as a space of constructed visibility of the practices of methodology. (Lather, 1994, p.39)

Traditionally, research within psychology has been measured against positivist principles, however, as qualitative research seeks to answer questions that are fundamentally different, with different underlying philosophies of science, different criteria are necessary for establishing quality. Morrow (2005) suggests that standards of research should adhere to both those that are appropriate to the particular assumptions of the methodology, and that enable trustworthiness.

Quality standards, such as those proposed by Elliot, Fischer & Rennie (1999), were considered in the present research, including meeting research aims, owning the theoretical position, situating the sample, grounding in examples, and adequate credibility. Credibility is related to the idea of internal consistency in quantitative research, and involves taking steps to prove methodological rigour. The present research sought to demonstrate this through reflexivity and co-analysis. Specifically, I undertook a reflective journal throughout the research process, samples of which are found in the appendices and referred to in the text, as well as a paper-trail of the process of data analysis (Yardley, 2008).

My supervisors checked through analyses and I engaged with a group of researchers at the university to discuss interpretations. Finally, I presented my analyses at an IPA research group where other IPA researchers were able to comment on interpretations, providing ideas and alternative reflections.

In regard to IPA theory, establishing trustworthiness in analysis involves making explicit the implicit biases that we have when interpreting data, to the extent that this is possible, including the emotional involvement that we form with the topic (Morrow, 2005). For me, explicit self-reflexivity involved documenting my own experiences and ideas as these developed through the research journey, and recognising the influences I brought to the research, whilst acknowledging that this awareness is partial.

With reference to the expressed political nature of the research, I am also concerned with “consequential validity” (Morrow, 2005, p.253), or the extent to which the research realises its own aims. This speaks to the values inherent in research that concerns social issues and the power differential discussed previously, in light of which a criteria for the research is its ability to address these. In line with the social constructionist stance, the validity of research is viewed in context, and in contribution to an evolving social science and clinical practice (Lather, 1994). In the presentation of results, the research aims to present an account of experiences that may be unique to the individuals involved, and gives privilege to the way they make sense of their own experience. This is in one way a route to expanding the currently narrow view that the dominant research paradigm and theories take towards understanding young refugees (Summerfield, 2012).

RESULTS

The results are presented idiographically, as I found that each major theme was most powerfully illustrated through my interpretation of each individuals' experiences in turn. This presentation style also serves to demonstrate the unique experiences of each participant of each of the major themes, in keeping with the aim of staying close to the lived experience (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The final account is a co-construction of meaning through my own, the researcher's, lens, and the accounts shared by participants. The intention was not to present a cohesive explanatory model but to put forward an interpretation of co-constructed meaning and how this was understood through the prism of layers of cultural, professional and personal meanings and language. The reader is invited to reach their own interpretations, thus adding a further hermeneutic layer (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Three master themes are presented in Figure 1, in an illustration of how the themes are construed to permeate throughout layers of participants' experience.

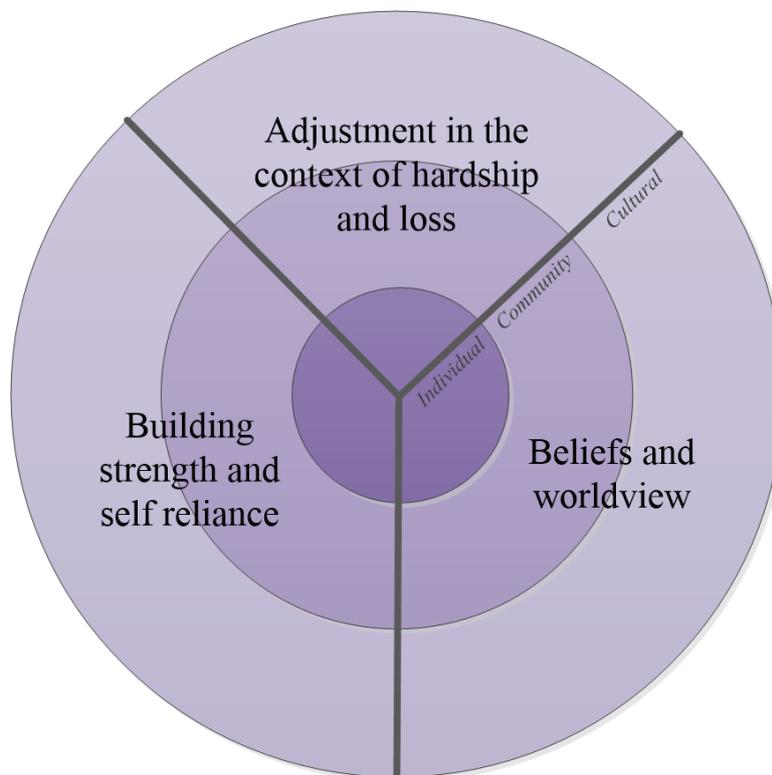


Figure 1. Illustration of three major themes experienced on multiple levels of participants' lives

3.1 Adjustment in the context of hardship and loss

Participants spoke of a range of losses and hardships, mainly in the context of demonstrating adjustment. The difficulties experienced appear not to stand alone, but give rise to learning and acceptance. Hardships ranged from the individual through to cultural: from loss of specific family members, to loss of community and culture; from arrival as a young teen lacking skills to care for oneself, to arrival into an unfamiliar landscape and culture. Likewise, adaptation is described by each on different levels: individual skills, community, and culture.

3.1.1 Keren

Keren, having spent the greatest length of time in the UK, relayed minimal hardship and a high degree of adaptation, conceding rarely that the process had been tough. The hardships he relayed included learning of his brother's death in the Mediterranean. Here he describes making a concerted effort to reach acceptance, alongside particular situations that had made this hard to maintain:

“I knew when I left my Mum’s home, I knew that I’m going to find some bad situations and stuff. So, for this reasons I didn’t find like a lot of like bad situations, or difficulties time, but when I was getting sick and stuff like that, that time was a bit like heavy”.

Along with most other participants, he attributes some of his difficulties to his young age, particularly connecting this with being in an unfamiliar country without his family. Asking us to imagine how hard this situation can be highlights the strength of his ability to endure and adapt, by “*carrying on*”:

“Living by yourself when you are 16 years old, and then carrying on early age from there, and for the first time to go, be abroad(...) this is the hardest thing this, that you can imagine in life.”

Keren makes regular reference to the lack of skills that he had on first arrival, using the phrase starting “*from scratch*” numerous times, and also “*my English was broken and zero*”, in contrast to his subsequent academic achievement and ability to adapt:

“There was a time that as a job they tell you nah you came from there... and stuff like that and still like I was giving back them, go and I’ll be resident, I’m getting distinctions trying to get just merit”.

In addition to working hard, Keren describes using strategies of using youtube, and gaining a wide friendship network to support him in times of need. The personal struggle and adaptation is paralleled by his account of his country's struggles, from its colonial history, through independence, dictatorship and ongoing civil oppression. He demonstrates that the struggle is not his own but that of his people, and he sees the ability to adapt as both learned and genetic. Using the collective pronoun "we", he demonstrates a shared struggle, resulting in the shared trait of adaptability.

"We had never had recognition as a country,.. so that means that we haven't had any freedom before. So for these reasons I can say like, which is in our DNA, that like we haven't been in a good situation, so you have to adapt, you have to adapt and then to leave the same situation, so for these reasons, and when you don't have option as well, you have to accept the life and things, and then you have to go through, whether it is bad or good."

Situating personal experience alongside the broader history, Keren demonstrates how belonging to his country sits alongside integration in the UK. A closer reading of this particular extract links to related themes that will be further discussed, including experiences of limited choice, acceptance, and cultural beliefs.

3.1.2 Aran

Aran spoke of hardship and loss with less reference to positive adaptation than Keren, and this could be considered in the context of his uncertain immigration status. His hardship is experienced physically, and Aran shows insight that his low energy is a manifestation of emotional pain and loss:

Interpreter: "The laziness maybe comes from lack of interest in doing some stuff, when I'm thinking about you know, my country, my family, the things I miss, so it makes me to lose interest in performing some stuff. It's not physical stuff that I don't have the energy, most of the time I think I'm, you know, I'm alive and I can do things, but the thing is, sometimes it's (pause)."

Although Aran (and the interpreter) did not complete this sentence, he clearly conveys lacking motivation. The unfinished sentence also indicates a struggle to express the emotional pain, and it is possible that this coincides with more general communication and language difficulties, as well as cultural norms around the appropriateness of sharing personal feelings.

Aran also speaks of not being able to share his feelings when contacting family at home, even though he describes the openness and expected way his mother shares hers:

Interpreter: *“My father has passed away but, my mother and my (number of) sisters are living together, every time I call my mother she is crying of course, but again, it’s reassuring that they are okay.”*

The sense of his own isolation from being alone in an unfamiliar culture and being unable to share his feelings, is combined with a determination to manage these himself:

Interpreter: *“I don’t want to upset them, so I keep it for myself; I say that I’m okay, I’m doing fine.”*

Since Aran has described finding out of his father’s passing, and mentioning only sisters, a further interpretation could be that Aran is now the eldest male in the family, with possible corresponding responsibilities of protection or support. Aran has adapted to his situation and struggle through withdrawal and isolation, remaining mainly in his room and communicating with his family over the internet.

3.1.3 Salah

Salah also describes intense feelings of loss in the context that he has been unable to make contact with his family, and therefore is unaware of their whereabouts or safety. The main object of his difficulties is trying to forget the past: *“College is like, to forget about, to help me like forget my family.”*

Despite this situation, Salah is engaging in life and college as a way of trying to move on. He describes how well he is doing, on a scale of 1 – 100 (where 100 was said to be ideal), and why he has said 30 rather than 20 or less:

“I don’t know but say it’s like my life is going it’s not all the time, like maybe if I’m gonna say 20 I’m sad like all the time but it’s like 30 for me is like maybe I’m not gonna remember like every day. Four or five days a week is why.”

Similarly to Keren, his life carries on, despite the difficulties. He describes ways of dealing with difficulties in place of support he would have had in his community at home. He describes with both gravity and slight amusement, the way in which his behaviour has been misunderstood:

S: For me, if I have something that, like I'm going to do crazy thing, like sleep people say you cannot do crazy sleep

J: How is that crazy?

S: How you got a problem you gonna sleep.

J: Oh I see

S: Yeah, like that they think is crazy. You can sleep, for me I can sleep like 24 hours so.

Salah describes both having sleep difficulties, as well as using sleeping to process difficulties, as he explains: “*so I think sometime sleep is my problem, or fix my problems, something I said like finish it, you realise things*”. At home the community would come up with a shared solution, whereas here he is provided information to make up his own mind. It therefore makes sense to him that he needs to take time to process and think.

Regarding culture, he also understands that problems cannot always be solved. He talks first about people helping in his culture-of-origin, and then the difficulty of receiving help in the UK, perhaps when problems cannot be fixed:

“It’s like the people gonna speak, or they’re gonna give you something to fix if you have a problem, because they’re gonna help you, but here it’s, how are they gonna help you (...) but I think it’s difficult.”

Salah demonstrates his overall hardship of loss, whilst at the same time navigating a culture where he has to learn to how to problem-solve his own difficulties.

3.1.4 Yasin

Yasin discussed adaptation according to ways that he had survived hardship so far in his young life. He attributes his adaptation to necessary skills that he acquired in the past, including during his journey to the UK:

Interpreter: “I have to learn things the hard way, you know I have to make sure that I get out of this, and I’m young and I’ve been through a lot... and it’s all experiences you know.”

Religion and talking are highly important in enabling him to maintain his wellbeing. He also uses strategies of changing his environment, and being around friends:

Interpreter: “Not just sitting at home all the time, you just make some things worse. Going out, meet my friend- that makes things easy for me.”

His relative wellbeing sits alongside loss and the most difficult thing: being apart from his family, even though they are in regular telephone contact. Similarly to all, Yasin refers throughout to the importance of family. Particularly, family appears to come before all else. For example, despite intentions to manage his life peacefully, certain situations may justify a different strategy:

Interpreter: *“If someone said something bad to (me) you know and (I) couldn’t cope with it or deal with it, maybe (I) would fight, you know, if someone says something bad about my Mum, we’re not gonna just let it go you know, just fight if you have to. Some things that is to walk away from, if you can, walk away from that.”*

Yasin has adapted by learning to get through life without his family, and although he misses them, does not consider that this impacts his coping abilities; without hesitation, he rated his coping as ten out of ten. Yasin described finding it helpful to call his family when he wants to, and did not mention that any harm had befallen them. In difficult hypothetical situations, such as family insult, Yasin had strategies that included walking away or, if necessary, to fight.

3.1.5 Bradley

Bradley also describes learning his own skills along the way to manage his new life:

Interpreter: *“When I came here, I knew nothing how to deal... then I was actually forced to use what skill or knowledge I have, then I start to ask my social work, take advice from her, and to follow what instructions she gives me or what to do for the best.”*

He lists the numerous things that have to be adjusted to, although has no particular way of describing how he has managed this:

Interpreter: *“It is possible to say that (I) came here, (I) adapted to the weather, society and everything, that is skill itself, adapted is skill itself.”*

Emphasising the difference between life in the UK and in his country, Bradley finds significant adjustment required for adapting to the responsibility for everyday tasks, as well as the isolation:

Interpreter: *“Life is different here... at home everything is prepared by family, you do nothing. Here, should prepare yourself, should go shopping yourself, you should manage. At home, there are common friends you can entertain outside, there’s not much here. At home, you are with brothers and sisters, here I have no brothers and sisters.”*

Bradley also emphasises difference in managing problems, as he lacks the support of family pulling together:

Interpreter: *“If you face problem there at home, all family’s around you, all the people who are experienced about, so you collect them and then ask how to deal with.”*

Bradley describes difference regarding culture, lack of family support and, initially, lack of skill. Regarding his coping abilities he said now it has gone from one to ten, out of ten, in just six months. Out of necessity, he perceives major adjustment to have taken place.

Concluding theme 1: Adjustment

All of the participants refer to hardship in their lives, from individual difficulties such as cooking and weather, to being apart from family. Hardship is further accentuated as difficulties in the home country are generally described as communal, with the family or community pulling together to help. This leads to varying adaptation strategies being devised by young people either learning to manage on their own over time, or gradual withdrawal from activity.

3.2 Beliefs and worldview in shaping a new life

Each participant’s account features religion, which was interpreted to variously influence facets of experience, including lifestyle, beliefs, values, and culture. Beliefs are seen to affect the individual level, through attention to daily activities, including prayer and other religious duties, as well as in forming individual mind-set and the approach to adjustment. On a family and community level, participants refer to the connection of religion with their family, and support networks built on respect, generosity and reciprocity.

Religion was not considered during recruitment, however four participants were of Muslim faith, and one was Christian.

3.2.1 Keren

Keren talks in detail about religious activities, for example, praying five times daily, attending mosque, and reading the Quran. Regular prayer is cleansing, and involves communication with God⁵. Following prayer, he describes feeling refreshed, amongst other beneficial consequences:

⁵Throughout, God is referred to as God except on a few occasions when Allah was the word directly used by the participant. God is the translation in English of the word Allah in the Arabic language.

“Whenever I read the Quran at the same time it gives hope and I’m going to have some things good in my future like that, and that’s why it makes me strong, and whenever like after I pray, after I pray, there is no depression, there is no stress, this is the most (important) thing that I forgot to tell you about”.

One of his references to religion, despite not mentioning it specifically, is in the context of family. He discusses the value of talking with his mother, in which her praying for him is a source of encouragement:

“I speaking to her every Friday, it makes a big difference and then the way that she pray for me and the way that she speak to me, she always she encourage me to follow my dreams and do whatever.”

Family life appears to be tied in with religion, Keren is supported by talking to his mother and also through knowing he is prayed for. Knowledge that his mother has belief may give him reassurance that she is supported, and provides them with shared hope for the future.

Religion is also described as enabling a focus on the present:

“Actually the whole Quran (...) gives you that the purpose of life is just to worship. And then there is too, there is God he brought us alive and now he is going to take us wherever he wants us, so even though I lost my brother, there is no guarantees for me, (to) know that I am going to live tomorrow, I may go tomorrow, so all I have to do is just pray for my brother and pray for myself, and then to do my duty.”

Keren speaks of religious belief shaping his life, giving his life meaning, and determining his future. He can therefore concentrate on the present and on his “duty”, which is referred to both in the context of religion, and in general life-management:

“Sometimes I’ll do it when I’m stressing, I always, I don’t get to the stress point before it comes, I have to do my duty and then to cover the duty before like I stressed.”

By “duty” Keren refers to strategies such as taking breaks, talking to friends, and playing football, for example:

“Imagine like, you been from Monday to Friday (...) you have been a lot of stress like that, so on Sunday you have to go a day and just play football so you know to gain a little fitness and to fresh your mind.”

Keren also describes cultural attributes, which indicate values of respect, duty, and reciprocity. Here, he describes what respect looks like in his culture:

“We are polite people that will not talk about behind someone’s back, but (...) we are not the people who can do something which is like dodgy, or maybe like neighbours, maybe like, they respect the neighbours in the hood, or everyone, and then you have to look at them with the same thing, which is like background, which is like you have to treat the environment the way you want to be treated.”

Keren makes religious references throughout his interview, but only gives detail when asked specifically about its importance. He also refers to guiding principles from his culture, which are illustrated using examples in his own daily life.

3.2.2 Aran

Religion is also important to Aran, however he explains having some difficulties with his religious practice and beliefs, which appear difficult to talk about. First, Aran mentions (interpreter): *“it’s in the hands of God, really, who’s got to decide on my fate”*, in relation to his asylum application. When asked about the importance of religion, Aran responds:

Interpreter: “This is the truth. (...) Everybody knows that God exists. Except maybe for atheists.”

Awaiting his application outcome was spontaneously offered, but not expanded on, so it is unclear whether it is that or religion that is difficult to discuss. Particular words recurring through his account include *“fate”* and *“destiny”*, which he explains as being associated with life having a purpose:

Interpreter: “God created us for a reason, and then we have to, to do something, it’s not enough that you are here and, there should be a direction that you should go (...) um, I can’t tell you precisely what destiny is, really.”

This bears resemblance to Keren’s ideas about life having meaning; although Keren initially stated the only purpose in life was *“worship”*, he also states that he believes God will *“take us wherever he wants us”*, implying predetermination.

For Aran, religious belief is ineffective at countering his difficulties. In response, despite his strength of belief, he appears caught up in the contradictions:

Interpreter: *“The thing is I believe strongly in God and in Islam, and I think as a Muslim I should pray and you know, do the thing(s) that Islam requires me to do, but I don’t do them. But, at the same time, how one can expect God to help him if He doesn’t answer his call.”*

Here he is explaining that experience shows him that God does not answer, and so it is no longer worthwhile talking to God. Religious belief again sits alongside description of a culture that influences personal values. For example, keeping problems private:

Interpreter: *“When we have a problem, you don’t complain in general, so, if it’s a really big problem, even if it’s a private problem we keep it for ourselves, we don’t share it.”*

This cultural attribute contributes to isolation in a country apart from his family, where his family and close friends are the ones he would usually confide in. Aran also mentions that the only object he brought with him was something that belonged to his friend, who died. Aran is alone having lost his father, a close friend, and now God. It seems that coming from a culture of generosity, (interpreter): *“the (region) people, or member of the community, they are very generous at helping each other”*, makes it difficult to ask for help as it may not be usual to need to do so. Aran also considers his isolation in relation to personality, and the result of experience:

Interpreter: *“Other people they find it normal to ask the same thing every week or ten times a day. It’s not my type, it’s not my, attitude. So, once I ask once or twice, and I saw there was no outcome (...) I prefer to leave it really.”*

Aran believes in God, fate and destiny, and values generosity as well as privacy. In the context of multiple losses and uncertain future, he has not found religious activities helpful, and mainly keeps to himself. What keeps him going seems to be destiny (whether that is cultural or religious), as this keeps him free from worry, and fear:

Interpreter: *“I’m not afraid of new situations or new environments, and I’m not afraid of death because I know it’s inevitable. There is no reason to be afraid of death.”*

3.2.3 Salah

Salah, despite his desire to forget his past and his family, appears to cope with support from religion, and community values. The individual practices of religion in themselves are helpful:

“I’m gonna read, because when you read the Quran it’s you’re gonna feel like better than before.”

He also has positive beliefs that God will help and answer his prayers:

“In my religion if you have problem, then it’s God, God help you.”

“You ask for something (...) and then He answers.”

Salah has ideas about the future, and has wanted to be doctor since a young age, due to wanting to help himself as well as others:

“I say maybe I gonna be a doctor, it’s gonna be good for me, I gonna help some people.”

At another point he describes the community he comes from and how helping and support is fundamental:

“The help different is like, every day is like, (...) they’re going to help, if I have something, like money or anything and then I give you. If I don’t have like a car like, they go outside they carry me, if I cannot walk.”

Support is reciprocal, and also tends to be communal:

“The thing I know is, in my country, people, if you have a problem, all the people are gonna help you.”

In response Salah reaches out to many people from his own community and creates a wide friendship network. At the same time, as mentioned in the previous theme, he has other ways of coping on his own, such as extended sleeping when he is thinking about the past or unsure what course of action to take. Overall, he explains that religion is the most important thing that helps him.

3.2.4 Yasin

Yasin describes use of religious practices as helping, in particular to manage difficult situations. He describes the form of Islamic prayer called *Takbir*⁶, where he will talk to God in order to manage situations calmly:

Interpreter: *“Just saying Allah, Allah is great, and all these things is helping. You don’t have to say it loud, you just say it in your mind, this eases everybody’s pain.”*

⁶ During debrief, the interpreter informed me that this is the name of this type of incidental prayer.

This is particularly useful for Yasin, who self-describes as an Arab, and therefore needing to take extra care to exercise self-control:

Interpreter: *“As Arab, we are, you know, like, um, bloody, you know like, think always about controlling our mind, thinking about something that you might regret later”*

While the word used is “bloody”, it is used with hesitation, and in this context the interpreter may have been looking for a word with less brutal connotations, perhaps passionate, bold or emphatic.

The broader sense in which Yasin describes religion, as the most important thing in his life, is that of a guide, or moral compass:

Interpreter: *“God gave us Islam and explained everything in Islam in Quran, many things that what life is about, he gave us our brain, to think, to know the right from the wrong, and you always have to follow the right things and do the right things, so this is what I’m trying to do all the time.”*

Yasin also expands on previous participants’ explanations of destiny or fate. In Yasin’s account the same sentiment is filled with hope rather than the uncertainty that Aran was facing:

Interpreter: *“In (my) village (we) believe that God is the one who puts you where you have to be. So, I come here and maybe there is something here for me (...) and where I come from there is no specific future for me there, it’s difficult, and here things are going to be hopefully different for me.”*

Yasin also describes another Islamic concept, *Kifarah*⁷, which appears similar to what we might understand in the English language as karma⁸:

Interpreter: *“If you follow the right path, you do the right things, friends as well the same, if you are a good person, God will, you know, make people around you are good as well, and if you are a bad person the same will happen.”*

Here, he describes following Islam as a way to ensure that friends are not leading you into trouble. This appears to encourage Yasin to follow his religion as he believes he will be rewarded.

⁷ Kifarah was another word given by the interpreter.

⁸ Karma is a transliteration of the concept from Eastern religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism.

Aside from respect for the family, another cultural value he describes is respect for age and wisdom. Older members of the family are described as holding the responsibility to deal with problems, and so being without family and elders could be problematic as there could be limited experience of managing difficult situations. This further helps to explain the use of avoidance strategies, such as walking away, or *Takbir*, when in difficult situations. He explains:

Interpreter: *“Cultures they have like you know the eldest person usually is the one to go and you know speak (...) and do things on behalf of others, I don’t get involved with that.”*

Yasin appears to benefit from his beliefs and religion, which provide guidance and help him to feel he has purpose. Religion also provides him with immediate coping strategies, which he uses to manage situations despite cultural practices of delegating problem-management to elder members in the family or community.

3.2.5 Bradley

Bradley also describes using religion as his main source of support. He describes religious activities, including spending four hours praying in church every Sunday, as well as attributing his success to God:

Interpreter: *“When I pray, I contact to God like telephone. God is give me everything. I know how can I come to England. (...) All this is God is helping me – in the Sahara, in the everything – in the Libya, everything is God is helping me. I believe God 100%, that’s why God is everything, he give me, look now I come to England, some people is died in the Sahara, died in Libya. I say every day, thanks God.”*

Bradley’s most common reference to God is to give thanks and gratitude. Religion is also described in relation to family, bringing hope for the future, and as an ongoing project of learning throughout life. Like the Muslim participants, Bradley could not conceive of a life without religious belief. Religion is fundamental to his understanding of the world:

Interpreter: *“I was 6 years old, (...) that I know about the religion, I have religion and that is what I know.”*

Bradley also explains the gender roles that he was brought up with in his culture, and that inform expectations of daily living:

Interpreter: “I can’t cook, cook is my Mum, my sister because in my country is the man is not cooking, just woman and girl. England is same, that’s why, in my country, I just I go to school, I go to play football (...) that’s why it’s too hard.”

Bradley refers to equal roles between women and men, a concept that he has not been brought up with. While living skills can be challenging to learn for any teenager, regardless of culture, Bradley’s account illustrates a cumulative impact of being apart from family, unfamiliarity with the culture, and daily tasks that would never usually be expected of him.

Concluding theme 2: Beliefs and worldview

For each participant there is a strong role of religion and cultural understanding, appearing equally prominent in the experience of both Muslim and Christian participants. Similarities are apparent through Islamic concepts, with aspects shared across all of the participants, including prayer, and the importance of belief in providing a familiar framework and meaning. Religion also shapes orientation to the past, present or future. Several participants refer to God giving hope, and allude to a predetermination. This enables them to focus on the present, particularly enhancing valued attributes of patience and acceptance. Other values include respect, reciprocity, duty, generosity, and patience. The Christian participant specifically refers to gratitude, although Muslim participants do also comment on appreciation of God, and so the specific difference may be linguistic.

All participants made spontaneous religious references but not directly in relation to answering how they cope or understand coping. On follow-up exploratory questions, religion was, in every case, either the most important thing in their life, or equally important to having friends. It is therefore my overall interpretation that religion does not constitute coping or coping strategies per se, but is a way of life, that informs and heavily impacts upon the ways in which these young people cope.

3.3 Building Strength and Self-Reliance

Participants describe coping behaviours in the context of specific difficulties, such as the weather or managing finances, however as has already become apparent there are more important concepts that guide them through life. This final superordinate theme finds that amongst various cultural concepts, one that pulls them together is *strength*. Not every participant used the word strength, and it is variously described as determination, independence or self-reliance.

The overall concept appears to be in contradiction to the way most have described coping in their own culture as shared and collective. However, we can see that the route towards self-reliance and strength is not just individual, but comes through connection with others, and from other cultural values, such as freedom. Freedom, as experienced through having choice and opportunities for the future, may be of particular importance in light of previous experiences of oppression. Most participants valued their developing independence, particularly when feeling supported to do so, and use this value to choose which aspects of their old culture and their new lifestyle to live their life by.

3.3.1 Keren

Keren describes gaining strength from his religion, enabling him to value each day and live his life one day at a time:

“This is thing that makes me strong, this is what makes me the life, and does value a lot. (...) I don’t think of a lot of about life, I have to do this one, do this one, this one, (...) actually it teaches me like, the Quran that, I have to live today, and not think about tomorrow.”

He also describes gaining strength from the people around him, emphasising skills to make friends and build his support network. The community where he lives and the resources available are what enable him to gain independence. For Keren it is apparent that being strong and independent means utilising the support and structures around him to meet his needs:

“The most thing that makes me happy, especially like I can say like, I think the community. You know, like and then if you can see overall, like from the friends that I have, from the people that are around me, from the service that you get in the UK.”

One of Keren’s ways of coping is through youtube, where he has learned about British history and popular culture. Strength for Keren is about accepting his life in the UK, and taking on aspects of the culture. He clearly describes this in the context of other options and awareness of persecution. Having chosen to leave his country, there is no going back:

“Even though if it is not my culture I have to do it because I’m living and stuff like that. So, this one, that makes me strong and patient that, to go through the journey and stuff, and then to accept it because if I have to go back (...) I don’t know what it will be like, whether you be killed or maybe be in prison(...) because there is a circumstance although if you left the country with (...) smugglers, and then you have to be like, this is the

situation and its, I have no option to go back so that I have to accept everything that comes.”

Keren describes gaining strength from religion, people and the community, and finally, from choice and having the option to live. The final extract has described the value of living in a new country, over not living in his country of origin, which brings him acceptance, patience, and strength.

3.3.2 Aran

Aran also talks about taking strength from his beliefs, but rather than religion, his focus is self-belief:

Interpreter: *“I believe in myself, strongly, myself. So since I have this I can do everything.”*

Similarly to Keren, he is aware that he needs to be independent, however he manages this differently; Aran feels it is not appropriate to ask for support. This links with his cultural belief discussed previously, and contributes to his aim of self-reliance:

Interpreter: *“I know very well that since I am here alone I have to support myself, and stand on my own feet. And I shouldn’t really rely on anybody else (...) to live or to ask for help really.”*

There may also be fear in getting to know people or opening up. Whereas for some participants, sharing and building social resources is valuable, for Aran, perhaps in the context of insecure asylum status, he is distrustful:

Interpreter: *“Here, the thing is, I don’t want to get in trouble, with people or with authorities, I don’t know what are they doing exactly these people, they might be thinking of involving me in some illegal activities, or stuff like that, so I get away a little bit. I keep the distance with them.”*

In consequence, Aran is quite isolated. He compares the two cultures from his perspective:

Interpreter: *“The difference is, I would say that here, is everybody for himself, so you don’t care about the people around you. It’s kind of individualism is so strong here it is the government, the people in charge that, they deal with situations. Over there, people are so curious, whatever you do, they asking, why are you doing this, who’s your guest,*

where are you going, everything, so they are very busy with each other's personal affairs."

Withdrawal is the way that Aran manages, even though the consequence is loneliness. Perhaps surprisingly, he values the UK culture, if only he had secure relationships and support:

Interpreter: *"The good thing is here is so you feel free, the bad thing is I'm alone, so, if I was with my family, it could have been perfect."*

As Aran describes cultural barriers to opening up, he aims to be fully self-sufficient. This is also an important protection mechanism against possible exploitation. He describes this in parallel to the situation in his country, where he believes the problems and instability in the region have been caused by his own culture's generosity:

Interpreter: *"The kind of is related to the politics in (country) in general, that they are so generous they accept everybody. So other nationals that are in some part of (region), they are the majority really. So they are creating so many problems."*

3.3.3 Salah

Salah talks mainly about the importance of friends, as well as being self-reliant. Although he has made friends with a range of people, he particularly values meeting people from his own country:

"One friend he came (area) and I met him in the park. We speak and he say he came from my country and so then, we friends (...) he gonna feel like you stay with your family or your same friends, like real friends."

Salah makes friends at college, but his main place of meeting people is in the park or shops. Although the support of his social worker is valued, he describes it as limited due to professionals' time pressures. In consequence, he appears to live with ongoing uncertainty and doubt regarding his own decision-making:

"I asked many people, but everyone gonna give you different thing, I don't know."

The things he feels most sure about are his need to study, and to take responsibility for himself:

"Most of the time you have to help yourself."

Studying is valued primarily in order to learn, with further aims of academic achievement, being able to support himself and attain a professional status in the future. For example, Salah

has been reading history books in English to improve his understanding of culture and language:

“Maybe if you learn something, you’re gonna know, you’re gonna learn something to help you, like.”

Despite his difficulties and loss of family, Salah has confidence about the future. As well as plans to become a doctor, he has ideals about getting married and living life:

“But after university, then everything.”

In relation to his culture, Salah, like Aran, sees the benefit in making independent decisions and having freedom. He values having options and working towards his own future, despite the challenges this brings. Here, he explains what is good and bad about the support culture of his home country:

“Good, maybe they’re going to give you like good, because they’re going to fix you. Bad is like maybe they’re going (...) maybe they’re going to make the problem is bigger (...) and everyone gonna know, and they don’t know how to fix it.”

3.3.4 Yasin

Yasin emphasises strength, and the necessity of independence in whatever country or culture you are in:

Interpreter: *“You have to try to do best to solve your problems, no one else will do it for you, you have to do it, people have falls and they get up again, they have to get up again, this is life in general.”*

Meanwhile, there are also benefits of support from others, as he gains strength from his religion, and strength from the people around him. He illustrates this using his journey to the UK, which he considers he would not have had the strength to survive alone:

Interpreter: *“After God, the people around you, they help you, and if I am alone, I might not reach where I wanted to, but people being around me they give me strength, we give strength to each other and you feel one of them, walking, and you have to walk otherwise you get left behind, so it’s we have each other.”*

Yasin also considers that he gained strength from his background, as life was not easy where he grew up:

Interpreter: *“Coming from the countryside is like, gave me strengths, even I think even from people that are in the towns, things are easier for them there, (...) maybe make them weaker than us, you know, where I come from, it gave me strengths and I think that I’m more powerful than, got more strengths than other people.”*

Strength is linked to the idea that patience is an important resource for getting through difficulties, with patience learned both from religion and from where one grows up:

Interpreter: *“If you have a difficulty, you have to be patient, then it will go away, and in being patient, maybe people here they don’t have this kind of patience, they want things to happen all the time.”*

Yasin demonstrates availability of these attributes, such as patience, acceptance, and strength, but he now has more choices. Independence means having options to make up your own mind to practice cultural values or learn new ways of life:

Interpreter: *“I’ll take the good part of whatever, and I will follow that. Not everything you know, people might do bad thing, I’m not just gonna copy them.”*

Like the others, Yasin sees benefits of UK society, in particular describing the value of having options, although this does not replace the meaning of home:

Interpreter: *“If you ask any person that’s come from abroad, they will always say my country is the best place (...) and the same goes to me, but I couldn’t see a future in my country (...) Maybe there’s future for me here, (...) it’s better than where I come from.”*

3.3.5 Bradley

Bradley describes numerous things that enable him to build self-reliance, coming to the point where *“it’s good, I cope by myself now”*. He recognises that support from others was necessary to reach this point:

Interpreter: *“A lot of people help me, lot of, my friend is, they are helping me, social worker is help me, caseworker is helping me, the (organisation) is helping me, after I’m good, perfect, that’s all.”*

Bradley also finds that God helps him, and as discussed in the previous theme he is thankful to God, explaining that God also influences his integrity, such as refraining from unhelpful behaviours.

Bradley did not elaborate on his relationship with home and family, despite being in contact with them, saying he only remembers to phone them when reminded by friends:

J: What's it like when you call your family in America?

B (interpreter): It's fine.

The difficulty may be due to their resettlement in the USA, although circumstances of his migration were not probed, and so it is unknown at what point Bradley became separated from his family. What is apparent is the consequence that this situation has had with his relationship to home, where it is not something that he finds supportive. Bradley appears to have learned to manage without family, having found support first from God and then from services. Now, he enjoys his own independence:

B: When I go to my social worker she is give me other thing, when I go to (organisation) she gives me different thing, you understand?

J: So they give you different advice?

B: Yeah, after I bring the two things (gestures -together) after, I go by my own mind (laughs)

Concluding theme 3: Building strength and self-reliance

All of the participants were developing independence as a way of life that they valued. The source of this strength and self-reliance came for some from religion, others from the community and support around them, and others the opportunity to begin life in a free society. This was not found to be contradictory to cultural beliefs and norms, as self-reliance enabled making choices and selecting which cultural practices to maintain. Strength can at once refer to traditional values of patience and valuing life, whilst also enabling this to be balanced with individual behaviours, such as learning what to do in a particular situation, or choosing whose advice to follow. Some participants also related the value of individual strength to experiences in their country of origin, such as lack of opportunity or political issues.

DISCUSSION

In this research I aimed to explore the lived experience of coping in young unaccompanied refugees, in the context of arriving and living in the UK without family. Data from individual interviews with five participants was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Three superordinate themes were found to present an understanding of coping co-constructed between the researcher and participants. These were: *Adjustment in the context of hardship and loss*; *Beliefs and worldview in shaping a new life*; and, *Building strength and self-reliance*. This chapter discusses an analysis of the findings in relation to existing literature and research. The clinical implications, suggested areas for further research, and an analysis of the methodological strengths and limitations of the research are also presented.

4.1 Analysis of findings

4.1.1 *Adjustment in the experience of hardship and loss*

Participants spoke of the losses and hardships encountered in their lives, including, for all of them, the loss of home and family. For some participants, losses were specific: Keren talks of the death of his brother, and Aran of the death of his father and a close friend. The others experience ambiguous loss: Salah has no contact with family and does not know if they are alive or dead. Loss for Yasin was the loss of home despite having contact with family, whereas Bradley experienced loss of connection with home due to his family migrating elsewhere.

Loss is a widespread theme in the general refugee literature (Papadopoulos, 2002), and the term “nostalgic disorientation” is used to describe the deep sense of pain regarding loss of home that is unique to the refugee experience. Home is not limited to physical place, but a place of belonging, a paragon of safety and retreat (Rosbrook & Schwartz, 2010), profuse with familial meaning and emotional connection, past memories and future anticipation. Lack of awareness of this emotional connection to home leads to attributing the loss experience to more tangible experiences that may appear insufficient. The depth and complexity of reactions to such loss can be misinterpreted as symptomatic of trauma reactions (Papadopoulos, 2002). For example, several studies report finding high rates of East African refugees seeking medical support which are often understood as somatic expressions of distress (Geltman et al, 2005). Expressions of grief are culturally relative (Bhugra & Becker, 2005) and can result in diagnosis according to western mental health diagnostic systems (e.g. Schreiber, 1995). Loss experiences also echo Eisenbruch’s (1991) theory of cultural bereavement, in which grief for the loss of

familiar social norms, language and dialect, customs and support systems, is a natural response to migration. For example, the darkest moments described by participants here related directly to the physical absence of family during times of personal difficulty, such as illness.

A core tenet of ambiguous loss theory (Boss, 2006), is that loss is fundamentally relational. Loss cannot exist without the presence of social bonds, followed by their absence. When both Keren and Aran learn of deaths within their families, they appear to draw closer to family, perhaps with increasing “nostalgic disorientation”, as though yearning for home and its promised security. Research on ambiguous loss encompasses experiences such as military deployment or family members going missing, as well as loss through progressive decline, notably dementia (Boss, 2010). In being relational, research suggests that relational support structures, such as other family members, are important. Research with Latino refugees in the US finds that family are the primary support mechanism, in addition to holding in mind the missing (Falicov, 2002).

A difference in this study is the lack of available family. However, most participants appeared to find certainty in their need to develop and adjust to life in the UK despite the challenges. For example, while Salah explains the desire to forget family and the past, this comes alongside the ability to use resources such as attending college, reading, making friends and learning to cook.

Other participants spoke of the value of contact with family, although this did not adequately replace their physical proximity. Contact may represent a link with home, provision of certainty through keeping track of remaining family members, and gaining support through reminders of their care. This reflects the reviewed paper by Luster (2009) where ‘lost boys’ coped using psychological presence of parents, for example, holding in mind what their parents had taught them. Luster (2009) also describes Salah’s strategy of using activities, such as sleeping and reading the Quran, to mentally disengage from the situation. Salah replicates previous findings of the paradoxical desire to both forget and connect with home. The role of culture in sleeping as a way of thinking and processing decisions, however, was not noted in the literature in the way that Salah described. Circumstantial differences may play a part, and adapting to a new culture may have influenced Salah’s experience according to availability of coping resources. For example, he referred to community support as his new family, alongside friends from his country feeling more like “*real friends*”, suggesting importance of making connections to home.

Bradley's experience can also be explicated through previous research, as my interpretation of his difficulty with family contact relates to ambiguous loss of home. Despite having contact with family, the connection to 'home' may not be experienced in circumstances where family are not in the physical place of home. Literature tackling this particular experience in unaccompanied refugees did not arise in literature searches, with literature on family contact focussing on temporary separations in Latino refugees in the USA. A study on experiences of reunited refugees found the main predictor of hope during separation was *prior* family experience, including an inverse relationship of hope with previous experiences of abuse. The relationship and comfort gained from connection to family could thus be influenced multifactorially, and currently this is not adequately understood.

For Aran, in contrast, the strength of connection with home may have been due to the loss of his father, and resulting desire to resolve grief. The usual rituals associated with death, such as funerals, burials and ceremonies, that can fulfil a cathartic, culturally validated experience, are not often available for refugees, and this can lead to prolonged grief reactions. For example, a qualitative study in the UK uncovers the impact on refugee mothers who were unable to attend their child's burial (Kelly, Nel & Nolte, 2016). Neimeyer, Klass & Dennis (2014) find that grief constructed relationally enables meaning-making in finding ways to communicate mourning. The socially constructed significance of grief in particular relationships, expressions of grief, and celebrations of life, tend to be culturally scripted, leading to security and shared understandings (Fowlkes, 1990). Unaccompanied refugees may therefore face multiple levels of disadvantage in attending to grief. Aran has experienced multiple bereavements, lacks familiar routines that can enable expression of grief, and cultural expectations preclude expressing emotion except amongst close family relations. For unaccompanied refugees, the illegitimisation of grief reactions is reflective of discourses that portray refugees as either traumatised or exploitative.

Experiences of loss, however, were voiced in the context of growth and adjustment. Post-traumatic growth, as previously defined, is constructed through the process of making sense of events together with community and support (Papadopoulos, 2006). In support of this general finding, whilst supporting families following 9/11⁹, Boss (2004) found that families with refugee backgrounds had higher than usual capacities to cope.

⁹ Following the devastating event of the attack on the World Trade Centre on 11th September 2001, many families experienced a situation of ambiguous loss due to the lack of hard evidence for the death of their family member.

This theme reflects the outcome of the quantitative literature reviewed, suggesting that unaccompanied refugees showed similar levels of life satisfaction despite this lack of family support. The qualitative studies also pointed towards growth alongside hardship experiences. For example, Allsopp (2014) describe young refugees actively responding to their situation, and Majumder (2016) found that adverse experiences contributed to resilience. The latter study, entitled “Inoculated in pain” perceived adversity as contributing strength and determination, implying that suffering gives rise to growth. However, the ability to endure hardship may not causally follow from the survival of previous hardship, even if it contributes to the narrative and identity of the refugees. The current research points instead towards the significance of maintaining or building close relational bonds as well as culturally valid coping responses even in the context of the worst struggles.

The present research further contributes to understanding the contribution of religion and spirituality towards adjustment and growth. The three mechanisms that Sutton (2006) found contributing to positive change following traumatic circumstances: social support; activity; and religion; were replicated in the present study. However, rather than positioning these as independent “vehicles for positive change” (Sutton, 2006, p. 83), the present analysis interprets each as occurring within a context of meaning-making derived culturally and relationally. For example, religion as a framework connected with home and culture; activity as value-driven; and social support as contingent upon trust and security. The three areas may not universally contribute to growth, and more attention is needed on conditions that contributing to growth.

This conclusion is also supported by research finding that the role of social support in ameliorating the impact of bereavement in adults (in a western sample) is a mediator for reduced social loneliness, rather than a main effect (Stroebe et al, 1996). This has also been described in relation to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979), which posits that significant loss cannot be compensated directly by social support, even if the emotional impact of the loss is reduced (Stroebe et al, 1996).

Aran’s experience of lacking drive to build social support is informed by the Swedish studies, where insecure immigration status contributed to the theme ‘living in limbo’ (Thommessen, 2015), and lack of relational bond-building in transitional housing (Malmsten, 2014). As the remaining participants in this study actively sought to build peer relationships and establish networks of support, this is supportive of context as enabling particular types of adaptation.

4.1.2 Beliefs and Worldview

In this research religion was found to play a role on multiple levels, with every participant describing faith as one of the most important aspects of their life. Four out of the five participants adhered to daily religious activities that they found beneficial; for example, prayer was described as cleansing, and reading the Quran or the Bible provided direction and improved mood. Religious activities that were accompanied by individual characteristics of acceptance, patience, belief in destiny and fate, featured in the results. Community-centric religious beliefs were also described, including respect and reciprocity, with family values often playing a role.

I have not attempted to partial out the influences of religion from culture, as these were seen to intertwine in the accounts of participants, and are broadly acknowledged to be mutually interactive¹⁰ (Saroglou & Cohen, 2011).

The importance of religion in managing stress is recognised in literature of non-refugee populations (Koenig, George & Siegler, 1988; Gall & Guirguis-Younger, 2013). Religion is associated with improved physical health outcomes (Ellison & Levin, 1998), and salutogenic¹¹ effects on mental health (e.g. Pollner, 1989; Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005). Religious faith also has a ubiquitous presence throughout research with unaccompanied refugees, although usually playing a minor role. In one exception, Ní Raghallaigh (2011), created a model to reflect religion permeating each theme of their qualitative research.

The role of belief in participants' accounts of coping was not always explicit; rather, participants referred to religious and cultural practices and concepts when discussing their experiences. To my knowledge, previous research has not looked to the religious teachings themselves to inform understandings of the role of religion in refugee experiences¹². Whilst participants emphasised different areas, some of the more common concepts that arose across participants' accounts are now discussed.

¹⁰There is a common misconception that all people of Arab culture are Muslim (and perhaps also that the majority of Muslims are Arab). Not all Arab people are Muslim; an Arab can follow any religion. States in the Middle East, where most Arabs originate, have large Christian minorities (as well as other minority religions). For example, in Syria there is approximately a 10% Christian minority. The largest Muslim populations are in Indonesia, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

¹¹ Salutogenic is a term meaning to create health or well-being, in contrast to factors causing disease (pathogenesis).

¹² Acknowledgement is given that not all interpretations of the Quran and the Bible are equivalent in all cultures or divisions of faith. The Christian participant volunteered that he is Christian Orthodox, however Muslim participants did not state their specific branch of Islam.

Most of the Muslim participants referred to ‘duty’, for example, “*I have to do my duty and then to cover the duty before like I stressed*” (Keren). This referred to religious activities, and also self-care activities: exercising, changing their environment, and taking breaks from study. Many such examples are outlined in the ‘Sunnah’¹³ reflecting the holistic influence that Islam can have on everyday living. It recommends, for example, good time management, as “time is life itself – with each breath that passes, a piece of you is gone” (Hasan al-Başrī, cited by Diwan, 2015). This religious text may lead Muslims to value self-care, learning, and activities believed to be a good use of time.

Most participants made reference to divine intervention, enabling them to reach the UK and manage subsequent experiences, for example, “*God is the one who puts you where you have to be*” (Yasin). In Islam, *Al-Qudar* is the concept of divine destiny, one of the Six Articles of Faith¹⁴, specifying that God wrote down all that has happened and will happen.¹⁵ In Christianity, there is a similar belief: “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that” (*ESV Bible*, James 4.15). Participants described their faith in God, and God’s will, as helpful explanations for how they overcame difficulties when others may not have.

Participants implied that patience was one of the most relevant concepts in how they manage their lives. Yasin explained explicitly that patience is “*in our religion*”, and could be described as a way of reaching acceptance. In religion, patience is an active verb, with connotations of endurance and perseverance in the face of difficulties. Both Islam and Christianity describe suffering as a test of faith, for which patience is required: “And we will surely test you until we make evident those who strive among you and the patient” (*Quran*, Muḥammad, 47.31).

Furthermore, a common theme within Bradley’s experience was the regular expression of gratitude, whereas this was not said explicitly by others. Bradley was the only Christian participant, and the Bible teaches gratitude, e.g.: “Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father” (*ESV Bible*, Ephesians 5:20).

Religious belief may also play a part in family connection and community, with frequent themes of reciprocity and generosity. Given the prominence of faith, some interpretation may

¹³ The ‘Sunnah’ is the teachings of the Prophet Muhammed, outlining numerous practices of living.

¹⁴ The six Articles of Faith: 1) Belief in One God; 2) Belief in the Prophets; 3) Belief in the Quran as the revelations of God; 4) Belief in Angels; 5) Belief in the Day of Judgment; 6) Belief in Predestination

¹⁵ My interpretation of this belief is that God does not determine exactly what will happen, but knows what will happen; it thus allows for divine destiny whilst preserving free will and thus responsibility.

be given to these as religious terms. For example, in Islam generosity relates to the term Zakāt¹⁶ one of the Five Pillars of Islam¹⁷. It means giving to the needy and deserving, either in material wealth or in good deeds. Helping and generosity were frequently described attributes of the home community, and all spoke about the importance of religion in growing up. Cultural references were also included, such as respect for age and wisdom, and gendered family roles. One participant described being prepared to fight to defend his family, with the mother being mentioned in particular. There could be a number of explanations for this: it could relate to the central role of the mother in family culture; a gendered interpretation in which females are protected by male family members; or a cultural principle of family honour. For example, many Arab cultures have a historical system of family honour that pre-dates Islam (Dodd, 1973) and which reflects many values observed in Islam (Suad, 1994).

While four participants described a positive role of religion, one notably had a different relationship to faith. In the literature, religious coping has been divided into positive and negative (Pargament et al, 1998), which may illuminate the different experiences of faith. Positive religious coping can include forgiveness, positive redefinition of events, and seeking support and comfort from God: for example, “*In my religion if you have a problem, it’s God, God help you*”(Salah). Theoretically, belief in a higher power can aid adjustment as the meaning-making enables transcension of immediate uncertainties (Boss, 2004); this bears resemblance to Keren saying “*the purpose of life is just to worship*”.

Negative religious coping can include attributing events to acts of the devil, attributing events as punishment for past sins, and confusion over spiritual beliefs (Pargament et al, 1998). Aran’s account appears to demonstrate such “spiritual struggle” (Burke et al, 2014, p.268), with his initial explicit belief in God, followed by expressed disappointment: “*He doesn’t answer*”. This struggle could reflect an internal conflict, or the influence of cultural expectations; in many Islamic cultures and communities disbelief is not socially acceptable, and can contribute to social marginalisation (Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2015). For Aran, the experience of religious doubt is in addition to multiple losses and social isolation, however, how these interact is unclear. This research contributes to the understanding that in some circumstances, belief systems can be thrown out of balance, perhaps when beliefs are not reconciled by experience. This has been found in studies of religious belief in circumstances of ambiguous loss

¹⁶ The Five Pillars of Islam: 1) Shahada (faith in God); 2) Salat (prayer); 3) Zakāt (charity); 4) Sawm (fasting); 5) Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca).

¹⁷ Also seen written as Zakah, and similar to the Christian term almsgiving.

(Hernandez & Wilson, 2007). Qualitative studies also find that negative religious coping patterns can prolong grief (Burke et al, 2014), making this entirely relevant to refugee experiences.

This study contributes to multi-faith research as there is currently limited research on religions outside of Christianity (Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2015). Studies of Islamic faith have taken place in the USA, however, most assume that religious coping methods are a choice which are turned to in difficult circumstances. In societies where religion and culture are closely tied, religion is the norm. Furthermore, a study comparing domestic and international Muslim students and the impact of religious coping found significant differences, suggesting that faith groups should not be seen as homogenous (Gardner, Krägeloh & Henning, 2014).

4.1.3 Building strength and self-reliance

Participants spoke about gaining independence as an individual in UK, using terms such as strength, self-belief, self-reliance and freedom. These were spoken about idiosyncratically, with the common thread of helping oneself and not relying on others. Some spoke of strength through religion, most spoke of support from friends and community enabling them to move towards self-reliance, whilst others spoke of limited support necessitating self-reliance.

This theme links to the previous theme, and may have been particularly important as in many instances the experience of strength appeared to derive from cultural or religious belief. Strength was often described in relation to religion, for example, Keren describes the Quran as the “*thing that makes me strong*”.

While clearly influenced by religion and culture, worldviews leading to emphasis on values such as patience and strength, are strongly implicated in participants’ abilities to manage their lives and develop independence. Some participants describe a developing, or well-developed, confidence to achieve. For Keren, this was linked to achievements and making progress at college, which could be explained by psychological theory, such as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). This theory argues that cognitions, including perceptions of capabilities to take control of our own situation, lead to further confidence and motivation to achieve. In addition, however, Keren emphasised the support that was needed to enable him to reach this position; a combination of his own achievements with the support of others. Most of the participants emphasised support in developing the ability to be independent. In particular, Bradley described his initial lack of skills, and then being able to “*cope by myself now*”, after having a wide range of support.

For each of the participants individual identity and independence goals sat alongside valuing culture and community, which participants appeared to easily reconcile. Integrating to the local culture and developing a sense of community was important both as a means and an end in itself; it was seen to contribute to the development of self and learning in order to adapt to the new environment. For example, Yasin described gaining strength from his home life, strength from having people around him, but also now making his own decisions. The development of self and a new independent identity is perhaps eased with guidance of religion and God, in which personal strength and endurance are valued. In the absence of support from family, these individual strengths come to the fore, whilst religion is an aspect of home that can be adhered to independently; participants generally spoke of religious practices done individually (such as prayer) as well as attending places of worship. Religion is thus a “relatively available” (Ní Raghallaigh, 2011, p.539) resource in the context of negotiating the process of acculturation. As most participants explicitly voiced appreciation of individuality and western culture, this resembles the acculturation theory matrix of holding on to aspects of each culture (Berry, 1997). It is worth noting that gratitude towards the host culture, however, could be influencing what was shared, or the appreciation of western culture could be an illusory by-product of the need for acceptance of this new way of life.

A final influence discussed in Keren’s account, and also referred to by Aran, was the political situation in the home country. Freedom, as one expression of self-reliance, was of heightened importance due to previous experiences of oppression. Previous research has found that refugees often retain close interest in the politics of home countries and engage in political activities (Al-Ali, Black & Koser, 2001), but the influence of politics and particular experiences of oppression on identity formation may not have been closely studied. The development of self-reliance could be informed by principles of empowerment, in which individuals take on power by virtue of the environment and opportunities afforded them. In Rappaport’s (1987) ecological theory of empowerment, on multiple levels both individuals and groups can take on strength to manage their own situation, and in turn, to influence others. This was the aim of some participants, particularly Keren and Salah, who spoke of building their own life and learning in order to help others.

Overall, throughout this theme the emerging individual identity is seen to develop alongside integration in the new culture and the adolescent stage of developing independence. Theoretically this may be informed by the developmental opportunities, as well as a cultural experience that enables independence to be realised. In one case, however, identity appeared

more fixed, with lack of trust creating lack of opportunities for development, and difficulty accessing and building on support.

4.1.4 Reflections

I perceived of loss in this context as an experience that goes beyond the individual coping alone. I am aware that my interpretations may be influenced by the clinical work I do with families in the UK when there has been a significant bereavement, and my natural inclination to work systemically. It is therefore both my professional and personal experience that loss is experienced more broadly, and therefore managed most helpfully when wider systems and culture are acknowledged. On a personal note, the concept of family and home are meaningful to me, and I relate to the feeling of 'home' that cannot be described accurately in words. I had always thought it was something about the air in Scotland that was easier to breathe. I also recall having an unexpectedly strong emotional reaction when my own mother suggested moving away; where then would home be? Awareness of this as my position has enabled me to identify how important the words are of the participants when they expressed the nostalgia, but certainly the words of loss and growth are their own expressions. Although I have identified with this particular aspect of experience, I am left wondering, what other aspects of their experience that I am less familiar with, have I not been able to comprehend and do justice?

The section on beliefs and worldview was challenging due to my own cultural assumptions, as I approached it from a position of growing up in a position of privilege, in peace, and within a secular household. As an outsider to both the religious and ethnic cultures described, I acknowledge the potentially wide gap between my own experience and theirs. I reflected that my initial interest in finding out more about some of the religious references led to reinterpretations of the interviews as a whole when viewed through this alternate lens. Equally important is the analysis of our own cultural frameworks that shape our interpretations, what we look for and which experiences we give attention. By positioning this research as culturally relativist and being open to co-construct interpretations of experience by considering participants' views in shaping their experience, I believe this highlighted the spiritual blindness in my own approach.

On the final theme, I found it initially difficult to comprehend the preference that was at times stated for individualism, in the context of strong beliefs relating to home and the faiths of their communities. I came with hesitation to the final theme of developing self-reliance through strength, and note that the discussion of it is a little shorter. However, going back through the

accounts to make sense of this the participants have explained it well. I am now struck by the capacity participants showed in adapting to a new culture while bringing forth cultural and religious ways that they have grown up with and make these work while building a new life and identity.

4.2 Methodological Implications

This section reviews the current research regarding strengths and weaknesses, with specific reference to guidance on evaluating qualitative research, as used in the literature review (Elliot, Fischer & Rennie, 1999; Yardley, 2008). A table outlining consideration of each evaluative area is included in Appendix 4.1. Overall, the present study makes a significant contribution to the literature on unaccompanied refugees in the UK, and in understanding their experience and perspective that has been largely neglected in mainstream psychological literature.

4.2.1 Method

The methodological framework of IPA (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009), enabled in-depth exploration of one particular area, whilst dialogue facilitates young people to express related topics of relevance. This gives the findings greater cultural validity, as the initial framework of understanding is not underpinned by western scientific assumptions. Depth is important for clinical implications as we seek to make sense of the vast complexity of interactions between situations and experiences. As IPA contributes idiographic understanding, it is limited in offering answers that can be applied to experiences of all young refugees, for example, it should not be assumed from this research that all young refugees are religious.

IPA sets out a well-prescribed analytic process that led to thorough analytic and interpretative understanding both within and between cases. Examples of analysis are available in the Appendix (4.2), providing transparency and quality assurance to readers that care was taken to ground interpretations in participants' descriptions. As IPA is reflexive, as researcher, my own cultural assumptions were recognised through the process of keeping a reflective diary, excerpts of which are throughout this thesis.

Despite the rigorous analytic process, it is acknowledged that a different researcher using the same approach may have followed up different aspects of interviews or made different interpretations. This is in keeping with the social constructionist stance, as there are multiple possible interpretations of data. Similarly, the experience of taking part may have altered participants' experience and relationship to coping.

The study, however, gave recognition to the perspective of young refugees, inviting their participation in a project to speak out and inform professionals about what is important to their experience. All of the participants conveyed that the meeting was a positive experience.

4.2.2 Sample

The process of conducting the research involved immersion in a community project, which contributed to the reflective process as I was able to observe and interact with a large number of young refugees. This increased my understanding of relational interactions, varied interests and struggles. As the sample were recruited from multiple locations, this also facilitated my ability to develop rapport and build trust with young people outside of the community.

Initially I intended to recruit at least six participants, however, due to recruitment difficulties, only five interviews were completed. Some individuals declined involvement even following connection through shared activities at the community group. This indicates that young people did not feel obliged to participate, and is encouraging as regards the ease that the other participants felt with their contribution. Another perspective is that the sample recruited were not reflective of young refugees in general. Given that other young refugees are known to drink alcohol and smoke, it is possible that there are groups of young refugees for whom the experience of coping is very different. It could take a longer period of immersion in the group, or alternative methods of data collection to establish the coping experience of possible other groups.

Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) do not specify a minimum number of participants for IPA studies as the intention is not to draw general conclusions. Greater numbers contribute mainly by adding different perspectives which aids interpretation of the data. Limitations apply to any sample size, and with increasing numbers, analysis becomes increasingly cumbersome. Five interviews provided sufficiently detailed depth of data, without being overwhelming for the novice IPA researcher.

The age limit of 16 – 20 was specified, however one participant was found to be older from the narrative of his story. This interview was carried out as the pilot, however due to low participant numbers the data is included in the full analysis. The themes that came out from his idiographic account were not any more dissimilar than the others were to each other. As IPA does require homogeneity in the sample, a criticism of the research could be the sample being too diverse, which contributed to the idiographic representation of the findings. The sample was homogenous in terms of gender, living independently in England, being a refugee or asylum-

seeker, and arriving in the country at the age of 15 or 16. Diversity was in languages spoken, country of origin, English language ability, and religious faith. Diversity was embraced due to recruitment difficulties, but also because the significance of particular differences was not known.

4.2.3 Language

As outlined in the Method section, cross-language qualitative research requires substantial consideration due to the construction and interpretation of meaning being core to the research. The decision to add this layer of complexity was balanced with the value of ethics and inclusion; not to exclude on the basis of language ability.

Three of the interviews took place with interpreters present, and all three spoke different languages so different professional interpreters were contracted. Quality of interpreters was ensured by using interpreting services recommended by local statutory services. A discussion was held with each interpreter before the interviews, so as to reach sufficient understanding of the research approach, including how we could address issues of power and difference. Guidance suggests matching interpreters with the client as much as possible, for example, in terms of age, gender and religion (Tribe, 2004), however it was not possible to achieve this level of matching. As all three of the interpreters were older males, I discussed with each interpreter how a young person might be influenced by this, however, the conversations implied a lack of awareness amongst interpreters about issues of difference, including age, social class or status. Regarding region of origin, two of the interpreters came from different countries to that of the participant. This was discussed openly at the start of the interviews¹⁸, and understanding of the dialect was checked with participants. In one situation for example, the interpreter had explained during our pre-meeting, that the “border is drawn on the map, but is not in our minds or in our hearts”.

Interpreters were invited to reflect on the concepts discussed and how these had been translated, with all explaining that “coping” did not directly translate. The process of the full interviews was to deconstruct and understand this from the participants’ perspectives, however it is not fully possible to determine the extent of the influence of translation on the final interpreted accounts. As researcher I acknowledge that the findings involved interpretation of the

¹⁸ I was also aware that there could be issues if countries of origin were in conflict with each other, or in the case of civil war, to ensure that interpreter and participant are not from opposing sides of conflict.

interpreter's interpretation of the participant's words (Riessman, 2000). A reflective extract following an interview with an interpreter is included in Appendix 4.3.

4.2.4 Power

Beyond issues of power brought about through language, another particular area to discuss regarding power is difference, as visible differences were apparent between myself, as a white British female, and the participants (Burnham, 2012). It is not possible to foresee how I might be construed to them, and how this might influence the responses and information shared. When initial analyses were presented at an IPA research meeting, the group suggested that I reflect on my position as British in interviewing participants living in situations of reduced social power. In social science, it is common for the researched to have lower status than researchers (Wallerstein, 1999), and therefore that collaboration and welfare of participants can be at stake. Foucault (1982) argues that power issues begin to be overcome through expressions of resistance, and the post-modern call for praxis regarding reciprocal interaction between researcher and subjects intends to work with this. Thus, identifying myself as British, amongst other identities, "establishes the researcher as only one player in the telling and interpretation of stories" (Wallerstein, 1999, p.43). It is praxis, the dialogue between participant perspective and my own interpretation, that is acknowledged and presented, rather than passive representations of participants' voices (Lather, 1991; Fine, 1994b).

It is acknowledged that the dialogue is further removed where the interaction represented is the interpreter's words; however, it is the interpreter's presence that enables dialogue to take place. Furthermore, the interpretation of experiences expressed by participants is acknowledged not to be fully representative of the multiplicity of possible voices of refugee communities. Finally, the interpretations, and my initial hesitation in making interpretations, was influenced by the interaction of my own values and cultural heritage; recognising that interpretations represent co-constructed understanding based on reflexivity rather than a relationship of oppression.

4.3 Future research

Whilst there is generally a growing literature base on refugee research, and unaccompanied young refugees in particular, the predominance remains on research underpinned by medical, trauma-informed models. This thesis demonstrates that this framework leaves unresearched areas that may contribute to blindspots in therapeutic practices.

This study highlighted the significance of loss, including ambiguous loss, and loss of home in young refugee experiences. Further qualitative studies could look at how refugees and young people conceptualise coping or resilience in the context of particular loss experiences. Alongside previous research uncovering the relevance of faith and culture in refugee experiences (Ní Raghallaigh, 2011), further research could focus on understanding the role of religious faiths and beliefs in young refugees. Although the current study aimed to use a homogenous sample, idiographic studies could focus on, for example, groups of particular cultural origin, living situation or asylum status. As the current study used a male sample, replication is needed looking specifically at experiences of young female refugees.

The study provides insight into religious struggle in one participant, and so further exploration of the negative experiences of religion in religious refugee youth is needed, both looking more broadly at religion, and specifically at Islam (and other religions), due to most studies of religious coping and struggle using Christian samples (Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2014). Consultation from Islamic scholars on different branches of Islam could be used to inform further study, ensure relevance and suitability of such studies.

Research with religious groups, or recruitment via churches, mosques and other places of worship, could be useful. As participants emphasised their faith as more important than relational support, research with religious leaders and their role in support with refugees, or their experience of working with professionals and the public sector, could aid understanding of the role of religion in coping as well as how services can support such coping for refugees.

Due to recruitment difficulties, a reflection on this research is that qualitative research may err towards inclusion of those who have the most positive experiences, to the possible exclusion of participants who have different coping styles (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). There is a risk that understanding develops with the experiences of those who have the greatest capacity to learn and embed new ways of coping within their existing conceptual frameworks. As not all young people may feel comfortable participating in individual interviews, participatory action research methods could be valuable. For research to capture the experience of those who struggle with adaptation, who may be at greater risk of isolation, recruitment may need to be achieved over long-term projects. Fuller immersion into refugee communities may be helpful to identify young refugees with a range of experiences in order to contribute to understanding the inter-relationships between asylum status, ambiguous loss and religious struggle. Engagement and setting up projects with young people may be necessary to gain initial access

to and engender willingness for participation. Longitudinal studies could also contribute to understanding young refugees' relationship to religion and God over time in the context of acculturation.

This research was valuable in considering language issues, and research should continue to consider language and cultural barriers to participation. Understanding this could be further achieved through establishing relationships and collaboration with interpreters. Interviewing interpreters on their own experience of working with refugees could also improve understanding of how particular concepts are understood cross-culturally, and to inform best practice communication styles for engagement.

Overall, continued research should value and privilege the experiences of young people, and enable refugees to feel valued for their contribution. The 'scientific' endeavour of studying culture, and religion, requires care and respect. This project shows that research has the potential to contribute to a more informed society on the positive elements and interpretations of Islam, for which there is a gap in the literature. Cultural guidance and collaboration could, however, be sought both on the direction of this research field, as well as on particular research ventures.

4.4 Implications in practice

This research looking at the experiences of coping in young refugees, has co-constructed understandings of coping with adjustment to a new culture, in the context of tremendous loss and grief. The experiences and understanding shared by Keren, Bradley, Aran, Salah, and Yasin enable consideration of the implications for the way services, including social care and mental health care, community services, and wider communities, can support young refugees.

Participants demonstrated that they each brought unique skills, preferences and needs for practical support. Some may need support to access college, to develop practical skills like cooking, and some may be at much higher risk of social isolation. This ties in with case review findings of different levels and types of needs (Abunimah & Blower, 2010). Formulation through co-constructed understanding of difficulties, while taking account of culture and individual meaning-making, can help to reduce assumptions and identify risks such as isolation (Harper & Spellman, 2014).

Themes in the research indicated significant experiences of loss, as well as for many participants, a need to connect with home. Therapeutic work with bereavement suggests

narrative approaches that integrate stories of loss into the overall life journey (Neimeyer, 1999). In ambiguous loss, young people may benefit from support to continue relationships to home and key attachments even if family are living elsewhere or have unknown whereabouts, a practice known as “continuing bonds” (Field, Gao & Paderna, 2005). A different relationship to loss can be built and gradually established, such as through re-membling practices (Hedtke, 2003; White, 1989).

As seen at the community group I attended, young refugees often take up creative opportunities, regularly using the colours of their national flag or other symbolic representations that link to homeland. This may represent community-based continuing bonds, as well as the between and within community interaction supporting increased levels of social participation (Valtonen, 2002). Group-level activities that support young refugees to build self-esteem and resilience through constructing their own stories in a context of strength and hope could be useful with young refugees, such as Tree of life (Ncube, 2006; Hughes 2014), Recipes of life (Wood, 2012), and other collective narrative projects (Denborough, 2008). Community groups and resources can be a valuable resource for providing young refugees opportunities to meet and build social networks.

The current findings also imply that direct therapeutic support may not be effective or necessary; young people may make sense of the most difficult experiences using existing beliefs and worldview, or they may use relational skills in building the support around them. Others, who may or may not have an objectively different level of trauma, might need additional support. In situations of loss or difficulties with trust, the primary need is for a secure base (Bowlby, 1973; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2001). An empathic and validating stance can provide containment, alongside providing regular scheduled appointments. Investment in establishing trust in the first months could reduce needs for support at later points, as this research suggests that young people value support that helps them to gain self-reliance.

A theme in the research was beliefs and worldview, with participants describing religion as particularly important. Supporting access to religion may be useful through links with religious communities. In this study, professional support was not a key theme, although it is possible that therapists are not well enough versed in understanding religion and religious coping to offer adequate understanding and support, or it could be due to spiritual blindness identified within many therapeutic models (Simmonds, 2004).

This finding, that religion can be both a resource and an obstacle to wellbeing, is backed by research on religious coping (e.g. Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005). The potential ramifications of religious struggle compounded by other losses may contribute to downward spiralling due to loss of identity and possible fears of marginalisation.

Due to individual differences and other cultural influences, emotions or difficulties may not be easily expressed by young refugees, however there could be physical symptoms, increasing isolation, or apathy, as well as expressions of guilt or shame (e.g. Kleinman & Cohen, 1997; Kinzie et al, 1990; Terheggen, Stroebe & Kleber, 2001). Indirect work with foster carers and social workers could be useful if there are concerns about engaging in therapeutic support and in social networks.

This research found that young people were not accustomed to making their own decisions, and some may take time to adjust to this. Multiagency meetings could be beneficial so that information can be provided jointly, and the young person supported to make decisions. Amidst the uncertainties they may face about the future, straightforward information and guidance may support the young person to begin to help themselves.

Working in partnership with an interpreter, to explain complex information and health-related communication, should be offered (e.g. Tribe, 2003). My own reflections suggest that it could be valuable for interpreters to be trained in helping young refugees to feel more comfortable, such as to distinguish health and social care meetings from asylum interviews, and awareness of issues of power in medical and therapeutic settings.

Services and community support form a part of the environment that contributes to the opportunities for young refugees to develop coping and resilience. These are small openings within the larger context; young refugees face lack of resources, voice and power, and are a marginalised and largely socially discriminated against group. As Smail (1995) argues, power is not an individual attribute, but comes about through access to social conditions that empower. In the current UK social context of shrinking resources, psychologists can develop and support community-level projects. As this research has found that the adaptation patterns of young refugees can be understood as normal and culturally congruent reactions to adverse life circumstances, psychologists are in a position to take a stance in demonstrating how refugee communities are affected by social policy and anti-immigrant discourses in the UK. Psychologists can be allies, as Reynolds (2010; 2011) suggests, by being alongside and speaking out about practices that disempower. This includes dissemination of research on

alternative paradigms to the dominant medical models, and opening up dialogue with professionals, including other psychologists, social care staff, interpreters and educators, in cultural competence.

4.5 Conclusion

This research has contributed to the growing literature with young unaccompanied refugees in UK, and particularly adding a culturally-relative interpretation of how young refugees experience and construe coping. This was warranted as theory increasingly views coping as bound by culture and social resources that empower or disempower (Hobfall, 1998). The findings indicate that the young people experience coping on multiple levels, including individual, community and cultural, alongside, and at times despite, significant experiences of loss and ‘cultural bereavement’ (Eisenbruch, 1991). Coping was expressed in these idiographic accounts as a process of adjustment, in a framework of cultural values, including a strong emphasis on religion and faith, and developing independence. With particular emphasis on cultural concepts such as “patience” and “strength”, participants are interpreted to incorporate coping within existing cultural and religious frameworks. This has implications for future research with refugees, who demonstrate adaptation and resilience in coping, and research on coping, which should be situated culturally. Implications for clinicians in practice includes recommendations for cultural competence, visibility of the religious and spiritual values of clients, and practices that support empowerment in communities.

On a final personal note, the current research has been a process accompanied by personal challenges and growth, and a colourful backdrop of political events. The strength I gained from the young people I came in contact with has led to self-reflection of my own coping ability, and I find there is much to learn. Whilst our media can be dominated by power struggles in the west, and discourses of fear and othering, I remind myself of events and lives that continue to unfold in places of refugee-origin. As academic practitioners and with the relative privileges our positions hold, I hold hope, on behalf of these participants, that we move increasingly towards inclusive practices and reflexivity.

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Appendix 1.1: Table of definitions, taken from the Refugee Council glossary of terminology

Refugee: Individuals recognised to have been granted a form of protection, including temporary protection, or in a refugee-like situation

Asylum-seeker: Individuals who have sought international protections and whose claims for refugee status have not yet been determined

Internally-displaced person: Individuals who have been forced to leave their homes as a result of conflict, human rights violations, natural or man-made disaster, and who have not yet crossed an international border; the majority of displaced people come under this category

Stateless person: Individuals who are not considered Nationals by any State

Returned refugee: Former refugees who have returned to their country of origin but are yet to be fully integrated

Refugee Status: Refugee status is awarded to someone the Home Office recognises as a refugee as described in the Refugee Convention. A person given refugee status is normally granted leave to remain in the UK for 5 years, and at the end of that period can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain.

Unaccompanied children seeking asylum: Children who have applied for asylum in their own right, who are outside their country of origin and separated from both parents, or previous/legal customary primary care giver.

Separated children: Children under 18 years of age who are outside their country of origin and separated from both parents, or previous/legal customary care giver. Separated children are typically asylum seekers, but not in every case.

Age-disputed child: an asylum applicant whose claimed date of birth is not accepted by the Home Office and/or by the local authority who have been approached to provide support. This term is usually used to refer to people who claim to be children, but who are treated as adults by the Home Office and/or the local authority. Whether an individual is treated as an adult or as a child has serious implications for the way in which the person's claim for asylum is treated, and the support received.

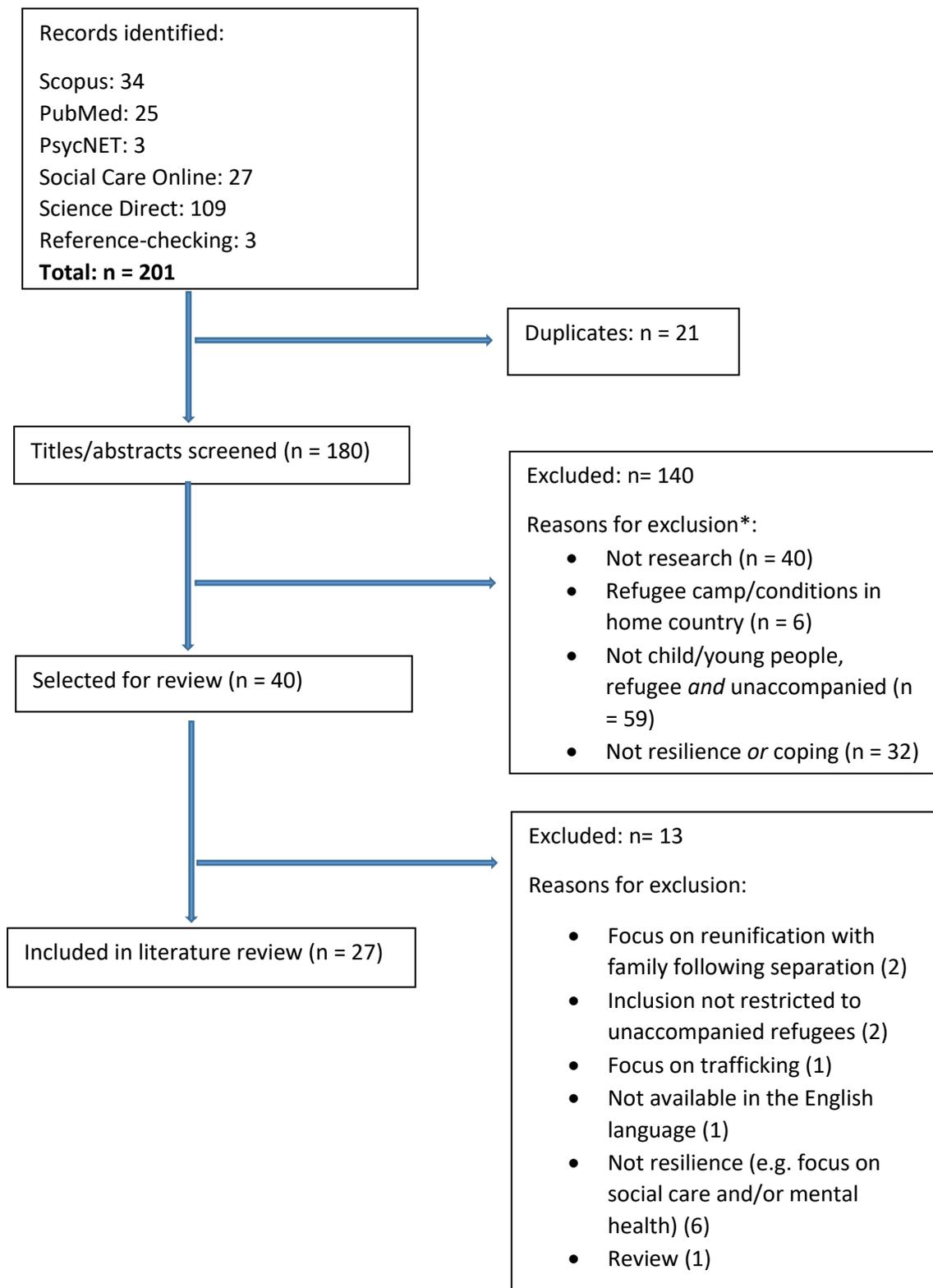
Limited leave to remain for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children: Protection for 30 months or until a child reaches 17.5 years of age, for children who are refused asylum or humanitarian protection

Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR): Also called ‘permanent residence’ or ‘settled status’ as it gives permission to stay in the UK on a permanent basis.

Discretionary leave: Discretionary leave is a form of immigration status granted to a person who the Home Office has decided does not qualify for refugee status or humanitarian protection but where there are other strong reasons why the person needs to stay in the UK temporarily.

Humanitarian protection: Granted by the Home Office to a person who it decides has a need for protection but who does not meet the criteria for refugee status.

Appendix 1.2 Consort diagram for literature review



*Some papers may have met exclusion for more than one reason, however just one reason was recorded for each paper

Appendix 1.3 Literature Review: Quality evaluation

	First Author & year	Aims clearly stated	Appropriate design/method	Owning perspective	Ethics	Data analysis – rigour/credibility	Contribution	Coherence/resonance	Accomplishment of aims	Language and culture acknowledged*
1	Abunimah, 2010	Yes	Case file review appropriate; 100 cases (representative)	Yes - Systematic/objective	Not stated	Thorough data-checks and acknowledgement of subjectivity	Captures thorough picture and types of difficulties and needs; clusters into 4 groups; risks are not solely trauma-related; covers levels of physical health, mental health, pregnancy, risk of going missing	Examples and case studies create resonance; coherent argument and limitations acknowledged	Overview of needs achieved; and specific case examples	Briefly discussed (less applicable to this study as a quality indicator)
2	Allsopp, 2014	Yes	Unclear. Mixed methods/exploratory design; Grounded Theory yet small sample and no theory developed	Not explicitly stated	Yes	Inadequate description of methods of data collection, analysis and triangulation of data sources; multiple data sources improve credibility	Clear description of the steps young people took to manage and take control of their situation; unique contribution	Use of quotes and situational examples; coherent argument; could be more clearly presented	Begins with a framework, rather than developing theory; accomplishes aims of understanding experience	Limited; participants all “spoke English well”.
3	Bates, 2005	Yes	Mixed methods – not justified (largely descriptive)	Not stated	No	Use of cultural consultants; consensus reached on themes	Contributes multiple perspectives on relational issues and suggests increasing cultural competence; allows comparison between foster carer and YP perspectives	Coherent account; limited use of direct quotes	Achieves descriptive account and implications for policy (context-specific)	Cultural background of research team described; lack of discussion of language (states participants had a good command of English)
4	Carlson, 2012	Yes	Case study justified	Not stated	No	Participant verification	Provides contextual findings of contributors to a good outcome, including individual, family and community	Gives depth to one account	Clear illustration of risks and resilience from one case	Culture discussed; no discussion of language

5	Chase, 2013	Yes (complex)	Grounded Theory appropriate	Not stated	Yes	Not described	Adds importance of 'ontological security' to wellbeing, and how this is constrained and managed	Yes	Yes, the paper illustrates conceptualisation of wellbeing – and importance of sustaining coherent biographical narrative	Not discussed – (interpreters were offered)
6	Goodman, 2004	Yes	Narrative analysis appropriate for aim	Not stated	Yes	Use of cultural consultant at multiple points; contextual knowledge	How young refugees make sense of their experiences, including cultural component of how meaning is made of hardship	Coherent and compelling account	Achieves narrative accounts of coping however claims generalisability	Culture acknowledged and discussed; language inadequately discussed (none took up interpreter)
7	Grouark, 2010	Yes (broad)	Qualitative study appropriate; not clear why or how triangulated with questionnaire data	Not stated – reference to validity and use of measure indicates positivist	Yes	Discussed – includes reflective diary, respondent validation, discussion of coding and themes	Re. coping – 4 themes were found: avoidance through distraction, acceptance, utilising support from friends, support from professionals	Coherent themes, not clear how measures contributed (as implies high clinical scores = participants were not coping)	Good overview of themes, however exploration of meaning of coping is limited	Briefly discussed use and role of interpreters
8	Hodes, 2008	Yes	Quantitative – appropriate large scale recruitment attempted	No, but quantitative study justified	Yes	Appropriately tentative	Influence of living situation and increasing age appears to be important – increase in symptoms; limited explanatory value	Well-presented	Yes	Limited
9	Hopkins, 2010	Yes	Qualitative – inadequately described method	Not discussed	No	Not discussed	Identifies areas of strength; conducted in dispersal area (Scotland)	Coherent; follows existing theoretical framework	More focussed on needs and lacks depth of exploration in coping/ Resilience	Not discussed
10	Huemer, 2013	Yes	Quantitative appropriate	No	Yes	Measures were justified and explained but many	Highlights complexity, i.e. presence of trauma in	Well-presented; lacks cultural awareness	Yes	Limited

			although assumptions made			alternative explanations, possible under-reporting and lack of cultural validation	the context of high resilience			
11	Luster, 2009	Yes	Grounded Theory appropriate for exploration	Theoretical perspective of GT stated	No	Coding by 4 members of team – coders’ backgrounds described	Coping described on individual, relational and community levels; intersection of the individual with the communal; development of strategies through specific cultural experiences	Coherent, well-structured account	Yes	Some discussion of culture; interviews conducted in English – no discussion of language however had been resettled 6+ years
12	Luster, 2010	Yes	Thematic analysis (assumed) of secondary data	Not explicit	No	Coding by 3 research team-members; member-checking	Longer-term resettlement outcomes; differences in perceptions of key concepts, e.g. “success”	Coherent account that makes sense of individuals’ perspectives	Focus on individual factors	Culture discussed (including cultural background of interviewers); language not discussed
13	Maegusuku-Hewett, 2007	Complex aims – appears to be multiple studies	Qualitative – thematic analysis appropriate (although narrative accounts also discussed?)	No - Unclear	No	Credibility checks not discussed	Finds influence of individual, social, familial and cultural norms and values on resilience, and that resilience constructed actively	Coherent results however themes are not presented (except internal/external)	Aims were not clear but makes some contribution to understanding link between culture – identity – environment	Not discussed (although culture discussed in results)
14	Majumder, 2016	Yes (broad)	Qualitative appropriate; perhaps unrealistic to both understand perspective and develop a theory	Not explicit – appears to be objectivist	Yes	Independent coding took place; only young people accessing mental health services were recruited; quotes included from young people and from professionals	Limited contribution; themes are described; suggests professionals have training to increase awareness of different cultural perspectives and their own lens	Generally good, unclear how themes link together	Does not pull together a theory; theory introduced in discussion is removed from aims	Yes – discussion of language and how this was considered
15	Malmsten, 2014	Yes	Qualitative appropriate – thematic analysis	Empirical /objectivist	Not stated	Credibility checks not discussed	Draws out themes of daily life in transitional houses in Sweden; experiences	Resonates with reader; links to	Adequate detail of local experience	Notes language issues and limitations of use of interpreters

							on individual, social and legal levels	Swedish history and media context		
16	McGregor, 2015	Yes	Quantitative - Small sample of 42, leading to chance of type II errors	No but limitations discussed	Yes	Reduced by sample size and lack of cultural validation of measures	Limited contribution; e.g. coping styles may not have been culturally sensitive; did not study cultural factors discussed as relevant	Unable to explain findings due to expressed limitations	No	Yes (but not adequately addressed)
17	Mels, 2008	Yes	Qualitative appropriate with use of measure to facilitate interviews	Not stated; positivism implied	No	Analysis inadequately described	Highlights importance of social support; partially limited to Belgian context; findings imply more robust than they are, but does state limited generalisability	Well-presented but table a little unclear	Aims were objectivist and therefore unrealistic for qualitative study	Inadequate – not discussed
18	Ní Raghallaigh, 2010	Yes	Qualitative appropriate	Not stated; respect for difference/ individuality	Yes	Credibility checks not discussed	Coping strategies described; finds religion across themes	Coherent description and model	Descriptive theory achieved as in GT methodology	Consideration to cultural context; no discussion of language
19	Ní Raghallaigh	Yes	Qualitative appropriate – not clear how a GT approach can be used with secondary data	Not stated; acknowledges limitation of being able to produce universal theory	Yes	Credibility checks not discussed	Presents theory on multifaceted nature of faith/religion in coping	Coherent account and themes	Describes multifaceted nature of religious coping but limited in how participants made sense of this	No discussion of language
20	Oppedal, 2015	Yes	Yes, for quantitative study. Sample n=948	Quantitative; discussion of limitations	Yes	Quantitative – adequate power and limitations discussed	Social support is valued and complex. Lends support to efforts at establishing contact with family, valuing diversity in activities and social resources.	Illustrative model showing proposed links between skills/cultural competence, support and symptoms	Yes	Cultural competence and translation of some (but not all) measures is discussed
21	Rousseau, 1998	Yes (within methodology section)	Qualitative/ ethnographic is justified	Not stated explicitly but builds theoretical picture of	No	Credibility achieved through cultural consultation and ethnographic field notes	Insight into refugee experience and behaviours, and how these relate to cultural norms (Somali culture)	In-depth case studies allow high level of resonance	Provides accounts of migratory experience and narratives of coping	Cultural consultation described; interviews took place in Somali language – translation not discussed

				cultural relativism						
22	Seglem, 2014	Yes	Yes, includes comparison group	Quantitative; limitations discussed	No	Adequate sample, comparison group, lack of culturally validated measures	Lacks explanation of why coping strategies are used to different effect; highlights levels of hassles experienced (rather than focus on trauma / symptoms)	Detailed narrative is useful and coherent	Partial – coping is taken from standardised list	Limited
23	Spiteri, 2012	No (various)	Conflicting theoretical approaches cited: Ethnographic, plus Grounded Theory, plus Discourse analysis	Yes (multiple stances taken?)	No	Not discussed	Contributes discussion of themes in relation to emerging new identities, merging of cultures and future within sense of self	Lacks organisation but lengthy quotes provide resonance	The aims were various; theory is not developed and data not saturated (re. GT); constructions of concepts discussed (re. DA)	Limited – no discussion of language/ translation (despite use of DA)
24	Spiteri, 2014	Yes	IPA appropriate for understanding the lived experience	Yes	Yes	Not discussed	Contributes themes of emerging identity, experiencing stability, experiencing cultural difference and uncertain relational bonds	Lacks organisation and structure; author's voice stands out more than participants	Interpretation and lived experience is lost amongst academic discourse	Not discussed
25	Sutton, 2006	Yes	Qualitative study appropriate: use of IPA not appropriate	Yes (perhaps not consistent as results propose a model)	Yes	Co-analysis included; but no reference to cultural consultation	Contributes factors relevant to post-traumatic growth including social support, religion, activity	Results map neatly onto existing explanatory model, which limits credibility; lack of cultural considerations; recruitment from mental health setting	Achieves good understanding of experience of growth; lacks in-depth exploration of themes e.g. role of culture in understanding growth	Limited; no discussion of language, 2 interviews used interpreters with no discussion of management or impact on data
26	Thommessen, 2015	Yes	Qualitative IPA study appropriate (although also	Not discussed	Yes	Credibility discussed; no reference to reflective journal or	Limited to experiences in Swedish system, but themes of social support and influence of home	Coherent account of experiences arriving in Sweden	Achieves aim of exploring experience, and “gives voice” in	Language/ interpreters discussed; data translated twice – during data collection

			describes attempt to “give voice”)			how presuppositions managed	culture on personal responsibility and independence in managing ambiguous loss		lengthy quotes, whilst acknowledging these are interpretations	into Swedish, then translated into English for data analysis
27	Vökl-Kernstock, 2014	No: coping not specified in hypotheses	Quantitative study questionable for exploratory study	Quantitative justification not given; discussion as a feasibility project	Yes	Lacks rigour, e.g. small sample size, multiple statistical tests, lack of validated measures	Very limited contribution, e.g. there were no hypotheses on coping; findings are purely descriptive and measures were not validated.	Could be pathologising; coping strategies were selected from a list	No	Acknowledged but not adequately addressed

*Criteria added due to the cross-cultural/cross-language nature of research with refugee populations

Appendix 2.1 Interview Schedule

Title of Research: *The experiences and understanding of coping among young unaccompanied asylum seekers in the UK (working title)*

Interview Schedule

Introduction

Researcher to introduce herself and explain role/position, e.g.:

“My name is Jacqui and I am in my final year of psychology training. It’s really good to meet you. I am doing this research for my thesis because I’m interested in the experiences of young refugees and how people cope. I also want to let others know what your experience really is like and find out more about how we as psychologists can understand how to support people like yourself better. Have you got any questions about me or who I am before we go any further?”

Researcher to invite the young person to introduce themselves, and check meet the criteria for the study:

“Thank you (name of young person) for coming here today to meet me. I understand that you came to the UK from (country of origin), did you arrive here more than 6 months ago? (allow response).

Researcher to check the participant understands the study, has received information sheet, understands confidentiality, and consents to participation:

“I wrote this information sheet about the study because it is important to me that you know about what is involved before you choose whether you want to go ahead. Did you have a chance to have a look at it (or) did you want us to go through it together just now? (depending on response, go through the information sheet; even if the participant has read the information sheet, explain confidentiality)

“I just want to make sure you remember that our conversation today is being recorded, so that I can represent your words correctly and I don’t forget anything. I will type our conversation word for word but I will change anything that will identify you, including your name and any other names you use, and any place names apart from the name of the country you came from. The recording will be deleted after the research is finished, which should be by September next year (2017). I also have to let you know however, that if you do say something that tells me that you or someone else is currently at risk of being harmed in this country, then I may have to let someone know so that you can be helped, but if something like that does come up then I will discuss it with you first.” (check if any questions)

Researcher to check use of interpreter:

“You have really good skills at talking in English, but I just want to check if you would prefer to have someone here to translate?” (in this case the interview may be rescheduled with an interpreter)

Or, if interpreter present, “you asked to have an interpreter here, can I check that this is still what you prefer” (can then have a brief conversation about how the interpreter can be used that the young person is comfortable with).

Consent:

“Did you want to ask anything else about the research or how the information is used? Let’s just read through these statements on the consent form, and then if you agree I will ask you to sign the sheet, and I will also sign it to say I will do everything in the way I have said” (proceed to go through consent form together, unless participant prefers to read it through themselves).

Interview

Note: this is a broad framework of the kind of questions that can be asked; questions will be altered according to what the young person is saying, e.g. if young person talks about family or friends, this would be followed up by incorporating within questions below (e.g. “you said you miss your family, is there anything that makes that any easier?”), but the researcher would not ask about family unless it was mentioned by the participant; for some cases more questions or prompts may need to be used than in others; follow-up prompts may be used for clarification or to ensure researcher understands what is meant; if a participant is struggling to explain what they mean they may be asked if they prefer to draw or describe it in a different way; wording of questions may be altered if suggested by consultation with community staff/pilot interview.

Possible ice-breaker questions- e.g.,

- Would you like to tell me which country you came from and what was one thing you liked about it?
- How many months have you been in this country and what is your favourite thing you have seen or done?

Interview questions

1. Being in a different country can be really tough, and some days or weeks more than others. Today I am not going to ask what it is that makes it difficult. I am more interested in what you find helps.

What do you think helps you?

Suggested prompts -

- a. What do you do when difficult things happen?
 - i. Do you find that helps?
 - b. Do you have other things you like to do that help you?
 - c. Are there things you think about that help you?
 - d. Do you have any skills that you brought with you that have helped you?
 - e. Where do you go when you need to get away from your difficulties?
 - f. Is there anything else that makes things any easier?
 - g. How else do you manage when things are difficult/ stressful/ upsetting?
2. In English we have some words and phrases to describe what we do when we have a difficult situation – write down “cope”, “manage”, “deal with”, “get on with life”. Ask interpreter to write down translations. Do you use any of these words?
 - a. Can you tell me more about what that means to you?
 - b. If it is not a word you would use, what word or phrase would you use instead?
 - c. How would you usually talk about this?

If something happened, like I broke my leg, I would need to do things differently for a while because it would make my life more difficult. When we make adjustments like that to a change in our situation, in English we might call it one of these words, such as cope. Can you tell me more about what you understand about this?

Suggested prompts -

- d. What do you think are helpful ways of coping?
- e. What do you think other people do to “cope” when they go through difficult or stressful experiences?
- f. What do people need in order to get through difficult times?
- g. How do you know if someone is not coping?
- h. What would you have done to cope with a difficult experience when you lived in (country of origin)?

- i. What is the same / different about how people cope here compared to what you knew before?

*For interviews where an interpreter is used, the conversation with the interpreter before beginning the interview will check the interpreter's interpretation of meaning and how they would translate this; if there is no direct translation of the word then an alternative could be used, such as "to manage"; the question is attempting to explore the concept rather than specific word.

3. I am interested in your experience of arriving in the UK, specifically thinking about coming here without your parents or family. I know that some days or weeks are bad, or worse than others. On an average week, how well do you cope?
Draw rating scale, from 1 to 10

If 1 is not at all, what do you think 10 would be?
You have put (number), what does that mean?

Suggested prompts -

- a. Did you have any ways of coping that you found helped you?
- b. Was there anything that kept you going?
- c. What feelings do you have that are difficult, and what do you do to get through those feelings?
- d. Does it feel like there are things here in London that can help?
- e. What choices did you make that helped you?
- f. Has anyone helped you or been there for you?
- g. How important is it to you to have people around you?

Close interview

Is there anything else about what we have talked about that you think would be important for me to know?

I want to thank you hugely for your time and talking to me today. How have you found it?

Give debrief sheet and point towards resources for support.

Offer to send summary and ask if they would want to be contacted in future about the results. Point towards my contact details on the information sheet and suggest they can contact me or supervisor if they think of any questions, wish to withdraw consent (which they can within 2 weeks of the interview), or wish to request a summary of the results once project completed.

Offer reimbursement / voucher.

Appendix 2.2 – Extracts from reflective journal (recruitment / community)

What did I find hindered me?

- My first meetings with community groups I found I was met with distrust. In one sense, community groups were interested to meet me and discuss the research, in another sense it appeared to me that they were not keen to find the value in such research. I felt confused by whether on one hand it was protectionism towards the young people in their care, or on the other hand if it was really what they were saying as an 'over-research' of this population. I understood from the comments being made that organisations were sometimes approached multiple times by researchers and journalists looking to research these young people, and did make me consider the burden on young people to tell well-meaning people about their experiences.
- Even where organisations were willing for me to do the research, there was negativity around whether the young people would want to talk to me. This contrasted with what I was reading, where it was documented that asylum seekers were keen to tell their real story and be heard.
- I strove to get across the ethical stance I was approaching the research with, the importance of contributing something that was not going to be sensationalist or medicalising. In the end this was grasped by some, but I think the next barrier was the actual nature of the work of these organisations – with many case workers having limited time due to high caseloads to talk to me about accessing individuals, even if they thought this would be valuable
- discussions with my field supervisor definitely helped in terms of recognising that this kind of research is valuable to clinical psychologists
- the papers on hope enabled me to feel that a small contribution is valuable and worthwhile
- being asked to volunteer in order to gain access to participants felt initially like a burden, but in time became a highlight in my week. The young people at youth group came to recognise me, their greetings became more positive and welcoming to 'their' club. Initially I felt I was intruding upon their space and time, but increasingly it felt as though my being there as a fairly consistent presence was valued.

Appendix 2.3 – Ethics Approval



HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES ECDA

ETHICS APPROVAL NOTIFICATION

TO Jacqueline Scott
CC Dr Barbara Mason
FROM Rev Dr Kim Goode, Health and Human Sciences ECDA Vice Chairman
DATE 27/09/2016

Protocol number: LMS/PGR/UH/02452

Title of study: The experiences and understanding of coping among young unaccompanied asylum seekers in the UK

Your application for ethics approval has been accepted and approved by the ECDA for your School.

This approval is valid:

From: 27/09/2016

To: 30/04/2017

Please note:

If your research involves invasive procedures you are required to complete and submit an EC7 Protocol Monitoring Form, and your completed consent paperwork to this ECDA once your study is complete.

Approval applies specifically to the research study/methodology and timings as detailed in your Form EC1. Should you amend any aspect of your research, or wish to apply for an extension to your study, you will need your supervisor's approval and must complete and submit form EC2. In cases where the amendments to the original study are deemed to be substantial, a new Form EC1 may need to be completed prior to the study being undertaken.

Should adverse circumstances arise during this study such as physical reaction/harm, mental/emotional harm, intrusion of privacy or breach of confidentiality this must be reported to the approving Committee immediately. Failure to report adverse circumstances would be considered misconduct.

Ensure you quote the UH protocol number and the name of the approving Committee on all paperwork, including recruitment advertisements/online requests, for this study.

Students must include this Approval Notification with their submission.



HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES ECDA

ETHICS APPROVAL NOTIFICATION

TO Jacqui Scott
CC Dr Barbara Mason
FROM Dr Richard Southern, Health and Human Sciences ECDA Chairman
DATE 24/10/2016

Protocol number: aLMS/PGR/UH/02452(1)

Title of study: The experiences and understanding of coping among young unaccompanied asylum seekers in the UK.

Your application to modify the existing protocol as detailed below has been accepted and approved by the ECDA for your School.

Modification: Encrypted audio-recording devices will not be used to record interviews.

This approval is valid:

From: 24/10/2016

To: 30/04/2017

Please note:

Any conditions relating to the original protocol approval remain and must be complied with.

Approval applies specifically to the research study/methodology and timings as detailed in your Form EC1 or as detailed in the EC2 request. Should you amend any further aspect of your research, or wish to apply for an extension to your study, you will need your supervisor's approval and must complete and submit a further EC2 request. In cases where the amendments to the original study are deemed to be substantial, a new Form EC1 may need to be completed prior to the study being undertaken.

Should adverse circumstances arise during this study such as physical reaction/harm, mental/emotional harm, intrusion of privacy or breach of confidentiality this must be reported to the approving Committee immediately. Failure to report adverse circumstances would be considered misconduct.

Ensure you quote the UH protocol number and the name of the approving Committee on all paperwork, including recruitment advertisements/online requests, for this study.

Students must include this Approval Notification with their submission.

Appendix 2.4 – Research Sponsorship



Dr B Mason & Ms J Scott
Department of Psychology and Sports Science
School of Life and Medical Sciences

University of Hertfordshire
Higher Education Corporation
Hatfield, Hertfordshire
AL10 9AB

Telephone +44 (0) 1707 284000
Fax +44 (0) 1707 284115
Website www.herts.ac.uk

18 November 2016

Dear Dr Mason and Ms Scott,

Re: UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE SPONSORSHIP IN FULL for the following:
RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: The Experiences and understanding of coping among young unaccompanied asylum seekers in the UK
NAME OF CHIEF INVESTIGATOR (Supervisor): Dr Barbara Mason
NAME OF INVESTIGATOR (Student): Ms Jacqui Scott
UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER: LMS/PGR/UH/02452

This letter is to confirm your research study detailed above has been reviewed and accepted and I agree to give full University of Hertfordshire sponsorship, so you may now commence your research.

As a condition of receiving full sponsorship, please note that it is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to inform the Sponsor at any time of any changes to the duration or funding of the project, changes of investigators, changes to the protocol and any future amendments, or deviations from the protocol, which may require re-evaluation of the sponsorship arrangements.

Permission to seek changes as outlined above should be requested from myself before submission and notification to the relevant University of Hertfordshire Ethics Committee with Delegated Authority (ECDA), and I must also be notified of the outcome. It is also essential that evidence of any further relevant NHS management permissions (formerly known as R&D approval) is provided as they are received. Please do this via email to research-sponsorship@herts.ac.uk

Please note that University Sponsorship of your study is invalidated if this process is not followed.

In the meantime, I wish you well in pursuing this interesting research study.

Yours sincerely

Professor J M Senior
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)

Appendix 2.5 – Extract from reflective journal (community involvement)

I continued to view the youth club as a space for the young people, and was reluctant to intrude upon this to recruit for *my* study*. I will explain however, how this view changed over time.

- Attending youth club initially was a group of longer-term members, and whilst I was relatively new, it felt more as though I was intruding upon *their* youth club. Soon, however, I noticed that new people joined on a weekly basis, sometimes as many as 10 new people might attend on one night. Older members sometimes stuck together, in a way that could at times be excluding of newer members, for example, showing ownership over the pool table (a prime resource).

- I found increasingly it was important to support inclusion of all members, old and new. Fairly soon, I became a long-term member in a position to welcome newer members and facilitate integration of members. Activities such as sports were one way members integrated

- I also experienced that, as the group is male-dominated, the female members disproportionately benefit from having other females around. For example, this enables them to play sports when sports can become aggressive, boys were less likely to be aggressive when female volunteers take part, were more respectful, and female young people more confident to take part.

- I also learned that boys from some countries may be unused to talking to females except those in positions of power (social workers). From home, they may not have talked to females except mothers and sisters, whom they are potentially now not in contact. Positive relationships, and making it ok to talk to females, is an important part of integrating into life in the UK.

*Outside of the community, in my everyday life, I was doing an 'interesting' project (much-needed, valuable, etc). While at the community project, we are all human beings; there is no concept of studying a different community.

Appendix 2.6 - Debrief Information

Debrief Information

Title of Research: *The experiences and understanding of coping among young unaccompanied asylum seekers in the UK (working title)*

Researcher: Jacqui Scott

Supervisors: Dr Barbara Mason, Dr Aisling Kelly

Thank you for giving your time to take part in this research project. We are doing this research with hope that it will give us better understanding of young people's experience of coping and how coping is understood by young people who have come to the UK independently.

We also hope that this understanding will help us to think about how to support young people to cope in ways they find helpful. This may help to reduce any distress of young people in this situation. The research therefore will be used to inform professionals working in social services, community organisations, and may be read by policy-makers.

Previous research has found that one of the things that reduces the distress of young asylum seekers or refugees, is having close family and caregivers. However, it is found that sometimes young people who do not have family around them are not provided with consistent support from services or may be living in their own accommodation. It has also been found that young people have many strengths and are often very good at coping themselves.

The information about your experience and understanding will be kept confidential, and the recording will be deleted after the project is finished.

If you wish to withdraw your consent you can do so, by contacting one of the research team within 2 weeks of the interview.

We hope you have had a good experience of participating. However, if you find that after participating you are experiencing distress or difficulties, please make use of the resources and organisations listed on the next page.

If you have any further questions, or would be interested in being informed in the results of this research, then please contact me by email:

If you have any complaints about the study, please contact Dr. Barbara Mason by email:

Thank you again for your participation and support.

(Debrief continued)

Resources and organisations

Childline:

Free and confidential counselling to young people (up to age 19) online and by phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Telephone (free): 0800 11 11

Website: www.childline.org.uk

The Mix:

Phone and online advice and support for under 25's

Telephone (free): 0808 808 4994

Website: www.themix.org.uk

Refugee Council:

A large organisation who provide practical guidance, courses and therapeutic support to refugees and asylum seekers.

Email: children@refugeecouncil.org.uk

Telephone: 0207 346 134

Website: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Asylum Aid:

Advice and assistance to refugees on applications for asylum and advice on related areas such as welfare rights and housing.

Email: info@asylumaid.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7354 9264 (Tuesday 1-4pm)

Website: www.asylumaid.org.uk

The Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS):

Advice helpline for individuals who may have experienced discrimination or their human rights have been breached.

Telephone (free): 0808 800 0082 (Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm and Saturday 10am to 2pm)

Text phone: 0808 800 0084

Website: www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

local services to insert as appropriate to location

Appendix 2.7 – Participant Information Sheet

Information Sheet

Title of Research: *The experiences and understanding of coping among young unaccompanied asylum seekers in the UK (working title)*

Why have I been given this information sheet?

You have been invited to take part in a piece of research being conducted by Jacqui Scott, (trainee clinical psychologist).

Before you decide whether you would like to take part it is important that you understand what the research is about and what will be asked of you, if you decide to take part.

Please read the information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish, and then take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Ask me if anything is not clear or if you have any questions; my contact details are given on the last page.

Who is involved in the research?

My name is Jacqui and I am completing a doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the University of Hertfordshire. As part of my course I complete a piece of research, and I have chosen this as my research topic. For my training I have also worked in the NHS for 6 years, before and during my doctoral training.

Also involved are my two supervisors:

- Dr Barbara Mason is a clinical psychologist, who works on the training programme at the University of Hertfordshire and has completed research in South Africa with children who experienced conflict
- Dr Aisling Kelly is my field supervisor, completed doctoral training at the University of Hertfordshire and currently works as a clinical psychologist with children and families in East London

What is the research about?

The overall aim of this research to improve understanding of the experiences of young people and ways they have of coping when they have arrived in the UK without their parents and family. We want to know about how young people understand what it means to cope, and what opportunities they have for coping.

What do I have to do?

If you would like to take part in this research, then I will contact you and arrange a convenient place to meet. If you like, you can have an interpreter to translate everything that is said during the meeting.

At the start of the meeting, I will speak to you about the research and make sure that you understand what is on this information sheet. You will then be able to ask questions before being asked to sign a consent form that shows that you are willing to participate.

If you want to take part, we will meet for about an hour. I will ask you some questions about your experience of adjusting to your current life situation. Then we may talk about how you cope with difficult life experiences. If you like, you can bring something with you to talk about how people cope, or if it helps you, you can do a drawing to help explain what you mean.

You may also be asked about what opportunities you have for coping in your current circumstances and how you see other people coping. The questions I ask you will be guided by what you say and bring, and what you want to tell me that you think is important.

Who can take part?

You can take part if you travelled to the UK without your parents or responsible adult carer, and have been in the UK for more than 6 months. You need to be at least 16 years old but not older than 20. You also need to not be in foster care.

If you are not confident speaking in English then we can arrange to have an interpreter present, who will translate everything I say into your language, and everything you say into English.

What are the benefits of taking part?

Taking part is an opportunity to speak out about your own experience, and is a way for you to feel that what you have to say has been heard and listened to.

The information we get from this study will help us to think about ways that social services and community organisations can help young people to cope in a way that makes sense for them. It is possible that the results of the study will be published so that more people will understand what things are like for people in a situation like yours.

However, please be aware that taking part will not help your application for asylum at all, and I am not someone who is able to help or advise with this.

You will also be offered reimbursement for travel expenses and for your time.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

It is possible that you could get upset if we were talking about things you had found difficult. You can take a break or decide to stop the interview at any time. If you do find yourself talking about some difficult things, I will provide information about where you can go for further support.

Do I have to take part?

It is completely your decision whether you want to take part or not. Nothing will happen if you decide not to take part.

If you do decide to take part, Jacqui will check that you understand the information on this document, and you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you change your mind after signing the consent form then you can still decide not to take part if you let her know up to 2 weeks after the interview. Once the study has been written up it will not be possible to remove your interview data from the research project.

Is my information kept private?

Your conversation will be audio-recorded, and the recording will be typed word-for-word afterwards and the recording deleted. When the words are typed, any information that might identify you will be removed (such as names, specific places, and ages).

If you choose to have an interpreter present in the session, then a Translating service will be used to type and translate the interview so all of it is in English. The Translating service will keep all the information private.

The consent form with your name on it will be kept separate from the recording so that your interview cannot be linked with your name.

The only exception would be if you say anything that makes me concerned about your immediate safety, or the safety of others in the UK, then this may need to be discussed with other professionals, in order to work together at keeping people safe who may be in danger.

What will happen to the results of the study?

When the research is completed I will write up the findings as an academic thesis at University. In addition, the findings will be shared with organisations working with asylum seekers (including social services and community organisations) and an article written for publication in an academic journal.

Resulting publications might use quotes from our interviews, but will ensure the quotes will not identify you and you will be given a different name to ensure your privacy. If you say something during the interview that you don't want to be used, you can ask this to be removed from the data.

If you would like to know about the findings of the research, I will be happy to share a summary once it is completed, around September 2017.

Will I get paid for taking part?

Participation is voluntary so you will not get paid, however as a thank you for your time you will be offered a small value of shop vouchers.

Who has reviewed this study?

This study has been approved by the University of Hertfordshire Health and Human Sciences Ethics Committee with Delegated Authority (Protocol number: LMS/PGR/UH/02452), and the organisations who are supporting participants who might take part, and the local authority children's board in Hertfordshire.

Contact information

If you would like further information or would like to discuss anything about the research, please get in touch with me in writing, by phone, or email. Alternatively you can contact my main research supervisor, Barbara Mason. Contact details are provided below:

Principal researcher:	Research Supervisor
Jacqui Scott	Dr Barbara Mason
Trainee Clinical Psychologist	Clinical Psychologist
University of Hertfordshire	
Tel:	Tel:
Email:	Email:

Address: Health & Human Sciences Research Institute, Room 1F414, Health Research Building, College Lane Campus, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield, AL10 9AB

Although we hope it is not the case, if you have any complaints or concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated as part of this research, please contact myself or my supervisor at University of Hertfordshire.

Thank you very much for reading this information and for considering taking part in this research.

Appendix 2.8 - Informed consent form

Informed Consent Form

Title of Research: *The experiences and understanding of coping among young unaccompanied asylum seekers in the UK (working title)*

Researcher: Jacqui Scott

Supervisors: Dr Barbara Mason, Dr Aisling Kelly

Please read each sentence and tick the box if you agree:

- I have been provided with an information sheet and Jacqui Scott has explained what the research involves and answered any questions I had.
- I understand I can withdraw at any time until 2 weeks after the interview without giving a reason.
- I understand that I can decline to answer any questions during the interview.
- I understand that taking part will not affect the support I receive from any services, my claim for asylum or legal status.
- I understand that my interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed, and may be translated into English.
- I agree that the results of the study will be written up for Jacqui Scott's doctoral thesis, that this will use direct quotes from the interview, and may be published in an academic journal or other publication, but she will remove all personal information that could identify me (e.g. names, specific places, and ages).
- I agree that anonymous data gathered may be stored at the university for possible re-use in future studies.
- Contact information has been provided if I wish to ask more about the research.
- I agree to take part in the research.

Participant's name:

Participant's signature:

Date:

Researcher's name: Jacqui Scott

Researcher's signature:

Date:

Appendix 2.9 – Interpreter statement of confidentiality

Interpreter Statement of Confidentiality

Title of Research: *The experiences and understanding of coping among young unaccompanied asylum seekers in the UK (working title)*

Researcher: Jacqui Scott

Supervisors: Dr Barbara Mason, Dr Aisling Kelly

Name of Interpreter:

I have undertaken the assignment of interpreting for Jacqui Scott and the participants of this research project. I understand that all information obtained during the research sessions will be kept strictly confidential. I will not in any way divulge the contents of these sessions to any other individual or organisation. I understand that failure to maintain confidentiality will constitute a breach of my contract for this project and may result in civil and criminal liability.

I understand that the sessions will be audio recorded and these recordings will be kept securely until the research is completed. I also understand that another interpreter, bound by the same confidentiality agreement may listen to the recording for transcription purposes.

Signature: _____

Name of Interpreter: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2.10 Table of participant demographics

Demographics		Number of participants
Place of origin	Eritrea	2
	Sudan	1
	Syria	1
	Iraq (Kurdish)	1
Length of time in the UK	6 – 12 months	2
	1-2 years	2
	2-3 years	0
	Over 3 years	1
Faith	Islam	4
	Christian Orthodox	1
Living situation	Shared accommodation / social services	4
	Independent	1
Age	16	1
	17	2
	18	1
	19	0
	20+	1
Gender	Male	5
	Female	0

Appendix 4.1 – Evaluation table

Recommended standard	Consideration in project
Appropriate design/method	Thorough description given of design, and outline of IPA method, giving justification, consideration of other methods and acknowledgement of limitations
Owning perspective	Perspective of social constructionist / cultural relativism is owned, and attempted to adhere throughout
Ethics	Necessary ethical approvals gained; ethics considered including issues of language, power and positioning
Data analysis/credibility	Detailed description of analysis; provisional analyses presented and discussed at research group meeting
Contribution	Depth of understanding of particular themes, of relevance to clinical practice
Coherence/resonance	Descriptions of findings clearly laid out, with contextualised quotes from participants (clearly labelling when spoken through interpreter)
Accomplishment of aims	Exploration achieved; further dissemination and discussion required
Language and culture acknowledged	Discussion of cross-language research and how this was considered; cultural consultation; involvement of interpreters was limited

Appendix 4.2 – Examples of Analysis

Emerging themes	line	Data	Descriptive comments	Linguistic comments	Conceptual comments
	161	J: so that was difficult to manage. I'm just wondering so coming back to the questions um, rather			
	162	than about what it is that's difficult, I'm wondering, what			
	163	would you do when difficult things happen?			
difficulty of youth	164	K: actually like, normally I, it's actually like, the same as I say earlier, it's actually like been living by	living by yourself when you're 16		the difficulty of youth - does he mean lacking experience?
	165	yourself when you are 16 years old, and then carrying on early age from there, and for the first time			
learning to live life; being young, without family, without culture	166	to go, be abroad, which is this is the hardest thing, this that you can imagine in life. (yeah) and then	being abroad for the first time	"the hardest thing ... you can imagine in life" - emphasising how hard it is before saying something that he struggled	this is the first point he does say that it was hard - not just hard but "the hardest thing you can imagine in life". Any difficulty is put down to his own young age and learning to live life on his own. This is both without family and also outside of his own culture, where people share the similar values of giving back and presumably supporting each other a lot
valuing life is living; living is to be learned;	167	in that situation like, there was a time that you can not even like value the life, like how to live, and	sometimes hard to value life	"value the life" - life is something to be valued, but this intrinsic thing was shaken due to the hardship	valuing life and living sounds like a fundamental part of the culture - there is something more intrinsic than material gain or achievement? where would he normally learn how to live - is it threatened as he is not able to share living with others, or is it just getting through each day
sickness as a test of patience	168	stuff, its especially like, how can I say like sometimes when even you get sick, I'm actually like,	difficult when you get sick		getting sick heightens the difficulties - lack of real support?
patience comes from acceptance	169	patient person and stuff like that, so when I was leaving my country that, like I promised myself	it is hard even for a patient person	"I'm actually a patient person" - reluctance to say the extent that he struggled - he will say the situation was the hardest but not he found it hard	Patience was tested when he was sick. Patience here is stated as an individual attribute, and he explains this as leaving his country made him choose his own particular attributes - patience and acceptance. These are the things that he can have on his own when his family/culture are not around him. these were tested in the hardest times. such as when he was sick
religion as part of life	835	K: actually yeah, I think it's part of the biggest part of my life and stuff like that (ohh) yeah	religion is the biggest part of my life	"the biggest part of my life..."	
	836	J: you haven't mentioned it, well, you've mentioned it but you didn't talk about it that much			
Religion in life not in coping	837	K: yeah I forgot about it yeah. I think so yeah, the religion does play a big part um, in my life. (ok) and then um		...I forgot about it" - it is so natural part of life	why has he forgotten his religion? It speaks to the cultural values of acceptance and duty, but not very british, so perhaps not something he wanted to talk about?
	838	J: how does it help?			
Duty of worship	839	K: um yeah, I'm not that big like deep religious, but I do my duties, which is like, I worship, I believe	I'm not that religious	"I'm not that big like deep religious" - what is he comparing himself to? Or is it that he knows it is not very british and he is trying to fit in more with british life? (is there fear in being seen as deeply islamic?)	what does "deep religious" mean? Duties is the same word used earlier to describe setting up life to reduce the hardship and need for coping - here used in a similar sense? Is duty about pleasing God so that bad things won't happen?
Religion as life's structure	840	in god and I believe in Mohammed and that, and I do pray my 5 times a day (ok) I do go my	belief, prayer, worship		
	841	Friday serve time, I celebrate the Eids and stuff like that, ah, and this one helping me I like read the	religious celebrations, reading the quran		
Strength through religion	842	Qur'an, the holy book (ok) ah, and this one help, this makes me stronger as well.	the quran makes me stronger	"makes me stronger" - this is the same word linked to power in home country, power that the government holds(?) but you can also have power through god	Strength also comes from the quran, strength comes from the religion - strength is to get through difficult times when there is nothing you can do to make it any easier
	843	J: that makes you stronger			
	844	K: yeah, this is the thing that I forgot to mention. Yeah, this makes me a lot stronger. (yeah) even	religion makes me stronger		

Appendix 4.2 (continued)

	J: so what does it feel like, while you are waiting to find out? 262 263Kurdish				
avoidance? Or acceptance?	I: I'm not so concerned about it, ah, I know it's gonna be like, a lengthy interview, a long interview. 264	not concerned, knows what to expect			why is he not concerned about it? I'm not sure if he is hiding the worry or if he feels such a lack of control until the interview that it is not worth worrying about (but then what about being sick, not going to college - are these manifestations of anxiety he cannot express)
Fate; God decides	I'm gonna of course answer the same, in the same way that I answered my first, or what's called screening interview (sure, yeah) and, it's in the hands of God, really, who's got to decide on my fate (sure, yep) of course, it's important to have it, but it's not so important that it can deprive me of	fate is in the hands of God			God will decide - this sounds like a way of accepting whatever happens it is not worth worrying about, as there is nothing he can do about it this is interesting as he is not really carrying on life as usual - his life is highly unusual (even for him) as he does not talk to anyone really, or often leave his room; unless it is usual to be this way in such a situation - or usual for him as keeping to himself and contacting his family at home? ... self-preservation
importance minimised	sleep, you know, stuff like that, so I carry on my life as usual. 268	carry on life as usual	"life as usual" - implies it is usual to stay in your room and not have trust when you are in this situation?		
usual as keeping to himself	J: okay, yeah, so you mentioned it's in the hands of God, is religion an important thing in your culture or for you personally? 269 270Kurdish				
religion as truth	271: this is the truth. (ok) 272Kurdish	religion is the truth			religious worldview
worldview	I: Everybody knows that god exists. Except maybe for atheists				this word implies again a worldview where everything is quite black and white- he does not look at how things might be any other way, so it may be hard for him to see another perspective. By mentioning atheists implies that he is aware that others do maybe have different views to his

Initial themes from one interview:

Superordinate Themes	Themes	Subthemes			
Identity	refugee identity	integration	cultural difference	humanity	
	cultural values	reciprocity	respect	valuing life	
	family culture				
	individual attributes	youth			
	achievement	starting from scratch	hardship		
Strength & Duty	independence & freedom (responsibility?)	duty (responsibility?)	choice and opportunity	appreciation	expectation
	acceptance	patience	adjustment		
	individual coping	skills	self-care		
Support	coping as sharing	trust	sharing	familial support	friends
	community	diversity			

Appendix 4.3 – Extracts from reflective journal – interpreters

1. I spoke with the interpreter both before going to meet the participant and after the interview. He had vast experience (over 5 years) and was registered with the interpreting service who offer qualifications. He said they do not have supervision however. This interpreter had worked locally with many refugees. The interpreter told me a little about the different languages in the region and that they understood each other fully, perhaps having a different accent.
2. Despite this, I had felt as though the young person gave a good account of how difficult he was finding things. I had a clear sense of the extent he was struggling, even if this was not voiced in words. In particular however, he had explained the difficulty with meeting people, the lack of support of this social worker and formerly his foster carer, and how he experienced things through his cultural lens. The interpretation of his exact words may be considered in relation to the view of the interpreter however.

I was also struck in this interview by the dynamic of having 3 of us in the room. I had felt that I had a friendly and warm relationship with the young person, who smiled when I met him, for example (I met him downstairs before the meeting, while the interpreter waited upstairs). The actual meeting felt more formal than I had planned – the interpreter was an older man, who I would have described as a gentleman, and was wearing a suit. The interpreter informed me that he made the young person feel at ease through use of humorous examples, however I did not observe this in body language. Via the interpreter, the young person informed me that it was nice to meet someone from his culture and be able to talk. At the end however, I felt the direct contact when we said goodbye and shook hands (in a friendly rather than formal way) was warmer than when we had the interpreter present. During the interview, although the interpreter talked to the young person, when I talked to him in English, he at times made eye contact and I could tell he picked up some of my words and smiled – I had made a connection with him which I did not sense he had made with the interpreter. I wondered about this as the interpreter was an older man and he talked about the death of his father, I definitely thought this may have been a difficult experience for him, and tried very hard to show empathy and warmth.