

**Understanding the Experiences of Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking
Young People as They Turn Eighteen Whilst Subject to UK Immigration
Control**

Thesis submitted in part fulfilment of the degree of

Doctorate in Clinical Psychology
(DClinPsy)
University of Leicester

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May 2018

Declaration

I confirm that this thesis (comprising of a Literature Review, Research Paper and Critical Appraisal) is my own work. It was written and submitted in part-fulfilment of the degree of Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy) and has not been submitted for any other academic award.

Alison Smith

May 2018

Understanding the Experiences of Unaccompanied Young People Subject to UK Immigration Control

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Thesis Abstract

Systematic Literature Review: Nine papers pertaining to the experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking youth in England and Ireland were critically reviewed. An interpretative meta-synthesis identified three main analytical themes: *Ubiquity of threat*, impacting on powerlessness and security; *Tensions and resistance*, highlighting assets and means of countering threat; and *Growth and future (framed by loss)*, pointing to the role of loss as the young people acted forwards into their futures. A rigorous quality assessment of reviewed studies found important contextual factors tended to be neglected. Implications are discussed in terms of how clinical practice might best attend to how young people seeking asylum alone are attuned to multi-level and persistent threats inherent to the post-migratory environment. Research methodologies employing reflexive, contextualised frameworks are discussed as offering utility. Greater attendance to the impact of context, particularly immigration status and access to social capital, is needed.

Research Report: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to explore the sense-making of four young Afghan men during interviews focused on experiences of turning eighteen whilst subject to UK immigration control. Three super-ordinate themes were presented: '*It's on me: The push and pull of control*', highlighting tensions and contradictions of power; '*The threat of having nothing and being no-one*', pointing to experiential loss of meaning and purpose; and '*Finding a place for struggle and resistance*', attending to purposeful responses to threat. Implications are discussed relating to the need for therapeutic endeavour to be cognisant of, and responsive to, broad contextual factors when working with this group, rendering visible aspects of power and bearing witness to moments of resistance in the face of ontological insecurity.

Critical Appraisal: A reflexive overview of the research project contextualised the research process and reflected on personal and professional development.

Acknowledgements

Four young men, who were facing incredibly hard journeys, allowed me briefly into their lives and trusted me with their words. This feels a significant act on their part and one that I am extremely grateful for. Each of the participants engaged with the research because they wanted the opportunity to help other young people facing similar experiences. I appreciated this important reminder that research needs to speak outward and have been greatly touched by the sense of solidarity which the young men inspired.

I would like to thank Alison Birch, Habib Rezaie, Suzanne Elliott and Anwen Goodwin for offering their thoughtful and helpful consideration of the research design, analysis and implications; this helped give the work important perspective. I would also like to thank all those who supported, and tried to support, recruitment.

I am extremely grateful to my Research Supervisor, Gareth Morgan, for the extensive support and motivation that was offered to me, particularly in order to keep developing the analysis and push it forwards. Your respectful curiosity and perspective helped shape a piece of work that I am proud of. Thank you, also, to the 2015 cohort for sharing ups and downs of the research journey which were hard to explain to anyone else.

Finally, thank you to all the important people in my life who have supported me and understood when I could not always be present as much as I wanted to be. With especial thanks to the Broadhurst and Kandola families, for always being there with continued love, solidarity, home-cooked food and an excuse to drink wine and eat cake.

My thesis is dedicated to my parents, who understood the value of education and who worked immensely hard to instil in me a mind-set that nothing was out of my reach.

Word Count

Thesis abstract	300
Literature Review:	
Abstract	175
Full text (including abstract)	6915
References	1684
Research Paper:	
Abstract	178
Full text (including abstract)	12,000
References	1754
Critical Appraisal:	
Full text	4030
References	441
Word count for mandatory appendices (including references)	4232
Word count for non-mandatory appendices (including references)	4868
Total word count for Thesis (including non-mandatory appendices)	27,813

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Addenda

(Anonymised transcripts, submitted separately)

Transcript One: '*Saber*'

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Transcript Five: '*Jahid*' (Time point two)

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Glossary

(Adapted from: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/glossary>)

Asylum-seeker: An individual who has lodged an application for protection as a Refugee.

Host-country: The country where asylum is sought/granted

Indefinite leave to remain (ILR): ILR is a form of immigration status given by the Home Office. ILR is also called 'permanent residence' or 'settled status' as it gives permission to stay and work or study in the UK with no defined time limit. However, ILR can lapse or be revoked under a number of conditions such as: Spending more than two continuous years outside of the UK; On recommendation of the court if the person is convicted of an offence punishable with imprisonment.

Looked-after: A young person or child under the age of eighteen who is under the care of a Local Authority

Refugee: An individual who 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...' (Definition quoted from the 1951 Refugee Convention)

Reporting (or signing): Most asylum-seekers who are not detained are expected to report to a reporting centre police station.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking child(ren): Unaccompanied children seeking asylum are children, under the age of eighteen, 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.

Part One: Literature Review

Understanding the Experiences of Unaccompanied Young People Subject to Immigration Control. A Critical Review and Meta-synthesis

**Prepared with the intention to submit to the Journal of Community and
Applied Social Psychology**

Author guidelines presented in Appendix A

Abstract

Objectives: The present meta-synthesis reviews qualitative literature pertaining to post-migratory experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors in England and Ireland. Previous research has identified that these young people face unique stressors compared with peers seeking asylum within a family context and are at greater risk of experiencing distress. **Methodology:** An interpretative, critical meta-synthesis was undertaken to identify qualitative research pertaining to the experiences of young people (aged eighteen and below) who were seeking asylum in the UK. **Results:** Three main analytical themes are proposed: *Ubiquity of threat*, impacting on powerlessness and security; *Tensions and resistance*, highlighting assets and means of countering threat and *Growth and future (framed by loss)*, pointing to the role of loss as the young people acted forwards into their futures. **Conclusions:** A rigorous quality assessment of the nine primary studies at the focus of this review found a tendency to neglect the complex political landscapes which frame the young people's experiences. Suggestions are offered for shifts in methodology to better attend to the complexity of the environments navigated by these young people.

1. Introduction

The present meta-synthesis reviews qualitative literature pertaining to post-migratory experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors. Numbers of such young people are rising; for example, 4560 unaccompanied young people were within looked-after Local Authority care in the UK in 2017, compared with 1950 in 2013 (DoE, 2017). Their experiences are framed by complex legal and immigration issues which impact directly on their health and wellbeing needs (Martinez *et al.*, 2015). As such, unaccompanied young people are a group of potential clinical concern. The following sections set out a broad background of post-migratory experiences for asylum-seeking youth and potential risk factors of distress for this group before refining a focus on contextual factors. Specific aims of the present review will then be presented.

1.1 Seeking Asylum as an Unaccompanied Minor

Young people seeking asylum without a formal care-giver have distinct experiences compared to adult refugees and accompanied children (Jensen, Skårdalsmo & Fjermestad, 2014; Kanics, Hernandez & Touzenis, 2010; Wernesjö, 2012). Around half will have experienced the unexpected death of a family member and many will have experienced violence prior to leaving their home country (Thomas, Nafees & Bhugra, 2004). The journey to a place of safety is often long and perilous, with experiences of violence, exploitation and rape not uncommon (Ellis, Fairweather, Scott & Griffiths, 2017; Wong, Chanchlani & Croft, 2017). Rates of distress and suicide have been found to be higher for young refugees than for their host-country born counterparts; a recent review found rates of PTSD in refugee youths re-settled in high-income countries to be 40 to 60 per cent (Reavell & Fazel, 2017).

A systematic review of the mental health of refugee youth found that unaccompanied status was a specific risk factor for high psychological distress (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011), with one study indicating a relationship between older age (> 16 years) and increased distress for unaccompanied

young people when compared with accompanied peers (Bean, Derluyn, Eurelings-Bontekoe, Broekaert & Spinhoven, 2007). Similarly, a systematic review of refugee youth seeking asylum in high-income countries, found that unaccompanied status, along with frequent moves within the host-country and precarious access to financial support, were important risk factors for mental health outcomes (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick & Stein, 2012). The post-migratory context, particularly structures relating to immigration and the risk of deportation appears, therefore, to have a significant impact on the mental health of young people seeking asylum (Ehnholt & Yule, 2006; Jakobsen, Demott, Wentzel-Larsen & Heir, 2017).

Protective factors mitigating distress for this group have been found to relate to social connectedness, particularly with members of the same cultural background, and positive educational experiences (Fazel *et al.*, 2017). However, research further indicates that unaccompanied young people face particular concerns, such as stigma and social isolation (Wong *et al.*, 2017), which impact on their means to acquire social capital (Chase & Allsopp, 2013).

1.2 Contextual factors

Figures from 2017 indicate unaccompanied young people migrating to Europe are typically male (88%) and aged between 16 and 17 years (77%; Eurostat, 2018). Immigration policy has an important impact on the lived experience of these young people, who face challenges of forced re-location, requirement to regularly report to immigration services and the threat of detention or deportation (see Hynes, 2011, for an overview). For young people approaching eighteen, a further transition into adult services and subsequent loss of protection are also a significant source of concern (Allsopp & Chase, 2017). The host-country therefore presents as a complex site of both protection and risk for these young people who often face marginalisation and powerlessness (Sleijpen, Boeije, Kleber & Mooren, 2015).

In acknowledgement of the protective function of social connectedness for this group, recent BPS guidelines for practitioners working alongside

unaccompanied young people highlights the need for interventions focused on social capacity building (BPS, 2018). However, research based in the UK suggests that there are multiple barriers for young refugees in accessing mental health support, including a mistrust of services (Majumder, O'Reilly, Karim & Vostanis, 2015) and, for unaccompanied youth in particular, a lack of support and guidance (Hek, 2005). The complexities of the experiences faced by these young people appear not well understood at a service level, further contributing to barriers of access (Michelson & Sclare, 2009). This is a finding confirmed by a recent mixed-methodology study, which found frontline workers experienced service structures as increasingly detrimental to the wellbeing of this group (Humphris & Sigona, 2017).

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives: Acculturation and Social Identity

Contemporary acculturation models, which seek to understand the process of change which occurs as culturally dissimilar groups or individuals meet, (e.g. Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga & Szapocznik, 2010) have shown utility in contextualising the mental health of those seeking-asylum within a socio-political frame. Although some early iterations of acculturation theory viewed individuals as responsible for determining their 'acculturation style' (see Figure 1), much more recent attention has been paid to the interaction between aspects of an individual's lived experience (e.g. socio-economic status; access to resources such as language) and aspects of the host-environment (stigma, inequality) on experiences of settlement and belonging (Schwartz *et al.*, 2010). For example, one study of adult refugees identified how prevailing discourses which may serve to medicalise distress possibly encourage a 'passive' acculturation style associated with experiences of marginalisation and hopelessness (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2003). A more recent study of acculturation and mental health in unaccompanied young people, found that high levels of social support increased what the authors referred to as 'cultural competence' (sense of belonging to both heritage culture and that of mainstream society), affording participants access to the means to resist negative aspects of the social environment, such as discrimination (Oppedal & Idsoe, 2015).

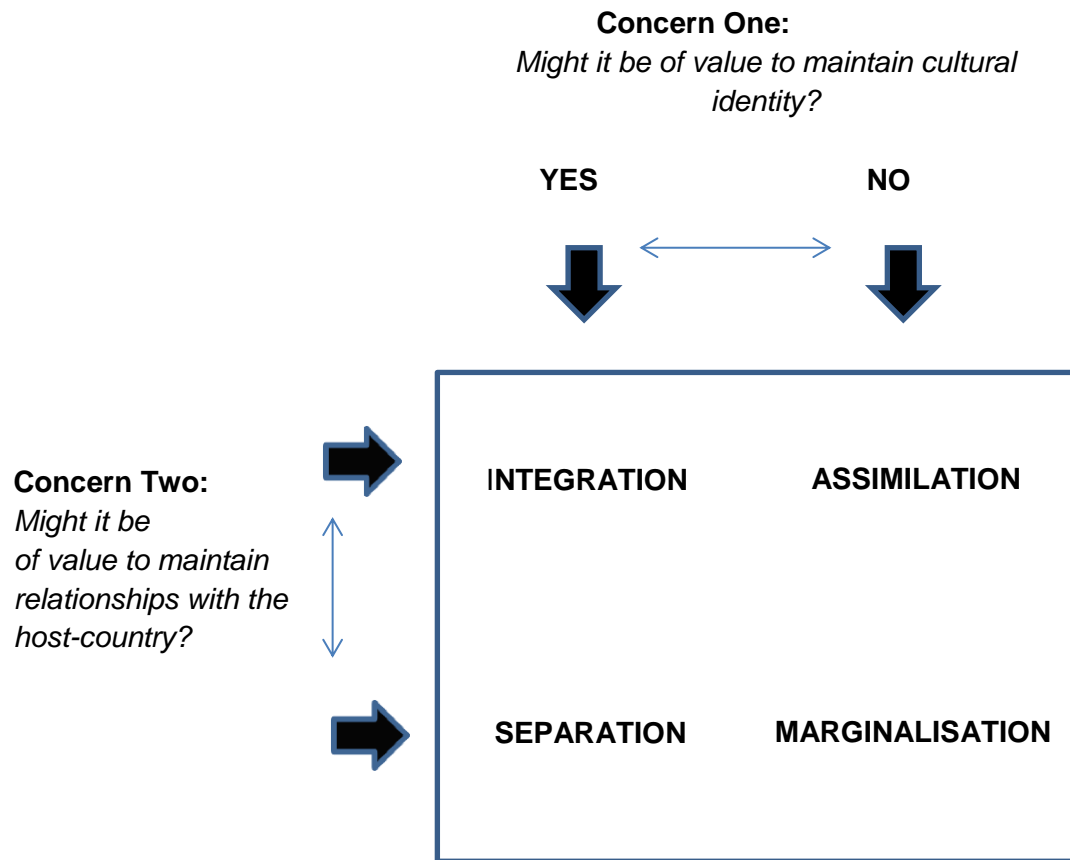


Figure 1. Acculturation strategies (based on Berry, 1997)

Within an acculturation perspective, social identity theory (e.g. Tajfel, 2010) becomes useful in further developing an understanding of the experiences of those with cause to seek political asylum outside of the birth-country. Acquiring the bureaucratic, and often socially undesirable, identity of ‘refugee’ occurs simultaneous to the individual losing or becoming increasingly distanced from prior social, cultural and internalised identities (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003). Within the host-country environment, identity becomes a site of multiple contestations with, for example, those seeking asylum encountering racism, stigma, and scrutiny regarding their age, ethnicity and level of need. Such inter-group and internally-focused processes of social identity development appear pertinent in making sense of the elevated risks of encountering serious emotional distress that have been found within migrant groups (McIntyre, Elahi & Bental, 2016). Research has suggested that, through offering the means to

develop a sense of self-esteem and value, the acquisition of group identification reduces the risk, for example, of an individual experiencing paranoia and depression (McIntyre, Wickham, Barr & Bentall, 2017).

Social identity theory may be particularly relevant considering the needs of unaccompanied young people, who are at a critical stage of identity development without the protective sense of belonging and purpose that seeking asylum within a family context appears to provide. A recent qualitative study exploring the 'developmental projects' of unaccompanied young boys in Norway, found that certain goals, such as succeeding in education, were supported by formal carers, whilst other aspirations, such as a sense of responsibility towards the birth-family, were not (Omland & Andenas, 2018). This suggests that the host-country context may work to shape and delimit the identities available to unaccompanied young people, validating those which are deemed culturally important.

It is therefore argued that acculturation processes and models of understanding social identity hold greatest utility when viewed within the context of structural and socio-political dynamics (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003). For example, access to meaningful occupation has been found to be a significant protective factor against mental distress, offering an individual an opportunity to act into preferred ways of living (Bhui, Craig, Mohamud *et al.*, (2006); Hocking, Kennedy & Sundram, 2015), yet the right to employment is currently withheld for those seeking asylum in the UK. Frameworks such as Smail's social-materialist model of understanding distress (2005) questions psychology's preoccupation with intrapsychic factors, and argue that the impress of power from more distal factors, such as state governance and social discourse, have a far greater bearing on embodied experience. Contemporary frameworks, such as the Power, Threat, Meaning Framework (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018), may, therefore, be best placed to provide a coherent and contextualised understanding of such experiences from a position which is highly alert to the primacy of power in shaping experience, but which also acknowledges the individual as an active agent in the development of their life (Omland & Andenas, 2018).

1.4 Aim of the Present Review

Research exploring the particular experiences of unaccompanied young people has not been previously systematically reviewed. The author of the present review aimed to explicitly acknowledge a tendency in research to neglect socio-political context (Colucci, Szwarc, Minas, Paxton & Guerra, 2014). In following, the specific question which guided this review- *How do unaccompanied young people subject to immigration control within describe their experiences*- was underpinned by a constructionist position with regards to how those experiences were variously attended to, interpreted and described within the research.

For brevity, the term 'young people' will be used hereon in to refer to the unaccompanied young people seeking asylum at the focus of this review.

2. Methodology

In consideration of the experiences of marginalisation that are often described by those seeking asylum (Alderson, 2010), the present review was framed within a critical interpretative approach to meta-synthesis (Dixon Woods *et al.*, 2006). This approach involved utilising 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (e.g. Gough & Madill, 2012) in order to problematize existing accounts within literature. This was a good fit with the present author's preferred epistemological position; one that leans towards social constructionism whereby knowledges regarding truth and reality are multiple, processual and purposeful. There were three main stages of the present review: Systematic search; Critical appraisal; and Meta-synthesis.

2.1 Systematic Search Process

An initial scoping search informed the development of a relatively open research question. Due to the primacy of country-specific immigration procedures in the lives of young people, the search was limited to studies based within the UK and Ireland. The search term strategy focused on three search strings based on age, unaccompanied status and immigration status (Appendix B) which were applied to PsychINFO, Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed and the Cochrane Library databases in January 2018. Parameters were set for articles published in English in peer-reviewed journals. The search process is represented by Figure 2.

2.2 Inclusion Criteria

The systematic database search yielded 1695 articles once duplicates were removed. Following systematic title and abstract screening a full-paper screening was applied to the remaining forty-five articles. Studies were included which employed an explicit qualitative methodology with young people who had been designated ‘unaccompanied minor’ status on their arrival to the UK or Ireland. Reception and asylum procedures are notably similar within the UK and Ireland (Pierard & Roublin, 2012) and English is considered an official language; it was aimed that this provided a coherent context for considering the studies. Studies were excluded if they did not focus directly on perspectives of the young people regarding their post-migratory experiences. Studies which used a mixed methodological or comparative design were included if the qualitative results pertaining to unaccompanied young people were separately reported. Of the nine studies included, two (Chase, 2010; Chase, 2013) used a sample from the same wider data set but focused on separate well-being constructs and offered unique interpretations.

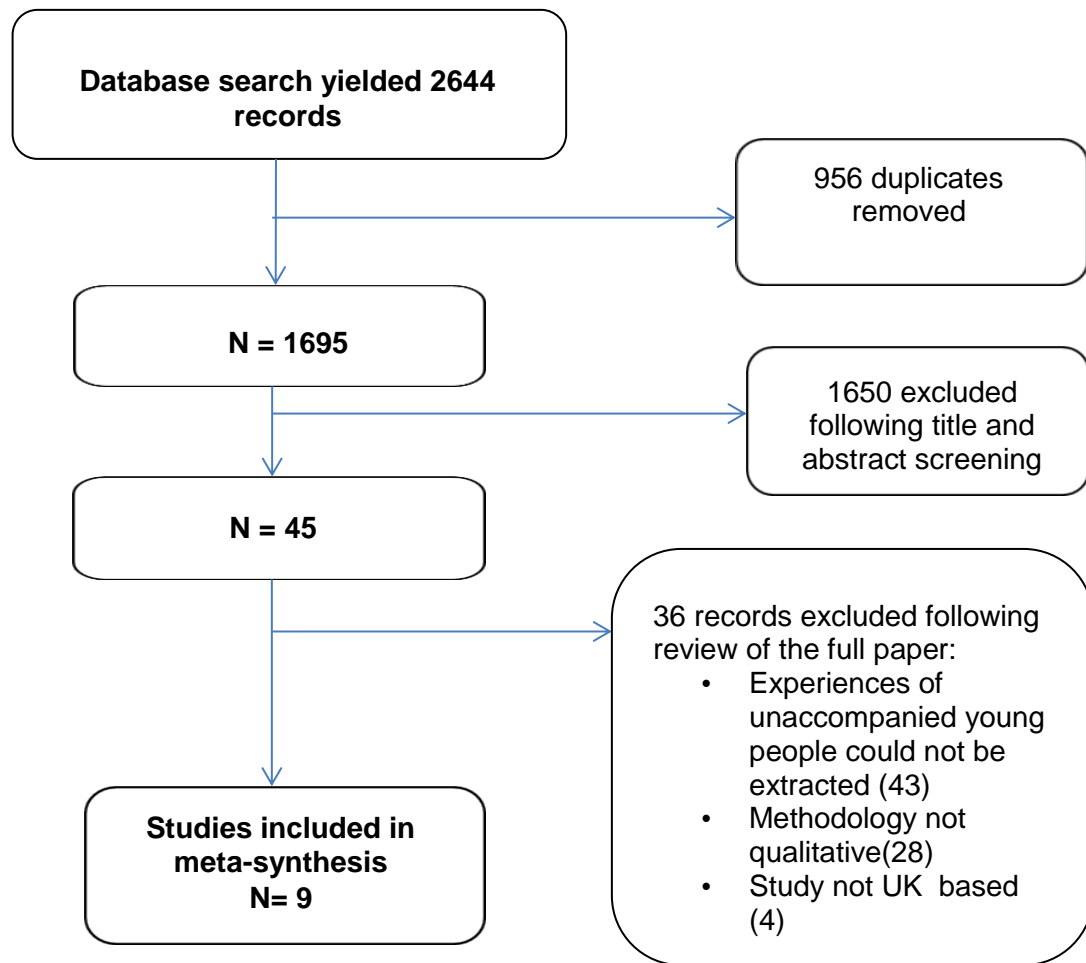


Figure 2. PRISMA flowchart of search process

2.3 Analysis

2.3.1 Critical appraisal

Being somewhat contentious for qualitative research (Yardley, 2000), a quality appraisal tool was utilised to guide consideration of relative ‘strength’ of the primary studies rather than to exclude (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Consistent with a critical-interpretivist position, the appraisal tool (Appendix C) specifically foregrounded transparency and reflexivity and was based on the work of Yardley (2000) and Walsh and Downe (2006), with modifications associated with good practice for research with unaccompanied young people (Thomas & Byford, 2003). After multiple readings of each primary study, a data extraction spreadsheet was used to systematically pull out data as per the assessment categories. Manual exploration of each paper was conducted in iterative cycles to ensure each paper was exhaustively examined.

2.3.2 Meta-synthesis

The meta-synthesis was based on a procedure of critical interpretative synthesis outlined by Dixon-Woods *et al.* (2006) and further informed by the work of Walsh and Downe (2006). The current author employed a conceptual definition of first- (participants' accounts of their experiences), second- (authors' interpretations of participants' experiences) and third-order constructs (the interpretations of the present author) as set out by Malpass *et al.* (2009). The analysis was based around data extracted from each of the 'results' sections of the primary studies (summarised in Table 1).

Each study was initially analysed individually. Direct participant quotes (first-order constructs) were not included in initial coding and the author endeavoured to bracket the review question at this stage. Line-by-line data coding generated a large number of constructs for each paper, which were then taken through reciprocal translational analysis (whereby overarching themes were developed) and refutational synthesis (where potential contradictions were examined) across studies. This was an iterative and dynamic process, aided by manual exploration of the data so that the developing analysis could be easily revised and refined. This was followed by 'line of argument' analysis (Dixon-Woods *et al.*, 2006) whereby the research question was returned to the fore and the synthesis was considered as a collective whole. Through interpretative engagement with the primary studies, therefore, third-order constructs were generated; Table 2 illustrates the final taxonomy of findings.

Analysis concluded when it was felt that a plausible and coherent account grounded in the evidence of the primary studies had been achieved (Dixon-Woods *et al.*, 2006). Three main analytical themes were generated: *Ubiquity of Threat; Tensions and resistance; and Growth and future (framed by loss)*. A 'sensitivity analysis' (Smith, Fox & Trayner, 2015) validated that the contribution of each study was meaningfully weighted in terms of the quality assessment (Table 3).

Table 1. Summary of findings across primary studies, continued over page

Study	Theme title	Summaries of second-order interpretations and conclusions given in primary studies	
		Interpretation	Conclusions
One	• Descriptions of mental health	Variable descriptions of mental health	Sense-making impacts experience of help-seeking
	• Associated with immigration status	Concern focuses on uncertainty of status and welfare of family	Distress as entirely appropriate; multi-layered
	• Experiences of using services	General distrust; comparisons with services in country of origin	Mistrust is an understandable, protective mechanism but also a barrier for engagement
	• Opinions of treatments	Differences between treatments offered and expectations	
Two	• Bounded by bureaucracy	Sense of being 'othered' and controlled	Psychologically uncomfortable effects arise from immigration processes
	• At home in the community	Peaceful places offer sense of belonging	Places of belonging resist dominant negative discourses
	• A place of one's own	Relates to feelings of independence, control and safety	
	• Wide and textured contexts	Personal territories are made and remade easing a sense of dislocation.	Physical activity central to the process of territory making, challenges discourses of victimhood
Three	• Young people's perceptions on the importance of culture	Culture provides a sense of continuity accessed through a variety of means	Differences in relationship to culture leads to problems in placements
	• Communication and language	Communication as a challenge; variable experiences in over-coming problems	Maintaining birth-language as well as having access to English language helps develop trust
	• Food	Food as important in terms of welcome and sharing culture	Food as symbolically significant tools of inclusion and belonging

Table 1. Summary of findings across primary studies, continued from previous and over page

Study	Theme title	Summaries of second-order interpretations and conclusions given in primary studies	
		Interpretation	Conclusions
Four	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trauma and its destabilising impact on self Lack of status, loss of identity Mental health and insecurity Order, routine and security Re-emergence of insecurity 	<p>Trauma leads to a sense of detachment and fear of the future</p> <p>Status and uncertainty main concern</p> <p>Immigration status linked to range of emotional difficulties</p> <p>Attempts to re-establish order, control</p> <p>Uncertainty as a threat</p>	<p>Undermining of a sense of self</p> <p>Leads to a loss of ontological security</p> <p>Uncertainties exacerbate mental health problems</p> <p>Education facilitates trust building which is essential for ontological security</p>
Five	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The branding of the 'asylum-seeker' Resisting the stigma Selective disclosure of the past Resisting the intrusive elements in the system 	<p>Persistent control bewildering</p> <p>Attempts to distance from the label,</p> <p>Bracketing the past allowed a focus on the future</p> <p>Complex relationships with social care; resisted by non-disclosure</p>	<p>Panoptic mechanisms dominate experience</p> <p>Panopticism of the asylum process a mechanism of 'othering'</p> <p>Immigration system as exercising the greatest degree of control</p>
Six	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss Negotiating a new way of life Experience of distress Process of adjustment 	<p>Losses are multiple and layered</p> <p>Impacted by reminders of difference</p> <p>Uncertainty impacts ability to do things</p> <p>Various methods of coping; variable experiences of receiving help</p>	<p>Negative experiences impact on self-esteem and ability to seek help</p> <p>Dissociation distances self from painful memories</p> <p>Evidence of resilience despite distress; role of trusting relationships a mediating factor</p>

Table 1. Summary of findings across primary studies, continued from previous page

Study	Theme title	Summaries of second-order interpretations and conclusions given in primary studies	
		Interpretation	Conclusions
Seven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple strategies Faith as a mediating factor 	<p>Various strategies</p> <p>Faith an important factor; links present and future</p>	<p>Continuity of self as important; religion facilitates acculturation and control</p> <p>Religion as a compelling resource</p>
Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A search for meaning Social support Activity Religion Positive changes in self-perception Desire to live a purposive life Co-existence of ongoing distress and positive changes Mismatch between internal feeling state and external presentation 	<p>Why events had happened</p> <p>Connected to loss</p> <p>Distracting; helpful in managing</p> <p>Facilitative; offering guidance , comfort</p> <p>Positive changes following trauma</p> <p>Experiences lead to a desire to help</p> <p>Multiple on-going concerns alongside positive change</p> <p>Hiding true feelings increases positive affect, protects from others' judgements</p>	<p>Rumination an adaptive process</p> <p>Developing narratives aids recovery</p> <p>Plays a role in fostering self-esteem and efficacy</p> <p>Meets a need for parental guidance</p> <p>Lack of family support leads to a sense of positive strength</p> <p>Psychological pain can co-exist with positive growth</p> <p>Distress underestimated; mitigated by support from others</p>
Nine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coherent narratives of past, present and future Unimaginable futures, unimaginable pasts 	<p>Temporal connections are expressed through desire for education</p> <p>Uncertainty; biographical narratives become incoherent</p>	<p>Development of a strong sense of future is connected with coherent narratives of the past</p> <p>Uncertainty of the future impacts on ability to plan in the present</p>

Table 2. Taxonomy of third order constructs

Theme	Sub-theme	Constructs
Ubiquity of threat	<i>Powerlessness</i>	Controlled by bureaucracy ^{2, 4, 5, 6}
		Scrutiny ^{1, 2, 5, 8}
		Fear/loss of future ^{4, 6, 9}
		Futility/ submission ^{4, 5}
		Lacking self-determination ^{2, 4, 5, 8, 9}
		Precariousness ^{4, 5, 6, 8, 9}
		Lack of power ^{2, 4, 5, 6, 9}
		In someone else's hands ^{2, 4, 5, 6, 9}
		Stigma ^{1, 2, 4, 5, 6}
		Marginalisation/being othered ^{2, 4, 5, 6,}
Tensions and resistance	<i>Troubled relationships</i>	Dislocation ^{3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9}
		Non-disclosure, distraction ^{5, 6, 7, 8, 9}
		Hiding self, loss of self ^{2, 4, 5, 6,}
		Being active, taking control ^{2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8}
		Finding safety ^{2, 4, 7, 8}
		Seeking hope ^{4, 6, 7, 8}
		Seeking regulation, continuity ^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7}
		Building and maintaining relationships ^{2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9}
		Faith and God ^{7, 8}
		Finding reassurance in others ^{1, 2, 3, 8}
Growth and future (framed by loss)	<i>Resisting control</i>	Being/ not being understood ^{1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9}
		Trust as a barrier ^{1, 5, 6, 7, 9}
		Sharing, not being alone ^{2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8}
		Loss always there ^{1, 4, 6, 8, 9}
		Alertness to legacy of the past ^{5, 8}
		Finding sense and inspiration in loss ^{7, 8, 9}
		Being shaped by loss ^{4, 6, 7, 8, 9}
	<i>Accessing outside support</i>	

¹Majumder et al. (2015) ²Muir & Gannon (2016) ³Ni Raghallaigh & Sirriyeh (2015) ⁴Chase (2013) ⁵Chase (2010) ⁶Groark et al. (2010) ⁷Ni Raghallaigh & Gilligan (2010) ⁸Sutton et al. (2006) ⁹Devenney (2017)

Table 3. Sensitivity analysis scoring (adapted from Smith et al., 2015).

Theme title	Study number								
	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight	Nine
1. Ubiquity of Threat									
<i>Powerlessness</i>	T	T	X	T	T	T	T	T	T
<i>Troubled relationships</i>	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T
2. Tensions and Resistance									
<i>Resisting Control and threat</i>	T	T	X	T	T	T	T	T	X
<i>Accessing outside support</i>	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T
3. Growth and hope (framed by loss)									
<i>Quality strength</i>	X	T	X	T	T	T	T	T	T
<i>L= Low</i>	L-M	M	L-M	M-S	M-S	M-S	L-M	M-S	L-M
<i>M= Medium</i>									
<i>S= Strong</i>									

'T' indicates theme is implied within the primary study; bold font '**T**' indicates explicit reference in the primary study. 'X' indicates theme not identifiable in the primary study

3. Findings

3.1 Summary of Primary Studies

Across the studies a total of 198 individual participants were interviewed. Tables 4 and 5 provide summaries of methodologies and participant demographics respectively. The overall sample contained substantially fewer male participants (66%) than is reflected by current demographics in the EU (88%). Representation in terms of age was broad (range 11-23 years). Studies

varied in the extent of information given regarding country of origin, immigration status and length of time in the host country.

3.2 Critical Appraisal

The quality assessment rated studies in terms of relative strength from 'low-medium' to 'medium-strong' (Appendix D). It is important to hold in the fore the present authorial voice which sought to problematize the lens through which young people seeking asylum are often seen through. Further, the dictates of journal submission criteria are likely to have been a contributory factor in terms of which aspects of research are given priority for publication. It is therefore acknowledged that alternative approaches to quality assessment would result in different conclusions concerning quality appraisal.

A majority of the studies focused on experiences of well-being and post-traumatic growth, indicative of the move away from discourses of pathology within the wider literature (Papadopoulos, 2007). While a majority of the studies set out clear aims with evident links to existing research, four of the studies scored low in terms of transparency of frame, obscuring the position of the researcher (Willig, 2013). For example, studies One and Nine did not set out an explicit research question or engage in reflexive consideration of how the frame of the research (psychiatric services, social services respectively) might impact on subsequent analysis. By contrast, studies employing Grounded theory or phenomenological approaches offered greater transparency regarding research design which enabled the politicised aspects of the status of children subject to immigration control to remain at the fore.

There was variability across the studies in the extent to which biographical demographics were acknowledged. Studies considered strongest maintained a focus on the biographical narratives of participants by weaving pre and post-migratory experiences within the data analysis. However, across all studies, aspects of culture and immigration status were not anchored to analysis, potentially working to reinforce narratives that refer to unaccompanied children as a de-contextualised homogenous group (Horgan & Ni Raghallaigh, 2017).

Transparency of data collection processes was relatively low across the studies with little evidence offered to enable scrutiny and verifiability. Studies employing an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) design, a methodology which calls for the author to be rendered visible, were notable exceptions. The four strongest studies (all employing Grounded Theory or IPA) also referenced a greater range of triangulation methods, ethical considerations and evidence of reflexivity, indicating a potential compatibility of these methods with the socio-political focus of the present review. Points of ethical concern focused almost exclusively on mitigating vulnerabilities of the young people concerned rather than attending to the ways in which the young people held agency that could, for example, have been useful in terms of developing research design. Only one study (Six) documented meaningful engagement of participants in research design.

In terms of impact, a majority of studies explored the generalisability of findings to wider populations. A smaller number of studies extended findings to discussions regarding wider policy development; for example Study Four offered a reconceptualization of 'well-being' constructs pertinent to the field of human rights.

Table 4. Summary of primary studies, continued over page

	One: <i>Majumder et al. (2015)</i>	Two: <i>Muir & Gannon (2016)</i>	Three: <i>Ni Raghallaigh & Sirriyeh (2015)</i>	Four: <i>Chase (2013)</i>	Five: <i>Chase (2010)</i>	Six: <i>Groark et al. (2010)</i>	Seven: <i>Ni Raghallaigh & Gilligan (2010)</i>	Eight: <i>Sutton et al. (2006)</i>	Nine: <i>Devenney (2017)</i>
Research focus	Views on mental health	Relationship to place	Fostering experiences	Notions of 'wellbeing'	Factors affecting 'wellbeing'	Coping strategies	Coping strategies	Post-traumatic growth	Experiences of leaving care
Theoretical framework/ research domain	Psychiatry	Social Psychology	Social Work	Grounded Theory/ Social policy and research	Grounded Theory/ Social policy and research	Phenomenological/ Psychology	Social work	Phenomenological/ Psychology and Social work	Social policy and research
Sample	Purposive; <i>n</i> = 15; minimal biographies offered	Purposive; <i>n</i> = 6; minimal biographies offered	Purposive; <i>n</i> = 21; minimal biographies offered	Theoretical; <i>n</i> = 54; biography tied to analysis	Theoretical; <i>n</i> = 54; biography tied to analysis	Purposive; <i>n</i> = 6; biography tied to analysis	Purposive; <i>n</i> = 32; minimal biographies offered	Purposive; <i>n</i> = 8; minimal biographies offered	Purposive; <i>n</i> = 18; minimal biographies offered
Data collection	Semi-structured interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Semi-structured interviews	In-depth interviews	In-depth interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Interviews	Semi-structured interviews	In-depth interviews/ visual methods
Analysis	Thematic	Thematic	Thematic; inductive	Thematic	Thematic	IPA	Thematic	IPA	Thematic

Table 4. Summary of primary studies, continued from over page

	One: <i>Majumder et al. (2015)</i>	Two: <i>Muir & Gannon (2016)</i>	Three: <i>Ni Raghallaigh & Sirriyeh (2015)</i>	Four: <i>Chase (2013)</i>	Five: <i>Chase (2010)</i>	Six: <i>Groark et al. (2010)</i>	Seven: <i>Ni Raghallaigh & Gilligan (2010)</i>	Eight: <i>Sutton et al. (2006)</i>	Nine: <i>Devenney (2017)</i>
Ethics	Ethical approval obtained	Ethical approval obtained; avoidance of asking about pre-migration; on-going consent process	Ethical approval obtained; avoidance of asking about pre-migration	Ethical approval obtained; discussion guided by young person	Ethical approval obtained; Focus on safety and control	Ethical approval obtained; young people involved in research process	Ethical approval obtained; avoidance of asking about pre-migration; on-going consent process	Ethical approval obtained	Ethical approval obtained
Methods to enhance validity	Independent coding, data saturation	NS**	Focus group*	Negative cases discussed	Data saturation; multiple interviews; negative instances sought	Independent coding, respondent validation, supervision, audit kept, quantitative methods	Participant observation	Independent coding, interview pro-forma	Visual methods used; participants interviewed twice
Focus of reflexivity	NS	Impact of researcher	NS	Research team discussion	NS	Research diary	Impact of researcher	Positioning of researcher evidenced	NS

* Not used in final analysis ** Not specified

Table 5. Summary of participant demographics across primary studies

Study	Sample size	Age range (years)	Gender	Country of origin (number where specified)	Immigration status	Time in host country	Quality score
One	15	15-18	1 female 14 male	Afganistan ($n = 11$); Iran ($n = 1$); Somalia ($n = 2$); Eritrea ($n = 1$)	'refugee' ($n = 7$); 'asylum seeking' ($n = 8$)	NS*	Low-Med
Two	6	20-23	6 male	Iraq; Afghanistan	'leave to remain' ($n = 4$); 'unknown' ($n = 2$)	NS	Med
Three	59	11-19	8 female 51 male	NS ($n = 10$)	'refugee status' ($n = 6$); others not specified	10 mths - 5 years+	Low-Med
Four	54	11-23	29 female 25 male	NS ($n = 18$)	NS	NS	Med- Strong
Five	54	11-23	29 female 25 male	Afghanistan; Eritrea; NS ($n = 18$)	NS	NS	Med-Strong
Six	6	16-18	2 female 4 male	Africa ($n = 5$); Asia ($n = 1$)	'leave to remain' ($n = 4$); 'unknown' ($n = 2$)	six mths- 1 year	Med-strong
Seven	32	14-19	18 female 14 male	Eastern and Western Africa; others not specified ($n = 6$)	NS	NS	Low-Med
Eight	8	16-20	7 female 1 male	NS	NS	2-10 years	Med-Strong
Nine	18	17-23	3 female 15 male	Afghanistan; Eritrea; others not specified	NS	NS	Low- Med

*Not specified

3.3 Meta-synthesis

Three main themes, presented in Figure 3, resulted from the analysis.



Figure 3. Summary of meta-synthesis themes

3.3.1 Ubiquity of threat

A sense of threat was evident across all of the primary studies, appearing to background the experiences of the young people in multiple ways. The following sub-themes pull together encounters with threat that negated the participants' access to resources of power and identity.

Powerlessness.

Across a majority of the primary studies, a theme of powerlessness was evident. The participants spoke of the bureaucratic immigration structures which

controlled and scrutinised their lives in ways many young people described as hostile and un-necessary. The participants were aware that their plans and strategies were vulnerable in relation to the power of immigration services to impose sudden change and restriction. The following quotes illustrate how threat remained ever-present in the background, threatening to destabilise a future that was not within the participants' control:

It's really, really stressful. I ask, 'what am I doing this for?' Two months before I graduate, they might ask me to leave the country. You just don't know. It's really horrible...I don't enjoy thinking about the future at the moment...

Study Four

....all my future is in your hands...Don't ask me about my future....

Study Five

The participants described needing to submit to the control of wider forces, being alert to their lack of means to exert agency or control over their precarious situations:

...they make you angry but you can't do anything with it, you know what I mean? Because they, I dunno, they have a power, they can do whatever.

Study Two

My pathway plan should have said something about college and that I wanted to go to university [...] I fell out with my foster carers and [the Social Worker] just wrote about that.

Study Nine

The second quote above highlights how participants across the studies described feeling vulnerable in their reliance on professionals who were perceived to hold competing agendas.

Troubled relationships and loss of self.

A constant awareness of their immigration status was encountered by participants across all of the studies. The related stigma of the identity of 'asylum-seeker' troubled their means to acquire social capital and marginalised them from peers who held citizenship. For example, the following quotes illustrate how participants from the respective studies felt a perceived need to withhold their status from friends and, in the second quote below, delimit the social spaces they had access to:

It's strange because I feel [friends at university] are my closest friends but they're not because they don't know about me...

Study Five

I can't go to a pub and say who are you, what you are, to make friends. I know who am I, and the conditions, I'm just a refugee.

Study Six

As the young people considered their place in the world, and possible future trajectories amidst their encounters of uncertainty and lack of control, a loss of self and future was also evident in studies Four, Five and Six, as illustrated in the following quotes:

To be honest, I don't see a future. If I had to go home it'd be horrible. To be here- I can't hope for too much.

Study Four

I've lost myself, I know I have.

Study Six

3.3.2 Tensions and resistance

All of the primary studies noted an experience of active resistance, where participants acted to reclaim control and safety in the face of threat. This

overarching theme drew together sub-themes relating to the multiple and layered ways participants acted within the tensions and pressures of the immigration system.

Resisting control and threat.

In response to the control and threats present in their lives, there was a strong theme across all the studies concerning the ways participants employed strategies with which stability, order and hope could be maintained. This was sought through education, which provided routine, structure and the means to acquire important skills, and access to particular locations where participants encountered a sense of solace and safety. The following quotes illustrate how respite was an important asset:

College was a haven for me, you know? A safe haven where I could go and hide....Education provided a smokescreen in a way- that's how I sort of coped with it....

Study Four

....this house...mean everything to me because this is the place...no one bother me, no one talk to me in a bad way...

Study Two

A degree of respite was also achieved through strategies relating to the ownership and regulation of distressing experience. Many of the studies (Four to Eight) noted that participants actively sought to detach from their distress, or withheld their difficult experiences from others. The following quotes illustrate how regulation of distress actively protected, to some extent, the young people from the threat of being over-whelmed:

....I keep it to myself. I keep quiet about some issues....I feel that if I hold in those issues, they won't feel bad on me...sometimes they go away but at some point they always catch up.

Study Five

...my social worker. was so cross with me because my landlord was saying I was not staying in the house [...] But then, they didn't get my point. I didn't want to be lonely, because when I was lonely I could get upset, all the memories would come back...

Study Eight

The last quote highlights how, at times, the needs of the participants sat in stark contrast with the parameters of the official structures around them. The young people were aware of how, at times, the strategies they employed were not ideal, indicating how few options they had available in order to manage their distress.

Accessing outside support.

Across all of the studies, access to support, such as faith, friends or professional settings, was highlighted as an important, at times lifesaving resource. Finding acceptance and validation seemed important, but the young people also spoke of how this was at times mediated by trust and the need for protection.

The following quotes illustrate how experiencing the support of others afforded participants a sense of reassurance and protection:

I really appreciated their help, at that time I did really needed help to be honest with you, 'cos I was in a very big mess

Study One

Sometimes when something and some difficulties come into my mind, I just went to my friend, yeah, spend time talking a lot and do things in common. I just like to get myself to forget about what I am thinking.

Study Six

The participants in the above quotes point to how vital this support was in the face of urgent distress and the threat of becoming emotionally over-whelmed. Across the studies, the participants encountered the value of being understood and access to an experience of shared understanding:

... it's like, if someone could listen to you, it means a lot, it means a lot, it means a lot to you because when someone sits down, you know, this is like my time [...] someone is there just to listen to you. It's all about you in that moment ... it feels good.

Study Eight

...Most of [my peers are] in the same situation, so you know you are not alone, you're not the only one on that boat, you got people that are there, that have got the same problem that you've got...

Study Two

The support of others offered validation and a reduced sense of carrying a burden alone. However, at times support was hard to access. Trust was an important factor:

I didn't say to anything about my problem, I didn't tell it to anybody, you know, because I don't trust anybody.

Study One

....I do have friends, but that don't mean I have to trust them 100%.

Study Six

The above quotes indicate that in reaching out to others the participants navigated a need to protect themselves from threat, often through keeping aspects of themselves from others.

3.3.3 Growth and future (framed by loss)

The strength of the young people in adapting to a new, at times hostile, environment was implicit throughout all of the studies. In studies Two and Four to Nine, the strength of the participants and the futures they looked forward to were anchored to their past, framed by the losses they had encountered.

The following quotes illustrate how the previous losses the participants had encountered wove through their experiences of the present:

....everything has just went forward slowly in a good way which I am very happy and grateful about...But, as I say, not to have any word from my mother...

Study Eight

[The foster family is] not your own family, it's not your real mother. If I had my family, I wouldn't be having this meeting right now (with the researcher). I'd just get on with my life.

Study Five

The last quote, above, indicates how fundamentally the experiences the participants encountered impacted on the present and future. This highlights how encounters with loss are carried forward as the young people progressed in their lives and looked towards acting into the future. The following quotes illustrate how the self-reliance and inspirational hope the participants experienced was framed within encounters of loss and dislocation:

You are no longer Mammy's boy or Daddy's boy, you know, how you grow up, you take care of yourself, you have to learn to live without your parents, you know. Eh, taking your own responsibilities . . . I'm deal-with-your-own-problems guy...

Study Seven

I want to be educated and I want to be someone and then maybe I can go home to Afghanistan and change something...like be a politician.

Study Nine

Loss and challenge were therefore integrated into participant's identities. At times, this was a regrettable aspect and the young people spoke of mourning what could have been. At other times, however, this was also an important source of esteem:

I've embraced it. It has become part of me.

Study Six

...here in the UK, they call me for like conferences and seminars to talk about my experiences and my achievements, so...like this can...empower other young youth....I just think of myself and I feel proud.

Study Eight

4. Discussion

The present systematic review focused on appraising research of the experiences of unaccompanied young people subject to immigration control. A meta-synthesis of nine primary studies generated three main analytical themes. Enduring and pervasive threat was encountered by the young people who were alert to their powerlessness which they subsequently strove to resist. As the young people acted into the present and looked to the future, past losses were woven into their sense-making of who they were and where they were heading. A rigorous quality assessment, with particular focus on transparency of research frame, noted persistent separation of the complex political landscape that framed both the young people's experiences and positioning of the primary researchers. The following sections discuss these findings in relation to existing literature; strengths and limitations are discussed prior to the outlining of implications and suggestions for future research.

The present findings link well with previous literature in terms of the centrality of complex post-migratory stressors in the lives of young people subject to immigration control, which render the post-migratory context one of continued threat rather than safety (Sleijpen *et al.*, 2015). A tendency of research to present these young people as an homogenous and, at times, a depoliticised group, has been identified elsewhere (Colucci *et al.*, 2014). Previous research has argued that acknowledgement of the socio-political dimension needs to be intrinsic to mental health service provision (Goodkind *et al.*, 2014), not least because post-migratory stressors, including immigration policy, have a detrimental impact on wellbeing (Reavell & Fazil, 2017) and the means to develop social capital.

Theories of acculturation and social identity development were a useful lens through which to analyse the present findings, highlighting both the social, cultural and political frame of experience for unaccompanied young people and how research may risk decontextualizing this experience (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2003). Bringing such perspectives to the fore raises an alertness to the ways in which identity and meaning-making are shaped and delimited by the post-migratory context. This points to the complex and politicised arena where practitioners come to meet young people seeking asylum and poses important considerations for how therapeutic workers and researchers come to frame an understanding of distress (Goodkind, *et al.*, 2014; Johnstone & Boyle, 2018).

4.1 Strengths and Limitations

To the author's knowledge, this review is the first to critically appraise research exploring the experiences of unaccompanied young people seeking refuge. Coherence between the appraisal and analysis of included studies was enhanced through taking a systematic approach within an explicit epistemological frame. It is noted that explicit interpretation methods overlooked other potentially useful frames of enquiry. Validity was attended to, in part, through the quality assessment and sensitivity analysis procedure. Reflexive supervision was useful in developing theme content although this may have been further enhanced by cross-member checking. The blend of

methodologies across the primary papers may also be potentially problematic in terms of the meta-synthesis (Zimmer, 2006), although the critical interpretative stance may have justified a focus on content of data rather than methodology (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009). Finally, it should be noted that the dictates of ethical research process (for example, anonymity) and journal publication guidelines (for example, of priority of focus) may have had a considerable impact on the presentation of the data in the original studies, thus having an impact on the quality-appraisal utilised in the present review.

4.2 Implications

The results presented here suggest that clinical practice needs to attend to how young people seeking asylum alone are attuned to the multi-level and persistent threats inherent to the post-migratory environment. In response, they develop active ways in which to mitigate their powerlessness. This may call for the ‘demystification’ of power to play an important function within the therapeutic encounter (Smail, 2005), turning attention away from constructs of trauma and vulnerability and shifting towards making sense of resistance and connectivity (Marshall & Sousa, 2017). This indicates multi-modal community-based interventions may have great utility. In a review of such interventions sited in Australia, benefits were indicated in terms of increased social inclusion and connectivity (Mahoney & Siyambalapitiya, 2017). Such approaches may help increase the resources young people have access to. Narrative practices, which can be used both individually and within small groups and communities may also be useful through acknowledging the difficulties inherent in focusing directly on threat (when such threats are continuous) and highlighting, instead, sense-making and resistance (e.g. White, 2005). The ‘Suitcase Project’, an arts-based storytelling intervention, is a powerful example of how such approaches to work with this group can help to heal, nurture and allow space for a foundation of future identity to be constructed (Clacherty, 2015).

In terms of research implications, the studies included in the present review represented a shift away from trauma-discourses and a contextualised and reflexive frame was utilised in the studies rated to have the highest strength.

However, greater attendance to controlling for particular aspects of experience, such as immigration status and access to resources, may have offered a richer analysis. This may indicate that interpretative methods of research enquiry are more suited to this group although more participatory methodologies, such as action research, may offer greater utility in pushing forward an understanding of meaning-making and resistance.

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Part Two: Research Paper

It's on me: Power, Threat and Becoming a Man Whilst Subject to UK Immigration Control. An Interpretative Phenomenological Study

Abstract

Objectives: Recent attention has focused on the significance of the post-migratory context in relation to experiences of distress among individuals seeking asylum. Within this context, unaccompanied young people encounter particular needs and vulnerabilities in relation to their positioning as both looked-after children and lone asylum-seekers. This is of especial importance as they turn eighteen and transition into adult-orientated services.

Methodology: Young men born in Afghanistan who had arrived in the UK as an 'unaccompanied asylum-seeking minor' were interviewed about their experiences of 'adulthood'. Data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Findings: Three super-ordinate themes were presented: '*It's on me: The push and pull of control*', highlighting tensions and contradictions of power; '*The threat of having nothing and being no-one*', pointing to experiential loss of meaning and purpose and '*Finding a place for struggle and resistance*', attending to purposeful responses to threat.

Conclusions: Transitioning to adulthood was seen as a time of accepting struggle and independence in ways which contrasted sharply with the participants' experiences of powerlessness and control. Implications for therapeutic practice and policy development are discussed.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Post-migratory Context of Seeking Asylum

Recent attention has focused on the significance of post-migratory context in relation to experiences of distress among individuals seeking asylum (e.g. Carswell, Blackburn & Barker, 2009). Uncertainty of immigration status is of particular concern; if asylum is refused, individuals face either the threat of deportation back to the country they had fled from, or the risk of destitution through residing 'illegally' in the former host-country. Relatedly, research has found that experiential distress is significantly reduced by obtaining a settled immigration status (e.g. Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011), or increased through receiving a negative decision (Morgan, Melliush & Welham, 2017).

Wider post-migratory stressors also impact on the lived experience of those needing to seek asylum; social factors have been shown to mediate distress regardless of immigration status (Hocking *et al.*, 2015). A systematic review of individuals resettled for five years or longer following war-related displacement, found that continued distress was related to experiences such as not being accepted within the host-country (Bogic, Njoku & Priebe, 2015). In a cross-national mixed-methods study of refugees in the UK and USA, ontological experiences of powerlessness and disillusionment were similarly brought to the fore, with participants reporting threats to masculinity, self-esteem and future aspirations following displacement (Warfa *et al.*, 2012).

Specifically within the UK, policy legislation mandates a life of restriction, control and lack of choice for individuals seeking asylum. For example, a review of immigration policy highlights how mechanisms of housing, welfare and support for those seeking asylum sit outside of mainstream service provision, leading to high levels of social exclusion and deprivation for this group (Hynes, 2011). Within this context, unaccompanied young people encounter particular needs and vulnerabilities in relation to their positioning as both looked-after children and lone asylum-seekers.

1.2 Specific Experiences of Unaccompanied Young People in the UK

In 2017, 4560 unaccompanied child asylum-seekers were formally being 'looked-after' in the UK (Department of Education, 2017). Following a strong international trend, most unaccompanied young people seeking asylum in the UK are male (87% in 2017; Eurostat, 2018). Considered more likely to be able to withstand the perils of making the asylum journey, males also often shoulder a responsibility to provide for their family (Nardone & Correa-Velez, 2015). Rates of sexual exploitation and physical abuse are difficult to establish due to barriers to disclosure, yet this is an evident risk for this group (Leon & Raws, 2016).

As a key determinant of policy entitlement, age can play a central role in the lives of these young people (Gladwell & Elwyn, 2012). The status of 'adult,' awarded as the young person reaches eighteen, results in a significant shift in resource entitlement and conceptualisation of need. Under the Children's Act 1989, unaccompanied minors have a right to protection, the responsibility of which is assigned to Local Authority (LA) care. Up until the day before their eighteenth birthday, young people are either placed within foster families (generally, if they migrate to the UK before the age of sixteen) or semi-supported accommodation. An early review found that stability of support, the means to develop consistent attachments with care-givers and positive experiences of education were important protective factors in mitigating distress for these young people (Wade, 2011). However, it has been argued that the needs of this group are defined primarily by their asylum-seeking status, leading to differences between the care and support experiences of these young people compared with minors who hold citizenship (Derluyn, 2018). Further, LA care provision, particularly as young people approach the transition out of child-orientated services, has been found to vary considerably (Meloni & Chase, 2017), leaving some young people with insufficient support as they face a time of uncertain change and challenge (e.g. Allsopp & Chase, 2017).

As unaccompanied young people reach the age of eighteen, they immediately transition out of child immigration service-structures, often facing

the need to make an asylum claim in their newly acquired status as ‘adult’ and a very real prospect of refusal and subsequent deportation; in 2017, 45 per cent of this group were refused asylum (Refugee Council, 2018). A mixed-method study of young Afghan adults forcibly deported from the UK, found returning from a ‘failed’ asylum attempt raised complex risks and vulnerabilities for participants who no longer felt connected to the country of their birth (Gladwell *et al.*, 2016). Refusal of an asylum claim has therefore been shown to be a factor increasing distress levels among refugee youth (Jakobsen, Demott, Wentzel-Larsen & Heir, 2017) and young people face protracted periods of uncertainty as they wait for their asylum appeal (Hynes, 2011).

Concurrently, turning eighteen is also a time of transitioning out of care-services, necessitating a move from foster care (if this had been provided) to semi-supported or independent accommodation and a corresponding reduction in support. A review of experiences of unaccompanied young people leaving care in the UK and Australia, found wide variety in terms of within country service provision and future-planning support (Barrie & Mendes, 2011). In the UK, the review also highlighted the problematic positioning of the Social Worker role for young people seeking asylum, being one of both gate-keeping resources and managing aspects of immigration entitlement whilst simultaneously taking on responsibility as a ‘corporate’ parent (Barrie & Mendes, 2011). As LA resources become increasingly stretched, provision of leaving-care support for this group often results in forced relocation away from the area the young person had begun to set down roots in as a minor, leading to isolation and loss of support network (Sigona, Chase & Humphries, 2017).

1.2.1 Experiences of distress

Relatedly, systematic literature reviews consistently report higher levels of distress (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011) and adverse post-migratory life-events among this group compared with accompanied peers (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick & Stein, 2012). A large scale cross-sectional study of unaccompanied young males from Afghanistan seeking asylum in the UK, found that one third met clinically-concerning levels of distress (Bronstein,

Montgomery & Ott, 2013). Research has further found that distress levels increase as unaccompanied youth approach eighteen, a finding not reported for those seeking asylum with relatives (Hodes, Jagdev, Chandra & Cunliffe, 2008).

A recent systematic review of literature pertaining to the relationship between social capital and mental health of individuals affected by disaster or conflict, suggested that social context was an important factor in understanding experiences of distress (Noel, Cork & White, 2018). The authors found tentative evidence of a negative association between 'individual-level cognitive social capital' (such as a sense of trust and safety) and distress, and a positive association between elements of 'ecological-level social capital' (such as group membership) on mental health (Noel *et al.*, 2018). Specific factors which have been shown to have an important protective function in mitigating distress among those seeking asylum include stability, security and social connectivity (Fazel *et al.*, 2012; Nakeyar, Esses & Reid, 2017) and the means to develop meaningful and secure networks of support (Loizo, 2002; Nakeyar *et al.*, 2017; Schweitzer, Melville, Steel & Lacherez, 2006). Relatedly, researchers have previously found great utility in drawing on theories of power to render meaningful experiences of distress. Morgan and colleagues (2017), for example, made use of a social-materialist perspective (see Smail, 2005) to frame an understanding of the impact of post-migratory stressors on the mental health of asylum-seekers. More broadly, the recently published *Power, Threat, Meaning Framework* (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018) offers an overarching structure within which the experience of distress can be understood as a response to threat.

Evidence that the means to access power through the acquisition of social capital is of particular importance, considering unaccompanied young people are at increased risk of social exclusion (Blight, Ekblad, Lindencrona & Shahnava, 2009), report high levels of concern regarding trust in their social relationships (Ni Raghallaigh & Gilligan, 2010; Ni Raghallaigh & Sirriyeh, 2015) and have a heightened sense of being different from members of the host-country community (Chase, 2010). For example, a phenomenological study based in the Netherlands found that immigration status disrupted the means for

young refugees to forge and maintain social relationships; this also had a negative impact on experiences of resiliency (Sleijpin, Mooren, Kleber & Boeije, 2017). Following research with unaccompanied young people, Chase (2013) proposed the concept of 'ontological insecurity' as a wellbeing construct useful to understanding the needs of this group. This concept refers to an inability for the individual to maintain a defined and coherent sense of self alongside a sense that the future landscape lacks continuity and order. This draws attention to the existential uncertainties present for unaccompanied young people as they face exclusion and powerlessness while subject to the control of immigration services at a critical developmental period of their life trajectory.

1.3 Previous Research

Phenomenological studies seeking to understand the experiences of young unaccompanied asylum-seeking individuals are few (Wernesjö, 2012). One study of unaccompanied Afghan young men seeking asylum in Sweden highlighted experiences of isolation, fear and loneliness among participants, particularly as the young men looked forwards to what the future may, or may not, hold for them (Thommessen, Corcoran & Todd, 2015). Of studies based in the UK, similar concerns of trust and security appear foregrounded (e.g. Chase, 2010; Groark, Sclare & Raval, 2010). Ontological security appears of particular concern in relation to intersections of liminality, such as age and belonging (e.g. Chase, 2013; Muir & Gannon, 2015). Concerns regarding immigration status and control also appear foregrounded; Muir and Gannon (2015), for example, described how young people's decisions and coping strategies often sat in direct response to immigration policy.

In the UK, while of growing interest (for example the "Becoming Adult" project, 2017, is a wide-ranging ESRC-funded project exploring how unaccompanied young people, culture and policy conceptualise the transition to adulthood), research into the phenomenological experiences of the transition between child and adult services for unaccompanied young people has been minimal. One study of the experiences of unaccompanied young people approaching the transition from care found that immigration status impacted

greatly on how participants related to the past and present (Devenney, 2017). Young people who had been granted a settled status described a sense of connection and coherence within their biographical narratives which was not experienced by young people continuing to face uncertainty (*ibid*).

Previous studies reviewing the quality of research pertaining to young people seeking asylum have further argued that there needs to be greater attention to contextual factors such as immigration status, country of origin, country of asylum and accompanied status in future research (e.g. Allsopp, Chase & Mitchell, 2014; Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011). Criticisms have also been proffered as to how research tends to depict unaccompanied young people as a homogenous group (Colucci, Szwarc, Minas, Paxton & Guerra, 2014), ignoring important contextual differences in how culture mediates experience (Fazel & Betancourt, 2017; Gilligan, 2009; Gladwell & Elwyn, 2012).

1.4 Rationale and Aims of the Present Study

Early adulthood therefore poses particular challenges for unaccompanied young people which are relevant to the sense-making of experiences of distress and, therefore, clinical practice. The present study focused specifically on the transition into 'adulthood'. Meaning-making and the importance of context was privileged through the use of interpretative methods and by seeking an homogenous sample. It was hoped that this research would address gaps in knowledge concerning the experiences of this group and contribute to the development of the role of clinical psychology in terms of intervention and policy development. In line with the intended qualitative research design (Smith & Osborn, 2008) a relatively open initial research question framed the study:

What are the experiences and sense-making of former unaccompanied asylum-seeking young men transitioning to adulthood subject to UK immigration control?

2. Methodology

2.1 Design

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is an inductive research method which focuses on aspects of particular, rather than universal, lived experience (e.g. Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012). A phenomenological methodology was adopted as I thought it important to maintain a focus on participants' own meaning-making in the context of previously referenced literature observing how disempowered the population can be. IPA, as an interpretive, empathic and questioning mode of enquiry (Smith & Osborn, 2008) was also in keeping with the critical realist position adopted (see Appendix E and F). In this I hoped to render the experiences of the participants contextually meaningful (Gorski, 2013).

The following sections have been written using a first person active tense. This is in keeping with APA style guidelines (APA, 2001). Further, IPA recognises the inter-subjective meaning-making between researcher and participant, rendering IPA a reflexive method where the researcher remains very much present (Smith, 2004). This has been argued to be of particular utility in terms of embedding research and policy development to empathic and values-based practice (Mitchell, 2017).

2.2 Ethical Considerations

The research project received ethical approval from the University of Leicester Psychology Research Ethics Committee (Appendix G). I considered good practice guidelines set out by Thomas and Byford (2007) in researching with this group which acknowledge the importance of building trust and addressing concerns regarding confidentiality and safety.

The use of recruitment site gate-keepers, who shared details of the research and sought initial expressions of interest (Appendix H), went some way to

ensure that the young people were clear about what the research entailed and indicated that the participants had access to a degree of support. Sufficient time was given to contact prior to the interview to ensure aspects of the interview protocol which might arise concern, such as audio recording, were thoroughly explained (Appendix I).

Particular biographical details of the participants were omitted from the analysis to reduce the likelihood that they may be recognisable. Multiple recruitment sites were approached across a large geographical area to support anonymity.

2.3 Participants

Four young men from Afghanistan participated in a total of five interviews, each lasting a mean of 73.6 minutes (SD= 8.96, range = 60 to 84 minutes). Participant demographics are presented in Table 1. Participants were aged between twenty and twenty-four at the time of the interview, having first arrived in the UK between the ages of fourteen and fifteen. All were appealing refused asylum claims at time of the interview, except Jahid who had been granted 'Indefinite Leave to Remain'. All participants except Saber were receiving support exclusively through charitable organisations. Three participants were unable to attend a second interview due to relocation and, in one case, overwhelming concern regarding immigration status.

Table 1. Participant demographics

Participant pseudonym	Time between Afghanistan and arrival in UK	Research interviews held	Status at time of interview	
			<i>Immigration</i>	<i>Support</i>
<i>Ansar</i>	13 months	1	<i>Refused asylum</i>	<i>Charity-sector</i>
<i>Saber</i>	7 years	1	<i>Refused asylum</i>	<i>Semi-supported housing; Social Worker</i>
<i>Basel</i>	<12 months	1	<i>Refused asylum</i>	<i>Charity-sector</i>
<i>Jahid</i>	< 12 months	2	<i>Indefinite leave to remain</i>	<i>Charity-sector</i>

Within IPA, between four and ten interviews are considered sufficient for a Professional Doctorate (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012) and may usefully include participants being interviewed more than once in pursuit of data that has a depth and richness (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). For example, an early study by Smith (1999) found that analysing multiple data sets from participants highlighted the dynamic inter-dependence of identity conceptualisation between participant and researcher.

The following inclusion criteria helped maximise participant homogeneity; participants were sought who:

- were men aged 18-24 years;
- were born in Afghanistan;
- migrated to the UK as an unaccompanied asylum-seeking minor and
- were subject to immigration control in the UK.

Recruitment sites supported the screening of participants. Young people were excluded from being invited to participate in the research if they:

- faced imminent deportation or other pressing concerns regarding their safety;
- were likely to face significant distress by participating or
- were un-confident in being interviewed in English.

Multiple third-sector sites which provided support and care to young people were approached to support recruitment; research suggests young asylum-seekers face barriers in engaging with statutory services (Majumder, O'Reilly, Karim & Vostanis, 2015). Interviews took place mainly at the recruitment site at the request of each participant. Participants were offered a voucher in appreciation of their involvement.

2.4 Procedure

A semi structured interview schedule (Appendix J) was compiled in consultation with members of the field. Interviews were audio recorded and,

following guidelines for IPA which acknowledge a degree of interpretation begins at this early stage (Smith & Osborn, 2008), were transcribed by myself.

Data analysis, (mapped in Appendix K), was based on established IPA guidelines (Smith *et al.*, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2008), consisting of the following steps for each transcript: *Multiple reading and free coding*; *Line-by-line coding*; *Development of emerging themes*; *Development of theme clusters*, and culminated with the compilation of a detailed 'case-summary' (see appendices L to M for examples of stages). One participant was interviewed twice; the two interviews were initially analysed separately before emerging themes were brought together and consolidated into a single case-summary. Once summaries had been compiled for all interviews cross-case analysis of theme clusters began, culminating in a detailed cross-case summary (Appendix N).

2.5 Methodological Rigour

Attending research-methods workshops and engaging in regular supervision went some way to ensuring methodological rigour (Yardley, 2000). This necessitated systematic and transparent trails of the analysis process (Smith *et al.*, 2012). Reflexivity was enhanced through engagement in supervision, maintenance of a research diary (Appendix O) and consultation with members of related fields (including a potential participant who met all of the inclusion criteria other than age) at the research development and write up stages. These consultations also helped to maintain sensitivity to context and checked for coherence (Yardley, 2000). Finally, prolonged and iterative engagement with multiple layers of the data throughout the analysis involved ensuring both a sufficiently interpretative cross-case analysis (Smith, 2011) which remained anchored to an idiographic focus.

A chronological outline of the entire research process is presented in Appendix P.

3. Findings

Data analysis concluded at the development of three super-ordinate themes, each further comprising of three sub-ordinate themes (Figure 1). Descriptions of the themes follow, illustrated with quotes from each of the young men.

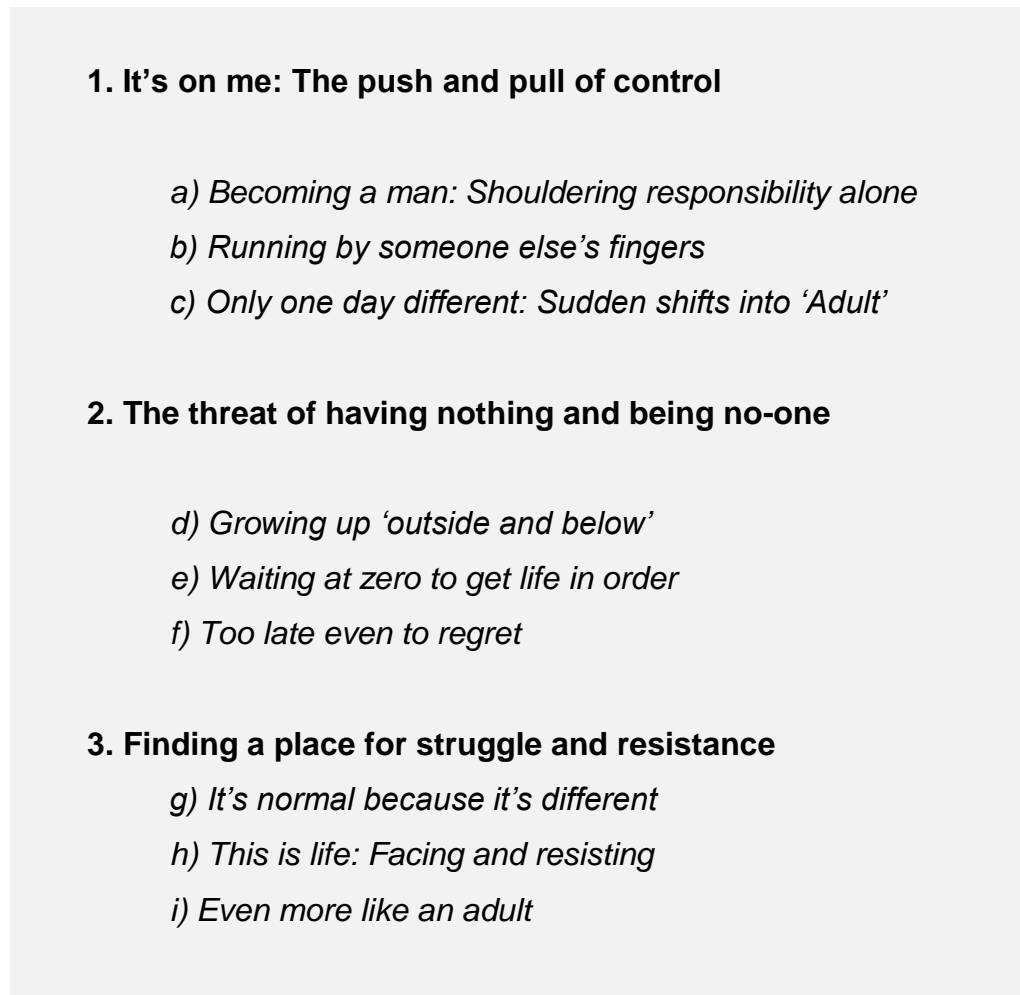


Figure 1. Super-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes

3.1 It's on me: The push and pull of control

In this super-ordinate theme, titled using a quote from Jahid, I drew together a pattern of tensions the participants experienced between control and agency. Striving to build their grown-up lives under the force of various political and social systems, the young men encountered both pushes and pulls towards

self-determination. Alongside this, they experienced a weight of control, which delimited their ability to act into their sense of what being a man entailed.

3.1.1 Becoming a man: Shouldering responsibility alone

For all participants, growing up and becoming a man was inextricably and unquestionably linked with self-determination and the ability to seek and shoulder increased responsibility for themselves. The young men encountered various pulls towards independence; all were striving to build their lives without their families and, for most participants, (Saber, Basel, Jahid) this was an explicitly gendered experience, with expectations of acquiring the means to become a 'provider' before they could eventually build a family of their own.

Seemingly without question, growing-up was a time of increased difficulty and an internalised expectation that responsibility for building the future should be 'shouldered alone':

Being an adult...not easy (laughs). [..It's] more responsibilities, you have to take every day. Life gets harder on you, you have to take [on the] responsibilities.

Jahid

[..Y]ou get [to] support yourself and...think of your future, build something and have to learn for your future...to aim to have a goal and to achieve.

Basel

The above quote from Basel captures an aspect of adult-focused endeavour which was visible for most participants (Saber, Basel, Jahid); the extra responsibility and duties they fore-saw were not regrettable aspects of what being a man entailed. Rather, they were looked forward to as markers of achievement. Future-building was anchored to a model of family-orientated life and the young men desired to take on roles relating to being a provider; expectations which rooted back to early experiences of family life in Afghanistan. However, looking forwards to their lives in the UK, without

connections to their birth-families and perceiving little opportunity in the present to build a family of their own, responsibility was funnelled towards themselves. This aspect seemed to amplify their striving for self-determination:

[..I]n our culture, you know, when you are a little bit grown up then you have to work, take responsibility for your family, you know. Just help them, or....but here it's just, [...] I don't have family here so I have to think about myself. Just to make good life for me, yeah, just the responsibility of myself.

Saber

It's just, because here in this country I am by myself, I do not have my family with, around me. I don't have anyone to support. [..B]asically, I'm...completely single, by myself, there's no-one for me. So I've got to do everything myself...from A to Z.

Basel

For most participants (Basel, Ansar, Jahid), outside support was not available and the young men navigated significant hardship and worries for the future on their own. Basel's quote above (*'there is no-one for me'*) seemed to signify the isolation in which these participants strove to enact adult roles and the lack of inter-connectedness that they encountered. Gender, and associated male roles, held significance for most of the participants (Saber, Basel, Jahid) as privileging, and perhaps demanding, the means to be strong and less vulnerable than being a woman. For example, in the following quote Jahid talks of the differences he perceived in how men and women encounter risk:

[A woman] could not live her life alone. [..If] a woman has no-one to be there for them....people can use them [...] Because me- if I'm on the street, get homeless...I can just walk around...if it was a girl on the street [...] so many idiot will try to take advantage of her.

Jahid

Continued statutory support on leaving foster-care at the age of eighteen was available for only one participant (Saber). This offered protection and scaffolding for Saber (*'they like to take care of you. It's nice.'*), who encountered less concern about his uncertain future and felt more connected to the support of others. Ansar, who lacked the financial resources to support himself, was somewhat an exception within this theme and, being reliant on the support of his local community, he made less explicit reference to his maleness or a striving for self-determination. This may have related to how distant he felt from the means to support a family and become independent. His inter-dependence with other young asylum-seekers was highly important in giving him access to the means to support himself.

3.1.2 Running by someone else's fingers

In this theme, titled using a quote from Basel, I noticed how, for all participants, the layers of official structures which framed their lives delimited and determined what they were able to do and the roles they were able to take on. As the young men strove to act into their responsibilities, they simultaneously encountered all-encompassing control and were alert to the limits of their self-determination.

The official structures that all the young men encountered were sites of unrelenting and hostile control and scrutiny, in which they experienced powerlessness. For Ansar, Basal and Saber, the threat of a refused asylum claim and subsequent deportation was ever present and the young men were alert to their vulnerability and lack of the means to exert control:

[..T]hey ask many questions....the police can give trouble to you.

Ansar

I'm running by a system. I'm running on someone else's fingers, on someone else's signings.

Basel

The difference in power between the participants and the regulatory structures around them was immense and, as hard as the young men strove to determine their future, most participants (Ansar, Basel, Jahid) spoke of how dreams and aspirations were no longer available to them. The following quotes illustrate how the power of official structures was experienced in the lives of the young men, governing behaviour through the use of threat (Jahid) and exerting control capable of negating the arduous journey to a better life (Basel):

[..I] wanted to go back to study; finish my [qualifications] and then I could decide...[T]hat was my...my dream to finish my [qualification]...and then the same time job-centre was not letting me to study [..] They are telling me: "If you do not look for job we are going to cancel your housing benefit", so that was scary for me...'cos they have done it.

Jahid

I was crying all the way from here to Afghanistan [following deportation] and I could not imagine that I have spent a couple of months to come to this country and they put me back to Afghanistan in a couple of hours. [..] It was like I slept at night time and I had the whole long dream in my life and then I wake up in the morning and I wake up back in the place where I started.

Basel

Basel's quote, above, speaks to an alertness of fundamental powerlessness. Through juxtaposing the effort and time his journey to the UK required with the speed and ease immigration structures returned him to his starting point, an encounter with bewildering futility is brought to the fore. The exertion of regulatory control in the lives of the participants also clashed with the determination of the young men to move forwards into roles of 'provider' and 'protector'. For most participants (Saber, Basel and Jahid) the goal of building towards a family of their own hinged on their being able to acquire a settled immigration status (Saber, Basel) and sufficient material assets (Jahid). The official structures that tightly framed the lives of the participants curtailed the means to act into these roles:

[..]If I go to the [woman's father] and say: "I want to marry her"; he'll be thinking whether I can look after them or not, isn't it? He'll be thinking [..] "What if immigration just arrest this guy and send him back home?"

Saber

If I settle down I got, going to be having kids, family; how am I gonna afford them, how am I gonna look after them? [..] Like, living in a renting house, with family...[..] how am I gonna live with that? It's going to be, probably, double hard. So...if you are going to settle down, sort your life, you have to...stand on your feet properly.

Jahid

The above quotes point to how strongly the male identity of 'provider' was related to. Jahid's words '*how am I gonna live with that*' is suggestive of a sense of being in the world which is fundamentally anchored to internalised discourses of 'doing manhood successfully'.

Life was, also, directed by powers greater than even the official structures which were so visible in the lives of the participants. For some of the young men (Saber, Jahid), faith in God was an important aspect of making-sense of the tension between their striving for self-determination and the limits to this they currently faced. For these participants, life was experienced as a journey laid out before them and determined by God's higher purpose:

I think like this. That probably [the delay in acquiring settled status] will be good for me... [W]hat if I get my status: I'll pass my car, I'll go somewhere and just...accident. [..] I think it's not the right time for me to get my things done... [W]hen, you know, it's good for me I'll get it.

Saber

I got pissed off. Like, what kind of God is that? What kind of, what kind of life is it arranged for me? What kind of destination is arranged for me to go through?

Jahid

These quotes illustrate dual aspects of the participants' relationship with their faith and the experience of living in the hands of God's determination. Belief in a higher purpose provided comfort and meaning in contrast to the more confusing and chaotic experiences of official services; Saber experienced a patience and acceptance of the delays he faced in moving forwards into his future. However this also posed a dilemma; for Jahid, the sense of fate and destiny his belief connected to, at times, provoked an experience of anger and betrayal that such hardship had been intended.

3.1.3 Only one day different: Sudden shift into 'adult'

In this theme, titled with a quote from Saber, I attended to the sudden increase in control and autonomy that the participants experienced around the age of eighteen. Propelled into adult-orientated services and simultaneously losing the supportive care and rights that had been afforded most of the young men as looked-after children in the UK, becoming 'adult' seemed to reflect a bureaucratically imposed shift in how services related to, and viewed, the participants. This experience was counter to the identities the young men held themselves and lacked meaning in relation to their experiences of liminality as they more gradually grew up.

All the participants encountered significant changes to their statutory support as they approached eighteen, from an enforced shift out of foster-care to semi-independent accommodation (Saber), to a complete loss of access to continued support (Ansar, Basel, Jahid). While most of the participants (Saber, Basel, Jahid) looked forward to the freedom and excitement they envisaged independent life would hold, the abrupt and unexpected changes to the way services were offered to the young men at this time seemed to jolt them into a category of 'adult' they felt unprepared for and which left them disenfranchised:

[..O]nce I turned 18 they kicked me out of the foster family: "Go do your own things".

Basel

I wasn't taking things serious. Once I realised: "Shit...I done a mistake, I need to go back to it, I need to do my education" [...] And then I didn't have the opportunity.

Jahid

While all participants were previously aware that turning eighteen would entail shifts in care support and in terms of their asylum cases ('*after eighteen...you don't have any support in the court or the Home Office interview*', Ansar), the experience was one of shock and disruption:

I was treat[ed] like child, then treat[ed] like adult, you know?...a big shock for me.

Saber

For participants who were suddenly unable to access care that had previously been available to them (Basel, Jahid), it was also an overwhelming experience as the young men encountered responsibilities they had not been prepared for: '*I was thinking I'm gonna have an easy life...enjoy it but- no.*' (Jahid). Ansar is an important exception; having previously fled from the threat of deportation he had not received statutory care as a child and, having grown-up with limited support of fellow asylum-seekers, did not experience a significant change in the care afforded him. For the other participants, the immediacy of this transitional moment jarred with experiences of growing up as a gradual and less clearly-defined trajectory, and so lacked coherence in relation to lived experience:

Yeah, so I'm just eighteen, it's no big deal I just turned it, you know. Like I was with Social Services and they say, like: "You are now adult" and...I say: "No I am just same". Eighteen; I was seventeen now I'm eighteen- it's

only one day different you know? [...] I would say, like, when you are eighteen you are adult, like, on paper.

Saber

[...]they look like an adult but they are not the same inside. Inside they are a child. That's the point.

Ansar

The lived experience of the participants clashed with the categories assigned to them and mediated how those with power responded to and framed the young men's needs. In the quotes above, Saber indicates how he was able to retain a clear distinction between his continued need for support and the identity of 'adult' afforded him. For other participants (Basel, Ansar, Jahid), the need to forge ahead alone at this time seemed more internalised: *'I had nobody to tell me: "Go right" or: "Go left". I was on my own direction'* (Jahid). The lack of means to determine their own paths, and the loss of support to scaffold them as they moved forwards with their lives, also jarred with how differently all the participants saw young people with families in the UK living out their lives:

[...]the people who [are] born here and they have their own home- bunch of their family around them. It's completely different for them because...I was thinking [...] that it's going to be like this and like that; like they are. But it wasn't [...]

Basel

[...]it's kind of hurtful...[M]y life would be amazing if I were a kid. If I was properly, like, born here. Or if I was like, two-three years old; my whole life would have been great.

Jahid

Particularly for participants who lacked access to continued support (Ansar, Basel, Jahid), the knowledge that pathways to adult life were different and easier for other young people seemed to amplify the unfairness of how support had suddenly changed. The bitter anguish expressed in the above quotes point

to how fundamental was the impact of the imposed transition into 'adult', as the participants looked back at the possibility of a route to adulthood which could have afforded easier access to their dreams.

3.2 The Threat of Having Nothing and Being No-one

In this second over-arching theme, titled based on a quote from Basel, I collected together experiential claims of marginalisation, stuckness and existential threat. In relation to how distant the participants' lives were from their expectations and hopes, the young men faced various challenges to their identity, agency and sense of security.

3.2.1 Growing up 'outside and below'

In this sub-theme, titled using a quote from Ansar, I drew together the various ways the participants seemed to 'fall' between the differences they encountered in relation to their position within the UK, their birth-home in Afghanistan and amongst their peers. This led to experiences of marginalisation for all of the participants.

While some participants (Saber, Basel, Jahid) had access to the support of foster care prior to turning eighteen and felt a sense of belonging to the UK, all of the young men also encountered a tangible separation from the country they had come to relate to as home. Occasionally experiencing racism (Basel), the participants felt a sense of being 'othered' and a need to adapt themselves in order to fit in:

I'm from outside, I'm below the UK law.

Ansar

I don't really tell [college friends] that I'm asylum-seeker or waiting for my status, I don't tell them. [T]hey'll think, like: "This guy is probably trying to get like some benefit and blah blah blah", so many things in their mind. [..]

So I just walk or talk, you know, like normal people who are born, like, here.

Saber

A striking element of Saber's experience, quoted above, is how he makes a canonical experiential claim towards 'normality' and sets his perception of his own identity and way of being as different to this. The need to enact 'normality' suggests that self-regulation is required to protect, and keep hidden, elements of identity and experience that do not fit in with a preferred version of what being a young adult entails. Strikingly too, were the intersections of dislocation and alienation in all the participants' accounts of their relationship with their birth home. Having spent their formative years in the UK, the young men encountered a cultural distance from Afghanistan. No longer fitting with their identities and sense-making of the social world, Afghanistan was related to as an unknown territory which amplified the sense of risk connected to deportation for Saber, Ansar and Basel:

[..T]he first time when I got deported [..I just stayed] inside the house for a week. [When I went into] the city centre, I swear to God; I felt like everyone around me is like an animal. They are, like, looking at me as someone, like someone completely a stranger.

Basel

I don't know [about Afghanistan] Because I was fifteen when I came here; I don't know, like, how is it.

Saber

For some participants (Basel, Jahid) the experience of marginalisation was total, and the young men felt alienated within peer groups of other young people who had also experienced the need to seek asylum in a foreign country. Jahid and Basel encountered an acute disconnect between their life trajectory and their fellow peers. Encountering shame and abandonment, the young men's access to this support was further fractured and disconnected:

[My friends] are completely in a different place and I cannot even face them. I cannot even see them. I cannot even talk to them. Because I consider myself really low. Really low and they are really in a high positions from me.

Basel

Friends, friends now where are the friends; they won't look for you. When you have money everybody will speak to you, when you don't have any money, your brother will walk away from you.....They are not real friends.

Jahid

Walking a separate path to all those around them left the participants to navigate the despair and loss they had experienced alone: *'There is no way I could ask for help...I have to keep it'* (Jahid). Contrasting with this, Saber and Ansar encountered a degree of inter-connectedness with their peer group which seemed to buffer somewhat their experiences of wider disconnection.

3.2.2 Waiting at zero to get life in order

Drawing from quotes by Basel and Saber, I related the title of this theme to how, for most participants, a 'good life' was accessed through the orderly acquisition of various material resources and assets which would give them a foundation on which family life could be built. However, all the young men encountered limitations on their means to progress forwards with their lives, finding their futures gate-kept by immigration control (Saber, Basel, Ansar) and disenfranchisement (all participants).

'Building a life' was experienced as a reliance on access to the attainment of material resources; the young men (Saber, Basel, Jahid) were alert to how these needed to be acquired before grown-up life could begin. For these participants, there was a sense of order or progression that needed to be achieved:

'Cos, I'm an adult now but I'm not from here and I just need to sort out my status. [...] I need to sort out that first then second thing is to work somewhere in a good place, third thing is to get house, you know- like that.

Saber

[..M]y dream was to go college and get my qualification [and] have a better, easier job; better life...[W]hen you have a good income, regular income, better job, you know- you can mortgage house, you know? Live your life in peace.

Jahid

However, barriers to initiate obtaining the required resources were experienced for all participants, leading to a sense their adult life could not yet get started. The young men described being trapped in limbo- waiting for immigration status (Saber, Basel, Ansar) or struggling to find a job that could provide sufficient financial means (Jahid):

My life in [the UK] is not even started. It's like, it will start when I get my paper, when I get my permission to stay [...] Then it'll become a completely different thing for me. Then I'll be starting my life from zero because I can't work now, I can't do nothing, so it's a lot different.

Basel

It's not easy. This country...[...] You can't save. There is no way of saving. Not from £7.50 an hour.

Jahid

For some participants (notably Basel, Jahid), acute losses in terms of support and entitlement around the age eighteen had led to experiences of devastation and the threat of destitution. The investments the participants had acquired prior to eighteen (education, material resources) were rendered redundant and wasted as the young men encountered barriers to further education (Jahid) and deportation (Basel). The following quotes illustrate the

internalised futility and emptiness these men experienced when reflecting on their prior effort:

I told [the Job Centre) I want to end up this- I want to do another two years education. [...] But my dream is just...messed up. Couldn't get it.

Jahid

I had, like, so much things that I have spent my money on. That I have spent my save-up on- on my life and all of them things. It's all been left it behind. It's all gone.

Basel

In facing fundamental barriers to getting the foundations of life in order, the young men experienced being held at, or pulled back to, a starting point. The importance and value of what had been lost, or withheld, through the control of official structures was framed by the lack of means the young men had to rebuild and regain. As the above quotes illustrate, the sense of profound disappointment for some participants was evident.

3.2.3 Too late even to regret

In this theme, titled from a quote by Basel, I drew together experiences that built out of this encounter of 'being stuck at zero'. For some participants, life had become 'derailed', leaving them feeling stranded and fearing that, as time wore on, their trajectories could become permanently unanchored from the future they hoped to build.

With firm ideas of what had yet to be achieved before they could 'begin' their lives, all participants experienced a pressure that time was running out and they might soon miss the opportunity to lead meaningful and satisfying lives:

Still I'm young I can do something, but after thirty, thirty-five- if I sort it out (laughs) then what am I going to do with it? Just eating benefit or something?

Saber

[The] government should not push [you] to the last limit and make [you] go out of [your] journey. [..O]nce you're...broke, get out of your journey, it's very hard for you to get on track.

Jahid

For some participants (Ansar, Basel, Jahid) the pressure of time left them perilously close to the threat of having irrevocably lost access to a future. At times, the participants encountered an imperative that their young lives could never be reclaimed and that all hope for the future had run out:

I [ran from the threat of deportation]. I left everything. [..] I left a future as well.

Ansar

It's too late for me now, even to regret. Because I get used to this life, this system, to the law, to the people and everything and I feel like this my home, this is my place, this is where I've grown up. [..E]ven though if I regret...does not, takes me nowhere...'Cos it's too late.

Basel

The above quotes point to experiential claims of profound disappointment; the future was never going to coalesce with the dreams the participants had risked their lives to obtain. In this, the young men experienced moments of existential weariness, their very being and sense of purpose in the world negated and rendered obsolete:

I'm nothing. I'm completely, like, someone that; I'm no-one basically. I don't have nothing. I don't have no life [..] And when I see my friends in a

different point [...] it makes me kind of really sad. Not a little bit- really, really; makes me so sad.

Basel

Sometime I just feel like: You know what, it's nothing that exists in this world. You just live your life, you die; that's it'.

Jahid

For these young men in particular, the powerful emptiness of their still-young lives and the powerlessness they encountered in their desire to move forwards, threatened to un-anchor life from a sense of meaning and purpose. At other times, and for all participants, a sense of purpose was mediated through interconnectedness and, as explored fully within the following over-arching theme, access to resources of power.

3.3 Finding a Place for Struggle and Resistance

In this final super-ordinate theme, I pulled together experiences relating to how participants actively made a place for struggle in their lives through sense-making, resistance to threat and growth. As the young men encountered challenge and control, they sought to respond in ways which afforded them safety, security and autonomy.

3.3.1 It's normal because it's different

In this theme, titled based on a quote from Saber, I attempted to capture how the participants made-sense of their experiences of loss and disenfranchisement. Knowledge of how, outside of the UK, life could be harder and more precarious afforded all participants a wide vantage point from which to understand the relative freedom and safety they experienced in the UK.

The young men, who arrived in the UK aged between fourteen and fifteen years, had experienced hardship and horror as they left Afghanistan and during

their precarious journeys to the UK. This afforded a perspective of the different foundations in childhood and pathways to adulthood that could be built:

[I]n every way, every area of everywhere in Afghanistan is bad. There, every person likes guns, likes fighting. [H]ere, nobody in the eight years I here, I see with the knife. Nobody. Exactly different.

Ansar

Here they just surround you [as a child], you know? They just take care of you, so many things you know? So treat you as a child. But [in Afghanistan] you grow up, you know, openly. You see so many things, you do so many things.

Saber

While this contributed to a sense of alienation discussed previously, for all participants (particularly Saber, Jahid) this perspective also gave rise to a sense-making which rendered the experience of marginalisation more tolerable and coherent. As hard as their struggles were in the UK, it was not as hard as what they had fled from and, although the men came to experience the UK as their home, there was a taken-for-granted knowledge that they did not *really* belong:

Yeah, I was struggling but it was not as hard as I been through back there....It was kind of...easy and hard.

Jahid

It's normal. 'Cos it's different, 'cos I'm not from here...It's just life.

Saber

At times this sense-making aligned with ideology underpinning UK immigration policy and current discourses regarding the need for 'tighter controls' and suspicious scrutiny. In the quotes below, Jahid and Saber's experiential knowledges suggest they may have come to accept the structure of immigration control which had previously been understood as un-necessarily

hostile (*'they just left their [home], probably not in a good situation, you know? Stop asking him so many questions, it's not nice'*, Saber):

Well, [immigration officials have to] think about [your claim] first. Not that: 'we should keep this here, this guy here or this guy here' as it's their responsibility not to.

Saber

There is a lot of people come, they lie a lot in their case just to get passport. [..Their cases are] all similar; the Home Office is not that stupid. Every case is like: "Oh I got enemy, I got this, I got that".

Jahid

Jahid's quote, above, is particularly interesting in how he positions himself as different from his peers who have not yet attained a more settled immigration status. Remaining subject to immigration control despite his more settled status, Jahid's sense of difference, from both young men seeking asylum and young men with UK-citizenship, is noticeable and points towards a complex encounter with cultural marginalisation.

3.3.2 This is life: Facing and resisting

In the context of on-going pressure and threat in the lives of the participants, sites of resistance and tenacity were clear for all of the young men. However, access to the means to face challenge and resist the impact of uninvited control which pervaded the young men's social worlds was mediated through the assets the participants had been able to acquire.

Through the resource of friendship, participants (Saber and Ansar) experienced stability and coherence, important in countering the threat of marginalisation and offering protection from distressing thoughts and feelings:

[They treat me] still the same, you know, they are just your friends [..T]hey don't feel me, like, differently.

Saber

When I use time with people my [thoughts] will be changed. When, when I am alone [..] I am feeling bad.

Ansar

Saber's quote, above, highlights how the disconnect between the identity of 'adult' imposed by official structures and lived experience could be mitigated by the continued regard of peer companionship. Saber's talk of how his friends experience him as a coherent whole suggests a resistance to the ways in which his identity is fragmented by the more powerful statutory agents in his life. However, friends were a resource of relative access and, as explored in the previous over-arching theme, the means to acquire social capital was mediated by material and experiential disenfranchisement. For some participants, the lack of means to build a good enough life led them to avoid peers (Basel) or to a perceived sense of rejection (Jahid).

Threat and control were magnified within certain locations and processes that the young men faced. These became important sites of resistance as the participants rejected unwanted control and regulation through the means of purposeful avoidance (Saber, Ansar, Jahid) and through facing 'impossible' challenge (Basel):

I told [the Job Centre]: "I will never come here; I don't want a penny from you guys. 'Cos you, probably for giving people £50 a week and then you will, you will make them regret for...what they getting from here".

Jahid

[If I am deported again] I will know- I cannot give up; I have to come [back to the UK]. Some of my friends, they tells me, like: "How the hell did you manage to travel and how the hell did you made it all that way back?" It's

really impossible; it's really something I could not believe myself. That I would do it and that I could make it.

Basel

The above quotes illustrate the lengths that the young men needed to go to in order to sustain a sense of autonomy and self-protection in their lives. Without access to wider resources of power, these two participants faced further risk and material loss in their attempts to regain control. Strategies of actively disconnecting from and resisting the sources of threat were further described by all participants as the young men sought to maintain a sense of safety in the face of over-whelming and seemingly insuperable challenge. Through bracketing off the future and dismissing aspects of life that made acting forwards into life untenable, the participants created space in their lives for protection. In the following quote, Jahid defends himself from the abandonment of support that was much needed by symbolically cutting his Social Worker out of his life:

[..M]y Social Worker come say to me: "Oh, you turn seventeen; we can't support you anymore; you need to go to Job Centre, this-that and apply". Ok. And then they disappear and then I delete their number. 'Cos I wasn't, I wasn't happy.

Jahid

At times, all participants experienced a lack of power and means to outwardly resist the threat that encroached on their lives. When such access to power and control were not available, strategies of shutting down from emotions offered valuable, perhaps lifesaving, protection:

I don't think, like, emotionally. Like, I don't have emotions and things [..Y]ou see, if you're emotional then people will see, then they think this person is weak. And then they will treat you in a different way, they say: "This is a weak person, a coward and this and that".

Saber

I only smoke [marijuana] because it's something; it stops my brain of thinking. [..S]o I don't think. It, like, numbs my brain.

Jahid

While all participants were able to access the means to resist and deny unwanted control and threat at times, availability seemed to be mediated by access to meaningful and reciprocal inter-connectedness. At times when the young men were most alone they were also at their most vulnerable and powerless. It was in these moments where the strategies of resistance the young men had access to appeared more likely to entail unintended consequences which impacted on their lives in unhelpful ways.

3.3.3 Even more like an adult

This final theme, titled using a quote from Basel, spoke to experiential claims from all of the participants, that struggle gave life meaning and that valuable advantages, such as pride and knowledge, could be gained from tenacious efforts to strive forwards in the face of challenge.

Further to the resistance explored in the previous theme, the means to forge ahead with optimism and hope were evident for all participants and at times the young men were alert to the gain and growth this afforded them:

You won't like it but it's good...it will be good for you.

Saber

[..O]bviously if you don't go through [struggle] then you won't know what life is [..] then you don't know the deserve of life, what life is. 'Cos you just keep easy going with it (laughs).But once you get through this kind of thing and then...and then you get on track then you got money then you know the value of your money, the money, the value of life.

Jahid

The above quotes suggest that an internalised experience of wisdom and insight was gained from the encounter with struggle. For some participants (Saber, Basel, Jahid) the value of having faced challenge was amplified in comparing the self to others, particularly peers born in the UK. For the young men, their life trajectory had been one they felt few born in Britain could have faced:

I've been through a lot of things, I've seen lots of things in my life, so that even, the experience I've had in my life, even makes me more feel like an adult. [...] What I've been through in my life [...] I don't think [...] an English man [could have experienced].

Basel

[...] If you send, like, a British kid from here all the way to [Afghanistan], you know? In another country at the age of fourteen, fifteen? I don't think they could do it.

Saber

The above quotes indicate an alertness of the extraordinary demands that the young men faced in pursuing their lives, demands that few others would have had to contemplate, let alone directly encounter. While this was not a position desired by the participants (*'I get through things that I never want to'*, Basel), the identities which were forged through persevering in the face of continued threat afforded the participants (Jahid, Basel, Saber) valuable esteem and pride that they were often not able to find from others:

I've not seen anyone that have gone and that came back or been through so much shit. [...] I could never imagine [another] person could be able to go all of them things, go through all of them things and still coming back to the same place. Still hoping, still fighting for himself, still trying to do something, still trying to have a life.

Basel

I'm still happy for whatever position I am at the moment. I am still happy, 'cos I had nobody to tell me what to do. What's right and what wrong for me. [..A]nd I am very happy for myself. For whatever condition I am at the moment. Trying to get back on my life, trying to get, sort my life out.

Jahid

As suggested by the above quotes, the experience of gaining from struggle was amplified by comparisons with others. This was less accessible for Ansar who, unlike the other participants, did not have a foundational experience of foster care and who experienced a profound lack of resources in relation to, and a financial dependence on, his peer group in the UK. Access to pride and esteem was built from his means to share his experiences and knowledges to other vulnerable young men:

[..T]hey give respect for me. A lot of. [..Because] I give help to anyone.

Ansar

For all participants, experiencing struggle and challenge as a site of valuable growth sat alongside the losses, fears and disappointment which made up the second super-ordinate theme (*The threat of having nothing and being no-one*). For example, interviewing Jahid on a second occasion, I noticed a stark shift in his encounter with feelings of life having been lost. Perhaps speaking back to the despondency he described in his first interview, Jahid asserted an imperative of hope:

Sometime I even think, even animal, probably...have a lot better, easy life than what I went through. (laugh) But now (bangs water bottle on table), I am not in that stage. (laugh) I'm happy.

4. Discussion

The research I have presented is a phenomenological study aimed at addressing the following question: *What are the experiences and sense-making of former unaccompanied asylum-seeking young men transitioning to adulthood whilst subject to UK immigration control?* To meet this aim, I spoke with four young men born in Afghanistan who had arrived in the UK seeking refuge and analysed, using an IPA approach, five transcribed interviews.

I have presented three super-ordinate themes from the analysis: *'It's on me: The push and pull of control'*; *'The threat of having nothing and being no-one'* and *'Finding a place for struggle and resistance'*, each of which over-arch three sub-ordinate themes. These span tensions of power, control, meaning and value which were particularly evident in the young men's narratives. The transition to 'adult' was experienced as a time of accepting and seeking independence and self-determination, contrasting sharply with how the young men were alert to the ways the systems around them shaped and delimited their possibilities of being. This seemed to foster attentiveness to the parameters of their social landscapes and a fear for some that, because of events that transpired once they had turned eighteen, life might become irrevocably wasted. These findings will now be discussed in relation to extant literature and considered through the lens of the *Power, Threat, Meaning Framework* (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). Limitations of the present study are considered before discussion of clinical implications.

4.1 Relationship of Findings to Existing Research

As has been noted elsewhere, growing up in the UK subject to immigration control was, for the participants in the present study, a time of heavy uncertainty (e.g. Allsopp & Chase, 2017; Thommessen *et al.*, 2015), particularly in relation to transitions into adult services (Hodes *et al.*, 2008). Previous research has also highlighted the significance of uncertain immigration status in relation to experiences of distress (e.g. Bronstein & Montgomery, 2015) and the accessibility of protective social connections (Sleijpin *et al.*, 2017). Importantly,

the present study found that pressures of control and restriction continued to feature prominently for the one participant who had been granted 'indefinite leave to remain'. This may point to a legacy of disenfranchisement and experiences of powerlessness and control relating to a wider context of state policy and regulation.

The present findings therefore echo previous research regarding the importance of considering broad contextual factors in understanding the experience of distress for unaccompanied young people (e.g. Wernesjö, 2012). For example, participants in the present study strove for self-determination, aiming to build forwards a life in a country they regarded as home. While such aspirations fit in with contemporary discourses regarding immigration, which call for an imperative of 'integration' and self-reliance (e.g. Allsopp *et al.*, 2014), the young men encountered multiple pressures which delimited their ability to act into these preferred ways of being. The *Power, Threat, Meaning Framework* (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018) provides a useful means to discuss this further.

4.2 A Framework of Power, Threat and Meaning (PTMF)

The PTMF is a recently published body of work which draws upon an evidence base to argue for a radical shift away from dominant 'western' understandings of human distress. Central principles of the PTMF understand the individual as a purposeful actor, anchored to a social, cultural and political context within which experience and meaning are shaped and constructed. The framework pulls together a number of 'core needs' which are the focus of human endeavour (such as a need for safety). Through operations of *power*, certain aspects of adverse social circumstances (such as lack of control) pose a fundamental *threat* to the meeting of these needs. An individual's embodied experience of threat is subsequently made-sense of through active *meaning-making*, co-constructed through social and cultural discourses. As an active agent, the individual simultaneously *responds* to the threat (for example by avoiding the object of concern) and draws on available *power resources* in a purposeful attempt to mitigate their loss of safety and control (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018).

For the participants in the present study, power was operationalised in a number of very visible ways, impacting on their ability to meet core needs of, for example, *a sense of justice, value and purpose* and *the means to acquire sufficient material resources* (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). In this, the young men encountered a tension between various pulls towards independence and a sharp delimitation on their means to act accordingly. The resulting experience of threat was an embodied sense of 'ontological insecurity' (Chase, 2013); life becoming permanently de-railed, devalued and lost, stripping the young men of a valued identity and threatening to obliterate their sense of self and future (Haas, 2017).

A particularly important aspect of the present findings was how the participants encountered pressures and pulls towards independence and self-determination from a position which was explicitly gendered. Exploring the experiences of detained men refused asylum, Griffiths (2015) highlighted how UK immigration policy works to infantilise and emasculate male asylum-seekers, particularly through constraining the means to act into expected male roles (such as heading a family). The tension between what is expected and what can be achieved, and the pressure this exerts, is substantial; in a large scale study of young people seeking asylum, financial hardship significantly increased the risk of suicide for males (Kosidou *et al.*, 2012). In the present study, attributes of masculinity appeared, in part, to be linked to cultural and religious expectations set down prior to the young men leaving Afghanistan, but also form a strong template of masculine identity in the UK (Alsop, Fitzsimons & Lennon, 2002).

Young people subject to immigration control in the UK are, therefore, also situated within a more distal social landscape stratified by neo-liberal ideology. Cromby and Willis (2013) conceptualised neo-liberalism as a system of governance emphasising responsibility, autonomy, self-determination and adaptiveness in a manner which works to meet the interests of capitalism. While these 'personal' attributes are by no means exclusive to neo-liberalist societies, it is useful to consider the multiple forces bearing down on the young men that

both direct the scripts of manhood that are available to them and, at the same time, curb the ability to live within such parameters.

What this points to is a need to consider the importance of inter-dependency and the extent to which young people seeking asylum have access to meaningful and validating power resources through which they can effect control and purpose. Wider research has found that inter-connectivity plays a substantial role in moderating mental health outcomes (Noel *et al.*, 2018) and suggests that reciprocal relationships can give rise to emergent power and sense of meaning (Schweitzer *et al.*, 2006). However, the findings of the present study suggest that access to resources of resistance, both material and relational, are substantially curtailed through the exertion of control. The resulting experience of ontological insecurity, which threatened to obliterate a sense of meaning in the lives of the young men interviewed, also negated their means to acquire social capital.

Relatedly, at times of particular vulnerability and high threat, the participants strove to counter the threat they experienced in ways which might also have unintended negative consequences. For example, the 'shutting off' from emotion described in the findings of the present study, effective in offering protection from overwhelming distress, may also prove problematic in relation to how assessments of asylum credibility relate to subjective judgements of vulnerability (Given-Wilson, Herlihy & Hodes, 2016). An embodied experience of unrelenting control is simultaneously also one of resistance and the striving for agency; it is crucial to consider the ways in which the impress of distal power shapes and delimits the forms such resistance can be drawn (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018).

4.3. Strengths and Limitations

The quality of the study was assessed against Yardley's four principles (2000) of research design (*Sensitivity to context; Commitment and rigour; Transparency; and Impact and importance*) and, with specific relation to the presented findings of the analysis, IPA quality indicators suggested by Smith

(2011). A key strength was the homogeneity of the sample, given that constructs of age, manhood and distress are culturally loaded. Particular aspects of the asylum journey (from pre and post-migratory factors) are also specific to country of origin (for example, deportation statistics vary considerably in this regard). Close matching of participants in the present study will have gone some way to ensure that there was some cohesion of sense-making from these perspectives and has not been well attended to in previous studies (Colucci *et al.*, 2014).

However, difference in immigration status within the sample was an important weakness of the present research; studies have indicated that uncertain immigration status is a significant factor in levels of distress (e.g. Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011). While, for purposes of homogeneity, it was not ideal that one out of four participants in the present study held a relatively secure immigration status, it did provide a compelling perspective of the potential for continuation of uncertainty and insecurity. A second important weakness was that only one participant was interviewed twice. The analysis indicated that being able to interview at more than one time increased the richness of the data, but was practically difficult to achieve with this group whose lives regularly encounter relocation and flux.

The richness of the interview data, allowing for extended interpretative enquiry, was a further strength of the study. Validation of the findings was partially sought through consultation with a member of the field who had lived experience of turning eighteen as an unaccompanied minor (but who was not interviewed) and who commented on the cohesiveness and plausibility of the presented findings. Consultation with field service-providers also helped ground considerations of recommendations and was helpful in ensuring the findings held utility and coherence.

Inter-subjectivity is an important aspect of interpretative analysis; a research journal, regular reflective supervision and systematic audit trails of the research process helped ensure the analysis remained firmly anchored to the interview data whilst simultaneously expanding the findings. Reflexive engagement of my

position as researcher helped to introduce a hermeneutic of suspicion (Gough & Madill, 2012) with regards to how participants made-sense of their experiences in relation to a female interviewer of British origin who was older than they and who had access to certain privileges (for example educational opportunities; Appendix E).

4.4 Implications

Mental health care remains difficult to access for individuals seeking asylum (Majumder *et al.*, 2015) and a recent report by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural rights (CESCR, 2016) highlighted concerning levels of discrimination and inequity in terms of access to appropriate and inclusive healthcare services. The present results suggest that therapeutic endeavour needs to be cognisant of, and explicitly responsive to, broad contextual factors. Previous reviews of mental health interventions for adults (Slobodin & de Jong, 2015) and unaccompanied young people (Nakeyar *et al.*, 2017) suggest that community-based approaches to mental health care provision are required which attend to social support, education and connection rather than a focus purely on individualistic interventions. Interventions addressing post-migratory experiences, from a position of advocacy and experiential learning, have been found to lead to significant reductions in levels of distress and increased ratings on quality-of life measures among refugee adults (Goodkind *et al.*, 2014). Research with young people seeking asylum, similarly, have found mentoring projects to be effective in mitigating anxiety, particularly around the transition to adult services (Thommessen *et al.*, 2015).

The present study also found that fear regarding the future was a pressing concern and source of fundamental threat. Supporting asylum-seeking young people to consider planning around the future, however, is fraught with problems considering the multiple uncertainties and risks that they face (Allsopp & Chase, 2017). It has been suggested that investment in educational opportunities and key-skills building for this group may help young people to bridge into their future (Chase, 2013). This may also provide opportunities for young people to act into meaningful and validating activity whilst their

immigration status is uncertain. Narrative practices may provide further utility in individual and group focused interventions through foregrounding aspects of agency and reframing what might be regarded as distress or 'symptoms' as acts of survival (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). The present findings found that, alongside the hopelessness and despair encountered by the young men at times, struggle was also rendered advantageous. Witnessing and validating resistance in the face of profound ontological insecurity can be an important 'tool' of therapeutic liberation (Wade, 1997).

In terms of wider therapeutic engagement, it is clear that practitioners must make themselves aware of both the general considerations in working alongside someone experiencing immigration control and idiographic features of an individual's narrative. The recent BPS (2018) guidelines on working with refugees and asylum-seekers, offers resources and signposts for relevant contextual information regarding immigration and country of origin. Services will further need to make sense of the ways in which resistance to control is a meaningful threat response and work to devolve power which might otherwise inhibit access to therapeutic support. Service provision also needs to respond to how, when other power resources are not available, withdrawal and disconnection might be best understood as self-protecting threat-responses. This is of relevance in how 'engagement' is often considered a referral criteria and where, particularly in adult services, regular non-attendance may lead to discharge.

Greater collaboration with third-sector services, sites potentially more accessible for this group, should be considered along with mechanisms for bridging young people into environments where social capital can be accessed. For example, a review of 'social prescribing', a mechanism used primarily in primary care to refer individuals to community, non-clinical settings for support, offers tentative positive findings in terms of mental health wellbeing (Kilgarriff-Foster & O'Cathain, 2015). The findings of the present research suggest, however, such mechanisms need to respond to the ontological alienation experienced at times by unaccompanied young people; psychology may provide an important role in scaffolding community groups in this regard.

Importantly, practitioners need to consider their own stance towards their work and turn their gaze outwards from the individual towards context and ethics (Patel, 2003). This may require practitioners taking a leadership role in terms of effecting or advocating for policy change. For example, 'leaving-care' policy provision, currently at risk for unaccompanied asylum-seekers, may benefit from a considered analysis of psychological well-being. Engaging at a macro-level through the assertion of a knowledge base (rather than purely seeking to mitigate the toxic effects of power) should be considered a key role for therapeutic practitioners (McGrath, Walker & Jones, 2016).

4.5. Further Research

Further phenomenological exploration is needed to understand the liminal experiences of other young people subject to immigration control. For example the research methodology described here might be usefully employed with unaccompanied young women, young people seeking asylum in a family context, young people seeking asylum from other countries and young people identifying with intersections of gender, sexuality or disability. The legacy of having spent the liminal period of early adulthood subject to immigration control, and all that this entailed for the participants of the present study, also warrants further investigation.

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Part Three: Critical Appraisal

A Reflexive Account of the Research Journey

The Observer's understanding of the world shapes his or her views of the unfamiliar.

Nader, (2015)

This critical appraisal provides an overview of reflexive consideration of the research process. Over the course of the research I sought to render visible my voice as author and the critical appraisal offers an account of the particular lens I brought to the analysis. Based on my reflective notes written over the course of the work, the appraisal summarises key aspects of the research endeavour from the point of view of my own personal reflection and encounters with supervision and members of related fields. The keeping of notes chronicling the various turns and shifts that marked my experience of engaging with research helped enrich the overall process and anchored it to a consideration of my development as a clinical psychologist in training. To provide coherence, the appraisal is set in a number of sections relating to broad phases of the research process.

1. Initial Development of the Research Project

Linked to personal experiences growing up and previous encounters of working alongside adults experiencing enduring distress pre-training, I was keen to develop a research question which had some utility in amplifying the experiences of those encountering marginalisation. Developing a project which I felt a connection with was important and I began thinking about this at the beginning of the training programme.

My long-term volunteer work with a local charity supporting young people seeking-asylum helped focus a research topic and provided me the opportunity to consult with various members of the field. A key area of concern arose; the transition into adulthood, for young people subject to control, marked a significant time of change and concern. Throughout the research process I was able to work within a variety of related services and offer support to both young people seeking asylum and the individuals working alongside them. This helped

anchor the research to shared knowledges of lived experience and facilitated my interpretations. Developing a research question in this way felt in-line with community psychology principles, an approach to psychological enquiry which I studied prior to my clinical training and which holds that the focus of research should arise from problems identified by the community (Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthorn & Siddiquee, 2011). I was able to regularly consult with one young adult who met all the inclusion criteria for participation in the present study other than age and who had experience of post-graduate research themselves. This was particularly helpful in terms of thinking through engagement with participants (for example the importance of taking time to build trust) and in developing data analysis.

2. Choice of Methodology

My initial thoughts about methodological design focused on developing previous, though limited, experiences of Participatory Action Research (PAR). I was keen to take a qualitative approach in order to attend to political dimensions of research enquiry (Yardley, 2000), particularly in relation to the focus of the present study. Early on during clinical training, however, it was pointed out that PAR was unlikely to be a fit for clinically-focused research given the time constraints of the DClinPsy. I noticed how I readily accepted this and wonder if I had been more confident in my training role I could have pushed myself and defended a participatory research project (for example, Afonu, 2015). However, a phenomenological method of enquiry seemed to allow for the exploration of experiences that had not previously been well attended to and I was drawn to how such methods privilege the meaning-making of individuals.

Following a literature review, where I noticed a tendency for a socio-political frame within research to be neglected (Colucci, Szwarc, Minas, Paxton & Guerra, 2014), initial supervision discussions explored contextual methods, such as Critical Narrative Analysis (Langdrige, 2007). However, I was aware that English for potential participants was unlikely to be a first language, a consideration which Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) seemed better able to address (Smith, 2004), particularly in the confines of a DClinPsy

project. IPA is also a methodology of increasing use in psychological enquiry (Brocki & Wearden, 2006), a factor which may contribute to perceptions of 'robustness' and integrity (Yardley, 2000). This felt important considering my commitment to seeking publication and influence.

However, I was mindful of how an IPA approach might fit alongside the experiences the participants had regarding ownership of their biographical stories and how these had previously been regarded with suspicion in terms of immigration process. I wondered whether this might pose barriers in terms of what was shared with me and how the participants might relate to my interpretations. One participant, for example, commented on how the Home Office had scrutinised certain words he had used in his initial statement and added layers of meaning to his account that he had not intended. While taking, and accounting for, a different motivational position, the process of IPA is not dissimilar to the account described and I wondered at times how a more participatory approach to research design would have helped mitigate this powerlessness. However, regular supervision and attending several IPA workshops helped to develop integrity of approach and I endeavoured to render visible the positions and interpretations I made so that they, also, may be scrutinised.

Early on in the research design I explored how inviting participants to bring visual and material objects to the second interview might facilitate data collection. Such methods have been usefully employed elsewhere to tap into experiential memories that may not be easily accessible by a verbal approach alone (Reavey, 2012). I also intended that this would be a useful strategy to bridge between the two interviews I sought with each participant. However, access to participants on two occasions was difficult to achieve in relation to the fluid, changeable and transitory circumstances that the participants lived within. In retrospect, interviewing participants a second time within a short time frame may have made this more achievable. Also, I encountered some hesitation about initiating the use of objects and pictures to provoke discussion with the young men, particularly in relation to the ways in which they spoke of keeping the emotional world at arm's length. My initial discussions about this with the

participants, as a result, were somewhat clumsy and were likely to contribute to this not being an invitation taken up by the one participant who was interviewed a second time. Greater consideration of how the research process might be experienced by the participants may have facilitated the use of this tool.

3. Ethical Approval, Recruitment and Data Collection

Barriers to accessing statutory therapeutic support for people seeking asylum have been well-documented (Colucci *et al.*, 2014); in part, differences in how constructs such as distress are related to may be an important factor (Majumder, O'Reilly, Karim & Vostanis, 2015). I was keen, therefore, to recruit participants via the third-sector and sought ethical approval from the University of Leicester. Reflecting on my approach to my research proposal, I noticed how I had developed participant materials in a formal and academic style and wondered if I engaged with these materials from a position of needing to seek academic approval rather than thinking about what might be meaningful to potential participants.

While I anticipated that recruitment of participants would unlikely be a swift process, the significant delays in finding young people who met the inclusion criteria and were also in a position to consent to be interviewed led to concerning delays. The focus on seeking a homogenous sample, particularly of young men from similar cultural backgrounds, necessitated a considerable scoping phase to ascertain which country of origin to focus on: I was keen to not openly invite participants to express interest, only to decline their offer on the basis of their cultural background. I consulted with various members of the field regarding potential availability of participants before deciding to focus on young men from Afghanistan. This decision mainly reflected my awareness of previous literature concerning the particular concerns young men from Afghanistan have about deportation (Gladwell & Elwyn, 2012) and qualitative research regarding childhood in Afghanistan (Heath & Zahedi, 2014).

Over the research process, I made contact with around thirty individual recruitment sites over a relatively large geographical area. This aided anonymity

but was also necessitated by how difficult it was to find such a specific sample. I found that recruitment sites often did not have data on prior unaccompanied status of the young adults they supported and identifying potential participants took considerable time which many of the sites did not have. I noticed that I was uncomfortable about imposing myself and was not always as assertive as I might have been in terms of recruitment; being able to impart a sense of motivation and energy behind my recruitment drive may have fostered more momentum during this process.

I also found several recruitment sites to be protective and guarded about consenting to access the young people they supported. On two occasions members of organisations raised concerns about previous researchers 'parachuting in and out' of the young people's lives. Spending time discussing my continued involvement with a refugee-support charity and the aims of my research did not always seem to alleviate concern and many of the sites I engaged with did not result in recruitment. I had some capacity to base myself for a few hours a week in a potential recruitment site, undertaking case-work support for adults with concern about their asylum claim. While this led to the recruitment of one participant I did not have sufficient time available to take this approach across multiple sites.

Conversely, I found other potential recruitment sites very keen to support recruitment and who expressed a critical position with regards to the voices of young people being 'gate-kept'. On occasions, my considered approach to gaining informed consent was met with bafflement and it was suggested I needed to be less focused on bureaucratic mechanisms of seeking and documenting consent. This made me wonder about how the voices of asylum-seekers are positioned and framed by the various actors working and researching alongside them. I was also alert to how some organisations within the third-sector seemed to be wary of academic endeavour and wondered if this pointed to a perceived disconnect between the relevance of research and the lived experiences and needs of the young people.

Several potential participants expressed interest in the work I was undertaking, but declined to be interviewed because they felt that reflecting on their experiences would be too over-whelming for them. A related factor seemed to be their concern that I would also be too upset by their stories. Withholding emotion and disconnecting from distressing memories was a theme that was discussed across the data and I wonder what impact this had on the content of the interviews that took place and the extent of the experiences shared with me. Interviewing one participant twice revealed some interesting shifts in experiential tone and this approach to gathering data seemed to be useful. I was also aware of the young men's prior experiences with being interviewed by the Home Office and how engaging in recorded dialogue about past experience may have felt uncomfortable for some young people. In hindsight I would have liked to have developed the information given to potential participants and been more mindful of the language I used. For example, it was suggested at a research methods workshop that extending an invitation to a 'research conversation' may have held less negative connotations for participants compared with the word 'interview'.

During the interview I sought to be transparent about my curiosity and hopes for the research (that this would contribute meaningfully towards clinical awareness). I noticed that interviewing for an IPA required a shift in conversation style and I found it hard initially to not let a therapeutic role take the fore. I considered power differentials within my relationship with the participants and began from a position of open curiosity. I also spent time after the interviews debriefing but also chatting to the young men and answering their questions about my own up-bringing and my trainee role. I noticed that I thought about the present circumstances of some of the participants a lot after the interviews, and felt 'pulls' to want to 'solve' some of the more immediate concerns they had around financial stability and housing. Offering signposting and ensuring they had access to support did not always feel sufficient considering how openly the participants shared with me difficulties in their lives, although I was mindful that my role was to bear witness, rather than to intervene.

Early on in the recruitment phase it was suggested to me by several members of the field that I should offer a financial voucher to participants and that this recognition of their involvement would help facilitate recruitment. I had not built this into my research design initially as I had been wary of participants, who might otherwise feel hesitant about taking part, consenting to be interviewed out of financial necessity. Having sought ethical approval for this, I was surprised at how two participants declined to take the voucher, telling me that they wanted 'just to help' and that they did not feel they required anything in return. In these cases the voucher seemed to symbolise a 'transaction' which felt out of place in relation to the weight of sharing lived experience, which was counter to the concern of some recruitment sites that payment was a means of mitigating potential exploitation. I also wondered, however, how the offering of a 'voucher' was received by participants, and how much this echoed the way in which those seeking asylum (who are eligible for financial support) receive a pre-paid voucher with which they can buy from a predetermined list of items. I wondered if I had been able to offer a cash alternative, this might have made the gesture of appreciation more appropriate.

4. Data Analysis

Transcription of the interviews, though time-consuming, was a useful step into the analysis process and helped me immerse into the data. Verbal speech is often more fluid and fragmentary than an objective approach to transcription can allow and I was struck by how I had to make nuanced interpretations of the data even at this early stage as I made decisions about sentence structure and grammar. Repeated listening to the audio recordings of the interviews was a helpful part of this process. I spent time considering which pseudonyms to allocate as a small gesture of regard: All the participants had been offered the opportunity to choose this themselves but had declined, often in a seemingly dismissive and baffled way. I had similar reactions when I explained about participant rights and expectations and, on more than one occasion, was told by the young men that I did not 'need to worry' so much. That holding onto these rights was a necessary, but in some-ways unimportant, priority made me reflect on how academic research might have been experienced by the participants (as

abstract, perhaps needlessly intellectualised) and how I might have worked harder to impart information in a more meaningful way.

Learning an IPA process while undertaking a DClinPsy research piece was an overwhelming task at times and there were moments when I questioned whether I had sufficient time to develop the analysis, particularly as much of the research write-up did not begin until the latter stages of analysis. Holding onto complexity and engaging in multiple iterations of analysis felt daunting, although ultimately resulted in a weightier and richer analysis. I would like to undertake an IPA research piece again, and feel the systems and strategies I developed will provide a good foundation to build on.

Bringing an analytical lens attuned to power and systemic context, rooted in previous engagement with activism and community psychology, undoubtedly led me to privilege these aspects within the data. While consultation with members of the field helped establish confidence that such a lens held utility and resonance, the data may have been equally compelling and meaningful from the position of other frameworks. For example, considering the data from models of attachment theory and the position of the participants as former 'looked-after' children may have been particularly useful in terms of clinical practice and wider policy regarding how (or whether) services respond to the needs of these young people as 'children' or 'asylum-seekers' (Crawley, 2006). However, I felt the chosen position from which to interpret the data held particular importance in terms of how political frame is neglected within existing research (Colucci *et al.*, 2014) and how there is a growing alertness within psychology of the direct impact of operationalised power (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018).

Reflecting back on the research design, I am aware of how the research was explicitly framed around constructs of 'asylum seeker' identity and 'adulthood' and how this will have prompted certain experiences of the transition into adulthood into the fore during the interviews. I wonder if I had held more lightly onto these constructs as I developed the interview schedule, though difficult to

practically achieve in terms of transparency and informed consent, whether different experiences would have been brought to the fore.

I was aware over the interview process that approaching conversation from an IPA stance required some adaption in relation to my usual style and, from my transcribed data, I can see that this was a process of learning. On reflection there were moments across the interviews where I would have liked to have asked questions differently, or pursued various strands of conversation in more depth. From a point of view of coming to know what 'good' IPA data looks like I think there would be some scope to develop these skills further.

A focus of my approach to analysis regarded inter-subjectivity and how power mediated my relationship with participants. I was alert to how I might be experienced by the participants, being a white woman, older than they, who had access to certain privileges (university education, a middle-class profession, resources such as the vouchers) and particular routes to socialising to the world (for example, having been born in a secular, neo-liberal society, a job-title anchored to notions of 'mental health'). The participants I interviewed were relatively young men; their journey to asylum was likely to have been male-orientated and may have fostered a need to act in ways in which deflected from vulnerabilities and distress. I wondered how this might have impacted on the interview data in various ways; for example our difference in age may have opened up space for the participants to relate to their youth or, conversely, led them to feel they needed to act into an adult role. I also wondered, from a wider perspective, how the role of British foreign policy had impacted on the conflict in Afghanistan, and whether this had any bearing on how the participants and myself came to experience each other. I held in mind these reflections throughout the write-up process and sought to 'listen to' the experiences of the participants from an interpretative position rather than speak for or 'essentialise' their experiential claims by taking a more descriptive or 'objective' approach (Spivak, 1987).

During the write-up I was alert to the constraint of writing to a word count and how, for publication purposes, some aspects of the research process are

privileged over others in a way which makes reflexivity and transparency difficult to account for. I am particularly mindful of the rigour with which I assessed the quality of primary studies in my literature review and how this reflected, to a large degree, the dictates of journal submission requirements.

5. Dissemination

Participants were invited into the study on the basis that their experiences may help increase practitioners knowledge-base in relation to their clinical work alongside others in similar circumstances. Dissemination of the research is therefore an ethical imperative. All of the young men declined an invitation to be contacted regarding the findings of the research, although all were keen for the study to be put forward for publication. This is something I intend to pursue; I also have an opportunity to present my research (both as a presentation and a poster) at a Research Conference at the University of Leicester in September 2018 and will be contacting key recruitment sites to discuss sharing the findings with staff and young people. There may also be opportunity, at a more local level, to present at a long-standing human rights festival and open up dialogue around the issues the study highlights.

6. Development of the research

From the vantage point of having completed my analysis and interpretation, I find it interesting that in exploring my research question, I focused almost exclusively on enquiring into the experiences of the young people themselves. As my analysis developed, and my focus on power and agency became more apparent, I questioned whether my gaze worked to amplify the voices of those with less power (as I had hoped) or rather helped to maintain a less useful focus on the experiences of those marginalised rather than the process of marginalisation itself (Patel, 2003). I wondered why it had not occurred to me, for example, to enquire into the positional meaning-making of professionals engaging with young people as they transition between child and adult services, in a process of 'studying up' the power hierarchy rather than exclusively 'down' (Nader, 1972). I think there is much worth in developing the research further in

this context, considering how practitioners navigate the explicit and nuanced politics that our work entails. For example, in a discussion with my Field Supervisor, we explored the dilemma of therapeutic practice in mitigating powerlessness and distress when it is often constructs of vulnerability which afford young people at risk of deportation some protection. This is a crucial consideration in relation to the extent to which immigration decisions are based on subjective assessments of vulnerability (Given-Wilson, Herlihy & Hodes, 2016). How practitioners navigate and tolerate this positioning would be helpful to explore further.

Considering the implications of the study led me to think about the role of psychology in working alongside the third-sector and how greater collaboration may facilitate young people to access services. Further research into the utility of psychological-informed-environments, where skills are offered to help frame engagement rather than through direct intervention would also be beneficial.

7. Professional and Personal Development

Reflecting on my engagement with this research project has also been useful in terms of on-going development, particularly as I head towards a first post-qualifying role as a 'scientist-practitioner'. The stress and pressure of balancing the under-taking of research alongside developing clinical skills and navigating placement evaluation helped develop skills of efficiency and pragmatism. This, and the ability to tolerate complexity while maintaining perspective, was an ultimately rewarding consequence of learning IPA whilst undertaking a doctoral thesis. Interpretative analysis has helped me shape alertness towards, and a practice of accounting for, my positioning to my work and I feel this will be useful both in terms of future research and clinical practice. As examples, I have developed a refined systematic approach to my work to facilitate transparency, particularly when consulting with others, and feel more able to acknowledge wider complexity while 'drawing lines' of focus around my work. The stark separation between community and clinical psychology that I had encountered previously has softened somewhat as a result.

Finally, I noticed that the process of research has impacted on my clinical practice in a number of ways. The evocative and rich experiences related to me during the five interviews gave me an important lens with which to consider my practice dynamically from a number of different levels and an understanding of embodied distress which I can take forward into my future work. Interpretive analysis offered an invitation for me to consider my 'blind-spots' in practice, for example a tendency to pull away from opening up discussions of faith, that I had not previously noted. The process of IPA also gave me practice of listening out for objects of concern and of more explicitly privileging meaning-making. For example I noticed that I tend to document in clinical reports the 'felt' experiences of the people I work with rather than make, as IPA would invite, a firmer statement of experiential claim.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Relevant Author Guidelines for the Submission of Articles to the *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*

1. Journal details

Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology © John Wiley & Sons Ltd

Edited By: Orla Muldoon

Impact Factor: 1.133

ISI Journal Citation Reports © Ranking: 2016: 46/62 (Psychology Social)

Online ISSN: 1099-1298

2. Author Guidelines

2.1 Manuscript Submission

The Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology (JCASP) operates an online submission and peer review system that allows authors to submit articles online and track their progress via a web interface. Please read the remainder of these instructions to authors and then visit <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/casp> and navigate to the Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology online submission site. **IMPORTANT:** Please check whether you already have an account in the system before trying to create a new one. If you have reviewed or authored for the journal in the past year it is likely that you will have had an account created. All papers must be submitted via the online system.

2.3 Manuscript Style and Format

JCASP publishes articles in a range of formats, including reports of empirical studies, theoretical articles, review articles, commentaries and reports of community practice. Submissions should be as concise as is consistent with clear exposition of the subject matter. Manuscripts should not normally exceed

5,000 words, with 7,000 as an absolute maximum. The word count includes abstract, references and tables. Editors may ask authors to reduce their article's length as part of the review process, in the interest of maximising the number of articles published in the limited space of the journal. Short Papers of no more than 2,000 words in length are encouraged. Research papers, Innovations in practice and Commentaries are all welcome in the Short Paper section. Submissions will be reviewed in the usual way but it is anticipated that the reviewing and publication process will be of shorter than average duration than for longer papers.

The title page must list the full title, a short title of up to 40 characters and names and affiliations of all authors. Give the full address, including e-mail, telephone and fax, of the author who is to check the proofs on this page. The title page is not sent to reviewers. In the interest of maintaining anonymity, acknowledgements should be placed on the title page rather than in the main text. Sponsor(s) of the research, if any, and grant number(s) should be included here.

Supply an abstract of up to 200 words for a full-length article, or around 50 words for a Short Paper. No abstract is needed for a book review. An abstract is a concise summary of the whole paper, not just the conclusions, and is understandable without reference to the rest of the paper. It should contain no citation to other published work. Include up to ten key words that describe your paper for indexing purposes.

Preferred formats for the text and tables of your manuscript are .doc, .rtf, .ppt, .xls. LaTeX files may be submitted provided that an .eps or .pdf file is provided in addition to the source files. Figures may be provided in .tiff or .eps format. Please note: This journal does not accept Microsoft Word 2007 documents at this time. Please use Word's "Save As" option to save your document as a .doc file type. If you try to upload a Word 2007 document in Scholar One you will be prompted to save .docx files as .doc files.

2.4 Copyright and permissions

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Illustrations must be submitted in electronic format. Save each figure as a separate file, in TIFF or EPS format preferably, the figure number and top of the figure indicated. Compound figures e.g. 1a, b, c should be uploaded as one figure. Include the source file. We favour dedicated illustration packages over tools such as Excel or Powerpoint. Grey shading (tints) are not acceptable. Lettering must be of a reasonable size that would still be clearly legible upon reduction, and consistent within each figure and set of figures. Where a key to symbols is required, please include this in the artwork itself, not in the figure legend. All illustrations must be supplied at the correct resolution: Black and white and colour photos - 300 dpi; Graphs, drawings, etc. - 800 dpi preferred; 600 dpi minimum; Combinations of photos and drawings (black and white and colour) - 500 dpi. Please submit the figure legends separately. The cost of

printing colour illustrations in the journal will be charged to the author. The cost is approximately £700 per page. If colour illustrations are supplied electronically in either TIFF or EPS format, they may be used in the PDF of the article at no cost to the author, even if this illustration was printed in black and white in the journal. The PDF will appear on the Wiley Online Library site.

2.5 Title and Abstract Information

As more research is read online, the electronic version of articles becomes ever more important. In a move to improve search engine rankings for individual articles and increase readership and future citations to Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology at the same time please visit [Optimizing Your Abstract for Search Engines](#) for guidelines on the preparation of keywords and descriptive titles.

2.6 Reference Style

The APA system of citing sources indicates the author's last name and the date, in parentheses, within the text of the paper. A typical citation of an entire work consists of the author's name and the year of publication.

Appendix B: Search Strings Utilised for Systematic Literature Search

The following search terms were combined to search in: *PsychINFO*; *Scopus*; *Web of Science*; *PubMed* and *Cochrane Library* databases

Focus of search				
<i>Age</i>	<i>AND</i>	<i>Accompanied status</i>	<i>AND</i>	<i>Immigration status</i>
Young or Child* or Youth* or Adolescen* or Teen* or Minor*		Unaccompanied or Separated or “Looked after” or “In care” or Alone		Refugee* or Asylum or Immigration or “Leave to remain” or Forced or “Discretionary leave” or “Exceptional leave” or Displaced or Relocat* or Traffick*

Appendix C: Quality Appraisal Template (based on Thomas & Byford, 2003; Walsh & Downe, 2006 and Yardley, 2000)

Title of paper:	Overall score:
Author/year:	Weighting:
Study paper number:	(8-10= 'low'; 11-14 = 'low-medium'; 15-17= 'medium'
Assessor:	18-21 = 'medium-strong'; 22-24= 'strong')

Quality assessment- themes and prompts	Notes	SCORE 3- Explicitly stated and evidenced 2- Stated but minimal or no evidence 1- Little or no statement or evidence
Aims and objectives Clearly reported; Clear and appropriate research question; Clear link to existing theoretical/research knowledge base		
Context Sufficient integration with existing theory; Clarity and justification of position within existing theory; Rationale for methodology in terms of research goal; Clarity of epistemology/frame/stance		
Sample Participants sufficiently described; Methods of sample identification and recruitment clearly stated, justified and consistent with research goals; Size and composition justified and appropriate; Attempts made to anchor analysis to contextual information (e.g. immigration status)		
<i>Continued overleaf</i>		

Data collection Sufficient and transparent description of method; Methods justified and appropriate, systematic and replicable; Methodology consistent with research question; Robustness (triangulation); Reliability/ validity (e.g. interview topic guides); Clear and transparent trails; Depth and breadth addressed		
Data analysis Sufficient and transparent description of method; Methods justified and appropriate, systematic and replicable; Methodology consistent with research question; Use of individual quotes to match concepts and themes to the raw data; Explicit findings beyond the level of description; Critical analysis of findings; Credibility of methods used (respondent validation, more than one analyst, negative case reporting); Findings discussed in relation to the original research question		
Authenticity and ethics Participants discussed in terms of stakeholder-ship; Appropriate methods used to help young people safely express their views/give informed consent/debrief; Appropriate methods used to ensure data analysis remained grounded in young people's views; Sufficient discussion of ethical issues		
Reflexivity Sufficient discussion regarding reflexive issues; Sufficient methods employed (such as audit trails, journals); Critical examination regarding bias, power, position; Discussion of hurdles and how approached		
Contribution Sufficient discussion of the contribution ; Areas for new research identified; Discussion of generalisability of findings to other populations; Extent of reach of utility of findings to various systems; Implications for service provision and policy explored sufficiently		

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Appendix: D Quality Assessment Scores and Weightings

	Study One <i>Majumder et al. (2015)</i>	Study Two: <i>Muir & Gannon (2016)</i>	Study Three: <i>Ni Raghallaigh & Sirriyeh (2015)</i>	Study Four: <i>Chase, (2013)</i>	Study Five: <i>Chase, (2010)</i>	Study Six: <i>Groark et al. (2010)</i>	Study Seven: <i>Ni Raghallaigh & Gilligan (2010)</i>	Study Eight: <i>Sutton et al. (2006)</i>	Study Nine: <i>Devenney, (2017)</i>
Aims & objective	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	1
Context	1	3	1	3	3	2	1	3	1
Sample	2	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	2
Data Collection	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	1
Data Analysis	1	1	1	2	2	3	1	2	1
Authenticity and Ethics	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	1	2
Reflexivity	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	3	1
Contribution	2	3	1	3	2	3	1	2	2
Total	11	15	12	18	18	20	11	18	10
Weight	L=M	Med	L-M	M-S	M-S	M-S	L-M	M-S	L-M

Weighting:

8-10= 'low'; 11-14 = 'low-medium'; 15-17= 'medium'; 18-21 = 'medium-strong';

22-24= 'strong'

Appendix E: Epistemological Position

The research process is governed by the epistemological stance taken and it is important to be explicit about the assumptions made concerning the relationship between data and reality (Harper, 2011). Further, it is argued that rendering the authorial voice visible is a quality marker of qualitative research, adding to contextual meaning-making and offering much of value to the interpretation of data (Mitchell, 2017). In this statement of position, I therefore set out considerations of stance that guided methodological choice, my engagement with the research process and data and engage in a reflexive hermeneutic of suspicion (Gough & Madill, 2012).

1. Research Topic and Engagement with Related Fields

Prior to choosing a research topic, I had worked for the previous four years with a local charity offering support to young people seeking asylum, many of whom had travelled to the UK without their families. This felt an obvious field in which to develop a research question, being a long-standing interest of mine and one that I had developed knowledge in. The proposed research focus was generated in consultation with members of this charity.

Over the course of the research I also had direct and substantial clinical experience of working in services offering support to: Adults seeking asylum who were experiencing distress; Adults and young people seeking asylum who were requesting support with material and social needs; Young people and children receiving 'looked- after' care who were experiencing distress. Within this I was able to reflexively engage with practitioners regarding issues concerning the provision of services to these groups.

During the analysis stages I attended a conference where the 'Power, Threat, Meaning Framework' (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018) was introduced. This resonated with the tentative interpretations I had been making about my data and was brought into the later stages of analysis.

2. Epistemological Stance

Having conducted a previous review of the literature around the experiences of young people seeking asylum in the UK, I was aware of how little had been written about the perspectives of the young people themselves. It felt important that my enquiry was embedded in their sense making where their voices remained foregrounded. A critical realist stance felt a useful frame in order to investigate the research question. Critical realism assumes the reality of the social world to be emergent and our access to it provisional (Gorski, 2013). This position holds that the data we collect about the social world provides us with a knowledge of reality, but not direct access to reality. The data we explore is always mediated by context, much of which is likely to be outside of the subject's awareness (Harper, 2011).

A critical realist approach would posit an aim of enquiry that seeks to translate data into something meaningful, through interpretative engagement, rather than to seek to impart explanation (Gorski, 2013). This felt particularly pertinent considering the foregrounding of power and identity that contextualises the landscape for young people seeking asylum. The chosen research question suggested that phenomenological enquiry was best suited for this project in order to investigate the sense-making of young people transitioning into adulthood rather than aim to uncover 'truths'. A critical realist stance adds to this endeavour by interpreting the data within a context (Harper, 2011) and can be useful in moving such research forwards towards the development of policy and recommendations (Fletcher, 2017).

4. Contextualising Myself as Researcher

With stance and methodological choice in mind, I set out below some brief contextual information about myself as researcher which may be relevant in terms of inter-subjective meaning-making and my subsequent interpretation of the research data.

I am a white woman in my thirties. I was born and have lived all of my life in England, growing up with two parents and moving around very little. In thinking about what it means to 'grow-up', I lean towards understandings that make sense of childhood, adolescence and adulthood as liminal phases rather than discrete categories. I find it helpful to consider an individual's development in this sense through a lens of power; I believe that children should be afforded the right to freedom from the malign power of others and the freedom to invest in their power resources as they move forwards towards adulthood.

While I am from a working-class background, and identify with this, I have had the opportunity to access further education up to doctoral level. In my contact with the participants I disclosed my role as a trainee clinical psychologist and my links with a university were made explicit through the research materials. My working background, since my undergraduate degree in psychology has therefore been focused on mental health and marginalisation.

Potential points of intersection in my own biography and that of the participants may be that I have lived-experience of emotional distress and experienced loss and bereavement as a young person. Brief contextual information regarding Afghanistan is provided in Appendix F for consideration.

References

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- Gorski, P. (2013). What is critical realism? And why should you care? *Contemporary Sociology*, 42, 658-670.
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Appendix F: Summary Information: Afghanistan

1. Summary of Cultural Demographics

The following information provides a brief cultural context to Afghanistan:

Afghanistan is categorised as one of the worlds 'least developed' countries (indicated by high poverty and economic vulnerability). Statistics from 2008 show that Afghanistan is ranked as having the highest proportion of infant mortality under five in the world; there is life expectancy of 44 years. Statistics from 2003-2007 show a youth literacy rate of just 49%. Statistics from 1999-2008 show a child labour rate of 30% of the population and 43% rate of child marriage. (UNICEF, 2018)

Developmental experiences of children in Afghanistan have been shaped for over forty years by war. There is no over-arching policy of protection for children; many families rely on children to work. (Heath, 2014).

Taken from Eggerman & Panter-Brick, (2014):

A large scale longitudinal study of mental health and resiliency found that one in five children appeared to have a mental problem that would fit within a clinical range. Everyday violence (familial, community) impacted as much as militarised violence in the recollection of traumatized experiences. Families appeared to shield children from much of the on-going military violence. Children and adults focused on school as the gateway of economic advancement, to alleviate economic stressors and to maintain family unity. A thematic analysis of collected interview data found six fundamental cultural values were important to families: *Religious faith; Family unity and harmony; The obligation of service to family and community; Perseverance or effort; Good morals, and social respectability or honour*. Failure or frustration in attaining social and cultural milestones was articulated in terms of stress, anxiety, depression, family conflicts. The study's authors concluded that: Education, employment, timing of marriage, home ownership are the economic, social and moral goals that underpin honour and self-respect: as a family matter rather than a personal objective.

Taken from Saito, (2014):

A qualitative study, interviewing children and young adult refugees and individuals returning to Afghanistan following war-related displacement, found repatriation was often accompanied by a complex mix of stresses and

emotional struggles. The study referred to a complexity of 'national identity', with participants both 'othered' and also 'Afghani' in relation to the host-country/ military forces in Afghanistan.

2. Summary of Refugee Population

The following summary is taken from the UNHCR website:

There are almost 2.5 million registered refugees from Afghanistan. They comprise the largest protracted refugee population in Asia, and the second largest refugee population in the world. In light of the increasingly deteriorating security situation in many parts of the country, the violence continues to drive people from their homes in 2018.

3. Summary of Current Risk

The following summary information is taken from the UK Government travel advice website:

Still current at: 14 May 2018

Updated: 2 February 2018



Terrorists are very likely to try to carry out attacks in Afghanistan. Specific methods of attack are evolving and increasing in sophistication.

Road travel is highly dangerous. Insurgents have set up false vehicle checkpoints from which violent attacks have been launched. In addition to the threat from terrorism and kidnapping, there is also a continuing criminal threat from car-jacking and robbery.

Terrorists are very likely to try to carry out attacks in Afghanistan. Multiple threats are issued daily. Terrorists and insurgents conduct frequent and widespread lethal attacks against Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF), domestic and international political and civilian targets, and those working in the humanitarian and reconstruction fields. There is a threat from high-profile, large-scale attacks in Kabul.

The insurgency has a strong anti-Western focus; this could make any UK interest or person a target. Attacks include bombs (roadside and other), suicide bombs (either on foot or by vehicle), indirect fire (rockets and mortars), direct fire (shootings and rocket propelled grenades), kidnappings and violent crime. Daesh is also fiercely hostile to the UK and other western countries.

References

- Eggerman, M. & Panter-Brick, C. (2014). "Life feeds on hope: Family mental health, culture and resilience. In J. Heath & A. Zahedi (Eds.) *Children of Afghanistan: The Path to Peace* (Vol. 36). Austin: University of Texas Press. 226-240.
- Foreign and Commonwealth Office, (2018). Foreign travel advice: Afghanistan. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/afghanistan> (last accessed May 2018).
- Heath, J. (2014). Introduction. In J. Heath & A. Zahedi (Eds.) *Children of Afghanistan: The Path to Peace* (Vol. 36). Austin: University of Texas Press. 1-36.
- Saiko, M. (2014). Education in transition: A key concern for Afghan Returnees. In J. Heath & A. Zahedi (Eds.) *Children of Afghanistan: The Path to Peace* (Vol. 36). Austin: University of Texas Press.
- UNHCR, (2018). Country information. Available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/afghanistan.html> (last accessed May, 2018).
- UNICEF, (2018). State of the world's children. Available from: <https://www.unicef.org/sowc/> (last accessed May 2018).

Appendix G: Ethical Approval and Related Correspondence

1. Ethical Approval



University Ethics Sub-Committee for Psychology

16/11/2016

Ethics Reference: XXXXXX-neuroscience, psychology and behaviour

TO:

Name of Researcher Applicant: Alison Smith

Department: Psychology

Research Project Title: A phenomenological exploration of experiences of 'adulthood' for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people subject to UK immigration control.

Dear Alison Smith,

RE: Ethics review of Research Study application

The University Ethics Sub-Committee for Psychology has reviewed and discussed the above application.

1. Ethical opinion

The Sub-Committee grants ethical approval to the above research project on the basis described in the application form and supporting documentation, subject to the conditions specified below.

2. Summary of ethics review discussion

The Committee noted the following issues:

This research proposal aims to explore the experiences of adulthood in young adults with the refugee seekers status. As such, the participants are vulnerable people. The methodology to be used is qualitative, and data would be obtained via interviews in which the experiences of the participants would be discussed. I have read the application and think the research team is fully aware of the Ethical concerns raised by this project; they are also entirely aware of the fact

that the content of the interviews might be potentially distressful, and have discussed how to cope with these situations. The principal researcher is very experienced in this type of research. I do not think there are any real concerns at this stage, and think the proposal can be approved.

Good luck with the data collection.

3. General conditions of the ethical approval

The ethics approval is subject to the following general conditions being met prior to the start of the project:

As the Principal Investigator, you are expected to deliver the research project in accordance with the University's policies and procedures, which includes the University's Research Code of Conduct and the University's Research Ethics Policy.

If relevant, management permission or approval (gate keeper role) must be obtained from host organisation prior to the start of the study at the site concerned.

4. Reporting requirements after ethical approval

You are expected to notify the Sub-Committee about:

- Significant amendments to the project
- Serious breaches of the protocol
- Annual progress reports
- Notifying the end of the study

5. Use of application information

Details from your ethics application will be stored on the University Ethics Online System. With your permission, the Sub-Committee may wish to use parts of the application in an anonymised format for training or sharing best practice. Please let me know if you do not want the application details to be used in this manner.

Best wishes for the success of this research project.

Yours sincerely,

XXXXXXX

Chair

2. Approval Amendment One



University Ethics Sub-Committee for Psychology

16/11/2016

Ethics Reference: 9009-as937-neuroscience, psychology and behaviour

TO:

Name of Researcher Applicant: Alison Smith

Department: Psychology

Research Project Title: A phenomenological exploration of experiences of 'adulthood' for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people subject to UK immigration control.

Dear Alison Smith,

RE: Ethics review of Research Study application

The University Ethics Sub-Committee for Psychology has reviewed and discussed the above application.

1. Ethical opinion

The Sub-Committee grants ethical approval to the above research project on the basis described in the application form and supporting documentation, subject to the conditions specified below.

2. Summary of ethics review discussion

The Committee noted the following issues:

The current amendment does not pose any ethical concerns.

3. General conditions of the ethical approval

The ethics approval is subject to the following general conditions being met prior to the start of the project:

As the Principal Investigator, you are expected to deliver the research project in accordance with the University's policies and procedures, which includes the University's Research Code of Conduct and the University's Research Ethics Policy.

If relevant, management permission or approval (gate keeper role) must be obtained from host organisation prior to the start of the study at the site concerned.

4. Reporting requirements after ethical approval

You are expected to notify the Sub-Committee about:

- Significant amendments to the project
- Serious breaches of the protocol
- Annual progress reports
- Notifying the end of the study

5. Use of application information

Details from your ethics application will be stored on the University Ethics Online System. With your permission, the Sub-Committee may wish to use parts of the application in an anonymised format for training or sharing best practice. Please let me know if you do not want the application details to be used in this manner.

Best wishes for the success of this research project.

Yours sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXX

Chair

3. Approval of Amendment Two

From: XXXXXXXX

Sent: 11 December 2017 14:06

To: Smith, Alison

Cc: XXXXXXXX

Subject: Re: ethics amendment- Clinical Psychology

Dear Alison

This is a good suggestion and a nice letter. Not sure why the system is not accepting it, but you can take this email as approval of the amendment.

Kind regards

XXXXXXXXXXx

University of Leicester

Department of Neuroscience, Psychology and Behaviour

Centre for Medicine

University Road

Leicester LE1 7RH

United Kingdom

Email: XXXXXXXX

Tel: XXXXXx

From: Smith, Alison

Sent: 11 December 2017 13:01

To: XXXXXXXX

Subject: ethics amendment- Clinical Psychology

Dear XXXXXXXXX

I am still recruiting interviewees for my research (A phenomenological exploration of experiences of 'adulthood' for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people subject to UK immigration control) and have been asked by one of my prospective interviewees to write a letter of appreciation for his involvement in the project. He feels this will be helpful for him in getting involved in further voluntary activities. I have spoken with my supervisor and have drafted a general letter that can be given to participants who would find this helpful along with a voucher (which has previously been approved). I have not used the title of the research study and have kept the letter general and open (see attached).

I have tried to submit this as an amendment online but my application status is showing as complete and I cannot submit new amendments; I am not sure why this is. Can you please advise?

Many thanks,

Alison

Alison Smith

Trainee Clinical Psychologist

Appendix H: Participant Information Sheet (shared via recruitment site)



Experiences of turning 18 while seeking refuge in the UK as an unaccompanied minor

Thank you for your interest in participating, this study is about the experiences of young people in the UK who were seeking asylum alone (as an 'unaccompanied minor') when they turned eighteen. Participation in this study is voluntary; please take the time to read through the following information before you consider whether you want to participate.

What is the purpose of this study?

Understanding more about the experiences of young people who seek refuge may help services offer more helpful, appropriate and accessible support. It is particularly important that services understand the needs of young people around the age of eighteen, as many young people find this is a particularly stressful time.

Who is involved in this study?

My name is Alison Smith and I am a trainee Clinical Psychologist working towards a doctorate qualification in Clinical Psychology at the University of Leicester. This study will be submitted to the University of Leicester as a requirement of the qualification. I am supervised by Dr XXXXX, University of Leicester.

Who can take part in the study?

I will be interviewing four young people who are:

- aged between 18 and 24 years of age
- someone who was seeking refuge in the UK when they were 18 years old as an 'unaccompanied minor' (without family or a formal caregiver)
- confident in speaking English

What will I have to do?

You will take part in up to two interviews with each one lasting up to one and a half hours. The first interview is likely to take place between December 2016 and February 2017. The second interview is likely to take place between July 2017 and August 2017 so you would need to be contactable over this period. We can agree a time and place to meet that is suitable, safe and private.

The interview questions will focus on:

- What does 'adulthood' mean to you?
- What is important about 'adulthood' for you?
- What were your experiences of turning 18 as someone going through an asylum process in the UK?
- How have you coped during this period?
- What is being an 'adult' like for you now?
- How different, or the same, is adulthood from what you expected when you were a child?

At the end of the interview you will have some time to talk about how the interview has made you feel.

The interview will be audio recorded, transcribed and analysed as part of the research process. I will write the study up and submit my research to the University. It may also be published in a professional research journal. I will aim to share the study widely so that it can be of use to services supporting young

people seeking refuge; if there are opportunities for you to be involved in this, and you would like to do so, please let me know.

Will my information be confidential?

Nobody other than myself and my supervisors will know that you have participated in this study unless you tell them. All of your answers at the interview will be anonymised and your name will be changed so that you cannot be identified when the study is written up. Care will be taken to change during the study write up to change any obvious details that may reveal your identity but this also depends on who you choose to tell that you are taking part; your friends who know you well, for example, might be able to identify you if you have spoken to them about similar experiences and they know that you have been interviewed for the study.

Your right to confidentiality is very important and will only be broken if your safety, or that of another, is in immediate risk in which case I would discuss my concerns with my academic or field supervisor.

What are the benefits and risks to being involved?

Your involvement will be voluntary and there are no financial benefits to doing so. Your involvement will be anonymous and there are **no** direct benefits with regards to on-going immigration claims or individual access to support or services. Some people may find having their experiences heard and written up into a study rewarding. You may also feel it is important to contribute to research that may help other young people going through the same experiences as you.

There are no direct risks to being involved in the study but some people may find talking about this period of their life distressing. You will be given time to talk about how you feel at the end of the interview and invited to think through where you could go for support should you need to.

What are my rights?

It is your choice to be involved in the study. You have the right to withdraw your involvement at any point, even if you have already contributed to one interview, without having to give a reason. You have the right to request the withdrawal of your interview data at any point without having to give a reason, however, this will not be practically possible during the later stages of the study.

During the interview you have the right to decline to answer any question without having to give a reason. You can also end or take a break from the interview at any point.

How will my information be used?

All of your information will be stored securely. Transcribed interviews will be anonymised by using a pseudonym (a false name) and written into a research thesis for submission to the University and possible publication. The thesis may include quotes from your answers but these will be anonymised.

After the study has been submitted to the University, there may be opportunities to share the research with other interested groups. This might include, for example, giving a talk at a conference. You will be asked if you are interested in taking part in sharing the results of the study in the future and, if you are, how best to contact you. This is voluntary and **you do not** have to be involved. You should consider that the number of people being interviewed for this study is small; if you do want to be involved in sharing the results of this study this may make it easier for people to identify you from your answers.

I want to participate, what happens now?

You need to return the attached 'opt-in' consent form. You can do this yourself by sending the form to me:

Alison Smith c/o

University of Leicester

Clinical Psychology
Centre for Medicine
Leicester
LE1 7HA

You can also contact me via email XXXXX or leave a voicemail/text XXXXXX

Appendix I: Informed Consent Template



Informed consent form

Title of study: Experiences of turning 18 while seeking refuge in the UK as an unaccompanied minor

Researcher: Alison Smith, Trainee Clinical Psychologist, University of Leicester

I confirm that:

- I have read and understood the 'participant information sheet' for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions
- I understand my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without having to give a reason
- I understand I am free to decline to answer any questions without having to give a reason
- I agree to take part in the above study
- I agree to the interview being audio recorded
- I agree to the use of anonymised quotations from the interview to be used in the write up of the study and any future publications

I do/do not wish to be contacted after the study with a summary of the findings of the research. I want to be contacted by email/telephone/post and am happy for the researcher to retain my contact details for this purpose.

I do/do not want to be contacted in the future about the results of the study. I want to be contacted by email/telephone/post and am happy for the researcher to retain my contact details for this purpose.

.....
(signature of participant)

.....
(signature of researcher)

.....
(print name)

.....
(print name)

.....
(date)

.....
(date)

Appendix J: Outline of Interview Questions and Prompts

1.1 What does 'adulthood' mean to you?

Prompts:

How/does it differ from 'childhood'?

Has your understanding of 'adulthood' changed over time

1.2 What is important about 'adulthood' for you?

Prompts:

Are there some things it would be important for you to achieve as an adult?

What are your hopes/fears about being an adult?

1.3 What were your experiences of turning 18?

Prompts:

Were there changes to your life after 18?

Are there any experiences which stand out?

What helped the situation/ made the situation harder?

Was there anything important for you to think about as you approached 18?

1.4 How have you/did you cope during this period?

Prompts:

What has helped?

What has not helped/made things more difficult?

1.5 What is being an 'adult' like for you?

Prompts:

How/is your life different now you are 18 (or older)?

Are there good/bad things about being an adult for you?

1.6 How different, or the same, is adulthood from what you expected when you were a child?

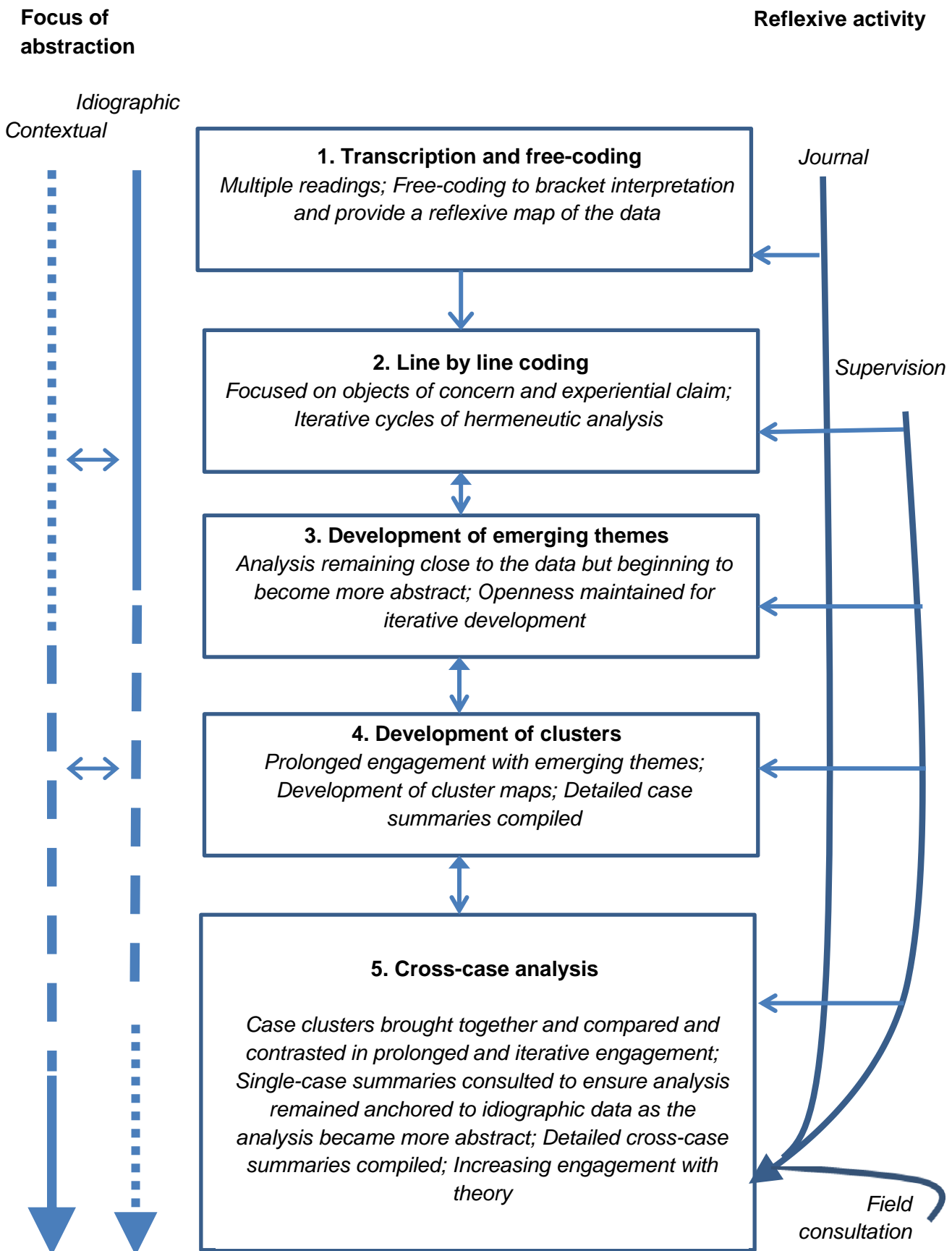
Prompts:

What did you think adulthood would be like when you were young?

What did you think about when you thought of your future as a child?

Appendix K: Summary of the iterative IPA process

Highlighting reflexive engagement and focus shifts between idiographic engagement and a more contextualised focus (full lines represent a greater focus; dashed lines reflect a withdrawing focus)



Appendix L: Extracts of Single-case and Cross-case analysis

Extracts and descriptions are given here of the full analysis process.

1. Single-case Analysis

1.1 Line-by-line coding and emerging theme development

The following extract, taken from Jahid's second interview (p.49) gives an illustration of how line-by-line coding and emerging themes were developed. This was an iterative process, developed over multiple cycles:

<i>Emerging themes</i>		<i>Line-by-line coding</i>
Being a man	P: Yeah, <i>because</i> if a woman has no-one to be there for them... people can use them , or any boyfriend can just, you	<i>Certain, obvious</i> Being a man = self-protection Others = untrustworthy
I can never know if it's a good person, or get on with them and because I sort their life or they're idiot...use them. Leave them on the am a man	street. You know, once a woman get used or abused and then after their life will <u>go through hell</u> . And I didn't want that kind of shit to happen to my sister. [mmmm, yeah].	Being a man= taking responsibility for others Repercussions of abuse are hell (for others) Protecting others/ women
Shouldering responsibility	want my mom and dad <i>even though</i> they are dead, who they are or where they are, I want them to be happy . wanted them to see....she's not struggling. So, yeah, <u>I did whatever it took me</u> . I brought her ,	Omnipresence of parents <i>Magnitude of my desire to honour them (of course I did)</i> <i>Sacrificing for others</i>

Annotations: (colour coded on the original) **Text in bold** indicates descriptions of objects of concern; *text italicised* indicates conceptual claims; text underlined marks linguistic indicators.

Line-by-line coding focused on 'objects of concern' and experiential claims (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). Linguistic coding was noted, although this was less of a focus considering participants were not speaking in their first language. Coding was an iterative process, turning to the data with more focused hermeneutics of age and gender (c.f. Langridge, 2007). This process latterly phased into the development of 'emergent themes'; a point of the analysis where my focus remained closely anchored to the data but at a higher level of abstraction (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012).

Emergent themes were tentatively clustered and mapped in iterative cycles to explore how the data might fit together or contrast. The following examples show this process:



Emerging themes were written on to post-it notes with corresponding key-words from the transcript. This allowed for free exploration of how themes clustered together and allowed for continual development.

Mapping the data in this way allowed me to move easily between the particular and the gestalt. Throughout the process of analysis the following reflexive questions were asked of the emerging analysis:

- *How might I account for the way these themes are clustered together?*
- *How well is the analysis capturing the narrative prose from the case-summaries?*
- *What might I be leaning towards or away from in terms of my own biases and assumptions?*
- *What utility might be gained by clustering the themes in this way?*

- *What might be lost by clustering the themes in this way?*

Once a sufficiently compelling map of clusters had been developed I compiled a 'case-summary' (see Appendix M for an example) which drew together details of each cluster, corresponding emerging themes and indicative quotes. The case-summaries became the main focus of analysis from this point.

2. Cross-case Analysis

Once a case-summary had been completed for all participants, I moved onto developing a cross-case analysis of theme clusters. This began with a process of mapping out clusters and exploring how the data might fit together/contrast. The following illustrations give an indication of this process:



Emerging clusters were written onto post-it notes which were colour coded for each participant. The themes that the emerging clusters comprised of were written onto smaller post-it notes and attached to the corresponding cluster title in a manner that allowed for them to be moved and developed.

The top photo shows an initial phase of this process, with clusters across the cases being very loosely grouped together.

The bottom photo shows a later stage, where cluster groupings became more defined and pronounced.

This was an iterative process, which involved the further development of case summaries.

2.1 Development of super-ordinate themes.

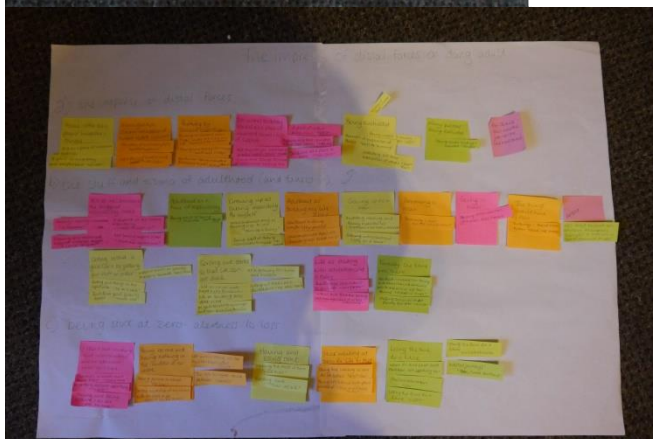
After considerable engagement with cross-case clusters, several 'maps' were compiled and discussed in supervision. This provided opportunity to account for and critique the groupings and to begin to tentatively engage more interpretatively with the data. Further analysis, following this, developed and collapsed the groupings into three overarching super-ordinate themes, each comprising of three sub-ordinate themes. Each of which were further refined and developed over the course of the analysis. The following illustrations set out an early stage in this process:



The cross-case clusters were explored in terms of a number of groupings.

The top photo shows an initial set of six maps, highlighting negative cases with a tentative narrative structure of how the themes grouped together.

The bottom photo shows a later stage of this process illustrating early development of one of the three super-ordinate themes.



The cross-case analysis then moved to compiling a detailed 'cross-case summary' (see Appendix N for an example) which was further developed during

the latter stages of analysis. Throughout this development single-case summaries (Appendix M) were consulted to ensure that the final analysis remained anchored to the experiences of individual participants.

References

- Langdridge, D. (2007). *Phenomenological psychology: Theory, research and method*. London: Person Education Limited.
- Larkin, M. & Thompson, A. (2012). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In A. Thompson & D. Harper (Eds.) *Qualitative research methods in mental health and psychotherapy: A guide for students and practitioners*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, Oxford. 99-116.
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. H. (2012). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, method and research*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Appendix M: Extracts from a Case-Summary

Once a sufficiently compelling map of clusters had been developed I compiled a 'case-summary'. Case summaries were developed, iteratively, over the course of the analysis and were not used in isolation; the interview transcripts, research diaries and interview audio were regularly re-visited throughout the analysis process.

Extracts from Jahid's case summary are presented below to give an indication of how these were organised. Case-summaries comprised of the following elements:

1. Emergent Clusters, Themes and Transcript Excerpts

The example below illustrates an extract of the emerging cluster '*It's on me...*' and one emergent theme within that cluster ('*It depends on me...*'). Subsequent emergent themes are indicated in brackets. Transcript excerpts highlighted in bold remained anchored to the corresponding cluster as the analysis moved to cross-case, in order to maintain a level of idiographic focus. In this case summary, clusters from the second interview are highlighted so that experiential shifts could be identified:

Cluster title	Emerging theme	Transcript extracts	Page/ line
Global codes (stance, tone)	Every element has a dark lining?	<i>He's a good person...but I was temporary there</i>	7:1-5
		<i>that's how I got English but I got bullied in the school as well</i>	8:4-5
		<i>Yeah, my girlfriend. She's got depression</i>	24:10
	Shift in tone?	<i>But now (bangs water bottle on table). I am not in that stage. (laughs) I'm happy.</i>	(2)54:1

2. Nested Summary Table of Clusters and Themes

A nested table summarised the more detailed work above; key excerpts are retained from the interview transcript. This provided an over-view of the case analysis and was taken forward for the cross-case analysis:

Clusters and emerging theme titles	Page/ line	Key excerpt
<i>It's on me: shouldering the struggle of responsibility alone (because I am alone)</i>		
It depends on me: Taking responsibility	21:7	<i>I have to sort it</i>
Not having support or help	(2)58:1	<i>Fighting on my own</i>
Seeking and rejecting independence	15:8	<i>No freedom</i>
Growing up as double hard: a time of increased struggle	13:14	<i>A lot of pressure</i>
<i>Being and taking on as man</i>		
Having responsibilities as a man	22:10	<i>Kids, family</i>
I can because I am a man	(2) 52:6	<i>I can</i>

3. Idiographic narrative.

Finally, a brief paragraph was written in order to maintain key aspects of concern for each participant; this aided analysis particularly during cross-case and interpretative stages by providing a means to check that the participant's voice was retained and honoured in the final analysis:

What should not be lost?	<p>First interview:</p> <p><i>... Multiple barriers to returning to education were talked about repeatedly and Jahid spoke of feeling that he had 'fallen out of his journey' because of his own decisions and those of the wider system (social services, government).....Growing up was described by Jahid as something he had to do by himself and often described his experiences or expectations of having to be responsible for others.</i></p> <p>Second interview:</p> <p><i>.....Jahid talked about the benefits of having been through difficult times (and the negative aspects of having had an 'easy' life) in terms of appreciating the value of life and opportunity and spoke of what he had been able to achieve.....Jahid spoke of how much family meant to him and how he tried to honour his parents even though he never knew them.</i></p>
---------------------------------	--

Appendix N: Extract from the detailed cross-case analysis table

A latter stage of the cross-case analysis involved the compilation of a tabulated summary, detailing each of the nine sub-ordinate themes. The table included sufficient single-case data to ensure that the analysis remained anchored to the initial idiographic focus. The following is an early extract of one of the sub-ordinate themes:

Corresponding super-ordinate theme: **It's on me: The push and pull of control**

Subordinate theme title: *Only one day different: Sudden shifts into 'adult'*

Case	Single-case cluster title	Single-case theme title	Single-case excerpt	Page/line
Basel	Approach to adulthood as both sudden and gradual	As something you become ready for, a state of mind	<i>So many points</i>	4:3
		Everything changed: turning 18	<i>Kicked me out</i>	37:5
	Kicked from the best of times into the worst of times	Childhood as the best of times	<i>Sweet times</i>	43:21
		Expecting freedom	<i>Power in your hand</i>	41:16
		Going from the best of times to loss	<i>Just gone wasted</i>	44:6
		Fucked up and old before my time	<i>Messed with my life</i>	32:16
Jahid	Turning 17 as a time of suddenly giving a shit and (others) taking the piss that I was not ready for	17 as a time of giving a shit	<i>Wanted to go back</i>	4:1
		They took the piss: Loss of support	<i>Disappear</i>	(2)57:4
		Not being ready	<i>Not ready</i>	36:19
Ansar	Alertness to 18 as a time of sudden loss of support (which I never had)	Turning 18 as a time of a sudden loss of support	<i>On your own</i>	24:20
		Age as not the same as how you feel inside	<i>Not inside</i>	28:3
Saber	On paper only; turning 18 as both a time of shocking change and continued support	Turning 18 as a time of shocking changes	<i>Big shock</i>	55:5
		On paper only: rejecting the significance of turning 18	<i>Not accepting that</i>	8:10
		Slowly, slowly; growing up as a gradual process	<i>Slowly changing</i>	13:2
		Receiving continued care and support	<i>Keep me here</i>	82:4

Appendix O: Extracts from Reflexive Diary

Reflexive diaries were kept throughout the research process; extracts below, relating to one participant (Jahid), illustrate how this aided the analysis of data:

1.1 Reflexive Comments Following Interview

‘After a de-brief conversation, and as I was packing away the interview materials at the end of our time together, *Jahid*, stayed to finish his drink. He lent back in his chair and looked a little shy, saying: “Sorry if my story is upsetting for you”. I replied something like; “I think it’s important we feel upset about each other’s struggles in life” and smiled. *Jahid* smiled back and rose from his chair to leave, still looking a little uncomfortable. As we walked from the room together *Jahid* spoke of the long hours at work he had ahead of him. After, I wondered what it was like for him to have got emotional in front of me during the interview and whether projecting the ‘upset’ on to me was a way of dealing with feelings or shame or humiliation. Later, I wondered about my assumption, and whether *Jahid*’s concern was more empathic and related to his sense of being a man as one of needing to protect (a more vulnerable) woman.’

1.2 Reflexive Comments During Analysis

‘As I was transcribing *Jahid*’s interview I listened more carefully to his answer about what advice he would give other young people in his situation. I noticed that I was surprised and a little disappointed in his answer- which was critical and suspicious of other’s seeking asylum. I wondered why he had not been more compassionate and understanding. Later, during the analysis, it struck me that *Jahid* felt very separate from other young people seeking asylum and described himself as having almost successfully taken on the Home Office as a child. I wondered about my assumption that, as a former asylum seeker, he would seek solidarity with others in the same position, and whether there was a ‘same position’....’

1.3 Reflexive Comments Following Supervision (case analysis stage)

‘(Supervisor) and I were reflecting on a moment in the interview transcript where I asked *Jahid* when he felt he became an adult. *Jahid* laughed and said “eighteen”, looking at me quizzically as though this should have been obvious. (Supervisor) wondered whether I thought I would have got different answers if I had asked about manhood rather than adulthood. Afterwards, I reflected on how I had framed the interview using constructs I had been socialised to in terms of age (adult, child, adolescent). I thought how I would have liked to have changed this and spent more time thinking about the wording I used. I returned to work on my case analysis of *Jahid*’s interview data and developed in my analysis a compilation of emerging themes that were attuned to how responsibility and expectation was gendered for *Jahid*. It also helped develop my reading of how ‘adult’ was made sense of; that there was a difference between how services spoke to ‘adulthood’ as a category, opposed to how, for *Jahid*, growing up was more a liminal stage.’

Appendix P: Chronology of Research Process

Dec 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Project development initiated with supervisor •Consultation with field members
Jan 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Literature review initiated
June 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Internal peer review (University of Leicester)
Aug 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Service User Reference Group review (University of Leicester)
Oct 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ethics proposal submitted
Nov 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ethics approval obtained
Dec 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Recruitment search initiated
June 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Interviews and transcription initiated
Aug 2017-May 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Analysis
Feb-May 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Write up
May 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Thesis submission
May- July 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Preparation for Viva
May- Aug 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Preparation for publication
August 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Dissemination to recruitment sites •Presentation/poster at University of Leicester research conference