The Process of Identity development in young Afghan 1.5 generation refugees in England: A Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract

The context of the past 40 years show that Afghanistan produces one of the largest numbers of refugees due to the ongoing conflicts. However, this group's experiences are often looked through a politicised, quantitative lens in research. Existing psychological literature on Afghan refugees highlights the psychological distress of various generations (Alemi et al., 2014; Mghir et al., 1995; Panter-Brick et al., 2009). However, there is an identified gap in psychological research on Afghan youth. Those who have arrived in England at specific developmental stages of their life have been identified as a unique generation. Through a narrative approach, this research focuses on enabling policy makers and academics to better understand the nuances associated with Afghan youth who had arrived between ages six and twelve, the 1.5'ers. The aim is to explore stories of how the youth recall their experiences of developing identity as refugees in England.

Five participants, three females and two males, who identified as Afghan, were recruited. All participants had arrived in England between the ages of six and ten and participated aged between 20-32. This research uses narrative methods and semi-structured interviews. A four staged Dialogical Narrative Analysis was designed for this study to analyse the stories as they emerged.

The emerging narratives presented the different processes that individuals experienced. Many participants spoke of loss and finding self, as many navigated complex social dilemmas. This process involves aspects of resilience against misconceptions that came from their social interactions and the growing activism towards homeland. In essence, the findings demonstrate the complexity and nuanced experiences and stories. The stories present the various actors and influences from society which impacted the participants as young children but equally as they formed their adult identities. The stories present the impact of

microaggressions, experiences of inequality and feelings of having their identities dictated by others who are perceived to hold more power. The narratives highlight the need to be listened to and given opportunities to build their own identities. It emphasises the need for continued dialogues and interactions to reduce misunderstandings and assumptions about the experiences of identity. This study informs our existing understanding of how Afghan youth begin to narrate their identities, an area highly linked to general psychological wellbeing. The analysis of stories comes with the awareness of the cultural perspective, a unique contribution to the research world. We begin to explore the roles main characters play in refugee youth identity development such as the role of family and media. Social context has a highly important role in this and experiences, such as those from school establishments, continue to impact identity through to adulthood. This study can inform educational psychology, social and political policies and encourage better access to appropriate resources in the context of youth refugees. Subsequently, this can facilitate their individual identity development from a culturally appropriate perspective.

1 CHAPTER ONE: Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

This thesis aims to explore and provide alternative narratives to the experiences of Afghan youth who had resettled in England. Afghan refugees, due to the ongoing conflicts, have been reported to make up a large percentage of the international refugee population. As of late 2021, Afghanistan became occupied by the Taliban and due to this forced occupation, thousands of Afghans fled. The UK has proposed a resettlement scheme to provide asylum for 20,000 Afghan nationals (GOV, 2021). As such, we can expect an increasing population of Afghans in England. Resettlement processes are complex and have been linked to mental health (Agic et al., 2019; Alemi et al., 2014). During resettlement, various changes take place in interactions with self and others. One such aspect is the importance of acculturation and assimilation processes. However, the abundance of research on refugee mental health has been through a quantitative and diagnostic lens, with an arguably simplistic overview of their needs. More important qualitative experiences are lost amongst statistical data. Counselling Psychology stems from humanistic and subjectivist principles which attempt to understand psychological distress from a qualitative and developmental lens. Equally, research on such processes in the Afghan population is scarce but has often focused on women, children and older generations. There is a shortage of research on experiences of early adulthood. Following research on US youth migrants, Rumbaut (2004) identified a unique generation, the 1.5. Existing literature highlights the nuances attached due to the developmental age in which they arrived. However, the existing literature on 1.5 focuses on the educational aspects and migrant generations are arguably different to those of refugee backgrounds. This is further explored in chapter 1.2.6.

Psychological research, particularly from a narrative perspective can increase the richness of our existing understanding. As a discipline, counselling psychology, commits itself to the relational aspects of working with experiences and moves away from pathology. One aspect of this discussion was the links between mental health and identity. Identity is complex and nuanced. Hence, a detailed discussion is presented in chapter 1.2.5.

Becoming a scientist-practitioner is an integral aspect of engaging with and contributing to scientific progress (Howard, 1986). This thesis aims to provide a rich exploration of the impact that arriving as a 1.5 generation (1.5G) may have had on Afghan youth. It provides a unique contribution by not focusing on educational attainment, as is often done so, but rather exploring unique concepts of identity. This thesis aims to create space for Afghan youth to express their identities and consequently, hopes that our existing knowledge progresses and reflects developmental ages. Due to the lack of extensive psychological research on Afghans, it has been considerably challenging to ensure the presence of appropriate, culturally sensitive interactions and policies in England. The proposed study will have added to existing studies on an under-represented group in Western societies. We can also hope to better understand identity from their unique perspectives and social circumstances, in addition to the dynamics created by having an insider researcher. Value is placed on the reflectiveness of being a science-practitioner, ethically and actively addressing *"real-world challenges"* as experienced by practitioners (Kasket, 2012). Thus, I aim to support equality and accessibility through ethical interactions with participants as a means of empowering clients (Cooper, 2009).

The literature review began with an exploration of research on refugees, focusing on the Afghan population. To situate the reader within the Afghan culture and context, I provide an overview of these issues and discuss the prominently dominated narrative of war. Concepts of self and identity as found in social sciences are discussed through a critical

evaluation of the incongruencies witnessed in definitions and theories. Each group have their unique challenges in addition to an identified generational difference. The 1.5G has been recently identified in literature with an emphasis on their complex journeys.

1.2   Literature Review
1.2.1   Refugees

A refugee is defined by the UN as a *"person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail him— or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution"* (United Nations Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 1951, p. 3). Their struggles have gained momentum in society and the media, with a particular focus on their psychological health and unique needs. The 1951 Refugee Convention and protocol (UNHCR) was developed to provide a legal and protective framework for refugees; there are about 79.5 million refugees as of 2019 (UNHCR, 2020). This has become a worldwide problem as people are forced to leave behind their homes, seeking refuge internally and externally. Syria, Afghanistan and South Sudan alone make up more than 50% of these statistics (UNHCR, 2020). In 2017, the 2nd country producing high numbers of refugees was Afghanistan and recently, UNHCR warned of an *"imminent humanitarian crisis"* (2021, p.1). Full results of the 2021 census are yet to be released however, 78,510 UK residents stated Afghanistan as their birth country (ONS, 2022).

Such statistics present an image of constantly increasing large populations entering new societies and cultures and provide a qualitative perspective. Exploring such populations would be beneficial across domains as it increases psychological understanding, allowing for societal changes and encourages appropriate legislation. As counselling psychologists, we are faced with increasing diversity in our clinical practice. As part of our responsibility, we must

ensure that our knowledge can cover the experiences of communities with which we may interact. Due to the ever-growing Afghan population in England, it becomes ever more important to raise awareness as we may have frequently interacted with them previously, as researchers, practitioners, or social agents.

1.2.2 Cultural and Historical lens

Historical context is key to our adaptive processes (Rumbaut, 2012). As such, a brief introduction to the Afghan culture will be important in navigating researchers. Afghanistan, a predominantly Islamic country in Central Asia, has a history of over 200 years with influences from Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Hinduism. As culture can impact our socialisation amongst other factors of development, it becomes necessary to create an appreciation of important social constructs (Chen, 2000; Liu et al., 2019). Collectivist cultures are often identified through the emphasis they place on the needs of the collective and relationships held between the members are central to the identity of the in-group (Gorodnichenko & Roland, 2012., Hoffman, 2015). Alongside my intuitive knowledge as an Afghan, I will refer to Entezar's dimensional analysis (2008). Within Afghan and other collectivist societies, extended families play a significant role in the relational dynamics (Georgas et al., 1997). Hospitality and honour are significant factors in holding relationships with the elders and building status (Dupree, 2002). Authority is therefore an important dimension as there is a higher tolerance for inequality within family dynamics and parents hold a high-value level of obedience. Within this, is the importance of privacy, a factor which is almost non-existent as certain matters become a part of the collective 'property' (Entezar, 2008). This is only a surface description, and it is important to not generalise research on grouped ethnicities as the assumptions we hold of collectivist cultures can be skewed and inaccurate (Talhelm, 2019). Contemporary psychology has often focused on cultural dichotomies such as collectivist versus individualistic societies (Hermans & Kempen, 1998).

However, there is increasing understanding that cultural connections can lead to hybridization and increasing cultural complexity. The idea of coherent or stable culture becomes less relevant to our increasingly complex society, especially with the added nuances of migration. Hermans & Kempen (1998) also discuss the ways in which this affects our notions of self and identity. For example, the introduction of various voices in those who have multiple cultural affiliations. Considering the historical background and recent conflicts behind their refugee struggles, I argue that studies completed on Asian populations may not be as representative or capture the nuances.

1.2.2.1   Afghan Displacement

Historically, Afghanistan holds a complex relationship with other nations. For instance, there is a history of war with Britain dating from the 1800s, followed by invasions from the Russians, and in the most recent times, the complicated dynamics with America. British troops in the 1800s attempted to extend their control from India to Afghanistan in opposition to the Russians (Britannica, 2020). Although Afghanistan was declared completely independent in 1919, the conflict only ended following a peace treaty (Ahmed, 2015). One of the biggest internal and external displacements of Afghans occurred during the Soviet invasion in 1979 whereby many escaped to neighbouring countries (Amnesty International, 2019). The generations of refugees in our society are often those who had sought safety following this point.

A further influx was created in the following civil wars. The war in the 1900s between the Mujahideen and the then leader, Najibullah, was followed by the proceeding Taliban regime. The regime had disastrous impacts on many, particularly increasing Afghan women's hardships who recalled narratives of identity struggles and imposed constraints (Lacopino,

1998., Rostami-Povey & Poya, 2007). Understandably, Afghan women and children formed the majority of those who sought safety (Khan, 2002).

The challenges of the Afghan people were exacerbated following the terrorist attack in 2001 on America. The American government believed that the terrorist leader, Osama Bin Laden, operated from Afghanistan. Following the loss of over 38,000 Afghan civilians, the US declared him dead in Pakistan (Crawford, 2018; The Whitehouse, 2011). The war left its irreparable mark with an increase in migration as living conditions dropped to frightening levels (Noor, 2006). The backlash and Islamophobia extended to the community in the West whereby Arabs, South Asians and Muslims were disproportionately affected with changes to their experiences of ethnic identity and assimilation (Gould & Klor, 2012; Kampf & Sen, 2006; Tindongan, 2011). Currently, there has been an increasing hostility towards refugees which has subjected refugees to racism. In the UK, this seems to be partly contingent on social and political activities (Leudar et al., 2008). Refugees are continuously faced with intimidating atmospheres and political decisions such as Brexit, introduction of the Anti-refugee bill, have all exacerbated the unwelcoming atmosphere. Although the UK has committed to the Afghan resettlement scheme running over five years, this gesture, in comparison to the economic interests that Britain had for more than two decades, can appear to be a symbolic gesture and disproportionate (Georgiou, 2021). The media further perpetuates the narrative that refugees are costly and cannot be housed, articles produced by newspapers have used economics to highlight points such as suggesting that Afghan refugees still living in hotels as of August 2021 are costing taxpayers £1m a day (Crew, 2022; Corker, 2022).

In the recent years, it has become evident that refugees and migrants within the UK and Europe have been responded to with racial denigration and hostility (Ibrahim, 2022). In the media, language such as 'illegal' or 'unlawful' have often been used to describe refugees

and British press has previously been found to hold most negative and polarised attitudes (Berry et al., 2015). The media is in fact, creating a false narrative that some refugees are more worthy of welcome than others (Georgiou, 2021). In England, it has been noted that Harrow accommodates over 60% of the Afghans who had arrived from 2000 onwards (Vacchelli et al., 2013). Each conflict created distinct generations of refugees as per their unique journeys of displacement. In August 2021, the Taliban gained control over Afghanistan, repeating the same atrocities as their 2001 rule. This recent event created a further generation of refugees who were forced to flee their homeland in unexpected and frightening circumstances. Although, this research was conducted before this event occurred, it is important to acknowledge the impact that such events will have on the narratives and the social world.

1.2.3   Mental Health

1.2.3.1   War & Mental Health

The consequences of war have been thoroughly researched with a focus on trauma (Barbara, 2008). The research has highlighted the impact on women and young people who are identified as experiencing the highest level of distress. The youth reportedly carry these through to adulthood and as such, the developmental aspects are highlighted.

War can have devasting impacts on both physical and psychological wellbeing, such as post-traumatic stress, depression, and anxiety (Barbara, 2008; d'Harcourt & Purdin, 2009). Quantitative studies have often measured these through the prevalence of symptoms and diagnosis (Miller et al., 2008; Panter-Brick et al., 2011). In one such study with over 700 Afghan participants aged over 15 years old, more than 60% reported experiencing at least four trauma events and symptoms of depression and anxiety (Cardozo et al., 2004).

As identified, children are left with healing the scars left behind by war (Van de Put, 2002). Their distress can be continuous (Kinzie et al., 1989., Smith et al., 2002). For example, in youth, daily stressors have been found to mediate the association between war exposure and psychological disorders, six years post-war (Newnham et al., 2015). Such experiences have also been assessed comparatively. Panter-Brick et al (2009) researched younger populations alongside their caregivers and teachers for psychiatric and social functioning. Their quantitative results showed that although the majority reported traumatic experiences, there was also the importance of understanding the trauma in the context of non-war related adversities. Both studies modified their interventions and data gathering so that it was culturally adapted. It highlighted the important positive impact of accounting for cultural differences and using specific checklists such as the Afghan Symptom checklist (Miller et al., 2006). In essence, this evidenced the sensitivity one can have to cultural power dynamic and the need for future research to focus on the cultural factors. In addition, the studies show that researching other aspects of well-being, especially in young people is equally important. However, statistical significance cannot gauge how the factors interact, hence the need for qualitative research.

Statistics have increased our understanding of clinical disorders, prevalence rates and has highlighted these from a clinical, diagnostic perspective (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). In effect, statistics can allow for resources to be distributed based on needs. However, they hold an arguably restricted function in modern-day Psychology whereby these needs are far more complex to understand. In addition, many self-scoring assessment measures have not been validated in terms of their cultural appropriateness (Richman, 1993). Therefore, mixed methods have voiced individual experiences in a way that the quantitative data could not. For example, Jones (2002) employed self-measurement scales and in-depth interviews to build an understanding of how Bosnian Herzegovinian

adolescents understood political violence and their psychological well-being. Adolescents who were engaged in the search for meaning understood their recovery as being bound up with the community rather than individually. Also, a mere 30-minute difference between locations produced different experiences. Arguably, qualitative research better captures context.

By considering context, we can begin to pave the way for policy reformation and guide interventions. For example, guidelines for working with refugees were possible through exploration of their lived experiences. As such, counselling psychologists focusing on lived experiences, in combination with qualitative methodologies can prevent the dismissal of identities (The British Psychological Society, 2018).

1.2.3.2   *Resettlement and Mental Health*

Resettlement is a process which can be seen through the lens of acculturation and assimilation. Acculturation refers to the changes that take place because of direct contact with culturally dissimilar people and social influences (Gibson, 2001; Redfield et al., 1936). Whereas assimilation is a process involving fusion with the memories, sentiments and attitudes of other groups, which becomes incorporated in common cultural life (Park & Burgess, 1924).

Many refugees continue to experience distress in their host countries upon leaving but most studies focus on pre-migration experiences (Ajduković & Ajduković, 1993; Scholte et al., 2004; Warfa et al., 2012). For example, they experience difficulties with the recipient countries attitudes, social isolation, and their basic needs. However, supportive factors such as family, future aspirations, in addition to social support has been identified (Khawaja, 2008). Thus, host countries hold the power to make the most impact. It is possible to improve psychological wellbeing when factors are adequately addressed and focused on providing

culturally sensitive care through their resettlement period, a complex process often linked to ideas of hope and safety (Agic et al., 2019; Lustig et al., 2004). Mental health professionals as part of a social system can encourage necessary support to help post-migration experiences.

Afghan refugees often report loss of social stability, discrimination and resentment. Alongside this, their attempts to integrate involve challenges with cultural traditions and fitting in (Tober, 2007). There seems to be a complex negation process that occurs during integration.

One systemic review explored psychological distress in Afghan refugees consisting of one mixed-method, seven qualitative and nine quantitative studies (Alemi et al., 2014). Issues relating to cultural conflicts, coping mechanisms and the need for mental health research within the community was stressed. However, this focused on studies between 1979 and 2013, arguably, considerable changes in both society and context call for more recent research. It is necessary to explore culturally relevant strategies to engage Afghans in research and to conceptualise ideas from a cultural perspective. In line with counselling principles, we need to continuously work towards context-appropriate research.

Amongst these, Afghan youth are one of the least researched. One study assessed the prevalence of psychiatric disorders in a sample of 12 to 24-year-old Afghans residing in the United States (Mghir et al., 1995). Structured interviews assessed correlations between traumatic events, parental acculturation, and distress. In addition to increased psychological disorders, there was a negative correlation between the acculturation of parents and the children's symptomology. These findings infer that a large percentage of Afghan youth suffer undiagnosed psychological distress and that family acculturation processes are linked to

relationships with their mental health. Thus, this calls for research that considers culture, family dynamics and generations.

In addition, Afghan resettlement processes have often been studied in the US (Lipson, 1993; Vacchelli et al., 2013). It is argued that the experiences of those resettling in the UK will be unique due to its own set of laws and social practices concerning migration. Fischer's (2017) qualitative study using relational sociology explored the links between self-identification and the emerging ties in the British Afghan community. Once again, the importance of family and ethnic affiliations in informing attitudes was highlighted. This further supports the need for research on the community to be situated within contexts of social, political, and history. This study, one of the few, highlighted the gaps within the psychology domain and although sociology can be linked closely to psychology, it does carry its unique nuances which may be better researched within a psychological framework and philosophy.

Despite the identified generational and developmental variation, studies have often only focused on the older generation of Afghan refugees with the mean age range of over 30 years old. Differences within the younger generation such as whereby adolescent refugees with lower rates of PTSD and a level of resiliency often present successful functioning when faced with adversities, are often missed (Mohamed & Thomas, 2017., Weine et al., 1995). However, it is important to not only focus on resiliency as a protective factor as we could face issues of creating 'toxic resilience'. For example, there needs to be an understanding that much focus on resilience or toxic positivity can lead to over tolerance of adversity (Chamorro-Premuzic & Lusk, 2017). Consequently, increasing the struggle to reach out for help when needed (Bastian, 2019). In addition, overemphasis can suggest that there is a right way of adapting to risk or threatening circumstances without the discussion of context, which can, unintentionally create abuse of power status (Mahdiani & Ungar, 2021). This can be

damaging to those of refugee backgrounds who are already, contextually, in state of lowered power based on societies definitions. Focusing on resilience building for such populations can be argued to be dismissive of their challenging and traumatic experiences. We need to consider how to incorporate appropriate levels of focus perhaps on both resilience and hearing of stories which may contain positive or negative experiences.

Research into the younger generation has often been on unaccompanied youth and focussed on their wellbeing and educational attainment (Gladwell, 2020; Jones, 2010). From quantitative data, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, several factors were found to be of significance in the integration process (Gladwell, 2020). In essence, high levels of education often resulted in socioeconomic improvement. However, this focused on youth who had reached 18 years of age following their arrival and research after they turn 18 is scarce. The developmental dynamics are considerably different, and this remains an inadequately addressed developmental gap (Husni & Cernovsky, 2015).

In England, community-based research has highlighted the needs of Afghans in the borough of Harrow (Vacchelli et al., 2013). Mental health stigmatisation appears to be a barrier as they revolve around misunderstandings and labelling those who suffer as 'crazy' and weak (Ashna, 2019; O'Donnel & Sharifi, 2016; Rintoul, 2010). As such, feelings of shame impact the level of reaching out. Alongside this, data presented the need for professionals to be trained to deal with specific community issues. Focus group conversations had indicated high priority for 'feeling part of British society', they suggested that being away from the war was enough for them to identify with the British way of life. Amongst these factors, issues of social support and immigration remained. Although the project's focus was on welfare provision, it has identified key gaps. Firstly, only two youth attended the focus groups which raised the question of barriers present in their journeys and the impact of methodology. They concluded that helping the youth was a significant aspect of future work

but since the project's completion over five years ago, the significant gap remains. This calls for opportunities in psychological research so that curiosity into the Afghan communities can positively impact stigmas, allowing for societal changes.

In summary, war significantly impacts mental health and psychological well-being across the lifespan and within Afghans, culture and family dynamics are key factors. Literature has identified gaps in the research available on the population, especially amongst the youth. Therefore, there is a need for research across domains to explore these experiences from a qualitative, developmental, and culturally sensitive perspective.

1.2.3.3   Identity & Mental Health

Mental wellbeing and identity hold a close relationship, consequently, both can impact other areas in our life. It is suggested that the Afghan population have unique but complex experiences concerning their identity. For example, Alemi et al (2014) stresses the presence of cultural conflicts and Fischer (2017) suggests the important influence of familial and ethnic affiliations. Therefore, it is fundamental to study such processes and relationships and creates the argument for identity research in the Afghan population.

Research has shown evidence for an interactional, multidimensional model between psychological distress and identity processes (Groen et al., 2018; Syed et al., 2013). Particularly when exploring this in migrants. These models have suggested that interactions between both ethnic and national identity can aid adaptation and acculturation. This is supported by the responses received by the host country as there seems to be a varying degree of impact based on societal pressures in assimilation. (Phinney et al., 2001; Rumbaut, 2012). Theories are discussed in 1.2.5.2.

Cultural identities and the use of self, such as self-esteem, can act as buffers for other forms of psychological distress (Mossakowski, 2003; Thoits, 2012). For example, support seeking behaviours are increased with the processing of identities and creates tolerance towards stigmas (Atkinson & Grim, 1989). For ethnic minority groups, participating in their ethnic identities has been linked to higher levels of daily happiness (Syed et al., 2013; Kiang et al., 2006). Participation was defined by engagement in cultural activities, listening to their ethnic music, attending events that essentially exposed them to their ethnic group.

Further to this, research on Hispanics and African-Americans have suggested that a stronger ethnic identity contributes to better psychological health (Greig, 2003). This is arguably more complicated in populations who manage dual nationalities. For those who have been exposed to collective trauma, interventions that look at clarification of cultural identity can have a positive impact on increasing well-being (Taylor & Usborne, 2010). In essence, we can presume that this cross-cultural relationship may be useful in improving engagement with psychological services.

Due to the research gaps on Afghans in the UK, I will refer to studies conducted in Europe as there are closer similarities in comparison to other continents. Groen et al (2018), explored ideas of cultural identity with mental health amongst Afghan and Iraqi refugees in the Netherlands. Their findings suggested that stress and acculturation relate to cultural identity and that three domains were significant in this: personal identity, ethnic identity and social identity (Fischer, 2017). The use of grounded theory provided a significant contribution to this area as it encompasses qualitative data. However, it is challenging to explore how certain factors such as their existing engagement with psychological treatment and the absence of their immigration status whilst on the study, may have impacted their sense of self and psychological wellbeing (Jannesari et al., 2019; Warfa et al., 2012).

Internationally, there is a depth of research on mental health and identity, with a focus on cultural identity for minority groups. However, these can be less appropriate for understanding the cultural groups present in the UK. Also, it is important to note that each Asian culture holds unique experiences in acculturation and ethnic identities and thus we need to focus on specific groups (Chuang, 2011; Salant & Lauderdale, 2003; Dupont, 1996).

1.2.4 Afghan refugees Identity

Afghan refugees and their experience of identity remain a gap in qualitative research. The understanding we do hold come from an ethnographic, sociological perspective. It is also clear that most research has focused on women, men, and the elderly generations (Akseer, 2011; Sadat, 2008; Omidian, 1996). I draw upon three studies that have explored Afghan refugees experience of identity to highlight the differences.

Sadat (2008) discussed identity in the Afghan diaspora from a hyphenated and ethnographic perspective amongst European, American and Australian communities. Various topics were identified as helping to shape cultural identity formation, including psychological health. The hyphenated identity of *'Afghaniyat'*, was the incorporation of moral values, beliefs and customs. Sadat (2008) highlighted the importance of collective belonging and identity, or as he suggested, the ways Afghans are faced with the choice to either preserve, hyphenate or reject their *Afghaniyat.* In addition to this, deep affection and desire to reconnect to those back home was found. This concept has also been present amongst Afghan diasporic women in Germany and India (Singh, 2010). They found it difficult to overcome the homogenised and stereotyped identity often placed on them, and the consequent limitations of defining themselves. It seems that Afghan identities often involve a reconciliation process but in the absence of a space to share their narratives.

A further ethnographic study explored families in America, Omidian (1996) looked at ageing in the refugee community and gathered experiences as narrated by elderly Afghans. Despite living in America for several years, many Afghans still described themselves as *'Muhajir'*, the Afghan word for migrant and shared their identities as largely defined by their family and religion. The family holds a significant role, and it was relayed through the elderly's concerns that their children were losing aspects of their 'Afghan' self. This dilemma, also identified by Sadat (2008), suggested a juggling of relationships between society and family members. In addition, cultural and generational patterns existed. For example, depression persisted in the elderly women, but not in the youth. They viewed themselves as healthy but were able to easily list illnesses for their family member. These subtle differences suggest the importance of clarifying youth experiences of adjustment. Methodologically, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility in data collection. Participants may have felt more at ease, possibly reducing feelings associated with interrogation as many refugees go through this process when they initially arrive at their host country. Some participants allowed their interviews to be recorded. However, there was distrust and apprehension amongst the participants with regards to having an American, 'outsider' researcher into their lives. Perhaps this dynamic impacted how information was relayed. Although insightful, the youth have often been neglected in certain aspects of research (Boyden & de Berry, 2004). It also emphasises the need for alternative perspectives in understanding experiences amongst Afghans and highlights a research gap concerning developmental groups.

Potentially overcoming this limitation is a study completed by Akseer (2011). Akseer explored identity formation in Afghan female youth aged between 14-18 years old in Canada. Six, first-generation females completed semi-structured interviews. In addition to experiences of discrimination and bias within the educational systems, their identity development often

involved suppression. However, community efforts to provide a nurturing context helped to aid more positive identities. In comparison to Omidian's study, Akseer was from an Afghan background. The reflexivity on the insider perspective was highly important in contextualising experiences. For example, she was aware of her pre-existing familiarity with the 'Afghan Muslim' identity but noted that ethnic and linguistic differences were not as significant to her participants. Frankl (2004, p. 20) captured this paradox whilst exploring narratives of concentration camp inmates, *"Such detachment is granted to the outsider, but he is too far removed to make any statements of real value. Only the man inside knows. His judgment may not be objective; His evaluations may be out of proportions."* The participants' age range provided a critical perspective of the development of identity. However, the participants were born and raised in Canada, understandably their sense of self may hold closer connections to their Canadian identity. It would be important to consider how this development is impacted when there is already a pre-existing sense of self upon arrival.

The differences in host countries cannot be dismissed. The UK Census has highlighted that lack of research in the UK explains findings for high levels of mental health difficulties amongst the community. It is only in 2020 that the first full-scale ethnography of Afghan male migrants in England was explored (Khan, 2020). In this qualitative study, Khan discovered stories of violence, displacement, and kinship. The men recollected stories and poems to make sense of their journey. We are only beginning to create a space to understand multi-faceted journeys. Through research, we may be able to better inform healthcare agencies who are initially involved in communicating with refugees and minority groups. This census, albeit several years ago, provides a rationale for the importance of researching an underrepresented population and can help further thinking about improving services nationally.

Each country has its perspectives towards refugees, this is embedded in the society and thus I argue that the gaps need to be addressed closer to our context in the UK. Although experiences of identity within Afghan women, men and older generations provide us with invaluable context and empathy, there is more that can be addressed within the youth.

1.2.5   Identity

1.2.5.1   Definitions

Defining identity is an enigmatic process (Hall & Du Gay, 1996; Fearon, 1999). There are ongoing debates on the number of identities one may hold, and consequently, the impact that social interactions may have (James, 1927; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Moreover, there is the issue of whether identity is stable or ever-changing. Burke and Stryker both suggested the presence of a stable identity. This contrasted with social identity theorists who propose the malleability of our identities. However, I argue for a constantly shifting and multifaceted approach towards identity.

I pay particular attention to cultural identity. This focus has come from the information gathered in the literature review. For example, studies have suggested that clarifying cultural identity can have a positive impact on overall wellbeing of those who have previously been exposed to trauma (Taylor & Usborne, 2010). Thus, making it most suitable for a participant group which has had a history of intergenerational trauma. In addition, it has appeared that studies on ethnic minorities such as the Afghan diaspora have often explored aspects of cultural identity (Groen et al., 2018; Sadat, 2008). These studies have suggested its' links with acculturation processes.

Cultural identity has been suggested to encompass personal, ethnic and social identity (Fischer, 2017). This can also be understood as the interplay of culture, ethnicity and some scholars believe, can include religion (Britto & Amer, 2007). This understanding of cultural identity evidence that for some communities, such as the Afghan community, exploration of an identity concept which has various factors including religion, could be most beneficial and insightful as it considers some of their most valued experiences. A narrative perspective on cultural identity can provide insight into the various factors and relational aspects of its process over time and development. It develops our knowledge beyond the 'self' existing in isolation and captures the whole being and aspects which makes an individual.

Some academics use the 'self' and 'identity' interchangeably because the self is an important tool in our perceptions and identity is tantamount to self-concept (Erikson, 1968; Oyserman et al., 2012). Hence. I will also be using these interchangeably throughout the thesis.

As stated above, cultural identity does include ethnicity. Ethnic identity is defined as *"a dynamic, multidimensional construct that refers to one's identity… as a member of an ethnic group"* (Phinney, 2001, p. 4821). This would exist alongside ones' sense of national identity; whereby one has feelings of belonging and attitudes to the larger society (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997).

Identity can be defined as the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is (Oyserman et al., 2012). Similarly, Stryker and Burke (2000) suggested that we can describe it concerning the culture of people. It is linked to the meanings that individuals place on their social roles and essentially relates to *"people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others"* (Hogg & Abrams, 1988, p.2). Self-concepts can include content, attitudes, or

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evaluative cognitive judgments, all of which aid in meaning-making (Oyserman & Markus, 1998). Some have seen identity as *'a location in a certain world and can be subjectively appropriated only along with that world'* (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.152). All definitions envision identity as largely attached to society, which can be time situated, focusing on the past, present and what one sees oneself becoming as. Fearon (1999) discussed identity from a linguistic, socially constructed perspective, that holds a double sense. The first, like Oyserman et al (2012), is described as a more socially connected definition and the second relates to personal identity.

Identity can be split into several subdomains, for example, social psychology has contrasted personal and social identities. Personal self-concept in psychology has been defined as traits that may feel distinct from our social identities and combining traits that feels separate from the social or role identities (Owens et al., 2010). Fearon (1999) argued that it is a 'more-or-less unchangeable' part that one takes pride in. Social identities, on the other hand, refers to groups such as national and ethnic identities. Ethnic identity would, as per Fearon (1999), be classed as a 'type' identity, involving sharing some types of similarities such as national or ethnic identities. It encompasses aspects such as belonging and knowledge of the group, in combination with practised cultural traditions (Phinney, 1990). However, as migration levels continue to increase, it can be argued that ideas of self are largely constructed within society and are mind-dependent, thus explaining the difficulties in reaching a consensus with terms. We can build our self-concepts from what becomes relevant in our time and place (Brewer, 1991; Tajfel, 1981).

1.2.5.2   Theories

There are several theories of identity development. Mainstream theories such as stage theories have made important contributions and thus, I briefly outline them, however, I focus on process theories such as Identity process theory (IPT) (Breakwell, 2014), Berry's (1997) and the Dialogical self theory (Hermans, 2001). These hold stronger relevance to the research topic and are more in line with the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of this research. The stage theories (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966) essentially view identity through stages one proceeds across the lifespan. 'Identity versus role confusion' or the fifth stage, starts early when a child begins to ask two questions; i) who am I and ii) what is my place in this world (McAdams et al., 2006). Erikson proposed that one strives to build a conscious connection with those in society but as an adult, to love and to work was most important (Hoare, 2002; Love and Work in Adulthood, 1977).

Although powerful in enabling a wider discussion surrounding identity, the notion of a fixed or linear identity remains troublesome. Further theories have attempted to expand on this and provide more insight into the process as one transitions into adulthood, such as Marcia's (1966) proposed relevance of exploration and commitment as part of identity formation. Although it evidences the evolving aspects of identity and challenges the idea of a static entity (Berman et al., 2008), the issues surrounding a coherent sense of self remains. It can be argued that formulating identity as an active search before commitment is quite simplistic.

Epistemologically, both models suggest that identity is more than an internal process made up of biological drives and gives insight into the truths that are co-constructed with society (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010). However, it does not adequately answer 'why' and 'how' (Marcia, 2007; Sokol, 2009). Moreover, the ideas proposed suggests that identity is an achievable goal. This contradicts longitudinal studies which have found support for a shifting and ever-changing identity process, with little evidence to suggest that young people could

ever reach an 'achieved' identity by their early adulthood (Fadjukoff et al., 2016; Kroger, 2007; Josselson, 1996). Conflicting messages on the development of identity past adolescence call for more exploration (Sokol, 2009). Other theories have been effective in filling this gap and have suggested that issues such as vocational, political and religious are significant during young adulthood. A frequent shift in goals challenges Freud's ideas of love and work which Erikson favoured (Harker & Solomon, 1996; Vaillant & Milofsky, 1980). Although these values can be linked to culture, the studies cannot be applied cross-culturally as over 60% of participants on studies of identity came from white backgrounds. Perhaps identity as narrated today is that from a Caucasian and Western standpoint (Sneed et al., 2006). Traditionally, it appears that research in psychological disciplines has excluded cultural groups, ethnicities and narratives which has deterred the development of psychology in certain aspects and forms. It is common for research to state that some participant groups are 'hard to reach'. However, this terminology itself is arguably problematic as it implies that the problem is within the group itself rather than the ways in which we, as researchers, approach them (Brackertz, 2007). In counselling psychology, we come across individuals from all backgrounds, and our work relies on evidence-based approaches. Arguably, a lack of research on our participant groups can lead to biases and misunderstandings. As research practitioners, we have a responsibility towards conducting research with all participant groups and reducing any barriers which may be perceived in research participation. This becomes significant when working with refugees and migrants whereby the interdependence of the stages can be reductionist. Their circumstantial difficulties may make it more challenging to resolve dilemmas at specific stages until later.

Alternatively, the IPT (Breakwell, 2014), a Socio-psychological model, conceptualises self-identity as its' content and value dimensions regulated by two universal processes, assimilation, accommodation and an evaluation of the content of the identity

through meaning and value (Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014). The value is frequently reinterpreted based upon the changes we come across in the social value systems. In essence, it views identity as a process spanning across an individual's life and our biological characteristics as linked with the social context. Thus, we attach meanings to our experiences following which a process of assimilation occurs into our identity and accommodation takes place as adjustment occurs in the existing structures. Evaluation is whereby meaning is allocated to the identity contents (Breakwell, 2014). The theory makes use of processes and evaluations which are suggested to be culturally universal. This theory provides an approach that considers the contextual factors such as when identity is threatened by society (Breakwell, 2010). It is arguably better suited to refugees who are faced with various internal and external challenges and its historical use in populations who have experienced struggles such as young Jewish individuals, strengthens its applicability. It has also helped us to understand the importance of ethnic identification on psychological wellbeing (Jaspall & Cinnirella, 2012).

Berry's model of acculturation, also known as the fourfold model (1997) discusses the importance of assimilation, integration, marginalisation & separation. Integration suggests that individuals maintain some resistance to change, but also move towards becoming more adjusted to the larger societal framework and decides to become a part of the dominant cultural group. When there is a loss of both cultural and psychological contact of their ethnic society, they find themselves in, we can say that marginalisation has occurred. However, when one decides to maintain their ethnic identity, they chose to separate from the dominant cultural group. They wish to lead without fully participating in the larger society to the extent of leading their independent existence. Berry's model (2005), as seen below in *figure 1*, indicates the links on an individual level and presents how behavioural shifts are inevitable upon contact with two cultures.
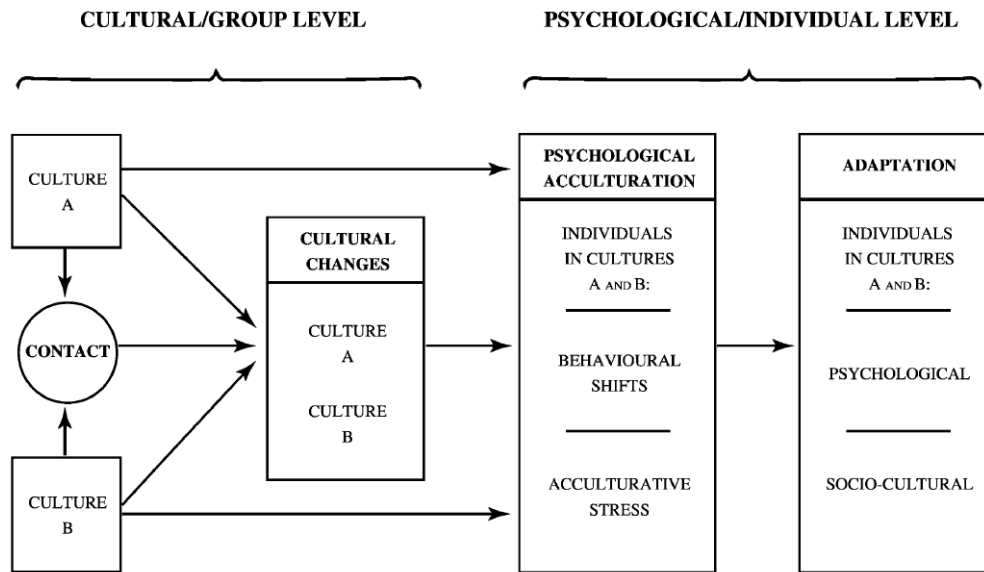
Figure 1

These strategies are part of the acculturation process and involve two goals; either conserve cultural identity or adapt. Those who have integrated are suggested to experience positive impacts of better psychosocial outcomes in both self-esteem and pro-social behaviours (Coatsworth et al., 2005). In addition to this, the model has been applied to understanding shifting changes in identity amongst age groups. For example, it has been found that personal identity and ethnic identity are often shifted away from those individuals held before 'contact' with the new culture. They also begin to consider how and whether they should engage in acculturation (Berry et al., 1989). For refugees, this is perhaps a more suitable lens as it considers two culturally different contexts and from both a group and individual level. The model can be useful in understanding the process of justification in explaining their identities to both the dominant cultural group in society and their ingroup (Verkuyten & deWolf, 2002). Furthermore, it considers the variations found in the adaption during resettlement processes and accounts for the differences.

More recent developments have been proposed by Ward (2013) based on international work with immigrants and ethnic minority groups. Ward (2013) focuses on integration,

especially as those who seemingly pursue integration appear to have adapted better. Specifically, it aimed to address the process, measurement and context in which acculturation occurs in. In relation to the process, Ward (2013) discovered that notions of 'reaching a balance' was expressed by young immigrant youth participants as a way in which they felt they could achieve success in living in New Zealand. In the study, the strategies for creating this balance were suggested to be alternating and blending ethno-cultural orientations. This alternation occurred between ethnic, cultural, religious or national orientations based on what participants viewed the need for. Through hybridization, participants felt that they could maintain a balance.

Berry's model (1997) suggested that cultural maintenance and contact-participation is the fundamental components of acculturation. However, there has been variations and elaborations of this model. For example, research on the domains of attitude, behaviours and identity have suggested that there are differences in public and private behaviours, with greater ethnic traditions being maintained at home (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2003). In addition, some extra factors such as religion can be suggested to hold a protective aspect, with a proposal that religious dimensions of cultural identity should be included with Muslim immigrants (Ward et al., 2010).

Ward (2013), aimed to look further into context. In relation to the study, it was noted that a socio-political context which supports multiculturalism can lead to adaptive outcomes. Their study, as conducted in New Zealand, found that contextually, there were moderately positive attitudes towards immigrants (Ward & Liu, 2012). We can understand identities considering context and see it through a culturally appropriate lens in an increasingly diverse society (Jaspal & Yampolsky, 2011). To evaluate this further, we can refer to the Dialogical Self theory, one which considers these points and complexities in detail.

The Dialogical Self theory looks at decentralisation of the self and culture (Hermans, 2001). The theory moves away from the idea of a core self or identity and instead moves towards a multiplicity of positions which exist in the self. This re-iterates that the concept of the self as we know it, is indeed continuously moving and sensitive to trans locality. This challenges more traditional approaches which suggest that identity can be linear or fixed. Time and space hold equal importance for the narrative of what forms the dialogical self. The DST argues that one can hold many positions and can be in agreement or disagreement with each other. It proposes that there is a multi-voicedness to the self, in that others will have a position in the self. This creates an alternative perspective. Within this, exists the inner and external voices which influence the sense of self. In the DST, the idea of the self is not viewed in isolation. Rather, it considers the permeability of the concept and the context of other positions. Neuropsychological evidence has also proposed and further supports this notion of the multiplicity of self (Klein & Gangi, 2010). From such research, we can largely argue that identity is formed from interrelated, functionally independent systems (Klein & Gangi, 2010). This perspective helps us to further understand and apply this to the narratives of identity in migrant groups, refugees and those who have experiences of navigating several backgrounds or exposure to conflicting cultures.

In relation to how the DST can be applied to better understanding refugees and migrants' experiences, we can look into dialogical misunderstandings (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). A refugee entering a new culture will have two or more internal positions. For example, 'I as Afghan' and 'I as British'. This interacts with external positions through the process of acculturation where they are exposed to other cultures. This interaction leads to a higher likelihood of experiencing multiple identities as one experiences conflicts or fuses with the culture. However, it also has the potential to create high levels of dialogical misunderstanding as they organise their self-systems (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). In addition, the DST suggests that

there are collective voices or voices of a group (Wertsch, 1991). These voices can organise the meaning systems that come from the dialogical relationship, in the sense that it can have power differences whereby some groups have more opportunity to express their views than others. It has been suggested that "*the relationship between a collective voice may constrain or even suppress the meaning system of an individual, although the individual may fight back in order to be heard*" (Hermans, 2001, pg 263). This suggests that refugees may find themselves in similar experiences due to the power differences and the societal definitions of expectations, even when their own expectations are in opposition. Their identity is often linked to complex issues of colonization and power in the homeland and host country (Bhatia, 2002). In essence, models such as DST, presents the various challenges that can be a part of acculturation, and which is missed from previous theories such as Berry's (1997). The DST emphasises the movement towards viewing acculturation through a lens of processes which is filled with tension across incompatible cultural positions (Bhatia, 2002).

In summary, such studies and proposals demonstrate the need for a systemic attention in research as society faces greater proportions of diversity. In addition, it presents the need for cultural attention so that we may become better at understanding complex processes of integration and adaptation. Identity is largely contextual, and research could increase our existing knowledge and allow for participants to create their definitions without imposition. The proposed study adds to this by identifying a group of people who are under-represented in Western societies. This allows for a better understanding of what 'identity' is for each and how this relates to their social circumstances.

1.2.5.3   Identity Processes in Refugees

Identity development involves acculturation, whereby there is a potential consequence for conflict and the need to negotiate (Berry, 2005). For example, immigrant youth seem to show a preference for integration and hold positive ethnic and national identities. This is followed by a preference for separation and a higher level of ethnic identity (Berry et al., 2006). These attitudes suggest support for Berry's model as there seems to be an initial preference to seek integration. However, exploration of the existing literature continue to suggest the importance of other interacting factors. Thus, evidencing the need for a multifaceted approach towards identity processes rather than a linear process.

The processes engaged within conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction have been examined to provide insight. Korac (2004) explored identity processes in refugees from former Yugoslavia who had resettled in other European countries. Findings suggested that policies and practices in the host country have a significant role in aiding boundary formation and recreating inter-ethnic relationships. This is important in emphasising the dynamics that take place on a social level, particularly the role of those in positions of power. Perhaps their ability to adjust policies, when deemed necessary, is key to bringing positive change.

Further to this, Phinney et al (2001) studied immigrant youth in USA, Israel, Finland and the Netherlands. This was aimed to explore the formation of identity and the inter-relationship between ethnic identity and national identity. The experiences in different host countries alongside the use of scales such as the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992), helped to categorise participants into four identity groups: integrated, assimilated, separated and marginalised. Levels of ethnic identity were higher in the US and Netherlands in comparison to Israel and Finland, with differences in the national identity scores for all. The variability questioned a two-dimensional theory of the relationship between ethnic and national identity. Again, the conclusions pointed towards the attitudes

held by the host countries and the focus given to adolescents. Such findings emphasize the need for societies to create environments where immigrants are well accommodated. This research is influential as it not only challenges an existing theory but also recognises the interactions with members of society. If this relationship were better assessed, it would positively influence other areas of society such as facilitating the development of trust amongst citizens (Fukuyama, 2018).

However, these studies and results are argued to be less related to those at different stages as they cannot reflect the shifts across the lifespan. Research on children of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants has suggested that ethnic identities shift from adolescence to early adulthood (Feliciano, 2009) and this was later supported by Feliciano & Rumbaut (2018). It was understood that the identity labels typically solidify by adulthood. For example, Liebkind (1993) looked at ethnic identity as self-reported by young Vietnamese refugees and their parents in Finland. The study employed the Hopkins Symptom checklist and a depression scale. The findings suggested youth sense of ethnic self-perception were impacted by the period they had spent in Finland, with a reportedly increasing sense of the Finish identity in comparison to their parents. This did suggest a potential conflict in the relationships between parents and adolescents. Thus, identity development makes a lasting impact on both generations and occurs through a process which can involve conflicts and thus impact the narrative that is created.

It is important to note the earlier discussions on whether identity can solidify. People consistently and constantly experience development or changes within this. Alternatively, longitudinal, and retrospective studies may give better insight into the process. Also, the participant groups are important as migrants may not necessarily face similar challenges of prosecution, therefore it would be beneficial to consider this from an alternative perspective.

1.2.5.4 Identity Processes in Afghan Refugees

Afghan refugee's identity development is under-researched in the UK and thus I draw upon studies conducted internationally. One recent study conducted on Afghan Hazara refugees explored the negotiation of multiple identities as they resided in Australia (Radford & Hetz, 2020). These identities included Afghan, Hazara, Muslim, Australian and refugee. Such studies have created a pathway for further research that can explore the various ways that Afghan refugees maintain ties with their ethnic identity whilst in exile (Akseer, 2011; Mackenzie & Guntarik, 2015; Svele, 2012). However, these studies have seldom been from a psychological perspective which creates a gap in perhaps an awareness of how these identities and maintaining ties could influence psychological wellbeing.

In the UK, studies from social anthropology have aimed to explore Afghan refugee's identity development. Schlenkhoff (2006) found that the narratives in which Afghan refugees used to make sense of their altered status involved the re-creation of life narratives. These memories came from their homeland and new experiences in London. Their identities were formed through a juggling act on many levels and there were questions of what defined 'true Afghan-ness'. However, the narratives also suggested a large degree of withdrawal from the host country, whereby individuals selectively engaged with aspects of their newly identified life. Issues with trust amongst the community was a factor in the few social relations that they held. Essentially, there are complex dynamics at play in the London community. This highlights the limitations in our existing understanding of identity within the community. In addition to this, the use of narratives enabled a rich exploration of these interactions from a multi-levelled perspective. In comparison to categories or statutes, we learn more about

complex processes from in-depth methodologies as it gives us insight into several factors present.

Ethnic identity in young people have been found to impact self-identification and is a crucial aspect of their journeys. From a segmented assimilation framework, multiple patterns of ethnic self-identification suggest the nonlinear pathway of identity development (Rumbaut, 1994). This suggests that identity is a complex and continuously shifting process. Perhaps narratives can help us to look at the process and explore the shifts within the journeys.

1.2.6   1.5'ers

The associated complexities of intergenerational conflicts between the youth and older generations have often been overlooked. The tendency to explore the first or second generation has in effect meant that minimal research exists on the newly identified 1.5G. This is despite the ever-growing evidence that acculturative stressors can be expanded beyond the first generation in ethnic minorities (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). First-generation individuals are born and socialised in another country, beginning their immigration journeys as adults. The term is often used in politics regardless of the age of arrival. The second generation refers to those born and socialised in the country of migration. However, experiences of mid-adulthood immigrants will vary in comparison to those who arrive as older adults, in that they may have had children, prior work-experience, unlikely to shed their native languages versus those who may be at the end of their working careers or able to learn a new language (Rumbaut, 2004). Rumbaut (2004) identified a unique group of individuals following his work with Japanese immigrants in the US. He found that the Japanese had clear terms for the first four generations; Issei, Nisei, Sansei, Yonsei, used in references to those who migrated between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although the youth were of

immigrant families, they had distinct differences; i) the age of arrival and ii) how many years they had been exposed to the US. Thus, the term 1.5G; pre-adolescents, primary-school-age children, typically between six and twelve, who have learned or begun to learn their mother-tongue, but largely complete their education in their country of migration. Key quantitative differences helped to form the argument for expanding research into specific generations. One such difference is education and occupational attainment. For example, Mexican 1.5G had fewer college dropouts in comparison to the first or 1.25G. There was also a difference in the migrant group's country of origin. For example, Indian migrants from both first and second-generation held a high percentage of college degrees. Concerning ethnic identity differences, 1.5 said that they identified with their national origins more in comparison to the second generation.

The age of arrival does result in differences across domains. As such, it highlighted the need for cautiousness around applying existing findings to other cultures. It would be important to investigate the potential impact of age of arrival on identity processes. This comparative, statistical, cross-generational study has effectively, given an image of how these differences can impact development. Furthermore, social dynamics alongside the context of reception were factored for. Other factors include the language assimilation processes, acculturation and identity. This is the focus of the following pieces of literature. However, because there may an unnecessary splitting which could add to the confusion, it may be more relevant to hear what individuals perceive themselves.

Equally, Rumbaut (2004) has specified that methodological issues exist around the age of arrival. His initial work began on migrants who were perceived to experience fewer complexities in comparison to refugees who may have several entries to a country until they are given refuge. It is argued that distinguishing such terms can cultivate awareness of the unique experiences and challenges that each may have. Further, this could aid government

policies through statistical data by presenting figures of who arrives in the UK and ensuring there is appropriate employment of resources upon arrival.

Most research on the 1.5'ers has been conducted on the experiences of American migrants, mainly from Hispanic backgrounds, and a lot more is available on the experiences of those affected by the Holocaust (Ellis & Goodwin-White, 2006; Gonzales et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2003; Suleiman, 2002). One alternative study focused on Ethiopian refugees (Kebede, 2010). Kebede assessed participant construction of identities through the theoretical lens that identity is a continuous process. Participants were recruited at an Ethiopian conference and interviews were conducted both over the phone and face-face. The questions focused on reflections on the sense of belonging and the role of this in their formation of identity. Kebede, in line with Rumbaut's proposition, argued that the formation of identity in the 1.5G is quite complex, which leads to difficulties in a sense of belonging. As participants reported a sense of belonging to multiple places and transnational identity, he questioned the absence of feeling rooted in one country. Through a sociological interactionist perspective, participants experience of living in America was highlighted. In addition, this research suggests the importance of moving away from conceptualising identity as two dimensional or through hyphenation.

Similarly, Braakman (2005) conducted a study on Afghan refugees in Germany to explore ideas of identity. Although this study was focused on the impact of belonging amongst a wide refugee sample, including those who did hold permanent German nationality and those who were still awaiting residency, it did provide some insight into how Afghan 1.5'ers may experience this in their host countries. Participants shared the immense pressure from the older generation on remaining Afghan and not become too westernised, supporting Omidian's (1996) findings. The other side of the pressure was evident in findings from participants who *'made up imaginary boyfriends'* or suggesting '*we the youth have lost the*

most'. Again, certain generations have a more intensified struggle for belonging and they cannot be merged or generalised with the first or second generation (Kebede, 2010). Braakman effectively used a variety of methods such as informal discussion groups and individual interviews to engage with her participants based on their collectivist culture. Overall, Braakman's study was able to show insight into the experience of young Afghans and how they perceive their situation. It gave rise to the question of whether there has been enough attention in helping the youth to integrate. Methodologically, the discussion of insider and outsider researchers becomes of importance once again as Braakman, an outsider, managed to effectively integrate with her participants by joining in their social gatherings. The impact of becoming involved with the participant group could positively increase levels of comfort in sharing stories. However, the boundaries within such studies that involve intimate interactions with participants groups can become blurred. Both Omidian's and Braakman's study makes me curious about the participant's view and expectations of the researcher who joined their way of living for a period and the consequent impact of such interactions.

1.2.7 Conclusion

The existing research highlighted several key themes which led to the research question. This research aims to address the gaps seen in engagement of the Afghan population not only in academics but also in mental health where they may be less represented due to various barriers. As an insider to the population, it is hoped that the research can address and reduce some barrier such as levels of trust in research. Statistical data presented evidence that refugees, particularly from Afghanistan and of younger ages are increasing. Consequently, there will be a rise amongst our communities in England and hence

this research aims to provide qualitative data in the form of narratives, addressing a gap in literature. These young people are not only vulnerable but also carry continuous aspects of the resulting trauma which impacts their developmental processes. This research aims to develop the understanding of these continuous processes which are carried through generationally by exploring it from the lens of the 1.5G. Refugee experiences are linked to both mental health difficulties and concepts of identity. The existing relationship and research pointed us towards a need to explore identity in these young people as a form of better understanding their psychological needs and experiences. The circumstances of a country are important as this is what determines funding, social support and how individuals' development can be fostered (Murphy,1965). Those who arrive at specific developmental stages will have considerable differences in their identity and the 1.5G hold nuanced experiences. Although there is continuing research on these aspects, there is a clear, identified gap in the experiences of Afghan youth in England, which this research aims to address. Through this literature review, there has been an identified research question of how the young Afghan youth do, from the 1.5G develop their identities and understanding the processes which takes place in this. Researching the population within a framework of culture, social relations and identity can have subsequent benefits to mental health sectors. Counselling psychologists could better understand their nuanced experiences.

2   CHAPTER TWO: Methodology

2.1   Introduction

I begin this chapter by providing a rationale for my chosen methodology and ensuring that the research question aligns with my epistemological and ontological background. A social constructionist stance is evaluated, and I argue for a narrative approach, a culturally sensitive, universally applicable stance, that follows on from the literature gaps. Narrative approaches are evaluated and discussed considering identity research before I introduce the use of Dialogical Narrative Analysis. Alongside this, I will be integrating reflexivity and discussing aspects of my role as a researcher. This research aimed to explore narratives of identity development through a cultural and social lens. This research considers the narratives which may arise from being part of the 1.5G at various stages of development.

2.2   Ontology & Epistemology

Philosophically, ontology, the science of *'what is, of the kinds and structures of objects, properties, events, processes and relations in every area of reality'* (Smith, 2012, p. 47), can be examined from various lenses. I believe that truths cannot be discovered. As a relativist, meaning cannot be viewed independently from the human mind. For example, historical events such as those extensively present in Afghanistan's timeline can be interpreted differently and any truth is a result of the groups or social contexts, we find ourselves in (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Realists assume that researchers are powerful observers and must maintain a distance from their participants. However, I argue that this becomes a near-impossible task when conducting qualitative research. Power dynamics are inevitable in certain contexts, but we can increase mindful awareness (Harrison, 2013; Hanley & Steffen, 2013).

Through relativism, we can understand human behaviour and their 'local and specific co-constructed realities' (Lincoln & Denzin 2011). Identity is arguably a subjective space, whereby the interaction of the world plays an important role. Social scientists such as Marx (Carver, 1982) and Weber & Shils (1949) emphasised that complex human beliefs could only be understood through their social and economic background. This is crucial when exploring a cultural group with gaps from both a Western and Eastern perspective. Within counselling psychology, our role is to consider the unique experiences of humans rather than generalising them to a common truth (Martin, 2015). By prioritising the context, we reduce the danger of making conclusions and align better with counselling values.

Observing human behaviour can begin with wonder and as Aristotle indicated, this could be the start of any enquiry (Wians, 2008). Wondering is referred to as the curiosity to expand knowledge, to enquire further into the less known. Hence, it was important to choose a methodology that encourages this interaction of not stopping wonder but letting it begin (Daston, 2014). This paradigm was in congruence with my beliefs about the nature of reality (Mills et al., 2006).

There are several branches to outlining how one understands knowledge production (Riley & Reason, 2015). However, my values aligned closely to that of constructionism, also interchangeably used with 'constructivism'. The constructionism paradigm looks at observations from a subjectivist epistemology. It argues against fitting information into pre-existing theories and for a mind-dependent phenomenon (Crotty, 1998). By doing so, the researcher does not hold the capability to seek knowledge without influencing it and is less deterministic (Hesse, 1980). Unlike objectivism, this does not undermine the interactional processes between researchers and participants. I believe that researchers cannot hold an assumed power to predict and control (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This becomes particularly significant considering the research topic and work with marginalised groups, further

highlighting issues of power dynamics. To wonder about ideas universally, it is arguably better to perceive meaning as filtered through lenses of gender, social class and language (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.21).

Social constructionism aligns with my counselling psychology values, such as those working towards reconstructing ideas for culturally appropriate therapy and therapist (Martin, 2015; Tribe, 2014). However, it is rare for one to hold constructionist positioning for all areas of life (Kukla, 2000). I argue for a balanced stance without completely deconstructing all concepts; some realities, such as mathematical concepts, do exist.

Social realities are constructed on the recognition that is received by others in our society, embedded in culture and history. These factors, alongside economic arrangements, are building blocks of knowledge (Burr, 2003). Thus, I began to focus the literature search on the identities of refugees and migrants from a multidimensional perspective. Based on my epistemology and counselling psychology values, the importance of advocacy and activism are key for me as a researcher. It is more effective to research cultural groups, with varying norms, from a perspective where ideas of superiority are demolished. I argue that by moving away from a largely Westernised perspective, we create bigger opportunities to learn.

The question '***How do the 1.5 generation of young Afghan refugees, living in England, experience the development of their identity'*** captured this positioning. Refugees experience socially threatening changes and consequently impact their development of identity. Thus, a subjective lens that considers the presence of others with self can be impactful because knowledge is not free of political, historical, and social constructs. By wondering, we open a dialogue that enables us to understand experiences better. The use of the '1.5G', a construct, shows that I do not strictly believe in the deconstruction of all ideas. This is a uniquely identified group of people based on a cross-culturally agreed

developmental concept, age. However, to keep my participants' narratives at the forefront, I did not want my research question to define a specific identity per se. Participants were to define themselves, giving insight into their mind-dependent perspectives.

2.3   Qualitative VS Quantitative

Counselling psychology qualitative investigations have increased following a call for multiple systems of inquiry (Polkinghorne, 1994). This has enabled psychologists to explore functions that give humans the ability to assign and recognise objects with meaning. As such, researchers are concerned with understanding experiences, attitudes, behaviours and interactions (Kalra et al.,2013). By focusing on social realities, we gain an alternative insight into human nature, which would otherwise be lost in statistics. We also gain an increase in active user involvement between researchers and participants, moving away from the position that frequently maintains separate boundaries between collected data (Heppner et al., 1999). It is frequently agreed that the *'researchers knowledge mediates information from any source of data'* (Morrow & Smith, 2000, p. 200). Hence, qualitative data was identified as the most appropriate for sensitively understanding identity (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992; Ponterotto, 2010). Counselling psychology values are situated within concern towards behaviour and meaning making of experiences and distress. In essence, this would include exploration of identity (The British Psychological Society (BPS), 2017; Watzlawik & Born, 2007).

However, this does not make qualitative research void of any limitations despite its unbiased and rigorous in-depth methods. Qualitative research can become too complex, muddled and confusing with certain limitations on obtaining large participant groups (Seale, 2002).

2.4   Narrative Identities

The narrative approach effectively captures these multi-dimensional factors and acknowledges the movement away from a Western perspective of the 'powerful' self. As Gergen & Gergen puts, "*These are not possessions of the individual, but people acting together*" (2007, p.5). A narrative perspective on identity research allows us to view identity as a multi-faceted concept, which can highlight the challenges towards conceptualisation or definition. By using such an approach, we no longer focus on a singular individual who hold all 'knowledge' and rather begin to see all the different voices, influences and dialogues which consequently impact identities.

I will use 'narrative' and 'storytelling' interchangeably which has been defined as *'an organised interpretation of a sequence of events'* (Murray, 2007, p.113). This includes the presence of 'contingency' in the sequences which creates a connection, or consequence (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997; Riessman, 2008).

Historically, we have been telling and re-enacting stories from early cave drawings, Greek **mûthos,** to bedtime stories. Thus, storytelling *"is simply there, like life itself"* (Barthes, 1975, p.237). In some respects, we can identify as *homo-narrans*, whereby humans are viewed as storytellers (Niles, 1999). Whole stories, with a beginning, middle and end, can help us to explore the rich experience of identity (Hiles & Čermák, 2008). Timelines can be important for allowing inconsistencies when identity is non-linear, assembled and disassembled (Fadjukoff., et al., 2016; Marcia, 1966). This openness towards fragmented narratives have been suggested as an integral part of the narrative material (Hyvärinen et al., 2010). By pushing for coherence, we put unnecessary pressure on narrators, this can be significantly unhelpful on those who have come from trauma backgrounds.

Researchers have increasingly suggested that narratives can shape our identities and as such, can allow individuals to provide clarification on any continuous aspects (Lindemann & Nelson, 2001; Smith & Sparkes, 2008). We can choose to accept or contest identities and perform for our audience (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Langellier & Peterson, 2004). This goes beyond traditional approaches focusing on themes and experiences and instead looks at how it is embedded. With positionality and subjectivity at its forefront, we become active, storytelling agents, representing the world and our lives to ourselves (Howard, 1986).

Alternative approaches such as ethnography were not deemed as suitable due to time and resources available as a doctoral student on a taught programme. In addition, ethnography often draws from sociology or anthropology, both of which have a unique framework and focuses on studying a cultural groups' shared patterns, whereas narratives would allow for individual stories. Also, the plausibility of entering fieldwork as an insider researcher and the potential challenges of doing so with little experience would have posed potential difficulties (Akseer, 2011; Omidian, 1996).

Bell (2020) suggested that as psychologists, we should have a dialogue to decolonise knowledge production. This is important because, as Bell (2020) puts, listening to people's stories helps to highlight understanding. Decolonization of knowledge production, especially in the realm of psychology, allows for people to take back the right to their narratives and push back on colonial narratives (Belfie & Sandiford, 2021). As discussed in chapter 1.2.2, the media has had significant impact on the racialisation and discrimination against refugees and consequently impacted their sense of identity. Their experiences are often filtered by those in power, a simple google search of 'Afghan' would evidence this.

As researcher practitioners, we co-produce the worlds of our research and value social awareness as our society progresses (Josselson, 2011). I hope that through such an approach,

empathy, understanding and curiosity towards Afghans are encouraged. The increasing attention to narrative therapies within Counselling psychology suggests the potential effectiveness of this to oppose dominant approaches. It focuses on honouring the experiences whilst aiding transitional processes (Haskins et al., 2016; Madigan, 2011). As Yuval-Davis claims, "*identities are narratives, stories people tell themselves and others about who they are (and who they are not)*" (2010, p.266).

2.4.1   Narrative Analysis

Riessman (2008) describes four types of narrative analysis; thematic, structural, interactional and performative. Thematic analysis focuses on themes and commonalities are identified between told stories whilst centring on the content. However, we lose the significance of the unsaid and it can be perceived as objectifying the enquiry. It suggests that the analyst does not have a mediated presence in the mode of themes. This was deemed to create challenges as each action negates a response from those around us. As an insider researcher, there would be more likely instances for common expectations, intentions and power equity between my participants (Rowe, 2014). Although appealing to me as a novice researcher, I became concerned that my comfort zone would intentionally disregard factors that would be appropriate for the community.

Alternatively, structural analysis shifts the emphasis to a story's narration and form. Language and linguistics become important (Labov, 1982). The basic components of a narrative structure were identified as involving an abstract, orientation, complication action, evaluation, resolution, and a coda (Riessman, 2008). As with the thematic approach, this has also been criticized for de-contextualisation of the historical, interactional, and institutional

factors, all high significance within marginalised groups (Scheyvens et al., 2003). These factors are crucial for understanding our narratives of identity development.

My epistemological positioning aligns better when we view the story as a performance to others. We learn more about the multi-dimensional aspects and begin to explore questions of 'who', 'when' and 'why'. Thus, the analysis becomes about the context and researcher influence rather than one specific aspect of the story.

2.5 Limitations

Narrative approaches do not have simplified guidelines for analysis or data collection. As a novice, I was left with a vast array of literature on perspectives towards narrative research. This flexibility can be viewed as a challenge but expected for novice researchers (Robert & Shenhav, 2014., Squire et al., 2014). I believe that this created opportunities to reflect, amend and adapt such research so that they become better suited to participants. Thus, we can cater to our participants needs rather than focusing on what we want from them, as would perhaps realist researchers. There is also a large degree of relativism and continuous re-interpretation that can occur with the interpretations.

To better understand the limitations of research, we can evaluate it based on pre-existing guidelines to ensure that it is of high quality.

2.5.1 *Research Evaluation: Why should we believe it? (Bosk, 2002)*

The question of how believable claims to knowledge are becomes key to any researcher who is faced with justifying their research (Polkinghorne, 2007). However, traditional ideas of validity do not deal with issues in narrative research and the use of 'trustworthiness' is better situated (Korstjens & Moser, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For

example, coherence and connecting stories have been central to validity (Agar & Hobbs, 1982; Linde, 1993). However, the idea of a coherent 'self' can be criticised as being part of the researchers need to hear continuity. Holocaust survivors of trauma showed 'two selves', with their own set of attached, and sometimes conflicting memories (Schiff & Cohler, 2001). Therefore, instead of coherence, I searched for co-existent realities (Riessman, 2008). This focuses on seeing narratives as life itself and the reality for one. I present how Loh (2013), and Lincoln & Guba's (1985) guidelines aided my attention to producing quality research.

Credibility

Credibility is used to demonstrate the truth-value. To overcome issues, one must engage in persistent observations, triangulation, member checking and prolonged engagement. All four are not necessary for all types of research, I sought to engage in persistent observation and constant examination of the data. Member checking was not employed due to concerns of the effect of power dynamics and on marginalised groups, for example, participants agreeing to analysis due to their perception of the researcher holding more power (Candela, 2019).

Transferability

Segments in isolation provide little to no context, it was my responsibility to provide a rich description of the research processes. I included summaries of the contextual background for each client alongside reflections into the dialogue which took place outside of the recordings. This, in essence, enables readers to make an assessment and judgement of my findings.

Dependability

To ensure that a study is dependable, there needs to be consistency in accepted standards for conducting research. In this instance, it was ensuring that the research was in line with narrative enquiries and held the core foundations.

Confirmability

It was important to ensure the inter-subjectivity of the data by attending to audit trails from the onset of the research. By sustaining transparency throughout the research process, I aimed to not only increase trustworthiness but also align myself with pragmatic use of the research through trails of how methodological decisions were made, how interpretations were produced and accessibility to primary data.

Reflexive journaling about the self and the methods can meet all four criteria. I aimed to strengthen my reflexivity and evidence my methodological awareness. This included recording my thought processes that informed the interpretation of the storied texts, alongside reflections of how my background experiences or positionality impacted the interactions (Seale, 2002). Some reflections are visible following each transcript in my analysis.

2.6   Participants

2.6.1   Demographics

The demographic of each participant is presented below in Table 1. Contextual information which situates each participant can be found in appendix A.

Table 1

Demographics of participants

Name	Age of Arrival (Years)	Age (Years)
Qais (M)	*9*	*20*
Maryam (F)	*7*	*25*
Sami (M)	*10*	*32*
Fatima (F)	*8*	*24*
Zohal (F)	*6*	*27*

2.6.2   Recruitment

Afghans in the UK are a minority group, '*a subgroup of the population with unique social, religious, ethnic, racial and other characteristics that differ from those of a majority group*' (Perkins & Wiley, 2014), with a population of approximately 79,000 in 2019 (Office for National Statistics, 2019). Full results of the 2021 census are yet to be released however, 78,510 residents of UK stated Afghanistan as their birth country (ONS, 2022). The figures for all Afghans including those born abroad are yet to be released. Based on the social media presence, I had gone into the research with an assumption that there would be more interest and in effect, underestimated the barriers. During my early literature phase, it became clear that Afghan youth organisations in England were scarce. Some organisations had deactivated

outdated websites. It was necessary to recruit through other means to increase the participant pool. I approached Afghan Societies around London Universities just as activity on social media rapidly changed. A charity initiative had been set up by university students to connect the Afghan diaspora and raise funds for those less fortunate in Afghanistan. 'Afghan Charity Week' had been at its early development during my recruitment. Approaching the societies helped with recruitment and seeing this new initiative brought up personal reflections. The community were actively becoming involved with their Afghan identity.

Social media, internet applications that allow users with accounts to connect and share content with social networks (Boyd & Ellison, 2007), was the chosen recruitment method. This was based on the participants' age group and the increasing popularity as a method of dissemination for difficult to reach participants (Gelinas et al., 2017; Ramo & Prochaska, 2012). I was also familiar with this in connecting with the Afghan diaspora. Networking sites such as Twitter were used to share the flyer with the following tags: Afghan, Afghanistan, Afghan Youth, Afghan Diaspora, Refugee, Afghans in the UK. I also sent detailed emails to the Afghan Youth Association and Afghan Professionals Network (Appendix B). Eventually, University Afghan Societies became involved in sharing the posters.

However, social media comes with two issues: (i) respect for privacy and other interest of social media users and (ii) investigator transparency (Gelinas et al, 2017).

(i)   Although there is a recognised degree of controlled anonymity in account privacy, anyone who did publicly reply to the post was sent a direct message and further down, an email. Through this, professional interactions were maintained, and their privacy, respected.

(ii)   Transparency from the researcher aligns with ethical guidance and values of trust and honesty in counselling psychology (BPS, 2017). I ensured that my poster had

sufficient information and was easy to read. Full criterions were shared in later communication.

Interviews were shifted to Skype to increase accessibility. This soon became the reality for all interviews per COVID regulations but shifted to Microsoft TEAMS due to issues of confidentiality. The shift to online interviews impacted participant recruitment, partly due to cultural differences as many lived with parents and families (Entezar, 2008). Therefore, few participants were unable to continue due to a lack of comfort in sharing sensitive stories in a virtual format. To overcome this, I updated potential participants as COVID regulations changed and made myself available in evenings.

2.6.3   Inclusion

Within a social constructionist, narrative approach, data will be heterogeneous (Earthy & Cronin, 2008). Despite this, some inclusion criteria were necessary in meeting the literature gaps.

Age: Previous literature had highlighted that young adult refugees were often neglected in research, therefore young adults were recruited (Omidian,1996). However, defining this was a difficult process due to the social and developmental aspects. During the initial stages of the research, I selected 20-25-year-olds as the age range. However, as I became more familiar with the definitions of young adults, it became important to use a combination of UK government statistics alongside developmental theories suggestions and cultural differences to define them. Young adults, per the UK Government, were those aged between 18-34 years old. Demographical research has found that societal norms, previously used to define life stages, are continuously changing. For example, leaving parents homes or entering higher education are now happening later (Patterns & Trends in Higher Education,

2015). Subsequently, increasing the age range increased the recruitment opportunities and allowed for further inclusivity.

Thus, I referred to generally agreed ideas that young adulthood is between the twenties and thirties (Birch, 1997). This was also suitable for Afghan populations considering the collectivist culture and that the concept of individuality can be significant later (Entezar, 2008). A younger population also aids the research aim of exploring retrospective stories, especially autobiographical memory, memories associated with specific episodes that have taken place in our lives (Tulving, 2002). Younger people may be better at recalling experiences and internal emotions with more detail (Gardner et al., 2015; St. Jacques & Levine, 2007; Piolino et al., 2002). If they wished, they could narrate ideas around their pre- and post-migration identities, or at least to be able to recall internal emotions. Also, the complexity of the 1.5G has been attributed to a pre-existing sense of identity.

Legal Status: Legal status does interact with wellbeing. Unresolved immigration status negates the positive contributions that education can have on the socio-economic wellbeing of Afghan refugee youth (Gladwell, 2020). To reduce the risk of distress, it was ethically important for participants to have permanent residency. They could express themselves without strict regulations, with their basic needs met to an extent. In addition, because of the challenges related to building trust and reducing suspicion, it becomes important to ensure the safety of disclosing sensitive narratives.

Location: Initial recruitment began in London as the 2011 census had reported that most Afghans lived in the borough of Ealing. This reduced travel challenges and created more opportunities for face-face interviews, reducing the issues associated with online interviews (Salmons, 2012). However, the recruitment pool had been significantly limited as interest started to come from abroad too. It was necessary to reflect the changes since 2011

and bring inclusivity in line with the ever-changing society. Therefore, it was expanded to include those living in England. This decision was influenced by statistical data and amended through my research process to ensure that opportunities were not limited.

Language: Previous literature supported having a shared language to express stories as it reduces the loss of content and meaning and allows ease of analysis, whilst reducing issues of language barriers (Squires, 2009; Temple & Young, 2004). Thus, it was decided that interviews should be conducted in English.

Participant Number: PhD studies typically recruit 10-40 participants, in comparison to narrative inquiries that only call for one or two (Creswell, 2013; Mason, 2010). However, there are no clear definitions as to what constitutes the 'correct' number of participants. The multifaceted process involves a discussion of the epistemology, the nature of the topic and accessibility (Baker & Edwards, 2012; Morse, 2000). Narrative data often involves lengthy stories and multiple voices and as such, small sample sizes are appropriate (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016., McCracken, 1988). As a responsible researcher, it was important to work within boundaries and competencies. I intended to recruit six participants. However, following challenges in reaching the population for a somewhat intense interview, it became clear that this will be difficult. A benefit of narrative research is the flexibility of allowing small participant groups. This does not lose an in-depth understanding of individuals because the aim of the research was not to find generalisable data (Butina, 2015). It felt suitable to proceed with a sample size that could be analysed within the DNA framework, looking at the content and the way stories are complexly told (Patton, 2002; Riessman, 1993).

2.7   Method Design

2.7.1   Materials

The following items were present during the interview: an interview schedule, consent form, information sheet, debrief and a list of psychological support services. Two recording devices were used.

2.7.2   Screening

Screening questions ensured that participants risk of harm was further reduced. The questions aimed to briefly note their previous or current experience of mental health diagnosis and to ensure that basic criteria were fully met. These questions aimed to protect participants from any further strain on any debilitating pre-existing mental health difficulties (Appendix C).

2.7.3   Procedure

2.7.3.1   Data collection

To enable accessibility, participants were asked to meet at; cafes, local libraries or at UEL campuses. As per GDPR (Information Commissioners Office, 2017), online interviews were held through Microsoft TEAMS. Interviews began with an informal conversation to build the researcher-interviewee relationship and recap of the interview aims. Participants were asked to sign the consent form (Appendix D). Based on literature with semi-structured interviews, I set a maximum of 1.5 hours (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This was to prevent clients from being overwhelmed. In line with narrative research, I aimed to encourage interviewees to take control over interviews (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016). In addition, it was important to allow for natural silences and engagement through prompts to increase participation and ease (McGrath et al., 2018). The interview schedule, created with narrative interviews in mind, can be found in appendix E.

2.7.3.2   Transcription

Our transcriptions are not merely the written form of what was said (Riessman, 2008). Transcriptions could either be an inclusion of the interactional context or privilege the narrators' speech. Therefore, each interview was transcribed verbatim with the inclusion of non-lexical expressions, breaks and pauses. For accessibility, Afghan phrases were transcribed in their English form and translated.

2.7.3.3   Pilot

Pilot studies have often been used to aid the research process, from training qualitative researchers, enhancing the credibility and raising awareness of ethical and practical issues (Kim, 2010). Therefore, two pilot interviews were conducted with Zahra and Hajera.

Zahra

Zahra, a friend, agreed to participate after I reached out to her. As a 27-year-old Nepali female, she had migrated to England as a 12-year-old.

Several interesting notions arose which helped to strengthen my interview schedule. Zahra answered the question of her evolving identity in natural dialogue, there was little need for prompts. In terms of the process, I did hold some assumptions. For example, I had imagined that I would struggle with anxiety as I shift into my novice researcher role. Alongside this was concerns relating to the pre-existing relationship. In some respects, it made the process easier and enabled me to feel more comfortable, however, the level of trust between us made the process informal. Zahra gave insight from her perspective. She shared that the questions were enjoyable, she found herself reflecting about her identity in ways that she had not previously done so. She shared that the initial question was difficult, and this emphasised the need for implementing a starter question, one which could gently lead the

participants to begin their narratives. For example, a conversation on what brought them to the interview. Essentially, this pilot highlighted the struggles to carefully manage my research-practitioner role and reminded me of the importance of reflexivity. It also created an acceptance that at times, I can only reflect retrospectively. The pilot effectively helped to create more self-awareness, and confidence in managing issues.

Hajera

Hajera, 25-years-old, reached out via email, and we met at her workplace. Hajera had arrived in the UK as a 15-year-old Afghan refugee. She had recently completed a dissertation on Afghan women. Hajera narrated her stories of migration and most prominently the challenges of finding a place to situate herself as an Afghan. She said she felt pulled into different directions where she wanted to be called an Afghan no matter where she had been raised but also having to *"adapt to how to live here".* The stories placed others as either accepting or rejecting of her Afghan identity and revolved around maintaining relationships. She said that *"you connect with your struggles"* by sharing stories with other Afghans. Hajera described the importance of fulfilling dreams that would otherwise be incomplete in Afghanistan.

Following the interview, Hajera shared that she enjoyed our discussion and did not feel that our shared background was a barrier. Perhaps for her, it helped build connection as she ended the interview by initiating a hug, I reciprocated this. Upon reflection, she saw me as another Afghan, and I was reminded of the cultural significance. This interview better situated me as an insider researcher, and I came to accept that the researcher becomes a part of the ongoing narratives.

The emotional power of stories became highlighted as I left with a sense of appreciation. The pilot interviews had effectively trained me as I found myself more

comfortable and had been able to see how I had been brought into the narrative as an insider researcher.

2.7.4 Dialogical Narrative Analysis (DNA)

We construct identities in performances to an audience (Riessman, 2008). Therefore, the listener and eventually the reader is implicated in this narrative. As with other narrative analyses, the use of 'I-thou' relationships, the social and historical contexts hold influence (Bakhtin,1984., Dentith, 1995). Bakhtin (Dentith, 1995) had a particular influence on these notions. Experiencing life through the Russian Revolution, he worked on linguistics and philosophical anthropology, insisting that all utterances, the actual communicative interaction in its real situation, are important in considerations of power and authority. According to Bakhtin these utterances only have meaning in certain situations or context (Dentith, 1995). He focused on the I-Thou relationship. Bakhtin (1984) argued that anything which we utter is produced through the relations we hold with others and that dialogues are historically specific moments coming in contact with each other (Smith & Sparkes, 2008). In relation to identity, the I-Thou relationship is important as it suggests the importance of how sense of self and sense of others are deeply linked. Bakhtin's' work on dialogism has influenced the development of DNA as he proposed that discourses have a dialogic orientation, interactions which occurs continuously (Dentith, 1995). The suggestions of the I-Thou relationship bear importance to narratives whereby there one shares the stories with others, in research using DNA, this becomes important as it considers the interaction with the researcher as an active participant rather than a passive listener.

Five key commitments are important in understanding these concepts by Bakhtin (Frank, 2012):

i) 'Polyphony or multi-voicedness' (Bakhtin, 1984). In essence, this implies that one voice carries the voices of many others which goes beyond what may have been shared in interviews and are of political, historical discourses (Park-Fuller, 1986). The narrator does not hold the final authority and the analyst can consider the voices of minor characters and gaps. This links with the Dialogical-Self theory.

ii) Remaining suspicious of monologue. Multiple stories emerge from many storytellers, and they become a dialogue. This occurs when each voice is collectively enabled alongside others.

iii) Seeking to extend the dialogue further and understand that stories have a symbiotic existence with us (Frank, 2010). It also combines ideas that stories can shape our sense of self. In essence, these stories are constrained to a degree as they can be based on the resources available to us (Lindemann & Nelson, 2001).

iv) *'He has not yet uttered his ultimate words'* (Bakhtin, 1984, p.59). Stories continue to evolve and are not finalisable as we revise them. As such, we cannot conclude narratives.

v) Thus, the word 'findings' becomes an undialogical word as it assumes that we end conversations.

DNA enables us to explore how identities are transformed through predominantly social processes, thus allowing individuals to hear themselves and others (Frank, 2010; Smith & Sparkes, 2008). The analysis will be a retelling of the stories. Ongoing narratives such as those between speaker & listener, interviewer and transcription, text and the reader, fits well with the ongoing development of identities. Each analysis can continue with different researchers. Taking an emic position during the analysis will allow me to be with the stories, immersing into a deeper way of understanding (Caddick, 2016). I hope to create a vision that

encourages researchers and Afghan's, to have an inner dialogue with themselves and their close communities, for them to consider their life changes outside of this research - thus strengthening the bonds and emphasising the impact of storytelling (Frank, 2010).

Three questions as suggested by Frank (2012) become significant in the analysis process; resource questions; what resources are available to both storyteller and listener and who has access to them? Circulation questions; for example why might one only be able to share certain stories with certain people? Affiliation questions consider who is rendered to be within the group and who is excluded. Identity questions open exploration of how the stories teach people who they are and how they use this process.

Remaining reflexive in narrative studies means that the researcher should engage in fieldwork before conducting research and situate oneself contextually (Wacquant, 2004). My position is further outlined in methodological reflexivity.

2.8   Interview Analysis

To get closer to my data, I proceeded to re-hear the stories at least three times following the interviews (Hiles & Čermák, 2008). I transcribed each recording and continued to cultivate my curiosity. Based on the work of Riessman (2008), Frank (2012) and Mangan (2017), I developed a multi-layered analysis process which considered key points and explorations of narratives.

Below, I give detailed insight into how each layer was analysed in order:

i) Analysis of the 'what' by identification of the stories and the explicit discussions. This would include the gaps and inconsistencies in the stories (Appendix F). This was analysed by carefully listening to the recorded interviews and noting only the explicit stories and discussions as they appeared. Once the overt discussion point was

identified, I could then form a timeline of events and stories that had been shared in the narratives. The gaps and inconsistencies in the narratives became easier to identify once the timeline had been created, for example, noticing if a participant had not shared any stories relating to their school experiences and identity.

ii) Analysis of language and answering the question of 'how' participants assembled their stories through metaphors, irony, ambivalences and tone (Appendix G). I proceeded to assess the transcripts for each participant and look at the various explicit ways in which language use was embedded in the storytelling. For transparency, I explain what I mean by metaphor, irony, ambivalences and tone. Metaphor was defined by a figure of speech which describes something by mentioning another. Irony was identified by instances whereby narratives were contrary to what one expected or juxta positioned. Contradictions referred to the use of narratives which presented two opposite facts or were self-contradictory. Tone referred to instances whereby the narratives or the ways in which it was expressed shifted, for example identifying tone of sadness changing immediately to happiness or anger.

iii) Analysis of positionality including my stance as an insider researcher, common expectations, intentions and power equity in impacting the narrative (Herr & Anderson, 2005) (Appendix H). For example, this included identifying instances whereby both myself as a researcher and the participant recognised the others needs and resources available. This would then lead to identifying if an offer was made to make that resource accessible. For this aspect of the analysis, I did reflect on how I felt during or after an interview and any questions that rose retrospectively.

iv) Analysis of multi-voicedness and exploring 'Who' is present in these stories, the voices of self and others (Aveling et al., 2015). This included the direct and indirect voices, in addition to echoes, where one voice spoke through another voice (Appendix

I). To address this part of the analysis, I had to begin by identifying the I-positions that the self spoke from. For example, the utterances with first person pronouns such as 'I', 'we', 'us'. These were the first-person possessive. Secondly, these were clustered into common voices with a label. For example, 'I-as a mother'. Following this, the inner voices were attended to, again through a process of highlighting the transcript with all the sentences including named others or third person pronouns. For example, utterances where reference is made to 'her', 'him', 'their'. It also includes named organisations, groups. The inner voices could have been direct, in the sense that direct quotes or phrases appeared from these named individuals. For example, 'my mother said...', referring to a direct utterance they heard. This was different from identifying the indirect voices, where they referred to an utterance but without a direct approach. For example, 'they told me that…'. Echoes were identified as one voice which speaks through another voice or social language, a voice which appears to come from something outside of the individuals' own beliefs or sense of self. For example, a participant referring to themselves as an 'illegal immigrant' could be echoes of the media.

2.9 Ethical Considerations

The ethics board of the University of East London approved the study and amendments.

The British Psychological Society and guidelines for human research informed my understanding of principles for good, safe practice. Due to the similarities between both guidelines, key aspects were combined below (BPS, 2014; BPS, 2018). Specific issues

relating to the use of internet-mediated research and narrative research is discussed using the BPS guidelines (2017). I outline the application of these below.

Respect

Respect allows us to remain vigilant to the worth of all humans regardless of differences. Steps were taken to ensure participants moral rights were respected through consent forms, confidentiality and reducing power imbalances. Anonymity was collaboratively agreed on. For example, participants could choose to use their real name or be assigned a culturally appropriate pseudonym. As a form of respecting differences where possible, inclusion criteria did not include gender, religion or sexual orientation.

Competence

It was important to consider my boundaries of competence to ensure justice towards the research and my participants. For example, my level of competence as a beginner was more suited to using one mode of narrative medium. As Behrens and Smith pointed regarding the use of multi-methods *"It is difficult to become an expert in a single paradigm. Working functionally in two is far more difficult"* (1996, p.948).

Responsibility

As research practitioners, it is our responsibility to manage power dynamics and ensure that it is not misused (Laugharne & Priebe, 2006). Thus, this research topic aimed to further the profession and contribute to our understanding of human nature. Through appropriate literature reviews and vigilance towards upcoming research, amendments were made to ensure that this study remained up to date. It was also important that I became aware of potentially competing duties, such as balancing my roles, an aspect which I continuously reflected on. These aided my ability to ensure partnership with my participants through

honesty. Responsible researchers also consider factors to ensure benefits are maximised for the greater good, whilst minimising harm. For example, refugees who had arrived here as unaccompanied youth or those who were still awaiting status were not in my inclusion criteria. In addition, risk probability was assessed, and measures were applied. For example, given the uncertain nature of stories, intense emotional responses could be evoked (Cieurzo & Keitel, 1999). I took several steps such as assuring participants that they had the choice to stop the interview when they could not continue. Participants were reminded that they can choose what they bring into these narratives and that I would have some prompts. However, due to the nature of building a bond with participants, they may have been reluctant to withdraw from the study. To overcome this, the withdrawal procedure was shared several times, with an emphasis on not being penalised. My therapeutic counselling core skills became useful here. The information sheet (Appendix J) contained appropriate and carefully selected organisations that participants could approach following the interview.

Integrity

Acting with integrity results in honest relationships with people. I set out to remain truthful to my participants from the onset of interactions to the debrief. Alongside this, the use of reflexive journaling helped me to remain aware of my biases, pre-existing assumptions and thus remain fair and maintain professional boundaries. Through this, it was important to ensure that the scientific design was amended when necessary, reducing harm and dissemination of low-quality research.

Consent

Participants were informed of the aims of the research on first contact through an information sheet with little psychological jargon and full disclosure (Appendix J). This transparency reduced participants risk of harm from deception. This was assessed by the level

of information shared on the sheet, allowing participants to ask questions at various points of the research process to maintain transparency. Participants were presented with a consent form and a copy of the information sheet.

Debrief

Participants were presented with a debrief letter at the end of the interview (Appendix K). There was an opportunity to ask further questions, hear feedback on the interview process and allow the continuation of a dialogue. In line with narrative enquiries, although the recording had ended, the story continued.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

To address the stigma associated with mental health in the Afghan culture (Pedneault, 2019) and the potential impact of this whilst narrating stories of identity formation, participants had choices to voice themselves and their data with control. Participants were reminded of data processing on the day of the interview and subsequently, their level of autonomy.

Ownership

The data as stories belong to its rightful owner, the participant. They are the ones in control of sharing their powerful stories and as such, participants are not necessarily 'given' control, but already hold control. It reduces the power imbalances which are prone to existing in quantitative methods and perhaps other methodologies. The analysis is not definite and aims to educate and inform others.

I continuously asked myself the questions of 'what does it mean for an individual to share their story, particularly around painful events', 'How do I give back to the community', and 'who benefits from the research' (Fine, 1992; Suzuki et al., 1999). These questions

helped during unprecedented times of pandemic and political dilemmas.

Although qualitative researchers are bound to the same ethical aspects as quantitative researchers, it was important to identify specific narrative research issues. Recent discussions recommended that narrative researchers extend beyond the traditional ethical considerations. There was a move towards empathic listening, non-judgment and suspension of disbelief as the stories unfolded (Lieblich, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

2.10 Reflexivity

As part of my reflexivity, I would like to begin by discussing my thoughts and reflections on the above questions of; 'what does it mean for an individual to share their story, particularly around painful events', 'How do I give back to the community', and 'who benefits from the research' (Fine, 1992; Suzuki et al., 1999). My understanding of importance of narratives and storytelling comes partly from academic research into storytelling and partly from my cultural upbringing. Personally, I have experienced a cultural upbringing which has had many influences from stories. The folkloric stories and myths that had encompassed previous generations had been passed down and shared in various forms. Families sharing stories over dinner and social gatherings were a norm and still have a great presence. Although the stories have often been from a positive lens or told with a fondness, the more painful events have also been present and have held deep meanings. For me to understand this perspective, I reflected on my personal feelings when sharing stories of painful events. For me, it holds the value of helping others better understand me, as a whole being, with complex and unique life experiences. It helps me to feel heard and has an almost therapeutic role in processing the more difficult aspects of the event. Academically, research into the positive outcomes achieved by narrative therapies to support those with experiences of

trauma or identity conflicts, demonstrate the therapeutic impact (Lansing, 2022; Vromans & Schweitzer, 2011; Carr, 1998).

Despite potential positive gains of sharing a cultural background with participants, holding an insider identity has negative impacts (Lipson, 1984). For example, repeated patterns of behaviour may be unidentified by the researcher as they become a routine. However, with awareness, the consequences may be reduced. Our own stories and positionality are important in this (Carter et al., 2014; Malterude, 2001; Wolf, 1996). As stated earlier, having some field experience is seen as a crucial aspect of conducting research (Wacquant, 2004). Not only does this situate us contextually, but it also impacts the decisions we may make in relation to methodology. For example, my passion for this topic comes from personal experiences. I arrived in the UK as a refugee with my family at around four years old. I had no concept of the English language or culture, speaking only my mother-tongue of Dari and only knowing my Afghan self. Growing up in the UK has been a complex journey that involved a rushed development to grasp the language, culture and find ways to fit in. As a child, my struggles in the first few years were less defined as I was amongst other Afghan families, albeit few. Therefore, it is important to note as to how my personal experiences as a person who fits very closely to the participant criteria, although not completely, may impact this study.

The importance of remaining reflexive and creating an environment where there are reciprocal and empowering interactions between the researcher and participant are highlighted (Cohn & Lyons, 2003; Flicker et al., 2004). Being an insider researcher with pre-existing closeness to the culture was advantageous. Gaining trust felt easier, however, careful attention to biases was required (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). Also, my bilingualism allowed the participants to use Pashto or Dari, especially for dialogues that would potentially lose their meanings through translation. However, there is a political discrepancy. For example, I

refer to my mother-tongue as 'Dari', whereas some Afghans use the term 'Farsi'. This may be reflected in the dialogues in the interviews. It is important to recognise the complexity of these dynamics (Merriam et al., 2001). To remain reflexive and continuously remain aware of my impact as a researcher, I did include my supervisor in discussions. This was to foster reflexivity and remain critically reflective. For example, I continuously discussed my background as an Afghan and my personal goals of making changes in societies understanding of the Afghan population.

My ability to give back to the community was a significant aspect of the research process. I am aware that my personal interest in understanding my community was in part a driving force behind this research. Thus, I often reflected on in what ways this was possible considering any limits as a research-practitioner. I found myself wanting to give back by firstly understanding what needs were presented by the community itself. What was it that the Afghan community was asking for – and if this was unclear then how do I, as a research-practitioner, go in search of this? I came to understand that by hearing their needs and stories, from their personal experiences may support this process. I could give back to my community by directly thinking about certain concepts with them together and gaining insight from their experiences. For the wider community, I wanted to present research which helped them to understand experiences of a marginalised population. By conducting this research, I reflected on who benefits. During the literature review, I attempted to remain curious and open to anything which might have been unexpected, any research which might have suggested that Afghans might not benefit from in a particular area. By exploring the potential impacts of such research, I could remain aware of any challenges that might arise or any barriers to completing the research including any resistance to the stories shared. I had to reflect on whether the practitioner, policy makers or those in powerful positions would benefit more or the population of Afghans, the research participants.

I kept a reflexive diary at various stages of the research and aimed to write regular entries on my experiences. My role as a researcher in the methods explored was to identify as closely as possible, methodologies which would perhaps be in line with the experiences of the participants. This would have been to consider the existing literature and to remain open and curious to the various methodologies. From this lens, as a novice researcher, I did struggle with concepts surrounding several methodologies. However, by my role as a researcher was to identify my gaps in knowledge, find ways to close the gap and seek information from sources so that I could better understand.

Reflexivity was important to ethical practice as it aided the reflection on my responses when faced with an ethical situation (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). For example, during my pilot study, one participant proceeded to embrace me in a hug. As a researcher, I was faced with the challenge of responding to this in a way which was in line with ethical research practice. However, as an Afghan, I was very aware of the nuances in cultural practices. As a researcher I was faced with deciding which balanced this, such as appreciating the gesture. I was able to later reflect on this and consider how it linked with the stories shared by the participant.

"*Personal narratives respond to the disintegration of master narratives as people make sense of experience, claim identities and 'get a life' by telling and writing their stories.*" (Langellier, 2001, p.700). In essence, we could examine lives from a multi-layered perspective, moving away from dominant discourses. Through this, we make use of arguably more appropriate methodologies to understand and give voice to those silenced narratives.

3   CHAPTER THREE: Analysis

3.1   Introduction

This chapter focuses on the stories of Qais, Maryam, Sami, Fatima and Zohal. As per Latour (2005), analysis involved much continuous attention as part of unfolding the multi-layered process. It is important to note; (i) contextual information to situate the reader can be found in Appendix A (ii) each interview began with the question of defining identity in line with the individual and (iii) an example summary of multivoicedness is attached (Appendix I) for clarification. I aim to take the reader through the four stages of analysis by presenting the narratives in chronological order rather than the order of their appearance in the interview. This will involve attention to the language used in framing narratives, positions of power dynamics, and the presence of internal and external voices. I include some reflections following each interview when the recording devices were turned off for further insight beyond the transcripts.

A transcription key is provided in appendix L.

3.2   Qais

3.2.1   Overt discussion, gaps and inconsistencies

Qais was a 20-year-old student living in student accommodations outside of London. He participated in this research via video call. Qais's definition of 'identity' involved three aspects: persona, culture and community however, identity had always remained a struggle. He explains these through his understanding of his personality traits, his closeness to his culture and how his Afghan community played key roles in his interactions.

Qais arrived in the UK aged nine years old. His earlier memories were fragmented and as such this remained a gap in his narrative. However, he could recall feeling that he was in a *"good place"* followed by feeling overwhelmed. Initially, Qais felt more connected to his cultural background and he continued to experience his cultural background as a way of relating to others.

> *" to give you for the whole idea of the first few years, I think my identity has been a lot*
> *-been…[tsk] attached with cultural backgrounds"*

As a child, he struggled with expressing himself and found parts of his identity to be a *"clash"* amongst his peers, amplified because he was from a *"poor middle eastern country."* The cultural differences, proceeding discrimination and certain situations in school furthered this alienation. For example, some interactions had resulted in his retaliation because he felt unable to create a sense of connection.

> *"well it wasn't easy to kind of attach myself to this new environment you know, so*
> *with these people."*

Qais did not elaborate but felt his response was impacted by two things: his language barrier and the difficulty of communicating with the opposite gender. This linked closely to his Afghan and Muslim identity. Qais felt that his reaction was worse in comparison to the other children but did not elaborate further. As the only Afghan in class, he perhaps experienced loneliness, framed with an element of surprise as his school was otherwise diverse.

"I was the only Afghan in my <u>class</u> and er although it was a very mixed primary school. I mean I did have some English, I had like very poor English speaking language… "

As a child, he accepted this difficulty to fit in.

"… I mean I was <u>young</u>, and I sort of accepted it- I was just a part of my life… it was nothing…I don't know very strong aspect of identity, from that time 'cus I was a child"

Qais entered adolescence and moved to another city; he had to re-start this difficult process. Despite his continuous struggles within a white populated school, the social interactions began to feel less pressurising amongst other Asians. Perhaps his moves between schools were representative of his dilemma. For example, in late secondary school, he recalled a physical altercation with some of his peers.

" when I had a fight in er year 10 and in year 11…and I lost. I got beat up because erm I was really stuck, I was really a crazy guy I guess most of the time and I got beat up by this fight"

He did not elaborate on this but indicated that such situations impacted his confidence and he felt stuck. Gradually he began to strengthen his distinguished identity as he felt more supported in the process. Qais re-negotiated aspects of his identity as the context around him changed.

"the importance like that plays in terms of like the foundations of er for someone to have a strong support line"

DST explains the important influence of the inner and external voices in our identity development (Hermans, 2001). In some ways, Qais's narrative demonstrates that the self is not viewed in isolation when he indicates the influence that his supportive system had on how he managed difficult scenarios and was able to process them.

As a young person, Qais made sense of the struggles through the narrative of his potential social anxiety. He did not describe how this had presented itself but indicated that there was a natural inclination towards similar friendships or cultures. In essence, his Afghan identity allowed him to effectively attach with other Afghans.

This changed in adulthood whereby he began to shape his identity based on the importance of financial stability. Largely influenced by the struggles of the refugee community, he noticed that those in similar positions had a yearning to make something of their lives. This was highlighted in roles taken in society. For example, the jobs that his father had to take up were not those which he would be expected to follow. He had more opportunities to cultivate bigger dreams towards success.

From 19 years onwards, Qais faced more opportunities to develop his individualistic sense of self and loosen expectations. For example, he went on a two-month apprenticeship away from home where he did not have to manage frequent calls asking for his whereabouts. However, Qais did not discard his Afghan relationships. These remained valuable even when other people at university began to hold a prominent influence. In essence, this demonstrates the complexity of hybridization and the multiple identities that one can form and navigate. In terms of DST (Hermans, 2001), we can perhaps view this with the idea that Qais had a self that was in relation to others but also a self where others had a position too. These positions

as discussed in DST can be in agreement or disagreement with each other and can occupy the same time and space (Hermans, 2001).

Upon his return to London, things went back to normal. He was yet again faced with boundaries.

"... I guess normal in terms of like [sigh] restrictions. There was a lot of like, if you live at home there-thing about having certain boundaries, certain rules, certain... certain respects that you need to have in terms of how you live your life."

For Qais, these boundaries came with some level of judgment from other Afghans.

"For example, you know, you know when you live in London and not being able to [tsk] er feeling judged or feeling err like, I guess a big part of this is like the reputation you hold in your family, in your community. It's definitely one of the most difficult things, that I have realised."

In relation to the dialogical self, perhaps Qais presents the conflicts and the difficulties in navigating in context of the space and the time in his life. He experienced some of his other sense of selves and witnessed through his interactions, the ways in which others, in his social sphere responded to him.

At this point, Qais firmly knew that he did not want to follow a traditional career or educational norms. His office jobs were often short-lived and at one point, he had been fired from a position. Although rather vague, he later clarified that he had been asked to leave for sharing his opinion on societal norms. Eventually, Qais started a joint business with his Afghan friend, whose shared identity aided the search for the right business partner. Qais shortly left to pursue his current Arts degree outside of London.

At university, Qais attempts to maintain his Afghan bonds. This was the familiar community, the foundations for his strong support system. In comparison to his first time away from home, he felt more connected to the importance of family and noticed the glaring lifestyle differences. Qais attributes this to his shifting ambitions and currently feels able to maintain his sense of self. Despite his earlier challenges, he no longer compromises his more deeply rooted Afghan values. A common running narrative has been him almost perhaps accepting these challenges as a part of his ongoing journey.

"living your own life, being the Afghan you are"

Qais realised the impact of his personality traits on his journey. He felt happier and regarded his education as a steppingstone to fulfilling his *"duty to help Afghans back home"*. However, he wants to work on self-improvements so that he could provide for his family.

" in terms of my identity, it's very erm complex 'cus I sort of have this expectation of myself… is I can't help someone else if I can't help myself I have like take care of myself, financially, my family and everything.

He shares that perhaps this is a bad decision but remains hopeful that setting up a charity in Afghanistan will be beneficial. This will become his identity, someone who provides and educates. Although this is somewhat inconsistent with his initial ideas of not following traditional routes, his journey would be to challenge traditional ideas and cultivate *"…the best quality of education in Afghanistan."*

3.2.2   Language

Qais's Afghan identity has been incredibly important at different stages and further clarified by language. Often the language steered towards emphasising the differences in his ideas and comparison to others. His desire to go *"back home"* to Afghanistan was described as a *'cliché'*, a word to imply an overused idea. However, it could not be further away from Qais's truth who valued this as part of his future identity. The closeness to his Afghan identity was illuminated through what he called a *"coded language"*. This unspoken, shared relationship between Afghans acted as a strong aspect of unity and gave the impression that others will need to decipher this code. It aided Qais's narrative of identity formation as it suggested that his identity was better understood by other Afghans. In addition to this, Qais labelled his experiences as being part of first-generation immigrants. This helped him to relate to others who had entered that had entered a country as an immigrant. Although contradicting with the label I employed, it stressed how people will label themselves.

As expected, there were several instances whereby the tone of the narrative shifted in line with the emotive level of the situation. For example, Qais's recollection of his experience of racism held hesitance and vagueness. Understandably, the topics are emotionally evoking and thus Qais may have not been ready to share the whole story but gave us a brief idea.

"…that was sort of the start, I mean it was ok. I mean I was being- I mean I <u>enjoyed</u> my time I had some decent friends… I mean, although I had some sort of er stupid fights…"

In addition, when Qais spoke of stagnant aspects of his life, he changed the tone to explain that certain things will remain the same. He described the Afghan community as being conservative and *'Afghany'*. In comparison, his changing goals and ambitions were framed with a driven tone.

"…have this like under-dying hunger to like, do something with our life."

80

This figure of speech was used several times to explain the strength and importance of this goal, framed within hope and enthusiasm.

Ambivalences were important in providing insight into the development. For example, Qais envisioned his move away from home to gain independence, but he began to learn the importance of remaining close to family. Similarly, he explained his Afghan family life as 'normal', whereas, throughout his narrative, there was an emphasis on diverting from a fixed way of life. This norm existed largely at home. Through this, he gave insight into the boundaries and consequences of an increase in autonomy for his self-development.

Qais used certain self-critical language to narrate his perceptions about his sense of self at different stages in his life. This was where his persona came into action and impacted his identity overall. The use of critical language such as *"crazy"* could have been employed to further perform the narrative of difference from others and a possible attempt to cultivate self-acceptance.

3.2.3   Positionality

Several different positions formed Qais's identity. Key positions revolved around insider-outsider, powerless-powerful positions and continued to hold value across the journey. In the beginning, our common expectations of contributing to the Afghan community aligned. This was performed by Qais's need for reassurance, perhaps he needed to know what would have had the most value in achieving our expectations. This joint position was also evident through the collective pronouns. Qais distinguished 'us' as two Afghans who indirectly understood cultural nuances. This insider-researcher position positively reduced some inequality and enabled relationship formation.

However, at other times, Qais placed me as an outsider. This was perhaps to emphasise that although there is a generalised understanding between us as Afghans, his experiences are unique. Through this, he indirectly helped me to reflect on biases that I may have carried into the interview and remain curious about issues such as *"what normal was like for you?"*.

Qais's hesitance towards narrating his stories was also understood through the lens of a power imbalance, perhaps as a researcher I had been placed with the power to direct. The DST recognises the presence of the collective or group voice (Wertsch, 1991). One aspect of these voices is that it can organise the meaning systems that come from the dialogical relationship. In this instance, there may have been the presence of the power differences experienced in the dialogical relationship. Perhaps Qais saw that some groups, in this instance, the voice of the researcher, would have more opportunity to express their views than others.

He covertly indicated that I have a level of power, such as when speaking of social anxiety. He may have had my counselling role in mind as he said that he did not know what social anxiety is per se, this was framed within a question for me to answer. However, I had to maintain my researcher role and ensure that I was not unintentionally opening therapeutic topics. This dynamic resulted in reassuring Qais that I am interested in his perspective, not silencing his story. The political lens could have added to this framework as in the beginning, Qais saw his country of origin as a barrier to acceptance. People looked down on those who were from less developed countries. His social anxiety as a child could have been impacted by the social context. Living as a minority in the early 2000s would have had considerable impact. Perhaps by relating and forming his identity based on his Afghan community, he could overcome the feelings of isolation. For example, Qais decided that he wanted to maintain his reputation and positioned himself within this environment. Through this, his

narrative of identity formation thus became one embedded with other people and as such, created the understanding of how these parts had been prioritised.

Within the social context, Qais could feel a positive sense of power by contributing back home. Feeling less pressure from his peers allowed this part of him to develop. Upon the end of the interview, he took this to be the core of his future identity impacting his actions to employ his privileges living in the UK. As Qais grew up, he began to see how his refugee identity was influencing his desire to seek stability. This is better understood within the social and political context as refugees are left with little stability, especially at the start of their journey and how he wanted to return some of these privileges.

3.2.4   Multivoicedness

Qais's narrative of identity involved several powerful voices; however, a more hesitant voice emphasised the complexities. His narrative was voiced through a doubtful, silenced eye where he was unsure of the value of his experiences.

"Do you want me to continue after that?"

Qais's more confident sense of self came across when he spoke as someone who loves business. This was a driven voice who continuously wanted to learn and gave him the energy to start his own business. As a powerful voice, it helped him to relay how much it had affected his overall sense of self.

Also, Qais voiced himself as someone conservative, a voice that had started early in his life and impacted his level of comfort around others through traditions. Qais as an Afghan was perhaps linked to this. Through a more emotive voice, he portrayed his interest in the study, his goals for the future and was characterised by similarities rather than differences.

Perhaps, this is evidence of the ways in which his internal positions were in agreement with each other (Hermans, 2001).

Differences became important when speaking as a friend. However, when Qais spoke as someone from the Middle East, it felt less than and was more silenced. This fit in with his internal voice as someone new and unfamiliar who faced complex barriers.

Once these barriers eased, as a student he could voice his happier experiences and express the current, more content identity and optimistic future. Again, this position was driven and linked with Qais as a high achiever, holding more independence. This was combined with his resilient voice.

"I personally became stronger."

We hear how his resilience became familiar with difficult experiences and could help him move forward. As a son, he could make stead towards educational attainment, and prioritise his family by taking care of them. This characteristic was also seen when Qais spoke as an immigrant, striving to actively impact the society. As a more dutiful voice, it reflected the responsibilities in face of barriers. The less agreeable, retaliative and somewhat self-critical parts of his 'rebellious' voice became useful.

"everyone wants to be different, you know…I don't want to go the normal way"

Paving the way for change in powerful ways and bridging gaps became easier to express through his advocate voice.

Qais's story was influenced by several others such as people in Afghanistan, his community and other immigrants. As he entered a new culture, he developed more positions of self which interacted with external voices through the process of acculturation (Bhatia &

Ram, 2001). This interaction led to more experiences of multiple identities as he perhaps attempted to fuse cultures or came to conflicts.

For example, immigrants were brought into the story through a supportive voice. They encouraged connection with the diaspora. It is also closely connected to the voice that suggested immigrants need to constantly prove their worthiness and give back in some form, here or back home.

"*I see it like as part of my, I guess the cliché of my destiny to start a charity, go back home to Afghanistan.*"

Through this, the Afghan community had a louder voice, perhaps more powerful and successful. For example, Qais felt more comfortable with his Afghan friends, he started businesses with them. However, this voice involved more responsibility and prioritised a dutiful nature.

"*I see it as part of my duty to help Afghans back home in terms of ... Stron-key thing is the education. Like to bring a good education back home… and I think that very commonly with the people ... with similar personality traits as me.*"

In addition, Qais's Afghan friends' voices can be heard through the narrative whereby they helped normalise Qais's experience. In comparison, the voice of his non-Afghan peers, was supportive but somewhat rare, giving the impression that perhaps this was less prioritised in Qais's identity formation. Qais's social circle was a rather distinct voice, his relationships had determined some aspects of his life, for example, whom he relates better to and how he reacts. Equally, people of the opposite gender are a distant and unfamiliar voice. In comparison, other ethnicities provide a more supportive voice which encouraged connection, community, and familial relationships. This collectivist voice brings people together and

places value on the familial and cultural context. His colleagues on the other hand are a less accepting voice which has often resulted in conflicts and left Qais feeling more different.

Qais's narrative on his identity development included echoes, voices that were indirectly spoken through another voice or social language. For example, Qais's description of the conservative Afghan community was echoed through his disengagement with certain social activities. In addition, university experiences and consequently the importance of family were echoes of the shared coded language. He described the immigrant and Afghan community as one with a strong drive to support people back home, which was then echoed by his future goal of charitable work. These echoes are not only from Qais's personal experiences but also from the social discourse. There is a clear idea in the Afghan community relating to a collectivist closeness to family. The cultural dynamics vary between men and women, hence Qais's identity formation embodies some of these discourses.

Instances of hesitation made me reflect on my main question and whether this was perhaps too broad to start the conversation with. However, upon reflection of Qais's overall narrative, and his indicated struggles with the concept of identity, I understood that perhaps this was reflective of that personal struggle rather than the question itself.

3.3 Maryam

3.3.1 Overt discussion, gaps and inconsistencies

Maryam was a 25-year-old living and working in London in a civil servant job. She participated in this research face to face, and we met at a public café during her lunch break. Maryam's definition of 'identity' involved her self-perceptions in combination with how others perceived her. Her narrative highlighted how others had significantly influenced her and how this had been a frustrating process.

Maryam arrived as a seven-year-old and was fascinated by the different society. She described good school interactions and felt fortunate that her experiences were void of bullying.

"But like it's always been very <u>nice,</u> people would mention my accent, but it was always in a very positive way. Erm so growing up I would have teachers constantly ask me where I am from but it was never offensive or sense of a rude way"

However, she did not elaborate further on these early beginnings. Maryam said that she had not focused on her Afghan origins as it had been framed in a positive light, rather she attended to other struggles such as her family's impact on the development of her feminist identity. Maryam highlighted that London's diversity had aided her sense of self but this changed when she entered university and work and saw her Afghan identity "*turned into a <u>whole</u> label*". Her interactions with people began to hold a bigger significance because she did not want others to perceive Afghans as *"lesser"*. It became important to represent and remain knowledgeable on her Afghan identity.

"when that happened, it started making me learn and understand about Afghanistan much much more than I ever planned-occurred you know. So, I think… the outside questions about Afghanistan, their curiosity about Afghans made <u>me</u> want to research and learn."

But even this came with barriers. Maryam noticed the increasing intrusiveness of the curiosity she faced. Her identity became *"politicised"* and focused on political unrest.

"I realised when you come from countries that we do, you can't get defensive"

This was a turning point in her career choice as she shifted to a political pathway. This surprised both her and her family but Maryam stressed the importance of closeness to her Afghan identity as part of recognising her diasporic privilege.

"...we've been very privileged to come and live part of the diaspora in the UK...it made me want to be more activist than anything."

Confidence became an important part of her journey to changing the dominant Eurocentric narrative. Maryam found this process frustrating as she began to see the lack of critical thinking from others which often resulted in blame towards Afghanistan.

"...it was just like-there was no-there was no critical thinking. There was no accountability, international communities would always-the blame would always be on Afghanistan, rather than seeing them as victims, it would be-they were the perpetrators which was quite ridiculous"

She began to question the perspectives in the Western media as she felt their negative words overshadowed any other way of existing.

"...their automatic response is 'you don't look like one, like you don't look Afghan' and it's like what does that mean...have you <u>seen</u> the diversity of Afghan people?"

Maryam began to build a central role of educating others about her country, especially with added challenges of racial misconceptions that people held about Afghans. Therefore, Maryam needed to remain active in this, a journey that contained feelings of hopelessness

towards change. However, she found a driven and diplomatic manner was more effective in getting her message across.

"And it's like if I am going to be surrounded by people with all kinds of questions, I would rather help them become aware too but from my perspective. At least it's better for an Afghan as more… I don't know, more in tune with their own culture, with their own background, history… and let them see how you know, we live as Afghans,

Maryam continued to face identity questions and battled "*'oh I am British or oh I am Afghan'"*. Over time, it was possible to confidently respond with 'I am from Afghanistan', with no further elaboration as people became predictable. Maryam's experiences at university cultivated her critical awareness but were tainted by those in authority positions who held misconceptions such as her professors' reaction.

"When he found out I was Afghan, he called me exotic, so can you imagine, a whole professor saying that."

She expressed her disappointment and how dehumanised she felt. Upon directly questioning her professor, she realised that perhaps this type of treatment was reserved for Afghans.

"I think it just depends on the environment you are in. If it's completely different to what you are used to, you're always going to be experiencing these kind of like little troubles."

Maryam was hopeful this perception could be overcome through increased academic engagement with Afghans. Maryam's experiences with her friends who shared similar contexts were influential as they helped her to get her through what she perceived as microaggressions.

Currently, perhaps due to these long-term microaggressions, Maryam questions her identity in the work environment and the genuineness of diversity and inclusion programmes. These interactions in her social world impacted her inner voices and the internal positions she held in relation to her identity.

"are you brought into an environment just because they want to diversify their environment, not for your actual skills or talent but only to be 'look, we have an Afghan woman in our midst'"

Her Afghan identity holds perhaps little value to others, resulting in a necessity to overcompensate and actively express her Afghan identity. Thus, Maryam perceives her future identity to prominently remain Afghan, the gap with her British identity needs to bridge.

"it will always be Afghan, Muslim, woman. I think always stay the same…"

Although some people have perhaps been more lost in their sense of self, Maryam feels liberated when she can continue to grasp her identity.

" I don't know, it's a disadvantage but also an advantage coming from a country that is going through what it's right now, it does <u>help</u> you become more in tune with it, it makes you- especially since you're living away from it, you want to grab on to it more, hang onto it, helps you kind of strongly identify to being an Afghan."

Maryam felt that she had not explored her identity formation in such depth.

" It's quite interesting 'cus I have never actually…er analysed it [laugh] I've never really thought of why my identity is as it is. I know <u>why</u> it became politicised, so I suppose I have never gone through memory lane and thought what parts I didn't really have a huge identity and now why it's so strong."

In addition, as Maryam grew older, she began to develop an awareness and compassion towards her parents' struggles in managing their Afghan and Muslim mentality in conflict with their daughter's developing self.

"...but I mainly realised like how <u>tough</u> it was for them to come to a whole new country, try to teach your kids and manners that they are used to and then try like navigate through life-making them feel really sad but then I am also like… it's just a learning curve."

3.3.2   Language

Maryam described Afghanistan as *"home",* linked with feelings of belonging and a place that gave her a *"secure blanket"* and effectively emphasised the strong presence of her Afghan identity. As Maryam went through the process of relating better to her Afghan self, she found her unchangeable identity will *"always remain Afghan"*. This became a necessity for her once she felt secure and confident in its expression.

Maryam's Afghan identity had often been perceived as less than, she used language which evoked the image of silenced people who were *"poor little humans".* This was furthered through the recollection of the interaction with her professor where she could emphasise the word *"exotic",* an alienating and offensive reference towards foreign people. Maryam showed how her identity had been othered and the impact of misconceptions. In addition, she used this to express the irony that a professor, an academic with specialism would hold such bias with little awareness of its impact. Maryam indicated that the *"outside world"* only took on board what the media presented and thus that world did not feel a part of her lived narrative. In essence, this narrative presents the ongoing levels of discrimination that is directed towards Afghans which influences one on a deeper level.

Maryam presented us the journey as being difficult from late adolescence onwards and was evident in the smaller stories she recalled. However, the ambivalence lied in the minimisation of the challenges that Maryam faced.

"So yeh, overall it wasn't too bad yeh [laugh]"

This contradicted the general tone that was perhaps felt throughout the journey. Maryam performed her journey through resilience. Perhaps, this was to prove her strength in overcoming the dominant narrative, consequently minimising the power that others may have held. Further, Maryam presented herself as someone who wishes to have roles in more powerful positions so that changes can be made. However, faced with these opportunities, she finds herself doubting the value of her skills. This presents the internal conflict that can occur because of the persistent, subtle, misunderstandings that have been expressed in the dominant society.

Her early experiences were recalled with a positive tone. However, as the narrative developed, the tone shifted into more frustrations towards those who had created an incorrect narrative about Maryam's Afghan identity. As Maryam recalled the journey to forming a confident identity, the tone no longer remained humorous and held more of an emotive presence. Maryam used a powerful image to demonstrate the extent of her frustrations. She wondered if a physical label on her forehead would have served the function of not repeatedly being faced with the same questions. The possibility for a solution is perhaps just like this imagined idea, impossible. In comparison, when her frustrations were validated, she could shift into a more optimistic outlook on change. Her current identity held more positive language such as *'liberating'* and *'strong'*.

3.3.3   Positionality

Maryam's intention to participate in the study positioned us both as Afghans with a shared expectation, wanting to make a difference and recognising that this could be a form of addressing gaps, such as those in psychology. Maryam was familiar with the political evaluation of her Afghan identity, whereas I looked at it from a psychological perspective. During the narrative, Maryam used phrases to reflect on this shared position. For example, *"you know"* indicate a deeper level of understanding, to connect and disseminate amongst others. She used this to imply our privileges as part of the diaspora and the opportunities that we have both been given. Other areas of our shared identities, such as being Londoners, was also highlighted overtly. Before speaking of her experiences, Maryam asked if I grew up in London to check how much would resonate and to ensure she did not assume when using *"as you know"*.

In some ways, this is how we were able to build upon the relationship during the interview, building a sense of understanding and trust. This became more visible in the narrative as Maryam became more casual in the references towards me and how she would bring me into the narrative, for example through humour: *"[laugh] do you get me?"* and *"as you would know [laugh]"* when referring to her Afghan family, a more personal and relatable aspect of her life.

However, amongst this relationship in the interview and the positionality, one other factor held a higher power, the media. This is where we both become less powerful, and an imbalance was noted whereby power was given to others. To some degree, it presents an instance whereby the voice of others had suppressed her internal voice and sense of self. Nevertheless, Maryam suggested that this inequality and positioning that we Afghans find ourselves in, emphasises the importance of seeing Afghan academics who will contribute to change and in essence, a direct reference to me, a doctoral research student. This is

representative of her fighting back to be heard despite the constraints of the external, collective voice (Hermans, 2001).

"So that's why it's like really nice like to see, as I said, other Afghans trying to do a PhD on like I need to see you guys in those roles"

This also added to her performance in that others have had a more dominating presence in impacting the development of her identity. This became amplified when Maryam called these people 'outsiders', and I was kept within the same position as her, I was not othered. The Afghan identity kept us both at the same level. This demonstrates the complexity of negotiating identities amongst other conflicts and external positions.

Maryam used age as one indicator of wisdom and how she had been able to become better informed about her parents' struggles, a social and developmental aspect which is often portrayed that as one does get older, there are expectations to reform and become a wiser version of oneself. This impacted Maryam's understanding and development of her identity as a daughter with Muslim, Afghan parents.

3.3.4   Multivoicedness

To perform her identity formation, Maryam spoke through several internal 'I positions'. Powerful voices included Maryam as an Afghan, a woman, as part of the diaspora. For example, her Afghan voice held an interactive and dominant presence and resembled the connection that she had gradually formed.

"I think everything I do, will be as an Afghan…"

Maryam as a diaspora was frustrated and as a more distinguished voice, it emphasised her experiences of inequality and the desire to hold onto her Afghan self. Though a complex process, Maryam had found herself in a position which negotiated her Afghan

internal position with others that she had also developed through the context of her experiences. Through her privileged self, it was easy to demonstrate the power dynamics towards her people and again motivate her as an activist. Maryam's I-positions had not remained static and instead changed and re-constructed as her circumstances and challenges in society changed (Hermans, 2001). Her educated voice helped her to portray the questionable nature of knowledge production and the assumptions that were present.

"so I think it kind of like erm kind of turns you into a more critical <u>thinker."</u>

This future-orientated voice critically explored these dynamics so that she could overcome the generalised ideas about Afghans. As a woman, Maryam could showcase her earlier experiences of finding her feminist position and how it had seeped into her role as a daughter, and eventually became an understanding voice. This aided her relationship with her parents.

As a friend, Maryam held a subtle, but transformative voice in the sense that she learnt how her experiences could be normalised. This combined closely with her soothing voice as a young person who was open to development but also linked to Maryam as someone misunderstood. This voice held her frustrations and confusions but aided her in addressing the misconceptions. Maryam's process of identity development involved fluidity, capable of change as she recognised conflicts. To further amplify this, as someone with political interests and resilience, she could act on these frustrations and consequently cultivate her activism.

"... if I think it is problematic, I do call them out."

Equally, inner other voices were heard throughout her journey. The Afghan community's voice was strongly bonded to a prouder identity and the need to grab onto her

Afghan self. Another voice that held similar characteristics was other refugees and migrants. This came across as a struggling voice but was clearly distinguished in her narrative. This was closer to older generations as Maryam specifically spoke of immigrant parent's experiences who made sacrifices to secure a better future for their children.

"*I mainly realised like how <u>tough</u> it was for them to come to a whole new country, try to teach your kids and manners that they are used to and then try like navigate through life*"

Maryam was left with a degree of contradicting voices which helped her to form a hybrid of her internal voices and external voices as she came to understand these further through her journey.

Further, Maryam's personal inner voices, her parents, brother and sisters' voice held importance. They were powerful, privileged at times due to cultural contexts and particularly at earlier stages in her life. For example, her brothers' privilege due to gender differences was later understood from her parents' perspective. In comparison, the voice of others in society was assumptive and in need of guidance as people were less receptive to change.

"*And <u>it's always</u> automatically, Taliban, terrorism and all of this…*"

Similarly, people in academics perhaps lacked cultural awareness. Equally, people from white backgrounds were portrayed as mistrusted as Maryam was left feeling doubtful about the value that she brought into her workplaces. Essentially, Maryam narrates that people in her social sphere hold quite contradicting and conflicting perspectives. These voices can be rooted in issues of colonization and power as they dictate and dismiss (Bhatia, 2002).

We also came across echoes. Maryam described the Afghan community as being mislabelled, and this was echoed through the labels' she felt had been assigned to her and her desire to educate outsiders. Maryam described how the Afghan diaspora was recognised as lesser than others. She echoed this through recollection of her experience at work whereby she had doubted her skills. The ways in which these echoes impact an individual's sense of self and its' construction emphasises the permeability of identity (Hermans, 2001).

Her consequent use of academia in reaching her goals also perhaps reflected this need to prove value and worth. The description of the Afghan identity as highly politicised was echoed strongly throughout her narrative, from the way she chose her smaller stories, the way she described her sense of self and how it impacted her desire to be involved in politics. It may be suggested that Maryam's' description of the sacrifices that immigrant parents face in raising children was echoed by her belief that diaspora kids have many privileges and should use these opportunities to show gratefulness.

The echoes linked to the wider societal discourse. For example, being proud of your heritage is seen as an important aspect of being Afghan, as Maryam indicates, it is something to essentially hold onto. Socially, it is generally accepted that academics hold years of experience that becomes a part of their social role. Although academics can and will have gaps in their knowledge, this highlights the importance of remaining curious and aware of implicit biases that can harmfully impact interactions. Maryam echoed this social concept by showing her surprise at this interaction with her professor. Maryam narrated the journey of her identity development as one which encompasses various interactions with her self and others, and how the multiple identities were negotiated based on the time and space.

Maryam shared some stories on how she had experienced considerable challenges between merging her identities. Maryam said that she could not see it merging and we wondered about issues of acceptance.

3.4 Fatima
3.4.1 *Overt discussion, gaps, inconsistencies*

Fatima was a 24-year-old, pharmacist, who had recently, due to circumstances of COVID, moved outside of London. She was living away from her family. Fatima struggled to define identity but felt that it was closely related to her experiences of belonging to groups, a basic human need to have social relations. She explained that these groups were humanity, Islam and Afghans.

Fatima could not recall much of her earlier experiences upon her arrival as a nine-year-old but recalled that starting school in year four held its' challenges.

"obviously I couldn't speak English uhm but actually picked up English quite quickly, like compared to my mum and my dad. Like me and my siblings, we learnt English quite quickly um and at first it was, you know that [culture shock], so being used to different to what I've been used to and how it was like back home."

This initial unsettling, *"scary"* experience left Fatima noticing differences.

"'cause at first you feel like you don't fit in, you can't speak English, you-you look differently, you dress differently, you don't speak the same language and there were so many barriers there…"

It was considerably difficult to socialise with her peers. This restricted feeling made her think about how things would be better if she could go back home as she experienced a rupture in her sense of self.

"so at first I was-I felt lonely, I missed my friends, I missed my family erm yeah, it was just very different…"

Fatima felt that the transition from primary to secondary school was a difficult one as moving several times meant that she had to repeat the same cycle of trying to fit in. However, she did not elaborate further on the process and what it involved. As the only headscarf-wearing girl, she felt that it added to her struggles and further confused her adaptation process.

"people went to different schools and so none of my friends <u>actually </u>went-came to the same secondary school [as me]. Another period in my life where like it was like 'urgh, I have to make new friends now' and again, I felt like everything sort of repeated there because like again, I felt-I felt like I didn't have any friends."

Eventually, through *"hard work"*, Fatima did adapt but did not explicitly indicate what this work involved. She began to feel some sense of belonging amongst friends who were *"similar",* such as other headscarf-wearing Muslims.

"it makes it easier to make friends… and feel connected or feel part of"

Growing up Fatima looked up to her mothers' engagement in Afghan traditions to understand her Afghan identity. Her mother would often make sure that her children were aware of their *"roots"* at home by encouraging them to speak Farsi. However, managing these two contrasting cultures created a dilemma as she wanted to *"put them together".*

"I guess people like me who, you know, have, you know, 50/50 of both-really quite difficult to… you're sort of like stuck in the middle, like you don't want to choose between the two"

Fatima wanted to blend whereas other Afghans, such as her younger siblings, had decided to pick up more of the Western ideas and *"forgetting their roots".* Being born here

had changed the dynamics but Fatima did not elaborate on how different life had been for her siblings. As an adolescent, Fatima felt that amongst developmental changes that were occurring in the background, nothing remained consistent. This is representative of how her identity perhaps also did not remain consistent or predictable, the changes were continuously occurring internally and externally.

Following sixth form, Fatima decided to take a gap year as she had been unsure of her career pathway. She did not elaborate on what was important to her during these doubts but eventually, decided upon pharmacy. Moving out to complete this was a big decision but Fatima knew that this was no longer a challenge as perhaps her resilient self had become more powerful in that time and space. This career had left Fatima with various choices. For example, currently, Fatima faced the choice of staying in England, close to her family or moving to Scotland to complete her pre-registration. She wanted to aim higher and had to make a choice that would reach this goal. In essence, Fatima felt that Afghans, in comparison to other Asian countries, had been less known and thus their identities had been overlooked and grouped with others.

"we don't really <u>have</u> an identity-identity anyway erm we're just classed under, you know, you know-you know the forms when you when you just complete [giggle]. We haven't made it there yet."

In essence, this gave the impression that there had been no space for such progression. As such, Fatima felt that she had grown to see this gap in the higher positions. For example, she felt that Pakistani's or Indian's were more skilled in reaching these positions.

" You see-you see like erm a lot of Indians and Pakistanis in like uhm [tsk] what's it called in erm I don't know like different industries you go to, you can see that there's a lot more representations from like those ethnicities as compared [to us]."

She felt disadvantaged as Afghans only truly arrived in masses following the wars, arriving later presented fewer opportunities in all aspects of life.

In the future, Fatima sees herself as having the duty to pass on her identity and her traditions, as an attempt to ensure they remain aware of their roots and do not lose them through this complex process.

"All I can say is that I'm not-I'm quite <u>proud</u> of where I'm from and like my faith and my ethnicity is quiet… important to me and I'm not afraid or I'm not shy to talk about it. I know with some of my friends… they would avoid such <u>discussions,</u> whereas with me, I just, yeah, I talk about it openly."

She sees herself as a Muslim British with perhaps Afghan in brackets, included in her identity but rather with a differing degree of priority. This supports the idea that identity in those who are exposed to conflicting cultures is more than a process of hyphenation, instead hybridization occurs (Hermans & Kempen, 1998).

3.4.2   Language

Fatima relayed her struggles in finding a sense of belonging amidst differences through specific language. For instance, her identity as an Afghan was clarified through the reference of *"back home"* and initial experiences of the new environment were narrated through more distressing language such as fear.

"I'd say it was quite scary…"

This fear perhaps emphasised how she felt amongst the very different, perhaps threatening, and confusing culture. Fatima could relay how sudden and unexpected these experiences felt. The height of these hurdles could be expressed using *"barriers"*. Fatima

assembled her story by indicating the changes which occurred following the demolishment of these barriers. For example, once she learnt English, she could form better social relations as she could communicate. She felt settled by making space for herself through the formation of friendships.

However, when Fatima began to overcome these barriers, the tone shifted. As she began to gain a sense of belonging, she used uplifting language such as *"enjoy"* and *"freedom"*. Fatima noticed the importance of being around the *"right"* type of people, people whom she could feel closer to, such as other headscarf-wearing females and people with the same culture. Fatima used language which showed Islam's priority in her development such as referring to how it *"shaped"* her whole sense of self. In essence, Fatima assembled her narrative around Islam as it provided her with the comfort she sought.

However, despite this prioritised identity, Fatima indicated the *"hold"* on her Afghan identity. She could not lose this, and it became exemplified through her mother's attempts to remind her and her siblings of the core values. This grip was also expressed with *"roots"* to her origins. This perhaps aided her narration by presenting the metaphor of her sense of self with many branches. Consequently, she also used this to express the dilemma that some other Afghans had found themselves in *"forgetting their roots"* and moving further away from these origins.

The tone of Fatima's narration helped to assemble her story of identity formation as one which was perhaps a rapidly changing development. For example, she spoke of her constant moves between her school environments in a fast-paced manner. This perhaps helped her to perform the constant change but also perhaps create the sense of an unstable environment which required Fatima to adapt rapidly to the changing circumstances. In combination with the tone, Fatima used words such as *"different" "new"* consistently to

assemble her story of trying to fit in and again, to create the impression of how rapid and unfamiliar these changes were. The experiences became amplified amongst the developmental changes she was going through as an adolescent. Essentially, she used this to perhaps indicate the extra added dilemma that she had to struggle against and the ways in which this conflict was managed internally.

" it's like now thinking about it like <u>all my life</u>, I've literally been moving, moving, moving and it's just constantly like getting used to like making changes, adapting and then moving again. It's literally-literally been like that. "

Fatima assembled her story of getting to a position in her identity development through the struggles, the difficult decisions and the *"hard work"* in attempting to *"staying true to who you are."*

3.4.3   Positionality

Fatima actively positioned herself alongside those who held similar values. These positions also held different levels of power. Those with power reportedly undermined her Afghan identity and hence she could not align herself with them. However, in the beginning, Fatima positioned herself with the powerful role of aiding me in the research, emphasising that Afghans or *"us guys"* support each other.

Other similar positions involved those who shared language, culture and religion. This supports the argument that aspects such as religion is incredibly important as a part of the self as it can hold a protective function, especially with those of Muslim backgrounds (Ward et al.,2010). However, her first position was as a *'human'*, which is a relatable and equal position to everyone. In essence, Fatima narrates her sense of self as made up of several

related but also separable processes and contents (Klein & Gangi, 2010). Instances whereby she did not have power equity, such as before acquisition of the English language, had left her in a difficult position to form some of the bonds with groups. Another position with a perceived reduction in power and isolation was being the only headscarf-wearing individual, a social context that understandably held importance.

Fatima had difficulty in starting her narration of identity formation. She was unsure of how she could best answer questions and at times asked for permission. She may have seen me as a researcher perhaps having the final directive on the interview process and what was allowed within its realm. This indicated that perhaps it was not so much the question itself, but the anxiety surrounding *'good enough'* answers. Fatima needed some further resources to continue the narrative and it was my responsibility to understand this and aid us both. I attempted to acknowledge her feelings and overcome any unverbalised concerns. Retrospectively, I admit that some instances could have been handled perhaps more effectively, an aspect which may have been in my blindsight due to my running anxieties.

Fatima expressed how the social context had impacted her identity. For example, the lack of awareness of who Afghans are and were, led to misconceptions at a higher level. This held them back in reaching for higher positions in comparison to other more resourceful ethnicities. Consequently, Fatima had to exhaust herself through adapting to reach some level of power equity.

> *"...just you know, putting in a little more effort to make friends and try to fit in… and I had to like adapt…like how-how I adapted the first time… like all my life…it's just constantly like getting used to like making changes, adapting…"*

Once she became familiar with this process, it no longer had the same impact and became an embedded part of her resiliency. Fatima cultivated this by moving away from

home as part of aiming high despite the option of an easier route. This was her identified strength.

Fatima's position as someone who has not become overly Westernized has been an important factor in holding onto her *"roots"*. This acknowledgement came with no judgement towards those who had done otherwise such as her siblings, who had a different perspective based on their social context. As such, Fatima positioned herself with a sense of responsibility in continuing this generational hold, just like how her parents had done so.

3.4.4   Multivoicedness

Fatima's identity was narrated through the presence of several internal positions, some holding a distinguishable presence, others less identifiable. For example, Fatima spoke as someone who wished to contribute to research, this in effect was the supportive, determined characterisation who wanted to do things well. It was this position that also made it difficult to start her narrative as she wanted to find the *"best answer"*. Other times, she spoke as someone who recognised the common human experiences, such as teenagerhood.

Key voices which Fatima employed in her narrative was as a Muslim, headscarf-wearing, Afghan. As a Muslim, her voice was firm and secure, but separate from her voice as someone who wore a headscarf. Perhaps this separation was created to indicate her awareness that not all Muslims practise the Islamic hijab, which comes with its nuanced experiences. It was an isolated voice but sought similarity. As an Afghan, the voice was easy to identify, it attempted to show the importance of being culturally similar and perhaps afraid of loss.

"I guess one of the things would be mixing with the… I wouldn't say with the right people, but maybe with the people who share the same kind of interest, who are like from the same background kind of thing."

Concerning backgrounds, Fatima spoke as a refugee, someone who was a part of a diaspora. She characterised the evolving voice as one which felt different but wanted to seek connection. As powerful voices, they relayed her confusions and the internal conflict which she had to navigate through to survive. Essentially, the I-position was open to change and development (Hermans & Kempen, 1998).

"*so being used to different to what I've been used to and how it was like back home.*"

Closely linked to these was Fatima's privileged voice. This was characterised by its responsible presence and change orientated as she saw her future with certain duties. In addition, as someone who constantly moved, the voice was accepting of change but fast-paced. Attached to this was perhaps her resilient voice. These constant moves were managed in some ways, perhaps subtly and hence Fatima's surprise at her developing self.

"it doesn't bother me at this stage anymore"

Her voice as a high achiever held notes of determination in continuing her hard work and in self-development in all aspects, especially related to career opportunities. Essentially, this voice helped to overcome the struggles and aided her coping. Fatima's sense of self accommodated the ruptures or changes so that it could help her evolve and develop (Bourke et al., 2019).

"...once I got it I was like 'OK, I'm not gonna let go this opportunity'"

Fatima's story of developing relationships and remaining aware of her responsibilities was voiced through her role as a daughter.

"*Obviously if we speak to my mum, like <u>freedom</u> at that time would be completely different to her than it was to <u>me as a child</u>*"

An easy to identify voice, it showed Fatima as an efficient learner and linked to her voice as a student, who worked hard to become experienced. As a friend, Fatima's voice expressed loneliness and the desire to remain connected but also have her independence.

Although Fatima's story had a larger portion of I-position voices, few inner other voices were present. For example, her friends' voices were heard throughout whereby they had played pivotal roles in her experiences in school and current interactions. They helped Fatima feel more comfortable and safer and their Muslim identities resonated with her prioritised Islamic values.

"when I moved to like sixth form I started connecting with more like-like Muslims with a headscarf. Yes, so like you said, when there's people who are a little bit similar to you, it makes it a lot easier to make friends… and feel connected or feel part of, you know, part of the school"

In addition, her parents and siblings voice were two distinguished voices. Her parents' voice had driven her to remain connected with her Afghan identity, such as by encouraging the use of the mother tongue at home. These activities, which Fatima engaged in had a function in developing her identity.

"like my mum is very much-she was very like erm you know, she-she doesn't want us to see-she doesn't want us to speak English at home just so we don't forget our language and she makes us go to at-all these like mehmani's and parties and all of these things. Yeah, I guess with me and my siblings because we've been [tsk] brought up in this like-in this society and the cultures here"

Despite this, Fatima recalled that her siblings had not picked up on Farsi as they were born here. In essence, their voice had an advantage, perhaps not having to work as hard to

belong. As part of the other voices, Fatima spoke of the influence of her future children who held an important voice that needed guidance.

In addition to this, Fatima's story involved non-Afghans, Afghans and South Asians. These voices were characterised through their responses, for example, the voice of Afghans was close to Fatima's as there were shared aspects bringing them together. These positions and voices had been internalised to support her sense of self. Other Asians initially held a familiar and safe characteristic. However, as Fatima noticed the social advantages that they had because of their earlier generational beginnings, the voice shifted to privileged and they were no longer the same.

> *" So, like, for example, the Indians and the Pakistanis, they came before the Afghans came so at-there's a lot more of them then there's-you know than us guys"*

Other non-Afghan voices were present in her narrative, focusing on the differences, lacking awareness and a detached presence.

Echoes were heard subtly through her narrative. For example, instances, whereby Afghans were seen in lower positions, were echoed by her aim to achieve in her career and reach these higher positions as an Afghan. She carried the voice right until her adulthood. In addition, her mums attempt to embed the Afghan traditions into their life was echoed in her narrative of wanting to hold on to her Afghan identity, and to pass it on to her future children.

> *" I want to take it… [tsk] I just hold onto it and pass it onto my children [giggle]. Yeah, and make sure that they're aware of where they're from and the struggles that-well, I didn't really go through any struggle, but like my parents did a lot for us, so my duty to pass that [down]. What they did to me and my siblings and what, you know we can do for our children and the future generations"*

She began to echo this voice and it became clear which voices were most valued in shaping her sense of self. This echo began to hold more power according to Fatima's situation and circumstances, even if they might have earlier been in conflict (Hermans & Kempen, 1998).

3.5   Sami
3.5.1   *Overt discussion, gaps and inconsistencies:*

Sami was a 32 year old, Engineer living and working in London. He was living with his family. We met for his interview at a public café. Sami's definition of identity largely depended on the collectivist, the family lineage and characteristics together with his sense of self. The collectivist aspects included the intergenerational conflicts and his family's sense of Afghan identity. He narrated his balancing act towards forming a more individual sense of self.

As a 10-year-old, Sami experienced most of his new interactions outside of the home where there were few Afghans, however this dynamic created some internal tensions. As part of the DST, it is suggested that people will experience conflicts and ruptures within the self as they are exposed to different, unfamiliar cultures (Hermans & Kempen, 1998). Sami attempted to manage his parent's expectations alongside the new social culture and develop his internal positions by changes he perceived in society. As a child, he felt that it was easier to adapt, for example acquiring English took little effort.

"... a lot of parents want you to be a certain person but when you go school you just you know pick up different behaviours, different erm the [lifestyle] erm so you no longer, I would say the same as an Afghan kid in Afghanistan but you're more of a British Afghan"

Sami had to alter his Afghan identity to fit in but with caution so that it could remain intact at home. The contradicting social spheres were influential in Sami's development of

identity as he had to navigate through this to form his hybrid identity. In some contexts, various parts of his internal I-positions would have felt more appropriate or accepted. Although there was no explicit indication of how these pressures interfered with his sense of self, as a younger person, Sami had struggled with acceptance and change. For example, his hesitance to his sisters need to move out for work was based on how he had been brought up by his *"role model",* his father and as such, he needed to *"follow his footsteps"* and agree with his decisions.

This shifted as the necessity for change unfolded and he could apply his critical thinking skills from his educational experiences.

> *" then <u>eventually</u> I started seeing things… in school, okay my friends are not doing that, my friends-my friends were doing things differently, why am I doing it this way"*

Whether this changed the relationships he held at home with his parents was not clear. Sami observed differences within the Afghan way of life that created inner conflict.

> *"Our parents always tell us to be the right person. Of course… to do the right [thing] to erm because you spend a little bit of time with your parents as to where they have grown up, what they know, but you mainly live in school or at work, that's where you spend your time so growing up around kids er in school would make your mind- change you as a person"*

He had grown up with specific ideas related to respect, especially for elders. The example of a technician visiting his home and not taking off his shoes portrayed this well.

> *"I can tell they don't like it [because] you know because they don't want to take it off but they don't understand it's just a part of my culture."*

Sami *"filtered through"* his culture, picking apart aspects which he felt were more appropriate with his context and the changes in time and space. Essentially, this links to the

ideas that there is a significant level of tension across incompatible cultural positions (Bhatia, 2002). As the context changed in time and space, Sami had to make changes internally to acculturate.

"I kind of have picked up what suits me [best]. I- the positive points and have tried not using… things that work over [there] and not here, so I've kind of picked up the best things and worked with that and kind of ignored the rest because I know it won't work"

For instance, at a younger age, he freely spoke his mother tongue around people. However, he recognised that he needed to consider the impact that it would have on people around him. Thus, he became better at deciding which values he could act on based on the level of acceptance amongst non-Afghans. By loosening some aspects of his Afghan identity, he could fit in. Sami viewed this as his ability to adapt but wondered how this would be perceived by those back home.

"…they might think we've kind of-we're kind of lost"

This experience was difficult as Sami had initially felt an absence of connection to his *"home country"*. He craved opportunities to meet Afghans and could finally say *"yes, my people"* when he saw an increase. One unshakeable aspect of his identity was his Muslim faith and his attempts to engage in Afghan traditions. For example, Eid was celebrated in traditional attire and thus these assumptions were challenged physically. Perhaps this was not as convincing to those back home. For instance, Sami said that Afghans here allowed more flexibility towards intercultural marriages, whereas back home, he knew that intertribal marriages were still frowned upon. Sami saw this openness as a requirement for integration, but intergenerational conflicts arose as his parents were not exposed to similar situations.

" I reckon people have accepted erm the big change because urm you have to think it this way, your kid is growing up here…with someone who's uh non-Afghan [and] they're growing up together… I think our parents still don't understand it, [but] they kind of do"

Sami feels that the ability to adapt has helped him to share his experiences with those who are now in the same position. However, boundaries were important in this journey as he had often been upset seeing other Afghans uproot their whole lives to match that of an English person. Sami felt that some considered this as the only solution to fit in and attributed this to the stigmatisation of Afghans following 9/11.

"…people were scared to say they're [Afghan]."

This did not come with judgement and Sami expressed his gratefulness for being in the UK. However, he felt that his home will always remain Afghanistan and was concerned for the future of Afghan generations who were *"completely"* different.

"Our children in the future are gonna be nowhere where we are, they just gonna say yes, my parents were from there and I don't <u>think</u> erm er the quality and the culture and the things we have right now, I don't think in the future they will have this"

Sami's concerns lie in how the Afghan diaspora will maintain some connection to their roots in the absence of some structure. Having reflected on his journey, Sami experienced a sadness that through time, some aspects of the Afghan identity will become weaker.

"I'm just wishing there was a way we could follow, some sort of template [chuckle] we could use but other than <u>that</u>, we just have to … cross your fingers"

3.5.2   Language

Language was significant for Sami's journey and for helping him to emphasise the importance of his Afghan identity. He set up the narrative by highlighting his mother tongue to demonstrate the learning process that he had experienced in the UK. For example, he learnt Pashto through his Afghan friends and reflected the positive impact of becoming closer to his Afghan community.

Further, Sami's hyphenated identity described the result of forming relationships outside of home, he began to see himself as a *"British Afghan"*. Thus, his identity became combined and developed into a hybridization of the various positions he experienced. Both his British and Afghan self are simultaneously active (Surgan & Abbey, 2011). This also set him apart from *"normal"* citizens or British ways which emphasised separation based on attitudes. To arrive at this duality, Sami had to hesitantly *"filter"* his Afghan identity, as a metaphor it described the adjustment process based on what society would deem as acceptable. In addition, it emphasises the multiplicity of identity.

Using this language, Sami could keep his Afghan identity at the forefront of our interview. Afghan proverbs in both Farsi and Pashto indicated perhaps his fluency but also how natural it was for him to express this in his narrative. For example, seeing a poster *"You are what you eat"*, reminded him of an Afghan proverb with similar meaning. It perhaps helped him to demonstrate the process of searching for similarities between his two identities and give a sense of his adaptation process.

The value of his Afghan identity was reflected in a Pashto proverb that compared Kashmir, also known as heaven on earth (Sharma, 2017), to his homeland. It translates to:

"For everyone his country is like Kashmir."

Despite living in the UK, it was Afghanistan that held a place of comfort. This proverb is often used to describe the despair of being away from home. In comparison, a humorous tone was employed to highlight his worries about the future of the Afghan diaspora and those who would have fewer links to their homeland. To demonstrate this, Sami referred to the disintegration of boundaries to fit in. Although subtle, he mentioned that *"they're hungry…They wanna be a part of the culture"*, metaphorically showing the desire to belong. Although light-hearted, the worries did carry an undertone of sadness and indicated the value of these emotional shifting dynamics. Sami indicated that feeling lost through this process has often left young people at different points without an awareness of how and why they have arrived from *"A to B".* This shift in tone became clearer as the interview ended and focused on the future, perhaps indicating how this gradually became a priority in Sami's adulthood.

In addition, certain aspects of his life were related to general world norms, for example, education as a general key to the world. Through this metaphor, he created the idea that education was perhaps one thing that remained the same in value no matter where he found himself. Sami used an idiom to explain how the journey without templates can feel out of control and perhaps chaotic at times but essentially, he remained hopeful.

3.5.3   *Positionality*

Sami had engaged in positions that emphasised the significance of insider and outsider dynamics. He began his narrative hesitant towards the relevancy of his story in meeting the interview question, as someone perhaps in need of direction. In turn, I gave some direction intending to re-assure and hand over the control. This allowed Sami to highlight his stories of power positions, for example, recalling his male privileges within his family. Understandably, this position had been passed down by his role models. Through this, Sami

could highlight the continuous aspects of Afghan culture despite being away from the homeland and self-continuity through engagement with the culture.

Sami positioned us both in the narrative as different from 'others'. At times it was subtle differences between Afghans and British people such as attending relatives wedding.

"We always do things differently"

Through this 'othering', Sami could demonstrate its magnitude and positioned us based on our ethnicity, perhaps stressing power, and equality. Diasporic identity negotiations are often connected to the political and historical practices of the homeland and hostland (Bhatia, 2002). This also impacted my level of comfort towards disclosures and expressing that I could not speak Pashto but was fluent in Dari. Consequently, Sami's attempt to translate a Pashto proverb was part of his effort towards power equity. He identified my resources, ensuring that I could capture his narrative. I also expressed the importance of hearing the proverb in Pashto so that I did not undermine its original form. Perhaps this was a positive impact of being an insider researcher and strengthening the relationship, or a performance to exclude 'others'.

This insider position did create some tensions where Sami had wondered about my feelings towards his thoughts and whether he was *"saying things wrong"*. I had to actively re-assure him that there were no incorrect answers and stressed the importance of expressing his truest version of himself without 'filtering'. At other times, it created a dynamic whereby Sami was helping me to reach a specific goal. Perhaps an indication of how he could use his powerful stories and maintain a sense of cultural responsibility that he had often experienced in his collectivist upbringing.

"I will make sure you get somewhere"

Not only was Sami keen to help me, but it was obvious that these valuable experiences could help others. For example, he shared how his friend upon arrival to the UK, will need to adjust, this was based on how Sami had experienced the necessity of this. He could provide some guidance, something that he wished had existed upon his arrival.

Sami positioned himself as someone who has been able to find a level of comfort amongst these 'others' and maintain a balance between his Afghan and British self. Certain values needed to be compromised but others remained strengthened. For example, his Muslim faith was non-negotiable, as was his respect towards his elders, both of which also highlighted the position that those in Afghanistan could not question. However, Sami's compromised position could indicate the struggle faced by refugees and immigrants who often find themselves at a junction between deciding which parts to let go of. Sami's narrative represents the shifting sense of self.

3.5.4   Multivoicedness

Sami's internal 'I' voices had their unique level of presence which aided his narrative and identity development. Voices that were closer to his family and Afghan identity were more prominent in comparison to those related to 'others'. Prominent voices included Sami as a son, as an Afghan, as someone with a family and as a diaspora. These dominant voices represent the complexity of the dialogical self, where some voices can be more privileged that another (Bhatia, 2002). As a son, Sami relayed his understanding, awareness of roles towards people such as his father. This process of negotiation and renegotiation of the internal positions occurs vis-à-vis the other, not in isolation, hence Sami's references towards others in his life who held a prominent influence (Bhatia, 2002). This was the voice that demonstrated the stronger bond he held with his Afghan identity. In addition, as an Afghan,

the easily distinguished voice built this narrative and held a powerful position that helped him to gather other areas of his life. It was through this voice that he knew he did *"things differently"* and felt strongly about boundaries. This linked closely to being in a family, where he evolved and was responsible for the consequences of not adhering to his duty. His voice as a diaspora and as a refugee came across as powerful, knowledgeable aspects of Sami. It also created the image of the conflicts faced both in his home environment and the external world, it was melancholic but remained observant and accepting of change.

"like the last ten years I've changed, I've thought differently, I've accepted a lot of [changes] in life, where I'm sure I wouldn't have ten years ago."

Less prominent voices included Sami as a worker, as a student whereby it was perhaps more of a learning curve for him. However, Sami as someone with the desire to contribute was present from the start of the narrative right to the end where he indicated how he will help me.

"but I'm glad… I did a little bit, at least it's a contribution towards your research [chuckle]"

It related to his active role in bringing change and through his privileged voice, helping others learn and providing them with the template that he had wished for.

Sami's narrative held a larger amount of inner other voices, people who had influenced his sense of identity. For example, his parents' voice, those who were more inclined towards staying close to their Afghan identity, had strongly influenced Sami's level of acceptance towards certain values.

"Of course… to do the right [thing] to erm because you spend a little bit of time with your parents as to where they have grown up, what they know, but you mainly live in school"

This was evident in the situation with his sisters and his elders. In combination, his Afghan community was closer to actively adhering to cultural practices, Sami could see the different ways of being amongst Afghans through this voice.

Afghans in Afghanistan were stricter, less inclined towards change and perhaps held a more critical voice because they saw things *"from different angles"*, whereas English people in society encouraged change and perhaps aided his journey towards acceptance in living in the West. His cousins' voice was useful in highlighting this. As someone who had had an intercultural marriage, he helped Sami to see what degree changes occurred. Sami could then understand his comfort level and perhaps use this to develop his I-positions further based on such interactions with his external world.

Certain voices helped Sami to learn of his privileges and to remain aware of them amongst adversity. For example, he could see how Afghan children in Afghanistan were hardworking, they remained this way despite the complexities of living in a war zone, Sami felt that he could be grateful for having more advantages here in the West.

"*I guess the word is we're more soft compared to… how they are"*

Other refugees and migrants held an accepting, more compromised voice, which at times had been silenced or confused perhaps due to the ever-lasting presence of power and political dynamics. In addition to this, the process of migration itself involves a prominent back and forth between different voices (Bhatia, 2002).

Echoes from the wider society added to Sami's narrative of identity formation. For example, Western individualistic culture emphasizes independence. Sami had to eventually accept that his sisters equally could use opportunities to become independent, thus encouraging their self-growth and especially amongst females. This echo involved an opposing voice and I-position whereby Sami was hesitant about the change. Other instances

included the differences that Sami felt occurred between non-Afghans, them not understanding certain practices was echoed through his acknowledgement that Afghans do things differently. Immigrants make many compromises through the process of assimilation. Sami echoed this by reflecting on his 'filtering' process and how society, often in popular media, showcase a need to adjust, physically changing their appearance by adopting different attire to much more deeper changes. Though these voices, Sami could begin to form his dialogical self and make the shifts as they happened in real time. Sami told us that Afghans back home would be judgmental towards those abroad and would view them as lost, which he later echoed through his perception of how he has *"let go"* of himself.

Sami mentioned pressures. He felt there were consequences to distancing self from cultural norms and related this to stigma and confidentiality within the community. Sami mentioned that the stigma around mental health in the Afghan community is hard to break as there is a comfort zone that has been set as the accepted form. He spoke of the hardworking nature of Afghans and shared some experiences of success.

3.6   Zohal

3.6.1   *Overt discussion, gaps and inconsistencies*

Zohal was a 27-year-old, student and mother of two young children. We met for an interview via video call. Zohal struggled to define identity and anything that she knew of this largely came from her parents, her *"comfort blanket"*. Her narrative emphasised the impact of being 'othered' from an early age and how this had resulted in a significant confusion with her sense of self.

As a six-year-old, Zohal highlighted communication difficulties and fitting in. She found herself struggling between becoming a Western individual but also maintaining a yacht back home. This *"floating"* in-between identities was amplified as her arrival coincided with 9/11.

"... after I went back to school, the first thing that one of my classmates asked me was ['where you from?'] and I was like 'Afghanistan' and 'Oh, erm is Osama Bin Laden your dad?' [chuckle] I thought ['what!'] I didn't even know who-I didn't even know who they're talking about"

Her response to these comments remained a gap in her narrative. Zohal's initial exposure to the word 'refugee' had come from the media with negative connotations.

" I think, as I got older and I started to hear erm o-on the news it's a lot <u>more</u> er stories about refugees and sort of erm it sounded negative even though I don't remember the content exactly... some communities weren't as friendly towards that word and it was very evident in the media as well. There wasn't as- [laugh] attitudes towards refugees weren't so great. "

Consequently, Zohal wanted to distance herself due to feelings of embarrassment and as an attempt to contest this, she would tell people she was from India or Pakistan. Little did she know that both had their negative misconceptions and she continued to experience forms of racism and being ostracized.

" I was <u>extremely</u> uncomfortable when people would ask me where I was from to the point that erm I remember er it got to-I didn't like telling people where I was from and I-I think started saying I was from India"

Zohal's visit back home as a teenager highlighted an unexpected reality where she felt further confused.

"They didn't see me as Afghan, and whereas it was kind of the first time I felt [at home.] Back home-er I-all this time I've been confused or living in Britain and trying to fit in. Maybe I'll fit in back <u>there</u>."

She no longer knew where she belonged because in Afghanistan she was not *"authentic"* and in the UK, she faced alienation as there were no opportunities to connect with similar people. From this narrative, Zohal demonstrates the complexity of navigating identities as a diaspora affected by the culture and memory of both her hostland and her homeland (Bhatia, 2002). In comparison, her parents had a heightened sense of patriotism, knowing who they were. Her mother continuously attempted to cultivate Zohal's engagement in celebrations.

"I mean the way my mom probably erm did it, it was erm like we would celebrate erm like family occasions, like er obviously like Eid is Islamic, but things like Now Roz, if there's an Afghan new year celebration with the traditional you know, sort of things you would do back home and she would like to make the traditional food."

Outside of the home, Zohal recalled a dinner with her non-Afghan friends' family where she was met with many political questions. She experienced this as an intrusion on her childhood; a treatment reserved for Afghans. These interactions with people who had no experience of war reminded her that she "*grew up very quickly*" whereby they failed to "*see this <u>child</u>.*"

The distance from her refugee label widened, demonstrating the shift in the internal positions that Zohal was developing. In secondary school she could not freely express her identity, fearing stigmatisation. She was aware that the media was contributing to not only how others saw her, but how she began to see herself.

"I felt like during my time there was no progression into my identity. It stayed the same because the <u>media</u> stayed the same and people's attitudes towards that <u>word</u> and er towards what-who-what Afghanistan was and who Afghans were stayed the same and they-you couldn't grow."

Studying politics at university reduced some of these conflicts. Zohal's experiences became normalised amongst those with similar struggles such as Syrian refugees, a place where she could perhaps ask questions of whether she was Afghan or British. However, this also perhaps indicates the struggle that individuals who are exposed to conflicting cultural shifts have. It suggests that they may often hold an assumption or a pressure to choose between their identities or only decide between two. This evidences the importance of research which shows the multidimensional aspect of identity and moves away from the traditional conceptualizations. Zohal compared this to the individualistic British culture, where people knew "*who they are*". This was a cultural shock and conflicting to Zohal's collectivist vision of life and thus challenged her co-dependent reality. She started to feel like "*just an Afghan girl who was living in Britain and studying these things*".

Gradually, Zohal started to feel prouder about her refugee identity and began to actively question media created biases. There seems to have been a shift towards an agreement of the internal positions rather than the conflicts.

"'Who do you know that made you think Afghans were like this?' [laugh] like where do you get that image from?'"

Her Afghan identity has been politicised to the degree that disentanglement feels impossible and conflicts with how she identified. The hyphenated identity which Zohal refers to, is one which can be challenging to understand and so perhaps identity is better viewed more than a hyphenation and suggests the need for thinking beyond the traditional boundaries. As an adult, Zohal feels that increasing research and this study gave her hope but deals with her internal sense of self by increasing acceptance that she does not feel like she belonged to either world.

"I felt I was getting all these… all-all these like elements from my parents and then I was bringing-taking that to school with me, but at school was being taught that you should be extremely independent"

Zohal highlighted her parents' identity trauma as an added complexity. These continuous conflicts with her sense of self became more difficult to manage.

"There was-it is a <u>constant</u> struggle between the two [laugh] er definitely think that's why I've got <u>such</u> a problem with-that word identity. I'm just like 'I don't know what it is' [chuckle] because like there's so many different things, I spent eight hours at school being taught one thing and I would go home and my mum completely dispelled that"

The idea that there should be a firm identity was impossible as she faced not only her internal positions but also external positions from those around her.

"it's still something I really struggle with but I'm more comfortable with saying I erm I don't know where I belong, whereas before I couldn't. When I was younger, I was so keen to find somewhere to-that I belonged, especially somewhere where people wouldn't er have negative attitudes to. I feel-I really wanted to belong [so hard]"

Some inconsistencies such as when she hyphenated her identity, could be representative of the confusion she often experienced. Her only viable option is to manage a balancing act. The DST approach sheds some light into this confusion as it suggests a model which moves away from the notion that cultural positions and voices need to be integrated or in harmony (Bhatia, 2002). From this perspective, Zohal can have these many other internal I-positions rather than having a fixed or integrated self.

"maintain your roots [laugh] and but also at the same time sort of find a balance between Western Society too."

Zohal's role as a mother adds to the complexities. This is a scary uncertainty as Zohal feels that her children will grow up with an absence of certain connections to Afghanistan, amplified by Zohal's' own links gradually breaking over time.

"how can I teach him something that they'll never know?"

3.6.2 Language

Zohal largely used metaphoric language to portray her identity development, from the way she referred to home to her confusion by identity issues. Zohal identified *"back home"* as Afghanistan and highlighted her *"mother tongue"*. Words which would create an assumption that there is a sense of connection to her Afghan identity. Ironically, Zohal said that going back was never enough and thus, the complicated relationship involved the

eventual act of *"cutting the cord"*. This visual metaphor appeared as a powerful climax to her story.

To further this image of a multifaceted relationship, Zohal highlighted that she could not be an 'authentic Afghan', her physical appearance alongside her verbal communication did not belong to this version. The metaphor emphasised her narrative of differences between her parent's sense of self as *"time froze"* for them and yet she was expected to develop. The dilemma was stressed through metaphors such as existing in a *"limbo"*, her identity did not have a fixed or reliable aspect.

Zohal felt that this complication had left her finding her *"shell"*, a closed-off environment she could turn to in face of adversity. This and her *"blanket"* as protection, assembled her narrative of seeking belonging and shelter within her family dynamics. Her parents, two characters, provided her with grounding during distress and confusion. This language built her narrative of isolation as she found herself amongst people she could not relate to and therefore perhaps an experience that highlighted the absence of acceptance in society at the time.

Although Zohal was a refugee, the word itself never held significance until the involvement of the media. This was ironic. Zohal struggled to self-identify and yet others easily labelled her. Zohal used this to indicate ways in which her identity was *"dictated"*, a powerful word. This in combination with people's eventual use of the same notions led to her identity being *"shattered"* and disintegrated any notion that she held about herself. Zohal continuously had to stop falling into the *"trap"*, language which indicated the extent of the threat and assembled the story through a suspicious lens where she had to remain alert.

Concerning tone, Zohal began light-heartedly. Perhaps an attempt to begin forming a relationship and change the feelings within me at the time of the interview. This allowed

Zohal to gradually build up the narrative and set the scene. This same tone was also perhaps used to perform her narrative of resilience. She had to overcome the negatively dominated narrative that existed regarding her identity. A performance that could challenge biases and show how she *"broke barriers".* The frustrated tone became clearer where Zohal had gained an awareness of the misconceptions and biases. Consequently, her story was assembled through her experiences of injustice. The lack of empathy added to her feelings of embarrassment and avoidance. It was not until she could critically evaluate these pre-existing notions that she began to eventually shift to a more positive and proud perspective.

3.6.3   Positionality

Zohal was aware of the research intentions to explore identity through an academic lens and brought attention to this position by highlighting stories of misunderstanding and the absence of empathy. From a DST perspective, dialogical misunderstandings are ever present in migrant and refugee populations and are more likely to occur when one has several internal positions (Hermans & Kempen, 1998). Her overall performance was intended to generate empathy and understanding. Zohal felt that Afghans had been set up with a pre-existing notion of who they were, whereas others were met with openness and genuine curiosity.

"...if you got somebody said 'oh I'm from Australia', 'I'm-I'm from er err Hawaii', people are curious because they don't know <u>much,</u> they would ask you, they would explore with you, sort of the journey of who you are."

Subtly, Zohal placed me into the narrative as a researcher who can aid in changing the dominant narrative.

"… it would be really nice to see in the future, maybe sort of a different side to how Afghans are portrayed through academia and through the media."

To an extent, I was placed in a position of some power and thus the imbalance existed in the interview. Zohal had found herself to be perhaps helpless in achieving this goal on her own and recognised my resources. Consequently, this position impacted Zohal's interaction in the interview. For example, when asked to share any last thoughts, she indicated that she had perhaps spoken quite a bit, which made me curious as to whether this related to her earlier position of someone who did not perhaps have people's curiosity to know more and understand her journey. This also demonstrates the ever-shifting nature of the dialogical self.

In addition to this, Zohal also found herself shifting positions in line with her Afghan culture whereby power dynamics existed in the form of parental power. She explained her parents' strong influence in connecting back home. Traditionally, this can be referenced to collectivist societies, however, the concept of a collective or individualistic culture can be restrictive as research suggests moving beyond this and viewing the complexities within cultures too. It is this context that later created conflict for Zohal as she began to socialise with the British who encouraged her to become independent. A political conflict existed following the onset of war after 9/11 when Afghans were viewed to be perpetrators. Politics and historical circumstances are highly significant in the development of the dialogical self, this is built with the influence of various factors and not isolated. Therefore, when Zohal experienced the unfamiliar circumstances and the historical event, this had wider repercussions to her sense of self. Consequently, Zohal had found herself positioned less than concerning her Afghan identity and hence the wish to distance herself despite her parental influence.

The political context seeped into her life and overpowered the general, human being. For example, in communication with adults, Zohal had found herself in the spotlight of political discussions and her developmental age or intellectual capacity was overshadowed by a factor that she had little power over. She met these struggles with acceptance when she positioned herself amongst those other refugees and immigrants, people who had been a victim of war and displacement. Zohal could start the process of finding her genuine self as she had the freedom of expressing her identity in a non-judgmental environment. The societal changes in recent years towards refugees aided this process. Zohal's social context has changed too, her newly found responsibility as a mother has led to the reduction of a singular or individual aspect of identity which she has to manage and replaced with the worries of how her children will consequently face these.

3.6.4   Multivoicedness

Zohal's internal "I" position helped to create her narrative of confusion and conflict and emphasise valuable aspects of her identity formation through stronger voices. Zohal as someone with an interest in understanding identity held a curious and determined voice. She could express her interests and struggles through a unique lens. Equally, as an Afghan and as an Afghan living in Britain, Zohal could demonstrate the confusion and detachment that occurred at different stages, which in essence gave the characterisation of a less dominating voice.

"*I was extremely uncomfortable when people would ask me where I was from*"

Dominating voices such as Zohal's connection as a daughter encompassed acceptance, respect and compliance towards her parents and was closely bound to cultural norms. Zohal said that her parents influenced her knowledge of what it meant to be Afghan and this formed her "*secondary identity*". This further emphasises the strong presence of

multiple identities and positions which can exist simultaneously and asymmetrically (Bhatia, 2002).

Although an anxious voice, as a mother, Zohal could now empathise with her parents better.

"I finally <u>understood</u> all the things that my mom was trying to teach me."

The conflict was reduced when Zohal spoke as a young person. The acceptance of change helped her to focus on building connections with those she felt more comfortable with, such as her friends. Her resilient voice was significant in helping her to build self-confidence through some of these relationships.

"I just went 'you know this is who we are'"

This did not undermine her characterised frustrations. It was through her distinguished refugee voice that the experiences of isolation became expressed. The media had impacted her sense of self and this voice emphasised the unjust treatment.

" it was very hard to a-adjust to a Western Society erm because i-it wasn't like I was extremely welcomed, like <u>embraced</u> at the start, erm I like I said post 9/11 definitely, there was a lot of hostility at school towards being an er an Asian or-or part of an ethnic minority"

Although less prominent, Zohal as a friend, as a student, did speak of forming close bonds based on similar experiences. It helped to cultivate independent evaluations of her choices.

"that's why it's so reassuring when I do meet other people who are in-who have had similar experiences to me erm so other Syrian er refugees or Iraqi refugees have been in similar positions where they've grown up, leaving home and then had to adjust to Western Society"

Other people were also important in this context and helped to shape her sense of self through the interactions she held. For example, her parents' voice was patriotic, actively attempting to bring her closer to her Afghan identity when it became too foreign. Consequently, the voices of her children were louder as the roles shifted and she became concerned with her responsibilities in passing practices.

Her peers or British people, however, had an alienating voice. It added to barriers in forming connections as they could not understand Zohal's experiences.

"they-they were either born in this country, [or] th-there wasn't-there wasn't many people that came from a [war zone] or refugees".

This disconnection was enhanced by the media. A voice that cultivated judgment and continued to do so because they held so much power than Zohal. Consequently, other refugees remained stagnant in their identities because they were faced with unremovable labels. By expressing her frustrations, Zohal highlighted the empathy towards refugees following this.

"...they were trying to find their place in society and really struggling and it didn't help that the media kept telling us who we should [be]"

Other people had also dismissed Zohal's experiences and consequently impacted the internal I-positions she held. For example, she referred to the voice of her friends' parents during dinner. This dismissal and rejection were voiced by people in Afghanistan too when Zohal's Farsi was not 'authentic'.

"it didn't sound as authentic as theirs so that they sort of made fun of it. ..."

Echoes were present throughout Zohal's story, at times rising from social discourses. Zohal grew up in a less diverse city in the early 2000s. This would have impacted the level of

exposure residents would have had towards non-whites and thus their understanding. Zohal echoed this by recalling her struggles of discrimination in school and how attitudes towards immigrants would have contributed to this narrative.

Echoes of the media were highly significant. Zohal often indicated how her identity had already been decided and how some interactions, such as one which occurred shortly after 9/11, became a norm. This was noticed by Zohal's desired distance from this 'bad' word, refugee. Equally, using the word 'illegally' to refer to her arrival was an echo of the media rather than Zohal's genuine feelings. Also, Afghanistan's link to 9/11 was echoed in Zohal's narrative whereby she would tell people she was from other countries such as India. As such, other people's voices had contributed significantly to creating a confusing sense of self, Zohal could not situate her true self as there had been many blocks to this growing up.

At the end of the interview, Zohal spoke of her role as a mother and the ways it was prioritised. She raised questions of how one can find answers about the development of such complex identities.

4   CHAPTER FOUR: Discussion

4.1   Introduction

Each story gave valuable insight into the process of identity development in an under-researched group. I will begin by highlighting and evaluating the main features to arise from the analysis. Through critical evaluation, I hope to attend to the questions of how this study has contributed to theory and practice, focusing on counselling psychology. As part of identity development, key, essential commonalities emerged between the stories. Although the common themes may appear to be distinct, they are interrelated and give insight into the context of the social world in which participants narrate their identities. The rich stories show the constant negotiation process of their multiple identities and thus the discussion will explore the overarching themes identified from the narratives. These will be discussed in relation to the wider context which considers their social worlds and interactions.

4.2   The Activist

The 'activist' was a performance taken by most of the participants, perhaps as part of the psychological and social processes in forming their identities. In adulthood, participants narrated reaching a point whereby their Afghan diasporic roles helped them maintain connections to their roots, such as by bridging political gaps. Participants' activism did seem to aid their assimilation (Quinsaat, 2019). This was often done through the engagement with the wider community, ensuring that they did not 'forget' those back home.

In line with previous literature, this aspect can belong to 'homeland activism'; a collective action towards reforming the homeland (Banki, 2013). The literature has suggested that the feeling of being disappointed in homeland policies impact this desire but has proposed other motivational factors, such as social justice goals or in the search for identity

(Melucci, 1996). In this thesis, participants activism was depicted by their search for belonging to their Afghan community when faced with non-acceptance in their host community. Their motivation towards this was not purely to bring reformation to their homeland, but to change perspectives of 'others in their host country' who held negative misconceptions; their motivation lied in recognising their privileges. This may be linked to survivor's guilt, as previously highlighted in the Afghan diaspora (Sadat, 2008). Survivors' guilt, a critical issue in refugees, has been linked to identity, a critical issue in adolescence (Tobin & Friedman, 1984). Therefore, becoming a refugee at a young age is likely to impact issues related to specific developmental stages. The narratives carried subtle aspects of this which were perhaps performed through the desire to return home and participate in activist roles. Despite the complex impact of this on resettlement (Goveas & Coomarasamy, 2018), it continues to be under researched in mental health. Perhaps because survivors' guilt is often categorised under PTSD and thus this study, amongst others, present the need for individual exploration.

The relationship with homeland is often viewed through a dichotomy of homeland and diasporic identities, with a focus on the country individuals leave (Banki, 2013). The country of arrival is sometimes omitted completely, limiting our awareness of other factors (Brubaker, 2005). By viewing this relationship through a dichotomy, we oversimplify a complicated process and relationship. Instead, the relationship that diasporas have with their homeland is one which involves re-negotiation of identities, conflicts and hybridization (Hermans, 2001).

Alternatively, the 'durable solutions typology' (UNHCR, 2011) considers the dynamic with the resettlement country. This effectively does overcome the absences identified in other theories, but the focus is still on geographical locations. In comparison, the 'Pentatonic Model' (Faist, 2000) and Banki's (2013) suggestions on precarity, go beyond because they suggest that the social space and civil society actors are significant in diasporic activism. These models better capture the narratives in the thesis. It is more appropriate for understanding narratives of misrepresentation, bridging this gap, alongside specific characters. Equally, it highlights the roles those transnational actors, such as civil society organisations have and acknowledges their interaction with activism. These people provide access to funds and resources so that one can be an activist. Banki's (2013) model is useful in understanding the problems faced by the participants and the frustrations towards media. The model suggests that the level of precarity, *forms of vulnerability and impediments to security and stability that stem from both formal (legal) and informal (social, cultural) processes*' (p.8), impacts the ability for refugees to have homeland activism. Those with no secure political status (high precarity) have higher access to media in some respects as their stories are more sought after. However, those with low precarity, often face fewer connections to media, just as narrated in this thesis; it is challenging to bring forward their narratives. Despite this, they do have recognised access to alternative resources. This could be a part of their identified privilege which they could cultivate and includes educational attainment. Participants were able to use education as their fuel to gain better access, however, they expressed that a significant amount of hard work had to be employed in addition to this. Social agents did less and so the process was more challenging.

These models highlight the need for accessibility. Particularly as asylum seekers in the UK are met with dependence and little cohesive social support (Connelly & Schweiger, 2000). The host country needs to play a bigger role in providing refugees with enough

support for them to act upon their activism. Perhaps it is necessary for counselling psychologists to become more actively involved to ensure that there is an increase in support. For example, by emphasising the need for low uncertainty early in the journey of refugees. By reducing uncertainty, we positively increase feelings of empowerment so that they can eventually participate with their homeland.

4.3   Multifaceted Identity

It became evident that for many, their Afghan identity seemed to hold a dominance at certain stages of their journey. This was navigated, assembled and disassembled at other stages based on the circumstances and the social context in which they experienced their dialogical self (Salgado & Hermans, 2005). This was amended when the social context demanded different ways of being (Salgado & Hermans, 2005). For example, participants narrated a desire to remain connected with their homeland when they experienced a social context which was rejecting and isolating. Sadat (2008) explained that the Afghan young diaspora often experiences split identity issues or hyphenation. However, in this research, hyphenation seemed to hold less importance for the participants process of strengthening their connections, psychologically and physically, to their Afghan identity. This research also highlights the limitations behind split identities or hyphenation as the narratives indicate a more complex process which occurs with the dialogical self. The hyphen does not necessarily represent an integration of cultures (Bhatia, 2002) rather it can represent the complicated nature of holding multiple cultures. The dialogical self moves away from the simple concept of two identities and moves towards the argument that one has many selves. Internal I-positions and voices, continuously interacting in contradiction or in conflict with each other. As seen in the participants narratives, many explain that they have not been able to find a

hyphenation that fits them. For example, Zohal explains that she is perceiving herself to be of various positions, I-as mother, I-as Afghan, I-as British, all positions which are able to move based on the exchanges that take place in internal or external dialogues. Participants from Omidian's study (1996) had indicated the fear that their young will lose themselves, however, in this current study, we see that this is a complicated process for the youth. At different life stages, participants became closer to their Afghan identity and did not reject it as much as predicted by the elderly. Simultaneously, participants did disassemble parts of their identity to acculturate during relational and communicational processes (Salgado & Hermans, 2005). This study has given insight into the inner lives of young Afghans who are faced with cultural and familial pressures but perform their Afghan identities with a deep emotional connection based on the demands they face.

4.4 'Poor Afghans', Discrimination and Resilience

A part of this process was affected by the lens of alienation. Their Afghan identities were stripped to a perspective which undermined everything else they stood for. Considering the scarcity of existing literature on young Afghans, this study enabled a space for overcoming this narrative. As scientist-practitioners, studies like this research represent the necessity for finding ways to manage real world challenges (Kasket, 2012). Being othered or racialised is seen to be a part of many non-Western immigrant's acculturation process which is closely linked to their fractured selfhood (Bhatia, 2002).

All participants significantly challenged pre-existing notions of *'poor Afghans'* when they had the opportunity. Their stories, albeit indirectly, expressed their resilience amongst experiences of racism and discrimination. Discrimination and racism were prominent in the narratives shared by participants. They shared stories of being judged and isolated for the way they looked or the way they conducted themselves. In some of these stories, participants

had to filter through their identities, find parts which were more likely to be accepted and then engage with that more. Those voices and identities which were more likely to be rejected by the wider society was set aside for some time, and when they felt that the circumstances and society shifted, then they engaged more with that part. For example, Zohal shared the story of how she was slowly seeing the change in media and how this impacted her engagement and conflicts within the self. One of the most disadvantaged groups in the UK are refugees, where they are faced with issues in the wider society such as stigmas, cultural barriers and social invisibility (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2016). The issues of racism and discrimination against minority groups such as refugees are rampant in society, with the UK Borders Bill increasing the risk further as it creates the perception that refugees are to be penalized and defined as 'illegal' (UK Borders Bill Increases Risks of Discrimination, Human Rights Violations, 2022). As highlighted in the literature review, the alienation of refugees increased significantly around the globe following events such as 9/11 and disproportionally targeted a select community of people (Gould & Klor, 2012). These stories are evident in the narratives shared by participants such as Zohal who shared her experience as a young child being asked if she is related to Osama Bin Laden, a conversation which was set in that space and time but left a significant impact on her sense of self. Several participants spoke about experiences of racism in early childhood and within the school environment amongst their peers. Following on from the narratives of racism and discrimination comes the use of resilience.

Resilience is often seen as a construct that combines personal skills with the social contexts and family networks (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Participants often spoke of their achievements and how they embraced difficult changes in their lives. As evidenced by the growing literature on the positive impact of narrative approaches on those from refuge

backgrounds, perhaps participants were able to achieve a sense of therapeutic processing of their journeys (Stiles et al., 2019).

Refugees require coping mechanisms for necessary survival amongst the unfamiliar environments (Adedoyin et al., 2016; Burnett & Peel., 2001). Perhaps as part of their activist self, participants performed their narratives through a resilience driven perspective. To present Afghans, they stood up against misconceptions, continuing to gain power back from those in higher positions, minimising the difficulties or simply by finding acceptance. Participants overcame the narrative that had hindered equity and provided insight into the fundamental impact of the media-driven narrative.

Afghans were left with few opportunities to evolve their identity and their subtle experiences gave insight into how 'who am I' (McAdams et al., 2006), was answered by others. The narratives show that this development becomes overridden by 'others' at various different stages which is equally impacted by the wider society and context. The levels of resilience shifted and moved in line with the context of their journeys. This was not a stagnant or a linear development, rather the multifaceted self was continuously navigating life through the different lenses (Hermans & Kempen, 1998). This significant finding extended into the world and other characters and implied the importance of the wider host country policies (Korac, 2004). This suggests that perhaps there needs to be more redirected focus onto the media when there is a considerable barrier to policy changes at such a large scale. Psychologists can begin with aiding a shift by calling for better representations to misconceptions. The impact of the media on building trust can be huge (Buchanan & Grillo, 2004; Schlenkhoff, 2006). As psychologists, we acknowledge this as the foundation of relationships and thus the importance of cultivating trust. Essentially, this thesis gave insight into the characters often involved in identity processes, other than parents and caregivers. Some characters such as employers and the media hold more power. As such, I argue that

calling for changes within employment can be equally important so that there is a genuine, welcoming curiosity to all parts of their identity.

These actors and the roles played in this process unfolded following early adolescence. In line with Breakwell's IPT (2014), participants did re-interpret the value placed on their identities in line with the changing threats as they occurred in social systems. For example, following 9/11, the media began actively driving towards a biased narrative on refugees, often describing them with derogatory terms (Buchanan & Grillo, 2004). This impacted the confidence of refugees and could perhaps be seen in the narratives of fear of disclosure, silenced identities, and mistrust. Previous research on cultural identities of Afghan immigrant youth in Canada, support this (Khanlou et al., 2008). These findings help to unfold how social context impact's identity development and where change is necessary.

As identified earlier, there is an interaction between permanent residency and connections to media (Banki, 2013). Often media is focused on reporting on those who are at immediate risk. Those who no longer do, are not employed to drive narratives. This thesis echoed the perspectives of such individuals, despite living in their host country for several years, they actively indicated that nobody was interested in their stories and consequently, the challenges of changing this. When others did not create opportunities for their narratives, they set out to do this on their own and eventually collectively; often achieved by their resilience and work to towards making subtle but significant changes where possible.

4.5 Loss and Finding self

Culture, religion and circumstances of arrival were important for many in helping them to ease into integration and 'find themselves'. Equally important was their interactions with other immigrants. This helped them to feel understood, to fit in without excessively compromising their core Afghan values. Also, a sense of security, or as narrated by the

participants, *'secure blanket'*, was associated with their Afghan identity. Parents were influential characters; participants knew they could feel secure within this familiar relationship. Psychologically, decades of research have effectively explored concepts of attachment to parental figures and the use of transitional objects in times of distress. The continued impact of these early relationships was emphasised by participants expression of how they used this to situate their identities (Bowlby, 1978; Pappas, 2010). The security blanket of the family has also been identified in South Korean youth during their transitions into adulthood (Yoon, 2006). In effect, we can better understand the circumstances of participants who, as young children, in need of safety, found themselves holding tightly onto what they knew best. The sense of protection eased the challenges.

Participants also spoke of loss and always concerning the Afghan identity. Many compared their journeys to other young Afghans who had decided to take another route, one which involved loss of their Afghan sense of self. They expressed a pang of sadness when others could not or did not embrace their heritage. When adjustments had to occur in the absence of other options, emphasis was placed on the little control participants held in response to a threatened identity.

Omidian (1996) had highlighted the concerns of loss of Afghan identity and it was interesting to hear from several participants stories of friends and relatives who had 'lost' parts of their Afghan identity through this assimilation (Berry, 1997). This current study gave insight into 'why'. For many, it was a matter of belonging when they had little choice. Participants echoed the reality of struggling to integrate, a finding which has been previously highlighted as occurring because of policy environments. These often limit choices, consequently increasing the vulnerability for psychosocial stress, a factor known to impact other areas of wellbeing such as physical health (Campbell & Ehlert, 2012; Phillimore, 2011). On an already vulnerable group, extra stressors can exacerbate the impact. In essence, if we

attend to reducing this form of stress, we start to see benefits in a person's overall wellbeing. Studies on mental health and psychosocial support for war-affected youth have found that the presence of school-parent collaboration, peer support programmes and social and emotional learning initiatives can aid this process (Bennouna et al., 2019; Stewart et al., 2019).

4.6   Early Beginnings

Narratives of isolation were common amongst participants early beginnings. They did not want to negotiate their secure sense of self, the Afghan identity. Many recalled a strong need to hold onto what they knew best either from what their parents had told them or what they grew up with in terms of traditions and structures. This sense of 'I can't lose this part of me' was at times accompanied by feelings of conflict when faced with threatening scenarios.

Breakwell's (2010) theory supports this finding. From this lens, we can almost suggest that Afghan youth from a refugee background had found themselves threatened by the environments they were placed in. This type of finding has been previously indicated in participants from Jewish backgrounds due to the historical significance of their threatening society (Jaspal & Yampolsky, 2011). Afghan youth often have a significance of war which has perpetuated their stories of threat to their sense of self. In addition, it links to the DST in which there is an emphasis of the impact that context of the space and time will have on the multiple identities.

To overcome this perceived threat, participants seemed to have kept curiosity at the forefront. For many, this led to an acceptance towards their new identity and ways to maintain this sense of safety with similar people. The similarity search created comfort in knowing that they could belong within a group. This supports existing research on the strong influence of being around people from similar ethnic backgrounds, often extending into neighbourhoods too (Fazel et al., 2012). As such, narratives that involved a gradual embrace

of the different identities were performed. It may be important to consider housing in areas where they could find similarities amongst their community or opportunities to connect with 'similar' others.

In late adolescence, incompatibilities were highlighted, and it became difficult to maintain parts of their Afghan identity. This stressed the issue of linearity within stage theories. Beyond adolescence, participants continued to ask the questions of 'who am I' and 'what is my role' based on circumstances. Essentially, identity development is best seen through a process (Breakwell, 2010; Fadjukoff, 2016).

4.6.1 Educational environments

Understandably, not only do schools act as great influencers of educational attainment it also impacts children's understanding of self and social relationships. Developmentally, this is often the first instance whereby children begin to exercise their autonomy and see the world outside of their family (Eccles, 1999). As the 1.5'ers begin or complete most of their academic life in their host country, it can explain why previous literature on them has often focussed on educational attainment. This development was evident in all narratives, with the added conflict between home and school. These early experiences were perhaps the most significant in their identity processes.

 In conjunction, children perceive developing competence in the English language as essential to their school progress (Mohamed & Thomas, 2017). It is no surprise that this was a prominent challenge. However, language went deeper into also understanding self from the lens of others. Zohal notably said by learning English she could hear how others thought of her identity and who they felt she was. Consequently, it is important to create a dynamic system that allows for a smoother journey into language acquisition as a way of cultivating a positive sense of self. Existing literature on older refugees has shown strong support for the

mediating effects of language acquisition on managing mental health difficulties (Kartal et al., 2019). This thesis makes a unique contribution by focusing on younger people's experience of this and suggests that learning English made the process of identity development easier; reducing some stressors. Across borders, research has shown the positive impact of pairing English-speaking peers with refugee students as a form of perhaps reaching equity (Hamilton et al., 2000). However, child language brokers (CLB) can also have negative impacts. For example, CLB may experience undue stress and pressure from these experiences and creates uncomfortable scenarios when sensitive matters need to be discussed (Cirillo et al., 2010; Morales & Hanson, 2005). To reduce the disadvantages of CLB activity, the school needs to provide context and there needs to be thoughtful staff support (Crafter et al., 2017). However, countries with lower immigration rates, and less acceptance of new cultures, often do not have such services in place (Berry, 1997). Therefore, it is crucial to build policies which outline clear guidelines for those in institutions such as schools to ease pressures and create positive attitudes.

Focusing on the early interactions with the host country holds potential benefits, such as maintaining and developing a sense of identity and overcoming difficult feelings of isolation (Hek, 2005). Psychologically, student alienation arises in many schools and impacts factors such as levels of achievement (Newmann, 1981). Not only are refugee students vulnerable to victimisation from students, but school officials can further perpetuate this when they over-classify them based on their limited linguistic skills or cultural differences (Correa-Velez et al., 2010). The current study showed how these subtleties can also continue into adulthood. Maryam's experience with her professor was perceived as a microaggression, having the potential to further isolate, unless one challenges it. However, many individuals with refugee, or minority backgrounds may not be able to do so, especially as a child. This indicates the important role that schools have on such processes, they need to address challenges overtly

through a proactive approach (Mthethwa-Sommers & Kisiara, 2015). I propose that multiple agency partnerships need to be employed when working with young refugees (Betancourt et al., 2010). The narratives shared by participants call for better integration which goes beyond traditional approaches in school. For example, we can perhaps consider the usefulness of art-based therapies during the initial stages when individuals are not yet equipped with the English language (Quinlan et al., 2016).

The education system positively cultivated critical awareness towards life and self during adulthood. Akseer's (2011) notably had found the importance of the education systems amongst female Afghan participants, more specifically, the suppression that many had to engage in to get through discrimination. Sing (2010) had suggested that Afghan women felt their identities had been homogenised, however this research challenges these notions and suggests the hybridization of identity. In this study, we heard how certain experiences of bias in academia were met with resistance. For example, Maryam's experience within academia had not resulted in suppression, rather it fuelled her need to question it directly; she had recognised how other voices had taken power over her identity.

4.7   1.5'ers

The complexity of the 1.5G emerges as participants arrived at a specific age, during a significant schooling period. For some, arriving at a younger age had been helpful in that they could make the most of the advantages this came with, such as the ease in learning English, in comparison to their parents. For many, it was during this age that they felt their main knowledge about the world and themselves came from their parents' influence, specifically by their mothers.

It became evident that family and schooling was key. As such, it linked closely to previous literature on Korean 1.5'ers whereby they emphasised the key roles around familial, sociocultural, political and transnationalism (Ahn, 2020; Roh & Chang, 2020; Song, 2020). In essence, narratives suggested the presence of juggling conflicting experiences as they were exposed to different value systems. One such difference was the encouragement towards independence as emphasised in school versus the traditional thinking at home. Although this finding of a contradictory process is not particularly unique to Afghan youth, it does give insight into another culture. As the concept of 1.5G is new, there is a need to investigate further.

The 1.5G remains an under-researched population, particularly in refugees. This unfamiliarity was visible in the narratives of participants who often used the term 'first generation' to describe themselves. As such, the current study has highlighted the ongoing ambiguity surrounding the definition. Some studies argue that the 1.5G can be split into 1.25G and 1.75G, again, depending on the arrival age (Rumbaut, 2004; Gans, 1999).

For example, 1.25 would identify those aged 13-17 years old, they would have essentially missed primary school and entered a more complex social and developmental stage of life. On the other end would be 1.75, those who arrived younger than six years of age, having more socialisation in their host country (Gans, 1999). However, this fine line needs further investigation so that the concept becomes better characterised, especially with the puzzling nature of identity (Fearon, 1999). Participants echoed this when asked to define identity from their lens. This was done to encourage dialogue, moving away from a western or dominant perspective. Consequently, participants shared the struggle to define it and carried this performance throughout their narrative. As such, through this dialogue, the study was able to uniquely present insight into the reasons behind individual struggles to distinguish what identity meant to them. At times, it was related to more complexities such as

their earlier childhood experiences of belonging. Not only is conceptualising identity important for the conduction of research, but also for understanding the self (Erikson, 1968; Oyserman et al., 2012).

The findings from this research could help to inform theorising cultural identities of 1.5G Afghan youth. From the narratives, it becomes clear that Afghan youth from this generation experience multiple challenges which impact their sense of self. The cultural identities are multifaceted and formed from various interactions with the self and the social world in which they live. The findings suggest the importance of creating space for the exploration of the different factors, one in which the Afghan youth do not feel silenced or dismissed. By considering the relationships they hold with their religion, cultures, societies, and communities, we ultimately encourage the processing of the internal I-positions, even when they conflict with each other. This can help to further the understanding that one does not necessarily have to remain situated within one position and that this can shift as needed.

4.8   Language

This research highlighted several aspects in relation to the language used when describing narratives. Participants made use of metaphors, irony and contradictions in a way that could help others empathise and gain an insightful perspective of what was being shared. The language used helped to build their sense of self and shifted based on the inner voices present in a certain period or context. In most participants stories, there was some reference to 'Afghanistan being described as 'home'. The homeland had a significant role in their identity development in that they had categorised it with a certain emotionally coded language. In one instance, Qais makes a direct reference to how Afghans have a coded language between themselves and Sami uses poetry to depict how Afghanistan is his home. These forms of language use were effectively brought into the narratives to demonstrate the

cultural links. This was further related to the language used to describe 'others' who existed in their social world, these 'others' were not understanding of their cultural practices and voices. In the narratives, there were also clear use of language which depicted an image of safety or what participants perceived brought them a sense of safety amongst their conflicting experiences. For example, Zohal and Maryam brought in the concept of a safety or secure blanket to portray their narratives of feeling connected with their parents and how this assisted them with feeling grounded and present amongst the contradictions in the wider society. These contradictions and conflicts as experienced within the self were referred to by descriptive language. For example, Zohal explained the process of being in a 'limbo' to perhaps emphasis the back and forth and the contradictions which does not allow for a fixed sense of self. These were further elaborated on in instances where Qais spoke about contradicting processes such as the desire to move away from home to build autonomy but in fact, coming back with a bigger interest to connect with his family and roots. These essentially highlight the ever shifting and dynamics of the multiple selves. These are and will be in contradiction with each other at times based on the circumstances of the wider society and the changes experienced (Hermans, 2001). When one feels threatened by the society and feels pressured, then it impacts the process of developing the I-positions. Maryam and Fatima narrated their stories to describe the threat and the fears they experienced from their interactions with others in society. At those points, they both explained how they challenged this or managed it internally and the questions it brought up for them.

4.9   Positionality

Analysing the positions that participants took throughout their narrative produced interesting ideas about how they navigated their sense of self through various positions. Many

of the narratives highlighted themes of power dynamics, both within the self and others in society. For example, the narratives placed participants in a position to encourage change in their community and the wider society where they had felt silenced. For example, there was a dedication towards their participation as having a wider influence in how they have been perceived by others. Maryam and Zohal spoke of how they participated because they saw the opportunity for an academic perceptive to share their narratives. This powerful position was also narrated when participants spoke of their responsibility to carry forward their cultural practices or encourage closeness to their cultural identities with their future children and families. Fatima narrated that her mother encouraged this from a young age and hence she also found herself in a position wanting to 'hold' onto her identity by sharing it with her children in the future. However, in line with the dialogical self and the many internal positions one can take, they also positioned themselves with less power at times. This was more evident when narrating stories of power imbalance or when their identities had been dictated by those in more powerful positions. Zohal spoke of how the media hindered her sense of self and told her who she should be. Fatima spoke about the subtle ways in which her identity was dismissed by those in power, such as the inability to select her ethnic group on formal documents because there was no option for it. Insider and outsider positions were also key for participants. All participants made direct references to the researcher, me, holding an insider position with them. This dynamic was significant for the participants in various ways. For example, many used 'us' to indicate that there is a shared system and that there are others outside of this system. This impacted the relationship formed in the interviews whereby participants, such as Maryam would indicate that I would be familiar with an aspect of her Afghan culture or for example when Sami spoke about a phrase commonly used in Afghanistan. In some respects, this was perhaps used as a form of creating connection, feeling heard and positioning themselves in line with the environment and

circumstances of the interview. This insider position also allowed for equity to be reached in some circumstances. For example, Sami recognised my limitations as someone who did not speak Pashto and was able to effectively navigate around this. These positions seemed to significantly influence the multiplicity of their identity and shift with the narrative and circumstances.

4.10 What does the future hold?

As part of the interview, participants were asked how they viewed their future sense of identity. Hence, there was some insight into the perceived visions that each participant had for themselves. Previous literature had proposed that the more time one spent in the host country, the higher the level of identification with that country (Mastrotheodoros et al., 2021; Magi et al., 2020). However, it is rare to have a stable identity or to have achieved an identity by early adulthood (Berman et al; 2008; Josselson, 1996). The thesis showed differences for the 1.5G of Afghans. Fatima firmly said that her Muslim identity would remain a priority and Sami explained how despite the adjustments, Afghanistan would always remain his heaven, also highlighted in Braakmans' participants (2005). For some, identity would remain a dilemma as it changed in line with their ever-evolving roles. Participants explored their intergenerational conflicts but felt that they had managed the identities in such a way that allowed them to not become too 'English'.

4.11 Critical Evaluation

Credibility

This criterion was met by active evaluation and reflection on the methods employed to gather the data. As I engaged with the literature, I could assess the typical methodologies and ensure that the employed method aligned with the overall epistemology and ontology of narrative studies. The persistent observations and changes which occurred throughout the

research showcased this as it allowed me to keep the credibility at the forefront. In addition, reflective journaling at all stages of the thesis added to the rich process, aspects which I have embedded within my discussions of positionality.

Transferability

To make the data transferable it was essential to provide descriptions of the context, location, and circumstances of interviews (Appendix A). This helps readers to situate and immerse themselves within each story. Discussions of positionality and personal background equally evidenced transparency; all as a form of cultivating a vivid picture for each reader (Amankwaa, 2016). The narratives from this research could also be relevant to other similar contexts where young refugees are developing their identities. However, at times, it may have been difficult to fully capture each experience for my readers and certain aspects such as some reflections from each interaction had not been possible to fully embed within the thesis.

Dependability

Narratives are performances we tell our audience and as such, dependability can be difficult to maintain. The performance of each narrative could be less stable over time. However, narrative studies acknowledge this constant change in conditions, and I included details on where changes had been necessary, for example considering the impact of a pandemic on recruitment and the subsequent challenges of interviewing, alongside the decisions that were made for ease of access.

Confirmability

It is understood that although the study could be repeated with similar groups of participants with similar questions, there will be significant differences in the resulting stories. However, despite this, I maintained an audit trail of the analysis and each decision.

This included those made in conjunction with my supervisor, who was able to provide me with a further reflective stance as someone who was not an insider researcher.

4.11.1 Limitations

Reflecting on the research process has highlighted limitations and, consequently implications of this on the analysis and findings. One such issue was the unfamiliar term '1.5G'. The term requires young people to have arrived in their host country at a specific age, as such, it restricted the recruitment pool. During the recruitment process, many interests came from those who had arrived at a younger age or had been born here. Unfortunately, they could not share their invaluable stories. Although many criteria amendments were made to allow some widening of the participant group, the 1.5 group was one non-negotiable aspect. I can only suggest that this calls for more qualitative research opportunities for Afghan youth from all backgrounds. In addition, the definitions of the 1.5 could be expanded further as new studies emerge.

The insider researcher perspective provided a unique contribution to existing studies and benefited the interviewer-interviewee relationship. Outsider researchers had often reported difficulty in building trust and at times being called, albeit, jokingly, FBI agents (Braakman, 2005). In this study, although there was more openness, their interview performances perhaps demonstrated another lens. For example, there were plenty of hesitations within narratives, showcasing perhaps mistrust. However, once the recording devices were turned off and the interview aspect finished, these hesitations significantly reduced. This prompted me to make notes following each interview without compromising confidentiality. This demonstrates the issues with recording interviews and raises questions of this could be overcome using different mediums. Further, Lipson (1984) emphasised the ease with which researchers could fall into assumptions. For example, when Qais said he had an

'Afghany' life, I had fallen into the assumptive bias of knowing what this would look like and had not been curious enough. However, the retrospective reflections prepared me for future interviews.

It is also important to consider the impact of conducting studies on an intimate aspect of life. Storytellers will perform narratives with an awareness of their audience. As such, what is revealed is frequently meant to project a positive self-image to others; participants' descriptions may have filtered out those parts of their experiences that will present a socially undesirable self-portrait. Consequently, having an Afghan researcher could have enabled a particular performance (Greene, 2014). However, participants could be more open to sharing their experiences if they trust that the interviewer is open to their truths without judgment; I emphasised this by overtly reassuring them. However, no finalizibility of analysis enables the presence of several meanings. For example, following the occupation of Afghanistan by the Taliban since August 2021, one can suggest alternative meanings to the narratives based on the changes in social context and time.

Also, participants were only given one interview, an aspect which has previously been noted as impacting the level of hesitancy to reveal intimate aspects of their life; it is often suggested that participants are interviewed three times (Seidman, 1991). This encourages development of confidence and trust in such types of research. Consequently, participants could have further time to deeply reflect and explore their stories. This could have filled ambiguities present in the stories because as many indicated, this was the first time they had sat to explore this (Polkinghorne, 2007).

4.12 Implications

The narratives indicated several needs from the Afghan youth population. Specifically, to reduce barriers and to impact the dominant voices present in forming policies. As Korac

(2004) proposed, practices in host countries hold a key role in enabling inter-ethnic relationships, especially for the Afghan population who need policy reformation from many domains of service (Schuster, 2011).

The narratives and use of the DNA framework contributes to the advancement of identity research for young refugee people. It does so by the introduction of an alternative, in depth qualitative method which brings forward stories, voices and identities that may have previously been neglected or dismissed. The development of a unique DNA format has allowed for important questions to be considered as we hear people's narratives whilst they navigate life through particular stages. This research is different from the mainstream acculturation research such as Berry's model (1997) as it creates room for several voices to be heard and shared. It also demonstrates that identity and its process for the young youth is considerably complex, unique and varies based on several factors. These factors are not fixed or linear, the process takes place in a combination of ways and is continuously re-negotiated with the self. In essence, traditional notions of cultural identity and what it encompasses has been furthered in this research as the narratives create an emphasis on moving away from the two-dimensional notions. It emphasizes the need to understand cultural identity as a multifactored and nuanced concept which is better explored in participants narratives through the lens of the dialogical self. This type of DNA can be useful in understanding other marginalized youth experiences such as those who might have been youth offenders, experiences of being bullied and other significant events which can be retrospectively shared and analyzed. This process is highlighted further in this research for those belonging to the 1.5G. A unique contribution of this research is the way in which it provides an understanding of the complexities that this generation face whilst attempting to balance various identities in England. One implication for the 1.5G is that this research has been able to create some familiarity of the term within the population who had often found themselves stuck between

the first and second generation. It is hoped that an increased awareness can lead to more interest in sharing their struggles and being able to find their own sense of belonging.

Counselling psychologists have responsibilities towards meeting certain needs within boundaries. In addition, social justice and cultivating equity at a structural level in our clinical practice is crucial (Rosenthal, 2016). Both are valuable in highlighting challenges and positive experiences but is an understandably complex process that may take time to establish. Psychologists could actively engage with communities, address societal structures which lead to disparities, and teach social justice curricular (Rosenthal, 2016). This research emphasizes the need for increasing dialogues and to engage with narratives for acculturation research and exploration. The research has highlighted the impact of holding internal and external dialogues with the self in the process of identity formation. Participant's stories highlighted the need for therapists to consider and understand their clients with specific historical and cultural contexts. We need to increase awareness through such means in the hope that it could increase the engagement of the general Afghan youth population. Included in this is the importance of familial structures and relationships, thus the need for Counselling psychologists to actively recommend multifaceted approaches, bringing together these dynamics. For example, practical steps such as involving important family members in the care planning stage. It can also be suggested that counselling psychologists should be encouraged to engage in appropriate trainings in more culturally sensitive therapy modalities. This would improve the accessibility to certain therapeutic interventions and provide psychologists with a wide array of skills and tools to support Afghans better. This would consider ideas on how to manage privacy or confidentiality with those who may be more hesitant to explore difficult aspects of their life due to the already existing issues of trust towards 'others' outside of their community.

Also, beyond traditional roles in clinical practice, we can suggest the implications for psychologists in educational contexts. Tailored practices in school for young refugees could reduce the sense of threat and encourage self-identification through a positive lens, by providing the resources needed. It may be important to employ alternative therapeutic tools such as art therapies or narrative therapies. However, better funding is necessary for this so that counselling psychologists can be present and provide training to all staff.

Beyond counselling psychology, this research has the potential to impact sociology and anthropology. The unique contribution of this study comes from the awareness of the cultural perspective, which, as participants emphasized, has always been pre-determined. It has the potential to lead to better understanding of Afghan stories, with a reduction in microaggressions. Consequently, organisations in the western world become better equipped to actively pursue more catered opportunities for young Afghans. It can be argued that the only reason they may be hard to reach is that they have not been approached with curiosity, at times because of the negative narratives created by the media. Participants have expressed the necessity of sensitive and accurate portrayal of Afghans.

This study only touches the surface of what can be done. The implication for future research is the necessity of building the interviewer-interviewee relationship. This is particularly important for outsider researchers who will be met with a level of mistrust. In some ways, I can suggest that this can be overcome with a good, appropriate level of engagement with participants during the research. For example, interviewers may set up more than one interview or employ more creative means. Also, there is a need for Afghan participants to be provided with more active opportunities in important research and at different stages. For example, encouraging empowerment by involving participants in the data analysis. This aligns with values in counselling psychology whereby there has been a drive towards addressing inequality and inequity through the potential use of participatory

approaches in methodology (Fish & Syed, 2021). This aids the process of change as it addresses the whole research process, from the development of research question to the analysis (Jacquez et al., 2021).

I believe that the biggest evidence for the importance of such research came directly from Qais, Maryam, Fatima, Zohal and Sami. All who highlighted the lack of space or even desire from others to hear their stories. The hesitance, the conversations after the recording, gave insight into a complex and necessary situation. I would like to bring to the forefront a saying by Kazuo Ishiguro, novelist and screenwriter; *"But in the end, stories are about one person saying to another: This is the way it feels to me. Can you understand what I'm saying? Does it also feel this way to you?"* (2017).

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6   Appendices

6.1   Appendix A Contextual Information situating Interviews

Participant	Date	Time	Interview Format	Notes
Qais	February 2020	Evening	Skype	*Qais was living in his student accommodation and away during term-time.*

Maryam	February 2020	Afternoon	Face-to-Face	*In public café, during her work break as she felt this worked within her schedule. I asked Maryam if she was comfortable with the setting and whether the noise levels were comfortable for her. Maryam said that she was happy with the set up and proceeded to order her lunch, after we began the interview.*
Fatima	June 2020	Evening	TEAMS	*At the time of the interview due to COVID situation and as Fatima had recently moved for her studies, we met remotely. I decided to honour Fatima's interview despite her mentioning that she was currently living in Scotland as this information had not been shared previously and thus, as her time and story was valuable, I respected and continued with the interview as it was disclosed.*
Sami	October 2020	Evening	Face-to-Face	Sami *expressed his interest in the study in early 2020, however following the onset of the pandemic, we were unable to set up a face-face interview. I informed Sami that I will contact him to arrange a face-face interview (as per his preference) once government regulations eased. We met at a local café which was convenient for Sami.*
Zohal	October 2020	Evening	TEAMS	*Zohal has two children. At the time of the interview, COVID was present and thus, we decided to meet over video call.*

6.2 **Appendix B** Email to organisations

Dear [Name of contact/organisation]

Thank you for agreeing to assist in my recruitment of participants for my Doctoral Thesis which is targeted at Afghan youth, your support at this stage is much appreciated and I hope this opens up a

bigger discussion within the community. Following our brief communication on [], through your page, I am reaching out to inform you that I am now ready to start my recruitment process.

Initially, I would like to introduce you to my research study to help you gain an understanding of what my research consists of and what my aims are.

What is the research?

I am conducting research into the journey of identity development as experienced by young Afghan refugees from the 1.5 generation. I am interested in looking at the stories in relation to development of identity as an Afghan living in England. This study aims to develop the understanding we currently hold about Afghan youth and their development of identity, particularly when they have held a refugee status.

Participating is voluntary and selection will take place once potential interests have approached me via u1721608@uel.ac.uk and have gone through a brief phone call conversation with myself.

Kind regards,

Avesta Panahi

Postgraduate Student at UEL School of Psychology – Doctorate in Counselling Psychology

6.3   Appendix C   Screening Questionnaire

Have you ever been admitted to hospital for mental health care?

Are you or have you ever received psychological therapy?

Do you suffer from any diagnosed mental health difficulties such as depression or anxiety? And if so, are you receiving help for this?

Have you and your family been granted permanent residence in the UK?

Did you arrive in the UK with your family members at the same time?

How long have you been living in the UK and in England?

6.4   Appendix D Consent form

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to participate in a research study

The Process of Identity development in young Afghan 1.5 generation refugees in England: A Narrative Inquiry

I have read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher(s) involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I understand that my interview will be audio recorded for collection of data and will be securely kept anonymously.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should I withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use my anonymous data after analysis of the data has begun.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

…………………………………………………………………………………….

Participant's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………

Date: …………………….……….

6.5   **Appendix E** Interview Schedule Example of the kinds of interview questions you intend to ask participants.

- Can you tell me what you understand by identity?
- Can you tell me a little about what interested you in participating in this study?
- Can you tell me the journey to where you are now in terms of your identity?
- Can you tell me how you came to developing your identity?
- Having reflected on this journey, how do you feel about this journey?
- (Where/ how do you see your identity for the future?) not so sure.
- Is there anything else you feel is important for me to know/hear about your identity?

6.6   Appendix F Example Analysis extract for identifying overt story (Maryam)

I: Hmm

P: So I wanted to get involved with that because as you know, the situation in [Afghanistan]

I: [Yeh]

P: The majority of our citizens, they all have PTSD

I: uhm

P: and we don't actually have many or even any I don't think living in the diaspora in [the UK] who are actual psychologists, so I think yeh this will be a great opportunity.

> **Avesta PANAHI**
> Maryam states that hearing or seeing the opportunity to contribute towards a research on Afghans, which did not focus on politics, which we later find out is a major aspect of her narrative, was interesting. She says that there is a gap in the mental health studies on Afghans, based on her experiences and what she has seen in the diaspora.

I: [Yeh]

P: [Laugh]

I: Fantastic, so, going into the kind of the question itself, what do you understand by identity? So just thinking of it as a [broader thing]

> **Avesta PANAHI**
> We then go into the main research question

P: [So, I just-] I suppose identity from a broad prospectum (sic) it would be what makes me 'me', I suppose.

I: Ok

P: Especially erm it's almost a social construct, but it's through your environment isn't it?

I: Hmm

P: So it's your socialisation, it's how your brought up-

I: Yeh

P: It's who you're surrounded by and they kind of do shape who you are, but then also you've got your whole internal likes, dislikes, so I think it's kind of like a variety.

> **Avesta PANAHI**
> Maryam describes key aspects which make her 'her' – her environment, her social interactions, her upbringing, her surroundings, internal preferences. She describes this as being quite varied and broad.

I: Yeh

P: So I think that's what my identity is, so.

I: Ok.

P: Just kind of how you perceive yourself and then also I suppose what others perceive you as.

> **Avesta PANAHI**
> I try to delve further and question about her personal identity, what she would describe herself as

I: Ok. Erm and your identity in particular. What would you say about that?

6.7   Appendix G Example Analysis extract for language (Sami)

I: [Yeah] yeah?

P: Erm I seen a lot, I learnt a lot and yeah, I mean everyone's…in Pashto… [chuckle] there's a saying that goes-well how can I say it… it's basically like home sweet like… you like your place, I like [my place] it's just a saying uh can't really translate it.

I: [Hmm] is that like a erm what feels comfortable to you, like you're in your space or

P: Yeahh

I: Yeah? How would you say it in Pashto?

P: [tsk] erm they say, we use Kashmir as [the example] yeah, we say *'har chata ekhpol watan Kashmir da '.*[5] That basically means… ah like heavens your home for [you]… uhh something like that.

I: [Ah okay] [nice] hmm okay interesting.

P: Ermm I- I don't know how I- we got here [laughs] yeah

I: [laughs] well you said like, you know, that kind of you staying in your space, whatever feels good for you so

P: Yeah, ermm I don't know what I can say much more about work but erm [tsk] I mean if there's more… I can add I would definitely [inaudible] and add it onto

Avesta PANAHI
Sami attempts to translate a Pashto proverb but of course, already knowing that I am not fluent in this, he tries to translate it for us to use – this is done perhaps for the audience to understand that he is aware of both languages, skilled in it, and to make it feel closer to home, he needs to use his mothertongue, this is the only way which he could explain it, a translation is not enough. After we struggle together to get to a common translation, I ask Sami to say to me in Pashto, knowing that I will have access to resources to translate this after and still include it in his narrative.

Avesta PANAHI
Sami uses the Pashto proverb to perhaps tell us that despite his journey to accommodating different cultural practices in his personal life and making adaptions, in the end, his heaven like place will be his homeland. This proverb is often used amongst Afghan community to describe the feelings and despair of the refugees and being a immigrant away from home, which was heaven. Equally, this can be said to be a ironic/paradox to his previous sentence of 'I'm just glad to be here' – unless there is a misunderstanding amongst us, me as a researcher, and me not understanding that England could be heaven/home to him now.

6.8   Appendix H Example Analysis extract for positionality (Zohal)

I: So, we'll start off a little bit about, just finding out what interested you in, I guess, participating in this study in itself. Erm [tsk] you know, what kind of brought you towards it or interested you about it?

P: Erm ok. So, I- so when I read er the participation [letter] what interested me was, I'm quite curious about knowing er-er like-like my identity being explained erm maybe academically, just because I've always felt like I didn't have-I don't have much of an Afghan identity, and I've never had a proper sort of mmh scientific or academic explanation for erm what my identity is

I: [Um] hmm Yeh

P: just because I've always felt like I've... sort of floated in between being erm erm [tsk] so [tsk] not British Afghan, but erm you know, erm an Afghan living in Britain.

I: Um

P: Just-I just-it the word never really made sense to me much and I don't feel like I have any err feelings towards [chuckle] being erm like any erm strong feelings towards having an Afghan identity erm and I just feel like there's not much research on it.

I: Uhum

P: And I think that's why, 'cause [sic] it's never really been explained on how we would [inaudible] on it. It would be nice to see how this could be compared to other individuals having the same experience as me.

I: Hmm [tsk] yeah, and-and what would you say what-how would you define identity for yourself or what does identity mean to you?

P: I think- [sigh] that's a bit-er that-that is something really struggled with because even erm when I came to this country, I don't really understand it. Erm there was always such a erm sort of struggle between being told who you're supposed to be by your [parents], who erm especially Afghan parents, who erm st-strongly believe in-er they're very patriotic

I: [Hmm] Hm

P: extremely patriotic [laugh] and erm you sort of become-your identity is based on what your parents tell you, you should be.

I: Uhum

P: And-and I think... for me it was only like whatever my parents say. So, if my parents say

Avesta PANAHI
Common intention here between me and Zohal in the sense that my intention is to learn about identity through an academic lens and to share that with others in similar positions but at the same time to expand and disperse it amongst others with the intention to help them understand – this is seen throughout our discussion, in particular points whereby Zohal explains how other people not understanding her identity and the conflicts that she experienced through this journey – this is performed with the intention to educate and to create empathy – both intentions which I aimed for with this research – this common intention is brought in at the end of our discussion, almost as a reminder of why Zohal went into participating – reminding us both of the common position

Avesta PANAHI

Avesta PANAHI
This again goes back to a common expectation – this research will somehow 'help'

Avesta PANAHI
Zohal positions herself in terms of power positions – she tells us that according to Afghan culture or parents – there is a power dynamic that results in parental power, and she explains this through her further narrative of how her parents were her main influence, points of reference, security blanket and connection back home – socially – we can reference this back to cultural tradutions within collectivist societies but also more specifically to Afghan culture as described by Entezar (2008). Equally, it is this context which later on creates conflict for Zohal as she begins to socialise with the 'British' who encourage her to become independent.

6.9   Appendix I Example Analysis extract for multivoicedness (Including coloured key) (Qais)

Transcript KEYS

1st Person Pronouns – I, Me, Myself, We, Us, ourselves, Ours, Group Names & 1st Person

Identified Clusters & Characteristics

1.   I-as-someone who loves business and finances

Driven, energetic, new concepts/ideas, identity, struggle, starting again, not giving up, hardworking, alone, energy, effort, successful, learning, work ethics, targets, achievements

2.   I-as-Afghan

Influences the way he views my study, his interest in it, more interested in research or anything that will benefit Afghans, different way of speaking to each other, similar values and beliefs, connection exists, cultural groups and sense of community, family, small, working hard, local, Afghany, fixed, social community, rare community, closeness, reputation, comfortable,mine, ambitious, goal driven

3.   I-as-someone from a Middle Easterner

Poor

4.   I-as-a student

Starting early, primary school, fun, got on well, altercations, communication, making decisions, University, bachelors, graduate

5.   I-as-someone who struggles to understand identity

Everyone will have their own different meanings, who doesn't have a strong grasp of the word/sense, what is important or relevant, personality traits, not knowledgeable, complex, hesitant

6.   I-as-an Immigrant

Has come here young, 1st generation, split generations, experiencing racism, hard working, shared community, hunger to strive and help, dutiful towards back home, personality, language barriers, age related

P: In terms of **my** identity, like **my** identity in terms of having a normal-**my** personal identity **I** don't know how this is in relation to being **Afghan** or like comfortable.

I: Uhum

P: Like **my** identity having a normal life can never like-I don't know why, that was just something **I** could ever accept. The normal of like having a 9-5 job, having stable basic like salary, stuff like that

I: Yeh

P: That's something, like **I** could not accept to be ok with.

I: Uhum

P: Co-like the opposite of that, like prob-like one of **my** very good friends and he's like completely the opposite of me, 9-5 job, very skilled, the guy's 20 and he is already engaged and getting married, and I'm like what the fuck you doing.

I: [Laugh]

P: So yeh. So, **I** guess that's sort of my identity. How **I** relate in terms of business, but **I** think [inaudible] everything will be struggling for normal. Like for example, like having freedom of being financially free at a certain age and **I** think a lot of it stems from **my** background, where **I** come from, from **my** ambitions and goals **I** have for the future.

I: Uhum

P: Yeh, like again it's part of **my** identity **I** see it like as part of **my**, I guess the cliché of **my** destiny to start a charity, go back home to Afghanistan. So yeh, that concludes it all.

I: Yeh. Ok and I guess I am curious to know about how did you feel within all of this, 'cus a lot has happened, and like you've mentioned your own drives towards like business and what's been your personal kind of interest in there, erm but how was it all for you in terms of how you felt about it and about this journey, just even reflecting back erm on it now?

P: Reflecting back, I've learnt a lot about myself to be honest. Erm **I** think the key thing that **I** learnt was **that I-err** in terms of personality traits.

I: Yeh

P: **I** mean something-something **I** had in terms of **I** was very impatient, **I** was a very erm what's the word, what's the word...**I** mean very impatient, like a very wanting results very fast...

I: Hmm

P: or not giving up enough time, working hard, being diligent, not working properly in terms of for results that **I** want.

6.10 **Appendix J** Information sheet

PARTICIPANT INVITATION LETTER

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you agree it is important that you understand what your participation would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Who am I?

I am a postgraduate student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London and am studying for a Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology. As part of my studies I am conducting the research you are being invited to participate in.

What is the research?

I am conducting research into the journey of identity development as experienced by young Afghan refugees from the 1.5 generation. This means those who had experienced life in Afghanistan before their arrival in the UK between ages 6 -12 years old. I am interested in looking at the stories that you may have in relation to your development of identity as an Afghan living in England. This study aims to develop the understanding we currently hold about Afghan youth and their development of identity, particularly when they have held a refugee status. The research will contribute to counselling psychology and allow us to identify gaps in existing research and services.

My research has been approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. This means that my research follows the standard of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

Why have you been asked to participate?

You have been invited to participate in my research as someone who fits the kind of people I am looking for to help me explore my research topic. I am looking to involve:

English speaking 20- 34 year old Afghan refugees who have been granted permanent residence in the UK. You must have some memories from living in Afghanistan and currently live in England.

I emphasise that I am not looking for 'experts' on the topic I am studying. You are quite free to decide whether or not to participate and should not feel coerced.

What will your participation involve?

If you agree to participate you will be asked to:

- Have an informal interview at an UEL Campus, a preferred location of your choice or through Microsoft TEAMS which may last a maximum of 1.5 hours
- Between working hours of 7am - 8pm on Monday - Friday
- Answer some questions about your journey in developing your identity as an Afghan
- Provide permission to have the interview audio recorded.

I will not be able to pay you for participating in my research, but your participation would be very valuable in helping to develop knowledge and understanding of my research topic

Your taking part will be safe and confidential

Your privacy and safety will be respected at all times.

- You will not be identified by the data collected, on any written material resulting from the data collected, or in any write-up of the research (unless you wish to use your real name, a pseudonym will be allocated).
- You do not have to answer all questions and can stop your participation at any time or take breaks when needed.
- Members of staff will always be available in the building and chosen location during the interview for our safety.
- You will be escorted to and from the interview to ensure your safety.

What will happen to the information that you provide?

What I will do with the material you provide:

- Your personal contact details (phone numbers & emails) will be securely kept on a password protected document on a personal laptop.
- Your recorded interview will be transferred onto a secure, password protected drive that will only be accessible to the researcher. All data on the recording device will immediately be deleted following this.
- You will be assigned a pseudonym which will be linked to your recorded interview content and will be kept separate to your personal contact details. You can choose to use your real name if you wish.
- The anonymised data may be viewed by my research supervisor, examiners and may be published in academic journals.

- Your interview will be transcribed word by word.
- After the study has been completed and assessed, your contact details will remain on file to ensure you are sent a copy of the finished research.
- Upon completion of the research and assessment, your interview materials will be kept for any further publications for up to 6 years.

What if you want to withdraw?

You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence.

You have the right to have the date supplied destroyed on request and will have three weeks from the time of participation to request a withdrawal of data.

If you request this after this period, I would reserve the right to use material that you provide up until the point of my analysis of the data.

Contact Details

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Avesta Panahi

U1721608@uel.ac.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor Dr Jeeda Al Hakim, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,

Email: j.alhakim@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Tim Lomas, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.

(Email: t.lomas@uel.ac.uk)

Helpline contact numbers

If you have a plan to end of your life and feel you may act on it today:

Please go to your local Accident and Emergency department or call 999

If you experience non-urgent distress following the interview, here are some numbers you may find useful:

NHS Direct

http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/

Operate 24/7 and should be able to provide details of local crisis support services or advise on accessing local A&E

Tel: 0845 4647

Samaritans

http://www.samaritans.org/

24 hour emotional support line

Tel: 08457 90 90 90

Saneline

http://www.sane.org.uk

Emotional support line for people in mental distress

Tel: 0845 767 8000 opening hours: 6pm-11pm everyday

Anxiety Alliance

http://www.anxietyalliance.org.uk/

Helpline for people with anxiety disorders

Tel: 0845 296 7877 opening hours: 10am-10pm everyday

The Black, African and Asian Therapy Network

https://www.baatn.org.uk/

UK's largest independent organisation specialising in working psychologically, informed by an understanding of intersectionality, with people who identify as Black, African, South Asian and Caribbean.

Tel: 020 3600 0712

The Naz Project

www.naz.org/uk/counselling

Counselling services for Minority Ethnic individuals and young adults aged 18-25 years old

Tel: 0208 741 1879

Afghan Association Paiwand

6.11 **Appendix K** Debrief Sheet

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN: **How do the 1.5 generation of young Afghan refugees, living in England, experience the development of their identity: A narrative inquiry.**

Thank you for giving your time to participate in this research study. Your story is invaluable and will hopefully reach many people who are in similar situations as yourself and provide many others with insight into the experiences of young Afghans.

Your data will be kept confidential and your recorded interview will be uploaded onto a secure and password protected drive that will only be accessible to myself, the researcher. Following this, your recording will be deleted from the recording device.

You will be assigned a pseudonym for your interview and this will be kept separate from your personal contact details.

You will have until the end of the day to let me know if you wish to use your real name and have three weeks from today to withdraw your data, without reason.

Attached to this letter is a list of organisations whom you can contact for support or in case of distress.

After the study has been completed and assessed, your contact details will remain on file to ensure you are sent a copy of the finished research.

Contact Details

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Avesta Panahi

U1721608@uel.ac.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor Dr Jeeda Al Hakim, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,

Email: j.alhakim@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Tim Lomas, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.

(Email: t.lomas@uel.ac.uk)

6.12 **Appendix L** Transcription Key

P   Participant

I   Interviewer

[inaudible]   Speech that is not clearly verbalised or recorded

(—)   Hanging phrase, incomplete sentence, a parenthetic expression or statement, an interruption by another speaker, resumption of a statement after an interruption.

Ellipses (…)   Silence and pauses

[   ]   Non-verbal sounds

Underline   Emphasis on word

Footnote   Translation of non-English speech

6.13 Appendix M Ethical Approval

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

For research involving human participants
BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

REVIEWER: Cynthia Fu

SUPERVISOR: Jeeda Al Hakim

STUDENT: Avesta Panahi

Course: Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology

Title of proposed study: How do the 1.5 generation of young Afghan refugees, living in London, experience the development of their identity: A narrative inquiry.

DECISION OPTIONS:

1. **APPROVED:** Ethics approval for the above-named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.

2. **APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.

3. **NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED** (see Major Amendments box below): In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY
(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)

2 – Approved with minor amendments required before the research commences

Minor amendments required (for reviewer):

Could the supervisor confirm that the student has DBS clearance before starting recruitment. The feasibility of the recruitment was not clear from the ethics application form. I presume that the supervisor has specific plans for the recruitment process.
For the sample size, could the supervisor confirm that a sample size of 6 participants for this type of study is sufficient for a Professional Doctorate degree.

Major amendments required *(for reviewer):*

Confirmation of making the above minor amendments *(for students):*

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name *(Typed name to act as signature):*   AVESTA PANAHI
Student number: U1721608

Date: 12/09/2019

(Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed, if minor amendments to your ethics application are required)

ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER *(for reviewer)*

Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?

YES / NO

Please request resubmission with an adequate risk assessment

If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

☐ HIGH

Please do not approve a high risk application and refer to the Chair of Ethics. Travel to countries/provinces/areas deemed to be high risk should not be permitted and an application not approved on this basis. If unsure please refer to the Chair of Ethics.

☐ MEDIUM (Please approve but with appropriate recommendations)

☐ LOW

Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any).

Reviewer *(Typed name to act as signature)*:

Date:

This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

RESEARCHER PLEASE NOTE:

For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's Insurance, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

For a copy of UELs Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in the Psychology Noticeboard