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Dislocated and misplaced: an autoethnography of moving, missing, and finding home

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**Dislocated and misplaced:
An autoethnography of moving, missing, and finding home**

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Middlesex University and Metanoia Institute

**Doctor of Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy by
Professional Studies**

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DEDICATION

To all of those who kindly opened their doors to me when I was younger.

To my husband and children, who showed me what a home could be.

To the reassuring presences of Crovie House and the village.

And to Charlotte, who never stopped writing.

| **ABSTRACT** |

Frequently moving home has been linked to a full spectrum of mental health issues including depression, anorexia and schizophrenia, multiple health problems, and even premature mortality. Whilst relocation trauma, as a concept, is still incompletely understood, theories suggest it may stem from the cumulative stress of disrupted relational ties, routines, and familiar environments. With most research largely quantitative in design, nuanced light needs to be shone on the topic of moving on and settling down so that we might understand more of the ‘whys’ and ‘hows’ surrounding this subject. This research is a reflexive investigation into the author’s experiences of recurrent relocation which resulted in traumatic attachments to people and places. The project is framed within the author’s present-day context of simultaneously relocating a therapy practice whilst experiencing fledgling ‘belonging-in-place’. Its aim was to study the relational practices of one example of a ‘modern nomadic’ culture for the purposes of broadening general, psychological, and therapeutic understanding of a life without roots. Using creative means, data were gathered as a self-interview, journal extracts, poetry, letters, and other artefacts before being crafted into narratives using visual, literary, and intuitive, body-based methods. Findings are presented as a layered account setting the author’s third person narrative alongside analysed personal reflections, theory, and research. These include tentative connections between adapting to (and being separated from) home with feelings of anger, loneliness, pain, fear, trauma, dissociation, relational distress, and shame. Findings suggest these experiences were likely caused by disrupted social networks, inadequate support, insecure parental attachments, and fragmented identity formation during formative years. The author’s current sense of residential settlement appears to be due to an unexpected, burgeoning sense of trust in the unfolding emotional bond with one particular place. The study shows the author in the ‘process of figuring out what to do and how to live’ whilst exploring personal meanings of moving, missing, and finding home. Conclusions highlight elements of loss and pain whilst also illustrating possibilities for mindful movement and positive change.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Hiraeth is an ancient Celtic word, difficult to translate, describing a form of homesickness and grief for somewhere we can never return to nor, perhaps, ever even truly was. For as long as I can remember, I have felt *hiraeth* for missing spaces. Places where I felt safe and rooted. This thesis is a reflexive investigation into my experiences of physical and emotional dislocation due to frequently moving throughout life. In it, I aimed to create original knowledge about what might be described as a 'modern nomadic' lifestyle. Using diaries, dialogues, letters, artwork, photographs, and objects, I crafted an evocative autoethnography about moving, missing, and finding home.

1.1. Personal relationship to this area

I went to ten different schools. This was, on average, one new school for every eighteen months of my compulsory education. Up until I was 13, my parents and I lived in thirteen different houses and one boat. Moving involved a process of creating, dismantling, and recreating family life, over and over which meant that my sense of home was forever shifting. Sometimes, it felt as if I, too, were being dismantled and recreated, over and over.

I often developed strong attachments to physical spaces, to certain rooms or aspects of them: an old radiator, or a bright corner. Objects, too, would take on profound significance. The homes changed, but so did the family members who always moved on, or away. It felt entirely normal for us to take on different characters wherever we went.

At school I was always new. Always making friends and adapting so as not to stand out but similarly to not fade away. I became good at forging relationships quickly and leaving them behind in an instant. When I was sent to boarding school aged 12, I lost, for good, what had up until that point been a rather tenuous hold on home. Separated from my parents, I was also left without a home to return to. A few times a year, I would travel thousands of miles to stay in their spare rooms. But these foreign houses were also always changing. At boarding school and university, I would often struggle to

picture my mother: where she might be standing or where might she go after hanging up the phone. Home became a twisted, painful, fleeting thing. At college, a running joke went something like: "Has Ellie got a boyfriend yet? No? Well, she'd better find one quickly, term's nearly over!" By my late teens, my parents had moved so often but without much provision for me that I was, in some ways, essentially homeless and had to find places to stay during the holidays. Later, in my twenties, I continued to move, almost compulsively, every few months, and simultaneously failed to launch into adulthood. I stalled in jobs, lacking confidence, like there was nothing inside me holding me up, or willing me on.

My mother would say that home was a state of mind. Somewhere you could unpack from a suitcase and nail to a wall.

This process of constantly uprooting combined with assimilating and fitting in to many different systems and niches led to this aforementioned impression of creating and dismantling physical and psychological worlds many times over. From the research journal I began at an early stage of this research process, I noticed entries often described feelings of homesickness for places and people I had left behind. This feeling of sickness, often very physical, was all encompassing and never seemed to go away or get any easier. Other entries reflected personal therapy sessions during which strong emotions had been evoked whenever I talked about home with my therapist remarking how my tone of voice and facial expressions also seemed to change depending on whether I was talking about my home (or homes) back then, especially during childhood, or my home now, as an adult. Even the noun *home* seemed different than the verb phrase *being at home*. It seemed that not only was there an aspect of relationship to *place* that felt painful and of interest but also aspects of relationships to *people* which were overlayed with issues of 'home and away' that were also worthy of consideration. Trying to define one form of personal loss, trauma, or growth from another would not, I already knew, be straightforward, but I was sure that my attachments to *place* were salient in terms of their constructive and destructive power. Because of the dawning significance of these wounds, many of which I still carried and regularly opened up, I knew that moving and missing home were experiences I felt drawn to investigating. Furthermore, because of the complexity of what the concept 'home' initially meant or symbolised for me, and how this had begun to change, it felt right to think about this as a separate, yet related, exploration as to

my experiences of home, then, and now, in order to distinguish a general investigation of what I would tentatively call my 'core wounds and growing edges' (i.e. moving, missing, and finding home) from an exploration of what was happening more recently, including any healing or transformation that had taken place. To me, it was important to distinguish these from one another, with the former being a process largely involving reflective, remembered, and real-time 'information gathering', and the latter involving a process of drawing together, construing, and meaning making around a multifaceted concept that was impactful for how I had come to understand *where* and *how* exactly I felt (or now feel) *placeful*. Arguably, there is sufficient overlap in these two issues for them to be subsumed within one overarching question pertaining simply to 'experiences of' however, for the reasons above, I wanted to place my attention on both of these throughout the investigation so that I could notice how my understanding of home, *as a concept*, might change during the research process.

It was important to me, from an early stage, to keep my feet on the ground and to remember that there are, doubtlessly, many people who have positive experiences of frequently moving home, school, or work. Nevertheless, I realised, particularly as a result of my therapeutic training, that I wasn't one of them. I had never fully, let alone systematically, examined what had happened to me through this repeated relocation process, particularly in earlier life, and how this continued to have an impact, years later. Over the course of my psychology training, a dawning sense of a void became apparent. Having to be regularly away for teaching weekends, staying in hotels, living out of a suitcase, and leaving loved ones behind, even if only briefly, continued to define my outline for this project, specifically looking at whether people, like me, who moved might develop a particular sense of belonging (or not belonging). I mulled over all the times I had moved home and school, and later continued to. All the people, places, and things I had attached to but subsequently left behind. Simultaneously and with a sense of intrigue, I noticed how, year after year, I was also finding excuses not to sell the house that I had, by then, lived in far longer than anywhere I had ever lived before. Nevertheless, I also noticed feeling deeply apprehensive about the idea of committing 'out loud' to this family home or to these map coordinates, since staying had just never felt like an option. But then, suddenly, it did. And I wasn't sure why. Was it perhaps because my children were finally settled at school? Or because our house was beside the sea? Or was it perhaps because some unknown, unconscious

process was being activated, causing me to resist the usual overwhelming urge to keep moving on? These questions, sometimes prompted by something as seemingly insignificant as a wave or a smile from someone I vaguely recognised on the high street, made me wonder whether this very process might be connected both to my previous feelings of not belonging and also to something new I had never experienced before which felt different and unusual. At that time, around 4 years ago, I had called this process '*Settling*'. I wasn't sure what it meant, or whether it was going to last, but it, too, felt important to investigate.

1.2. Background and overview

The primary aim of this research was to draw on something deeply personal to illustrate things which may be common, given a particular set of circumstances. I hold certain assumptions about myself and the surrounding world originating in my social background, psychological make-up, values, and beliefs. For example, I don't think we can ever realistically separate the observer from the observed (e.g. Toschek & Wunderlich, 2001) and believe, if we had a powerful enough 'telescope', we could probably glimpse the interconnectedness of everything (Gyatso, 2014), mind and matter alike. Within a relational universe, it seems unlikely we could pinpoint absolute truths through scientific inquiry. On a smaller scale, I saw no need to eliminate 'bias' or 'outliers' for this inquiry, and I concluded that a subjective, interpretive approach to new knowledge on this subject was most suitable.

To achieve this, I wanted to study the practices (Geertz, 1973) of the modern nomadic culture I was part of, and indeed still am, in order, ultimately, to help others, including therapists, to understand what it can be like to move around and, later, to try and stay put. To do this, I revisited some of my earlier homes, reconnected with childhood objects, dramatized certain scenes and interactions, and created a variety of texts (Rath, 2012; Goodall, 2006; Thomas, 2010) to form vignettes which would resonate with readers. Whilst ultimate truths might not be discoverable, I nevertheless hoped to convey certain 'essences' of experience (Bochner, 2000) through the power of story to stretch, heal, and illuminate (Poulos, 2009).

At the beginning of this research process, from 2018 to 2019, I decided to conduct an initial 'light skim' of the literature to understand what was out there in terms of theory and research on issues relating to frequently moving home and school. At that point, I

hadn't come across anything specifically connected to these experiences from a psychological perspective, although my reading around the subject of boarding trauma did bear some similarities in describing relocation, loss, and pain. I soon came across important terminology such as 'frequent childhood relocation' (Oishi, 2010), 'relocation stress' (McKinney & Melby, 2002), 'relocation trauma' (Manion & Rantz, 1995), 'third-culture kid' (Fail, Thompson & Walker, 2004), 'global nomad' (McLachlan, 2007), and 'cultural homelessness' (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999) which helped me to locate my thoughts and feelings within existing conceptual frameworks. These terms had the additional, unexpected consequence of making me feel seen and heard, perhaps for the first time. 'Yes', they seemed to say, *'What you went through has a name. It is an actual thing.'* Most of the research I came across was large-scale in design drawing on quantitative paradigms to create statistical models of cross-comparison between two groups: movers and non-movers. Whilst much more limited, the qualitative research (or the qualitative aspects forming part of mixed methods studies) seemed to provide, at least on this 'first pass' of the literature, a deeper slice of certain issues such as how young people can be affected by relocating away from friends on subtle emotional levels as well as the broader stroke measures of psychopathology commonly captured by larger-scale studies. These more subtle aspects included reports of sadness, poor confidence, and poorer coping in frequent movers.

Something else I identified as being important through personal therapy and my early journalling was the experience of homesickness. Again, from this first fly-by of the literature, I was aware that homesickness had been investigated among certain populations and the breadth of the literature caused me to keep these experiences at the forefront of my mind as I went forward. So, it was with these embryonic queries in mind that I moved further into the research process and literature review.

This study reflects certain conceptual ideas, such as 'home' and 'belonging', which have their origins in a modern, predominantly Anglo-European 'imaginary' whereby home is constructed as a formative dwelling place involving certain familiar characteristics largely premised on middle-classed, heterosexual, nuclear family notions of it (Wardaugh, 1999; Mallett, 2004). Thus, whilst this research aims to illuminate certain experiences, it does not seek to represent all cultural experiences or conceptualisations of home. Similarly, I use the term 'modern nomad' because I found

it useful to describe myself but would not wish to equate this with any other, equally modern, nomadic cultural experiences.

From the outset, I was thinking about whether difficult experiences of moving might relate not only to certain events, but also to individual differences. For example, I assumed less securely attached people might be particularly susceptible to unexpected shifts and losses (Fried, 1963, 2000) and that, sometimes, moving might, in itself, *cause* insecure attachment. Overall, I assumed we don't know enough about the consequences of frequent upheavals, especially during more formative years. As a therapist, I suspected client difficulties around relocation trauma might not always emerge until matters specifically relating to it became figural and that there may be times when it would be beneficial for therapists to hold salient experiences of place in mind when working with mobile clients.

Using the personal to explore the universal, I have at times commented on my understanding of certain common prevailing attitudes regarding, for example, the seemingly unproblematic 'portability' of children, but have, at others, attempted to remain at a respectful distance to provide space for the Reader's own thoughts, experiences, and conclusions.

1.3. Research problem

Following my initial identification of questions and the reasons for these as outlined above (moving and missing home as well as a dawning sense of belonging) and having conducted a skim of the literature to ensure my research was relevant and pertinent, I formulated my research problem as follows: Whilst moving home has been linked to health and wellbeing risks, frequent childhood relocation, as a field, still appeared under-researched and poorly understood from a psychological and particularly a psychotherapeutic perspective in terms of people's actual lives experiences, and it was this last issue that I felt drawn to address.

1.4. Contributions

1.4.1. The fields of psychology and psychotherapy

The implications of moving home have not been fully integrated into psychological theorizing and research (Oishi, 2010). As people relocate across boundaries of differing magnitudes, more research is needed which explores its impact on the human

'lifespace' (Lewin, 1936). Because mobility research has been largely quantitative in design, a fresh direction was warranted incorporating aspects including homesickness, rootlessness, and place attachment to potentially furnish a number of fields with additional depth of understanding such as social, developmental, counselling, clinical, educational, and environmental psychologies, and informing a variety of discourses on issues such as development through the lifespan, trauma and loss, and attachment.

1.4.2. The wider social sciences

Theories of intersectionality recognise the limitations of using one defining feature as a unified collective term (Davis, 2008) with authors urging us to explore the complex tapestries of what it is to be Other, recognising that "what is oppression in one context may be a privilege in another" (Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008, p.6). In depicting shifts between my own lived experience as a member of several intersecting groups – white, female, middle class, state educated, privately educated, third-culture, emigrant, immigrant, nomad, settler, mother, homemaker, therapist, and client, this multifaceted perspective may be small, yet still holds informative value (Bochner, 2000). Some researchers ask that future studies address the types and mechanisms of intersections between relocation biographies and specific contexts because, they argue, these matter for children's wellbeing and development (Gaspar, de Luca & Estacion, 2010; Vidal & Baxter, 2016). This research therefore stands partly in response to such requests.

This project furthermore contributes a rich, human angle to debates about connections between mobility, personality, and stress (e.g. Oishi & Schimmack, 2010; Lin, Twisk & Rong, 2011; Oishi, Krochik, Roth, *et al.*, 2012). With only a handful of UK studies exploring connections between frequent childhood moves and outcomes, this study also aims to address this gap.

1.4.3. Policy makers

As a result of this investigation, themes have come to light supporting a reorientation of community, wellbeing, and educational services to better engage with people who move often, some of whom may have hidden supportive needs. This work therefore forms an important part of a wider body of inquiry examining the effects of educational,

mental health and economic policies on issues relating to individual and family relocation (see 'Review of the Literature').

1.4.4. The general public

This project could be used to improve awareness in those who are thinking of moving or who have moved. Due to ongoing uncertainty around the possible risks and benefits of relocation, it is important that sufficient information is publicly available when making such decisions, particularly those affecting children. Written in what is hopefully an engaging, jargon-free manner, this study aims be of interest to the general reader, opening up ideas to wider audiences who might, otherwise, feel excluded from research results. Results will be straightforward to share, in abridged format, with individuals and organisations online, through media channels, and in person.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

I have followed Wentzel (2016) whereby this literature review followed on chronologically from my earlier light review of the literature during which I identified key terms and issues, formulated my research problem and objectives, and developed a rough outline of questions of interest and which later acted as guiding concepts during the planning and writing of this comprehensive review.

The review is structured according to the three intersecting topics of 'Moving home', 'Missing home', and 'Finding home'. Within these, I have selected theory, research, and ideas relating to psychology and psychological therapy, sociology, anthropology, health, and education as well as, occasionally, philosophy and creative literature. I sourced this literature using the library search database of Middlesex University by entering a variety of terms including the following: "frequent childhood relocation", "residential mobility", "homesickness", "home", "relocation stress", "relocation trauma", "belongingness", "boarding trauma", "third-culture kid", "residential stability", "settlement", and "home". The search for literature was ongoing throughout the initial phases up to the time of data collection (the collection and writing of narratives) and later continued from the analysis (Reflections) onwards until completion. At times, certain searches were foregrounded, such as when I came across an issue that seemed particularly relevant (e.g. children's geographies). I also searched the web (using Google or Google Scholar) by entering all of the aforementioned terms and phrases in order to capture a broad variety of ideas and writings on these subjects and this meant I often snowballed from one particular book or peer-reviewed journal article to another, sometimes leading, through subsequent researching, to general ideas from others and even, sometimes, literary references. In terms of the empirical focus of this review, there is a leaning towards research relating to young people because scientific evidence suggests that childhood is the most significant developmental period in terms of lifelong wellbeing (Smith & Pollack, 2020; Wehrle, Caflisch, Eichelberger *et al.*, 2020). I have chosen to alight on personally relevant 'islands' of informative context from these texts, again often snowballing from issues and gaps suggested by authors in the field. These include: 1. Exploring links between frequent moves and risks to health and wellbeing, 2. Home-related factors for 'third-culture kids' and boarding

pupils, 3. Childhood home spaces (children's geographies), 4. Narratives of moving and family 'home folklore', 5. Homesickness as an attachment process, 6. Belonging and rootedness as a human need and how this relates to the physical and emotional space of the therapy room.

The following theoretical and empirical strands implicit underpin this review's structure and the project overall: attachment theory (e.g. Bowlby, 1969; Fonagy & Target, 1997), relational neuroscience (e.g. Panksepp, 1982; Porges, 2009; Mizen & Hook, 2020), trauma and loss (e.g. van der Kolk, 2003; Herman, 2015), development, adjustment, and personality (e.g. Eysenck, 1950/2013; Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2002), human flourishing and happiness (e.g. Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005), the therapeutic relationship (e.g. Norcross, 2010) and relational psychotherapy (e.g. De Young, 2014; Lingardi, Holmqvist & Safran, 2016). I furthermore drew on theoretical research on place attachment (e.g. Low & Altman, 1992) and humanistic geographical (e.g. Tuan, 1976) literatures and I espoused the view that place is more than mere space being both product and agent in social processes (Cresswell, 2006) and a centre of felt value (Eyles, 1989).

2.1. Moving home: Why should we care?

Moving home is an increasingly relevant personal and societal issue (International Organization for Migration, 2022) with upward trends in the UK fuelled by low mortgage rates and high housing demand (Office of National Statistics, 2021). Historically, opinions differ in terms of the impact of residential mobility on society and health (Rossi, 1955; Blau & Duncan, 1967; Glück & Glück, 1962) with moving not necessarily being bad for people or places, nor staying being necessarily good (Stokols & Schumaker, 1982). In her autoethnography on emigrating to New Zealand, Wright (2009) quoted Giddens (1991, p. 54) claiming "a person's identity is not to be found in behaviour nor...in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going", surmising there was nothing inherently good nor bad about her move, but that maintaining a core 'thread' was important to hold onto when familiar people, objects, and places fell away.

Modern moving trends may be rooted in the medieval European shift away from residentially stable, kinship-based communities towards more mobile groupings where

self-interest and status-based achievements became increasingly relevant (Taylor, 1989). Implications of this changing relationship between people and place has been explored from a sociocultural psychological standpoint (Oishi, Koo & Akimoto, 2008; Oishi & Kisling, 2009; Oishi, Whitchurch, Miao *et al.*, 2009; Oishi, Miao, Koo *et al.*, 2012) using mixed methods (e.g. correlational and experimental) resulting in suggestions that moving 'for opportunity' can be a double-edged sword posing risks for mental health, communities, and ecologies. Nevertheless, the same research strand highlights that a recent settlement trend may be causing people in the United States (a formerly highly residentially mobile country) to feel 'stuck in one place', unable to move to new places and opportunities (Buttrick & Oishi, 2021). It presents as a complex issue. Whilst difficulties may occur through the breaking of social ties, there may be benefits for people, even cultures, who are 'on the move', including interpersonal trust, life satisfaction, optimism, and tolerance of differences (Czaika & Vothknecht, 2014).

It is equally clear that some people can feel upset and confused by moving. When difficult feelings are severe and enduring, this may be termed relocation stress or relocation trauma (e.g. Manion & Rantz, 1995). Relocation trauma has been researched among older people moving residences where it has been seen to worsen health and even hasten death (Walker, Cox Curry & Hogstel, 2007), in patients transferring from intensive care units to ward-based care (Brodsky-Israeli & DeKeyser Ganz, 2011), and in psychiatric patients moving to new buildings (Kagan & Kigli-Shemesh, 2005). Interestingly, only two studies have explored relocation stress within non-clinical populations – both involving young Americans. Jurgens, Houlihan and Schwartz (1996) looked at how teenagers whose school was destroyed by a tornado reacted to joining with a neighbouring school district, finding via a questionnaire that relocated students had significantly lower grades and more behavioural problems than a control group. More relevant to this particular project, however, is Puskar and Ladely (1992) who, using descriptive, exploratory interview methods with a small number of female students who had recently moved schools, noted that more than three quarters of them felt sad, particularly about leaving friends, a quarter of them lacked confidence in adjusting to their new school and the same number presented as clinically depressed and anxious. The way most of these girls appeared to cope with relocation stress was through relying on strategies of so-called 'escape avoidance' (e.g. Haskell,

Britton & Servatius, 2020) such as wishful thinking and day dreaming to help regulate stressful emotions. Being only one of two existing studies on relocation stress among ‘average’ young people, there is clearly a gap in the literature when it comes to finding out more about the experiences and mechanisms young people may rely on to cope.

2.1.1. The risks of moving often

Concerns are growing around the risks of moving often, especially for younger people who need to make new friends and learn new rules whilst carving out spaces for themselves in unfamiliar environments. Research indicates that moving, even once or twice, during childhood and adolescence can result in myriad problems including lower school achievement (Astone & McLanahan, 1994; Schwartz, Stiefel & Cordes, 2017); poorer quality relationships (South & Haynie, 2004), earlier menstruation, sexual behaviour, and parenthood (Clutterbuck, Adams & Nettle, 2015; Adam & Chase-Lansdale, 2002; Tønnessen, Telle, Syse *et al.*, 2016); delayed language development (Parsons, Ollberding, Copeland *et al.*, 2021); criminal behaviour (Wood, Halfon, Scarlata *et al.*, 1993); poor life skills (Drennan, Kennedy & Renfrow, 2005); substance misuse (DeWit, 1998; Morris, Manley & Northstone, 2016), cancer (Tønnessen *et al.*, 2016; Dong, Anda, Felitti *et al.*, 2005); lower income (Tønnessen, *et al.*, 2016), violence (Haynie & South, 2005), and even early mortality (Oishi & Tsang, 2020; Tønnessen *et al.*, 2016). Even just one move in the past five years of a young person’s life is reported to increase the risk of a major depressive episode by 35% (Morris *et al.*, 2016) and has been linked to “a full spectrum of mental health disorders” (Mok *et al.*, 2016, p. 57) including personality disorders, schizophrenia, mood disorders, somatoform disorders, eating disorders, and suicidality (Adam & Chase-Lansdale, 2002; DeWit, 1998; Qin, Mortensen & Pedersen, 2009; Paksarian, Eaton, Mortensen *et al.*, 2015; Simsek, Costa & de Valk, 2021; Zhang, Coid, Lin, *et al.*, 2021).

One large prospective cohort study (Price, Dalman, Zammit *et al.*, 2018) followed up individuals yearly from birth to age 29 and found increased incidence of schizophrenia in frequent childhood movers, especially those moving more than 30 miles away. The authors hypothesised this striking result was likely due to disrupted peer networks and identity formation during crucial years. Few studies demonstrate benefits for children who move, an exception being results from the American ‘Moving to Opportunity program’ (Ludwig, Duncan & Hirschfield, 2001) which enabled lower income families

to move to wealthier areas and showed improvements for behavioural problems and academic performance. Two others showed either no significant differences between those who moved and those who did not (Verropoulou, Joshi & Wiggins, 2002) or negative outcomes only for children living with one parent or less (Tucker, Marx and Long, 1998). Whilst families move for many reasons, research has consistently shown mobility is higher among lower income households with vulnerable children tending to move most often (Speare, Goldstein & Fray, 1975; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Roy, McCoy & Raver, 2014). Hermann (2011) presented an American family's multiple perspectives of leaving their family home due to bankruptcy. This loss was experienced as disenfranchised by all concerned with their subsequent involuntary move causing unexpected relational ripples and trauma. However, the aforementioned study is rare in that not only is it a collaborate autoethnography and a piece of narrative research, but qualitative research pieces are so few and far between in the area of residential mobility indicating a major gap in the literature when it comes to a deeper understanding of real people's experiences.

Around two fifths of British children move before they are 5, mostly just once (Joshi, Gambaro & Mostafa, 2011). Findings from longitudinal cohort studies across both sides of the Atlantic are contradictory as to whether relocation disproportionately affects disadvantaged under 5s. Some researchers find moving is significantly associated with key problem markers, such as externalising behaviours, largely for children from underprivileged backgrounds (Ziol-Guest & McKenna, 2014; Gambaro, Buttaro, Joshi *et al.*, 2022) and others conclude that the particular characteristics of the move matter more than family resources, including how far away children move from their previous home and how often (Mollborn, Laurence & Dowling-Root, 2018).

Data from another cohort study, this time in Australia, were used by Rumbold and colleagues (2012) to explore the impact of moving on young children's social development. Analysis showed that moving at least twice was associated with increases in fearfulness, withdrawal, concentration problems, aches, pains, and other symptoms without obvious causes. As with other developmental stages, the authors suggested sensitive periods might exist for children during which frequent moves could have detrimental effects, perhaps because younger children undergo rapid developmental phases across multiple domains (Gaensbauer, 2011) yet cannot fully

verbalise difficult experiences and, furthermore, depend on caregivers' abilities to cope with stressful events.

Connections between health and wellbeing in early childhood and adulthood are well-established (Haas, 2007) with successful school transitions also correlating with higher school achievement and later socioeconomic success (Weller, Schnittjer & Tuten, 1992; Molborn *et al.*, 2018). Generally, the literature is limited through primarily focussing on house, as opposed to school, moves although these may be just as disruptive, particularly when overlapping with factors like poverty or poor support, leading some children to feel traumatised and marginalised (Larson & Meehan, 2011; Miller & Bourgeois, 2013; Masten, Fiat, Labella *et al.*, 2015). One prospective birth cohort study (Singh, Winsper, Wolker *et al.*, 2014) connected school newness to social exclusion, bullying, and developing psychosis-like symptoms in late adolescence, something the authors proposed may be due to children's sense of 'social defeat'. Some empirical evidence posits pre-existing differences between frequent movers and their non-moving counterparts, socioeconomic or otherwise, placing some children at greater risk of *both* frequent moves *and* negative outcomes, differences which appear even more apparent for school, rather than house, moves (Gaspar *et al.*, 2010). Similarly, Wright (1999) found differences in achievement between school movers and non-movers with children moving school within the same geographic area faring *worse* academically than those moving from further afield, variability seemingly accounted for by family income and ethnicity in that lower incomes and minority ethnic backgrounds correlated with poorer school achievement following a school move, although this connection was far from clear. Since there are limitations in the number of studies that specifically explore this form of mobility as well as a limitation on the variables researchers have traditionally measured, either as outcomes or moderators, more research is needed exploring the factors involved for pupils moving school as well as the consequences of moving school 'full stop'.

Only a few UK studies have explored school-based mobility adversity links in any form, although not exclusively. Two (Flouri, Mavroveli & Midouhas, 2013; Pearce, Elliman, Bedford *et al.*, 2008) based on UK Millennium Cohort Study data, found negative outcomes for frequent school movers on immunisation uptake and delinquency after adjusting for family adversity. Another, based on Scottish cohort data (Brown,

Benzeval, Gayle *et al.*, 2011), found increased psychological and health risks after adjusting for adversity and number of moves. A couple of British studies have connected moving house to childhood asthma (Austin & Russell, 1997; Hughes & Baumer, 1995). Another (Verropoulou *et al.*, 2002) used cohort data from the mid-1950s to explore the effects of migration on family structure and wellbeing finding no relevance for number of house moves although using older, potentially poorer, quality data can mean like-for-like comparisons are not always possible. More recently, Jørgensen and Perry (2021) synthesised the current literature on school mobility with an analysis of the English National Pupil Database noting an underlying rate of moves of about 1.5%-2% per term with differences in mobility relating to social disadvantage and special needs status. The authors highlight more research, policy, and practice is needed to better understand individual mobility circumstances, particularly from a British perspective.

Practice-based intervention research for mobile students is limited but the gap regarding homeless and refugee pupils is fortunately closing (Sulkowski & Michael, 2014; Crooks, Smith, Robinson-Link *et al.*, 2020) with interventions such as providing newcomers with peer allies or arranging classroom activities for non-newcomer students about how to be more inclusive showing promise.

For some people, moving can be experienced as a highly negative life event (Wood *et al.*, 1993; Simsek *et al.*, 2021) ostensibly due to the stress of breaking social ties, familiar environments, and routines (Oishi & Schimmack, 2010; Tønnessen *et al.*, 2010; Oishi & Tsang, 2022). Certain people may be especially at risk, including migrants (Shen and Zhong, 2018), asylum-seekers (Goosen, Stonks & Kunst, 2013), looked-after children (Lawson & Kearns, 2018), service children (Longfield, 2018), boarders (Schaverien, 2015), 'third-culture kids' who have grown up in a different culture to that of their parents' or birthplace (Fail, Thompson & Walker, 2004) and girls (Clutterbuck *et al.*, 2015). Given that certain groups may be more vulnerable to any negative effects of moving, it seems important to hone the research focus within these groups whilst also remaining mindful that there may be other 'at risk groups' yet to be identified. Having said this, it is clear that some children's needs may, conversely, be better served by moving school, including particularly vulnerable or gifted children (Leventhal, Fauth & Brooks-Gunn, 2005), although negative effects from moving may still occur (Plucker, 1999).

2.1.2. Narrowing the research focus

Displacement has been explored in refugees (Warfa, Bhui, Craig *et al.*, 2006), migrant workers and ex-pats (Farrer, 2010), psychiatric patients (Farhall, Trauer & Newton, 2003), housing residents (Lim, Chan, Walters *et al.*, 2017), older people (Bosque & Bosque, 2008; Gasgoigne & Masshoudy, 2011), and military personnel (Blakely, Hennessy, Chung *et al.*, 2012) with both benefits and disadvantages being reported. A process of continuous displacement has also been explored in individuals experiencing homelessness (e.g. Preece, Garratt & Flaherty, 2020). In this project, I have used the term 'homeless' to describe a relatively unexplored aspect of displacement and rootlessness that can sometimes occur within comparatively advantaged circumstances (e.g. Schaverien, 2015) however I do not intend to align this with other forms, such as street homelessness or refugeeism. Not only have experiences within these populations increasingly received research attention (Norman & Pauly, 2013; Greeno, Fedina, Lee *et al.*, 2019; Wusinich, Bond, Nathanson *et al.*, 2019) but it would be inappropriate to equate my experiences with other, distinct, experiences which differ across key features, core drivers behind power inequalities and causes of social exclusion being but one example (Gray, McGinty & Ebringer, 2011). This is an inquiry into a specific subset of moving and resettlement involving relocation for reasons relating to career, schooling, and a search for novelty. Within this specific subset, research involving UK-based residential mobility, boarding school, university students, and 'third-culture' experiences was most relevant to my study.

Walker (2001) discussed challenges faced by third-culture kids, highlighting them in children's literature and concluding that "underneath their much-travelled, multilingual, sophisticated exterior.... lie rather vulnerable young people at a crucial stage of their development" (p. 25) whose parents may be too busy to integrate into a new culture and whose adult attachments may be geographically (or linguistically) inaccessible. In one interesting study, Hatfield (2010) asked children returning from abroad to photograph meaningful objects and spaces in their homes which later prompted discussions about children's sense of agency in homemaking. The author found that children tended to make fewer adjustments to their home spaces than adults did, identifying "home as a bed or a decorated wall, rather than a building that can be physically altered and owned" (p. 254). Like Hatfield's participants, my family had, as its head, a skilled migrant with sufficient cultural and economic capital to move around

without great difficulty. Research on this subset of movers has tended to focus on the economic ‘lead’ migrator, usually male, whereas, in many studies, “expatriate children are merely an item on the list of do-not-forgets” (Selmer & Lam, 2004, p. 432) or “baggage” (Orellana, Thorne, Chee *et al.*, 2001, p. 588).

Research such as this seems to illustrate the value of small-scale places of importance and the power, for researchers and caregivers alike, of attending to children’s co-created experience of place. Given the scarcity of this kind of phenomenological research, combined with the paucity of research highlighting children’s experiences at all despite this being encouraged in order for sociological discourses on childhood to continue to evolve (e.g. United Nations, 2015; Sudarsan, Hoare, Sheridan *et al.*, 2022), more research looking at children’s relationships to leaving, returning to, and creating home spaces seems warranted.

2.2. Children’s and adults’ geographies

Children’s geographies is the branch of human geography concerning the places and spaces of children’s lives as studied across experiential, political, and ethical dimensions (Horton & Kraftl, 2006). Until recently, children’s spaces have been largely ignored despite children forming an important part of society with particular needs and experiences of the world. The phrase ‘children should be seen and not heard’, originally emerging from religious medieval culture (Powell, 2018), proved remarkably enduring and seems to suggest that children’s views were often secondary to those of adults. Children still often hold diminished responsibility when it comes to important family decisions, like moving home or living arrangements following divorce (Butler, Robinson & Scanlan, 2005) and it was only comparatively recently that collective silencing around the most serious issues surrounding children began, in earnest, to be challenged (Ward, 1984; Miller, 1990; Herman, Perry & van der Kolk, 1991; Herman, 2015).

Philosophically, children’s geographies interconnects with childhood studies (James & James, 2012) in that it tends to view childhood as socially constructed and children’s voices as worthy of attention. Jean Piaget (1964) first drew multidisciplinary interest in how children conceptualise space across different stages of cognitive development bringing the fields of human, environmental and developmental psychology into alignment (e.g. Piché, 1981). More recently, perhaps due to burgeoning interest in

developmental neuroscience and affective psychology, there is renewed enthusiasm among geographers about contributions from psychology and psychotherapy for understanding emotional (or unconscious) experiences of place - hence the emotional and psychoanalytic 'turns' in social and cultural geography (Philo & Parr, 2003; Bondi, 2017).

The hypothetical corresponding term 'adult geographies' does not exist, perhaps because the focus has, historically, always been on them. Yet adults, too, can find it hard to move. Empirical research shows increased mental health risks, including depression, when moving during adulthood particularly for people who are worried about moving, even when doing so 'for opportunity', and particularly if relocating twice or more in a year (e.g. Astone & McLanahan, 1994; Scanlon & Devine, 2001; Davey-Rothwell, German & Latkin, 2008; Busacker & Kasehagen, 2012; Millegan, McLay & Engel, 2014). One large study (Lin, Twisk & Huang, 2012) found that childhood moves continued to impact people into adulthood with higher risks of emotional difficulties by middle age, especially for people deemed introverted. Stokols *et al.* (1983) found that adults who moved experienced more illness and a depleted sense of community noting, though, that this relationship was not invariably negative and might best be understood according to the unique context of a person's life and their sense of autonomy. Most of the above research on adult relocation has been conducted using clinical populations and there is a lack of evidence as to the impact on adults of moving amongst the general population: a clear gap in the literature. Women's voices, furthermore, are also conspicuously absent, although this is something which psychotherapist McCollum (1990) looked to address semi-autobiographically in *The Trauma of Moving: Psychological Issues for Women* urging researchers to consider individual factors when attempting to draw conclusions on this topic. Together, the above evidence suggests residential relocation in adulthood is a complex potential stressor that is long overdue detailed investigation (Fernandez, Rice & Post, 2020). This includes explorations of the deeper meanings and significance for people concerning both movement and settlement with new research needed exploring links with self, relationships, community, and happiness (Eggleston & Oishi, 2013).

2.3. **Missing home: Why homesickness matters**

Homesickness is a bit like seasickness. You don't know how awful it is until you get it, and when you do, it hits you right in the top of the stomach and you want to die.

Roald Dahl, 1984, Boy: Tales of childhood

Whilst evidence suggests most people adapt well to being separated from home, for some people, this can be devastating (Baier & Welch, 1992; Hack-Polay, 2012; Stroebe, Schut & Nauta, 2015). Severe homesickness is classified as a form of adjustment disorder involving 'mixed anxiety and depressed mood' according to the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Homesickness tends to be worse across larger distances (Tognioli, 2003) and has been studied in students, summer campers, migrants, boarders, and tourists, among others, showing an incidence rate of between 30% and 75% (Brewin, Furnham, & Howes, 1989; Fisher, Frazer & Murray, 1984; van Tilburg, Vingerhoets & van Heck, 1996). Acculturation stress (Sam & Berry, 1995) and culture shock (Ward, Furnham & Bochner, 2005) may be closely related phenomena.

Homesick students may be significantly more likely to drop out during their first year than their non-homesick counterparts (Burt, 1993). In boarders, homesickness has been linked to eating disorders, absent-mindedness, depression, sickness, and suicidal thoughts (Fisher, 1989; van Tilburg & Vingerhoets, 1997). Possible contributing factors are suggested as being introverted, having an avoidant coping style, and an unsupportive family (Fisher, Frazier & Murray, 1984; van Tilburg *et al.*, 1996). Psychodynamically speaking, homesickness has been suggested as originating in early narcissistic wounds involving premature or overdue separation from caregivers, leading to problems around closeness, control, anger, and abandonment (van Tilburg & Vingerhoets, 1997).

Measures of homesickness, whilst seemingly thorough (e.g. Fisher, 1989; Stroebe, van Vliet, Hewstone *et al.*, 2002) appear somewhat insufficient in capturing people's lived experience and perhaps, furthermore, risk pathologising healthy responses to separation from a secure base (Duffell & Bassett, 2016; Lewicka, 2008). Purported cures, including distraction or physical activity (Thurber & Walton, 2012; Denowski, Grierson & Oyenarte, 2008; Nejad, Pak & Zarghar, 2013), may be unreliable or even counterproductive (Tavakoli, Lumley, Hijazi *et al.*, 2009). A small amount of

international literature has evaluated homesickness interventions including animal-assisted therapy (Binfet & Passmore, 2016), cognitive behavioural therapy (Saravanan, Alias & Mohamad, 2017), and self-compassion (Terry, Leary & Mehta, 2013) with generally positive results correlating with feeling connected and reassured, normalising feelings of disconnection and loss, and accepting oneself and one's situation. Nijhof and Engels (2007) explored the role that parenting style plays in homesickness among first year university students. Using questionnaire methods, they found that participants raised by permissive and authoritative parents felt more homesick than those raised by authoritarian or uninvolved parents with the authors surmising this may indicate the importance of loving home environments in the onset of homesickness, the latter being a natural response to losing something positive and good, further evidence, perhaps, of the 'healthiness' of this grief response. Homesickness remains a relevant public concern due to its impact on parents, GPs, university counselling services, employers, therapists, social workers, and teachers, not to mention sufferers themselves (Scopelliti & Tiberio, 2010), however there is a notable dearth of recent British literature on the subject, only a handful over the past three decades such as Lu (1990) who examined Chinese students' adaptations to British universities (Lu 1990) and Stroebe, Vliet, Hewstone and colleagues (2002) who compared causes and consequences of homesickness among students from Dutch and British universities.

2.4. Home

Commonly associated with security, seclusion, and self-expression, home is often viewed as the epicentre of family life, providing a sense of continuity, identity, organisation, and meaning (Winnicott & Britton, 1944; Despres, 1991; Low & Altman, 1992; Iwarsson, Wahl, Nygren *et al.*, 2007). Whilst the proliferation of research on people and their environments has produced, at times, a dizzying variety of conceptual and terminological ideas (Hernandez, Hidalgo & Ruiz, 2021), connections to home have been explored through constructs like rootedness (Godkin, 1980), topophilia (Tuan, 1974), place identity (Prochansky, Fabian & Kaminoff, 1983) and place attachment (Low & Altman, 1992). Increasingly, and due to the proliferation of authors writing on home and its many meanings within a number of disciplines, home might helpfully be thought of as a multidimensional concept consisting of one, two, or even

all, of the following: “(a) place, (a) space, feeling(s), practices, and/or an active state of being in the world” (Mallett, 2004, p. 62). Some authors view home as intimately bound to concepts of the house or the family (Saunders & Williams, 1988) whereas others disagree (Sibley, 1995; Wardaugh, 1999). A clear gap in the literature is that many authors tend to speak on the subject of home solely from their own disciplinary orbits thus potentially missing out on opportunities to learn from and contribute to wider discussions about a thing, experience, or state of mind which is arguably an essential aspect of the human experience.

Empirical research on place attachment has explored the changing dimensions of people-place relationships, how places fulfil needs, and how processes of identity, continuity, and change interact with space (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Chow & Healey, 2008; Scannell & Gifford, 2017). Place attachments may be important for people everywhere (Li & Chan, 2018; Mandal, 2016; Degnen, 2016) being intricately linked to our interpersonal attachments (Robertson, Mash, Curtis, *et al.*, 2005). Identity theories suggest place moulds a core sense of self, purpose, continuity, and self-esteem (McAndrew, 1998; Simandan, 2011) and that “it is not simply the places themselves that are significant, but rather what can be called ‘experience-in-place’ that creates meaning” (Manzo, 2005, p. 74). Martin Heidegger’s (1971) concept of *Dasein* or *being there* refers to the experience of existing we have in the world whereby ‘being-in-place’ occurs because “for us to be, to claim a who, we have to have a place, a where to be” (Richardson, 2003, p. 43) suggesting we are nothing without place, and place is nothing without us.

Involuntary relocation can disrupt place attachments with harmful consequences (Fried, 2000; Brown & Perkins, 1992) although positive bonds with multiple places may also be possible (Giuliani, 2003; Scopelliti & Tiberio, 2010; Hakim-Dowek, 2019). In her autoethnography *Stories of Migration*, Kriek (2012) writes about her challenges migrating to England with her words seemingly conjuring feelings of alienation, loneliness, confusion, and starting a new life ‘on the back foot’. In *Sketches of Homesickness*, Bösch (1991) proposes new places lack the ‘inner template’ home usually provides, preventing newcomers from anticipating events because they can’t ‘read’ what is possible, yet this opaqueness holds potential for joy as, by sheer immersion, people expand themselves, feeling empowered and capable of self-reinvention.

In an evocative autoethnographic novel about his childhood home, Peter Jachimiak (2014) writes about the significance and self-structuring power of home spaces and his experiences growing up in a Welsh town in the 1970s. I resonate with Jachimiak's doing of autoethnography since he paints an emotionally kaleidoscopic, data-rich picture of the spacetime of his childhood in which places, people, events, and culture poignantly come alive. Holding the tensions of being fully *inside* his experiences whilst holding a critical 'self-and-other' perspective is effectively signalled, I believe, by his use of the third person pronoun throughout e.g.:

"Peter, as a young boy, watched his mother toil in the garden, and, then, in watching Gardener's World with her, was engaging in a process of, together, learning about their 'edible landscape'. (p. 125).

It would be useful for more literature to be available on the subject of being at home in addition to that which exists on moving and missing home, particularly from a psychological perspective. Compared to residential mobility, research on residential settlement is scant with only a handful of authors exploring this from a health and psychological wellbeing perspective. Bures (2003) examined links between adults' health and residential stability in childhood finding that staying put was positively linked to good mental health in midlife and suggested that remaining in the same neighbourhood may increase children's community-based social capital later which later carries over into adulthood as an ability to establish supportive social networks. It would be interesting to explore both directions of this apparent relationship in terms of whether adults who moved as children can experience benefits from staying put later on in life, or whether an earlier lack of social capital may mean that their wellbeing is always, to some degree, at risk. The relationships between homeownership, residential stability, mental health, and pro-community behaviours have been explored (Aarland & Reid, 2019; Oishi, Rothman, Snyder *et al.*, 2007) and this direction of research seems to indicate there can be positive outcomes from embedding oneself in one location.

2.5. Returning home

Two publications have explored returning to a childhood home. Stack (1996) presented narratives of urban black Americans returning to the rural South after living in the North with some reporting feeling pushed back because of issues like

joblessness, and others returning home determined to use their skills to build new communities and exert their rights to participate in southern life. For these individuals, returning home often seemed to involve a personal sense of social and cultural reclamation. Burger (2011) collected experiences from over a hundred Americans revisiting childhood homes and whilst his participants were seen to return for a variety of reasons, they all agreed that vital aspects of themselves had been forged in their childhood homes, even if this was sometimes traumatic. The revisiting itself seemed to facilitate something important, including realising it might not signify what they had expected. As far as I'm aware, these two books are all that currently exist on this subject.

2.6. Belonging(s)

Along with affection and attachment, empirical research portrays belonging as a fundamental human need (Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, *et al.*, 1992; Eck, Schoel & Greifeneder, 2017). The 'Belongingness Hypothesis' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) proposes much of what we do is in its service, ensuring "a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships" (p.497). Social inclusion may be so essential to survival (Macdonald & Leary, 2005) that social rejection results in similar brain activity to actual physical pain (Eisenberger, 2012). For belongingness needs to be fulfilled, bonds must, in theory, be continuous and mutually affectionate with regular interactions with multiple acquaintances proving less satisfying than repeated interactions with the same person (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Relocation can threaten belongingness needs, triggering social pain that takes time to alleviate through new social networks (Watt & Badger, 2009). From a neuroscience perspective, Polyvagal Theory (Porges, 2009) suggests that when we feel safe and supported, we engage the ventral vagal neural pathway promoting feelings of centredness and social readiness. Conversely, when we feel threatened or rejected, the dorsal vagal pathway is activated causing us to shut off and become numb which is similar, perhaps, to a state of not-belonging.

Research has demonstrated relationships can protect against stress, promoting positive developmental and life outcomes (Jiang, You, Zheng *et al.*, 2017). Parental bonds, furthermore, may represent a prototype of belongingness providing regular, reliable experiences of 'belonging-in-relationship' (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). With

social belonging linked to numerous positive outcomes (Begen & Turner-Cobb, 2015) and social deprivation underlying much human distress (van Orden, Witte, Cukrowicz *et al.*, 2010), globally poorer outcomes for youngsters who move frequently (e.g. Mok *et al.*, 2016) may appear understandable given the regular demands on them to redefine group memberships and recalibrate belongingness needs. This direction of research, together with attachment, place attachment, and place identity literatures, prompted me to consider how attachment bonds within the therapeutic dyad (e.g. Wallin, 2007) might also relate to the concept of belongingness, with therapist and client both, perhaps, feeling intrinsically motivated to fulfil this basic requirement, trying to feel, in a sense, 'at home' with one another.

Belongings are things that make us feel we belong somewhere (Jarrett, 2013). Empirical research suggests people often experience their belongings as extensions of themselves providing a bridge between the self, the environment, and the past and losing belongings can feel like losing part of oneself (Furby, 1978; Belk, 1988). Frequent movers tend to have a higher turnover of possessions with one study (Gillath & Keefer, 2016) investigating whether participants who were primed (using imaginary scenarios under differing experimental conditions) to temporarily think and feel similarly to frequent movers might be more or less inclined to dispose of imaginary belongings and, additionally, imaginary friendships. Participants were asked to write in detail what they thought this would be like. The authors concluded that as participants' sense of mobility increased so, too, did their willingness to dispose of objects and, through further analysis, certain relationships. This striking theory warrants further investigation but arguably using a method gathering data from a richer, purer source, rather than via a proxy of feelings and cognitions surrounding this experience.

2.7. Folklore and family lore

Folklore studies, as a field, embraces both social science and the humanities (Hufford, 1991; Muncey, 2011). Folk, referring to anything from two people to an entire nation, involves shared identities and distinctive, longstanding interpersonal traditions. The folklorist, or 'keeper of the lore', passes along stories and ways of being to others (Dundes, 1969; Wilson, Rudy & Call, 2006) whereby cultural artefacts continue to be created within groups and families. Folklore can also act to differentiate 'us' from 'them'

operating within interpersonal processes psychologists might describe as ‘splitting’, ‘merging’, or ‘putting the bad in the other’ (e.g. Segal, 2018).

In her essay exploring concepts of childhood using children’s folklore, Tucker (2012) asserts that scholarly representations of young people seem closely connected to the eras in which they lived. Similarly, Ariès (1962) argues childhood is a socially constructed, relatively recent invention and points towards medieval paintings where children are depicted as perfectly proportioned, miniaturised grown-ups. Only later did modern notions of childhood as a discrete phase arise alongside its sheltered, dreamy, innocence (Tucker, 2012). Cross-cultural comparisons lend support to the social construction of childhood since, despite all children going through identical biological developmental stages, different cultures construct these phases in different ways, the age of consent being one example (Wagg & Pilcher, 2014). Like a folklorist, I have also gathered and performed co-constructed artefacts in the form of words, objects, and customs, studying aspects of my culture as someone through whom certain practises and beliefs are translated, interpreted, and transmitted. I aimed to re-imagine the construction of my childhood relationships to home including, as Ariès (1962) suggests, a sense of when my childhood ‘began and ended’ and how I, as a ‘miniature adult’ might have conformed to others’ images and expectations.

2.8. Feeling at home in the therapy room

The process of moving house has been compared to losing a loved-one (Marris, 1974/2014; Chisholm, Bierre, Davies *et al.*, 2021). Yet theoretical and empirical evidence suggests therapists sometimes ignore the potential salience of their client’s physical environments by focussing preferentially on their emotional environments, with places being viewed as mere ‘backdrops’ to everyday life (Anthony, 1997; Preesly & Heesacker, 2001; Anthony & Watkins, 2002). Similarly, therapeutic inquiries into children’s home or school settings are likely to focus on the relationships between children, caregivers, teachers, and peers rather than on children’s physical dwellings, with few diagnostic and treatment measures ever stressing their importance (Anthony & Watkins, 2002). Attachment to an object or place can be defined as the personal wellbeing or distress resulting from its presence or absence (Giuliani, 1991). Some authors view modern cultural trends as eroding much-needed bonds to home places (Dovey, 1985; Oishi, 2010). Whether or not this is the case, it could be important for

therapists to give due consideration to clients' place attachments, past and present, as these may be relevant regarding issues of loss, identity, and meaning. Likewise, therapists and supervisors may, at times, personally experience these issues being activated through their work.

The therapy room functions to help establish and support the therapist's role and provide clients with a comfortable, safe place (Frank & Frank, 1993). The room is part of the therapeutic frame (Gray, 2013) acting as a symbolic container for the client's story (Waldburg, 2012). Pressly and Heesacker's (2001) literature review concluded that therapy spaces should facilitate core processes such as developing rapport, self-disclosure and self-exploration which equally apply for somewhere the therapist, too, should feel comfortably situated (Pearson & Wilson, 2012).

Despite this, the role of the physical therapy environment is still vastly under-researched with studies often drawing on quantitative methods that can't always accommodate wider narratives (McKellar, 2015). Very little has been written about the overall function and experience of the therapy room with Sinclair (2021) being a notable exception investigating clients' and therapists' experiences of UK-based therapy rooms. Treatments settings are a research niche where environmental psychology and therapeutic psychology overlap as seen in Subotincic's (1999) visual analysis of Freud's meticulous arrangement of the furniture and objects in his room, mirroring his thoughts and theories. Anthony and Watkins (2002) conducted an informal interview investigation drawing on their own, and other, therapists' experiences of rooms, concluding that a convenient location, 'homelike' design, visibility, privacy, and a soothing view were all important. Furniture was too, alongside easy-to-read clocks, comfortable chairs, mood-appropriate lighting, well cared-for plants, and thoughtful artwork. The authors proposed that the physical environment influences clients' attitudes, behaviour, and even their therapeutic outcomes, asserting that rooms can exacerbate clients' pre-existing issues "for better or for worse" (Anthony & Watkins, p. 140) and recommending greater collaboration between environmental and psychotherapeutically oriented subject areas.

2.9. A critical perspective of the main strands of research

Moving and settling is a relevant issue on an individual and societal level. It is important to integrate different people's experiences of relocation into psychological theorising

and research because this can help us better understand our lifespace (Lewin, 1936; Oishi, 2010) and is pertinent for travellers, migrants, relocated families, professional helpers, and decision-makers alike.

To date, only a handful of UK studies have explored the impact of mobility on health, educational, or psychological outcomes (e.g. Lacey & Blane, 1979; Dobson, Henthorne & Lynas, 2000; Strand, 2000; Verropoulou *et al.*, 2002; Pearce *et al.*, 2008; Riva, Curtis & Norman, 2011; Brown *et al.*, 2012; Flouri *et al.*, 2013; Tunstall, Pearce, Short *et al.*, 2015; Jørgensen & Perry, 2021; Gambaro *et al.*, 2022). Within the field of homesickness research, original British empirical contributions were made (Fisher, 1989; Archer *et al.*, 1998; Stroebe *et al.*, 2002), however many of these studies are now over twenty years old.

Furthermore, in highlighting certain adultist biases in relocation research, authors have demonstrated how children's experiences of moving can substantially differ to those who are in charge (e.g. Hardill, 1998; Dobson, 2009; Hatfield, 2010) which provides evidence that children's unique moving perspectives are worthy of academic consideration. Attachment theory is increasingly drawn on across multiple fields as a useful way of understanding needs and motivations, and place attachments have been seen to develop at any age but "*childhood and adolescence in particular may provide a fruitful area for investigation if there exists a critical period for the formation of attachment to the home places (as occurs in interpersonal relations), if there are periods of latency, and if there are shifts in the objects of attachment associated with specific life stages*" (Giuliani, 1991, p. 144). Such critical periods appear important to investigate, alongside individual differences in home attachments, and how these relate to other bonds.

Belongingness seems a crucial human construct with wide-ranging implications for health and wellbeing. A specific dimension concerns whether frequent movers may not only dispose of their belongings more readily but also their relationships (Gillath & Keefer, 2016). Research in this direction from a lived experience perspective appears warranted particularly regarding its relevance and applications within applied psychology and psychotherapy.

The majority of research on moving, missing, and finding home has been quantitative which has been appropriate for drawing standardised comparisons of, for example,

residential mobility and health outcomes. Nevertheless, it means insufficient light has been shone on the nuances of moving experiences: school 'newness', for example, or lived childhoods far from home. A clear gap in the literature existed in terms of the 'whys' and 'hows' which operate within individual minds or family conversations. With plentiful evidence regarding possible health and wellbeing risks from frequent mobility in the clinical literature, a felt human element was missing incorporating a fleshed-out view of these, and related, experiences so that they may be further interacted with and understood by others including researchers and practitioners from a variety of different disciplines.

2.10. Research questions

Having considered the evidence presented by previous research as well as the preliminary lines of enquiry grounded in my personal experience, I constructed two research questions:

1. What were my experiences of moving, missing, and settling throughout life?
2. What were my experiences of home, then and now?

In addition to these, and in consideration of this issue's relevance for the fields of counselling psychology and psychotherapy, among others, I constructed one further research question based on my epistemological view that my research process would entail learning about my topic in the process of writing and creating it, and that the resulting knowledge would be useful and meaningful:

3. What useful meanings can I construct from this to share with others?

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

If our desire is to research social life, then we must embrace a research method that, to the best of its/our ability, acknowledges and accommodates mess and chaos, uncertainty and emotion.

Tony Adams, 2015, p. 9

3.1. Approach and rationale

In his book *More Examples, Less Theory: Historical Studies of Writing Psychology*, Michael Billig (2019) explores what it is about good writers that makes their writing so appealing and points to the ‘ultimate example’ of Marie Jahoda who conducted ground-breaking research during the 1930s within the impoverished *Marienthal* community. He highlights her favour for well-chosen, real-life individual examples over established theories since she viewed the latter as ‘straitjackets’ and ‘high-level abstractions’ (Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, Zeisel *et al.*, 1971) which were less comprehensible and impactful than down-to-earth vignettes and explanations. Writing “directly with minimum jargon and maximum clarity” (Billig, 2020, p. 44), Jahoda showed how scientific writing can be an art form which intensifies, rather than merely simplifies, taking readers deeper into meanings where readers “grasp real lives being lived” (Billig, 2020, p. 43).

Many believe research cannot be conducted from a neutral, objective standpoint (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). My experiences could have been examined using other methodological approaches, although, given my belief that there is no objective reality or truth for a researcher to arrive at, employing quantitative methods which, almost invariably, embrace a positivist paradigm would not, I believe, have made this feasible. I do agree, though, with Avis (2003) who questions whether, as qualitative researchers, we need to trouble ourselves so much with epistemological and ontological ‘allegiances’ when investigating life in all its complexity. He argues for a more holistic approach to avoid the tangles resulting from rigidly selecting either a sceptic or relativist position (i.e. what there *is* to be ‘discovered’) by accepting that, whilst there may be no objective truths ‘out there’, we can still locate enough commonalities, or ‘essences’, to make some sense of the world and ourselves in it. For this reason, I allowed myself to be influenced by other, arguably similar, methods of inquiry to draw on and make use of, much like a photographer using different lenses to capture the same subject. With most relocation research aligning with objectivist, positivist paradigms and only a few studies including more subjective elements (e.g.

Thurber, 1999), I decided that the particular subset of relocation experiences I wanted to explore would benefit from a lens foregrounding personal experience, subjectivity, and reflexivity.

3.2. Reading and writing: Stories and narratives

In order to draw from my subjective experience, I wanted to capture this as a story that could be analysed and interpreted. A story involves key events, characters, and scenes whereas a narrative involves broader ideas thereby being *how* the story is told, rather than *what* is told. In this way, a narrative might be compared to architectural plans for a building, whereas a story might be compared to the building materials. In his book *'Letting Stories Breathe'* Frank (2010) describes stories as active agents in our lives, shaping our experiences, with people who have suffered benefitting from telling their own and hearing those of others: *"in the sense of providing information, but more significantly, stories give form temporal and spatial orientation, coherence, meaning, intention, and especially boundaries to lives that inherently lack form... Stories make life good, but they also make life dangerous. They bring people together, and they keep them apart."* (p. 2). Etherington (2020) similarly holds that writing and reading stories of trauma can be transformational for writer and reader alike. Reading stories, especially those conveying difficult or life-changing experiences, can be an important step for people who have been affected by similar matters. Likewise, writers can process their own trauma whilst also gaining a sense of agency over their experiences, something which has been shown to have great healing potential (Etherington, 2008; Wright & Thiara, 2019) perhaps because, as Frank (2013) says: *"the moral genius of storytelling is that each, teller and listener, enters the space of the story for the other... Telling stories... attempts to change one's own life by affecting the lives of others. Thus all stories have an element of testimony"* (p. 18). Testimony and the act of bearing witness have also been defined as core features of trauma recovery (e.g. Herman, 2015).

3.3. Decision-making process for autoethnography

Initially, I had considered an approach which drew primarily on others' perspectives, perhaps because this seemed, at the time, slightly more conventional. Gradually, and with others' encouragement, I realised that my perspective, alone, was equally as

valid. In researching autobiographical story-telling approaches, I became lost in their differences and similarities. I knew I wanted to tell my story and compare it with those of others, so initially considered using Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry (Clandinin & Caine, 2012) since it aligned with my epistemological view that data, in narrative form, are always connected to others. However, I realised I was more interested in writing autobiographically about my life in context rather than how or why the story was unfolding. It wasn't exactly narratives for narratives' sake I was drawn to, but rather how it was to write *within* them.

To further illustrate this rationale, I will consider how my research questions might have been addressed using another introspective method - Phenomenological Self-Inquiry (Petitmengin, 2006; White, 2011). This involves precisely describing experiences to illuminate the specific, identifying phenomena as they are perceived. Deep information is gathered through inductive means such as interviews, observations, or 'stream of consciousness' recordings and subsequently represented from the researcher's perspective (e.g. Wertz, 2005). Given my focus – my lived experience – and my aim of conducting a 'deep dive' study generating rich information from a variety of sources (memories, self-interviews, fieldwork, and so on), there was much, in theory, to recommend this method. However, whilst it may have been effective in highlighting experiences and moment-by-moment perceptions, actively challenging assumptions, I didn't feel I could necessarily bypass my preconceptions or emotional 'distractions' (as this method encourages), even reflexively, since so much was active beneath my awareness (Lowes & Prowes, 2001). Plus, the distractions themselves seemed important. I decided that articulating as clearly as possible how I *felt* I came to my interpretations was more fitting, aiming for openness, fallibility, and visibility as an interested and subjective participant-researcher, as opposed to an impartial observer (e.g. Stanley & Wise 1993).

Autoethnography aligned with my goals for this project, allowing me to write freely and creatively and access intimate information with comparative readiness, constructing narratives, contrasting these with others' findings, then bouncing light back onto my situated context to try to reach readers and prompt dialogue (Chang, 2016). Autoethnography is research, writing, storytelling, and method in one, connecting autobiographical to cultural, social, and political elements (Ellis, 2004). Storytelling and writing form parts of other, broader autoethnographic possibilities including those

involving other arts-based methods such as dance (e.g. Vionnet, 2022) and art (e.g. Bartleet, 2021) to name a few. Embracing a co-constructed reality, autoethnography aligns with my ontological and epistemological stances viewing reality as intersubjective and interpretive, and human subjectivity as a source of knowing in its own right (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). As a social constructionist endeavour, it rejects binary oppositions between researcher and researched, subject and object, art and science, personal and political, and is perhaps the only methodology *specifically* concerning itself with the meeting points and interactions between self and culture (Ellingson & Ellis, 2008). It furthermore responds to the related question of what happens to cultures when we are part of *them*, involving “a back-and-forth movement between experiencing and examining a vulnerable self and observing and revealing the broader context of that experience” (Ellis, 2007, p. 14), as seen in Chapter 4, p. 117.

3.4. Why evocative autoethnography?

Autoethnography encompasses a wide array of practices varying in their emphasis on the writing and research process (*graphy*), culture (*ethnos*), and self (*auto*) (Reed-Danahay, 1997) all entailing “a methodological chat with self” (Egeli, 2017, p. 5). One common distinction is between analytic (Anderson, 2006) and evocative (Ellis, 1997) forms in terms of where they lie along the ‘process-culture-self continuum’ (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Each, usually, employs differing mixes of artistic representation, scientific inquiry, self-narration, and ethnography (Ngujiri & Hernandez, 2010). More artistic pieces tend to be termed evocative although they vary according to the researcher’s interests and goals. Williams & Bin Zaini (2016) challenged this aforementioned dichotomy by drawing on evocative and analytical approaches to theorise and perform about the author’s involvements with ‘Rude Boy’ subculture, writing a collaborative, co-created narrative using both. Personally, I don’t feel particularly partisan to one form of autoethnography over another, viewing analytic autoethnography in a similar way to Vryan (2006) i.e. as a potentially useful way of conducting qualitative research emphasising researcher visibility and reflexivity. Nevertheless, I chose an evocative approach for this project because I welcomed this method’s open invitation to write vulnerably and creatively as drawn on so successfully by others for similar purposes (see Ellis, 1995; Adams, 2006; Weaver-Hightower, 2012; Williams & Bin Zaini, 2016).

Like Ellis (2004), I believe in the power of an engaging story to bring experiences to life with the potential to transform myself and possibly others too. I have tried to write an interesting story which makes people wonder: 'What happens next?'. If this is the case, then the litmus test for my selection of evocative autoethnography will hopefully have been proven. Evocative autoethnography finds agreement with my therapeutic stance since literary techniques like narrative voice¹ (Pelias, 2000), composite characters² (Ellis, 2016), and dramatic tension (Ellis, 2004) are intrinsically relational, creating flow and interest. Within this method, there was the implicit assumption that further research questions and findings could naturally emerge and take shape through the creative process (Colyar, 2013; Richardson, 2013). As someone who draws on relational psychoanalysis (e.g. DeYoung, 2015), I certainly believe some experiences cannot always be 'storied' or made sense of, but similarly I hold that narratives can prove a useful route into the unconscious mind and "things that can't be said" (Frosh, 2007).

I chose to integrate evocative autoethnography with elements of intuitive inquiry, a qualitative transpersonal research method developed by Rosemarie Anderson (Anderson, 1998). This method has a hermeneutic cycle format blending the reading and rereading aspect of a narrative-based method aiming, like autoethnography, to not only move the reader's heart belly and head (Bochner, 2000) but something of their spirit as well (Anderson, 2004).

As the autoethnographer, I was central to this investigation being both subject and object, providing interpretive context, framing collected information, fieldwork, findings, and conclusions. Knowing that a multiplicity of others exists within any researcher's culture (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010), I tried to remain ethically and creatively aware of others' presences to explore how I was shaped by my environment and shaped it in return. This story is "complicated by gaps and omissions" (Muncey, 2010, p. 94) and doesn't necessarily fit with typical family values. It was sometimes difficult to tell and might be uncomfortable to hear, but perhaps *for* these reasons (Behar, 2014), it also seemed an important story to write.

¹ The personal perspective the story is told from

² Characters based on more than one person

3.5. Critique of the approach

Concerns around methodological rigour, critical distance, authenticity, and epistemological standing have been raised against autoethnography (McLeod, 2011; Shields, 2000). It has been criticised as being romanticised (Atkinson, 1997), self-indulgent (Delamont, 2009), avoiding 'hard' ethnographic field work, and being on an ego trip (Gans, 1999). In its defence, Denzin (2006) claims autoethnography is political, pedagogical, critical, performative, is likely to be emotional and sometimes also painful. With its focus on the researcher's self, these elements have been criticised as promoting lax attitudes to data collection, auditing, and analysis (Delamont, 2009), risking interpretations which are theoretically weak, trivial, or sensationalist (Lapadat, 2017).

Ellis (2009a) responds by suggesting such criticisms originate from four arguments: whether there is an objective reality to be studied; how far a researcher can discover and represent others' experiences; what researchers' ethical rights are when writing about their own and others' cultures; and how much authority a story can be said to have (see pages 29, 41, 39 & 144 for examples of my personal responses to these arguments). Ellis defends autoethnography, explaining that "the meaning is in the experience...the meaning is in the story... [and] the meaning comes in writing the story about the experience" (2009a, p. 376). I believe this can certainly be the case, however if the narrator who is also, in my case, the person interpreting the story, comes across to the reader as unreliable this could cause the reader to question the actual events themselves i.e. the likelihood of them rather than the truthfulness of them, and therefore also to question the author's interpretations. There is a fine balance here, then, between telling one's story which is, in itself, a crafted thing, and constructing a narrative which is designed to persuade and, in this case, to transform. Both story and narrative have the potential to harm and to heal. I have intended to leave a deliberate gap by my use of the layered account as a place where the reader might, perhaps, vicariously experience some of *my* experiences yet also be free to think about and construct alternative perspectives and interpretations, including alternative beginnings and endings, if needs be (Rambo, 2005).

I agree that useful knowledge can, indeed, be derived from writing as research and method although I also acknowledge that discussions and differences of opinion about

this method will doubtless continue (e.g. Duarte, 2007; Hughes, Pennington & Makrin, 2012).

3.6. Method

I purposively sampled from the richest, most proximal informative source I could find and, as such, I was the sole participant in this study.

3.6.1. Data collection

I gathered data, although this could perhaps more helpfully and appropriately be described simply as ‘information’, by combining autobiographical (remembering, reflecting, and storytelling) and ethnographic aspects (fieldwork, self-interviews, theoretical comparison, participation and analysis) of home culture. This, initially, involved immersing myself in my topic using imaginal resonance, an intuitive, qualitative data collection and interpretation technique drawing on mental imaging, creative expression and embodied writing (Anderson, 2004). It involves writing about an experience whilst paying attention to subtle body sensations and free-floating thoughts, describing felt responses beyond the events themselves and tuning into information coming from the conscious and unconscious minds (e.g. Netzer, 2014). Largely due to my relational developmentally-based therapeutic stance that takes into account what we, as human beings, learn and absorb long before we have the capacity of conscious thought or language, I believed it was important to focus on non-cognitive ways of knowing as have variously been referred to as tacit knowing (Polanyi, 1966), unconscious knowing (Taylor, 2001), and embodied knowing (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) all of which describe forms of awareness residing in the body which are gained through a constant flow of sensations, actions, and responses (e.g. Nagatomo, 1992; Stern, 2018). It is worth reiterating that I didn’t think I could recollect or record a universally accurate portrait of my experiences, and I was always aware that, were this project to be conducted at a different timepoint or with a different mindset on any day, at any moment, alternative elements may have come forward. For example, had I embarked on the data collection phase of this project after the first wave of COVID-19 rather than prior to it, it seems likely that different aspects of ‘being at home’ would have been noted which would perhaps have reflected more of my dual sense of confinement in and appreciation of my immediate community at this time as came through in my later analysis. Similarly, had I conducted this research in my early 20s rather than in my

mid 40s, I feel certain that other events, whilst still as *real* to me now, may have been foregrounded, whilst my account of continued dislocation as a mother of three children would, of course, have been barely conceivable to me.

I had initially planned to construct an overarching 'meta-frame' (Ellis, 2001) in the form of a journey back to my very first home, a croft in the Scottish Highlands, which I hadn't seen since moving away aged 4. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, this trip had to be cancelled. Nevertheless, other trips were conducted, other homes revisited, allowing me to explore and document in real time how it was to find, see, and touch these long-lost places all of which had, in different ways, represented earlier prototypes of belonging or disconnection. These visits were audio-recorded and later transcribed and journalled. I collected additional information through a self-interview with a colleague during which she asked me three open-ended questions, based on my research questions, with the possibility of adding further enquiries on my areas of interest, if appropriate:

1. *"What were your experiences of moving, missing, and settling throughout your life?"*
2. *"What were your experiences of home, then and now?"*
3. *"What meanings can you make of this?"*

Further information was collected as artefacts and archive materials including photographs, letters, diary entries, objects, artwork, poetry, and descriptive prose to convey depth and experience across time and distance. I drew on body-based and alternative data gathering techniques including intuitive (Braud & Anderson, 1998) and tacit ways of knowing (Polanyi, 1966). I felt drawn to these transpersonal knowledge structures because moving often felt to me like a soul wound (Shengold, 1989). Trying to define this experience in this way seemed important because it represented my subjective truth and also because tapping into this felt sense (Gendlin, 2003) enabled memories and feelings 'stored' in the body (van der Kolk, 1994) to find expression in ways which might not otherwise be possible.

3.6.2. Data analysis and interpretation

Analysis and interpretation began after I had reached two forms of natural conclusion. The first was reaching 'data saturation point' (Anderson & Braud, 2011) and the second was the first COVID-19 lockdown. Unexpectedly, the six months I spent home-

schooling my children and learning how to work therapeutically online served as essential downtime away from the highly involved daily contact I'd had with my research up to that point. This enforced space enabled me to analyse my draft narratives and other information from a slight emotional distance and to better engage in a dialogue between my experiencing and reflecting self (Anderson, 2004; McLeod, 2011). Developing this dialogue was vital, and I visualised it being similar to Benjamin's (2004) definition of relational intersubjectivity or 'thirdness'. Life around the pandemic meant there was sufficient time in between the stages of data collection, analysis, and write-up since, in my case at least, it felt as though my heart, mind and soul needed time to transition between skillsets in terms of what was required of them at each point.

Analysis involved all materials being gathered and organised so they could first be felt, understood, and then interpreted. Without quite realising it at the time, I had gathered an enormous amount of information, some of it in research journals, much of it in files on my computer, and still more of it in lengthy dictations to myself collected during fieldwork or elsewhere, in letters and childhood belongings, and in cupboards filled with photographs, artwork and assorted artefacts. Having transcribed my self-interview and my fieldwork dictations, I then developed an interpretive compositional structure of 'facts' and 'feelings' involving significant events, transitional moments, epiphanies, important relationships and developments, emotional highs and lows relating to moving home and school and, later settling, that I gathered in raw form. Because I particularly respond to the spoken word, I audio-recorded a 'first sift' of these elements to begin editing and structuring the narratives. Later, I represented this collection of thoughts, ideas, memories, questions, and patterns in visual forms using paper on physical surfaces which were moved around and modified. Turning my whole self into a detecting and analysing 'instrument', I engaged with the information I had collected, opening up to "interrelated concepts, themes, narratives, sequences, or irreducible features" (Anderson, 2011, p. 56). Throughout this stage, I continued to be led by intuitive, inductive methods including truthfulness (using my sense of logic as well as feeling), empathetic identification (tuning into the self I'd depicted and those of others), and also an awareness of multi and cross-modal perceptions such as when analysing one section narrating the blending of odours in the kitchen which later

prompted a taste in my mouth and, subsequently, the *feeling* of my parents and also an *impression* of home which I made use of during the Reflection (see p. 52).

Initially overwhelmed with what felt like an unscalable mountain of data, I recalled Anderson's (2004) description of the 'auspicious bewilderment' stage and tried to trust in this process. My mind eventually quietened, and the mists began to clear. In this calmer period, I used the hermeneutical lenses initially developed through the understanding of the topic I gained writing the literature review to begin questioning, modifying, and expanding these initial 'pre-understandings' (Anderson, 2004), comparing and incorporating other researchers' experiences into my own. Again, using imaginal resonance, I tried to imagine, and locate, different ways others may have gathered or reported similar experiences. After several days, I was able to discern patterns, often as 'intuitive breakthroughs' (Anderson, 2004). The data seemed to shape themselves beyond my conscious control, and I constructed my key themes later refining these as my understanding of the topic and research questions deepened.

I soon realised that my emergent narrative chapter, back then in meatier, messier form, was more valuable intact than as the sum of its analysed parts. This led to my decision, upon lengthy reflection, not to use a thematic analysis-type method such as that described by Braun and Clarke (2006) or Anderson (personal communication, 4th November, 2020) as originally planned, since after spending a long time experimenting with actively constructing codes through dividing and breaking down the data in their various forms into smaller and smaller pieces, I was left with a profound sense of emptiness and overall 'wrongness'. I felt I was losing in vision more than I was gaining in detail. Cutting up and labelling my words whilst trying to ignore the silences implied by the gaps on the pages made me feel deeply uncomfortable, like I was butchering something still alive. It felt more appropriate to me to present and analyse this work using a layered account method developed by Rambo (1995) setting my first-person narrative simultaneously alongside personal reflections, theory, and existing research. The layered account is a postmodern ethnographic reporting technique embodying a theory of consciousness and a reporting method in one. As Rambo (2005) says: "With my prose, I describe what is there, and through inference, the reader constructs what is not there – presence and absence... as each story is told, the layers are superimposed one over the other" (p. 572). I based my layering of the Narrative and

Analysis sections on the aforementioned piece by Rambo called *'Impressions of Grandmother: An autoethnographic portrait'* because of what I saw as the inherent value, economy, and narrative intrigue of juxtaposing vignettes and impressions in order to paint a portrait of my life's movements that simultaneously incorporated multiple responding 'voices' as well as "theory, subjective experience, fantasy, and more to convey aspects of a topic" (Rambo, 2005, p. 563).

Postmodern approaches have often de-centred the given authority of science, technology, and tradition (Lyotard, 1988). Conventional narrative forms in science can sometimes 'force-feed' the reader a particular understanding of the world masquerading as *the* understanding of the world. Rambo's layered account offers an impressionistic sketch providing readers with layers of experience to fill in themselves and construct their own interpretations of the subject at hand "thus projecting more of themselves into it and taking more away from it." (Rambo, 1995, p. 396). Narrative Analysis, furthermore, as described by Clandinin & Connelly (2000), was not appropriate for my purposes since this method primarily involves organising all elements of the data into 'a coherent developmental account'. Since I have always experienced relocation as dislocation, a form which conversely emphasised the fracturing or scattering of the narrative seemed most apt. A layered account is designed to loosely represent to, as well as produce for, the reader a continuous dialectic of experience emerging from the multitude of voices that produce and interpret a text, much like Bergson's (1910/2008) description of 'la durée', or the stream of consciousness of daily life which, combined with deep reflection and theoretical thinking, has the potential to make several ways of knowing possible for the reader (Rambo, 1995). I furthermore used Ellis' (2004, p. 197) 'sandwich style' autoethnographic format whereby the story has academic literature and theory on both sides (e.g. Ellis, 1993, Ellis, 2002).

3.7. A note on writing style

I have written the narrative sections largely using a third person point of view (POV). This POV, analogous to a wide camera angle in film (Gullion, 2016) means that readers view the action through my eyes as a character. This, I discovered, allowed me more of a sense of freedom as well as a crucial sense of creative distance,

something other autoethnographers have also found (e.g. Wyatt, 2006; Denzin, 1997; Jachimiak, 2014).

3.8. Issues of quality and trustworthiness

Due to its subjective, social constructionist foundations, quality assessment criteria for autoethnography differ to those used in more positivist research or even other qualitative methods. As Richardson and Adams (2005) suggest, I aimed for this piece to be evaluated according to how well it:

- Makes a substantive and credible contribution to our understanding of life
- Has artistic merit and leaves the reader wanting to know more
- Is reflexive and contains my presence inside and outside of the text
- Impacts the reader emotionally, intellectually, or otherwise.

Validity in the form of verisimilitude would have been achieved if this project evokes in readers a feeling that the experiences described are lifelike, believable, and possible (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011) as well as being, in some way, helpful (Ellis, 2004). Validity and reliability in terms of practical usefulness is an important criterion for judging quality, including evaluating what impact this work might have, and to what use it might be put. Narrative truth, an important goal, does not imply pinpoint accuracy but rather a wholehearted belief in writing authentically: “We can judge one narrative interpretation of events against another, but cannot measure a narrative against the events themselves because the meaning of the events comes clear only in their narrative expression” (Bochner, 2002, p. 126). Generalisability will be tested in a dynamic, ongoing way by readers judging whether the story speaks to them, involving ongoing processes of comparison, reflection, and critique through resonant life experiences (Ellis, 2004) since what is personal also has political, and even universal, dimensions and implications (Stanley & Wise, 2002). The quality of the writing is a key determinant of both internal and external validity and I have tried, again, to follow Ellis (2004) here, and to write vulnerably and “therapeutically” (p. 130). I have furthermore striven to work to Anderson’s (2011) standard of validity and reliability which involves a reader experiencing ‘sympathetic resonance’, or an experience of inner concordance with the truthfulness of another’s experience, such as when two instruments vibrate and respond harmonically when only is played.

3.9. Data reporting

Due to the doctoral requirements of this project, I have adopted a standardised reporting layout but chose to combine the narrative (data) and reflection (analysis) elements for reasons I later explain (p. 47). Like Jago (2011), I used creative literary methods to introduce characters, scenes, and explore meaningful processes, weaving various aspects together, moving forwards through time, and speaking from a variety of standpoints. I aimed to inwardly locate faithful, redolent ways of describing patterns, problems, themes, and epiphanies arising throughout the research journey in order to produce an 'alive', engaging piece inspiring feelings of authenticity and impact in readers.

3.10. Ethical considerations and procedures

As an approach, autoethnography has deeply ethical roots, seeking to address important issues around the representation and appropriation of others' voices (Lapadat, 2017). Based on feminist communitarian ethics (Edwards & Mauthner, 2002), autoethnography challenges dominant traditionalist, realist discourses of power, inequality, and stigmatisation. It aims to hold human dignity highly, to understand rather than judge, and to heal rather than harm or exploit. Denzin (2014) calls autoethnography 'a courageous moral act', a way of moving into the future of humanized scientific inquiry. Writing and performing autoethnography can be therapeutic, even transformative, for storytellers and readers alike (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), but is not without its ethical complications. This story involves disconnection, pain, neglect, dysfunction, and loss as well as personal growth, love, belonging, and gratitude. But, in telling this story, I have not only represented myself but others too, and this carries a significant ethical burden.

I have considered three main ethical dimensions: procedural, situational, and relational. Procedurally, I aimed to ensure that aspects such as informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, and participant protection were adequately dealt with. Situationally, I was required to consider subtle, unpredictable issues, the 'What do I do now?' questions (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Relationally, I aimed to conduct ethical research by trying as hard as possible to remain true to myself whilst being responsible for my actions and their impact on others (Slattery & Rapp, 2003; Ellis, 2007). I drew on my existing therapeutic stance, extending this relationality into my research and its

ethical aspects, holding mutual respect highly in terms of those who were implicated by my stories. I tried to think about issues of dignity and interconnectedness, remembering I was not an independent entity in a bubble but part of others' lives with the potential to influence their thoughts and feelings, positively and negatively. I thought deeply about how my research might impact the interpersonal worlds of those implicated, such as my children, my clients, or my family members. If something went wrong, or did so in the future, if there were some unanticipated consequence, then this would be my responsibility, and mine alone. The question of how to manage this would depend on the particular situation and the person involved. Although nothing 'bad' has happened, there were some smaller ethical issues which, I believe, I was able to address through action or refraining from action. This is evident, I believe, in the unfolding process across two telephone conversations with my mother described on pages 113-115. Here, the question of all three forms of ethics came to the fore, temporarily threatening to derail the project, at least in my mind. Similarly, when reflecting on the strains of keeping up a long-distance childhood friendship with 'Charlotte' (p. 66), I exposed certain feelings which I might, were it not for this project, never have spoken aloud. In so doing, I was aware I was exposing others in ways I couldn't pretend to entirely predict. Much like Ellis (1986) discovered after publishing her work with the 'Fisher Folk' community in Chesapeake Bay, it isn't always possible to retrospectively ease any problems or wounds one's research inadvertently creates. But I accept this as my responsibility and rely on my continued mindful reflections in this regard for the purposes of ongoing ethical decision-making and caretaking in this, and future, research endeavours. To reiterate, although I have tried not to cause harm or distress, I accept there is the potential for some harm despite my best efforts (Medford, 2006). Nevertheless, I think that, in holding the intention of compassion and integrity, both core aspects of my integrative therapeutic framework, this should go some way in working through ethical matters in an appropriate way.

3.10.1. Consent and representation

In considering this important issue, I based my research practice on Ellis' (2007) paper *Telling Secrets, Revealing Lives: Relational Ethics in Research with Intimate Others* exploring the author's dilemmas and learnings over the course of her, then, twenty-year, autoethnographic career.

I firstly had to decide how to convey to others what I was planning to do in my research and whether, and how much, to share its plans, process, and results. I had discussions with each individual appearing (explicitly or implicitly) in this piece including my parents, siblings, my friend, my interviewer, my husband, and my children, asking how they felt about what I was planning to write and if, how far, and in what manner they would be comfortable appearing in it. There were some people, old friends from school whose 'goodbye notes' I have included, whom I could not contact to obtain consent. These, however, do not come across as implicating to me in a negative way and, as they are typed rather than hand-written and anonymised, I did not consider this was a strong ethical issue. Regarding my family, particularly my parents, whilst I knew the possibility was always open of continuing to discuss this work with them, I also knew I'd never been entirely honest with them about some parts of my story and was concerned that, if and when they read my descriptions of earlier traumatic experiences, they might be hurt or upset. I also sensed there was likely to be some disagreement about my view of events. There was part of me that believed some people might not understand what I was trying to accomplish. However, I always operated under the assumption that they would read it. Now and again, I became concerned about how I would feel when faced with their possible conflicting interpretations of events and experience, perhaps because my impression had often been that I was not fully heard, nor my needs particularly considered. I often imagined myself during the writing of this project as vainly attempting to defend my 'reality': a difficult and vulnerable place to be. I was concerned that I might write something which could disrupt their relationships with me or, even worse, with each other. Questions of relational ethics deepened around matters of internal confidentiality (Tolich, 2004) and ongoing bonds between those appearing in my story. The potential for doing harm to valuable interpersonal connections certainly exists. Ellis (1996) grappled with something similar when writing and publishing her story *Maternal Connections* about caring for her elderly mother. She decided, eventually, on ethical grounds to both hide and disclose certain aspects to her mother, such as details of her ageing physical appearance, using her moment-by-moment judgement about what seemed least likely to cause harm. Like Ellis, a winding course of disclosures and shared edited sections seemed appropriate, also offering to share my research in full upon completion. Again, like Ellis who explored her ethical decision-making with *Maternal Connections* in a

later paper (2001), I believe certain conversations I've had with family members about this project have proven helpful for both parties. Furthermore, since "language can never contain a whole person, so every act of writing a person's life is inevitably a violation" (Josselson, 1996, p. 62). I am reminded that, whilst I don't have an unchallengeable right to tell others' stories, I also know that my perspective of *my own* story is only mine to tell. Relational ties can also serve a protective ethical function, facilitating open channels of communication. These have hopefully formed a part of an overall 'caregiving experience' (Ellis, 2007) and was noticeable in how feelings emerged, at every stage, leading me to feel more confident about what was, or was not, appropriate to tell. It involved an ongoing process of thinking, improvising, re-writing, anticipating, and noticing consequences, both for myself and others.

Having people whom I trusted talking to about these issues was essential, and I was grateful to have a research supervisor who embodied a reflexive, thoughtful stance to guide me on this journey. I was aware that my relationships with key individuals could change over time or due to external events, and was prepared for complexities to unfold, such as someone no longer wishing to be mentioned, or requesting I leave something out. If anyone had expressed feeling uncomfortable, then another step of re-examination and decision-making would have been necessary. Balancing this, I also maintained the ethical importance of speaking my own story's inscription without misrepresenting or filtering it through someone else's interpretation or agenda. This means I would not *always* have amended *per se* what was included or excluded. Ellis (2007) asks: "Is the wellbeing of the researcher always less important than the wellbeing of the other, even others who have behaved badly?" to which she answers herself, "No, not always" (p. 24).

I had several back up plans in my mind should a problem have occurred, including altering the story's scope or breadth or including more 'multiple interpretations' or 'alternative voices'. I tried to balance these unforeseen events with the aim of writing as truthfully as possible, recognising what Primo Levi (1958/1996) calls "the need to tell [my] story to 'the rest'" in order to achieve my own "interior liberation" (p.15). It felt important to tell the story of my disrupted childhood, identity formation, and growth in order to move on at this point in my life whilst honouring the implicit relational trust provision I have with close others (e.g. Ellis, 2007). And this reminded me of Levinas' (1996) ethics of the Other, similar to Buber's (1937/2002) *I-Thou* dialectic, in that our

encounters with others are highly privileged things in which the other person's proximity and distance are both strongly felt. Our relationships make an implicit demand on us to act gently, respectfully, recognising the transcendence and mutual influence of the Other. In this way, I tried to research in a way which protected myself, us as a family system, and others who became part of this story by telling a truthful, yet crafted, account for readers. Conducting pilot conversations with a critical colleague formed an important part of this since, during these conversations, we brainstormed what might be happening for myself and others. Different aspects needed to be considered relating to each person, including those who were more on the story's periphery. I opted to use pseudonyms throughout, including place names, to protect anonymity. Given I could not contact everyone involved, I recognised I needed to work just as ethically with them 'in absentia' as with one of my closest relatives. In some cases, I have omitted and altered certain people and events to try to ensure this.

My children required special consideration in my representation of them, particularly since two of them were still technically minors. It was complex to think about how they, and others, could realistically give free and meaningful consent when I am someone with whom they are involved in a love and trust-based relationship (Wall, 2008). Up until now, I have their full support, understanding, and permission with this project in which my life and parts of theirs has been performed, but have had to consider whether they really know what this could mean for them, and how far I, as a mother-researcher, have been willing to go in telling this story. Can a loved-one's consent ever be truly 'informed' when attachment bonds are invariably at play? I needed to acknowledge my own potential to misuse the power I explicitly and (implicitly) held as author and interpreter (Tolich, 2010). Navigating this entailed careful decision-making every step of the way with others' advisory input. For example, how I chose to portray my childhood may impact my children's relationships with their grandparents. Therefore, it was with an intergenerational ethical focus that I reviewed and refined my narratives, attempting to care for those who will hopefully be co-existing with one another, in one way or another, for years to come.

Such issues of process consent and representation are not only important ethically but also empirically. Addressing these needs and boundaries regarding what is shared is relevant since, when it comes to readers' internal assessments of validity and

trustworthiness, if something feels wrong in the writing of a character or event, then this will likely jar, risking disturbing the overall authenticity and resonance of the research - both important proofs of quality. I therefore needed to ascertain, at each stage, what was happening in and around the story which might make me 'stop' or 'go' with a particular image or piece of dialogue. My guide, as with so much, was information coming from my right-brained, embodied 'wisdom' (Schoore, 2018) and my left-brained critical thinking, remaining prepared to adapt the research process and product if required, including prior to presentation or publication.

3.10.2. Transformational hopes behind this research

Despite the perhaps rather grand (or grandiose) sounding aim of transformation underpinning autoethnography (Custer, 2014), I'm aware that my ideas about what is good or positive may not be the same as those of others. Similarly, my concept of a healthier or better place for us to 'move into' as a family in terms, perhaps, of opening opportunities for dialogue may not be *their* idea of 'growth' or 'transformation'. I cannot create this for us, nor would I try to. But still I hope that, in telling this story, a space might open up inviting reflections and feelings of all kinds to come forward. What each person chooses to do with such a space would be up to them. Like many researchers, I feel autoethnographies can and should aim to make the world a better place, even if in a very small way (Chang, 2007), leaving people better off at the end than they were at the beginning. It is too early to say, for certain, whether this has happened but my feelings, so far, are generally positive. In terms of the unintentional hurts others might have caused me, some of which I have written about, I embraced Ellis' (2007) suggestion of writing to understand how other people may have put their worlds together and how I might emerge from this shared world as a survivor. In attempting to understand and construct meaning from my life, to grow from my difficulties as well as my many blessings, writing this project has been a gift.

3.10.3. Self-care and researcher vulnerability

Writing and sharing autoethnography has been compared to opening up a vein, bleeding, and suffering not only one's remembered experiences, but the impossibility of adequately capturing them in language (Bochner & Ellis, 2016), a process Pearce (2010) refers to "the crises and freedoms of researching your own life" (p. 1). I knew that special concern needed to be given whilst re-living and disclosing sensitive

aspects of mine. Writing trauma stories can be a way of “writing the unspeakable” (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 206). As Etherington (2020) writes, with reference to Frank (2013), coherent stories which are written or told in the present usually include a remembered past and lead to an imagined future, which may not always be possible to achieve when writing stories of trauma which are often inherently disjointed, disconnected, exposing and vulnerable. However, I agree with Ngujiri & Hernandez (2010) that it is precisely this vulnerable exposure that often makes autoethnographies so compelling. Like Chatham-Carpenter (2010), Rambo-Ronai (1997), Weaver-Hightower (2012) and others who took the decision to write about extremely sensitive aspects of themselves and those close to them (anorexia, sexual abuse, and an infant’s death) with aching sensitivity and respectfulness, I have tried to render my experiences in a helpful way. I learnt from Chatham-Carpenter’s (2010) description of the choices she made trying to protect herself from the re-emergence of harmful compulsions when writing about her eating disorder. I, too, grappled with questioning at what cost I was willing to be published about such a personal topic, and whether my discomfort as a storyteller was too much to make the storytelling worthwhile. I needed to learn how much and how far forward to come in terms of remaining real, open, and safe. I also followed Chatham-Carpenter’s (2010) advice of waiting until I was in a ‘good-enough’ space writing over a significant length of time – 4 years – whilst continuing to live my own life as a therapist, wife, mother, and friend. On occasion, I took the decision that what I actually needed to do was to write through my pain, trusting that, on the other side of it, powerful learning and healing would take place, creating new knowledge as a result. I further addressed issues of researcher vulnerability by choosing to write on a subject that felt alive and important but which I have also spent time living and working through in my relationships and personal therapy. One of the reviewers of Chatham-Carpenter’s research advised: *“There is a certain element of “timing” in the construction of autoethnographic work. In my own experience, trying to write narrative before I have fully processed the experience I wish to convey culminates in what reads like personal journal writing and thus, does not yet have the ability to connect to larger ideas, theories, people, communities. Although writing before one has fully processed an experience is helpful, even necessary at times, it does not necessarily make for good autoethnography”* (Chatham-Carpenter, 2010, p. 9). To my mind, this project had enough of a growing edge to warrant deep methodological inquiry, but equally enough of an emotional and psychological

supportive structure 'around it and me' to sustain it during the inevitable, and not to be avoided, experiences of vulnerability as researcher-participant.

Issues of researcher vulnerability took on particular significance when imagining my therapy clients finding and reading my research. There were many ethical dilemmas to navigate ranging from my own vulnerability (Sweezy, 2005), risks around client wellbeing and therapy effectiveness (Bridges, 2001), exposing discordant personal values or attitudes, and wider risks of negatively impacting clients' impressions of me, my work, or even the profession itself. In terms of proceeding ethically, I envisaged this as being like a 'permanent inked tattoo' (Tolich, 2010) and tried to strike a balance between writing vulnerably and truthfully, on one hand, and submitting thoughtfully with an eye to the future on the other, employing the editing process Medford (2006) describes as 'mindful slippage'. I also believe I share a great deal of myself, unwittingly, on an implicit, unconscious level with clients every day (Schore, 2015). Whilst I am not advocating excessive self-disclosure, I feel that, if conducted in a way privileging the client's interests, any arising questions or issues could potentially be worked through as an aspect of our therapeutic alliance.

Ellis (2007) advises that, to write an effective autoethnography, we need to be willing to show our perceived 'warts and bruises' as well as our pretty parts and successes. This risks criticism from others. I would hope to manage this by turning my attention back to a future critic and asking myself what I can learn from their responses about myself, my world, and my reality. Ellis (2007) has found this strategy helpful in protecting her from taking criticism too personally and avoiding self-absorption, although other writings seem to suggest this hasn't always been easy (Ellis, 2009b; Tolich, 2004). I don't know how I would respond if and when this happens to me, but I would like to think I could make meaningful use of whatever 'comes back to me' in a way which deepens my understanding of this topic and my place in it.

CHAPTER 4. NARRATIVE AND ANALYSIS

Stories move in circles. They don't move in straight lines. So, it helps if you listen in circles. There are stories inside stories, and stories between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home.

Deena Metzger, 1992

GUIDE

This chapter consists of interwoven narrative and analysis honouring the non-linear process of creating and listening with stories.

For clarity, original narratives in various forms including poetry, prose, journal extracts and photographic descriptions are presented in '**Arial**' font.

Data in the form of recorded audio excerpts from self-interview are presented in '**Calibri**' font.

Data in the form of recorded audio excerpts from self-dictations during fieldwork are presented in italicised '**Calibri**' font.

Reflective, analytical, and theme identification aspects, presented in the form of 'Reflections', are in '**Times New Roman**' font.

Sections are separated by three asterisks *** to assist with visual and theoretical transitions and to invite the Reader to think with the presented pieces.

Part 1.

Journey, 1980, aged 4.

Swaddled in a soft eiderdown, her night-time body warmth still lingered in its folds and feather-filled compartments. The familiar scent of car surrounded her: old leather, sun-worn plastic, petrol. Outside, the trunk cranked up and slammed down again, each time with what felt like increased irritation. Everyone was now inside. With a clunk and a whine, the gearbox shifted into reverse. The world outside slid slowly backwards.

"Wave goodbye!", someone shouted.

She knelt up on the seat to see, but nobody was there. Oh. She was supposed to wave at a thing, not a person, she realised. She waved, obediently, her face pressed up against the glass, her breath leaving its ghostly trace on the windowpane.

'Byeeee!' she mouthed towards the empty house.

The lights were out, the windows bare. Somewhere inside her, a strange feeling started snaking slowly upwards, blurring her vision.

At the end of the drive, popping gravel gave way to smooth tarmac. Her vestibular senses told her something had changed. Now, in forwards gear, her mind reoriented to the shapes her fingerprints were making in the misted glass. She waved again, but absent-mindedly now, smearing and clearing everything all at once.

Muscle memory

How to begin

Narrating these senses?

Life's movements

Packed

In deep storage

Proprioception asks:

'Where are you in space?'

Kinaesthesia asks:

'Where are you coming from?'

'And going to?'

She needs these senses

More than ever

Now she is travelling

In the dark.

Reflection:

That was me, the child in the car, leaving my first home aged 4. The poem 'Muscle Memory' is about my initial difficulties accessing and writing about my relocation experiences. Both seem to show me holding stories about moving in a place beyond words. Writing them, I drew on less conscious, body-based senses including

kinaesthesia and proprioception, rather than conscious, declarative forms of knowing to assist my travels 'in the dark.' After leaving my first house, I always dreamt about returning. But in my childhood dreams, a different family lived there, and I was their unwelcome visitor. These nightmares conjured feelings of outrage and anguish. I would always wake up from them, crying.

Part 2. The Front Garden, Aberdeen, 1980, aged 4

Eleanor was visiting another house her parents were thinking of buying. She played outside while the adults talked indoors. Circling a little patch of lawn, she noticed two boys in next door's garden. She smiled at them. The boys locked eyes with her and scowled, then silently trooped back indoors, later peering at her through the window. Her cheeks flushed with embarrassment. But then, a large shrub caught her eye and she decided she could lose herself in it. She danced in its grassy embrace, escaping into a familiar, make-believe world. When her father called her into what turned out to be her new house, the old owners stared at her aghast. Suddenly, she noticed searing pains all over face, arms, and legs: hundreds of razor-thin scratches from the pampas grass outside.

She didn't like this new house, she decided. And it didn't like her much, either. It was nasty and unfriendly. Just like the strange grey lady she glimpsed one afternoon, or thought she did, a few months later in the attic. Her family, too, briefly haunted that house. Then, two summers later, they were gone.

Reflection: The hauntology of childhood

My parents spent much time planning or executing their next move. Tagging along on

viewings, I felt embarrassed as unfamiliar spaces would be pointed out in front of the owners, ‘This will be your room,’ my parents would say. ‘And this will be ours’. It felt like trespassing on hallowed ground.

Cresswell (1996) wrote that spaces are turned into places through the hauntings of past habitation. Since Freud’s early examinations of the mind, “it has been accepted that the experiences of childhood, particularly those beyond the reach of conscious memory, cast a long shadow over adult life” (Burton, 1996, p. 179). This shadow can be understood in terms of the hauntology of childhood (Derrida, 1994) referring to the return or persistence of elements from the past. Hauntology involves sensitising to both the ‘presence of absence’ and the ‘absence of presence’ in our experience of the everyday (see Lipman, 2016) which I have come to understand relationally in that my childhood self is continually acted and re-enacted with others in relationship. Thus, my childhood is never gone forever, since certain aspects are always alive and kicking in the present, echoes of which are always felt.

Spooky spaces in various homes often became ‘taboo’ locations, like the attic or cellar. Places I wouldn’t linger alone after dark. But my sensory memories of acclimatising to new places are even stronger, their absolute *strangeness* haunted me most because they, too, were places of temporal and ontological disjunction (Gallix, 2011). Hauntings in the form of ‘ghosts in the nursery’

(Fraiberg, Adelson & Shapiro, 1975) - unwanted visitors from parents' unremembered pasts - point towards the importance of attuning to children's needs, including when relocating, for emotional self-regulation to be possible (Schoore, 2015).

Growing up, each new move always felt impactful. Each new lifeworld required my complete commitment to it. In many ways, for me, home resembled a total institution (Avni, 1991).

Part 3. Newhaven Harbour

Front Door, 1983, aged 7

During another in-between time, Eleanor's family lived on a sailing boat. *Arwen's* front door was rounded, wooden, and welcoming. Eleanor would jump across the thrilling gap to reach it from the pontoon and, steadying herself against the rolling and yawing, would fumble with the lock on the hatch-guard, like she was unlocking a garage instead of a home where four people lived, ate, and slept. The hatch would slowly slide backwards, and the entranceway would appear like a portal to a secret world.

Hit from below by *Arwen's* belching maritime odours, Eleanor would swing down into her dark interior, giddily delighting that her feet were now below sea-level. Happily, she would sit and watch the others awkwardly descend. More rolling and yawing, and her parents would pass each other, hip-to-hip, at the bottleneck between fore and aft. With a single scrape, *Arwen's* stove would be alight, sulphur and gas marrying together, creating the reassuring impression of home.

"There it is. Pontoon 'F'. That could be [Arwen] down there. That familiar clanging of rigging, not quite as loud as I remember - my tiny bunk with the ferry going past all night." [Winds down window] "There are the seagulls. That familiar smell: diesel and fish. Empty boats and flapping flags, everything blue and white with tide marks all around... It's a lonely place. Nobody lives here. A sort of homeless place. Others would come, take their boats out on a Sunday, before going home again."

Reflection

According to Akiko Busch (1999), the front door is where we engage in 'the ceremony of coming home'. *Arwen's* door, for some reason, was one I immediately connected with this sense of homecoming. I was surprised by the warm tone of the first piece compared with the bleaker tone captured live during the second. A sense of family, especially my parents, comes through with odours 'marrying together', creating the 'impression' of home. With both pieces, I felt reassured about balancing tensions around this subject, recalling 'good' and 'bad' moments, placement and dislocation. Both, I realised, can and do co-exist in me, with neither one needing to be overtly chosen over the other.

Part 4. Bedroom, 1986/2020

Soon, Eleanor's daughter will be leaving the sunny bedroom upstairs whose floors and walls have held her, contained her, for ten years. It will be there, waiting for her, when she next returns from university. When Eleanor thinks about her own childhood bedroom, a prickly feeling prompts an image of herself on the floor, cross-legged, playing with her old pine cupboard in Newhaven. Inside the cupboard, she kept her most prized possessions: her *Peter Rabbit* books, scented eraser collection, and *My Little Pony*. Everything would be laid out neatly. At night-time, when she closed the latch, she imagined these beloved objects would come to life inside.

Before their spontaneous emigration to South Africa, Eleanor's parents bought another house a few miles away that they never ended up ever living in. One day, her mother asked Eleanor to help sort through some boxes at this new house before everything else was loaded onto a ship, headed for the Cape.

Upstairs in a darkened bedroom - perhaps the previous owners had taken the light bulbs - Eleanor located boxes marked with her name and, next to them, to her surprise, was her little pine cupboard. Instantly forgetting her task, she crouched down, opened the latch and, inside, found all her treasures cluttered together in one corner where the cupboard had been tipped on its side during removal. She took out each one and, reverently, lined them all up again: her books, rubbers; her *My Little Pony*, mane now combed... Engrossed, she only came to when she heard her mother's footsteps on the stairs. The spell was broken, and her time in cupboard-world was over. Carefully, she closed the latch, knowing everyone inside was safe and she would see them again soon.

The cupboard, to her knowledge, never made it to South Africa. Sometimes, she still wonders what happened to it and to her tiny world within.

Self-interview I

E: "Home... so many associations with that word. There's no... thread. It doesn't mean anything to me. I don't go to a house or a feeling... I don't go to either."

L: "What do you go to?"

E: [Long pause] "It's quite painful. I just feel... Ouch."

L: "Ouch?"

E: "Yeah. It feels like I'm... being a bit defensive... like I need to protect myself against that word!"

Part 5. Communal Hallway, November 2019, Fieldwork Dictation

"God, that smell here on the stairs, that creaky floorboard... When someone says they don't have childhood memories, I don't know, it's always kind of irritated me. But I can sort of understand it now because what I remember is newness, novelty, strange odours and atmospheres. Maybe if you don't move there's not much new stuff for the brain to remember. No new hazards to assess or categorise. Does home have a smell? No, I don't think so. I think it's probably odourless. The smell of somewhere where you've got so used to everything it's just...neutral. And the things I remember most, fresh paint and damp and, oh, all those feelings... maybe those were the times my brain was still taking it all in. Like, when you come back from holiday, the house smells odd. Maybe because the heating's been off, but maybe because home shouldn't actually have a smell. Just for other people, maybe, but not for you."

Reflection: Belongings

In these pieces, created in very different ways, I see myself attempting to locate my 'body in the mind' (Leuzinger-Bohleber, 2018). A prickling sensation connected to the concept 'childhood bedroom', prompting a specific memory. Being asked how I felt about the word 'home' triggered a bodily response verbalisable simply as 'Ouch'. Lastly, I was hit by an avalanche of sensory cues upon re-entering a hallway that provoked an epiphany about the scent of home. All three represented, perhaps, key olfactory 'frames of remembering' (Low; 2013). At home, we are immersed in a place that 'intrudes' upon the self through the senses (Brah, 1996, p. 188).

Memories are living entanglements of bodymind and culture (Totton, 2003) “activated by embodied acts and semantically dense objects” (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 9). The senses act as mnemonic triggers, ‘messengers of the past’, evoking feelings of “emotional/embodied plenitude” (Sutton, 2001, p. 82). How readily the cloying vanilla sweetness of the rainbow erasers in my pine cupboard sprang to mind! No wonder, perhaps, since objects, animate and inanimate, constitute and shape children’s worlds and development (Winnicott, 1953; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978; Hood, Weltzein, Marsh *et al.*, 2016).

Childhood belongings can also hold special meanings for adults retaining “something of the eyes which have looked at them ... a thing which we have looked at in the past brings back to us, if we see it again, not only the eyes with which we looked at it but all the images with which at the time those eyes filled.” (Proust, 1927/2003, p. 284). Toys and belongings act as containers for our identity whereby, when absorbed by them, we can almost exist in a timeless state, protected from life’s struggles (Nachbar & Lause, 1992). Like transitional objects, childhood belongings are a way of both holding on and letting go (Winnicott, 1953). Something told me our upcoming move to South Africa was going to be a big one, making me wonder if part of me already knew I would need to say goodbye to constructs like cupboard world, just as another part of me wished I could hold onto them forever.

Part 6. The Old Vicarage

Bathroom, 1985, aged 9

Something wasn't right
Nobody was talking
Seeking solace in the bathroom
She clambered on the toilet seat
Gazing mermaid-like
Into the shell-encrusted looking-glass
Then it happened
Like the shells
Her eyes stuck fast
To her reflection
She stared and stared
At someone else
(Falling falling)
She was not real
Nobody was home

Driveway, 2019: Fieldwork Dictation

"Oh look, there's the bathroom! And there, where the roof pitches up, that's my old bedroom. Should I go and knock? What should I do if I go inside? Absorb and 'experience' with strangers gawping, wondering what the hell I'm doing in their house? No. That would negate the whole experience... It was here, there, I learned about nuclear war for the first time on the '6 O'clock News'. I was terrified. I remember thinking, 'How could something exist that could destroy the world?' My mind just rejected it. I ran down this hill, full pelt, freaking out for hours. Maybe that's when I began growing up, that day I knew everything could just be blown up and destroyed."

Reflection: Trauma and health

Mirrors and looking glasses often appear when the mind is being discussed, particularly in terms of its functioning or relationship to others and itself (e.g. Jung, 1976/2015; Lacan, 1977/2014; Kohut, 1971; Rizzolati & Craighero, 2004; Beebe & Lachman, 2014). According to self psychology, a cohesive self forms provided crucial developmental needs are met by caregivers, including mirroring, idealisation, and twinship (Kohut, 1971). Empathic attunement, in the form of adequate mirroring, is key to promoting healthy self-esteem and belongingness with others. If caregivers cannot provide this, children may be at risk of later difficulties (Banai, Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). Key people, like grandparents, can fill relational gaps, providing a 'protective shield' (Khan, 1963) and can, if available, particularly support children during a house move (Sakyi, Surkan, Fombome *et al.*, 2015; Lucier-Greer, 2015). By 9, I had already moved 6 times, but never to anywhere with connections, no friends or family to fill any gaps between my parents' needs and those of their children.

Akhtar (1999) suggests the experience of dislocation coupled with the uncertainty and stress faced by those who move large distances, in his example, immigrants, can produce the internal conditions for regressing into a split, fragmented inner world consisting of all-good or all-bad 'objects'. This aligns with Klein's (1940) theory that major life transitions can trigger an

emotional return to a pre-verbal developmental stage into what is termed the ‘paranoid-schizoid position’.

The poem ‘Bathroom’ describes my first episode of depersonalisation and derealisation, forms of dissociated panic, whereby I felt completely outside of myself. For some, this experience can be mild, provoking no more than passing unease, for others, it can be much more debilitating (Baker, Hunter, Lawrence *et al.*, 2003). I was 9, gazing into the bathroom mirror when it first occurred. It was the most terrifying experience I’ve ever had, recurring throughout childhood and developing into what might nowadays be called ‘Depersonalisation-Derealisation Disorder’ (Salami, Andreu-Perez & Gilmeister, 2020). Back then, staring at my wide-eyed reflection, I kept thinking, ‘*This is me, this is me, this is me...*’ whilst sliding inexorably towards a cataclysmic mental event horizon: a reflection within a mirror, within a mirror, within a mirror. I felt helpless, unreachable. Like losing my mind and body all at once. Existentially despairing, nothing seemed real. But *I* was still conscious so there was nowhere to escape to. Sometime later, sobbing to my bewildered mother downstairs, I clawed back some semblance of what, even then at my tender age, I realised was the ‘falseness’ of conventional reality. Still, it had felt comforting to kid my mind into ‘pretending’ once more.

Established links between trauma and dissociation exist with trauma considered to be the root cause for at least 90% of those who suffer

from dissociation (Scaer, 2014). Dissociation is a self-protective survival strategy whereby one slips into a disconnected state to avoid experiencing something intolerable over which one has no control. Childhood abuse remains the most common factor, but other forms of trauma sometimes underpin dissociative disorders (Bromberg, 2014). Derealisation, when severe, can lead to panic attacks or even panic disorder (APA, 2013).

In my case, ‘tapping out’ didn’t feel protective because the experience of not being me was, itself, highly traumatic. In children, the severity of dissociation tends to align with trauma severity but, as with moving home, sensitive periods to trauma are thought to exist whereby children aged between 0-3 years, 8-10 years and 12-14 years are particularly vulnerable (Stevens, van Rooij & Jovanovich, 2018). To this day, when I’m worrying about something but I haven’t realised it yet, depersonalisation returns. When it does, it’s like I am 9 years old again, standing on that toilet seat.

It is well-known that moving features high in stressful life events (Martin, Leach, Norman *et al.*, 2000) with children depending on others for reassurance and stability (Cozolino, 2014). Thomas (2017), seeking to rebalance the lack of children’s voices in this area, interviewed children prior to and after a move exploring how far stressors like the move itself, a parent’s new job, or changes in support structures impacted their wellbeing. One participant, ‘Ariel’, became

noticeably more reliant on her mother. I, too, leant heavily on my mother during house moves, often feeling sad and anxious, following her around, unsure of what to do next. Whilst I don't recall feeling directly affected by parental stress nor being unfairly treated or unsupported as, for example, Masarik and Conger's (2017) 'Family Stress Model' might suggest, I do recall an undeniable level of tension and 'hecticness' pervading our shared emotional landscape. Being experienced movers as well as highly practical, my parents undertook the renovations themselves – the house was a 'fixer-upper' – and they were busy much of the time. The sights, sounds, and smells of a building site would fill the house, a finished home was always some far-off, promised thing. Our home was constantly metamorphosing: wallpaper stripped, walls demolished, strangers tromping around, radios blaring, ripping things out or drilling things in. I would hunt for safe spaces and quiet corners although these, too, would eventually be invaded. This theme of destruction versus construction comes through in my recollection of learning about nuclear war for the first time itself, perhaps, a metaphor for a sense of doom on the horizon that my world would soon be 'blown up'. A way of expressing fears of something bigger over which I had no control.

Part 7. Pen Pals

One morning, a parcel arrived addressed in Eleanor's oldest friend's handwriting. They had only attended the same school for two years but had kept in touch ever since after Eleanor moved to South Africa.

"Moving is always hardest for those left behind," Eleanor's mother had told her, somewhat confusingly, after she and Charlotte had bid their tearful goodbyes. Now, decades later, having told Charlotte about her research, she had sent back all Eleanor's letters (which, incredibly, she had kept) in the hope that they might be useful.



To her surprise, Eleanor was unsure at first if she even wanted to open them. Perhaps part of her was hoping to remain anonymous or unchallenged. She did briefly worry there would be nothing in them except silly, childish words. And who was this earlier self about to spring off the page? Would they embarrass her? Hurt her?

Taking a deep breath, instinctually following storytelling conventions, she searched for the oldest letter. There, near the back, was a single sheet of notepaper addressed from 'Claridges Hotel, Cape Town', the hotel she'd stayed in upon arrival.

Dearest

Paradise Hotel
Cape Town
14th Sep

Before I start, please
do not write to me at the
address I put at the top as
I am only staying here for
1 more day. We have found
a house just like that!
It's very small, but cool
and airy inside. Give
Joanne the stamp. I will
be going to school in
3 weeks time. This letter
will probably take ages
to reach you. Never mind.



P.T.O. →

I miss you very much.
It's such a different
situation out here we're
all confused. The minute
we got off the plane
it seemed like, we were
rushed around on a tour
of Cape Town, when all
I wanted to do was go
straight to bed. As I was
sick due to turbulence on
the plane. Anyway more
news soon!

Lots a' love

Eleanor

xxx
P.S. Sorry about the airport
drawings!

'I will be going to school in 3 weeks' time', Eleanor wrote. 'This letter will probably take ages to reach you... 'I miss you very much. It's such a different situation out here, we're all confused.'

Eleanor's family had moved into a townhouse in a cosy Cape Town neighbourhood. At 10, the cusp of adolescence, Eleanor hung out with her 'new' aunt and cousins, bombing around in their *Combi* van at weekends, cheerfully enduring their high-octane, evangelical church events. She sought belongingness in this sunny, upbeat family whose voices all went up at the ends of their sentences. Everyone seemed to live a charmed life, with lush green lawns, turquoise swimming pools, and *braai* parties loaded with thick snails of *boerewors* sausage.

She was determined to fit in. She lost her puppy fat, cut her hair, and developed a nut-brown tan. She learned the slang, watched what she was told were the correct TV shows, and eventually mastered the art of appropriately reacting to people and events. Slowly, she began to feel more accepted. Outside, in a tall sycamore tree, she played with other neighbourhood kids from morning until dusk. Recalling this period in her life, it has a curious, running-together-like quality, like a cine-camera reel playing clips of sped-up adventures: games around the tree, kiss chase, made-up worlds, stories, and dares all bathed in African sunshine stretching ever outwards. Always one more climb, one more game, one more run around the block.

Slowly, her old life in England began to fade. She still wrote to Charlotte but felt guilty about taking longer to reply. Eleanor was a bad friend, she thought. And then there was the problem of Debra, Eleanor's pet rabbit, whom Charlotte had been looking after. *'Please don't hold your party for me,' Eleanor writes in 1987. 'Listen, do you want to keep Debra or do you know anyone who you know would take good care of her? I really would love you to keep her... Your [sic] the best friend I ever had and you always will be.'*

Hope you enjoy this
presie, and the other, late
Xmas presie that will be
arriving soon.

Listen, do you want to keep
Debra, or do you know
anyone who you know would
take good care of her? We
can't pay or send her out
here or anything though.

I really would love you to keep
her because I know you would
take excellent care of her. I'm
missing you so much. Last week
I went round to sleep at a
friend's house, and I started to
cry because I kept on thinking of
the games we used to play. I
will be back though, very soon.
Keep writing. Lots and Lots of
Eleanor xxxxx p.s.

You're the BEST FRIEND I ever had, and you always will be!

She felt guilty about this. But, at the same time, she lived somewhere else now, so she distracted herself by playing with her friends in the park opposite. Eventually, this park became *their* park, an extension of their arboreal world. There were some parts of it, though, that they would not enter. The far side, left wild, was different - *not them* - 'where the Coloureds went', she was told. She took a short cut through it once, feeling its otherness for herself. She felt like a trespasser. A microcosm, the park served as a template for her behaviour elsewhere - she kept to her own 'Whites only' spaces because this was what was expected. But, if she thought about it, this would make her stomach churn with a mixture of fear and embarrassment. She tried hard to squash it down but, because it was inside her body, it always bubbled back up again.

To everyone's surprise, she was made head girl at her primary school. It was nice to feel acknowledged and validated, completely contradicting her former belief that, as a newcomer, she was inherently less known, less trustworthy, and somehow further behind than everybody else. Wearing her shiny new badge, she felt proud, popular even. Then, a few weeks later, she reluctantly became aware of a familiar, lurching feeling, like an invisible anchor slowly breaking free. Whenever she mentioned school, or next year, her parents' silences made her feel fuzzy-headed, or mildly concussed. Eventually, she learned her father was changing jobs again and she might be sent to a boarding school near Johannesburg. She was horrified, having inherited a mortal dread of boarding from her brother who had suffered in one against his will for years. Other, very vague, plans were mooted. Possibly, she and her mother would return to England whilst her father worked a short-term contract elsewhere. Again, nobody told her what they were thinking, so trepidation took hold. A feeling of being slowly cut off. She couldn't put it into words back then but, again, she sensed another major turning point coming her way.

In a state of numb perplexity, she waved goodbye to her friends, teachers, cousins, neighbours, house, tree, and park. Back in grey England, she lay awake on her camp bed in their new flat, trying to make sense of it all. She was now twelve with plenty to look forward to, she was told. A new school would be found. She would make other friends. Whilst she waited, she pored over glossy magazines, imagining, one day, being grown-up and glamorous, a time and place in which she could, at last, *arrive*.

Reflection: Uncomfortably numb

After moving from Germany to the United States, psychologist Kurt Lewin summarized the differences between social ties in each country: *“Compared with Germans, Americans seem to make quicker progress toward friendly relations early in the acquaintance process and with many more persons. Yet this development often stops at a certain point and the quickly acquired friends will, after years of relatively close relations, say good-bye as easily as after a few weeks of acquaintance”* (Lewin, 1936, p. 282). So-called ‘relational disposability’ occurs among people who move house often, possibly because movers mentally associate the mutual disposability of objects and people (Gillath & Keefer, 2016). Children, like me, who were regularly asked to give up toys and belongings might feel slightly better, or less bad, when asked to give up friendships too. Whilst I felt the keen loss of both, I believe I coped by ‘numbing out’ negative feelings and reminding myself of our moving narratives and family folklore: *“Moving is hardest for those left behind”* (i.e. I was the lucky one) and *“We’re moving somewhere fresh and exciting”* (not away from somewhere familiar and dependable). The timing of the Cape Town move, the cusp of adolescence, meant that my bodymind was quite different between arrival and departure two years later. I was navigating powerful shifts in self-image and identity, something that can be particularly challenging for girls who, compared with boys, often experience

drops in self-esteem during early adolescence (Block & Robins, 1993).

My pet rabbit's entrance as a character is intriguing, coming across, almost, like a child of divorcing parents. Six months into our time in Cape Town, my mother told me to ask Charlotte to find a 'permanent solution' for her. I took this to mean that ties should be cut within this caregiving arrangement. Sharing Debra involved an ongoing mutual commitment which was, traditionally, the kind of thing my parents preferred to avoid. I felt sad about losing Debra from afar, but also didn't feel I was entitled to feel *anything* about it, a disenfranchised grief also observed in other children (Packman, Field, Carmack, *et al.*, 2011; Crawford, Zhu, Davis *et al.*, 2019). I never knew what happened to Debra. Perhaps I forgot to ask.

I have a sense, re-reading my letters, of standing at an intersection of cultures and identities. Acculturation, implying absorption into another culture (Berry, 2006), certainly took place alongside identity development and identity loss, processes often associated with third-culture kids (e.g. Fail, Thompson & Walker, 2004). Cutting relational ties involved disconnecting older and newer ways of thinking and feeling: I was always being implicitly asked to 'forget' the things I left behind. To my parents' credit, I believe they encouraged me to do so with the intention of sparing me unnecessary distress. Nevertheless, I became adept at dissociating prior identities and the attachments these were built on.

Similar numbness comes through when I describe not noticing what another part of me was reluctantly acknowledging - that I was about to move again. Feeling “fuzzy-headed” and “mildly concussed” aligns with descriptions of dissociation involving a “disruption in the usually integrated functions of consciousness, perception, and memory” (APA, 2013). Evidence suggests children’s wellbeing is at risk when parents engage in ‘parenting by lying’ even with benign intentions (Santos, Zanette, Kwok, *et al.*, 2017). I recall not being told as well as not wanting *to be* told suggesting, perhaps, a tacitly agreed upon ‘Don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy. Perhaps I simply lacked the mental and emotional structures to assimilate what was, I believe, a difficult experience, relying instead on numbing to escape the full impact of change and loss (Classen, Koopman & Spiegel, 1993).

It can be hard for people, young and old, to keep up with old friends. When I was younger, *Friends and Family* tariffs and the internet didn’t exist. Letters were the only way of keeping in touch. However, the physical distances surrounding written correspondence created perceptual distances within friendships. It would be six weeks or more between questions asked and answered, as seen in my first letter to Charlotte: ‘*I will be going to school in 3 weeks’ time. This letter will probably take ages to reach you. Never mind.*’ Such delays felt like an uncannily unfair form of time travel whereby we tried to uphold certain core conditions of friendship, including

spontaneity and rapport, within the harsh boundaries of spacetime. Like having a conversation with somebody on Neptune.

I was familiar with transition shock, but the culture shock following the South Africa move was difficult, for everyone, I think. When we lose familiar people, places, and cues, an identity crisis can result (Weaver (1994). With cross-cultural geographical moves, what is socially appropriate in one context sometimes isn't in another (LaFromboise, Coleman & Gerton, 1993). My intrinsic motivation to form group memberships in a new country involved changing my concept of self (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011). Like Wright (2009), referring to Oberg's (1960) stages of culture shock: 'honeymoon', 'negotiation', 'adjustment' and 'adaptation', there was a certain process to it. Three months in, homesickness, knowing how anything worked, and information overload had largely subsided, although I wasn't specifically supported with this and was, as usual, simply thrown into the deep end. I knew that making new friends was essential, but still it pains me to hear myself placating Charlotte, as if I was a traitor: *'You must think I'm a fat, lazy pig for not sending you a Christmas present'* I wrote, and: *'I went round to a friend's house... and started to cry...I kept on thinking of the games we used to play'*. Later on in this letter, I can spot our family lore involving, one day, returning 'home' in glory: *'I will be back soon, keep writing'* – an attempt, perhaps, to also prevent *myself* from being forgotten. Together,

these processes of guilt and fantasy trapped me in a kind of limbo for decades, never having the confidence to commit to anywhere, or anyone, for good.

During the forty years of South African apartheid, communities and schools were segregated, preventing people encountering each other. Children were educated in toxic discourses (Norval, 1996; Karlsson, 2004). I can see how I distanced myself from awareness of racial abuses by narrowing my attention on the goings-on in my own orderly, picturesque community. Psychic numbing, or ‘doubling’, serves to reduce emotional stress by splitting off morally repugnant thoughts (Janet, 1886). I was a sojourner in South Africa yet also a co-creative participant in this ‘social madness’ (Lifton & Markusen, 1990). Perhaps because of this period’s sharp political intensity, the ‘belonging or not belonging’ question feels particularly foregrounded, begging questions as to the kinds of identities I was both unknowingly given and willingly sought out. Like all identities, these processes were not set in stone but are always in the process of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’ (Berzonsky, 1986), belonging to the future as much as to the past.

Part 8. City Comprehensive

Home Time, 1988, aged 12

“You talk funny,” the older girl said.

“Do I?” she replied. “No, I don’t,” she added, effortfully dropping the ‘t’ at the end of ‘don’t’.

“Yeah, you do,” the girl said, stepping forwards. “You think you’re all that, *New Girl*. ‘Ew! Lah-dee-da!’ What sort of accent is that, anyway?”

Around them, a small group had gathered. Their school trainers scuffed the pavement, eyeing the unfolding scene, hungrily.

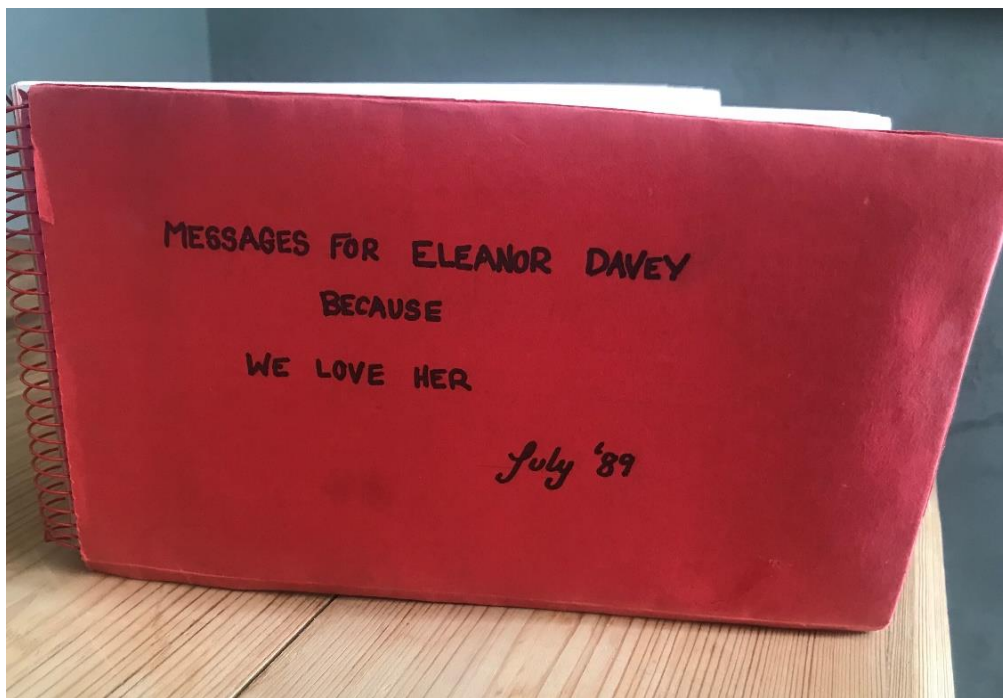
“C’mere,” the girl said, grabbing Eleanor, pulling her forwards. “I’ve got summink for ya.”

Deftly removing a cigarette from someone else’s fingers, she grazed it across Eleanor’s wrist. Eleanor yelped, stumbling backwards in shock. The others tittered gently. She decided not to speak, knowing anything she did say would be held against her in evidence. Instead, she pursed her lips, casually tossing back her hair. But, by then, her awareness was already floating out of her body and a calm voice had arrived in its place. ‘*You’re above this*’, it assured her. ‘*One day, none of this will matter.*’

She scooped up her bag together with its spilled contents before striding towards the comparative safety of the bus stop just as a final shout rang out:

“That’s right! Just fuck off home!”

Goodbye Book, 1989, aged 13



Nine months later, Eleanor was told she was leaving the city comprehensive to go to a boarding school on the other side of town. Her mother was joining her father in another country and Eleanor would be staying in England. She felt sick and confused and wondered how she would manage with her mother being so far away.

On her last day, a friend presented her with a Goodbye Book during an impromptu farewell ceremony. She had asked the class to write messages on index cards and had glued them in. The fact that her friend had done this touched Eleanor deeply. She had only been in this move for a few months, and it had been getting harder and harder to become a new person each time. She had only just rid herself of her unpopular, hybridised accent and adopted a broad, Estuary one in its place. It was true, she had been bullied there, but she had liked living with her mother in the flat in Arnold Street and making these new friends.

Years later, when she was grown up, she re-read the Goodbye Book, spotting the tell-tale signs of a life lived in transit from the number of pages with nearly identical messages:

"Dear Eleanor, I know you didn't know me that well, but I don't want you to forget me so here's a little note..."

"Dear Eleanor, sorry to hear ur leaving. Even though I didn't know u that well, maybe later on we'll have a chance to get to know each other better!!!"

"Dear Ellie, I didn't know you very well and perhaps I would have liked to know you better but things don't seem to have worked out that way, do they?"

A few people simply signed their name or drew a cartoon or smiley face. There were other messages too:

"Dear Elly, I didn't think when you first came into our form room we'd become such good friends. I don't want you to worry about your new school because if you can fit in here as well as you did, you can fit in anywhere!!! I wish you weren't leaving but I wish you the greatest good luck in everything that you do. Love [K]. PS I envy you for not having to go to another boring Maths lesson with Mr H..."

"Hello again Smeg, Good luck in your new school and come and visit us sometime. There's going to be an empty space in our class when you're gone..."

"Dear Ellie, I never thought I would become as good friends with anyone as I have with you, I am really glad we were both sort of left out when I came otherwise we wouldn't have become friends. I will miss you so much when you're gone. I hope you'll think of me when you're getting off with all the hunks at your new school. GOOD LUCK and I'll see you every weekend because you don't get away from me that easily. I'll miss you tons, love L..."

Reflection: New girl

I'm ashamed to admit I forgot most of these friends. I tried to keep up with a couple, I think, but, in the end, I couldn't quite make our worlds join up. I let go, moving on as readily as relational disposability (Gillath & Keefer, 2016) would suggest. Rereading the Goodbye Book, I feel sad for my 13-year-old self, barely known by most of my classmates. I also feel grateful to those who did know me or wanted to know me better. I think some of us could, eventually, have mattered to each other. These relational 'almosts' occurred all the time but were almost impossible to define. This book seems to say it all.

In the 16 months between leaving Cape Town in May 1988 and starting boarding school in September 1989, I attended three very different schools involving three sets of friends, teachers, rules, and cultures. From a bioecological perspective, development occurs in a series of embedded, interconnected contexts including homes, families, schools and communities, and changes in one potentially create changes across multiple areas (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Regardless of the reasons behind a move, each

one brings adjustments and disruptions to a developmental system whereby children are faced with learning new routines, rebuilding social networks, and forming new connections. The forces of residential mobility accumulate with additional moves placing strain on a child's adaptive resources, academic abilities, friendships, and emotional balance. Children, perhaps more than adults, can feel isolated when they move because it is often assumed they should be able to settle in without difficulty (Knörr, 2005). If a house move coincides with a new school or with changes in a family's configuration, further pressures can be placed on the child's resources with additional accumulative developmental ramifications (Coley & Kull, 2016). In a recent meta-analysis on childhood mobility and health outcomes, moving was seen to appear most critical between the ages of 10-18 with negative impacts increasing with each move (Simsek *et al.*, 2021).

Young British people who had recently moved were found to be more likely to be bullied and to continue to be victimised (Green, Collingwood & Ross, 2010). Nevertheless, changing schools due to bullying is often seen to reduce reoccurrence which, indeed, was often the case for me when I moved schools, although different peer-related problems (surrounding newness or differences) tended to persevere or take on different forms. My pattern was that initially I felt like an unwelcome intruder and was usually ostracised, then, later on, practically fetishized as a

fascinating curiosity whom everyone wanted to befriend. Later still, when inevitable ruptures in friendships occurred, my original 'intruder status' would be recalled and I would once more be relegated to the social fringe. If I had remained longer in schools, I might have been able to work through some of these natural social processes with my peers but being continually removed meant I never developed sufficient faith in myself as being socially acceptable or, even, likeable. Victims of bullying often blame their own perceived characteristics, like how they look or where they're from, as the causes of their problems with others (Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, *et al.*, 2004).

So-called 're-entry' shock can be similar to culture shock but can be even more difficult to deal with (Gaw, 2000). This is something Hatfield (2010) found in her participant-led photographic and interview study exploring families' experiences of return migration suggesting even so-called 'privileged migrants', whose socioeconomic backgrounds might conceivably smooth any bumpy transitions, can struggle with the complexities of negotiating a return 'home'. Returning to the UK, it was jarring to discover how much everything had moved on without my being part of it. A great deal about me had also changed. As well as being a new girl again, I also felt like a foreigner. I was picked on for the differences I exhibited and inwardly felt. Without the emotional scaffolding and armour a sense of placement brings, I was probably a

natural target for bullies, the other walking wounded.

Part 9. Boarding School

Girls' dormitory, September 1989, aged 13

"Morning girls. 7 o'clock".

One by one, strip-lights twitched to life. Her brief interlude of emotional paralysis was over. Whilst the girls muttered sleepy greetings to each other out of awkward politeness, Eleanor dropped from her bunk, burying her face in her bath-towel (her brother's from boarding school) to hide her fresh tears. Her heart hurt. She thought about going to Matron but quickly decided against it. Matron was even worse than this feeling she had inside.

The shower curtains billowed as she entered the chilly bathroom and sat, head bowed, counting tile cracks. Tropical flowers wafted from nearby: a sweet, pain-inducing scent she associated with somewhere warm, somewhere she imagined her mother to be.

In her new kilt and blazer, she shuffled into the dining hall heading for the safety of the porridge urn where fewest people were gathered. Later, sinking into a pew in chapel, she inhaled the smell of incense and candlewax whilst the organ burst deafeningly to life. Standing, wobbling, she launched herself into *'Morning has Broken'*, feeling slightly steadier by the end: *"Praise for them springing fresh from the world"*.

Everyone filed out into the buttery Autumn sunlight, hurriedly gathering armfuls of books. Eleanor spent the morning feeling adrift, her attention drawn to the scudding clouds outside. Her body felt light and insubstantial. Her eyes filled amidst the classroom's clamour, and she was hit again from the inside by spasmodic waves of heartache. Furiously, she blinked away tears. But, she thought, at least these feelings were a connection. At least they were real.

"It's just homesickness," someone told her, later. "Everyone gets it, sometime or other".

She drifted queasily towards the lunch queue, wondering how, if it's really just homesickness, can this be for a house, a home, she's never even seen?

Self-interview II

L: "What were your experiences of home, then and now?"

E: "Then? [*Sighs*] The first thing that comes into my mind is '*mother*'."

L: "Mother?"

E: "Yes, *mother*. Presence and... a smell. Warmth, things taken down and put up in each place. Furniture rearranged in different configurations. All with strings going back to that word. Home was a feeling like... being in bed. A sense of safety. Of being relaxed. Of being free. Then something happened to stop that feeling. And that was boarding school. When I think about home... boarding was a complete rupture. A total break in... experience. Home just stopped."

Housemistress's Office, November 1989, aged 13

[*Knock knock*]

"Come in!" [*Electronic lock beeps*] "Ah, Ellie."

"Um, I'm not feeling very well..."

"Temperature?"

"I'm not sure.... Maybe."

"Well let's have a look... Hm, I can't feel one."

"Oh."

"You should be fine for Corps this afternoon. Off you go."

"It's just... I really don't *feel* very well."

[*Mrs W frowns, her pen nib clicking in and out*]

"Well, perhaps your monthlies are due? A dose of exercise will do you the *world* of good."

"But..."

"Mhm?"

"I was thinking... could I... maybe, call my mum?"

[*Mrs W's frown deepens*]

"Now, Ellie. Last time was really an exception. You were feeling muddled and I'd thought a quick phone call home might help you adjust. But now I'm not sure that was such a good idea."

"But I wouldn't be long, Miss..." *[E's voice trembles]*

"I think that would be a mistake. No, no, now... now, don't be silly. Here. Take a tissue. That's it. Have a good blow... Now look here... *[Sighs]* If it's really so important to you then I'll think, *think*, about putting in a call later. *If* she happens to be in. If so, she might call you for a quick word on the payphone after prep. *If* she has time. Now, how's that?"

[E nods dumbly]

"But this mustn't happen again. Alright?"

[E continues to nod]

"You know, it's really best for everyone to just accept where we are and not go bothering people with every little thing. Muck in, and you'll soon be alright. You don't see the sixth formers moping about all day, now do you? No. Now, off you go.... And no more of this silly business, either."

"But I really am feeling..."

"Now, that's enough."

[E turns to leave]

"Shut the door, please."

Reflection: Survivor

The terms 'boarding trauma' and 'boarding school survivor' have now entered the common lexicon. Nick Duffell's (2000) seminal work on boarding paints a picture of youngsters denied the right to be children whose attachments and social connectedness are often damaged through the doctrine of 'toughening children up' by distancing them from their home environment. Duffell defines traditional boarding as an "attachment-deficit-environment *[where]* children find themselves in an institutional world ... run along patriarchal lines with little or bno

maternal influence [and] separation from parents may be felt by children as unnatural. Instead of growing up through a process of gradual maturation over a number of years, children are forced to grow up too quickly, to put away childish ways and become adults before their time. Instead of having a secure base of good attachments, boarders tend to grow up emotionally and relationally detached. Children compensate by developing an internal refuge: the Strategic Survival Personality, to which they transfer their attachment and reliance. [Ex-boarders] often seem to show signs of a child inside of them who has been frozen in time and never organically grown up and who tends to dominate some of their behaviours, especially in intimate relationships.” (Duffell & Basset, 2016, p. 25).

Adolescence is increasingly recognized as the second major developmental window of opportunity and jeopardy, second only to early childhood. A period of such dramatic biological, cognitive, and social change, it is perhaps no wonder adolescence is linked to the onset of many problems including depression, eating disorders, substance misuse, risky behaviours and academic difficulties (Moretti & Peled, 2004). Some researchers contend that parental influence makes little impact on youngsters during this time, highlighting instead the importance of peers (Harris, 1995). Others point to growing evidence that caregivers can make significant differences for young people through existing attachment

bonds (Moretti & Holland, 2003; Andretta, Morgan, Wells *et al.*, 2020).

I may have moved home many times before this, but, after being sent to board, I developed what I would describe as complicated homesickness (see ‘complicated grief’ e.g. Stroebe, Schut & van den Bout, 2013). Homesickness was, and still is for me, an all-encompassing experience involving mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual elements of loss, disorientation, and yearning. I still get homesick when I go away on holiday or on business, even only for one night. Whilst I enjoy seeing new places, I get physically nauseous at the sight of a suitcase. I feel a wrench leaving, arriving, and leaving again, and will often bid ‘Goodbye’ to rooms, like they are actual people, much to my children’s amusement.

Whilst the early literature on homesickness focussed on analysing and preventing it according to measurable correlates and components (e.g. Fisher, 1989; Archer, Ireland, Amos *et al.*, 1999), my visceral experience was of a raw, unprocessed grief at having lost something so irreplaceable. Despite their ostensibly privileged status, boarders (and others) can still suffer from the privations of unfulfilled basic human needs such as bodily contact with familiar people and ordinary, loving family interactions and can thus be “*emotionally wounded (traumatised), exiled (homeless) and bereaved (grieving)...*The gaze, the touch, familiar smells, food and sounds of home all

create a subliminal sense of belonging. Thus, even when home life is not ideal, being sent away to live in school is a rupture in the continuity of the life of the child.” (Schaverien, 2015, pp. 164-165). When, on rare occasions, I verbalised my anguish to the adults in charge but was told ‘it’s just homesickness’, I concluded my feelings must be trifling and childish. I looked to my peers to check whether similar issues were also etched on their faces, but they never seemed to be, further increasing my sense of isolation.

Patrick Kaye, a GP writing about his experiences in a public school (2005), observed children somatising homesickness as ailments and reporting these to the adults whose job it was to know about sickness, usually Matron. I would often go to Matron’s office seeking care or rest but was almost always turned away. My emotional wounds weren’t seen by others for what they were, so I learned to feel ashamed of them and conceal them. When adults reframed my sickness as ‘feeling muddled’, I took this to mean I was slow or was misbehaving, a common ‘splitting’ experience among boarders (Duffell & Basset, 2016). In this way, I, like many other boarders, ended up ‘lost for words’ having learned to mistrust and dissociate from my feelings (Schaverien, 2011). I did this for years until another loss - the death of a friend - shook me free from my numb prison. Like a natural form of electro-convulsive therapy, the shock of his death seemed to enable my cerebral hemispheres to link up and to think and feel in

unison for the first time in a decade. At last, I found the words.

Part 10. In Transit, 1990, aged 14

Plucky damsel
On a platform
Recalls dawn splitting
Sky wide open
Through portholes
Heartsick
Hiding it
Trying not to think:
I was on the other side
Of the world
Just twelve hours ago.
Heaving luggage
A crowded compartment
Collecting herself
A seasoned traveller
In the cab
With put-on airs
Of savoir-faire
Precociously older
Than her fourteen years
She reapplies her lipstick.

Reflection: No non-place like home

Familiar, yet foreign, Marc Augé's 'Non-Place' (1995) describes a place of transience and anonymity too insignificant to be experienced as somewhere in its own right: "[If] a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned

with identity will be a non-place” (pp. 77 – 78). As Gertrude Stein put it, “There is no *there*, there.” (Stein, 1937). The succession of bus stops, stations, and airport lounges I travelled through in order to go home eventually all blurred into one.

People who don’t belong within standardised social categories or who travel cross-culturally at young ages can struggle finding a culture where they feel implicitly understood, something known as cultural homelessness (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). There can be positive consequences of this experience, like adaptability and social competency, but also negative ones like always feeling alone in one’s differences and befuddled by the requirements of cultural ‘codeswitching’ (Navarette & Jenkins, 2011). Culturally homeless people often yearn to return home without knowing exactly where that is (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2010). In my experience, cultural homelessness occurs on micro levels as well as across international borders. When I moved from one school to another, even short distances away, I experienced a lack of belonging in both places because I was new and therefore different. Full-time boarders, furthermore, can experience essential homelessness because they spend much of the year in an institution (Schaverien, 2015).

In the poem ‘The In-Between’, I see myself aspiring to be an global nomad moving through, rather than settling in, places and precociously attempting to pass as something I was not. I used

to imagine I was the leading lady in a drama my parents were watching from afar. Yet, when I visited them, I stayed in a guest bedroom, increasingly feeling like a passing visitor to a child-free couple. None of my belongings were kept in any of their houses, and I felt ashamed about this inferring, I think, that I didn't *belong with them*.

If Utopia is somewhere where everything is good and dystopia is somewhere everything is bad, then heterotopia is somewhere where things are simply different or “*a collection whose members have few or no intelligible connections with one another*” (Mead, 1995, p. 13). Many of the roles I played in different places felt highly ambiguous and precarious, compelling me to develop heterotopic selves (Klein, 2022) within various geographical and relational spaces which have, at times, possessed both utopian and dystopian qualities but which were generally always experienced as Other.

I once asked my mother if I could have the same room when I next visited but was told it ‘wasn't practical’. Not having a conserved space seemed to contribute to my ongoing sense of being unheld by them in mind and place, compounded by the time a friend stayed and asked (whilst gazing around our shared guestroom): “Ellie, where do your parents keep your *things*?”

Non-place is a place where someone can feel anonymous and lonely (Augé, 1995). In my

experience, even home can be non-place because anonymity can happen there too.

Self-Interview III

E: "When I was fifteen, I wangled living on my own in the flat in Brighton so I didn't have to board anymore. I became a day girl. Anything to get away. Still, it's funny to think about that now because, basically, I was living on my own. I had a whole slew of flatmates I used to find on post-grad noticeboards."

L: "You were fifteen, and they were postgrads?"

E: "Yes. I was their landlady! [*Laughs*]. But that flat, it meant *everything* to me. It was my home. In fact, I still dream about it most nights."

L: "What's the feeling in those dreams?"

E: "Just love and pain and... the walls, stairs, rooms, the kitchen especially... they all represented something powerful for me..."

L: "What was that?"

E: "I don't know. 'Mother' maybe?"

L: "Ah."

E: "I think because she bought the flat, and I always went back to it whenever I could. All her things, her jugs and bowls, the ones she didn't want, she left there. I got very attached to them... I lived in dread they'd sell the flat and I'd have to leave. Sometimes, she'd call on the payphone and say: 'It's time,' and I'd feel like my life was ending. But in my dreams, the flat's always derelict or belongs to someone else..."

L: "So even when you were living there, there was always a threat of your home being taken away?"

E: "Yes. So, although I was safe, I was also..."

E & L: "Never safe."

L: "I don't know why, but it reminds me a bit of Harlow's monkeys."

E: "Yes. 'Cloth mother'. That's exactly how it was."

Part 11. Snapshot: Living room, 1993, aged 17

[A rectangular photo, 4x6 inch, colour, shows a woman in her 50s opening a tub of margarine. It is Eleanor's old flat in Brighton. Green leaves are visible on the treetops outside. There are tins of paint on the floor. The wall has been scraped back, revealing old paint underneath. There are bowls and jugs on top of the kitchen cabinets. There is lunch, set for two: bread, cheese, and apples. The carpet is crumpled and thinning. Two bright patches of sunlight fall through the gaps of a venetian blind. The woman looks wistfully off to one side.]

Renovation

There you are, looking downcast towards the table set for two. The open window lets in a cool summer breeze, rustling the treetops. We can hear seagulls placating their chicks in the chimneys above. Soon, they will be pushed out to waddle, bleating and confused, along littered city streets far below.

Fumbling with a yellow tub, you stare at the table, avoiding the camera's gaze. A stepladder stands between us. The wall has been scraped back by you, perhaps by us both, revealing ancient paint and plaster. The smell is of old brick and fresh paint. It smells like heartache. The picture shows renovation. It also shows upheaval, change, and loss. The flat I loved (because it reminded me of you) is excised and bare.

The modest meal set by one of us for the other, the decorators, invites me to partake but also to push the plate away, refusing. You, the beloved in my kitchen, averting her eyes, are carer, restorer, provider. The one who holds, the one who scrapes, the one who fills and paints over. You are also passing guest, painful reminder. Still, this is your house, and it is I who am the squatter, the nuisance. This was never a safe place, no matter how desperately I clung to it.

Perhaps, with such things in mind, you decided that day that we should chip away at bubbling paintwork. Thoughts of moving on probably hung in the air when you glimpsed me in the doorway and I immortalised, in a sixtieth of a second, your wandering heart on film. A walk-on part, you looked embarrassed, awkward, as if you were already somewhere else.

Part 12. Snapshot: College dorm, 1995, aged 19

[A rectangular photo, 5x8 inch, shows Eleanor with three other young people on a bed. The room is decorated with posters and photographs. There is a striped duvet on the bed and a large wall-hanging pinned to the ceiling. Books, mugs, an inflatable Bart Simpson head, ashtrays, and pint glasses are visible.]

Nest

There she is, next to the TV she bought in *Argos* with her hardship grant and the mosque alarm clock she found in a souk during the holidays. How kitsch and trendy she had thought it was. Everyone is looking happy, slightly drunk or stoned, goofy smiles on their faces. Everyone seems relaxed. Unified.

She remembers obsessing about how quickly terms were passing. She used to eke out the days by staying up late and waking early. She would always play hostess. She had drinks and snacks. People would eye her fridge, purring in the corner, and remark, “Jeez, this place is just like home.” She had a toaster, sandwich maker, and microwave. She had wine glasses, shot glasses, tankards, and highballs. She had rugs and blankets in case anyone got cold.

But her friends would always change towards the end of term, their dawning, misty expressions somehow conveying an end was approaching. Posters would be taken down, plans condensed into one final drink or hurriedly written paper. Conversations dried up. Jokes that might once have brought howling laughter would become suddenly passé. There were queues for payphones arranging pick-up times or tickets. Gradually, everyone pulled away.

She did her best to avoid people’s parents when they came: silvery-haired, Arran-jumpered, pleasantly proud-as-punch people who piled out of *Audis* and *Volvos* to embrace their children before trudging up staircases to carry down books, bedding, and carefully disguised bongos. It was horrifying to watch her friends regress to a time before she knew them. She felt wounded and jealous watching them leave and sit in pride of place, parents glowing, taking them home where they belonged. After they went, she would slink back to her bedroom, listening in vain for the *drum & bass* vibrations which would ordinarily hammer xz her ceiling but which, by then, was eerily silent.

She called her college rooms 'home' and arranged to keep her belongings there during the holidays. She didn't have anywhere specific to stay. When she did leave, it was important to her to know her room would remain intact. A little warm bubble alongside other identical, cold and empty, chambers. She often fantasised somebody would let themselves in whilst she was away, checking her room's suitability for a conference delegate, perhaps. 'Oh,' he or she would think or, even better, say out loud, '*This room must belong to someone else.*' Eleanor would leave things out to cement this impression in potential interlopers' minds: a brimming ashtray, piles of unwashed crockery, some period-stained pants, browned and dry, dangling off a radiator. *Get out!* these guardian items would scream.

She stayed long after most of the others had gone, as long as she could bear. The buildings felt different then, swinging doors' swooshes superfluous along the unrushed lengths of corridor. Nowhere to hurry to, no one in the bar, the hallways miraculously cleared of their usual comforting, blue tobacco haze blanket.

Self-interview IV

E: "I created little nests everywhere I went, always trying to put my mark on places. I stencilled a fireplace in one boyfriend's house once, just to sort of go: 'I was here'. I had boxes of belongings I used to cart around everywhere. I was oddly proud of that. I think it made me feel grown up. Creating little pop-up homes everywhere I went. Probably exploring being a grown up..."

L: "And that's what grown-ups did?"

E: "And *that's* what grown-ups did."

L: "They moved."

E: "They moved."

Reflection: Dislocated and misplaced

Walls, stairs, jugs, bowls, glasses, and boxes of belongings were all things I clung to because they were, at least, there. In a wonderful moment

during my self-interview, my interviewer responded with an image, “Harlow’s monkeys”, to describe this painful, loving clinging. Harry Harlow and colleagues’ (1958) seminal, yet disturbing, research on early dependency processes in primates demonstrated caregiving and companionship as being essential for physical, social, and psychological development. In the experiments, monkeys were offered the choice between a food-delivering ‘wire’ mother substitute and a non-feeding ‘cloth’ mother. Contrary to scientific consensus, the baby monkeys chose to spend nearly all day with ‘cloth-mother’ because, Harlow concluded, it simply felt better. In later experiments, he placed newly weaned monkeys into a ‘pit of despair’ isolation chamber for up to two years where they had nothing to attach to, real or otherwise. Needless to say they emerged intensely and irreparably damaged, or didn’t survive at all. My interviewer had no way of knowing, but it was after reading about Harlow’s monkeys that I decided to train as a psychologist, a powerful example, perhaps, of a right-brained ‘now moment’ (Stern, 2004). My interviewer was correct, I did always worry my safe place was about to be taken away. In the later piece, ‘Renovation’, cloth mother seems to make a reappearance in the line: *“This was never a safe place, no matter how desperately I clung to it.”*

Research interest in the combined effects of separations from caregivers and residential mobility grew from earlier research looking at

how the loss of a parent, through death or divorce, affected children's wellbeing (e.g. Adam, Bouckoms & Steiner, 1982). Prior research has, until recently, focussed on the impact of changes in young people's contact with their fathers whilst rarely acknowledging how many people experience major separations from their mothers when moving home. Adam and Chase-Lansdale (2002) found, within their sample of adolescent girls, that when the number of separations from parental figures increased, so too did the number of psychological problems with correlations holding true for shorter and longer-term separations across all age groups regardless of demographics, environment, or quality of parent-child attachment. Attachment theory suggests that children's sense of felt security is based on internalised perceptions of caregivers' emotional and physical availability (Bowlby, 1969). Whilst negative consequences may most readily be seen during the first two years of life, attachment-related problems can occur at any point throughout childhood and adolescence. When a child's internalised sense of security is disrupted by separation, negative emotional states can result (Kobak, 1999). The violation of trust for a young person whose caregivers either frequently or permanently leave can have implications for how she perceives others as well as herself (Adam, 2004). One of Schaverien's ex-boarder clients describes his sense of betrayal and dread whenever his mother returned him to school whereby the only meaning he could make of being sent away was that he'd been bad: "*Theo*

described the separation from his mother, the moment of parting and his incredulity as he watched her leave the station platform. He could not believe that she was just getting on with her life. He knew the routine: she would go for a coffee with the neighbour and then carry on washing clothes, cleaning the house, doing all the normal things...[Theo explained] 'I had to stop thinking about it, it was impossible; it ripped your mind apart'" (Schaverien, 2015, p. 90). Such traumatic separations can be difficult to recover from. I, too, couldn't comprehend how or why my parents kept putting me onto planes, trains, and automobiles to travel back to various places alone. My distress, again, felt disenfranchised. Perhaps, due to misconceptions around 'privilege' and 'neglect', I was actively discouraged from mourning the loss of family and home. A disrupted grieving process was shunted off into my unconscious where it still dwells producing, amongst other things, nightmares about my old flat in Brighton.

Since childhood, I have always experienced certain rooms and objects as imbued with special meanings. Pictures and photographs were precious and they would accompany me in my travelling boxes. I selected two of these, both dog-eared, for the snapshot pieces above. Niemyjska (2019) wonders: 'When do keepsakes keep us together?' surmising that, when separated from loved ones, we find solace by directing our attachments to inanimate objects reminding us of

them instead with some people sensing their loved one remains present *in* these objects.

Part 13. Bedsit: London, 1999, aged 23

After university, Arnold Street was sold, and she had to move out. At the same time, her hair began to fall out. Taking the first grown-up job on offer, she moved, haphazardly, into a bedsit above Tooting Bec station and donned the mask of 'young professional'. She feigned office work in Green Park whilst, at home, descending into depression and substance abuse.

Eventually, she took out an overdraft and spent it on a consultation at a hair-loss clinic - a savage and shame-inducing experience. The woman had informed her that her condition wasn't entirely treatable. She left clutching expensive products, feeling like a failure. The problem, they had said, was her roots.

Self-interview V

L: "How do you feel family culture, like family stories or lore, relates to your experiences of home?"

E: "I suppose the cultural norm growing up was that there was no such physical thing as a permanent home, but there was a psychological thing. Home was where family was... But soon after I was born, my family started to drift apart. My sister left when I was 4 and my brother went to boarding school shortly thereafter. And we moved a lot... So, the family lore was, I suppose, 'Our family is different. We have a different relationship with home to most people. In fact, we almost slightly look down on those who stay put'... sort of like: 'Well, that's alright for *them*, but *some* of us would prefer a more interesting life,' you know? We were told, 'It's good to move, it's progressive. You'll have broader horizons, a better education.' And I lived that. It made me feel better about leaving everything behind. But then, in London, when I was so...lost.... And after [H] was killed, I think then, for lots of reasons, something just fundamentally changed. The story became: 'I need to find somewhere, even just inside myself, to stay.'

Part 14. West Pier, Brighton, 2019, Fieldwork dictation

"I think that's why I eventually came back here, ten years later... to come home. Somewhere where the names on the map were familiar: Lewes, Piddinghoe, Seaford... Little pins of 'known'. I wanted to heal, to repair some wound from years ago. To show them I could belong somewhere... as if saying: 'You left this place, but I can be here'. An elaborate revenge! Still, I'm not sure that worked out because it all still feels so painful."

Part 15. Pick-up time, 2006-2020

lip-sticked
buttoned-up
effortfully dressed-down
wistful glance
and frown
conveys
her nonchalance
there they are
embracing
guffawing
eyebrows raised
mouths agape
clucking
kissing
telling
retelling
each other's lives
meaning making
validating
going back
way back when
through time
together
gored by shame
she shuffles past
lifeless handset to her ear
mirroring nods
and pursed lips
at the end of the lane
she waits
too far away to be lonely

for signs of life
emerging
ruck-sacked
through the gates

Reflection: A solitary figure

The rootlessness I felt in my teens and early twenties eased after living briefly in a Buddhist centre in Brighton after my friend died and, later, after meeting my husband and having our first child. At last, I felt I belonged as an integral part of a family unit. Nevertheless, as a family, we still moved often. Stuck in various places, again without friends or family nearby, my husband working long days in London, new levels of loneliness descended. I struggled to connect with other mums nearby. It felt like most of them already had well-established connections and I sensed that, as a newcomer, I was surplus to requirements and so defensively projected an otherness that made it hard for people to get to know me. Research shows that stressed families with emotional and social-relational problems are those who move house most often, in turn making them less likely to invest in social networks (Appleby & Desai, 1987; Kirby & Kaneda, 2006; Oishi, Rothman, Snyder *et al.*, 2007). School pick-up times always triggered extreme feelings of dislocation which, on other occasions, I might have managed to ignore. I would wait for my children at a distance where being out of place would hopefully draw least attention.

There may well be long-term consequences for people who move often. Looking longitudinally across 30 years, Lin and colleagues (2012) saw marked increases for frequent movers across a broad range of midlife problems including fatigue, irritability and depression. Whilst psychological and physical outcomes of displacement have been examined by some, there have been few studies exploring more symbolic impacts of living without a place called home. Looking at the experiences of internally dislocated people in Colombia, Murcia (2019) suggested that, for them, home involves a tension between ‘here’, ‘there’, and ‘nowhere’ with many of her participants feeling trapped in a liminal space of emotional and existential homelessness searching for a *sense*, rather than a *place*, called home. For a displaced person, home might be no more than an idea or memory (Taylor, 2013) or a mythic place of desire (Brah, 1996). One thing seems certain, home involves emotions, be these the presence or absence thereof (Somerville, 1997; Mallett, 2004) because home ‘intrudes’ upon the self through the senses, defining what we smell, hear, touch, feel and remember (Brah, 1996). When my training institute announced we were moving buildings towards the end of my doctoral studies, a significant part of me, irrationally, felt like I was being ripped away from my mother’s womb. I wept and snarled about this every month when we met as a group in the new room, shocking myself (and my colleagues, I suspect) with the sheer depth of feeling this enforced move evoked.

I have felt rootless for so long. Sometimes, I think I might never really know what it's like to truly *belong* somewhere, and this thought makes me feel lonely. Loneliness, we are told, can be harmful, leading to adverse health outcomes (Holt-Lunstad., 2017). Nearly a third of new mothers are lonely (Lee, Vasileiou & Barnett, 2019) perhaps because having a child can disrupt existing relationships, outer and inner, and new mothers are particularly vulnerable when they are residentially mobile (Tunstall, Pickett & Johnsen, 2010). As a new mother and a newcomer (we lived in four different houses before my eldest child was 6) I felt sure nobody would want to make friends with me. I closed my mind and body off to others, remaining at a distance. The usual pattern of movement, isolation, and frustration was, thus, perpetuated.

Part 16. The Beacon, 2009

Ancient seaside village
Nestling in the
Narrow gap
Between Downs
And Channel
Up on Beacon Hill
Past the Windmill
Burrowing her boots
Into soft, earthen mounds
(Long Barrows)
With theatrical solemnity
Circumambulating
The atavistic burial chambers
She imagines
The eyes and minds
Of all of those

Who shared this view
Gazing downwards
Due East
Her senses pick out
Home
There
Near the bottom
Smoke curling
From its chimney
In the colder months

Part 17. The House, 2019

Crovie House is alive with the fluxes of family life. Miraculously transforming alongside its inhabitants, its rooms shift their colours and contents, reflecting the family's changing needs. Walls, painted and repainted over a decade, seem to grow and shrink according to what is required of them. One moment, there are three floors of Victorian terrace, tall and wide enough to contain each person in isolation. Another moment, the house contracts itself into one room where they all sit cramped together, eyes glued to a single light source.

Whenever she is there alone overnight, Eleanor makes her bedtime transition from downstairs to upstairs as swiftly and mindlessly as possible. She never stops to collect odd socks, nor does she venture to the top floor and her children's empty bedrooms. A superstitious voice seems to caution her not to call such realms back into being until they have returned. Almost as if whilst they are not here, she is not really, either.

Part 18. Church coffee morning, October 2019

Mother and child stand together at a trestle table in a darkened room whilst, outside, the rain comes down even harder.

"We're raising money for the PTA", Eleanor announces brightly towards the first few bedraggled parishioners walking through the door. No one smiles. *They're wondering who we are*, she thinks. *They know we don't belong*. She senses their judgement: an unknown, shameless flogger of two-day-old cakes.

She shouldn't be here, she decides. One of them reminds her of her mother-in-law. Her keen, blue eyes seem to take in Eleanor's wild hair, baggy leggings, and off-key smile, finding her lacking.

The curate enters. Recognising Eleanor's daughter from school, she comes over to say hello. Eleanor thanks her for letting them recoup their losses from the disastrous school bake sale. They chat about the other vicar, away on holiday, and Eleanor makes a joke about him sitting on a beach with his cassock and sunglasses on. She isn't sure why she finds this so funny, but Mother Rachel generously laughs along.

They have a few takers. Someone else comes up and puts £5 in their kitty. A man whose children went to the school twenty years ago stops to chat. Another man, a volunteer, confides he comes here every Sunday before he visits the hospice in memory of his wife whom he lost eight years ago to cancer. She went blind from in the end, he explained, and he cared for her until she died. She'd never actually made it to the hospice. Slowly, Eleanor begins to feel slightly less pointless. She glances around, noticing for the first time how everyone is in their seventh or eighth decade of life. All except her, her daughter, and the curate who occasionally looks over eagerly towards their trestle table. Sadly, she can't eat their cakes. She is gluten-free.

Part 19. Remembrance Sunday, November 2019

Ever since the coffee morning and for reasons she didn't understand, Eleanor had started attending the odd church service. She was finding this Remembrance Day ceremony, with its solemn tone, poppies, and crowd-pleasing hymns, unusually moving. Her daughter kept looking across, squeezing her arm – *Mummy, are you ok?* Teary-eyed, Eleanor nodded before turning away to scrutinise the scorch marks on a pillar, evidence of an ancient blaze set by invading French pirates. They looked fresh, like they'd been made yesterday by a careless altar boy and a candelabra.

Somewhat predictably, the sermon was about suffering, death, and rebirth. Without knowing why, her tears kept coming. *Maybe I'm here to get something out*, she thought. *Or to get something in?* She realised she needed to feel touched, even if it hurt. She peered around at the congregation, wondering if anyone else was there for

the same reason. Yes, she realised. *Everybody's here today to remember and to be 're-membered'. Put back together again.* She knew, then, why she had been coming. It was to connect with other people, with ritual and with belief. She prayed silently.

Outside, in the sunshine, villagers gathered by the memorial. Eleanor had never been there before on that day. Somehow, she had always been too busy. Her other children joined them and, together, they watched people come forward to lay wreaths: a police officer, the Scouts leader, two schoolchildren. With each, a bell cast from old shell casings rang out. Servicemen and women, past and present, stood to attention, splendid in pressed uniforms and polished boots. Some looked on sternly, others proudly. A few, resting on canes or in wheelchairs, gazed, misty-eyed past the crowd as if searching for something or someone.

Words were spoken. Remembrance. Togetherness. Children were told that, one day, they would be the custodians of these traditions. Eleanor noticed her youngest listening very carefully. Suddenly, they seemed to be very much *of this place*. 'We enabled this for them', she thought. Like tiny pillars of the community, they were holding it up with their shared intentions, marking the silence, and the noise, of life together.

Part 20. Next door

The back gate creaked. It was Eleanor's elderly neighbour, Margaret, popping over for coffee, an invitation prompted, in part, by something that happened in eucharist the previous week. Eleanor couldn't recall exactly what this had been, but, ever since, she had been encountering people from the village a lot more than usual.

She took Margaret's arm and guided her over the uneven paving stones. They chatted on the sofa about village life. Eleanor found herself telling her about her youngest child, recently diagnosed with depression. Words tumbled out. She wasn't sure why. Margaret listened carefully and Eleanor sensed she could trust her, and that this precious information would be received with compassion and understanding.

Margaret took another sip of coffee. She told Eleanor that, several years ago, her son had taken his own life, but that she didn't talk about it much, she said. Suddenly, they weren't just neighbours, they were mothers relating to each other across time about the deepest of maternal pains. A connection formed. It took courage, on both their parts, and a willingness to be met.

Later, after taking Margaret home, Eleanor returned to her living room. It looked the same as before, but something felt different. It was almost as though the gap between her body and the room had become smaller, or like some disparate pieces of herself had begun slowly knitting themselves back together. Her story-making was changing things, she realised. Where once she saw only boundaries, she now perceived meeting-points.

Reflection: The Radicant

In *Rootedness: The Ramifications of a Metaphor* Wampole (2016) defines the root as an archetypal image of connectedness, a “primary organising trope [accommodating] the need to feel connected to something outside the self... Across cultures and through time, the rhizome surfaces again and again as a figure for filiation, cultural connectedness, regional or national allegiance, and symbiosis with the environment.” (p. 2). Some authors believe westernised civilizations are reeling from the impact of mass rootlessness from frequent geographical relocations and the cutting of family-place ties (Keller, 1968; Buttimer, 1980; Tuan, 1980; Dovey, 1985; Feldman, 1990; Oishi, 2010). Wampole says: “In any place that has been touched by large-scale displacements...or where people have lost contact with ancestral memory; or where there is

a general sense of isolation resulting from either new social habits or technology's alienating effects; or where people feel estranged from the environment because of the human's self-extraction from it, people describe themselves as uprooted." (2016, p. 3).

A family tree is somewhere many people turn for insights about their roots. My *Ancestry* subscription is testament to this. Whilst a family tree cannot endow me with rootedness, the idea still fascinates me because, as a nomadic child of nomadic parents who, themselves, had few roots due to adoption, abandonment, and life choices, my interest in my ancestors feels proportionally greater, perhaps because I've always felt my roots were somehow threatened (Wampole, 2016). Not having the security of roots holding me in place has often made me feel decontextualised, non-situated, and abstracted.

I believe my walks up to the Beacon were prompted by such feelings. Through imagining a sense of connection with the village's Neolithic inhabitants, I restored some of the lost contact with ancestral memory Wampole mentioned. Probably because topography changes so little over time, I liked to imagine ancient people gazing across our shared landscape, out to sea. Spaces are turned into places through "the hauntings of past habitation" (Cresswell, 2004, p. 2). Likewise, the village's living inhabitants, shopkeepers and neighbours, know more of me now than anyone has anywhere before. Even if it is only a little, it is something like belonging.

In *Rising Ground: A Search for the Spirit of Place* (2015), travel writer and anthropologist Philip Marsden looks at our powerful reactions to certain places. Drawing from the work of other topophiles, he explored locations in Britain's West Country with personal, historic, and symbolic significance finding, through felt contact with them, that humans have a deep need to feel belongingness with their environment. Drawing on Heidegger's (1971) influential essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking', Marsden expands what it means to truly dwell – to 'be' – in a place inasmuch as the manner in which we dwell corresponds to the way in which we *are* and how we exist on earth. Being at home is thus an extension of our identity. I see something of this in my description of Crovie House and how it seems to attune to my family's needs, growing and shrinking in size, sometimes even whispering to me. Crovie House is a spiritual, domestic, and topographic amalgamation where, as Heidegger suggests: "*the self-sufficiency of the power to let earth and heaven, divinities and mortals, enter in simple oneness with things, ordered the house*" (1971, p. 157). As an uprooted and dislocated person, I am still learning how to dwell.

Spirit of place, stemming from the Latin term *genius loci*, originally referred to a location's guardian spirit (Lewis, 1979). The village church, to my surprise, held a particular spirit of place, unexpectedly bestowing me with understanding about the personal importance of ritual, numinosity, community, and collective meaning-

making with the congregation, itself, somehow representing both family and home. It was a shift which enabled me to ‘see’ my elderly neighbour for the first time, later perceiving the spaces inside Crovie House as meeting points for mind-body-place-other. There is a coming-together quality to these five pieces I didn’t anticipate whilst writing but which, of course, now seems rather obvious given how this research has helped integrate my mind and body around this subject – what was known and sensed, spoken and unspoken (e.g. Schore, 2015; Siegel, 2011; Amore, 2021).

In processing death into life, roots have a resurrectional power which can sometimes prompt thoughts of an afterlife (Wampole, 2016). I always struggled with the idea of death, something evoked at the end of ‘The House’ (p. 98) when superstitiousness prevented me calling my children’s realms back into being until they had safely returned. Perhaps, through frequently moving, I was able to mentally hold off thoughts of mortality whereas, in sinking roots, these inevitabilities feel less avoidable. The tendrils of rootedness I occasionally now experience mean I can contemplate both where I’ve come from *and* where I’m going to. I will move on again, perhaps, at some later date but, by settling, the cycle of life, death, and rebirth has become less anxiety ridden and I, in turn, feel less defensive of its reality. The root is a little bit like the unconscious mind with “its hidden and abject form resemble[ing] the unsayable aspects of the

psyche. The living botanical thing reaches for what it needs...reaching into dark recesses for what used to be alive... If people think of themselves as rooted beings, it is due to an umbilical memory of an attachment to the earth, a memory that has been severed in more ways than one.” (Wampole, 2016, p. 18).

Residential settlement, the opposite of residential mobility, fosters, for many, a sense of identity leading to beneficial outcomes, like belongingness and altruism, resulting in pro-community behaviours such as caring for others and the environment (Oishi *et al.*, 2007; Sampson, Raudenbush & Earls, 1997). A sense of community identity may be similar to place identity (e.g. Prochansky, Fabian & Kaminoff, 1983) and appears more likely to develop after living somewhere for a long time (Oishi *et al.*, 2007). Unlike in mobile communities, people in stable communities are more likely to feel emotionally connected to their neighbours (Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974; Sampson, 1991; Kang & Kwak, 2003) leading to feelings of oneness (Cialdini, Brown, Lewis *et al.*, 1997) and we-ness (Flippen, Hornstein, Siegal, *et al.*, 1996). From the Remembrance Sunday piece, I noticed how I used to distance myself from others in the village, finding excuses not to attend group events. I think I became accustomed to shuffling along in a bitter fugue of disconnection, jealously observing local life and assuming I would never be part of it, a dark part of me whispering I was not good enough for them or, worse, that they

were not good enough for me. Winnicott proposed that ‘good-enough environmental provision’ makes it possible for children to cope with the shock of losing their omnipotence (1964/2021). The village environment, the landscape and the people have, I believe, reparented me, helping me transition from a fantasy system of believing that moving on was what made me and my family of origin ‘special’ into a more realistic realm of living with the benefits (and inevitable limitations and disillusionments) of an everyday life with roots.

Part 22. Workspace

Bridge between two worlds

Crossing the frosted landscape
On the hill-top winding road
Connecting home with study
The thought:
I can do this Doctorate
Arrived on the same bend as:
I can do this Masters
Ten years ago
Some form of accordance
In matter, time, and space
Meant she knew this road
And saw where it would lead
No need to change
Or relocate
This place
And she
Endure together

Unfocussing her eyes
Surrendering, bedazzled,
To the brilliant Winter sun.

A new therapy home

Changes were afoot and she needed to find another consulting room, quickly. Trawling the small ads, all her moving hang-ups were being triggered and now she was also worrying about her clients. How would they feel? Would therapy feel the same somewhere else? Might some of them even leave?

With all this percolating, she visited a room being rented out by a reiki healer. The staircase smelled of geranium. The room was clean, slightly shabby, but inviting. Eleanor leant back on a squashy recliner and the healer sat on another, opposite. The chairs rocked backwards in unison and they both laughed. The healer was looking for someone to help with the rent. Eleanor was looking for somewhere she could belong with her clients. The room has good energies but wasn't quite right, so she kept on looking.

The next place was shown to her by an unpleasant man running a high-footfall room-rental business. The waiting room – three chairs in a corridor – was so confined that clients risked tripping each other up. Changeovers were military precise. Every hour, on the hour, seven doors opened and closed and people hurriedly moved back and forth. To Eleanor, such enforced interaction felt impinging. The therapy hour, furthermore, didn't seem like the time to form an awkward toilet queue before gathering oneself to return to the outside world. The whole thing felt like a boundary violation, the therapeutic equivalent, perhaps, of a *Regus* office, somewhere with everything technically required but missing something important: a heart.

Later in the week, rather despondently, she viewed some other rooms on a main road in the less well-to-do end of Hove. From the outside, they felt unwelcoming. She imagined her clients standing on the dingy-looking doorstep. No, she thought, they didn't like it here either. Wearily, she rang the bell, contemplating spending more on a room, more time getting to it, and a generally negative impact of the move all round.

Once inside, though, her mood abruptly changed. The hallway had a lived-in feel, spacious and quiet, its floorboards and rugs were reminiscent of her old Buddhist centre. Another therapist, she learned, regularly ‘cleansed the energies’ there which was oddly palpable in the building’s curious clarity: fresh, yet worn in. The chairs, none too soft nor too hard, seemed to invite her to sit in one, her client in another. Without doing so, as she had elsewhere, she knew she could, and it would be alright. She would find the right things to say and feel comfortable in silence. The rooms would let her be herself and simultaneously hold the client’s interests in mind. The spaces had certain, less measurable, qualities too... like energetic resonance, acoustic timbre, and intuitively felt ‘warmth’. Guided by her unconscious mind, she noticed tell-tale signs walking round: a soft feeling here, a small flutter there, a definite ‘no’ from her solar plexus to the attic. The east-facing room on the ground floor, she suspected, would have been her favourite. Unfortunately, though, that day it was already in use.

Dream move

Eventually, she found a large, sunny room in a smart building on a quiet, tree-lined street and she signed the lease immediately. She hammered up pictures, screwed together furniture, gathered treasured items: a lump of rose quartz for compassion, a hunk of fossilised wood her father had given her, and the same *White Company* room spray she’d used before, hoping to create a sense of familiarity when her clients first walked in.

Despite her relief and excitement, her mind was uneasy. *Who will we be together, somewhere else?* she wondered. She knew her concerns about imposing a move were probably echoes of her childhood experiences, but would her new location, decoration, and designation be too much for clients to absorb in one go?

Is there enough furniture? she worried. *Will it fit? Is it too big? Too small? Is it too new? Too personal? Too clinical? Too ‘Ikea’?* She paced the room’s length from end to end, trying to gauge if it felt therapeutic enough. She opened the door. Would her neighbours be a problem? Maybe she should go around the building, introducing herself? But that could come across as overly friendly or, worse still, needy. She wondered how safe she would feel there late at night. Would this place protect her?

The night before her first day, she had a dream. In it, she was tidying a wooden cupboard in her new office when a leak suddenly sprung from inside it. She grabbed a towel. Then, another leak sprung from somewhere else. She urgently needed help but, as so often in these kinds of dreams, her phone wasn't working, and the water was pooling fast. Frantically, she tried to stem the flood whilst rummaging through drawers, of which there were hundreds. Dozens of items started tumbling out: blankets, glasses, frozen ready-meals, T-shirts - all over the floor, against the door – cardboard boxes, trinkets, children's drawings. Just then, the doorbell rang. Her first client had arrived. She knew she couldn't contain his anxieties or projections with herself on show like this. As the dream ended, she was on hands and knees, shovelling things under furniture, trying in vain to conceal her belongings, disorder, and mess.

Dead space

"How was your first day?" he asked.

She thought for a moment. "I didn't know who I was," she replied.

"Why?"

"I don't know myself there yet. Or us. It's weird."

"But you know you're the therapist and they're the client," he said. "You're not different people, you're just somewhere else. Nothing's changed."

Eleanor leaned against the oven, sighing.

"Yes, you're right. But the thing is...." She searched for an example. "It's like Winnicott, you know? '*There's no such thing as a baby?*'"

Her husband looked blank.

"Well," she went on, "It's kind of like that. Except there's no such thing as a therapist, either. The room's always part of it, holding us, containing us. Familiar, known. We'd all grown into the old room. Around its edges. Into its corners."

"Mh-hm."

"It was *ours*, you know? Part of how we knew each other, and part of how I knew myself. And now... We've got to get to know each other all over again. Somewhere else."

"Still... it looks really good what you've done with the place."

"Thanks... No vibrations, though. None at all. Just a dead space."

"Dead?"

"Well, not dead exactly, just...neutral. It's only ever been used for meetings. It's got no energies yet. The walls in the other room had 15 years of therapy *embedded* into them." She sighed again. "It seemed to invite the work because it already existed there in some way. It made me feel I knew who I was, and that I could do this."

Her husband reached for her hand.

"And now I need to start all over again," she said. "And that's going to take time."

Reflection: A healing space

There has long been interest in how we create and ascribe meanings to places (Maslow & Mintz, 1956; Ulrich, 1984; Lei, 2010, Blank & Rosen-Zvi, 2012). Clients encounter therapists in spaces inside which healing narratives are formed (Kehoe, Hassen & Sandage, 2016). As with transitional objects (Winnicott, 1969, 1974) transitional spaces, characterised by boundaries and phantasies, facilitate the mutually creative space of psychotherapy (BenEzer, 2012). Therapy rooms can invite and support openness, vulnerability, shared emotional experience and self-understanding (Frank & Frank, 1993; Punzi & Singer, 2018; Jackson, 2018). A safe therapy space has subjective, emotional, and practical elements (Sinclair, 2021) with virtual therapy spaces perhaps providing similar functions (Shklarski, Abrams, & Bakst, 2021). Evidence suggests that, alongside comfort and safety, clients prefer rooms without a clinical feel that are aesthetically welcoming, perhaps because this implicitly communicates to them that they are

valued (Punzi & Singer, 2018; Finlay & Hewitt Evans, 2022).

When transitional or spatial boundaries are altered or broken, the reactions of client and therapist are often ripe for therapeutic understanding (Borys, 1994). Nevertheless, psychodynamically-oriented therapists tend to emphasise the need for a calm and, preferably, personal consulting room (Bondi & Fewell, 2003; Price & Paley, 2008). Perhaps with such thoughts in mind, I fretted about how the move and the new room would be experienced by clients. Much like Goldilocks, I wanted something just right. My hopes for it to be sufficiently homely without being too impinging seemed valid because my experience told me that, when therapy comes to an end, the room itself can be internalised as a safe base in the same way as the therapist, ready to be recollected and drawn upon as somewhere to mentally ‘go’ when needed.

My dream of the flood and the cupboard drawers exploding over the floor appears to mirror my anxieties about myself as both therapist and ‘person’ i.e. ‘is it/am I too much or not enough’? I have had recurring dreams about frantically packing and unpacking for many years. At the time, I interpreted this dream as indicating I was unconsciously transferring my own unresolved moving trauma onto this office move. A long-lost character also popped up, the little pine cupboard I lost years ago. Perhaps it finally came back to me after all, symbolising, maybe, a ‘world within

a world'. This time, though, it was my world of the professional within the personal, raising the ever-present question for me as to how separate my home and work identities ever could, or should, be.

Part 23. Transforming spaces

'My family were nomads'

And then, the hard part.

Eleanor awoke with a long, jagged intake of breath. Another dream. Not about her old flat or new room this time, but about her parents, far away. Years later, this separation still hurt. They had always moved. It was what they did. Shortly after her older sister was born, her father had taken a job in Tehran. It was 1966. In the 56 years since, her parents had lived in dozens of places, yet their decision never to settle still mystified her.

She rang their house in France, and, towards the end of their conversation, Eleanor asked her mother whether she knew why they had moved so often.

"I don't know," her mother replied, somewhat warily. "In your research, couldn't you just say, 'My family were nomads' and leave it at that?"

Eleanor let that land.

"Yes," she replied. "I suppose I could."

Their conversation ran its course but, afterwards, she experienced a familiar dissonant tug. Deep down, she knew she was writing about something her parents wished she would leave alone. As usual, this left her feeling silly and wrong, wondering what the point was, and who cared, anyway.

Later, pushing a trolley around, Carolyn Ellis' words '*Do no harm*' looped around in her head. Perhaps she should write her story in a cleaner way, washed free of pain and anger? Or she could still write it vulnerably, but have it published anonymously? Or maybe she could tell a different story, a good one, mind, but one that wasn't completely

'her'? There's no such thing as ultimate truth anyway, she thought, so who's to say which stories are closer to reality?

But, of course, none of these would be true *for her*. Thinking it through, this process mimicked a classic double-bind: If her parents, the people she most loved and trusted, were wrong to constantly uproot her, then something must be wrong with them and her whole family. On the other hand, if this moving life really was as exciting and advantageous as they claimed, yet she still felt bad, then something must clearly be wrong with *her*. It had taken a lot of time and therapy to start believing she wasn't entirely bad, mad, ungrateful, and unlovable. But, during that phone call, she was right back there, thinking not only was she wrong, but her research was, too.

She had tried hard so far, deciding what to write and what to include. Trying to remain involved yet objective, well-intentioned yet honest. Mindful of self, respectful of other. But she often found herself struggling to define the driving forces behind her project, wondering if others would be satisfied with it. In editing out so much of her experience to 'take care', was she doing others a kindness? Herself a kindness? Could she be sure she was acting ethically towards anyone at all?

5am

She lay in the dark, re-living the conversation with her mother. Something didn't feel right. Downstairs, waiting for the kettle to boil, she began to wonder whether her parents felt apprehensive about her research because, in unearthing the family's historical tendency to move, it might also dislodge something about their psychological process. If Eleanor had always struggled wrapping her head around this, so, too conceivably, might they. Her mother, in particular, might be anticipating feeling exposed through her writing, perhaps to an implication of some form of primal wound or 'basic fault'.

Later, her mother rang again and asked how everything was going. Somewhat hesitantly, Eleanor asked if she could check dates for her chronology.

'I'm wondering, er, if I've got this right. So, you were *here* in 1993 and... if I remember correctly, I think you were *there* in 1994?'

Her mother was also perplexed. It took a while, with mutual encouragement, to recall times and places. Her mother then reminisced for a while about a particularly exciting period when they moved to a fixer-upper in the South of France with two new puppies in tow. Whilst she was talking, Eleanor noticed the familiar pull to concur with her mother's captivating version of events. But life had felt very different for Eleanor who, at that time, was living alone in Arnold Street and putting herself through her GCSEs. Her parents' lives had always existed at some considerable distance from her own, but the difficulty of this had, up until now, felt disqualified due to the grand enthusiasm surrounding her parents' successive new ventures.

"Did you move a lot as a child?" Eleanor asked.

"Absolutely," came the instant, emphatic reply.

"You did? I didn't know that."

"Oh, '*Every three years*' was the running joke. That way, your grandmother avoided unnecessary spring cleaning by moving as soon as the house got really dirty – one big clean moving in and another moving out."

They both laughed at this.

"How many times?"

"We thought probably 8 or 9," she replied, seemingly implying a number that had been arrived at together with someone else.

"So, what was that like for you, then, as a child?"

"Well, I saw there was always a reason for it," she said. "Then, when the time came, I was prepared to do it myself."

"You mean, with your own children?"

"Yes."

"What about friends and school? What was that like for you?"

"I don't know," she said. "I don't think I ever felt hugely connected to any one place. Perhaps because I had my ballet, there was a kind of continuity."

"Why do you think your parents moved so much?"

"Oh, because your grandmother caught the moving bug from a friend."

How interesting, Eleanor thought. *Perhaps moving was like a virus. Once you caught it, you had it for good.* Suddenly, her own story seemed to be extending backwards and outwards.

“And don’t forget,” her mother added, “Nana had to leave everything behind when she came over from Canada to marry. She had nothing. No family either.”

Eleanor imagined her grandmother: rootless, belongingless, scrabbling together a new life somewhere far away.

“Yes,” her mother went on, “She had tremendous strength. But of course, that’s just one side of the story. There’s also Daddy’s background... But, now I suppose when I look back on it, there was probably a pivotal decision in those early days. I think, had I said ‘No’ to moving to Tehran because I didn’t want to leave my mother, things might have been different. But I knew it was an opportunity, so I said ‘Yes’. And, given I’d grown up knowing the practicality of moving, I knew we could do it and it would be the best thing for us.”

Eleanor thought very carefully about what to say next.

“I understand you saw those moves as ‘practical’,” she said. “But, can you understand that, from other people’s perspectives, from *my* perspective, they didn’t always feel practical, they sometimes felt harmful?”

Silence followed. Eleanor held her breath.

“Yes,” her mother replied eventually. “Of course, I can.”

And, in the space of a second, everything felt back on track. They had both heard something of each other’s experiences, and that felt positive. Even so, much of the time, this process still all felt so precarious.

Self-interview VI

L: “Have you ever had a sense of feeling at home? Can you describe a time or place where you’ve experienced that?”

E: “[*Exhales*] I think... the closest I’ve got is where I am right now. We’ve been there for nearly ten years. Sometimes we’ve thought, ‘Shall we move?’ And I, *I’ve* been the one to say, ‘No,

let's stay'. I think I thought if I don't... *do* this, don't try to settle just once, I *will* end up like them. It's definitely in me to just go: 'Ah it's nicer over there, let's go and see.' But then I thought 'I'm going to try *not* moving... and see if something terrible happens.' Part of me was certain that, if I stayed, people would tire of me. They'd realise they don't really like us – well, *me*. But then I thought, 'I'm going to hang on here... Maybe these people, this place... can hold me. Maybe I'll be good enough for it.' It was huge really. I just had to risk staying."

Part 24. Spring

"I wonder what it would be like to move house?" the girl said, gazing outside, one hand propped under her chin.

"Well," her mother replied, "That might be fun, right? You could have a new bedroom. And maybe we'd have a bigger garden..."

The girl spun around. "How big? Could we have a trampoline?"

"Maybe!"

"Wow!" The girl pursed her lips. "When could we move? By summertime?"

"Whoa, hold your horses! Moving is a big deal, you know. It involves planning and organising and other things."

The girl's expression dropped.

"But mainly it has to be the right decision for *everybody*."

"But... wouldn't you *like* a bigger garden Mummy?"

"Oh, I would! Wouldn't that be lovely?"

They both beamed at each other.

"Thing is," her mother went on, "When you move, lots of things can change. Like who's next door and how far you walk to school or the shops. And other little things too. Things you can't always know about beforehand."

"Would I have to move schools?"

"Well, I don't know. Hopefully not."

"I wouldn't want to do that. Or... on second thoughts, maybe I would!"

“Mmh.”

“I mean, I like it here. This is our home and it’s by the beach and we have our friends and stuff. But I guess... sometimes I’d like to know what it’s *like* to move. To start all over.”

Part 25. Placed

The poet Hafiz had been tumbling through her mind.

His quote, how did it go again? Oh, yes, I remember.

This place where you are right now,

God circled on a map for you.

Reflection: On being placeful

Narratives are not life as lived but, rather, stories about it. Narrative inheritance refers to stories we receive about ourselves and others (Goodall, 2005). These pieces seem to highlight conflicting narrative inheritances whereby I am not only unsure which stories to tell and whether they are true, but also whether I have permission to tell them (Rath, 2012; Hudson, 2015). Quite often and quite simply, many of my inherited stories don’t add up. Family narratives that don’t align with personal experiences can taint our identity and sense of belonging within social, cultural, and political worlds (Poulos, 2009). But, as we know, identity is fluid, and can transform through the different stories we create during our interactions and within larger-scale, societal discourses (Kovarsky, Duchan & Maxwell,

2013). Implicit within all psychological research, this autoethnography being no exception, is the guiding principle to do no harm. In choosing to tell my story, I strove to remain truthful, respectful, and fair to those who were implicated. I also know that what may have begun as external actions, conversations, and events have, over time, become largely internalised, with self-generated caricatures playing out various scenes from my life at different times. My stories may not seem like monologues, nevertheless they are, of course, one person's experiences portrayed in a variety of ways.

A different perspective, a Third, perhaps (Benjamin, 2004) seems to enter the conversation during what transpired to be the rather transformative second telephone call with my mother entitled '5 am'. I had never looked for, nor been shown, an intergenerational perspective on my lifelong pattern of relocation, but suddenly, there one was. Even though this information couldn't alter my past, the conversation did change things for me. It was an all-important *present moment* (Stern, 2004). Family relationships can be the most impactful and hurtful of all relationships, yet most of us still feel the need to reach understandings with one another and, sometimes, to forgive in order that relationships can continue (Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998). In all these pieces, not just those relating directly to my parents, I was attempting 'sense-making' (Hudson, 2015). I might not quite be at the point of complete resolution around

some of these issues, but I am now in a place where I can hear alternative stories and be more open to integrating some of these within my own narrative truth.

Developing emotional ties to places is very common (Relph, 1976). Place attachment is strongly linked to community attachment (Low, 1992; Gerber, 2001) whereby, in investing emotionally somewhere, this can give us a sense of wellbeing and pride (Brown, Perkins & Brown, 2003). “The more ties there are [to a place], the stronger is the emotional bond” (Tuan 1977, p. 158) creating, over longer periods, deeper connections with friends, family, and even local services (Hummon, 1992) forming a ‘central setting’ for life (Scannell & Gifford 2010). I always knew I needed to stay longer somewhere to stand a chance of feeling placeful although I always doubted, and still do, that I would be entirely successful. In the self-interview, I said: “*But then I thought: I’m going to hang on here... Maybe these people, this place... can hold me. Maybe I’ll be good enough for it. It was huge really. I just had to risk staying*” (p. 116). For me, it felt dangerous to stay because people would then discover who I really was. The unspoken questions: ‘Am I *enough* to stay here?’ and ‘Do I deserve somewhere *for good?*’ lingered in every interaction. Interestingly, my children now want to experience moving, understandably, since Crovie House is the only home most of them remember. Very gradually, I reached a place of greater

security around this ‘risking staying’ question where I demonstrated, mainly to myself, that I can, indeed, remain and, in remaining, be present – *really here* – the opposite, perhaps, of non-place. Remaining seems to have signalled to me that it is now safe, at some point, to contemplate moving on.

This leads me to consider how my displaced and mislocated identity may have impacted others, including my children, and what might have been co-created through this process. The dialogue with my daughter speaks to this issue, since she is keen, just as my own parents were, to discover new horizons, trying on different identities and experiences for size. I have been cautious to uproot them because of my self-defined role as the ‘broken link’ in an intergenerational chain of displaced people. But I can now see that I risk becoming frozen in an anxious ‘staying state’. The poem by the Sufi poet, Hafiz, heard one day on the radio, seemed to go to the heart of this uncertainty, succinctly capturing an intensely reassuring idea that I may already, and perhaps always have been, placed and located, no matter where I was on the map. Maybe this is something my parents have always appreciated, whereas I couldn’t or, at times, wouldn’t. Perhaps it isn’t me who avenged my younger self by ‘showing them’ but they who have, in time, also ‘shown me’. I hope, regardless, that my own children can benefit from the sense of security I know roots can bring (Oishi, 2010) and perhaps knowing a little of their mother’s journeys here, there, and

back again, some positive modelling may have taken place around the benefits of sticking it out somewhere.

In my experience, feeling embedded couldn't be arrived at through effort or "thoughtful and deliberate steps" (Tuan, 1980, p. 4). Additionally, me saying "I am rooted in this place" implies a distance between the perceiving 'I' and the place itself. To be truly rooted, I think, I would have to feel so completely at home somewhere that no conscious reflection would be necessary, I would simply take it for granted. As Tuan says: *"Rootedness is not a condition that can be celebrated. People may not even be aware of home when they are truly at home, wrapped in the small satisfaction of day-to day affairs, unconcerned with the past's heritage or the future's promises."* (1980, p. 6). Rootedness cannot be intentionally obtained nor got rid of, it is something that happens slowly over time, unconsciously, and with increasing depth of experience (Sack, 1992). If true rootedness feels, as has been suggested, like "breathing, or blinking, or a constant heartbeat inside a person's chest" (McEwen, 2019, p. 20), then what a wonderful feeling that must be! But then, a bit like the smell of home, perhaps belonging doesn't have a feeling attached to it, just for those who lack it maybe, but not for those who do. So many changes during sensitive periods in my life, including early childhood, adolescence, and new motherhood, could mean I am now overly sensitised to being 'not in place'. How I wish to

be, though. Sometimes, when I'm not thinking about it too much or trying too hard, it might just be happening, all by itself.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

Writing this discussion, it felt like trying to pack a suitcase too small for everything I wanted to cram inside it. For once, though, this image of luggage didn't trigger too much anxiety but instead it seemed to simply invite me to select what I most needed for this project's onward journey.

This discussion consists of two sections. In Section 5.1., I discuss how I have answered my research questions and have interpreted findings compared to selected literature. In Section 5.2., I present my reflections on this process, its impact, and its original contributions.

5.1. Answering my research questions

Due to the overlapping nature of answers to Question 1 'What were my experiences of moving, missing, and settling throughout life?', Question 2 'What were my experiences of home, then and now?', and Question 3 'What useful meanings might be constructed around these experiences to share with others?', discussions of each are incorporated into the following sections and divided into key themes identified by this investigation.

5.1.1. Broken attachments

There is a clear pattern of attachment, loss, and reattachment. I was uprooted and separated from familiar things including trusting, secure parts of myself known through their connections with key others like siblings and friends.

Homesickness and grief run through this piece though never quite so sharply as when 'adrift' at boarding school. In line with others (Fischer, 1988; Baier & Welch, 1992; Hack-Polay, 2012), I experienced tangible 'symptoms' of homesickness, including loneliness, illness, and absent-mindedness (pp. 77-79). I also had recurring nightmares (p. 49) of returning to a former home. Even now, I still dream about the flat in Arnold Street as being abandoned or haunted (p. 92) connected perhaps to feeling distanced from my parents' homes (p. 85). Whilst dreams have previously been linked with homesickness (Archer, Ireland, Amos *et al.*, 1998) and traumatic relocation (Lakhous, 2009; van Oeveren, 2020), my narrative of lifelong nightmares contributes to these lines of enquiry whilst also aligning with ideas that individual differences (including personality, coping styles, family factors and attitudes) may exacerbate or

trigger homesickness (Scullion & Linehan, 2005; Hack-Polay, 2012). As an introverted person, I might have been somewhat worse off through lacking intrinsic motivation or stress-management capacities to wholeheartedly, repeatedly reintegrate (Oishi & Schimmack, 2010). As an adult, childhood moves continued to exert a long-term influence on me emotionally and socially, aligning with previous findings (Lin *et al.*, 2012).

Depictions of Arnold Street reflect a clinging, insecure attachment (Bowlby, 1969) whereby I craved physical proximity to an approximation of ‘mother’. This insecurity, combined with continued breaking of person-place bonds, presents an additional layer of interpretative complexity. My earliest memories, of which I have many, suggest to me a wayward influence on my developing mind and self *from the upheaval of the moves themselves*: the strangeness of each new house, school, and culture, the making and relinquishing of friends, losing belongings and identities (e.g. p. 52). I will later return to this ‘chicken and egg’ question (see Section 5.1.11).

I continued to move into adulthood having, conceivably, ‘caught the moving bug’, but did so mindlessly, as if on autopilot, much as literature on dissociation suggests (van der Kolk, 2015; Goldberg, 2020). This accords with the only other research specifically investigating whether childhood moves increase the chances of moving during adulthood (Bernard & Vidal, 2020). Through using regression analyses of moving histories from longitudinal population surveys from several European countries, results suggested that moving home may, indeed, be a learned behaviour, with those moving before age 17 being significantly more likely to move in later life. My experiences testify to this, since even after ‘settling’ after having children, I still got itchy feet. Moving is not unusual in early adulthood (Furstenburg, 2015), but it became a problem when I noticed how lonely and ashamed I was feeling in each new place (p. 96). Never having been known anywhere before felt like failure, and I covered this up with displays of the same superior nonchalance I practised as a teenager (p. 83). This indirectly supports earlier findings by Bures (2003) that residential stability positively relates to stable mental health in midlife, my case illustrating, perhaps the inverse of this correlation. The concept of belongingness (Leary & Baumeister, 2000) did, as hypothesised in the Literature Review (p. 23), contribute towards my understanding of lifelong homesickness. Even brief stays in hotel rooms seem to threaten my belongingness

needs. As I got older, inevitably, the pull to continue covering up my feelings collided with an opposing, equally powerful, need to feel seen, embedded, and real, corroborating findings on place attachments (Low & Altman, 1992; Anton & Lawrence, 2014) and place identity (Prochansky *et al.*, 1983; Lengen & Kistemann, 2012) as moulding a core continuing sense of self and purpose (McAndrew, 1998; Simandan, 2011). My experience of settling in the village echoes Manzo (2005) in that it was the 'experience-in-place' which, in time, created sufficient meaning for me to feel anchored.

5.1.2. Stress

This research strongly supports a connection between moving and stress (Haour-Knipe, 2002). For example:

"I, too, leant heavily on my mother during house moves often feeling sad and anxious, following her around, and unsure of what to do next.... an undeniable level of background tension ... The house was constantly metamorphosing: wallpaper stripped, walls demolished, strangers tromping around, radios blaring, ripping things out or drilling things in." (p. 60)

Being young, I wasn't actively involved in these processes and lacked a voice to object when things became stressful or chaotic. The sights, smells and sounds of renovations, with parts of the house closed or half-finished, had a destructive, traumatic feel. Adults, too, can find moving and renovating stressful, yet these projects are usually adult visions, and adults possess more mature emotional resources to self-regulate and to, intellectually, 'see the point'. I found it difficult having strangers in the house and struggled to relax, something others who, like me, were deemed 'sensitive', might also find challenging.

5.1.3. Relocation trauma

My earlier relocation experiences involved loss and trauma. An important aspect to emerge from this research has been recognising how moving greatly impacted my sense of self, wellbeing, and ability to feel socially at ease. Each time a child moves house or school, inevitably, something is lost. This research shows, in contrast to some previous findings (e.g. Speare, Goldstein & Fray, 1975; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994) but in accordance with others (Duffell & Bassett, 2016; Schaverien, 2015) that poorer outcomes and socioeconomic disadvantages do not, always, go hand in hand

with frequent relocation. I identified the following potential stressors which contributed, I feel, towards my relocation trauma:

- a) Loss of physical 'safe base', child 'worlds', and familiar locations (p. 49)
- b) Loss of belongings (p. 55)
- c) Loss of friends and pets (pp. 60-64)
- d) Loss of subsidiary adult relationships (p. 66)
- e) Loss of established familial structures (p. 93)
- f) Loss of identities and former relationships with self (p. 73)
- g) Rapid physical and cultural transitions during crucial periods without adequate support (p. 83)
- h) Exposure to non-nurturing environments or homelessness (p. 86).

These frequent losses led, I think, to me expecting similar losses in the future (Kagan, 2014). When I finally decided to remain, it felt like swimming against the tide: I was sure 'something bad' would happen. With loss, comes grief. Grieving my first few homes felt manageable, but compound losses created protracted bereavements. By the time I left Cape Town, I was probably displaying signs of complicated grief, like anger, dissociation, and intense confusion about who I was or had to be (e.g. p. 73). Yet this loss seemed invisible to others. On the contrary, I was often told how fortunate I was to be moving.

Such ambiguity prompted, I think, a 'mind-body-place splitting' to occur which I managed largely by numbing parts of myself to continuing threat. Whilst threats were not necessarily real, they nevertheless felt ever-present, leading to a sense of uncertainty or 'fuzzy-headedness' (p. 66). As trauma authors suggest, dissociation involved compartmentalising experiences into isolated fragments (van der Hart *et al.*, 1998). My functioning self no longer felt integrated with my emotional self which was still holding traumatic memories and fears, causing numbness. My body 'kept the score' (van der Kolk, 2014) through manifesting anxiety about travelling: objects like suitcases triggering dread and panic. These findings align with an aforementioned study specifically considering relocation stress among young people (Puskar & Ladely, 1992) showing girls drawing on 'escape-avoidance' (e.g. Haskell, Britton & Servatius, 2020) behavioural strategies to avoid experiencing difficult feelings. My narratives involving dissociation and 'play-acting' (p. 79, p. 83) seem similar. Etherington (2020)

writes that: *“creating a coherent story out of our childhood trauma can be difficult because trauma often disrupts our sense of a continuous existence. A person may disconnect/dissociate from aspects of their traumatic experiences in order to survive (Braun, 1988). Those aspects might involve feelings, sensations and/or memories that threaten to overwhelm, leaving gaps in their sense of self and identity”* (p. 7). I think this is exactly what can be seen on a more ‘meta’ level from sections of the narrative including, for example, those labelled ‘a – h’ above, but also, as Etherington (2020) suggests, that writing my trauma story and locating it within a narrative framework involving ideas and interpretations (as seen in the ‘Reflections’ and ‘Discussion’ sections) has helped me to further engage with and process my traumatic experience, relocating it from a purely reactive state of bodymind to a more conscious, reflective state of being (e.g. Herman, 2015). From these two elements alone, one storied, the other narrated, I would conclude that this is dual supportive evidence that moving can, indeed, sometimes prove to be an adverse, occasionally even traumatic, experience and that relocation trauma continues to be worthy of academic consideration.

5.1.4. Guilt and shame

Guilt and shame are both self-critical emotions. Guilt involves a negative moral self-evaluation – ‘I did something bad’ - whereas shame involves a perceived discrepancy between one’s actual and one’s ideal self - ‘I am bad’ (Micelli & Castelfranchi, 2018). Shame can be a painful, pervasive self-experience involving feeling defective or unlovable arising from “a disturbance of recognition” (Broucek, 1982, p. 370) or “strange situation” (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970, p. 49) between oneself and another leading to a state of “passive receptive emotional surveillance” (Schore, 1991, p. 188). Whilst guilt and shame are increasingly explored as key constructs among displaced people e.g. refugees, migrants, and children in care (e.g. Krohn, 2015; Stotz, Elbert, Müller, *et al.*, 2017; Bath, 2019), these emotions, to my knowledge, have not yet been noted in connection with frequent childhood relocation. Shame is apparent in my feeling new (p. 64), homesick (p. 77), unwelcome (p. 87), rootless (p. 96), lacking social networks (p. 95) and lacking a sense of origin (p. 105). Kohut (1970) spoke of early empathic failures causing narcissistically wounded self-states which DeYoung (2015) later renamed chronic shame. A similar shame, perhaps, to feeling I wasn’t known anywhere, itself possibly originating in not feeling known “from the inside out” (DeYoung, 2015, p. 60) when younger. This, rather painful, conclusion supports earlier

findings from mobility research suggesting frequent childhood movers tend to define their core self according to context-free personality traits like: 'I am intelligent' or 'I am hard-working', rather than contextually grounded interrelationships such as 'I belong to an organisation' (Oishi & Buttrick, 2021). It also supports earlier homesickness research indicating psychological factors, like personality or coping style, can affect homesickness severity (e.g. Fisher et al., 1984; van Tilburg & Vingerhoets, 1997) with common characteristics for sufferers' involving "high levels of rigidity and dependency and low levels of extroversion, dominance, and assertiveness" (van Tilburg, Vingerhoets & van Heck, 1999, p. 2). I certainly felt embarrassed and guilty about what I thought were my 'character flaws' in missing home as I did.

This piece strongly supports a theory of relational disposability or duty-free friendships among people who move often (Gillath & Keefer, 2016; Oishi, 2010). Until now, this has not been explored in depth nor from a personal perspective. Its lasting personal consequences have been guiltiness at letting people go, and mistrust in the endurance of friendships (and in myself as capable or worthy of sustaining them). My earliest experiences may also have had a bearing on this since I can't ever recall feeling settled, aligning with the idea that self-esteem originates in secure parental bonds representing "a prototype of belongingness" (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Regardless, my feelings of non-belonging became a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy (e.g. p. 100).

Guilt, as an emotion connected to moving, re-surfaced when I had to move offices and worried about 'inflicting' this move on my clients. Shame, too, was noticeable in my concerns about whether a new office would be good enough for them, and whether I, or the work, might be lost or damaged. This aspect of my past subsequently played out in later therapeutic encounters and its working through prompted renewed empathy with clients who were also on the move and, in a more abstract way, with therapists for whom frequently moving therapy rooms is required.

Unlike in former places, Crovie House and its surrounding landscape provided me with the mirroring, affirmation, and constancy I needed, showing me that affective contours really can exist between people and physical environments. Windows, skylines, stairs, gardens, and hillsides all reflected and, at times, responded to my needs in ways which made me feel accepted and acceptable, helping me escape the chronic shame of feeling 'out of place'.

5.1.5. School moves matter

Much research exploring links between relocation, educational achievement, and mental health has been limited through focussing on residential, rather than school, moves (Gaspar *et al.*, 2010). Apart from studies on specific populations such as poor, military, or looked-after children (Been, Ellen, Schwatz *et al.*, 2011; Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari *et al.*, 2010; Pears, Kim, Buchanan *et al.*, 2015), this research is the only study I know of investigating the impact of frequent school moves in phenomenological, rather than statistical, terms and is one of only a handful of UK-based studies exploring this topic at all.

It took effort for me to develop a chameleonic sense of self in different schools and this always entailed altering facets of myself (p. 64) to cope as the 'new girl' (p. 72). These new pupil experiences find accord with previously cited research suggesting social rejection results in similar brain activity to physical pain (Eisenburger, 2012) and that social inclusion and prolonged, mutually affectionate bonds with the same people are essential (Macdonald & Leary, 2005). The requisite adaptational energy for successive, idiosyncratic cultures placed strains on my inner resources which might have been better spent on learning how to form lasting friendships or dealing assertively with peer conflict.

My findings suggest there can be significant differences between school environments since each new school demands complete commitment or else one risks social exclusion or academic failure. Moving internally (within the same geographical area) felt as impactful on my achievements and wellbeing as moving externally (as Wright, 1995, also found). Gaspar (2010) suggests possible 'pre-existing differences' place some children at greater risk of struggling after a school move, I think my attachment style and my introverted, rather avoidant personality (e.g. Oishi & Schimmack, 2010) as well as factors like moving from one educational system into another may also have contributed here. Whilst some children's needs are doubtlessly better served by moving school, I personally found life as a mobile pupil harrowing, particularly given the voids in adult support. This is partly in line with research showing that even so-called 'upward moves' can negatively impact school pupils, making them less likely to finish their education (Metzger, Fowler, Anderson *et al.*, 2015). Further, I identified subtler social consequences including the relational "almosts" (p. 74) or friendships

and supportive structures which so nearly might have been but which were, nevertheless, still missed.

5.1.6 The importance of belongings

Many of my belongings were lost, sold, or given away during a move. It later felt strange to visit my parents' houses where nothing of mine was kept, as though I lacked, through their 'home-keeping', a sense of my own existential continuity. In this research, I identified anonymity and *Non-Place* (Augé, 1995) being associated with home (p. 86), something which is, as yet, unexplored elsewhere. I sometimes fantasised about what it might feel like to return to a childhood home in early adulthood to find cherished old belongings still there, waiting. Self-extension theory proposes that when special belongings are lost or taken away it feels like losing part of oneself or one's identity (Belk, 1988; Duncan, 1976). My findings accord with this self-extension perspective by demonstrating how doggedly I held on to possessions throughout adolescence and early adulthood, even in unusual circumstances. Tuan (1980) argues "Our fragile sense of self needs support, and this we get by having and possessing things because, to a large degree, we are what we have and possess" (p. 472). A home is, itself, a belonging (e.g. Lollar, 2010). Findings here make an additional contribution by evidencing how someone might intuitively attempt to counteract the distress of losing both by creating 'little homes' wherever they go to recreate a sense of containment and self-integrity (pp. 88-89).

5.1.7 The therapy room

In 'Dead Space' (p. 109), I describe mourning a former therapeutic space whose chairs, walls, and 'embedded therapeutic history' had helped establish me in my role. Leaving triggered older moving memories, particularly since, again, leaving wasn't by choice. Writing in my research journal, I noticed a need to belong *in a particular therapy space*, something other therapists with similar histories might also experience. The idea certainly finds accord with research suggesting rooms require certain essential qualities, like calmness and a non-clinical feel (Sinclair, 2021), providing, for clients at least, a 'homely therapeutic landscape' (Knapp, 2019). Both members of the dyad may benefit from homely aspects being installed or symbolically represented because both, conceivably, need to feel they *belong* there, together in the work. Finlay and Hewitt Evans (2022) explored the experience of finding a 'relational home' within

psychotherapy drawing on their own and participants' experiences of being client, therapist, and researcher. They uncovered emergent themes around 'belonging', 'safety', 'holding', 'affirmation' and 'being with' and described various meanings of this home relating to themes of 'safe sanctuary', a 'containing frame', 'secure base to grow', 'supporting connection', and a 'spacious alliance' which seemed to allow people to feel more able to trust, let go, and to know that they really mattered. Physical and metaphorical aspects of homeliness and belongingness could well have counterparts in virtual therapy settings, like a familiar, calm, welcoming digital or real-life background. This has been alluded to (e.g. Finlay & Hewitt Evans, 2022) but not yet specifically looked into and warrants future research attention.

5.1.8 Cultural ideas about leaving home

Ideas about how and when young people leave their birth home to set up one of their own are premised on idealised, often Westernised, ethnocentric views of home as a nurturing environment founded on continuous, caring relationships fostering interdependence and self-sufficiency (Mallett, 2004). My experience of leaving home indicates a relatively accelerated developmental trajectory as evidenced by my interviewer's apparent surprise about me being a teenage "landlady" (p. 86). Accelerated development in the form of rapid transitions from domesticity into self-sufficiency has been noted by boarding authors (Duffell & Basset, 2016) and also in the comparatively under-researched field of adolescent neglect (Hicks & Stein, 2015). I believe my family's culture reflected certain older, outdated, intergenerational conceptualisations of children being, as Ariès (1962) described, 'miniaturised adults'. Many members of my family were sent away to school at any early age. I was, in a sense, standing on their slender shoulders in this regard.

I used to feel proud about being 'mature' but this later changed. At university, I had nowhere to call home, feeling pushed out before my time like the seagull chicks on page 87. Later on, a sense of rootlessness gathered momentum and I felt physically and emotionally stranded in a world of adult responsibilities. Living in London bedsits triggered a crisis but and it was, strangely, a shock bereavement that prompted me to leave this inhospitable environment to prioritise better solutions for my belongingness needs (p. 96). I depicted myself here as someone requiring structural support from a home base to counteract the stresses and strains of transitioning into independence

and adulthood. This relates, in theme, to research highlighting how parental support can mitigate risks of young adults developing difficulties like depression and substance misuse (Holahan, Valentiner & Moos, 1994; Needham, 2008) both things I also struggled with.

Whichever cultures one belongs to, usual and acceptable routes out of home commonly exist, with those who take alternative pathways sometimes feeling marginalised, in turn, affecting how they identify with home in the future (Mallett, 2004). From within my particular cultural orbit, I found the continual moves and lack of grounding meant I was unsure what a 'usual and accepted route' even was. Plus, my family lore actively prevented conversations around this. The alternative pathway I walked felt isolating and proved instrumental in my definitions of a 'proper home', then and now.

The gradual process of attaching to Crovie House and its landscape seemed to happen by simply being with space through time and forming connections beyond my own, encapsulated, lifetime (p. 97). I discovered I needed to engage in rhythms, routines, and rituals to feel prompted to attach to people close by and take greater relational risks (p. 100). My family lore defined home as a psychological location rather than a real one, something many researchers agree with (Somerville, 1992; Wardaugh, 1999). Nevertheless, my experience was that an enduring physical location *really was required* for me to feel placeful. I needed somewhere my senses could routinely experience, internalise, and draw on for trust and belonging.

I feel rather moved that Crovie House has come through as a character in her own right, a 'great grand-aunt' figure of sorts, who has contained and adapted to our needs, being there for me in a way that, no matter how much I wished it, the flat in Arnold Street never was nor could be. Of course, these anthropomorphised spaces are also representations of real people, or parts of people. *I am now the container, I am the secure base.* Still, my relationships with these places feel real.

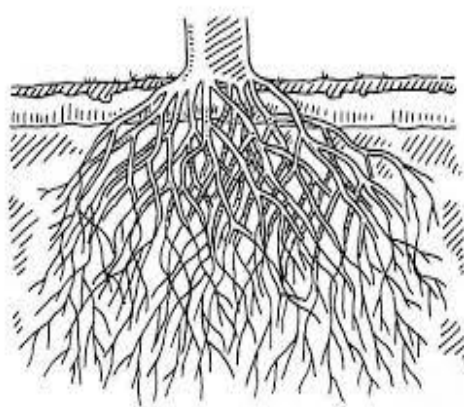
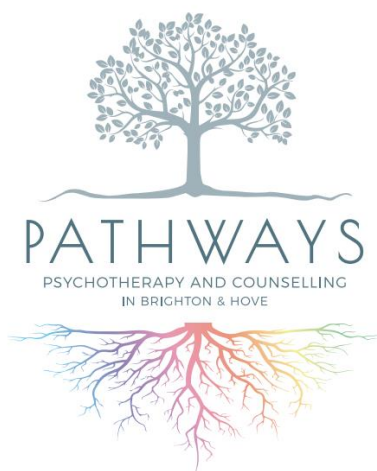
5.1.9. Personal meanings of home

This research finds agreement with multiple studies showing health and wellbeing risks from repeated moves through childhood (e.g. Tønnessen *et al.*, 2016; Mok *et al.*, 2016; Price *et al.*, 2018; Simsek *et al.*, 2021). Findings are also in accordance with limited research exploring the impact of relocation on adults suggesting poorer

emotional health for those who move often (e.g. Astone & McLanahan, 2012; Lin *et al.*, 2012; Millegan *et al.*, 2014). Although it is only one aspect of this study, my fieldwork, involving returning to childhood homes and reflecting on this, adds support to the two existing pieces on the subject of returning to a childhood home (Stack, 1996; Burger, 2011). Like many of Burger's participants, I also felt vital parts of myself had been forged there, even if this was sometimes traumatic, and the experience of going back facilitated something important, even if, as these participants echoed, this meant realising the return didn't signify what I had expected. More research on this topic is warranted.

Children's geographies literature tells us children have a particular way of interacting with, and experiencing, place (Tsevreini, Tigka & Christidou, 2022). The meaning of home for a child may be quite different than that for an adult. Like the young returning migrants in Hatfield's (2010) study, I, too, tended to identify home as "a bed or a decorated wall, rather than a building that can be physically altered and owned" (p. 254), and clung to small-scale places of importance like walls, floors, and objects (see p. 53 and p. 88). This research adds to the small, but significant, knowledge base surrounding the importance of attending to children's perceptions and involvement with space, place and the tiny 'corner-stones' of their "homely, streetwise and institutional geographies" (Hatfield, 2010, p. 254).

5.1.10. Roots



I found the image and symbolism of the root extremely helpful in constructing core meanings of moving, missing, and finding home.

Firstly, the root can symbolise a deep connection with one's environment. My experience was of having no roots whatsoever. Unlike my parents, what I felt I needed was a 'bedding in' of relationships and environmental ties: a sense of settlement (Oishi, 2010) and spirit of place (Marsden, 2015). I recognised that the more ties I made somewhere, the stronger the emotional bonds and the more settled I would feel (Tuan, 1975). As I discovered, rootedness began to happen slowly, unconsciously, and with increasing depth of experience (Sack, 1992), requiring knowledge of my own and others' pasts in a concrete, non-abstracted form (Tuan, 1975). Whilst moving house was usually achieved in a day, finding home took years. Even now, I suspect I will probably always feel somewhat 'eradicated'.

A second association with the root is the 'family tree' or 'tree of knowledge' as illustrated, without realising, in my own therapy practice logo above. Having never known much about my mother's history, I learned something during the conversation with her depicted in '5am' (p. 113) during which we discussed her family's moving pattern. This new knowledge helped me to feel more contextualised and less abstracted.

Thirdly, roots process death into life. Daring to sink roots has allowed me to experience temporal changes more measurably. I can't avoid the march of time as I used to when I moved frequently – I have witnesses now to this process for one thing – but I consequently feel less anxiety-ridden about change, and I no longer depersonalise in the mirror as often. Without so much of a need to recreate myself over, and over - I don't feel such a pull to escape before I'm 'discovered'. Crovie House and the village, through the security they provided, also helped me manage loss and uncertainty whilst transitioning between 'therapy homes'. At home, they helped me reconceptualise my sense of physical space, no longer feeling distances between people as boundaries, but as 'meeting points' (p. 101).

5.1.11. OK, but maybe it's just me?

Some recent research based on large-scale longitudinal comparisons of mobile children in the US and UK implies frequent childhood residential mobility is, in and of itself, associated with few effects of any kind on wellbeing once characteristics such

as socio-economic background are accounted for, claiming familial *reasons* for moving contribute more towards negative outcomes than moves *per se* (Gambaro *et al.*, 2022). I have often asked myself something which seem to go to the heart of this issue: “Do I have insecure attachments to place? To home? To people? Do I, perhaps, have a new category of attachment issue, ‘*Place Attachment Disorder*’? ‘And, if so, have I moved into a place of ‘earned security’? (e.g. Roisman, Padron, Sroufe *et al.*, 2002). I wonder, how much of what I’ve recalled and written here really relates to moving, and how much relates to my family’s particularities or our reasons for moving? It is hard to answer this because I can’t perform statistical analysis on myself, adjusting for variables like the loss of family members, atmospheres surrounding house moves, or parental attitudes towards moving and ‘home-keeping’, nor would this be in accordance with my philosophical stance. Still, the issues identified here certainly find accord with findings connecting frequent moves with swathes of negative outcomes, especially for young people. This autoethnography has made tentative connections between one person’s regular adaptations to (and separations from) meaningful environments with the following: sadness (p. 48), anger (p. 49), loneliness (p. 52), pain (p. 53), anxiety (p. 56), trauma and dissociation (p. 55), stress (p. 74), health concerns (p. 93), social dysfunction (p. 94) and shame (p. 74). My personal perspective thereby provides a ‘deeper slice’ of the topic, comparing favourably with research showing poorer outcomes are correlated with disrupted social networks, peer support, and fragmented identity formation during formative years (Singh, Winsper, Wolke *et al.*, 2014). Similarly, I wonder if my parents’ permissive, ‘hands-off’ approach exacerbated my homesickness (see Nijhof & Engels, 2007). There are few findings here suggesting moving frequently was a positive experience, for me at least, although I recognise its value in helping to shape me into the person and practitioner I now am.

My personal experience narrated here suggests that certain factors can exist which, even within advantaged or attuned family systems, may yet prove unhelpful. From my viewpoint, these included feeling uneasy in a new house or neighbourhood, adjusting to new school routines, making new friends and leaving old ones, and adapting one’s personality and identity to fit different cultural norms, to name but a few. Therefore, a tentative conclusion may be drawn from this research that moving often in childhood may indeed *in and of itself* prove disruptive, or even harmful, for some.

5.2. My experience of doing this project

5.2.1. Hiccups, readjustments, and the 'Stay at Home' order

This project has taken five years to complete, and, in that time, a great deal has happened. When, as a nation, we were asked to 'Stay at Home' in March 2020, like many others, I needed to radically adjust much of my life. This meant cancelling my upcoming field trip to revisit childhood homes in Scotland during which I'd hoped to reconnect with a sense of the child in the car driving away in the beginning and to explore how earlier spaces might cause made to re-evaluate what home was then, and now. Cancelling this felt like a huge blow and, due to the timing of further lockdowns, restrictions, and commitments, it could not be rescheduled. As was necessary for many researchers, this project needed to adapt, operating within tighter geographical parameters. Whilst these cancelled visits would, I'm sure, have produced interesting findings, the visits I did undertake proved rich and valuable, often resembling a parallel process with my research journey itself. In asking myself: "Should I ring the bell? What will they think? Do I really want to go back inside?" (p. 56), this mirrored some uncertainty regarding the entire research process i.e. I was unsure about 'going back inside' these spaces and of being seen there.

Still, in being forced to stay at home, a new dimension emerged. The irony of being asked to do this was not lost on me. In many ways, being asked to stay at home was something I had perhaps been waiting for my whole life, and in that time, through volunteering on a local helpline, meeting people on walks, and deepening my awareness of the changing seasons, countryside, and wildlife, I felt more at peace, and more home than ever before, even though all around me it felt as though the world, if not exactly ending, was certainly changing in ways that were strange and frightening. I felt lucky to be able to be with my children every day, to have us all together in our house, for a while at least, safe and sound. It was the kind of security and simple belonging that part of me wished I had felt more of when I was younger. And this homeliness brought fresh clarity to my research process when I finally picked it all back up again. I was fortunate to have squeezed in my self-interview with my kind colleague immediately prior to the first lockdown since this provided welcome ideas and, later, listening back, a chance to 'hear my own story aloud', prompting insight, self-compassion, and reflective distance.

Whilst this project has taken an undeniable toll on certain parts of my life, the emotional gains have been significant. I have, unwittingly, written my way through a kind of ‘family therapy by proxy’ that has helped me understand my pain more astutely whilst making more allowances for the decisions and processes of others. Personally, I have gained in self-belief by tackling this subject, writing it ‘from the inside out’. Professionally, I have benefited from gaining a better understanding of these kinds of difficulties.

5.2.2. Remembering, finding voices, and working through

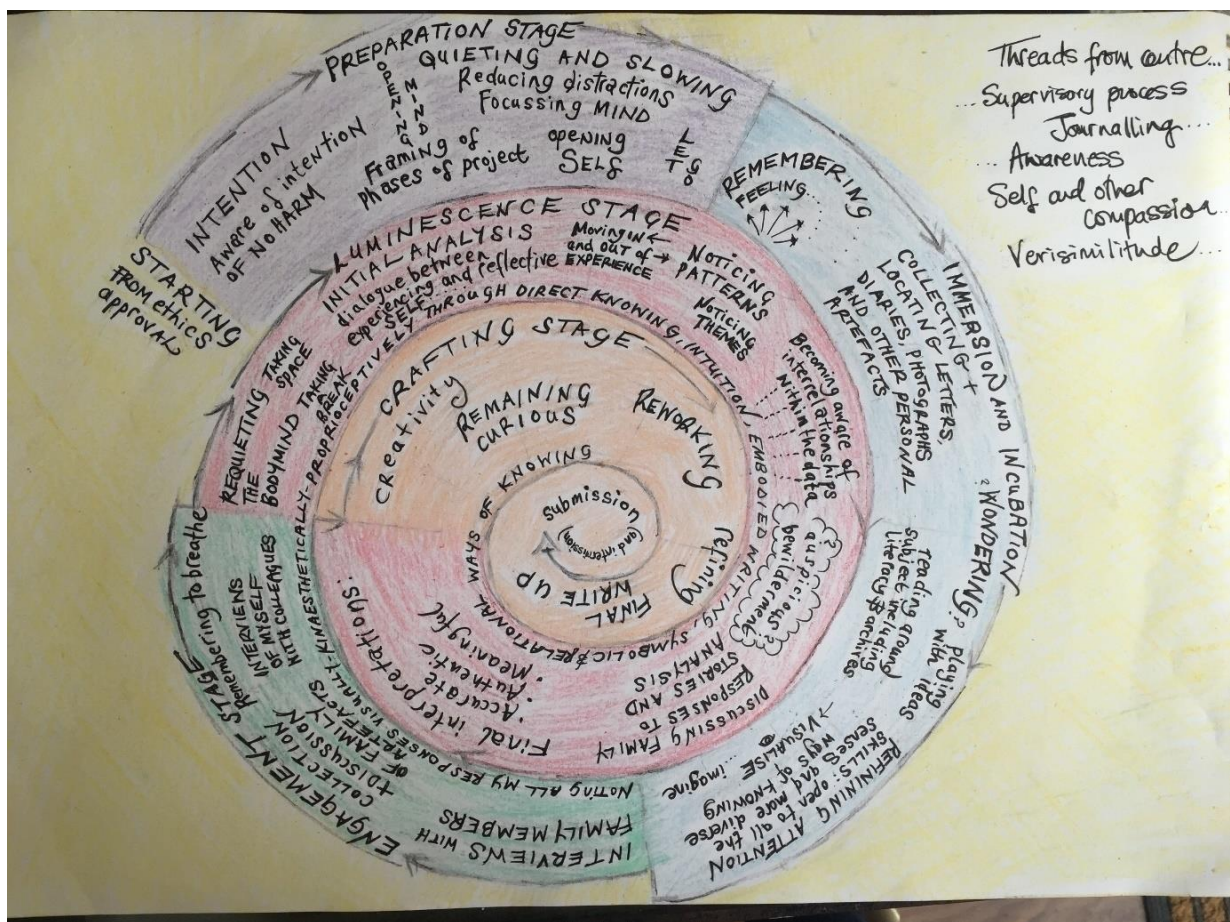
I had originally thought, for my thesis to be deemed valid and useful, I would need to synthesise a sense of ‘truth’ from my account. But this, I later realised, entailed exerting monologic control over my narratives (e.g. Bakhtin, 1981), something I did not want. Opening myself up to others’ voices and less ‘vocal’ parts of myself, enabled alternative conversations whereby disparate points of view were able to converse with one another (Morson & Emerson, 1990). These dialogues have, I think, averted certain gaps and silences and provided opportunities to understand my own choices, or lack thereof.

5.2.3. Walking the labyrinth

Doing this project has felt like walking the path of the ancient labyrinth, an image I have been doodling since childhood:



Not to be confused with a maze, the labyrinth has been found across the globe for millennia representing, for some, a journey of psychological self-discovery towards insight and wholeness. In theory, as you walk the path to its centre, you release the details of your life, shedding thoughts, judgements, and distress. Upon reaching the centre, you can be gifted with knowledge and illumination. Following the same path out again, self and spirit are reunited and one feels empowered to grow and do the work one is seeking to do in the world. It looks quite a lot like a drawing I did five years ago depicting my original ideas for this project:



As discussed on pages 33-36, I drew on this original diagrammatic plan and incorporated it throughout by following its instructions:

(The Reader may wish to rotate the image)

- Setting the intention of no harm (Ellis, 2007)
- Quieting the mind and self (Anderson, 2004)

- Immersing myself in my memories (Muncey, 2010)
- Opening my mind to diverse ways of knowing (Anderson & Braud, 2011)
- Collecting data and artefacts (Jones, Adams & Ellis, 2016)
- Conducting a self-interview (Ellis & Bochner, 2016)
- Taking a break, making space for dialogue between experiencing, reflective, and analytical selves (Anderson, 2004)
- Noticing patterns, identifying themes (Anderson, 2004; Ellis, 2004)
- Trusting 'auspicious bewilderment' (Anderson, 2004)
- Creating authentic, accurate, and meaningful interpretations (Anderson, 2007)
- Crafting this process and its proceedings into an aesthetic whole (Ellis & Bochner, 2016).

Much as walking the labyrinth is a healing process, walking this iterative path using different enquiring 'lenses' helped me feel a sense of wholeness about my dislocated and located self.

5.3. **Contributions**

5.3.1. My practice as a trainee counselling psychologist: The bodymind in place

Resurgent interdisciplinary interest in the mind-body problem has led many practitioners to consider how they can help clients access unconscious processes through increasing their mutual awareness of the bodymind (e.g. Ogden, Minton, Pain *et al.*, 2006; Bloch-Atefi & Smith Melbourne, 2014; Reuille-Dupont, 2021). Through actively engaging with my relocation trauma, sensory memories proved key in reconnecting to the truth of my forgotten experiences, creating spontaneous associations through which, much like a 'tuning fork' (Stone, 2006), I was better able to narrate and perform my story.

Achieved via empathy, compassion is important for our wellbeing (Engen & Singer, 2015) and involves sensitising oneself to suffering and committing to alleviate it (Gilbert, 2018). To be self-compassionate means feeling empathic towards oneself, recognising that our varied experiences connect us to the rest of humanity (Neff, 2013). Through reflexively accessing embodied memories, I developed self-compassion for my own misplaced inner person. Self-compassion can be particularly

helpful for therapists in promoting felt connection to those we work with whilst preventing compassion fatigue and work-related stress (Conversano, Ciacchini, Orru *et al.*, 2020).

5.3.2. Contributions to general knowledge

Researchers from diverse fields agree home is a multidimensional concept that can best be understood using a joined-up, multidisciplinary perspective. This has yet to fully take place because researchers have tended to focus on aspects of home within their own disciplinary domains, thus limiting their reach (Mallett, 2004). Whilst social and psychological outcomes of displacement have partially been examined, there are few studies exploring the more symbolic impacts of living without a place called home (Murcia, 2019). Whilst some advocate for a “dispassionate social scientific analysis” of home (Saunders & Williams, p. 91), with its relational psychoanalytic foundations, this project contributes to interdisciplinary debate and conceptual understanding precisely because it *is* personal and emotionally laden and aims to connect with readers from diverse walks of life.

5.3.3. Contributions to Applied Psychology

There are substantial areas of compatibility between different branches of psychology drawing on similar theoretical frameworks and interventions including theories of human development and motivation. Applied psychologists of various kinds may benefit from this research including members of clinical, counselling, organisational, and educational branches as well as social and community professionals. I believe gains could be made by sharing it with a wider audience than therapists alone. Space does not permit examination of each in detail however, I will briefly highlight this by considering contributions to one such field, educational psychology.

Educational psychologists, assessors, and teaching staff could draw from this research since it highlights concerns relating to frequently moving home and school and, specifically, relating to homesickness, adjustment, culture shock, trauma, and loss, and could therefore promote improvements in supportive measures from policy makers, teachers, parents, and families. This could include, for example, appreciating that, alongside feeling nervous or lost, some new pupils might experience shame in a different educational environment due to their belongingness needs not being adequately met. It may be that encouraging conversations around complex thoughts

and feelings which are difficult for children to verbalise could help guide improved interventions around students' wellbeing and capacity to thrive.

5.3.4. Contributions to Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy

This research privileges the importance of one person's unique experience over and above ideas of diagnosis and ultimate truth using an innovative methodology designed to evocatively convey and analyse aspects of human life (Bury & Strauss, 2006). This is, itself, a core aim of counselling psychology (Rafalin, 2010).

It furthermore implies that difficulties resulting from frequent relocation may best be addressed via supportive or community-based means, another key focus within counselling psychology (Vera & Speight, 2003).

Place attachments, involving important bonding processes, have been remarkably overlooked within the therapeutic literature. To my knowledge, no other study has, so far, explored issues relating to attachment bonds with home as pertaining to the therapeutic relationship or to the person of the therapist, a further focal point within counselling psychology (Laughton-Brown, 2010).

This research responds to remaining questions posed by Giuliani (1991) and Rumbold and colleagues (2012) as to whether there are critical periods of home attachments during childhood or, conversely, periods of latency. From these presented vignettes, the times which appeared more 'critical' were around the Aberdeen move (aged 4-6 years) and after returning to the UK prior to boarding (aged 12-13 years). Both these periods of change felt especially challenging. Giuliani's (1991) second question related to possible periods of latency. The transitions between homes and schools during the South Africa move (aged 10) did not, interestingly, come across as so impactful on self-esteem and mental stability as others did, perhaps aligning with Freud's (1905/1953) idea of the latency phase (ages 7-12) as one of relative stability and, one might argue, also with Anna Freud's (1965) warning that if parent-child relationships are fraught or unresolved during the latency period, the child may be prone to peer difficulties, school phobias, and homesickness if sent away to school. This aligns with recent research suggesting moving between the ages of 13 and 18 presents greater risks to wellbeing (Simsek *et al.*, 2021). Since this investigation is explorative, no conclusions can be drawn as to whether this illustrates examples of 'critical' or 'latent' periods for disrupted home environments. Nevertheless, this finding makes an

interesting contribution to the psychotherapy knowledge base from a theoretical standpoint.

This research makes a further contribution by speaking to the current debate as to whether and how, as counselling psychologists, we might productively redefine what is meant by the term 'Scientist-Practitioner'. Many argue that, since the traditional interpretation of this clinical model cannot adequately capture the essence of the therapeutic relationship, it needs to be either discarded (Carter, 2002) or enlarged to reflect evolving definitions of the scientific aspects of practitioners' identities (Bury & Strauss, 2006). This research portrays me, a scientist-practitioner, elaborating on traditional definitions of scientific enquiry through my use of this particular methodology, positively contributing towards this debate over which much is at stake for the profession (Hage, 2003).

Drawing on sensuous ways of knowing, this research shows how aspects of self can be mediated through sight, smell, vestibular, and other sensory memories, helping to construct sensory 'meta-narratives' (e.g. p. 47) and demonstrates the relevance for counselling psychologists (e.g. Pinner, 2019) and others of capitalising on sensorial-bodily experiences as data, particularly when exploring issues like identity, relationships, and discourses of happiness, nostalgia, and trauma and their pivotal roles in shaping self, society, and culture (Howes, 2003; Sparkes, 2009; Salami, 2020).

Traditionally, counselling psychology orients itself towards life-long growth rather than models of psychopathology and cure, although some are concerned that, particularly in the UK, it is increasingly aligning with the medical model resulting in a profession "more concerned with relieving distress and 'treating symptoms' than building on strengths and facilitating growth" (Steffen, Vossler & Stephen, 2015, p. 2). Counselling psychology's non-pathologising, contextualised view of human development and its emphasis on person-environment fit has always been an important focus (Hage, 2003). Closely allied with this, I feel, is the positive psychology movement in upholding values like hope, wisdom, creativity, courage, spirituality, responsibility, and perseverance for psychological science (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Robbins, 2015). This research highlights difficulty and pain whilst also championing possibilities for transformation and change thereby, perhaps, bridging both facets and agendas (Steffen *et al.*, 2015).

One unexpected element of this research was the concurrent storyline involving my move to a new therapy room something which, to a greater or lesser degree, triggered a traumatic response. Process and findings here agree with other research suggesting qualities such as light, warmth, protection, calm, and even colour can all be important for a therapy room (Devlin, 2014; Liu, Ji, Chen *et al.*, 2014), however what also emerged in this study was the importance of other subtle qualities such as energetic resonance, acoustic timbre, and intuitively felt 'warmth' (p. 108), all of which may be relevant for future consideration. Other issues came to light concerning sensations of feeling at home at work, or not, and of feeling belonging and estrangement together with the client in the new space. This is, I feel, an important contribution.

5.4. Evaluating and critiquing this research

5.4.1. Is one story enough?

Despite initially struggling with a method that did not involve collecting, measuring, and analysing data in a highly structured way, engaging with it has radically altered my views about 'proper' research as well as how I see myself personally and professionally. Sometimes, I have felt at sea without visible hoops to jump through towards results, but I appreciate such challenges are inherent in narrative methods, and in autoethnography in particular. I eventually renounced my hopes of finding an answer to anchor myself to and draw conclusions from in a stepwise manner. Recognising that story cannot, nor ever could be, neatly gathered helped me embrace the ambiguity of self-and-other experience and revise my ideas of suffering and growth. It was important to accept that my story, alone, was indeed enough.

5.4.2. Evaluation criteria revisited

As outlined previously (p. 37), Richardson & Adams (2005) suggest autoethnography, being both science and art, should be evaluated according to five criteria. I view this research contributing substantively to this topic through presenting a detailed, vulnerable first-person account of the impact of moving on body, mind, and spirit in circumstances which were unique but intersecting with known 'categories' of social experience including the 'modern nomad', 'third culture kid', and 'boarding pupil' and contributing to theories within each whilst also presenting fresh 'categories' of social life for consideration, such as 'the dislocated and misplaced psychologist'.

In terms of aesthetic merit, this research might foster empathy and insight in some readers yet leave others cold. Whilst successful autoethnographies ideally invite readers to 'relive' events with the author (Bochner, 2000), I would hope that this is judged according to whether it provokes feelings of *any kind*, including anger or dislike, since feeling *something* about an experience may still prove useful because this can, at the very least, make one more aware about one's assumptions or opinions (e.g. Tobias & Everson, 2009).

This research aims to fulfil Richardson's third criterion, reflexivity, through acknowledging my leading role in its creation whilst also challenging my accompanying assumptions and beliefs, simultaneously recognising (and indeed embracing) the inherent bias of writing using my memories, artefacts, and experiences.

In attempting to show myself "in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live and what [my] struggles mean" (Bochner & Ellis, 2006, p. 111), I have striven for Richardson's fourth criterion, impactfulness, engaging the reader's mind and heart, perhaps switching a light on for someone who, in turn, switches one on for someone else.

This method has given me the freedom to describe my reality and truth without needing to wait for someone else to tell it first. I own and take responsibility for this. It demanded a willingness to self-disclose which some readers might rather I had not done, perhaps because they experienced unwanted feelings as a result (Bochner & Ellis, 1996). Nevertheless, I believe I have, at least, conveyed my reality, Richardson's fifth criterion. Whilst some criticise autoethnographies for 'distorting' fact versus fiction (Walford, 2004), I celebrate this evocative piece being a story about the past, and not the past itself (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), because it means my crafted world of experience might prove slightly more relatable for readers, prompting some to reflect on their experiences and those of others they know, playing a small role in the "existential struggle to move life forward" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 746).

An important part of ensuring that the criteria for evaluating the quality of this research project have been met is to discuss how it has been received, so far, by some of those who have been implicated by it. This is also important in terms of ensuring that, as the researcher, I have acted according to my aforementioned ethical aims. I will illustrate

this with reference to two conversations in particular (out of several) I had with such close others.

Upon reading my completed thesis, I had a telephone conversation with my mother during which we discussed her impressions of the work, as a whole. She told me that she was “impressed” with its scope and academic quality, she thought it was “beautifully written” and she felt that it “deserved to pass”. I thanked her, and asked how it had felt for her to read depictions of parts of her life, and our lives, as well as aspects of our relationship over the years. The first thing she said was that it had been “Fine. Better than I’d imagined” to read the vignettes I had written, both about my life as impacted by her and my father’s decisions about moving so often. I then asked her if, by this, she meant it had indeed felt “fine”, or whether there was perhaps anything else she also wanted to say about it. She replied: “No, I meant fine, as in ‘good’ fine.” I explained it was important for me, for us, to know whether there were any parts of the work which could make her feel unduly exposed, or uncomfortable, or otherwise concerned in any way. She replied that she thought she and others in the family had been depicted “with understanding and respect”. She went on to say that it had felt important to her, personally, that I appeared to have “come through” my earlier difficulties, and she felt this was shown in the section entitled ‘5am’ on page 120 when I expressed having developed a deeper understanding of an intergenerational aspect to my relocation trauma, and also, she felt, in ‘Spring’ on page 121 when I had portrayed a conversation with my daughter about her wanting to, one day, move house. Both of these, my mother felt, indicated I had reached a state of “resolution” which she found personally reassuring. In her mind, she said, this seemed to suggest that whilst I had explored the difficulties and impact of frequent moves earlier in life in this autoethnography, I had now reached “another stage, later in life” where I appeared less negatively impacted. Whilst I found her comments, on the one hand, reassuring as they seemed to show that I had, indeed as planned, taken sufficient ethical care to portray her, our life, and our relationship in a way that did not, seemingly, cause harm, I was also left with the familiar ‘tug’ as to whether I had adequately respected my telling of the story and my self-care as a researcher and someone who is still, very much, impacted by these earlier experiences and very likely always will be. Nevertheless, my overall conclusion was that Richardson and Adams St Pierre’s (2005) criteria of quality had been met by her commenting that the piece was “well-written” and “poignant” and

that she also felt she had “got to know me better” whilst reading it, something I connected particularly with Richardson and St. Pierre’s (2005) insistence that good narrative writing should “have artistic merit and leave the reader wanting to know more”, be “reflexive, containing the author’s presence inside and outside of the text” and should impact the reader “emotionally, intellectually, or otherwise” (p. 961). However, my mother’s comments also connected with what Ellis (2007) highlights as the requirements of autoethnography in terms, specifically, of both procedural (e.g. consent and representation) and relational ethics (e.g. responsibility for my actions and their impact on others). Given the importance of my mother in this piece, and her importance to me as the researcher-participant in this study, successful ‘checks’ of this kind appear confirmatory of its overall quality and trustworthiness.

A second such ‘check’, in a more diffuse format, came during several conversations over a number of months with my children as to whether and how I had portrayed aspects of them and our family life, and whether or how they felt impacted (or not) by what I had written. Overall, I have always received their unequivocal support with this project, however it felt very important to let them read sections relating to them and to allow them time and space to acknowledge how these ‘landed’. I was particularly interested to know how it felt for my daughter to read my portrayal of the conversation with my neighbour on page 107 about her being diagnosed with depression. Throughout, and upon a final reading, my daughter maintained she was not only happy for this information to be included, but that it had felt good for this aspect of her life to have been talked about in this way and to have been included in this research. My daughter feels quite strongly that mental health difficulties are not to be shied away from during conversations and that people “need to know they affect kids too”. I asked her whether she imagined she might change her mind about this in the future, to which she replied that this seemed unlikely. After the most recent conversation, however, when I returned to this question, I asked whether she thought there might be a way of addressing any potential future impact or change of heart, suggesting that perhaps I remove the reference to her in terms of birth order (youngest, middle, or oldest child) thus ‘diffusing’ the likelihood of a reader potentially figuring out who she was. She disagreed with this because she felt that doing so would make her and her difficulties ‘less visible’ to the Reader, and that greater visibility regarding mental health problems was something she, personally, feels should be advocated for. For this reason, I

decided to abide by her wishes, and to keep the narrative as it was. My children, and my husband, have expressed the belief, at different times and in many different ways, that I have depicted them and our family life here in this village, and over the years, honestly and respectfully, but they have also said that some aspects of my earlier life felt difficult to read, my experiences at boarding school and my 'essential homelessness' being two such examples. Often, conversations have spontaneously happened, both in depth and in passing, about what it is like for them to know these things about me through the medium of this research project but we are also quite open with one another about things in general and none of them expressed excessive dismay about anything I have written, although one of them expressed a deepening understanding around these issues and said she felt more empathy for another child at school who appeared to be going through something similar. Conversations such as these provide further important evidence that the quality and ethical dimensions of this research have, so far, been met.

5.4.3. Autoethnography as therapy

Trying to connect with readers has led some to criticise the goal of autoethnography as therapeutic, rather than analytic (Atkinson, 1997). As a psychological practitioner, I do not consider this being necessarily problematic or as determining the quality of this research. Many therapists, including narrative therapists, believe that telling and revising stories enables us to make meaning out of experiences, resolving tensions within self, identity, and relationships (Friedman, 1993; Hudson, 2015). In this autoethnography, I acknowledge my family lore concerning who we were as a family who moved. As in therapy, this involved narrating painful experiences, deconstructing events, and reinterpreting these using reflective inquiry. A key transformative aspect involved realising that my experiences of moving fundamentally differed from those of other family members and came down, ultimately, to a question of perspective. From *my* viewpoint, I felt stranded, out of place, away, alone – an observer. From others' viewpoints, remaining in place may have seemed cloying, stifling, or even annihilating. Whilst I craved blending in, others may have felt more comfortable standing out (Cresswell, 1996). This also connected to my dual roles as researcher-participant, at times standing outside looking into my narratives, at other times dwelling inside my subjective experiences, looking out.

5.5. Strengths

I believe this project's main strength relates to the personal stories that provide a direct method of understanding and making sense of this topic. This project has also promoted the value of vulnerability with the aim of transforming my own (and others') emotional wounds and sore points. I may have been "reaching down into the soul and pulling up trash and scum" (Custer, 2014) but I have dug up some gold and diamonds along the way. This direct engagement took courage and purposefulness showing that vulnerability is a thing which, perhaps rather counterintuitively, can promote deep self-trust. If any empathy has arisen in the hearts of readers for others who have gone through similar dislocating experiences, or for themselves, then this is also a strength.

5.6. Limitations

It is worth reiterating that in selecting certain aspects of my moving and settling experiences to write about, edit, and present, I have necessarily had to exclude others. Whilst, from the large amount of information I initially gathered, I have attempted to synthesise the themes and most salient parts in order to retain an accurate representation, here in very small parts, of the whole, I am aware that focussing on any other of these could have lent a different flavour to this project, perhaps prompting alternative reflections and conclusions. In the same way, writing this project at another time in my life could have prompted other memories and associated stories to come to mind which, in turn, may have reflected alternative narratives or meta-narratives. As previously stated, this, like all research, can only ever be a snapshot taken from a certain angle. But this snapshot's unique perspective should not be dismissed, and I would be cautious of emphasising this study's subjectivity and relativism, both being major drivers behind this project, as a potential limitation on either myself or on this study. All research, all knowledge, after all, rests on a background of mutually appreciated meanings.

5.7. Suggestions for future research

I conducted research that climbed inside one person's experiences of moving, missing, and finding home, however I envisage this line of enquiry going forward in further work exploring others' perspectives. I would like to conduct a second project investigating frequent relocation and settlement among global nomads or individuals

who have moved several times within the same country, or even region. I would focus on their lived experience of space, whether or how they created home each time, and who or what supported this, perhaps clarifying some of my current conclusions and providing some useful contrasts.

Drawing on my findings concerning subtle qualities or features of therapy rooms, like felt warmth or safety, future research needs to move beyond those commonly researched elements such as lighting, noise, and temperature. Crucially, the therapist's perspective should also be explored, alongside how both clients and therapists experience 'belonging' in the space. Tapping into bodymind perspectives, affective resonance, and unconscious processes would be useful with this.

5.8. Suggestions for supportive practice

In terms of suggestions for supportive practice, this research highlights the importance of people, particularly children, being offered support to mitigate any negative effects from moving and to help them forge positive social connections, bolstering their resilience. I would suggest, merging my own findings with those of others, that traumatised, displaced individuals may prefer to meet counsellors or helpers in the same room each time which has been made to appear as welcoming as possible to establish a sense of actual, or imagined, permanence.

This study builds on previous evidence suggesting mobile children can face special challenges. With policy makers advising a 'whole school' approach to social and emotional wellbeing (Department of Education, 2021), it is vital that children's needs be specifically considered and for supportive awareness to permeate all levels of educational settings. The challenges of moving home and school, even locally as shown here, should be integrated into emotional wellbeing programmes and support provision. With school mobility increasingly shown as a robust marker for severe mental disturbance in late adolescence (e.g. Singh *et al.*, 2014), evidence from this report supports the view that school mobility should be taken seriously as a risk indicator for social and emotional problems in young people and be appropriately screened for. Dedicated 'allies', akin to first aiders, could be appointed in schools to help pupils successfully integrate into new environments, particularly focussing on reducing bullying and social exclusion which can often underpin further serious problems (van Dam, van der Ven & Velthorst, 2012). Similar interventions could be

designed to those already seen to be effective in addressing newcomer issues among homeless and/or refugee children (e.g. Crooks *et al.*, 2020) such as strengths and resilience promotion and vigilance around trauma.

In this research, I have identified an ambiguous form of disenfranchised grief occurring when moving home (p. 66, p. 79, p. 92). I would suggest, if this resonates with others, that helping people to place and clarify their feelings by giving it a name - 'loss' perhaps, or 'trauma' – may be important. Being aware of opening discussions with people around other, less talked about, experiences, such as cultural homelessness which can occur even on smaller scales, could be helpful.

In terms of supportive practice with young people, I would suggest it is vital for practitioners to recognise that children may sometimes carry complex emotional burdens following multiple house or school moves, particularly because they may not readily connect a recent move with how they are feeling or what is happening around them. It is important that this information be shared with other adults or those *in loco parentis* roles, such as boarding staff or foster carers.

Some populations have been previously identified as particularly at risk from difficulties resulting from frequent relocation. These include boarders (Schaverien, 2015), girls (Clutterbuck *et al.*, 2015), and third-culture kids (Fail *et al.*, 2004). As someone who has identified with all of the above, my findings suggest that paying particular attention to any difficulties presenting in intersectional individuals may be worthwhile.

In finding rootedness for the first time, I recognised how important a sense of ritual became and, thereby, began engaging differently with my home spaces (pp. 98-101). I have since introduced certain rituals at my office, such as blowing out a candle after each client session. Clients and therapists who, like me, struggle with feeling placeful may, conceivably, also find it difficult moving between therapy rooms whereby even subtle changes could impact them or how effective they feel able to be on their client's behalf. I would suggest it may be useful for health service providers and supervisors to give greater consideration to this issue and offer support or make adjustments accordingly.

I also believe it could be useful for professionals who are working with dislocated individuals to notice how they, themselves, may be feeling around this subject, possibly because of their own moving histories or because they are unwittingly

avoiding conversations around difficult feelings, like anger or shame, thus rendering themselves unavailable to those they are hoping to support. As this research highlights, my being denied opportunities to express relocation trauma led to a sense of shame at not belonging remaining unexpressed and unresolved for a long time. The main practice-focussed recommendation is therefore to find ways of asking clients about the ‘upsides’ and ‘downsides’ of moving, enquiring how much involvement or choice they felt they had in the process, and what meanings they made around being somewhere new and, possibly even, *becoming* someone new.

5.9. Suggestions for social policy and wider discussion

In many Western societies it is increasingly recognised that older children deserve the final say over significant issues including custody disputes, vaccinations, and contraceptives. This research implicitly asks whether, sometimes, caregivers have an ethical duty to allow children a ‘veto’ over family relocation. From a theoretical philosophical perspective, De Vries (2020), argues that, indeed, they do in cases where there are no significant reasons for moving other than to somewhere “with a richer cultural scene, a better paid job even when they currently make enough money to live comfortably, a bigger house [or] simply a change of scenery” (p. 329). Whilst I recognise that increasing children’s high-stakes decision-making in relocation could lead to problematic vetoing of any number of other important adult-led decisions, nevertheless, these findings in terms of loss, trauma, self-esteem, broken ties, and adult dysfunction support a case being made for older children, at least, to have more explicit rights regarding family decisions to move.

5.10. Dissemination

Several organisations support and promote the interests of people who have experienced frequent relocation. TCKid (<http://www.tckidnow.com>) is a non-profit organisation serving the international community of third-culture children and adults. Its new sponsored research programme aims to cultivate relationships between cross-cultural researchers and the public by publicising and funding research into these experiences and working to encourage access to this information. I have approached this organisation regarding publication of this and funding of the aforementioned post-doctoral project.

Synopses will further be submitted for presentation at forums including annual conferences of the British Psychological Society (BPS) and BPS divisions of Counselling, Clinical, and Educational Psychology, the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) and other psychotherapeutic and educational events. A number of symposia offer opportunities for social science and psychotherapy research to be shared with international, interdisciplinary audiences such as <https://www.ocerints.org/intcess22/>. With autoethnography's growing popularity, I plan on attending and, hopefully, presenting at conferences including the 2023 International Symposium on Autoethnography and Narrative (ISAN) and the International Conference of Autoethnography as well as others featuring this approach such as the European Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (ECQI).

I plan on refining this project into an article submitted for review with the *Journal of Autoethnography*, launched in 2020, as well as other publications with experience of publishing on issues of relocation and autoethnography including:

- *Journal of Family Theory and Review*
- *Journal of Environmental Psychology*
- *Attachment: New Directions in Psychotherapy and Relational Psychoanalysis*
- *Qualitative Inquiry*
- *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*.

Written using evocative, relatable language, this research could appeal to wider audiences than academia alone. Several articles on moving home have been published in newspapers including *the Guardian*, *the New York Times*, and the *Daily Mail*. These, as well as lifestyle and psychological and social interest publications, could be approached with a short article.

Eventually, I would like to develop this research into a book on moving home in childhood, either as a stand-alone piece or combined with others' contributions including, perhaps, results from the aforementioned second project, to be presented in a format similar to Etherington's (2008) narrative inquiry on transforming trauma. In time, publishers and agents could be approached with a viable concept and manuscript.

5.11. Conclusion

Findings here support many well-established links between frequent relocation, stress, trauma, and loss of different kinds and the potential effects on mind and body. It stands in unison with much theorising and research conducted in recent years which proposes that, for some, moving can be experienced as a highly negative life event. It also highlights, in contrast to some previous studies, that, whilst most frequent movers tend to be described as vulnerable children from more obviously complex or disadvantaged households, frequent movers from more advantaged backgrounds may, too, be in need, yet are sometimes overlooked by those in positions to support them.

As other researchers have shown, poorer life skills and emotional difficulties can be a consequence of moving frequently due to constant upheavals combined with, as I have suggested, a disenfranchised sense of loss. Through writing and living this autoethnography, I recognise that the difficulties I encountered were, indeed, largely due to disrupted peer networks and fragmented identity formation during crucial periods of development. It is this aspect of the many experiences detailed here which comes through, to me, as most significant overall and which I wish to highlight in conclusion.

Caregivers, by their very nature, are in the position of overseeing the welfare of those in their charge. However, this can consequently mean that those in their care hold diminished responsibilities when it comes to important life decisions, like moving home or school, or that children can become “an item on the list of do-not-forgets” (Selmer & Lam, 2004, p. 432). My sense of loss, homesickness, and rootlessness were not helped by the reality that my choices were rarely prioritised. As has been shown here, this led me to believe that these emotions and cognitions were somehow wrong and were, subsequently, disavowed from my conscious awareness, a process of denial that continued for many years.

I would hope, therefore, that if one piece of insight or future learning were to stem from this study, it would be for caregivers, guardians, educators, and professional helpers to be helped to recognise the relevance of physical, as well as emotional, environments for any relocated individuals they are trying to reach out or relate to, and to appreciate how losing one, or both, repeatedly can sometimes create complex,

hidden harms which can be challenging for that person to recognise, work through and to, one day, *move on* from.

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