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‘Being-at-home’ and homelessness: an interpretive phenomenological analysis of the experiences of Syrian involuntary immigrants living in Istanbul, Turkey

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‘Being-at-home’ and homelessness: An interpretive phenomenological analysis of the experiences of Syrian involuntary immigrants living in Istanbul, Turkey

Doctoral Thesis

Gökçe Olga Soy

January 2022, London, UK

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling and the Psychology Department of Middlesex University for the Degree of Doctor of Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy.

Statement of Authorship

This dissertation was written by Gökçe Olga Soy and has ethical clearance from the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling and the Psychology Department of Middlesex University. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling requirements and the Psychology Department of Middlesex University for the Degree of Doctor of Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy. I confirm that this is an original piece of work and has not been previously submitted and approved for the award of a degree, by this or any other University, within or outside the United Kingdom. This thesis is, therefore, the product of my personal investigations and any material or information that has been employed that is not my own has been appropriately identified by references which are appended.

Word Count (Chapters 1-6 inclusive): 63,993

Abstract

The existing literature on involuntary immigrants predominantly focuses on trauma and trauma-related mental health issues, and there is a need for approaches to therapeutic practice that acknowledge the individually varying experiences of displaced people. Employing interpretative phenomenological analysis, this dissertation addresses this gap in the literature and explores the experiences of Syrian war immigrants living in Turkey in relation to 'being-at-home' and 'homelessness'.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight English-speaking, well-educated participants aged under 45. Interviews primarily focused on participants' individual experiences of leaving their home and settling in Istanbul. Four superordinate themes emerged from the narratives: experience of loss; crisis; making a new home; and significance of home.

The loss of home was often described as a painful and earth-shaking experience, which changed my participants' lives radically and forever. While multiple losses at physical, psychological, social and spiritual levels were seen as inseparable to the loss of home and were described at length, there was also a deep sense of an 'inexplicable gap', a hole as to what, really, the loss of home meant for them. Loss of home was experienced as something ontological, something that is far larger and more fundamental than the summation of what can be described.

Several psychological complaints and negative feelings were reported during the interviews conducted. Ideas that the world is not a safe, fair place and that other people are not trustworthy and caring, but are instead hostile, self-seeking and discriminating, recurred in the accounts. I argue that these negative emotions and experiences, which result from the 'ontological' loss of the sense of home, can be interpreted in the existentialist framework of "life crisis" and through Laing's concept of "ontological insecurity". Furthermore, I show that the "crack" in the immigrants' beings - resulting from once losing their home and experiencing the crisis of getting out of the comfort zone of *everydayness* - paved the way for a more authentic existence.

Key words: Involuntary immigration; home; homelessness; life crisis; everydayness; ontological insecurity; home-making

To my dad...
Who has been exiled for all his life

BAŞKA TÜRLÜ BİRŞEY

Başka türlü bir şey benim istediğim
Ne ağaca benzer, ne de buluta
Burası gibi değil gideceğim memleket
Denizi ayrı deniz,
Havası ayrı hava..

Bir başka yolculuk dalından düşmek yere
Yaşadığından uzun...

SOME OTHER THING

Some other thing that I want
It is neither like a tree nor a cloud
The country that I'll go to, doesn't like
Its sea is a different sea
The weather is different weather...

To fall from another journey branch to ground
Longer than you have lived…

Can Yücel

Farewell, my dear father, farewell...

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank all my participants who have dedicated their time to taking part in this study. Thank you all for being honest, for having the courage to share and for trusting me. I hope I can be a vehicle that enables your voices to be heard. I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr Niklas Serning and Dr Patricia Bonnici, for their support and feedback. I would like to thank the NSPC staff for creating a welcoming learning environment and give special thanks to Danny van Deurzen for being there with every question I had throughout my time at NSPC. I want to thank Natanya, who came on board as a proofreader, demonstrating dedication and belief in the topic and in me.

Thanks also go to my mother, who has never given up believing in me, and to my brother, who has always been my best friend and playmate since childhood. Thanks to my dad, who has always been a role model for me to be myself despite the difficulties in being accepted by others.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

According to the 2015 report by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the world is facing the most serious displacement crisis since World War II. In 2015, over 1 million people – refugees, displaced persons and other migrants – made their way to the EU, either escaping from the conflict in their country or searching for better economic prospects (UNHCR, 2015). At the end of 2021, 84 million people were forcefully displaced worldwide because of violent conflicts and natural disasters (UNHCR, 2021). Despite the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, displacement has carried on, and 1% of the world's population - 1 in 95 people - is now displaced compulsorily. Since the civil conflict started in Syria at the beginning of March 2011, 4.8 million Syrian refugees have fled from their country, and nearly 6.2 million Syrians have been displaced internally (UNHCR, 2020).

According to the United Nations (UN), the civil war in Syria has caused the worst refugee crisis in the world to date. Most of the Syrian population has fled to neighbouring countries, such as Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan. Turkey has followed an 'open door policy' since the beginning of the Syrian war (Koca, 2016). According to the UNHCR's global report, Turkey has hosted the largest refugee population worldwide; close to 3.7 million refugees are living in Turkey who have migrated from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and other conflicted areas. The majority of Syrian refugees are not living in refugee camps but among the Turkish population.

This new age of mass migration poses new challenges to psychotherapeutic practice in Europe and the UK. Refugees and asylum seekers are a particularly vulnerable population at risk of mental health problems for a variety of reasons, such as traumatic experiences during their escape from their countries of origin, difficult camp or transit experiences, cultural conflict, adjustment problems in the country of resettlement and multiple losses - family members, country, and ways of life (Lipson, 1993). This current context makes empirical and conceptual research that seeks to improve psychotherapeutic practice for refugees and asylum seekers a highly relevant and crucial field of study and addresses the complexities of working with displaced people in a counselling setting at different stages of counselling training (van der Veer, 1998) becomes a particularly important area that requires further research.

There are several media reports giving voice to Syrian war immigrants and what has recently been called the refugee crisis, but, in fact, we know very little about Syrian war immigrants' experiences of departure

from their homeland and settlement in a new country. Despite the growing need to build a better scholarly understanding in this field due to its wide-ranging implications, refugees and other displaced people do not find a sufficient place in counselling and psychotherapy literature. Unfortunately, much of the current refugee psychotherapy literature has ignored client insights that can be gathered by listening to their subjective experiences as individuals; instead, it focuses predominantly on the problems and mental difficulties deriving from their "objective conditions". Most studies in the field stress the common aspects of refugees' traumatic experiences of persecution, violence, and flight into exile (Van der Veer, 1998; Manson, 1997; Marsella *et al.*, 1994 & Papadopoulos, 2002b; Silove, 1999) and do not provide insight into the subject from a perspective informed by the individuals' lived experiences.

To illustrate, psychodynamic and psychoanalytic perspectives, such as those of Grinberg and Grinberg (1989), place emphasis on the "pathological dimensions" of common experiences and aim at tailoring specific models of therapy to improve the client's capacity to cope with past traumatic events. Although handling refugee experiences from a psychoanalytic vantage point might be effective and helpful in several instances, it does not help us build a more holistic understanding, as it neglects the importance of refugees' own accounts of their experiences as individual subjects. The need for such accounts has been previously flagged by scholars. For example, Rosbrook and Schweitzer (2010) stress that meanings attributed to home and its loss remain an underexplored theme in the existing literature:

> *A phenomenological approach [allows] the emergence of the personal story and [facilitates] sense-making amongst participants. [...] Some refugees may benefit from less structured therapeutic interventions [that] allow sufficient time and space for the individual's personal story to emerge (ibid, 2010: p. 170).*

The aforementioned tendency to neglect subjective conceptualisations expressed in accounts in search of commonalities that fit pre-existing frameworks, combined with the dominant approach that views refugee experiences through the lens of pathology and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Papadopoulos, 2002b; Halperin, 2004), has thus created a notable gap in the literature. To address this gap, it is important to engage with refugees' subjective experiences through alternative theoretical lenses that can help draw a holistic picture on the subject matter. To this end, this study takes an existential vantage point, engaging with the questions around involuntary immigrants' experiences by exploring existential processes in a way that acknowledges the unique meanings they attach to these experiences. It does so by starting with a core assumption that informs the researcher's stance: rather than categorising refugees and asylum seekers with externally imposed criteria, we need to understand the world of meanings each individual has constructed.

For instance, because refugees share the condition of having lost their homes (Papadopoulos, 2002, 2007), being "away from home" constitutes an important aspect of refugees' subjective experiences. In contrast to *voluntary immigrants* in Western countries, *refugees* leave their homeland due to reasons beyond their control; the consensus in the literature in this regard is that, if given a choice, most refugees would prefer to stay in their home country (Stein, 1986; Williams and Berry, 1991). So one key aim of this research is to understand the diversity of meanings attributed to notions of "home" and "being away from home" for Syrian refugees while exploring the implications of "losing home" for refugees' mental well-being. An inquiry into the sphere of meanings refugees attribute to "not being at home" - one that is based on the subjective accounts of their personal experiences, individual worldviews, and perceptions - can develop an awareness of previously neglected issues when working with refugees and make significant scholarly contributions to the literature in ways that can be used to improve clinical practice.

1.1 Research questions and methodology

The proposed study will endeavour to address the following questions:

- What are the meanings ascribed to 'home' and 'being away from home'?
- What are the participants' experiences of leaving home and living in a host country?
- How has 'losing home' been experienced by immigrants while settling in their new home?
- How has the perception of 'home' changed since the participants left their homeland?
- What are the participants' experiences of feelings of homelessness?
- In what ways has 'being away from home' brought about a change in each participant's sense of self?
- What were the challenges migrants faced after losing their home?

This study employs Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to approach these questions. This choice of method is aligned with the purpose of this study to explore the participants' experiences in depth and offer a more nuanced sense of participants' insights.

One of the criticisms directed at counselling psychology is the profession's over-dependence on quantitative methods in research (Gordon, 2000). Quantitative methods are beneficial in measuring and classifying factors, but they cannot capture underlying meanings attributed to people's experiences. In

contrast, qualitative research methods can enable researchers to engage with, explore and contextualise, as well as represent, individuals' experiences (Elliott, Fischer & Rennie, 1999).

Rather than confirming previous studies or existing theories, previous researchers have used IPA to gain an understanding of themes from the participants' perspective. For instance, IPA has been used in studies on exile-related distress (Schweitzer, Greenslade, & Kagee, 2007; Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000). These have addressed significant gaps in research and practice by stressing that the participants should remain as the research focus (Elliott *et al.*, 1999); they offer valuable insights into the complexities of personal experiences, highlighting the understandings and concerns of the participants and the individual meanings assigned to their experiences.

1.2 Terminology: "Involuntary immigrants" instead of "forced immigrants"

In this study, I adopt the terminology proposed by Papadopoulos (2021) and prefer the term 'involuntary immigrant' rather than the widely used term 'forced immigrant'. Papadopoulos (2021) states that using the term 'forced immigration' moves attention away from individuals. It undervalues individuals' agency in choosing to leave their home, and it implies that the departure from home was bound to 'external forces'. Thus, it can disempower immigrants who were consciously going through a decision-making process. Papadolopus (2021) argues that the sense of dislocation of moving away from home does not only pertain to the physical locality of home: "In addition, there is another type of dislocation that often precedes it and can be considered as the initial or primary or 'internal' dislocation, occurring when the very sense or feeling of being at home is damaged" (p. 39). In line with Papadopoulos (2021), I believe using the term 'forced immigration' can reduce the richness and complexity of individual experiences associated with immigration.

In contrast, using the term 'involuntary' emphasises the internal process of deciding to dislocate. Papadopoulos (2021) suggests that using this term instead pushes us to think about how people make such a decision to flee, as well as the meanings and ambiguities involved in such choices. Papadopoulos (2021) argues that immigrants are not objects to be forced out nor objects tossed into a skip (ibid). Choosing to leave their home may not be ideal and can be a difficult decision made under duress, but they still have agency. The choice to use 'involuntary*'* acknowledges the immigrants' agency in making a choice to leave their home behind and pushes us to confront these obscurities and paradoxes as the most helpful way to address the subjective experiences of such phenomena. Papadopoulos' (2021) explanation resonates with many aspects of this study and with my participants' narratives.

1.3 Historical background

After the 2011 conflict in Syria, a civil war quickly [i]escalated, which caused the destruction of cities, the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, and injuries and suffering for millions; immigrants fled from the outbreak of violence involuntarily. Since then, Turkey has been hosting the highest number of immigrants in the world, mainly from Syria. Syrian war immigrants are not granted the legal status of 'refugee' due to the legal framework in the country. In 1961 Turkey signed the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees with 'time' and 'geographical' limitations. In 1967 the time limitations were lifted, but the geographical limitations were maintained, preventing non-European asylum seekers from eligibility for refugee status. Syrian involuntary immigrants were initially living under 'guest' status until Turkey implemented a new Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) in 2013, with additional changes in 2014. This changed Syrian war migrants' legal status from 'guest' to 'under temporary protection'. There are also unregistered Syrian migrants, as well as Syrians residing in Turkey with residency who live without temporary protection.

Whereas temporary protection facilitates certain rights for Syrian migrants - such as access to Turkey's public healthcare system, access to public education and access to a work permit - it limits the opportunity to gain a permanent settlement, leaving Syrian immigrants face-to-face with an uncertain future (Şimşek & Akçapar, 2018). This being said, in 2016, a very small number of Syrian immigrants were granted the right to apply for Turkish citizenship based on the criteria of professional qualifications. Problems around immigration status have been ongoing for 10 years, and the Turkish government still does not have a solid policy to protect immigrant populations. Syrian immigrants still live and work under difficult conditions. Due to the increasing numbers of involuntary immigrants, Turkey changed the state policy for Temporary Accommodation Camps for Syrians, which pushed many Syrians to look for jobs, education opportunities and health services in the big cities.

In certain cities, Syrian immigrants started to live in groups, which contributed to a ghettoisation process, and various instances show that Turkish people have struggled to welcome and coexist with them. Although, in reality, Syrians outside of camps have limited access to state funds, the idea that Turkey does not have regulations on involuntary immigrants accessing state funds has been used to fuel tension and resentment among many local communities in the context of Turkey's economic crisis (Esen & Binatlı, 2017). Some Turkish employers deliberately hired Syrian involuntary immigrants to avoid certain taxes and social security contributions. Even though Syrian people took the most poorly paid jobs, Syrians were blamed during the economic crisis by many who could not find employment; they have been depicted as outsiders who alter the labour market, thereby affecting wages and local unemployment. Many members of the host community also perceive Syrian people to have a tendency to commit crimes and see them as a threat to national identity (Liszkowska, 2020). Reports show that, since the Syrian conflict started, over 70 hate

campaigns against Syrian people were organised around Turkey; furthermore, many Turkish people reacted positively to this on social media (Chudziak, Marszewski, 2019). Syrian immigrants have received xenophobic hate speech and a violent, hostile attitude toward them. The Turkish state has still not taken any adequate measures to tackle these problems.

1.4 The choice of the topic

I decided to choose this dissertation topic during a Christmas break in Turkey. During a conversation about the Syrian ‘refugee crisis’ in Turkey, my friend told me about an incident she had recently experienced. On a cold and rainy night, she met a young Syrian man living on the street. She offered him some money because she did not know what more she could offer. The man refused the money and took a note out of his pocket to show to my friend. On the note, it was written in Turkish: “I am not a beggar”. After she told the story, we remained silent for a while and thought about the meaning behind this note. Her story made me recognise, once again, the centrality of our self-perceptions, the meanings we attribute to our existence and experiences, even under the toughest conditions. Sometimes, our need for acknowledgement and respect from others might be as essential as our need for shelter and food.

My interest in the problem of involuntary immigrants also has its roots in my personal history. I am originally Turkish, but I have lived in England for more than 21 years. I am a migrant myself, and I have had voluntary and involuntary immigrant friends and colleagues throughout my years in the UK. In the past, I experienced several problems and difficulties related to my immigrant status, and I also had a chance to closely observe many people in my social circle going through similar processes. I was always aware of the significance of being heard as an immigrant, a stranger in a strange land. I also recall that I wanted to see a therapist who was an immigrant because I wanted my therapist to be able to understand when I talked about “not being at home anywhere” and the difficulty of describing “home”.

As a migrant and trainee counselling psychologist, I have sought to understand where home is and what home means to me. In many instances, I have experienced being-at-home whilst simultaneously feeling the loss of a home on a personal level. These years of my personal journey to my own personal therapy, especially during my training, have made clear to me how the adverse effects of feeling *homeless* had a great impact on my awareness of my existence in this life. Encounters in my therapeutic settings showed me that existential therapy can help us to understand our own choices and take responsibility for our lives, as it did in my case. This has helped me tremendously to overcome the difficulties I had to face as a *homeless* migrant in the UK due to its focus on accepting responsibility for one's life when dealing with crises and loss and searching for meanings in the concept of being-at-home/lessness.

Due to my personal history, I have developed a sensitivity to voluntary and involuntary immigration issues, and as a therapist, I have always been interested in working with these groups. I feel that it is important to give involuntary immigrants the opportunity to make their voices heard, particularly in this time of crisis. As Blackwell (2005: 15) states, "Refugees may not all need counselling, but a significant number want it, and it is one of their human rights to have it made available to them if they do want it." Despite my enthusiasm to work on this subject as a therapist and researcher, I found the process quite challenging. I remember a dream after my first interview took me to a place in which I questioned my position: what if I find myself in a similar position? I dreamt that Turkey was at war, and I felt guilty for not speculating about the outcome of the war. I worried about people that I loved and blamed myself for not being able to help them to escape from Turkey. I also felt guilty about living in England and being safe. Choosing this topic led me to reflect on my place in this country as well as my place away from my home country.

My experience of living in the UK for 21 years has had an immense effect on my worldview and my sense of self. Prior to this, as a child and a teenager, I had to change cities, schools, and houses every other year due to my parents' jobs. This experience of being a stranger almost everywhere led me to question the concepts of 'home' and 'homelessness'. For a long while, I tried to find out where 'home' was. I still question and wonder if I have ever felt 'at home' in any place. On a broader scope, I have been led to question what it means to be 'at home', and how it relates to other life events and our worldviews.

Moreover, I never imagined myself going through loss and grief before I chose the topic to study loss of home. During my training and the writing process of my thesis, I lost my father to cancer... I felt homeless during my grieving process and lost my homely sense of being at home. I remember my resistance to visiting my home country, and I felt that nothing could replace how I felt when I was at home while he was alive. When I visited my parent(s), I did not feel at home. It was a moment in which I realised that *home* was not the same anymore. So home was not home, even though its structure and other people existed; his absence was so real. This made me realise that we cannot predict the future and what life will bring up to us.

In my case, the experience of losing my father reshaped and changed my life forever. Despite the difficulty in facing up to this, it allowed me to see life from a different perspective. I confronted death, loss, and my life choices in a way that led me to feel ungrounded. I came to question the meaning of life and my relationship with it. The loss of my dad changed my understanding of my therapeutic work with my clients and my relation to them. I believe one of the inevitable life crises I had to face in the midst of training allowed me to question my true self, an interrogation I avoided engaging in for a long time. Questioning my choices in life helped me to take responsibility for my postponed life. It allowed me to take this space for myself to look deeper until I professionally and personally saw the light at the end of the tunnel. I had never

imagined that my participants' stories would resonate with me so much while I listened to the interviews. Unfortunately, I am now closer to where they stand.

1.5 Practical rationale for the study

Definitions of the legal status of involuntary immigrants regulate their access to rights and benefits, so these definitions play a crucial role in areas that are fundamental for integration, such as: employment, access to higher education, social services and healthcare (Waters & Pineau, 2015). However, such legal definitions and categorisations do not provide us with an understanding of *what it is like to be* an involuntary immigrant in existential terms. Being-in-the-world and with others, looking for meaning or beginning to make sense of their lives outside their home, making life-changing decisions, and taking the responsibility to survive or escape from a threat are concepts that can be explored closely from an existential point of view in ways that can make valuable contributions to both research and practice.

At a time when the number of people leaving their homeland behind is reaching unprecedented levels, it is vital to understand the meaning of "homelessness" and its psychological implications. This study focuses on participants who have already chosen to leave their home and have moved to the host country. I shall not be investigating the process that participants go through in arriving at the decision to dislocate. Rather, this study is an exploration of the process once they are dislocated and are starting to understand what *home* and *homelessness* means to them. It is hoped that this study will help me and perhaps other mental health workers develop our understanding of clients to improve our practice by offering a perspective that reflects the experience of involuntary migrants who go through life crises.

1.6 The structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 begins with a brief overview of existing literature on this subject. It reveals how, for "refugee studies" in psychology fields, and Syrian "refugee studies", in particular, Trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorders are the dominant ground. Because most refugee studies focus on trauma-related responses instead of the subjective experiences of involuntary immigrants, they can fail to acknowledge the human ability to process their experiences differently than in diagnosed trauma. This creates a huge space in this field of psychology research. To address this gap, I explore how, from an existential point of view, trauma can be seen as a life crisis - the disruption of the normal course of life events; for involuntary immigrants, the crisis begins at their home. I then focus on how the processes of overcoming crises have been studied from an

existential perspective. The last section of the literature review addresses the definitions of *home* presented in prominent theories and outlines qualitative research studies that have been conducted in this area.

Chapter 3 explores the rationale for choosing a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative method as the most suitable methodology for this research. I explain the selection of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, then outline its philosophical foundations and its application to the practice. This chapter also includes a section that explains the interview procedure and how this research was carried out. I conclude by succinctly discussing the validity of qualitative research and the ethical considerations of this study.

In Chapter 4, I present the main themes and subthemes that emerged from the 8 semi-structured interviews I conducted with Syrian war immigrants living in Istanbul, Turkey. Each subtheme is presented with quotes to give the reader a sense of the interviews. Space is left for the reader to interpret and make their own sense of meanings.

Chapter 5 discusses and interprets the results in light of existing empirical studies and within a relevant conceptual framework.

Chapter 6 presents a summary of my key findings. Subsequently, I evaluate the extent to which this study expands and/or challenges the current understanding of involuntary migrants' experiences. In the Reflexivity section, I reflect on my impact on the study as the researcher and provide a deeper reflection regarding the research process. This section also discusses the implications of this study for the clinical practice of counselling in the psychology field. Finally, I conclude by providing recommendations for future research and reflecting on the limitations of this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Studies in psychology and psychotherapy literature on involuntary immigrants

Until now, most studies on involuntary immigrants largely focused on trauma and trauma-related mental health issues (Porter & Haslam, 2005; Sinnerbrink, Silove, Field, Steel, & Manicavasagar, 1997; Turner, Bowie, Dunn, Shapo, & Yule, 2003; Bemak & Chung, 2000; Marsella, Bornemann, Ekblad, & Orley, 1994; Nicholl & Thompson, 2004; van der Veer, 1998). This literature generally makes a link between pre-displacement experiences and deteriorated mental health during and after relocation (Silove, Steel, McGrory, & Drobny, 1999; Smith, Perrin, Yule, & Rabe-Hesketh, 2001; Steel, Silove, Phan, & Bauman, 2002; Terheggen, Stroebe, & Kleber, 2001; Momartin, Silove, Manicavasagar, & Steel, 2003), since involuntary immigrants are often subjected to multiple losses and violence before leaving their home/land.

These studies also show that involuntary immigrants' current life circumstances and lack of support in host countries create additional stress factors (Gorst-Unsworth & Goldenberg, 1998), especially if they are exposed to difficult living conditions that reinforce their traumatic experiences (Steel *et al.*, 2011). Harris and Maxwell (2020), among others, point out how involuntary immigrants are consequently at high risk of suffering from a wide range of physical and mental health problems.

Such findings create an area of concern regarding how to address the increasing mental health needs of displaced people who are traumatised due to war (Schulz *et al.*, 2006), often by experiencing multiple losses (Nicholl & Thompson, 2004; van der Veer, 1998). The diagnosis and treatment of PTSD has been the focus of many trauma-related approaches. For instance, based on their own experimental study findings, Nickerson, Bryant, Silove, & Steel (2011) argue that there are effective psychological treatments for involuntary immigrants diagnosed with PTSD.

Studies that concentrate on difficulties in the procedures of diagnosis and therapy can also be covered in this literature. Wainrib (2006) argues that severe psychological responses by involuntary immigrants can manifest in the form of emotional or physical problems at any time as a result of exposure to traumatic events; for some people, these issues can last a lifetime. Yet, as Harris and Maxwell (2000) emphasise, the number of reported "mental health problems" should not be taken as a true representation of the actual scale of stress experienced by individuals; they argue that involuntary immigrants tend to report mostly physical problems rather than the emotional difficulties they experience in response to psychological distress (Van der Veer, 1992).

Research on pre/post-displacement trauma factors and responses dominate the psychology and counselling literature on involuntary migrants. Yet there is also a line of thought which notes that such studies can fail to acknowledge the immigrants' capability to emotionally process even the most frightful experiences in meaningful ways, a capability which can be very existential in nature.

While several other studies (Van der Veer, 1998; Papadopoulos, 2007) categorise involuntary immigrants' experiences under PTSD in accordance with the psychiatric DSM-IV, Papadopoulos and Hildebrand (1997) deviate from conventional approaches in this field and express the need to develop a model to *normalise* the lives of those who have been affected by war. Papadopoulos (2002, 2007), who has been studying involuntary immigrants' experiences for an extensive amount of time, tries to draw attention to psychosocial descriptions of these experiences. He emphasises that, in the majority of cases, people who think of these immigrants almost always associate them with their trauma rather than trying to understand what *home* means to them. According to Papadopoulos (2002), losing one's home should be considered as the main common point in the experience for all displaced people rather than the trauma. He argues that understanding what *home* means for involuntary immigrants can help us develop approaches for effective therapeutic care through an interactive process.

Changes in the approaches used in studies with involuntary immigrants illustrate this point. For instance, it is significant that a widely known scholar in this field, Papadopoulos (2006), changed his perspective from psychoanalytic to humanistic. This shift can indicate the importance of understanding involuntary immigrants' subjective experiences rather than pathologising the human condition. Existential themes and elements guide the theoretical perspective in his latest studies, which are markedly different from his earlier work. Papadopoulos (2006) warns us about the risk of failing to understand immigrants' lived experiences; he explains how mental health services can substantially help improve their conditions in the host country *as long as* the professionals involved in these services have a deep understanding of their experiences.

In this respect, Papadopoulos (2006) sees a therapist's role as providing 'therapeutic witnessing'. The nature of this approach is not to question but to listen as a witness to the involuntary immigrants' experience. In a similar vein, White and Epston (1990) stress the potential of the narrative as a therapeutic tool. Exploring the personal story, they argue, might lead to empowerment and might prevent us from falling into the trap of using pathologising approaches. This study addresses the aforementioned literature gap by primarily concerning understanding their subjective lived experiences by listening to them as a witness.

2.2 Syrian war immigrants in the literature

Despite being limited in number, research on Syrian war immigrants have explored a wide range of issues, covering topics such as settlement and integration (İçduygu & Şimşek, 2019); Syrian refugee rights (Tunç, 2015); housing problems (İçduygu & Şimşek, 2016); finding shelter (Kirişçi, 2014); Syrian war immigrants' access to health care services (Yavuz, 2015; İçduygu & Şimşek, 2016); accessing education (Berti, 2015); residency and settlement permit (Kaya, 2016); employment problems (Taşar, 2018; Çetin, 2016); and citizenship (Simsek & Koser Akcapar, 2018).

Like the general mental health literature on involuntary immigrants, the literature on Syrian war immigrants has a trauma-dominated focus, and existing studies on the mental health of Syrian immigrants mostly rely on quantitative methods. For instance, Steel *et al.*'s (2009) study on meta-analysis with 80,000 involuntary immigrants found that PTSD and depression were the highest commonly studied mental health issues. In another study with Syrian involuntary immigrants who showed PTSD, signs were often presented with somatisation indications (Barkil-Oteo *et al.*, 2018). Sijbrandij *et al.* (2017) offered evidence-based scalable programs for Syrian involuntary immigrants to provide information for testing and adapting to various modalities in European and other countries hosting them.

In this context, recent research reveals that 33.5 % of Syrian immigrants in Turkey suffer from war-related traumatic events (Alpak *et al.*, 2015; Nassan *et al.,* 2015). Existing research has also revealed that Syrian immigrants who live in refugee camps in Turkey use a variety of coping strategies, such as finding comfort in their faith and reaching out for support (El-Khani *et al.*, 2017), to normalise their new and highly unfamiliar living circumstances. According to El-Khani et al. (2017), this helps them accept the ongoing uncertainty they have to live with and thus provides a sense of relief.

Another important study is Ersahin's research (2020), which reveals that there are positive developments among Syrian immigrants living in Turkey in relation to PTSD. Ersahin (2020) conducted her study with a large number of Syrian immigrants to understand and identify the most beneficial psychological interventions. She found that the most common coping strategy for survivors of war was to turn to religion. Ersahin's findings offer valuable insights in discovering channels for growth.[1]'[1]

[1] Nevertheless, her study is also limited in terms of providing a deeper understanding of individual experiences or differences. Data collection in that study was conducted through an assistant who interpreted the responses of some Syrian immigrants to fill in the survey on their behalf. Moreover, there is a conflict of interest, since the research was conducted by a state university in Turkey, and this might have created pressure for the Syrian immigrants in terms of giving more positive answers about the state rather than being open and honest about the mistreatments they might have experienced in the host country as war immigrants, experiences which could detrimentally impact affecting their mental health.

It has been reported that Syrian war immigrants in Turkey are eligible to receive free access to mental health care services provided for people with severe psychiatric disorders (Alatas, Karaoglan, Arslan, & Yanik, 2009; Al-Krenawi, 2005). Most involuntary immigrant patients have prescribed medication, but they cannot easily access talking therapies. A large-scale treatment was delivered to Syrian immigrants in Turkey using the EMDR approach, which was found to significantly reduce depression symptoms (Acarturk *et al.*, 2015, 2016). However, due to Turkey's limited number of trained psychotherapists in public services, Syrian immigrants are found to still be in need of help, either from psychiatrists or EMDR therapists. This situation is exacerbated by other factors, such as the language barrier and distance to mental health services, which limit immigrants' access to well-being support facilities.

Furthermore, qualitative phenomenological research exploring involuntary immigrants' experiences of migration is scarce, and none of the few exceptional studies empowers Syrian immigrants living in Turkey, a country that hosts a considerable number of Syrian immigrants who were displaced by the war. Nevertheless, despite the shortage, existing qualitative studies have made important contributions to our understanding of the subjective experiences of Syrian immigrants. For example, Utrzan and Wieling's study (2020), which focuses on the settlement and post-settlement lives of Syrian immigrants living in the US, reveals that one of the most common mental health problems amongst the Syrian involuntary immigrant communities is grief. This validates the findings and conclusions of previous studies that highlighted how, in addition to bereavement, grief can be an outcome of the loss of a home, cultural identity, and relationships (Hassan *et al.*, 2016).

Against this background, a recent qualitative study by Arvanitis and Yelland (2019) on young Syrian immigrants' narratives about the meaning of *home* demonstrates how young involuntary immigrant children living in a refugee centre in Greece persistently reconstruct their home through personal narration. Through their study, Arvanitis and Yelland (2019) try to understand what children's lives look like in unfamiliar places and how they make places home. To this end, they use a narrative methodology as an effective means to help, presenting involuntary immigrant children's stories from a first-person account. They show that young immigrant children persistently reconstruct their home based on their personal stories. In this regard, Arvanitis and Yelland (2019) argue that telling the story of how they experienced leaving home and arriving at the unfamiliar in their new life in Greece enabled these young Syrians to create new and more acceptable self-identities, and thus it helped them to gain empowerment, as well as a sense of control over their life.

Similarly, Atari-Khan *et al.*'s (2021) qualitative study, which explores the mental health problems experienced by Syrian involuntary immigrants in the US, shows that, despite terrible traumatic experiences, Syrian involuntary immigrants who migrated to the US demonstrate extreme resilience in adapting to their

new life. These findings align with previous research suggesting how being part of a community significantly helps involuntary immigrants build resilience (Nuwayhid *et al*., 2011; Somasundaram, 2010). Likewise, another study exploring the coping strategies of Syrian involuntary immigrant women in Jordan reveals that having a support network constituted of other Syrian involuntary immigrants with similar experiences and keeping in touch with family members in Syria helps those women to create a powerful coping mechanism for themselves (Alzoubi, Al-Smadi & Gougazeh, 2019).

In short, existing studies on involuntary immigrants have made huge contributions to our understanding of their experiences, but there are also significant gaps in the literature due to the shortage of studies that shed light on individual experiences. Moreover, there are limitations in exceptions that do exist, which largely formulate these experiences through theories of pathology. From an existentialist stance, it can be argued that the main problem with categorising and anthologising these experiences is that this takes external events as the main criteria to assess and ignores the necessity to make sense of the individual's point of view.

2.3 Problematising the existing conceptualisation of trauma in the literature

The notion of *trauma* in the literature is often regarded as a negative phenomenon that needs to be treated. This conceptualisation has led many studies to start with a particular assumption about the need for treatment and to focus on the assessment of different treatment methods. It leaves us with a very narrowly focused view, a limited perspective of trauma. Despite their contributions, these accounts have significant limitations and shared weaknesses. For instance, as Jacobsen (2006) highlights, viewing a crisis as an abnormality "runs the risk, albeit unwittingly, of reducing the multifaceted nature and quality of human life" (ibid, p. 3) into a relatively more simplistic phenomenon.

This picture then begs the question: if trauma is not something that should be cured, removed, or fixed, then what alternative lens can we use to understand it? Existentialist approaches assert that we can look at 'trauma' without necessarily pathologising it. This perspective rather starts with and focuses on understanding individual experiences of 'what is to be a human being'. It advocates handling the issue with great care, putting particular emphasis on how we can avoid a pathologising approach to trauma that seeks ways 'to cure' the individual. Instead, it aims to "*explore, describe and clarify in order to try to understand the human predicament*" (van Deurzen, 1997, p.3).

From an existential point of view, the concept of *trauma* is, first and foremost, a form of *crisis*. Crises are considered to be integral parts of life and being alive (Bollnow, 1959). We will all encounter and learn to deal with these crises sooner or later. As I will be drawing on this perspective while reflecting on the

limitations of studies that pathologise trauma, I will refer to traumatic events as '*life crises'* from this point onwards in this thesis. Next, I explain why existentialism offers a richer perspective to study trauma as a form of life crisis.

2.4 Existentialist perspective

According to Joseph (2010), it is common for people who have experienced traumatic events to have disturbing thoughts and images, along with avoidance, increasing arousal and emotional numbing. In this regard, it is argued that PTSD is not a natural term but a social construct that pathologises natural responses to traumatic events (Maddux *et al.*, 2004, cited in Joseph, 2010); a PTSD diagnosis, made as a result of the medicalisation of trauma, obscures the existential nature of trauma responses and inhibits the process through which individuals can deal with their emotions in meaningful ways.

Treating trauma can be a complex biological, psychological, and social endeavour that involves working with different modalities over time to reach for recovery. Corbett and Milton (2011) argue that understanding trauma recovery from this angle invites practitioners to acknowledge the characteristics of their clients and consider the range of other contributions made to trauma therapy, including those that have previously been disregarded due to a medicalised approach. In relation to understanding and working with involuntary immigrants, practitioners are also faced with making difficult decisions about which approach resonates most for the clients and which therapeutic modalities serve their needs best. In this sense, existential theory and practice offers a valuable alternative to pathologising perspectives.

Existential therapy can create a space for unpacking some fundamental existential issues that are inseparable from human reality, and it provides a means of doing, so that is based on the client's perspective or worldview. The existential therapeutic spectrum consists of approaches such as Existential Analysis, Existential-Humanistic Therapy, Dasein Analysis and Logotherapy (Iacovou, 2009). Unlike trauma-focused modalities, existential therapy does not pathologise the client; instead, "it merely seeks to *explore*, *describe* and *clarify* in order to understand the human predicament" (van Deurzen, 1997, p.3, emphasis added).

Jacobsen (2006) conceptualises *crisis* [2]as having three dimensions: loss, adversity and the opening of existence. The individual in crisis loses something, faces adversity, and has the opportunity to define his or her life at a deeper level. Jacobsen's (2006) concept of 'crisis as loss' can involve direct and physical losses of a specific object or person that the client subsequently misses, resulting in grief. Jacobsen observes that,

[2] A term sometimes used interchangeably with trauma (du Plock, 2010)

when something is lost, so is a part of oneself that was attached to that person or thing. Bollnow (1966) makes a similar connection when discussing bereavement, claiming: *"...the bereaved does not inhabit his or her world in the same way as before. Therefore, the death of a loved one is a loss of existence. The individual shrinks. The death of a loved one is a piece of one's own death"* (p.66, cited in Jacobsen, 2006, p.44). This sense of loss, whether induced by a bereavement or altered circumstances resulting from trauma, can be perceived as both an unfamiliar environment for the individual to inhabit and an intensified impression of one's own mortality.

As aforementioned, there are different descriptions of trauma. Some, like Jacobsen (2006), see it as a 'crisis as loss', which refers to a lost sense of meaning in life and a loss of a worldview as an opening of existence; others view it as 'psychosocial transitions' that people use to reconstruct their way of seeing the world and the way they live in it (Parkes, 1971, cited in Corbett & Milton, 2011, p.101).

2.5 The process of getting through the crises

Crisis usually brings a variety of feelings, including, but not limited to: anger, grief, despair, anxiety and/or shame. It is important to identify and acknowledge those feelings to be able to accept them. This constitutes an important part of being human, and so it needs to be recognised that it is also part of ourselves. What Jacobsen (2006) points out is very important for getting through crises: it is neither reasonable to ask a person to release their feelings, nor should the feelings be taken out of our body; most of our feelings are embodied in us, so we need to be able to contain and shelter them, make them our own, and live with them.

In this vein, Corbett and Milton (2011) suggest that the work of du Plock (2010), who cites Jacobsen (2006), can be considered as a guide to working therapeutically with trauma by considering it as a form of crisis. Here, three aspects of the process of getting through the crises are emphasised: 1) feelings and moods, 2) reintegration and 3) reconstruction. When an individual is confronted with a crisis, a process is set in motion.

With regard to *feelings and moods*, van der Kolk (1989) and van Deurzen-Smith (1988) similarly characterise the most common feelings that emerge after trauma as circular experiences; feelings appear in a circular movement. van Deurzen-Smith (1988) says that each mood has a destructive and constructive side, and the client must experience and explore those feelings to understand how to work with them, thereby becoming accustomed to taking them as an integral part of life. However, du Plock (2010) suggests that it is not easy to go through certain feelings, especially when the person is experiencing trauma, as their defence systems are activated in ways that cannot be contained by the individual consciousness. In this vein, Boss

(1994) emphasises that an individual's need for a sense of being alive helps them be more reflective. This allows them to meet with the world more freely and stay present.

du Plock (2010) highlights how there can be difficulties in the *reintegration* state; some individuals experience trauma that consciousness cannot contain because of frightful experiences. Moreover, Spinelli (1994) explains how traumatic experiences are stored in two different compartments of consciousness: the more difficult and painful memories are placed in one compartment, whilst the positive memories are allocated to the other. Therapy is considered a means to provide a safe space in which clients can recall and explore these memories. This process of reintegration enables the subsequent repairing process to take place.

In the process of *reconstruction*, therapy can create space for individuals who have experienced a trauma/crisis to build a more positive interpretation of the events. People often react to a traumatic life crisis through a sense of meaninglessness. It is fundamental to find meaning in life. If one can construct meaning in crises with life's own forces, he/she can better reassert themselves into life. To illustrate, research on cancer patients has shown that confronting existential problems can lead people to experience something positive in their illness (Jacobsen, 2006). Reflecting on these findings, Jacobsen (2006) argues that the meaning people see in their illness is often a strong personal reminder that one may want to, and/or indeed *is able* to, change their life. Having survived a crisis and found meaning in it, the individual may discover, learn, and become aware of their life and what is meaningful in their life more intensely. Therefore, constructing meaning in life through crises is closely associated with finding one's true self and learning to be/become more true to one's self (Jacobsen, 2006).

During life crises, people go through loss, grief, changes in their sense of self, uncertainty about their relationships, a sense of life as meaningless, and many other destabilising emotions and shifts in perspective. I believe that involuntary immigrant experiences can also be seen from a crisis perspective that allows us to interpret their subjective experiences as part of human existence.

These first two sections have revealed the gaps in the trauma-dominated literature on involuntary immigrants and discussed why the life crisis approach is a suitable replacement for a trauma-centred framework. The next section will explore definitions of *home* in the existing literature.

2.6 Home in the literature

> *The real secret of the ruby slippers is not that 'there's no place like home', but rather that there is no longer any such place as home; except, of course, for the home we make, or the homes that are made for us, in Oz: which is anywhere, and everywhere, except the place from which we began.*

Salman Rushdie

While conducting my research, I asked myself the following question: "*What does 'home' mean for people*?" This led me to search for a definition of *home,* and I soon realised that this is quite a challenging notion to define. There is a diverse range of multidisciplinary research that shows how *home* is associated with many different contexts and has a vague, ambiguous meaning which should not be taken for granted (Lawrence, 1995). Studies on the meaning and the experience of *home* are abundant within the disciplines of anthropology, architecture, philosophy, and psychology (Mallett, 2004). To illustrate, according to Sixsmith (1986), three modes of experience should be considered in relation to *home*: 1) the physical, 2) the social, 3) and the personal home.

I will now explore this crucial term in more depth to highlight how *home* has contradictory and sometimes conflicting meanings. Equally importantly, it has multiple and dynamic meanings; it can refer to different layers and aspects of life experiences and changes constantly as one goes through different life experiences. This investigation will reveal that the meanings assigned to this word do not only refer to a physical dwelling; rather, *home* is a more complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon (Wardaugh, 1999; Somerville, 1992).

2.6.1 Material and physical aspects of home

The concept of *home* has been studied as an aspect of a physical building (Moore 2000), as a material concept (Despre, 1991), and as a meaning attached to a structure (Rapport, 1995; Blunt & Dowling, 2006). *Home* can refer to the material features of the domestic space (Lawrence, 1995; see also Altman & Gauvain, 1981). In this regard, Fox (2002) argues that *the physical reality* of home is a fundamental feature of people's everyday lives; it provides for families the basis for everyday life and safety, as a place for privacy and a sense of permanence. However, drawing on his empirical findings, Sixsmith (1986) argues that the *physical structure* of a home does not only refer to its architecture; it also embraces human space.

2.6.2 Socio-spatial context of home

Home has also been studied as a spatial organisation of cultural and historical context. Giddens (1984) argues that it is 'simultaneously, and *indivisibly,* a spatial and a social unit of 'interaction'' (p.82). Drawing on this definition, we can infer that home, as a socio-spatial unit, represents the combination of a physical structure and social interaction. Some studies consider home a spatial facet (Griffiths, 2001; Mallet, 2004), such as a house, town, city, country, and neighbourhood. According to Blunt and Dowling (2006), however, home is where we hold social relations - not only relations with the family but also with other groups, such as friends or members of a commune - e.g., a group of monks or nuns, etc. In this socio-spatial context,

home represents a fundamental boundary between society and the individual (Mallet, 2004). Saunders and Williams (1988) view *home* as the interaction between the place and social relationships. Their work, however, is criticised by Mallet (2004) on the grounds that they do not suggest any theoretical clarification of the mutually constitutive relationship between the physical and the social.

On the other hand, several studies define *home* as a social and a cultural unit (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Duncan, 1981, 1985; Lawrence, 1987; Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 1991; Sixsmith & Knowles, 1996; Pearson & Richards, 1994). To illustrate, Moore (2000) stresses that understanding the concept of *home* needs to be drawn together from personal and culturally significant factors. Other studies suggest viewing home as a portrayal of an individual's personality and their connection to their society and culture (Altman & Gauvain, 1981). These accounts validate Despres' (1991) conclusion based on his critical review of the literature from 1974 to 1989, which stressed that a more comprehensive description of *home* should include psychological, social, and cultural meanings.

2.6.3 Home as a relationship with self and others

Home can refer to the relationship with oneself, others, and the family. Homes are places where we are born, raised, nurtured, and finally move away from when the time comes (Bowlby *et al.*, 1997). *Home* is the first place in which we start dwelling, and it is a place to hold a sense of stability (Bachelard, 1969). In other words, *home* provides a place for self-growth. In this regard, Bachelard (1969) suggests seeing *home* as a space for the preservation of self-identity. It can be a place to escape from conflicts in our lives, or it can be the place to be 'at one' with ourselves (Tueido, 2009; p 2). From this perspective, Tuedio states that "*while home space offers protective insulation against the disruptions of the unhomely, it cannot secure the boundaries of home against the constant menace of displacement"* (p. 5). Yet the question is: how do we make home a home space? For Tueido (2009), we organise our home around our relationships with others. *Home* becomes a contextual frame of orientation in support of interpersonal relationships.

According to Blunt and Varley (2004), *home* is imbued with meanings, experiences, emotions, and connections that lie at the core of human life for personal development. Beyond a legal concept, it is the centre of personal and social growth (Fox, 2002). From a developmental perspective, it can be seen as a holding space where values and views gained in the outer world are "mirrored, practised and integrated" in a way that provides a foundation for personal growth (Papadopoulos, 2001). Furthermore, Giddens (1990) argues that the sense of constancy in one's social and material world provides individuals with a platform for identity development and self-actualisation. In this sense, *home* is a place where one can carry out daily activities and gain control away from the outside world's inquiry (Dupuis & Thorns, 1998). Moreover, *home* can be viewed as the reflection of one's sense of self (Despres, 1991), which mirrors who we are.

Based on the wide-ranging conceptualisations of this complex, multidimensional notion and its varying associations presented by existing studies (Despres, 1991; Moore, 2000; Blunt & Dowling, 2006), we can infer that *home* should perhaps be seen as a never-ending process of meaning-making, especially once people step outside of their home and move into other homely or not homely places.

2.6.4 Home as heaven and hell

In much of the literature, *home* is termed as heaven where people can find refuge and relax (Moore, 2007). Some studies suggest that *home* offers security (Dovey, 1985); freedom and control (Darke, 1994); and creativity and rejuvenation (Bachelard, 1969; Cooper, 1976). For Bachelard (1969), *home* represents the 'protected intimacy' of people's dreams because dwelling places are re-lived as daydreams, where *home* remains the same all the time. In this vein, Tuedio (2009, p. 3) suggests that *home* represents the comfort zone for living in safety and security; he asks: "*what else is home, if not a safe, secure place to seek shelter from the storms of life*?"

Some assumptions embedded in these conceptualisations create a dilemma. *Home* can entail dualistic opposing connotations, such as: public and private, comfortable and uncomfortable, safe and unsafe, inside and outside. It may be a space for peace, safety, and comfort; it can also be a place of anxiety, insecurity, and emotional atonement. This begs another question: *Can people feel 'at home' then if they cannot find safety and security in such places?*

Research criticises the idea of *home* as heaven because homes can represent the opposite for many people (Jones, 2000; Wardaugh, 1999). For numerous women and children, the home is where they are subjected to violence and various forms of abuse (Wardaugh, 1996; Goldsack, 1999), where they might feel 'homeless at home' (p.7). Therefore, *home* cannot be taken for granted as only a positive place for daydreaming, as Bachelard (1969) suggests.

Well, then, what is *home*? What meanings do we assign to *home*? In this limited space, I have tried to demonstrate that *home* can be anything, anywhere. It can be here and now; it can be somewhere or something we hold on to from the past or somewhere or something we dream of for the future. It can be static or fluid. It can be seen as a form of interaction with other people and with oneself. It can also be a space for personal growth, identity, socio-cultural context, building, structure, house, dwelling place or perhaps even a combination of all. If we consider what it means to feel *at home*, we find that the feelings can be associated with safety, danger, comfort, harassment, intimacy, and myriad other personal connotations.

This brief investigation into the many different ways that home can be described, explained, and explored shows that, due to its complex and multidimensional nature, it is essential to conduct more studies that explore individuals' experiences of *home* from first-person accounts.

2.6.5 Phenomenological concept of home

Phenomenological literature has established that understanding people's feelings and relations with places is fundamental. Phenomenology focuses on the ontological nature of being human by studying how individuals discover things on their own terms (Husserl, 1970; Seamon, 1982; Seamon, 1987). Places are part of human existence and are not separable from our everyday experiences. Therefore, the philosophy of phenomenology provides a basis for understanding the *"essential nature of human existence and the world in which it enfolds"* (Seamon, 1982, p. 123).

According to Tuan (1974), who explores the way people attach meanings to the places in which they dwell, *home* goes beyond one single entity of a place, a building, or a particular environment. This is in line with Heidegger's (1971) view that dwelling is not merely an activity that we engage in; rather, it is the way of existing in the world.

In this vein, Heidegger (1971) defines *home* as our ability to dwell here and there. For him, *dwelling* is the necessary characteristic of *Dasein*, which requires a wish to *belong* to an environment, to be at home. Dwelling cannot be separable from the culture, building, cultivation, construction, or architecture of the places we inhabit. Heidegger (1971) states that dwelling in the world "remains for man's everyday experience that which is from the outset 'habitual'—we inhabit it" (p. 349). Hence, for Heidegger, the notion of *home* is conceptualised in relation to how human beings live their life, which depends on the ways in which human beings are able to dwell in the world.

Phenomenological research on *home* has a keen interest in the experience of being at home, not as a physical location, but rather in relation to the nature of individuals' experiences at home (Gurney, 1997; Jackson, 1995; Ingold, 1995). So, it is not necessarily related to what people think about the *home* concept, but rather it is how people *feel* about home. As a source of inspiration for phenomenological inquiry, Mallet's study (2004) highlights Jackson's book, *At Home in the World* (1995), which recommends focusing on the experiences of being in the world without attempting to overemphasise the role of society, culture, and person. He describes "how in different societies, people work - in reality and through illusion, alone and in concert with others – to shape the course of their own lives" (p. 123), and "home is grounded less in a place and more in the activity that occurs in the place" (p. 148, in Mallet, 2004 p.70).

In conclusion, from a phenomenological standpoint, *home* is not a place, people, or specific objects; rather, it is a term used to communicate the activity achieved by people or places.

2.7 Immigration and Home: Different Dimensions

There are various different meanings attached to *home* as well as *homelessness* within involuntary immigrant populations, and we must acknowledge that involuntary immigrants should not be seen as 'out of place' individuals; they have multiple bonds constructed between their homeland and the new place they may call home (Al-Ali & Koser, 2002: 6).

According to Taylor (2009), four fundamental dimensions should be considered when defining home: 1) the material dimension, 2) the spatial dimension, 3) the temporal dimension, and 4) the dimension of relational homes.

2.7.1 Material, Spatial, Temporal and Relational Homes

The first dimension, namely the *material* home, refers to the 'sensory nature of home through tastes, scents, and an embodied experience of landscape' (Taylor, 2009: p. 6). It is related to food, smell, and soil. It includes everyday routines immigrants used to undertake back at home, e.g., where they cooked with family members and ate in the landscape to which they were accustomed. Memories like these can create a yearning to return home for migrants.

The *spatial* home refers to the physical home; building; and places, such as cities, towns, or villages. According to Massey (1992), scholars traditionally understood *home* as a fixed geographical space that has unique and unchanging characteristics. Spatiality is often associated with the physical places in which people are rooted. By leaving their spatial home, people feel uprooted or homeless, as in the case of involuntary immigrants. Taylor (2009) points out here how involuntary immigrants maintain a strong bond with their physical home because of the loss they experienced due to having to move from their home involuntarily. However, Malkki (1992) disagrees and argues that involuntary immigrants have a chance to build new lives and a new idea of *home* over time.

The third dimension is the *temporal* home. It implies the past, present, and future spatiotemporal references for an involuntary immigrant's home. It is similar to the human life cycle, where *home* is not perceived as linear but rather a continuous and repetitive phenomenon (Taylor, 2009). Displaced people's involuntary movement creates uncertainty and loss of position; they live at a temporal distance from their past. This results in an inability to foresee if they will ever be able to return home in the future. For this reason, involuntary immigrants keep their memories alive by reflecting on the past. Unfortunately, this

results in a sense of feeling distant from the people they left behind (Feuchtwang, 2003). In this regard, Al-Rasheed (1994) emphasises that the myth of returning home forces individuals to deal with the ambiguity of staying in liminal spaces.

Lastly, the fourth dimension highlighted in Taylor's (2009) framework is the *relational* home. It refers to social interactions among family, as well as the social and economic relationships that occur in everyday life. Due to their mobility, involuntary immigrants experience the loss of their social relations, which affects the economic and social status of the individuals. According to Cernea (1966), this results in alienation and social displacement, which is a marker of poverty (Taylor, 2009).

2.7.2 Home as interrelated realms

From a psychological perspective, perhaps the most common shared experience for all involuntary immigrants is the loss of home. According to Papadopoulos (2002), home is the centre of where physical and metaphorical meanings are contained and intertwined at three basic levels: 1) home allows space for individuals to grow and develop within the family; 2) home can regulate this relationship, as well as conflicts arising in it; 3) home can serve as a mediator between the society, culture, and the outer world. Therefore, *home,* for Papadopoulos (2002) is a mirror image of family connections, as well as the larger society and the sense of self.

2.7.3 Home as a safe place

Miller's (2002) study on involuntary immigrants in relation to the concept of *home* supports conceptualisations that link it to feeling emotionally supported and safe in protected spaces. This reflects the importance of bearing in mind psychological and psychical safety when studying involuntary immigrants (Silove, 1999). Loss of home is a highly complex notion for involuntary immigrants who still live in unpredictable and volatile environments (Miller, 2002). In line with the view of Miller (2002) and Silove (1999), Papadopoulos (2002) concludes that *home* should be conceptualised as a secure place of sanctuary where involuntary immigrants can ground themselves.

2.7.4 Phenomenological perspectives on migration and home and homelessness

Madison (2006) provides valuable insights regarding the notion of migration from a phenomenological point of view through developing the concept of "existential migration". Madison makes a clear distinction between voluntary and involuntary migration, and he considers the choice to leave home and become a foreigner in a new environment as a deliberate decision. His work sheds light on motivations behind leaving home, such as seeking greater possibilities for self-actualisation in foreign lands and exploring foreign

cultures to understand one's identity. Thus, he emphasises the positive aspects of 'losing home' and conceptualises 'voluntary migration' as 'existential migration'. In doing so, he draws from Heidegger's ontology framework, *Unheimlichkeit* (unfamiliar/uncanny), to view voluntary immigration through a lens that offers an alternative understanding of homelessness as a human condition.

Uncanniness, a dreadful, unpleasant feeling of angst, is the worry of being alive, which reminds us that "what anxiety is anxious about is Being-in-the-world itself" (Madison, 2006, p. 232). The experience of angst gives a chance for human beings to step away from the illusion of being-at-home. When familiarity falls, *Dasein* becomes an individual experience of being-in-the-world, existentially 'not-at-home'. Despite its essentialness, uncanniness is appeased or covered when living in accordance with the conventions of society. From this perspective, "home" is a familiar environment "which offers a 'tranquilised self-assurance', a feeling of being-at-home, in which life is obvious, unremarkable, and taken-for-granted" (Madison, 2006). According to Madison (2006), leaving home and what is familiar behind to confront the strange and the unfamiliar brings the awareness of groundless dimensions of life; as such, it can provide new possibilities for self-awareness, openness and authenticity. In this sense, it is not pathology but an essential facet of our being, the nature of our consciousness. Thus, from a Heideggerian perspective, he concludes that not-being-at-home can be seen as an existential opportunity to find belonging in the world generally.

Although Madison's (2006) conceptualisation primarily concerns the voluntary migrants who have made conscious life choices, these new possibilities offered by migration cannot be ignored when working with involuntary immigrants. It should be recalled that, like voluntary migrants, involuntary immigrants too are "grappling with issues of home and belonging in the world generally" (p. 1). Thus, this study does not limit itself to exploring the negative experiences of leaving home; rather, it uses an existential framework to better understand what 'home', 'homelessness' and 'being away from home' means for involuntary immigrants, in a way that recognises the complicated and sometimes conflicting meanings assigned to these experiences by individuals.

Hayes (2007) agrees with Madison's (2006) statement of 'not-being-at-home' as *Dasein*'s call of conscience; however, she argues that this is not the whole story of voluntary immigration. She states that one can understand existential immigration not only as enabling possibilities for authenticity but also as a means to establish a new home that eventually leads to becoming home to oneself. In her study, she uses a Kierkegaardian framework to demonstrate that *home* is a notion that has various different meanings, and people move from one sphere of existence to another. For Hayes' participants, immigration is about a settlement; becoming 'home to ourselves' continues forming and re-forming the meaning of home within ourselves and with others.

These studies on immigration using existential perspectives are valuable. Yet both Madison and Hayes focus only on voluntary immigration. This raises the question: *why is there a lack of research on involuntary immigration through an existential and phenomenological lens?* The reason is quite understandable, considering the sensitive conditions in which involuntary immigration takes place, such as war, violence, exile, and oppression; in such contexts, it can be difficult to discuss key existential themes of choice, responsibility and freedom.

Nevertheless, unlike Madison and Hayes, I argue that involuntary immigration and the problems that involuntary immigrants face can be understood from an existentialist perspective with reference to the aforementioned central existential givens, as well as concepts of awareness and authenticity. Both "voluntary" *and* "involuntary" migration are "existential". I will show that existential themes are clearly visible in immigrants' accounts even in war-related migration.

2.8 Crisis as opening of existence

There is an expanding literature on post-traumatic growth that shows that there is a positive change that may happen in the aftermath of traumatic events (Linley & Joseph, 2004; Christopher, 2004). Such studies present the impacts of traumatic events, such as bereavement, on individuals' experiences of 1) growth and change (Rosenblatt, 1995; Swanson, Pearsall-Jones & Hay, 2002); 2) personal transformation (Schneider *et al.*, 1994); 3) resilience (Nolen-Hoeksema, Larson & Grayson, 1999); 4) finding meaning in life (Neimeyer, 2004); 5) positive life changes (Lehman *et al.*, 1993). However, this literature predominantly considers trauma as a problem that needs to be treated based on the diagnostic criteria.

Jacobsen (2006) claims trauma is a 'crisis as loss', the loss of meaning in life and the loss of one's worldview, leading to an opening for existence. He argues that a crisis can be seen as one of living through relief, overcoming danger, questioning the deeper meaning of life and the removal of issues that may be related to old conflicts. All of these instances can lead to a new level of stability in relation to one's sense of self. This is well illustrated by Yalom and Lieberman's study (1991), which focused on bereavement and heightened existential awareness in grieving individuals. Here they found that existentially aware individuals are more able to cope with their grief and loss, as they tend to be more accepting of loneliness, death, and/or questions about the meaning of life.

This is in line with the two core characteristics of crises highlighted by Bollnow (1959): i) first, *crises as a purging process* where people learn to free themselves from old impurities and begin with fresh starts; ii) second, *crises as decision* which involves a choice between two or more possibilities. From this perspective,

as a form of life crisis, involuntary migration can be seen as bringing with it new opportunities that open doors for existence, despite the painful experiences it involves.

2.9 Crises as a move towards authenticity

Madison (2006) suggests that, in the case of voluntary immigration, disturbances begin at home. In this study, I argue that involuntary immigration can also lead to the question of the authenticity of living in the world through feelings of not belonging and not feeling at home. It also highlights the positive aspects of feeling insecure and not taking for granted being at home.

Ontology is concerned with everyday life, the everydayness of our being in this world. From an existential point of view, everydayness is considered a challenge: living in our routines of activities, there is always a risk of falling into inauthenticity. Inauthenticity and everydayness are related to Heidegger (1962); he suggests that everydayness is an ordinary conformism that we live in, yet we still constantly make choices that reflect the question of who we are. Nevertheless, even though average everydayness is not considered a bad thing, Heidegger finds living in the 'everydayness' of this conformist world deeply problematic. Therefore, when individuals are in a state of crisis, as in the case of this study of Syrian involuntary immigrants, they are pushed out of their comfortable life, which can cause them to profoundly question their identity and life choices.

The question is: *why don't we want to live in everydayness if this brings comfort and safety to our life?* Heidegger describes *Das Man*, how there is no uniqueness and personality in existence in everydayness. As Heidegger (1962) states, the danger lies in stagnation; in stagnation, we become dependent on the world structure we live in. The world gives the human being a structure within which to function, but then we become subject to what is imposed upon us. So in everydayness, we become conditioned to our reality, and this conditioning influences human consciousness. In the case of involuntary immigrants, we can see that they are out of their everyday mundane tasks. Such an abandonment of everydayness might compel them to reflect on their usual old selves.

Warnock (1970), who has written about Heidegger's work, states that, in order to become authentic, individuals must transcend the approach found in everydayness; however, this transcendence cannot be achieved without experiencing everydayness. So, everydayness must exist in order to be overcome. For Bollnow (1959): ''*Human life is not just something that is there. It has to be taken over, and this can only be achieved through a process of disengaging it sharply from everyday life''* (cited in Jacobsen, 2006, p. 47). This process of change or upheaval entails the confrontation of angst. As Heidegger points out, angst is the

essential instant of human existence; it is the state that we all experience when we realise our mortality in the world.

Facing existential givens -such as: death, isolation, meaninglessness, and freedom (responsibility) - brings up experiences of 'not-being-at-home' (Heidegger, 1962) and causes individual dread, also referred to as existential anxiety. This anxiety can lead individuals to reduce physical, psychological, social, and spiritual awareness, which may have long-term consequences. When individual processes these internal conflicts, they can open new possibilities in life. For Heidegger, an individual experiencing themselves as 'nothing' is something that goes beyond anxiety; it is, as he calls it, 'dread'. Bugental (1965) highlights the irony of how existential anxiety is itself the threat of non-being: because these are existential givens, it is not possible to escape from them; therefore, only one who is non-existent can escape them.

2.10 Crises as a possibility for self-actualisation and personal growth

Confronting anxiety and dread can lead to personal growth and self-actualisation. van Deurzen (2002) says that being open to explore existential anxiety can bring up new possibilities in life and ultimately can pave the way for authenticity or creative growth (Schneider & Krug, 2010). As May (1975) puts it, subjective experiences can create awareness of self, which is related to feelings, responsiveness, and hopes. Parkes (1971) also sees trauma as 'psychosocial transitions' in which people reconstruct their way of seeing the world and the way they are living in it (cited in Corbett & Milton, 2011, p.101). Corbett and Milton (2011) also state that trauma can result in growth; adversity and distress can drive people to personal change and development.

Jacobsen (2006) provides an illustrative analogy for this, referring to a crack in the ground that gives people the opportunity to look deep inside. Similarly, Corbett and Milton (2011, p. 11) argue that a crisis can result in *growth,* as adversity and distress can open up new life possibilities and drive people to personal change and development; they refer to it as a personal turning point:

> *[It is] when the ground opens up before us - when the carpet is swept from under our feet - when we are disturbed… that we potentially have a rare opportunity to work with awareness not previously experienced.*

When involuntary immigrants are thrown into crisis, their ground is shaken, and there opens a crack on the ground that can enable them to find new possibilities in life; this crisis can provide a possibility of finding an opening to the depths of one's existence.

In this thesis, I argue that not only "voluntary" migration but also "involuntary" migration can be seen as an "existential phenomenon" because choosing to survive and seek safety in extreme cases like the Syrian war is also a choice. Edward Said's writings on exile are particularly interesting on this point. Said and his family were forced to leave Palestine and relocate to Egypt in 1948. In his memoir, *Out of Place* (2012), Said describes the condition of being in exile through its conflicting aspects, and he defines it as the source of his self-perception, his worldview, and his work. For him, exile is, on the one hand, a 'terrible' experience, a 'condition of terminal loss, and a state of being 'cut off' from one's roots, land, and past. As such, it is a source of pain. At the same time, being in exile offers new possibilities for awareness, creativity, and originality:

> *There are certain positive things to be said about a few of its conditions. Seeing 'the world as a foreign land' makes possible the originality of vision. Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two; and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions and awareness that - to borrow a phrase from music - is contrapuntal. (2000, p.186)*

The existential themes in Said's account on exile are quite prominent. For instance, the "awareness of simultaneous dimensions" formulated by Said can be interpreted as the realisation of infinite possibilities and choices. This transcendence of what is conventional, habitual or previously been taken for granted is a step towards Dasein's openness to the world.'

Conclusion

In this literature review, I have discussed how most research on involuntary immigrants in the field of mental health is focused on trauma and trauma-based treatment. There is a need for further studies conducted with qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, that enable involuntary immigrants to talk about their subjective experiences and the emotional difficulties they face in relation to extremely painful events. Failing to address this gap in the literature runs the risk of generating misleading conclusions for future studies and psychotherapeutic practice. It is also important to highlight that there is a shortage of studies that acknowledge the differences in individual experiences of involuntary immigrants. Displaced people from different countries may have very little in common. Likewise, involuntary immigrants do not always share the same experiences with the members of their community, society, or people in their host country. For these reasons, I believe there is a vast potential to make contributions to the mental health field by exploring

involuntary immigrants' experiences from a phenomenological and existential perspective to provide better support in identifying and meeting their needs.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this section, I will present the methodological approach of the study, namely Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). I will outline the basic features of IPA and then discuss its suitability for my research topic and my research questions. Subsequently, I will present my data collection method, participant recruitment criteria, and ethical issues related to the research. Finally, I will offer a reflexive discussion, showing an awareness of my own contribution to the progress of the research process. Issues will be raised regarding my involvement in the investigation as a researcher; I will reflect on how my own values, experiences, political beliefs and social identities may shape the research. I acknowledge that it is impossible to fully bracket my assumptions while conducting this project. I hope the reflexivity section will help readers be aware of particular influences that inform the research investigation.

3.2 Qualitative vs Quantitative Research Method

The choice between quantitative and qualitative research methodology is primarily determined by the goals of the research (Stroebe, Stroebe & Schut, 2003). Quantitative studies are designed to make generalisations from findings on a particular population. While qualitative research is oriented towards 'discovery', quantitative research is oriented towards the validation or rejection of a predetermined hypothesis; it does not help us grasp contextualised experiences and the subjective world of meanings in their complexity. Since this research is not interested in objectively exploring the state of involuntary immigrants by testing, observing, and quantifying, using a quantitative methodology is not appropriate.

A qualitative research methodology will be adopted in this study. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define qualitative research as "an interpretive naturalistic approach to the world" (p. 3). Qualitative research aims to understand phenomena by looking at individuals' own meaning-making processes. The interpretive pattern covers "the researcher's epistemological, ontological and methodological premises" (p. 22). Qualitative research requires a direct study with participants. The description of certain phenomena from the participants' viewpoints requires interaction between the researcher and the participants.

Qualitative research is concerned with participants' unique frames of reference and the processes through which individuals make sense of the world around them. It provides a holistic approach that seeks to grasp the richness and complexity of data rather than reducing it to numerical presentations. The purpose of this study is in line with this methodology, as I am interested in understanding Syrian involuntary immigrants' experiences of being and not being "at home" and how they make sense of their own experiences; I am not interested in variables and cause-effect relationships that are externally defined.

Wilson (1982) draws attention to the way in which "qualitative and quantitative approaches are complementary rather than competitive methods, and the use of a particular method…rather must be based on the nature of the actual research problem at hand " (p. 501, cited in Flick). Flick (1992, 2004) also states that these different methodological perspectives complement each other in the study of an issue, and he highlights the benefits of an integrative approach, borrowing from both qualitative and quantitative research methods to overcome the weaknesses and blind spots of every single method. However, combining two methods still carries the risk of limiting the research area and compromising deep meanings that can be revealed by qualitative research.

3.3 Phenomenology

The phenomenological research method was initially founded by Husserl and was later criticised and developed by other figures from the phenomenological tradition, including Heidegger. Phenomenology is the study of how phenomena are perceived by the human consciousness, and it emphasises the importance of personal perspective, interpretation, and the meanings arising from lived experiences (Langdridge, 2007). Lester defines the purpose of the phenomenological approach as "understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions, and cutting through the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom" (1999, p.1). Heidegger's work, in particular, inspired a new research theory that centres on first-person experiences as a protest against dehumanisation in psychological research (Wertz, 2005).

Merleau-Ponty (1962) identifies four characteristic conceptual pillars that are shared by different schools of phenomenology: *description, reduction, essences,* and *intentionality*. Phenomenological research aims to provide a direct description of the human experience. van Manen (1990, p. 39) suggests that:

> a good [phenomenological] description that constitutes the essence of something is construed so that the structure of a lived experience is revealed to us in such a fashion that we are now able to grasp the nature and significance of this experience in a hitherto unseen way.

Heuristic *reduction* entails bracketing the attitude of taken-for-grandness, and it aims to awaken a profound sense of wonder about the phenomenon in which one is interested. *Essence* is the subject of study of the phenomenological approach. According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), phenomenology is the study of essences, including the essence of perception and consciousness. Finally, *intentionality* refers to the notion that consciousness is always the consciousness of something. While this research will be guided by the principles and assumptions of the phenomenological method, as identified by Merleau-Ponty (1962), I will also keep in mind van Manen's (1990, 1997) statements that there is no fixed set of methods to conduct this type of research, and that flexibility and freedom are essential attributes of an IPA researcher.

Transcendental or Husserlian Phenomenology (1954, cited in Werts, 2005) is "the unprejudiced, descriptive study of whatever appears to unconsciousness, precisely in the manner in which it so appears" (Moran & Mooney, 2002: 1). It is concerned with the explication of how meanings are constituted by consciousness; in other words, it is a phenomenology of consciousness. As such, it is a 'constitutive' method involving two aspects: reduction and constitution of meaning. It relies on the idea that, in describing the phenomena, the researcher should "bracket" their presumptions in relation to how the world presents itself to them; this entails withdrawing from taken-for-granted attitudes and suspending personal beliefs, values, prejudices, etc. in order to arrive at the state of pure consciousness. Thus, the main assumption of Husserlian Phenomenology (1954, cited in Werts, 2005) is that the researcher's taken-for-grantedness should and can be suspended.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology stands apart from Transcendental Phenomenology with its dismissal of the possibility of reduction. This tradition, pioneered by Heidegger (1927), accepts the impossibility of bracketing and tries to plumb the depths of subjective experiences via interpretation. According to Heidegger, our perception of the world is shaped within social, political and historical contexts, and thus, we cannot fully bracket ourselves from our biases. It is interpretive rather than descriptive since it accepts that all forms of awareness, and thus, description, are always interpretive. According to Langdridge:

> … the hermeneutic turn of phenomenology resulted from the opinion that our experiences can be best understood through stories we tell of that experience. To understand the lifeworld, we need to explore the

stories people tell of their experiences, often with the help of some specific hermeneutic or method of interpretation (cited in Kafle, 2007: p.191).

I share this view that it is impossible to withdraw fully from one's everyday stance. My choice to study this subject, my approach to the issue, and the research questions I formulated reflect my personal attitude in life. For instance, my previous life experiences as an immigrant in the UK played a crucial role in my decision to explore lived experiences of Syrian involuntary immigrants.

3.4 Rationale for eliminating alternative qualitative methods

Discourse Analysis was considered a possible research method for this study. Discourse Analysis focuses on the use of language by individuals as discursive agents directed toward accomplishing certain goals (Wetherell & Potter, 1988). According to Willig (2001), language offers a set of clear signs of internal states that are linked to external reality. Language is conceptualised as a productive activity that builds and forms our social reality. Research employing critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995) emphasises the ways in which social power relations are endorsed and challenged by written and verbal texts within a particular social and political context.

Critical Discourse Analysis can be particularly helpful when understanding social and political problems. However, this study focuses on the subjective experiences of individuals in exile. Considering the complexity of Turkey's position towards Syrian involuntary immigrants and the complicated current political situation, it is clear that focusing on political and social discourse can take attention away from individuals' lived experiences. As Smith *et al.* (2009) state, people are more than discursive agents. They make sense of the world around them and these meaning-making processes are central to all human experiences. Since using Critical Discourse Analysis was incompatible with my research questions, I have eliminated this methodology.

Narrative Analysis was another possible methodology for this study. Narrative Analysis and IPA are popular in health and social sciences and widely used in psychological analyses (Bruner, 1987). In some aspects, these two methods are similar. Like IPA, Narrative Analysis considers individuals as actors making sense of their own experiences (Smith, C. P., 2000). There are also similarities in the data analysis process.

However, there are key differences between IPA and Narrative Analysis, which Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2007) draw attention to. Narrative Analysis stresses the significance of the individuals' chronological lives, which have led them to their current states; it concentrates on the sequential revealing of personal stories from a set of events narrated by individuals. IPA looks for themes emerging from the

individual's narrative and tries to establish connections. This approach is more appropriate for my aims, as I will be using personal narratives to shed light on people's sense-making processes rather than to reveal the significance of chronological life stories. As can be understood from my research questions, I am interested in how people make sense of their lived experiences instead of the sequences of life events. Therefore, I chose to discard Narrative Analysis for this research project.

Similarities between Grounded Theory and IPA also drew my attention while I was searching for the most suitable method for this project. Grounded Theory was developed by sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1965) in order to find a new ground for moving data to theory. It is described as a discovery of the theory of generation in the process. Like IPA, it involves the identification of categories of meaning emerging from data. In order to understand the phenomenon underlying what we are investigating, Grounded Theory offers us a descriptive framework, reduced to a technique for systematic categorisation. It begins with an aspect of individual cases and works from that point to build a theory that holds true for those specific cases (Froster, 2010). On the other hand, IPA questions the meaning of individual experiences and focuses on interpretive actions involved in the analysis process from individuals' personal points of view. Therefore, IPA is a better fit for this research, as it enables people to interpret the understanding of their own world and world perceptions (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The qualitative methodology of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) developed by Smith (1996) is used in this study. It draws from phenomenology, hermeneutics and symbolic interactionism. Phenomenology is concerned with human experiences and emphasises the meanings assigned to subjective experiences, while hermeneutics requires the interpretation of activity in conducting research (Froster, 2010). As Langdridge states, it is the "study of human experience and the way in which things are perceived as they appear to consciousness" (2007, p. 10).

As Ashworth (2003) purports, the application of Husserl's principles should be a departure point for the psychological investigation of lived experiences. With its rejection of dehumanisation in psychology (Wretz, 2005), the phenomenological research method allows us to reflectively explore human characteristics and behaviour departing from subjective experiences. Human beings are not passive receivers of objective reality; they can interpret their own experiences and reality to make sense of the world around them. The choice of my research method was informed by similar considerations.

van Kaam (1967) states that researchers can access phenomena in either a critical or an uncritical way. The former refers to the use of a phenomenological approach that involves a description of the given

phenomena. Giorgi (1985) highlights two levels of an empirical phenomenological approach that I believe have been helpful for my research. At the first level, a researcher obtains descriptive data from open-ended questions. On the next level, the researcher interprets the individual's own experiences through the eyes of reflective analysis.

IPA offers the researcher a theoretical foundation and comprehensive procedural guide (Chapman & Smith, 2002). The purpose of IPA is to offer descriptions of the process through which individuals make sense of their own experiences by thoroughly exploring and interpreting respondents' accounts (Chapman & Smith, 2002; Smith *et al.*, 1999). The approach is concerned with an individual's subjective experiences rather than objective conditions and explanations (Flowers, Hart & Marriot, 1999; Smith, 1996). This process requires self-reflection. The researcher checks their own personal involvement and influences in the process while attempting to grasp the participants' personal world through interpretive action. This is referred to as a joint activity. It is a dual process (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999), which can be achieved through joint reflections by both the participants and the researcher.

IPA aims to understand what personal and social experiences mean to the individuals who experience them. IPA does not reject objective reality; rather, it tries to understand it from individual viewpoints, departing from the individuals' own description of the particular phenomena as it occurred to them at a particular time and in a particular place. IPA leads the researcher to explore individuals' experiences within a social, political and cultural context (Froster, 2010). In line with phenomenology, IPA encourages the researcher to get involved in a dynamic process. While engaging with an individual's subjective perception, the researcher embraces an active role in the process of research.

In order to gain an insider's viewpoint, IPA gives the researcher the role of interpreting the research while making sense of the individual's experiences. IPA is an attempt to unravel the meaning of individual experiences through texts and transcripts of interviews (Smith, 1995b). This engagement, followed by a series of structured steps, allows the researcher to identify themes and interpret them into meaningful texts. Therefore, as an IPA researcher, I need to pay more attention to interpretive activity in attempting to make sense of what individuals say and how they make sense of their experiences.

Smith and Osborn (2003) state that IPA is especially useful in cases that involve complexity, process or novelty. I believe that the complexity and uniqueness of involuntary immigrants' experiences require this type of analysis. Smith and Osborn (2003) suggest that a semi-structured interview is the most appropriate technique for IPA. I follow the guidelines for using semi-structured interviewing methods to collect data for this research by considering individuals as the primary experts in describing their own experiences

(Alexander &d Clare, 2004). Each transcript is analysed in accordance with IPA guidelines provided by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009).

Limitations of IPA

The use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which enables a rich and in-depth understanding of Syrian involuntary immigrants' experiences, matched well with the aim of this study. The IPA approach proved to be helpful in the investigation of experiences. The practical and comprehensive descriptions of the procedures helped conduct interviews and analysed the data. It is based on a methodological framework that supports this procedure. The analysis carefully balanced descriptive phenomenology and interpretive strategy, allowing for a rich analysis that remained close to the participants' narratives. However, although this was the most suitable method for the study, it still has certain limitations.

Firstly, IPA has been criticised for not having a sufficiently structural framework. Giorgi (2010) criticises the IPA for having a methodological stance that is loose, vague and suggestive instead of prescriptive. With no one way to conduct IPA research, Georgi (2010) claims that IPA does not have enough standardisation, clear rules and strict protocols to qualify as a rigorous scientific technique capable of reaching valid empirical knowledge.Yet Smith and Monforte (2020) challenge the idea that IPA is not a prescriptive technique, recognising that prescriptive techniques in quantitative research should not be compared to those in qualitative research owing to methodological differences. This is not to say that any work generated with IPA is not scientific; in reality, IPA gives instructions to researchers, but it ultimately relies on the researcher's complicated professional and personal qualities, which will impact the quality of their work (Smith, 2020). As a researcher, I also cannot entirely agree with Giorgi's view that a rigid methodological framework is needed to explore subjective experiences. Smith and Osborne (2008) suggest that IPA is an approach providing flexibility to match the needs and discovery of the researcher rather than a strict methodology. Willig (2001) also suggests results of the IPA research induce a sense of discovery rather than production.

Secondly, IPA has been criticised for failing to produce generalisable findings. IPA is used to understand individual perspectives in depth, which requires taking into account the uniqueness of each specific case. The researcher appears as the vehicle of the participants' epistemological standpoint. Thus, although the methodology involves identifying specific patterns/themes that cut across the participants' narratives, it does not aim to arrive at "stylised" conclusions that can be applied to a wider context. This, it is argued, poses an essential limit in terms of its impact, especially its implications for psychotherapy and counselling practice. This is a general criticism that may apply to most qualitative methodologies. In addition, according to

Gadamer (2013), describing our experiences is an interpretative activity; therefore, experience presented through an interpretive lens is altered. As human beings, we use language to communicate and make sense of our experiences. This can raise the question of the validity of the study. IPA aims to get as close to the interpreted experience as possible, but it only promises to capture the true substance of universal experiences if such a thing is possible.

Furthermore, it is not reasonable to make statements regarding the generalisability of this study's findings to a larger population when IPA is an idiographic technique that does not strive to produce conclusive or positivistic solutions. It is important to note that the findings offer a thorough understanding of the key themes of my participants' experiences in this research. This may undervalue the possibility of replicating the study. The goal will be to develop themes and findings which may disintegrate if the population is diverse. However, it is feasible to develop theories that can add to the existing literature and support further study.

This leads to the IPA's third limitation, which concerns its validity as a scientific methodology. Explicating the validity of a qualitative investigation is crucial. Still, it may be more challenging to do so for qualitative methods than it is to demonstrate the validity of a quantitative study, owing to the criteria based on distinct epistemological expectations (Lewis et al., 2003). However, there are several principles for determining the validity and characteristic of qualitative research. When utilising IPA, Yardley's (2000) rules are suggested. According to Yardley (2000), qualitative research is primarily concerned with an individual's experiences; the researcher needs to allow unspecified patterns, meanings and senses to develop. Yardley's recommendations for checking the validity are as follows: the context of sensitivity, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, impact and importance.

A fourth point of criticism as Rawson (2016) has stated, is how the researcher plays a predominant role in IPA, and the interpretation presented in an IPA study is only one of several possible interpretations. This also implies that the researcher's biases might impact the outcome of the research (Smith, 1996). In the case of the present research, I gave more attention to some issues and themes than others. Due to the limitations of my viewpoint, there were biases in selecting the themes. Nonetheless, there were undoubtedly many additional themes that would have been equally important to my research. For instance, another researcher would have identified various themes in the same data. However, subjectivity is unavoidable in IPA; in fact, it is a vital, dynamic component of it. The interaction between the researcher and the participant shapes the interpretation. Thus, numerous distinct interpretations are what is sought after in IPA. In light of this intuition, my research has aimed to convey the facts rather than to arrive at a truth.

In relation to subjectivity, Heidegger states that relatedness to the world is an essential aspect of our constitution, and intersubjectivity seeks to define and make sense of this relatedness. For IPA researchers, the central premise is that we are being-in-the-world in relation to something (Heidegger, 1962). This creates that phenomenological investigation requires the interpretation of people's meaning-making processes. As we are positioned in a meaningful world, watching, feeling, experiencing and engaging in producing meaning from that reality (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). So, the researcher's participation in IPA research is critical since they contribute their own historical values and assumptions to the investigation.

Finally, the IPA method concerns the limitations of language as a medium through which to transfer the participants' experience to the researcher. Willig (2008) argues that more than complete access to and grasp of individual experiences is needed. Therefore, language should be considered as only one imaginable form of truth rather than an accurate description of the experiences. That being said, language, despite its flaws, might be the best meaning-making process for understanding experience.

In the Conclusion Chapter, I will discuss in detail how I tried to deal with these limitations associated with the IPA as a qualitative methodology.

3.5 The Research Plan

3.5.1 Participants and Recruitment

I interviewed eight Syrian involuntary immigrants currently living in Turkey. I did not interview anyone that I had previously known. To find the participants, I used my network in Turkey, which consists of humanitarian workers, lawyers, and psychologists who provide support to Syrian involuntary immigrants. I sent an invitation letter to those who were interested in my research (Appendix 8). For safety reasons: participants were recruited from a large city like Istanbul, pseudonyms were used, and organisation names were not stated; instead, I use pseudonym names to refer to places and organisations.

The interviews took place in one of the NGOs in Turkey. They were conducted face-to-face and recorded on two devices. The participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw at any time during the study. Demographic information (Appendix 7) about the participants was collected through questions that asked about:

- Age
- Gender

- Race/ethnicity
- Religion
- Socioeconomic status
- Level of education
- Partnership status
- Children (age/s)
- When they left Syria
- When they arrived in Turkey

Interviews were transcribed, and each individual was given the option to review the transcripts. Participants were informed that the interview transcript would be kept for six to eight months after completing the study and destroyed.

Potential participants contacted me via email. After the first contact, I sent them an information sheet (Appendix 4), and further emails were exchanged. I also asked my potential participants to ask any questions about the information given.

Participants were selected based on the following criteria in order to achieve a sample that is, to a certain degree, homogenous:

- A Syrian citizen who fled the war
- Between the ages of 20 to 35
- Living in Turkey for a minimum of 1 year
- English speaker
- Well-educated (University degrees / specific training)

A homogeneous sample signifies the representative sample that is crucial to the study of phenomenology. Since I have a small sample size, I have taken care to choose a homogenous sample as much as possible. My small sample is not representative of different ethnicities, ages or gender groups (Langdridge, 2007). I can only hope that this specific group of people can give a larger view on specific experiences in a specific place.

After each interview was completed, each participant was given a debriefing (Appendix 6). I wanted to ensure that any emotional struggles my participants may have experienced during their interviews were expressed and that the participants were allowed to ask any questions they might have in order to clarify any issues or concerns during the interview process.

Sample size

It is often stated that a study's required sample size depends on the methodology chosen, the type of analysis conducted, the research questions addressed and its practicalities. Large samples might seem to be appropriate for all sorts of studies. However, in particular cases, large samples can lead to the loss of sensitive data in meaning (Collins & Nicholson, 2002; Smith, 2004; Reid *et al*., 2005).

IPA studies aim to reveal detailed information about a particular group rather than arriving at generalised conclusions regarding a whole population. They are generally conducted on small sample sizes (Smith & Osborn, 2007), which enables the researcher to focus case-by-case on the individual transcripts and conduct a thorough analysis. Therefore, following Smith's guidelines for conducting an IPA study, I chose 8 individuals to interview and held one interview with each of these participants. I considered this a suitable number of interviewees: small enough to avoid losing the richness and depth of data but large enough to convey the fullness and range of each participant's experiences.

Research Ethics and Ethical Approval

Gillam and Guillemin (2004) identified two elements of ethics. The first kind is procedural ethics, which Ethical Committees require to ensure that procedures sufficiently address informed consent, confidentiality, privacy rights and protecting human beings from harm. The second is situational ethics, which deals with the unforeseen and morally significant events that may arise in the research. Ellis (2007) included relational ethics, which represents a third dimension and is strongly connected to the ethics of care. For Slattery and Rapp (2003), relational ethics are the activities necessary to be authentic to one's character and accountable for one's acts and their implications on others. Relational ethics acknowledges and supports the connection, respect and dignity that exist between researchers and the participants. If relational ethics calls on us as researchers to take responsibility for the acts we take conducting the research, then it is a requirement to become aware of our interpersonal ties to our participants and act from the heart and mind. In what follows, I explain how I dealt with the ethical issues and the ethical approval process in the more "traditional" sense of research ethics. The perspectives of relational ethics and possible issues of trust and mistrust at different stages of my research are covered in the Conclusion Chapter.

Ethical approval for this project was obtained from the NSPC and the Middlesex University Research Ethics Committee. I received ethical clearance (Appendix 1) and my own risk assessment (Appendix 2) from Middlesex University. The project is in accordance with BPS Ethical Guidelines for Conducting Research with Human Participants (2010). I am also a member of BACP and an accredited member of UKCP; as such, I have followed their ethical guidelines for research. I was cautious to protect my participants from any harm and preserve their autonomy and dignity. I am aware my participants gave consent voluntarily. To protect their dignity and rights, sufficient and adequate information was provided to them (Allmark, 2002, p. 13).

The information sheet made it clear that there was no pressure to take part. They were provided with a debriefing letter (Appendix 6), including my details and my primary supervisor's. They were recommended to a therapist and/or a support group if they requested support. In the debriefing, I gave a list of organisations that provide free or low-cost counselling and psychotherapy for needy individuals.

According to Flick (2007), research should avoid any situations that may harm participants. This includes avoiding any invasion of their privacy and misleading them about the research aims. I was aware of my research field's sensitivity and the possibility that this investigation might bring up some uncomfortable feelings for both my participants and myself. During the process, I was supported by my supervisors and continued with my personal therapy. I was also aware that some of the questions in the interview might bring up difficult memories on the part of my participants. All of my participants understood the framework of my research, and I informed them about their right to withdraw at any time.

I recorded the interviews digitally and stored them on a password-protected file on my computer, accessible only to me. I have protected individuals' anonymity: their names will not appear on data sheets or in the coding system. I changed the identified details of significant others spoken about during the interviews. I asked individuals to choose a pseudonym to be used in the research. The research participants received and signed consent forms. I will delete the recordings and transcripts once the dissertation has been marked. All data collected will be stored, analysed and reported in compliance with the 1998 Data Protection Act.

It is important to keep in my mind that ethics related to reflection and sensitivity (Flick, 2007) did not prevent me from doing my own research; rather, this helped me to approach the topic in a more reflective and considerate way.

Financial Issues

I paid my own travel expenses to Turkey. Participants agreed to be interviewed and invited to the NGO's premises. Participants were offered reimbursement for any travel expenses, but none wanted to claim them.

Settings and Equipment

Participants were interviewed face-to-face in a safe place in which they could feel comfortable and secure. I was given permission (see Appendix 3) to use one of the interview rooms in the NGO's settings. We were allocated a quiet room, and I also felt safe to be there. Interviews were recorded with digital voice recorders. Participants received and signed consent forms (copy in Appendix 5 - original forms kept on file but not attached for anonymity reasons). Interviews lasted between 50 to 70 minutes. The reason interview

durations were longer than I initially planned is because of the impact of participants not using their native language. I believe my participants needed more time to think, reflect and find the words to speak, and this additional time allowed them to talk about their personal experiences without being pressured.

3.5.2 Data collection and interviews

Interviewing is an effective method employed to access an individual's everyday experiences. Fontana and Frey (2000) define the qualitative interview technique as "one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 645 cited in Froster, 2010), as individuals are the primary experts in describing their own experiences (Alexander & Clare, 2004). At the same time, I am aware that an interview is an active dialogue between two meaning-making participants and that no absolute control or predetermined outcomes can be claimed.

My intention as a researcher is to provide a space for people who are thought to have been suppressed in the host society, especially Syrian involuntary immigrants. The experiences of involuntary immigrants, particularly Syrian immigrants in Turkey, are not visible to the local and international society in general and could not find a place in the media. One of the aims of this study was to make Syrian involuntary immigrants' experiences visible from their own perspectives and with their own words. I have realised that using the phrase 'giving a voice' challenges the purpose of this study. It can be a problematic usage of the term as it suggests that I provided the voice to the participants. Who was I to give a voice? Do I own their voice? Was I really giving voice to the Syrian involuntary immigrants? I started to wonder about the implications of using the terminology of giving voice, especially in light of the fact that participants are frequently assumed not to have a voice.

The idea of empowerment has recently gained popularity in therapeutic settings (Burnham, 1992) and research areas. As a result, practitioners now state that their therapy goal is to empower the clients rather than transform them (Burnham, 1992). In this research, I will use Burnham's (1992) definition of empowerment as my participants felt heard and empowered by talking about their experiences.

I am interested in understanding the subjective experiences of Syrian involuntary immigrants rather than accessing 'facts'. In this sense, other techniques - such as surveys based on a large sample - seem to be less effective in capturing the complexity of life experiences. I conducted semi-structured interviews with my participants to grasp the diversity of meanings the individuals assigned to the sole concept of 'home'. Interview questions were handed in before the interview in order to ensure that I do not have a negative bias. The outlines of some research interview questions are (also see Appendix 9):

- Can you tell me about your journey to Turkey?
- Where does your family live?
- How was this journey for you?
- How was your life in Syria?
- Have you ever thought of leaving your homeland before?
- How did you feel about moving your house and starting a new beginning over again?
- Can you describe the experiences of your initial arrival to Turkey?
- How was it for you?
- Where do you feel home is?
- How would you describe your sense of home? Has there been any change in your perception since you have been living in Turkey?
- How has living in a different country had an impact on your sense of self? Do you think it has changed you? Do you feel any changes?
- What does it feel like to be talking about it now?

The semi-structured interview technique is a formal interview technique. The researcher prepares the questions and topics that need to be covered during the conversation in advance. However, questions are usually open-ended; the conversation strays from the guide and follows the direction taken by the participant when the researcher thinks this is appropriate. This flexibility opens up space for the uniqueness of each subjective experience to be expressed, which is crucial for the purposes of this study.

Despite the many advantages of semi-structured interviews, it also brings some challenges (Suzuki *et al.*, 2007). One of the challenges I had during the interview process was when I felt the questions were not answered. Sometimes I noticed that my participants were insistent on continuing their stories rather than focusing on the interview questions. As soon as I noticed that they wanted to share their stories, I decided to give them more time to continue. Yet I was also aware that I needed to go back to my specific questions about their individual experiences at home because my research was designed around those questions. I wanted to be sensitive to this and be aware of the limited time to ask specific research questions to collect my data. I believe my training in counselling and psychotherapy has helped me to navigate between paying attention to their needs to be heard and being a researcher to overcome this challenge.

I was aware that good interviews could be conducted if there is a rapport established between the interviewee and the interviewer (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). From the very beginning, even before conducting this study, I was passionate about the Syrian involuntary immigrants' situation in Turkey. I already had strong empathy and curiosity to listen to their stories. In line with the goal of empowerment, I

also kept in mind that this could be a great opportunity to give them a chance to articulate and share their personal experiences in an atmosphere where they would feel safe, heard, and respected. I believe that - by listening carefully, paying attention to details, letting them know that I had heard them, and acknowledging their struggles and the difficulty of talking about it with me - a rapport was built during the interview process. I also allowed silence, space and freedom to be less formal in the interview so that, instead of feeling under interrogation, my participants would feel like a part of a more open and honest conversation during which they could express their feelings and experiences.

Prior to this research, I conducted a pilot study to understand what the interview process might bring in order to design the research questions effectively and openly. Issues that surfaced in the pilot study helped me to be aware of the time constraints, to pay attention to my participants' need to talk about their journey, to be more precise with open-ended questions and to trust myself to allow the interview to unfold - not to be directive with questions.

I share McLeod's view that 'one of the hallmarks of a good qualitative interview lies in the extent to which the informant learns or gains from experience' (1999, p.125). In this regard, I believe that the experience of every interview was not a gain only for me, but an opportunity for each participant to reflect on their experience and gain new insights and understandings.

Lowes and Paul (2006) explored participants' experiences of the interviews in their study. They found that the sense of being heard by interviewers positively impacted the participants. Despite feeling anxious about being interviewed, participants expressed gratitude for being included in the study, which they found beneficial. This is also in line with my experience as a researcher. I realised that my participants were visibly enthusiastic to talk about their experiences in response to the questions addressed. Even in the process of preparing for interviews before our meeting, they revisited their lived experiences and tried to put these into words. I believe that narrating their subjective story helped them gain insight. Their feedback also confirmed this point at the end of the interview. Most of my participants expressed that they had never thought about what they had gone through since they left their country, and having the chance to think and talk about this helped them connect with their feelings and make sense of their experiences. They also listed some personal benefits, which were similar to what we usually expect from the therapeutic outcome, including realising their potential and resilience to overcome challenges while creating a new home in the new environment.

McLean *et al.* (2007) suggest that situated stories highlight any narrative interpretation of personal memory created within a specific situation for a specific audience to fulfil particular goals to develop and maintain the self. In line with McLean *et al.* (2007), participants carefully selected the specific life

experiences that allowed them to express their unique experiences. While they talked about their story, they also made links between their experiences that provided harmony and purpose. Most of them already stated the reason they accepted the interview. I noticed that they all had different reasons, but the common thing was that they had a goal in their mind. They all had their intention, like having the opportunity to make the truth visible (Farid), wanting to open people's eyes to Syrian involuntary immigrants' stories (Yasser), wishing to contribute to the society (Nabil) or wanting to raise awareness of anti-immigration attitudes against involuntary immigrants in a way that might help other people to be accepted (Farid). In this way, as McLean (2007) suggested, creating a specific story for a particular audience was also helping them maintain their sense of self.

Research suggests that talking about negative past experiences is related to individual life story reasoning processes (McAdams, 1993). Therefore, telling their stories, even in negative crises, is essential for participants' well-being. At the end of our interview, I had feedback that, although it was quite emotional and exhausting for some participants, they said they felt better. They acknowledged the importance of this interview. Some participants said they had never talked about their deeper feelings, even with their family members. It helped them to make sense of their stories and feel heard and noticed among the crowd.

When we look at the bigger picture of the narratives of Syrian involuntary immigrants' stories in this study, which is limited to my participants, they were also seeking to be heard through telling their heroic stories. They were seeking to structure the narratives to find meaning in their life in a new home. They developed an account of their loss which merged the acknowledgement of the pain of the loss with a sense of personal growth. This study shows that they lost their home but grew stronger. I am not claiming this interpretation is accurate or that degrees of change is the same for every individual, but - whether small or more significant - there was an indication of some change pertaining to personal growth that was noticeable in their stories. I also noticed in my participant's narratives that those who were willing to open up to experience were able to connect in more depth to explore the meaning of their movement to a new place. For my participants, it was a heroic action: deciding to step into the unknown, leaving home behind, taking a significant risk to leave Syria, and taking responsibility for others. This needed to be heard as heroic action and acknowledged. For example, some of my participants wished to talk about their journey. Saz, Roni, Farid, Yaser and Nabil clearly stated that they wanted other people to hear their journey and that it would serve them to make the truth visible to others. Their heroic journey helped them to understand their reason, journey and themselves.

In addition, my participants were experiencing discrimination living in the host society. As a result, they started to develop adverse feelings towards the host society, making it challenging to construct a new home

in the new country. In this research, I, as a representation of part of the host society, want to give them a chance to speak and talk about their experiences. This could give them a different perspective of the society, a new view that not everyone in the host society is hostile - that there are members of the host society who are welcoming and accepting, who want to listen to their stories and recognise them.

Most of my participants allowed me to ask vulnerable questions, which aligns with wanting to trust others. They also believed that this research could be an opportunity for Syrian involuntary immigrants and the Turkish host society to build new understanding and acceptance. As Nabil said, he wanted me to succeed in my study because he was also part of the cause to do something useful to society and the larger community.; '…cause you're adding something new to our society or big community' (Nabil, p.16).

Farid also told me he accepted the interviews to let others know the truth about their situations, which could help others and, at the same time, reach a bigger audience. '…by the way, the only reason that I do interviews... I'm happy to share that with people because telling the truth is the reality of the situation. You can't reach it as an interviewer. You can't get this information through the TV, governments, media in general, social media…I want people to know the truth (Farid, p.15-16). He also emphasised that this research would help others to understand them to be accepted by the host societies; '… If they make an effort to make, people understand the situation… If they do, those refugees will be more accepted. We can make it hundred people accepted' (Farid, p.16). Roni also gave me feedback after the interview: '…it was good. You had some new questions, especially about how I recognise the world or associate this to my thoughts and ideas. You had new things that I never thought about'. (Roni, p.16)

Transcripts analysed in five stages

To address Giorgi's (2010) aforementioned criticism that IPA's method is not clearly prescriptive - that phenomenological interpretation is used as a method, but it is not methodical -one of the important sections of this study is the analysis of data. I feel this section can provide evidence to show the way I have used IPA guidelines to analyse my data. In this study, each transcript has been analysed in accordance with IPA guidelines provided by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009).

Stage 1**:** Each interview's audio recording carefully listened to several times while reading the transcript. In each listening session, I focused on identifying the feelings that were presented during the original interview. I focused on one participant at a time and read each transcription several times to better understand each narrative. Re-reading the transcript helped me to engage with data actively. I made notes of my first impressions and observations, including non-verbal expressions, descriptions, etc. I paid attention to changes in voice, and pauses or silences in my participants' speech were also not missed. My aim was to

understand participants' meaning-making processes as well as to be aware of their inner conflicts. In order to bracket myself from the actual data, I kept my notes separate to focus on what participants were saying.

***Stage 2*:** An interpretative stage took place following the first process. Themes were identified and characterised through bracketing my knowledge. I re-read the transcripts and identified what emerged from the initial text. I converted my initial notes into more theoretical statements and kept records of them.

I went line-by-line when I started to make more descriptive notes on the right margin of the transcript. Once I became familiar with the transcript, I added more descriptive, interpretive and semantic notes that I found relevant to the study. In the descriptive comments, I stayed close to my participants' narratives. In the interpretative comments, I noted what I felt participants said and my initial thoughts and reactions to the narratives. Semantic notes were inserted to identify where references, expressions, metaphors, or certain linguistic forms were used to express meanings. The sub-themes emerged during this analysis. After completing this stage, I printed and cut out each theme to spread across the floor to cluster them into groups. In this way, I could cluster sub-themes together and gradually form a big cluster of main themes.

***Stage 3*:** I concentrated on establishing connections between what emerged from the transcripts. I identified superordinate and subordinate themes in order to demonstrate the connections between interpretations. I then examined the commonalities and discrepancies between emerging themes. This is where I struggled to group them in order to create the whole picture. I moved these themes around several times as I felt that various early configurations were not representative of what was said in the interview. During this process, relevant and irrelevant themes appeared in the text, and I used my initial notes to stay close to the given data. It was challenging to cluster the themes, but I tried to stay with what my participants said, what was important for them and how to make sense of their experiences.

***Stage 4*:** I then formed a summary table for clusters of themes and listed superordinate and subordinate themes. I presented them in order and showed the relevant connections. In the end, I arrived at 15 sub-themes clustered into 4 superordinate themes.

***Stage 5*:** At this stage, I searched for patterns among the emergent themes, trying to identify shared meanings and connections. I only focused on and included themes that captured the essence of participants' subjective experiences, and some themes that were found to be irrelevant were removed. These stages were intertwined with my own interpretations of the narratives in the participants' accounts. This part of the process was the part that was most noticeably influenced by my subjective experiences.

3.6 Reflexivity

According to Willig (2001), reflexivity also demands that the researcher reviews their personal and professional reasons for asking their particular research questions. As we conduct IPA research, we try to support individuals to explore and reflect on their past experiences. As I am trying to make sense of the participants' experiences, I am also trying to make sense of my own personal experiences. This process, called double hermeneutics, allows me to take a double role in the research. At the same time, the researcher is unlike the participants, continuously engaging secondly in order to make sense of someone else's experiences (Smith & Eatough, 2007, p. 36). As Willig (2001) suggests, being aware of how the research changes and affects researchers and participants is something to consider in the research field. I have had my own assumptions, personal values and cultural suppositions that I had to be aware of in reflexive interaction with my research.

Conducting IPA research requires interaction with co-researchers and with the data they provide. The researcher, therefore, is active in the analytical process. As aforementioned, I am aware that my personal reflection will be affected by my values, beliefs, interests and personal experiences. I paid more attention to this due to a broader awareness that my life experience and social identities instigated this research path. I also paid attention to the fact that this research may change me as a person and as a researcher. For all these sensitive issues, I kept a reflective journal throughout the research. This was done to help me identify obstacles that I might need to tackle and to guide me in understanding the interactions between the participants and me.

Froster (2010) states that sometimes qualitative researchers consider interviews not as a simple method of collecting data but as a way of framing the research. In this process, I focused on two main points. First, as any interview is an interaction between two people, Foster (2010) suggests that the most effective approach is to acknowledge and focus on the interactions between interviewer and interviewee (ibid) without ignoring the role of the researcher. I knew I had to prepare before the interviews took place to be reflective and aware of my interactions during the process. This preparation gave me powerful and insightful viewpoints that helped me analyse my data.

The second point relates to the nature of our knowledge. How we talk about things and how we choose words to express our feelings, attitudes, and beliefs will influence the interview process. I stayed with phenomenological questioning - how and what questions - in order to help participants open up freely. Froster (2010) points out that some qualitative choices in our answers are already conscious, as individuals are already mindful of what they are presenting. This raised an issue for me: what if my participants formed biased opinions about their recent past?

For example, I am aware that my being Turkish might have influenced their answers; responses could be impacted by how participants/co-researchers perceive Turkish people. A participant's conception of or preconceived notions about a Turkish person interviewing them could be influenced by their experience living in Turkey for some years. I recognise the possibility that their narrative might be affected by the image they would like to create in others' eyes. For instance, it is possible that they would consciously abstain from a discourse that might imply ungratefulness towards their host country. I wanted to ensure that my co-researchers felt safe with me so they could openly talk about their life experiences. For this reason, at the end of the interview, I also asked them questions to find out how they felt during the interview and whether my nationality had any impact on their answers. I wanted to make sure that my intentions, questions and reactions would be non-judgmental. I also ensured that they were well-informed that this research is not being conducted for the Turkish state or for a Turkish university, and that I have no obligation towards either. In addition, I informed my co-researchers that I also lived in exile due to my father's political views in Turkey, and I now live in England as an immigrant.

Being reflexive is essential in distancing ourselves from our identity and culture to understand the 'other' and 'other cultures'. In this anthropologically reflexive context, the world is a site of contested supporters and interpretations (Turner *et al.*, 2002, p.148). I am also aware that I can never fully grasp the participants' subjective experiences of being an involuntary immigrant in Turkey, but, as aforementioned, I may empathetically relate to living in a strange land, the experiences of feeling 'at home' or 'homeless', and the experience of cultural differences and difficulties.

In fact, interviewing my participants as Turkish nationals may have had an impact on their answers. However, I felt that only one participant had an issue. He was resistant to identifying any difficulties he had living in Turkey. I felt he wanted to show his gratitude for being given a chance to speak, which may have shadowed being open in his interview.

The feedback at the end of the interviews resonated with me profoundly. I acknowledge that this study is conducted with a limited number of participants; however, I think it is still relevant to acknowledge the bigger picture in the narratives of Syrian involuntary immigrants. As much as they deal with instances of vulnerability and uncertainty in their lives, they are also seeking to be heard by telling their stories.

In what follows, I explore the impact of doing this research on me from the stage of choosing my topic to the process of drafting reflexively. I discuss the challenges and dilemmas I faced and how I addressed them. I also share the new insights and understanding I gained during the whole process. This reflexive exploration

is conducted at two levels: first, focusing on different stages of the research, and second, elaborating on the study as a whole.

Reflexive exploration at the different stages of the research

Qualitative research, in particular, values self-reflection. At the same time, acknowledging that it is almost impossible to put one's own opinions and assumptions aside, qualitative researchers work to bracket their (researchers') own biases and existing theory via self-reflection in order to better understand and portray the experiences of their participants (Elliott *et al*., 1999). Most scholarly publications are written in the third person, but IPA takes an epistemological stance that acknowledges how qualitative researchers have their own opinions and meaning-making processes; so, to provide transparency on this, the first person is employed as necessary in this research throughout the remaining portion of the text.

Several reasons motivated me to conduct the research. I am a Turkish volunteer immigrant living in the UK for the last 22 years. I was always interested in working with immigrants who left their country voluntarily or involuntarily, struggling to change themselves and make a new sense of home again. During over 20 years of working and living in a highly diverse and mentally struggling immigrant community, I became interested in dealing with individuals who had immigrated or had an immigrant background. After the Syrian war broke out, the immigrant population drew my attention when I visited my home country. I had very little prior understanding of involuntary immigrants. However, as I learned more about people's experiences and their situations, I started to question why I had never heard anything from their first-person experiences living as involuntary Syrian immigrants in Turkey. I have also noticed the discrepancy between how this community is portrayed in the media and the accounts I heard from humanitarian and charity organisation workers. As a result, I became more aware of the lack of knowledge about their life stories available to understand this population's needs.

In the introduction section, I stated my reason for choosing this topic as my research project. In this section, I have provided terms of my engagement in conducting the study, including interviewing my participants and analysing the interviews. In addition, I have discussed the master and sub-themes from a theoretical point of view. During the analytical stage of the research, constructing and building up the themes, my engagement with self-reflection played a crucial role in developing the themes. Therefore, I have reflected upon how I shaped this research project and my findings.

Before conducting my interviews, I was wary that my prejudices, biases, and past experiences might impact my ability to understand my participants. To be as open as possible to my participants' understanding

of their world, I remained mindful of my changing presumptions. I was quite touched by my participants' courageous way of being in the interview and sharing their experiences with me as a stranger. Even though we did not have enough time to build the kind of rapport that can be fostered in therapy sessions, being a stranger may have facilitated self-disclosures more effectively than if we had had a pre-existing relationship. Therefore, I paid all my attention to ensure that I was excited to hear their life stories and approached them from a non-judgmental point of view.

One of the challenges that arose during the interviews was deciding how to respond best with the knowledge that these were not therapy sessions. In other words, I was careful not to make any interventions during the interviews, which was challenging because of the sensitive issues discussed; the therapist in me wanted to make sure that the therapeutic process guided them to make sense of their personal experiences. Having this in mind, I also wanted to create a safe space by softly inviting them to open up freely. If a participant became emotional when sharing their touching experiences with me, I needed to navigate how, without stepping into the therapist role, I could use some of my therapist skills to assure them that it is alright to be upset. I wanted them to feel comfortable with me, so they felt I did not judge. I tried to be authentic in being with them to maintain engagement with their stories.

While listening to my participants' narratives and trying to focus on their personal experiences, I noticed my stance as a researcher and my impact on them. It also gave the insight that every participant had a unique understanding of losing a home. I became aware that there was no standard recipe to follow. I had to adapt to their attitudes to help them feel that they were in a non-judgmental free space where they could express themselves freely and open up about their values, opinions, and feelings. It made me aware of my unique way of creating a new home in the UK as a voluntary immigrant and how I had felt homeless several times. I realised their experiences could not be generalised and reduced to a common pattern. Instead, each involuntary immigrant experienced being homeless in the world in a different way.

Throughout the process, I aimed to be as open as possible to recognise my beliefs and knowledge about living in another country. I tried to capture my participant experiences. The experiences that influenced me emerged while listening to the interviews. I have attempted to keep these influences in my mind and recognise them during the analysis and writing-up stages.

At the end of the interviews, I asked my participants about their interview experiences. I felt pleased to hear that, despite any anguish, it may have caused, every participant found the interview helpful. Some participants informed me that this was their first chance to consider and talk about their experiences in such

depth. Others also expressed how they were startled by the material that came to light. Also, some participants disclosed that having their losses heard and seen by another person was healing.

Analysing in-depth interviews with qualitative data was quite challenging and time-consuming. Listening to and transcribing the audio recordings added another dimension to the analytical process. As I reassessed the participant narratives, I saw that I was thinking back on what was developing from each participant's story, the interviewing process, and my responses to their narratives. In contrast to the interview process, the transcription process allowed me to slow down and focus on what was in front of me. During the analysis, I took some notes, which were formed and made easier to organise by annotating the transcripts. My excitement and passion for the study were clearly well-founded, but I had never imagined it would be such a challenging task. During the writing process, while we were on lockdown due to Covid19 and grieving, I found myself quite upset, emotionally drained and disengaged from my life.

The challenging part during the analysis of cases was making judgments on what looked specifically noteworthy and representative of participants' stories across instances. At this point, a conflict arose between the need to preserve the originality of participants' narratives and the need to uncover more profound meanings. While trying to take a more comprehensive picture of what had been offered to me in participants' stories, this procedure also gave me a chance to dive into the data differently than I had done while examining the narratives of each participant. To provide an accurate account of the facts, I felt somewhat burdened by the need to do justice to the narratives. I was also conscious of my role as a researcher and my choices regarding the themes that looked specifically strong and significant. Throughout this process, I remained very concerned about how I could portray both the similarities across participants and the distinctiveness of each person's experiences.

During this research journey, I was touched on a personal and professional level in relation to what it means to feel homeless in the world. Various themes arose, leading me to question how my life experiences have contributed to a feeling of home or absence of home. I remembered my constant struggle to understand and accept whether I would ever feel at home. Even though I appreciate the struggle and the process of questioning to make sense of my own experiences, it was an experience of struggle residing within me that I was keenly aware of when writing this project. When my participants asked how they felt after stepping outside of their country, the start of a journey of feeling homeless, I was reminded of my personal journey. It reminded me how much I yearned to go back each time I struggled with life in the UK, and, with the realisation that nothing would be the same, the knowledge that home was long gone in time.

Reflexive exploration of the study as a whole

As I mentioned before, I chose this research topic because of my personal and professional interest in immigration. The experience of losing my father during the writing process of this research and going through bereavement impacted my personal and professional life. I noticed a transformational process during this period which shaped how I engage in the world with others, including my clients. I became intensely aware of my mortality and the mortality of others. I felt that I understood those who have gone through experiences of loss. It is hard to disclose that the loss of my father opened a new world and a new understanding of my life. I had to face the paradoxes about life, death, and desires; the most challenging was the relationship with others. I was going through one of the biggest crises in my life during this time.

This research allowed me to appreciate the difficulties and crises that I have been through. I remember questioning my sense of self/identity as if I didn't know who I was anymore. After many years of leaving part of myself back in my country and feeling quite lost, I resonated with what my participants were also struggling with.

However, I was cautious about bracketing my personal experiences because two people's experiences could never be experienced the same way. I paid attention to their grief and suffering while I was listening to my recordings. My own experiences of grief and loss allowed me to participate more openly in the phenomenon in my research. For example, one of the participants who were quite clear about their decision to leave their country and was already hopeful about the future after losing three brothers to war didn't make much sense during the interview. I assumed they needed to be more explicit about my question, so I asked from different angles to guide them to look at it from a different perspective. After my loss, while I was listening to the interview, I could see that they were at the stage of accepting their loss and their own mortality, which helped them see the light after the darkness.

In my case, the experience of losing my father reshaped and changed my life forever. Despite the difficulty in facing this, it allowed me to see life from a different perspective. I confronted death, loss, and my life choices in a way that made me feel ungrounded. I came to question the meaning of life and my relationship with it. My dad's loss changed my therapeutic work with my clients and how I relate to them. I believe one of the inevitable life crises I had to face in the midst of training allowed me to question my true self, an interrogation I avoided engaging in for a long time. Examining my life choices helped me take responsibility for my postponed life. It allowed me to take this space to look deeper until I professionally and

personally saw the light at the end of the tunnel. I had never imagined my participants' stories would resonate with me so much while I listened to the interviews.

Overall, this project has helped me to become self-aware of loss and understand the meaning of losing someone or something precious and cherished. In addition, it has provided me with a perspective to situate myself when I evaluate myself with my participants. Last but not least, my research has prepared me to work as a counselling psychologist with involuntary immigrants. When I worked with immigrants who were exploring their struggles in the past, I was less self-reflective about my position as an immigrant and more easily influenced by emotions. As a result, I was less skilled as a therapist because I struggled to distinguish myself from my client's problems. Overall, this study has benefitted me in terms of dealing with clients' issues of crises, loss, and moving into a new home. It has also improved the scientific component of my self-concept as a counselling psychologist in practice.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I give an overview of the 8 interviews I conducted with my participants. First, I present the demographic information of my participants. To gather background information about them that might be relevant in making sense of their experiences as Syrian involuntary immigrants in Istanbul, I handed out questionnaire forms to the participants prior to the interviews and asked them to fill these out. This information is summarised in Table 1.

Then I present a summary of 15 sub-themes clustered under the 4 master themes I identified in the accounts of my participants. I discuss each theme with quotes that I think are illustrative of the concerned theme. All quotes are referenced by page and line number, and one of the interviews is enclosed in Appendix 10 (An excerpt of the first 144 lines from Saz's transcript).

The 4 master themes relevant to Syrian involuntary immigrants' experiences of leaving their home and settling in Istanbul are: 1) LOSS, 2) CRISIS, 3) MAKING A NEW HOME, and 4) THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HOME. I commence with an in-depth look at how my participants experienced leaving their home and settling in Istanbul as a great *loss*. Then I focus on their description of life *crisis*, manifested through disturbed senses of the self, of the other and the world. After this, I turn to their experiences settling in the host country and accepting it as a means of *making a new home*, with accounts of self-realisation and personal growth as a result of the challenges they had to overcome. Finally, to explore *the significance of*

home, the meanings and associations my participants attribute to the concept of home are presented. The first three themes largely follow a chronological sequence (from leaving the hometown in Syria to establishing a new life in Istanbul), while the fourth theme on the perception of home cuts across different stages of the temporal narrative.

Participant's Pseudonym	**Ag**	**Gender**	**Level of Education**	**Social Status (Job/Income Source)**	**Partnership Status**	**Childre**	**Siblings**	**Arrived in Istanbul**
Saz	30	Male	Bachelor's Degree in Medical Science	Working for NGOs	Engaged (1.5 years)	None	Two brothers and one sister	Sept 2015
Yaser	28	Male	Bachelor's degree in Translation	Translator/ Waiter	Single Separated	None	Two brothers and one sister	Oct 2015
Nada	20	Female	Graduated in High School/Conti nuing Bachelor's degree in Biology in Istanbul	University student/ Biology teacher for small children	Single	None	One unger brother	2016
Farid	33	Male	Bachelor's degree in Education	Working for NGOs as Programme Coordinator	Single	None	Two brothers	May 2015
Amar	32	Male	Bachelor's degree in Medicine	Working for NGOs as medical adviser	Married	6-month -old daughter	One brother	2013

Dima	31	Female	Bachelor's Degree in Finance	Working for NGOs as Coordinator	Single	None	One brother and one sister	2015
Nabil	44	Male	Bachelor's degree in Translation	Teacher/Lecturer	Married	5	Three brothers, one deceased	2014
Roni	32	Male	Bachelor's degree In Literature	Working for NGOs as Translator	Single	None	Two siblings	2013

Table 1 – Data on participant demographic characteristic

1.	LOSS
1.1	Having no choice
1.2	Losing everything
1.3	Awareness of loss
2.	CRISIS
2.1	Disturbed sense of self
2.2	Disturbed relatedness to others
2.3	Strategies of the fragile self

3.	MAKING A NEW HOME
3.1	Istanbul as limbo
3.2	Istanbul as the new home
3.3	Hope
3.4	Self-actualisation and personal growth
4.	SIGNIFICANCE OF HOME
4.1	Home as a safe place
4.2	Home as a space of privacy and intimacy
4.3	Home as an emotional landscape
4.4	Home as a place in which one can work
4.5	Home outside Syria

Table 2 - Themes and Subthemes

4.2 Themes

1. Loss

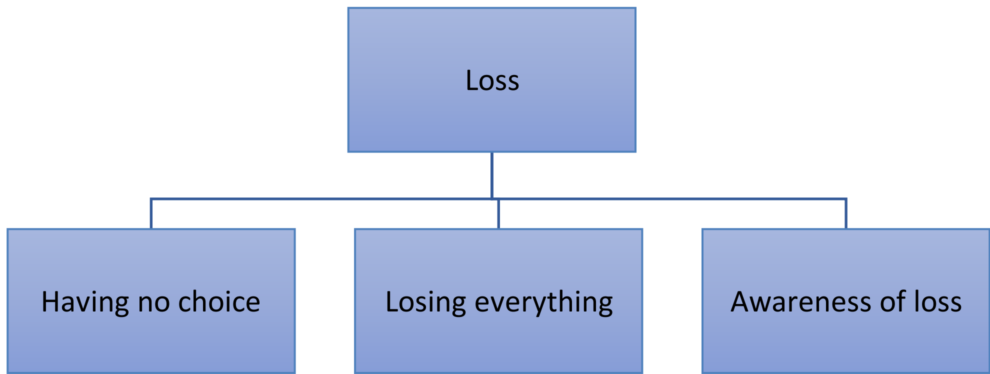

Figure 1 *Loss* and its subthemes

1.1. Having no choice

A major theme cutting across participants' narratives is 'having no other choice' than leaving home and staying in Istanbul. In numerous instances, they justified their decision to leave their home country on the basis that they were obliged to do so at the time. Participants insistently used the words 'should', 'had to', and 'impossible' when referring to their departure from Syria. Most participants also repeatedly used phrases to portray that they did not actually make a choice and were not in a position to choose; instead, they simply followed what had been imposed upon them by the objective realities of the war. Thus, they refused any agency in the course of events.

For instance, Saz said:

'*Then I said I have only one choice, then I should go to Turkey.' (Saz: p.3, 26).* **'***It's not my choice...OK, my home is Istanbul. It's not my choice, but I have only this choice*.' *(p.43, 472)*

Roni said that his parents made a choice for him against his will, and he had to follow their decision:

'*It was so dangerous…So that's why they [my parents] decided to take me to Turkey (Roni: p.1, 18) 'I had no vote. That time I didn't want to leave Syria. I was like I'm not going to leave. I was very stressed about it. I didn't want to go to Turkey.*' *(p.7, 16)*

Dima's words also imply a total lack of agency in her presence in Turkey:

'Suddenly I found myself in a country I don't want to live in, [where] I don't have any future there.' (Dima: p.6, 37)

In certain cases, participants presented their responsibility towards their family members as the reason why they had to do what they did. For instance, several times throughout his narrative, Saz said that he 'had to leave' in order to keep his father alive:

'*My father was sick. He had a heart attack before... In eastern Aleppo, there was no angiography. So I only have one chance, I should go to Turkey.' (Saz: p.6, 54)*

Similarly, Amar mentioned that he had to stay in Istanbul since attempting to enter Europe illegally was not an option for him because of his baby:

'*So, if I want this and I would do it anyway… But, I would not do it like other people crossing the sea with their kids. (Amar: p.14, 8) …because I can choose for myself but for my baby, I can't choose because she cannot decide or choose for herself... yeah...I see it as a crime to do this. You put him or her in a place that you don't know what would be the results of this*.' *(p.14, 19)*

Some male participants stated that staying in Syria was extremely dangerous for them because of the war conditions and the political environment; therefore, leaving was not a 'choice' at all. Roni, Yasser, and Amar's political activities prior to the civil war had put them in a critical position, which explained the 'impossibility' of staying in or going back to Syria. Being at the age of recruitment for the military was also stated as a factor, which left them with no other choice than to leave:

'*The reason that I can't go back is because first I am erm.... all about what I did before. Like manifestation (protests) secondly, because I am on the right age for the army.' (Amar: p.5, 116)*

'*I have been involved in all of these situations, protests. So, I had no other choice but to travel outside of the country.*' *(Yasser: p.1, 17)*

'*I was a young male, previously arrested. I had so many problems.*' *(Roni: p. 1, 29)*

For some male participants, avoiding participating in the war or joining the regime army, ISIS or opposition forces was the major motivation to leave Syria. For them, the fact that they would have 'had to fight in the war' if they had stayed in Syria automatically entailed the 'impossibility' of staying. Their accounts shifted from describing the compulsion of young male adults to fight on one or another side of the war to being 'obliged' to leave the country or not being 'able to' return, with no mention of their ethical or political considerations related to fighting.

'So, I've told my brothers that for us - we are young men - we can't go to regime areas. Because if they don't arrest us just because we are from Palmyra, they will force us to join the military. So, I've told them, "We will go one by one."' (Farid: p. 3, 32)

Yaser and Amar pointed to values and moral ethics in justifying their act:

'To be honest with you I had only two choices. One is going to military service and there was a very high position there. One of the VIP guys but I refused. Other choice was to travel outside.' (Yaser: p.7, 19) 'I will never be part of that. I am a teacher. I used to help people, not kill people. So it's completely out of my values. So there was only one choice left to travel.' (p.7, 24)

'I know because many of my friends I have experienced other people who stayed there. So in my age they take everybody to the army. So surely, they would have taken me to the army that I don't want. Because I don't want to fight with anybody to have the power.' (Amar: p.10, 22)

It was interesting to observe that some participants recognised the existence of several options in front of them but argued that they did not have a real chance to choose among these options freely, as if the choice was somehow imposed. Dima describes it as:

'*I haven't to choose them actually. They chose me, like there is a choice but the choice is not mine... My circumstances chose me, It's like... I consider the concept of choice in another way.*' *(Dima: p.12, 18)*

While not 'having any other choice' besides leaving home was a recurring theme in most participants' narratives, they themselves mentioned alternative paths they could have chosen or paths chosen by others they know. When referring to his two siblings who stayed in Aleppo, Saz mentioned that it was their "decision" and that they "preferred" to do so. This is the only occasion throughout the interview where he implicitly expressed that staying could have also been an option. However, while he could consider "staying" as an option or as a deliberate choice for his siblings, he never considered it as an option for himself.

'*My sister is married, and she decided to stay in Aleppo...with her husband and her children and I have another brother also who is married, and he said 'I prefer to stay'...I tried to talk to them. Please come with me. Here life it would be impossible to stay. I will be afraid all the time for you...I will be worried for you. They said 'this is your decision; you can move but we will try to stay as possible as we can. I said OK...This is your chance, this is my chance...I will go.*' *(Saz: p.13; 126)*

Farid also suggested that staying could be an alternative:

'*So, the only thing that we should do, we should stay there trying to find a job there under the control of ISIS. Some people could do that but it's always risky.*' *(Farid: p.3, 29)*

On this point, Nabil communicated a markedly distinct view from other participants; he clearly expressed that leaving his hometown for Istanbul was a deliberate choice he made both for himself and his children. He talked about his preferences, his priorities and his decision-making process at length. Not only was he quite happy with his decision, but he also insisted that he would not be in Turkey if he did not think Turkey was where he should be.

'I know that's something stupid, but it's my choice not to stay under government rules.' (Nabil: p.1, 13)

'It was not easy to decide, but I had to survive and save my children for the sake of my children to study and having an education. That was number one. I could go somewhere else inside Syria, but I preferred to come to Istanbul because it has a good education system and it's safe.' (Nabil: p.1, 28)

'For me, if I'm not convinced, I wouldn't have come to Istanbul. I can't be with people I don't love.' (Nabil: p.14, 6)

1.2 Losing everything

As a result of the feeling of not having any choice or agency, leaving home, hometown and the home country was experienced by most of the participants as a great loss - something that happened to them rather than a consequence of a deliberate decision. Loss, in its several dimensions, was central to all accounts. Participants defined loss as a painful experience close to physical pain. Saz defined the experience with a very striking expression in Arabic, his native language, as that of '*removing one's nail from one's finger.*' For him, the loss was similar to losing a part of his body, being torn apart:

'*[as] if someone is trying to remove your nail...it's very painful... because...for example... your home, your city, your area, your house, your room. It's, for example, the main part of your life. My home was there. I had born in that home. I lived in that home, and I moved.*' *(Saz: p.7, 62)*

For Yaser, Nada and Roni as well, loss was associated with the feeling of pain:

'*How you lose everything, it's painful.*' *(Yaser: p.8, 18)*

'*It was very painful.' (Nada: p.5, 31)*

'*I suffered a lot.*' *(Roni: p.8, 18)*

In the participants' narratives, loss frequently appeared, not as the loss of a specific object they were attached to, but, rather, as the loss of 'everything' they had, their whole world. Moving to Turkey meant beginning from 'zero' in life:

'*We have lost everything in the war. We lost our house, we lost everything. So starting from zero.*' *(Yaser: p.7, 32)*

'*Yes. When I decided to move to Turkey, I thought I have lost everything.*' *(Saz: p.11, 112)*

‘*So I had a good life. Suddenly I’ve lost them all’ (Farid: p.7, 22); ‘I was hopeless when I came here with nothing, even… I spent the last money that I have. No money, no hope, nothing at all.*’ *(Farid: p.9, 10)*

Several layers of loss were mentioned in the narratives: loss of home, loved ones, social circle, future, career, hope, connections, etc. Loss of home was often stated as the most central loss that brought about other types of loss.

The way in which the participants experienced the loss of their home varied. For some, it was the physical destruction of the building or the whole residential area, while for others, the loss occurred as they left their home and moved to another place in Syria or abroad for different reasons. For instance, Nada felt the loss of her home for the first time when she had to leave her belongings and the house where she grew up to move to a new house in her hometown because of the bombings:

‘*I remember it was the saddest moment in my life. I just...I couldn’t believe it. You know the moment you can’t even have time to say goodbye to your home.*’ *(Nada: p.5, 29).*

Seeing a photo of his house after leaving their hometown following the ISIS occupation made Farid realise that he lost his home:

‘*We are happy that it’s still there, but it’s not our home anymore, we can’t go back… It’s not ours*’. *(Farid: p.5, 12).*

He also added that it was sudden and unforeseen:

‘*Palmyra was a good place to live, a simple town and the situation was good because it wasn’t involved in the war. So suddenly everything went upside down. Our… our homes destroyed, ISIS came, the regime didn’t save civilians but in the opposite way.’ (Farid: p.2, 16)*

For Nabil, the moment he lost his home was the moment the Turkish-Syrian border was closed, which meant that he could go back to Syria anymore, not even to visit:

‘It's difficult to recognise that I cannot go back to Syria. […] So, after closing borders it's hard for me. Since that time, I felt like I am a stranger.’ (Nabil: p.2, 19).

Losing people and a social circle was an important aspect of losing a home. All participants talked about the loss of people that they knew or were connected to, and, in numerous cases, this was a physical loss.

‘After the jail, most of my best friends died. Even my cellmates, most of them died.’ (Roni: p.4, 16)

‘Like my friends died. It was more effective to me. So I was very bad, I cried... like this.’ ‘his family they called and they told me 'yesterday we lost my son, your cousin died from an airstrike' (Saz: p.45, 512).

Nabil was the only one who lost an immediate family member at war.

'*I lost three brothers each year. This is why I came here. […] My brother was a pharmacist, and he had a pharmacy, the first one. But the others were killed under shelling*' *(Nabil: p.8, 19).*

Moving to Turkey also meant the interruption of intimate relationships and deprivation from support systems and social relations for some participants. Coming from a large family and moving to Turkey alone, Yaser felt the lack of relations with his nuclear and wider family and the loss of the comfort zone they provided:

'*I used to play with my brother, I used to embrace my mother in the morning. These things are so much valuable to me. Like the smell of my father. It's very hard to live without those things. One can't stand here alone.' (Yaser: p.4, 27)*

'I have felt very happy because you gather, you talk, you have someone who cares, someone who helps. Lots of people who love you wish you all the best. Here I am all alone. We celebrate alone.' *(Yaser: p.6, 18)*

Nabil tried to keep his family close to him in Istanbul but did not manage to do it.

'*I didn't tell you that I brought my father and mother here to Turkey in 2014 and then they left to Syria. One year later, my parents-in-law came here and stayed with me for one year, and when I came back from Gaziantep to Istanbul, I was shocked. Now my sister is in Germany, my father, and mother-in-law are in Syria and my parents are in Syria. This is a new feeling of alienation.' (Nabil: p.6, 32)*

Some participants experienced the loss of connection to their relatives, wider family and social surroundings, despite the fact that they all live in Istanbul.

'But here, even I have some cousins here, my two brothers are here. But it's a hard life, I can't see them. I haven't seen my brothers for three months. There, we were living together. Even if he, if he is in a different flat, you can go any time.' (Farid: p.12, 9)

'Maybe we have lots of relatives here, but we don't do that. I don't know why. I think we lost the feeling that we want to do that. I saw many people here in Çapa [a region in Istanbul], they don't go and visit each other. They say no I don't feel like it, or I am busy. In Syria, no one would say that. Even they are busy they would still visit more.... yes.' (Nada: p.21, 24)

With great sorrow, Nada mentioned the loss of shared and handed down cultural values, which she called a 'magical' thing connecting people and transferring from one generation to another.

'*It was passed to me from my ancestors. You cannot pass to the next generation. Old women in Syria, even sitting at the coffee shops. All the Syrian women back then had a special way to say the words, like lovely words. Those women will pass to you these cultural things without you being aware. [..] People have in Syria and anyone left that country lost this thing... When someone left then this would lose its magic....,*

like we all Syrian like this type of coffee, the way we cooked the coffee, these magic things that we all share.' (Nada: p.21, 2)

Loss in terms of their material standards of living was an emphasised aspect of the participants' sense of deprivation. They usually left all of their immobile and most of their mobile assets behind as they departed from their hometown:

'*It's not a nice thing, you know. And you left… left everything. We just took our clothes. We couldn't take more. House… big house full of furniture, clothes, everything, you know. We had a very very big house. It was just like two houses but connected. So, everyone has his own room with a TV, my private telephone, the extension one... Everything was… I mean we left everything, we moved to Raqqa.*' *(Farid: p.4, 30) '...and we spent all our money. Four months without working, paying rent, buying food and transportation, everything is too expensive. You know, in war everything is very expensive. So, we've spent everything.*' *(Farid: p.3, 9)*

The emphasis on this particular aspect of loss was perhaps more pronounced because my participants were coming from middle class and well-to-do families, who enjoyed a certain standard of living in Syria. Therefore, they experienced the new conditions in Istanbul and financial uncertainty, which they were not familiar with before, as a sharp decline. Saz, for instance, said:

'*When I was in Syria, my family was rich...so....my father... we had one home and we had, also in a village we had a farm and we had three shops erm...one factory, one car... we lost them all.*' *(Saz: p.12, 118)*

For some participants, the most important – and the most recurring - element of loss, which is also associated with material loss, pertained to their professional careers. For Saz, as a medical doctor, leaving Syria meant losing the possibility to practise his profession, and, together with it, his hopes of being an orthopaedic surgeon. His training was interrupted, and, despite several attempts, he found out that he would not be able to legally practise as an MD in Turkey. Farid, who was a teacher in Syria, was in a similar position to Saz.

'*Yes. When I decided to move to Turkey, I thought I have lost everything. I lost, for example, my education and my speciality*.' *(Saz; p.11, 112)*

'*I was a teacher. I was teaching at a public school in the afternoon. I was teaching in an institute with a private licence. So, I had a good life. Suddenly I've lost them all.' (Farid: p.7, 21)*

An associated type of loss mentioned by Dima was the loss of her previous social status as a bank employee and a successful graduate student at a prestigious university in Syria, which she defined as her

'identity'. She felt that she enjoyed power and respect in society in this professional role, something she does not have as a Syrian involuntary immigrant.

'I lost my identity at some point... I was a banker, I had a good social situation, I had a very powerful network because of my job, and because of my position wherever I go and I mentioned that I work here and the doors were open. I didn't worry about anything, maybe the small life details but whenever I wanted something I could manage it because, I'm talking now about living in, surrounded by authority, the Syrian, the legal stuff which I don't have any power here.' (Dima; p.16, 32-36)

'In addition to this, I was a Master's student, in a very well-known university, I had a good reputation there, […] So I left all this behind.' (Dima: p.17, 13)

1.3 Awareness of loss

As part of the participants' efforts to cope with their disturbing experiences of leaving home, shared themes of awareness of loss and when it occurred frequently appeared in the narratives.. Most participants did not realise that they were leaving their home for good at the time of departure. The realisation of loss usually was not immediate but came afterwards, looking retrospectively:

'*No, I wouldn't take the things with me because that would make me feel bad because I would leave there and I would come back to my home.*' *(Nada: p.5, 19)*

'*Who can expect you never return to your home again? Just a couple of things I took ...erm... after weeks, then months... the borders between the area and our city were closed. We couldn't return home.*' *(Yaser: p. 8, 11)*

'*Shortly after I arrived in Turkey and I felt that my home was in Syria. I felt that I lost my home.*' *(Roni: p.8, 18)*

Not being aware of the loss at the time it occurred was sometimes related to not being able to think and feel, and it usually accompanied the feeling of lack of agency. Both Yaser and Farid expressed that they could not think or feel anything or did not go through a decision-making process at the time they left their homes behind:

'*When I said goodbye to my family, I didn't feel it. I was numb. I didn't feel anything, any reaction. I was out of everything, out of thinking, out of feeling. I didn't have any feelings.' (Yaser: p.4, 21)*

'*We couldn't think logically, we couldn't understand' (Farid: P.2, 25)…'Then I started to think back about that area, about that time, yeah, I know that I didn't decide to leave.*' *(Farid: p.2, 33)*

The awareness of loss often came with a comparison between past and present, Syria and Turkey, home and 'not-home'. Referring to several aspects of daily life, participants compared their current conditions with the conditions in Syria, conditions with which they were familiar. Each time, they arrived at the conclusion

that “Syria was better”. In contrast, life in Istanbul was experienced as something “missing”, as a life “less good”. Hence, their assessment of the present was a relative, comparative process, rather than an assessment on its own terms. Their emphasis was always on the “difference” between Syria and Turkey (food, culture, weather, time, etc.), and “different” meant something bad or less good.

‘*But here, the way you’re thinking is different. I mean when we left the country, everything changed at one time. I mean thinking about the future is different, thinking about life is different, love, the parents, anything…*’ *(Farid: p.12, 10)*

‘*Yeah my life was very, very perfect there. But here...here everything is different.’ (Yaser; p.5, 20)*

‘*Eating...ahh...different. Different taste...Turkish food.. and Syrian food... I found, for example, like meat, for example...ahh.. the same meat in Istanbul and in Syria...when I tried to eat meat here. Ship meat...oh, it's not delicious*.’ *(Saz: p.40, 438)*

‘*Syria is better than Turkey because, erm, there is a type of....how can I say...Islamic issues...this we can say...Syria is like...in Turkey they say bereket (abundance).*’ *(Saz: p.39, 424)*

‘*When I came to Istanbul the first six months... all these months I and my family were sick... because also the weather was different*.’ *(Saz: p.28, 280)*

In addition to highlighting differences in the physical environment, language, climate, food and culture, participants stressed how, more importantly, human relations in the host country were different than they were in Syria. According to them, there was a sharp contrast in terms of how people treated each other in the two countries. People in Syria were described as generous, helpful and caring, whereas in Turkey they were selfish, careless, and unreliable. Nada stated:

‘*Back there everyone loved everyone. We have something called: if my neighbour can't have it, I can’t have it. We can’t do something without sharing. You know Arabic people, But, here no one cares about anyone. I met some people from SPI when they have found a place to live or good jobs, they don’t help each other...It feels like there is hate. No! We were not like that. No, we are not. People hate each other, not wishing good things for each other.’ (Nada: p.22, 11*)

In some cases, denial of loss of home and resistance to change came to the surface with thoughts and imaginings about ‘going back home’. Most participants kept reflecting on how it would be to go back to their home and hometown, and whether they would be able to get the life they left behind back. Although most expressed the view that the conflict is ‘never going to end’ or ‘nothing would be the same’ again, this did not stop them from dreaming of returning to their hometown in search of a ‘lost heaven’ or having conflicted feelings about returning back.

‘*Every night I dream of returning to my house because there were my books, my stuff, my photos when I was a child. There were lots of memories in that house.’ (Yaser: p.8, 17)*

Saz stated that he still wished to 'go back', but, at the same time, he knew that he would not be able to live in their hometown under the current conditions of war. In his dreams, he finds himself stuck in Syria, in his past, feeling unsafe being at home:

'Sometimes I see some videos about my city Aleppo...ahh now...it means...if I come back there, I can't live I think...because life conditions...because there is no electricity no water no services to telephone...also another type of life conditions...it's different because...if I came back, I think I will be crazy...or how can I say 'bad mood.' (Saz: p.42,454) '*Every time I think about [returning home] I saw a dream...now I left Syria....(...) area...attacking there..erm, I saw like this... I try to come back to Turkey, I see Turkish soldiers trying to kill me (laughing) ok this is your decision, stay in Syria and you will die there...so ok... then I wake up...and thank god...' (Saz: p.42, 458)*

Some of the participants developed a sense of acceptance that they lost their home forever. Acceptance came in many different forms. For Yaser, acceptance meant recognising that the home he knew no longer existed, that he would not be able to find what he left behind again, even if he physically returned to the location:

'*If I went back into the same situation, I don't want to go back. The situation is different. If everything is settled...new government, new people...why not I say. [...] I would be happy because I come back to my family, friends, and a new life. But I remember even my friends are abroad. If I went back there would be no one... I would go back to a completely new life, new situation, new people, and new place because everything definitely changed.*' *(Yaser: p.12, 16)*

Dima recognised that paradise was lost forever when she visited Syria for a short period after moving to Turkey. Disappointed not to find the home she left behind, even when physically there, she stated:

'I felt like something's changed there in these two months... yeah, it wasn't the same city I left back behind me, like not many people around. Also, like I met my friends and I spent with them almost every night with them there, but there was no topic to talk about. Politics, the situation... we shared the same things we used to share and that's all, but I felt like that something has changed.' (Dima: p.1, 26-29)

For Roni, 'saying goodbye' to his home meant that he accepted it as lost and was ready to move forward. Interestingly, he did not say goodbye the first time he left Syria for Turkey; instead, he did so when he returned to his hometown for a short period of time to postpone his military service. He stated that his visit had been a breaking point, and he began to feel differently about Syria, recognising that the home he knew was gone forever and should be left behind.

'It was a proper goodbye. [...] I saw my grandfather and most of my cousins and aunts. So, as you said it was a proper goodbye.' *(Roni: p.2, 22)*

1.4 Conclusion

For most of my participants, leaving home was not conceived of as a choice they had made. Rather, they insisted that they were left with no option but to move to Turkey, and, thus, this process involved almost no decision-making on their part. Participants mentioned that they 'had to' leave Syria to survive and to avoid fighting in the war, which automatically meant that staying was 'impossible'. Thus, leaving home was perceived as something that happened to participants, rather than something they had chosen. Departure from home brought a pervasive sense of loss. An important point observed here is that the awareness of loss occurs in the present time and the host country, and it appears through a comparison between the present and past. Putting it differently, although the 'loss' itself occurred gradually and in the past, it was not acknowledged as such in the home country at the time in which they left.

2. Crisis

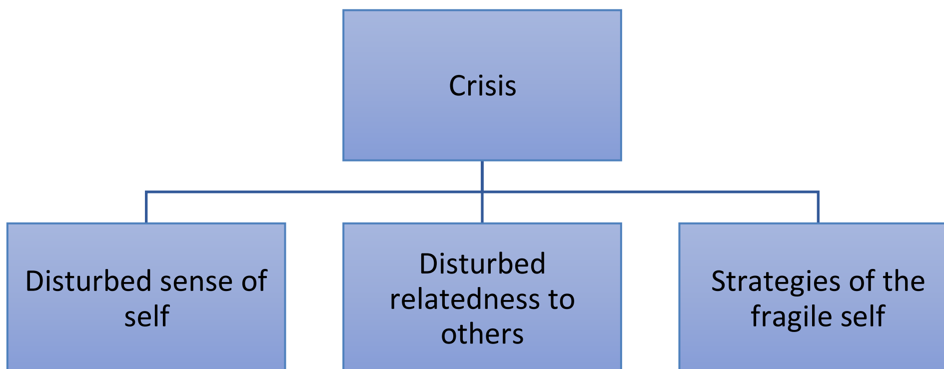

Figure 2 – *Crisis and its subthemes*

2.1 Disturbed sense of self

The experience of most participants was marked by a disturbed sense of self, including feelings of self-alienation, lack of agency and loss of authenticity.

Dima indicated that she felt confused and lost after she moved to Turkey. It is significant that she lost track of the conversation just when she was talking about these feelings:

'*I was confused at the beginning, I didn't know who I am for a while' (Dima: P.16, 30)...I don't know, like what I'm doing here. I felt lost and nothing was working very well. so, yeah, it feels like…I forgot the question.*' *(Dima: p.17, 28)*

Farid talked about a similar feeling:

'*When I came here… it is just like nothing is clear, my mind, my view, it's something not clear*.' *(Farid: p.2, 31)*

Saz felt that "*something is broken inside*" him and that "*he has no sense*" *(Saz: p.38, 398).* He experienced the change, not only as the transformation of the person he was before but also as the disappearance of himself as a human being and turning into "no one". As he recognised that he had lost or was losing his ability to love, feel fear and sympathise with the victims of war in his country, he began to think he had "psychiatric problems" and to question whether he is "human or not":

'Sometimes I think like...erm...I have psychiatric problems. I think that because ...erm... after the war, according to my.... am I a human or not? Why all those news is not affecting me...I don't know...maybe anything that happened and it's repeated, repeated then you see like a normal situation.' (Saz: p.51, 574)

Both Yaser and Dima reported that they could not function as they did before; awareness of how their functionality was impaired made them feel further estranged from their former selves.

'*So I wasn't able to concentrate, I wasn't myself. I was not able to look at the things that I am good at.' (Yaser: p.3, 32)*

'*I felt also everything I gained I forgot them... not forgot... they are in a part of my mind I can't recall them. Like it's erased, like I have to deal with something, I have to learn it again.*' *(Dima: p.19, 30)*

Saz felt that he was different:

'I feel different. […] My fiancé says, 'Are you Salem the same who was in Syria?' (Saz: p.38, 400)

Yaser complained about memory impairment:

'*I forget a lot. Maybe because of stress, maybe...but this was a big problem for me because I need my memory so much. I need it.' (Yaser: p.11, 13) '... I keep my umbrella in my hand because if I put it somewhere, I would forget it. This wasn't happening when I was in Syria. I wasn't forgetful, but here my memory doesn't help me*.' *(p.11, 18)*

Amar described his feeling of lack of control over life, as being an 'audience':

'*We are just [laughing] nothing in this world, it's like going to the cinema just watching. You cannot do anything... Yeah. You can't do anything*.' *(Amar: p.8, 12)*

Roni reported a feeling of dissociation from the real world:

'*I was living physically in Turkey, but all my thoughts and feelings were in my homeland.' (Roni: p.7, 29). 'I mean, in my brain, I don't really...I have sort of detachment or dissociation from the fact that most of my friends died and my beloved ones died.' (Roni: p.4, 21)*

He also spoke of a constant feeling of pain, which made it impossible to move on with his life without psychotherapy and medication:

'*...living in pain, you know. If I would just live with it, live with pain, I wouldn't have success in my life. I would quit my job.* […] *When my brain processes this much, I cannot function. I'd be at work looking at the screen all day but not working. I have to move on with medication or therapy or counselling*.' *(Roni: p.7, 6)*

Some participants also mentioned a lack of energy, loss of appetite and sleeping difficulties, which seem to be related to a weakened or lost feeling of liveliness. They were physically suffering from being in an unfamiliar habitat away from their home. Yaser felt dizzy and had headaches:

'*When I first came I felt dizzy […] thousands of questions were coming to my mind. I had a very bad headache. Because I need to know everything, what is going on here*.' *(Yaser: p.12, 8)*

Similarly, Farid stated that he lost his physical health:

'*When I came here, I was traumatised, I mean physiologically. So for two months maybe, or more, I was… even my body wasn't healthy. I mean weakness, you know, I was skinny.*' *(Farid: p.2, 33)*

2.2 Disturbed relatedness to others

The self does not exist in a vacuum but is always in relation to others. A disturbed sense of self was often accompanied by disturbances in relatedness to others.

Feelings of loneliness and isolation were often expressed during the interviews. Being away from their homes and separated from their family, friends, and social circle, my participants felt that they were struggling to overcome the challenges of being a "stranger in a strange land" all alone by themselves:

'*I was just separated from my friends and my life. Now there is no one that I know. I knew no one. Then this is what strikes me.*' *(Nada: p.2, 23)*

'*But in Turkey, after I came, to know nobody, it was really hard*.' *(Dima; p.17, 24)*

For Yaser, loneliness was the absence of someone close and caring for him, of someone to rely on:

'*When I was in Syria there was always someone who cares about you, someone who can at least protect you. […] Here you are alone. If you have no job, you will sleep on the street. Nobody will afford your rent, nobody...they may help you, but not for a long time.*' *(Yaser: p.5, 30)*

The desire for a caring and supporting other came to the surface, especially during difficult times, such as when Yaser broke up with his fiancée:

'*When I broke up with my fiancée, it was a disaster…I needed someone to hold me in their arms and feel their tenderness. But there was none. I struggled alone, and that was very painful until I recovered.*' *(Yaser: p.6, 6)*

For some, language and cultural differences were significant barriers to connecting with other people in the host country. Among others, Roni said that not speaking Turkish was the main reason he could not establish relationships in Turkey when he first arrived.

'*I didn't speak the language and I couldn't make relationships with people. Yeah. So, therefore, I didn't like it that much. In 2014, I decided 'no way I am going back home.' (Roni: P.2, 6)*

Mistrust was perhaps the most characteristic element of the participants' relation to their surrounding world after they left home. All participants, with no exception, questioned the sincerity and genuineness of others. The mistrust expressed during the interviews extended from the closest circle of family and friends to the whole of humanity. The lack of confidence was directed towards family (Roni), classmates (Nada), roommates (Farid), colleagues (Saz), Turkish and Syrian people (Saz), Western countries (Saz, Yaser, Farid, and Dima), politicians and political movements (Roni), religion (Saz), media, the international community, among others.

In many cases, participants explicitly mentioned or implied a breaking point or a certain incident, a disappointment which led them to 'realise' that people are not trustworthy. For instance, Nada spoke about an experience at her school when a professor mistakenly distributed an exam in Turkish to Syrian students:

'Our professor would fix it. But the feeling that I had with my classmate was too bad. Now I don't trust anyone. This person was speaking with me last week and now he is laughing. I don't understand, I don't trust them.' (Nada: p.12, 11)

For Roni, this breaking point was being dumped by his family:

'I mean that they can let you down anytime or leave you for anything. Ahhh. I don't count my family as bad people, but in some period here in Istanbul, erm...in 2015. My family just dumped me….' (p.3,7) 'They just threw me on the street [laughing]. So, I can't count on my family.' (p.3, 12)

Some participants were more forgiving about their disappointing experiences. For Yaser, the Syrians in Istanbul are in a struggle for survival, which makes their self-centred actions understandable:

'*Because life is here difficult. Everyone needs to survive. They cannot give because they are also in the same bad situation. Like we are in a wooden boat, this boat is sinking. Everyone looks at how he can save*

his life. So everyone here, here in Turkey, tries to save his own life. They don't have the feeling to help another.' *(Yaser: p.7, 10)*

The words 'real', 'true', 'fake' and 'lie' came up noticeably often in the interviews, which suggests that the participants were deeply questioning the reality presented to them by others:

'The difference is, your friends are just for....let's say they are interested in you. But are they real? I don't think so. Not all of them, but one or two maybe…' (Yaser: p. 6, 24)

'I can't trust any person. I think every person is a liar until I will see the trust.' (Saz: p. 46, 524) '*If I hear the news or I see the politicians...I told my brother to close the channels, close the TV, they are all liars.*' *(Saz: p.47, 532)*

'How can I say? […] Watching the news. It's fake, everything is fake […] Regarding countries, governments, the political situation, everything is fake, it's not the world there. I told people.' *(Farid: p.13, 31)*

A common target of the distrust was the Western countries that failed to stop the war in Syria and support the Syrian people, despite their humanitarian discourse. Participants raised doubts about the sincerity of the Western world's intentions and blamed the Western politicians for hypocrisy, which was a big source of frustration for them:

'*If I hear the news or I see the politicians... 'OK we will stop the war in Syria', and I told my brother to close the channels close the TV, they are all liars, they are not human....yes, not only politicians, all people...so when I see the news...for example when I talk to my friends in Europe...I said, "Thank God I didn't go to Europe." Because they say, "We care, we support humanity, we support refugees," and also they are liars...all the world is the same…*' *(Saz: p.47, 534)*

'*These countries don't want to stop the war, even if you see in the media they say, "We'll stop the war." They will keep the conflict because it's all about money and business. They are selling the lands, they are taking the oil and the gas without paying them, and they can stay there when there is always conflict. It means they will stay*.' *(Farid: p.13, 11)*

'Syria is part of the world. Other people sympathise with us orally but indeed we haven't seen that action on land.' (Nabil: p.14, 21)

The loss of confidence in others led some of my participants to break with their previous beliefs and engagements. Saz, who was a practising Muslim when he was in Syria, became quite sceptical of the clergymen. He raised doubts about God and questioned the meaning of faith:

'*Before I used to believe all of them [the hocas, meaning Muslim scholars]...now I hate all of them...so when I hear, for example, in a video he says, "Muslim, you should stay Muslims…" God damn you, you are a big liar…all of them...*' *(Saz: p.61, 683)*

'*When I was in Syria, I trusted in Islam. I believed in Allah, I believed in God. God will save me, God will protect me, and God will support me. When I was in Syria as a Muslim […] in Ramadan I fast, I prayed daily, five times… [...]for example, now, after I came to Turkey, sometimes I pray, and sometimes I don't pray. Sometimes I said, mmm, like... Allah supports us, God supports us or not? I say, OK, I trusted, and I believed in God, but what happened?*' *(Saz: p.60-61, 67)*

Similarly, Roni, who put his life in danger taking part in the opposition, became critical of the opposition movement after recognising that it was manipulative:

'There was an exaggeration to make people participate more. They were taking advantage of people's ignorance and rocking them with some shocking news, you know, or propaganda or something. […] I felt betrayed because I would protest even for one person because they're human and I would refuse to kill any person in front of me. Why were they exaggerated? This felt bad, and ever since, I felt bad about either pro-government people or opposition.' (Roni: p.6, 19)

What one thinks about how he is perceived by the 'Other' is an important aspect of how one perceives himself and how he connects to the Other. This dimension of the involuntary immigrant experience (more specifically, how one is seen by the host society) emerged in the interviews as the 'other's look'. The way participants perceived this look was closely linked with where they saw themselves in the host society and how they experienced being a Syrian involuntary immigrant in Istanbul.

For most participants, the look of the host society was coloured by disrespect and insult. Almost all of the participants reported that their experiences in Istanbul as involuntary immigrants were marked by hostile, racist and xenophobic perceptions held by the local people. The participants reported that they found themselves targets of discriminatory policies and attitudes.

Saz emphasised that being a "Syrian refugee" in Istanbul meant a certain status, which came together with several limitations faced in daily life:

'*What does that mean to you when you heard people talking that you are Syrian - I was traumatised [laughing] yes it's a type of racism. or... for example, they said, "'Suriyeli' (Syrian) go out"... Syrians not possible... for a Syrian you can't do this... you can't move... you can't...everything was difficult for us.*' *(Saz: p.30, 300)*

Yaser felt that, in the eyes of the host society, he is in an inferior position, not considered equal to the local Turkish people, and this was clearly a particularly hurtful thing to bear for him:

'*When they look at you...they would like to think you are…[pause] second citizen, not the same level. They would make you feel that you are not loved, you are not welcome here... This feeling is hurting.* [long silence]' *(Yaser: p.5, 23)*

The feeling of 'not being welcomed' was also expressed by Farid:

'*Yeah, but I still have a feeling that I'm not welcomed in this country by people, yeah... People, Turkish people, some of them, yes, they are helpful, they are nice people, in general, but there is a kind of racism or xenophobia in Turkey. Unfortunately, lots of Turkish people don't know the reality of the situation in Syria. Because of that, they don't like Syrians. Because of that, they don't accept us here.*'*(Farid: p.10, 1)*

Nada also stated that she felt aware of being treated differently than Turkish students, that she could not react against this, and she referred to it as 'trauma':

'*Yes. This trauma. People are pushing me, and I don't want any trouble.*' *(Nada: p.12,1)*

Others mentioned the 'difficulty' of living in Turkey as foreigners:

'[Turkey] is very challenging for refugees. Not only refugees but people from other countries.' *(Amar: P.6, 18)*

'*And there is no program for refugees.' (Farid: p.3, 27)*

'Some Syrians, they were attacked by Turkish people.' *(Saz: p.31, 308)*

This disturbed relation reflects the tension between the yearning for connection and a mistrust of others. This led the participants to embark on a radical questioning of their engagements and beliefs, leaving them almost completely ungrounded.

2.3 Strategies of the fragile self

Participants developed strategies to protect their disturbed, fragile selves in an environment that they deemed hostile and threatening. The third sub-theme under the superordinate theme of CRISIS encompasses these strategies, which were developed to cope with the wounded perceptions of the self and of the world following the loss of home.

According to Farid and Saz, in order to move towards the future, they must forget their past, or not think about what they have gone through and where they come from.

'*I keep myself busy. I don't… I try to do not to think about that. Thinking about that makes me, makes me sad, and it's not helpful. I should focus on my life, rebuilding my life.*' *(Farid: p.17, 21)*

‘*I feel like hopeless from the people, from the world, but I try to forget all those memories...every time I tried to forget...some of them like, erm...they asked me, “Did you remember this person from Syria?” I lied, I said, “I don’t know this person.” I want to forget.*’ *(Saz: p.52, 588)*

A number of times throughout their interviews, Nabil and Farid argued that what is best for them is to focus on the present and future and on what has to be done to achieve a better life, rather than being stuck in the past mourning the losses. Talking about the death of his brothers, Nabil stated:

‘*So, when he [my father] was very sad, I told him, “Don't be sad to that extent. We have something else to do. He has two children and we have to take care of them.”*’ *(Nabil, P.9)*

‘*We have to work. Some experiences pass and you think it's difficult, like missing a brother. But you don't have time because you have to work.*’ *(Nabil: p.7, 25)*

Amar mentioned that he ‘learned to hide the feelings’:

‘*Like even if I feel something, if I feel something, I just hide it. I say, it's ok; with time you can forget it... Like missing, like sadness. Yes...just learned not to talk about it [...] I don’t talk.... Maybe because I lived alone. Most of the time I didn’t tell my stories for a long time to anybody. So maybe I used to do this, to hide my feelings. Maybe....*’ *(Amar: p.12, 4)*

Being “no one” or turning into “no one”, was also expressed as something desirable by some participants. Saz and Roni reported their wish to be someone indistinguishable among the masses, someone with no past and no identity, someone who merely “survives”. Most of all, they “regret” their identity as a Syrian, and wish that they were not the person they are, that they “were not born in Syria”:

‘I try to get rid of the fact that I am Syrian actually.’ (Saz: p.43, 483)

‘I feel regret that I was born in Syria [laughing] like when I think about Syria, I feel regret [...] There's always something wrong attached or associated with Syria.’ (Roni: p.16, 15)

Saz expressed the belief that the only way to live in Turkey as part of a community - in other words, his only chance to “integrate” - is through becoming unidentifiable as a Syrian immigrant. He stated that he was ashamed of being a Syrian immigrant and tried to hide himself as one. At this point, the language of the host country was shown to play a symbolic role. For Saz, the Turkish language was not a medium of communication that would enable him to connect to the local community. On the contrary, the language acts as a *shibboleth*[3], as a test of his belonging to a particular group. Speaking Turkish with an accent reveals

[3] Shibboleth: A shibboleth is one specific phenomenon involving observing the use of the language of "out-group" people. It is a linguistic marker that is characteristic of members of a group, which is used by another group to identify members of the first group. Such identification typically has bad consequences for the members thus identified. The

that he is a Syrian immigrant, rather than a member of the local community, and, as such, it can result in disrespect. He associated the host country's language with "racism" and discrimination. He mentioned an incident in which he intentionally avoided speaking in Turkish and communicated in English with a shopkeeper in Istanbul. For him, his integration into the Turkish community is only possible if he can "speak Turkish like Turkish people":

'*Maybe after 10 years...erm...I can go back to Syria...maybe I will forget everything. Maybe...maybe after 10 years, I can speak Turkish like Turkish people [smiling].' (Saz: p.56, 634)*

'Yes...after 10 years I speak Turkish they will not notice [laughing].' *(Saz: p.57, 638)*

Dima also talked about how she hid her 'true self':

'I have, yeah, I'm working in this NGO, what do you work? Doing stuff. Then till now, I'm introducing myself as a translator, but I'm not.' (Dima: p.19, 37)

It was also interesting to see how disappointment and the resulting mistrust altered the way participants related to others. Roni indicated that he became pragmatic in his personal connections. For him, 'self-interest' was now the rationale of and his strategy in relationships:

'*I can sense how I can motivate people and how I can impress people and how I can influence or make a good impression if I need this person. I have to be good and make a good impression. I can affect people in general...No, it's how this person or how I can benefit that person.*' *(Roni: p.15, 24)*

Self-isolation and withdrawal were other responses to the hostility of the surrounding world. A conspicuous example was Nada, who, during her first months in Istanbul, locked herself at home and did not go out for months.

Since an embracing world and a dependable other could not be taken for granted anymore, participants tried to protect themselves by coping with life on their own without materially or emotionally depending on anyone else. Almost all participants said that they became more distant, sceptical, and hesitant in their

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story behind the word is recorded in the biblical Book of Judges. The word shibboleth in ancient Hebrew dialects meant 'ear of grain' (or, some say, 'stream'). Some groups pronounced it with a sh sound, but speakers of related dialects pronounced it with an s. In the story, two Semitic tribes, the Ephraimites and the Gileadites, have a great battle. The Gileadites defeated the Ephraimites, and set up a blockade across the Jordan River to catch the fleeing Ephraimites who were trying to get back to their territory. The sentries asked each person who wanted to cross the river to say the word shibboleth. The Ephraimites, who had no sh sound in their language, pronounced the word with an s and were thereby unmasked as the enemy and slaughtered. http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/Words/shibboleth

relationships. Both Nada and Dima stated that they kept their relationships at a superficial level, without entering into the intimate zone:

'*No, I can't trust anyone anymore […] There is not even one person that I want to tell. I stay with them, we share, we talk, but I don't...they just know my name.' (Nada: p.13, 18)* '*Yes. I want to talk to myself. Even with a loud voice, but only with myself.*' *(Nada: p.13, 25)*

'*Also, I have some people who I don't trust 100%, but I trust them the much that I can communicate in my daily life with them.' (Dima: p.15, 35)* '*I have my limitations like, yeah, I can sit with them for a while and that's enough, I go back to, you know, my shield.*' *(Nada: p.7, 27)*

A specific attempt to isolate one's self from the world which was reported by many participants was the refusal to learn or speak the language of the host society; this constituted a refusal to communicate with the hostile 'other', a strategy to keep the hostile 'other' at a distance. Nada, Saz and Dima stated that they resisted learning Turkish for a long time (Nada: p.2, 30; Saz: p.29, 286; Dima: p.11, 35). Roni stopped speaking Turkish after witnessing, as a translator, the way the Turkish police treated foreigners.

'*That was traumatic to see somebody being tortured in front of you and you are translating between these two folks. So, after these two incidents, two accidents actually, I decided that if anyone would ask me, "Do you speak Turkish?" I'd say, "Definitely not!" […] So, this thought became a fact that now I don't speak Turkish anymore.*' *(Roni: p. 5, 10)*

A desire for total isolation or a state of complete 'homelessness' was expressed by Saz, who described a vacuum in which no other person exists, where there is no communication, as a desirable place to live:

'*Sometimes like...I feel...let's go out of the earth to another planet. For example...sometimes, if I find a place it's so far from the world, no people there, no Internet, no telephone, no news, no fight, no war...OK, I can accept this.'* (Saz: p.47-48, 536)

It seems like these words reflect many participants' explicit and implicit desires for a radical detachment from a world deemed insecure, hostile and unjust.

2.4 Conclusion

Participants described an experience of 'crisis' in the aftermath of their departure from Syria and their arrival in Istanbul. The crisis manifested itself in different forms, but as a general pattern. Participants reported psychological and/or physiological complaints associated with disturbed senses of the 'self' and the 'other', and they developed strategies in response, including: self-isolation, forgetting the past, and hiding one's true self.

3. Making a new home

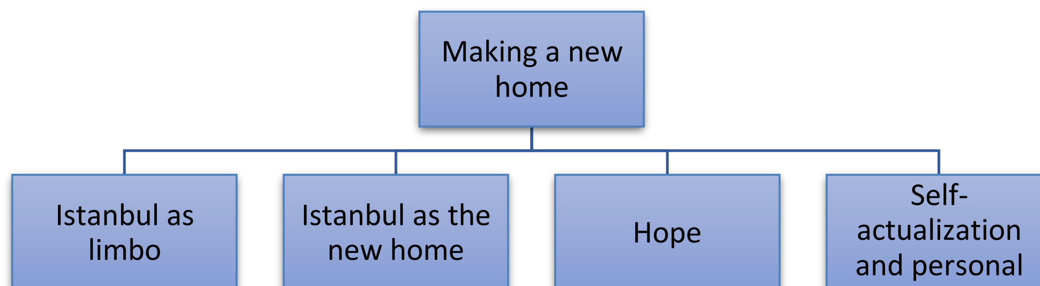

Figure 3 – *Making a new home* and its subthemes

3.1. Istanbul as limbo

After leaving Syria, none of the participants considered Istanbul a home for themselves. It seems that, for almost all participants, Istanbul was initially a 'limbo', a temporary station between their 'real' lost home in Syria and their future home. Feelings of temporariness and unsettledness were raised in Dima's narrative, among others:

'I was just focusing on the temporary living circumstances.' (Dima: p.7, 17)

When leaving Syria, most of the participants considered Turkey as a transit zone to Europe or other Western countries. For Saz, it was standing between his war-destructed homeland and Germany, which he used to define as "paradise". Until recently, Saz had never envisaged Istanbul as a permanent home, but as a way station in his journey. Even when his plans of immigrating to Germany did not work out, he refused to accept Istanbul as his home, and he kept his conflicted feelings towards the city and the host country:

'I shouldn't stay in Istanbul, I should move to Europe'; 'before the war, [home] was Syria...after the war...it was Germany...like, erm... because it was my dream to travel to Germany. I thought Germany was a paradise [smiling].' (Saz: p.42, 468)

At the beginning of his journey, Nabil also envisaged himself as a visitor, rather than an inhabitant, in Istanbul:

'I was thinking of visiting Istanbul as a passenger for a year, for example. This is what I felt before for one day or two days or a few hours and go to England and continue my studies, Master's or PhD in English Literature.' (Nabil: p.4, 1) 'That's why I felt about Istanbul as a station to pass.' (Nabil: p.4, 6)

Similarly, Dima said that, when she first came to Turkey, she was planning to go to Germany, where she would reunite with her family:

'The plan was, come to Turkey temporarily and then apply for university in Germany, apply for my visa and leave. But it didn't work like this.' (Dima: p.6, 8)

The host country was also considered a temporary place because Syria was perceived as the only possible home, and the idea of "going back" there to recover the "paradise lost" haunted some participants. They described constantly thinking about returning to Syria, hoping that conditions would become easier there and that the war would be over in the near future. This made Istanbul a refuge until the storm was over. During our interview, Saz mentioned this idea a number of times:

'Every day, for example...maybe next year the situation in Syria will be better. Maybe I can go back to my city so I can visit.' (Saz: p.41, 448) 'Maybe after 10 years...erm...I can go back to Syria.' (Saz: p.56, 634)

Nada also said:

'It's just like, it's a station. I say to myself, you would not stay here. I still think we will go back.' (Nada: p.6, 20)

Because of the feeling of being stuck in limbo - a place between here and there, hell and heaven, and the past and the future - some participants hesitated to or refrained from settling down in any real sense. They resisted making long-term plans, establishing relationships, investing in a permanent life in Istanbul or pursuing a career here. This is most clearly observed in Dima's account. Having had a very difficult and painful break-up with Syria, Dima tried not to establish any ties with her physical or social surroundings in Turkey. She said that, in the last three years, she lived in eight different flats, most of which had very poor living conditions, even though she could find and afford better flats if she had sought them:

'I was in the feeling that I'm unsettled every time I want to move somewhere else. I get the feeling that when I have nothing to do I just move so I'm just packing my luggage, taking a taxi, and going from place to place. So, yeah, it was all because I was thinking I'm leaving... I'm not staying here for a long time.' (Dima: p.11, 23)

Dima did not establish long-lasting connections with other people; she did not want to have more loved ones to leave behind when, as she envisioned, she would eventually move away from Turkey:

'Because, as I told you, I didn't see anyone and I at some point also decided that I don't want to make friends here. I want to save the moment that I'm leaving the country.... I want to leave comfortably like I don't want to leave beloved people behind as it happened in Syria.' (Dina: p.8, 4)

Nada told herself something similar:

'I don't need to settle down here at home. No, I will go back. I couldn't feel it's my home.' (Nada: p.6, 21)

3.2. Istanbul as the new home

Most participants stated that, as time passed by, they accepted their conditions as involuntary immigrants in Turkey, and their relationship with the host country changed positively. They began to accept Istanbul as their new home or a place 'like home' where they could be settled, work, establish relationships and dream about the future. Roni, for instance, chose to stay in Istanbul because he '*felt connected to Turkey' (Roni: p.8, 5)*, even though he had a chance to go to Italy with a scholarship. He described the moment he made this decision:

'I was on the ferry going to Kadikoy and I thought, "OMG, this is a beautiful country. I don't want to leave." (Roni: p.12, 2) 'I felt that I love Istanbul and I want to live in Istanbul.' (Roni: p.12, 6)

After spending several months in isolation and inaction, Dima decided to earn a living and move into a proper flat, accepting the idea that she would live in Istanbul, at least for a while.

'It's like the feeling came from I'm wasting my life and it's time to take an action.' (Dima; P.7, 8) 'Then I found my first job, and it was like I worked as a freelancer. My first job I got a decent amount of money so I could cover my expenses and save a bit.' (Dima: p.7, 9)

She then put effort into turning her flat into a place that would truly belong to her and reflect her personality and taste:

'I worked harder to make [this house] as I want, to give it some of, like, part of me so now when you enter this house or when people enter this house they feel: yeah, your house is nice, so I got this feedback that it's comfy, it's nice, well organised and I, now, because I'm around, now I'm trying to do something here.' (Dima: p.15, 32)

Saz defined a breaking point in his relationship with the host country and his mood, dating six months prior to the interview. He stated that 'something changed' around this time:

'I live and I am safe and...Here I can stay alive, I can work, so Istanbul for me will be like my home. So for me like if I like to make home ...a place you can feel comfortable, survive, can work, you have...that will be for now it is home' (Saz: p.43, 473) 'I think my home will be in Istanbul.' (Saz: p.58, 651)

The shift in how the participants perceived their new environment occurred in different ways. In some cases, it was the result of the acceptance of loss (as described above under the sub-theme, *Awareness of Loss*); in others, it was the result of recognising the new opportunities in the host country. Sometimes, it was a combination of both.

All participants except Nada, who was a university student, had completed their university education and had a certain command of the English language. Being able to exercise their profession, earn a living through work, and contribute to society seems to have helped the participants feel like actors in life and look to the future with hope.

For Saz, who was a doctor in Syria, a stable job and the distant possibility of practising his profession in Turkey opened a new period in his life. Referring to the time when his relationship with Turkey began to change, Saz said:

'In these six months I found a job, my fiancé found a scholarship and they accept me to apply for citizenship. I think it was the most important thing in my life...' (Saz: p.32, 328). 'Turkish government promised us to work permit to work as a doctor.' (Saz: p.33, 330).

For Nada, learning English and being accepted into an undergraduate program had been a breaking point. She defined it as her second chance in life:

'My heart opened again to dreams. Yeah... I can start to think about the future.' (Nada: p.3, 24) 'It's all finished then the chance came to me, so I just caught it. I didn't want to lose it.' (Nada: p.3, 29)

The issue of citizenship was raised by Yaser and Farid. For both, obtaining Turkish citizenship - which meant equal rights as members of the host society - was described as something that could 'change everything' and make Turkey home for them. Yaser stated that this would be a *'great step'* for him:

'But if my situation here in Turkey changes, for example, if I get an ID, Turkish identity card or nationality, it would be a great step, you know. It's a kind of selfishness, choosing to live in Turkey. But it looks like where is the best for me.' (Yaser: p.12, 30)

'*But when I get citizenship, hopefully, hopefully, I'm not sure, I can get a proper job, I don't need a work permit when I'm a citizen, and the payment would be different*.' *(Farid: p.10, 32)*

For Saz as well, receiving an invitation to apply for Turkish citizenship meant the chance of a 'new life', because he believed that the legal status of temporary protection 'means nothing' - 'no rights' and 'no respect'.

Alongside citizenship and professional or academic opportunities, favourable social relations were another factor that allowed participants to develop a feeling of sedentariness in Turkey. Yaser stated:

'I remember that I spent, for example, 3 years in this country, your connection, your friends, they are now part of your family. They became part of you also. So how could you leave them again and return to another life?' (Yaser: p.12, 33)

It became clear from my participants' accounts that the awareness that the home they knew before was gone forever also contributed to a positive change in the participants' relationship with Istanbul. This left them with no option but to accept their new environment as their new home.

Saz was brought to accept that, for the foreseeable future, his plans to move to Europe would not happen and the war in Syria would not end; acceptance of both of these facts altered Saz's relationship with the host country:

'When I have decided to stay in Turkey, when I found no chance to go out of Turkey…' (Saz: p.26, 250) 'so no solution...maybe the only solution I think after 30, 35 years, maybe all Syrians, they will die and they will be new generation they can stop this war I think...' (p.58, 648) 'I don't have any chance to come back, I think…I will stay in Turkey. I will spend all of my life. Maybe I will die here. I will commit my life here.' (Saz: p.58, 648)

Dima said that she decided to put all other 'circumstances' aside to settle in Istanbul, at least until she feels ready to move again:

'*Now, it's here. It's here. Forget about the other circumstances, the issues that haven't been solved yet, my Master's, my family. Now I feel I want to stay here for a while, that from inside I feel comfortable and settled, not nervous about anything, just getting some rest [until] I will have the energy to prepare for another journey again.*' *(Dima: p.11, 30)*

Unlike others, Amar was still struggling to accept this city as a place to move on with his life at the time when we conducted the interview.

'I am looking forward to leaving Turkey. First, I want to live where I can exercise my profession. The country that I can do my profession, maybe England. I would like to be there. Yeah...Second idea is Australia and Canada. No, I feel not settled here.' (Amar: p.6, 7)

3.3. Hope

In relation to developing a sense of settling in Istanbul, participants spoke about looking hopefully towards the future and making long-term life plans, following a dark period marked by numerous difficulties and a feeling of hopelessness.

Awareness and acceptance of given circumstances came with 'lots of hope' and allowed Saz to see the opportunities of a new beginning in the host country. Saz defined this change with an Arabic expression, "seeing the light after darkness". This was the point in the interview in which where he spoke of the future for the first time:

'We say in Arabic I open like a hole in the big rock...now after darkness, I see the light...' (Saz: p.58, 654)
'future...I see it hopefully... Maybe it will be a new life... a new chance to work as a doctor. Maybe I will feel better. I think maybe it will be helpful to forget the past. Maybe.' (p.58, 652)
'When I escaped from Syria I was hopeless, this is the difference. Now I am hopeful.' (Saz: p.34, 348)

Nada stated:
'There is something good waiting for us. We should keep going to fight... to take the good. This absolutely will come.' (Nada: p.23, 8).

Hope was often associated with having a sense of agency in life, instead of being directed by external factors beyond their will. Getting back confidence, and seeing themselves as subjects capable of making life decisions, learning, improving, adapting, changing and so on, enabled the participants to have positive feelings about their life and their future. Saz stated:
'I feel now, I am in paradise, and I tried to scratch myself or... I am alive or in a dream?'; Now I feel hopeful. I feel like my life is very important for me...I feel ok I am a person...I can work, I can achieve something. I can do something better.' (Saz: p.33, 334)

Farid articulated a similar thought about having control over his life in a quite striking way that, regardless of the circumstances, one can establish a life for himself at his own will:
'Whatever the situation, whatever is the conditions, we can reboot our life, that's all.' (Farid: p.12, 21)

This feeling of having control over one's life was also expressed in relation to the participants' stay in Turkey. Although leaving Syria was considered by the participants as something that happened to them out of their will, living in Istanbul was mentioned as a decision, a deliberate choice, by some participants. For instance, Saz said:
'Yes, I have decided to stay in Istanbul. Then, ok, this is my new home, and I should try to stay in this area.' (Saz: p.24, 231)

Roni was the only participant who was in therapy, and he expressed the view that this was helping him to feel strong enough in himself to cope with the challenges he was facing. Describing himself before the therapy as dysfunctional, he mentioned that, thanks to therapy, he became 'functional', in the sense of gaining back the ability to work and carry on with his life. Interestingly, he described acceptance, which gave him the strength to be 'fine' anywhere, as a matter of courage; this indicated a paradoxical sense of agency granted in the choice or willingness to accept what is outside of one's control:

'That is why I know I really need therapy and I'm doing great. I am functioning and doing everything.' (Roni: p.8, 2) '[I have] the courage to accept anything, to feel that I accept this and it's fine wherever I go. I feel like, yes, I am going to cope.' (p.8, 29)

This sense of agency in life was not shared by Dima:

'*I stopped planning for my life. No, it doesn't make sense now […] I felt I had a plan, but it didn't work. And I had to face and walk in a different way, away from my plans. Now I'm questioning, am I still interested in what I planned?*' *(Dima: p.20, 19)*

3.4. Self-actualisation and personal growth

During the interviews, 'Change' and 'Growth' were recurring sub-themes that were experienced by the participants in unique ways. While Roni, for instance, said that he developed a "new personality" in response to the painful experiences he lived through, Saz defined it as growing "mature" and Yaser described "learning" new things.

Amar is one of the participants who talked most clearly about the change that he went through, although he could not distinctly identify its reason or cause:

'But I don't know if it is because I have left my home or just because the person is growing up and every day changing more. So, I cannot differentiate. I have left my country and I am growing up, every day I am learning new things when you grow up, meeting with new people.' (Amar: p14, 30)

The participants defined themselves as stronger, bolder, wiser, more resilient and more mature than they were in their home country before the war.

'I am 29 and I feel I am 50 in Arabic like...'hikmet' [wisdom]' (Saz: p.48, 544).

'What happened in Syria changed my vision... ahh, now...erm...I am more powerful...if I want to make a decision I think, think, think...after that I decide.' (Saz: p.48, 548)

Nada expressed the view that her journey made her a stronger person facing the outer world. She was no longer afraid of taking the bus alone or getting lost in an unfamiliar city.

'Yes, she can do it! [smiling] Even though I have lost my way many times, but I can find my way back home. I didn't get scared. It's ok now. I have slept on the bus once. I have found myself on the other side of the city, but it was OK.' (Nada: p.18, 7)

Nada was also more confident and open in her social relationships. From a shy person, she turned into someone who can speak up for herself, someone who cannot be intimidated:

'I was really, really a shy girl. I didn't have any friends. I didn't use to speak with other people easily. I just listened all the time.' (Nada; p.17, 7) '[In Syria] I wouldn't say I don't like this thing, it's not good for me. Here I say no. I will do it if it's the right thing for me. […] They [meaning what she had gone through] made me stronger. You know that also helped me in my job. I became more professional. No one can say this is a little girl that we can talk to the way we want.' (Nada: p.17, 27)

A related experience was gaining independence and self-reliance. Many participants stated that the experience they went through helped them gain independence from their family or social surroundings. For some, this was imposed by the circumstances; they learned to rely on themselves because there was no one else to rely on. Both Amar and Yaser described how they got out of their comfort zone in which they were surrounded by loved ones and learned how to stand on their feet in the host country, overcoming several challenges by themselves.

'Living in another country is a good experience…Learning to depend on myself to solve my problems has changed me. Everybody goes out of home some days, they learn to solve it. […] Even if I go back home to Syria, but of course now it would be a very new experience'. (Amar: p.11, 17)

'In Syria, I wasn't completely depending on myself. Yes, I used to work and afford my university, but when I had no money, of course, my father would give me some money, as pocket money to complete my task in life. But here I have to completely depend on myself. They're no small bullshit. You have to work by yourself. So that made me not a dependent person but independent.' (Yaser: p.13, 17)

A very striking example is Roni, who used the expression 'stray dog' to describe the 'new person' he turned into. After being let down by his family and friends, Roni explained that, like a stray dog, his sole motivation was to survive. He lowered his expectations to staying alive, and this, he believed, made him a 'more flexible strong, solid, stable' person, one who is 'trying to learn hunting' (Roni: p.16, 28):

'I had high expectations, but the actual wasn't that good. There was no actual outcome, but recently when I tried to analyse everything that happened, at least I'm strong enough to face anything.' (Roni: p.11, 7)

Another important aspect of personal growth that was frequently mentioned by the participants was becoming less judgmental and more tolerant in their relations with others. Some participants indicated that their capacity to empathise with those who are suffering had increased and that they learned to respect and accept differences.

Farid stated that he does not get into conflict with other people, even when they misbehave towards him. He adopted an understanding attitude which involved questioning himself instead of getting angry:

'So, it changed my mind. I don't judge anyone anymore now. I don't have any problem with anyone at school, at SPI, friends or relatives but all of these places there are lots of conflicts. People shouldn't….' (Farid: p.14, 27) 'I always think about the others. I put myself in their place and try to feel in the same way even if I disagree with that, I have to accept the others, the other side. You have to look yourself in their place.' (Farid: p.16, 33)

Yaser included a striking term, 'wiser-hearted', to express a similar change in his attitude towards others:

'I became wiser-hearted. Maybe you don't treat me nice, but I look behind that […] Because I don't want to become the one who treated me badly. I don't want to do the same. It's hurtful, there is so much mean, so much hurt...I don't want to hurt people.' (Yaser: p.13, 31)

Farid also expressed that he became more accepting towards people who have different life choices, beliefs, worldviews, sexual orientations and gender identities than his own. Coming from a conservative Islamic community, he could not imagine 'living together' with people from other religions before, but this had become recently normalised for him:

'I accept people more than before. I came from an Islamic environment […] I've met many people from different religious views, Christian, Jewish and atheist and I'm OK with that. I understand why people believe this, or not believe this. But I wouldn't think before that I could live with them, and their environment because it's not my environment. But now I'm OK with that at the moment.' (Farid: p.16, 3)

Farid also adopted a tolerant and respectful attitude towards LGBTI individuals, something he would not be able to do in his hometown:

'I still think it's wrong. I mean it's not natural. […] But I have my reasons; I mean scientific reasons, research, but I accept that I respect that. I don't come and say, "You're wrong, you're not natural." No, no, I don't do that. […] if I meet them, I'm ok with that. But I couldn't… I've told you, I wouldn't think that I could live with that in Palmyra. Everyone can have a different religion, views, and LGBT…' *(Farid: p.16, 20).*

A related point, the experience of transcending national and cultural boundaries and differences, was expressed by Nabil and Yaser. Both emphasised that leaving Syria helped them recognise the value of "humanity'':

'*We were taught Syria is our world, and now I discovered that Syria is part of the world. So, I belong to humanity first other than as a piece of land. The dedication is for humanity first*.' *(Nabil: p.15, 18)*

'*I only look for humanity now. I don't care about nationality. […] Are you kind-hearted or do you like to do good for people? Those are my best friends. You became more aware of humanity.*' *(Yaser: p.14, 10)*

Another point that emerged during interviews in relation to the sub-theme of self-realisation and personal growth was learning and discovering new skills. Struggling in life and trying to survive in an unfamiliar environment, participants gained, developed and/or recognised skills and talents that they did not have or did not recognise having previously. They pushed themselves harder to improve or to catch novel opportunities and fulfil their potential.

Learning a new language, gaining new experiences and discovering her own potential is how Dima defined her own path to self-actualisation:

'I would have spoken only Arabic and some English. Now, I have almost three languages. Working, getting new experience, being part of the bigger picture outside, getting ... yeah, learning another stuff […] Also, this is important.' (Dima: p.14, 1)

Nabil stated:

'You open the doors you like only. For me, I have to try all the doors.' (Nabil: p.12, 18)

Similarly, Yaser stated:

'I would not deny that it improved my… lots of my, let's say, skills. Because I had to overwork, I had to overdo things more than I am capable of. For example, I have worked as an accountant, and I had no idea about an accounting job. I had to learn, deal with goods, arrange and deal with different characters. All of those things that I had to learn, new things I had to learn. Whenever I worked, wherever I worked, I had to do more than my best to be accepted in the job.' (Yaser: p.13, 7)

Saz saw something positive out of difficult experiences living in a foreign country:

'*Yes...also I found something positive...when I was in Syria, erm...for example, I was a doctor, only a doctor, and according to this war, when I came to Turkey to try to work, I found the experience...I learned another language...so for me, now something is positive... I can speak Arabic, I can speak English, I can speak Turkish, and I can speak German.' (Saz: p.49, 560)*

A less frequently mentioned but equally significant aspect of change highlighted by participants was getting out of everyday tasks and being able to see the bigger picture in life. Dima eloquently expressed how getting out of the daily routine opened up new prospects for her:

''Hmm! Yeah, I might stay there caring about electricity, water, and gas. Worrying about how I can afford to live there. Being distracted with the small life details. So, I realised that it's a shame just to keep stuck in these small things and forget about other things that we can grow, we can improve.' (Dima: p.13, 36)

3.5 Conclusion

Within this theme, one can observe how my participants' initial feelings of temporariness in Istanbul were replaced by a feeling of settledness over time. Accepting the loss of home, becoming aware of opportunities in professional or academic careers, establishing relationships with others, and being recognised as equal citizens by members of the host society seemed to be critical in making the new environment, home or place like home and often came together with hope. Despite all of the challenges they faced, there was a strong emphasis on self-actualisation and growth over this period.

4. Significance of Home

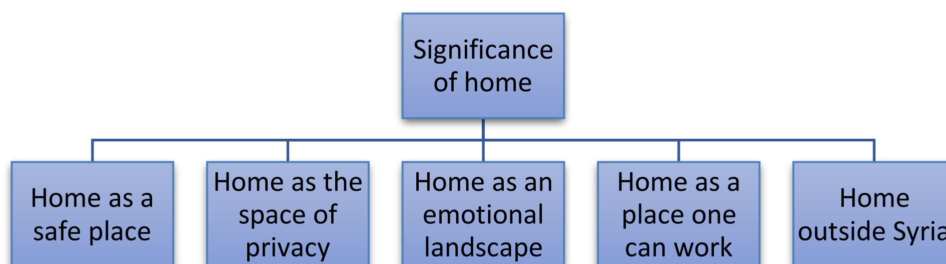

Figure 4 *Significance of home* and its subthemes

When participants used the word 'home' throughout the interviews, they used it to define a number of different things. First, the word was used to refer to the family environment and the family dwelling in its physical aspect. Secondly, it was used to refer to the community and a certain sociocultural context, in which the participants spent most of their lives. Thirdly, 'home' referred to the participants' hometowns and their homeland, Syria.

4.1. Home as a safe place

It seemed that the most prevalent feeling that home evoked in my participants was the feeling of safety and security. Dima stressed that home is, by definition, a safe place:

'*House is ... somewhere feeling safe, comfortable and settled.' (Dima: p.11, 6) ... 'if I don't have a safe environment, I won't feel at home.*' *(Dima: p.15, 23)*

Saz also defined home in similar terms:

'*I live and I am safe [...] So for me like if I like to make home ...a place you can feel comfortable, survive, can work.*' *(Saz: p.43, 472)*

The rise of insecurity with the war was often the beginning of my participants' journeys from their hometown to Istanbul. Yet even before they left, facing the risk of violence and death opened a hole in their sense of being at home, which Roni described as 'heart-breaking' and 'disappointing.' These feelings pertaining to a home not being safe anymore occurred in his 'nightmares':

'*It's about being at home in Syria, Damascus. Walking on the streets or imagining myself in Damascus... just heartbreaking. I feel insecure and I feel the danger. Like there's something dangerous and I shouldn't be there. I feel disappointed.*' *(Roni: p.13, 4)*

Interestingly, for Nada, Farid and Saz, this association between home and safety were so strong that home continued to be perceived as a secure place, even after the war broke out and their hometowns faced violence and destruction. For them, the familiarity of home created an illusion of safety, even in the midst of the war conditions. Under air bombing one night, Nada walked alone on the streets of her hometown, from a shelter to her house, without feeling terrified.

'*Even old people, even my mother, she was so scared, and she took my small brother to shelter. I couldn't stay there. I stayed there like only in the morning… then in the middle of the night, around 2 AM, I couldn't. I wanted to stay in my house. I don't know, I still think about how I did that. How I walked in the street, which they can shoot me.*' *(Nada: p.8, 9)*

Looking retrospectively, Farid wondered how he and his family kept staying in their home, almost completely ignorant of the immediate danger they faced:

'*We didn't think that it's very dangerous, even the jets were bombing every day. We just stayed at home, we heard the sound, the horrible sound, the sound of missiles and explosions. And you don't know is it your time, your friends, your relatives. Then after that we go and check who died, who needs help. And people stayed. Really, we couldn't think logically, we couldn't understand.' (Farid: p.2, 21)*

Saz had to move out of the home where he was born and grew up after his unofficial detainment by the Syrian government forces. In his search for a feeling of safety, he moved within Syria for a while, but he went back to his hometown and his house every time. Being at home in war-destructed Aleppo made Saz feel more secure than elsewhere. He felt safe in his room and could sleep, despite the bombing attacks and war conditions:

'*...snipers...airstrike. This sounds horrible, but I can sleep.' (Saz: p.10, 100)*

As home and the familiar were associated with security, the unfamiliar host town was associated with insecurity for Saz. He experienced sleeping problems once he left home because, even though he was now in

a safe environment, he lost the sense of safety associated with his home. For instance, he felt that the buildings in Istanbul are not as solid as those in Syria:

'*Buildings in Istanbul are not safe from attacks. Quality of buildings is different in Syria [...]Yes, I was afraid...I thought buildings in Istanbul are not safe from attacks from airstrikes [laughing]. I thought if this building was attacked from airstrike, do we stay alive or not...*' *(Saz: p.23, 225)*

Dima seemed to be well aware of this illusion, which she shared previously:

'*Before leaving Syria, I got the feeling that Syria is the only home I have. I was accepting everything going on because I'm part also of the picture of Syria, and I got the impression that I cannot go outside of Syria and live the same, and got the same life I had there…stable, secure, nothing around me ... nothing will harm me.' (Dima: p.16, 2)*

4.2. Home as the space of privacy and intimacy

Participants often associated home with family, intimacy and being taken care of. It was defined as a warm, supportive and emotionally comforting place, where others from the outside world cannot intrude.

In this sense, one of the features of home mentioned during the interviews was exclusiveness, the protection it provides against 'strangers'. Nada stated:

'just our home...I love the special feeling in my room. This is my special home, [referring to her room] space in a big home. This feeling.' (Nada: p.7, 1)

Likewise, Yaser defined home as a place that 'belongs' to him, which means not being disturbed by others.

'*What was home...It means everything. […] Can you imagine that comfort feeling, no one annoying you, no one claiming for rent or... it's your room, it's your own. You own it, everything belongs to you. It is the only place you feel comfortable.*' *(Yaser: p.9, 1)*

Similarly, Farid explained:

'First of all, home is belonging. You feel that you belong. It's your place. So if someone doesn't like you, it's OK. I'm in my country, I'm in my home, I'm in my city; so I don't care.' (Farid: p.11, 25)

Closed to the outside world, home provided an environment for intimate relationships and for the togetherness of the family in particular:

'*My home... I mean the place we can sit as a family with my parents, put my daughter next to me, where we can eat together and talk, discuss.*' *(Amar: p.10, 1)*

4.3. Home as an emotional landscape

Human relationships and connections with the wider social circle beyond family were also presented as central to the meaning of home. On several occasions throughout our interviews, participants mentioned that being at home meant feeling like part of a community comprising relatives, neighbours, friends, colleagues, fellow townsmen and so on; in this way, the home was associated with social interactions, culture, and language.

Yaser expressed the idea that homeland is far more than a 'piece of land', that what makes it is people:

'*Can I just love the land or I just missed the land? This is stupid. It's not the land, the piece of land. What matters who lives in that land? Your society, community, your friends.' (Yaser: p.15, 19)*

According to Yaser, a feeling of togetherness and connectedness was what was lost with the war, and the land itself would not mean much if these integral parts could be taken back:

"Now your society is different, your friends are far away, your family separated. You can't think of anything but sadness. If the situation continues, I would not be glad to go back with an empty place, empty land. This place would be the same as every other place. Nothing would be the same as it was before. All the values and all things did matter not there anymore.' *(Yaser: p.15, 24)*

Farid also discussed the value attributed to human relationships and solidarity in Syrian culture, which, for him, was an element constitutive of the meaning of home.

'*So according to my culture, we are close to each other. We are very close to each other. Friends or family, family members, relatives… We support each other as much... you can't find it in different places.' (Farid: p.11, 32)*

Dima expressed comparable associations::

'not nationality or language we speak. It's about mentality, caring.' (Dima: p.15, 2) '*The home is where you feel belonged, secure and surrounded by.*' *(Dima: p.16, 24)*

A different point expressed by the participants on this theme was the feeling of not belonging to the society in their homeland. Nabil clearly stated that he had never been a social person, and, thus, nothing changed for him in this regard after he left Syria. He was content to move to Turkey, which he called a 'change'. For this reason, relationships with other people were not a part of what home meant for him:

'*I live the same as in Syria. I didn't use to knock on the door of my neighbours, only the doors of my family.' (Nabil: p.10, 27) 'Not only close to family, the whole building in Syria I didn't have similarities or*

common bonds to share with others.' *(p.10, 30) '... Because we were living in a narrow-minded society.* […] *So, the change was good for me.' (Nabil: p.12, 10)*

More than once during our interview, Dima stressed the same point:

'*I wasn't comfortable in the society around me.' (Dima: p.5, 3) 'I need a value and I couldn't find it there.' (p.5, 28) 'I didn't like the structure of the society or the features there. Maybe I've got my friends, but overall... like, in general, it wasn't my environment... So maybe outside you'll get your opportunity. You'll find another or better environment to work with and everything, like, my character just shows itself as something not belonging to there.*' *(Dima: p.5, 9)*

Amar stated that he yearned for freedom which he found lacking in Syrian society:

'It was boring in Syria because there was nothing to do even before the war. Erm...I wanted to leave even before, leave this country.' (Amar: p.5, 29) '... I wanted to go to the places where nobody asks you, why you do this or why you don't do this. I wanted to be in the country where I can have freedom.' (Amar: p.6, 1)

4.4. Home as a place in which one can work

When participants were asked what home meant for them, they commonly responded that it was 'a place where they *could* work'. Holding university degrees, most participants had socially respected jobs in Syria. However, they could not exercise their professions in the host country due to formal or informal restrictions. Moreover, despite their degrees, most had difficulty finding fairly paid, stable jobs.

In this context, being able to work and earn a living was presented as a crucial part of feeling settled in a place. For instance, Saz was a resident orthopaedic surgeon before he left his town. He defined being a doctor as an integral part of his identity, and this was one of the main reasons why he could not see Istanbul as a home for himself and wanted to move to Germany, rather than stay in Turkey:

'*When I reached Turkey, I asked my friends in Turkey, "Can I work as a doctor?" They said, "It's impossible." They said, "You can't work as a doctor, because Turkish government don't accept Syrian diploma." Ok...I have only one chance... to move to Europe.*' *(Saz: p. 20, 199)*

Amar also defined the feeling of being settled through work:

'*Having a place to live, having to work in this place. Erm...having the work which I want to* [referring to his profession as a doctor]. *This is a settlement.' (Amar: p.9, 22)* '*I want to live where I can exercise my profession.*' *(Amar: p. 6, 7)*

Yaser stressed that he would feel at home in a country that valued his professional skills:

'*I would find myself at home in Canada, for example, in one of the institutions...who cares about teaching skills.*' *(Yaser: p.15, 2)*

For Roni, working meant not only earning money but also attaining the acceptance he longed for:

'*But in my job currently I find all those people around me and there's a friendly atmosphere and they accept me. I mean, I don't make lots of money from this work. But it's enough for me to break the cycle and break the rules and end up with some good portion of the money that can give me a good life.*' *(Roni: p.9, 16)*

Nada expressed a similar feeling of being loved as a teacher, which helped her accept Istanbul as a new home:

'*I really felt that kids love me a lot. I found the thing that I really love. I fulfilled my dream.' (Nada: p.17, 18) 'I feel that they are my family. I feel like, yeah I have something to do here.*' *(Nada: p.16, 25)*

4.5. Home outside Syria

Whether or not a place outside Syria *could* be home was a recurring theme in the narratives of my participants. It was clear that, whilst developing a connection with the host country, participants continued to experience conflicting feelings about whether they could feel at home in Istanbul in the same way as they did in Syria. While speaking at length about how Istanbul was turning into a home for them, some participants stated that Syria would always remain their *permanent* home.

'*It's [Istanbul] a temporary home [...] because according to me, erm...only Syria…out of Syria it can't be like...permanent.*' *(Saz: p. 43, 474)*

What Dima thought on this issue was completely different. During the interview, she stressed multiple times that it was possible for her to feel at home outside Syria:

'I got this feeling that I cannot start anything outside because also this is, like, the common or the general idea of living abroad. You cannot feel belonged there' *(Dima: p.16, 6)* '*We were told that our home country is our home, we can't change it. No, we can, we can change it, we can feel this*.' *(Dima: p.15, 3)*

Going beyond whether there could be a home outside Syria, Farid, Roni and Nada pointed to a deeper change in the meanings they assigned to home. They spoke about their recognition that home is not a physical building, a certain location, or a particular society, but it can be any place in the world, nature, or the self:

'*Yeah. Now. Well, I belong to the things… like if I want to be good, I would belong to nature. Not one place specifically. It's not about a place. I'm trying to cope with the idea that I don't belong to a place. I belong where I can make it a home. I belong to myself...*' *(Roni: p.15, 30)* '*I had that thought that home,*

maybe it's not somewhere. Maybe it is something deep inside you and how you feel and how you organise your thoughts and emotions.' *(Roni: p.8, 9)*

'[Home is] *all the places that I have been to, I think I was feeling like it's my home, it's the comfortable place that I can put my soul in.*' *(Nada: p.21, 8)*

'*These obstacles or challenges in a different country make me feel... Each anyone who has the willing, they can get something anywhere. I can find myself anywhere.*' *(Farid: p.14, 11)*

4.6 Conclusion

The significance of home and the meanings assigned by participants have been explored in this theme. Safety, privacy, social connectedness and work were the most common words associated with home. The issue of whether a place outside Syria could be home was often raised. While some participants believed that their only real home is in Syria, others developed a new sense of home and stated that home could be anywhere.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

Following on from the thematic analysis of the interviews I conducted with my participants, I will now discuss the results presented above in light of the existing literature and within a phenomenological conceptual framework.

While the literature review presented at the beginning of this dissertation provided the necessary framework for reflection on the topic and the departure point for my analysis, the results from the interviews took me to new seas and unexpected territories, as one would expect from any study adopting the methodology of IPA. My engagement with these findings, and my efforts in trying to understand the experiences of my participants, imposed the necessity to introduce new material from the literature in this chapter in order to complement and enrich my discussion of the results.

In what follows, I discuss each superordinate theme to understand the experiences of my participants in relation to leaving their home, settling in Istanbul, and the multi-layered and changing meanings they assigned to 'home'.

5.2 Discussion of themes

5.2.1 Experience of loss

Loss emerged as a major component of my participants' experience of departing from Syria and settling in Istanbul. It was often described as a painful and earth-shaking experience, which changed the participants' lives radically and forever.

There is an abundance of wide-ranging scholarly accounts of loss associated with immigration (Khawaja &Mason, 2008; Henry, Stiles & Biran, 2005; Ahn, 2006; Keyes & Kane, 2004; Casado &Leung, 2001; Detzner, 1996; Emmenegger-Hindin, 1993; Lakatos, 1992; Eisenbruch, 1991; Brener, 1991; Aroian, 1990; Kashani, 1989; Gangamma, 2018; Hamburger *et al.*, 2018; Casado, Hong & Harrington, 2010; Schultz, 2014). Among others, Porobić (2016) mentions that involuntary immigrant experiences are deeply marked by an *accumulation* of losses, extending from physical to social and cultural space, which is reinforced by the current context in the host country (Hamburger *et al.*, 2018). The relatively recent concept of 'migratory grief' suggests that separation from home is a 'grief-like phenomenon', quite like a response to the loss of a loved one in terms of the underlying process, manifestations and consequences (Stroebe, Schut & Nauta, 2015, p.2). The psychodynamic tradition, on the other hand, considers separation from the "mother country"

as the "loss of primary object", which causes deprivation from the holding functions of the homeland (Lijtmaer, 2001).

My results also have shown that, in almost all cases, the perception of loss associated with war-related migration is multidimensional and pervasive, and it leads to overwhelming feelings that are difficult to cope with. Van Deurzen-Smith (1984) emphasises that, since humans are bio-socio-psycho-spiritual beings, all human experience is holistic and complex. In line with this perspective, the narratives of these participants demonstrate the overarching and multifaceted impacts of 'losing home' that cut across all of the four aforementioned dimensions presented by Van Deurzen: the (i) physical, (ii) social, (iii) personal/psychological and (iv) spiritual.

The physical dimension (*Umwelt*) refers to our relationship to the surrounding physical world, the built and the natural environment. Stressing that this environment is also formative of who we are, Huntington (1981) points to the real physical differences between places - in terms of climate, topography, light, flora and fauna - as an important source of immigrants' perception of loss. In this study, this aspect was most visible in Saz and Nada's accounts. Saz stated that the climate, architecture, food, water, and even the pills in Istanbul were so unfamiliar to him during the first months following his arrival that his physical health was negatively affected. Nada mentioned that she could only feel at home in Prinkipo, which reminded her of her hometown due to its physical landscape and the jasmine trees.

The considerable decline in the participants' standards of living can also be conceptualised in relation to this physical dimension. Abandoning their homes and possessions when fleeing, being obliged to live in sometimes shared, low-income flats with poor conditions, and generally not being able to practise their professions in the host country, my participants had experienced a downward shift in their socioeconomic class, which they had difficulty accepting. This triggered feelings of injustice, frustration and inadequacy, and it was often proposed as the main source of unhappiness and other negative feelings they experienced. These sorts of material losses experienced by involuntary immigrants are also given a substantial place in the literature (Taylor, 2009).

In van Deurzen's scheme, our relationship with the people around us and our social interactions comprise the social (*Mitwelt*) dimension. The need for a feeling of belonging to a social group, to a certain culture, class identity and social conventions all fall in the scope of this dimension. As Syrian involuntary immigrants in Istanbul, most of my participants stated that they found themselves deprived of intimate relationships, social connections and support in the host country, which they had enjoyed in their homeland. Most expressed with sorrow that they lost the feeling of being part of a caring community, and some

described the loss of their social status as a shocking experience. These findings are unsurprising and have been revealed previously by a wide range of studies that demonstrate that the immigration process, particularly involuntary migration, compromises the social well-being of the people on the move and often leads them to isolation. For instance, with regard to Iraqi involuntary immigrants in the US, Gangamma (2018) states:

> *In addition, participants reported a loss of familiarity; differences in language, cultural norms, and societal expectations further isolated them. They discussed not having the same socialization opportunities here that they had in Iraq, where childrearing, grocery shopping, and entertainment centered around their community. Moving to the United States meant a loss of those opportunities that they were used to back home* (Gangamma, 2018, p.328).

The third dimension is that of the personal/psychological (*Eigenwelt*). This dimension concerns our relationship with our own selves or our personal world in the very private manner that is generated by self-reflection. It concerns how we see and define who we are, our past and how we look to the future. Among my participants, loss of psychological health and resilience was particularly common in the early stages of displacement. They reported a wide range of psychological problems of varying intensities, as well as a markedly disturbed sense of identity, hopelessness and a sense that their future was restricted.

Finally, the spiritual (*Uberwelt*) dimension is relevant to our worldviews, beliefs, ideas, values, and principles, making the world we live in intelligible and meaningful for us. Experiences as involuntary immigrants shattered the identities, worldviews, and most fundamental assumptions about the life of the participants. These two aspects will be handled in depth in the following sections.

While this study's findings correspond to issues highlighted in previous scholarly works, my participants' narratives also point to a different and more fundamental type of loss that has not yet been discussed in the literature in adequate depth. Multiple losses at the four aforementioned levels were seen as inseparable from the loss of a home and were described at length and in detail by the participants, yet there was also a deep sense of an inexplicable gap, a hole as to what really the loss of home meant for them. Loss of home was experienced as something that is far larger and more fundamental than the summation of what can be described. In an attempt to define the nature of bereavement engendered by homelessness, alongside all of the other tangible and intangible losses, some participants used the expressions "losing everything," "having nothing left," and "going back to zero". The loss of a sense of having a home seems to have left immigrants as unprotected and bare beings amid a chaotic, unintelligible world. In this sense, the loss was "ontological," as it had shaken the very structure that lay at the foundation of being.

The inexplicable and fogged sense of loss of home that came to the surface in the interviews overlaps with Papadopoulos' (2002, p.16) analysis. Papadopoulos stresses that, since the loss in question concerns such a basic and fundamental aspect of one's being, involuntary immigrants generally cannot grasp what really is lost and missing; instead, they focus on other tangible losses that can be easily observed and described as the source of their predicament. He states:

> *Refugees tend to single out specific complaints as the sole source of their unhappiness. Often, these complaints are legitimate, but they seem to acquire extraordinary and excessive significance, and they are evidently overcharged with feelings in a disproportionate way. These may be focused on insufficiently attended needs connected with housing, schools, benefits…* (Papadopoulos, 2002, p.16)

In a similar vein, van Deurzen-Smith (1984) notes that our struggle in life often comes to the surface on the material dimension, with our constant temptation to secure the physical dimension through wealth and health. Focus on these aspects in lengthy narratives within most participants' accounts supports both Papadopoulos' and van Deurzen's interpretations. The clearest example is perhaps Saz, who expressed numerous times during our interview his dire yearning to practise his profession as a doctor and to earn enough money for a comfortable life in Turkey. He was quite sure that this was all he needed to recover his well-being, and this seems to have prevented him from becoming aware of more fundamental conflicts and disturbances he was experiencing.

Moreover, Papadopoulos (2002) argues that loss of home is not just about the "conscious" loss of home in its material, sentimental and psychological dimensions, but "it is of a much more fundamental and primary kind." The experience of home, he claims, provides a "protective and containing membrane", which serves as the "substratum of identity" (2002, pp. 16-18). It follows that the sense of lack associated with losing home (the sense of lack that most involuntary immigrants fail to express and make sense of), results from deprivation from the containing function of home.

> *Indeed, home provides such a protective and holding enwrapment. This is so because, de facto, most homes provide some kind of continuity that enables co-existence between many opposites; love and discord, distance and proximity, joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments, flexibility and obstinacy, envy and magnanimity, rivalry and collaboration, loyalty and betrayal, enmity and friendship, similarities and differences, to name but a few. Within the context and relative permanence of home, one can experience the co-existence of seemingly irreconcilable opposites and this experience creates a special feel of containment that is not usually consciously appreciated. Regardless of how 'dysfunctional' families may be, homes can provide that deep and fundamental*

> *sense of space where all these opposites and contradictions can be contained and held together.* (Papadopoulos, 2002, p.16)

Clearly, Papadopoulos' reading is psychoanalytically-oriented and more specifically coloured by Winnicott's Object Relations Theory, according to which the mother acts as a 'container' for the child and provides the 'continuity of being'. According to Winnicott, the unavoidable separation from the mother is a source of stress and shatters the illusion of unity:

> *Winnicott (1958, 2005) related psychic conflict to the border of the psyche, between "inside" and "outside," in what he described as an "intermediate zone," a transitional space. Only a maternal object that is "good enough" can provide containment for the baby's psyche, which is torn between the "needs of the ego" and the sexual drives, in order to maintain a "continuity of being." The baby develops by becoming the center of gravity of maternal care, in which a "border membrane" is established between the "inside" and the "outside." According to Winnicott, what we are here calling the "envelope" or "container" is situated at the level of the self, in relation to challenges of satisfaction of the drives. In his case "overwhelming" results from an impingement of the instinct upon the self and the needs of ego.* (Mellier, 2014)

This being said, it would not be wrong to claim that Papadopoulos' studies on involuntary immigrants also bears a Heideggerian tone, which becomes more visible in his later works. He defines the loss of home as an "ontological loss" (Papadopoulos, 2002 p.18); and states that embeddedness in space and time is a fundamental structure of being which is essential for our capacity to keep on with our lives. As in Heidegger's phenomenology, for Papadopoulos the Dasein's embeddedness, its being-in-the-world, is so fundamental that it is often unnoticeable until it is disrupted:

> *…We belong to a country, that our country exists, that we belong to a certain language group and we are used to certain sounds, that we belong to a certain geographical landscape and milieu, that we are surrounded by particular types of architectural designs… (Papadopoulos, 1997b, p.14)*

> *And that we live within a space permeated by certain smells and tastes, etc. All these form part of a primary sense of human life and can be considered as a fundamental given. Although this mosaic substratum is mostly unnoticeable, it forms the essence of being human and its function consists of providing us with a primary sense of our humanity and sense of predictability in the course of our lives. (Papadopoulos, 2002, p.19)*

> *Ordinarily, this layer (experience of a home), being so basic and fundamental, is outside the reach of our awareness unless it is disturbed. This is precisely what happens when people lose their homes and become refugees. A primary and fundamental lack develops which imperceptibly takes hold of refugees, in addition to other tangible losses they are aware of and they consciously mourn for.*

On this point, I argue that a Heideggerian approach can lead us to an understanding of involuntary immigrants' experiences of loss of home as an "ontological loss" more deeply than the Object Relations Theory, which Papadopoulos draws on. The picture Heidegger provides of *Dasein* as inextricably embedded in its environment lies in sharp contrast with the notion of a Cartesian mind as an isolated and immaterial being. Dasein's world is radically different from an intersubjective world, where individuals start by looking through the glass of their own minds and then construct a shared ground, a shared world. According to Heidegger, we always encounter physical objects and others immersed in an environment equipped with meaning and understand ourselves on a pre-ontological ground of intelligibility provided by the social world. Embedded in a specific historical culture, Dasein is always and inescapably in the world and is inescapably with others. In this sense, sociality is constitutive of a human being's capacity to be a human in the first place. Thus, the distinctive way of Dasein's being-in-the-world is a fundamental structure of its existence. Overall, the intelligibility of the world being strictly linked to a social world, historically and culturally configured, implies that our sense of predictability of the world and ability to "read life" stems from our sense of home.

Based on premises comparable to Heidegger's holistic account (in the sense of the inextricability of Dasein from its environment), Huntington defines migration as the *separation* from "the usual life space" that determines our "*our model of man, the assumptions we have about human nature*"; this, she adds, is often "*a society that is usually place-time specific*" (1981, p.4). Elaborating further on this point, we can argue that migration opens a hole in Dasein's fundamental structure of "being-in-the-world" and "being-with"; this experience shatters the world's intelligibility, depriving Dasein from the very background that makes all encounters and relations (with the physical world and with other Daseins) meaningful.

I believe that this is a very useful framework to understand how the participants in this study described their experiences of being "taken out" of their past way of being-in-the-world - being "taken out" of their familiar life sphere and everydayness - comprising their daily routines, habits, rituals, practises, ways of living, encounters, gatherings, language, taste, and so on - since this constituted the very ground in which their beings dwelled.

Interestingly, “loss” and “separation” were used by the participants interchangeably when describing their cut-off relation to home, with separation from the homeland being perceived as the same thing as “losing” it. The way Saz describes the loss of home with the Arabic description “removing the nail from the flesh” expresses a deep pain but also a sense of a component being torn away from where it belongs. As the nail and the flesh exist together, being always exists in-the-world and with others.

Separation was perceived both in its temporal and spatial dimensions. In certain cases, the “lost home” referred to a home that had long gone and was left behind in the past, creating a sense that what separates one from the homeland is time; thus, the loss is unrecoverable. Particularly when the physical home, hometown and life at home were in question, the theme of ‘destruction’ was dominant, suggesting that there was an awareness that home was gone forever in this sense. Yet, in other cases, particularly when talking about home as the homeland, Syria, the “lost home” implied a home that continues to exist despite one’s separation from it by geographical distance. In the narratives, the spatial and temporal distinction was often blurred; the “home away” and “home in the past” intermingled. Yet, this distinction surfaced when participants talked about “returning back home.” Some clearly stated that “returning to home” is impossible, as “nothing and no one is the same” as before the war; thus, home is no longer ‘there’. However, in certain cases, this awareness coexisted with a sense that there was an abstract element and a deep connection that was not that easy to put into words, which continued to make Syria a homeland for them, thereby perhaps keeping the possibility of returning alive.

This distinction between separation from home in time and in space is generally handled in the literature on *homesickness* and *nostalgia*. *Nostalgia* is defined as “a longing for the past resulting from separation in time”, and homesickness as “the longing for home that results from the separation from home in space” (Smeekes & Jetten, 2019, p.131). However, Smeekes and Jetten stress that, in the case of immigrants, this distinction is usually vague or blurred, since immigrants are usually separated from their homeland both in space and in time; thus, they have powerful and possibly inextricably linked feelings of both homesickness and nostalgia. Yet, as aforementioned, this was not exactly true for some of my participants, who expressed an awareness that the loss of home was unrecoverable in certain aspects.

I would like to go beyond descriptive perspectives on loss experienced by involuntary immigrants in the existing literature to inquire why the ‘lack of home' is experienced as loss in the first place before moving on to discuss how this loss was experienced in unique ways by my participants. In asking this question, my intention is, of course, not to ignore the different forms of deprivation my participants face as Syrian involuntary immigrants in Turkey. Here I am interested in ‘loss’, not in its objective dimension, but as a

subjective lived experience of losing something or someone, a process which deserves more in-depth investigation.

With the exception of Nabil, my participants defined moving from Syria to Turkey, not as 'leaving', but as 'losing' their home. For me, it was striking to observe that this overwhelming feeling of bereavement was closely associated with the recurring emphasis on the lack of any agency in the course of events or on 'not having any other choice', as my participants put it. Almost unanimously, the participants claimed that no decision-making was involved, or, if it was, it was an almost automatic one in which they individually did not play any part. They did not consider their journey to be the consequence of a deliberate choice they had made; rather, it was conceptualised as something terrible that happened to them, almost like an accident or a natural disaster.

Davenport, Moore and Poe state that:

> *[Most scholars present] a belief that the relationship between violence and [involuntary] migration is simplistic and much less complex than that between economic conditions and voluntary migration*. [...] *A theory that removes choice from human decisions cannot account for the behaviour of those who choose not to flee in the face of the same persecution or who choose to enter into a situation that while conflictual is still an improvement over their home location*. (2003, p. 29-30)

Accordingly, a closer engagement with my participants' narratives reveals that, although often overshadowed in the accounts, a rational decision-making process - one which involved considerations pertaining to physical security, ethics, professional career, protecting loved ones, etc. - was in play. By far, protecting one's physical integrity emerged as the primary motivation that led the participants to leave Syria for Turkey. All participants clearly expressed that, due to war conditions, staying in their hometown meant a considerable physical risk, so leaving their home was, above all, done to survive. Not willing to fight in the war - to join the regime's, the opposition's or ISIS' armed forces - and the desire to keep the children and the elderly in the family safe were other motivations stated by the participants. In their narratives, none of the participants mentioned economic concerns or the quest for a 'better life' as a factor playing a part in their departure.

These findings are in line with the limited literature on the aetiology of involuntary immigration. Schmeidl (1997), for instance, points to security concerns related to generalised violence as the primary factor that leads people to move across or inside national borders, and she states that economic conditions are a far less significant incentive in this regard. In Davenport, Moore and Poe's (2003) study as well,

violence and threats to physical integrity appear as the main reason why people abandon their homes for an uncertain future as involuntary immigrants.

My participants could discuss in detail the course of events that led them to leave their homes for Turkey and showed that they were well aware, then and now, of what they left behind. Furthermore, throughout their narratives, they mentioned a number of options other than leaving home or staying in Turkey. Still, they did not consider their decision to leave Syria as a "real" choice. On this issue, I believe the conversation with Dima, who stayed in Turkey after her plans to move to Germany did not work out, is quite illustrative. In response to my question on why she thought it was not her own choice to come and stay in Turkey, she insisted that the choices we make in the absence of any desirable or acceptable alternatives are not choices in any real sense, but are rather imposed upon us.

This general tendency for my participants to strongly object to the idea that they had indeed made a life choice in leaving their country can be explained in an existentialist framework, with reference to Sartre's concepts of *facticity* and *bad faith*. *Facticity* refers to the environmental conditions one cannot choose but is thrown into. Existential psychotherapy relies on the presumption that, although people are not free from circumstances, they still make choices for which they must assume responsibility; this is so even when these conditions are extremely challenging (Frankl, 1963). Frankl states, *"everything can be taken from a man but...the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way"* (1985, p.75).

According to Sartre (1956), claiming that one action among multiple possibilities is unavoidable is a form of self-deception, and, with such a denial of responsibility, one falls into *bad faith* - putting one in the position of an object, rather than assuming the role of a free agent in the world. Hence, it is the existential therapist's role to guide clients toward acknowledging their decisions and encouraging them to take responsibility for these (Yalom, 1980). This is the way that leads to authenticity.

From an existentialist perspective: although, as Syrian involuntary immigrants in Turkey, my participants are obviously not responsible for the generalised violence and the destruction of their homeland, they are responsible for their own responses to this environment. However, it was interesting to observe that, for most participants, the choice to be safe elsewhere over living at imminent risk of death at home was deemed as automatic, even though they acknowledged the choice of family members to remain in Syria. I posit that this was mainly because the desire to survive was taken as 'natural', as an instinct, and was, therefore, not imagined as a deliberate choice over death. Thus, the war conditions and the threats to physical integrity were thought to directly imply the *impossibility* of staying at home, disburdening individuals of the

responsibility to own their decisions and actions, including their choice to fight for survival. This can be defined as a “naturalist” attitude towards survival, - which considers humans as subject to the determining forces of the environment and sees their struggle for survival as instinctive - as opposed to an existentialist view - which purports that one should face death fear through familiarisation, dissection, and analytical comprehension (Yalom, 2008), *choosing* an attitude toward death.

I also had the impression that my participants’ insistence on ‘not having any other choice’ besides being in Turkey is partly related to their perception of not being welcomed in the host country as Syrian immigrants. Particularly in Amar’s narrative, these two themes emerged together. Xenophobia against involuntary Syrian immigrants in Turkey is widespread and prevalent in political debates. Thus, in the face of discrimination and hostile attitudes from the host society, the participants seem to have developed a defensive discourse that emphasises that it was not their choice or fault to be in a country where they are not welcomed.

Another sub-theme in the narratives of loss was the unawareness of loss of home at the time it occurred - i.e., physical destruction, a departure from hometown, etc. Nada, Yaser, Roni, Farid and Amar noted that they did not recognise that they were leaving home for good when they left. These participants described a sense of “numbness,” a state of “not being able to think,” and dissociation, which shadowed their consciousness at the time. “Saying goodbye” was conceived as a necessary ritual that should mark the separation from home; thus, missing the opportunity to say goodbye to their home was a source of sadness for most. On the other hand, Dima and Roni said they were glad to have a chance to temporarily return home for “proper” closure.

Unawareness of loss can be interpreted as a form of denial, which is generally taken as a defence mechanism characterising the early stages of grief in the literature. This corresponds to the best-known, yet much-criticised, model of response to loss: the Kubler-Ross model (1969). Yet such theoretical models of grief have been revealed to be inaccurate and/or fall short of capturing the complexity of human responses to loss. It can be said that “numbness”, as a response to shocking events and existential anxiety, can help people cope with unacceptable physical and psychological losses, threats and overwhelming feelings - as in the case of involuntary migrants who lost their homes.

Throughout the narratives, participants contrasted their host country with their homeland and repeatedly highlighted the discrepancies between the two countries in terms of food, people, culture, weather, the experience of time, etc. The homeland and old cultural symbols were generally idealised, whereas the host country was characterised as “less good” or “missing.” It seemed that participants were becoming aware of

the loss as they experienced the absence of home through this comparison and nostalgia. Both home and its absence were defined on the basis of the contrasts between "home" and "not-home", "there and here", and "past and present". I find Korac (2009) particularly very helpful in understanding how "home as absence" is linked to nostalgic narratives of a homeland. He states:

> *…home moves us most powerfully as absence or negation. Home as absence invokes powerful nostalgic narratives of home or place caused by prolonged absence from one's home and homeland. Home as absence often results in narratives and practices of symbolic recreation of place in which memory is always mediated by nostalgia. As nostalgia is never about the past as it was, but rather an active creation of the past in the attempt to remember it (Graham and Khosravi, 1997, p, 128), home often becomes a mythical place or homeland*. (Korac, 2009, p. 28)

Miller *et al.* (2002) arrive at a similar finding in their studies on Bosnian involuntary immigrants living in Chicago. They state:

> *[Memories of pre-war life in the homeland] seemed to function at various times both as a source of comfort and as a reference point against which the experience of life in Chicago was continually evaluated. Consequently, people's perceptions and experiences of specific exile-related stressors were inseparably embedded within a comparative temporal framework.* (Miller *et al.,* 2002, p. 344)

From the psychoanalytic perspective, Akhtar (1999) argues that the nostalgia of immigrants towards their home results from "retrospective idealisation of the lost object", the homeland, and is a defence mechanism against the aggression triggered by current challenges and difficulties. Following Akhtar, Lijtmaer (2001) interprets the overvaluation of cultural symbols of the homeland and the devaluation of cultural symbols of the host country by immigrants as a splitting process.

From a phenomenological perspective, it can be argued that comparing and contrasting the two different contexts is an attempt to recreate the lost sense of familiarity by translating what is unfamiliar into the language of the familiar and intelligible. In a sense, my participants were creating gridlines and assessment templates to make the strange world around themselves intelligible; to do this, the familiar world generally functioned as the "gold standard". Whether the cultural symbols of the host country were devalued or not is arguably not the main point since the attempt was to make these symbols graspable or accessible in the first place. On the other hand, remembering the familiar context they were torn away from might be a way to hang on to it and escape from the feeling of "uncanniness" triggered by the new environment, as Taylor (2009) suggests.

5.2.2 Crisis

Several psychological and physiological complaints - such as: sleeping problems, loss of appetite, confusion, memory impairment, depressive mood, hopelessness, self-alienation, disorientation, a feeling of a lack of agency, a sense of displacement and loss of authenticity - were reported by my participants during the interviews. Furthermore, strong feelings of isolation, loneliness, and a deep mistrust of other people were expressed. Ideas that the world is not a safe and fair place, that other people are not trustworthy and caring, but are instead hostile, self-seeking and prejudiced, recurred in the accounts.

Psychological problems and difficulties associated with involuntary migration are central in the existing literature (Camia & Zafar, 2021; Ullman *et al.*, 2015; Gülşen, Knipscheer & Kleber, 2010; Fazel, Wheeler, & Danesh, 2005; Sundquist, Bayard-Burfield, Johansson, & Johansson, 2000). As previously discussed, these are often handled as posttraumatic stress reactions - in other words, as aftereffects of traumatic events displaced people go through in their journey from their home country to the host country. Gülşen, Knipscheer and Kleber (2010) describe the impacts of migration on immigrants:

> *[They are] more vulnerable to mental disturbances due to the experience of migration itself, the demands of cultural adaptation, and a disadvantaged socioeconomic position. The resulting cultural adaptation is a prolonged and often laborious process. Migrants have to become accustomed to another language, to different attitudes, and to new roles. Furthermore, existing social networks have fallen apart, often resulting in a lack of both perceived and actual social support*. (Gülşen, Knipscheer & Kleber, 2010, p. 109)

The disruption of the ordinary course of life, particularly when it is undesired and unexpected, is associated with negative feelings and experiences that affect all aspects of one's being; it can often shatter the most fundamental assumptions about one's self, others and the world. As discussed in the literature review, from an existential perspective, such periods of life can be defined as "life crises". Having lost their homes and begun endeavouring to settle in a foreign land, almost all of my participants went through or were going through a 'crisis', manifested through a disturbed relation to their sense of self and to others.

While "life crisis", as a general category, is useful in conceptualising immigrants' worlds, an in-depth understanding of the experiences pertaining to the specific type of 'crisis' results from the 'ontological' loss of the sense of home - is needed. Huntington (1981, p.4) explains the crisis experienced by involuntary immigrants as follows: "When our external world (a society that is usually place-time specific) changes, we face a crisis for our assumptive world no longer fits that of the people around us. Inner and outer reality is [sic], temporarily, discordant." In their study on voluntary immigrants, Kosar and Markovic (2016)

emphasise that encountering an unfamiliar world triggers a sense of identity threat, loss and disorientation. Their findings suggest that when immigrants enter a new environment, their sense of self is fragile and disoriented; these feelings are often associated with a sense of exclusion and isolation.

Papadopoulos (2002, p.16) claims that the consequences of losing home are far beyond the grief associated with the loss of home in its material, sentimental and psychological dimensions; he highlights how immigrants experience a specific type of disturbance, one that manifests as confusion, bewilderment, a sense of unreality, a lack of confidence in one's own existence. In opposition to pathologising approaches to involuntary immigrants, he defines the specific disturbance that involuntary immigrants experience as being close to what has been referred to as 'ontological insecurity', 'existential anxiety' (Giddens, 1991; Laing, 1960), 'existential angst', or 'dread' (Kierkegaard, 1957; Sartre, 1948). To define the sense of a fundamental gap, he proposes the concept of "*frozenness*" as a state of "*psychological hypothermia*". He stresses that this "*nostalgic disorientation*" is more the result of the "primary", i.e., ontological, loss of the organising and containing functions of home, rather than other tangible and intangible losses:

> *The hypothermia image could have additional meaning for and application in working with refugees. Under conditions of deprivation and with a multiplicity of losses, individuals, families and communities seem to ``freeze up'' and the repertoire of their feeling, perceiving and functioning becomes restricted. This is the "frozenness" referred to in connection with the "nostalgic disorientation'' above; externally, it could have all the symptoms of a dissociative state and, in a sense, it is one. However, on closer examination, it could be discerned that it is more the result of the primary loss of home rather than of the long list of the secondary and tangible losses*.
> (Papadopoulos, 2002, p, 16)

I argue that, as Papadopoulos implies, the disturbances experienced by involuntary immigrants can best be grasped from an existentialist/phenomenological perspective before all because the loss of home is an ontological loss. At this point, I believe that Laing's (1960) work, *The Divided Self,* provides a theoretical lens through which to build a more comprehensive understanding about the relationship between loss of home and crisis than that which can be achieved through a limited pathology-oriented conceptualisation. More specifically, Laing's definition of 'ontological insecurity' can shed light on my participants' disturbances, as their sense of being-in-the-world and belonging to the world was shattered by the unexpected disruption of their lives.

Laing is identified as a predecessor of the British School of Existential Analysis, together with van Deurzen, Spinelli and Cohn, and his work made significant contributions to the field of phenomenological/existentialist psychotherapy. As van Deurzen (2009, p. 163) points out, the movement of

anti-psychiatry Laing engendered was largely inspired by the writings of Heidegger and Sartre. This being said, he was trained as a psychoanalyst, and the ideas of Winnicott, in particular, who was his supervisor, had a lifelong influence on his work. Laing's "enigmatic relationship with psychoanalysis" (Thompson, 2010) has been subject of much debate, and van Deurzen (2009, p. 163) rightfully defines his work as "an uneasy synthesis of object relations theory and existentialism". This also applies to Laing's book, *The Divided Self*, which I draw on here. The psychoanalytic theory and terminology that permeates Laing's book - such as: 'identity', 'defence mechanism', 'false self', 'split', etc. - makes this endeavour a difficult task. However, a great number of scholars (Daniel Burston, Emmy van Deurzen, Alfons Greider, John Wilson, Ernesto Spinelli, John M. Heaton, etc.) have interpreted the concept of "ontological insecurity" to fit into the existentialist/phenomenological psychotherapy literature., In fact, Laing himself imbued these psychoanalytic concepts with a phenomenological tone, leading towards what one might call an existential reading of psychoanalysis (Thomson, 1999). In what follows, I refer to these phenomenologically-oriented studies and draw on their reading of Laing's "ontological insecurity" to make sense of my participants' predicament resulting from the loss of home. I also present a phenomenological interpretation of these terms where appropriate.

Like others, van Deurzen (2009, p. 164) defines *ontological insecurity* as "the basic lack of trust in one's physical and concrete existence in the world;" yet, unlike Laing, she does not correlate it to schizoid experience. Instead, she takes it as a basic fact of human existence, one that is commonly experienced by most people in the ordinary course of life. Maclaren (2015) defines *ontological insecurity* from an existential-ontological perspective as "a failure of being-with that is established through being-with" (2015, p. 148). He further states:

> *[It is] the establishment of a pervasive sense of threat to one's own sense of being real and alive, so that the particular things that show up in the world tend to show up as threatening me. This 'world' of ontological insecurity seems to arise, however, not from a sense or meaning that is thrown out onto the world by a subject, but by a sense or meaning that is established in and through being-with. (Maclaren, 2015, p. 148)*

According to Burston (2000), who is also an existentially-oriented scholar, ontological *security* consists of "identity with one's body; a stable sense of autonomy, identity and personal agency; a capacity for sustaining good-enough personal relationships; and an overlap between being-for-self and being-for-others" (2000, p. 134). When these basic constituents of ontological security are not present and/or if the relationship with the self and/or others fails, individuals tend to question their existence and start to feel ontologically insecure.

In what follows, I look to these three existential-phenomenological interpretations of Laing's concept of ontological insecurity and suggest that it corresponds to the state of crisis that my participants experienced after leaving their home. More specifically, in line with MacLaren and Burston, I argue that the sub-ordinate themes of a "disturbed sense of self" and "disturbed relatedness to others", which arose from the interviews, can be interpreted in relation to this concept. I suggest that people feel *ontologically insecure* when they are out of their *everydayness*, such as in cases of crises or loss, including loss of the familiar world. In such cases, people feel groundless and question their relationship with the self and others, as is the case with my participants who left their homes in Syria behind. In the previous section on LOSS, I suggested that migration opens a hole in Dasein's fundamental structure of "being-in-the-world" and "being-with"; it shatters the world's intelligibility, depriving Dasein from the very background that makes all encounters and relations (with the physical world and with other Daseins) meaningful. Accordingly, the predicament experienced by involuntary immigrants can be considered as an "existential misery" in van Deurzen's terms (1998, p. 163), ie. a reflection of the crack in Dasein's ontological embeddedness in and unity with the world, which brings about a deep sense of insecurity.

The first two points in Burston's definition of ontological security, 'identity with one's body' and "a sense of autonomy, identity, and personal agency" refers to the third dimension in van Deurzen-Smith's (1984) scheme depicting the human experience namely, it refers to *Eigenwelt,* which concerns our relationship with our own selves or our personal world, in the very private manner that is generated by self-reflection. It concerns how we see and define who we are, how we see and define our past and how we look to the future. To illustrate the first point, 'identity with one's body,' most participants emphasised how they struggled physically. For instance, Yaser felt dizzy and suffered from headaches for prolonged periods, and Farid noticed considerable changes in his physical health. Likewise, Saz talked about falling ill more often in Istanbul than in Syria, and how he lost a considerable amount of weight after he started to live in Turkey. As can be seen from these accounts, experience with one's body is one of the ways in which people have a relationship with themselves, and we see how this part of their relationship with themselves started to fail during the experience of involuntary migration.

Moving on to the next point - namely, a sense of autonomy, identity, and personal agency - I observed fears related to identity-less-ness, confusion regarding their own being and feeling lost. I found that my participants struggled to ground their being. Many of them mentioned feelings of numbness, confusion, memory impairment, self-alienation, and lack of self-agency, which made it difficult for them to recognise who they are. For example, Saz described his numbness as having 'no sense', as he felt something was broken inside him. Likewise, Yaser also stated that he was numb and didn't have any feelings for a while. Amar felt a significant sense of lack of self-agency; he explained how he felt like an audience of his own

life, as if he had no power over it. Roni mentioned how he had to detach himself from the real world in order to carry on living and avoid pain. Thus, ontological insecurity experienced by involuntary immigrants creates an unsteady sense of identity, “differentiated from the rest of the world, so that his/her identity and autonomy are always in question” (Laing, 1960, p.42).

The same can be observed in relation to another important point Burston (2000) highlights as a source of ontological security: ‘a capacity for sustaining good-enough personal relationships’. This point refers to the second dimension in van Deurzen’s (1984) scheme, *Mitwelt*, which concerns our relationship with the people around us and our social interactions. Commonly, any contact with the outside world creates fear, which imposes itself into our inner world and damages our capacity to establish and maintain good enough relations with others. This can be seen in my participants' accounts of their attempts to secure their inner selves by withdrawing from other immigrants and from the host society, isolating themselves and, as a result, feeling lonely in their new life.

Another commonality among my participants was thinking their experiences were unique to them and, hence, that they could not be understood by the outside world. The contradiction arose when they yearned for connection inside, yet they found involvement with others to be a risk for their beings. This contradiction seemed to create anxiety in many of them. Because of this inner conflict, they sought safety in loneliness. This was evident in most of my participants' excerpts when they mentioned a feeling of loneliness, even though they came to Turkey with parents, siblings and/or relatives.

This experience of loneliness can be seen as a result of the loss of trust in themselves as well as others. Loss of everydayness in the crises thus made participants feel insecure and led them to question who they were, their autonomy and agency, which fostered an inability to establish new relations or maintain the old ones. These accounts validate Spinelli’s (2005) views, highlighting that when *“faced with such insecurities, any interpersonal relations focused on the self or others may easily be interpreted as highly threatening and, hence, to be avoided as much as possible”* (Spinelli, 2005, p.160).

According to Laing, this shows how the self feels the risk of being taken over by something alien, and this marks an important difference between the old and the new sense of who they are. My participants repeatedly defensively implied that their “new self” had a weakened capacity to establish good enough relationships. Some participants, for instance, mentioned their reluctance to connect with others in Turkey, despite having no difficulty being open and connected with others back in Syria. They also mentioned observing the same pattern in the experiences of other involuntary immigrants around them. This, according to Yaser, made involuntary immigrants become less altruistic, more selfish, pragmatic and hard-hearted, as

they felt as if others were a threat to their existence. They frequently used words to describe others as untrustworthy or liars and questioned their sincerity. This picture clearly fits with MacLaren's (2015, p.148) definition of ontological insecurity as a "failure of being-with."

Yaser said that he could not be sure if others were genuinely interested in him. Saz mentioned that he had difficulty signing contracts with NGOs due to the lack of trust in his colleagues and managers. Likewise, Nada and Dima clearly stated that they could not trust others and were keeping their relationships at a distance, just enough length to carry on with their daily lives. These accounts are in line with the statements of Wilson *et al.* (2010, p.89), highlighting how, in a state of a crisis, *"the individual's relation to their world - the individual's self-world unity (or being-in-the-world) - is disconnected. They come to see the world and other people as dangerous and potentially threatening, from which they believe they must protect themselves.*" My participants wanted to connect with the outside world and were looking for assurance, but they had already isolated themselves as a result of failing to build good enough relations. This state created a strong sense of *being on their own*, alone in this world. This is a state in which the basic need for ontological security through both being-with-oneself and being-with-others is unmet; it is, therefore, a source of ontological insecurity.

My participants didn't just experience a loss of trust in the people around them; most of my participants lost trust in almost everything. Overall, the world was no longer a safe and embracing place for them. For them, the threat was present, not only in social relatedness but also in their existence in the world. They felt disappointment and mistrust towards the media and humanity as a whole. For Saz, his faith in God was deeply shaken. Most participants started to see others as a source of threat, control, and manipulation, and this created a fear of objectification and instrumentalisation of the self by others. In general, Syrian involuntary immigrants developed mistrust towards Western countries in particular, which they perceived as liars and hypocrites pillaging Syria. Loss of trust in humanity was a feeling shared by most participants. They felt there is no one out there to rely on, evident from one of the most commonly used phrases by my participants: "*you cannot depend on anyone but yourself*".

Van Deurzen (2009, p. 164) states, "Sartre's notion of the look and the experience of shame when being made into an object is very close to Laing's descriptions of petrification." Interestingly, the 'other's look' was another recurring theme in the accounts, in which 'others' refers to the local residents of the host country, who were almost always perceived as hostile. The gaze of the discriminating other led to feelings of being objectified or alienated and brought a deep shame. I previously discussed the internal conflict and ambivalence participants experienced in relation to social relations – how, on the one hand, they wanted to feel connected to others in the new context and to establish genuine relations; on the other hand, they were

scared to do so because they felt threatened. In a similar way, most of my participants experienced the 'other's look' as a terrifying and highly disturbing encounter that they wanted to run away from, yet, at the same time, they were seeking respect, recognition, and acceptance by the other. I believe this is precisely the dilemma Sartre points to in *Being and Nothingness*.

Many participants expressed that being unwelcomed in Istanbul and feeling unwanted and unloved were painful experiences. Saz explained how he decided to pretend to be a tourist in Istanbul with a friend to avoid being looked at as a 'Syrian refugee'. Yet, even while pretending to be a tourist, he came to the belief that the only way to get rid of this uncomfortable feeling would be to speak the Turkish language like the native speakers; from his perspective, this would make him indistinguishable as a Syrian involuntary immigrant and thus it might enable him to be accepted by the host society.

Similarly, Nada and Roni described how the 'others' look' created an urge to withdraw and vanish as soon as they recognised they were being looked at. Nada mentioned how she hesitated to take a bus since she felt everyone was staring at her. Moreover, most participants mentioned how they felt dismissed in the eyes of others, that they existed merely as numbers or statistics; this sense of being unvalued affected them to the point that they wished they were not born in Syria so that they would not have to bear the others' look.

It is often stated in the literature that, rather than being a homogenous group of vulnerable, dysfunctional people, immigrants display a wide range of adaptive coping strategies and self-healing mechanisms (El Khani *et al.*, 2017; Eid & Diah, 2019; Podyal *et al.*, 2021; Arenliu *et al.*, 2020). In my participants' accounts, two distinct strategies can be identified: they either protected their identity and autonomy through isolation, or they tried to dissolve their uniqueness and become indistinguishable in the masses. I think this is linked to Sartre's explanation of the uncomfortable state of being under the other's gaze, making one extremely self-conscious and ontologically insecure. Drawing on Laing's (1960) notions of "petrification" or "depersonalisation", we can also see these strategies as a kind of response to threat. Laing explains how one avoids social relations and becomes like a stone through isolation. My participants seem to have developed these strategies.

According to Thomson (1999, p. 58), what Laing (1960) defines as a 'false self-system' is derived from Heidegger's notion of *authenticity* and its correlate, *self-deception* or *inauthenticity*:

> *For Laing, the basic thrust of any effort to situate psychoanalysis in existential and phenomenological principles necessarily has to be rooted in the dialectic between truth and falsehood and how the conflict between them accounts for the split in the self that engenders forms of human suffering that are typically labelled as forms of 'psychopathology.'" Thus, Laing's*

> *concepts of 'true self' and 'false self' can be taken to denote 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' modes of Dasein in Heidegger's phenomenology, and the inauthentic being might be a result of the "protective maneuvers against one's own experience". (Thomson, 1999, p.70)*

While running away from the threat, participants were still longing for relatedness. It is evident in the participant excerpts that, in order to save their beings in a hostile world, they needed to find refuge in isolation. The authentic being can only find itself in solitude, whilst emotional and intellectual engagement with the world is done through an inauthentic being that acts as survival camouflage. For instance, Roni explained how he developed a second identity, an inauthentic mode, that helped him to survive at work and within his social circles because he found it difficult to exist in those contexts as who he truly was. So, in order to survive and not be dead inside, in isolation he developed this coping or survival mechanism. By creating this second personality, that of a 'stray dog', in his words, he tried to protect himself on the outside to keep his inner self alive. This shows that the self needs to engage with the outside world through emotional and intellectual connectedness, yet it does so by camouflaging the authentic being (Prince, 2005).

Kirsner (1976) describes this as a 'schizoid position' arising from "*a failure of basic trust in the self and in the general social contexts as being sufficiently good and reliable for authentic autonomy and mature relationship to develop*" (Krisnes, 1976, p.5). I think we can go beyond explaining this as purely a 'schizoid position'. What Kirsner suggests is compatible with the existential vantage point. Drawing on the experiences of involuntary immigrants, I argue that when we feel ontologically insecure - as in the cases of life crises experienced by my participants - we may find a way to secure our being-in-the-world. On this point, the level of perspicacious, introspective self-awareness my participants demonstrated in describing public versus private selves, their 'false' and 'real' selves, and why they chose to behave differently with others should also be noted.

In order to protect one's own being, individuals do not only seek isolation. Another "protective manoeuvre against one's own experience" (Thomson, 1999, p. 70) is turning off unbearable emotions. This can be observed in the participants as a strategy of avoiding thinking about the past, ignoring or hiding emotions, even resisting learning the host country's language, and so on; these acts can be seen as a means of protecting the self from something hostile. To elaborate, language functions as a vehicle through which to connect and adapt, yet many of the participants - despite expressing desires for connection and the attainment of a more secure social standing - deliberately delayed or resisted learning the Turkish language. This can be understood because the host country was perceived as alien, hostile and threatening to their existence. The implementation of other defensive strategies to protect the self - such as: avoiding sadness, hiding feelings, staying distant, and resisting appearing vulnerable - was also evident in their narratives.

The second strategy used by the participants to deal with not feeling safe while being looked at was to dissolve into the unfamiliar world. Participants mentioned a desire to be ‘no one’ so that they could not be detected. I found it interesting to hear how Saz wished to have no identity; he wished not to be a Syrian and not to be related to anything about Syria. Thus, he depersonalised himself and became like an object rather than a person to avoid exposure until he could fluently speak the language perfectly with no accent, perhaps in 10 to 15 years' time. Saz also expressed a desire to dwell in a vacuum in which no other person exists; he wanted to be alone in a place for himself, out of this world so that he wouldn’t need to deal with, communicate with or hide from others.

5.2.3 Making a new home

From what my participants shared, the feeling of “temporariness” linked to the liminal status attributed to the host country seems to be a central aspect of the lived experiences of Syrian war immigrants in Turkey. Particularly during the early stages, their stay in Turkey was commonly regarded as temporary. Initially, Istanbul was either considered as a stop on the way to Europe or a temporary refuge until the homeland would be safe enough to return to. For a considerably long time, this feeling of temporariness - even after all other life plans failed - kept my participants from accepting Turkey as their new home, establishing new relationships and making long-term plans here. This placed them in a ‘limbo’ between the ‘real home’ they left behind, perhaps forever, and an elusive future ‘dream’ home; the sense of being in a transitory space led to a sense of ungroundedness, lack of purpose, uncertainty and ambiguity. Time in this limbo state seemed to be frozen, and the experiences described were close to “being out of the world”. The most striking example is perhaps from Dima, who, for several months after her arrival, refused to seek proper accommodation and a job to make a living; she deliberately abstained from establishing any friendships in Istanbul because she was deeply convinced that she would leave Turkey soon, even though this seemed almost impossible at the time. She described a depressed, lethargic mood of living almost in a vacuum, “doing nothing” and “wasting her life”.

Recently, a growing number of studies focus on the “permanence of temporariness”, “liminal state,” or “limbo” as a condition that involuntary immigrants find themselves in. Initially, these concepts were associated with protracted displacement, i.e., prolonged waiting times in encampments and detention centres. In a paper entitled, “‘I can't even buy a bed because I don't know if I'll have to leave tomorrow’: temporal orientations among Mexican precarious status migrants in Toronto”, Villegas (2014) demonstrates that legal status deeply impacts immigrants’ ability to make plans, secure decent work, and develop a sense of belonging to the host country. In a similar vein, Arvanitis and Yelland’s research (2021) explores the experiences of five Syrian children temporarily housed in a refugee centre in Greece and waiting to be

relocated on a permanent basis to a new country. They stress that this legal liminality led the children to view Greece as a transitional space, as they were en route to Western Europe, despite all the positive feelings they had towards the host country. Accordingly, obtaining Turkish citizenship also had a particular significance for my participants. It was commonly regarded as a major threshold, the overcoming of which could alter their relationship with the host country radically. A reliable and long-term legal status of residence, which would provide Syrian war immigrants certainty and equal rights with the local citizens, was aspired to as something essential before investing emotionally, professionally and materially in Turkey as their new home.

However, more recent research recognises that these feelings are common to all involuntary immigrants - not only those waiting to be relocated or granted permanent legal status - and can endure even after these people settle in a host country and obtain permanent legal status. Several studies stress that liminality is related to expectations in life and to perceptions of where one's real home is. Zeno (2017), who himself is a Syrian scholar in the UK, claims that Syrian involuntary immigrants prefer the word "guest" to define themselves rather than "refugee",:

> *In contrast to what the category of refugee implies (finding a new permanent home), daif* [guest] *signifies a feeling of temporality, expressing the desire among many Syrian refugees to believe that their time in exile is limited and once the war ends, they will return 'home.'* (Zeno, 2017, p. 72)

Similarly, in a study of internally displaced Abkhazians in Georgia, Brun (2015) states, '*The hope for return has created a strong feeling of temporariness that shapes people's conceptions of home as the place they left*' (Brun, 2015, p. 46). This sense of temporariness also resonates with the Ambiguous Loss Theory, which refers to a certain type of loss in which closure does not occur, and the loss is denied. Perez and Berkovitz (2018) talk about the ambiguous loss of homeland to describe immigrant experiences of "*keeping their country of origin psychologically present after their physical departure…[This] may present itself as confusion about whether to maintain hope for an eventual return or to grieve the loss of a homeland they will never again see*" (Perez and Berkovitz, 2018, p. 92).

Whilst one might expect the precarity of the Syrian war immigrants' legal status in Turkey as persons under *temporary protection* and their hope to return to their homeland one day to have contributed to this mood, it seems to me that this feeling of liminality was a stage of the life crisis my participants were going through after losing their 'home'. It was an aspect of 'falling into bad faith' and a denial of the loss of home. I believe that a temporary, unsettled way of living enabled them to avoid taking responsibility for their lives,

which required confronting their new facticity, a challenging task. In this sense, liminality was part of a transition period until the loss was processed and accepted and grief was completed. It was interesting to see that Nabil, who acknowledged his choice to move from Syria to Turkey from the very beginning, was the only one who did not experience such a 'limbo state'.

Despite mixed feelings, inner conflicts and ongoing ambiguity, all participants indicated a point at which they felt the urge to get out of limbo, a decision to settle down in Istanbul, at least for a while. Istanbul was evidently becoming a new home or a place 'like home' for my participants over time, and they seem to have developed varying degrees of attachment and belonging towards the host country. This was even so for Dima and Amar, who still expressed the desire to depart from Turkey for Europe when ready to move again after spending some more time in Istanbul. A new everydayness with new routines, norms, values, connections and novel ways of doing things was being established and was taking the place of the past ways of being-in-the-world. Temporality was an essential element of the narratives around settling in the host country, with time being conceived as required to develop a sense of familiarity with the new environment.

The processes through which a host country becomes home for voluntary and involuntary immigrants is conceptualised as "homemaking" in the relevant literature. Brun and Fabos (2015)state that homemaking "*takes place as people try to recreate familiarity, improve their material conditions, and imagine a better future*" (2015, p. 10). Having said that, the centrality of coming to terms with facticity for homemaking by involuntary immigrants has not been mentioned in the relevant literature. Unlike leaving the homeland, the process of making a new home was often described as the result of deliberate actions, efforts and struggles, and it was expressed with a language of authorship by the participants. The moment the participants got out of the limbo state, the vacuum, was generally when they decided to act for themselves and take control over their lives. In almost all cases, this leap was accompanied by a more realistic assessment of their chances to move to Europe, an acceptance of the loss of their familiar world, and an acceptance of their new objective conditions in the host country.

Among the factors that help immigrants make a new place, their new home, work and professional opportunities seemed to be particularly important for my participants. This observation is in line with numerous studies stressing the significance of work for displaced people in developing coping strategies and as a way to empowerment. I observed that having a stable, decent job in a supportive work environment, the financial security it brought and the feeling of being useful to society through work provided a sense of permanence, dependability and social connectedness, which helped my participants imagine Istanbul as their new home and look to the future with confidence and hope. Meanings attributed to work were beyond a means of material subsistence; work was conceived of as a way to gain social recognition and respect in

what they considered to be an unwelcoming and hostile environment. Moreover, entering into a work routine provided them with a sense of structure in life, within which they could feel some sense of groundedness.

To create a sense of belonging, another commonly mentioned prime factor was the establishment of relationships and connections -particularly, getting to know dependable people and a helping hand when needed. In this sense, as Boccagni (2017, p.30) mentions, it was through *ordinary interactions in daily life* that Syrian immigrants were "rooting" in Istanbul. Yet, there might also be a communal background to these individual stories, as a number of studies claim that, after a decade of immigration since the first refugee influx from Syria, the Syrian community in Turkey has entered the integration phase (Içduygu & Sert, 2019; Daniş & Nazli, 2018).

Homemaking was often associated with seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. Participants reported positive changes, a "breaking point" with regard to their psychological well-being, after their relationship with the host country changed. They described this new mood with a strong feeling of hope for a better future and a sense of ontological security. The sense of groundedness seemed to be regained to a certain extent, and Istanbul was now defined as a "safe place" where trustworthy, caring people also exist. The findings of many studies on displaced immigrants demonstrate that this feeling of hope, alongside other positive feelings that come after a long period of crisis, marks a phase in the immigrants' life journey (Umer & Elliot, 2019; Mahamid & Berte, 2020; Hussain & Bhushan, 2011).

'Change and growth' was an important theme repeatedly visited by most of the participants, despite their conflicting feelings about home. The change was often described as empowerment, a positive transformation in one's personality or an enhancement in one's capacity and skills. What my participants told me suggests that the life crisis they went through led them to both become critical of their basic convictions about themselves, others and the world and to discover their hidden strengths and previously ignored opportunities in life, thereby enabling self-actualisation and personal growth. As demonstrated in detail in the Analysis Chapter, almost all participants reported with pride a confident awareness of feeling stronger, more independent, more self-assured, more mature and "wise" in life. Some radically questioned and/or rejected their communities' social norms and values, which they had taken for granted before leaving their homeland. Others felt the urge to explore life and relationships and developed enhanced empathy and tolerance towards other people. A few clearly expressed that they redefined their perspectives and orientation in life as a result of these changes.

Weiss and Berger (2006) and Berger (2021) discuss the experiences of immigrant women from the perspective of post-traumatic growth. In these studies, it is shown that personal growth was commonly reported by immigrant women, including:

> *…increased personal and social freedom, augmented power and autonomy, acquiring a broader worldview and a better comprehensive and multi-dimensional understanding of the world, developing empathy and sensitivity, giving themselves permission to aspire to personal achievements, and higher respect for themselves.* (Berger & Weiss, 2003, p.31)

While these findings resonate with and correspond to the present research, to my knowledge, there is no study discussing from an existential perspective how the loss of home by involuntary immigrants might result in the opening of existence at several different layers.

As summarised in the review of the literature, the existential approach to 'crisis' problematises the predominant ways of looking at it as something to be treated and overcome (Jacobsen, 2006; Yalom & Lieberman, 1991; Bollnow, 1959). In this vein, Jacobsen (2006) argues that crisis can be seen as, among other things, an experience of: living through relief, overcoming danger, questioning the deeper meaning of life, and the removal of issues that may be related to old conflicts. All of these instances can lead to a new level of stability in relation to one's sense of self. What fundamentally distinguishes the existentialist concept of 'life crisis' from that of 'trauma' or a 'traumatic event' is the possibilities the former bears. This perspective finds that gaining awareness of the realities of the human condition can open new doors for individuals to experience self-actualisation and personal growth.

I previously mentioned Yalom and Lieberman's study (1991), which found that existentially aware individuals are more able to cope with their grief and loss in bereavement as they tend to be more accepting of loneliness, death, and/or questions about the meaning of life. As another form of life crisis, involuntary migration can be seen as bringing with it new opportunities that open doors for existence, despite the painful experiences it involves. This is in line with the two core characteristics of crises highlighted by Bollnow (1959): i) crises as a purging process through which people learn to free themselves from old impurities and begin with fresh starts; ii) crisis as a decision that involves a choice between two or more possibilities.

A Heideggerian interpretation of the life crisis associated with involuntary immigration can stem from his concepts of everydayness, the *Anyone* and inauthenticity. According to Heidegger, the *Anyone* - the everyday mode of *Dasein* - is attributed to both positive and negative characteristics. On the one hand, it is presented as a fundamental structure of *Dasein*'s existence and the source of intelligibility of the world; on

the other, as *Dasein*'s in-the-public and anonymous mode, the *Anyone* is associated with critical aspects of conformism and inauthentic ways of being. In everydayness, *Dasein* does things as everyone does:

> *We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as they take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as they see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the 'great mass' as they shrink back; we find 'shocking' what they find shocking. The 'they', which is nothing definite, and which all are, though not as the sum, prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness*. (Heidegger, 1977, p.127)

This everyday mode "disburdens" *Dasein* of its responsibility for its existence, i.e., of the possibilities to own itself, providing it with a sense of groundedness. The *Anyone* and everydayness cover the fundamental homelessness of *Dasein*, thereby saving it from the existential anxiety and dread that it would otherwise bring.

When one loses one's home and is obliged to settle elsewhere, *Dasein* is drawn out of everydayness and its *Anyone* mode, out of the banality of the world it is embedded in. As Jacobsen (2006) puts it:

> *When someone is thrown into a crisis, it is as if a crack opens in the ground that was previously covered with sand, in much the same way as cracks appear in the earth during an earthquake. The crack allows the individual to look deep into something very significant. In this way, the crisis becomes existential and can become a personal turning point, a new life possibility*. (Jacobsen, 2006, p.46)

The priority for most of the participants was creating a safe, familiar environment and establishing a new everydayness, a new routine, in which they can be the *Anyone* again and feel at home in the world. Finding a decent job, providing stability for their families, developing social relations, and becoming a respected member of society - in brief, securing the most tangible aspects of life and starting doing things as everyone does again - were what my participants were aspiring to in the first place to make Istanbul a new home for themselves. For instance, on his way out of the crisis, the breaking point for Saz was the emergence of the possibility of practising as a doctor, obtaining Turkish citizenship, and getting into a work routine.

Still, for participants like Roni and Nada, losing home brought a confrontation with homelessness as a fundamental human condition that one needs to live with. As they recognised that home is both "everywhere" and "nowhere", they simultaneously faced the fact that we are all fundamentally ungrounded in this world, that there are no given structures in life, no places in which to dwell forever. I believe this was a painful, unsettling, yet emancipating, and rare experience. In their own unique ways, Roni and Nada

eloquently described this awareness, which they achieved as they struggled to cope with losing their home. Interestingly, for both, it was a moment of enlightenment accompanied by a deep sense of freedom. Their experiences were quite similar to what Madison (2010) states about voluntary migrants who have left home to find their purpose in life: "*uncanniness confronts the individual with the nothingness of the world in which he or she feels compelled to fulfil his or her own self*" (2010, p.25).

Equally importantly, the "crack" in their being, which resulted from at once losing home and experiencing the crisis of getting out of everydayness, paved a path towards a more authentic existence for all of my participants in different ways and to varying extents. For example, both Dima and Amar talked about how leaving Syria took them out of their everyday routines and relieved them from concerns about "small details" of daily life, thereby enabling them to see the "bigger picture" and to improve and grow. Moreover, it was interesting to observe that all participants had a visibly critical and questioning attitude towards social norms, values and practices of their close social circles and wider communities and towards the different forms of 'public-ness' they get in and out in their daily lives. This questioning could go as deep as questioning one's religious beliefs and faith in God, as was the case with Saz, or it could bring disillusionment and disengagement from a political movement to which one had devoted his life, as was the case with Roni.

Together with this critical attitude came the openness to different life options, choices and ways of living for themselves and others. This sometimes manifested itself as being more tolerant and accepting towards those with different life choices than one's own. Farid and Yaser stressed that their horizons had radically expanded beyond their communities' norms, values and roles, which they had once considered unquestionable. This brought them recognition of plurality and a sense that peaceful coexistence with others who are different from themselves is both possible and necessary. Moreover, Nabil, Roni and Dima radically questioned cultural and national boundaries, arriving at the conclusion that one should go beyond these boundaries and communal attachments. Such perspectives indicate transcendence beyond the conformism and conservatism of the *Anyone* that shaped their own beings.

A sense of being part of "humanity" and being attached to universal values also emerged out of this questioning. Knowles (2017), who calls for a pluralistic interpretation of Heidegger's project, defines 'inauthenticity' as an undifferentiated and indifferent relation to the *Anyone;* in other words, it is taking the social norms, values and practises one is familiar with as the only 'right' bearing in life that should apply to everyone in the same way. In contrast, she claims that authenticity occurs when "*Dasein is open to the conflicting and at times contradictory norms of everydayness"* (Knowles, 2017, p.49). It seems that, in this

sense, my participants were becoming more authentic since they related to the *Anyone*-in-making in their new *everydayness* in a differentiated manner.

This openness to possibilities also brought awareness of the ‘true’ potential one bears. Participants expressed a sense that the comfort and conformity associated with home inhibited the achievement of their fullest potential in their past life, whereas the challenges and deprivation that accompanied getting out of this comfort zone revealed their hidden strengths, skills and talents; it enabled shadowed traits of their characters to be actualised. Dima, for instance, was “dazzled” to see what she could achieve by merely being ‘herself’ once deprived of the social privilege and networks she enjoyed in Syria. When Roni’s social roles and expectations were left behind in the homeland, he became engaged in finding out and seeking what he really wants in life, what he desires and is capable of doing.

Furthermore, all participants learned and gained new skills and knowledge beyond what their previous social roles prescribed - such as a new language, new professional skills, and how to make handcrafts - to survive in the host country. Miller *et al.* (2002) conceptualise these new skills as “environmental mastery”. Jacobsen states, “*the crisis involves a break with the past - a painful and distressing process - and the unfolding of new modes of existence on a level that is different from that of the past*” (2006, p.42). Overall, this sense of a “break with the past” was present in all of my participants’ narratives. There was a clear distinction being made between the *past* and the *present* life, the *past* and the *present* self.

5.2.44 Significance of Home

The complexity of meanings ascribed to home by immigrants has been frequently mentioned in the literature. On this point, Koser and Markovic (2016) state that, for voluntary immigrants, *“home exists as an ever-shaping multifaceted matrix of emotions, interactions, experiences and environments”* (2016, p. 41). In line with other studies on this subject, my participants, too, expressed an intimate and strong attachment to home in Syria, with its intertwining material, spatial, temporal, and relational meanings. Home, in its *material* dimension - i.e. as a “*sensory nature of home through tastes, scents and an embodied experience of landscape*” (Taylor, 2009, p.6) - was often included in the accounts through references to everyday routines and ordinary details of life in the homeland, such as food, sounds, smells, views, etc. Interestingly, this aspect was almost completely lacking in relation to the host country, suggesting their relation to daily life was still lost.

The *spatial* home, i.e. the physical house or hometown as a location - was less emphasised compared to other aspects. This dimension was generally raised when participants talked about the physical borders of home, which they imagined as an insulating layer separating the inside from the outside world, protecting

from intrusions and creating a comfortable and safe space for the family. The physical aspect was also mentioned when contrasting the poor housing conditions in Istanbul to the comfort and welfare they enjoyed in their homes before leaving their homeland.

Home was, above all, closely associated with physical and emotional "safety" by all participants, including and beyond the material security provided by a house or a demarcated physical space. Physical safety was a particularly emphasised dimension as my participants had fled from war conditions with a motivation to save their lives. Alongside being protected from physical threats to life, home brought emotional safety and a sense of being respected, valued, and supported by others.

This is a point frequently raised in the literature on involuntary immigrants. For instance, Rosbrook and Schweitzer (2010) stress that, for involuntary immigrants from Burma, the experience of home was that of a psychological space of safety and retreat:

> *Participants reported that feeling cared for, protected, supported and valued engendered feelings of safety and stability, allowing for authentic, unselfconscious self-expression, and for the expression of love in relation to others*. (Rosbrook & Schweitzer, 2010, p.168)

This finding is also consistent with Miller *et al.*'s (2002) study on exile-related stressors among Bosnian involuntary immigrants. In this regard, Herman (1992) and Silove (1999) emphasise the significance of providing safe psychological and physical contexts to work with involuntary immigrants with post-traumatic stress reactions resulting from the loss of their home.

Despite resonance and overlaps, this study challenges existing understandings and provides a new perspective on the association between home and one's sense of 'safety'. Whereas in the existing literature on involuntary migrants, home is *defined* as a safe and secure place, my findings suggest that the sense of having a home comes before the sense of safety; the feeling of being-at-home was constitutive of the sense of being safe for the participants. In other words, my analysis revealed that the feeling of 'being at home' can create a sense of safety, even under the circumstances of large-scale catastrophes (e.g. war, violence). As illustrated in my participants' narratives, in certain circumstances, people search for safety in the place they once called home, even though it does not provide them with objective conditions of physical safety anymore. In these cases, people tend to seek a familiar sense of safety, even at the expense of risking their lives (e.g. going back to the danger zone just to be closer to the familiar physical surroundings that they once called home - as we find in Saz's and Nada's cases). Therefore, we can conclude that home can create an illusion of safety amid a chaotic and dangerous world.

This new proposed perspective on home is further supported by my participants' accounts of feeling unsafe in their newly entered environment, despite it being safe. The analysis revealed that when "away from home", people may find it difficult to feel safe, even though objective conditions pose no danger to them. Although there are certainly threats to the self-imposed by the 'alienness' of the new and unwelcoming, hostile society in the host country, which has been discussed at length in the Findings section, these arguably pale in comparison to the threat of immediate death posed by the gunfire, bombs and spontaneous violent outbursts that characterise war. Yet Saz claimed he could sleep in his home in Syria amidst the sounds of distant and near explosions, but he struggled to sleep in Istanbul. As soon as the physical place that feels like home is left behind (i.e., buildings, hometown, city or country), the objective reality, which was ignored before due to the illusion of being safe at home, tends to become shockingly evident. This may bring up suspended feelings of doubt about what *safety* is in a new country, refugee camp or city.

Miller *et al.* (2002) offer an explanation for involuntary immigrants' sense of insecurity in new environments, despite the lack of any objective threats. This feeling of unsafety, they argue, is initially triggered by the volatile environments back at home and deepens with the uncertainty, unpredictability and volatility of the immigrant conditions in the host country. However, this explanation is limited and ignores the fact that - even when certainty, predictability and stability are ensured - involuntary immigrants may not experience a sense of safety in the host country. In this regard, I argue that to be able to feel safe, people need to be "at home"; that is, they need to be in a familiar place, a familiar environment, where they feel rooted and grounded. Thus, recreating a sense of safety and security after displacement should be considered as a process that coexists and fuses with homemaking.

My participants also defined home as a space for privacy and intimacy. This is in line with Rosbrook and Schweitzer (2010, p.163), whose findings demonstrate that home is understood by involuntary immigrants from Burma as a place of personal freedom, sanctuary and restfulness. One of the participants of their study states:

> '*… all your worries, all your fears, all your worries at work, or your tiredness - when you come home, you see your loved ones and you relax. You have no feeling of guilt. You have no feeling of fears. You just relax. That's the idea of a home for me*.' (Rosbrook & Schweitzer, 2010, p.163)

Similar expressions were present in the accounts of my participants. Particularly for those living in shared flats, being deprived of personal space made it difficult to accept these places as home. Friends were not family; having roommates was considered different from living in a family home with other members of the family.

Home was also understood as the context of both memories, the reflections of the past, and life projects and future plans; this corresponds to conceptualisations of the "temporal home" in the literature. As illustrated in the analysis, a recurring theme was the consideration of home as the context of a life project. In general, this project was presented as a satisfactory professional career by my participants; most defined home as "a place where they can work" and "exercise their profession". Considering the meanings attributed to work - being independent, being useful for society, social recognition and respect, etc.- it can be argued that home is understood by involuntary immigrants as an environment that provides opportunities for a life with purpose and meaning, an environment where they can actualise their potential and realise themselves. While the narratives generally swung between a lost home left behind in time (past) and a projected home to be reconstructed (future), home in the present time was much less visible. Thus, home was more a nostalgic representation or an idealised projection rather than a locality experienced 'here and now'.

At the same time, emotional attachment to a particular socio-cultural context is considered to be an important component of having a home. In the interviews, there was a recurring emphasis that the homeland was much more than a 'piece of land.' Practices, routines, cultural values, norms and roles, language and other elements of sociality that structure daily life, together with a sense of connectedness and communal togetherness, was what really made the land home. Rosbrook and Schweitzer (2010) conceptualise this dimension of home as a "*geographical-emotional landscape*", and they state that:

> *the landscapes of home are more than physical landscapes – they are landscapes to which the individual has an emotional connection. 'Emotional' in this regard is best understood as relating to the power of landscape to stir up strong feelings*. (Rosbrook & Schweitzer, 2010, p.166)

In this vein, most involuntary immigrant children interviewed in Arvanitis and Yelland's (2019) study expressed their attachment to Syria, even though they believed their homeland was now "boring and dangerous".

The emotional attachment to the homeland voiced by my participants brought up the question of whether reconstructing a new home outside Syria could be possible. Except in one case, participants expressed ambivalent feelings as to whether they could feel at home ever again. Whilst Istanbul and the host country were becoming a 'home-like' place for them, most stated that Syria would continue to be their 'true home'. This distinction is in line with the findings of Taylor (2009), who states:

> *Refugees and migrants experience the painful loss of home acutely and consequently often maintain a strong need to restore the certainties of a perceived static past in their imagination. Home(land) is perpetuated through 'the continued existence of a unitary, 'true home'. (*Taylor, 2009, p.10)

Finally, central in all the narratives was the vision of home as an entity constructed from encounters, social interactions and relations with family, friends and wider social circles; this was generally linked with the themes of loss and homemaking.

Returning to a phenomenological perspective, 'being-in-the-world' signifies that we are basically involved in a meaningful whole where we encounter, are interested in and deal with other things and people. In other words, *Dasein* is a relational being that requires active engagement with the opportunities encountered, either authentically or inauthentically. *Dasein* implies not just here-and-now but also the past, present, and future. This opens possibilities for ways of being-in-the-world. For Heidegger, among others, it is in our everydayness that we 'feel at home' in the world. Every participant's account presented ideas that one's life revolves around their engagements, such as their job, religious views, and/or attachment to abstract notions like nationality. Every aspect of my participants' world mattered to them, as each gave them possibilities for acting and being who they are. Hence, from the aforementioned sub-themes related to the meaning of home in the narratives of my participants, an ontological definition of 'being-at-home' - rather than of 'home' - has emerged.

This new perspective on home is closely linked with the known and familiarity, the routine activities and encounters, and the mundane tasks in everyday life that provide a sense of groundedness and opportunities to actualise one's potential. Home is a grounded place - a place that comes with emotional connection and interaction with language, places, and people, as well as the context for a life project, such as a rewarding career and generative, purposeful livelihood. It follows that people lose the ground of 'feeling-at-home' in the absence of those elements in their life, and this results in feeling homeless. This point is stressed in the literature. Downing (1996) states that involuntary migration brings "unexpected destabilisation of routines", and MacDonald (2015) emphasises that re-establishing a normal life course and routines are an important mechanism of making a new home. This suggests that, in order to make the host country a new home, involuntary immigrants need to establish new forms of everydayness through work and social connections.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

> I know that everything essential and great originated from the fact that the human being had a homeland and was rooted in tradition. (Heidegger, 2000)

Diverging from most existing studies on involuntary immigrants, which are predominantly interested in trauma responses and the diagnosis and treatment of PTSD, this study aimed to contribute to psychotherapeutic theory and practice by providing a deeper understanding of the individually varying experiences of involuntary immigrants. To understand subjective experiences and meaning-making processes related to 'being-at-home' and 'homelessness' for Syrian involuntary immigrants living in Istanbul, Turkey, it employed the qualitative methodology of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 English-speaking, well-educated participants, all aged under 45. Interviews mainly focused on participants' individual experiences of leaving their home and settling in Istanbul. As a result of the analysis of interview narratives, 15 sub-themes were categorised under 4 superordinate themes - (i) experience of loss, (ii) crisis, (iii) making a new home, and (iv) the significance of home.

In line with Papadopoulos, this study adopted a non-pathologising approach in interpreting the results. Displacement due to war was conceptualised as an unexpected and undesired disruption of the normal course of life events, which posed numerous and severe challenges to people on the move. Accordingly, an existentialist framework woven around the concept of 'life crisis' rather than 'trauma' was used to grasp lived experiences related to Syrian immigrants' involuntary displacement and their search for a new home.

6.1 Summary

All participants expressed an intimate and strong attachment to their home in Syria, with its intertwining material, spatial, temporal, and relational dimensions. Thus, loss emerged as a major component of their experience of leaving the homeland and settling in the host country. Departures were often described as painful and earth-shaking experiences that radically changed participants' lives. While multiple losses at four levels - physical, psychological, social and spiritual - were seen as inseparable to the loss of home and were discussed at length, there was also a deep sense of an 'inexplicable gap', a hole as to what, really, the loss of home meant for them. With a sense of home being a constitutive part of 'everydayness' from within which the world becomes intelligible for *Dasein*, the loss of home was experienced as something ontological and ineffable, far larger and more fundamental than the summation of what can be described.

I argued that several psychological complaints and struggles highlighted during interviews - including profound feelings of isolation, loneliness and a deep mistrust of other people - were linked to this existential loss, which dramatically altered the familiar ways of being-in-the-world and being-with. Laing's concept of 'ontological insecurity' was deemed a generative way to explain this specific type of 'crisis', which was described by the participants as being similar to stepping into an unintelligible and estranged - thus, chaotic - world as a naked being.

Getting out of their everydayness, out of the world as they always knew it, and thrown into a new publicness in the host country, Syrian involuntary immigrants interviewed in this study seemed to have lost the sense of order and continuity regarding their experiences of the self and the world, which brought a pervasive and profound feeling of existential anxiety. They responded to this painful feeling of lack of containment, ungroundedness and a constant sense of threat with protective strategies, such as: self-isolation (from their close social circles and the host society), developing 'false selves' (adopting superficial public personas for daily interactions), trying to hide their identity as Syrian immigrants (to the extent of desiring to be 'no one') or dissociating from their emotions (becoming 'numb'). They engaged such disconnecting strategies even though they were longing for connection and authenticity simultaneously.

As pointed out by many other studies on involuntary immigrants, a central aspect of the lived experience of involuntary immigrants is a sense of temporariness with regard to their presence in the host country. Almost all participants reported a sense of being in "limbo" in Istanbul, between the 'real home' they left behind, perhaps forever, and a future home envisioned in Europe or elsewhere, likely to be never reached. This seemed to be a transition phase, a stage in the life crisis that involuntary immigrants went through as part of a process. In coping with the crisis generated by displacement, there were thresholds to be overcome. At least to a certain extent, acceptance of the facticities of life - in this case, the destruction of their homeland by the war - and awareness of the choices made within the constraints of these facticities - such as deciding to leave home and taking responsibility for the consequences - were required to step out of the vacuum my participants found themselves in.

It is clear that, over time, Istanbul was becoming 'home' or 'a place like home' for all of the participants. Individual experiences related to 'homemaking' diverged; the pace at which the new world was becoming familiar, the life events, encounters and relationships that helped the immigrants to make a new home, and the strategies employed varied from one participant to another. However, a common feature for all was the centrality of 'everydayness' in this process. As MacDonald (2015) pointed out in a previous study, re-establishing the normal course of life and the routines of daily life in the host country was a major step in

homemaking by involuntary immigrants. In other words, new ways of being-in-the-world with new connections and practices were emerging out of the ‘ordinary’.

From a Heideggerian perspective, most participants' priority was creating a safe, familiar environment and establishing a new routine in which they could be the *Anyone* again and feel at home in the world. In this regard, work was attributed special importance and meaning beyond financial security and satisfying living standards. For the participants of this study, having a stable job was seen as a means of self-realisation, a way to be a beneficial participating member of society, to achieve the recognition and respect of the ‘other’ and to gain independence and autonomy as an individual.

Homemaking was often associated with seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, with hope for a better foreseeable future. The changing relationship with the host country and regaining a sense of being settled led to ontological security and improved psychological well-being. More importantly, immigration-related experiences had far-reaching and transformative impacts on each participant's being. Although their displacement was involuntary, insights gleaned from their narratives correspond to what Madison (2006) describes for voluntary migrants. I showed that the “crack” in the immigrants’ beings - resulting from at once losing home and experiencing the crisis of getting out of everydayness, the comfort zone of unquestioned norms, values, practises, routines, world views etc. of the familiar world - paved a path towards a more authentic existence.

All of my participants expressed, in different ways and to varying extents, the “opening of existence” that Jacobsen (2006) describes as a result of a life crisis. Change and growth were repeatedly indicated by my participants and often described in relation to an empowering, positive transformation in their personalities. They questioned their fundamental assumptions and beliefs about themselves, others and the world, and they discovered hidden strengths and potential, which enabled self-actualisation and personal growth. These findings lent support to the existentialist view that painful and life-shaking experiences, such as forced displacement, can lead to greater self-awareness and openness to possibilities of life that were previously ignored.

Alongside this common experience of change and growth, a few participants also achieved an existential awareness of homelessness as a fundamental human condition one needs to live with. Whereas most participants were in search of a new ‘home’ in its most tangible and ordinary sense, some participants clearly stated that home is now ‘nowhere’ and, thus, ‘everywhere’. Such statements were accompanied by a deep sense of ungroundedness in this world, a sense that there are no given structures and places to dwell in forever, which led to a strong sense of empowerment.

The relevant literature generally emphasises that one's sense of being safe and secure is a constitutive element of a sense of being at home - in other words, people can feel at home only when they are in a physically and psychologically safe environment. This study challenged this view. It showed that, even in the face of life-threatening dangers posed by the war, Syrian immigrants felt 'safe' in the familiarity of their home; moreover, despite the host country's objective physical 'safety', they could not feel safe there. Building upon this finding, I suggested that the feeling of being-at-home itself is constitutive of and precedes one's sense of being safe. Thus I argued that, for involuntary immigrants, regaining a sense of safety and security after displacement should be considered a process that coincides with homemaking. The results also revealed that home had a 'temporal dimension' as the context of memories, reflections of the past, life projects and future plans. Without a sense of home, life lacked a meaningful personal history, meaning and purpose.

Overall, the findings of this study led us to an ontological definition of 'being-at-home' that is largely ignored in the literature. In line with Papadopoulos (2002, pp. 16-18), who argued that the experience of home provides a "protective and containing membrane" and serves as the "substratum of identity", I emphasised that 'being-at-home' is an *existential*, essential feature of *Dasein*, which enables it to experience the world in an ontologically secure way. Thus, I argue that what involuntary immigrants lose as they leave their homeland behind is much greater than the physical, psychological, social and spiritual losses that can be described. *It is the familiarity of the world.*

6.2 Limitations of the study and the research method

One of the limitations of this study is its small sample size; the number of participants in the study was limited to 8. However, this remains within the recommended sample size of the IPA method, as a smaller number of participants enables the researcher to focus on the richness in accounts of individual experiences and engage in a more in-depth analysis of the data. Moreover, the primary motivation of this research - as in other qualitative research - is the exploration of subjective experiences, which are unique to individuals. Generalisations of a statistical nature are beyond its scope. This being said, several findings of this research allowed us to arrive at certain generalisable conclusions of an analytical and a theoretical nature, which aligns with the IPA methodology.

We might consider the recruitment and sampling strategy as another limitation. As mentioned in the Methodology section, the NGOs working with the immigrant populations disseminated my research proposal and call to potential participants. Consequently, those who were in touch with such organisations in some way, and those willing to tell their story to a wider audience, chose to participate in this research. Although

this might have led to a certain degree of bias in my results, it was unavoidable. Furthermore, I believe that a variety of reasons that underlay this willingness ensured the plurality of voices in the sample.

I specifically called for participants who could speak English in order to better immerse myself in the interview process and to communicate through a common language with the Syrian participants. Through this, I avoided the use and presence of an interpreter during the interviews. The absence of an interpreter and the ability to communicate through a mutual language align better with the IPA approach. However, the English language requirement singled out those Syrian involuntary immigrants who are from a specific socio-economic background and level of education. Hence, the findings should be interpreted in light of the information that the participants are well-educated individuals coming from middle-class or well-to-do families, and they had professions that provided them with relatively high living standards and social recognition in their homeland. This situation has probably made certain shared experiences and common themes more visible in the narratives.

Another potential limitation pertains to language as both a medium and a barrier in communicating subjective lived experiences. Following a Heideggerian understanding (Heidegger, 1926/2001), I believe that descriptions or reflections on the inner or outer world can never be fully captured; therefore, the being cannot express itself completely through language. Despite the central place of linguistic expression, IPA also involves deep engagement with a person's unspoken thoughts and feelings. It searches for meanings that are enmeshed in the context of a person's unique life and world. I believe listening to my participants' accounts, enabling them to open up with varying degrees of vulnerability whilst talking about their intimate and emotional stories helped to gather the most valuable data for the present study. Also, what was important was to empower the participants who were part of the research process.

In the present study, it was necessary to empower the Syrian involuntary immigrants with the assurance of quality and the capability of rigorously interpreting data. Murray and Wynne (2001) point out the challenges of conducting qualitative research with participants who do not speak the researcher's language. They emphasise the need to find the balance between methodological rigour and the need to include those who are typically left out of the research. To achieve methodological precision, validity and reliability, I paid more attention to the linguistic remarks made by the participants. I paid careful attention to the details and the words selected during the interviews. I was genuinely interested in hearing about their life experiences and followed every remark and gesture they made, encouraging them to use them in their language. I looked for different cues to understand what they said and how they told their stories. As Eatough and Smith (2006) also say, although IPA focuses on language, it also pushes us to think about other aspects of experience beyond language usage.

Smith *et al.* (2013) describes how IPA offers a link between descriptive and abstract transcripts. It is acceptable to say that sometimes it can be challenging for people to find the right words to describe their experiences. I realised participants found a way to do this by articulating themselves through many techniques, including metaphors, expressions or idioms. I made notes on linguistic choices to capture the relationship between the content and specific language use, also noting laughter, facial expressions, and fluency as valuable components of the language. Saz, for example, used phrases and metaphors during the interview when he wanted to express his feelings attached to the experiences. Nada's spoken language also mirrored the intensity of her temporal experience of leaving home. She could not contain her feelings when she talked about the visit to a little island that reminded her of home; she paused and emphasised each word slowly and with passion. This illustrated how language could both reflect and possibly construct human experiences. I also noticed how Amar laughed when answering questions that brought up emotions or difficulties. This was a possible indicator that it was hard for him to go more in-depth into vulnerable emotional territory during the interview.

On the other hand, a major criticism of IPA is the presence or absence of linguistic fluency of the participants in describing their perceptions, emotions and feelings. In this case, the native language of all the participants involved in this research was Arabic, and English as a second language to all, with varying degrees of fluency among the participants. In addition to this, I, as a researcher, also use English as a second language. Despite my best efforts, the use of second language variances might affect the findings based on the researcher's and participants' linguistic competency. With an awareness of this issue, I did consider conducting the interviews in Arabic; however, there were several factors that led me to choose English. Firstly, because I do not know Arabic, I would need an interpreter. The presence of a third person in the room might impede our ability to build rapport, inhibit participants and/or limit the participants' speech. Furthermore, there would still be issues pertaining to what can be lost in translation - both in terms of the live translation occurring in the interview, and in the later stage of translating the transcript for data analysis; I was aware that it might affect the validity of results when data is gathered in one language and presented in another (Tribe, 2007). Considering these complications and limitations associated with conducting the interviews in Arabic, I decided to conduct the interviews in English and let the participants pick their own words as they had already shown competency in English.

Even though some participants could not use all English words to describe detailed, vivid experiences, the sentences were generally fluent enough to make sense of their meanings. Nevertheless, to support their ability to articulate feelings more freely and fluently, I asked the participants to use Arabic words when they struggled to express themselves. As there are many commonalities in our native languages (Turkish and

Arabic), many of the words were known to me. Even when I was unaware of their meanings, I reassured the participants that I would ask for help from an Arabic speaker during the transcription process. Despite this barrier, I believe that the participants could express themselves adequately and quite clearly and reflect their experiences and feelings in their narratives.

Furthermore, Costa and Dewaele (2012) state that when a client uses a second language in therapy, it can allow space to open up for new emotional expression. It can also be difficult for people to freely express their whole experiences if the person comes from the same or similar background. Sundberg's (1981) findings suggest that some clients, for example, prefer to work with therapists from different backgrounds. It is relevant to my study that a second language can be seen as a neutral zone for opening up to expression, allowing participants to a new stage as a new beginning in a new environment. This can offer an appropriate explanation for the phenomena of creating a new self, which the majority of participants were experiencing.

All of my participants talked about the struggle with language in the host country and with using the host country's language (Turkish). Some participants decided to overcome this difficulty and started learning Turkish. Despite the advantages, some still chose to use English to communicate rather than the host country's language. For example, Saz used the English language when travelling. He travels around the city with his friends, pretending to be a tourist so people would not don't recognise him as Syrian After his experience working as an Arabic-Turkish translator in the police investigation case, Liam decided never to mention that he could speak Turkish. Most of my participants had the advantage of using English as a second language, . and English was not something they would be ashamed of speaking. On the contrary, they used English as a second language to work, communicate and even give research interviews to be heard by the crowd. So I believe meeting in a third language was like meeting in the free zone, for the participants to speak and for me to listen.

Furthermore, meeting in a third language is relevant in analysing the collected data to represent participants' lived experiences. According to Heidegger (1962), a significant constraint of purely descriptive phenomenological investigation is the necessity of using language. He states there is consistent interpretation and affirmation in language and discourse. Thus, there is always a restriction in hearing and speaking the language, even if people use their first language. These limitations usually come with the selection of the words used and the intention of the listeners to those words. Words have a specific meaning, and we strive to comprehend one another through those words and their perceived meanings. Therefore, language is a significant component in how we perceive our experiences, and it is via language that we locate ourselves in the world.

It is only fair for me to accept the impossibility of untainted description and concur with Heidegger (1962) that the significance of phenomenological account as a method lies in interpretation. My participants and I are both embedded in our own worlds and circumstances, which are limited by our language; with this in mind, I was aware that it was crucial to remain as close to my participants' experiences as possible. Therefore, I aimed to give them space and time for them to be heard fairly and clearly. The choice of the words they used carried meaning, and these meanings were always influenced by the participant's unbreakable bond with the outside world. Heidegger (1962) said that when *Dasein* speaks, it reveals the connection with Being-in-the-world as the listener by how they interpret what has been said.

At the time the interviews were conducted, all the participants had been living in Istanbul for a relatively short period of time (my selection criteria included living in Istanbul at least for one year). If the same study was conducted with participants who lived in Istanbul for less or more time, it would possibly present different findings; it would be a completely different study, since this research focuses on the transition period in which all participants struggled to accept the loss of home and to make a new home. Gradual changes in experiences and meanings attributed to home and homelessness can be captured by longitudinal studies, but this is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Another important limitation regarding the sample is its unbalanced gender distribution; it includes only two women and no trans individuals. Unfortunately, these were the only women who were willing to participate in the study. While their narratives provided deep and important insights from female involuntary immigrants' worlds, I am aware that this is an important weakness from a gender perspective.

The knowledge about the experiences of the participants is also limited by the format and duration of the interviews, the list of specific semi-structured questions, and the scope of analysis. Even though the interview questions were open-ended and led to narratives not previously obvious to the researcher, there might have been some narratives left out due to the theoretical focus and value hierarchies embedded in the set of questions. My attempt in this thesis has been to make sense of the participants' descriptions of their subjective experiences as informed by the IPA approach, whose theoretical underpinning is hermeneutics, which is the art of interpretation of various meanings.

I had a theoretical and methodological bias to seek a certain form of narrative through my questions during the interviews. In one of the interviews, I did not realise that the participant was answering the interview questions in an indirect way; this became apparent to me only after listening to the recording later on. The process of my immersion into the narratives of participants happened while listening to the recordings (after having completed all the interviews), transcribing them, and starting the preliminary coding process. This did not change the level of richness I captured about the main themes; however, I might have

missed some opportunities to dive more deeply into some sub-themes that appeared during the interviews. In this regard, follow-up interviews with some participants could be ideal. Follow-up interviews can be a part of the IPA approach in some contexts, even though they might have limitations of their own. I do not believe that follow-up questions were necessary for all of my interviews, but asking specific follow-up questions to particular interviewees (after thematising their first interview) could have improved the analysis chain. However, due to practical reasons - such as the fieldwork taking place in a different country - this was not an option for this study.

The impact of the IPA method should also be considered when talking about the limitations of the research. Using an academic approach to phenomenology, my reflexive process and bias as a researcher are significant contributors towards magnifying certain themes in narratives and downplaying others. As a researcher, I used the IPA method to explore topics that are less understood, known or researched (based on my literature review) and attempted to bring new knowledge to light based on my own theoretical aims.

I made an effort to 'bracket' (Husserl, 1999) my potential biases and assumptions and stayed aware of my thoughts and feelings in relation to the migration experience. Despite my awareness and training on bracketing, my professional identity as an existential therapist and my theoretical understanding and praxis of the migration experience are the factors that were potentially constitutive of a bias in my interpretation of the data. Yet, as Heron and Reason (1997) argue, critical subjectivity means that we do not suppress our primary subjective experience; rather, we accept that it is our experiential articulation of being in a world, and, as such, it is the ground of all our knowing. This was what I endeavoured to do throughout the process.

Yet I must acknowledge that, despite how much I attempted to 'bracket' my assumptions and feelings, they still affected how these findings were formulated and interpreted. My professional identity as an existentialist psychotherapist and my personal experiences of losing my father just before Covid hit the whole world have been reflected in the study to a certain extent. I also have to admit that, during the pandemic lockdown, this research was the only thing that kept me going. I found comfort in diving into interviews and listening to my participants' experiences of loss/losing home, which reminded me of how I felt at home. As I went through one of the existential crises of facing the death of loved ones, the only grounding experience was to connect with my thesis. As a result, this project became an emotional piece of work, like something that I gave life to.

Finally, a context of sensitivity in this study was obtained by investigating relevant theoretical and empirical literature and theory. I carefully conducted the interviews with as much sensitivity, and I cared for the participants, considering their well-being. My empathy and focused attention as a counsellor were critical in assisting my participants to open up, share their experiences with understanding and eventually give the

significant material on which my analysis was based. Yardley (2000) emphasises the need for commitment and rigour in data gathering and in-depth involvement with the issue as a path to validity. This was obtained by being attentive throughout data collection as well as during analysis. I believe that the dedication and time spent travelling between two countries and arranging for interviews suitable for my participants addresses this question as well. Another crucial quality that illustrates the rigour of qualitative research is transparency, which can be achieved when the study steps are written up. All tables, themes and quotations were given wide transparency, so it was evident where interpretations came from. The last concept for this research is its goal to contribute and make a difference in the larger community through distribution to other practitioners. Overall, their validity factors were critical for the study to have an impact I was aware of throughout the process. As a result, I added a chapter on the research's significance to counselling psychology.

6.3 Issues of trust and mistrust

Trust is essential to the success of any study project involving human participants. In this part, I will examine how trust or mistrust might have affected my research from individual, institutional and societal points of view. To do this, I will reflect on the fundamentals of my participants' confidence in me as a researcher and their ability to trust my motives enough to consent to engage in this research, especially on the sensitive issue of being Syrian involuntary immigrants. Here, I am questioning whether my participants trusted me, my institution (as coming from the UK), or both. Did my Turkish nationality incentivise them to accept the interview in the first place, or did it limit them from talking freely?

I have realised the literature on trust in the context of research is surprisingly limited. The importance of participants' trust in research and its ethical implications are rarely discussed (McDonald *et al.*, 2008). According to McDonald *et al.* (2008), participants in human research have different perspectives on what trust means. They suggest that participants' perception of trust in health research is both tangible and abstract, indicating that it is a dynamic notion in research.

Typically, trust is thought of as an interpersonal connection where one person depends on another to behave in a specific way (Hardin, 2002). Reliance on the good intentions of the person being trusted makes the truster vulnerable, yet trust involves more than just reliance. As we all assume, when the participant enters the research, we want them to trust us and trust in our good intentions so that they can become vulnerable. Jones (2012) states that trust in the relationship is genuine when the trustee has extended an invitation to trust or has committed to being trustworthy in some way. In the context of research, it is critical to distinguish between trust and reliance because, unlike reliance without any invitation to trust, trust imposes particular

ethical duties on the part of the person being trusted. Nevertheless, trust has more components at the different temporal stages.

As I mentioned above, trust in a researcher-participant relationship is considered vital to successful research (Lammers *et al.*, 2007). However, it is difficult to predict whether my participants trusted me to open up authentically. Firstly, trust comes with an ethical obligation of whether I am a trustworthy researcher. So I was aware that it was essential to pay attention to my participants, whether they felt vulnerable or emotional. Some participants spoke about experiences which brought lots of difficult memories to the surface; I was partially prepared for this, but for some disclosures, I was not. However, it is worth mentioning that most of the participants who accepted to study want to 'speak up' and be heard. The second aspect is that participants can mistrust the researcher's motivation behind the research (Mackenzie, McDowell, & Pittaway, 2007). When I conducted my research, I realised it would be more challenging to interview the Syrian population if I represented a Turkish state university. There was a complication between the Turkish political stance and the Syrian population. Therefore, NGOs were trying to protect their clients and minimise the risk of bringing conflict. In this case, I have held the advantage of coming from outside of Turkey, which might clear my motivation to create a sense of freedom of speech for my participants.

I reflect on how, when embarking on this research project, I kept pondering the question of whether I would be able to get clearance from the ethical committee. If I did, would they be willing to talk to me? Would they trust me?If they did, how would I know that? How should I approach vulnerable populations who are living in Turkey? In hindsight, reaching the Syrian involuntary immigrant population was not as difficult as I expected. While conducting this research, I used my contacts in Turkey, who were working at the NGOs as social workers working with immigrant populations and also Syrian NGO workers who could access the Syrian community. I quickly realised that building connections based on trust was vital to finding participants. I was very fortunate to have such connections among community group members dealing with Syrian involuntary immigrants in a multicultural area of Istanbul. Here, I wondered if trust came with people who were acting almost like mediators to reach them before I even interviewed my participants.

The question is not whether my participants trust me or not. It is not about the trust they have in me; they are also concerned about where I come from and the institution I represent. Guillemin *et al.* (2018) state that most existing literature focuses on trust between individuals rather than individual and institutional trust. Their findings showed that participants were primarily putting their trust in the institution. Their relationship with the researcher was based on the researcher's background of association with certain

institutions/universities. The majority of the currently available research on trust focuses on interpersonal trust.

Nevertheless, how does trust operate between a person and an institution? Trust in institutions like charity organisations, universities, and government-based organisations are so essential to daily life that we seldom pay attention. Researchers may believe that being trustworthy in a research organisation entails more than just abiding by institutional regulations to avoid sanctions. We may assume that researchers frequently see participants trusting them personally because they exhibit trustworthy personal features. However, I must acknowledge that it is possible to assume that my participants trusted me because of the institution's functions.

So some of the participants knew me because I knew someone in their community or social workers working within their community. However, that did not change the fact that I was there as a researcher, like an outsider. In addition, various identifying factors, including my age, race, and living status (outside Turkey), significantly impacted how my participants saw me. My ethnic origin and identification as non-Syrian were additional factors in the trust, which frequently aroused the interest of many participants. All my participants knew that I was coming from the UK. After the interview, they asked how my life was in the UK and if there were advantages or disadvantages of living outside of my home country. I felt we shared a sense of partial belonging or non-belonging, which opened the door for an intersubjective encounter where we felt the limitations of being part of Turkish society. Of course, I did not feel the same as a part of Turkish society in the same way that my Syrian participants did. They were not able to take many advantages that I had.

I admit that it is likely that participants thought of me as an outsider researcher. As I am a holder of Turkish nationality, I wondered how it would be if the research had been conducted by an insider such as someone Syrian or an involuntary immigrant. I was also conscious that my position as a host country representative may have influenced participants' preconceptions, which in turn may have influenced how I conducted this research or how they responded to my questions. People who leave their country because of war and conflict can represent the most challenging task for the researcher. Considering Turkish society's xenophobia among the Syrian population, as a Turkish-speaking researcher, this may have created some conflicted feelings for my participants in terms of whether or not to trust me.

As in any other research context, it is impossible for me to know precisely how participants experienced me, but it is vital to be aware of this presence of power (Patel & Mahtani, 2007). Lewicki and Bunker (1996) state that 'identification-based trust' is one of the more significant trusts established on shared values,

empathy and understanding of others. I mainly focused on this to be mindful of how they perceived me as a trustworthy person who conducts the research by carefully listening to them. In addition, I was conscious of their position as Syrian involuntary immigrants in Turkish society. Even though I have never shared my world views, it became more visible through our interview through my reactions and responses to their questions. They were clear that I also felt similar to their experiences of feeling homeless in the world and living in a strange land.

6.4 Clinical applications and implications for practice and Existential theory

This section outlines the implications of this thesis for therapeutic practice with involuntary immigrants. While involuntary immigrants' experiences are mainly seen through the lenses of trauma or pathology in the psychotherapy literature, existential literature has limited research on immigration and life crises in the context of immigration. This might be partly attributed to the significant challenge that the issue poses to an approach whose main pillars are concepts of 'freedom', 'choice' and 'responsibility'. How can we understand the experiences of these individuals - who have gone through a process marked by incidents of violence, material and emotional losses, pain, uncertainties and overwhelming feelings - from a perspective of responsibility and choice?

It should be underlined once again that this thesis does not ignore the fact that involuntary migrants were subjected to numerous gross and serious human rights violations and inhumane treatment. It is by no means acceptable from a human point of view that millions of people are involuntarily leaving their home countries as a consequence of dramatic events, wars and extreme poverty. Yet, I argue that an approach that does not victimise these individuals and/or pathologise their experiences might be more beneficial in psychotherapeutic work. Indeed, the existential/phenomenological perspective is not about ignoring our limits and existential givens; rather, it is about cultivating an awareness of these and taking responsibility for our lives and the choices we make amongst the options available, however, limited they may be.

This thesis adopts a phenomenological perspective, which concentrates on the lived experiences of involuntary immigrants as they appear to them, and hence, it diverges from the trauma-focused research in this field. It follows a line of inquiry that attributes great significance to hearing individual voices grasp the unique and complex nature of lived experiences rather than taking individuals that have been affected by the same incidents (e.g., war, involuntary migration, etc.) as a group, and imposing generalisations upon them.

Existential/phenomenological therapy provides a safe space for clients to make meaning of their own experiences so that they can have ownership of their lives. It also allows individuals to become more self-reflective and self-aware. Therefore, instead of diagnosing and pathologising involuntary immigrants, an

existential way of working can give a space for people to experience the freedom to create their own narratives, to become more aware of their existential givens, to accept them and take responsibility for their own beings. We can work collaboratively with involuntary immigrants, allowing them to bring their subjective stories to explore and make sense of their own personal experiences that take place in a given space and time.

Instead of structured psychotherapy to work with involuntary immigrant populations, existential psychotherapy can focus on existential themes as it allows clients to experience their existence in this world. Without reducing their life experiences to a series of traumatic events, it can highlight the richness and multiplicity of life experiences as immigrants but also as holistic beings. Involuntary migrants have painful and overwhelming experiences, beginning in their homeland and extending to the host country. There is no doubt that losing home, friends, social circles, and so on has dramatic effects on people's lives. From an existential perspective, losing home is losing one's ground, which is an integral component of existence and cannot be easily removed. Such a loss is difficult to be accepted as a life experience, but simultaneously, it can be considered a journey to the unknown/unfamiliar. As practitioners working with the involuntary immigrant population, we can focus on the existential themes of groundlessness, moving out of our comfort zone into new encounters. These themes can be accommodated in the therapy in order to explore an individual's sufferings and challenges.

This thesis has shown that involuntary immigrants' experiences can also be understood as a "life crisis" rather than as "trauma". Homelessness might be experienced as groundlessness, as being naked and unarmed in a chaotic world. When the ground we step on shakes, we do not feel safe or stable. Understanding involuntary immigration and loss of home as a crisis rather than trauma can help us stay with clients' emotions. This would bring us to a therapeutic approach that puts emphasis on an individual's subjective experiences of the crisis. Acceptance is one of the main themes in existential/phenomenological therapeutic work with clients. If it is explored deeply, this could allow clients to take responsibility for their own being and choices in this world, even under difficult and painful conditions.

In terms of involuntary immigration, we can explore our clients' experiences with them, support them to become aware of their situations and allow them to work around the choices limited by objective conditions. When doing so, an important conceptual tool that can be used is "existential givens" or "adversity". While working with involuntary immigrants in a therapeutic setting, the therapist can stay with the client's feelings and with phenomenological questioning to reveal the possible choices and opportunities available to the client.

Another conventionally used concept in the work with involuntary immigrants is “integration”. This concept reflects a particular understanding of what settling to a new country would mean for the individual, and this is linked to a particular understanding of “home”. The integration of involuntary immigrants has been discussed widely in literature, on the themes of settlement and integration of involuntary immigrants. These individuals have unique experiences; they may have prior experience of ‘being-at-home’ or of having ‘never felt home’ or ‘belonging to the host country’ etc. in different ways. It also deviates our focus from what it means to settle in a new country and directs our attention to settlement and integration. Involuntary immigrants may already feel like outsiders and the focus on integration further reinforces the notion that they are outsiders.

Instead of focusing on the integration perspective, here I argue that putting emphasis on the “home as interaction” would be a more appropriate approach. Interaction with one’s surroundings can help people toward the development of their self-potential. In therapeutic work, a “home as interaction” perspective would mean that the individual becomes aware of their surroundings and of establishing a set of relationships. Being more aware of our surroundings in relation to how we interact with each other and the environment is a way of becoming more open to ourselves. Openness is crucial to create a relationship with a client and therapeutic work, and, as practitioners, we may guide our involuntary immigrant clients to openness.

I defined moving to a new country as ‘conscious living’ and an opportunity to foster a more mindful way of being in the world, alongside its numerous difficulties and challenges. In such a situation, people get separated from their daily routines, familiar surroundings and habitats. This unfamiliarity prevents people from experiencing comfortable ‘everydayness’, which is very painful and terrifying; yet, at the same time, it is full of new opportunities. Involuntary immigrants may have felt that they were forced out of their everydayness without a choice, but unfamiliarity still offers the experience of ‘what is out there’ and ‘how to be in the world’. This can be achieved in the therapy room if we understand how individuals interact with their environments and the world. As therapists, we need to hold the ground for people who are experiencing a sense of groundlessness and ontological insecurity. We can build trust with clients who have lost trust and have become strangers to themselves and others. It is important to understand the client to build a therapeutic alliance to help them create a new home and environment. Perhaps we can encourage them in their process of homemaking in a country that is different from their homeland.

At the heart of my study as a therapist working with involuntary migration, there is an emphasis on the ‘relationship’. My belief as an existential psychotherapist is that every person has the potential to meet their authentic self if given enough space to explore basic human existential givens, and my intention is to provide

my clients with a relationship that can foster their potential in every psychotherapeutic encounter and in the relationships they build outside of the therapeutic field. In this regard, I agree with Cohn (1997), who views therapy as a collaborative attempt that can empower clients to make a choice of their lives and begin on a journey toward a more authentic way of living. If I am able to develop a better understanding of what it means to be homeless-in-the-world as an individual and how this choice changes us, then it may be possible to tailor my practice, as well as that of others who work with involuntary migrants, to enable clients to consider how these choices to become homeless-in-the-world have changed their sense of self in a more impactful and empowering way.

6.5 Recommendations for further research

Above all, I hope that future research on involuntary immigrants will go beyond the quantitative methodologies to increasingly acknowledge the need to explore lived experiences and understand the meaning-making processes of displaced people. More qualitative studies that listen to the unique voices of individuals can challenge the existing logic and create a paradigm shift in the way we think about involuntary immigration and losing 'home' as an immigrant. I strongly believe that the best approach to learning about the realities of any disadvantaged population or marginalised group is through listening to these individuals. In particular, the researchers who have been trained as therapists should be encouraged to conduct such studies.

The existential themes associated with the process of immigration and other aspects of immigrant life in the host country need to be explored further. One theme that emerged in this study but could not be explored adequately due to the limitation of space is the 'Other's look': how involuntary immigrants experience the host society's attitudes and discourses towards incoming immigrants, how differently welcoming versus hostile encounters affect homemaking processes and what the displaced people's sense of the Other (the host community) is. These are highly relevant and important questions in terms of the major issues raised in this study.

I believe that the Heideggerian theoretical framework proposed in this research, which enables an ontological description of being-at-home and homelessness, is promising in terms of grasping the experiences of involuntary immigrants. Further work on the role of *everydayness* and how it relates to one's sense of home might enhance our insights into immigrants' worlds.

The psychology literature also needs more research on involuntary immigration as a form of life crisis. In future studies, more larger and more diverse samples can be employed to embrace immigrants from different socioeconomic backgrounds and having different genders, ages, sexual preferences, religious affiliations and

so on. Further involuntary immigration studies can also be conducted in the native language of the participating immigrant groups for a more in-depth understanding of experiences.

I hope that future research focuses on involuntary immigrant struggles in a new, unfamiliar environment by looking from an existentialist lens, not only to enlighten the academic literature but to also inform therapists, psychologists, and mental health workers in their practice. With more information available on the topic of individual experiences of involuntary immigration, practitioners can find new ways to work with and support these populations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Application for ethical clearance

Middlesex University Department of Psychology Ethics Committee
Application for Ethical Approval and Risk Assessment

No study may proceed until approval has been granted by an authorised person. For collaborative research with another institution, ethical approval must be obtained from all institutions involved. If you are involved in a project that has already received ethical approval from another committee or that will be seeking approval from another ethics committee please complete form 'Application for Approval of Proposals Previously Approved by another Ethics Committee or to be Approved by another Ethics Committee'

UG and MSc STUDENTS: Please email the completed form to your supervisor from your University email account (...@live.mdx.ac.uk). Your supervisor will then send your application to the Ethics Committee (**Psy.Ethics@mdx.ac.uk**). You should NOT email the ethics committee directly.

PhD Students and STAFF: Please email the completed form to **Psy.Ethics@mdx.ac.uk** from your University email account (...@mdx.ac.uk)

This form consists of 8 sections:
Summary of Application and Declaration
Ethical questions
Research proposal
Information sheet
Informed consent
Debriefing
Risk assessment (required if research is to be conducted away from Middlesex University property, otherwise leave this blank. Institutions/locations listed for data collection must match original letters of acceptance)
Reviewer's decision and feedback

Once your file including proposal, information sheet, consent form, debriefing and (if necessary) materials and Risk Assessment form is ready, please check the size. For files exceeding 3MB, please email your application to your supervisor using WeTransfer: **https://www.wetransfer.com/** this will place your application in cloud storage rather than sending it directly to a specific email account. If you/ your supervisor have confidentiality concerns, please submit a paper copy of your application to the Psychology Office instead of proceeding with the electronic submission.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Application No.:	Click here to enter text.	Decision:	Click here to enter text.	Date:	Click here to enter a date.

RISK ASSESSMENT *(complete relevant boxes)*:

Required:	X	Signed by:	X
Date:	Click here to enter a date.		

LETTER/S OF ACCEPTANCE/PERMISSION MATCHING FRA1 (RISK ASSESSMENT) RECEIVED (SPECIFY):

	Date	From	Checked by
All	14/03/17	Click here to enter text.	
Part	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text.	
Part	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text.	

DBS Certificate(s) Required? *(complete relevant boxes)*:

DBS certificate required?	Copy of DBS Certificate provided Click here to choose an item.	Seen By:	Choose an item.
DBS Certificate Number:	001514032519	Date DBS Issued:	23/12/15

Summary of application (researcher to complete)

Title of Proposal:	*'Being-at-home' and homelessness; An interpretive phenomenological analysis of the experiences of Syrian involuntary immigrants living in Istanbul, Turkey.'*
Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisor	Dr Niklas Serning
Name of Student Researcher(s) and student number(s)	Gokce Olga Soy

Please click one of the following:			
X			
Proposed start date	Click here to enter a date.	Proposed end date	Click here to enter a date.
Details of any co-investigators (if applicable)			

Name:	Organisation:	Email:
Name: None	Organisation: Click here to enter text.	Email: Click here to enter text.
Name: Click here to enter text.	Organisation: Click here to enter text.	Email: Click here to enter text.
Name: Click here to enter text.	Organisation: Click here to enter text.	Email: Click here to enter text.

X

Topic/Research Area (tick as many as apply)

Methodology (tick as many as apply)

X

1.1	Are there any sensitive elements to this study (delete as appropriate)? *If you are unclear about what this means in*	YesClick here to choose an item.

	relation to your research please discuss with your Supervisor first	
1.2	If the study involves any of the first three groups above, the researcher may need a DBS certificate (Criminal Records Check). PG students are expected to have DBS clearance. Does the current project require DBS clearance? *Discuss this matter with your supervisor if you unsure*	Yes Click here to choose an item.
1.3	Does the study involve ANY of the following? Cl*inical populations; Children (under 16 years); Vulnerable adults such as individuals with mental or physical health problems, prisoners, vulnerable elderly, young offenders; Political, ethnic or religious groups/minorities; Sexually explicit material / issues relating to sexuality*; *Mood induction; Deception*	Yes Click here to choose an item.
1.4	Is this a resubmission / amended application? *If so, you must attach the original application with the review decision and comments (you do not need to re-attach materials etc if the resubmission does not concern alterations to these). Please note that in the case of complex and voluminous applications, it is the responsibility of the applicant to identify the amended parts of the resubmission.*	No Click here to choose an item.

By submitting this form you confirm that:

you are aware that any modifications to the design or method of the proposal will require resubmission;
students will keep all materials, documents and data relating to this proposal until completion of your studies at Middlesex, in compliance with confidentiality guidelines (i.e., only you and your supervisor will be able to access the data);
staff will keep all materials, documents and data relating to this proposal until the appropriate time after completion of the project, in compliance with confidentiality guidelines (i.e., only you and other members of your team will be able to access the data);
students will provide all original paper and electronic data to the supervisor named on this form on completion of the research / dissertation submission;
you have read and understood the British Psychological Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct,* and *Code of Human Research Ethics.*

2 Ethical questions – all questions must be answered

2.1	Will you inform participants of their right to withdraw from the research at any time, without penalty?	Yes Click here to choose an item.
2.2	Will you provide a full debriefing at the end of the data collection phase?	Yes Click here to choose an item.
2.3	Will you be available to discuss the study with participants, if necessary, to monitor any negative effects or misconceptions?	Yes Click here to choose an item.
2.4	Under the Data Protection Act, participant information is confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance. Will participant anonymity be guaranteed?	Yes Click here to choose an item.
2.5	Is this research or part of it going to be conducted in a language other than English? *Note, full translations of all non-English materials must be provided and attached to this document*	No Click here to choose an item.
2.6	Is this research to be conducted only at Middlesex University? *If not, a completed Risk Assessment form - see Section 8 – must be completed, and permission from any hosting or collaborative institution must be obtained by letter or email, and appended to this document, before data collection can commence. If you are conducting an online survey or interviews via skype or telephone whilst you are at Middlesex University you do not need to fill in the risk assessment form.*	No Click here to click here to choose an item.

If you have answered 'No' to questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 above, please justify/discuss this below, outlining the measures you have taken to ensure participants are being dealt with in an ethical way.

SEE ATTACHED PROJECT PROPOSAL AND DRAFT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
ADDITION FOR REFUGEE STATUS IN TURKEY:

Legal Framework

Since 2011, Turkey has followed an open door policy for Syrian refugees. The government initially referred to them as "guests", and then applied the temporary protection policy in October 2011 to deal with the large influx.
Turkey is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Additional Protocol on the status of refugees. However, Turkey applies a geographical limitation to the 1951 Refugee Convention, which limits the right to be recognized as refugees to asylum seekers originating from Europe. According to the Temporary Protection Directive, identity cards are provided to refugees upon their arrival.
Turkey implements a “temporary protection” regime for refugees from Syria, which grants beneficiaries right to legal stay as well as some level of access to basic rights and services. The “temporary protection” status in acquired on a *prima facie*, group-basis, to Syrian nationals and Stateless Palestinians originating from Syria. DGMM is the responsible authority for the registration and status decisions within the scope of the “temporary protection” regime, which is based on Article 91 of the LFIP and the Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR) of 22 October 2014.
As part of the Temporary Protection regime, Syrian nationals, refugees and stateless persons from Syria who seek protection from the Turkish authorities are under normal circumstances be admitted to Turkey, seek and receive Temporary protection. They will not sent back to their country of origin unless they themselves request to do so. Refugees from Syria have been protected under special conditions ergo none of them can be considered as illegally living in Turkey. Therefore, I am not obliged to report them to the Turkish authorities if they are Syrian nationals.

Are there any ethical issues that concern you about this particular piece of research, not covered elsewhere on this form? If so please outline them below

The research has been specifically designed to minimize any risk or disadvantages for participants. However, The interview could bring the participant into distress. They are clearly informed about this in the information sheet. If this happened I would be aware and sensitive to their distress and I would talk to them about it. As I will not know what effects the interview will have on the refugees afterwards I will give each participant a number of organizations that offer support if they feel this necessary. If the participants were very upset I would ask them if they would like to stop the interview.
This raised the issue in my mind: what if my co-researchers have already made conscious decisions of choosing what they want to say due to their recent past? For example, as they have been living in Turkey for some years, this may already influence their conceptions about a Turkish person interviewing them.
For this reason, at the end of the interview, I will also ask them questions to find out how they felt during the interview, and whether my nationality has had any impact on their answers. I will make sure that my intentions and questions are non-judgmental. I am also aware that being Turkish might have influenced their answer. This will depend on how co-researchers have perception on Turkish people. I will make sure that they are well informed that this research will be conducted for a British University and no information will be delivered to any Turkish authority. I also want to inform my co-researchers about my background that I have lived in exile in Turkey due to my parents' political affiliations and now living in England as an immigrant.
As I am not affiliated to a Turkish educational institution and as I will not collect data from government bodies, there are no Turkish procedures that need to be followed to conduct this research in Turkey.
'Turkish Psychiatry Association ethical guidelines, the article 6 requires that the 'rule of confidentiality may only be broken in a case where there is a possibility that the patient may inflict serious physical, mental or economic damage to self or to his or her environment'.
http://www.psikiyatri.org.tr/eng/?page=ethical.
However Turkish Psychology Association (TPD) guidelines state on the clause 3.3 (d); conditions under which confidentiality may not be maintained 'If the person being served has already harmed and/or will harm himself'.
https://www.psikolog.org.tr/turkey-code-eng.pdf
The loss of confidentiality will only occur if only these cases occur and participants will be informed beforehand. However, I will inform my participants that I will stop the interview if they start to talk about some incidents happened back in Syria. My interest in this study is not to investigate or judge them what they have done under the civil war conditions'.

3 Research proposal

This section should contain sufficient information to enable the ethics committee reviewer to evaluate the ethical status of the research. A research proposal would normally be around 2 A4 pages in length (about 800 words) excluding references and additional materials. The headings below are indicative, and you may choose whether or not to use them.

Aims and Hypotheses/Research Questions

Supporting literature and rationale

This section should include a brief discussion of previous research in the area which justifies your choice of topic, aims, hypotheses and research questions

Method

The four sub-headings under method (design, participants, materials and procedures) should contain details about the design, participants, recruitment (including how and from whom will informed consent be obtained), provision of information and, where necessary, deception.

Design

Participants

Materials (if appropriate)

Procedures

Details of the procedures, and what the participant will experience as part of the research are critical.

Analysis

You should also include some discussion of how the data will be analysed.

References

Full references and any materials developed or adapted for this research should also be included (this includes but is not limited to questionnaires, rating scales, and images). If due to the addition of these materials your file exceeds 3 MB, or if materials cannot be scanned for copyright reasons, they should be clearly identified in the research proposal. You need to provide references for Questionnaires which have been previously published/validated.

Appendix 2: Risk assessment form

7 INDEPENDENT FIELD/LOCATION WORK RISK ASSESSMENT FRA1

This proforma is applicable to, and must be completed in advance for, the following field/location work situations:

1. *All field/location work undertaken independently by individual students, either in the UK or overseas, including in connection with proposition module or dissertations. Supervisor to complete with student(s).*
2. *All field/location work undertaken by postgraduate students. Supervisors to complete with student(s).*
3. *Field/location work undertaken by research students. Student to complete with supervisor.*
4. *Field/location work/visits by research staff. Researcher to complete with Research Centre Head.*
5. *Essential information for students travelling abroad can be found on* ***www.fco.gov.uk***

Name:	Gokce Olga Soy	**Student No Research Centre:(staff only)**	
Supervisor:	Niklas Serning	**Degree course**	DPsych

FIELD/LOCATION WORK DETAILS

NEXT OF KIN Telephone numbers and name of next of kin who may be contacted in the event of an accident	**Name: Gizdem Akdur** **Phone**: 07760 951451
Physical or psychological limitations to carrying out the proposed field/location work	N/A

Any health problems (full details) Which may be relevant to proposed field/location work activity in case of emergencies.	N/A
Locality (Country and Region)	TURKEY (İstanbul/İzmir/Ankara)
Travel Arrangements NB: Comprehensive travel and health insurance must always be obtained for independent overseas field/location work.	I will fly to Turkey and in the country I will be using public transport.
Dates of Travel and Field/location work	Spring/ Summer 2017

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION VERY CAREFULLY

Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

List the localities to be visited or specify routes to be followed **(Col. 1).** For each locality, enter the potential hazards that may be identified beyond those accepted in everyday life. Add details giving cause for concern **(Col. 2).**

kamples of Potential Hazards :

dverse weather: exposure (heat, sunburn, lightening, wind, hypothermia)
errain: rugged, unstable, fall, slip, trip, debris, and remoteness. Traffic: pollution.
emolition/building sites, assault, getting lost, animals, disease.
orking on/near water: drowning, swept away, disease (weils disease, hepatitis, malaria, etc),
arasites', flooding, tides and range.
one working: difficult to summon help, alone or in isolation, lone interviews.
ealing with the public: personal attack, causing offence/intrusion, misinterpreted, political, ethnic,
ltural, socio-economic differences/problems. Known or suspected criminal offenders.
afety Standards (other work organisations, transport, hotels, etc), working at night, areas of high
ime.
health: personal considerations or vulnerabilities, pre-determined medical conditions (asthma,
ergies, fitting) general fitness, disabilities, persons suited to task.
ticles and equipment: inappropriate type and/or use, failure of equipment, insufficient training for
e and repair, injury.
ubstances (chemicals, plants, bio- hazards, waste): ill health - poisoning, infection, irritation,
rns, cuts, eye-damage.
anual handling: lifting, carrying, moving large or heavy items, physical unsuitability for task

If no hazard can be identified beyond those of everyday life, enter 'NONE'.

1. LOCALITY/ROUTE (specify here the exact name and address of each locality/organizatio)	2. POTENTIAL HAZARDS

NGO's buildings	**None-** **I will avoid to use private therapy centres for my interviews** **I will also avoid crowded places** **I will avoid working alone in a building as well as crowded places to minimize potential risk. If there are others around I can call upon this will increase my level of safety.** The interview will take place at the premises of an NGO, Göçmen Dayanışma Ağı (Migrant Solidarity Association). The letter from the NGO's chairperson has been attached to this application form.

The University Field/location work code of Practice booklet provides practical advice that should be followed in planning and conducting field/location work.

Risk Minimisation/Control Measures PLEASE READ VERY CAREFULLY

For each hazard identified **(Col 2),** list the precautions/control measures in place or that will be taken **(Col 3)** to **"reduce the risk to acceptable levels",** and the safety equipment **(Col 5)** that will be employed.

Assuming the safety precautions/control methods that will be adopted **(Col. 3),** categorise the field/location work risk for each location/route as negligible, low, moderate or high **(Col. 4).**
Risk increases with both the increasing likelihood of an accident and the increasing severity of the consequences of an accident.

An acceptable level of risk is: a risk which can be safely controlled by person taking part in the activity using the precautions and control measures noted including the necessary instructions, information and training relevant to that risk. The resultant risk should not be significantly higher than that encountered in everyday life.
Examples of control measures/precautions:

3. PRECAUTIONS/CONTROL MEASURES	4. RISK ASSESSMENT (low, moderate, high)	5. SAFETY/EQUIPMENT
Interviews will be carried out in a meeting room at the NGO's and charity organizations offices. There are other individuals in the building in the event of an incident.		**I will inform my family, friends and my supervisor Dr Niklas Serning and Dr. Claire Marshall about my location at the time and date of the interview. I will advise my family friends and etc. a plan of action should they have concerns which would be to contact the NGO's manager and police. Yet, I will maintain the anonymity of my participants. I will also use social media to stay updated (The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) service for email, twitter and Facebook alerts for updated travel advice). https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice I will give the number of the NGO's number and my mobile phone number to my friends**

Providing adequate training, information & instructions on field/location work tasks and the safe and correct use of any equipment, substances and personal protective equipment. Inspection and safety check of any equipment prior to use. Assessing individuals fitness and suitability to environment and tasks involved. Appropriate clothing, environmental information consulted and advice followed (weather conditions, tide times etc.). Seek advice on harmful plants, animals & substances that may be encountered, including information and instruction on safe procedures for handling hazardous substances. First aid provisions, inoculations, individual medical requirements, logging of location, route and expected return times of lone workers. Establish emergency procedures (means of raising an alarm, back up arrangements). Working with colleagues

(pairs). **Lone working is not permitted where the risk of physical or verbal violence is a realistic possibility.** Training in interview techniques and avoiding /defusing conflict, following advice from local organisations, wearing of clothing unlikely to cause offence or unwanted attention. Interviews in neutral locations. Checks on Health and Safety standards & welfare facilities of travel, accommodation and outside organisations. Seek information on social/cultural/political status of field/location work area.
Examples of Safety Equipment: Hardhats, goggles, gloves, harness, waders, whistles, boots, mobile phone, ear protectors, bright fluorescent clothing (for roadside work), dust mask, etc.

If a proposed locality has not been visited previously, give your authority for the risk assessment stated or indicate that your visit will be preceded by a thorough risk assessment.

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION AND SIGN AS APPROPRIATE

DECLARATION: The undersigned have assessed the activity and the associated risks and declare that there is no significant risk or that the risk will be controlled by the method(s) listed above/over. Those participating in the work have read the assessment and will put in place precautions/control measures identified.

NB: Risk should be constantly reassessed during the field/location work period and additional precautions taken or field/location work discontinued if the risk is seen to be unacceptable.

Signature of Field/location worker (Student/Staff)	Gokce Olga Soy	**Date:**	Click here to enter a date.
Signature of Student Supervisor		**Date:**	15/05/16
APPROVAL: (ONE ONLY) **Signature of** **Director of Programmes** (undergraduate students only)	Click here to enter text.	**Date:**	Click here to enter a date.

Signature of Research Degree Co-ordinator or Director of Programmes (Postgraduate)	Click here to enter text.	**Date:**	Click here to enter a date.
Signature of Research Centre Head (for staff field/location workers**)**	Click here to enter text.	**Date:**	Click here to enter a date.

FIELD/LOCATION WORK CHECK LIST

1. Ensure that **all members** of the field party possess the following attributes (where relevant) at a level appropriate to the proposed activity and likely field conditions:

X X

X X

X

2. Have all the necessary arrangements been made and information/instruction gained, and have the relevant authorities been consulted or informed with regard to

X

Important information for retaining evidence of completed risk assessments:

Once the risk assessment is completed and approval gained the **supervisor** should retain this form and issue a copy of it to the field/location worker participating on the field course/work. In addition the **approver** must keep a copy of this risk assessment in an appropriate Health and Safety file.
RP/cc Sept 2010

Appendix 3: Confirmation letter from NGO

13/03/2017

To the Director of NSPC and Middlesex University;

Göçmen Dayanışma Derneği (Migrant Solidarity Association) is a non-governmental organisation established by professionals from varying fields, including doctors, lawyers and social workers. In 2016, with the cooperation of the Şişli Municipality and Expertise France, we established the Refugee Counselling and Support Centre that provides psychological and psychosocial support (including support in the fields of mental health, education and the human rights) particularly to Syrian and other refugee groups.

We would like to welcome one of your DPsych students, Gokce Olga Soy to conduct her research in our premises. We will provide a confidential and secure meeting room at our premises. We guarantee that a responsible person from our organization will be present at the premises during the times interviews are taking place. We will be also happy to disseminate Gokce Olga Soy's invitation letter for participants to the Syrian refugee community. We are deeply convinced that all NGOs conducting work in related fields will benefit from her research.

We confirm that we will give our best support to Gokce Olga Soy for her research.

Hatice Ödemiş
Migrant Solidarity Association, Chairperson

Adress:
Rumeli caddesi, Efe sokak
No:2 D:2
Osmanbey/İSTANBUL
TURKEY

Appendix 4: Participant information sheet

New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling
NSPC Ltd
258 Belsize Road
London NW6 4BT

Middlesex University
The Burroughs
London NW4 4BT

Study Title: *'Being-at-home' and homelessness; An interpretive phenomenological analysis of the experiences of Syrian involuntary immigrants living in Istanbul, Turkey.'*

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is carried out and what it involves. Please take your time to read the following information carefully, and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if anything is not clear or if you would like to have more information. Take your time to decide whether or not you would like to take part in this study.

1- What is the purpose of the research?
This study is carried out as part of my studies at NSPC Ltd and Middlesex University.

In the existing psychotherapy literature, there are only a few studies on the subjective experiences of refugees, and none of these focus on Syrian refugees. Most of the studies in the field focus on traumatic experiences related to violence, torture and loss.

“Being away from home” or “not being at home” constitute a crucial aspect of refugee experiences. In a time when the number of people leaving their homeland behind is reaching unprecedented levels, it is vital to understand the meaning of “homelessness” for those who have been living in Turkey for a minimum of 1 year, are English speakers and are a well-educated population and its psychological implications.

The proposed study will endeavour to address the following questions: What are the meanings ascribed to “home” and “being away from home”? Has the perception of “home” changed since the participants left their homeland? What are the participants’ experiences of the feelings of rootlessness and groundlessness and how did they deal with these feelings? Has there being a change in the sense of self?
There are several media reports on Syrian refugees, and what has recently been called the refugee crisis. But, in fact, we know very little about the subjective experiences of refugees in general, and Syrian refugees in particular. This study aims to provide insights into the Syrian refugees’ world for a specific population.

2- What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part in the research, I will ask you some questions about your feelings and experiences related to home and homelessness. I will need to meet with you just once for about an hour; it can be shorter or longer than this (up to 90 minutes). İnterviews will take place in NGO settings, and the travel expenses will be reimbursed. We will discuss how it has been for you to be away from your home, how you experienced recent changes since you have left your home and how you experience the feeling of being at ‘home’ or feeling of ‘homeless’ in your life. Taking part in the research will involve participating in semi-structured interviews, in which you will be asked to answer a number of questions. The information from the questionnaire will be combined with the information from other participants for statistical analysis. I will use a qualitative research method to extract the main themes associated with different people’s experiences of home. There will be no right or wrong answers to the questions.

3- What will you do with the information that I provide?

I will be recording the interview on two digital recorders and will transfer the files to an encrypted USB stick for storage, deleting the files from the recorders. I will use two recorders in case a technical problem occurs and one of the recorders is out of order.

All the information that you provide me will be identified only with a project code and stored on the encrypted USB stick. The recording will be destroyed once the research is completed and publications are drafted. Every effort will be made to ensure your confidentiality.

The information will be kept at least until 6 months after I graduate, and will be treated as confidential. If my research is published, I will make sure that neither your name nor other identifying details are used.

All data collected will be stored, analysed and reported in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

4- What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

This research has been specifically designed to minimize any risks or disadvantages for participants. The interview will be scheduled in a way to avoid any disadvantages on your part, such as lost work, and your participation will be kept confidential and your data anonymized.

In case talking about your experiences feels upsetting, the interview can be stopped at any time. During a debriefing after the main interview, I will discuss with you your understanding of the research and interview. If you do become distressed as a result of our conversation and the things you choose to talk about, I will support you during the conversation and afterwards- by giving you the list of mental health services that you can refer to, if you decide to do so. In order to get prepared for any difficulties I would advise you to talk about your concerns if available, with trusted friends, colleagues and family to ensure you have the necessary support before you agree to participate.

5- What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Taking part in this study will give you the opportunity to talk openly about your personal experiences of being at home or homeless. However, this is not 'therapy'. In the long term, it is hoped that this information could potentially be quite beneficial in improving the clinical practice when working with refugees. However, taking part in the study may also be beneficial for you as you have a chance to talk through your experiences with an interested and understanding person. Also, it may be helpful to verbalise your personal experiences in order to understand these and the changes you are going through.

6. Consent

As a participant, you will be given a copy of this information sheet for your personal records, and if you agree to take part, you will be asked to sign the attached consent form. You will be given a copy to keep along with a copy of this information sheet before the study begins. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you decide to take part you may withdraw at any time without mentioning a reason.

All the information that I collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any report or publications. Contact details of an academic supervisor are also included on the consent form, of which you will keep a copy.

The interviews will be recorded on two recording devices. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings other than my research supervisor. The recordings will be deleted at the end of the project. You may request them to be erased at any time before this if you choose.

7. Who is organising and funding the research?

All research has been organized and funded by me, the researcher, Gökçe Olga Soy.

8. Who has reviewed the study?

All proposals for research using human participants are reviewed by an Ethics Committee before they can proceed. The NSPC research ethics sub-committee have approved this study.

9. Expenses
Your travel expenses will be reimbursed.

Thank you for reading this information sheet. If you have any further questions on the research, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to working with you on this project.

Best regards,

Gökçe Olga Soy
Researcher- DPsych Candidate
(Turkey mobile number will be provided)

NSPC Ltd. 254-6 Belsize Road
London NW6 4BT
OS297@live.mdx.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the study, you may contact my supervisor:

Niklas Serning (Supervisor)
niklas@otrbristol.org.uk
Or

The Principal
NSPC Ltd. 254-6 Belsize Road
London NW6 4BT
Admin@nspc.org.uk
0044 (0) 20 7624 0471

Appendix 5: Consent form

New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling
NSPC Ltd
258 Belsize Road
London NW6 4BT

Middlesex University
The Burroughs
London NW4 4BT

Project title: *'Being-at-home' and homelessness; An interpretive phenomenological analysis of the experiences of Syrian involuntary immigrants living in Istanbul, Turkey.'*
I have understood the details of the research as explained to me by the researcher, and confirm that I have consented to act as a participant. What we discuss is confidential, unless I am worried that you are posing a threat to yourself and others. The focus of the study is not to investigate or judge you what have you done under the civil war, and as such will not be discussed.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, the data collected during the research will not be identifiable, and I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time without any obligation to explain my reasons for doing so.

I further understand that the data I provide may be used for analysis and subsequent publication (academics, students and general public might be interested in reading) in an anonymous form, and provide my consent that this might occur. I understand that a recording is being made of this interview and will be securely stored until a verbatim transcript has been made and the research has been completed and written up.

Print name of participant **Participant’s signature**

Print name of researcher **Researcher’s signature**

Gökçe Olga Soy

Date

Academic Supervisor – Niklas Serning
NSPC 258
Belsize Road
London
NW6 4BT
020 7624 0471

Appendix 6: Participant debriefing sheet

New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling
NSPC Ltd
258 Belsize Road
London NW6 4BT

Middlesex University
The Burroughs
London NW4 4BT

Debriefing

'Being-at-home' and homelessness; An interpretive phenomenological analysis of the experiences of Syrian involuntary immigrants living in Istanbul, Turkey.'

The purpose of this research is to understand the diversity of meanings attributed by Syrian refugees to "home" and "being away from home", while exploring the implications of "losing home" for refugees' mental well-being. Being 'away from home' constitutes an important aspect of refugees' individual experiences. I aim to provide a perspective that stresses the existential processes, in contrast to the existing approaches revolving around Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This study is intended to understand refugees from an existential vantage point.

The information you have shared will be anonymized. I can assure you that your contribution will not be identifiable.

In case you feel psychologically distressed following participation in this study, I advise you to seek personal or therapeutic support. There are a number of organisations that may be able to offer support if you feel this is necessary:

- **Migrant Solidarity Association is a new organisation and they provide psychological support for Syrian refugees. You can fallow their Facebook page -Göçmen Dayanışma Derneği جمعية التضامن مع المهاجرين- or call +90 212 247 13 01**

- **Positive life society offers counselling and emotional support. Visit www.pozitifyasam.org.**

Tel: 0 216 418 10 61. Opening hours Monday to Friday: 10:00 am- 18:00 pm

- **International organization for migration (IOM Turkey) supports community centres in Istanbul and in southern Turkey that provide multi-sector support including counselling and psychosocial support for Syrian refugees. Visit www.turkey.iom.int or call +90 (212) 293 50 00**

- **Caritas, a Catholic Church organization in Turkey works with a variety of groups needing support: refugees, migrants, etc. counsellors offer support to cope with depression and bereavement. Visit www.caritas.org or call +90 212 23 44 564**

- **ASSAM (Association of migrants and asylum seekers) offers psycho-social support for Syrian refugees in İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir and many other cities. Visit www.sgdd.org.tr. Tel: 0 312 212 60 12-13-14. Opening hours Monday to Friday: 10:00 am- 18:00 pm.**

If you have any questions about this study please feel free to contact me at:
gokceolga@gmail.com

Thank you again for participating in this study, which I believe will be a step towards understanding the experiences of home and homelessness of Syrian refugees in Turkey. This research would not be possible without your involvement.

Academic Supervisor: Niklas Serning

NSPC, 258 Belsize Road,
London,
NW6 4BT
+44 20 7624 0471

Appendix 7: Demographic questionnaire

Participant number	
Age	
Gender	
Level of education	
Socioeconomic status (Your earnings/job/income)	
Race/ethnicity	
Religion	
Partnership status	
Children (age/s)	
When did you leave Syria	
When did you arrive Turkey	

Appendix 8: Invitation letter

Letter of Interest

Are you a Syrian citizen who fled the civil war?

My name is Gökçe Olga Soy and I am a fourth year trainee on the Doctorate in Counselling Psychology programme at the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling in conjunction with the University of Middlesex, London. As part of my Doctoral research I am conducting a study about experiences of feeling at home or homeless people from Syria.

I am looking for participants who are over 20 years old, English speaker, educated and living in Turkey for a minimum of 1-year. You should be from Syria and moved to Turkey due to civil war.

The proposed study will endeavour to address the following questions: What are the meanings ascribed to "home" and "being away from home"? Has the perception of "home" changed since the participants left their homeland? What are the participants' experiences of the feelings of rootlessness and groundlessness and how did they deal with these feelings? **Has there being a change in the sense of self?**

As a participant you will be asked to take part in 60 minutes (it could last maximum of 90 minutes) interview to discuss your feelings of leaving your home or home country. I would be interested to hear how do you see yourself now after you have left Syria or if you have experienced any changes.
If you are interested in this study, please contact me for further information on the following number 0044 7977582742 or e-mail **gokceolga@gmail.com**.

Kind regards,

Gökçe Olga Soy
Trainee Counselling Psychologist

Appendix 9: Outline of the Research Interview Questions

Questions related to demographics questions will be:
Can you tell me about your journey to Turkey?
Where do your family lives (parents/children/relatives)?
How was this journey for you?
How was your life in Syria?
What were you doing before you have left your country?

The main questions of the interview will be:
Have you ever thought of leaving your homeland?
When did you think of leaving your homeland?
How did you feel about moving your house and starting a new beginning over again?
Can you describe the experiences of your initial arrival in Turkey?
How was it for you?
What was it like coming here?
Where would you feel that home is?
What's been like since you left your country?
Do you ever think how do you feel things would be if you hadn't left Syria?
How would you describe your sense of home? Has there been any change in this perception since you have been living in Turkey?
How has living in a different country had an impact on your sense of self? Do you think it has changed you? Do you feel any changes?
What feelings emerge when you think about Syria? How do you deal with these feelings?
What does it feel like to be talking about it now?

Appendix 10: Developing emergent themes (Excerpt from Saz's transcript)

Red: Descriptive Comments   Blue: Superordinate Themes   Yellow: Sub Themes
Green: Conceptual Comments   **Bold: Significant comments**   Purple: Linguistic Comments

Exploratory Comments	Original Transcript	Emergent Themes
Asking demographic questions Want to make sure how he would like to be called/pronunciation of his name He prefers not Arabic pronounce but how people pronounce his name in the organisation	1) O-eeee so we can begin....erm...I called you XXX but its written XXX.. 2) S- aaa its different like between languages… For example in Arabic we say 'XXX' But like Hatice saysXXX... 0- XXX...Ahhh… what do you preferred that I call you?...XXX or XXX… 3) S-XXX… 4) O- Thanks Saz for accepting this interview. But before we begin the interview I would like to ask you some questions. It's very short. What would you say for your gender? 5) S-Male 6) O-and age you said…29…and half 7) S-yeah… 8) O-Ok…If you don't mind me asking your socio economic status? Like do you have a job? Do you earn money? 9) S- I work in this…organization. 10) O- you work here in NGO..erm...do you earn money? 11) S-yes… 12) O- you do earn money. Ok. You do have an income. What would you say about your ethnicity? What is your race? what would you say for that? 13) S- Arab 14) O- Ok Arabic you say…and your religion. Do you have any? 15) S- Muslim	
He doesn't remember his exact day of arriving in Turkey confused where to start(chronological) he decided giving a well thought/time might be important	16) O- partnership…are you married or…engaged…? 17) S- Engaged. 1) O- you are engaged…if you don't mind me asking how long you are engaged for? 2) S- About one year and half. 3) O- one and half. Ok… do you have any children. 4) S- no 5) O- when did you leave Syria. Exact date? do you remember? 6) S- erm… in 2015 7) O-do you remember the month? 8) S- I can see in my id card. 9) O- Ok it's not necessary 10) S- Maybe in September. 11) O- September ok…This is enough probably. Do you remember when did you arrive here…like same day? 12) S-yes yes… 13) O- Ok this was the demographic questioners. So we can begin with the interview. Thank you again. Just checking my audio recordings… yes it is recording…so can you tell me about your journey to Turkey? 14) S- ahhh…. where can I start…when I decided to enter Turkey? 15) O- yeah… 16) S- Actually I entered Turkey illegally. Decided to enter in 2015. 17) O- 2015?	necessity of taking illegal action

He tried to stay in Syria he was not ready to leave perhaps he has done his best to stay as much as possible. As I can…significant/time frame/was still hopeful	18) S- yeah… Before I tried to stay in Syria. 19) O- hhh you have tried? 20) S- As I can… 21) O- Have you also moved within Syria?	Syria as home
he also changed his placeless within the country	22) S- yes I have…I have several times. 23) O- several times?	Migration starts within homeland
seeing as a last chance. maybe the last hope safety is important. so this is how he decided to move to Turkey. not feeling safe anymore.	24) S- Yes. I was from Aleppo… but when I decided to move to Turkey it was the last chance for me to be safe. 25) O- Ohh, this is what you thought as a last chance?	This is his decision making process Searching for a safety The feeling of unsafe at home
feeling of not having much options. Only one choice which is moving out of Syria. He calls his journey to Turkey as 'travel' is it a travel really.	26) S- yes because I moved to another area…then I said I have only one choice then I should go to Turkey. So… do you want me to tell you about my travel. 27) O-yeahh. One more question just pop into my mind. Have you… you've said it was your last chance. Did something happen to make you to decide at that moment?	Existential concept of Choice Immigrating as a choice the choice of word 'Travel'
Saz is doctor so it is important for him to keep his profession	28) S- Yes, actually I am a doctor. 29) O- you are a doctor.	
It must be significant to him that he wanted to become a doctor or complete his speciality in surgery.	30) S- I have graduated in 2011. Then I started to do my speciality in orthopaedic surgery. I stayed as…. a	Identity as a doctor (education/job related) Self as a doctor/identity

Changing life events being arrested. Prisoned for 6 months has changed his life. Not being acknowledge by the authorities. 'abduction' or 'being arrested' which one is worst?	resident orthopaedic surgeon…2013…then I have been arrested by Syrian regime…and I have stayed in prison for 6 months…erm… after that… actually they said I haven't been arrested… they said I have been abducted. 31) O- who said that?	Life changing events related to not feeling safe at home Safety and being-at-home are linked
smiling and talking sarcastically and stating that was the government	32) S- The government. (smiling) 33) O- The government said that.	
failed to provide a official paper that his study being interrupted. First time encounter with underground-armed group, which works as a government forces.	34) S- because I said, I need a paper to come back to my hospital to complete my speciality… they said you haven't been arrested…like this… then after the arrest, they make me free… they sent me to a like erm… a gang…Syrian gang its called Shabiha… 35) O-Shabiha? 36) S- this gangs they support the government…to fight for government. 37) O- gangs like, you mean group of people…(interrupted)	First time encountering with Syrian gang 'Shabiha'
he wanted to emphases that this group is armed with weapons.	38) S- yes… supporting them…with weapons to fight for government. 39) O- supporting Assad basically.	considering he has choice
His family had to pay the ransom to save him. another arrest for two weeks	40) S- yes. They arrested me again. For two weeks. They took money from my family two million Syrian liras.	He has been forced to

Meaning of being in danger does not mean when he is at home relief/ feeling happy when he remembers how he felt at home He felt enjoy of his discovery of how it was strange to sleep when airstrikes were outside. Laughing while he was telling me this Living close to danger/ death danger close to his home I suppose he can locked the danger outside when he is inside his house. Feeling safety especially when there is a danger outside. urge for feeling safe remembering helps him to release his stress	you are talking about it. It was kind of relive for you even though… 102) S- yes I can sleep. 103) O- it's interesting… 104) S- I remember when I was at my home. It was airstrike attacked near to my home only 500 meters away. 105) O- oh my god. 106) S- so it was a morning and I got up (laughing) ok let's sleep again. 107) O- you went back to sleep (laughing) 108) S- yes (continue laughing) 109) O- this is very interesting but I think this is how you feel…like you said you feel comfortable you feel like at home. 110) S- yes. 111) O- ok and how was it for you to come to turkey. You said you have decided like this was your last chance…it was very painful but you felt you had to. 112) S- yes. When I decided to move to turkey I thought I have lost everything. I lost for example my	Feeling of secure at home in the war zone Feeling-at-home again Being aware his sense of living close to danger/death home can be as a stress relief Feeling-at-home Home as a comfortable place
he confirms he felt comfortable at home It was quite significant for Saz to acknowledge his losses. His tone of voice has changed. It seems it was difficulty to continue to talk about his looses Loss of his future realizing there is no going back by talking what he had to give up Loosing his dream to go another country in a different circumstances first time mentioning his fiancé/ escaped. His desires to move to Turkey might connected to his fiancé.	education my speciality… 113) O- so you weren't able to finish? You have left in the middle. Is that what you are saying? 114) S- yes… 115) O- I see 116) S- so I have lost my speciality (meaning becoming a specialist in hand surgery) Also I didn't have chance to complete my speciality in the hospital. Also I have no chance to go to another country to take the study again… to do anything… for example my fiancé.. She escaped from Syria… 117) O- she also escaped 118) S- yes she escaped before… to turkey and… I have lost lots of members of my family. Some of them on airstrikes some of them they were arrested and they died in prison. So…. I decided I should escape to survive me my father my mother my brother also…and also when I was in Syrian my family was rich…so….my father… we had one home and we had, also in a village we had a farm and we had three shops erm…one factory, one car… we lost them all. 119) O- You have lost them all 120) S- so only our souls, the most important things we should save our souls at least. So I told my father,	Main theme 1- Loss Loosing everything loss of education his speciality Loss of hope Loss of future Loss of dream to study in another country Desire to connect with loved one Main theme 1- Loss Loosing everything Loss of family members Facing inevitable death Facing the consequences of war Loss of wealth Desire to meet family needs

Loss of family members inevitable death/consequences of war Wanted to survive wanted save his family/ family needs becomes fundamental Loss of wealth/ life condition Saving his soul. is this meaning of life or his being. wanted to exist in-the-world Deciding to move to Turkey. Why Turkey? It was difficult decision to leave his other family members behind. Now his mother, father and his one brother becomes his new nuclear family.	ok we should move to Turkey. 121) O- so with whole family you have decided to move 122) S- yes 123) O- so who were there? your father you said and… 124) S- my father, my mother and my brother… 125) O- your brother… you only have one brother… 126) S- no… I have another. But for example my sister she is married and she decided to stay in Aleppo 127) O- so your sister wanted to stay 128) S- Yeah. 129) O- with her husband 130) S- with her husband and her children and I have another brother also who is married and he said 'I prefer to stay'. 131) O- so two of your siblings decided to stay. 132) S- yes… 133) O-how was it for you?	wish to being-in-the-world SPİRUTUAL LEVEL saving the soul Turkey as an escape leaving people behind Main theme 1- Loss Having no choice The feeling of afraid who left behind
stating that his sister has a husband meaning she choose to stay with her family Both his siblings have their own family. Him and his brother who doesn't married and don't have children can decide for themselves. Family might relate to marriage and children. Seeing no future in Syria. Wanted to convince them. Feeling afraid of their life/ wanted to relief his worries. Being eldest son now in this new family he has a responsibility Feeling responsible for his parents and brothers life. He believes his parents now dependent on him. This leaves him feeling responsible to make the right decision for everybody.	134) S- for me I tried to talk to them. Please come with me. Here the life it would be impossible to stay. I will be afraid all the time for you…. I will be worried for you. They said 'this is your decision, you can move but we will try to stay as possible as we can. I said ok…This is your chance this is my chance… I will go. My father… Because I am the biggest one 135) O- so you are the eldest one 136) S- so they… my father and my mother… they are retired. They depend on me for money like this. They said Salim we decided that we would go with you. So… 137) O- so your father, mother and your brother came with you 138) S- one of my brother… He is 16 years old. Together we decided to move from Aleppo to Turkey. 139) O- how was the journey? 140) S- Ahhh it was very difficult. Because in that time the Turkish boarder, it was closed. 141) O- ooh it was closed? 142) S- yes…and only I should find illegal ways to enter Turkey. Then I asked some people how to move to Turkey. Some of them said you should find smugglers. 143) O-hhm smugglers… 144) S- smugglers, maybe they can help me to move to Turkey. At first, I decided, I should move out of Aleppo because… to survive. Because I told you, only one way at Castello way (road), I should move from this way and it was very dangerous because the Syrian army was very near to this street and sometimes they attacks	Desire to relief his worries. Anxious of leaving part of family behind Feeling responsible as an eldest child Decision making process Making a decision as whole family Journey begins Journey to Turkey Facing the difficulties on the way to immigration Choice becomes difficult responsibility. Stepping into a danger zone