

Portfolio submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Professional Doctorate in  
Counselling Psychology

*Transition and Growth in Emerging Adulthood: 'Look on every exit as being an  
entrance somewhere else' (Tom Stoppard, 1966)*

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March 2018

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### List of Abbreviations

CAT – Cognitive Analytic Therapy

CBT – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

CORE-LD – Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation – Learning Disability

DA – Discourse Analysis

EA – Emerging adulthood

GT – Grounded Theory

IPA – Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPT – Interpersonal Therapy

LD – Learning disability

MHP – Mental health problem

NICE – National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence

RRs – Reciprocal roles

ZPD – Zone of Proximal Development

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Journal article                      pp. 219-244

## **II. Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, I would like to thank the participants who so kindly offered to be part of this research. I am eternally grateful for you sharing your experiences with me. I hope that this portfolio enables your voices to be heard. To all of the clients who I have had the privilege of working with throughout my training, you have been fundamental to my growth as a Counselling Psychologist. Thank you for being part of my journey.

My sincere thanks and gratitude to Dr Deborah Rafalin for enabling my ideas for this research to come to fruition. Your passion and enthusiasm motivated me, your knowledge inspired me and your generosity warmed me. I never thought I would learn and be pushed so much by your honest 'feedback sandwiches'! Dr Kornilia Givissi, thank you so much for stepping in at such a crucial part of this journey. Your guidance, patience and calming words helped me to persist and see the light at the end of what felt like a never-ending tunnel!

To my invaluable placement supervisors, thank you for inspiring me, teaching me and helping me grow into the practitioner I am today. I feel incredibly fortunate to have been supervised by each of you.

To my parents, words cannot express how grateful I am for this opportunity to follow my passion. It would not have been possible if it weren't for your kindness and generosity. I hope I can continue to make you proud as I embark on my qualified career. To my siblings and dear friends, your ability to keep me entertained and motivated throughout my doctoral journey is something I will cherish forever. The mid-week meetups to get me out of the house and away from my laptop were so greatly appreciated. And last, but by no means least, thank you to my wonderful course mates. It has been an absolute pleasure to undertake this journey with you. I look back with pride at how far we have all come. May our paths continue to cross in our professional careers!

### **III. Declaration of Power**

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#### **IV. Preface to the Portfolio**

*Transition and Growth in Emerging Adulthood: 'Look on every exit as being an entrance somewhere else' (Tom Stoppard, 1966)*

This doctoral portfolio is comprised of three sections: a qualitative piece of research, a combined client study and process report, and a publishable paper. The main portion of work is the thesis. It is an exploration of the experiences of moving out of home in emerging adult (between the ages of 18 and 25) daughters whose mothers struggled with anxiety. Such experiences related to a journey from challenging and distressing moments, towards change and adjustment which enabled a greater sense of satisfaction, hope and fulfilment. The client study focuses on the use of cognitive analytic therapy (CAT) with a female emerging adult with a learning disability. This therapeutic approach was used to address her relationship difficulties and subsequent adaptation to her change in relationship status by working on her self-to-self relationship. Whilst there was some variation in characteristics between participants in the thesis and client study, an overarching theme emerged from both which related to transition and growth in emerging adulthood (EA). Whilst the thesis explores transition in the context of maternal anxiety, it is important to note that this context also has undertones relating to change. Anxiety can be a response to a single or accumulation of changes or transitions which require adjustment (Hopson, Scally & Stafford, 1992). Holmes and Rahe's (1967) renowned Social Adjustment Rating Scale identified a series of transitional events which can cause an individual stress or anxiety partly due to entering into the unknown. Events include change in residence, daughters leaving home and relationship break-ups. The authors found that each event requires approximately a year to restore the energy expended in adjusting to the change, highlighting the significance of transitions.

This overarching theme also links with my own transition and development from trainee to qualified Counselling Psychologist. Embarking on my doctoral training saw my exit from my comfort zone of being a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner (PWP) and entry into the somewhat unknown world of a Trainee Counselling Psychologist. This excited and intimidated me at the same time. Training pushed me out of my comfort zone by affording me opportunities to work with various client groups, therapeutic modalities and supervisor approaches. Some of my most challenging experiences led to the greatest learning and subsequent rewards. They encouraged me to acquire new knowledge, broaden my thinking and develop my skills as a practitioner. I found myself contemplating my professional identity based on these experiences: How did I want to work? What kind of practitioner did I want to be? What did I particularly value as a practitioner when working with clients? In adjusting to the transition from PWP to trainee psychologist, I found myself developing both personally

and professionally. Who I was at the start would not have allowed me to flourish for the benefit of myself and my clients. Thus, who I was at the end was someone who had grown and developed in how they approached, managed and made sense of life and the situations it entailed. My transition into and now out of training has prepared me to embrace my new identity as a Counselling Psychologist and future challenges I am likely to encounter.

Life is never plain-sailing. It is full of times that reward you, challenge you, comfort you, and distress you. Every day we encounter new experiences. In some circumstances we are faced with a significant change, a transition, which requires adjustment. Transition involves heightened self-reflection, attempts at meaning-making and opportunities for development (Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1987). Inherent to my desire to train as a Counselling Psychologist was my fascination with individuals' unique responses to life events and transitions. I have a particular passion for working therapeutically with adolescents and emerging adults. Various transitions are often encountered during these life-stages which can leave individuals confused, distressed and in need of support: parental separation, change in friendship groups, loss of first-loves, transitioning from school to university, and transitioning from education to work to name but a few. The power in exploring transitions to understand the meaning they hold for individuals has always been striking to me. How this often paves way for consideration of ways of enhancing coping and adjustment to such transition fascinates me (Anderson, Goodman & Schlossberg, 2011). EA in particular involves new experiences and possibilities which can challenge emerging adults' adaptive skills, leading to variations in the source and nature of growth (Gottlieb, Still & Newby-Clark, 2007). Thus, this portfolio gives voice to the wealth of growth and development that can emerge as a consequence of transition. As reflected in Tom Stoppard's (1966) quote, the leaving behind of one leads to entry to another. With this come possibilities for growth.

Although we have each been on our own journeys, I notice a parallel between myself, my research participants and my client from my client study. We have all experienced transitions which were challenging at times, but have all developed and grown from them to some degree. To quote a participant, 'It was out of my comfort zone. Stressful. So stressful. It was beautiful though. It was beautiful at the end because I have grown in who I am.' (Jessica 29/8-10).

I will briefly describe each piece of work and highlight how the theme of transition and growth presents itself in each section.

## **Section A: Doctoral Thesis**

My doctoral thesis aimed to explore the experience of moving out of home in adult daughters whose mothers struggled with anxiety using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). A wealth of research has highlighted potential detrimental effects of having an anxious mother. As such a daughter, I was concerned about the consequences of pathologising anxious mothers. I was also puzzled as to why, given the apparent deficits of being a child of an anxious mother, an enquiry into *what* this was like had largely been ignored. Despite experiencing challenges, I was witness to my own thriving development and life satisfaction. I felt it was not sufficient to make generalisations about a group of individuals without gaining a deeper understanding of their experiences, including positive as well as negative experiences.

I was particularly interested in this area in relation to EA as it is a potentially vulnerable time due to the high incidence of mental health problems and risk behaviours during the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Cheng, McDermott & Lopez, 2015). The transition of moving out of home became the focus of this study due to the potential growth and development as well as challenges (due to adapting to novel and previously-unknown lifestyles) that could arise during this time (Arnett, 2004; Kins, Beyers, Soenens & Vanstenkiste, 2009).

IPA was selected as the most appropriate methodology to answer my research question as it enabled in-depth knowledge to be generated about the quality of an experience (which is unique for each individual in their own contexts) and how each individual makes sense of this (Willig, 2013). Themes emerged relating to the struggles of moving out and separating from their mothers, but with a gradual adjustment to the transition to a new environment and newly-negotiated relationship with their mothers (including less maternal control, both adopting adult roles and improved relations). Within their new environment, flourishing and development appeared rife amongst adult daughters. Their growth spanned from identity, to independence, to social networks. As Arnett (2014) remarked, EA is a 'winding road'. This seemed to specifically apply to the transition of moving out during this lifestage which was not an easy, linear process.

## **Section B: Combined Client Study and Process Report**

Counselling Psychology places great importance on the use of the therapeutic relationship to explore a client's subjective experiences. The use of CAT therefore resonated with me during my training as it prioritises the therapeutic relationship to gain insight into a client's ways of relating to the self and others, and uses this as a mechanism of change (Ryle & Kerr, 2002).

This piece highlights the effectiveness of adapting CAT for learning disabilities. There is similarity between my research participants and this client as she too was an emerging adult who had recently moved out of home. Following greater social exposure in her new environment, she began her first romantic relationship which later became problematic. Our therapeutic work focused on managing her transition from being in a relationship to single. This was particularly significant due to her fears of being alone and unloved. Similar to participants, she initially struggled with this transition, experiencing distress over the unknown. Over time, she realised that with loss can come gains. In moving from one to another new possibilities presented themselves. Her transition brought opportunities to reconnect with herself and others. In turn, she experienced growth in relation to discovery about her identity, and her values and beliefs regarding relationships. She likened herself to going through a transition from a vulnerable crab with a cracked shell hiding under a rock, to 'growing a stronger, brand new shell' and emerging from under this rock at the end of therapy.

### **Section C: Publishable Paper**

This piece presented a challenge. Due to the word limit, I felt concerned about having to skim over what I felt were very rich findings which reflected the depth and variety of participants' experiences of moving out of home. I considered narrowing the focus to fewer themes, but felt that it was necessary to present them together in order for participants' complete stories to be heard. Each theme felt so valuable that removing any would disrupt the narrative that I aimed to convey in my research. Consequently, I chose to include all four themes when presenting this research in the format of a publishable paper.

Similar to the thesis, this paper emphasises the theme of transition in adult daughters of anxious mothers moving out of home and adapting to their new environment. Transition is reflected in the themes that emerged; from moving from their home environment whereby they felt stuck, to immersing themselves in a new environment with ample opportunity to grow and develop their skills, identity and social network. The mother-adult daughter relationship also went through a transition; from living closely to adjusting to living apart (and with this came a change in ways of relating and an adoption of adult roles).

### **Concluding Comments**

Transitions have always been of interest to me. This has increased throughout my training as I have learnt about the array of unique meanings individuals ascribe to them, as well as the different therapeutic models used to conceptualise them. I have encountered transition in my personal life as well as in my professional life through being part of clients' therapeutic

journeys as they make a variety of positive change. This portfolio highlights how individuals experience transition and subsequent growth. It has aimed to give voice to a previously unheard group, as well as informing theory and practice.

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## **Section A: Doctoral Research Project**

Adult Daughters of Mothers who Struggled with Anxiety:  
Moving Out of Home

## **Abstract**

Most research focussing on being a child of an anxious mother is deficit-focussed. The exploration of children's possible benefits and positive experiences have been neglected. Such research has not considered the influence of maternal anxiety on children's developmental stage. Emerging adulthood (occurring between the ages of 18-25 years) has been regarded as a potentially vulnerable developmental stage due to high incidence of mental health problems and risk behaviours during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The transition of moving out of home often occurs during this stage. It presents opportunities for individuation, psychological growth and adult-to-adult interaction. Attachment, parental mental health and psychosocial competence are some factors found to affect adaptation to transition. The mother-adult daughter dyad is of particular interest in relation to this area as it has the greatest interdependence and connection amongst all familial relationships. This study therefore aimed to gain a narrative of the experiences of moving out of home in adult daughters whose mothers struggled with anxiety. Eight participants shared their experiences through semi-structured interviews. Interview transcripts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Four superordinate themes emerged: feeling stuck, from togetherness to separation, what is out there and identity. Findings reflected the journey of each participant, from feeling restricted at home to deciding to move out; to actioning their decision but with both mother and daughter struggling with the separation process; to flourishing in their new environments through developing their identity, independence, autonomy and social networks. Clinical implications relate to identification of key areas for exploration in therapeutic work with adult daughters and/or their anxious mothers. Consideration is also given to links with wider networks to promote wellbeing in these individuals following transition.

## **1. Chapter One: Introduction**

### **1.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter will explore literature relevant to the niche area of research that this current study focusses on. It will begin with an introduction to anxiety, before funnelling in to the more specific area of the impact of anxious parenting on children, justifying the emphasis on mothers and the mother-daughter dyad. The focus will then be directed to the developmental stage of emerging adulthood (EA), exploring its emergence and features to familiarise the reader. It will consider the role of identity during EA and draw on relevant theoretical models. The role of parents in this process will also be discussed. Literature on moving out of home (including the implication of such a transition on emerging adults and the parent-child relationship) and adapting to transition will be presented and discussed. It will be highlighted how there is limited qualitative research available to explore experiences of moving out of home in adult daughters<sup>1</sup> of anxious mothers, and that developing new knowledge from this area of research can be highly valuable and relevant to the field of Counselling Psychology. The rationale for the present study is provided and the research aim is highlighted.

### **1.2 Impact of Anxious Parenting on Children**

#### *1.2.1 Background*

Anxiety is a common human response to danger. Although adaptive in numerous scenarios because it leads to the avoidance of danger, it can also become pathological (Beesdo, Knappe & Pine, 2009). In such an instance, anxiety becomes maladaptive as it interferes with daily functioning. It is characterised by sensitivity to threat, a heightened physiological response to threatening stimuli and frequent avoidance behaviour (Stein, 2015).

Anxiety disorders (such as generalized anxiety disorder, social phobia, panic disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder) are widely studied due to their high prevalence rates (Rapee, Schniering & Hudson, 2009) and subsequent detrimental effects on an individual's behaviour and daily life (Mychailyszyn, Mendez & Kendall, 2010; Settapani & Kendall, 2013). The prevalence rates for anxiety disorders are relatively high: between 15-20% in childhood and adolescence (Beesdo et al., 2009) and 24.9% in adults (Bandelow & Michaelis, 2015). Difficulties experienced by a significant proportion of the population result in their frequent presentations to psychological services for treatment. Gaining as much knowledge and insight into anxiety as possible would aid Counselling Psychologists who would be treating such difficulties or delivering preventive interventions.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this research, daughters whose mothers were anxious when they were children will be referred throughout as 'adult daughters of anxious mothers'.

### *1.2.2 Aetiology of Anxiety*

Research has demonstrated that children of anxious parents are more likely to meet the criteria of an anxiety disorder themselves, with 80% of children with anxiety disorders having parents also with anxiety disorders (Black, Gaffney, Schlosser & Gabel 2003; Chapman, Petrie, Vines & Durrett, 2011). Investigation into the development of anxiety in childhood has identified vulnerability factors (such as genetic predisposition and a behaviourally inhibited temperament) and environmental factors (such as parental behaviours) as increasing the risk of child anxiety disorder development (Murray, Creswell & Cooper, 2009).

Degnan, Almas and Fox's (2010) aetiological model of anxiety insinuated that parental anxiety, parental personality, parent-child attachment and parenting style are all environmental factors which increase the risk for child anxiety disorder development. The model describes how children inherit a strong genetic predisposition for anxiety. The familial transmission of anxiety disorders has been demonstrated through family and twin studies (Beesdo et al., 2009). Moreover, Degnan et al.'s (2010) model claims that parents of these children are likely to be anxious themselves and display dysfunctional and maladaptive parenting styles. Further studies have proposed that parenting styles are characterised by parental behaviours, such as a lack of warmth, over-control and overprotection. Instead of reducing children's distress in stressful situations, these behaviours reinforce children's vulnerability for developing an anxiety disorder (Hudson & Rapee, 2004).

### *1.2.3 Focus on Mothers*

Parents play a pivotal role in children's development (van der Kaap-Deeder, Vansteenkiste, Soenens & Mabbe, 2017). Parents are a primary reference point for children (Collins, Madsen & Susman-Stillman, 2002); they teach them about social norms and provide guidance for daily functioning and responsibility (Maccoby 2015), as well as protecting their children (Grusec & Davidov, 2010).

Several theories of child development have implicated the role of parental functions, especially with mothers. Freud's (1936) renowned psychosexual theory proposed that children's development occurs through five stages: oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital. To become well-adjusted adults, children must successfully pass through all stages. He highlighted the role of parents in possibly blocking children's development at one stage. This would result in a child becoming fixated at that particular stage, exhibiting associated symptoms. Freud acknowledged the pivotal but differing roles of mothers and fathers. The mother-infant relationship is the most archetypal and influential, which creates a foundation for all additional relationships. This is acknowledged in object relations theory (Klein, 1997)

whereby primary relationships (mother-infant) affect the formation of mental representations of themselves (the infant) in relation to others and influence later interpersonal relationships. Freud (1936) also argued that fathers' importance comes later in development, particularly in the moral development of their sons through the Oedipal complex (Holden, 2015). Thus, mothers and fathers have different roles, with maternal influence being more prominent.

Winnicott's (1958) distinguished stages of development also highlight the mother's role. A child must feel connection with their mother and gradually develop independence. During the undifferentiated unity stage, an illusion of a child's connection with their mother occurs. A mother's responsiveness to their child's needs indicates that the child is in full control of them. The transition stage is characterised by the mother gradually moving away from the child to enhance their independence. The mother's role is to be the target of the child's projection of bad objects, before they reintroject them upon realising how well she manages them. Relative independence occurs through effective transition whereby the child develops a healthy false self which they are comfortable in presenting to the world. Alternatively, the child remains uncomfortable with itself. Again, this theory implicates the role of the 'good-enough' mother in guiding their child through these stages via initial connection and then gradual release. Winnicott viewed the mother-child relationship to be the most important in enabling a child to develop a healthy sense of self.

Most research on the area of anxious parenting focusses on mothers. It is important to note that most of this research has emerged in the social context of mothers staying at home or being the primary caregiver. In this context, research has highlighted the primary importance of mothers, particularly during childhood and adolescent years. They spend more time with their children than fathers (Bornstein, 2015), and subsequently serve as primary caregivers (Gar & Hudson, 2009). A similar trend applies during adulthood, with mothers continuing to be more involved with their grown children than fathers in terms of support (Fingerman, Kim, Birditt & Zarit, 2016; Fingerman, Miller, Birditt & Zarit, 2009). Furthermore, differences exist in children's relationships and attachments to their mothers compared to fathers (McCarthy, Moller & Fouladi, 2001). Mother-adolescent relationships involve greater intimacy, disclosure and focus on affect than father-adolescent relationships. Additionally, children are more likely to seek support from mothers than fathers (Dolgin & Berndt, 1997). Changing trends are, however, beginning to emerge. Recent socioeconomic changes (such as increased numbers of women in the workforce) have begun to result in a trend towards fathers' involvement in their children's lives and care gradually increasing (Ferreira et al., 2016). Over the past 50 years, paternal roles have gradually begun to change, from financial provider and disciplinarian to more caregiving roles and spending time with children (Holden, 2015). This has directed attention to fathers' contributions to children's cognitive and

emotional development (Paquette, 2004). Despite this, Khan (2017) remarks on how this change is still taking place; although there have been some improvements (such as increased paternity leave and flexible working), there is currently only minimal up-take of this by fathers to support their parenting activities. Thus, there is still further progress and change required to enable fathers to increase their parenting presence and activities. As a result, the focus on mothers currently remains most prominent.

In their research focussing specifically on anxious parents, Teetsel, Ginsburg and Drake (2014) argued that the difference in how anxious mothers and fathers interact with their children would result in variations in the influence on children's anxiety levels. Fathers are more likely to engage in 'rough and tumble' play with their children, whereas mothers tend to engage in caretaking, comforting and protecting of them (Bögels & Phares, 2008). Although the latter may evoke a sense of security and thus lower anxiety in children, it may inadvertently cause greater maternal dependence, lower autonomy and high anxiety. Consequently, distinctions exist between maternal-child and paternal-child relationships, which result in different potential impacts on children.

Beardseele, Versage and Giadstone (1998) investigated the long-term effect of parental mental illness and concluded that maternal mental illness is more detrimental to children than paternal mental illness. Consequently, most research examining parent-child interactions in relation to anxiety focuses primarily on mothers. Gar and Hudson (2009) explained that, as mothers are usually the primary caregiver, their anxiety and behaviours will greatly affect their children. Therefore, as an abundance of research and theories exist to demonstrate the primary importance of mothers in shaping children's development and the differences between maternal and paternal influences, the research that will be reviewed will relate to maternal anxiety.

It is of additional note that relationship differences also exist between mother-son and mother-daughter dyads. The mother-daughter relationship has the greatest interdependence and connection amongst all relationships within the family system (Bowlby, 1988). Onayli and Erdur-Baker (2013) concluded that the mother-daughter relationship carries greatest significance for the daughter's social and psychological wellbeing. Thus, focussing on this particular dyad is of key interest to the current study as it is so influential upon development and wellbeing, as indicated by various theories and research.

#### *1.2.4 Parenting Behaviours*

Many quantitative studies have implicated the role of maternal anxiety in increasing the frequency of display of negative parenting behaviours (Budinger, Drazdowski & Ginsburg,

2013; Challacombe & Salkovskis, 2009; Schneider et al., 2009; Schrock & Woodruff-Borden, 2010; Turner, Beidel, Roberson-Nay & Tervo, 2003; Williams, Kertz, Schrock & Woodruff-Borden, 2012). Explanations of the impact of maternal anxiety on children have been proposed. A lack of warmth reduces nurturing and prevents mothers from attending to children's emotional needs (Drake & Ginsburg, 2011). Over-control and intrusiveness reduce opportunities for children to manage new experiences independently, resulting in low self-efficacy (Wood, 2006). Maternal criticism informs children that they lack adequate coping skills. The researchers suggest that this lowers self-confidence and self-worth, leading to avoidance of situations which then results in limited opportunities to develop effective coping strategies (Ginsburg, Grover & Jalongo, 2005).

It must be noted that much of the existing literature regarding maternal anxiety is deficit-focused and that the exploration of children's possible benefits and positive experiences of maternal anxiety have been neglected. O'Connor et al. (2012) raised this as an issue following their research finding that an absence of mental illness does not guarantee positive wellbeing. Thus, one cannot assume that some, if not all, children of anxious mothers will have their wellbeing negatively affected by their mother's mental health struggles. Their findings strengthened their argument against a 'cookie-cutter' approach of assuming that everyone is the same and has similar experiences; not all children of anxious mothers will have negative experiences, and so it is just as important to explore these experiences too. Furthermore, the widespread use of quantitative methodologies prevents the exploration of the subjective experiences of children of anxious mothers, which may include both positive and negative experiences. It is hoped that using a qualitative methodology in the current study will rectify this issue by providing opportunity to explore both.

Griffiths, Norris, Stallard and Matthews (2012) conducted one of a few qualitative studies to explore the experiences of adolescents of parents with mental health problems (MHP). They focussed specifically on obsessive-compulsive disorder. Themes emerged pertaining to challenges faced, feelings of having a burden placed on them and a lack of support. Some participants verbalised concerns about how being overprotected by their parents might affect them developing the skills required when separating from the family and leaving home. The authors acknowledged that most research has failed to consider the influence of parental anxiety on children's developmental stage. In particular, there is limited insight into having an anxious parent during EA. Consequently, this is an area that warrants further exploration, particularly from the perspective of Counselling Psychologists. They are trained to work with individuals across all developmental stages and also systemically with families, both in the context of MHP. If such adult children feel their lack of support requires addressing, then providing more support through psychological interventions could have a profound impact on

their coping ability and development of skills required to successfully adapt to the significant life changes that occur around this time (such as moving out of home).

#### *1.2.5 Attachment*

The role of parental anxiety has also been implicated in another aspect of parenting: the quality of the parent-child bond, known as attachment, with parental anxiety being associated with insecure attachment styles (insecure-avoidant, insecure-ambivalent and insecure-disorganized; Wei & Kendall, 2014).

Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory describes how infants seek safety and comfort from their caregivers (often parents) when stressed. Infants then use their caregivers as a secure base for exploration, returning to them in times of perceived threat or stress. How the parent responds to their infant's proximity-seeking behaviours dictates the parent-child attachment relationship. Secure attachment results from consistent and warm parental responses, whereas unreliable and detached responses result in insecure attachment patterns. The attachment relationships and patterns that an infant experiences during their early years will have future implications on their emotional, social and behavioural well-being.

It has been recognised that the presence of parental anxiety can impact on the parent's interaction, responsiveness and sensitiveness to their child. Fellow-Smith (2000) highlighted how an anxious parent is likely to be preoccupied by their own anxiety-related distress and subsequent engagement in avoidant or compulsive behaviours. This affects their ability to fully commit to attending to their child's needs, making them less warm and responsive. Consequently, an insecure attachment pattern is likely to develop between anxious parents and their children. Although dated due to limited research in this area, Manassis, Bradley, Goldberg, Hood and Swinson (1994) found that, from a sample of 36 participants of children of anxious mothers, 80% had an insecure mother-child attachment.

In addition to investigating a link between parental anxiety and attachment, more recent studies have examined the implication of this link in children of anxious parents. Kerns, Siener and Brumariu (2011) claimed that children of non-anxious parents are able to use their parents as a secure base for exploration, feel confident in their parent/s' availability and responsiveness and experience less anxiety than children who lack a secure base. They established that children who developed anxiety were more likely to have an anxious mother and perceive less security in their relationship with her. Thus, they regarded maternal anxiety and insecure attachment as factors affecting the mother-child relationship which serve as risk factors for child anxiety disorder development. This study has, however, been criticised for using the mother as the informant of child anxiety symptoms. Parents have

been found to report lower levels of child symptoms than children (van der Ende & Verhulst, 2005), and so they may underestimate the extent of their child's distress.

Schimmenti and Bifulco (2015) built on this research by using adolescents' and emerging adults' self-reports of anxiety. More specifically, they examined the role of insecure attachment as a mediator of anxious maternal behaviours (lack of warmth and criticism) and child anxiety disorder development. An insecure-ambivalent attachment style mediated this relationship. They explained that anxious mothers may not be emotionally attentive to their children, causing them to feel rejected and develop an insecure mother-child attachment, relating to fears of rejection and separation. Children lacking in resilience are likely to develop internal working models of themselves as unworthy of love and of others as unreliable. The authors, however, viewed their meditation result tentatively because, due to the retrospective data provided, it was difficult to ascertain whether attachment style preceded anxiety disorder onset. Nevertheless, this research implicates the role of maternal anxiety as a potential developmental pathway for child anxiety disorder development. This highlights how the presence of maternal anxiety can cause distress to be experienced by both mother and child. If child vulnerability and susceptibility to anxiety is increased, then it would be of interest as to how a child is affected by life events such as moving out of home, if at all. Gaining further insight into such experience may be helpful to the provision of support for the children whom such research predicts may be more susceptible to experiencing emotional distress.

### **1.3 Emerging Adulthood**

#### *1.3.1 Emergence of New Developmental Stage*

When considering life span development, the work of Erikson must be acknowledged as it created the foundations of which more recent theorists have built upon. Erikson (1950) proposed that the stage of adolescence occurs between the ages of 12 and 18 years, followed by young adulthood between 19 and 40 years, after which middle adulthood then occurs. This theory is somewhat dated. It can therefore be argued that this paradigm no longer applies to present industrialised societies. Reasons for this include more people undertaking further education in their early 20s resulting in longer financial dependency on parents and the median age for marriage now occurring in their late 20s (Arnett, 2004). Arnett (2000) therefore introduced 'emerging adulthood' (EA) which occurs between the ages of 18 and 25 years. He postulated that, due to the increase in time taken to transition to adulthood, EA represents its own period of a life course as opposed to a transition. As a result of the dated and previously limited numbers of theoretical frameworks for development following adolescence, Nelson et al. (2007) maintained that EA addressed this theoretical

gap. They argued that Arnett's theory captures the life experiences and situations of young people in today's society in between the end of adolescence and beginning of young adulthood.

### 1.3.2 Features of Emerging Adulthood

EA literature is currently limited to one prominent researcher, Jeffery Arnett, as it is a new and emerging life stage theory. According to his qualitative research, Arnett (2004) proposed that EA is characterized by five unique features, making it a distinct period of development:

- 1) *Identity exploration*. An opportunity for self-exploration in relation to work, love and world views as emerging adults gain more independence from their parents, but have yet to form long-term, stable commitments representative of adulthood. Although identity formation is commonly associated with adolescence, as reflected in Erikson's (1950) identity vs. role confusion conflict stage, he also recognised that 'prolonged adolescence' occurs in industrialised societies whereby young adults experiment with roles and identities. Furthermore, identity achievement is seldom attained during the end of adolescence, and it often continues and amplifies during EA (Waterman, 1999).
- 2) *Instability*. Planning a route from adolescence to adulthood will inevitably involve revisions due to changes in residential status, relationships, work and education as a result of explorations during this period of development. Each revision to future plans often results in an experience of learning or gaining self-insight, providing some clarity over future aspirations (Arnett, 2004).
- 3) *Focus on the self*. EA is often a time of limited social obligations and commitments to others (such as spouse or children), enabling greater autonomy over their lives (Katsiaficas, 2017). This self-focussed time enables ample opportunity to attend to one's own development and developing self-sufficiency in preparation for adult life. This is often seen as a preliminary step before committing to relationships with others, both in romantic and occupational domains (Arnett, 2007).
- 4) *Feeling in-between*. Rinker, Walters, Wyatt and DeJong (2015) asked 8,230 emerging adult university students to rate whether they considered themselves to be adults on a scale of 1 (definitely no) to 7 (definitely yes). The mean response was 4.19, demonstrating ambiguity about their adult status. This reflected the consistent finding of ambivalence about having reached adulthood, due to not seeing themselves as either adolescents or adults (Arnett, 2008; Arnett & Schwab, 2012; Nelson et al., 2007). This is often attributed to experiencing fewer restrictions of adolescence and not enough responsibilities of adulthood. This is accounted for

because the criteria most emerging adults deem necessary for becoming an adult (accepting responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions and becoming financially independent) are reached gradually (Arnett, 1997).

- 5) *Possibilities*. Possibilities, options and life direction remains open. Emerging adults have various possibilities in the directions they desire to steer their lives in. As they have greater independence from their family and are not yet bound by obligations, they have opportunities to develop into who they aspire to be, as opposed to becoming who their parents envisage them to be. They are able to implement their autonomy when making choices and decisions for themselves (Arnett, 2004).

### *1.3.3 Universality of Emerging Adulthood*

EA has been criticised for only capturing the experiences of white individuals in industrialized societies (Bynner, 2005; Hendry & Kloep, 2007). Limited research exists on race and ethnicity in EA. Syed & Mitchell (2016) offered a critique serving as rationale for examining the universality of EA. They noted the contrast of the importance of independence in individualistic cultures and interdependence in collectivist cultures. As independence is a central feature of EA, the generalizability of experience may be minimised amongst ethnic minority groups. Additionally, differences in family obligation exist amongst ethnic groups. Family obligation and related behaviours are greater amongst ethnic minorities than Whites (Fulgini, 2007). This could be associated with different conceptualizations of adulthood, as family obligations are prioritised over independence (Syed & Mitchell, 2016). Kloep and Hendry (2011) proposed that such criticisms are targeted at the definition and inclusiveness of emerging adults and not the concept of EA itself. They distinguished between EA and emerging adults, with the latter pertaining to the psychological aspect of the phenomenon, which is concerned with an individual's meanings and experiences. Thus, in the critique of race and ethnicity in EA, the issue warranting further exploration is the inclusiveness, i.e. who 'gets to be' an emerging adult (Syed & Mitchell, 2016).

Côté and Bynner (2008) criticised Arnett's (2000) theory for minimal acknowledgement of social class differences. They noted that, although EA applies to those from affluent backgrounds and various cultural groups (Arnett, 2000; Arnett, 2004; Arnett & Tanner, 2011), the same should apply to those from more disadvantaged social groups. Côté (2014) elaborated upon this by remarking on how Arnett's (2000) theory implies that working class individuals may have fewer opportunities to explore the self and identity during EA as they may leave school early, become teenage parents or enter the workforce to earn a wage instead of pursuing further education. This resulted in a suggestion that this developmental stage may be shortened by a few years for individuals from less affluent backgrounds.

Arnett (2016) responded to his critics by publishing national survey data from 18-25 year olds across a range of social classes. Limited differences across social classes emerged. Most notably, there was consistent agreement about the five features of EA and no differences in expectations of adulthood. He concluded that there are similarities in experiences of EA across social class. He described EA as 'one stage, many paths' (Arnett, 2016, p.234) to account for variations in this common experience which are due to social class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and culture. This highlights how one developmental stage can be experienced differently by individuals depending on their circumstances and contexts. Additionally, he acknowledged that all of his data in support of EA is from the United States. He, however, argued that it is likely that findings across social class in the United States would also apply across social class in similar countries, including the United Kingdom.

#### *1.3.4 Positive Development*

EA has been regarded as a potentially vulnerable time in the lifespan due to the high incidence of MHP and risk behaviours during the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Cheng, McDermott & Lopez, 2015). EA is therefore of particular interest for anxiety research. Adjusting to a period of such transition and potentially experiencing any difficulties with this may make individuals more susceptible to anxiety struggles.

Arnett (2000) claimed that a lack of adherence to social norms during EA enables greater experimentation with a range of individual differences. Furthermore, the focus on identity exploration increases the likelihood of engaging in risk behaviours, such as substance use, heavy drinking and antisocial behaviour (Arnett, 2005), resulting in negative association with this developmental stage. More recently, O'Connor et al. (2012) argued that the transition in to EA is not characterised by negative outcomes for all emerging adults, and highlighted the positive development that can occur during this time.

Hawkins, Letcher, Sanson, Smart and Toumbourou (2009) proposed a multidimensional model of positive development during EA. They identified five universal domains of positive functioning: social competence (successful formation of a social network), life satisfaction (feeling of contentment), trust and tolerance of others (ability to peacefully live amongst people from different backgrounds), trust in authorities and institutions (attachment to a community) and civic engagement (willingness to undertake the role of a citizen and emergence into a democratic society). Through these domains, O'Connor et al. (2012) maintained that EA provides a 'window of opportunity' for positive development. Consequently, one can step away from the 'cookie-cutter' approach by no longer assuming

that all emerging adults (especially the population of those with an anxious mother) will struggle during this time and instead acknowledging that individual differences occur.

## **1.4 Identity**

As identity exploration and development have been identified by Arnett (2004) as key features of EA, focus will now be given to the area of identity.

### *1.4.1 Models of Identity Development*

Identity is defined as a person's mental image of themselves. It is an important psychosocial task which begins during early adolescence. It involves the questioning of who and what a young person could be, and occurs alongside the young person envisioning new and different possibilities for themselves (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca & Ritchie, 2013).

Erikson's (1950) psychosocial theory laid the foundation for theoretical models of identity. He postulated that identity features in the identity vs. role confusion conflict which occurs between adolescence and EA. During this stage, individuals search for their identity and a sense of self through exploration of values, beliefs and goals. A conflict exists between having a stable and coherent sense of self and confusion and uncertainty about one's self.

Further theoretical models have been developed to operationalize Erikson's (1950) work. Marcia's (1966) identity status model proposed four identity statuses during EA which involve commitment and/or exploration of identities: diffusion (disinterest in identity issues), foreclosure (rigidity and conformity in identity formation), moratorium (searching for a sense of self) and achievement (integration of various aspects of the self into an identity). Diffusion and achievement relate to each end of Erikson's (1950) identity vs. role confusion conflict, with achievement being the ideal status to attain in EA (Gfeller & Bartoszyk, 2015).

Despite its popularity and influence, the identity status model has received criticism. It appears to misrepresent Erikson's (1950) theory. He described identity as being created through interplay between the individual and their social context. In contrast, Marcia's (1966) model disregards context and instead depicts identity development as a series of individual choices. Consequently, it has been regarded as too simplistic to represent the complex process of identity development. It accounts for identity development as exploration of a series of choices before committing to and thus completing identity development (Schwartz et al., 2013). This sense of identity being finalized in early adulthood contradicts Erikson's early work.

Following the criticism, Berzonsky (1989) extended Marcia's (1966) identity status model and proposed three identity-processing orientations which represent how individuals approach and respond to identity-related issues and dilemmas during their identity development. Three orientations exist: informational (considers various alternatives and adopts an open-minded approach), normative (conforms to expectations and seeks resolve) and diffuse/avoidant (avoids confronting or delays identity-related decisions).

In sum, the development of theoretical models following Erikson's (1950) has expanded the compatibility of identity status from his pioneering work. It is of great importance that these identity models are developmentally-focused as they provide insight specific to the developmental stage of EA. It emphasises how EA is a time of exploration and experimentation of identities, with great self-focus. As suggested by Arnett (2004), exploration of and commitment to identity is a central feature of EA which individuals will have to navigate through as part of their transition out of adolescence and towards adulthood.

#### *1.4.2 Identity Development in Emerging Adulthood*

Thomson (2010) proposed that the transition to EA was previously a single-step, linear process. The traditional sequence involved moving from education to work, followed by leaving home to marriage and family formation (Furlong, 2016). Nowadays, due to socioeconomic changes, this process is more uncertain and non-linear. The sequence is more irregular as individuals frequently alternate between work and education, as well as marriage, family formation and home ownership being delayed. Instead, emerging adults explore the different options and experiences available to them before making such commitments (Antonucci, 2016).

Due to the delay in young people undertaking adult roles, Arnett's (2000) theory of EA prioritises subjective and individualistic traits over the acquisition of normed adult roles as markers of adulthood. Included in this is adult identity. Arnett (1997) proposed that adult identity is similarly based on the development of individual traits, such as independence, responsibility and maturity instead of roles. Based on this, Benson and Furstenberg Jr. (2007) examined how acquiring adult roles affects emerging adults' subjective adult identity. Their findings corroborated with Arnett's (2000) theory as emerging adults did not perceive all role transitions to be markers of adulthood. They, however, also found that acquiring certain adult roles (such as moving out and living independently) significantly alters the perception of feeling like an adult, resulting in the acquisition of an adult identity. Consequently, moving out has a pivotal role in EA, not just through enabling independence, but through contributing to the facilitation of adult identity development. Currently, insight into

the experience of this process is limited. It is of interest exactly how emerging adults navigate this time of physical and psychological transition and what this experience is like for them. Furthermore, Kenny and Rice (1995) regarded EA as a life stage whereby individuals use their past experiences, current relationships and future expectations to form and develop their identity and sense of self. Consequently, EA may be regarded as a time of transition and change both intrapersonally and interpersonally. This would be of interest to Counselling Psychologists as any struggles resulting from this change may increase emerging adults' vulnerability for developing MHP and their access of mental health and support services (O'Connor et al., 2012; Schulenberg, Sameroff & Cicchetti, 2004). Developing further insight into the potential struggles associated with adapting to change in EA amongst the specific population of adult daughters of anxious mothers could be used to inform such services. In addition to offering treatment, any insight and knowledge gained from research in this area could also be used by Counselling Psychologists to offer preventive work for adult daughters and their anxious mothers in preparation for the impending move. Counselling Psychologists have links to wider community networks (Humphrey, Wolpert, Hanley, Sefi & Shorrock, 2012), and so they can share any new knowledge, support and train any services closely involved in supporting emerging adults (such as universities, employers and occupational health). Moreover, Cheng et al. (2015) regard Counselling Psychologists as being particularly well-suited to the provision of support for emerging adults due to the field's historic focus on developmental and adjustment difficulties. Thus, adding further to their wealth of knowledge pertaining to relevant areas such as attachment, separation and individuation in this specific population would aid Counselling Psychologists in supporting their clients' adjustment in such a context.

Additionally, Schwartz, Côté and Arnett (2005) acknowledged that economic, societal and cultural changes have resulted in many aspects of the life course becoming less community-based and more preference-based. Thus, many individuals are left to make decisions independently which makes the transition to EA a more complex, progressive process. The unstructured and prolonged nature of EA, the various potential identity choices and a lack of external guidance combined have made identity development a personal project for many emerging adults. Schwartz et al. (2005) proposed that emerging adults are required to 'individualize' their identities and life courses by taking the initiative to make their own decisions, such as forming relationships, gaining qualifications and employment experiences. They insinuated that emerging adults who address these issues in a proactive and agentic manner are likely to form a coherent sense of identity which can guide their life paths. In contrast, struggling to form coherent identities may prevent individuals from taking advantage of the opportunities presented within society resulting in adverse life effects.

Previous research suggests that the presence of an anxious and therefore over-controlling mother (Schneider et al., 2009) may interfere with their child's ability to form a coherent sense of identity during EA. This could then impact on the emerging adult's psychological wellbeing. Thus, it would benefit the profession to develop further insight into this population.

#### *1.4.3 Role of Parents*

Parents have been regarded as mediators between children and society in relation to identity as they transfer societal norms and values to their children and act as role models for identification (Schachter & Ventura, 2008).

O'Connor et al. (2011) investigated predictors of positive development (functional human behaviour and successful developmental outcomes) using a large sample of emerging adults. Strong parental relationships were found to be a main predictor of positive development in EA. The authors concluded that positive parental relationships may contribute to the development of the emerging adult's identity and trust in others, enabling them to explore their environment and adapt to change. Additionally, they claimed that strong parental relationships may contribute to the emerging adult's emotional control development, also resulting in positive development. It must be noted that, due to the quantitative nature of this study, such conclusions regarding the mechanisms of how strong parental relationships lead to positive development are speculative. There may be additional mechanisms or reasons than those identified in this research which could be explored and understood further through using qualitative methods.

According to Tanner (2006), recentering is a primary psychosocial process that occurs during EA which underlies the shift to adult identity. Recentering occurs in three stages. Initially, the emerging adult's relationships and roles (which previously involved them being dependent on others) shift towards relationships with shared and mutual power, and responsibility exists for giving as well as receiving support. Following this, various roles and relationships are explored to learn of available opportunities, such as relationships and careers. Finally, the emerging adult commits to long-term roles and responsibilities in adulthood. Tanner and Arnett (2009) suggested that it is during this process of recentering that emerging adults renegotiate parental relationships by becoming residentially and financially independent and moving towards making commitments to others, such as partners and their own children. Moving out of home initiates the development of such independence, with greater focus on relationships outside of the family of origin to enable individuals to begin forming families of their own. It is, therefore, of interest to explore this process in adult daughters of anxious mothers as this is an unresearched area involved in such a key time in identity development.

The task of separation-individuation in relation to identity development during EA has gathered much interest (Koepke & Denissen, 2012). Separation refers to a child's increasing awareness of their mother as a separate person and internalizing the mother's self. This acknowledgement of the mother having her own separate identity leads to the dissolution of a mother-child 'symbiotic-fusion', resulting in a physical separation between the pair. Individuation pertains to the child's increasing awareness of their own characteristics and identity (Koepke & Denissen, 2012). Blos' (1967) proposal of the separation-individuation process which occurs during EA therefore entails the emerging adult disengaging from their childhood perceptions of their parents as influential authority figures and shifting towards greater independence, self-regulation and responsibility.

During adolescence, parents become prepared for the change in power relations between them and their child during EA. They subsequently monitor their child less and promote their independence and autonomy. Prior to entering EA, adolescents begin to explore their identity options in environments which allow them to experience their increasing independence. Through autonomy-granting, parents support their child's expression of their own opinions and engagement with various identity options upon entering into EA (Luyckx, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Goossens & Berzonsky, 2007). This fosters a sense of personal agency which motivates emerging adults to explore all opportunities before making commitments congruent with their individuality (Schwartz et al., 2005). As they develop through EA, they increase their investment in adult roles and commitments. The outcome is the development of adult identity, enabling the engagement in adult-to-adult interaction between emerging adult and parent (Koepke & Denissen, 2012).

The above describes optimal identity development involving the separation-individuation process. It must be acknowledged that this trajectory may not apply to all emerging adults due to variations in their circumstances and contexts. Consequently, consideration has also been given to disrupted identity development in relation to parents during the separation-individuation process. Within this explanation, Koepke and Denissen (2012) included parents who are overprotective of their children, which is a common behaviour displayed by anxious mothers (Clarke, Cooper & Creswell, 2013). Such behaviour may affect the emerging adult's sense of agency and cause them to experience difficulty in ascertaining which identity options are best suited to their individual traits. Additionally, they may need to constantly justify and defend their choices to their overprotective parent/s who struggle with the departure from their influential authority figure and caregiver role. Consequently, the process of identity development is not solely an internal process within the emerging adult. It is also externally influenced, highlighting the pivotal role of parents in either enhancing or disrupting this process. The current study will therefore focus on EA and moving out as it involves

moving away from some external influences (home environment and parents) to new ones (new living environment, people and choices) which can all influence the identity development occurring during EA.

## **1.5 Moving Out of Home**

Now that the psychological and developmental processes of EA have been established, the process of moving out will now be discussed due to it being a common life event and subsequent transition during this life stage.

### *1.5.1 Statistical Information*

Many adults believe that individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 should move out of home to develop the self and personality, with particular emphasis on the development of independence (Bouchard, 2014). Recent United Kingdom (UK) government statistics revealed that 78% of female and 68% of male emerging adults no longer live at home (Office for National Statistics, 2012). They leave home for several reasons, including starting university, cohabiting, marriage, moving in with friends or relocating for employment purposes (Ribar, 2013). White (2002) proposed an additional factor of incongruence between an expectation to act as a contributing adult within the family household and parents' childlike treatment and power over them.

The average age in the UK for leaving home is 24.3 for males and 23.8 for females (Eurostat, 2009). Comparisons with previous years have demonstrated that this age has recently increased; in 2001, the median age of females leaving home in the UK was 20.3 and 22.4 for males (Billari, Philipov & Baizán, 2001). This delay is often attributed to an increase in time spent in education as well as a change in the traditional pathway into employment (Seiffge-Krenke, 2016).

It must be noted that these statistics are UK-specific. Research has found variations in the patterns and ages of moving out of home in emerging adults amongst European countries (Billari & Liefbroer, 2010) and cultures which prioritise the importance of family (Beaupré, Tucotte & Milan, 2006). Ethnic differences have also been found, with Black and Hispanic emerging adults being less likely to move out of home than Whites (Lei & South, 2016). It appears that differences exist among cultures and ethnicities in family connections and how the transition to emerging adult roles is managed.

### *1.5.2 Implications of Moving Out of Home for Emerging Adults*

Lenz (2000) described how many individuals entering into EA experience a significant life transition by moving out of home. Holdsworth and Morgan (2005) recognised how moving out of home represents a major life transition, but argued that individuals will have varying experiences of this process. Thus, not one experience of moving out of home is the same.

Arnett (2004) proposed that moving out presents emerging adults with opportunities for individuation, psychological growth and interacting with parents in more satisfying adult-to-adult ways. The transition of moving out may result in a period of instability with emerging adults having to adopt more independent lifestyles with greater responsibility. They may use their newly-found independence as an opportunity to explore their sense of self and sample different lifestyles (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006). Furthermore, this independence offers opportunity to develop autonomy, which subsequently promotes well-being (Kins, Beyers, Soenens & Vanstenkiste, 2009). In sum, moving out offers opportunity for a wealth of development and growth, whilst also being a potentially challenging period due to adapting to novel and previously-unknown lifestyles. It is for the above reasons that the process of moving out will be the focus of the current study.

Despite an emphasis on moving out as promoting autonomy, Aquilino (2006) argued that a contradiction exists between an emerging adult's autonomy and a continued level of dependency on their parents. Society promotes autonomy through granting emerging adults legal adult status. Moving out of home also fulfils their desire for freedom. In contrast, economic reality often results in a degree of dependency on parents in terms of financial (as well as emotional) support. This frequent alternating between needing separation and connection to parents lead to Norris and Tindale (1994) suggesting that parents be 'intimate at a distance'. They maintained that distance promotes separation and individuation, whereas intimacy ensures emotional and financial support from parents.

### *1.5.3 Parent-Child Relationship*

Seiffge-Krenke (2016) commented on how the separation-individuation process occurs from childhood onwards and is explained through various theoretical frameworks. Object relations theory (Mahler, Pine & Bergmann, 1975) accounts for separation between self and others through interpersonal differentiation, distancing and boundary implementation between parent and child. Separation-individuation continues throughout adolescence as highlighted by attachment theory. Adolescents find a balance between distance and closeness to parents, using them as a secure base during the exploration of their environment, in order to develop independence (Bowlby, 1973). Colarusso's (2000) concept of 'third individuation'

describes how this process persists during EA. This involves definition of the self and others through relationships with those other than primary objects. Physical and psychological separation from these childhood primary objects occurs through experiences with intimacy, relationships, work and education.

Such theories have implicated changes to the parent-child relationship as the child progresses through developmental stages. It has been acknowledged that this relationship is also affected by the emerging adult moving out of home. In a review of literature, Seiffge-Krenke (2016) remarked that moving out is associated with greater parental support, mutual respect and better parental relationships. Specific changes within the parent-child relationship have been researched further, namely support-giving, advice-seeking and renegotiation of the relationship. Upon entering into EA, they develop the ability and a sense of obligation to become a source of support for their parents, particularly their mothers (Del Corso & Lanz, 2013). Furthermore, parents begin to seek and accept advice from their adult child. Thus, there is a shift from a child-to-adult relationship to a more adult-to-adult relationship with greater mutuality, and an equal distribution of authority and provision of support and advice.

Bouchard's (2014) review on the impact of children leaving home on parents identified that negotiation of new relationship rules between parents and children is necessary following their departure. Dare's (2011) qualitative research aimed to provide further insight into this process, which was found to particularly apply to the mother-daughter relationship. This relationship requires renegotiation upon daughters leaving home to enable greater balance and equality. Mothers shared their experiences of how their daughters' developed appraisals of them as individuals with strengths and weakness, and how they began to express their expectations of how their mothers should behave in certain situations. This alluded to change within the mother-daughter relationship to account for the daughter's new emerging adult status. Thus, it is of interest to research the process of moving out of home as not only does it require adaptation to a new environment, but also to pre-existing familial relationships. It must, however, be noted that these studies focused on mothers' experiences. To date, the voice of mothers has been heard more in research than their daughters about such experiences. As adult daughters are the ones undertaking the move out of home, hearing their experiences is paramount.

## **1.6 Adapting to Transition**

Droseltis and Vignoles (2010) acknowledged that individuals form bonds with their residential environments. They hold meaning which results in attachments to the symbolic, social and cultural characteristics associated with them. Moving from one area to another

therefore disrupts these attachments. Chow and Healy (2008) claimed that this can affect how an individual adjusts to their new environment following a move.

Terrazas-Carrillo, Hong and Pace's (2014) qualitative study aimed to gain an understanding of emerging adults' adjustment to a new place after moving out of home. Participants shared what helped with their adjustment. A social network and subsequent social interaction in the new environment was deemed vital for healthy adjustment as it minimised feelings of isolation. From a cultural perspective, new environments encouraging personal experiences and the re-enactment of cultural traditions supported the adjustment process. Consequently, personal, social and cultural factors contributed to the process of renegotiating meanings attached to new environments. This informs that the presence of particular factors can facilitate attachment to new environments and subsequently support adjustment to the transition of moving out of home. Despite gaining such insight, the participants were all international students, making the transition more significant due to the departure from their country and culture of origin. This might also have had implications on identity during this adjustment process.

#### *1.6.1 Attachment*

With discussion on the significant transition of moving out of home come questions about adapting to such change. Schlossberg's transition theory (1981) highlighted that stable interpersonal support is a main factor required for successful adaptation to transition. Kahn's (1975; as cited in Anderson, Goodman & Schlossberg, 2011) influential concept of the convoy of social support claimed that the quality of an individual's social support determines their objective and subjective well-being, thus influencing their performance in daily life. Consequently, an individual's ability to adjust to a period of transition (such as moving out of home), which has the potential to create a sense of instability, may be enhanced by the presence of strong social support, including parental support.

Kenny and Rice (1975) claimed that parental attachment influences adjustment to a change in environment. Their renowned review of attachment models implicated secure parental attachment as providing a buffering effect against the challenges of coping with adjustment to change, as secure attachment provides a source of security and protection. Moreover, having secure attachment to a parent who permits and encourages autonomy and psychological growth results in an emotionally stable and self-reliant child (Bowlby, 1973).

It has been noted that such findings are dated and only a limited amount of recent research exists. For example, emerging adults with secure parental attachment reported less distress, upon separation, greater provision and availability of parental support and that their parents

promoted their independence upon moving out (Scharf, Mayseless, & Kivenson-Baron, 2004; Seiffge-Krenke, 2006). Furthermore, secure parental attachment lead to healthy levels of separation-individuation (lack of negative feelings about parental separation such as anxiety or guilt) which resulted in students' positive adjustment to university (Mattanah, Hancock & Brand, 2004). It must be noted that this research focussed specifically on emerging adults moving to university, whereas other markers of moving out of home in this age group exist and warrant investigation. Lifestyle, environment, opportunities and experiences may differ in situations others than moving out to attend university. The current study will therefore endeavour to fill this gap in research by exploring the experiences of adult daughters who have moved out of home for various reasons.

Research regarding insecure parental attachment has indicated contrasting outcomes. Preoccupied emerging adults experiencing anger and ambivalence towards their parents reported greater distress, homesickness and contact with their parents upon moving out than their securely attached counterparts (Bernier, Larose, & Whipple, 2005). Seiffge-Krenke (2016) concluded that this was due to a parent-child enmeshment; the blurring of psychological boundaries whereby there is difficulty in differentiating child from parent, resulting in the child being perceived as an extension of the parent (Goldner, Abir & Sachar, 2016). Enmeshment causes children to experience difficulty in gaining a healthy distance from their parents upon entering EA and moving out (Seiffge-Krenke, 2016).

Fellow-Smith (2000) argued that insecure attachments can occur when there is a disruption in parent-child attachment. She claimed that this disruption often occurs due to maladaptive parental behaviours which are commonly displayed by anxious parents. Despite such theories and research, Kenny and Rice (1995) emphasised that not all insecure parental attachments result in detrimental effects on children, thus affecting their adaptation to a period of transition. They stated that individuals with insecure parental attachments may experience other healthy developmental influences which can result in later adaptive functioning. This highlights the importance of using qualitative research to explore these experiences without being influenced by pre-existing assumptions about the possible negative implications of having an anxious mother. Qualitative research enables participants' narratives to be heard without being restricted by hypotheses or lead by questionnaires (Festen et al., 2014). It is hoped that the flexibility in inviting participants in the current study to share their experiences will enable both positive and negative experiences to be discussed.

### *1.6.2 Mental Health*

Quantitative research has investigated the impact of parental mental health on the leaving home transition. Emerging adults of parents with MHP reported greater difficulty in moving out of home and gaining distance from their family. It was established that, instead of promoting their autonomy, these parents placed a greater burden on their children about their home departure (Hussong & Chassin, 2002). This was especially the case with daughters, who were found to be more caring than sons (Radke-Yarrow, Zahn-Waxler, Richardson, Susman, & Martinez, 1994).

Similar findings emerged from a study which specifically focussed on anxiety-based MHP. Anxious mothers made greater attempts to maintain contact with their children after they had moved out. Although responses varied, some mothers exerted psychological control and used manipulation (such as inducing guilt or withdrawing love) to ensure close emotional and physical proximity to their children (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). This is likely to affect an emerging adult's autonomy development, with implications on their adjustment to the transition of moving out of home. Such a conclusion is, however, only tentative as this research only investigated mothers' experiences. Consequently, the current study aims to fill this gap by exploring adult daughters' experiences. This would be beneficial to Counselling Psychologists as they also work with this age group. Broadening their knowledge may enhance their understanding and work with such clients.

Emerging adults use their parents as a secure base for exploration and development of autonomy in their new environment (Ross & Fuentes, 2010). Previous research has suggested that anxious mothers lack in autonomy granting (Challacombe & Salkovskis, 2009) and promote avoidance (Flett, Hewitt, Oliver & Macdonald, 2002). It would therefore be of interest to explore how having an anxious mother can shape the experiences of adult daughters in moving out of home and adjusting to their new environment, independence and autonomy.

The study of the role of anxiety in adapting to transition is not just confined to parents. Last, Hansen and Franco (1997) examined the psychosocial functioning of anxious and non-anxious emerging adults as they adjusted to having moved out of home. Anxious individuals experienced greater difficulty during the moving out transition. The authors suggested that the role of avoidance in reducing the discomfort and distress associated with anxiety may account for this finding; anxious individuals might have struggled more with moving out due to being unable to continue using avoidance to prevent the anxiety that moving out of home might have evoked. As children of anxious parents are at greater risk of developing anxiety

themselves (Affrunti & Woodruff-Borden, 2015), the role of anxiety in adult children must also be considered due to its possible impact on adjusting to transitions, such as moving out.

### *1.6.3 Psychosocial Competence*

Psychosocial competence has previously been highlighted in relation to adapting to transition as it considers resilience as well as successful and challenging adaptation. Tyler (1978) built on traditional models of psychosocial competence as this can have significant implications on psychological and physical wellbeing (Tyler, Brome & Williams, 2013).

Tyler's (1978) renowned model of the configuration of individual human functioning proposed that successful adaptation also requires psychosocial competence, consisting of self-attitudes (positive self-evaluation, internal locus of control and sense of responsibility), world attitudes (optimism and trust) and behavioural attitudes (coping ability, realistic goal setting and planning, and the capacity to experience and build from success and failure). Such attitudes are formed during childhood and are influenced by one's environment and experiences in the world, including interpersonal relationships with family. An association has been proposed between having an anxious mother and children with low self-esteem (Ginsburg et al., 2005). This indicates that the presence of maternal anxiety could affect mother-child relationships, subsequently affecting adaptation to change.

## **1.7 Relevance to Counselling Psychology**

As parents play a central role throughout their children's development, the experience of adult daughters of anxious mothers undergoing major life change such as moving out of home is of great interest. This has been identified as an important area for Counselling Psychologists to gain an understanding of through research (Biggs, 2010; Cooper, 2010). Not only is this research area very relevant to the field of Counselling Psychology because it values subjective experience, but it is also a novel area of research as it explores the experiences of a specific, relatively un-researched population in the context of a particular transition. It can develop new knowledge in relation to anxiety, therapeutic and/or preventive interventions and working with this client group and their families.

Rescher (1993) noted that due to the complex nature of the world, all humans are diverse and have different experiences. Counselling Psychologists have an ethical commitment to provide the most appropriate support for their clients. This can be achieved through working collaboratively with them by focussing on their individual experience (Woolfe, 1996). Consequently, Counselling Psychologists are trained to develop a pluralistic approach to treatment (Hemsley, 2013). Thus, more needs to be known about the area of this current

study to enable the provision of treatment which engages with each individual's unique experiences.

There is growing recognition against a 'cookie-cutter' approach (O'Connor et al., 2012). The methodology used in this current study therefore makes it novel and relevant to Counselling Psychology as it provides in-depth, idiographic knowledge which can enrich developmental understanding, insight into journeys and transitions and any associated implications. It therefore acknowledges that experiences such as having an anxious mother and moving out of home will not be the same for everyone. It will enable exploration of what makes these experiences unique – a core feature of the ethos of Counselling Psychology.

The phenomenological commitment of the current study addresses the limitations of previous research regarding maternal anxiety, which has a tendency to evidence cause and effect and identify deficits. The subjective knowledge produced by the methodology of the current study will offer insight into the nature of participants' experiences. Enquiring about the nature of participants' experiences and meanings ascribed to them will produce a more in-depth form of knowledge. It can enrich what is already known by offering narratives of what experience is like and therefore broaden scope for further research in this area. Furthermore, the mission of Counselling Psychology encompasses mental health, wellbeing and living a full life (British Psychological Society, 2018). Being able to gain an understanding of individual experiences can inform therapeutic work which is closely aligned to the mission of Counselling Psychology.

Exploring this area can raise awareness and subsequently inform therapeutic work pertaining to supporting adult daughters of anxious mothers adapting to a period of change and transition. This is of particular importance to the field as adult daughters of anxious parents may, in turn, develop mental health difficulties themselves. This may have implications on developmental areas which are particularly prominent during EA, such as identity development, separation-individuation and relationship formation. Gaining further insight can benefit Counselling Psychologists as they address such issues at individual and systemic levels.

There has been a peak in people accessing mental health services between the ages of 20 and 34 (Health and Social Care Information Centre, 2014). Young women have been found to access and utilise mental health services more than young men (Wilson, 2013). Data from Improving Access to Psychological Therapy services found that, between 2012 and 2013, over 60,000 over their referrals were for females aged between 20 and 24, in comparison to less than 40,000 for males of this age range. When considering their referrals in relation to the general population, 3,410 females (per 100,000 of the population) aged between 20 and

24 were referred between 2012 and 2013 in comparison to 1,740 males (per 100,000 of the population; Health and Social Care Information Centre, 2014). Thus, findings arising from this research on this specific population will make any insight gained highly valuable. Counselling Psychologists lead the way in developing better understanding of their clients' difficulties. Any new understanding emerging from this current study could then be incorporated into practitioner training on working with adult daughters and their anxious mothers. Such work can involve therapeutic interventions, preventive work for 'at risk' clients in preparing for an upcoming move out of home, and training services who are closely involved with emerging adults (such as universities, employers and occupational health).

Existing theories and research have regarded mothers as playing a more pivotal role in children's development, care and upbringing than fathers (Teetsel et al., 2014). Moreover, mother-daughter relationships are characterised by greater intimacy and connection than mother-son relationships. Researching the former relationship is of key interest as it may or may not impact upon adult daughters' experiences of moving out of home, especially in a specific population as adult daughters of anxious mothers.

### **1.8 Rationale and Justification**

Currently, of the limited existing research, attention has been given to qualitatively exploring *anxious* and non-anxious *mothers'* experiences of their adult children moving out of home (Dare, 2011; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010), and *quantitatively* investigating the impact of parental mental health (*without* a specific focus on anxiety) on adult children moving out of home (Hussong & Chassin, 2002; Radke-Yarrow et al., 1994). Additionally, of the existing research examining parental MHP, few have regarded the influence of the child's developmental stage (Griffiths et al., 2012). Thus, no research currently exists specifically focussing on the subjective experiences of adult children of anxious mothers undergoing major life changes, such as moving out of home. Adult daughters are of particular interest in the current study because of their connection and intimate relationships with mothers (Bowlby, 1988; Onayli & Erdur-Baker, 2013).

Much focus has been allocated to investigating the impact of maternal anxiety on children, such as low self-esteem (Ginsburg et al., 2005), perfectionism (Mitchell, Broeren, Newall & Hudson, 2013), insecure attachment (Kerns et al., 2011; Nelson et al., 2007) and fear acquisition (Dubi, Rapee, Emerton & Schniering, 2008). Many of the findings are deficit-focused, which some may perceive as pathologising and blaming anxious mothers for the detrimental impact their anxiety may have on their children. Cooper (2010) argued that pathologising does not help to understand the challenges or difficulties which may be experienced. Additionally, much of this research has used quantitative methods to assess

cause and effect. Thus, there is a lack of narrative about adult children's experiences of having an anxious mother and how this shaped their experiences of moving out of home. An argument for the use of qualitative research to explore the research aim is therefore proposed. It enables participant narratives of their experiences to be heard, within which there will be similarities and differences. This is congruent with Counselling Psychology prioritising subjective experience (Rennie, 1994) and its pluralistic ethos. Lyotard (1984) argued that aiming for a general census results in failure, leading to acknowledgement that all individuals will have different experiences of the same phenomenon. Qualitative research will therefore enable participants' subjective experiences to be explored.

### **1.9 Research Aim**

Previous research (mostly quantitative) acknowledges the potential negative impact of having an anxious mother on children (Drake & Ginsburg, 2011; Ginsburg et al., 2005; Griffiths et al., 2012; Wood, 2006). EA is regarded as a difficult developmental stage due to the requirements of adapting to change such as moving out of home. Previous research has suggested that successful adaptation to transitions occurring in EA may be affected by the presence or lack of certain factors, such as a lack of family support (Kenny & Rice, 1975; Schlossberg, 1981; Terrazas-Carrillo et al., 2014) or presence of an insecure parent attachment (Mattanah et al., 2004; Scharf et al., 2005; Seiffge-Krenke, 2006). Such factors have been found to be associated with having an anxious parent. Whilst acknowledging this existing research, the research aim is not intended to be influenced by pre-existing assumptions and instead endeavours to encourage a non-judgmental viewpoint. It is hoped that this will enable an in-depth investigation of the below phenomenon at the subjective level. The research aim is to explore the experiences of moving out of home in adult daughters whose mothers struggled with anxiety. It will explore growing up with a mother who struggled with anxiety, deciding to move out of home, the process of moving out, the mother-daughter relationship during this process, adjusting to the moving out transition and adapting to life following this.

### **1.10 Summary**

This chapter involved a review of literature relating to anxious parenting, EA (including the role of identity), moving out of home and adapting to transition. Research and theories were offered as a rationale for the specific focus on adult daughters of anxious mothers. Existing research has been critiqued to provide a rationale for a study which aims to explore the experiences of moving out of home in adult daughters of anxious mothers. A justification for the relevance of this research to the field of Counselling Psychology has also been discussed.

## **2. Chapter Two: Methodology**

### **2.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter begins with explaining the use of a qualitative approach. Discussion will follow as to the philosophical underpinnings of the research paradigm, including the researcher's epistemological and ontological positioning. The chosen methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, will then be described and critiqued, in addition to a justification of why it was chosen over alternative approaches. Consideration will also be given to reflexivity, with personal and methodological reflections relevant to this research.

### **2.2 Qualitative versus Quantitative Perspectives**

Social phenomena are diverse and complex (Tuli, 2010). As a result, different research methodologies are used to gain insight into them: quantitative and qualitative. Most existing research in the field of maternal anxiety has adopted quantitative research methodologies which were often centred around investigating cause and effect (Budinger, Drazdowski & Ginsburg, 2013; Challacombe & Salkovskis, 2009; Schneider et al., 2009).

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, much research adopted positivist, quantitative methodologies due to their replicable research design, large sample sizes and generalisability of findings (Nelson, 2015). Quantitative methodologies emphasise objectivity over subjective experience (Baker, 2012). Thus, they seek objective, universal theories which explain the world or the people in it. Furthermore, they are deductive as they aim to test existing theories by gathering and analysing numerical data (Willig, 2013).

The interpretivist approach to social science research heavily criticised quantitative research. It was argued that the same research methods used to study chemistry and physics cannot also be successfully applied to study human behaviour (Willis, 2007). Quantitative methodologies have therefore been criticised for failing to acknowledge the individual, their context and personal meanings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Since the 1990s, it has been acknowledged that qualitative methodologies can provide a different type of knowledge to quantitative approaches which can significantly contribute to the field of Psychology (Petty, Thomson & Stewart, 2012).

Qualitative methodologies can vary in terms of epistemological positioning (this is dependent on research aims and methods used; Willig, 2013). They are inductive as they are concerned with generating new theories and/or knowledge. Qualitative methodologies focus on language and seek an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon through describing and

interpreting participant experiences in a context-specific setting (Ponterotto, 2005). They can therefore achieve transferable findings to individuals who share salient characteristics.

Currently, the extensive quantitative research on anxious mothers fails to provide insight into lived experience of the phenomenon. Furthermore, of the limited existing qualitative research in this area, few aim to explore and understand the experiences of offspring of these mothers. In enquiring about how adult daughters of anxious mothers experience moving out of home, the focus would be on understanding each participant's internal process and the meaning it holds for them. Thus, the aim is to gain in-depth understanding of their subjective experience and how they make sense of this, as opposed to a cause-and-effect relationship. Consequently, a qualitative methodology is most appropriate for the research question and aim (Ashworth, 2003).

Furthermore, Counselling Psychology adopts a pluralistic standpoint (McAteer, 2010). It acknowledges that the world is comprised of diverse people, each with their own unique experiences, attitudes and beliefs (Morrow, 2007). The researcher recognises that each adult daughter's experience will vary due to their experiences being context-specific. A qualitative approach is therefore most congruent with the acknowledgement of uniqueness of individual experience and that variations amongst experiences would subsequently emerge. Such an approach is concerned with the 'the naturalistic description or interpretation of phenomena in terms of meanings these have for the people experiencing them' (Langdrige, 2007, pp.2). As such, a qualitative approach is more aligned with the paradigms and methods associated with Counselling Psychology practice (which prioritises subjective experience).

### **2.3 Philosophical Underpinnings**

Crotty (1998) argued that choosing an appropriate research methodology is dependent upon the research paradigm. This study aimed to shift away from investigating the cause and effect and detrimental consequences of adapting to a transition in the context of having an anxious mother. Instead, the interest was in gaining an in-depth understanding of this experience; what was it like moving out of home for adult daughters of anxious mothers? This can be achieved by getting as close to each participant's world as possible (Tuli, 2010). Although a homogenous sample was sought, each of these individuals would differ in their unique experiences, contexts (such as family situation, culture, social environment and reason for moving out) and meaning-making. It was endeavoured to choose a research methodology which allowed participant freedom and flexibility in sharing their unique subjective experiences (which could include positive as well as negative experiences) so that the researcher could gain insight into the world and infer meaning. As such,

consideration of ontology, epistemology and methodology were essential as they shape and define the nature of an inquiry.

### 2.3.1 *Ontology*

Ontology, the nature of reality and being, is a continuum from realism to relativism. A realist ontology is concerned with the existence of one true reality, involving cause-and-effect relationships between objects (Willig, 2013). There is an emphasis on discovering what is 'out there' through the use of conventional scientific methodologies, namely quantitative (Ponterotto, 2005). In contrast, a relativist ontology advocates that multiple, constructed realities exist which are dependent upon variations in contexts, social worlds, individual experiences and perceptions. Qualitative methodologies are often adopted to explore, interpret and describe socially-constructed realities (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

The focus of this study is on experience and how meaning is made of these experiences. The researcher does not believe in one universal truth. No inferences are made about whether what participants are reporting is 'true' in the 'outside world'. Instead, the researcher believes that variation amongst participant experiences will exist due to their uniqueness and differences in how they make sense of their experiences. As such, this study assumes a relativist ontological position (Willig, 2008).

### 2.3.2 *Epistemology*

Epistemology is concerned with the theory of knowledge. It involves the relationship between knowledge belonging to the participant and the attempt to gain understanding of this knowledge by the researcher (Ponterotto, 2005). Willig (2013) recommended the consideration of three questions to ascertain one's epistemological standpoint.

- 1) *What kind of knowledge is aimed to be produced?* The aim of this study is to explore the subjective experience of individuals, the way they attribute meaning to moving out of home as an adult daughter of an anxious mother. There is no intention to capture one universal reality that is generalizable to all. There are subjective, multiple realities which are socially, culturally, historically and linguistically constructed; 'What is true for you may not be true for me – it all depends on our perspective' (Finlay, 2006, p. 18). Consequently, the aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon in its unique context, as opposed to generalising to a population.
- 2) *What assumptions are made about the world?* The researcher's assumptions about the world and experiences are influenced by the acknowledgement that each individual has their own unique experiences. This is reflective of a phenomenological

point of view. The 'same' event can be experienced in many different ways (Willig, 2013), as no one person and their experiences are the same.

- 3) *How is the role of the researcher understood?* Most qualitative methodologies acknowledge the implications and attachment of the researcher to the research process, but the extent varies for each. It is acknowledged that the participant-researcher relationship affects participant responses and subsequent findings. (Finlay, 2006). Furthermore, the researcher's values, beliefs, own experiences and subjectivity all influence their interpretation of participant experiences. Although the researcher attempts to bracket these off, a 'pure' description of participant experience is not possible. Thus, knowledge acquired through such research is regarded as having been co-constructed by participant and researcher (Petty et al., 2012). Finlay (2002a) argued that, as meaning-making occurs within specific social contexts, interpretations of meaning may vary between researchers.

These answers inform that the epistemological standpoint of the researcher is as an interpretative phenomenologist. This is differentiated from a descriptive phenomenologist whereby experience is captured as it is presented at face-value. Instead, it seeks to understand meaning of an experience by stepping out of it and reflecting on its wider meanings in social, cultural or theoretical contexts (Willig, 2013). Combining the researcher's ontological and epistemological standpoints reflects a study that aims to generate knowledge about the quality of an experience (i.e. what it is like to have that experience) and its meaning within a wider context (Willig, 2013).

### *2.3.3 Methodological Considerations*

Methodology pertains to how knowledge is gained. It is guided by ontological and epistemological principles (Tuli, 2010). This research adopted Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, 1996) as its methodological approach. It is a qualitative methodology with philosophical underpinnings in phenomenology and hermeneutics (Eatough & Smith, 2017).

Phenomenology, founded by Edmund Husserl, is the study of human experience. It focuses on how humans understand their experience in the world (Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy & Sixsmith, 2013). 'Experience' is understood from a 'phenomenological reality' as the reality of an experience is subjective, not objective. Thus, phenomenology involves understanding subjective experience in terms of how an individual perceives and talks about objects and events, as opposed to using objective statements or pre-existing conceptual and scientific criteria to understand objects or events (Smith & Eatough, 2012).

Intentionality is a central concept in Husserl's view of consciousness. Husserl remarked that 'all experience is experience of something' (Langdrige, 2007, p. 15) and that there is an intentional relationship between the phenomenon being experienced (noema) and the way it is experienced (noesis). Husserl's approach to phenomenological inquiry involves bracketing all past knowledge, assumptions and preconceptions to focus solely on describing the phenomenon under investigation to subsequently achieve 'phenomenological purity' (Husserl, 1931).

In contrast, Martin Heidegger moved away from the descriptive and transcendental focus of Husserl, towards a more interpretive position. Heidegger focussed more on the ontological question of existence. He proposed that humans are constantly interpreting as they are always existing in the world as opposed to looking in to the world from the outside (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Heidegger therefore believed that one's being cannot be separated from the world. Heidegger's approach to phenomenological inquiry does not view description and interpretation as two distinct entities, but rather that description is a form of interpretation (Willig, 2013). It is argued that it is impossible to understand a phenomenon without making an interpretation (Smith, 2007). This resulted in a hermeneutic turn, with a focus on interpretation instead of simple description; there was a move away from phenomenology which uncovers meanings, towards hermeneutic inquiry which focusses on how individuals interpret and make sense of their experience (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty & Hendry, 2011).

The focus on an interpretive process was particularly relevant to the main objective of this research to understand how individuals make sense of their experience in the world. Heidegger's work highlighted how phenomenology is essentially looking for meaning. Such meaning may initially be hidden, and interpretation will enable it to be uncovered (Langdrige, 2008). Interpretation therefore provides the possibility of uncovering an individual's original intended meanings (Smith et al., 2009) which reflects the essence of this study. Consequently, the approach was interpretive (IPA; Smith, 1996) as opposed to descriptive.

## **2.4 Rationale for Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

### *2.4.1 Consideration of Alternative Approaches*

Grounded theory (GT; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was considered as an alternative approach because, as with IPA, it aims to explore the experiences of individuals within the context of their own worlds (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

When GT first emerged, it was epistemologically positioned closest to positivism as it viewed reality as objective and obtainable through the data (Glaser, 1992). More recently, Charmaz (2006) introduced a different version of GT which emphasised the epistemological position of social constructionism. This version argues that categories and theories do not emerge from the data, but that they are constructed by the researcher through his or her interaction with the data. Thus, it studies *how* and *why* an individual constructs meanings and actions in specific situations. Focussing on how people talk about the world and their experiences means that access could not be gained to the quality of an individual's unique experience by understanding the meaning of an experience and *what* it is *like* (i.e. the aim of this study).

GT involves identifying categories of meaning from the data and making links and establishing relationships between these categories. Thus, the goal is to generate a theory or explanatory framework to understand the phenomenon being studied (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Instead, this study endeavoured to adopt an exploratory approach of an undefined phenomenon which could be understood as an experience of this particular group of participants. Thus, GT was inappropriate in fulfilling the aim of this research as, instead of developing a theory, the research question requires prioritising subjective and intersubjective experiences. Moreover, it has been highlighted how research concerned with understanding the meaning of a particular experience is descriptive (and subsequently interpretative) in its nature rather than explanatory, and therefore is not appropriate in contributing to the development of a theory or explanatory framework. Willig (2013) proposed that research questions about the nature of experience are more applicable to be addressed through phenomenological research methods. Specifically, the interpretative element of IPA is integral in addressing this study's research question. Interpretations of participants' rich descriptions would enable the researcher to understand what it means to be an adult daughter of an anxious mother experiencing a move out of home (in their particular world).

Discourse analysis (DA; Potter & Wetherell, 1987) was also considered because, as with IPA, it acknowledges the role of language in analysis. It is concerned with how language is used to construct reality and involves close reading of participants' experiential accounts of their worlds. DA does not use people's language to gain access to their worlds, but instead examines how people use language to construct reality and what is gained from this (Coyle, 2012).

Unlike DA, IPA aims to bring to light internal processes which participants may not be aware of (Lyons, 2007). This study aimed to gain insight into participants' thoughts, beliefs and meaning-making as opposed to how they construct reality through language. As DA places

greater emphasis on language as a social phenomenon (Starks & Trinidad, 2007) instead of prioritizing the subjective and intersubjective experiences of moving out of home in adult daughters of anxious mothers, it was deemed unsuitable for the research aims of this study. This study was better suited to an approach with an epistemological standpoint whereby, through an interpretative methodology, access to a participant's inner world is enabled. Such an approach would be IPA.

#### *2.4.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)*

IPA is a qualitative, experiential research approach which has increased in popularity over the past twenty years. It aims for an in-depth exploration of how participants make sense of their lived experiences, and the meanings they ascribe to such experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Brocki and Wearden (2006) stated that 'human beings are not passive perceivers of an objective reality, but rather that they come to interpret and understand their world by formulating their own biographical stories into a form that makes sense to them' (p. 88). Consequently, each individual creates their own unique meaning of their personal and social worlds. As a result, IPA focusses on participant experiences, understandings, perceptions and views in an attempt to gain insight in to how they make sense of their experience (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005).

The philosophical underpinnings of IPA relate to phenomenology and hermeneutics (Smith & Eatough, 2012). Bäckström and Sundin (2007) remarked on the different processes involved in phenomenology and hermeneutics: the former reveals meaning, whereas the latter interprets meaning. Thus, IPA is viewed as having 'inter-subjective understanding' as it involves both descriptive and interpretive elements (Standing, 2009).

IPA is often compared to more descriptive phenomenological approaches. Barbour (2007) argued that descriptive phenomenological approaches produce accounts which are limited to 'bearing witness' to lived experiences. In contrast, IPA is capable of 'bringing to light' the meaning-making which phenomenology endeavours to attain. This is possible through the researcher being actively involved in the research process through reflecting upon and interpreting the initial phenomenological description of experience (Pringle et al., 2011). This is congruent with the researcher's epistemological standpoint; it is impossible for the researcher to gain direct access to participant experiences. Instead, what is produced is an interpretation of this experience (Willig, 2008). Thus, the phenomenon is embraced as it presents itself to interpretation by participant and researcher (i.e. knowledge of a phenomenon is co-constructed by participant and researcher). This will now be discussed further.

IPA involves a 'double hermeneutic' as the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant, who is trying to make sense of their experience i.e. transitioning out of home as an adult daughter of a mother who struggled with anxiety (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The researcher is engaged in a dual role: a human being who, as is the case with the participant, is trying to make sense of the world, but also that the researcher is only able to access the participant's world through the participant's own accounts of their experience. The latter involves the researcher's own conceptions to make sense of the participant's world (Smith et al., 2009). This therefore highlights the role of the researcher in the research process, and how the researcher's values and experiences may influence the findings.

IPA is also influenced by idiography, which is concerned with the particular and unique. This opposes nomothetic enquiries which aim to generate general claims about a population, resulting in universal laws or theories about human behaviour (Smith et al., 2009). Wadeley, Birch and Malim (1997) regarded IPA's idiographic nature as 'addressing the wholeness and uniqueness of the individual' (p. 21). Thus, the aim is a full, in-depth understanding of each individual's experience, acknowledging that variation will exist amongst all participants (Shaw, Burton, Borg Xuereb, Gibson & Lane, 2014). It will therefore be expected that examples of convergence and divergence will emerge amongst participants' experiences. IPA's emphasis on idiography enables all participants' voices to be heard, revealing unique aspects about each of their experiences of moving out of home as adult daughters of anxious mothers.

IPA's idiographic nature is particularly important when exploring the diverse yet personal area of moving out of home in adult daughters of anxious mothers. The in-depth exploration of experiences and contexts is a main feature of IPA. This helps to highlight the unique perspectives of the phenomenon under exploration (Smith et al., 2009).

In sum, this study aims to understand meanings of an experience within a specific context: adult daughters of anxious mothers' experiences of moving out of home. This is an experiential phenomenon with various meanings ascribed to it across individuals. It is hoped that, through the use of IPA, the researcher will produce meaningful findings for the practice of Counselling Psychology, which will also make a valuable contribution towards enhancing knowledge of this area within the profession.

#### *2.4.3 Critique of IPA*

IPA is regarded as a flexible approach as it enables creativity and freedom with regards to participants, contexts and data collection methods (Willig, 2013). Pringle et al. (2011) maintained that IPA is essentially 'evidence-based' as findings are based on the words of

participants and the direct use of quotes. This highlights IPA's emphasis on individual experience.

Despite providing in-depth understanding of experience, the idiographic nature of IPA has been criticised for not enabling generalisability due to its subjectivity (Wadeley et al., 1997). Reid et al. (2005) responded by claiming that, although the purpose of IPA is not to generalise, similarities across individual accounts can be identified within IPA. Furthermore, although IPA does not aim to create one universal 'Theory', findings can contribute to 'theory' in a broader sense. Caldwell (2008) asserted that individual insight and subsequent 'theoretical dialogue' resulting from IPA research can be contextualised on a wider scale to provide a more wholesome level of insight. Thus, there is an emphasis on theoretical transferability over empirical generalizability (Smith et al., 2009).

The smaller sample sizes used in IPA have been compared with that of other approaches (Barbour, 2007). Smith et al. (2009) argued against this as a potential limitation, stating that it enables richer data to emerge as researchers are able to undertake a more in-depth analysis.

Similarly, Pringle et al. (2011) noted an apparent criticism of the homogenous sampling adopted by IPA as it can't inform a broader context due to its unique and/or specific inclusion criteria. Smith et al. (2009) alleged that readers should be able to determine transferability of findings providing research is detailed, transparent and relevant to existing literature.

## **2.5 Reflexivity**

The theory of double hermeneutics highlights the significance of the researcher's role in the research process and in the construction of meaning. This notion is referred to as reflexivity. Reflexivity acknowledges the influence of the researcher's values, beliefs and experiences on the findings (McLeod, 2011). IPA involves examining both oneself as the researcher and the research relationship at every stage of the research process (Smith et al., 2009). Despite advocating that the researcher adopts a transparent approach to the research and recommending the use of a reflective diary (to increase awareness of biases in thinking which may impact on data interpretation), some limitations of reflexivity have been identified.

Shaw (2010) speculated that being overly cautious with regard to reflexivity can result in a lack of focus and attention to the researcher and the phenomenon under investigation. She viewed reflexivity as paramount but advocated that it should not be the objective of the research.

Finlay (2002b) remarked that the researcher's preoccupation with their own emotions and experiences can skew research findings in an undesirable direction. Consequently, as a researcher, I aimed for a balance between self-awareness and not becoming too consumed by the self so that participants' voices were then neglected. For example, I became conscious of my reaction when contemplating theme names. I began to question how my own anxious mother would feel about the names, and subsequently wanted to ensure they did not sound too negative or 'blamey'. I noticed how my initial theme name choices used very tentative and safe language, which subsequently shifted away from participants' language, towards my own. I realised these provisional names were not capturing the essence of my participants' experiences. Personal therapy and my reflective diary enabled personal reflection on this, away from this process of analysis. It brought my focus and attention back to my main aim of creating theme names which captured participants' stories. It reminded me that it was my role as researcher to give a voice to my participants. Sharing their narratives (regardless of how they made me feel) was my duty as a researcher.

Furthermore, Willig (2008) highlighted how qualitative research can be shaped and influenced by the researcher. I feel that it is vital to acknowledge where my curiosity and interest in this research topic originated from. I would consider myself an adult daughter of an anxious mother. I have gained awareness of how this shaped some of my life decisions and my adjustment to moving out of home. My personal interest in this area of research was first reflected in my MSc research on maternal behaviours in anxious mothers. This drew my attention to how deficit-focussed research on anxious mothers appeared to be. I experienced sadness that children of anxious mothers were being grouped into a category which, I felt, projected a message which set them up for future struggles with potential impacts on their functioning. I felt it was not sufficient to simply make generalisations about such a group without gaining a deeper understanding into their experience. What was it actually like? How did it get to a stage with such detrimental effects? What about any positive experiences? I felt frustrated as I witnessed my own thriving development and life satisfaction, albeit with occasional challenges. As I reflected back on my own experiences, I felt pride and satisfaction at what I had achieved and who I had become. I wondered if I was not alone in being an adult daughter of an anxious mother whose experiences were not all 'doom and gloom' in its entirety. Therein became my desire to develop a study which enabled in-depth and flexible exploration of participant experiences (with scope for positive as well as negative ones).

Additionally, I am one of three adult children. Through discussion with my siblings it became evident that each of our experiences of our anxious mother varied considerably. We felt that our unique experiences somewhat contributed to our very different life decisions. This

demonstrated to me that no two people's experiences of the same phenomenon are the same. This enhanced my curiosity further to explore the subjective experiences of other adult daughters of anxious mothers.

A methodological reflection is offered regarding the interview process. During my earlier interviews, I was often pulled in to my role as therapist. This was partly due to my training and concurrent role as Trainee Counselling Psychologist, but also because the research topic represented an area of personal familiarity through my own similar experiences. I felt particularly drawn to parts of my participants' experiences that had similar undertones to mine. This was discussed in research supervision and personal therapy. It heightened the importance of the depth of my enquiry in ensuring that I understood the nature and extent of participants' experiences instead of making an assumption based on my own, potentially similar experiences.

I recognised that, during the interview and data analysis processes, it was necessary for me to continually be aware of my own belief systems and experiences and the possible effects these might have. I identified these beliefs and experiences as my own, and focussed on how the transition of moving out of home is experienced by other adult daughters of anxious mothers. To aid me in this process, I kept a personal reflective diary to seek out my thoughts and reactions to the research and to develop and awareness of potential biases in my thinking so that this would not impact upon data interpretation. I also recorded anything that stood out immediately after interviews (such as emotional responses or non-verbal expressions) and any thoughts, comments or questions that arose for me about the phenomenon in question. This enabled me to respect IPA's idiographic commitment through bracketing off any potentially contaminating thoughts from my own experiences, preconceptions, earlier interviews and analysis of earlier transcripts.

## **2.6 Summary**

IPA was selected as the most appropriate qualitative methodology for the research question as it was most consistent with the research aim. IPA acknowledges that subjective versions of reality exist; it is interested in unique experiences and believes these to be real, however, the researcher is limited in fully making sense of participants' experiences, and so a need arises to interpret data. It is accepted that the inner world of an adult daughter of an anxious mother cannot be accessed directly in an empirical manner through observation, but rather that the researcher's interpretation of a participant's experience may provide knowledge and insight into it (Willig, 2013). Thus, a shared meaning is co-constructed between researcher and participants. Overall, IPA was deemed a suitable fit with the research question and researcher's ontological and epistemological standpoints. It enabled knowledge to be

generated about the quality of participants' unique experiences and meanings within their varying contexts.

### **3. Chapter Three: Overview of Research Design and Method of Analysis**

#### **3.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the research design and process. It explains why certain decisions were made relating to issues such as participant inclusion criteria and recruitment. It also gives consideration to issues concerning ethical practice, confidentiality and validity. This chapter is concluded with a step-by-step account of the analytic process.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

##### *3.2.1 Participant Selection*

IPA advocates selecting a purposive homogenous sample (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). A sample size of eight participants was used. This was sufficient for an IPA study due to its emphasis on each individual participant's experiences (Smith & Eatough, 2007).

Eight individuals who met the following inclusion criteria were sought as participants: female, between the ages of 18 and 25 years, perceived that their mother struggled with anxiety during their childhood and had moved out of home within the past twelve months or more.

As discussed previously, research and theories of child development implicate the primary importance of mothers in shaping children's development (Fingerman, Kim, Birditt & Zarit, 2016; Fingerman, Miller, Birditt & Zarit, 2009; Freud, 1936; Winnicott, 1958). Additionally, mothers and fathers provide different types of support to their children as a result of gender role differences, thus resulting in different relationships with their children (Srinivasan, Scholte & Dubas, 2006). Consequently, this research only focussed on mothers. Additionally, the parent-child relationship has been found to be affected by the gender of both parents and children (Roest, Dubas & Gerris, 2010). Washburn (1994) postulated that differences exist between mother-daughter and mother-son relationships. He explained that the former is often stronger and longer-lasting due to the gender identity that exists between mothers and daughters. Daughters also have the greatest connection, intimacy and interdependence with mothers (Bowlby, 1988). As a result, this research only focussed on adult daughters.

The age range of 18-25 years encompasses the life stage of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004). Emerging adulthood was selected as it involves various milestones, including identity development (Kenny & Rice, 1995), separation from parents followed by individuation (Koepeke & Denisse, 2012), psychosocial maturation (Greenberger & Sørensen, 1974) and, for some, transitioning out of home (Office for National Statistics, 2012). It was therefore of

interest and relevance to seek participants of this age range to gain insight into their experiences during this time of development and transition.

It was not necessary for participants' mothers to have received an anxiety disorder diagnosis. No objective 'proof' was required; as this research adopts a qualitative methodology, participants' experiences of their mothers as anxious were accepted as their reality. Due to the idiographic nature of IPA, a definition of what constituted anxiety was not required. It was accepted that each participant's experience of their mother as anxious would be unique to them. Instead, participants provided examples of how they perceived their mothers as anxious. These included: having panic attacks, being unable to leave the house, unable to answer the door or telephone, taking medication to calm her anxiety level, excessive worrying about worst case scenarios relating to health and safety, taking sleeping tablets as worrying keeps her awake at night, obsessive cleaning and tidying, doing things in a set order, not letting daughter partake in an activity where she would sweat due to fears of her becoming unwell, obsessive checking, and not letting teenage daughter walk down the street by herself due to excessive worrying about her safety.

A minimum timeframe of twelve months for having moved out of home was included as it was felt that this enabled a sufficient amount of time to have begun to adjust to such transition (Petschauer & Wallace, 2005).

No specific reasons for moving out of home were required. Focussing on a particular reason for moving out could have resulted in the issue of limitability by potentially only attracting a particular type of participant. For example, of the UK university population in 2010-2011, 69% were from middle-class backgrounds, whereas 31% were from working-class backgrounds (Bathmaker, Ingram & Waller, 2013). Therefore, moving out of home to attend university might have limited the inclusion of participants from low socioeconomic status backgrounds who might not have been able to afford university and/or university accommodation fees. Additionally, emerging adult children of anxious and overcontrolling mothers have a reduced likelihood of home-leaving (Brenning, Soenens, van Petegem & Kins, 2017). These mothers may not permit their children to move out to attend university, so the sample might have only captured the less-affected adult daughters. For these reasons, any markers of moving out were welcomed by this research, such as moving out to start a new job, attending university, moving abroad, moving in with friends, buying a property etc.

Although the current study aimed to capture participants who moved out of home for a multitude of reasons, a majority moved out to attend university. Only three participants moved out for alternative reasons. This may be a reflection of the current socioeconomic climate. Since 1993, the rate of home ownership in the United Kingdom for those aged 20-29

has declined from 50% to 20% (Office for National Statistics, 2012). Moreover, a fifth of emerging adults' monthly outgoings are often more than their average monthly income. They reported feeling as though they didn't earn enough to be able to rent or buy their own accommodation, causing them to remain living in their family home (Office for National Statistics, 2012). This is congruent with Arnett's (2004) argument for introducing the EA lifestage, as remaining in the family home for longer due to being unable to afford to move out contributes to the delayed transition to adulthood. A recruitment bias might also account for many participants' reason for moving out of home being to attend university. It is possible that the recruitment and advertising locations resulted in only a certain population of emerging adult daughters (such as young, white, middle-class females) accessing the recruitment posters. Such a demographic has a greater likelihood to attend university than others (Bathmaker et al., 2013).

### *3.2.2. Advertising and Recruitment*

The recruitment process involved advertising the recruitment poster (Appendix A) on noticeboards (in coffee shops, fitness centres, bars, pubs, restaurants and libraries) and on social media websites (such as Facebook) frequently accessed by emerging adults. Flyering of the recruitment poster took place by hand in areas of London and Surrey populated by large numbers of emerging adults.

This was not a research study focussing on cultural differences or factors in experiences of moving out of home in adult daughters of anxious mothers. As such, the current study did not seek participants from a particular culture. As recruitment occurred in England, it was anticipated that participants would be from a British culture (born and raised and/or currently residing in England). It is, however, acknowledged that the recruitment methods might have biased the sampling towards particular cultures. For example, advertising in more affluent areas of London and Surrey might not have captured participants from certain cultures. Additionally, advertising in particular public locations (such as bars and pubs) might have prevented participants from certain cultures who do not frequent such venues from seeing the recruitment poster.

The recruitment poster provided the researcher's email address and research telephone number for potential participants to enquire further and/or express their willingness to participate. Upon being contacted by potential participants, the researcher responded using the same method of communication as participants. All were offered a phone call with the researcher to ask any questions or share any concerns they might have had prior to the interview.

Ten potential participants contacted the researcher. After responding to all, two participants made no further contact. The remaining eight participants each engaged in a telephone conversation with the researcher to have any questions answered. They all confirmed their understanding of what was required of them as participants and expressed their willingness to participate.

Much speculation exists as to the ethics and implications of paying research participants. It has been questioned whether paying participants in qualitative research compromises the key ethical principle of informed consent, as some low income participants may feel that the financial incentive is too good to refuse (Head, 2009). There is also concern that participants may falsely provide information to meet eligibility criteria for the research. Alternatively, participants may provide accounts of what they believe the researcher may want to know as opposed to sharing authentic accounts of their true personal beliefs or experiences as they are receiving payment for participating (McKeganey, 2001). Moreover, this qualitative research involved interviews whereby participants gave insight into their world by sharing some very personal experiences with the researcher. The question that was therefore raised pertained to how much payment these experiences would be worth. The concern was that participants might have felt that their experiences had been devalued by receiving what they deemed to have been an insufficient payment for their participation. It was for these reasons that the researcher refrained from paying participants for taking part in this research. Participants were, however, reimbursed for their travel expenses as this form of payment has been distinguished from research participation payment. Payment to reimburse travel expenses has been viewed as more ethically acceptable as participants would be 'out of pocket' for travelling to participate in research (Russel, Moralejo & Burgess, 2000).

Ashworth (2013) described the notion of a gift relationship in relation to exchange theory of social behaviourists; when one gives a gift, the other is obliged to reciprocate. He argued that, from an evolutionary perspective, it would be detrimental to an individual to give a 'free gift' without reciprocity. It was acknowledged that, in this research, participants would be giving a gift through offering their time, being willing to help out a researcher by participating, sharing their personal experiences and letting the researcher into their world during the interview. Thus, they were essentially letting go of their sole ownership of these experiences. This raised the question as to what the researcher could offer them in return. It was made explicit in the recruitment material that the researcher would endeavour to make participants feel safe after having undertaken an interview with them. Participants were offered opportunities both pre-and post-interview to ask any questions. Additionally, the researcher actively listened throughout the interview process and provided them with a comprehensive five-page list of support services if required. Participants were informed that their

involvement in this research would help to contribute to a greater understanding of the phenomenon of moving out of home in adult daughters of mothers who struggled with anxiety. Consequently, the knowledge and understanding derived from this research through the help of the participants would aid in informing the profession of Counselling Psychology in relation to effectively supporting such individuals who may be struggling with this transition. Participants were therefore made aware that the knowledge gained from their interviews would be used to help enhance future research, Counselling Psychologists' understanding of this area and subsequently their work with clients.

### *3.2.3. Ethical Considerations*

Before the research commenced, ethical approval was obtained from the Department of Psychology Research Ethics Committee at City, University of London (Appendix B). The researcher aimed to protect all participants by adhering to the Division of Counselling Psychology's Professional Practice Guidelines (British Psychological Society, 2005) and the Standards of Proficiency for Practitioner Psychologists (Health and Care Professions Council, 2015).

Prior to the interviews commencing, participants were provided with an information sheet (Appendix C) outlining the purpose of the study and explaining that all data would remain anonymous (participants were assigned a pseudonym). Informed consent (Appendix D) was also obtained whereby participants were informed that they have the right to withdraw at any time. Participants were invited to ask questions prior to the interviews. After the interview, participants received a debrief form (Appendix E) thanking them for their participation and providing them with a list of support services to access if necessary.

A risk assessment was also considered to ensure that participants and researcher were safe from harm. Prior to each interview, the researcher gave the address and telephone number of the location of the interview to a professional contact. The researcher phoned this contact pre- and post-interview to confirm their safety. Only the researcher and participant were present in the interview room. When conducting interviews at City, University of London, only interview rooms with Security staff present in a building were used as their support could be accessed if any health and safety risk issues arose.

On a few occasions, some participants became tearful during the interview process due to discussion of personal experiences. The researcher offered them a chance to compose themselves before continuing with the interview. Participants were also reminded that, if they felt uncomfortable and did not wish to continue with the interview, they could withdraw from

the study at any time without having to provide a justification. The debrief form signposted participants to a range of relevant support services.

#### *3.2.4. Participant Confidentiality*

Confidentiality was ensured by assigning a pseudonym to all participants. The researcher was the only individual involved in the transcription process. Any identifiable information such as names and locations were removed from transcripts. All participant consent forms were stored securely and separately from the interview audio recordings and transcripts to prevent participant identifiers being matched to the data. All interviews were recorded on a digital audio recorder (Philips Voice Tracer DVT1100). Following each interview, the audio recording was immediately transferred onto a password-protected HP laptop computer belonging to and accessed only by the researcher. All audio recordings and transcripts were stored in password-protected folders on this laptop. All consent forms and paper copies of transcripts were stored in a secure locked filing cabinet.

#### *3.2.5. Interview Setting*

All interviews were scheduled at a mutually convenient time, date and location for each participant. All participants were given the choice for the interview to take place in a private room at City, University of London, or to suggest an alternative location. Most interviews occurred in a private room at the Northampton Square campus of City, University of London. Private rooms were booked in advance and a sign was placed on the door politely reminding people not to enter as an interview was taking place.

Due to geographical location, a few participants requested that I travel to them for the interview to take place in a private room at their home address. Together, we arranged a time for the interview when no-one else was present at their house to maximise their privacy.

#### *3.2.6. Semi-Structured Interview*

A semi-structured interview method of data collection was used to enable the researcher to hear each participant talk about their experiences. Due to the potentially sensitive nature of these experiences, the one-to-one, face-to-face format of these interviews aimed to enable the researcher and participant to build rapport, and for the participant to feel able to freely share their experiences. It was intended that this in turn would enhance the researcher's understanding of what the participant was communicating to them.

Interviewing is regarded as a flexible research tool which is not associated with one particular theory, and nor does it subscribe to one epistemological orientation (Breakwell,

2006). Kvale and Brinkmann (2014) proposed that interviews can be regarded from two different perspectives. Firstly, interviews are a neutral process whereby the researcher identifies objective truths from the participant's account of their experience. The aim is therefore to capture the reality from the participant's responses. The participant is viewed as possessing knowledge and it is the researcher's role to stand back objectively during the interview process to ensure the data is not influenced or contaminated by them. Secondly, from the interpretive perspective, the focus of the interview is on the interaction between the researcher and participant. Consequently, participant responses are no longer objective truths which require quantifying, but meaningful relations which require interpreting.

Willig (2013) raises the concern of a power imbalance between participant and researcher during interviews. She postulates that, although it is possible for rapport to be established quickly, the rapport between researcher and participant can be adversely affected by certain factors (such as the presence of an audio recorder or the researcher asking the interview questions) which reminds participants of the researcher's role and thus position of power. Cotterill (1992) argued that participants may respond to this perceived power imbalance by withholding information or refusing to answer certain questions as means of exercising their control over the interview process. The researcher adhered to Willig's (2013) suggestion of adopting a sensitive and ethical approach to building rapport with participants. Moreover, the researcher ensured they did not abuse their power and the informal features of an interview (such as open-ended questions) to elicit participants sharing too much about their experiences than they would normally feel comfortable with.

An additional issue is raised by Willig (2013) relates to linguistic variability in interviews. She described how the same term may have different meanings for all participants. As the focus of semi-structured interviewing is on meaning, it is imperative to ascertain what the participants mean by their responses, regardless of the language they choose to describe them. The researcher recorded the interviews (upon obtaining informed consent) and listened and re-listened to participants' responses. This helped to understand meanings which were contextualized by aspects of verbal communication, such as intonation, voice tone etc.

Each semi-structured interview with participants lasted approximately ninety minutes. Smith and Osborn (2008) identified how a semi-structured interview aims to build rapport with the participant, and subsequently analyses how each participant perceives and understands their experiences. The necessity of creating an interview schedule prior to conducting semi-structured interviews has been emphasised. Smith and Osborn (2008) explained how using an interview schedule to guide the interview enhances reliability as it reduces variation

between interviews. An interview schedule was used to encourage participants to talk freely and openly about their experiences through the use of open-ended questions (Appendix F).

Wimpenny and Gass (2000) highlighted that interview questions are formulated by the researcher through prior knowledge and experience of the phenomenon being researched. The researcher's own epistemological standpoint may also determine the content of the interview questions. Thus, a 'conceptual map of the phenomenon' already exists which may reduce the level of psychological depth that can be attained during the interview process. Consequently, the creation of an interview schedule was accomplished through combination of the researcher's familiarity with relevant literature, and discussion with her academic supervisor who is an experienced IPA researcher. Interview questions did not endeavour to explore or test a theory. Leading questions were avoided, as were any questions based on assumptions or preconceptions. This enabled a 'fresh look' at the phenomenon being explored. The aim of interview questions was to gain insight into the quality of participants' experiences and their meaning-making. In research supervision, potential interview questions were discussed which aimed to facilitate exploration of the experiences of moving out of home in adult daughters of mothers who struggled with anxiety. In accordance with Smith and Osborn's (2008) recommendation, a funnelling technique was used to generate the interview schedule. It began with a more general question which was sufficient to encourage participants to talk about the subject of interest. More specific questions then followed which focused on more sensitive and difficult content. The use of this technique allowed for participants to initially provide the researcher with their own views relating to the interview topic, before funnelling them into more specific questions related to the research area.

The first interview was used as a pilot to determine suitability of the interview schedule, and to gauge whether the questions provided sufficient opportunity for participants to express themselves and share their experiences. The participant undertaking the pilot interview was aware of this and that their data might not be included in the research. No significant concerns arose from this interview, and it was deemed unnecessary to make any amendments to the interview schedule. The interview was therefore incorporated into the main volume of data.

### *3.2.7. Sample*

Eight female participants were recruited, interviewed and their data analysed for this research. Table 1 overleaf provides basic demographic information about the sample group.

Table 1

Summary of sample characteristics

Participant <sup>2</sup>	Age	Ethnicity/Nationality	Age when moved out of home	Reason for moving out of home
Anna	24	White/American	22	Internship
Emily	22	White/Italian	19	University
Hannah	21	White/Italian	19	University
Keira	25	White/British	18	University
Niya	24	Asian/Indian	23	Bought property
Rachel	23	White/British	18	Work
Sophie	24	White/British	18	University
Tara	25	White/British	18	University

<sup>2</sup> All participants have been assigned pseudonyms to preserve anonymity

### 3.3 Validity

Assessing validity in qualitative research differs to that of quantitative research due to their ontological and epistemological differences (Baumgarten, 2012).

Yardley (2000) presented criteria for assessing the quality and validity of qualitative research. This was comprised of four principles, as discussed below:

1) **Sensitivity to context.** This is demonstrated by careful management at all stages of research, such as methodology and the interpersonal nature of the interview process (Yardley, 2000). During the interviews, the researcher remained open-minded and non-judgemental, and showed empathy particularly when sensitive and emotive topics were shared. Open-ended questions were adopted to prevent any leading during interviews, thus enhancing the focus on each participant's unique subjective experience. As some participant demographic information was obtained, the researcher was aware of the differences in these areas (such as nationality and reason for moving out). When such information was provided, the researcher enquired further to gain further insight into their specific context. This helped in the researcher's understanding and awareness of each participant's individual context.

During the analysis process, the researcher prioritised the voices of all participants by including numerous direct quotes of participants sharing their stories. Pringle et al. (2011) argued that this enables IPA to have an 'evidence-based' format, as findings are based on

words of participants. The researcher ensured that any interpretations were tentative, and remained cautious over the choice of language used to convey such interpretations.

Literature relevant to the topic of research was reviewed, which revealed a gap in providing a narrative around the experience of moving out of home as an adult daughter of a mother who struggled with anxiety.

2) **Commitment and rigour.** Commitment is ensured through being fully engaged with the participant during the interview process, followed by attentiveness to the analysis of interviews (Yardley, 2000). During the interview process, the participant became the researcher's sole focus. If the researcher became uncertain or required clarity over any aspect of the participant's narrative, she carefully and sensitively asked the participant to elaborate. This prevented her from making any assumptions or judgements. Repeated listening to interview recordings and reading and re-reading of interview transcripts maximised the researcher's immersion in the research process.

Rigour pertains to the thoroughness of the study at all stages of the research process (Smith et al., 2009). The participant sample inclusion criteria, which was homogenous in many ways, was carefully considered in relation to the research question. A rationale was provided for choosing such a sample.

The researcher had several discussions with her research supervisor about conducting thorough, in-depth interviews. She was aware of her clinical role in a therapeutic setting vs. her research role. Research supervision ensured that she remained in the latter role whilst maintaining empathy and listening attentively. Research supervision was also utilised to review analysis to ensure an appropriate balance between idiographic engagement and meaningful interpretations made by the researcher.

3) **Transparency and coherence.** This refers to the overall clarity of research (Yardley, 2000). Transparency was enhanced by providing detailed accounts of participant selection, construction of the interview schedule using a funnelling technique (Smith & Osborn, 2008), and the steps used during the analysis process. The researcher aimed for a corresponding fit between the research question, theoretical assumptions of IPA, and her own epistemological and ontological positioning. An awareness of the researcher's role in IPA was maintained at all times, and has been demonstrated in the reflexivity section.

Regular research supervision was scheduled to review, discuss and critique the analysis progress. Smith et al. (2009) asserted that this is somewhat equivalent to an 'independent audit' which enhances validity. The researcher kept a 'paper trail' (consisting of annotations,

photographs to document analysis attempts and drafts) to enhance both transparency and the supervisor's insight into the research progress.

**4) Impact and importance.** This relates to the usefulness and importance of the research (Yardley, 2000). From the outset, the researcher endeavoured to ensure the relevance of the research to the field of Counselling Psychology. It is hoped that the knowledge and understanding derived from the research through the help of participants will help to inform the profession of Counselling Psychology in relation to effectively supporting such individuals who may be struggling with the transition of moving out of home. Exploring this area can raise awareness and subsequently inform therapeutic work pertaining to supporting adult daughters of anxious mothers adapting to a period of change and transition. The clinical relevance of this research will be elaborated upon in the discussion section.

### **3.4 Analysis**

As a novice IPA researcher, I adhered to the six main steps as outlined by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), as outlined below:

- 1) **Reading and re-reading.** Initially, original transcripts were read and re-read to actively engage with the data. This enabled the researcher to enter the participant's world as the participant became the sole focus of analysis. Any initial observations or ideas about the transcript were bracketed off and written down in a notebook to ensure the researcher remained focused on the data. Listening to the audio recording whilst reading the transcript helped to increase the researcher's familiarity with the participant's attempt to make sense of their experience as significant or contradictory segments of the interview were identified during this stage.
- 2) **Initial noting.** Notes were made in left-hand margins pertaining to the semantic meaning and language of the interview responses. This process increased the researcher's familiarity with the transcript. The aim was to produce a comprehensive set of exploratory comments on the data, relating to anything of interest to the researcher. Although this was not a prescriptive process, Smith et al. (2009) recommended that the focus should be on descriptive (referring to objects or experiences which hold meaning to the participant and make up their lived world), linguistic (how language is used to present content and meaning, such as metaphors, repetition, pauses and laughter) and conceptual (reflections, questions or interpretations arisen through reading participant descriptions) comments. Comments on similarities, differences, echoes, amplifications and contradictions were included (Appendix G).

- 3) **Developing emergent themes.** Here, there was an analytic shift away from the transcript and towards the initial notes. Themes described by each section were given descriptive labels in right-hand margins (Appendix G). Emergent themes reflected a process of description and interpretation. During this stage, the researcher remained aware of the hermeneutic circle as to avoid any previously identified emergent themes influencing further themes - 'the part is interpreted in relation to the whole; the whole is interpreted in relation to the part' (Smith et al., 2009, p.92). Thus, during the analysis process, interpretation moves away from looking at what participants are saying on a descriptive, linguistic and conceptual level (initial notes), towards the relationship between accounts within the same interview (emergent themes), to then patterns across all interviews at the end of the analytic process (superordinate and subordinate themes), which represents the 'whole'.
- 4) **Searching for connections across emergent themes.** This was a process of clustering themes. Upon developing emergent themes, the researcher then established connections or patterns between them. She was keen to develop a method of doing this which corresponded to her preference for practical and visual ways of working. Consequently, all themes were typed up, printed out and cut up into individual strips. A large floor space was used to display all strips of paper so that the researcher could begin to explore how certain themes related to each other (Appendix H). Spatial representation (Smith et al., 2009) was particularly effective in identifying similar and opposing patterns, which enabled them to be brought together. Following the clustering of themes, the data was recorded in a table format including direct quotes from the participant (Appendix I).
- 5) **Moving to the next case.** Following the creation of this table, the process was repeated for all interview transcripts. The researcher remained aware of the idiographic nature of IPA and ensured that she bracketed off ideas which emerged from previous participants' interview analyses. This was achieved by ensuring that she followed her method closely and remained attentive and reflective throughout. Whenever possible, she used different floor space as to avoid reminders of the themes which emerged from previous cases. A separate table of themes was created for each participant.
- 6) **Looking for patterns across cases.** This process involved the emergence of superordinate themes relevant to the entire participant group. This occurred by printing out each participant's table of themes and cutting out each theme. Smith et al.'s (2009) concepts of abstraction (identifying patterns between themes), subsumption (an emergent theme becomes a superordinate theme and brings

together any closely related themes) and polarization (identifying opposing relationships between themes) were especially helpful in the formation of superordinate and subordinate themes. Subordinate themes were placed in individual envelopes with sticky notes denoting the provisional theme name. The superordinate themes were represented by grouping envelopes of subordinate themes together using a large floor space (Appendix J). The result was five superordinate themes which were reduced to four, each with three or four subordinate themes (Appendix K). This stage was finalised by the creation of a table of these superordinate and subordinate themes using various participant quotes.

### **3.5 Summary**

The researcher endeavoured to remain close to the research question and methodology during the research design process. The aim was to produce a thorough and valid piece of research which was informative and could contribute to the field of Counselling Psychology. The research design process has been documented in detail during this chapter to ensure transparency. The data analysis was found to be quite a substantial process. This was approached with great attention, with the researcher remaining reflective and aware of the idiographic element of IPA. The intention was to enable a rich data analysis which captured participants' lived experiences.

## 4. Chapter Four: Analysis

### 4.1 Chapter Overview

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of eight interviews led to the development of four superordinate themes, each with three or four subordinate themes. These are represented below.

*Table 2*

Table of superordinate and subordinate themes

<b>Superordinate Themes</b>	<b>Subordinate Themes</b>
Feeling Stuck	<i>Lack of Growth</i> <i>Restrictions</i> <i>Limit Reached</i>
From Togetherness to Separation	<i>Together</i> <i>Moving Out: Struggles of Being Apart</i> <i>Child or Adult? Renegotiation of Roles</i> <i>Change in Relationship</i>
What is Out There	<i>Experiencing a Social World</i> <i>Learning to Fill the Void</i> <i>A Life Belonging to Me</i>
Identity	<i>Role of Mother in Shaping Who I Am</i> <i>Searching for Myself</i> <i>Change in Me</i> <i>From Losing the Mother I Knew, to the Return of Mother</i>

Rich and meaningful data was obtained from all interviews. Themes more prevalent and closely related to the research question will be presented and discussed. Extracts from participant interviews will be provided as quotes, followed by the researcher's commentary and interpretation.

Minimal detail relating to participants' lives remain in the quotes. The purpose of those included is to provide clarity when following the analysis. Any identifiable information has been omitted and replaced with a code outlined overleaf in a table consisting of all transcript codes. Following each quote, the participant's pseudonym, page number and line number are noted in parentheses to enable clarity and transparency, such as (Anna 1/1-2).

Table 3

Table explaining codes from participant transcripts

Code	Meaning
[name]	Identifiable information (such as name of area) has been replaced to maintain anonymity
[vf]	Change in voice tone was noted and will be elaborated upon further in the commentary
...	Brief pause of less than 2 seconds
[2s]	Pause lasting 2 seconds
[3s]	Pause lasting 3 seconds
[4s]	Pause lasting 4 seconds

## 4.2 Superordinate Theme One: Feeling Stuck

This theme represents how most participants felt stuck and held back from moving forward both with living at home with their mothers and in terms of their development. There is an awareness that most were not flourishing or developing at the expected rate, through comparison with their peers. They felt restricted in some of their experiences and ways of living the life they wanted. Additionally, living at home created an unpleasant home environment and mother-daughter dynamic which some struggled to tolerate. Consequently, this sense of stagnation and feeling at a dead-end with life at home fuelled a desire and subsequent decision to move out of home, eventually enabling them to become unstuck.

### 4.2.1 Lack of Growth

Nearly all participants remarked on a lack of personal growth due to minimal self-insight, life experience, and knowledge acquisition. There is an emphasis on a lack of learning about both themselves and the world.

*'I saw her like [4s] I never saw anybody have like a [2s] I never saw an adult who was really close to me have like a fear, an anxiety and work through it in a healthy way and I don't...yeah, it was...so it became this big, unmanageable, scary, horrible thing for me.'* (Sophie 11/4-7)

Repeating 'never' and use of 'anybody' highlights Sophie's lack of exposure to adult modelling of healthy anxiety management strategies. Using such absolutes suggests that life

was always this particular way. Perhaps the lack of exposure to alternatives combined with the adults around her only adopting unhealthy strategies contributed to her lack of learning and progression. Using four consecutive adjectives to describe her anxiety amplifies the difficulty it caused her, and thus its power. Frequent references to her anxiety as 'it' implicates her perceptions of anxiety as something she was up against, as opposed to it becoming a part of her. This gives a sense of it existing as a third entity amongst herself and her mother. She lacked guidance from her mother in relation to learning anxiety management strategies. 'Unmanageable' highlights how this possibly left Sophie feeling disappointed, let down, or even frustrated. Furthermore, 'it' is a detached label for anxiety. This combined with her hesitant voice tone and pauses suggest she might be experiencing discomfort at recognising the difficulties she developed as a result of lacking in learning from her mother.

*'So, when I came here I didn't have any experience of life. So, I started from zero. From the basic things in the house to, you know, meeting people and having actual life experiences, especially with people.'* (Hannah 12/11-13)

Frequently referring to herself as 'naïve' prior to moving out and the use of 'didn't have any' and 'zero' portray Hannah missing out on life experiences, enhancing a sense of lack of growth. This extract highlights the significance of her transition of moving out of home; moving from somewhere with limited experiences and subsequently hindered growth and development, to moving to a new environment where the process of acquiring knowledge and experiences could begin. A comparison can be made between living at home under her mother's influence vs. living away from her and taking control of her personal growth, as indicated by her use of 'I'. It is questioned how Hannah felt about having originally lived a life which caused her to miss out on experiences. Not having the 'basic things' hints that she lacked a foundation for which to build upon as she developed.

A few participants also noted how their lack of learning was due to their focus being directed towards their mothers, highlighting how prioritising them resulted in minimal time to develop and grow up.

*'I think the biggest thing is the feeling like I had to manage her, and help her, and be like her carer kind of thing. That was like the main thing. Erm, it meant that I didn't really have any time for me to grow and also that I never got shown how to manage feelings of anxiety and fear and all that kind of stuff in a healthy way.'* (Sophie 10/11-15)

This is Sophie's second quote mentioning 'healthy'. This pathologising highlights her perception of anxiety as being detrimental and causing harm. Sophie felt as though she had no choice but to care for her mother, who became her priority. Her description of how she

helped her seems an exhaustive list for a child to undertake. There is a dual sense of loss of focus on her growth which pertains to this role-reversal. Firstly, adopting a carer role resulted in the loss of focus on Sophie's own development. Secondly, her mother did not adhere to Sophie's possible expectation to model behaviours. Her mother appeared unable to fulfil this need of teaching her healthy emotion regulation strategies which might have prevented her from flourishing. The implications of this in terms of her learning are questioned. It is significant that Sophie later experienced struggles with alcohol and substance misuse as this became her strategy for regulating different emotional states.

One implication of lacking in learning and development was that some participants felt behind their peers.

*'I could not do most of the things that they did.'* (Emily 6/16-17)

This extract evokes a sense of Emily's awareness of her peers developing whilst she was held back by her mother. The discrepancy between the capabilities of her and her peers highlight Emily's delay.

*'I said "No, no, no. Maybe we can play another game?", because I was so worried about being unwell because of my mum's reaction. And they would look at me like "Come on, what's wrong with you? Like, you don't want to have fun? You don't want to erm be around and run and enjoy the outdoor activities?''* (Emily 5/10-13)

It is of interest that Emily's peers began to notice such differences through their questioning of her. 'I always felt like the outsider' (Emily 5/15) suggests how an outcome of this was feeling separate from and not belonging amongst them. Her friendships were also affected, resulting in social isolation; 'I only had one or two friends' (Emily 6/18). It is striking that Emily's panic and desperation in her attempt to avoid playing a game mirrored her mother's responses. Her mother's anxiety about her wellbeing developed into Emily also worrying about it. Her mother's anxiety and influence pulled Emily away from social interaction and fed in to her own anxiety. Instead of growing and developing in accordance to the expected social milestones in childhood, she was growing anxiety instead.

Furthermore, participants commented on their awareness of their peers developing as individuals, yet they had to reach this stage themselves. Consequently, they felt stuck in progressing with self-exploration.

*'So, looking at my friends they were all very erm bright and great personalities, and then I was still a bit behind because, obviously, if you cannot explore then how can you create your own self, right?'* (Hannah 7/4-7)

Hannah was so focussed on adhering to her parents' expectations to portray a 'perfect daughter' (an important value shared by both parents in her native country) that she became unable to invest in developing her own self. It appears that she perceived self-development as a process requiring exploration and thought prior to creation. Being unable to engage in the exploratory stage of this process highlights her developmental stagnation during adolescence. It is questioned how Hannah navigated this part of her life whilst feeling behind in relation to her identity.

*'I met this person at the gym and erm, he was a drug dealer but I didn't know. So, I wanted to be his friend and I ended up being his friend. Then obviously we did not hang out together anymore because...at the core, he is a completely different person and I had to experience that and maybe erm have that wrong and dangerous experience of being involved in something like that in order to learn that that was wrong for me... I was not able to think "Okay, maybe I have to be suspicious about this person or maybe this situation" or "I have to pay attention".' (Hannah 28/12-18)*

It is of relevance that Hannah proceeded to befriend different types of people. Some friendships developed whereas others ended. This highlights how she initially lacked social awareness which led to the formation of some poor quality, unsuitable friendships. She only began to grow and develop in her awareness of others after having bad experiences (proving her mother's fears right). This may reflect her feeling that her identity development was delayed; not knowing who she was might have resulted in her being uncertain of who to assimilate with when creating friendships.

#### 4.2.2 Restrictions

A majority of participants provided various examples of experiencing restrictions imposed by their mothers whilst growing up. They felt prohibited in terms of available opportunities and held back from gaining new experiences as they grew older. Some identified their mother's role in preventing engagement in certain activities. This evokes a sense of their mothers limiting their childhood and adolescent experiences.

*'In my head, it was better to me to sit erm still and not do anything so my mum wouldn't worry and there would be no consequences for my actions. So, I stopped socialising and erm...being interested in doing erm more, more things.' (Emily 15/16-19)*

'Consequences' involve unpleasant outcomes following decisions, emphasising Emily's need to choose wisely. She opted for the choice (not based on her desires) which caused her mother the least anxiety. Here, a child made sacrifices and missed out on aspects of their

childhood to alleviate their mother's anxiety. The decision left Emily confined to the extent that she kept her physical movement restricted. It depicts a child who has become imprisoned by a fear of the consequences delivered by their mother, implicating her power. A parallel is drawn between Emily and a baby whose physical movement is limited as they are swaddled by their mother keeping them close for protection. A contrast is also visualized: an alive, vibrant and engaged child vs. a child who is like a doll, simply existing instead of living, without any interest or zest for life. Emily is associated with the latter which highlights the implications of such restrictions on her quality of life.

Similarly, Keira and Rachel believe that their mothers caused their social experiences to be limited.

*'I wanted someone to come over and she wouldn't let them come over...'* (Keira 10/1)

Keira tried to push back against her mother. She had the confidence to attempt to action her desire. Her mother's response to a child with desires of its own was to reject and prevent them being fulfilled. Perhaps she was unable to consider the needs and desires of others.

*'Like, we went on a family holiday, but she was [2s] still funny with people. Like, she...I remember not being too...I remember always being afraid to invite my friends over.'* (Rachel 27/5-8)

In contrast, Rachel appeared more accepting by admitting defeat. She became overpowered by her own fear. 'Funny' implies a struggle to make sense of her mother's anxious behaviour. Her pause and hesitant vocal tone suggest that her mother's behaviour continues to cause her discomfort, further emphasising this power.

Both acknowledge their mothers as barriers to having friends over. As with Emily, such restriction highlights a mother's power over her child. A clash of wills is depicted which is endured differently by both mother and child.

A greater number linked their restrictions with specific behaviours displayed by their mothers. Some spoke of their overprotective environments preventing them from experiencing and learning about the world. Others found their mothers to be controlling in their behaviour, hindering their autonomy. Perhaps this restriction prevented individuation, including the formation of thoughts and opinions belonging to themselves.

*'Because she would control everything [laughs]. She would tell me how to feel about certain things, or she would tell me how [stutters] I was supposed to manage things.'* (Hannah 6/14-16)

Hannah's nervous laughter and stuttering indicate discomfort at being prevented from experiencing her own cognitions and affect. Her mother's direct instructing meant that Hannah was not responsible for her ways of thinking, feeling and behaviour. This might have informed her that her own thoughts and feelings weren't important, possibly impairing her recognition and expression of them.

*'We weren't allowed to be independent until we were older than say maybe most people our age. Erm, it's like the reins were kept on for a lot longer because our Mum worried.'* (Tara 10/8-10)

The reins reference depicts Tara's mother as being in control. A powerful visual is formed of a toddler, who is inquisitive and keen to explore, wearing harness reins held by their mother. This would enable the mother to manage their child's whereabouts by constant awareness of their location and pulling them back to her if venturing too far. Being treated as a dependent child for so long and feeling outside of a social norm would result in consequences, such as a lack of a sense of belonging ('I was the one who stood out' [Tara 32/24]), or developing beliefs about the world as dangerous.

*'I felt in a cage because you feel in a cage. You feel that you can't do anything on your own. You feel weak. You feel powerless.'* (Emily 17/15-16)

Similar to Tara's reins reference, Emily talks about a cage in relation to her restriction. Both symbolise their mother's totalitarian authority. Emily's comparison to feeling trapped in a cage portrays being in a restricted environment lacking in comfort and warmth. There is a sense of helplessness, of being held against one's will with no way out. It seems that this affected her self-belief. Her meaning-making of this experience highlights her powerlessness, subsequently resulting in being reliant on others. She appeared to rely and become dependent on her mother for the things she felt unable to do. As a result of these living conditions created by her mother, Emily became defeated physically and psychologically. It is therefore all the more striking that she was later able to increase her strength to be able to move out.

*'I was just thinking to myself "Oh God. How long am I here for?". So, at first, first couple of days it felt just like being back for university holidays. But then, as the weeks wore on...you know, Mum moaning about the housework and erm [2s] not being clean and tidy erm ...it just really grated. I was like "Oh God. I just can't wait to get out of here".'* (Keira 25/9-13)

Keira's questioning and uncertainty over the duration of remaining time at home enhanced her sense of feeling stuck and trapped. 'Wore on' and 'moaning' portrays a difficult

atmosphere between the pair, with unhappiness coming from both. Keira's exclamation of her eagerness to leave home highlights her longing to escape from this environment. Living away from home enabled her to recognise what is and isn't important to her; the unclean and untidy environments which distressed her mother did not affect Keira. This reflects her separation-individuation process, with her developing a persona separate to and not influenced by her mother.

Living under such confined conditions lead to feelings of frustration and an intention to break out and gain freedom. For some, this was met with a sense of desperation. Many also spoke about wanting to gain distance. This suggests how they might have felt that they needed some space from their mothers, and that gaining distance from them ensured that these restrictions could not be implemented from afar.

#### *4.2.3 Limit Reached*

For many participants, living with their mothers felt increasingly difficult to endure. Some struggled to tolerate challenges they encountered with having a mother who struggled with anxiety. Each participant had their own limits for what they felt they could tolerate before needing to move out. A few had now reached these limits, illustrating an increasingly intense and uncomfortable atmosphere between mother and daughter, which lead to them moving out.

*'Erm...I think it just got a bit too much at home. Realistically, it just wasn't liveable...'* (Niya 13/15-16)

Niya explains how her mother impacted on the home environment which, in turn, became so intense that it was unliveable. 'Wasn't liveable' portrays an environment which has the potential to be so suppressing or depriving that it would stop one from being alive. Perhaps she experienced living at home as being a drain on the resources that kept her alive, enhancing her desire to move out.

*'I just found her too much, especially with the worrying and anxiety.'*  
(Tara 17/21-22)

Tara specifically identified her mother and her anxiety as being difficult to tolerate. It is possible that this impacted more on their relationship than home environment.

Both used 'too much', suggesting that they endured living with their mothers up until a point, after which became too difficult to tolerate. There is, however, a subtle difference in their reasoning. Both only acknowledge that their tolerance had exceeded its threshold once it

reached such an extreme. It is hypothesised that living alongside and managing their mothers depleted their resources, leaving them feeling fatigued.

*'So the season started in like October or November and I would have finished school in June or whatever, and I think I was already done with being at home with her 'cos I hadn't been used to that...I hadn't really had much experience being at home full-time.'* (Rachel, 25/19-22)

The short timeframe to reach Rachel's limit signifies the possible challenging nature of living with her mother. 'That' highlights how adjusting to the transition from boarding school to permanently residing with her mother was a particular type of experience which set it apart from adjusting to living with other family members. This may be attributed to developing an awareness of the reality and extent of her mother's struggles. 'Full-time' evokes a sense of Rachel's time at home with her mother feeling similar to a job. A distinction can be made between a job and relationship; the former relates to duties and obligation, with the latter pertaining to the maintenance of a connection consisting of enjoyment and mutual benefits. Rachel's experience with her mother seemed more associated with the former.

The impact on family relationships (including mothers) was mentioned as an additional factor contributing to participants reaching their limit of living at home.

*'It was impacting my relationship with my parents quite a bit, and impacting my relationship with my brother. I didn't want that. I didn't want it to become a negative relationship and it was going down that road...so I think the best decision was for me to move.'* (Niya 14/3-6)

Repeating 'I didn't want' indicates strength in Niya's desire to maintain good relations. It is of interest that she felt moving was the best response to this situation. This may be reflected in her explaining how the sharing and discussion of feelings were not encouraged within her family. Perhaps she felt unable to share her concerns and address this issue with them. Her decision enhanced her desperation about the family situation. She was prepared to defy cultural tradition of females only moving out upon getting married in an effort to salvage family relations. Although this highlights her family values, it is striking that she appeared to be the only family member who took action. This may reflect her role within the family; the 'fixer' who makes personal sacrifices for their family.

*'I became really irritable towards her. I would get really irritated. Erm, a lot of arguments I guess when you come home and have to try and justify where you've been and what you've been doing.'* (Niya 16/8-10)

Niya elaborates on the situation, and her repetition and choice of language ('really' and 'a lot') emphasise her increasing intolerance. She depicts an interrogation process, with her mother as an authority figure trying to elicit information from the potentially guilty party. Escalation to arguments, irritation and defensive positions suggest that her mother might have disapproved of her lifestyle, which appeared to deviate from her traditional cultural lifestyle. The multiple occurrences of this scenario indicate that she continued to defy her mother. Although this might have given her a sense of control, having to justify her whereabouts during her late teenage years and early twenties might have decreased her independence and autonomy.

### **4.3 Superordinate Theme Two: From Togetherness to Separation**

This theme describes a change experienced by almost all participants pertaining to the relationship with their mothers. Initially, participants spoke of the closeness to their mothers, and how it felt as though they existed together. Their closeness was signified by each struggling to be apart from the other. Insight is provided into the experience of the mother-daughter relationship, with several participants noting confusion over child and adult roles. The process of moving out appears to have triggered re-negotiation of their relationship, which then involved two adults. Experiences were shared regarding the variation in perceived changes to their relationship as a result of moving out of home.

#### *4.3.1 Together*

Some participants described themselves and their mothers as existing together; they were a duo, lived closely alongside each other, and therefore struggled to be apart.

*'So it was just very me and her against the world, and she relied really heavily on me.'* (Sophie 1/11-12)

Her mother requiring her support implies that Sophie held the strength for them as they encountered life, uniting them. 'Really heavily' highlights the weight of her mother's reliance. Perhaps she found it exhausting to invest her resources in her mother instead of on her own life and development as an emerging adult.

*'She wanted us to be in this little club, just me and her against the world.'* (Sophie 8/13-14)

'Little club' enhances the exclusiveness of their mother-daughter dyad. Both extracts depict the pair coming together as one in an 'us vs. them' scenario. As a pair, they had to fight or defend against others in the world. Stating herself before her mother identifies Sophie's more prominent role in the pair.

Furthermore, participants described living so closely to their mothers that they almost felt tied to them. This closeness related to ensuring they maintained a degree of proximal, as well as emotional, closeness.

*'I think it's because I [2s] I guess I almost felt like I was so...I...in a way I lived so closely with her that I could almost feel it coming off her.'* (Rachel 10/15-17)

Rachel's shifting body posture, hesitation and tentative language evoke a sense of discomfort about her feeling emotionally intertwined with her mother. Perhaps she felt that this was not the nature of a mother-child relationship. Rachel 'living with' her mother, and not the other way around, suggests that she would often enter into her mother's world and became the dominant half of their duo. The implications of her mother needing her presence and being so emotionally attuned to her are questioned. Rachel might not have been able to focus on her own life and development whilst being so immersed in her mother's. This could have minimised attending to her own needs and receiving support. Additionally, feeling her mother's anxiety coming off her emphasises how it was too strong for her mother to contain internally. This reflects the power of anxiety and her mother's struggles in managing it.

*'Where I moved to was determined by how close I was to my Mum. I had to reduce my Mum's anxiety quite a bit. I think [3s] it was not feasible for me to move like towards the other end of where we lived. It would just be too far.'* (Niya 25/20-23)

Maintaining close proximity was an absolute priority. Describing a distanced move as not possible for just her (and not her mother too) raises the issue of it perhaps being Niya who needed closeness to her mother. Niya's sole responsibility for her mother is striking, which might account for her not feeling able to be far apart from her. Niya may not have been able to fully experience her own life upon moving whilst ensuring close involvement with her mother as she continued to centre her life and her decisions around her.

As a result of their relationship and attachment to one another, participants spoke of difficulties of being apart encountered by both themselves and their mothers.

*'That was her big thing...it was that we wouldn't be able to see each other...erm, and what would she do without me and she couldn't bear to be alone and...yeah, she couldn't cope.'* (Sophie 19/20-22)

Shifting from 'we' to 'she' suggests that these concerns related to the implications of separation on solely her mother, highlighting her reliance and dependency on Sophie. Her strong ability to give her mother a purpose and security vs. her mother's vulnerability depicts Sophie as taking on a more parental role in their relationship. Her mother needed Sophie's

presence to function, as though she was keeping her mother alive. Her mother was so accustomed to unity with her daughter, that separation evoked a sense of pain, desperation and panic that is echoed throughout this extract. Implicating her daughter in any potential struggles she might experience could have affected Sophie's adjustment to moving out.

*'I would get really homesick and panicky being away from her. It was like this horrible enmeshment thing.'* (Sophie 2/12-13)

Sophie also struggled in her functioning during temporary separation, emphasising their togetherness and need for each other. Her distress focussed on separation from her mother as opposed to being in an unfamiliar environment, highlighting the extent of her mother-child attachment. The contrast between separation distress and discomfort at the lack of boundaries in their relationship hints at confusion. Sophie seemed torn between wanting to gain distance from her mother and being unable to be apart from her, highlighting the powerful nature of their relationship. 'Enmeshment' is a technical term. 'Thing' suggests a lack of understanding. This might have been the language adopted by the professionals who engaged Sophie in extensive therapy. Perhaps it was difficult for her to make sense of an outsider's understanding of their unique relationship.

#### *4.3.2 Moving Out: Struggles of Being Apart*

Participants shared their experiences of being apart from their mothers upon moving out. A majority of this centred on their mother's emotional distress and enthusiasm for being reunited with their daughters. It is speculated whether this represents a sense of most daughters managing the transition with greater ease than their mothers. Although of lesser quantity, there is, however, some discussion of participants' own struggles of being apart from their mothers.

Nearly all participants remarked on the anguish experienced by their mothers following their move from home. This exacerbates the extent of the emotional turmoil they believed they encountered.

*'Erm, but she was, at that point, I think super anxious about me leaving. She like cried in the weeks leading up to it saying like "You're never gonna come back, are you?''* (Rachel 25/4-6)

There is a sense of Rachel's mother grieving for the upcoming loss of her: losing her physical presence from home, as well as losing the person she was at the time. Her questioning and doubt highlight her prediction that Rachel would change upon exposure to external influences through living in a new environment. Rachel was aware that her mother felt threatened by the world outside of their home which could take her daughter away. Perhaps

it was validating for Rachel to have her mother alerted to how different life is outside of home and that she may no longer want to return to it.

*'She managed it well, and she did what she did always which was crying as she waved me off at the airport, but she was supportive.'*  
(Anna 26/20-21)

In contrast, Anna discusses her mother's reaction to her moving out to live abroad. The disparity between sadness and a difficult time vs. being supportive emphasises how, despite how Anna's departure affected her, she remained selfless and encouraged her to live. Her mother engaged in her typical pattern of ensuring others were happy even if it was at detriment to herself. Consequently, unlike other participants' mothers, she was not consumed and paralysed by her sadness. Thus, the degree of mothers' struggles varied including the extent it impacted on their functioning.

*'I think it was basically like a ripping apart.'* (Tara 29/17-18)

'Ripping apart' implies that mother and daughter were equally attached to one another. This also suggests a harsh and forced separation by a third party. Such an act can potentially cause damage. This raises curiosity about whether the separation negatively affected their relationship. Perhaps Tara's departure resulted in a change from them comprising one entity to each having to be an individual. This could have been an arduous adjustment.

A few participants also drew on their own discomfort at being apart from their mothers.

*'I would cry every day and call her like a million times a day like "Mum, I wanna come home" and she'd cry and be like "Oh, I miss you so much. I can't bear being apart from you"...like eurgh [vt] it was so not healthy, but yeah.'* (Sophie 10/4-7)

Frequent phone calls suggest Sophie needed her mother. Her mother would mirror her remarks and emotional state, as though the pair were feeling each other's emotions. A pair of magnets (the opposing poles being mother and child) being drawn to and needing each other is visualised. When together, they are calm and stable. When apart, an intense atmosphere ensues, whereby a force is wanting and trying to pull them back towards each other. This emphasises that the pair are so connected and together that any disruption to their relationship is problematic and creates upheaval. Sophie's change in voice tone to mimic disgust confirms her acknowledgment of their unhealthy relationship dynamic. It is possible that the force of being pulled back to her mother upon moving out was too great for her to have control over it, rendering her powerless. She now recognises that this held her back from creating a life in which her maternal relationship was not a central feature.

Further experiences are provided which depict participants' struggles of having left their mothers to move out.

*'I went to [name] and [3s] I just suddenly felt like I couldn't be there...that I couldn't leave my Mum at home.'* (Rachel 43/7-8)

Perhaps a yearning to explore the world and gain new experiences enabled Rachel to leave her mother. She appeared to experience guilt over this, to the extent of perceiving this as abandoning her. This feeling may have been so intense (requiring a pause whilst recalling) that she no longer felt able to continue enjoying her new experience abroad.

Some participants reflected on this struggle of being apart as time progressed.

*'She'd count the weeks and she'd call me and be like "I don't know if you've realised but it's gonna be like...you know, four weeks until we see each other next". And I'd be like "Oh, is it? Oh. Mmm. That's interesting" [laughs].'* (Sophie 30/20-22)

Sophie was aware of her mother's desperation and eagerness to see her. There is a sense that, without Sophie at home to guide and motivate her mother, she initially became a prisoner in her own home, with little engagement with the outside world. This extract portrays her mother as a prisoner counting down until their next visit; this is what her mother lived for, what kept her going. 'I don't know if you've realised' suggests her mother suspected Sophie may not have been as avid as her about their reunion. Sophie's detached response lacked affect, and her following laughter was dismissive. This contrast between mother and daughter is indicative of a significant change in Sophie from her earlier extracts. She shifted from struggling to be apart from her, to being somewhat aggressive towards their relationship. Perhaps this affected their relationship, with her mother trying to cling on and maintain their closeness, with Sophie gaining some distance from her and managing without her presence.

#### *4.3.3 Child or Adult? Renegotiation of Roles*

An outcome of the process of change from togetherness to separation involved a renegotiation of roles within the mother-daughter relationship. A few participants described experiencing confusion over the parent and child roles. The majority found themselves taking responsibility for their mothers and becoming the parent, whilst their mothers presented as childlike. Moving out appeared to cause a shift in this, with both taking on more adult roles.

*"cause...the reason...I think the reason I didn't act sooner is because of the roles. She is my mother. She should be the one looking after me.'* (Rachel 17/10-12)

Rachel recalled a scenario whereby both were struggling with anxiety whilst she was living at home. She was reluctant to intervene and care for her mother as this would constitute role-reversal. 'The roles' instead of 'our roles' highlight how they were universal and not specific to their family, enhancing the global expectation to adhere to these normed roles. 'My' and 'me' emphasise Rachel's focus on what she needed and expected from her mother yet she did not get. Perhaps this blurring of parent and child roles and subsequent role-reversal felt confusing for Rachel. 'No-one comes to see me when I am feeling anxious' (Rachel 37/1-2) hints that she lacked support for her own anxiety whilst attempting to adhere to a parent role. This could have had further implications on her mental health due to the vulnerable and risky nature of emerging adulthood (EA).

The role confusion appears to be amplified further by all but one participant who portrayed their mothers in a childlike manner.

*'Like she will get really wound up and throw things across the room or whatever and go up to her room...'. (Rachel 32/20-22)*

'Wound up' creates a visual of increased tension being applied to string until it breaks under extreme conditions. There is a sense of a chaotic atmosphere whereby situations became overwhelming, were physically reacted to and then retreated from as opposed to being addressed verbally. The modelling of this approach might have contributed to the development of Rachel's own anxiety struggles. Observing a parent acting in such contrast to their role and life stage might have been confusing for her. This prompted Rachel to adopt a parental role to compensate, as indicated by 'I became the parent who looked after her' (Rachel 41/16).

*'My sister's boyfriend...my Mum has absorbed him into like "Who can I take care of? Can I make him cookies" etc., which is really sweet but she's just such a Mum [laughs].'* (Anna 17/4-6)

Anna's experience of her mother contrasts with Rachel's. 'Absorbing' people draws parallel to a sponge, which is capable of taking on a lot but becomes increasingly heavy and weighted down in the process. Anna recognised that the importance of fulfilling a caring parent role and putting others' needs first (as previously acknowledged) was so great for her mother that she neglected to take care of herself. This extract highlights her clarity of experiencing her mother as an adult. Consequently, she viewed her as a secure and available base for support and nurturing (as discussed later).

Part of this renegotiation of roles included several participants discussing a shift in felt responsibility. All but one noted how they stepped back from their carer role with an inflated sense of responsibility for their mothers.

*'Erm [2s] I think like knowing that it's [hesitates] okay that my Mum [2s] if my Mum is upset...this sounds really harsh, but that's her problem. It's her thing to deal with and as long as I'm doing...you know, if I'm acting in a way that I feel is okay and is right, that's all I can do really and all I need to do. I don't need to look after her and manage her feelings.'* (Sophie 30/13-17)

Sophie's pauses, hesitation, and 'sounds really harsh' imply a sense of guilt associated with removing herself from her previously-held position of responsibility. Perhaps it was taking time to adjust to her new position of being more boundaried and becoming less involved in her mother's problems. She now attributes ownership of her mother's struggles to her mother and no longer has an expectation to be so involved with her. It is of interest that Sophie recently engaged in therapy. Perhaps therapy enhanced her awareness of her inflated responsibility and supported changes in this area. Decreasing her maternal responsibility is likely to have resulted in investing more time in herself.

*'I think I now feel so much more responsible than I did. So I...it took me moving away and coming back to it and seeing it again and being like "No, I don't think this is, I don't think I can watch this anymore".'* (Rachel 17/7-10)

In contrast, Rachel's responsibility to look after her mother significantly increased upon moving out. 'It' and 'this' depicts her perception of her mother's anxiety as a third entity. It is questioned why she views it separately from her mother. This may be accounted for by Rachel's reaction to her mother, which hints at her distress of observing her mother's struggles. There is a sense of Rachel's desire for an end to her mother's difficulties. This is reflected by her recurring efforts to seek therapeutic input for her mother (which she continued to decline).

It is of interest to reflect on Rachel's experience. It is wondered why she was the only one who felt an increase in responsibility. This may be due to her being the only participant who believed her mother's struggles with anxiety had not improved. Having a mother with enduring struggles who required support places her in more of a child role. In comparison, Rachel's ability to provide effective support to her mother associates her with a parental, adult role. Thus, Rachel might feel a greater duty to support her as her difficulties persisted.

For a couple of participants, part of the role renegotiation included their mothers becoming more accepting of their help.

*'Erm, but that's been really nice as I can actually pass something back that I am more comfortable sharing than whatever it is*

*about...psych knowledge about her friend's kid or whatever it is she is asking about. So, yeah, that's quite nice.'* (Anna 30/4-7)

There is now a greater sense of reciprocity in giving and receiving help in their relationship. 'Passing' instead of 'giving' or 'handing' is affiliated with an element of care. It is also possible that Anna passed knowledge to her mother after it was initially passed to her by another, promoting the concept of helping others. The act of offering help when asked by her mother is associated with gratitude for the help she provided Anna when younger. Anna appears to recognise the value of her mother's help whilst growing up, increasing her awareness of giving, as well as receiving, help.

*'So that's...it feels more like...some of the time anyway, it feels more like adult-to-adult rather than me kind of parenting her, or her treating me like a little kid [3s].'* (Sophie 32/1-3)

There is a greater sense of balance and equality in their adult relationship. This might feel particularly freeing for Sophie as her mother is now treating her in accordance with her life stage and behaving more age-appropriately herself. This could have strengthened her identity as an emerging adult. Furthermore, Sophie may feel released of the obligation to parent her mother.

#### *4.3.4 Change in Relationship*

Over half of participants remarked on changes to their mother-daughter relationship, including the quality of their interaction, a need (or lack of) for regular contact, and closeness or distancing from each other.

Most participants spoke about the role of moving out of home and away from their mothers as contributing to a change in their relationship. The direction of change is, however, mixed.

*'It definitely changed...it changed around then. I think we are a lot closer now than we used to be because I'm not having to fight for my space.'* (Anna 27/24-25; 28/1)

Anna might have felt stifled and claustrophobic living with her mother. 'Fight' portrays a struggle between the two; space was something Anna felt entitled to at her age, but it was hard for her mother to give her this. Distance has brought closeness. Being able to develop as an independent individual could have brought satisfaction with the newly-formed boundaries between mother and daughter, enhancing their relationship.

*'I would say that we became increasingly less close. [3s] Mainly because I didn't feel as though I could confide in her and her social anxiety meant that she was rude.'* (Rachel 39/4-6)

Rachel had an opposing experience. This reflects how her mother was no longer a consistent support source, resulting in Rachel not getting what she required from this relationship. It is of interest that she highlighted having consecutive boyfriends from around this time. She might have been attempting to fill the lack of closeness to her mother with closeness to someone else (but of a different age and gender as to not replace her mother).

*'So, I am happy that she will listen to me with interest instead of her being critical like she did when I was younger. So... so yeah, now we can...I feel like I can tell her much more about myself and what I do.'*  
(Emily 25/11-13)

Emily has changed due to her mother's shift, suggesting that she saw her mother's behaviour as a barrier towards more positive interaction when younger. There seems to be a door open vs. door closed contrast between Emily's information sharing in their past and present relationship. During her childhood, her mother's criticism left her feeling unsafe and scared to let her in (door closed). Now, her mother's curiosity and enthusiasm have increased Emily's confidence in her life and letting her mother in (door open). She now feels safe enough to teach her mother about the person she has become, suggesting an intention of gaining closeness to her.

*'So I think we speak more than we did previously. It's also very different because it's a purposeful kind of thing. It's like "I'm calling you because I wanna talk to you".'* (Anna 29/12-14)

Anna differentiates between the frequency of contact and how meaningful it is. It feels such conversations with her mother now feel precious and important, and that she is gaining from them in some way. Her intention to maintain their relationship highlights her increasing agency. What her mother can now give her has value and meaning. Conversation content and quality have changed. Perhaps this can be accounted for by more adult-to-adult interaction and her mother managing her anxiety, making communicating and relating easier. Alternatively, the distance may cause them to cherish their relationship more, making interaction more treasured.

*'Just because I didn't feel the need to. It was just that. I didn't feel like I needed to...needed her in that way anymore, and because I was busy doing my things so I didn't need to talk to my mum in another country three times a day to tell her "Yes, I've eaten. I've cooked some pasta today" or "I went to the university and I took the bus" [laughs]. You know, there was no point, so...yeah.'* (Hannah 25/5-9)

Hannah's experience differed. 'In that way' implies that her mother's use and purpose had changed for her. Her comments on being immersed in her own life combined with referring to

her mother being abroad create a sense of 'out of sight, out of mind'. Perhaps Hannah viewed life in England as separate to her mother's life. There is a suggestion that she is moving forward in life, whereas her mother may be struggling. What her mother needs is not what she needs; these reassuring conversations were necessary to calm her mother's anxiety, but Hannah viewed them as futile (as emphasised by her dismissive laugh) and an inconvenience as they interrupted her lifestyle. Consequently, she placed less importance on their relationship as she created a life for herself elsewhere.

It is interesting to reflect on Anna and Hannah's contrasting experiences in an attempt to account for such a difference. It appears that this is determined by what the mother-daughter conversations entailed. For Anna, there is a sense of information exchange from both parties, subsequently benefitting the two. For Hannah, it feels that the purpose of their conversations is simply to reassure her mother, thus only benefitting the latter.

*'And, that has kind of worked with my Mum as well and strengthened our relationship as well. I come back and we do things together.'*  
(Niya 31/2-4)

Niya believes their relationship has changed through both leading separate lives since she moved out. From her earlier reference, giving her mother less insight into her life has been beneficial. Removing the reality of how she lives her life has helped their relationship, highlighting her deviation from her mother's cultural lifestyle. 'We' and 'together' enhance a greater sense of cohesiveness between them. It is speculated whether the improvement is limited to enjoying spending time together, or whether there have been other changes, such as her mother providing more support (which is something Niya felt was lacking).

#### **4.4 Superordinate Theme Three: What Is Out There**

This theme represents a sense of discovery pertaining to the new experience of life outside the confines of home and away from their mothers. It focusses on how participants acquired new knowledge and social experiences about the world they became more involved in upon moving out. It includes how participants learnt that there are others out there who can provide what they feel their mothers don't or are unable to. Additionally, it considers participants' feeling towards taking ownership and gaining control over a life which now belongs to them.

##### *4.4.1 Experiencing a Social World*

All participants focussed on their social experience as a significant part of their life upon moving out. It began as a process of learning about social relationships, and then developed into creating their own support networks and an appreciation for this. For a few participants,

struggles involving their mothers in accepting them developing additional relationships are considered.

A few participants reported on their limited comprehension of the social world. This applied both to a lack of understanding about how it functions, and also what they strive for in seeking out social relationships. A greater immersion in social situations upon moving out appeared to develop their understanding.

*'Erm...and I had no, like I said, no boundaries, no internal sense of self so like, you can't have a relationship with someone really if you're just...you know, like copying them and desperately trying to be what they want so they like you and are happy. Like, adult...I mean, healthy adult relationships don't work that way.'* (Sophie 17/15-19)

The repetition of 'no' implies a lacking within Sophie. Her description of ambiguity portrays her as being uncontained, resulting in an absence of a clear structure of who she really is and how to be. This would be problematic in the context of social relationships when a sense of self is required to assimilate and bond with others. There is a sense of desperation attached to her willingness to sacrifice who she was to develop social relationships when younger. She remarks on 'healthy adult relationships' suggesting that she is beginning to learn and differentiate between what does and doesn't work regarding healthy vs. unhealthy and child vs. adult relationships. Perhaps she perceives social relationships in childhood as requiring and involving different factors to adulthood.

*'So, like "Do I like this? No, I don't. Okay, good, I know I don't like that. I don't like that person. Oh, why don't I like that person? Because he is x, y and z. Okay, good, clock that for future use". It's just experiences of knowing what you like and don't like so you can use that later on it life.'* (Keira 30/6-10)

Keira appears confident in determining her opinions and understands the reasons for any unfavourable perceptions of others. Based on her confidence and black-and-white checklist approach, it is wondered whether she has had an array of social encounters since moving out of home. It is assumed that she may be confident in her social preferences as she is satisfied with the relationships she currently has. Alternatively, her decision certainty contrasts with her mother's struggles with decision-making due to her worrying. Perhaps she has chosen to be this way due to her frequently-stated desire to not be like her mother.

Most participants expressed an interest in creating or enhancing their social network upon moving out, with several taking responsibility for seeking out new friendships.

*'Erm...at first it was difficult as I knew no-one [laughs] so I was alone but I tried to know more people. Even erm like living on my own. Like, I would even go out on my own to a bar, to a pub... It was beautiful at the end because I made a lot of friends.'* (Emily 28/2-5)

Emily's laughter features a hint of sadness. Perhaps this sadness motivated her attempts to meet others. She went from the side-lines where she lacked friendships in childhood, to more towards the centre by developing a support network through a process of different stages. Her experience of a social world was that it was something new to be explored. She had to work her way in to it. It wouldn't automatically make her a part of it; she had to expose herself to it and become involved.

*'I think a lot of my enjoyment came from meeting people who are like me...erm...erm...definitely. Probably more so than escaping Mum's anxiety, or whatever.'* (Tara 33/2-4)

It is hypothesised that Tara felt isolated and alone, encountering life whilst feeling different to those around her. Perhaps she longed to be a part of something as it would have given her a greater sense of who she was. After all, humans tend to be social beings with a need to belong. Thus, immersion in a social world, acceptance and belonging were more powerful for her than her mother's anxiety. What was important to Tara upon moving out shifted: from feeling trapped and wanting to escape her mother's anxiety, to focusing more on her identity, a sense of belonging, and forming meaningful friendships.

Hannah's observation whilst forming new relationships pulled her mother back in to focus:

*'I think it's because unconsciously I was trying to recreate what was going on in my family. Because, yes, there are a lot of negative aspects of having an anxious mother but, at the same time, that relationship that you have with an anxious person, especially a family member that is so intense, so invasive in a way that it also makes you feel secure on the other side.'* (Hannah 27/8-23)

A conflict existed which was enhanced by Hannah's family connection to her mother; the powerful and intrusive nature of their relationship (discomfort) vs. the security it brought her (comfort). 'Other side' indicates that she alternated between these two positions. The intrusive dynamic provided a sense of security. This was what Hannah had learned to navigate and become accustomed to, resulting in her bringing an expectation of this dynamic into the social world outside of the family home. It is of interest that Hannah's initial friendships following moving out were unsuitable and short-lasting, highlighting the incompatibility of such dynamics in her new social environment. It appears that the social functioning in her family environment was inconsistent to the functioning in the social world

outside of home. An additional conflict prevailed; wanting to move away from home and form new relationships vs. holding on to her family by bringing them in to her new life with her.

Despite all participants sharing positive experiences of their social worlds, consideration is given to some of their mothers who struggled with adjusting to this. Some appeared deterred by their daughter's increasing social network.

*'She was even anxious about me being able to erm...have my own life, I guess. So, me relating to other people. Erm, jealously, if you want to call it that. So, me interacting with other people and other people maybe enjoying my company...so this like detaching from my mum. She had...I think she felt jealous because of that, because she feared the detaching...me erm being with other people and enjoying them and having fun without her...it was hard for her.'* (Emily 14/20-24; 15/1-2)

Emily's mother struggled negotiating her daughter's new relationships. She didn't want to share her with others. Emily recognised that this experience was challenging for her mother but it did not deter her from continuing to engage with others. In contrast to her childhood, she was now putting herself and her desires first. References to her life as her 'own' imply a separation of her life from her mother's. There is a sense of her independence and autonomy as she does not need her mother to experience fun and enjoyment, causing her mother to lose her purpose. This highlights how Emily moving out was an adjustment and had implications for both; she gained socially whilst her mother experienced a sense of loss. This emphasises the decline in a need for her mother, whilst her mother still needed her and their relationship.

#### *4.4.2 Learning to Fill the Void*

A majority of participants spoke of their void in receiving emotional support from their mothers, possibly due to their mother's struggles with connecting to their emotions. An element of participants' learning about what is out there in the world was the realisation that others are able to provide them with what their mothers may not. There was recognition of obtaining both emotional and social support from alternative sources.

All participants attempted to make sense of their mother's lack of emotional support. Various participants believed their mothers did not provide such support due to their disconnect and lack of understanding.

*'It's about the latest TV programmes. It's all about what was on TV last night. It's not about how I feel, because she's not very good at dealing with emotions. I wish she was. It would be nice to have that*

*sort of conversation...but it won't happen with her. She never asks "Am I happy? What do I want for myself?".' (Keira 33/1-5)*

Keira's conversations with her mother seem to lack meaning for her, constituting a void for Keira. 'I wish she', 'it would be nice', and 'she never asks' suggest she is yearning for this void to be filled. Despite accepting the permanence of the void, it has not reduced her desire for it. Perhaps this resulted in her not feeling fulfilled within her maternal relationship. It is also wondered about the consequences of having a mother who wasn't connected to her emotions whilst growing up. This might have led to Keira internalizing her thoughts and feelings and experiencing similar struggles.

Some participants explained the implications of their experiences of their mothers as not emotional, by learning to fill this void through other social sources.

*'I just went to a different source to find the support. So, I went to my best friend, Kim, and had a chat with her, or went to my sister and talked to her about it instead. Erm, you just find other people to talk to. If your caregiver isn't able to provide you with something, you look elsewhere for it.'* (Keira 36/12-15)

'Caregiver' reflects Keira's expectation of her mother to provide care (including emotional support), yet she did not. There is a contradiction between labelling her mother as a 'caregiver' and her mother not meeting Keira's need of engaging with affect. Perhaps she showed care in other ways. This extract suggests she experienced a void in not having this emotional need fulfilled by her mother, and thus took responsibility to search and fill what she felt she was lacking. It is of interest that she sought out female sources. Maybe she felt a greater connection to those of the same gender as her, or was attempting to fill this void.

*'I think she is very much a good shoulder to cry on and an ear to listen. I know that if, you know, I have something terrible happen I can always go to her.'* (Anna 17/14-16)

In contrast to Keira, Anna's mother seemed willing and able to provide support by tolerating her daughter's difficulties and distress. This highlights her resilience in emotive contexts. Anna feels reassured that her mother's support is limitless. She perceives her as being able to take on and withstand any problematic issues she may bring to her. She might therefore be able to be open and not have to hold back with her mother, which could feel freeing and comforting.

Participants also gave consideration to other sources of support, signifying how they created strong and supportive relationships outside of their immediate family.

*'I don't want to worry my Mum by going to her if I need support. So, it's more kind of support from friends, siblings and cousins really. Support is always there.'* (Niya 28/23; 29/1-2)

Niya's void in maternal support arose from her desire not to cause her mother distress by seeking support from her. Instead of lacking in support entirely, she actively sought readily-available and constant support elsewhere to ensure she didn't go without. There is a sense of her extended family and friends responding better to her support requests and thus fill this void.

#### *4.4.3 A Life Belonging to Me*

Of particular importance was the recognition by every participant that, having moved out of home, they now had access to a life belonging solely to them as opposed to being controlled and/or influenced by their mother. An image of increased power emerges as they gained freedom, independence, control, and ownership over their lives.

For many, there was emphasis on ownership and their lives being something which belonged to them. At this point, their mother's influence did not seem to feature.

*'Now, I'm my own owner of my life, so my thoughts, my actions...so, yeah. I'm very happy with that.'* (Hannah 29/9-10)

'Now' and 'own owner' imply that someone else (her mother) owned Hannah's life until recently. With the extent of her mother's ownership, it is wondered whether she felt like her mother's puppet, emphasising the magnitude of her control and how trapped she subsequently felt. This is reflected in her pleasure at the puppet strings being cut. Hannah took ownership of what was rightfully hers from her mother. Being in possession of her life demonstrates her increased control.

Having a life belonging to themselves appeared to be affiliated with a sense of empowerment at being in control of their life. This was reflected by participants acknowledging their capabilities and subsequent pride in themselves.

*'It's really good and I feel empowered [laughs]. I feel that I can do many more things. I feel that I erm I still have to, you know, improve...yeah, but I feel that I can do it now. Before, it was different.'* (Emily 26/5-7)

Emily's laughter suggests relief at finally feeling this way. Repeating 'I feel that I can' emphasises confidence and self-belief which appear to have provided clarity over who she wants to be. Despite making change, she strives to make further. Perhaps she feels that significant changes are required in order to be a different person to who she was. The

contrast in using 'I' to describe herself currently, with 'it' as a detached reference to who she was insinuates that she is trying to distance herself from the latter. Moving out possibly afforded this opportunity, and feeling empowered may motivate further positive change.

*'It was more when I moved to [name] and I was living...I was responsible for myself. So, I was earning. I had a job, I had rent to pay and I was paying bills. It was me looking after myself, if that makes sense?' (Keira 18/10-12)*

Repeating 'I' highlights Keira's independence and personal responsibility for herself, enabling her to feel like an adult. Her mother looking after her as a child has transformed to Keira now looking after herself. Considering that looking after oneself includes attending to one's emotional wellbeing, it is interesting that she only provides practical examples of this. Perhaps she adopted her mother's lack of focus on emotions in relation to self-care and wellbeing. It is wondered who attended to this, if at all.

*'I enjoyed the freedom and independence. I still do enjoy living in my own home and having freedom and independence.'* (Keira 30/23-24)

Keira's enjoyment may reflect the novelty of her freedom and independence not having subsided yet. In contrast to her childhood when her mother did not fulfil her desires, Keira is now able to ensure she fulfils them as an adult. It may be suggestive of a significant difference in experiences of living at home with her mother and living alone away from home. Keira associates 'independence' with 'freedom'. This implies a sense of captivity, being held back, and prevented from developing whilst living at home; things which she has now been able to move away from. She may continue to cherish her environment as she is no longer confined or deprived in such areas, enabling her to flourish.

*'Even the freedom to eat what you wanna eat as well. Erm, what I wanna watch. Even what I wanna wear in your house. So, in an Asian household it's very...erm, respected for men...What we wear is kind of restricted as we have to dress respectfully...But now in my own household I can do whatever I want. It's absolutely fine. The thing is, I love the freedom...that's all it is.'* (Niya 27/25; 28/1-3)

Niya's examples of freedom provide insight into how dictated and thus restricted life was (in relation to culture). She could have lacked a sense of self due to minimal control over her life, even in the most basic sense. Moving out represents a shift away from restriction and confines, towards greater freedom and an ability to express herself. Niya associates 'freedom' with fulfilling her desires by 'doing whatever I want', suggesting the former is enabling her to experiment. This is a process in identity development. It is expected that this will help gain clarity over her identity.

Although participants mainly focussed on what they gained through experiencing a life belonging to them, a few also acknowledged how their gains resulted in a loss of their mother's control.

*'I took full control over my life, whereas before Mum had been...not like controlling-controlling, but relatively controlling erm...through worry.'* (Tara 19/9-11)

There is a sense of Tara now having complete ownership over her life. She might have had some control prior to moving, so her mother's influence was not all-encompassing. Perhaps she claimed this back by moving out of home and/or by her mother releasing control as her anxiety reduced. Tara appears to view her control through worrying as less intentional than direct controlling behaviour. The former emphasises the power of anxiety.

A part of being in control also included the decision to gain some privacy from their mothers. This highlights how participants recognised their right to their own life and so decided to withhold parts of this from them.

*'I would really tell her 'Yes, I am here and I am doing this and this' whilst I was actually in another place doing something else, just because I knew that I didn't want to share what I was doing.'* (Hannah 21/16-18)

This extract demonstrates how Hannah gained privacy through providing misinformation to her mother. She did something which could potentially damage their relationship if her mother found out in order to bring her closer to what she wanted (i.e. live a life with minimal maternal involvement). This highlights the extent of her mother's involvement in her life until this point. She has discreetly incorporated boundaries into their relationship. As an emerging adult, she has a life belonging to herself which is separate to her mother's. This is reflective of this developmental stage which is characterised by less dependency on parents and reducing insight into their life.

#### **4.5 Superordinate Theme Four: Identity**

This theme focuses on a journey of transformation, predominantly for participants, but also for their mothers. For the former, it is concerned with their journey of self-discovery, individuation, and going from old to new in terms of changes to one's self. For the latter, it relates to a journey of disconnecting and shrinking from the world, to the gradual return and re-engagement in it.

#### 4.5.1 Role of Mother in Shaping Who I Am

Every participant spoke of their belief of their mother's role in shaping who they are. They acknowledged experiencing similar struggles to them, and almost all felt they contributed to the development of their own anxiety struggles. Some proceeded to consider their own identity and recognised wanting to be different to their mothers.

Participants provided insight into their own struggles with emotions. They then linked this with feeling that their mothers were distant from emotions.

*'So, my response to [laughs] I think...I've picked up on my Mum's inability to manage emotions and it's...so, I've used it...I've used her focus on material things and logistics and I also definitely do that. I definitely, definitely do a lot of that.'* (Keira 16/19-21)

What can be 'picked up' can also be put back down, hinting at Keira's hope for changing what she observed and learned. Repeating 'I've used it' indicates her awareness of using something belonging to her mother. This is met with a sense of discomfort, as inferred from her type of laughter. It is wondered whether Keira has experienced difficulty in getting her emotional needs met due to her struggles with connecting to her emotions. However, 'used her focus' highlights her mother's ownership. Although this is similar behaviour to her mother, it has not become Keira's focus. Again, there is a sense that this could change. It is of interest that she refers to her mother's struggle as an 'inability'. This implies permanence and irreversibility, as opposed to 'difficulty' which suggests otherwise. She possibly believes her mother will never be capable of this. This contrasts with Keira's hope to change. Perhaps the discrepancy is due to anxiety severity. She may view her struggles to be milder and thus more capable of change than her mother's.

*'100%. Like, I worry about the same things.'* (Tara 37/11)

Tara recognises, with certainty, experiencing similar anxiety struggles to her mother, even to the extent of similar worry content.

*'I definitely feel that I have a bit of the cleanliness kind of OCD in my home environment. It has rubbed off from my Mum to me...and definitely in how I conduct myself in my adult life with the orderliness and routine.'* (Keira 21/2-5)

Similarly, Keira's explains with conviction how her similarities relate to anxiety presentation as well as content. She identifies her struggles being transferred from her mother, however, her use of 'a bit' indicates that although she may identify some similarities, her struggles may

be to a lesser extent. This highlights how daughters of anxious mothers may not replicate their mother's exact struggles or intensity.

*'Like, when it was at its worst I was definitely similar to her.'* (Rachel 12/19-20)

In contrast, Rachel feels affected to a greater extent than Tara and Keira, by acknowledging temporarily becoming similar to her mother in persona. The similarity only occurring when her anxiety was at its worst highlights the greatness of her mother's struggles. This also demonstrates the various ways of maternal anxiety impacting on adult daughters.

Many participants elaborated further and identified the role of their mothers in the development of their own anxiety struggles.

*'I cannot really erm...detach this from feeling...from the anxiety that my mum gave me... So, I am like the result of her and her anxiety.'* (Emily 6/1-3)

Feeling unable to detach from anxiety suggests Emily's belief in it being so closely linked to her that it feels a part of her. The impossibility of separation signifies the power and strength of anxiety. Emily's perception of a cause-and-effect relationship reflects her feeling like her mother's replica. She later discusses her intentions and success to-date with changing parts of herself, connoting how these are not stable or permanent parts of her. There is a sense of her wanting to separate from her mother and individualise. Considering the potential distress caused by anxiety, it is wondered how a daughter might feel towards their mother in the context of her belief about her mother's contribution to her own anxiety. Perhaps Emily is acknowledging her mother's role in her own distress.

There is repeated reference to not wanting to be like their mothers by some participants. They were considering who they did and did not want to be as they develop as adults, and possibly as parents themselves.

*'I would really struggle to find something to say I would want to replicate [4s]. Mmm...she is quite patient actually, that's very true. She is very patient. She is very caring. So, that's two good things, but the rest of it like her concerns, her focus, how she conducts herself...I just wouldn't...I wouldn't want to replicate it at all, or be like in the slightest.'* (Keira 22/15-19)

'Find something' depicts deliberately searching for something not easily accessible. Perhaps she was trying to search through her mother's anxiety-related traits in attempt to identify desirable ones. This is enhanced by 'rest of it' implying these predominant features create a substantial part of her mother. Keira's repeated emphasis on her lack of intention to replicate

these features in herself insinuates her choice to be dissimilar to her mother. Perhaps this was due to her experience of growing up as a daughter of a mother who struggled with anxiety. Considering her perception of her mother's limited desirable traits, it is questioned whether Keira struggled to connect with her mother or use her as a reference guide for her own sense of self.

#### 4.5.2 Searching for Myself

Almost all participants focussed on the search for themselves internally (self-discovery) and externally (through interacting and engaging in environments). This appeared to be a process which began prior to moving out of home, whereby a few felt uncertain over their identity. This then progressed into a journey towards gaining insight about themselves. It appeared to be triggered upon moving out of home which created new experiences for participants to learn about themselves. Many proceeded to describe a greater sense of clarity about who they are as they began to gain insight into this area.

*'Because of how anxious she was and how, you know, volatile she was and with me not being able to go places and stuff, I felt like I never really got to find out who I was. So, and that caused me a lot of problems later on because I just had no sense of self...'* (Sophie 3/13-17)

It seems that Sophie was both physically and psychologically held back by her mother. She was unable to explore internally (identity) or externally (places and environments). She appeared cut-off from the world and engaging in new experiences which would have helped her to explore her identity. This highlighted her mother as a barrier to her development.

Uncertainty over identity seemed to lead to some embarking on a journey towards exploring and understanding who they are. This began after moving out of home.

*'So, university...the first year in particular, you are just so self-absorbed in everything around you that it's actually...it's kind of a time to try and find who you are.'* (Keira 28/20-22)

'Self-absorbed in everything around you' portrays Keira as being in an environment with many self-focussed opportunities available. She appeared to take everything in from this new experience and process it. Keira is visualised in a bubble of opportunities with no external distractions (her mother), where she could direct full attention to herself. 'Try and find' acknowledges it as a gradual process requiring experimentation. Through this, she began to search for who she is. This quest seemed to relate to her wanting to connect to herself by understanding and getting to know herself better. This would enhance her self-to-self relationship.

*'I just feel like every day I realise something about myself and I'm like 'Ohh. Ohh.'. (Sophie 35/14-15)*

'Every day' depicts learning about herself as an ongoing process. This emphasises Sophie's delay in a process expected to be undertaken in adolescence and approaching EA. It highlights how life with her mother hindered such learning opportunities. 'Ohh. Ohh' suggests that this is met with excitement. Sophie's report of only now learning so much about herself raises questions about what it was like to live as this person before embarking on a self-discovery journey. Perhaps she was challenged by feeling disconnected between her body and what filled it. It is as though her identity was inaccessible whilst living at home and, since moving out, she is gradually uncovering parts of herself to access new information. Thus, she is gaining a greater sense of who she is.

Various participants elaborated on their journey towards self-insight upon moving out. Learning about themselves through experiences comprised part of this journey for some.

*'I had to experience that and maybe erm have that wrong and dangerous experience of being involved in something like that in order to learn that that was wrong for me. But, a person that maybe grew up in a less protected environment would have experienced that earlier on in their lives.'* (Hannah 28/16-19)

Hannah believes that, due to her lack of learning, extreme experiences were necessary for her learning. This extract demonstrates the contradiction of her overprotection; shielding her during development to protect her lead to her experiencing dangerous situations. Despite her mother's positive intentions, being overprotected was detrimental to her. Feeling behind others highlights Hannah's vulnerability and raises questions as to whether people took advantage of this. It feels that she was sheltered from exposure to various life experiences and some of the realities of life. Consequently, Hannah's learning about herself through experiences might have occurred later than in her peers.

Several participants described how these searches lead to a greater sense of identity since moving out.

*'I've got a bit more clarity about who I am, what I want, and where I am in my own life, whereas before it was very much linked to my family and taking them into consideration.'* (Niya 29/14-16)

Gaining self-insight is an incomplete process for Niya as she requires further clarity. Discovering her desires as well as her identity emphasises the extent to which she is now prioritising herself. A change has occurred; from having a global view lens, to a lens zooming in and gaining focus on herself. It is questioned whether her identity and aspirations being

previously guided by her family left her feeling trapped and suppressed, whether she accepted the situation as a cultural norm, or whether she was unaware of her family's contribution to her identity. Gaining distance from her family by moving out appears to have afforded Niya the opportunity to individuate and learn about herself outside of the context of her family and culture. 'My own life' and her repetition of 'I' emphasise her sole focus on herself during this search for who she is.

#### 4.5.3 Change in Me

Nearly all participants referred to self-change since moving out. An initial strive for change appeared to lead to the process of making changes to how they lived their life. Some remarked on how such changes included a decrease in their anxiety. A small number of participants also identified further areas they wish to change.

*'So it's partly why you make a conscious effort to change for yourself and, also, for your other half. You know, you just don't want that for your kids either, so you try and change yourself 'cause you know that your behaviour will impact and affect other people around you. That's what I feel happened with my Mum's anxiety.'* (Keira 32/2-6)

Keira reviews her awareness at how she is striving to change for both herself and others. This highlights the potential widespread implications of who she is (in relation to her anxiety) on herself and others. She seems concerned about a potential detrimental impact on and damage to others as she believes her mother's anxious behaviour affected her. This extract alerts how powerful behaviour is. It appears that Keira had two choices: do something and protect others (consistent with a caring maternal role) or do nothing and inadvertently cause adverse effects on others. After experiencing her mother do the latter, she appeared motivated to undertake the former.

For many, their striving turned in to making change:

*'She would be like "You have to come home today. I have to see you today. I've made you this", and so I started to say "No". I put the boundaries back in and was like "This is my space. This is my time". I had to tell her "No" quite a few times as well. She still calls me mid-week and is like "Can you come home and sort this family issue out?" and I'm like "I can't do that".'* (Niya 22/5-10)

Niya is starting to decline her mother's requests, portraying her in a greater position of authority. It is as if there is frequent alternating of authority between the pair by making and declining requests. Her mother's persistent attempts may reflect her struggle with adjusting to Niya's newly-developed authority. Repeating 'no' to her mother suggests that she may be

struggling to accept this new change in her daughter. Niya's mother seems to need her, but this is not reciprocated. Niya's resistance of her mother's persistence highlights her efforts and strength to make such change. This extract reflects her important role of family mediator whilst living at home. She now accepts that she can't always be the family 'fixer' and that others have to assume responsibility. Instead, she is using her time for herself.

*'When I was a child and when I was erm a teenager, I felt that I didn't have the weapons to, to fight her and I had to just say to myself "Okay, this is my life". Now, having grown up, I have managed to build some confidence and I can now speak for myself.'* (Emily 12/10-13)

Emily portrays a battle scenario with her mother during her childhood and adolescence. 'Weapons to fight her' indicates how Emily believes she was coming under attack from her. Thus, she felt she needed to defend and protect herself, however, she felt unable to do so. She felt she lacked strength and accepted defeat over her mother. It is wondered what it was like to live with someone they were battling against. The atmosphere might have felt intense and uncomfortable, with a need to remain alert. There is a sense of decrease in the intensity of feuding between the pair, as 'weapons' and 'fighting' in childhood have now been replaced with 'confidence' and 'speaking for myself' in EA. Emily is beginning to use her new-found strength and confidence to recognise the power in using her voice with her mother. This might also reflect a change in their relationship from hostile to having greater calm.

*'Erm, more organised, more confident...erm, more erm sociable, erm...happier [laughs], and prouder [laughs], and erm...yeah [2s]. I feel like I have a voice now and that I am good enough [laughs] and yeah, that people can find me interesting, and...yeah.'* (Emily 29/20-23)

Emily's qualities now being recognised by others suggests that this was not the case with her mother whilst living at home. Perhaps she felt invisible. Furthermore, 'I have a voice now' implies that she was not heard, and therefore felt silenced by her mother. Emily's listing of further positive changes in herself highlights how there was no room for her to grow and flourish whilst living at home. Moving out ended this suppression and provided her with space to do this. In sum, there is a sense that she simply existed at home instead of lived. Upon moving out, she came alive in respect to who she is (internally) and what others see (externally). Her repetitive laughter and smiling hint at pride and happiness at what could be regarded as achievements. There is more acceptance and connectedness to herself by both herself and others. Consequently, there is a sense of comfort in the person she has become through these changes.

*'I had to take a step back and be like "Okay, fine. 1., It's not my house so I shouldn't be too fussed about it. 2., I guess he is right. It's not the end of the world. It's a ceiling and it's collapsed". Erm, it's a very different approach and I do try to do that.'* (Keira 23/17-20)

Keira describes a change within herself; a recurrence of her challenging her own thinking. 'Step back' suggests that part of this change involves distancing herself from her old ways of thinking and maternal influence, to being guided by the calmer responses of others. 'Very different' highlights the contrast between her old and new ways and therefore how potentially challenging the process is (yet she continues to ensure she adheres to it). It emphasises her strength, motivation and the significance of her efforts to change. Unlike her mother, Keira seems more open to change, both in contemplating and attempting it.

Some participants specifically observed a decrease in their struggles with anxiety since moving out of home.

*'I am so much better than I was. Like, I was a mess.'* (Rachel 13/14-15)

Rachel confidently acknowledges considerable improvement in her anxiety. 'A mess' emphasises how problematic and challenging she found life to be at the height of her struggles, enhancing her recent progress. 'Was' suggests that who she was then is not who she is now, highlighting the role of anxiety in her identity.

*'100% less. Like, a million times less.'* (Tara 26/8)

Tara also speaks of her improvement. Although 'less' implies that she continues to experience some anxiety, it feels far-removed from the great extent of her past struggles. It is wondered what has accounted for this change. Perhaps, in addition to Sophie, professional support was sought to aid this change.

*'Not having to worry about how your Mum is all the time...which I did. I still do probably, but less so. I definitely worried a lot less about her when I was at uni as I had this new life that I focused on.'* (Tara 33/5-7)

'Having' suggests there being no other option but to worry. It seems Tara took on the role of worrying when it should have been the opposite. It is assumed that this would have been quite consuming and challenging to balance with focussing on her life. 'Definitely' depicts certainty over Tara's awareness of her past worries. This contrasts with 'probably' which is more tentative, indicating less awareness of her present worries. This highlights how she has become less aware of her worries as they reduced in frequency. Perhaps they have less impact on her now. 'New life' connotes a fresh start. A comparison between old and new

emerges; leaving behind the old vs. immersion in a fresh new life full of novel opportunities (similar to Emily's new experiences). It reflects the difference between life at vs. away from home, thus accounting for her focus in the latter. It appears that moving away from her mother has enabled a change within her to focus on other occurrences in her life.

*'I have to build my confidence more. I have to grow still because in the back of my head there is always that voice, always that stress, always that anxiety on me...but I want to, to improve and I want to continue to make more positive change.'* (Emily 22/4-7)

This extract reflects Emily's intentions and responsibility towards further strength ('build') and development ('grow'). She describes a struggle which 'back of my head' initially appears to suggest is not all-encompassing or a main focus, but she then contrasts this by elaborating further. 'On me' hints at her mother's impact creating a pressure of weighing Emily down. She believes she can overpower this constant voice by growing and building herself. She feels change is necessary to defeat this voice of anxiety and stress. 'Positive change' denotes how she views her progress to-date favourably and therefore is confident in undertaking further change.

#### *4.5.4 From Losing the Mother I Knew, to the Return of Mother*

Half of participants gave consideration to their mother's identity. It felt important to them to represent their mothers in their experiences. Their relationship and connection to their mothers meant that their departure affected their mothers as well as themselves. As a result, some participants experienced their mothers as going on a journey of their own, leaving participants experiencing a sense of disconnect and loss of their mother's identity. For some, this resulted in a lack of clarity about who their mothers were. This seemed to apply more at the height of their mother's struggles with anxiety. Part of their transition of moving out of home included participants' sense of their mother's return and improvement in wellbeing and functioning.

Some participants began describing their mothers in the present tense, before correcting themselves and using the past tense. This suggests how they believed they had changed over time, with who they used to be becoming separate from who they now were.

*'She used to be incredibly self-confident, obviously. I mean she stood in a bikini in front of a camera for a living, erm...but she now is incredibly insecure, like I say her self-confidence is probably the lowest of anyone I know. Erm, she doesn't like people to see her or talk to her unexpectedly. She doesn't like to leave the house. It's like so sad to think about how much she has changed.'* (Rachel 5/8-12)

Rachel shares her experience of losing the mother she used to know as her mother's anxiety gradually worsened following her move out of home. Her repetition of 'incredibly' highlights her mother's change between two extremes. She has changed from being in front (of cameras) to behind (doors), from conquering the world with her career success to being afraid of the world and hiding away. This reflects how Rachel feels she has become a shadow of her former self. Her sadness at her mother's vulnerability hints at her mourning the loss of who her mother used to be.

The change in their mothers resulted in a sense of confusion for participants, amplifying the lack of clarity around who their mothers were.

*'I love her to bits but I just don't really recognise her anymore.'*  
(Rachel 40/22-23)

A lack of recognition implies Rachel is unsure of who her mother now is, emphasising how anxiety has overshadowed or even taken away who her mother used to be. This was particularly the case when she moved out of home. It is pondered what it was like to live with someone who felt a stranger. Perhaps it was difficult to know how to be around her mother. Rachel's unconditional love emphasises the depth of love and the bond between the pair, even during uncertain times.

Some participants felt that the loss and change in who their mothers were resulted in their worlds becoming smaller after they moved out. They appeared to disconnect from the world and those in it.

*'She cried her eyes out when he left, 'cos it was like her best friend and she doesn't have any friends now. Like, they have all faded into the background and...especially like her best friend who was friends with her for like the last 10 years.'* (Rachel 14/10-13)

This extract describes how, following Rachel's move out of home, her mother's worsening anxiety resulted in a loss of friendships. Her friends disappeared from focus, whilst her anxiety became a central feature. This depicts the intrusive nature of anxiety. She appeared to lose her strength to maintain her friendships and, instead of being surrounded by them, she became surrounded by anxiety. The dissolution of her mother's social network portrays how her world became smaller.

A few participants focussed on additional changes in their mothers which specifically occurred following their move out of home. There is a sense of return of their motivated and engaged mothers who had previously disappeared for some time.

*'What's changed is that she has become much happier. She like...so she started the U3A which is like the University of the Third Age. So, she goes to like Italian classes, she goes to Zumba. And, she's got more of a life now. She goes to this Rambling Association which means she goes to these dinners.'* (Tara 20/6-8)

Tara seems to recognise her mother's drive to learn and gain knowledge, as if she is now making up for lost time. Perhaps she is trying new activities to ascertain who she is again, after having disappeared for so long due to her anxiety. 'More of a life now' reflects Tara's observation of her mother no longer being held back by a fear of the world and people in it. Instead, she has witnessed her mother becoming immersed in the world and sampling what life has to offer. There is similarity between Tara's experience of both herself and her mother exploring and engaging in new opportunities upon moving out. It is as though moving out of home motivated her mother to come back to life and gained back what she lost at the height of her anxiety struggles.

This change in their mothers also extended to their anxiety:

*'...the worrying about my future maybe has got less as I have moved out and, erm...she can see that I am doing good. Whenever I go home she is quite happy. She's always really pleased to see me. She's back to being a lot more chirpier as well than more of a kind of on-edge Mum like she used to be...she tended to be quite on-edge. Erm...she seems happy actually, and she always seems pleased to see me so it's actually quite nice.'* (Niya 22/18-23)

'The worrying' instead of 'her worrying' portrays Niya's mother's anxiety as a third entity. It is wondered whether its presence is now felt less and has become less of a barrier in their relationship. There is now more space for their mother-daughter relationship to develop. 'She can see that I am doing good' suggests her mother has clarity over recognising her daughter's achievements (such as career success) which are outside their cultural expectations. Part of the change in who her mother now is (as her worrying decreased) related to becoming more accepting of Niya's cultural norm deviation. This appears to be welcomed by Niya, as her mother is now beginning to accept her for who she is and what she does. Comparing her mother from past to present reflects the change. 'She's back' insinuates a return of her old, less anxious mother. Repeating 'pleased to see me' and 'actually' (suggesting surprise) indicates that she is not used to such displays from her. Such changes seem to have had positive implications on their relationship and thus gaining distance from her mother has been beneficial to both parties.

## **4.6 Summary**

Overall, the analysis highlighted every participant's journey from deciding to move out of home, to actioning it, and to adjusting to their life away from home. Of interest, not all themes solely related to the participant. Some also focussed on their mothers, highlighting their involvement in and impact of their adult daughters moving out of home. Many shared similar experiences, but contrasts also existed. These were discussed and explored.

## **5. Chapter Five: Discussion**

### **5.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter will draw together the research findings in the context of the research aim. It will provide a summary of the findings across all themes and will consider these in relation to previously-mentioned or new literature. The study will then be evaluated in terms of its strengths and limitations, and the researcher's final reflections on the research process will be provided. Finally, implications will be presented relating to clinical work and suggestions for future research.

### **5.2 Summary of Findings**

#### *5.2.1 Feeling Stuck*

In existing literature about emerging adulthood (EA), development is rife (Arnett, 2014). Data from the current study, however, found this to be stagnated. Participants<sup>3</sup> attributed this to having an anxious mother. They viewed their dissatisfaction with their home environment and concern about their lack of personal growth as important precursors for the journey they were about to embark upon. Consequently, participants felt that their journey of moving out of home began prior to departure.

Increased feelings of responsibility and being overburdened have been identified in adult children who support parents with mental health problems (MHP; Tabak et al., 2016). A consequence is children not developing to their full potential (Aldridge & Becker, 2003). This was echoed by participants in relation to their lack of growth. They reported being focussed on supporting their mothers to the extent that they were too preoccupied to attend to their own development. It is possible that the emotional support they offered their mothers exceeded age-appropriate expectations (Aeyelts, Marshal, Charles & Young, 2016). In turn, ensuring emotional and physical availability to help them reduced time to focus on themselves. Additionally, participants' prioritisation of their mothers resulted in a lack of attention to their own needs congruent to their developmental stage, hindering personal growth. Similar findings emerged from a study on the transition to EA in children of mothers with MHP (Nagl-Cupal, Metzging & Mayer, 2015). Difficulties with balancing their own needs and development may arise due to increased personal involvement in supporting mothers with MHP, limiting time to focus on themselves. It must, however, be noted that these studies used adult sons and daughters. As daughters tend to adopt more caring roles than sons (Radke-Yarrow, Zahn-Waxler, Richardson, Susman, & Martinez, 1994), these findings

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<sup>3</sup> For ease of reading, the use of 'participants' throughout this chapter solely refers to participants from the current study.

in the current study may be particularly amplified by the use of female participants only.

Experiences of focussing on mothers as being detrimental to children's own development have been demonstrated in studies establishing that supporting mothers with MHP restricts children's socialising, increasing social isolation (Nagl-Cupal et al., 2015; Petrowski & Stein, 2015). In a study specifically on mothers, their struggles took a central focus in their children's lives. They felt their social integration decreased and they missed out on opportunities during childhood (Murphy, Peters, Wilkes & Jackson, 2016). These restrictions could have had ramification on participants' transition to EA. This transition is socially constructed amongst peers, where skills and resources are used to jointly enact goals, construct identity and negotiate and maintain friendships (Young et al., 2015). As it plays such a pivotal role, it is possible that participants' restricted socialising and social opportunities impacted on their EA transition. This could have accounted for them feeling behind their peers and lacking in growth.

It is also of worth commenting here on the EA lifestage. Many participants referred to it as a period of 'growing up'. Some remarked on attending university or undertaking internships during EA as 'not really the adult world'. This is consistent with Arnett's (2008) proposition of EA as being a stage of 'feeling in-between'. Participants no longer felt like adolescents, but did not quite feel like 'full adults', enhancing the basis of EA as a distinct stage of life.

Many participants proceeded to comment on their lack of learning, experiences and developing knowledge (including emotional development). The emotional development of children caring for vulnerable mothers has been found to be impaired (Hall, 2004). Mothers with MHP are often emotionally unavailable (Barnett & Parker, 1998). Consequently, although participants' capacity to request emotional support was suppressed by their mothers, their needs still remained. Mothers with MHP may struggle to meet their children's emotional needs (Obadina, 2010). The lack of maternal support and void in not having their emotional needs met by their mothers affected participants' growth and development. This appeared to occur through a lack of opportunities to learn through experience with their mothers and maternal modelling.

Participants attributed feeling restricted whilst living at home to certain behaviours displayed by their mothers, namely overcontrol and overprotection. Maternal overcontrol involves constraining or manipulating children's thoughts and feelings, often through behavioural ways (Borelli, Margolin & Rasmussen, 2015). It is particularly prominent in anxious mothers. They struggle to tolerate uncertainty and thus implement overcontrolling strategies with their children to manage their own anxiety (Woodruff-Borden, Morrow, Bourland & Cambron, 2002). Furthermore, maternal overcontrol is greater in mother-daughter dyads due to their

intimate yet conflictual relationships, resulting in mothers closely monitoring them as emerging adults (Smetana, Metzger, Gettman & Campione-Barr, 2006). Maternal monitoring was a source of contention for participants. Having to justify their actions and whereabouts minimised the privacy they felt entitled to for their lifestage. This had detrimental implications on the mother-daughter relationship as it would often result in arguments.

Maternal overcontrol impacts on healthy autonomy development by limiting individuation, psychological autonomy, identity formations and competence (Barber, Bean & Erickson, 2002). This was reflected by participants who spoke of feeling powerless, lacking in independence and autonomy and being unable to own thoughts and feelings belonging to them. Suppression of such pivotal areas in development seemed to affect their positive adjustment to EA (Desjardins & Leadbeater, 2017). Participants' displeasure of their mother's overcontrol (which they described as prohibiting, intrusive and all-encompassing) exacerbated their experiences of feeling restricted. This is of particular interest in relation to EA whereby freedom and flexibility is required for environmental and self-exploration. Maternal overcontrol significantly conflicted with participants' need for greater autonomy as emerging adults (Borelli et al., 2015). As this prominent need was suppressed, it is understandable that they felt constrained and limited in their capacity to develop as emerging adults.

Maternal overprotection involves developmentally-inappropriate parenting which exceeds children's needs and limits opportunities to practice and develop skills and abilities (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). Associations between maternal anxiety and overprotection have emerged (Brenning, Soenens, van Petegem & Kins, 2017). Maternal overprotection was rife amongst participants. It became more prominent as they began to express their intentions to move out. One way of understanding this is that their mothers experienced their increasing independence as a threat to their relationship. The distress experienced by some mothers suggests it was perceived as a personal rejection or loss of their relationship. Consequently, overprotection became an effective strategy to postpone this impending departure.

Although this restriction may have been adaptive for mothers, participants perceived it as detrimental to their development. Maternal overprotection inhibits the rite of passage into EA by restricting experiences, psychosocial development and independence (Ungar, 2009). Emerging adult daughters of mothers with obsessive-compulsive disorder verbalised concerns about how their restriction and overprotection would affect them developing the skills required when leaving home (Griffiths, Norris, Stallard & Matthews, 2012). Similar acknowledgement of the impact of such restrictions (arising from living with an anxious mother) was present in the data. Participants commented on how their overprotection

prevented them from developing the knowledge and skills expected at their age, as well as making them increasingly vulnerable for being exploited or mistreated by others. They felt that the consequences of their overprotection left them deviating from the norm in terms of their development. Thus, maternal overprotection had an inhibiting effect on their development progressing in accordance with their lifestage.

Of further interest is the concept of bounded agency (Evans, 2002). This postulates how emerging adults' agency is influenced by contexts and barriers in their environment. Participants clearly identified their barriers as the restrictions experienced whilst living with their mothers. It can therefore be suggested that this might have affected their agency during this time. For example, feeling unable to action their desires to socialise or travel abroad, undertake hobbies that they selected instead of their mothers, and express opposing views to their mothers. The requirement of agency for individuation in EA (Hamilton & Adamson, 2013) emphasises participants' accounts of how life at home with their mothers lead them to feel stuck in their development and experiences.

There was an increasing sense of participants struggling to further tolerate living with their mothers. They portrayed negative atmospheres of stress, frustration and resentment which became detrimental to their relationship. This is concurrent with emerging adults co-residing with their parents reporting increased irritation and that their parents 'got on their nerves' (Fingerman, Huo, Kim & Birditt, 2017). This support is, however, only tentative as it focussed on both mothers and fathers and sons and daughters. The current study's focus on mothers and daughters only leaves out consideration of remaining family members. Despite this, ambivalence theory, in the context of mother-adult child co-residence provides some insight into this finding. It involves sensitivity to behaviours which evoke negative emotional responses. Specifically, ambivalence occurs due to structural factors and unclear norms (Lüscher & Pillemer, 1998). The former pertains to sharing living space and various experiences throughout the day, and how this increases interpersonal tension. The latter relates to mothers interfering in the lives of their co-residing emerging adult children due to their previous normed behaviour corresponding to their maternal role. This is reflected in the current study through various participants' accounts of increased tension and withholding information about their lives from mothers.

For similar reasons, the transition to EA and adopting more adult roles decreased co-residence satisfaction, negatively affecting parent-adult child relationships (Aquilino & Supple, 1991). Participants experienced difficulty with tolerating living with their anxious mothers, whilst feeling unable to fulfil their desired transition into EA. They yearned to develop the skills, freedom and independence associated with adult roles, but felt their

mothers prohibited this. This is supported by research findings that overprotective parenting commonly displayed by anxious mothers did not facilitate an emerging adult's development. Instead, low life satisfaction occurred (Nelson, Padilla-Walker & Nielson, 2015). This corresponds with participants' accounts of gradually struggling to tolerate their mother's questioning of their whereabouts and frequent checking on their wellbeing. As such, they felt controlled and lacking in the independence they felt required for developmental progression in EA. This sense of being held back from moving forward caused frustration and unhappiness with life at home.

### *5.2.2 From Togetherness to Separation*

Participants described living closely with their mothers, with suggestions of being close and existing together. Some commented on how their mother's anxiety resulted in them undertaking caring responsibilities for them, resulting in their mother's dependency on them. These experiences are relevant to the concept of generational boundary dissolution. The mother-child relationship becomes disturbed by role-reversal, with the child becoming the maternal caregiver. Prematurely undertaking adult responsibility which exceeds cognitive and emotional capacity (Sroufe & Fleeson, 1988) can serve as a stressor, hinder children's competency development and prevent their developmental needs being met (Shaffer & Sroufe, 2005). This was reflected in participants' accounts of exhaustion through investing their resources in their mothers and undertaking responsibilities which opposed normative child roles.

Some participants felt so emotionally intertwined with their mothers that they both ended up needing each other. Hann-Morrison's (2012) writings on maternal enmeshment identify mother and child as being so emotionally fused that they operate in reaction to each other. Not only do they depend on each other excessively, but adult children's sense of self then becomes limited. This is attributed to mothers' lack of effort in promoting children's autonomous identity during development. Such dependency can result in less exploratory behaviour during adolescence and EA. This is recognised within the 'together' subordinate theme which describes how some lived closely with their mothers, focused on each other and paid little attention to external influences.

An enmeshed mother-daughter system results in internal and external boundary management difficulties; internal boundaries within their relationship are minimal, whereas boundaries to the world outside of their relationship are rigid (Manzi, Vignoles, Regalia & Scabini, 2006). This draws parallel with Sophie's portrayal of an 'us vs. them' situation. Her boundaries with her mother appeared blurred whilst growing up, but she clearly

distinguished her mother-daughter dyad from any other relationship. This amplified their sense of togetherness and lack of attention towards anyone outside of their relationship.

Participants' experiences of maintaining closeness to their mothers upon moving out related to spatial proximity, with contrasting accounts arising. Emerging adults' emotional closeness to mothers was associated with spatial proximity following home-leaving. Residential location either enables maintenance of positive relationships or avoidance of the downsides of poorer relationships (Gillespie & Treas, 2017). Niya insisted on remaining nearby so she could continue to support her mother as well as later engaging in leisure activities together. Perhaps Niya's spatial closeness helped her to develop their relationship and subsequently maintained their relationship benefits. In contrast, Keira sought spatial distancing. This reduced or avoided unwanted interactions with the mothers. This highlights the impact of closeness to mothers on their separation process.

Although most discussion of struggling to be apart related to maternal distress, a few participants remarked on their difficulties they identified as 'homesickness'. Homesickness is associated with home-leaving as it involves a change from previously-established routine and lifestyle and adaptation to a new environment (Bernier, Larose & Whipple, 2005). Thus, moving out and leaving their mothers might have been experienced as a loss by these participants, accounting for their emotional reaction. More specifically, enmeshed emerging adults had more contact with their parents upon moving out and subsequently struggled to maintain a healthy distance from them (Bernier et al., 2005). This resonated with Sophie's (who referred to being 'enmeshed') experience of struggling to separate from her mother. Her enmeshment was such a defining feature that it impacted her emotional autonomy development, causing separation to be particularly challenging and distressing.

Focus was also given to how participants' mothers struggled. The delay in transition to adulthood and recently-changed economic factors often postpone home-leaving (Arnett, 2000). Consequently, the mother-adult daughter relationship remains prominent for longer. This, in addition to participants' reported togetherness with their mothers, could explain why such an event was difficult. Kins, Soenens and Beyers' (2013) findings of separation difficulties being common in mother-adult child dyads are understood in relation to Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory. Mothers interpret separation as threatening. This triggers anxiety and an instinctive tendency to protect her child. This aids in understanding why participants' mothers were keen to see them and frequently made contact; perhaps their attempts at maintaining physical and emotional proximity related to their goals of protecting their adult daughters and managing their own distress.

Similarly, anxious mothers were less autonomy-granting upon their adult daughters moving out (Wuyts, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, van Petegem & Brenning, 2017). Mothers perceived home-leaving as an abandonment and rejection. Consequently, they felt pressure to keep their daughters physically and emotionally close. Perhaps autonomy-suppressing parenting resulted in a conflict: participants stayed in close contact to benefit their mother's wellbeing, but felt internally conflicted by their desire to increase maternal distance. This was especially reflected in Sophie's contrast of her mother's enthusiasm for their upcoming reunion and her nonchalant response. Whilst she was beginning to adjust to living away from her mother, her mother was still struggling. The struggles in separating and maintaining distance from anxious mothers highlights the importance of the impact of these factors on the process of moving out for this participant group.

Bouchard (2014) offers further insight into maternal struggles with separation. Mothers experience loneliness, sadness and a sense of loss in anticipation of and early stages of adult children moving out. Such loss can affect identity. As many participants lived so closely connected to their mothers, they might have been incorporated into part of who their mothers were (especially those whose mothers felt they were in an exclusive club or team together). Their departure from home would therefore have amplified this loss.

The area of role reversal and subsequent confusion emerged in the data. Participants experienced parentification, a role reversal characterised by the child feeling obliged to enact a parental role with great responsibility, with the parent enacting a dependent role (Goldner, Abir & Sachar, 2016; Göpfert et al., 2004; Schimmenti & Bifulco, 2015). Kabat (1996) combined psychoanalytic ideas to offer an explanation for this finding. She used Winnicott's (1971) concept of mirroring to demonstrate how the narcissistic needs of the mother overshadow the needs of the child. The selfobject needs of the child are therefore subordinated to the selfobject needs of the mother. She also used Freud's (1933) oedipal dynamics to explain how the ongoing oedipal tie between mother and daughter accounts for the daughter's ambivalence towards her mother regarding role reversal. Kabat (1996) concluded that the intense and close mother-daughter relational bond results in role reversal whereby the daughter undertakes a mothering role. Her own needs are sacrificed and she provides emotional attunement to maintain emotional connection to her mother. This is amplified by maternal mental illness, as mothers present as vulnerable and requiring help (Griffiths et al., 2012; Macfie, Brumariu & Lyons-Ruth, 2015; Tabak et al., 2016). This appeared salient for participants who described being mindful of the normative roles they expected to enact, but that their mother's need for support was so great that they adhered to parentification. A connection to their mother was secured by this role-reversal.

A shift in roles often occurred once participants moved out, with mother and daughter both adopting adult roles. This included reciprocity in giving and receiving help. Emerging adults felt supporting their parents post-home-leaving represented reciprocated love and mutuality (Funk, 2012). This emphasised the increased balance in their newly renegotiated roles, reflecting experiences such as Anna's, who remarked on her pleasure at being able to advise her mother. Perhaps the lack of participants' presence at home encouraged mothers to become more responsible, and being away from home prompted participants to develop their independence.

Moving out resulted in changes to participants' maternal relationships. The direction of change was mixed, but the majority reported improvements. Anna, Emily and Niya shared how their maternal relationship changes resulted in greater closeness and self-disclosure. Jiang, Ming Yang, and Wang (2017) found parental responsiveness mediated the positive association between daughter self-disclosure and relationship quality. These participants experienced their mothers as being more responsive through communication changes such as responding better to their needs by listening more. This suggested an increase in their mother's understanding and interest in their lives, enhancing their closeness and comfort with self-disclosure.

Telephones were a commonly used method of maintaining contact by participants. Positive associations emerged between telephone call satisfaction and maternal relationship satisfaction and closeness (Miller-Ott, Kelly & Duran, 2014). This was highlighted by most participants. Miller-Ott et al. (2014) explained that this was because telephone contact enables maintenance of their relationship upon moving out. Participants achieved this by having regular contact, maintaining a suitable degree of insight into each other's lives and seeking and offering advice and support. This improved their relationship satisfaction and closeness. Potential negative consequences have also been identified. Telephone contact may foster dependency and unhealthy attachment from either party, resulting in dissatisfaction (Miller-Ott et al., 2014). This reflected Hannah's experience. Her mother's frequent contact for reassurance and expectation of her to be readily available to speak conflicted with Hannah's desire for greater independence. This highlights how the purpose of contact can have varying relationship implications.

Research on mother-adult child relationships found that, as children became adults, their maternal relationships involve greater intimacy, closeness and emotional support. There is greater balance in support exchange which increases positive emotions and self-esteem (Schwarz, Trommsdorff, Albert & Mayer, 2005; Vassallo, Smart & Price-Robertson, 2009). Furthermore, greater positivity in mother-adult child relationships are associated with

perceived adult status (Lindell, Campione-Barr & Killoren, 2017). Data emerged to support this. Participants felt that gaining independence following their move from home improved maternal relations. Not only was this due to no longer have to fight for something which many felt their mothers were inhibiting, but also because they began to feel more like adults in terms of their lifestyle, competence and identity. These mothers appeared to adapt to their adult daughters' growing maturity and diminished their roles of monitoring and enforcing household rules. In turn, participants began to view their mothers as people (as well as mothers), resulting in a new relationship between them as equals with mutual respect. Moreover, moving out enabled control over when they saw their mothers. The distance seemed to encourage them to value their time together, prompting efforts to maintain contact (Arnett, 2014).

### *5.2.3 What is Out There*

Upon moving out of home, participants became immersed in their new environments and opportunities for new experiences. All focussed on their social experiences which appeared to play a central role in this transition. Moving out of home results in emerging adults leaving their families of origin, enabling friends to play more prominent roles (McNamara Barry, Madsen & DeGrace, 2016). During times of transition, friends are utilised as primary support sources. Consequently, social networks expand during EA (Wrzus, Hänel, Wagner & Neyer, 2013). Thus, as many participants in the current study felt socially restricted whilst living at home, their desire to develop socially to support them during this transition period is understandable.

Social relationships are particularly valuable during EA as they support in undertaking developmental tasks, provide emotional intimacy, support, foster autonomy and promote self-initiation (McNamara Barry et al., 2016). They help manage the transition to adulthood and achieve the criteria for adult status (McNamara Barry, Madsen, Nelson, Carroll & Badger, 2009). This is congruent with participants' experiences of newly-formed friendships helping with developing a sense of self and belonging. Their friends were pivotal in shaping the perspectives they were developing about the world as emerging adults no longer under the influence or control of their mothers. They shifted from worldviews learned from their mothers to exposure to more varied views of their new friends (McNamara Barry et al., 2016). Furthermore, social relationships are exceptionally important when adjusting to transitions (such as starting university) in females (Conley, Kirsch, Dickson & Bryant, 2014). Participants described the value of their friendships, particularly in aiding their identity development as they supported exploration in a familiar context. This offered them stability

and a secure base during a period of unknown and uncertainty (McNamara Barry et al., 2009).

Friendships are associated with wellbeing and positive functioning in EA (O'Connor et al., 2011). More specifically, they provide security, greater self-esteem, and engaging in activities with friends makes them more meaningful, resulting in greater happiness (Padilla-Walker, Memmott-Elison & Nelson, 2017). This aligns with some participants' happiness with the social networks they created upon moving out. The contrast between how suppressed and inhibited their mothers made them feel and how alive and engaged their new friends made them feel highlights the impact of friendships on flourishing during this developmental stage.

Emily and Sophie's mothers struggled with adjusting to their daughter's new relationships. This is supported by anxious mothers experiencing stress and concern about adult children's decreasing involvement with them and increasing affiliation with friends. Perhaps Emily and Sophie's mothers perceived them as a threat to their relationship as these friendships suggested they were no longer needed (Wuyts et al., 2017). Mothers' reactions to this may cause their daughters to feel conflicted, possibly making their transition to a developmental stage with a focus on peer and romantic relationships a challenge. This area warrants further investigation.

Most participants described a void in receiving emotional support from their mothers. Tabak et al. (2016) postulated that anxious mothers may be emotionally unavailable to their children due to their heightened focus on their struggles and symptoms. This may have reduced the emotional engagement of participants' mothers, resulting in not all of participants' needs being met. They recognised and responded to this void by seeking emotional support from alternative sources, namely friends.

Receiving support from friends becomes more salient during EA, with a shift from mothers as support sources in adolescence, to friends and romantic partners in EA (Szwedo, Hessel, Loeb, Hafen & Allen, 2017). Friends' increasing role during EA is affiliated with their striving for independence and receiving greater comfort from confiding in peers due to encountering similar experiences. Indeed, these reasons may account for choices of alternative support sources by participants in the current study, especially upon moving out of home in EA. These participants expressed satisfaction with their alternative support. This concurs with Sherman, Lansford and Volling's (2006) finding that positive friendships counteract against any negative effects of lower-quality family relationships (such as lack of emotional support). Seeking support from friends possibly enabled participants to fill the void of the lack of emotional support they experienced in their maternal relationships.

In contrast, Anna experienced her mother as being able to provide her with valuable emotional support during distressing times. Similarly, Desjardins and Leadbeater (2017) found that effective maternal emotional support protected adult daughters when in difficult situations. This highlights how maternal support can be beneficial in providing an outlet, guidance, reassurance and advice. Anna's positive experience of maternal support emphasises how her mother's knowledge, life experience and understanding of her enabled her support to be incredibly beneficial to Anna. She found it particularly helpful in navigating the challenges associated with moving out. Thus, despite moving out, her mother's support remained constant and she continued to seek it for its value and effectiveness. In this instance, the support provided by an anxious mother aided her daughter's transition of moving out of home.

Most participants' descriptions of moving out as marking the beginning of having a life belonging to them entailed their increased independence and subsequent feelings of empowerment. For many, moving out to start university is the first step in their journey towards independence (Mulder & Clark, 2002). For all participants, their new experience of independence which emerged around the time of moving away from their mothers (with a majority moving out to start university) appeared to heighten their sense of adult status and identity (Katsiaficas, 2017). Many attributed moving out with increasing responsibility for themselves, autonomous decision-making and the flexibility to explore and experiment. This taking ownership of their lives was possible due to a reduction in their mother's control over them. Maternal control decreases as adult daughters become more autonomous and independent (Desjardins & Leadbeater, 2017). The change towards increased ownership of one's life is often associated with better adjustment to EA, as it fosters a sense of competence and the development of positive self-perceptions. This appears to account for participants' relief, pride and feelings of power from such change.

Furthermore, exploring opportunities during EA is associated with positive psychosocial wellbeing (Baggio, Studer, Iglesias, Daeppen & Gmel, 2017). This is mirrored in the experience of participants who shared their excitement at trialling new activities. For many, this exploration also resulted in gaining self-insight and developing value and belief systems. Through engaging in different activities with peers from various backgrounds, they gained further understanding of their likes vs. dislikes, what was important vs. unimportant to them, and what they felt was morally acceptable vs. unacceptable. Such learning was previously prevented whilst living at home with their mothers due to the restrictions she imposed. It is important to note that, for most, the undertone of their stories changed; from one of restriction, struggles and a degree of negativity, to one of freedom, confidence and new opportunities. It signifies how moving out of home enabled them to thrive.

#### 5.2.4 *Identity*

Every participant shared their belief about their mother shaping who they have become. It included acknowledging having experienced similar struggles to them. This is consistent with findings that children of anxious mothers are likely to develop similar struggles themselves (Black, Gaffney, Schlosser & Gabel 2003; Chapman, Petrie, Vines & Durrett, 2011; Degnan, Almas & Fox, 2010). Not only did participants report similar anxiety struggles, but they also identified similar struggles with connecting to their emotions. This is supported by adult children of parents with MHP experiencing similar difficulties with emotional connectivity and literacy (including identifying, understanding, interpreting and expressing emotions; Murphy et al., 2016). This is explained by the mother-daughter relationship resulting in daughters developing a self-identity closely related to their mother and her struggles.

Although participants acknowledged similar struggles, they then referred to intentions to change to avoid comparable lifestyles to them. This study offered flexibility for participants to share an array of experiences (positive, negative, or both) without any leading questions. Unlike previous quantitative research, the emerging data was not solely confined to blaming or pathologising mothers. In addition to the negative experiences, it also offered space for participants to share some positive experiences due to its focus on unique experiences. In fact, Tara commented on how developing similar mental health struggles to her mother brought closeness and greater awareness of how challenging life can be for someone with anxiety. Tara's lack of blame could be understood by her own experiences creating an understanding of her mother's struggles and perceiving her as a model of perseverance (Petrowski & Stein, 2016). This introduces the possibility that daughters may adopt an approach to their mothers which is comprised more of curiosity, understanding and appreciation for enduring such challenges as opposed to one of resentment. It highlights how adult daughters' experiences of maternal anxiety are not uniformly negative, and that some are invested in their maternal relationship regardless of the challenges associated with having an anxious mother.

Nearly all participants' narratives depicted their journey of searching for themselves, from a lack of sense of self, towards gaining self-insight. Transitional periods (including EA and moving out of home) are linked to a decrease in sense of self due to re-evaluation of pre-existing commitments, changes in routine and additional identity options for exploration (Crocetti et al., 2016). This lack of clarity is exacerbated further in adult children of mothers with MHP (Nagl-Cupal et al., 2015). It could be understood that, upon moving out of home, participants' caring role for their anxious mothers reduced significantly. They were then exposed to their own needs, resulting in realisation that their needs and identity development

had been neglected. The questions they encountered were similar to those found by Nagl-Cupal et al. (2015): 'who am I?' and 'what do I want in life? Furthermore, 'loss of knowing oneself' was a main theme in a qualitative study on experiences of adult children of parents with MHP. They lacked a sense of self due to becoming overwhelmed by their parents' MHP. This led to a desire to find out who they are (Murphy et al., 2016). Participants had similar experiences as they reported not knowing who they were prior to moving out. This was due to lacking in the agency required in identity exploration and focussing on attending to their mother's needs.

As emerging adults begin to adapt to their transition, their new experiences increase clarity over their identity due to more opportunities to explore and reconsider identity options (Crocetti et al., 2016). Peer relationships are salient in this process. Self-concept clarity was positively associated with social participation. This is because being amongst peers in EA increases engagement in social behaviours which enable self-reflection (Crocetti et al., 2016). Moreover, peer presence provides comfort and emotional intimacy to facilitate emerging adults exploring different identities and then receiving peer feedback (which can alter their self or worldviews; Young et al., 2015). Correspondingly, participants shared how interacting with others and new social experiences helped to gain insight about themselves. They became more aware of how they wished to develop as individuals and behave socially, began identifying future aspirations, began developing values and beliefs separate to their mothers, and changed attributes identified as undesirable by others in social situations. This highlights how moving away from home and their mother's influence enabled individuation and identity development which was previously neglected for many. There is a sense of optimism attached to their recent identity journey. This is reflected in research findings of associations between identity commitments and increased well-being, self-esteem, internal locus of control and reduced anxiety (Waterman et al., 2013).

EA is the lifestage characterised by greatest personal growth and change (Arnett, 2004). This theme was particularly prominent, with nearly all participants' strive for change translating into making changes to how they lived their lives. Their changes were often triggered by the influence of peers' viewpoints, peers modelling alternative ways of behaving, adapting to new environments and social situations, and greater self-focus to identify desired changes. This is supported by findings from Gottlieb, Still and Newby-Clark (2007) about the events and experiences which brought about personal change during EA. Adapting to new experiences was a significant contributing factor as the effort and adaptive skills required enhanced their responsibility and confidence. Engaging in activities concurrent with goals and skills enhanced wellbeing due to feelings of productivity relating to goal achievement. Support, care and responsiveness from newly-formed friendships

promoted their confidence development, responsibility and resources for independent living. Growth and change also occurred through greater self-focus. For participants, this increased their self-understanding, introspection, maturation, personal strength and priority changes. Taken together, participants' exposure to transition, new events, people and environments aided positive personal change. Here, it is questioned whether such change related to EA or moving out and away from anxious mothers. As both of these contexts apply to all participants in the study, it is difficult to clearly distinguish between the two. However, as these changes were often triggered by moving out, regardless of the presence of EA lifestage, it could be speculated that it was this which enabled change. This is an area for further investigation. Exploring the area of personal change in emerging adults who have not moved out and away from their anxious mothers would be of interest.

For some, their change extended to a decrease in their anxiety struggles. Pride and empowerment were often affiliated with their efforts to effectively manage their struggles, highlighting the role of agency. Agency is associated with hope in working towards goals related to MHP, awareness of needing to take control of making changes, and feeling empowered to take responsibility for making changes (Andresen, Oades & Caputi, 2011). Agency also supports the separation-individuation process in EA. Higher agency is positively related to identity development as emerging adults seek out opportunities and subsequently settle for identity commitments congruent with their individuality (Schwartz, Côté & Arnett, 2005). Participants both from previous research and the current study identified similar changes directly associated with the separation-individuation process: developing own opinions and beliefs not influenced by parents, developing a private personal life in which certain information is withheld from parents, developing independence, gaining physical distance, and a distancing from negative feelings towards parents suggestive of conflict (such as feeling anxious about mothers' MHP or guilty for not taking responsibility for mothers; Koepke & Denissen, 2012). Consequently, the changes that participants in this current study made through immersion in their new environments away from their mothers enhanced their wellbeing and development as expected during EA. Such changes enabled success with the separation-individuation process, by creating a separate and independent life whilst maintaining maternal relations from a distance and navigating any challenges along the way.

The data then shifted to consideration of participants' experiences of their mother's identity. They believed they too went on their own journey. Some remarked on a sense of losing their mothers at the height of their struggles, to the return and reconnection of them upon improvement with their anxiety struggles. Given their relationship and connection to their mothers, it seemed important for participants to focus on them. The perceived loss of their

identity was significant. It left participants in a state of unknown and temporary disconnect from their mothers, causing confusion and sadness. It highlights how participants' departure from home affected their mothers and not just themselves.

Although mothers often experience distress when their adult children leave home, positive psychological consequences can also emerge. These include increased personal growth and leisure time, and subsequent opportunities for reconnection (Mitchell & Lovegreen, 2009). Although participants' mothers initially struggled when their adult daughters left home, this life event gradually enabled opportunities for reconnection (such as leisure activities and education) and a reduction in their anxiety struggles. Engagement in leisure activities significantly predicted an improvement with mental health struggles through providing opportunities for meaning-making, satisfaction, connection/belonging, identity, autonomy, control, competence and stress-coping (Iwasaki et al., 2014). Similar findings emerged from the current study. Several participants commented on a return of their once motivated and engaged mothers following their departure from home. They felt their mother's leisure pursuits enabled the rediscovery of their strengths, social support availability and social competence. Rebuilding their lives and reconnecting with the world resulted in greater agency and a sense of purpose for their mothers (Andresen, Oades & Caputi, 211). It is as though participants believed the reduction in their mother's anxiety struggles and their re-engagement with the world resulted in the return of life-meaning and purpose for them.

### **5.3 Evaluation of the Study**

#### *5.3.1 Strengths*

Limited research exists on families of people with MHP. Specifically, there is a limited narrative of experiences of adult daughters who have grown up with parents with MHP (Murphy et al., 2016). Furthermore, minimal studies have considered the developmental stage of children (Griffiths et al., 2012). The current study has therefore added to a research area which previously accumulated little attention. The introduction chapter of this thesis presented research on moving out in the general population. Not much was known about the area of moving out of home as an adult daughter of an anxious mother, making this study particularly relevant. As a result, these findings were stated within the wider literature. Through what is known about adult daughters of anxious vs. non-anxious mothers, what emerged from the current study is that the former experienced entering in to a transition period in a disadvantaged position as they felt developmentally underprepared. Insight is offered into how this may result in such adult daughters finding the transition more challenging than their counterparts with non-anxious mothers. Although it is expected that any adult daughter undertaking such transition will expect some level of difficulty, those with

anxious mothers who felt that they lacked a sense of self, had minimal life experience and had not developed much independence (which they all associated with their mother's anxiety) might encounter a more challenging transition than those without an anxious mother.

Although the current study intended to shift away from pathologising anxious mothers, the findings that emerged highlighted how, initially, many adult daughters did struggle. The positive experiences were initially outweighed by various challenges, struggles and negative experiences. However, unlike previous quantitative research, this qualitative data enabled this participant group's voices to be heard. It has offered an in-depth understanding of these struggles which can be used to inform therapeutic interventions to support such individuals with any potential associated struggles.

Furthermore, exploration of participants' experiences of their transition then offered insight into how their journeys progressed; despite initial struggles and mostly negative experiences whilst growing up with their mothers and initially struggling to separate, they began to adapt in their new environments which paved way for flourishing, development and a wealth of positive experiences. It has taken the initial steps in a shift away from solely blaming and pathologising mothers who struggle with anxiety; although adult daughters reported negative experiences, positive ones also existed for both themselves and their mothers. There was a sense of hope affiliated with the journey such individuals undertook which related to being able to overcome and grow from negative experiences and live enjoyable and meaningful lives as adults.

A phenomenological approach appeared well-suited to fulfil the research aims. Participants appeared engaged and free to express themselves and share their stories. It enabled flexibility in hearing participants' narratives as they weren't restricted by hypotheses or led by questionnaires (Festen et al., 2014). The interpretive element of IPA enabled the researcher to get as close to understanding participants' experiences as possible. Additionally, IPA's emphasis on idiography enabled focus on individual experiences. This resulted in data reflecting participants' unique and individual experiences of moving out of home.

Given IPA's emphasis on intersubjectivity and double hermeneutics, this approach enabled the researcher to be attentive to their relationship with participants. The personal influence on researchers' interpretations of participants' accounts can never be fully eradicated (Clancy, 2013). Without self-awareness and examination, research can become heavily influenced by personal characteristics, bias and prejudice (Finlay, 2003). Thus, keeping a reflective diary and being aware of one's position allowed researcher recognition of any influences which could have affected the research process. The researcher was able to take

into account how their own interests, assumptions and experiences contributed to the data that was collected. Consequently, considering the researcher's relationship with both participants and the research topic and implications of this resulted in a more accurate reflection of participants' experience. This enhanced the rigour of the research.

### *5.3.2 Limitations*

As previously identified when reviewing literature, this study only focussed on experiences of adult daughters in relation to their mothers. Although a justification was provided for using this dyad, it cannot be ignored that the experiences of adult sons have yet to be heard. This is not to say that their experiences hold less importance or value. It is hoped that equally insightful and informative findings would also emerge from this participant group. The same applies to exploring adult children's experiences of anxious fathers. This is acknowledged in relation to recommendations for future research later in the chapter.

All eight participants nominated themselves to partake in the study. It was therefore assumed that they felt comfortable to share their experiences. This is reflected in their detailed responses of their experiences which began as a time of struggle and unhappiness, but veered towards greater happiness, satisfaction, hope and growth. It is possible that other adult daughters of anxious mothers (possibly with greater struggles) were less keen to participate and subsequently not represented by this study. It would be of interest to interview a similar group of adult daughters who weren't able to move out until later due to the extent of their mother's anxiety struggles (Aldridge & Becker, 2003) about their experiences.

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, a maternal anxiety disorder diagnosis was not necessary; participants' experiences of their mothers as anxious were accepted as their reality. Instead, participants were invited to take part if their 'mothers struggled with anxiety' when they were children. Having participants from various cultural backgrounds highlighted how the term 'anxiety' may have different meanings across cultures and thus how the wording of 'anxiety' in the recruitment advert might only have attracted certain cultures. For example, in some cultures and languages there are no words equivalent to the concept of anxiety used in Westernised societies (Halbreich, 2007). This was raised by Niya who acknowledged that, in her native language, there is no word for anxiety. Anxiety was not mentioned at home and so she only became aware of its definition during mid-adolescence. Emotion expression and interpretations of anxiety are culturally influenced (Barlow, 2002). Thus, culture influences how individuals make sense of and communicate their symptoms of MHP (Eshun & Gurung, 2009). This may result in underdiagnosing MHP so they are unrecognised (Paniagua, 2013). Instead, 'culture-bound syndromes' exist whereby

commonly identified MHP are perceived as unusual in the context of certain cultures (Rego, 2009). Examples which correspond to anxiety symptoms include 'Brain Fog' in African-American cultures and 'Ghost Sickness' in American-Indian cultures (Paniagua, 2013). This difference in recognition might account for a lack of individuals from particular cultures offering to participate in the current study. Perhaps the recruitment advert did not resonate with individuals from certain cultures. Consideration should be given to what constitutes anxiety when recruiting from different cultural backgrounds.

In IPA, language serves as a tool to capture participants' experiences. Phenomenological research relies on participants being able to clearly express and articulate descriptions of their experiences (Willig, 2013). Furthermore, experiencing certain emotions or distress affects articulation (Gerrig, Zimbardo, Svartdal, Brennen, Donaldson & Archer, 2012). Participants more eloquent in their descriptions provided richer detail in comparison to those who became tearful or struggled to articulate themselves. The researcher was mindful of this during analysis and so was particularly attentive to participants' expression, metaphors and non-verbal communication to gain further insight into such experiences.

Finally, the research required participants to remember past events and experiences, from what happened earlier on the day of their interview, to as far back as childhood. An argument can be put forward as to whether recall shapes the experience of remembering a past event in the here and now in comparison to describing something in the present. The interview process focussed on significant experiences for participants. Thus, there was a lot of mental activity occurrence, including recall and reflection. Interviews facilitated self-conscious phenomenological reflection through participants remembering, contemplating and making sense of their experiences. The researcher's questioning also prompted unselfconscious reflection to become something for participants to consciously reflect upon (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Thus, remembering becomes remembering of something stimulated through an act of memory. IPA's main focus is on the hermeneutic circle and so it is sufficient that, through remembering, participants were making sense of their experience. This meaning-making was the focus of analysis.

### *5.3.3 Reflexivity*

Coming from a quantitative research background, I initially struggled as a novice IPA researcher. I was very much used to a black-and-white approach. Absolutes were my comfort zone. Embarking on my doctoral research journey distanced me from this. I acknowledged the limitations of quantitative in relation to my research aims and appreciated the value a qualitative methodology would bring to my research topic. I valued IPA's idiographic nature which felt at the core of my research. At the same time, I also found it

problematic when in the early stages of analysis. Analysis took several months, with the initial stages taking three attempts. I was too descriptive and constantly stayed too close to my participants' words. I felt anxious about the great responsibility of being given data so rich and powerful and needing and wanting to do it justice. Here, the idiographic element was the source of my concern; if everyone's experiences are so unique, how could I possibly get it 'right'? In time, I realised I had to distance myself from this right-wrong, black-white approach. What I had to focus on instead was getting as close to my participants' worlds as possible to infer their meaning. My various analysis attempts and thorough supervisor feedback and guidance gradually built my confidence and ability to do this.

Adopting a reflexive approach has enhanced my self-awareness of how the researcher's own beliefs, preconceptions and experiences can influence the research process. Berger (2015) highlighted the benefit of 'studying the familiar'. Having similar experiences to my participants contributed to my understanding and sensitive approach, which caused greater ease in building rapport. Furthermore, I was more willing to 'go-there' and enquire about potentially sensitive and emotive areas as they weren't completely unknown or unexpected. I felt that having encountered similar experiences made me as prepared as I could possibly be to explore this area with curiosity as a researcher.

Having similar experiences to participants also posed some challenges. After my first interview, I wrote in my reflective diary about my feeling of discomfort when a participant spoke of how her mother's anxiety caused difficulty with family social events. I assimilated with this. It was a main source of contention in relation to my mother's anxiety struggles. After writing in my diary, I replayed the interview. I recognised that my questioning and exploration of this particular experience was limited. I realised that I had shied away from this content because of my reaction to my own experiences of such an area. Through this process, I became aware of my 'unconscious editing' (Berger, 2015) which was due to my own sensitivities and minimised the depth and quality of my exploration. Alerting myself to this enabled fuller engagement with data.

I felt particular affiliation with one participant. I felt her experiences closely resembled mine. I noticed that I was especially attentive in identifying emergent themes from her interview which resonated with me due to my own similar experiences. I also had a tendency to select many quotes from her when drafting my analysis chapter. I recognised the double hermeneutic process in IPA and how my own experiences could have led to me making sense of this participant's experiences purely through the eyes of my own experiences. I was concerned that this would leave me blind to her true experiences and meaning-making, affecting my interpretation. I acknowledged that my own experiences and assumptions

couldn't be separated from the process of making sense of participants' experiences. Thus, I remained attentive to the need to identify and reflect on my own standpoint and reactions to her data. Instead of being consumed by the awe of sharing a similar experience to a participant, I attempted to ground myself within IPA's idiographic understanding of comprehending each participant as a unique person (unique to both myself and other participants) in a specific historical, social and cultural context. Through this I could attempt to gain an insider's perspective. Utilising my reflective diary and supervisor discussions, I ensured that my analysis of her quotes produced interpretations that reflected and were important to her experiences, and not mine. I also ensured I gave equal consideration to all participants when selecting quotes; all participant experiences are so diverse that it was my duty as a researcher to give voice to this diversity.

One final, overarching reflection will be offered. Prior to embarking on this research journey, I started with a rather binary perception about experiences of having an anxious mother: they were positive or negative. However, through the data, I began to realise that participants' experiences were much more complex than categorising them in this way. IPA directed my awareness to the nuances of individual experience. This resulted in a change in my understanding of pathologising and positive or negative experiences. I acknowledged that participants' experiences were akin to a transition in itself; what started off as various challenges and negative experiences filtered out into learning, adapting, flourishing and change as they continued their journey of moving out of home. I realised the importance of not being so black and white in how I understood this.

## **5.4 Implications**

### *5.4.1 Clinical Implications*

Counselling Psychology prioritises subjective experience. Rather than searching for universal truths, it searches for understanding (Rafalin, 2010). This study aimed to understand how adult daughters of anxious mothers experienced moving out of home. It holds clinical importance by highlighting a previously unstudied area using a qualitative methodology to yield rich data.

The in-depth, idiographic knowledge and subsequent themes which emerged from this study were not areas which had previously arisen in different research contexts. Using a methodology which prioritised subjective experience and permitted the use of open-ended questions enabled participants to come forward and provide responses which previous quantitative research may not have invited. It has raised awareness that adult daughters of anxious mothers do experience struggles, challenges and negative experiences as part of

their transition of moving out of home. The study has, however, added an additional layer of knowledge which previous research has not accessed; the learning and appreciation that can arise from having an anxious mother, motivation for change, determination involved in making positive change, and the risk-taking to overcome such negative experiences. A 'fuller' insight has therefore been gained into their journey which can guide future research.

The current study wanted to challenge the paradigm of a deficit-based approach towards having an anxious mother. It endeavoured to adopt a different insight into this phenomenon, and IPA afforded this opportunity by allowing for the exploration of participants' unique experiences and meaning-making. It was hoped that gaining a different insight (which went beyond deficit recognition and towards unique experiences and their meaning) would enable services to take a different approach to understanding this phenomenon in relation to clinical implications and directions for future research.

Although the focus of the study was on moving out, many participants felt that this journey began prior to their move, with contemplation of moving. They felt it was important to provide insight into what led to their decision. This was characterised by feeling stuck in their growth and development, a restricted lifestyle at home and an increasing intolerance of life at home with their mothers. Thus, these experiences spanned from childhood through to the beginning of EA. These findings could be insightful for Counselling Psychologists undertaking any individual or family work with daughters of anxious mothers to promote their development. They could also be implicated within a wider network. Educational establishments have a pivotal role in children's learning and development (Barbarin & Miller, 2011). This knowledge may therefore be of interest in considering how education systems could help to effectively promote areas of female children's development alongside maternal input (within the context of having an anxious mother).

This study was not an empirical investigation of cause-and-effect in the transmission of anxiety between mother and child. However, accounts from all participants are consistent with existing findings of a link between parent and child anxiety disorders (Black, Gaffney, Schlosser & Gabel 2003; Chapman, Petrie, Vines & Durrett, 2011). All participants shared their experiences of developing similar anxiety struggles to their mothers. They attributed this to the modelling of their mother's anxious behaviours (such as avoidance of social events, excessive cleaning and orderliness) and/or the consequences of the maternal behaviours which have been found to be associated with maternal anxiety, such as overcontrol (Wood, 2006). Awareness of this may be of interest to Counselling Psychologists working with daughters of anxious mothers who have developed their own anxiety struggles. This study offered further insight into how participants made sense of their own anxiety

struggles. For example, not learning coping strategies from their mothers, not being able to talk about their emotions with their mothers, and being discouraged by their mothers from trying out new experiences were all attributed to their anxiety struggles whilst growing up. This knowledge highlights how such areas could be addressed by preventive interventions to support this specific at-risk group.

This study has also highlighted the continued importance of the mother-daughter relationship in the context of maternal anxiety, from child development through to EA. Although focus on the maternal relationship and involving mothers in the treatment process (if the client consents) is common in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, it is less so in adult services. This study reflects the importance of continued maternal involvement in therapeutic interventions as these daughters enter into EA. Involving family members in therapy in adult services has been found to bolster treatment efficacy (Renshaw, Steketee & Chambless, 2005).

A theme that participants felt was pertinent in theirs and their mother's worlds related to the struggles of being apart upon moving out. Although the extent varied for adult daughters and their mothers, all found the adjustment to moving out of home challenging, with implications on wellbeing and functioning. This study highlights some potentially problematic factors worthy of exploration by Counselling Psychologists working with adult daughters and/or their anxious mothers: management of the separation-individuation process, mother-adult daughter relationship, role renegotiation, a sense of loss, as well as focus on the self and identity. Moreover, of particular note is the area of attachment. Although deficit-based research has previously identified associations between attachment patterns and having an anxious mother (Wei & Kendall, 2014), this study has offered further insight into what this experience is like and the implications of it in the context of moving out and transition. This study is not suggesting a link between a particular attachment type and maternal anxiety. It does, however, offer insight into participants' attachment experiences, ways of relating to their mothers and how this made the separation process challenging for both. It highlights the importance of considering such attachment and supporting a balance between maintaining connection and enabling distance in the context of their relationship when delivering therapeutic interventions – an area which participants felt they struggled to navigate.

Findings were not entirely centred on struggles, detrimental consequences and challenging experiences. Many participants' experiences of both themselves and their mothers adapting to their departure were affiliated with a greater sense of hope, fulfilment and a purpose in moving forward in life. The importance of environmental factors in supporting the adjustment

to transition for both was highlighted. The focus of Counselling Psychology is not just confined to the management of various MHP. Its humanistic roots emphasise functioning behaviour, the promotion of strengths and wellbeing (Joseph, 2017), and living a full life (British Psychological Society, 2018). For participants themselves, they felt that developing and becoming part of a social network afforded opportunities for connection, a greater sense of identity and belonging and social and emotional support outside of their family unit. It may therefore be of interest to consider how this knowledge could be used to promote wellbeing in adult daughters of anxious mother who have recently moved out of home. Counselling Psychologists may wish to inform, educate and consult with communities regarding the availability of opportunities for active involvement in social and leisure activities to enhance communities and networks relevant to the EA population.

Additionally, following their move out of home, many participants experienced a return of their once-motivated and engaged mothers. Some even noted an improvement in their mother's anxiety. Participants believed that this was facilitated by them engaging in leisure and occupational activities. Again, it may be worth considering the benefits of encouraging the pursuit of activities (such as adult education, employment, voluntary work, leisure activities and socialising) amongst anxious mothers whose adults daughters have moved out of home.

Consequently, the findings lead to various valuable clinical implications in supporting both adult daughters and their anxious mothers. Many of the implications are situated within the profession of Counselling Psychology. Counselling Psychologists prioritise subjective experience and thus are naturally inclined to undertake exploration of experiences and their meanings. They may be suitable in offering a meaningful therapeutic relationship whereby adult daughters, their anxious mothers or both can safely explore the process and implications of moving out of home. Moreover, exploring the meaning of participant experiences in this study through interpretation lead to powerful data and subsequent insights. Addressing such experiences in therapy may hopefully yield rich, in-depth material which could enhance the facilitation of therapeutic change in clients.

#### *5.4.2 Suggestions for Future Research*

Participants' experiences involved struggles, reactions and changes in both themselves and their mothers. Moving out had implications on both, and so it is also important to study the experience of the latter as well as the former. Not only would their perspectives be valuable in evaluating the needs of their adult daughters for interventions, but they could contribute to what might help vs. hinder mothers also adjusting to this transition process (Festen, Schipper, de Vries, Reichart, Abma & Nauta, 2014).

Future research should consider the experiences of moving out of home in adult sons of anxious mothers. In the UK, males remain at home for an average of two years more than females (Eurostat, 2009). Therefore, it would be of interest to explore how they adjust to such transition given this greater duration at home with their mothers.

Research could also explore moving out in the context of additional dyads, such as father-adult daughter or father-adult son in relation to paternal anxiety. The current study was positioned amongst pre-existing research on maternal anxiety. Themes which arose such as restrictions imposed by having an anxious mother and experiencing similar anxiety struggles to their mothers lead to suggestions for further research on fathers. This study highlights how experiences of having an anxious mother are not the end of the story. It has created curiosity about the experiences of having an anxious father. It would therefore be beneficial to gain insight into this less-studied family dyad involving fathers. Furthermore, recent socioeconomic changes have begun to trigger a shift towards fathers' increased involvement in their children's lives and care (Ferreira et al., 2016), placing even greater value on developing knowledge into paternal dyads.

Participants came from various cultural backgrounds. Emily (Italian), Hannah (Italian) and Niya (Indian) all made reference to their cultural norms. For example, Niya believed her culture's traditional values prioritising family and marriage contributed to her mother's increased anxiety about having an adult daughter who was unmarried and whose reason for moving out of home was unrelated to marriage (thus opposing cultural norms; Atkinson & Hackett, 2004). It was decided not to focus on a theme of culture to avoid deviating from the phenomenon being explored. Individualistic cultures value independence by promoting autonomy, whereas collectivist cultures value interdependency by promoting relatedness (Syed & Mitchell, 2016). Variation even exists within individualistic cultures. In some Mediterranean countries, norms dictate that adult children remain in parental homes for longer due to greater connectedness and family orientation (Seiffge-Krenke, 2016). Italian parents with stronger intergenerational links were more dissatisfied by their adult children leaving home as they viewed it as detrimental. In contrast, French parents were more satisfied and in favour of home-leaving (Mazzuco, 2006). In turn, Italian emerging adults' decisions to move out of home or not were influenced by their parents' approval or disapproval (Tosi, 2017). As all individuals are immersed in a culture, this would shape the experience of being an adult daughter of an anxious mother who has moved out of home. Research exploring adult daughters from various cultures would provide greater insight into the diversity of such experiences. It would also be of interest to explore moving out in various cultures without being in the context of maternal anxiety. As previously noted, the sampling and recruitment methods of the current study might have biased participant

recruitment from certain cultures. It would be desirable to be mindful of this and to overcome such recruitment barriers to recruit and capture experiences from a diverse range of cultures for the purpose of research with a cultural focus.

When discussing convergence and divergence amongst participants' experiences, the researcher noted a role difference between two mothers with contrasting marital status. This may have accounted for the difference. For example, as a single-parent and main caregiver for her children, Anna's mother may have had no other option than to adhere to an adult role. Bringing the focus onto maternal marital status raises questions as to whether this affects the experiences of their adult daughters. Adult children living in single-mother households had a later home exit (Mencarini, Meroni & Pronzato, 2012). It may therefore be that experiences of moving out of home are exacerbated in adult daughters whose anxious mothers are single parents. Further exploration of this area is warranted.

One cannot discuss moving out of home during EA without acknowledging the phenomenon of 'boomerang kids' (adult children returning to the family home after living independently; Seiffge-Krenke, 2016). The rate of boomerang kids is 20-27% across Europe (Mitchell, 2017) and 40% in America (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). Emotional distress and MHP are associated with returning to the family home (Sandberg-Thomas, Snyder & Jang, 2015). It is possible that these factors could apply to mothers and/or adult daughters and so may affect adult daughters' return home. Thus, further research into this area may offer additional insight into potential struggles of moving out of home in adult daughters of anxious mothers.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This study has added to a limited body of existing research in the field of experiences of adult daughters of anxious mothers. Exploring the experiences of a specific population group in relation to the transition of moving out of home during a particular developmental stage makes it a novel piece of research. It has introduced the notion of moving out of home as being a journey for both adult daughters and their mothers which is characterised by challenging and distressing times, with a gradual shift towards nourishing, pleasurable and hopeful times. It is hoped that participants' accounts of their positive experiences in addition to negative ones have begun to enable a shift away from the blaming and pathologising of mothers who struggle with anxiety. Such insightful findings have clinical implications which are important for clients seen by Counselling Psychologists. Knowing how to better support these adult daughters and mothers could have a profound impact on the effectiveness of interventions and subsequently their wellbeing. This study has created a strong foundation for further research on this topic. Exploring other areas within this topic can expand and

broaden the understanding of these adult daughters' and mothers' experiences and how best to support them.

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7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix A: Recruitment Advert



CITY UNIVERSITY  
LONDON

**Department of Psychology**  
**City University London**

**DID YOUR MOTHER STRUGGLE WITH ANXIETY  
WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD? HAVE YOU RECENTLY  
MOVED OUT OF HOME?**

**I am conducting research exploring the experience of moving out of home in adult daughters of mothers who experienced difficulties with anxiety, and I would like to hear your story.**

If you are: female, between the ages of 18-25 years, had a mother who struggled with anxiety when you were a child and have moved out of home within the past 12 months or more then I would be really appreciate you sharing your experiences with me.

Your participation would involve attending one individual, face-to-face interview with me which lasts approximately 90 minutes.

I will travel to you or alternatively, you will be reimbursed for your travel to City University London.

For more information about this study, or to take part, please contact me (Stephanie Santos, student on the Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology programme) on [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED]

This project is supervised by Dr Deborah Rafalin (Registered Psychologist and Senior Academic) from the Psychology Department at City University London. Dr Rafalin can be contacted at [REDACTED]

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethical clearance through the Department of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, City University London (Ethics Approval Code: PSYETH (P/L) 15/16 56).

If you would like to complain about any aspect of the study, please contact the Secretary to the University's Senate Research Ethics Committee on [REDACTED] or via email: [REDACTED]

## 7.2 Appendix B: Ethics Form and Approval Letter



### Psychology Department Standard Ethics Application Form: Undergraduate, Taught Masters and Professional Doctorate Students

This form should be completed in full. Please ensure you include the accompanying documentation listed in question 19.

Does your research involve any of the following? <i>For each item, please place a 'x' in the appropriate column</i>	Yes	No
Persons under the age of 18 ( <i>If yes, please refer to the Working with Children guidelines and include a copy of your DBS</i> )		X
Vulnerable adults (e.g. with psychological difficulties) ( <i>If yes, please include a copy of your DBS where applicable</i> )		X
Use of deception ( <i>If yes, please refer to the Use of Deception guidelines</i> )		X
Questions about potentially sensitive topics		X
Potential for 'labelling' by the researcher or participant (e.g. 'I am stupid')		X
Potential for psychological stress, anxiety, humiliation or pain		X
Questions about illegal activities		X
Invasive interventions that would not normally be encountered in everyday life (e.g. vigorous exercise, administration of drugs)		X
Potential for adverse impact on employment or social standing		X
The collection of human tissue, blood or other biological samples		X
Access to potentially sensitive data via a third party (e.g. employee data)		X
Access to personal records or confidential information		X
Anything else that means it has more than a minimal risk of physical or psychological harm, discomfort or stress to participants.		X

**If you answered 'no' to all the above questions your application may be eligible for light touch review.** You should send your application to your supervisor who will approve it and send it to a second reviewer. Once the second reviewer has approved your application they will submit it to [REDACTED] and you will be issued with an ethics approval code. You cannot start your research until you have received this code.

**If you answered 'yes' to any of the questions, your application is NOT eligible for light touch review** and will need to be reviewed at the next Psychology Department Research Ethics Committee meeting. You should send your application to your supervisor who will approve it and send it to [REDACTED]. The committee meetings take place on the first Wednesday of every month (with the exception of January and August). Your application should be submitted at least 2 weeks in advance of the meeting you would like it considered at. We aim to send you a response within 7 days. Note that you may be asked to revise and resubmit your application so should ensure you allow for sufficient time when scheduling your research. Once your application has been approved you will be issued with an ethics approval code. You cannot start your research until you have received this code.

Which of the following describes the main applicant? <i>Please place a 'x' in the appropriate space</i>	
Undergraduate student	
Taught postgraduate student	
Professional doctorate student	X
Research student	
Staff (applying for own research)	
Staff (applying for research conducted as part of a lab class)	

<b>1. Name of applicant(s).</b>
Stephanie Santos
<b>2. Email(s).</b>
██████████
<b>3. Project title.</b>
Adult Children of Mothers Who Struggled with Anxiety: Moving out of Home
<b>4. Provide a lay summary of the background and aims of the research.</b> (No more than 400 words.)
<p>Emerging adulthood (ages 18-25 years) has been regarded as a vulnerable age group due to high prevalence rates of mental health problems (Cheng, McDermott &amp; Lopez, 2015). The transition into emerging adulthood is often described as one of the most critical life transitions as it involves frequent contextual and social role changes (Schulenberg, Sameroff &amp; Cicchetti, 2004). The process of transitioning into emerging adulthood may therefore produce potential risks and vulnerabilities. It has been suggested by Ross and Fuertes (2010) that one way emerging adults adapt to this change is to use their parents as a secure base for exploration and development of autonomy in their new environment. This ultimately results in emerging adults forming a sense of self and identity. It is therefore of interest to explore the role of one of the most significant relationships an emerging adult has at this life stage (i.e. their mother) in the transition process of moving out of home.</p> <p>Currently, there is no research focussing on the subjective experiences of adult children of mothers who struggled with anxiety undergoing major life changes, such as moving out of home. Much focus has been allocated to investigating the impact of maternal anxiety on their children, such as low self-esteem, perfectionism, insecure attachment and fear acquisition. Many of the findings are deficit-focused, which some may perceive as pathologising and blaming anxious mothers for the detrimental impact their anxiety difficulties may have on their children. For example, Drake and Ginsburg (2011) demonstrated that a lack of warmth in anxious mothers reduces nurturing and prevent mothers from attending to their child's emotional needs.</p> <p>As much existing research has used quantitative methods to assess cause and effect, there is a lack of narrative about children's experiences of having a mother who struggled with anxiety and how this shaped their experiences of moving out of home. Consequently, the widespread use of quantitative methodologies prevents the exploration of these experiences, which may include both positive and negative experiences. An argument for the use of qualitative research to explore this area is therefore proposed due to the ethos of Counselling Psychology focussing on subjective experience and qualitative research enabling this to be explored (Rennie, 1994). Furthermore, it is of interest to explore the process of moving out of home in adult children of mothers who struggled with anxiety as this is an un-researched area, yet it is such a key time in identity development.</p>
<b>5. Provide a summary of the design and methodology.</b>
<p>The proposed study will be conducted using a qualitative method. It aims to explore the experience of moving out of home in adult children of mothers who struggled with anxiety. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using the qualitative method of Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA). IPA will be the chosen method due to its emphasis on idiography which is concerned with each individual's unique lived experience and how they make sense of this (Smith, Flowers &amp; Larkin, 2009).</p> <p>IPA involves a 'double hermeneutic' as the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant, who is trying to make sense of their experience i.e. being a child of an anxious mother who transitions out of home (Smith &amp; Obsorn, 2008). The researcher is engaged in a dual role: a human being who, as is the case with the participant, is trying to make sense of the world, but also that the researcher is only able to access the participant's world through the participant's own accounts of their experience. The latter involves the researcher's own</p>

conceptions to make sense of the participant's world (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This therefore highlights the role of the researcher in the research process, and how the researcher's values and experiences may influence the findings.

**6. Provide details of all the methods of data collection you will employ (e.g., questionnaires, reaction times, skin conductance, audio-recorded interviews).**

Semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 90 minutes will be conducted with the participants on an individual, face-to-face basis. An interview schedule (Appendix A) will be used to encourage participants to talk freely and openly about their experiences through the use of open questions. One pilot interview will be conducted to ensure suitability of the questions. Interviews will take place either in a private room in the Department of Psychology at City University, London or in a private room at a location convenient to the participant. This will be discussed and arranged with participants beforehand. All interviews will be audio recorded and stored on a password-protected computer and later transcribed.

**7. Is there any possibility of a participant disclosing any issues of concern during the course of the research? (e.g. emotional, psychological, health or educational.) Is there any possibility of the researcher identifying such issues? If so, please describe the procedures that are in place for the appropriate referral of the participant.**

Due to the interviews asking about personal experiences, it may result in participants disclosing experiences of psychological distress or mental health difficulties to the researcher. As the researcher and a Counselling Psychologist In-Training, I hope that I would have the skills to recognise these signs of distress.

If any participants become distressed during the interview process then they will be offered a chance to compose themselves. If any participants are in an extreme state of distress then they will be reminded that they have the right to withdraw and can terminate the interview. Additionally, participants will be provided with an extensive list of support services which they can access.

**8. Details of participants (e.g. age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria). Please justify any exclusion criteria.**

Female participants will be recruited. Males will not be recruited as differences exist between mother-child relationships in sons and daughters, and this research is not focussed on exploring the gender differences.

Participants will be aged between 18-25 years as this is the stage of emerging adulthood when identity development occurs.

Participants who perceived their mothers as struggling with anxiety during their childhood will be recruited, as this research is exploring how having a mother who experienced difficulties with anxiety has shaped the experience of moving out of home.

Participants would need to have moved out of home within the past 12 months or more. This allows for sufficient time to adjust to the transition of moving out.

**9. How will participants be selected and recruited? Who will select and recruit participants?**

Purposive sampling will be used for convenience purposes. The researcher will recruit participants through advertising (Appendix B) in newspapers, noticeboards and on social media websites (such as Facebook). These sources are frequently accessed by emerging adults. Advertising in newspapers and handing out of flyers in areas of London populated by large numbers of emerging adults (such as Clapham) will take place. Noticeboards in relevant areas such as Clapham will also be used to display participant adverts.

Smith and Eatough (2007) recommend that a sample size of eight participants is sufficient for an IPA study. As a result, recruitment will stop once eight participants who correspond to the

inclusion criteria are sought.		
<b>10. Will participants receive any incentives for taking part?</b> (Please provide details of these and justify their type and amount.)		
All participants will be reimbursed for their travel costs. Participants will be informed that their involvement in the research will help to contribute to greater understanding of the phenomenon of moving out of home in adult children of mothers who struggled with anxiety. Consequently, the knowledge and understanding derived from the research through the help of participants will help to inform the profession of Counselling Psychology in relation to effectively supporting such individuals who may be struggling with this transition.		
<b>11. Will informed consent be obtained from all participants? If not, please provide a justification.</b> (Note that a copy of your consent form should be included with your application, see question 19.)		
Written informed consent will be obtained from all participants prior to their interview commencing (Appendix C). The consent form will emphasise to participants that they have the right to withdraw at any time.		
<b>12. How will you brief and debrief participants?</b> (Note that copies of your information sheet and debrief should be included with your application, see question 19.)		
All participants will be provided with an information sheet (Appendix D) prior to the interviews commencing. This will outline the purpose of the study and explain that all data will remain anonymous (participants will be assigned a pseudonym) and confidential.  After the interview participants will receive a debrief form (Appendix E) thanking them for their participation and providing them with a list of support services to access if necessary.  All participants will be invited to ask the researcher any questions prior to and after their interviews.		
<b>13. Location of data collection.</b> (Please describe exactly where data collection will take place.)		
All interviews will take place in private rooms in the Department of Psychology at City University, London.		
<b>13a. Is any part of your research taking place outside England/Wales?</b>		
No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	If 'yes', please describe how you have identified and complied with all local requirements concerning ethical approval and research governance.
<b>13b. Is any part of your research taking place <u>outside</u> the University buildings?</b>		
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	If 'yes', please submit a risk assessment with your application.
<b>13c. Is any part of your research taking place <u>within</u> the University buildings?</b>		
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	If 'yes', please ensure you have familiarised yourself with relevant risk assessments available on Moodle.
<b>14. What potential risks to the participants do you foresee, and how do you propose to deal with these risks? These should include both ethical and health and safety risks.</b>		
It may be possible that a participant becomes distressed during the interview process due to discussion of personal experiences. If this happens, the researcher will offer them a chance to compose themselves. Additionally, participants will be reminded that, if they feel uncomfortable and do not wish to continue with the interview, they can withdraw from the study at any time without having to provide a justification. Participants who experience discomfort during the interview will be signposted to relevant support services.		
<b>15. What potential risks to the researchers do you foresee, and how do you propose to deal with these risks? These should include both ethical and health and safety risks.</b>		

<p>A full risk assessment has been completed (Appendix F). It may be possible that a participant becomes distressed or hostile during the interview and may try and physically harm the researcher. A risk management plan will therefore be put into place prior to each interview whereby the researcher will give the address and telephone number of the location of the interview to a professional contact. The researcher will phone this contact prior to and after the interview has been conducted to confirm their safety. Only the researcher and participant will be present in the interview room. Only interview rooms with Security staff present in the building will be used as their support can be accessed if any health and safety risk issues arise.</p>		
<p><b>16. What methods will you use to ensure participants' confidentiality and anonymity?</b> (Please note that consent forms should always be kept in a separate folder to data and should NOT include participant numbers.)</p>		
<p><i>Please place an 'X' in all appropriate spaces</i></p>		
<p><b>Complete anonymity of participants</b> (i.e. researchers will not meet, or know the identity of participants, as participants are a part of a random sample and are required to return responses with no form of personal identification.)</p>		
<p><b>Anonymised sample or data</b> (i.e. an <i>irreversible</i> process whereby identifiers are removed from data and replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers. It is then impossible to identify the individual to whom the sample of information relates.)</p>		
<p><b>De-identified samples or data</b> (i.e. a <i>reversible</i> process whereby identifiers are replaced by a code, to which the researcher retains the key, in a secure location.)</p>	X	
<p><b>Participants being referred to by pseudonym in any publication arising from the research</b></p>		X
<p><b>Any other method of protecting the privacy of participants</b> (e.g. use of direct quotes with specific permission only; use of real name with specific, written permission only.) <b>Please provide further details below.</b></p>		
<p><b>17. Which of the following methods of data storage will you employ?</b></p>		
<p><i>Please place an 'X' in all appropriate spaces</i></p>		
<p><b>Data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet</b></p>		
<p><b>Data and identifiers will be kept in separate, locked filing cabinets</b></p>		X
<p><b>Access to computer files will be available by password only</b></p>		X
<p><b>Hard data storage at City University London</b></p>		X
<p><b>Hard data storage at another site. Please provide further details below.</b></p>		
<p><b>18. Who will have access to the data?</b></p>		
<p><i>Please place an 'X' in the appropriate space</i></p>		
<p><b>Only researchers named in this application form</b></p>		X
<p><b>People other than those named in this application form. Please provide further details below of who will have access and for what purpose.</b></p>		
<p><b>19. Attachments checklist.</b> *Please ensure you have referred to the Psychology Department templates when producing these items. These can be found in the Research Ethics page on Moodle.</p>		
<p><i>Please place an 'X' in all appropriate spaces</i></p>		
	<b>Attached</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<p><b>*Text for study advertisement</b></p>	X	
<p><b>*Participant information sheet</b></p>	X	
<p><b>*Participant consent form</b></p>	X	
<p><b>Questionnaires to be employed</b></p>		X
<p><b>Debrief</b></p>	X	

Copy of DBS		X
Risk assessment	X	
Others (please specify, e.g. topic guide for interview, confirmation letter from external organisation)	X (interview schedule)	

**20. Information for insurance purposes.**

(a) Please provide a brief abstract describing the project

The proposed study aims to explore the subjective experiences of moving out of home in adult children of mothers who struggled with anxiety. Eight adult daughters (aged between 18-25 years) of mothers who struggled with anxiety will be interviewed to explore this. An interview schedule will be used, consisting of nine interview questions. The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed whilst maintaining participant anonymity. The interviews will then be examined using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This study would be of interest to the field of Counselling Psychology as this specific area is un-researched, yet it is such a key time in development.

*Please place an 'X' in all appropriate spaces*

(b) Does the research involve any of the following:	Yes	No
Children under the age of 5 years?		X
Clinical trials / intervention testing?		X
Over 500 participants?		X
(c) Are you specifically recruiting pregnant women?		X
(d) Is any part of the research taking place outside of the UK?		X

If you have answered 'no' to all the above questions, please go to section 21.

If you have answered 'yes' to any of the above questions you will need to check that the university's insurance will cover your research. You should do this by submitting this application to [redacted], before applying for ethics approval. Please initial below to confirm that you have done this.

I have received confirmation that this research will be covered by the university's insurance.

Name ..... Date.....

**21. Information for reporting purposes.**

*Please place an 'X' in all appropriate spaces*

(a) Does the research involve any of the following:	Yes	No
Persons under the age of 18 years?		X
Vulnerable adults?		X
Participant recruitment outside England and Wales?		X
(b) Has the research received external funding?		X

**22. Declarations by applicant(s)**

*Please confirm each of the statements below by placing an 'X' in the appropriate space*

I certify that to the best of my knowledge the information given above, together with accompanying information, is complete and correct.	X
I accept the responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in the attached	X

application.		
I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research that may arise in conducting the project.		X
I understand that <b>no</b> research work involving human participants or data can commence until ethical approval has been given.		X
	<b>Signature</b> (Please type name)	<b>Date</b>
<b>Student(s)</b>	Stephanie Santos	21.10.15
<b>Supervisor</b>	<i>Dr Deborah Rafalín</i>	<b>28.10.15</b>



6<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Dear Stephanie Santos

**Reference:** PSYETH (P/L) 15/16 56

**Project title:** Adult Children of Mothers Who Struggled with Anxiety: Moving out of Home

I am writing to confirm that the research proposal detailed above has been granted approval by the City University London Psychology Department Research Ethics Committee.

Period of approval

Approval is valid for a period of three years from the date of this letter. If data collection runs beyond this period you will need to apply for an extension using the Amendments Form.

Project amendments

You will also need to submit an Amendments Form if you want to make any of the following changes to your research:

- (a) Recruit a new category of participants
- (b) Change, or add to, the research method employed
- (c) Collect additional types of data
- (d) Change the researchers involved in the project

Adverse events

You will need to submit an Adverse Events Form, copied to the Secretary of the Senate Research Ethics Committee (  ), in the event of any of the following:

- (a) Adverse events
- (b) Breaches of confidentiality
- (c) Safeguarding issues relating to children and vulnerable adults
- (d) Incidents that affect the personal safety of a participant or researcher

Issues (a) and (b) should be reported as soon as possible and no later than 5 days after the event. Issues (c) and (d) should be reported immediately. Where appropriate the researcher should also report adverse events to other relevant institutions such as the police or social services.

Should you have any further queries then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards

Hayley Glasford  
Student Administrator  
Email: 

Katy Tapper  
Chair  
Email: 

## 7.3 Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet



CITY UNIVERSITY  
LONDON

**Title of study** *Adult Daughters of Mothers Who Struggled with Anxiety: Moving out of Home*

Before you decide whether you would like to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

*There is a wealth of research that exists on the impact of anxious parenting. Most of this research has focused on establishing a cause and effect. Thus, there is limited research on the individual experiences of having a mother who struggled with anxiety and how this has shaped the experience of adjusting to a period of change (i.e. moving out of home) during emerging adulthood (18-25 years). This research (which is being conducted as part of a Doctoral programme in Counselling Psychology) will use a qualitative research method. It will therefore aim to discover personal experiences and meanings within the interviews conducted with each participant.*

### **Why have I been invited?**

*The study proposes to understand the experiences of moving out of home in adult daughters of anxious mothers. Your experiences are important because all participants need to be: female, aged between 18-25 years, you felt that your mother struggled with anxiety when you were a child, and you have moved out of home within the past 12 months or more.*

### **Do I have to take part?**

*Participation in the project is voluntary, and you can choose not to participate if you wish. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. You will not be penalized for withdrawing.*

### **What will happen if I take part?**

*You will be invited to attend one semi-structured interview with me which will last approximately 90 minutes. The interview will take place either in a private room at City University, London or in a private room at a location convenient for you. This will be discussed and arranged beforehand.*

### **Expenses and Payments**

*The cost of your travel to attend the interview will be reimbursed.*

### **What do I have to do?**

*If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You will have an opportunity to ask me any questions before the interview commences. Once the study has finished I will give you the opportunity to ask me any additional questions as well as providing you with a list of support services if required.*

### **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

*It is possible that discussion about your personal experiences may cause you some emotional discomfort. I will aim to make the interview process as comfortable as possible for you, but you are welcome to pause the interview process at any time. You are not required to resume the interview if you do not wish to do so. If you choose to continue with the interview then I will provide you with information about services to contact for support.*

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

*Your participation in the research will help to contribute to a greater understanding of how having a mother who struggles with anxiety shapes adult daughters' experiences of moving out of home. Consequently, the knowledge and understanding derived from this research through the help of participants will help to inform the profession of Counselling Psychology in relation to effectively supporting such individuals who may be struggling with this transition.*

**What will happen when the research study stops?**

Audio recordings will be erased after the Doctoral programme is completed. Transcripts will be retained for 5 years (in accordance with the Data Protection Act) in a locked cabinet and then destroyed after this time.

**Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

- Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym.
- All pseudonyms, real names and socio-demographic details will be kept in a locked cabinet that only the researcher can access.
- I will audio-record your interview and will then transcribe it into written form.
- All transcriptions will be made anonymous; all real names of participants will be changed to pseudonyms.
- Recorded data will be password-protected on a memory stick which can only be accessed by the researcher. Computer data will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act and codes will be stored separately in a different locked cabinet.
- If, during the interview, any details emerge which suggest that you or others may be at risk of harm then I have a duty of care to report this information to the relevant service. I will inform you if this were to be the case.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

This study is a Doctoral-level research project in Counselling Psychology and is supervised by a Registered Psychologist and Senior Academic. It is intended that this research study will be available for peer groups to access as well as future publications in journals relevant to the field. In any case, participant anonymity will be remained throughout through the use of a pseudonym.

**What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?**

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without providing an explanation or receiving a penalty.

**What if there is a problem?**

If you have any problems, concerns or questions about this study, you should ask to speak to a member of the research team. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this through the University complaints procedure. To complain about the study, you need to phone 020 7040 3040. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is: *Adult Daughters of Mothers Who Struggled with Anxiety: Moving out of Home*. You could also write to the Secretary at: Anna Ramberg (Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee), [REDACTED]. Email: [REDACTED].

City University London holds insurance policies which apply to this study. If you feel you have been harmed or injured by taking part in this study you may be eligible to claim compensation. This does not affect your legal rights to seek compensation. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for legal action.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

This study has been approved by Department of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, City University London. Ethics approval code: PSYETH (P/L) 15/16 56.

**Further information and contact details**

**Researcher:** STEPHANIE SANTOS (Counselling Psychologist In-Training), City University London, [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]

**Research Supervisor:** DR DEBORAH RAFALIN (Registered Psychologist and Senior Academic), City University London [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.**

## 7.4 Appendix D: Informed Consent Form



CITY UNIVERSITY  
LONDON

Title of Study: *Adult Daughters of Mothers Who Struggled with Anxiety: Moving Out of Home*  
Ethics approval code: *PSYETH (P/L) 15/16 56*

Please initial box

1.	<p>I agree to take part in the above City University London research project. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the participant information sheet, which I may keep for my records.</p> <p>I understand this will involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being interviewed by the researcher</li> <li>• allowing the interview to be audiotaped</li> </ul>	
2.	<p>This information will be held and processed for the following purpose(s): To carry out the research aim of exploring adult daughters' experiences of having an anxious mother and how this has shaped their experiences of moving out of home.</p> <p>I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party. No identifiable personal data will be published. The identifiable data will not be shared with any other organisation.</p>	
3.	<p>I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.</p>	
4.	<p>I agree to City University London recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) set out in this statement and my consent is conditional on the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.</p>	
5.	<p>I agree to take part in the above study.</p>	

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

When completed, 1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher file.

---

Note to researcher: to ensure anonymity, consent forms should NOT include participant numbers and should be stored separately from data.

## 7.5 Appendix E: Debrief Form



### ***Adult Daughters of Mothers Who Struggled with Anxiety: Moving out of Home***

#### **DEBRIEF INFORMATION**

Thank you very much for taking part in this study and for sharing your experiences with me. Your experiences will be extremely important in helping to shape an understanding of undergoing major life changes (such as moving out of home) in adult daughters of mothers who struggled with anxiety. Your participation will help to influence future research in this area as well as contributing to the knowledge of how to support such individuals through such major life change.

If you feel that you have been affected by anything discussed during your interview and that you may benefit from receiving some emotional support you may wish to contact your GP to be referred for counselling or psychological therapy. Additionally, please find below a list of services for further support:

**Advocacy Project:** Advocacy service for people with a learning disability, mental health problem or older adults to help understand their rights, make choices and have their voice heard.

Website: [www.advocacyproject.org.uk](http://www.advocacyproject.org.uk) Phone: 020 8969 3000  
E-mail: [info@advocacyproject.org.uk](mailto:info@advocacyproject.org.uk)

**Alcoholics Anonymous:** Information on local meetings for support with alcoholism as well as free telephone helpline.

Website: [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk) Phone: 0800 9177 650  
E-mail: [help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](mailto:help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

**Anxiety UK:** Information and self-help resources (including information about local self-help groups), telephone information line and live chat for individuals or family members affected by anxiety. Anxiety UK employ their own psychological therapists who provide therapy (face-to-face, telephone or webcam) at a charge of £80 for an assessment and £50 for subsequent therapy sessions.

Website: [www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk) Phone: 08444 775 774 (Mon-Fri 9.30am-5.30pm; calls cost 7p per minute) E-mail: [support@anxietyuk.org.uk](mailto:support@anxietyuk.org.uk)

**Citizens Advice Bureau:** Online and telephone advice and support for issues such as benefits, work, debt, housing, law and rights, tax, healthcare and education. Local drop-in centres can be identified through their website.

Website: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) Phone: 03444 111 444

**Couple Connection:** Live chat, online courses, online forum for support and advice for relationship problems.

Website: [www.thecoupleconnection.net](http://www.thecoupleconnection.net) E-mail: [admin@thecoupleconnection.net](mailto:admin@thecoupleconnection.net)

**Eaves:** Support for women who have experienced or are at risk of domestic and sexual violence). Eaves run various projects for help in various areas, such as support for survivors of trafficking, abuse sexual violence, those seeking to exit prostitution, and life skills for women experiencing violence and homelessness.

Website: [www.eavesforwomen.org.uk](http://www.eavesforwomen.org.uk) Phone: 020 7735 2062  
E-mail: [post@eavesforwomen.org.uk](mailto:post@eavesforwomen.org.uk)

**Family Action:** Support vulnerable families with issues such as financial hardship, mental health problems, social isolation, learning disabilities, domestic abuse, or substance misuse and alcohol problems.

Website: [www.family-action.org.uk](http://www.family-action.org.uk) Phone: 020 7254 6251  
E-mail: [info@family-action.org.uk](mailto:info@family-action.org.uk)

**Family Lives:** Free confidential telephone helpline service, live online chat and e-mail support service for single-parent families. Also provide practical parenting workshops and online parenting courses.

Website: [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk) Phone: 0808 800 2222 (Mon-Fri 9am-9pm and Sat-Sun 10am-3pm)

**Frank:** Information and advice on drug use. Live-chat available Mon-Sun 2pm-6pm.

Website: [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com) Phone: 0300 123 6600  
E-mail: [frank@talktofrank.com](mailto:frank@talktofrank.com) Text: 82111

**Gingerbread:** Advice and practical support for single parents relating to money, work and family through online information and free telephone helpline service.

Website: [www.gingerbread.org.uk](http://www.gingerbread.org.uk) Phone: 0808 802 0925 (Mon 10am-6pm, Tues, Thurs and Fri 10am-4pm and Wed 10am-1pm and 5pm-7pm)

**Home-Start:** Support for families with young children who struggle to cope. Home-Start provide emotional support, support for families coping with illness or disability, support for isolated families, support for families with complex needs and practical support (such as taking families to the park or shops).

Website: [www.home-start.org.uk](http://www.home-start.org.uk) Phone: 0116 258 7900  
E-mail: [info@home-start.org.uk](mailto:info@home-start.org.uk)

**Marriage Care:** Specialist face-to-face and telephone counselling for couples or individuals encountering relationship difficulties (donations are welcomed for this service), marriage preparation workshops and relationship education services.

Website: [www.marriagecare.org.uk](http://www.marriagecare.org.uk) Phone: 0800 389 3801 (Mon-Thurs 9am-6pm and Fri 9am-5pm)

**Mind:** Information about various mental health problems, treatment options and support that can be accessed both through visiting their website or contacting their helpline. You can also find out about local Mind services which offer counselling, advocacy, housing help etc.

Website: [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Mon-Fri 9am-6pm)  
E-mail: [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)

**Net Mums:** Information on local children's centres, online chat groups and support groups for single parents

Website: [www.netmums.com](http://www.netmums.com) E-mail: [contactus@netmums.com](mailto:contactus@netmums.com)

**Only Mums:** Practical information, guidance and sign-posting (such as local mediation services) for mothers going through separation or divorce. Also provide a free confidential advice service from local professionals in areas such as debt, housing education and dating.

Website: [www.onlymums.org](http://www.onlymums.org) Phone: 07794 848103 E-mail: [info@onlymums.org](mailto:info@onlymums.org)

**Rape Crisis London:** Advice and signposting to relevant services for men, women and young people for rape and sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse, domestic violence, prostitution and trafficking, sexual harassment and female genital mutilation. Telephone helpline service is open 365 days a year.

Website: [www.rapecrisislondon.org](http://www.rapecrisislondon.org) Phone: 0808 802 9999 (12pm-2.30pm and 7pm-9.30pm)

**Relate:** Relationship support via live online chat, telephone counselling and e-mail counselling as well as information about local counsellors and workshops. Payment is required but this is a means-tested service.

Website: [www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk) Phone: 0300 100 1234

**Richmond Fellowship:** Supporting recovery of mental health problems such as support with employment and social inclusion.

Website: [www.richmondfellowship.org.uk](http://www.richmondfellowship.org.uk) Phone: 0207 6973300

**Samaritans:** Free confidential support for any difficulties you may be experiencing. Samaritans offer the opportunity to discuss your problems, think about potential solutions or just listen to what you have to say. The telephone helpline is free to call and is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Website: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) Phone: 116 123(24 hours) E-mail: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

**SANE:** Provide information and emotional support to individuals affected by mental health problem, including family, friends and carers. Support is available through their telephone helpline, text messaging service and online support forum.

Website: [www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk) Phone: 0300 304 7000 (6pm - 11pm every evening)  
Textcare Service: [www.sane.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/support/textcare/](http://www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support/textcare/)

**Sexual Advice Association:** Information and telephone helpline service for sexual difficulties.

Website: [www.sda.uk.net](http://www.sda.uk.net) Phone: 0207 486 7262 (Mon, Wed and Fri 9am-5pm)  
E-mail: [info@sexualadviceassociation.co.uk](mailto:info@sexualadviceassociation.co.uk)

**Tomorrow's People:** Supporting families with going back to or starting work, running programmes teaching new skills, help with finding employment and personal support for the long-term unemployed.

Website: [www.tomorrows-people.org.uk](http://www.tomorrows-people.org.uk)

**Woman's Trust:** Offer free individual counselling, support groups (a 2 hour weekly session for 8 weeks) and psychoeducational workshops for individuals who are currently, or have experienced domestic violence.

Website: [www.womanstrust.org.uk](http://www.womanstrust.org.uk) Phone: 0207 034 0303 (9.30am-5pm)  
E-mail: [admin@womanstrust.org.uk](mailto:admin@womanstrust.org.uk)

**Women's Aid:** Support for women and children who have experienced domestic violence. In addition to their Freephone telephone helpline and their online support forum, Women's Aid also provide contact details for local refuge services.

Website: [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk) Phone: 0808 2000 247 (24 hours)  
E-mail: [helpline@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:helpline@womensaid.org.uk)

I hope you found the study interesting. If you have any other questions please do not hesitate to contact myself or my supervisor: Stephanie Santos (Counselling Psychologist In-Training) on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED], or Dr Deborah Rafalin (Research Supervisor) at [REDACTED] or on [REDACTED].

Ethics approval code: *PSYETH (P/L) 15/16 56*.

## 7.6 Appendix F: Interview Schedule



- 1.) Tell me about what it was like growing up in your family.
  
- 2.) Tell me what your mother was like. How did her difficulties with anxiety show themselves?
  
- 3.) Tell me about how your mother's struggles with anxiety impacted on you/shaped things for you when you were growing up?
  
- 4.) Tell me about what lead to your decision to move out of home.
  
- 5.) What did you notice about your mother when you moved out of home?
  
- 6.) Has your relationship with your mother changed as a result of you moving out of home? If so, how?
  
- 7.) How were you when you moved out of home?
  
- 8.) Tell me about what life has been like since moving out of home.
  
- 9.) Is there anything else you would like to share?

## 7.7 Appendix G: Example of Analysis with Initial Notes and Emergent Themes from Keira's Interview

her your book' she would say. Or, I told her <sup>limited # things she told Mum?</sup> once that I let someone borrow...was it a jumper, or a book, or something? She went to me 'oh My God! You will <sup>absolute</sup> never get it back! <sup>concrete</sup> Don't ever lend anyone anything!'. And, I was like...I thought that was <sup>repetition</sup> really <sup>confusion?</sup> weird 'cause you're <sup>very different message</sup> always taught in school to share and to be nice, but my Mum is telling me the opposite. It's complete contrast. And I remember...I remember...in fact, I remember it really vividly...I was in the garden sitting on a red chair or something like that, and I remember her telling me 'Don't, don't lend your things. Don't share with other people'. And, I was really confused. I was like 'But everyone tells me to share my stuff and I don't mind'. It doesn't bother me, but it obviously bothers her. So, that's my first proper memory of it affecting...not affecting me but, you know, <sup>awareness? paying attention? standing out? made sense.</sup> registering with me.

I: Can you remember what it was like, using that particular example-

R: I was just <sup>repetition.</sup> really confused. I was like 'Oh, well, my Mum is telling me and I <sup>own thinking</sup> think I am <sup>expectation to share</sup> meant to share. What I am taught in school is to you are <sup>expectation</sup> meant to share. And, <sup>associating not sharing with affecting friendship?</sup> actually, I have friends and I like my friends and I don't understand why I wouldn't <sup>understanding of lending</sup> lend them something of mine'. Because the idea of lending is you get it back, whereas my Mum's idea, I guess, was 'Don't ever lend it 'cause you will never get it back' [<sup>recalling seriousness of comments?</sup> **VOICE TONE CHANGES TO STERN**]. She was assuming the worst of people and <sup>tentative; did she believe this?</sup> being anxious about what might happen to that thing. On reflection, it was a really <sup>unimportant? frustration?</sup> small stupid thing. It could be a <sup>frustration?</sup> fricking pencil...<sup>insignificant?</sup> who cares whether or not if you get a pencil back [**LAUGHS**] or a jumper back? It's just material things. You know, if it was something more emotional like 'Don't give your heart away too easily' or 'Perhaps you shouldn't think about being friends with her, she's not very good for you' [**VOICE TONE CHANGES TO SOFTER AND HIGHER PITCHED**]. It was really material things she would worry about rather than necessary...actually, that's really

Mum opposed sharing.  
Mum's message not to share.  
Conflicting messages; school promotes sharing vs. Mum rejects sharing.  
Clear recollection.  
Confused by Mum's message.  
Opposing Mum? Difference in how sharing affects Mum's daughter.  
Mum's anxiety registered with her.

Mum opposed sharing.  
Didn't expect Mum's reaction.  
Consideration of other external influences.  
Mum contradicting school's teachings.  
Confusion at Mum's teachings.  
Difference in emotional impact.  
First memory of recognised anxiety.

Felt really confused.  
Expectation to share.  
Questioning Mum's thinking.  
Sharing part of friendship.  
Didn't understand why not to share.  
Mum has different idea about lending.  
Making sense of Mum's thinking.  
Mum assumed worst of people.  
Retrospectively acknowledging lack of importance of issue.  
Fixed focus on material issues.  
Material things not as important as emotional.  
Mum worried about material issues.  
Material issues unnecessary/not as important?

own thinking.  
Opposing Mum's thinking.  
Forming own views.  
Struggled to understand.  
Mum's thinking.  
Mum not trusting of others.  
Insignificant issue.  
Material vs emotional.  
Prioritising of material issue.  
Mum's focus on material concerns.  
Insignificance of material issue.

awareness; took notice of this

Mum worried about material rather than emotional.

Mum not understand emotions.

Mum not dealt well with emotions

making sense of Mum's focus on material things?

interesting, it was material stuff she worried about rather than the emotional stuff,

because I don't think she understood emotions very well or dealt with them very

well. So, because she couldn't understand and engage with the emotional side of

things I think perhaps that's particularly why there was the obsession...the focus on

material things rather than your wellbeing and happiness and that sort of stuff.

↳ your, rather. Who is your? family? children?

I: And, what did you do, just out of interest, in the situation you described?

Went against Mum's instructions

Lent in secret

Took responsibility to get them back

Experience reinforced belief that her actions were correct.

R: I lent things to people <sup>secretly</sup> behind her back. Obviously I wouldn't say to her 'I lent my

jumper to Anna' [LAUGHS] erm, but I just made sure I got it back, or if I didn't get it

back...actually, I don't think I ever didn't get something back. That reinforced that I

was right to do it, if that makes sense?   
 So, Mum's message was incorrect / voice lead?

I: What was that like to have to go behind your Mum's back to do something which,

as you said, throughout most of your life you are told that it's the right thing to do

from school and friends, yet your mother was telling you the opposite?

What was that like?

Normalising her actions

Did what felt was right.

Opposed Mum's instructions.

Did not want Mum to find out.

Not want to upset Mum.

Made own decisions based on beliefs.

Drawing on learning from other sources to Mum.

R: Well, I guess most kids do things their parents don't know about that are

naughty right? But, in this sense, I didn't feel like I was being naughty because I felt

it was...felt it was okay to do it, if that makes sense? I thought 'I'm sure it's okay to

lend stuff even though she doesn't want me to. So, I just have to make sure that

she doesn't find out about it 'cause I don't wanna upset her, but I think it's an okay

thing to do so I'll do it'.   
 ? was it naughty to lend, or naughty to go behind Mum's back?   
 preventative measure

I: So you stuck by the values you had developed?

Made her own judgement.

School teachings guided her judgement.

Decided it was the right thing to do.

moral awareness.

R: Yeah. Well, that I had been told..taught by the people in school and I made a

judgement...as much as you can make a judgement at sort of 6 or 7 that that's the

right thing to do.   
 Not fully able to make own judgements at 6/7?

Focus on material worries.

Lack of emotional understanding.

Unable to engage with emotions.

Prioritised material issues over emotional wellbeing

Rebelled against Mum.

Took responsibility

Reassurance for her actions

Learned through experience

Justified her actions

Opposed Mum / Mum was incorrect.

Developing separate views to Mum

Protect Mum from upset.

Behaviour consistent with learnings, values & beliefs

Made independent decision.   
 7

I: Mmm, that's interesting. Are there any other ways that your Mum's difficulties

with anxiety shaped things for you whilst you were growing up?

R: Erm...erm...like I said, she wasn't very big on sharing things so I...actually, no, that's interesting. So, I didn't have friends over to my house very often because she

was anxious about the mess and...I don't know...the noise. She just didn't like being in contact with people. She's a bit anxious about social contact, and again it comes back to the needing of control and order. So, I very rarely had friends over. If I

wanted to have friends over it was a big deal. In fact my parents argued...it would cause arguments amongst my parents...between my parents 'cause I would like...I would ask Mum to have friends over, she would say no, and my Dad being the

rational one would say 'Well why can't she have friends over?' etc. And, when I did have friends over, I would be anxious the whole time they were over. I would be saying to them 'Don't make too much noise. Please be quiet 'cause, you know, I don't wanna annoy my Mum or whatever'. Erm...and if they were over I would be

being careful that we didn't break anything, weren't being too loud or weren't doing the wrong thing to annoy or upset her because then I definitely wouldn't

allow friends over again further along in the future.

I: What was that like for you?

R: Erm...well I did most of my interactions at other peoples' houses, if that makes sense? So, I was lucky enough that my friends invited me over to theirs a lot. So, I

spent...actually, probably when I was a bit older...so actually maybe I didn't go around peoples' houses too much when I was younger and not until I was a bit older at secondary school and had a bit more independence and was able to do it

and be trusted. When I was younger, I certainly don't remember...maybe I am wrong and being a bit unfair...I certainly don't remember people coming over very

Mum not keen on sharing making connections. Lack of friends to house as Mum anxious Mum not like being around others. social anxiety making connection to needing control & order. Limited experience of having friends over. Not straight forward having friends over. Caused arguments. Tense atmosphere? Dad as rational one. Dad overde/overwhelmed Mum? Tense atmosphere extended to being with friends. Constant anxiety with friends. And it was needed to be adhered to. Took on voice of parent? Took responsibility for collective? a rep/ not relaxed when friends around. Prohibited from having friends visit in future. upset or annoy Mum. socialised at friends' houses. invited to friends' houses a lot. went to friends' houses more at secondary school. Gained a bit more independence. Became more able. Could be trusted. No recollection of frequent visitors to family home when younger.

hesitation

-not keen? or -didn't do often?

-unsure of reasons?

-any form of contact?

is this at core of anxiety struggles?

not simple? complicated?

division?

mum declined request

divided opinion?

enduring presence of anxiety

pleading, desperation?

Not enjoy play/interaction

Senses

not expected to be allowed to have friends over that frequently

consequences

choice of word/ why not play or socialise?

grateful? why?

independence still limited/gradually developed

guilt?

Restrictions imposed by Mum's anxiety

Mum's social anxiety

Mum's need for control

Impact on childhood socialising

Arguments due to anxiety

Transfer of Mum's anxiety to daughter

Restrictions during socialising

unable to be a child

Aware of consequences of upsetting Mum

Sought interactions elsewhere.

outside of family home.

Developed independence.

Gained trust.

Others not allowed in to Mum's comfort zone.

Home was just for family?

Friends visited less than normal amount

Familiarity/closeness to Mum's environment

Just played in garden.

Away from Mum's comfort zone.

Distance from Mum's anxiety

Familiarity to Mum  
Forced choice to invite children.

Played with sister

Mum's behaviour not intentional.

Enjoyed playing with sister.

Strong rship with sister

Played away from Mum's comfort zone.

Struggling to make sense

Distinct from feelings?

Frustration

Confusion.

Play dates are norm.

Difficult to understand Mum's position.

Mum strongly opposed play dates at home.

Frustrating

unfair.

Mum's anxiety & her awareness of mess & order.

Awareness through hindsight

Unaware of any impact when younger.

Age & distance from Mum & her awareness

Not notice much when younger.

often to the extent that I think was the norm. Erm, and when I do remember kids

coming over it was usually because there was 1 of 2 families who lived near us who

came over to our house and we just played in the garden rather than inside... 'cause

at least we were out of my Mum's comfort zone and (her order) and stuff inside.

Erm...or it was a structured friends of my parents' friends and they had kids and

hence they had to come over with them rather than my friends being invited round.

So, as a result, my sister and I spent a lot of time playing together so that our

friends didn't come over. I guess that was...I don't think it was intentional by my

Mum at all probably and, in fact, I quite liked playing with my sister. My sister and I

got on really well so we just spent a lot of time playing together in the garden. But,

yeah, maybe that's because my Mum didn't like having people over...I don't know.

But, what was it like for me? I don't really remember my particular feelings about

this as a child back then but I would say frustrating and confusing. It's the done

thing to have play dates, right? I guess it was hard for me to understand why my

Mum was so against the idea. So, I would definitely say frustrating, and maybe I

also felt that it was unfair?

I: And you said with one of these examples that it made you feel anxious when you

did have your friends over. Were there any other impacts that it had on you?

R: When I was younger? I think it's a bit difficult to...erm [PAUSE FOR 4 SECONDS] it

made me more conscious of mess and order. So...and again, it's only with hindsight,

isn't it? So, when I was young between the ages of 0 to 10 then no, it didn't have

any impact on me at all...consciously at least. As I got older, and once I moved away

from that environment from my Mum I have been able to see what the impact of

that has been. At the time, I didn't think I noticed it very much...apart from, you

know, an occasion whereby I felt I had to go behind her back because I was sharing

Deviation from norm

Comparison to other children.

Restrictions imposed on playing

Worked around Mum

Mum prevented this experience within family home?

Family home separates/isolated

Close rship with sister

Make adaptations to keep Mum happy

Emotional void?

Deviate from norm.

Difficulty understanding Mum's reasoning

Frustration. Unfair.

Impact of Mum's anxiety struggle on her

Awareness developed with hindsight.

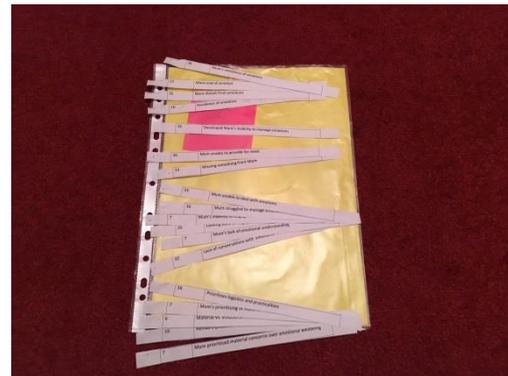
Distancing from home environment.

Lack of awareness when younger.

## 7.8 Appendix H: Example of Some of Keira's Emergent Themes



**Living by Mother's Rules**



**Difficulty with Emotions**



**Awareness of Mother's Struggles with Anxiety**



**Gaining Distance from the Family Home**



**Process of Change**

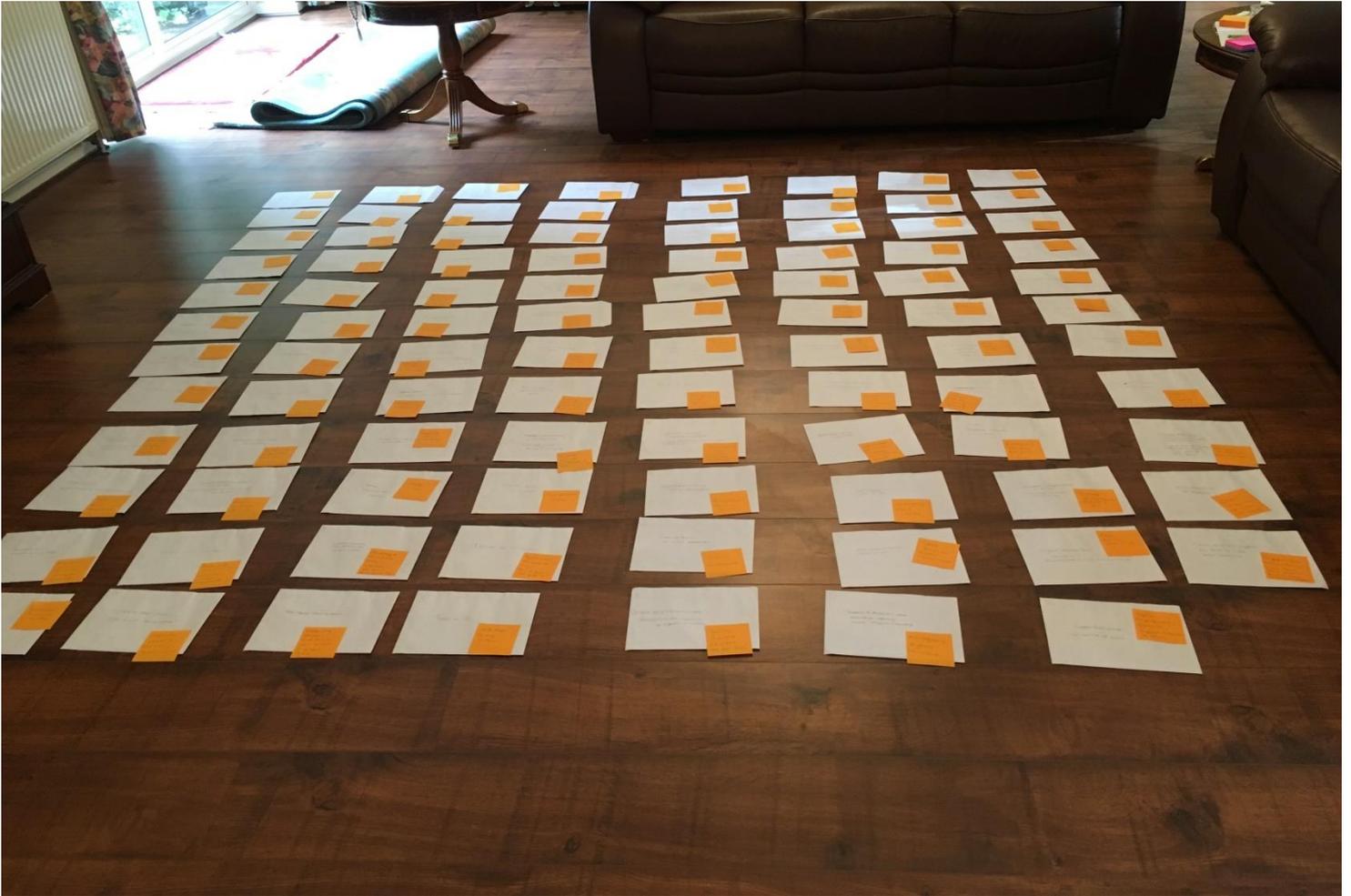


**Development of the Self**

## 7.9 Appendix I: Example of Table of Some of Emily's Emergent Themes

Emerging Theme	Quote	Participant
Feeling trapped	'Erm, I felt in a cage [ <i>laughs</i> ] because you feel in a cage.'	Emily 17/15
Restricted experiences to lessen mother's anxiety	'I thought it was better for me to stay home so my mother wouldn't be so anxious...'  'In my head, it was better to me to sit erm still and not do anything so my mum wouldn't worry and there would be no consequences for my actions. So, I stopped socialising and erm...being interested in doing erm more, more things.'	Emily 4/1-2  Emily 15/16-19
Making sense of mother's behaviour	'Maybe she can be more...because I know she suffered a lot. I know she's not, she's not anxious and stressed because she wanted to be like that. Erm, you have to look back at my grandparents. I know there are things back then which were really difficult. So...yeah, she had to struggle a lot. Erm, yeah...so I understand that...'	Emily 24/2-6
Desire for distance	'I wanted to go out, not, not down the road but to another city in [ <i>name of country</i> ] called [ <i>university name</i> ] after going to high school.'	Emily 21/1-2
Mother's surprise at daughter's achievements	'She came here and she told me "Oh wow, how can you do this? I didn't expect you to do something like this. You are so good. You have a job and you study. Wow" [ <i>laughs</i> ].'	Emily 21/17-20
Increased exposure to social world	'So, I was like "You want to do this. You really want to do this, so let's just...try to do this. If you feel uncomfortable you can always erm take a step back for a while, and when you're ready you can erm try again". So I did it like that. It was like a dance; it went back and then forth, back and forth. And I managed to have my space. I found, I found my rhythm. I found my melody [ <i>laughs</i> ]. So now I can go out by myself.'	Emily 28/10-15
Gained recognition of her capabilities	'It was...it is really good. Now, finally someone is recognising that I am capable of doing things. Yeah, that I am capable to live in a big city [ <i>laughs</i> ] big city.'	Emily 27/21-23
Feeling empowered	'It's good. It's good. It's really good and I feel empowered [ <i>laughs</i> ]. I feel that I can do many more things. I feel that I erm I still have to, you know, improve...yeah, but I feel that I can do it now. Before, it was different.'	Emily 26/5-7
Positive changes in herself	'Erm, more organised, more confident...erm, more erm sociable, erm...happier [ <i>laughs</i> ], and prouder [ <i>laughs</i> ], and erm...yeah [2s]. I feel like I have a voice now and that I am good enough [ <i>laughs</i> ] and yeah, that people can find me interesting, and...yeah.'	Emily 29/20-23

## 7.10 Appendix J: Process of Organising Themes



7.11 Appendix K: Final Superordinate and Subordinate Themes with Recurrence

Superordinate & Subordinate Themes

