The Empowering Effect of Letting Go: A Counselling Psychology Perspective

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A Portfolio Submitted for the Award of Doctorate in Counselling Psychology (DPsych)

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Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DECLARATION

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PREFACE

This Counselling Psychology DPsych portfolio holds three sections, namely a research study, a publishable article and a clinical case study. These separate pieces of work encompass a common theme throughout, namely dependency and female empowerment, and focus all on wives' identities in relation to their husbands. In this section, I offer a brief impression on each piece and discuss them in relation to my training as a Counselling Psychologist.

The first section is an empirical study exploring the experiences of being a wife of a diplomat (WOD) across diplomatic assignments. Over the last few decades, women have separated from the traditional norm, as society increasingly expects of them to make independent decisions and create their own personal paths and careers. However, one minority that has yet to experience this shift is spouses of diplomats. Accompanying a spouse in diplomatic mobility has long been associated with the image of a dependent and nonworking wife (Fechter, 2010) whose domestic work has been incorporated into the corporate ideologies (Callan & Ardener, 1984). As a result, many have unfortunately been unable to experience the modern women era in this traditional patriarchal diplomatic world. However, for no manifest reason, this phenomenon has been poorly explored, leaving many WOD feeling unheard, undervalued and unaccounted for (Hendry, 1998). Consequently, this research seeks to not only fill in the gap, but to also raise awareness in the research community, and shed light on a hidden minority that has been overlooked. Hence, eight participants were interviewed about their experiences as WOD and data were analysed using IPA (Smith, 2017). Emergent themes reflected on the ways in which WOD struggled and eventually made sense of their presence during diplomatic postings. The study pays careful attention on the factors that supported and impeded WOD's sense of self and explores the different ways they were able to manage these difficulties.

Whilst my aim was to understand these women's subjective experiences and allow them to share *their* stories by giving them a voice, my initial interest in the area stemmed from my difficulty in witnessing injustice and unfairness. Indeed, shortly before commencing my DPsych training in Counselling Psychology, I lived in Beirut where I met my current partner. As he is the child of a diplomat, I took great interest in his mother's life thinking

that she was very lucky to have lived such a glamorous life. She quickly corrected me by allowing me to see the reality behind the closed doors of the diplomatic world. She shared with me many stories of other WOD, which inflamed me with a sense of injustice and unfairness that I did not understand at the time. I soon realised that it were my feminist values that triggered such reaction, helping me see that many of them suffered in silence and rarely sought help. Notably, as I wanted to explore this further, I engaged in many conversations with friends of my partner's family and realised that many shared common experiences. Hence, my desire to support them encouraged my interest to transform their anecdotal stories into an evidence-based research.

In the second section of the portfolio is a journal article that draws on the qualitative research presented above. The focus of the article is formed around WOD's quality of marriage, which allowed them to lose their sense of self and make sense of who they became throughout their diplomatic journey. This article considers the ways in which WOD's experiences seemed to have been shaped by the patriarchal norms of the diplomatic world. The implications for psychological practitioners are also discussed in terms of their clinical work. Finally, the article highlights the responsibilities for psychologists to advocate for social justice and become part of a community psychology. I chose to submit this article to the journal of *Feminism and Psychology* for three main reasons, which are discussed in details in the second section.

The last section of this research portfolio is a case study representing my therapeutic work with one particular client who was in the process of divorcing her husband. It was taken from my final year placement and reflected my clinical practice from a person-centered approach. This approach was best suited to show the client that her relationship does not have to be dominated by her husband's agenda and that the locus of control can and should be within her (Mearns & Cooper, 2005; Rogers, 1957). I have chosen to present this client as she, first, evoked in me similar feelings of unfairness I felt when I first heard stories of WOD, and second, influenced my professional and personal development as a woman.

One of the threads that unites the sections discussed above is the issue of dependency. In fact, this portfolio is the story of different women who to some extent have experienced a sense of dependency on their spouse, which has affected their identity

and sense of self. Given that these pieces of work were all inspired by the same feelings of injustice and unfairness, it feels only natural to acknowledge the element of empowerment throughout their process of sense-making. Indeed, throughout their diplomatic journey, WOD enhanced their sense of empowerment by finding ways of managing, understanding and shifting their perception in regards to their situation. As all embarked on their husband's journey, they aimed for a self-development that was separate from their husbands in order to independently experience their sense of self. Similarly, the work done with my client was mainly based on empowerment, helping her develop a strong, stable and independent identity that was not influenced by her husband's views and beliefs.

Each of the sections discussed above reflect my own development to becoming a Counselling Psychologist. My passion for feminism, community psychology and social justice have only enhanced as a result of my passion for my topic and my devotion to my clients. These pieces of work have allowed me to reflect on the kind of work I want to do as a Counselling Psychologist and how to utilise my strength and weaknesses in my work.

As I am approaching the end of my training, I now realize how this portfolio has influenced my views on relationships and marriage. These experiences have required me to reflect on the kind of wife I want to be for my –future- husband, while reminding me of the importance of staying congruent within myself. I have also found myself throughout the past three years affirming the importance of my professional identity and discuss with my partner the extent to which I would be willing to shift from it. Finally, this portfolio empowers me to take control over the fluidity of my identity, and to always empathise and support others who cannot.

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PART ONE: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY

The Lived Experience of Wives of Diplomats: An Interpretative
Phenomenological Analysis

Supervised by Dr. George Berguno

ABSTRACT

The mobility of diplomats represents an important facet of today's migration flows. This diplomatic minority has become diverse and numerous as a result of increased international assignments and career mobility becoming a necessity. Notably, diplomatic mobility has been found to have an impact on family arrangements and partner's working life and future plans. However, despite being one of the earliest forms of expatriation, very little is known about the experiences of spouses of diplomats who decided to embark on this journey alongside their husbands. Consequently, this study is interested in giving a voice to this minority and explore their experiences as Wives of Diplomats (WOD) across diplomatic assignments. Data is collected from eight participants using semi-structured interviews and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The findings suggest that despite the fact that each country has its own laws and rights for spouses of diplomats, all participants experience their role as WOD in a similar fashion, explaining that many lose their sense of self and autonomy, especially in the first diplomatic posting. It appears that the strength and connectivity of their marriage allows them to make sense of their experiences by understanding that their presence is essential for the diplomatic posting and that they have the possibility of choosing who they want to be. Implications for psychological practitioners are discussed in terms of their clinical work and their responsibility to advocate for social justice. Suggestions for future research are also discussed.

Research Study Introduction

In light of the rapid growth in globalization, mobility and expatriation, researchers have advocated for the re-examination of identity. The concept of frequent relocation has raised many basic questions over the management of identity: Who am I? Which dimensions of my identity do I want to preserve and which parts can I let go of or change? Where do I belong? How do I experience my identity in foreign countries? Do I take a part of me everywhere or do I form new identities every time? When moving, how can I manage this sense of self and help those that I love manage their own identities?

The experience of expatriates in building a new identity in a host country has become a core issue, given the rise of expatriation and globalization. It has become increasingly common to examine and question concepts such as one's sense of belonging, the impact of a professional identity or its absence, the education of children in a transient environment and its consequences, and one's sense of self and how others perceive it. These concepts have become central themes in applied and theoretical research in social sciences as well as in other academic fields.

In my research, I would like to shed light on these issues by focusing on the subjective experiences of a small group of women who decided to accompany their spouses on diplomatic assignments. Within this exploration, feelings of how Wives of Diplomats (WOD) experience themselves and their relationships with others will be the focus of attention, while looking at the meanings formed around these experiences. Also, this research will concentrate on how these experiences are intertwined with a deep questioning concerning identity and the inner self.

This study will mainly look at the implications of multiple relocations on WOD's identities and its relevance to counseling psychology. I hope to demonstrate that their experiences are a novel but relevant and interesting phenomenon that lacks proper psychological investigation, given that it has scarcely been touched upon in the literature. This inquiry will adopt a phenomenological philosophical standpoint that puts human experiences and meaning at the centre.

I will discuss this topic by dividing my work into four main chapters. The first chapter will throw light on the current literature available to understand both the topic and gaps currently present. The second chapter will help us provide a detailed description of the methodology and procedure used in order to conduct the research project. The third chapter will focus on the different findings that have emerged from the data, and the last chapter will provide an interpretation and description of the significance of the findings in light of what is already known about the topic being presented.

Chapter 1- Critical Literature Review

I would like to present an outline of the leading research that has been conducted in each of the fields this research project is concerned with. I will first provide background information regarding the diplomatic world and the role of the spouse in diplomatic postings. I will then discuss different theories of identity that are used to understand WOD's identities, and will end this chapter by looking at the relevant literature on the impacts of diplomacy on this minority. This will provide a contextual framework to the study, as well as highlight the gaps in the literature where the study could potentially contribute.

1.1 Diplomacy[1] in its Dimensions

1.1.1 Historical Background on Diplomacy

Diplomacy is known to be one of the oldest forms of expatriate assignment. Although Greek, Roman and Byzantine diplomacy dominated for a long period, modern diplomacy can be traced to the states of Northern Italy during the early Renaissance era, with the first embassies founded in the thirteenth century. The city of Milan played a leading role as they established the first permanent embassies and spread their practice to many European countries. They created many of the traditions of modern diplomacy, such as the presentation of an ambassador's credentials to the head of a state.

At the time, ambassadors were mainly noblemen whose status differed with the prestige of the country they were posted to. Important defining standards emerged for ambassadors, requiring them to have large residences, host lavish parties and play important roles in the court life of their host country. Although many of these noblemen had little skills in foreign relations, they were supported by a large staff that was considered expert of the host country and of the formal protocols to follow. At the same time, permanent foreign ministries were founded in many European countries in order to coordinate staff members and embassies.

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[1] Of course, it should be noted that individual countries have different specifications of work for their diplomats, and different rights for their spouses. While one responsibility/right may be required/available by one country, another

Up to the 1980's, many diplomats were chosen not only for their professional competencies and gender, but were also favored in terms of their marital status. In France, for instance, it was inconceivable for diplomats to engage in diplomatic postings without the presence of their spouse, as it was a pre-requisite (De Singly & Chaland, 2002). Hence, diplomatic candidates were evaluated on the basis of their professional competencies, gender and marital status, leading them to label their spouse's presence as crucial to the postings, referring to her as an auxiliary to the diplomat (De Singly & Chaland, 2002).

1.1.2 Diplomatic Roles and Responsibilities

Diplomats are referred to as citizens representing their country abroad, while involved in the act of diplomacy. This act is defined as the art and practice of conducting negotiations between nations without arousing hostility. Diplomatic missions are characterized by the basic functions they intend to provide, such as protecting the interests of the home country and its citizens in the host country. Other functions include negotiating with the foreign government, monitoring and reporting on conditions and developments in the commercial, economical, cultural and scientific life of the host country, and issuing passports, travel documents and visas (Hockings, 2006).

One important diplomatic duty is the need to build relationships and improve contact with the host country. In this role, diplomats offer guidance to their host countries on topics that affect the well-being of the people and governments of both host and home countries. Diplomats usually accomplish these tasks by connecting with leaders and decision-makers in both governments, and local community members and leaders (Hockings, 2006).

Some country's diplomats take on different roles within the Foreign Services and diplomats can perform multiple duties on behalf of their home country while serving abroad. The Foreign Service separates their officers into five distinct career subjects, referred to as "cones", and diplomats choose their cone at the beginning of their careers (Hockings, 2006). These can be consular, political, economical, managerial or part of public diplomacy (Hockings, 2006). Each cone represents a different set of responsibilities and burdens carried by the diplomat and his team. As a result, many

spouses will find themselves more or less involved in official representation depending on their partner's cone.

Readers may ask what relevance the history and the roles of diplomats have to the research question my project seeks to answer. I feel it is important to consider how diplomats, spouses and others view the world of diplomacy and understand its origins, as they may have been influenced by it. It is diplomats' predecessors who lived through this time and formed the image of what is now known as diplomatic postings and diplomacy. I wonder what impact, if any, this has had on my participants' experiences. This will be explored further in subsequent chapters.

1.2 Theories of Identity

In the past few decades, the subject of identity has been greatly researched and theorised in psychology (Breakwell, 1986; Côté, 2006) as a result of the concern with the self. The notion of identity appears often to have been used interchangeably with other concepts that are closely related, such as the self, self-identity and self-concept, to name only a few. Vignoles, Schwartx and Luyckx (2011) argue that 'identity' is a complex and sometimes even 'obscure' term that can mean different things depending on researchers' philosophical and theoretical models. Assuming that each cultural era influenced our understanding of the self and identity, Logan (1987) emphasized that this current concern of the self is a result of our existentialist postmodern era and that it allowed people to gain a psychological perspective and develop a stronger sense of self (Vignoles et al., 2011).

In this project, I consider the definition of identity as "who you act as being" in relation to others, and "who you think you are" as a member of a specific group and as an individual (Vignoles et al., 2011, p. 2). I also adopt a 'light' social constructionist epistemology, which will be discussed further in the next chapter. This epistemological position was taken as a result of the social context being a significant element in the construction of the self (Gergen, 1985). Hence, theories of identity presented in this research reflect this epistemological position by looking at them through the framework of subjective experiences. Therefore, I will review the theoretical perspectives on identity theories that consider this concept within a personal and social context. These will be

discussed in relation to frequent relocations and being an accompanying spouse, while focusing on the impact they have on one's self-esteem and self-concept.

1.2.1 Interactionism and Identity

Howard (2000) offered a contextual definition of identity that stems from symbolic-interactionism. She explained that the basic premise of symbolic interaction is that people attach a symbolic meaning to behaviours, other people, objects and themselves (Howard, 2000). These meanings are developed and transmitted through interactions and can vary in their emphasis. As a result, Howard (2000) used the concept of identity to locate an individual within a "social space by virtue of the relationships that these identities [implied], and [were], themselves, symbols whose meanings [varied] across actors and situations" (p. 371). In other words, people behave towards objects on the grounds of the meanings these objects have for them and not on the basis of their concrete properties.

The interactionist approach to identity focuses on (1) the structure of identity and on (2) the interactions and processes through which it is constructed from. Howard's (2000) structural approach relies mainly on the concept of role identities and on the characters a person develops as the occupant of a specific social position, explicitly linking social structures to the person. Hence, self-identity is an ensemble of role-identities that are hierarchically organized according to the importance they have in the person's life and the degree to which one is committed to them (Howard, 2000). This degree of commitment "depends on the extent to which these identities are premised on our ties to particular other people" (Howard, 2000, p. 371). The second approach focuses on the processes of identity construction and negotiation. Indeed, negotiations about who a person is are fundamental to the development of mutual definitions of situations as they entail impression management and self-presentation (Goffman, 1959; Howard, 2000; McCall & Simmons, 1978). As a result, for Howard (2000) identities are strategic social constructions created through interactions, with material and social consequences.

1.2.2 Social Identity Theory

Thinking about identity as group memberships, Tajfel and Turner (1986) developed the social identity theory (SIT), which focuses on the extent to which individuals think and

identify themselves in terms of groups. The centrality of SIT is characterized by individuals defining their identities by following two dimensions: The personal - the idiosyncratic elements that differentiate an individual from others; and the social - defined by a sense of belonging in various social groups. Although Tajfel and Turner (1986) view identities lying at different ends of the spectrum, Deaux (1993) argues for an interplay between both dimensions, suggesting that they cannot be easily separable. Deaux (1993) adds that people's identities are anchored within their surrounding social environments, as they focus on wider social groups and on the context. She adds that through this social perspective, identity cannot be viewed as a static and rigid structure, but instead as a combination of convoluted processes. These processes guide individuals into their social worlds, suggesting that identities are subject to change and have the ability of being flexible and tailored to specific situations (Bausinger, 1999; Breakwell, 1983; Deaux, 1993).

Others have also stressed the importance of the social dimension as part of our identity (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Goffman, 1959), given our natural need to belong that affects our inner subjective self-representation. However, some, such as Goffman (1959), express extreme views that the self is strictly a social-self, suggesting a narrowed vision of the human world, namely one that is rule-governed, ritualized and scripted (Jenkins, 2008).

1.2.3 Reflexivity and Identity

The sociologist Anthony Giddens (1991) stressed that self-identity lies within specific temporal and cultural contexts. He considers the role of awareness and reflexivity in an attempt to understand one's identity in terms of his/her biography (Giddens, 1991). These 'reflexive projects' require individuals to work, reflect and review their personal narratives in order to gain meaning. He continues to argue that a stable sense of identity can only be maintained when individuals create an ongoing coherent narrative of their selves (Giddens, 1991). Also, according to Giddens (1991), self-identity in the late modern era seems to differ from earlier traditional societies in that contemporary societies have created threats to identities. Giddens (1991) described these threats as "situations where individuals' sense of continuity and security [are] challenged due to increase fragmentation and uncertainty" (p. 243). Giddens (1991) has been criticized

however for holding dualistic views of the body and mind by omitting to account for experiences of embodiment, despite his acknowledgment of the role of the body as a reflexive project (Shilling & Mellor, 1996). Other researchers also remind us that identity should be perceived as a subjective psychological experience, given that both identity management and change occur within a constant process of interaction (Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golledge & Scabini, 2006). Taking place in a particular cultural context, these interactions occur between individuals' social worlds and their active reflexivity. Additionally, Linstead and Thomas (2002) refer to identity as a 'project, not an achievement', suggesting that it is a constant developing concept, persistently influenced by one's active reflections.

1.2.4 Identity Process Theory

Some might critique these previous theories for being one-sided, not taking into consideration one's personal striving for continuity and the impact that biography has in forming the identity. As Glynis Breakwell (1986) saw a need to focus on both social and psychological processes that form identities, she developed the Identity Process Theory (IPT) in order to address these issues. Having worked with Henri Tajfel on SIT (Tajfel, 1978), she paid great attention into assimilating both social and personal identities, arguing that both are part of the individual's biography.

Breakwell (2010) suggested that the fundamental element to understanding identity was to examine an individual's response when his/her identity is threatened. IPT is concerned with the holistic examination of an individual's identity as a whole and proposes elements that are dynamically resultant from aspects of individuals' experiences, such as their group memberships, interpersonal relationships, social representations, personal experiences, and more. At the core of IPT is the affirmation that individuals seek to construct and maintain certain identities, by engaging in a dynamic process of constant negotiation between individuals and their surroundings. Furthermore, individuals are seen to have control over the construction of their identity, although Jaspal (2011) argues that this degree of agency may be constrained by the overriding social representations of a particular social context. I have chosen to include IPT as it focuses on the social and psychological processes that form an individual's

identity, rather than solely looking at identity as evolving from evaluations of social processes.

In IPT, identity is assumed to be regulated by the processes of accommodation/assimilation and evaluation, which are thought to be universal psychological processes. Assimilation and accommodation are two components of the same process: respectively, one refers to the inclusion of new components into an identity structure, and the other refers to the adjustment that happens in the existing structure so space can be made for new elements. Evaluation, on the other hand, is the process by which an individual gives value and meaning to the contents of identity.

Over time, both processes interact to determine the changing value and content of one's identity. Although she recognized that historical and cultural specifics can have an impact, Breakwell (2010) offered four discernible prime principles that guide these processes: Continuity of the self through time, distinctiveness as a positive sense of uniqueness, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Self-esteem is defined as varying on the extents of effective actions and social approval of others (Breakwell & Lyons, 1996). As a result of the considerable amount of debate about these principles, Jaspal (2011) suggested that three more principles, namely meaning, belonging and psychological coherence between identities, should be added to Breakwell's.

However, these dynamic processes raise great challenges in terms of management of multiple conflicting social groups and situations in which threats to one's identity are present. In other words, as individuals move within the social structure, threats to identity can be experienced when changes conflict with the principles that guide them. Breakwell (1986) termed this problem as 'Identity Threat' and defined it as "a threat to identity [that] occurs when the process of identity, assimilation-accommodation and evaluation are, for some reason, unable to comply with the principles of continuity, distinctiveness and self-esteem, which habitually guide their operation" (p. 47), hence taking the form of an attack.

As a result, Breakwell (1986) explained that individuals may use a range of coping strategies, categorized as deflecting or accepting. Strategies of deflection include mainly avoidance and/or denial of the existent threat, in order to attempt to restore these

principles, and negativity towards or confrontation of the source. Acceptance strategies, on the other hand, include a re-evaluation of the principles and/or a fundamental identity change as a result of the threats.

Due to the focus within this research project on the identity processes taking place for women who experience multiple relocations, the threats to identity posed by this recurrent mobility are discussed further.

1.2.5 Mead's (1934) Theory of Self

Philosopher G.H. Mead (1934) explained in his book Mind, Self and Society that the self is a social emergent and the individual self is a product of social interaction, rather than biological or logical conditions. Indeed, he argued that the self is a developmental process and is not there at birth: It arises in the process of activities and social experiences, and develops within the individual as a result of his relations within himself and others (Mead, 1934). As Mead (1934) distinguished the 'self' from the 'body', he asked himself "How can an individual get outside himself, experientially, in such a way as to become an object to himself?" (p. 221). He attempted to answer his question by explaining that the 'self' can only be understood in terms of social interaction with others. Indeed, individuals experience themselves indirectly from the standpoints of other individuals of the same social group or from generalized standpoints of social group to which they belong. As such, individuals can "enter as objects [to themselves] only on the basis" of these interactions (Mead, 1934, p. 225), and engage in self-consciousness. Mead (1934) defined self-consciousness as the process in which individuals take the attitude of others towards themselves and attempt to view themselves from the standpoint of others. His account of the social emergence of the self is developed further as he elucidated three forms of inter-subjective activity, namely language, play and game. These methods of symbolic interaction, such as words, gestures, and roles, are the founding paradigms of his theory of socialization and form the basic "social processes that render the reflexive objectification of the self possible" (Madzia, 2013, p. 208).

Although the self is the result of socio-symbolic interactions, it is not a passive echoing of the other's views and standpoints. Instead, individuals' responses to their social world

are active, given that individuals actively decide how they will react in the light of other's attitudes, although these reactions are not mechanically determined. As such, Mead (1934) proposed two poles of the self that determine these reactions, namely the pole that reflects the attitude of the other and the pole that responds to the attitude of the other. This separation resulted in the distinguishment of the "me" and the "I". Mead (1934) defined the "I" as the "response of the organism to the attitudes of the others; and the "me" [as] the organized set of attitudes of others which one assumes" (p. 175). It appears that a dialectical relationship exists between the individual and society, which influences the intra-psychic levels of this polarity. Indeed, the "me" is the internalization of roles, which derive from the socio-symbolic processes, and the "I" is the creative response to the socio-symbolized structure of the "me". However, although it could be tempting to view both as separate entities of the self, it is more accurate to see them as a dynamic relationship that forms the self (Margolis & Catudal, 2001).

1.2.6 Social Self-Identity and Social Media

The self can be classified into two categories, namely an individual self-identity and a social self-identity (Carter & Grover, 2015). The first can be emphasised through one's autonomy and can distinguish itself from others, while the second 'refers to the categorizations of the self that reflect assimilation to more inclusive social units' (Carter & Grover, 2015, p. 940). In recent years, the social self-identity has become more significant as different social environments surround individuals, leading them to define themselves through others. Indeed, individuals now, more then ever before, are more pre-occupied by the ways others perceive them, affecting thus the way they see and experience themselves (Pan, Lu, Wang & Chau, 2017). A current important vehicle for self-presentation has been the use of social media platforms (Chen, Lu, Chau & Gupta, 2014).

In contrast to other traditional modes, social media is far more complex as it gives a more salient role in the self-presentation process and manipulates the image received by the audience (DeVito, Brinholtz & Hancock, 2017). However, studies have linked the use of social media with certain negative effects on well-being, affecting the quality of lives of many individuals (Appel, Gerlach & Crusius, 2016; Meier, Reinecke & Meltzer, 2916).

Indeed, an important study conducted by Woods and Scott (2016) showed how the use of social media was related to poorer sleep quality, lower self-esteem and higher levels of depression and anxiety. They justified these results by examining the amount of time adolescents spent on social media and the emotional investment they had in regards to the platforms (Woods & Scott, 2016).

Although a lot of the research has focused on teenagers, researchers Vogel, Rose, Roberts and Eckles (2014) have studied the impact of social media on adults and found similar results. They explained that social media offered abundant opportunities for upward social comparison, leading to changes in individuals' self-evaluation processes (Vogel, et al., 2014). Indeed, they explained that although upward social comparison can be beneficial as it inspires individuals to become more like their comparison targets (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997), when linked to social media, it engendered feelings of inadequacy, negative affect, unpopularity and poorer self-evaluations (Kim & Lee, 2011; Vitak & Ellison, 2013). Moreover, a more recent study showed how one's fears of missing out and being disconnected from others have both contributed to poorer mental health amongst adults (Dhir, Yossatorn, Kaur & Chen, 2018). Indeed, several studies have showed that social media users with these particular fears are more likely to suffer from negative emotions, depression, poor sleep, compulsive social media use (Baker et al., 2016), low life satisfaction, low personal interconnection, emotional tensions and problems in emotional control (Elhai, et al., 2016; Wolniewicz et al., 2018). Many social media scholars have explained that such reaction to high social media use is often a result of an incoherent sense of self (Aalbers et al., 2018; Vogel et al., 2014). Indeed, individuals who experience an unstable sense of self are more likely to be affected by social media than individuals who experience a stronger self-identity (Aalbers et al., 2018).

1.2.7 Conclusion on the Theories of Identity

The different theories and research on identity have left a great gap for further exploration into the subjective experiences of identity and its threats. Research is needed in order to understand how identity threats are experienced and understood in situations where lack of agency, frequent relocation and loss of professional identity

occur, which will be discussed further. Moreover, given the great impact that social media has on individuals who experience unstable sense of self, it would be interesting to see if/how social media has affected WOD. Although some qualitative studies have attempted to explore frequent relocations and their link to being an accompanying spouse (e.g. Arieli, 2007; Davoine, Ravasi, Salamin & Cudre-Mauroux, 2012; De Singly & Challand, 2002), little attention has been given to studying these different experiences from a phenomenological standpoint.

1.3 Diplomacy and its Impacts

1.3.1 Frequent Relocation and the Psychological Implications

A common understanding of mobility is the movement of the body between different locations in a primarily geographical space. This experience, mainly characterized by the concept of change, has been found to have far-reaching implications on the psychological well-being of people, as it can threaten their self-concept (Davis, 2011). Indeed, identity threats can be experienced when conflicts between the different identity components and values of individuals clash, leading to significant psychological effects on the individual's well-being. Vignoles et al. (2006) argued that when individuals' self-esteem are threatened, their psychological well-being is affected, leading them to attempt to minimize the damages or re-evaluate certain components of their identities (Sedikides & Gregg, 2003). As geographic space and mobility play an important role in one's identity, researchers have concluded that it has become a potential identity threat to many who are subject to these moves (Easthope, 2009; Hardwick, 2003; McHugh, 2000; Silvey & Lawson, 1999). Jones (1997) suggested that as a result of the changes and transitions, these threats can have a potential effect on an individual's identity processes, such as a relative shift in the prominence of different identity dimensions. Hence, many identity dimensions such as the professional, national and ethnic components may require a re-evaluation (Easthope, 2009; Jones, 1997).

In regards to diplomatic mobility, Nicholson's (1984) theory of work role transitions show that diplomats tend to follow the replication adjustment strategy when experiencing change as they make some adjustments to their identities in order to fit into their roles (De Singly & Chaland, 2002). Although they experience different countries at each

assignment, their overall social role stays the same, hence fewer impacts on their self-identity (De Singly & Challand, 2002). By contrast, the spouse's identity is deeply affected by frequent relocations as she usually leaves behind many social identities such as a professional one in order to take on a new backstage identity (Arieli, 2007; Collins & Bertone, 2017; Davoine et al., 2012; De Singly & Challand, 2002).

Consequently, frequent mobility may pose a threat to identity by violating one or more of the guiding principles of identity, as proposed by IPT (Breakwell, 1986). Diplomatic assignments take place in different social, national and developmental domains, hence influencing diplomatic families' inner selves, social relations and life choices (e.g. leaving a career, choosing a university major), all of which have implications on the construction of their separate identities. These threats are the result of families' transitions and their experience of precarity, characterized by the instability of occupational identities and the unpredictability of the next diplomatic assignment (Cangià, 2018).

Diplomatic and consular professionals are considered to be higher civil servants like the French prefects of the De Singly and Chaland's (2002) study who highlighted many common characteristics with international executives, such as high level of qualification and a highly mobile workforce with different levels of responsibilities. The regular international assignment rhythm is between two and four years in international postings, with optional periods of two years in the home country between each posting (Davoine et al., 2012). Diplomatic assignments are initiated by the ministry of foreign affairs, which appoints diplomats on a temporary mission in a variable location, making their assignments usually unpredictable in both timing and location.

The study of these families' daily experiences raises important questions about the meaning and experience of global mobility, and the movement of family members who have long been viewed as 'privileged' travellers (Beaverstock, 2002; Cranston, 2016; Meier, 2014; Smith & Favell, 2006). Although diplomatic mobility represents an important component of frequent migration flows, it is a uniquely and inherently stressful way of living that cannot be prevented most of the time (Ravasi, Salamin & Davoine, 2013).

International relocation stress has been defined by Wilkinson and Singh (2010) as 'a psychological state that develops when an individual faces a situation that taxes or

exceeds internal or external resources available to deal with that situation' (p. 169). They referred to three major components of stress: lack of control over situations, uncertainty concerning outcomes, and ambiguity concerning expectations. Hence, 'by their very nature, overseas assignments are characterized by uncertainty, lack of control and ambiguity' (Wilkinson & Singh, 2010, p. 169). When considering the Holmes and Rahe (1967) stress scale, at least half of the 40 most stressful life events can be directly or indirectly related to the diplomatic families uprooting from their home country and engaging in diplomatic mobility. These life events include a change in financial status (15th on the scale), change or new line of work (17th on the scale), spouse starting or stopping a job (25th on the scale), and changes in residence (31st on the scale), school (32nd on the scale) and social activities (34th on the scale).

Beyond the stress of practical mobility and unexpected life events that can take place during an international assignment such as bereavement, sickness, fears of kidnapping and/or host country insecurity (i.e. Civil Wars), diplomats and their families are exposed to higher levels of daily stress compared to non-diplomatic families (Cangià & Zittoun, 2018). They also need to become accustomed to stressors related to cultural, social, legal, religious, political and environmental adaptation (Niekrenz, Witte & Albrecht, 2016). As noted above, the uncertainty, lack of control and ambiguity that characterize diplomatic assignments represent a certain level of stress that can easily shape the quality of life of family members. For example, some studies show that marriage can serve as a shield against everyday stress, including hardships, and can diminish the threat of external events (Pearlin & Johnson, 1977; Sweatman, 1999). However, when a couple experiences too much stress, there can be psychological and/or psycho-physiological consequences (e.g. illness, substance abuse) that can affect negatively the quality of the marriage (McNulty, 2012; Wilkinson & Singh, 2010).

In an important study, McNulty (2012) found that at least six percent of accompanying spouses indicated that they were considering divorce or marital separation as a result of stress-relocation. In comparison, 99 percent of expatriates' couples rated a stable and strong marriage as the most important adjustment element when experiencing international assignments. Hyslop (2012) found that 445 expatriate couples living in the United Arab Emirates ended their marriages in 2011, a 30 percent rise from 2009. Lazarova, McNulty and Semeniuk (2015) found that 92 percent of their 650 expatriate

families believed that relocation-related marital tension can affect the family dynamics, suggesting that more research is needed to explore the unique needs of expatriate families with single, separated or divorced parents.

1.3.2 The Professional Identity of Wives of Diplomats

One strand that emerges from few studies is the link between diplomatic assignments and issues of spouse's identity. As mentioned, diplomatic mobility can be a profound experience significantly influencing many different aspects of the self, often requiring a continuous re-evaluation of various identity components and roles (Arieli, 2007; Davoine et al., 2013; De Singly & Chaland, 2002; Dovidio & Esses, 2001). The mobility of diplomats can have an impact on family arrangements and on the spouse's plans and working life, which may involve experiencing breaks in their professional careers and/or various challenges with regards to relocation (Cangià, 2018).

The rise of couples with dual careers and the awareness of having a professional identity have recently become an issue, as WOD are becoming more concerned about having a professional identity independent of their partners' (Andreason, 2008; Simosi, Rousseau, & Daskalaki, 2015). Unfortunately, many countries have traditionally banned spouses of diplomats from working while on diplomatic postings, given that they do not get local work authorizations, as there might be conflicts of interests. Although some nations (e.g. Sweden) have begun forging bilateral pacts with other countries allowing diplomatic spouses to seek outside employment, the majority of countries still interdict it. However, even in cases of bilateral agreement between countries, a WOD's potential successful career may be limited due to frequent moves and unstable experiences (Finch, 2012; Pahl & Pahl, 1971).

Accompanying a spouse in diplomatic mobility has long been associated with the image of a dependent and nonworking wife (Fechter, 2010) whose domestic work has been incorporated into the corporate ideologies (Callan & Ardener, 1984). In one important study conducted by Schaller (1995), a drop of personal career among Swiss WOD was found to be higher than expected, with only 16 percent of spouses of diplomats who worked prior to their first posting returning to work and pursuing their chosen professions. Concerns over career prospects were also reflected in a study conducted

by the Austrian researcher Wille-Romer (1992) who found that 75 percent of participants who had completed a professional training were not exercising their professions due to diplomatic assignments.

Given WOD's loss of professional identity, many have experienced a shift in their efforts and dedication from their personal career to their partner's career (Arieli, 2007). These shifts are especially acute for WOD whose husband's career or types of postings entail expectations on them to perform tasks and/or fill roles that serve the diplomatic assignment. Feminist sociologist Papanek (1973), who wrote about American middle-class women married to professionals, termed this professional concept a 'two-person single career'. In her study, she suggested that this term served as a mechanism of social control that kept wives in their place by channeling their personal career aspirations into supporting their husbands' careers, resulting in a psychological cost for women (Papanek, 1973). Papanek (1973) described this cost as a destruction of women's self-esteem as they were expected to conduct tasks they were reluctant to do, while their time and efforts went undervalued. In spite of the decades that have passed since her work, similar phenomena have been found in studies of wives of professional baseball players (Ortiz, 1997), clergymen (Frame & Shehan, 1994), executives (Hochschild, 2003), prefects (De Singly & Challand, 2002), and college and university presidents (Reid, Cole & Kern, 2011).

For women, loosing one's professional identity can be seen as a central component in their experiences of becoming an accompanying wife. In one significant study conducted by Kanji and Cahusac (2015), the transition from professional to stay-at-home wife and mother was found to be a continuous struggle in which they tried to reconcile their professional, spousal and maternal identities before and after exiting the workplace, illustrating how identity change is a crucial and integral part in workplace exit. Their findings also implied that women pay a high cost in loosing their professional identities (Kanji & Cahusac, 2015), while trying to cope with the loss and the disjuncture of exiting the professional world by moving back and forth across the border (Howard, 2000). Their subsequent ability at reaching the classic action of sense making enabled these women to finally reconcile their loss and perceive their exit as a personal choice. Although a valuable contribution to the understanding of the sense making of identity loss, Kanji and Cahusac's (2015) qualitative study does not address the partner's intake or position in

regards to their decision to leave their profession, and the potential impact this might have had on the participant's sense making.

Subsequently, in the case of diplomacy, cooperating with patriarchy essentially means accompanying the husband to a host country and, as such, entering a social structure that is more patriarchal than the one the wives might have experienced in their home country, especially as professionals. The fact of leaving the workplace makes these wives, some even for the first time, financially and socially dependent on their husbands (Arieli, 2007; De Singly & Challand, 2002). Kinsley (1977) highlighted this concept by offering a representation of what economic marital dependency is, suggesting that "at the core of a wife's dependence on her husband is her inferior earning power. As long as she is not able to get a job with pay and prestige at least equivalent to that of her husband, she must rely upon him to maintain her standard of living and social status" (p. 80).

As a result of the lower social status and levels of power, accompanying wives are more likely to have chronic strain and a lower sense of mastery (Nolen-Hoeksema & Davis, 1999). Given their lack of financial contribution, WOD are chiefly responsible for childcare and childrearing, and will tend to subordinate their own needs in order to maintain their relationships and reduce the risks of dissolution (Valor-Segura, Exposito, Moya & Kluwer, 2014). Ultimately, this 'silencing of the self' leaves wives feeling 'unheard, undervalued and under-appreciated' in their marriage (McBridge & Bagby, 2006, p. 187).

In his Social Rank Theory, Paul Gilbert (2000) examined this phenomenon closely by studying subordinate hierarchies. He suggested that threats to human can be triggered by loss of approval and acceptance by others, and eventually translate into submissive strategies such as shyness, shame and depression (Berger, Keshet & Gilboa-Schechtman, 2017; Gilbert, 2000). Indeed, Gilbert (2000) explained how humans are concerned with others' levels of approval and value of their personal traits, and tended to internalize these concerns by perceiving themselves in low rank self-relevant domains. He added that this perception made humans feel inferior as they did not feel valued, esteemed, chosen, desired, wanted and accepted, all part of the concept of involuntary subordinate self-perception (Gilbert, 1992). In relation to WOD, loosing one's

professional identity can trigger thoughts of "seeing oneself as undesirably inferior to others, less attractive and an outsider, and thus not able to garner the interests and approval of others" (Gilbert, 2000, p. 175). It feels important to note that the unwanted and involuntary nature of this novel social position is an important aspect to the way WOD perceive and react to their social ranking. Indeed, this involuntary subordination has been found to affect people's emotional well-being, often impacting the presence and severity of depression, social anxiety and poor sense of self (Gilboa-Schechtman, Friedman, Helpman & Kananov, 2013).

1.3.3 Wives of Diplomats in Diplomatic Assignments

Many women have accepted or adopted, to a certain extent, the role of spouse for at least some part of their adult lives. In traditional Western culture (and some current Oriental culture), the role of the 'wife' used to be defined as caretaker and homemaker of the household and family, while husbands were considered breadwinners and often detached from any household affairs. As a result, it is fair to say that many WOD have been expected to accompany their husbands, and support them and the Foreign Services through diplomatic assignments, even if these expectations are both unofficial and non-remunerated.

Among the challenges of WOD is that of sustaining a sense of self, while at the same time enacting the traditional female role in a society that increasingly expects of women to make independent decisions and create their own personal paths/careers. In a marriage where the diplomat has a prestigious and well-defined sense of self through his role and professional identity, the WOD may still be expected to play a range of traditional roles on a regular basis. Along societal shifts that have occurred over the past 50 years, various researchers have studied factors affecting marriages, women's employment and dual career, (e.g. Haring, Hewitt & Flett, 2003; Zuo & Shengming, 2000).

The complexity and difficulty of describing roles and relationships within a marriage has led us to think that married partners are rarely equal in terms of responsibilities, power and status (Dryden, 1999). These inequalities are results of the construction of role, and are based on the societal norms in regards to gender and the expectations that are set

on each. For women, these norms impacted their independent identities as many internalized the notion of limited agency and the importance of self-sacrifice (Beers, 1992; Dressel, 1992). Although these views were generally held by society for a long time, one can argue that these norms are somewhat out-dated in light of the current shifts in women's rights and personal aspirations. However, despite these more or less recent developments, many diplomatic accompanying spouses, once referred to as 'trailing wives', still face these traditional norms and experience great amount of pressure to attend to specific expectations (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley, Luk 2001).

For these women, expectations from others can be seen as a central factor in their experience as the accompanying spouse of a diplomat. In one of the few studies that deal with spouses of diplomats, Davoine and his colleagues (2012) used Goffman's (2001) dramaturgical approach to thoughtfully explore the social role of spouses of Swiss diplomats (N = 40) during long-term international postings. The analysis consisted of dividing the data into three main repertoires, namely (1) the spouse gives psychological and/or professional support, and accompanies the diplomat to social events; (2) the spouse represents Switzerland in social events and develops links with the local expatriate community; and (3) the spouse gives administrative support and supervises local staff by becoming a resource manager (Davoine et al., 2012). The authors have provided a clear understanding of the complexity of spouses' roles as they conducted their research using an interactionist sociological perspective. This school of thought emphasized the different processes of transmitting, sharing social meanings and developing one's own self through social interactions (Stryker & Vryan, 2006).

Although a valuable contribution to the sociological aspect of being an accompanying spouse of diplomat, Davoine and his colleagues' study (2012) did not attend to the subjective experience of their participants and/or how these role expectations made them feel as accompanying spouses. Hence, this calls for a more subjective experiential exploration of spouses of diplomats, especially as many researchers expressed concern for the psychological well being of this group (Arieli, 2007; Bielby & Bielby, 1992; Chiang, 2015; Yellig, 2011).

In their study, Davoine et al. (2012) also omitted a crucial part that constitutes WOD's self-identity, namely the family life. Indeed, the psychological state of children has been found to be a major stressor for expatriate parents (Arieli, 2007; Ismail, Ali & Shaharudin, 2015), and more specifically for women, who are mainly supporting them emotionally (Arieli, 2007). The different levels of parental implications is linked to the fact that diplomats usually start their professional role quickly after arriving in the host country, leading spouses to take care of all the administrative tasks that are related to the new-country-transfer (Davoine et al., 2012). This component is not only demanding, but also stressful, as spouses have to help their children integrate themselves into the new community, and turn the expatriation experience into a successful endeavor as harmoniously as possible (Franke & Nicholson, 2002).

In her study, Arieli (2007) conducted an ethnographic study of 30 western expatriate wives in Beijing, and found that their main source of stress came from emotional labour used to support their husband and children. Indeed, researchers of marriage and family describe the importance of emotional work that is done for others within the family. Continuously encouraging others, listening and advising, expressing appreciation of them and to them, and empathizing with their emotions have been found to be no less important than financially providing for the children and the household (Erickson, 2005).

Given that women are found to do most of the emotional work (Arieli, 2007; Davoine et al., 2012; Erickson, 2005), the implications on their mental health are severe. For one thing, emotional work done for others is both time-consuming and emotionally demanding, and is often not valued and even belittled, all characteristics that can lead to burnout (Erickson & Ritter, 2001; Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). Additionally, the inequality that appears between husbands and wives with regards to other-centred emotional labour may generate feelings of unsupportiveness towards the women within the marriage: a feeling that has negative effects on her overall well-being (Strazdins & Broom, 2004). As a result, some researchers concluded that many accompanying spouses encounter great difficulties when becoming WOD as they experience a disruption of social ties and routines, loss of identity and self-worth, loneliness, isolation, and role alteration (Adler, 1986; De Singly & Challand, 2002; Harvey, 1985).

One important point that needs to be made is to highlight the complexity and irony of WOD's role expectations. Although some studies (Davoine et al., 2012; De Singly & Challand, 2002) focused on the role of WOD during diplomatic postings, all failed to mention the un-officiality of these expectations. Indeed, Foreign Services are not legally bound to spouses of diplomats as they do not officially employ them, leading their diplomatic representation to take place through the idiom and channel of their family. The wife is thus performing her duties by virtue of her status as WOD.

This process has had an important effect upon how WOD perceive their sense of duty and diplomatic role (Hendry & Watson, 2001). Many WOD perceived their love and marriage to be a partnership, and accepted that this partnership could spill over into their performing roles in the Foreign Service (Black, 2001). Although this spill over may seem old-fashioned and outdated in some countries, many other countries still retain this theme of dedication in regards to WOD's roles and the structure within which they work and live. Callan (1975), who was writing at a time of significant flux in attitudes, introduced the concept of 'premise of dedication', which was operating as a sort of psychological means that serviced to resolve the paradoxical issue that WOD took on duties that had many salary-like features.

Whilst her short essay represented a shift in the ideology of roles from firm duties and obligations to agency and choice, some associations, such as the British Diplomatic Spouses Association, saw a need to voice these concerns. As a result, the British Foreign Service experienced a gradual change in their stance and expressed that 'spouses were not expected to do anything in support of the officer but that anything the spouse did on a voluntary basis would be greatly appreciated by the Service' (Black, 2001, p. 264). Some have described this position as derogatory, condescending and ambiguous (Black, 2001; Hendy, 1998), and is until now is used as the main argument by the Foreign Service against the idea that spouses should be financially remunerated for their work. Despite some countries' change in position, such as Estonia, several debates remain unresolved, as many ways in which the limitations of diplomacy and Foreign Office continue to dominate across the conjugal link.

1.3.4 Adjusting to the Identity Threat

Adjusting to cross-cultural moves is defined as a complex process of functioning effectively in a culture other than the one in which a person originally came from (Haslberger, 2005). While the amount of time this process requires is still unclear, some researchers have claimed that adjustment can be achieved within one year of the relocation (Tung, 1998; Ward et al., 1998), while others found evidence of a longer process which may take up to three years (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer & Luk, 2005). However, no research has been conducted in regards to diplomatic families and their adjustment levels in multiple relocations.

Individuals who experience diplomatic mobility through expatriation and repatriation deal with a new set of circumstances. The development of acculturation which helps families adjust psychologically and physically is expected to lead to greater harmony between them and their environment throughout the process of relocation. Given that the process of psychological adjustment for diplomats and their families include a pre-department period, expatriation period and repatriation period, which they experience in a repetitive manner, it is an important element of their experience. Consequently, researchers identified two other strategies of psychological acculturation, namely withdrawal and reaction (Berry, 2003). However, these are often non-viable options and are found to be underlying causes for difficult expatriate assignments (Cieri, Dowling & Taylor, 1991). Moreover, researchers in the fields of cross-cultural psychology highlighted the need to consider separately both the socio-cultural adjustment (being able to fit in a new culture) and the psychological well-being (feelings of satisfaction and well-being), as two different dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1993).

Using the Ward, Okura, Kennedy and Kojima's (1991) model of adjustment as a theoretical basis for expatriation, Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1998) developed a model of expatriate adjustment. In their model, they conceptualized expatriation adjustment as a stressful transition that is experienced along three interrelated dimensions of adjustment, namely work, interaction and general adjustments. Given that most WOD's are unable to work while on diplomatic postings, they mainly experience general adjustment (adjustment to the general cultural and physical environment, such as living conditions, transport, environment, entertainment, food, and shopping) and interaction adjustment (adjustment to interaction with host country nationals and

expatriate/diplomatic community). Nonetheless, one can argue that WOD also experience work adjustment as many take on an unofficial active role in the diplomatic mission and participate in diplomatic events and activities. Shaffer and Harrison (2001) recognized that many antecedents of expatriate employee adjustment have also been applied to accompanying spouses, including personality traits, perceived organizational support and social support. However, some researchers have argued that the adjustment experience of the accompanying wife is both different and more challenging than the employed spouse (Adler & Gundersen, 2008).

Subsequently, Shaffer and Harrison (2001) developed a model of expatriate spouse adjustment in which spouses are described as experiencing adjustment in three interrelated dimensions of adjustment, namely person, interaction and cultural adjustments. In order to test their model, Shaffer and Harrison (2001) used Black and Stephen's (1989) measure of cultural and interaction adjustment to operationalize these dimensions, and added a personal adjustment construct to measure the extent to which accompanying spouses made sense of "becoming a part of, belonging to, or feeling at home" in these host countries (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001, p. 239). After interviewing ten accompanying wives living in Hong Kong, Shaffer and Harrison (2001) found that instead of retaining past identities, wives found it more important to establish their new identities by building new interpersonal relationships. However, Mohr and Klein (2004) found another important aspect to add to the adjustment of accompanying wives. In their research, they studied American accompanying wives in Germany and found that along with interaction and cultural adjustment, a third dimension of adjustment was crucial, namely that of role adjustment. Indeed, other researchers have also emphasized the importance of role adjustment to the identity of accompanying spouses in the expatriate experience (Davoine et al., 2012; Cole, 2011; Kupka & Cathro, 2007; McNulty, 2012).

1.4 Relevance to Counselling Psychology

For the past decade, international mobility departments were aware of the danger of neglecting the accompanying spouse of their mobile workforce. Indeed, the most cited cause of failure in international assignments for expatriates has been the inability for the accompanying spouse to adjust to life abroad (Andreason, 2008; Cartus Corporation, 2014; Cieri, Dowling & Taylor, 1991; NetExpat, 2018; Tung, 1998). A recent significant

survey conducted by the Permits Foundation (2018) revealed that spouses are central to the success of international assignments, with 71 percent of corporations agreeing that an unhappy and un-integrated spouse in a host country is the main reason for failed assignments. Although there is no unique definition of a successful expatriation (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004), it can be considered that "expatriation is successful if expatriates remain in the assignment until the end of the term, adjust to living conditions in the host country and perform well professionally" (Aycan & Kanungo, 1997, p. 251). It feels important however to stress that concepts of success and failure are ambivalent terms used in the diplomatic discourse.

With evidence of spillover effects between accompanying spouses and the expatriate employee (Takeuchi, Yun & Tesluk, 2002; van der Zee, Alo & Salome, 2005), spouses are an influential source of either support or stress for the expatriate (Arieli, 2007; Lauring & Selmer, 2010; Lazarova, Westman & Shaffer, 2010). Studies have shown that a spouse's support directly impacts the expatriate's adjustment to living conditions in new cultures and indirectly impacts his job performances (Kramer, Wayne & Kaworski, 2001; Tung, 1998). The adjustment of the spouse is therefore an issue of concern in the management of diplomatic relocations.

However, the world of research has objectified these women by treating them as 'factors' which influence productivity, and have used the economic character of the bargain to mask its emotional side. Some may argue that this phenomenon happened as a result of WOD presenting as women who have resources and high social status primarily through their association with powerful and high-achieving marital partner (Reid, et al., 2011), and their exposure to a privileged life style (Arieli, 2007). Indeed, psychology has virtually ignored this minority of women who are viewed as powerful or privileged, perhaps because "their positions appear to many nonintimate observers to be comfortable and even splendid", as explained by sociologist David Reisman (as cited in Clodius & Magrath, 1984, p. 156). And yet, many wives have made familial, professional and personal sacrifices in order to support their husband's careers. Since their contribution is often behind the scene, their background role is not usually seen, respected, valued or even prized by others (Davoine et al., 2012; Domett, 2005; Reid et al., 2011). These women are (unofficially, of course) expected to contribute in major manners to their institutions and communities, often working long hours for little

(including partner support budgets) or no pay. As many of these wives arrive in these positions relatively unprepared, they need to rely on the public's opinion to succeed in the work they do on behalf of their husband and the embassy, while being minimized or ignored by the general public.

The concepts of diplomatic mobility and loss of identity have been noticed as clearly potent psychological constructs, but have not yet become the subject of systematic research in general, especially as phenomenological perspectives. A much more thorough investigation into the concept of diplomatic life and WOD experiences is needed, particularly at the subjective level, given that little research interest has been given outside the managerial and human resources fields.

Whilst many questions are still unanswered, this research project attempts to explore and provide insight onto this phenomenon. Such questions include: how do WOD maintain their identities when undergoing important changes? How do they operate in their marriage? How are they able to balance their professional and personal needs while meeting other's expectations? How are they able to sustain any kind of connections in a highly mobile diplomatic society? And, how do WOD manage and cope with the psychological impact of these changes?

As a result of these questions, I believe that there are particular issues and challenges faced by women married to diplomats, who are regularly expected to portray traditional female roles within a society that increasingly expects women to create and follow their own independent paths. Although feminist research has often focused on women with prestige who have accomplished success in their own right (e.g. Hulbert & Schuster, 1993; Reid & Kelly, 1994), this research project aims at giving voice to women who, for different reasons, agreed on accompanying their husbands' on diplomatic assignments. In an attempt to attend to all these questions, this research project aims to **explore the experience of being a WOD across diplomatic assignments.**

Finally, WOD (or their family members) may present at some point for support in different contexts where Counselling Psychology may be involved (Moore & Rae, 1998), such as education settings, GP surgeries, assistance program, private sector. As Counselling Psychologists, our main role is to sit with someone while they try to make

sense of who they are in relation to themselves, their world and others (Kasket, 2012).
By working holistically, we can help other psychology discipline and our own understand
what it is like for WOD to hold these roles, while remaining neutral, non-pathologising
and non-judgmental of their experiences (Cooper, 2009). As mentioned above, this
phenomenon has not been the focus of any psychological research, even though
concepts such as wellbeing, identity, relationships, acculturation and empowerment
have been at the centre of Counselling Psychology.

Chapter 2- Methodology and Procedures[2]

2.1 Overview of Research Design

This research project used a qualitative research approach, and more specifically IPA (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). I collected data using semi-structured interviews from a sample of eight Wives of Diplomats (WOD) and then analysed the data in order to draw out different themes.

2.2 Aims of Research

The aim of this research was to access the different experiences of WOD during diplomatic assignments by asking "What is the Experience of Being a Wife of a Diplomat across Diplomatic Assignments?". Throughout this chapter, I reflected upon my choice of research question and methodology, by drawing out the role I played in my choices and in the formation of new 'knowledge'. Reflexivity is intertwined throughout this Methodology chapter.

While carrying out this research project, I intended to take an exploratory and transparent approach that seemed to parallel the ideals of Counselling Psychology and IPA. I truly hope that this exploratory approach will generate some understanding of the phenomenon of being a WOD, and will encourage others to take an interest in additional research, as this area has been greatly overlooked. Finally, I hope that this research project will help mental health professionals reflect on their clinical work, where an understanding of the experiences of WOD may give additional insight when difficulties emerge for clients.

2.3 Rationale for using a Qualitative Approach

As a trainee in Counselling Psychology, I felt that qualitative research resonated well with my professional and personal development, in contrast to my previous experiences

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[2] This chapter was written in the first person in order to express the reflexive nature of this research and address the reader directly when describing the research stages and process

using quantitative methodologies. My clinical practice, relating to my clients at an interpersonal depth, seemed in fact distant from the quantitative methodology, and I wished to approach my research question in a similar attitude. Although this felt like a natural fit, I may return to quantitative research in the future.

My initial literature review indicated a scarcity of psychological, and more specifically Counselling Psychology research around WOD. Despite the presence of some Human Resources Management and International Business Studies journals suggesting that WOD play a major role on the quality of diplomatic assignments, no great amount of psychological research could be developed upon. Consequently, the investigative nature of this research leaned towards an inductive approach, as opposed to a hypothetico-deductivism one, given its bottom-up approach (Thomas, 2006). In fact, I did not intend to approach my research question in a deductive manner by attempting to establish general principles or laws, or by engaging in a nomothetic approach that would assume that the participant's social reality is external and objective (Burns, 2000). Instead, I regarded social reality as a "creation of individual consciousness, with meaning, and the evaluation of events seen as a personal and subjective construction" (Burns, 2000, p.3). As Smith et al. (2009) mentioned, the nomothetic approach to psychology tends to limit the involvement of participants and bases their group-level asseverations on statistics, while an idiographic approach highly regards participants' subjective and complex data and naturalistically approaches it; making qualitative research a well-founded choice (Marshall, 1986; Morse, 1994).

Although criticized for lacking the accuracy and precision of quantitative research, qualitative research has been able to explore important areas in psychology that were never touched before, such as people's subjective experiences and their meanings. Also, in line with Ponterotto's (2005, p. 13) view, I agree that Counselling Psychology 'is in the midst of a gradual paradigm shift from a primary reliance on quantitative methods to a more balanced reliance on quantitative and qualitative methods'; leading us to believe that they can interdependently co-exist (Solomon, 1991), as they both bring different material to the world of research. Although others may take the view that this approach to research may lack the rigour of a 'real science', given that it studies areas of research that cannot be quantified accurately, I believe that qualitative research can be as rigorous and scientific. As Giorgi (2009) suggested in regards to phenomenology, this

43

approach represents in fact, a different philosophy of science. This difference can be found by the way this nomothetic approach to psychology makes group-level claims based on statistics (Smith et al., 2009), as opposed to an approach that is idiographic, and respects and values participants and their data.

As a result, both my preference for an idiographic approach and my research question have provided me a rationale for using a qualitative methodology.

2.4 Epistemological Position and Reflexivity

In order to meaningfully evaluate a study, Willig (2013) stated the importance of (1) asking about the knowledge the methodology aimed to produce, (2) the assumptions it made about the world and (3) the conceptualization of the researcher's role in the research process.

Willig (2013) explained that there are three types of knowledge a researcher aims to produce, namely social-constructionist, phenomenological or realist knowledge. Given that my research question is 'How Does the Experience of Being Wives of Diplomats Shape How They Feel About Themselves and Their Relationships Across Diplomatic Assignments?', I aimed to produce phenomenological knowledge, as I wanted to know about the subjective experiences of WOD by getting "as close as possible to the research participant's experience, and enter their experiential world by stepping into their shoes and looking at the world through their eyes" (Willig, 2013, p. 16).

I started by questioning the assumptions I made about the world, predominantly by trying to answer the ontological question of 'What is reality?' in relation to human existence, or as Willig (2008, p. 13) put it 'What is there to know?'. I do not perceive reality as consisting only of objective set of facts that can be measured and discovered. Whilst a positivist position sees reality as an objective set of facts that has a "direct correspondence between things and their representation" (Willig, 2013, p. 4), I eschew that a direct cause and effect association exists between them. Conversely, neither do I take an extreme relativist position where reality exclusively exists in people's claims of it. Consequently, I situate myself between the poles of realism and relativism and take a critical-realist position. I retain an ontological realism that states that there is a real world

existing independently from our constructions, theories and perceptions, and accept another form of epistemological relativism and constructivism which understands that the experiential world is a construction of our own standpoint and perspectives (Maxwell, 2012).

My position on this has been confirmed by my clinical practice. I realised that some clients' approach to the world can be unhelpful and self-defeating, and that accepting their reality can help strengthen the therapeutic alliance and eventually move towards change. I believe that participants will interpret in their own way the 'reality' of their experience, as they cannot entirely access this 'reality'. Therefore, I do not assume that participants' experiences will be directly related to an external 'reality', and understand that each will have different experiences of this 'reality' depending on their interpretations of it. Moreover, given that we can never be completely aware of this external 'reality', I will accept that the data provided during interviews will not be an evident indication of what happens in the 'real' world, and that a degree of interpretation will be needed to further illuminate the phenomenon of being a WOD.

Nonetheless, I also believe that participants' social contexts have to be imperatively acknowledged within human experience. I take on Coyle's (2007) conceptualization of context as "the social systems and feedback loops in which an individual is embedded and through which they make sense of, construct and are constructed by their worlds" (p. 17). Hence, in agreement with the social constructionist approach, both historical and sociocultural processes have a central role in the ways we experience and understand our world, as well as construct and interpret our experiences (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Willig, 2013). Indeed, Eatough and Smith's (2008) position maintains that sociocultural context and discourses influence the way participants tell, understand and give meaning to their stories. Additionally, I feel influenced by their position with respect to IPA, as I also believe that language is a crucial part of the way participants experience their social world. Indeed, throughout the analysis, I focused carefully on the way WOD chose to reflect and express their experiences, as 'reality is both contingent upon and constrained by the language of one's culture' (Eatough & Smith, 2008, p. 184). On the other hand, Madill, Jordan and Shirley (2000) suggested that 'contextual constructionism' is a position where knowledge is considered situational, provisional and local; hence, "different perspectives generate different insights into the same phenomenon" (Willig,

2013, p. 172), thereby leading the research to seek completeness instead of accuracy. Finally, Larkin, Watts and Clifton (2006) concluded that there is a need for phenomenology to engage meaningfully with different aspects of constructionist values, as the phenomenon in question is viewed as occurring in a certain cultural personal context during a certain time and place.

Therefore, I position myself between critical-realism and contextual-constructionism. In my analysis, I have paid particular attention to cultural influences on meaning and how it entwined with WOD's lived experiences.

2.5 IPA Methodology

2.5.1 Overview and Background of IPA

IPA aims to shed light on the detailed personal experiences that participants have of influential life events, exploring how they make sense of their life-world, both social and personal (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Therefore, there is an important emphasis on the meaning that participants make of their experiences.

IPA was first developed by Jonathan Smith (1996) as an intermediate between the positivistic experimental approach to social cognition and the social constructionism of discourse analysis (Smith et al., 2009). IPA aims to explore how individuals make sense of their experiences, by taking an extensive view of their meaning-making, awareness, reflexivity, and hot cognition, both in their social and personal contexts (Smith & Osborn, 2003). By not minimising and conceptualising the experience as a theoretically predefined concept, the IPA researcher explores the human experience by looking at the experiential rather than the experimental data. (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2009). I found IPA to resonate with my own sense of the complexity of cognition and my reluctance to take a polarized approach to epistemology.

In addition, IPA claims to be well suited for the investigation of new topics that are multi-dimensional, contextual, involved in the exploration of sense-making process that are significant to individuals, and concerned with individuals' subjective experiences. As a result, IPA touches often upon issues of self-concept and identity (Smith, 2004). For IPA

studies that directly explored issues of identity see e.g. Coyle and Rafalin (2000) who explored religious and sexual identity, and Timotijevic and Breakwell (2000) who explored identity threat and immigration.

As the name indicates, IPA is both phenomenological and interpretative. It draws on hermeneutics as its theory of interpretation. It also takes an idiographic approach with a specific focus on the particular. I consider all three philosophical influences below.

2.6 Phenomenology

Langdridge (2007) suggested that phenomenology is a philosophy that studies the in-depth exploration of individuals' lived experiences. It aims to understand how a phenomenon is perceived according to the context and time within an individual's consciousness (Willig, 2013, p. 85). Phenomenology was first initiated by Husserl (1927) who proposed that it was possible "to transcend presuppositions and biases and to experience a state of pre-reflective consciousness, which allows us to describe phenomena as they present themselves to us" (Willig, 2013, p. 84). In this context, IPA explores systematically the content of our consciousness by reflecting and processing our understanding of our social and personal experiences (Smith et al., 2009). In his early work, Husserl (1927) suggested that in order to research psychical experiences, one has to acquire a phenomenological attitude, via reflectivity, whilst stepping out of the natural attitude. He proposed to 'bracket' our assumptions about the external world by setting aside what we already know about them (Willig, 2013).

However, Heidegger reconceived this phenomenological attitude by questioning Husserl's (1927) 'return to the things themselves'. He explained that as individuals, our meanings are formed through our experience of being in the world (Heidegger, 1962; Spiegelberg, 2012). Byrne (2001, p. 831) suggested that 'Heidegger acknowledged that culture, history, and related life experiences prohibit an objective viewpoint'. Indeed, Heidegger (1962) challenged the concept of bracketing, as he believed that it is through the scope of our own interpretation that we are truly able to understand and investigate participants' experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Heidegger's approach is one that is similar to mine; I do not feel capable of completely 'bracketing' my assumptions, but I can surely question them and make them as transparent as possible to the readers.

47

2.6.1 Hermeneutics

IPA also draws on hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1962; Schmidt, 2016). The researchers' role in IPA is one of constant interpretation (Willig, 2013). By acknowledging that Husserl's bracketing can only be reached to some extent, Heidegger (1962) and Gadamer (1975) agreed that to prevent any imposed meaning based on one's preconceptions, one constantly needs to preserve a reflective openness to biases and prejudices. Consequently, this interpretative process involves a hermeneutic circle (Dilthey, 1976; Heidegger, 1962; Gadamer, 1975; Schleiermacher, 1998). This cyclical process is of great importance in IPA as it allows researchers to intentionally bracket their experiences, and to engage entirely with the participant's own experience. By involving a 'back and forth' analytic process, Smith et al. (2009) argue that a number of various meanings can emerge, as every 'understanding requires a circular movement from presupposition to interpretation and back again' (Willig, 2013, p. 86).

Given that IPA endeavours to "know" the participant's world, researchers engage in double-hermeneutic as they try "to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 51). During this process, researchers are both interrogative, as they use psychological theories to shed light on participants' experiences, and empathic, as they aim to adopt the participant's perspective (Smith et al., 2009).

2.6.2 Idiography

IPA takes an idiographic approach, as it does not make claims about groups and population, but tries instead to make specific statements about certain individuals (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Smith et al. (2009) propose that a commitment to idiography in IPA involved the need for in-depth analysis along with the necessity of openness to the unique view that the individual in question can offer of his/her experience of the phenomena. In parallel, they pointed out that phenomenology incorporates the entrenched nature of the contexts that influence the individual's experience. They suggest that the analytic procedures of IPA are also able to sustain an idiographic commitment whilst developing more general commentaries and themes. Smith et al. (2009, p. 29) go on to argue that an idiographic approach does not signify that more engraved generalities can never be made in IPA, but that they would develop progressively as more research studies in the specific area are carried out.

2.7 Rationale for IPA

Some methodological approaches were considered prior to choosing IPA, such as Grounded Theory (GT) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and Discourse Analysis (DA) (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

This study aims at taking an exploratory approach that looks at WOD during diplomatic assignments as an undefined new experience. Thus, this study is not interested in developing a theory about WOD, but instead wants to illuminate their experiences by enabling the progress of a tentative model (Smith et al., 2009). As Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson (2009) also suggested, GT is characterized for not taking into account participants' internal worlds, a crucial concept for this study, as these internal worlds are the main focus.

Moreover, although similar to IPA's commitment to qualitative analysis and language, DA researchers differ in its perception of the role of cognition. Potter and Wetherell (1987) explained that the main focus of DA is on the construction, consequences and function of discursive organization, and that DA is a 'radically non-cognitive form of social psychology' (p. 178). This study, on the other hand, is cognitively driven as it is mainly concerned with the beliefs, internal thoughts and meaning-making processes of the WOD. Smith, Flowers and Osborn (1997) added that 'DA regards verbal reports as behaviours in their own right which should be the focus of functional analyses' (p. 70).

Consequently, I felt that IPA went hand-in-hand with my epistemological stance, as it permits 'epistemological openness' to be exercised (Larkin et al., 2006). Moreover, according to Smith (2004), IPA has been found to be the most suitable analytic strategy to use when the research explores issues of identity, as mentioned previously. IPA looks at the individual as a complete and unique entity: it does not reduce or loose the individuality of the participant.

As a methodology, IPA can be rigorously scientific, even though it takes a different point of view to that of quantitative research (also see section 2.8 below). It was chosen given its focus meaning-making processes and its concern with cognitive psychology.

Cognitive psychology has been mainly 'dominated by quantitative research anchored in positivist and post-positivist research paradigm' (Ponterotte, 2005, p. 126), although its focus was originally formulated as having 'acts of meaning' (Bruner, 1990, p. 3). In return, researchers such as Eathough and Smith (2008) have called for a broader view of cognition and promoted IPA for its analysis of subjective meaning-making processes. They both acknowledged the importance of language in the inter-subjective development of the self, although I perhaps put less importance on the discursive aspect of language. These reasons reflect the position I take in the research project towards IPA.

2.8 Evaluating Research

Qualitative methodologies are concerned with the validity of their research. Although they are distinct from the reliability and validity of positivistic research (Lyons & Coyle, 2007), Finlay (2006) suggests that there is still a great discrepancy of views on the ways qualitative studies should be evaluated. As Cho and Trent (2006) proposed, 'validity in qualitative research is about determining the degree to which researchers' claims about knowledge correspond to the reality (or research participants' constructions of reality) being studied' (p. 320). However, limits in attempting to judge validity have been found when researchers use strict criteria to judge the research or, on the contrary, use extreme relativist positions (Seale, 1999). Consequently, I followed Lucy Yardley's (2008) proposition for demonstrating validity by showing sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, coherence and transparency, and impact and importance.

In section 4.3 of the Discussion, the quality markers of this research project will be further discussed.

2.8.1 Sensitivity to Context

I attempted throughout the study to achieve sensitivity to context by engaging thoroughly in readings of theoretical and empirical studies, over a variety of areas including psychology, sociology and international business. During interviews, I also demonstrated sensitivity to participants' perspectives by conducting semi-structured interviews and using, for example, open-ended questions (Stroud, 2015). Moreover, I demonstrated awareness and sensitivity to the sociocultural context within which the experience of

WOD took place, and was cognizant of the influence of my assumptions and point of views as a researcher (see Personal Reflexivity, section 2.9).

2.8.2 Commitment and Rigour

I registered myself to IPA training seminars and have read numerous papers on IPA and philosophical theory. I have also aimed at demonstrating commitment and rigour by engaging my fellow research colleagues and my supervisor in cross readings to give feedback (Henwook & Pidgeon, 1992). The feedback I have received during my analytical stage allowed me to take a step back from the data, especially when I felt that I wasn't able to see the bigger picture. Their feedback helped me reengage in the hermeneutic circle.

Smith et al. (2009) propose that the research sample should be carefully selected and be as homogeneous as possible, in order to demonstrate rigour. I have tried to show rigour in regards to the selection of participant in a different fashion. The research literature presents very little knowledge on WOD, which made it difficult for me to justify the recruitment of WOD belonging to a certain age or ethnicity group. To be sensitive to the insufficiency of knowledge, I felt that I had to be rigorous in aiding the self-selection of the sample without limiting the inclusion criteria. Consequently, I consciously courted a sample that would allow WOD of any experience of assisting their husbands across diplomatic assignments to come forward (see section 2.10.1).

While conducting the analysis, I used negative case analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As preliminary themes started to emerge one by one, I looked for participants' experiences that were antithetical, with the aim of refining the analysis until it explained and accounted for the majority of cases. I went through repeated cycles of abandoning, adjusting and expanding themes, until I was able to confirm the different patterns that were emerging from the data (Patton, 2001).

I aimed to develop an analysis and interpretation that has enough insight and depth to add to WOD research. I tried to develop an empathic understanding of my participants' experiences while taking into consideration their sociocultural context. I grounded and re-grounded my findings and interpretations in their experiences, with the aim of staying as close to the data as possible.

2.8.3 Transparency and Coherence

I have outlined my methodological choices and epistemological stance earlier in the chapter. In section 2.10, I described how I selected the participants and developed my interview schedule, and discussed the different steps I took while doing the analysis and write-up. By doing this, I aimed to make the research process as transparent as possible for the reader. Additionally, I engaged in personal reflexivity and used a research diary in order to clarify how my experiences and thought processes as a researcher were unavoidably part of the research process, and discussed my involvement double-hermeneutic processes. I also aimed to achieve coherence and transparency by including participants' own words during the Analysis.

Throughout this research process, I have kept all of my notes concerning my developing ideas about my topic, my post-interview and transcription comments, and my notes concerning the development of the themes, as Smith et al. (2009) suggested. These notes, alongside my corrected drafts, have been points of reference that I have used to check the coherence of my thoughts while conducting this research. However, the final arbiter of the coherence of this research project will of course be the reader.

2.8.4 Impact and Importance

Yardley (2008) explains that an important vessel for good quality qualitative research is the impact and significance of what this new knowledge presents. I have aspired to select a challenging topic that has been little researched, especially in psychology, and which has potential impact and significance by virtue of the many women who follow and assist their partners in foreign countries. I expand on this in more depth in the Discussion when considering the relevance of my findings for Counselling Psychology.

2.9 Personal Reflexivity

This section was written after interviewing participants. In the Discussion Chapter, I will further consider personal reflexivity post analysis.

Willig (2013, p. 10) describes personal reflexivity as a useful point to start when considering the research project: "Personal reflexivity involves reflecting upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider

aims in life and social identities have shaped the research. It also involves thinking about how researchers shape the ongoing research and how the research may have affected and possibly changed us, as people and as researchers".

In order for the reader to properly assess how this study contributes to knowledge, I feel it is important to clearly state my position as a researcher (Marshall, 1986; Willig, 2013). My personal interest in this specific topic is two-fold. First, as a young child, I was always charmed by WOD who visited our house, with two in particular that enhanced my fascination with their lifestyle. Their elegance and ability to make conversation with everyone captivated me and made me want to become one of them; an infantile desire that I out-grew during my teenage years. In my early twenties, my fantasy of WOD's lives took a turn when I met my partner's mother, a WOD herself. After sharing my one-sided fascination of what one could accomplish through multiple expatriations, she was kind enough to share her own personal difficult experience of being a WOD and the different obstacles she faced throughout her journey.

Second, as a woman, my parents have always encouraged me to build a strong and independent identity, while at the same time conforming to conservative traditions. These conflicting stances have affected my views on women's identities and ability to become their full selves. Indeed, although I was semi-raised under feminist values, my views on women's happiness became defined by their ability to have personal achievements and reaching their maximum potential, whilst being valued and appreciated for the person they became. I now understand that the way I understand the world in which I live may have been influenced by my experience of being surrounded by women whose time and efforts were under-valued and rarely appreciated, ensuing an intense sense of injustice and inability to accept unfairness. Upon reflection, I also recognize that my personal views and interest on WOD may have stemmed from a place of similar emotions where inequality and negligence were being experienced, inflaming in me the need to give them a voice.

My period of reflexivity around WOD helped me realize that their experience deserved more psychological attention from an academic perception. Nonetheless, I quickly realised that my own anecdotal experiences and personal attitudes about WOD's experiences were going to influence my research. I understood that given my strong

feelings and assumptions, a significant need for reflection was indispensable during the research process. To this end, I began a research diary in which I wrote my thoughts and feelings in regards to my topic, and reflected on the different ways they may have influenced my interpretations of the study. I also became transparent with my supervisors by sharing my views on WOD and allowing them to challenge these assumptions.

Although I have chosen WOD as an area of research that I am highly interested in, I tried my best to maintain a stance of curiosity while writing the interview schedule, conducting the interviews, analyzing the data and discussing the findings. I am aware now, in a way that I was not before supervision and the write-up, that I do not want to fall into the role of social advocate for WOD. Undeniably, there were times where I felt that I was taking the role of social advocate as I became defensive when friends or colleagues would challenge me about the topic. I have tried to manage these issues by expanding my awareness as much as possible in regards to WOD and their experiences. My awareness to how my own assumptions, experiences and material may have influenced and directed the research process has been at the center of my own reflexivity. This is because I felt that the more I became aware of my own processes, the more I would be able to bracket my knowledge and assumptions. As mentioned, this was partly achieved through the use of supervision and my research diary (Appendix A).

While reflecting about the impact of my own assumptions, I started thinking about my role as a researcher in my IPA study in the light of the double-hermeneutic process (Smith & Osborn, 2003). As a researcher, I am making sense of my participants' sense-making and cannot remain apart from it. I am reminded of Bunge (1993) who suggested that in the critical-realist epistemological approach, our perception of facts is affected by our attitudes and beliefs, and therefore subjectivity is an important part of understanding and producing knowledge, which will always require personal reflection. This subjectivity is also a result of my professional identity as a Trainee Counselling Psychologist as it allowed me understand WOD's experiences through this professional lens. Reflecting on my interviews, I can say that this lens has shaped my attitude towards my participants and the relationship that we developed during interviews. It also engendered psychological insight, which needed to be put aside in order to allow my participants' voices to be heard. Upon reflection, I notice that my professional background allowed

me to make certain assumptions about my participants' experiences, with some that I am probably not aware of. Although bracketing has been recognized as imperfect (Fischer, 2009), I truly hope that I was able to put aside my own beliefs and feelings, and allow the phenomenon in question to speak for itself (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

2.10 Data Collection

2.10.1 Sampling

Because of its qualitative nature and idiography, IPA uses small samples; hence, it makes little sense to talk of random sampling and representativeness in the same way a quantitative study would.

IPA recommends quality information to be collected which will eventually generate a deeper understanding of participants' experiences (Clarke, 2009). As a result, Smith et al. (2009) explain that researchers should aim to recruit a homogeneous sample that represents the area of study. Smith and Osborn (2003) and Yardley (2008) propose that by recruiting a sample that is homogeneous, the researcher is limiting some of the variations between participants that may emerge in other ways than the one suggested by the research question.

The issue of homogeneity was one that vexed me. In fact, I understood that WOD constitute a minority, which narrowed down the pool in selecting research participants. This population qualified as ''hard-to-reach'', and made it arduous to recruit a sample that had little variation. However, when trying to find different ways of making my sample more homogeneous, I also realised that I was coming up against my own initial ideological stance. I found it unjustifiable to privilege a certain group of WOD, or to prevent any participant the opportunity to come forward and to share her experience. Instead, I decided to give space for any WOD who wanted to say something about her experience and to come forward. However, I am not suggesting that this sample is one that is representative of all WOD, as the sample was self-selected and rather small. Nonetheless, it will still allow the study to shed light on the wider context and not limit the ability to make associations and transferability (Smith et al., 2009).

Therefore, by drawing from a broad pool of participants and keeping the research question open, a more heterogeneous sample was created than in most IPA studies. I am reminded of Smith et al. (2009) who explained that the final judge of the effectiveness of an IPA research project is the amount of light that has been shed on the wider context. I now realize that a more homogeneous sample would have explored only one side of the subject matter and end up limiting the reader's ability to make different connections, an element that Smith et al. (2009) suggest is important in IPA.

Following the recommendations for professional doctorate sample sizes for IPA, I recruited eight WOD (Smith et al., 2009). I posted an advertisement (Appendix B) on a Facebook group seeking WOD over the age of 18 who are willing to take part in an interview about their experiences of being a WOD. Moreover, two points of contacts helped me recruit participants in Beirut and London (see section 2.11.1).

2.10.2 Semi-structured Interviews

When settling on the data collection method, my main goal was to choose a method that would engender the most detailed and in-depth data regarding participants' personal experiences. My decision was mainly influenced by Brocki and Wearden (2006) who suggested that IPA researchers should think prudently about the pros and cons of different data collection methods. Indeed, I chose a method that would permit participants to freely associate information that they considered to be important aspects of their experience. Therefore, I rejected the use of more structured approached, such as questionnaires, as they constrict the data collected, given their rigidity, and tend to imply pre-judgments about participants' experiences. I also rejected diaries, as I wanted to collect data that dated from a longer period of time. However, I considered the use of personal accounts, but felt that they might disadvantage some participants or put off others.

Consequently, I decided to use interviews as they allow participants and myself to engage in a discussion, build a rapport and elicit novel areas that arose (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This method also went hand-in-hand with my skills as a Counselling Psychologist, relying mostly on my interpersonal communication skills and my ability to build rapport in order to gather data (Hargie, 1997). A single interview was a pragmatic and achievable choice, given the time constraints of the research project. This method of

56

data allowed me to take notes of non-verbal communication during the interview, after the interview and while transcribing the interview, in order to enrich the analysis. The design of these interviews was semi-structured, as I hoped it would help participants to flexibly recall important experiences, allowing new concepts to emerge (Dearnley, 2005) and allow me pinpoint relevant meanings (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005).

2.10.3 Preliminary Interview Schedule

My preliminary interview schedule (Appendix C) comprised a series of questions covering different areas of experiences of being a WOD. These initial questions emerged out of a multi-disciplinary review of WOD as there was little peer-reviewed psychological research. My interview schedule was guided by my research question (Smith & Osborn, 2003). I aimed at scripting the question by using language that could be clearly understood in an interview context (Smith et al., 2009).

At this stage, I engaged in a reflexive interview, by trying to put myself in the WOD's shoes, and recorded the interview. This exercise helped me refelct further on my role as a researcher in regards to this topic and guided a reappraisal of the interview schedule. In fact, when I listened back to my responses on the audio-recorder, I became aware that some of my questions were not in line with my epistemological stance. I noticed that many prompts were not grounded in my research question and were formulated using close-ended questioning, hence resulting in a paradigm shift by taking a positivist approach. As I considered this more, I felt that my initial interview schedule was incongruent given its incoherence with phenomenological exploration and that many questions were too directive and held an agenda. I also noticed that in order to get rich and deep data, participants needed to connect emotionally and meaningfully with the specific experience that they were recalling. Therefore, I reworked my interview schedule by reminding myself that IPA looks for the richest and most detailed data, and aims at asking questions that are open and explorative in order to gain depth and breadth (Smith et al., 2009). I realised that having questions that focused on WOD's first diplomatic assignment might help elicit areas of experience which would engender contrasts and comparisons with later diplomatic assignments.

Despite doing this, I was devoted to using this interview more as an aide-memoire while being with participants rather than as a way of inflexibly structuring the interviews along a certain format. This revised interview schedule was then used for a pilot study.

2.10.4 Pilot Interview and Revision to the Interview Schedule

I decided to undertake a pilot interview in order to get myself confortable with the questions and see if the interview schedule was well constructed. I was keen on gaining feedback on my interviewing style, and see if the interviewee felt that her experience had been fully explored.

My partner's mother, who had taken an interest in the research, volunteered to take part in the pilot interview. She identified as a WOD herself and therefore fitted all the research sampling criteria. I followed the pre-interview, consent and post-interview procedures as closely as possible, in order to rehearse for the actual interview.

I received very positive feedback from the pilot participant. I reviewed the data and felt that both depth and breadth were found, although I had missed to 'go deeper' during some part of the interview. I agreed that if opportunities to 'go deeper' would arise during interviews, I would make use of the prompt 'Can you tell me more about …', in order to elicit further details. My pilot participant reported that the interview had triggered her to think about other areas of her experience, such as being away from her family and how it related to her experience of being a WOD. From this, I made additional changes to the interview schedule (Appendix D).

2.11 Procedure

2.11.1 Recruitment

This research project relied on a convenience sampling technique, and selected participants from London and Beirut given their accessibility and proximity. Participants were selected and recruited via two recruitment strategies. First, a flyer (Appendix B) was posted on Diplomatic Spouses' Association of Lebanon's Facebook group. Second, participants were selected and recruited through the snowball technique as an informal way to recruit a hard-to-reach population, and two points of contacts helped recruit participants. Both points of contact are family friends, with one being a WOD herself and the other, the wife of a politician who has many friends in Foreign Services. This method

was used one month after posting the ad on Facebook and yielded sufficient responses. Hence, I decided to remove the Facebook ad once all eight participants were recruited. It is also important to note that participants were selected in the order to which they had responded, as I wanted the selection process to be transparent.

Two participants heard about the study through one of the points of contact and e-mailed me with their concerns. Both participants asked me about the interview questions, expressing a worry that it may get too personal. I replied by writing my main questions and explaining that they can skip any question they feel uncomfortable answering. After a week, both participants replied to my e-mails saying that they did not feel ready to share their experience as WOD, with one specifying that it was "mentally too hard at the moment" for her to do so. I replied to both e-mails and thanked them for even considering to participate in this study.

2.11.2 Initial Telephone Contact

The advertisement included both my e-mail address and a telephone number dedicated for research, with an invitation to respond to the advert by voice or text message. The two points of contact were also asked to give the same mediums to any participant who was interested in taking part in the study. When potential participants made a telephone contact, I followed a prepared telephone schedule (Appendix E), which was designed to provide additional information about the study to allow respondents to decide if they wished to participate further. At the end of this initial contact, I sent WOD who were interested a 'Participant Information Sheet' (Appendix F) by e-mail. This allowed participants access the written information outlining the study, helping them make an informed and considered decision.

2.11.3 Pre-interview Discussion

For all eight participants, interviews were conducted in their respective homes (see Section 2.12.1 for how I addressed the risk of conducting interviews in participants' homes). Upon meeting participants and after checking that they were confortable to start the interview, I introduced myself, explained the outline of the interview and allowed time to answer any questions they had. Some of them asked for the duration of the interview and how confidentiality would be maintained. Given that the report was to be published and confidentiality at this stage could fully be maintained, I emphasized on the fact that their name would be replaced with a pseudonym and that any identifying details, such as

the country they mentioned, would similarly be altered in the research project, in order for their anonymity to be kept at all time. I explained that I allowed time at the end of the interview to debrief, during which we would discuss how the interview felt for them. Following this information, I gave a consent form (Appendix G) to participants for them to read and sign. I also gave them a signed copy to keep with them.

2.11.4 Background Demographic Information Form

After signing the consent forms and before starting the interview, I invited participants to complete a background demographic information form (Appendix H). The aim of this form was to give the reader of the study an idea about the different demographic backgrounds, so that he/she could contextualize the sample. In order to be as transparent as possible about the various backgrounds of participants, I encompassed numerous items based on the literature review of WOD. As a result, questions regarding age, ethnic origin, relationship status, number of children, education and employment were included. I tried to assure the completion of the form as separate from the interview as possible, but in some parts the form became a trigger for different experiences leading participants to say sentences such as 'my two children suffered enormously from this'. This valuable data was difficult to develop further on, especially with the first participants, as I wanted to follow the flow of the interview schedule. However, the more I practiced my interview skills with successive participants, the more I found myself being able to leave the form incomplete, and take on board their shared information and ask for more details. In the future, I would include this form in my interview schedule and ask questions about their demographics as we go on in the interview.

2.11.5 Interview

The duration of interviews ranged from approximately one hour to three hours in length, with the average being one hour and forty-five minutes long. Each interview was recorded on a DictoPro digital voice recorder, with data being transferred onto USB and stored in a locked drawer in my home. Once the evaluation and appraisal of the study is completed, I will destroy the recorded material.

Adopting an open and relaxed attitude when meeting each participant, while at the same time showing that I was conducting the study in a thoughtful manner resulted in a pleasant build-up of the rapport. The fact that I was referred to each by a mutual friend also facilitated the relationship. Given that interviews took place in their private

residence, participants made me feel very welcomed by offering me a drink and/or some sweets, which made the interview process less formal for me.

Starting the interview by asking participants their reasons for participation was found to be an easy question to answer and formed the basis for the rest of the interview. In the first interview, I found myself slightly stilted at the beginning, as I was trying to stick as much as possible to the interview schedule, without forgetting any prompts. However, in the following interviews, my confidence grew and my ability to interview participants became more natural. I was able to go with the flow of the interview and revisit points previously mentioned in a more flexible manner. Although each interview took a different form, most participants found it difficult to stay grounded in their first diplomatic assignments, and instead shifted from one assignment to the other. In my initial interviews, I tried to re-ground participants in their first assignment, as I was reminded of the usefulness of staying connected to a specific moment. By re-grounding them, I realised that I was interfering with their views and experiences of having had multiple diplomatic assignments. My ability to be flexible allowed me to understand the usefulness of dipping in and out of their timeframe with regards to their respective experiences. This back and forth often helped them make sense of their experiences and roles throughout diplomatic assignments, and I felt it was my ethical responsibility to respect this, as my questions made them realize things about their experiences that they had never fully been aware of in the past.

Prior to some interviews, some participants asked me how they could prepare for the interview. I was careful to explain how the research is about their personal experiences and that no preparation was needed for the interview. I also noticed that during some interviews, participants had a tendency to check with me whether they were giving me information that was 'useful', and even sometimes became apologetic for not having 'really bad experiences' that they could report. These comments positioned me in the role of the expert who is seeking to find only the bad aspects of being a WOD, which was not what I intended for. In future research of this kind, I would greatly emphasize how my interest in this topic is one that stems from unbiased curiosity to truly understand what is the real experience of being a WOD.

In my first interviews, I referred to the interview schedule as a checklist, in order to ensure that I had not missed any areas that I wanted to cover. I found this process quite stressful and unnatural, as I couldn't concentrate fully with the participant. As a result, I decided by the third interview to memorize my interview schedule and left the interview schedule in a folder, just in case I needed to monitor the coverage of different topics (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Keeping in mind that I wanted to guide and facilitate the interview, rather then dictate exactly what would happen, I found that by memorizing the interview schedule, I was able to refer to it only as an indicator of the general topics of interest and use it to help provide cues if my participants were having difficulties. In future, I would like to memorize my interview schedule from the beginning.

2.11.6 Post-interview Debrief

After each interview, a verbal debrief was conducted with each participant, asking them how they felt about the interview and inviting them to ask additional questions. All participants responded that they had enjoyed the interview, describing it as a positive opportunity to reflect on their life and their journey as a WOD. Some remarked that they had forgotten how much their life felt like a rollercoaster and that they were proud of themselves for overcoming many obstacles. Others shared their feelings in regards to their children, suggesting that I should also conduct a research project on children of diplomats and the impact it had on them. After receiving their feedback on the interview, a resource pack (Appendix I) was provided to all participants, explaining that if the interview negatively impacted them, a list of different mental health support was available should they want to receive psychological support.

After answering their questions in regards to the pack, I thanked them for their participation and turned off the digital voice recorder. In fact, at the beginning of each interview, participants expressed an interest in getting to know me, and understand how I was related to the person who had referred them. They were appreciative of the fact that I was mainly here for the interview, but still expressed an interest of talking more 'when the interview finishes'. My understanding of this particular interest was one that I formulated as *formal vs. informal* conversation. I felt it was only natural for me to end any formalities in order to have an *off the record* conversation, during which many participants offered me sweets and gave me a tour of their diplomatic residency.

62

This gesture was very much appreciated by participants as many verbal and non-verbal cues suggested the possibility for a relaxed heart-to-heart conversation. At this moment, all participants asked questions about my interest in this topic and how it had developed, which I was happy to share. Three of the participants offered their help in recruiting more participants, with one calling her friend while I was still in the house. Another two shared information about associations that are dedicated to spouses of diplomats, and the kind of information I could find in each. Three of the participants felt confortable enough to disclose some personal problems they were having in regards to their children's education and accommodation: All three asked for my professional opinion as a Trainee Counselling Psychologist and my academic opinion as an alumni of different universities. One of the participants offered me a book she had written, suggesting that it would help me understand her experience further. Two participants introduced me to their husbands and explained what my research project was about. Both husbands shared their opinion of WOD and the positive impact they have on diplomatic assignments. Finally, while leaving their homes, five participants confided very personal information about the impact of these assignments had on their mental health, suggesting that some cried regularly and others had doubts about their husbands cheating (see Section 4.2.2). After validating their feelings, these participants were reminded of the different ways they could ask for help and seek psychological support.

2.11.7 Post-interview Reflexivity

After the completion of each interview, I wrote notes on the participants' reactions, what they evoked in me and the impact the interview had had on me. My notes were also made up of my different thought-processes and a summary of my initial impressions of them. Most importantly, I tried to write verbatim what some participants had told me after the recorder went off, as much of the information was very important in order to fully understand their experience. However, I was aware of my inability to use this data in my analysis, but felt that the experience itself of disclosure when turning off the recorder was important to note and reflecting on. I also made notes of the two husbands I had met and the comments they made about WOD. I treated each interview and post-interview notes as part of my learning process. During my analysis and write-up, I revisited my notes in order to reflect further on my emerging understanding, and used our experience of *formal vs. informal* conversation in the Discussion chapter. Any ethical

concerns that arose from interviews were handled appropriately and were written about in my notes.

2.11.8 Transcription

I used Microsoft Word to transcribe each interview verbatim. I transferred each interview onto my computer and used iTunes to listen to the recordings, as it was easier to use the play, rewind and fast-forward buttons on the computer than on the device itself. I aimed at keeping a level of detail in the transcriptions that would significantly reflect the interview. It was made at the semantic level and included notes of non-verbal communication and pauses. The transcribed interview was also left intact from any inconsistencies in the participant's speech (Appendix J), in order to keep the data as rich and as close to the text as possible. Wide margins were also left on both sides of the document for my analytic comments, and each line was numbered. Every interview was deleted from my computer and removed from Recently Added on ITunes once the transcription was completed.

2.11.9 Analysis of Data

As I started the analysis stage, I was wary that I was inevitably part of the research process and that I would need to ensure reflexivity in order for the analysis to remain grounded in the data. In IPA, interpretations have been described as involving a 'double hermeneutic' as I aimed to make sense of my participants' sense making (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 53). The aim of this analysis was to move from the particular of one participant's experience to a shared experience between all eight participants. This process of analysis involved numerous iterations, as every transcript was analyzed one-by-one and emergent themes gradually grouped into super-ordinate themes. The process was repeated across all participants' super-ordinate themes, which eventually developed into a set of master themes. These master themes attempted to capture the essence of this shared experience while at the same time allowing for some divergence to remain. My description below of these different stages seems to overly simplify the process and makes it sound as one that was straightforward. In reality, however, this process has been complex, repetitive and convoluted: Initial codings and emergent themes were explored multiple times in an attempt at ensuring that they were representative of the participants' accounts. Although I consider these findings to be only one of many different possibilities, I am reminded of Reid et al. (2005) who pointed out that what is truly important is for the analysis to be plausible to those who read it.

2.11.9.1 Reading the Transcripts

The first stage of the analysis started by looking in details at one interview at a time before analyzing further interviews in order to build-up the master themes (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The first interview was chosen on the basis of the participant's rich explanation of her experience, given that it felt like a proper starting point to develop my analytical skills. I decided to analyze each interview immediately after transcribing it, as the interview and the participant felt quite vivid at the time.

2.11.9.2 Initial Notes

After transcribing the interview, I re-read the text twice alongside the audio recordings in order to familiarize myself further with the interview. My initial impressions made during and after the interviews were also read and reflected upon. With every reading, initial notes about my impressions, insights and ideas were made on the right hand side margin as I read through it line by line (Appendix K). At this stage, I engaged in micro-codings as I aimed to annotate each line, while staying as close to the text as possible. With further readings, I started adding linguistic and conceptual comments, using different colors to distinguish them (Willig, 2013). These comments brought a new level of richness to my codings, which allowed me to see the text through a deeper lens. There were times when I felt that my coding became more abstract, sometimes as a result of my inability to focus further. When this happened, I returned to them the following day and changed, extended or rejected the coding with a new one that felt more grounded in the transcript.

2.11.9.3 Developing themes

This time on the left hand side, I read through the interviews again in order to develop some emergent themes that would capture some of the essence of the initial coding I made prior to this stage. In order to find my emergent theme, I would read my initial coding from the right hand side margin and ask the question 'What is X experienced as?' or 'What is X an experience of?'. The answers to that question would become my emergent themes that I would annotate on the left hand side (Appendix K). Although at this stage my emergent themes were still grounded in the text, they took one step deeper in their meaning (see table 1 for example of how themes evolved). Once all emergent themes had been

annotated on the left hand side margin, I created a word document in which I wrote each emergent theme in one column, the quote that represents it in another column, and the participant pseudonym, page and line numbers of the quote in a third column (Appendix L). After printing the emergent themes, I cut every row into vignettes in order to visually and manually maneuver the cross-linking and creation of subthemes. I found this embodied way of manipulating data helpful to move and reform themes.

```
                        ┌──────────┐
                        │  Master  │
                        │  Theme   │
                        └──────────┘
                  ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐
                  │Sub-theme │─│Sub-theme │
                  └──────────┘ └──────────┘
          ┌────────┐  ┌────────┐  ┌────────┐
          │ Theme  │  │ Theme  │  │ Theme  │
          └────────┘  └────────┘  └────────┘
                   ┌─────────┐┌─────────┐┌─────────┐
                   │Emergent ││Emergent ││Emergent │
                   │ Theme   ││ Theme   ││ Theme   │
                   └─────────┘└─────────┘└─────────┘
                        ┌─────────┐   ┌─────────┐
                        │ Initial │   │ Initial │
                        │ Coding  │   │ Coding  │
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```
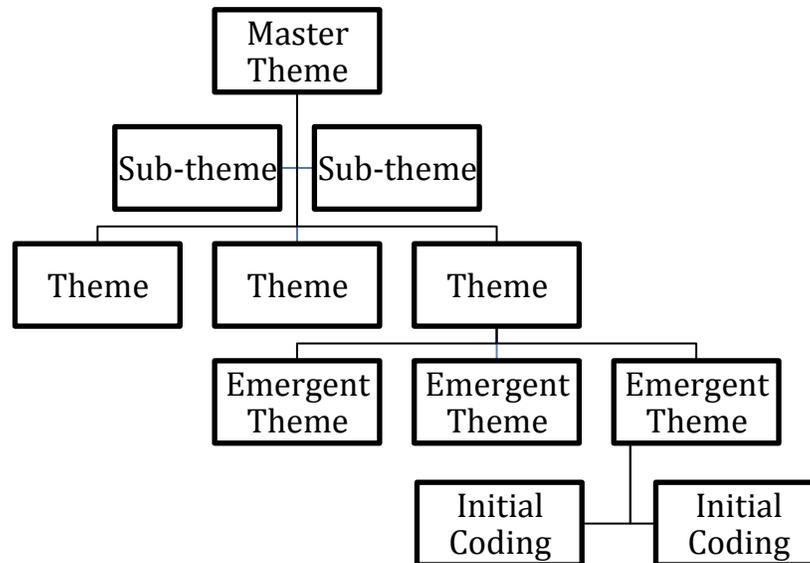
Table 1: Development of Themes

2.11.9.4 Cross-linking of themes

In this stage, Smith and Osborn (2008) explain that emergent themes need to cluster into themes. To facilitate the process, I used vignettes in order to cross-link emergent themes and create clustered themes, which were checked for meaning against the transcripts. Smith and Osborn (2003, p. 70) used the idea of magnets in order to imagine how some emergent themes would tend to draw together as the researcher attempts to make sense of the data. Using vignettes to create themes helped me sense the connection between different emergent themes and subsume them into other themes. When the clustering process plateaued, the emergent themes became themes and different subthemes were listed above them (Appendix M). For each participant, a summary table was then

created including sub-themes, themes, emergent themes, quotes and their location in the text (Appendix N).

2.11.9.5 Selection of the next participant for analysis

Each interview was analyzed as described above before moving onto another transcript. As I analyzed new transcripts, I found that my 'fore-structures' had been affected by my previous analyses and I was unavoidably influenced to some extent. Nonetheless, by meticulously following the steps in the procedure and reflecting on my different assumptions about what might succeed, I understood that, rather than being imposed by themes that had emerged before, new themes could eventually emerge in later transcripts. In order to evaluate my themes, I brought a segment of my analyzed transcript with a table of themes to my research peers and asked them to review my material for plausibility. Although this process did not constitute validation by triangulation (Madill et al., 2000), I found it useful as time was spent exploring my choices of themes and understanding my participants' experiences. My themes were further reviewed with my research supervisor. At this stage of the analysis, I had between four and five master themes for each participant.

2.11.9.6 Developing themes across participants

Once every transcript had been analyzed, it was time to develop the themes across participants. All sub-themes were compared across participants using the same procedure of clustering as described above. Vignettes of the themes had been printed out in order to carry the work on a table. When a master theme had been recognized, I engaged in a back-and-forth checking between the name of the master theme, the themes that depicted it, the transcripts and the quotes that had been incorporated into it. The analysis continued until 'saturation' had been reached and no themes could be further integrated, as suggested by Willig (2013). A table of master themes and sub-themes was then put together (Appendix O) with the quotes that best represented them. This table was used as the foundation of the write-up process of the Analysis chapter (chapter 3 below). During the write-up, the structure and names of the themes were reworked as a result of laying the table into an analytical text.

2.12 Ethical considerations

This research was subject to approval granted by the Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology at City, University of London. Also, given that this research took place both in London and in Lebanon for convenience reasons, it received insurance cover approval. A copy of these forms and approvals is attached in Appendix P. Throughout this research process, I prioritized the consideration of ethics at every stage. My two main concerns were to prevent my participants from any harm the research could have engendered, and to secure their confidentiality throughout the interview process and write-up. Other concerns included participants' informed consent and their right to withdraw from the study, whilst conducting the project in a way that preserved respect towards each participant and avoided any judgments. These points are discussed further below.

2.12.1 Throughout design and implementation

As an ethical consideration, respect towards participants underlined this study in an indispensable way. I reflected on the literature on WOD and the way these women are perceived in society. I aimed to respect all participants' experiences of what it means to be a WOD and to avoid any prejudicing aspect of their sense-making by keeping the research question as open as possible and by not focusing on one single aspect of their experience. I have maintained this stance throughout the analysis of interviews and the write-up of the project.

Not offering any financial inducement for taking part in the research was a decision I took based on motivational factors. I did not want any financial incentives to become a possible motivation for taking part in the research as I hoped that each participant would participate on the basis of wanting to willingly share their experiences. Moreover, I felt that giving any financial inducement would become problematic if a participant wanted to withdraw later from the study.

In order to avoid causing harm to participants, I considered designing the research in a way that would involve no more psychological and physical risk to participants than the day-to-day risk they experience. However, given the sensitive nature of the research topic, I reflected on the possibility that some participants might find the interview process more difficult than what I could anticipate. In order to remain sensitive to this possibility, I

conducted interviews in a flexible manner, allowing WOD to take the lead on what they felt needed to be discussed. I also remained sensitive by paying attention to verbal and non-verbal cues that suggested their reluctance to discuss further certain delicate areas.

Before starting each research interview, I engaged in a pre-interview discussion with participants based on their understanding of the research. I asked participants if they had any queries before starting the interview and reminded them of their right to skip any question if they felt uncomfortable answering. I felt it was important to minimize the potential for harm by helping them understand that I was putting their personal and psychological interest before my academic one. When participants expressed their wish to continue the interview, I asked each to sign the consent form (Appendix G). I highlighted the most important points of the form by reminding them that the interview was being audio-recorded and of their rights to withdraw from the study prior to the analysis.

During the interviews, I tentatively used the schedule to prompt for additional experiences, letting participants know that they may find some questions irrelevant or too personal. Importantly, I allowed for a post-interview debrief in which participants and I were able to discuss the interview and difficulties that may have risen. During debrief, most participants expressed how proud they were of their journey and their ability to overcome obstacles. Some participants expressed additional worries in regards to their children and the latters' futures. I paid particular attention to their debrief to ensure that they felt grounded before I left their home. I also engaged in an off-record debrief with each participant. This debrief proved to be very useful as the simple gesture of turning off the audio-recorder engendered deeper conversations (See Discussion Chapter). Any ethical considerations that arose from these conversations were taken care of in a similar manner as the ones brought up on-record. I had prepared a debrief information pack (Appendix I) for each participant. Two debrief information packs were prepared, given that interviews took place both in Lebanon and London. Participants were given the appropriate pack as it contained contact numbers of mental health organizations that might prove helpful, should any participant experience distress at a later stage.

I also paid attention to my own self-care. Given that interviews took place in participants' private residences, I was aware that I was entering the homes of people who were

69

effectively strangers to me. This situation carried some potential risk, should a participant had the intention to harm me. Although this was seen as a risk, it was outweighed by the potential benefits of the study once I had put the right precautions in place. Since participants were referred through two contacts that are close to me, I trusted their judgment in regards to the risk participants carried. Also, I put in a place a buddy system, which included a close friend or parent who was made aware of the timing and location of my interviews. I noticed them prior to my interview and advised them on the approximate duration of the interview. If I had failed to contact them at the intended hour, they were informed of the procedure to follow. However, as predicted, no harm was caused by participants and interviews were carried in the safest environment.

One of my main concerns was to ensure the anonymity of my participants. All identifiable personal materials have remained confidential as they were altered. A pseudonym was given to participants while transcribing and referring to them in the Analysis chapter. Other details such as their nationalities and the countries of their diplomatic assignments were also altered, mainly in the Analysis Chapter below. It feels important to state that initially I aimed at writing case summaries on every participant, allowing the reader to grasp an idea of the participant's life and context. However, this felt like a breach of confidentiality as the diplomatic community is rather small and participants could be recognized, even if their information was altered. Hence, I decided to exclude any case summary in order to protect further their anonymity. Also, the transcripts were kept on a password-protected computer in my home to which only I had access to. Recordings, research diary, analyzed transcripts, vignettes, consent forms and demographics sheet were all kept in a locked filing cabinet in my home. All interview forms and recordings will be destroyed once the appraisal stages of the research are fully completed.

2.12.2 Write-up

While writing the research project, I am aware of the necessity to organically engage closely with the data and let meanings emerge, as it is a prerequisite to my methodological and ethical stance. I am reminded of Willig and Stainton-Rogers' (2008) views about imposing meaning on participants' accounts. Throughout this study, I reflected in my research diary on how meanings emerged from the data and my role in this process. When analyzing and discussing the data in the chapters below, I stayed aware that the 'I' in IPA is for Interpretations. I tentatively aimed to reveal another

exploratory layer of meaning, whilst keeping my participants' voices in mind during the process. I attempted at testing the developing meanings by always putting myself in my participants' shoes, as if they were reading this study. I further reflect on this process in the Discussion chapter.

Chapter 3- Findings

This analysis describes the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the interview, through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. These came about from reaching *gestalt*, a point where I felt the master themes answered the question: what is the experience of WOD across diplomatic assignments? In an attempt at presenting a glimpse into these women's experiences, I will use their quotes as illustrations of the 'Master Themes: Sub Themes'.

The respondents who were interviewed were aged between 46 and 78 years of age and all reported being WOD. There were no requirements for participants to have English as their native language, but all demonstrated high degree of fluency, including participants for whom English was their second or third language. A summary of participants' demographic details is set out in Table 2 below.

	Age Range	Nationality	Husband Current Diplomatic Status	Education	Previous Employment	Current Employment	Number of Diplomatic Postings	Number of Children and Age Range
Elan	[40-50]	South Asian	Working	Undergraduate Degree	Full Time	Not Working	4	Two [10-20]
Marta	[50-60]	South American	Working	Post-Graduate Degree	Full Time	Freelancing	5	Two [20-40]
Sarah	[40-50]	European	Working	Post-Graduate Degree	Full Time	Not Working	2	No Children
Caline	[50-60]	Middle Eastern	Working	Post-Graduate Degree	Full Time	Not Working	3	Two [10-20]
Lina	[50-60]	Middle Eastern	Retired	Undergraduate Degree	Full Time	Not Working	3	Three [20-30]
Amy	[50-60]	Middle Eastern	Retired	Post-Graduate Degree	Full Time	Not Working	3	Three [10-20]
Ava	[50-60]	European	Working	Post-Graduate Degree	Full Time	Not Working	6	Two [20-30]
Louise	[70-80]	European	Retired	No University Degree	Full Time	Freelancing	9	Two [40-50]

Table 2: Participants' Demographic Details

I decided to avoid referring to theory throughout this chapter, as I wanted it to represent a close reflection of my participants' voices. I wanted this chapter to focus mainly on their lived experiences, rather than risking them being shadowed by the theoretical discussion. As a result, I discuss the findings in light of theory in the chapter following the Analysis.

The themes that have emerged from these interviews have been clustered into four master themes, which are then divided into sub-themes. A brief outline of the Master Theme is set out in Figure 1 (see Appendix O for a more detailed table of the master themes and their sub-themes, and Appendix K for how these themes emerged from the interview).

```
1.  Power of Marriage
        1.1.    Love
        1.2.    Togetherness
        1.3.    Emotional Support
2.  Loss of Self
        2.1.    This is Not About Me
        2.2.    Loss of Agency
        2.3.    Wasted Intellectual Potential
        2.4.    Alone in the Crowd
3.  My Presence is Essential
        3.1.    My Well-Being is Central
        3.2.    Motherhood: A Two-Way Guilt
        3.3.    Pressure to Create a New Home
4.  Making Sense of Who I am and Who I want to Be
        4.1.    Who Am I in this New World?
        4.2.    Making Sense of my Presence
        4.3.    The Need for Personal Success
```

Figure 1: Brief Outline of Master Themes

The master themes were organized around the different process of meaning making that participants engaged in, namely their attempts at understanding what it meant to be the WOD across diplomatic assignments. Accordingly, it appeared that WOD acknowledged the (1) need for a strong base in their marriage, in order to (2) allow themselves to lose part of their identity. This first thread allowed them to (3) understand the importance of their presence in these diplomatic assignments and eventually (4) make sense of who they are and who they want to be.

The analysis uses data in the form of direct quotes from the transcribed interview. In order for the participants' identities to stay protected, their names and any identifying information have been changed. These changes mainly include a pseudonym, and countries and cities where WOD and their families have been to. The latters have been changed following a specific coding system; for example, if the participant lived in Rio de Janeiro, the information has been altered as [Important South American City].

When quoting from the transcript, the pseudonym, page number and line numbers are mentioned in parenthesis after the quote. The quotes were left entirely un-edited, and were presented in participants' expressions and language, including syntax and grammatical errors, in order to stay as close as possible to their stories. Pauses and silences are indicated in the text by the use of a double full stop .. while the use of italic

text within () is used to describe non verbal reactions. The use of bold text is utilized for words that were stressed by the participant. In a few cases, the use of [ ] on their own indicates that a part of the text has been omitted, as it might add confusion for the reader.

One factor that runs throughout participants' narratives is the importance of culture and context in understanding how they made sense of their experiences. However, due the differences in cultures represented in the sample, I felt that emphasizing on culture and context at a thematic level would risk losing the richness of experiences that were common between WOD. Therefore, I have woven the culture and context into the analysis at each point where it felt helpful to inform the reader of the background to the experiences being described.

3.1 Master Theme 1 – Power of Marriage

This master theme illustrates the way all eight WOD view the importance of their marriage as the strongest base in diplomatic assignments. Each participant described their marriage as the main vessel to the quality of diplomatic assignments and how this factor was fundamental in their experience. The need to be part of a team with their husbands was a direct link to their involvement in assignments and acceptance of this new life.

3.1.1 Love

Most participants described 'Love' as being the central element of their marriage, and regarded it as the initial reason for agreeing to accompany their husbands. As most of them met in professional environments, they all described needing to love unconditionally the other in order to 'leave' what they had initially construed, and embark in this new journey.

For example, Amy described meeting her husband, falling deeply in love with him and needing to be with him at any cost.

It was love at first sight. (Amy, p. 10, l. 139)

I was anxious and nervous, but I mean I loved him so much that I
wanted to be with him at any price. I am telling you, the love is
the most important thing to be able to go through all this. (Amy,
p. 25, l. 356-358)

Amy referred to her love for her husband as starting from the first moment they met. Her
vivid recall of feeling anxious and nervous about this new life also showed how she
could not have moved away from her home if it was not for the genuine love she had for
her husband. Her use of 'I am telling you' seemed to suggest that she is absolutely
convinced of what the power of love can do to people, and how 'love' was the most
important element that allowed her to 'go through all this'. It is as if she painted an image
of herself as finding the strength to embark on this life through the need of being with
him 'at any price'.

But I realize that we need the will and the love in order to do it.
The will and the love, but I think the love is more important
because when there is love, the will comes. (Lina, 20, l. 281-283)

Lina described her sense of acceptance and entry into this world as a result of the 'will
and love' she had. Her language and repetition of 'the will and the love' suggested that
her transition was only made possible because of these two components. She then
seemed to acknowledge that both will and love were not two independent components,
but were actually causative. She identified will as the result of the love she felt for her
husband, and understood that this will was needed in order to become part of diplomatic
assignments.

Love is important because it keeps you together, it keeps the
couple strong, the couple should be strong to go through all the
changes, you know. It's not easy. (Lina, p. 36, l. 519-521)

Lina's acknowledgment of love as essential seemed further compounded in her belief
that it was what kept her couple strong. Her experience of going 'through all the
changes' was one that was 'not easy', but was made possible because they were
'strong'. Similarly to the will she expressed, her couple's strength was also the result of
the love they had and shared.

It makes you see the other differently and makes you cope and
makes you make a lot of effort. So already a marriage is not
easy, but abroad it's even worse, and so you need to really love
the person to do all these efforts. (Caline, p. 17, l. 246-248)

Likewise, Caline described a marriage abroad as very difficult and needing great efforts.
Although from her language it seemed like she encountered a lot of difficulties, the love
she had for her husband allowed her to keep going and make the necessary efforts to
make her marriage work. It seemed that love was the element that prevented her from
quitting.

These experiences of deep and mutual love seemed to have helped WOD's transition
suggesting that without love, their experiences would have been different. These
feelings engendered a sense of belonging in a couple and being part of a team, in which
both members played a key role in each other's life. This is explored further in the next
subtheme.

3.1.2 Togetherness

This sub-theme explores the way WOD perceived their role in diplomatic assignments in
regards to their husbands. It shows the understanding of WOD's capacity of being part
of the assignment, while being in the background, as expressed by Louise:

You know my role was not official, or like people couldn't see
exactly my input in his work, but behind the door, we were
working together (Louise, 27, l. 349-350)

It appears that the very experience of working with her husband 'behind the door'
influenced her sense of belonging in a team. Although these assignments were officially
for the diplomats, the inclusion of the wife in the official process seemed to have
increased her sense of usefulness and understanding of what her purpose was, allowing
her to find her a place both in the assignment and in her couple. Louise did not seem to
be pre-occupied by others seeing her 'input in his work', which emphasized her sole
need to be a team player with him. She also seemed to link the unofficiality of her role to

others' ability of seeing what she was doing, suggesting that only their perception could have officialized it.

Similarly, Sarah explained how her role was quite important, although foreseen as unofficial.

> I help him quite a lot, unofficially of course, like gathering
> information, I read his speeches, I sometimes write like euh
> drafts…for his comments…for his reports before he sends them
> to the ministry (Sarah, p. 2, l. 30-31)

Sarah's 'of course' suggested that she recognized her limit in her role and did not feel the need to refute it. Her enumeration, however, emphasized her awareness of her role and the different ways she helped her husband in official duties. On the other hand, this togetherness was highlighted by her husband's acceptance and openness for her help, accentuating their team work.

> When he has some things to share from an economical point of
> view, he knows and says 'what do you think of this report?' The
> secretary of the embassy wrote it but what's **your** comment? and
> I also have a comment that he approves (Marta, p. 23, l. 258-
> 263)

Sarah and Marta had experiences of helping their husbands with their official work, while having their intellectual abilities acknowledged by them. Both their statements suggested that their husbands took on board their wives' opinion in their assignments, rather than excluding them from their work. Marta showed how her husband's request was one that is intentional, as he valued her unique opinion.

Likewise, Lina remembered:

> We always consult with each other. We brainstorm together and
> discuss things together about his work. (Lina, p. 17, l. 247-248)

Lina told her experience of working in a different capacity with her husband. Her sense of togetherness was highlighted by her repetition of the word 'we' and 'together'. It was however contrasted with her inference of 'his work', reminding herself that she was only part of his world. In a way, she showed how her input was not only valued but also crucial to the practical side of diplomatic assignments.

> We used to plan everything, even conversation. Like we would
> say ok this conversation let's not open it. Let's focus on that
> instead. We used to do that my husband and I. (Lina, p. 25, l.
> 582-584)

She later gave an example of another instance where she and her husband engaged in teamwork. Again, her repetition of the word 'we' emphasized her willingness to be part of her husband's work, and the specificity of her example implied her high level of understanding of the diplomatic world. In fact, by planning social conversations, Lina experienced herself as part of the micro activities that took place, increasing her sense of usefulness.

> I became useful for him because I would share tips or
> information that I learned about the country or the people with
> him. Like you know they told me this and look how they act
> (Marta, p. 22, l. 252-254)

Marta described her sense of usefulness by becoming an ally to her husband. She shared 'tips or information' that he did not have access to, suggesting that she had a different type of insight that could have potentially helped him. Marta also recognized her role as the missing piece of the puzzle.

> I wouldn't say that it was also crucial information, but more
> information that was complimentary. Like if my husband had a
> meeting with someone I would say I played bridge with his wife
> and they really enjoy this or that. I had information that maybe
> helped how do you say smooth a meeting or make the other
> person more comfortable with my husband (Marta, p. 23, l. 258-
> 262)

However, as Marta further elaborated on her role, she seemed to not think of her role as 'crucial', but rather as a 'smooth[er]' to the process. Her experience suggested lower level of involvement, as opposed to Lina who experienced higher levels of involvement.

This sub-theme suggested different varieties of involvement, all appearing to play a crucial role in the WOD's senses of purpose. This appreciation for togetherness seemed to help WOD connect further with their husbands and experience themselves as key team players in these assignments. Given their sense of togetherness, both husband and wife are expected to play important roles in each other's lives and provide the right environment and support to help the other flourish into the person they aim to be. The importance of this support is further developed in the final sub-theme.

3.1.3 Emotional Support

For most participants, husbands' support and understanding was an important element to which they referred to on many occasions throughout their interviews. It often seemed as though the support they received allowed them to stay congruent with themselves.

Some WOD received help from their husbands while experiencing their transitions, as Elan described.

> But he knew I was like that, so every time we had to host a
> dinner, he would ask how much would it be if we catered the
> food, so this amount will go to me instead since I was doing
> everything. And I think it's also the type of person I am because I
> didn't want to just ask for the money itself, I wanted to feel like I
> worked for it. That was tough. (Elan, p. 37, l. 542-546)

Elan explained that one of the biggest challenges she faced when she embarked on this new journey was becoming financially dependent on her husband. As she highlighted her concern, she experienced her husband as an understanding man who 'knew [she] was like that' and created a compensation system for her efforts. Elan seemed to feel supported by him as he showed cooperativeness and appreciation for her efforts. Most importantly, it did not seem that Elan was asked to change, as she was able to stay true

to herself while finding creative ways with her husband to do so. This need to feel worthy is one that she experienced as 'tough', but was alleviated by her husband's support.

> He understands what I need. If he didn't I wouldn't have been
> able to continue all of this. (Marta, p. 18, l. 200-201)

This quote went to the very heart of Marta's experience of being the WOD. It showed how her husband's support was the main element that allowed her to continue this journey with him. His dedication to understand what she needed at this time made her feel heard and understood in their marriage.

> I think my husband met me half way. I know he made a lot of
> efforts to understand me. He would understand that sometimes I
> was too tired with the kids and that I did not want to go out. Or
> you know he would say let's invite some people instead. (Caline,
> p. 14, l. 199-202)

In line with Marta and Elan, Caline explained how being heard and taken into consideration helped her cope with her presence in diplomatic assignments. Meeting her husband 'half way' implied the balance and equal partnership they experienced in their marriage. Caline's appreciation for her husband's efforts suggested that perhaps it was not something she truly expected from him, but was yet receiving it. His ability to create new alternatives that would better suit Caline showed the usefulness of the support system he put in place for her.

This master theme explored the power that marriage holds in participants' experiences of being in diplomatic assignments, by looking at the sub-themes 'love', 'togetherness' and 'mental support'. There was a rich harmony in the accounts within these sub-themes, suggesting that being in a healthy marriage was an important aspect to WOD's experiences during diplomatic assignments. In all accounts, WOD projected the image that they were not following their husbands on postings, but rather accompanying them, suggesting greater respect and value for their role.

3.2 Master Theme 2 – Loss of Self

In this master theme, WOD reflected on their experiences as individuals. The participants described diplomatic assignments and the impact it had on their sense of self. They also expressed how this experience made them lose an aspect of themselves, as they rapidly realised that had no control or place to share their personal opinions and worries.

This section first looks at (1) how these diplomatic assignments were experiences as "not about them", and (2) how their sense of control disappeared as many factors depended on external bodies. It then (3) deals with WOD's worries about wasted intellectual potential and (4) how they found themselves sometimes alone and isolated.

3.2.1 This is Not About Me

The impact of becoming a WOD was first experienced by the realization that they were embarking on a journey that was not about them. Therefore, WOD needed to accommodate to the demands of these assignments, which led them to lose a part of themselves in the process.

> The only thing that I have to accept strongly although I don't approve
> is that, although you are a diplomatic spouse, you cannot say what
> you feel, because you are not you. [ ] In my case, I am representing
> my country, so my husband said 'remember, it's not about you
> anymore, it's about your country now. You are your country. So be
> careful what you say'... It was so difficult for me to understand this.
> (Elan, p. 26, l. 376-382)

It appeared that the very experience of finding out that she was a symbol and a representation of something bigger led Elan to conclude that she was not able to completely and fully embrace herself. The oxymoron of 'you are not you' brought much confusion into understanding this new identity that she needed to adopt in the eye of the public. She further explained the impact of not understanding this shift:

> So many times my husband and I would argue after a dinner or
> something. And he would be like, 'why did you say that? You came

across as rude! You can't always be yourself, you are [home country],
not Elan. (Elan, p. 27, l. 392-395)

Elan described not conforming to the norms and holding on to her own sense of self,
leading her to experience conflicts with her husband. On the other hand, her husband
understood what diplomatic assignments entailed and how they transformed a person
into a symbol. Although Elan was reporting his words, she remembered being told that
being herself 'came across as rude' and elements of her personality were not allowed.
These conditions suggested that Elan's understanding of representing a country
translated into losing aspects of herself.

But euh sometimes you get into trouble if you don't control yourself.
So it's like a responsibility to not be yourself. It's a pressure, but you
know it's for political reasons and also other things, like you cannot
comment on euh things you don't like to hear. It's like you can't share
your opinion, or if you want to, if you have to think 10 times before you
speak…it's exhausting. Because at the end of the day, you just want
to be yourself. You want to be able to say whatever comes to your
mind and have no boundaries; you just want to be free. (Lina, p. 15, l.
209-216)

Lina talked about needing to control herself and to 'think 10 times' before she spoke in
order to avoid being in 'trouble'. Having to control elements of her personality was an
exhausting pressure that she needed to apply every time she was in presence of others.
Her use of the words 'boundaries' and 'free' suggested that she may have felt
imprisoned in the body of a person that she did not recognize, as she had the
'responsibility to not be [her]self'. Lina described that for political reasons, her personal
opinion could not be shared, as her opinion represented her country. Likewise, Caline
described her experience of feeling detached:

Very impersonal. I gain nothing. I go in a certain mind set where I
know that I just need to say this sentence like 'congratulations for your
independence day', and that's it. Nothing more nothing less. It's
impersonal because my presence is irrelevant for the bigger picture.
But that's for the official part; you know you have to be there but it

83

does not need to be **you you**, just the wife of the [home country] diplomat. (Caline, 20, l. 281-283)

Caline referred to her experience of being a symbol as impersonal and insignificant. She showed awareness at the irrelevance of her presence and understood that her role in the capacity of a WOD was solely a form of display. She referred to the need of actively putting herself in 'a certain mind set' where the impact of her presence was rectified and adjusted to the reality of her role as the WOD. Caline's verbal and non-verbal communication at the time suggested that she voluntarily disconnected from these official duties, as she understood her presence there had nothing to do with the person she was. She reflected on the way being a WOD had led her to feel that her sense of self had been changed, as the focus shifted from her to the job itself.

Sarah experiences a similar feeling of having to lose a part of herself in order to simply be the WOD.

> I'm representing something. I am not myself. I make this huge difference. I am myself now, like when I talk to my good friends, but in these dinners, cocktails, I am not myself. I am representing a person. I don't know what I am exactly but I know it's not me. (Marta, p. 40, l. 454-456)

Marta referred to herself as being a symbol, rather than her true self. She suggested not being able to know exactly who she was but seemed to be certain that she was not herself in specific situations. Also, Marta appeared to know exactly in what moments her true self disappeared, suggesting that it was like a mask she put on and off when the situation felt appropriate.

> She told him one thing 'for the ministry you are you, you are not a family' because he told her 'my wife, my kids, school, blabla, think about us, how can you do that?'. She told him 'you are you, nobody is going to think that you are married and have a family'. (Amy, p. 29, l. 413-416)

84

Amy described feeling disregarded by the ministry of foreign affairs. She reported hearing the secretary of the ministry explain to her husband that for the ministry, her husband was considered alone, and she and her children were never taken into the equation, which accentuated Amy's invisibility towards them. Amy's paralinguistic suggested that she was feeling angry for being left out and not cared for, given that it was assumed that she was supposed to follow her husband and not argue any decisions taken by the ministry.

While this sub-theme illustrated how WOD experienced themselves in diplomatic assignments as constricted and un-important, the next sub-theme deals with their loss of sense of control in assignments.

2.2.2. Loss of Agency

All participants experienced a transition of control over their lives as they accompanied their husbands in diplomatic postings. The felt that their sense of agency and autonomy were taken away from them, handing all forms of self-control to other entities, such as the Foreign Service.

One of the aspects of this loss of control had been financial. Some participants described their first proof of loss of agency by their financial dependency on their husband. This dependency played an important role in their lives as it represented the shift from being independent working women, to being WOD. For example, Elan described her experience of being financially dependent on her husband, where the emphasis was put on her previous life.

> Not having an income that was tough, you know, to depend on your
> husband. I have **never never never** depended on someone in my
> adult life when it came to my needs; I worked on holidays, worked
> on scholarships. (Elan, p. 36, l. 535-537)

Elan's vivid recall of never having to depend financially on someone in her adult life showed how important her dependency was for her. The repetition of the word 'never' illustrated how financial dependency was crucially significant for her and the use of examples on how she earned money suggested a sense of personal accomplishment.

85

The use of the word 'tough' seemed to mark this transition as one of the main obstacles she faced as a WOD.

> But still it was part of my personality. Tough to change like that and 'gosh, now I have to ask **him** for money', eugh (shaking head) like that was really tough thing. (Elan, p. 37, l. 540-541)

Elan's sense of acceptance seemed to be one that came with great difficulties. The use of the words 'tough', 'gosh' and her non verbal communication suggested that her financial dependency was not one that was desired, but instead, one that was put upon her.

Similarly, Louise described living with money that was 'his'.

> I don't have a salary so we really live with **his** money. It was very weird because my whole life I worked and made my own money, and to then go and ask him for things…euh…I remember times where I didn't…hmmm… didn't' even know how to ask for it (Louise, p. 57, l. 766-771)

Louise seemed to be estranged to the feeling of asking for money as she recalled a life where she had her 'own money'. Her pauses and hesitations suggested a difficulty to acknowledge that her financial dependency was real, and that her life had somewhat changed.

Along with being financially dependent, becoming the WOD is a transition that many experienced as difficult given the uncertainty of their future.

> That's when I realised that my life was going to change. (Nervous laughing), I did not know anything about the diplomatic life. I knew things were going to be different but I did not know how. (Ava, p. 5, l. 59-62)

Ava recalls the first moment she was told that she was assisting her husband on their first diplomatic assignment. She appeared feeling afraid of stepping into an unknown

world, as she was not able to know what to expect. Her fear was emphasized by her nervous laugh, suggesting that the uncertainty made her feel worried. This discomfort in uncertainty is further being experienced when moving to a new country:

> The thing is that we have no control to where they send us. We can't even request anything and that makes me **sooooo** nervous…this uncertainty (Ava, p. 46, l. 678-680)

Ava's lack of control on the situation is experienced through the process of moving to a new country. Her prolonged 'so' is used as an attempt to draw a picture of how difficult it was to live in such uncertainty. Her need to make requests implied that Ava may have had specific reasons why she would have preferred to go to a certain country, rather than leaving it on pure luck.

This sense of uncertainty was also experienced by Elan who felt that she was living in an environment that was not hers.

> The thing is that husbands are safe because when they meet among each other, the topics discussed are quite formal like economics and politics and topics that are work related so no extra effort. But when it comes to **us**, it can be anything and everything (Elan, p. 17, l. 241-244)

Elan expressed a sense of separation between her experience as the WOD and the experience of her husband as the diplomat. This element of us versus them was felt through Elan's description of how it felt to be on the other side of the same world. The use of the word 'safe' suggested that perhaps Elan did not feel as safe and protected in her part of the world. Her comment 'anything and everything' echoes a real lack of certainty and security in what her role is supposed to be.

Other WOD, such as Lina, experienced satisfaction in the countries they had been assigned to, while acknowledging that these were purely based on luck.

> I went to [important North American city] and [North American Capital], and [Mediterranean European Country]. But what if I went to

87

like [Asian under-developed country] and was stuck there, or to
[Northern European Country] or whatever. It's not easy because a lot
of luck comes to play. And I was lucky. (Lina, p. 38, l. 527-531)

Lina considered the destination of her diplomatic assignments as an important element
to her quality of life. She expressed awareness on the potential consequences of being
somewhere else, leading her to feel a certain sense of gratitude. However, the
realization that her life depended on a variable that was out of her control created a
sense of powerlessness, leading her to experience feelings of anxiety.

There was a lot of uncertainty. And that uncertainty killed me, even
though I am very flexible. (Caline, p. 29, l. 425-426)

Caline's experience of uncertainty was 'kill[ing] her', suggesting that it had affected her
quality of life. She defined herself as a 'very flexible' person, signifying that diplomatic
assignments were abnormally uncertain, as nothing was in her control.

Additionally, Elan gave an example of one of the type of worries she experienced as a
result of her lack of agency.

I mean like one of my worries is the fact that I do not have a
permanent doctor that knows my health and me. So every time I
move, I have to change doctors and some will advice you based on
the country you are in, like diets, medicines, things like that. And like
everything changes, the weather and you know it is our responsibility
to not neglect it but it is beyond our control (Elan, p 45, l. 665-669)

Elan's worry about not having a stable medical doctor who knew her complete medical
history had been one of her main stresses, given her need for permanency. Having to
change medical doctors every couple of years suggested a need to start over every
time, a process that can be tiring and overwhelming. Moreover, she emphasized on the
different out-of-control factors that can impact her physical and mental health, while
acknowledging the importance of not neglecting them.

Louise explained this lack of control further.

> You are most of the time, not in control of the situation…as a trailing
> wife, most things are out of control. The countries you go to, how you
> dress, what you say, the dinners, the food, you don't have a lot of
> space to make big decisions and you have to be okay with that.
> (Louise, p. 46, l. 654-657)

This quote went to the very heart of how Louise experienced herself in diplomatic assignments. First, she referred to herself as a trailing wife, suggesting that she perceived herself as solely following her husband in diplomatic assignments, although this was the terminology used when Louise's husband was a diplomat. Second, her life seemed to be dictated by her diplomatic duties and role, implying that there was little space for her to experience her true self. However, Louise appeared to have made sense of the challenges that diplomatic assignments convey, and understood that the only way to go through them was by accepting them. Her initiative at accepting and not refuting these 'out of control' scenarios allowed Louise to accept, to a certain extent, the loss of herself.

This loss of agency was also experienced by the limitation WOD experienced in regards to their domicile.

> As ambassadors we are not allowed to choose our house, we live in
> the house that is given to us…with the same furniture and all. (Sarah,
> p. 28, l. 318-320)

Choosing one's house was an element that many people needed in order to feel at home when moving countries, as they could personalize it. Given that the ministry of foreign affairs assigned the same house with the same furniture to every diplomat and his family, Sarah's sense of uniqueness got affected. Moreover, her use of the words 'not allowed' showed the limited amount of control she had over their choice of domicile.

> Every time you want to buy like a plate, you have to ask permission
> from [home country]. Also like if you want to throw something, you put
> them in the bag and have to send them to [home country]. (Amy, p.
> 15, l. 214-217)

89

Amy gives an example of the way she felt limited in these diplomatic assignments. She explained not having enough freedom as she needed to 'ask permission' in order to take make decisions. Her choice of example showed the extent to which her loss of agency was affected. Amy described further her lack of control by explaining how throwing away something that was of no use anymore was a process in which she needed to get permission from her home country. Her examples emphasized her inability to take any initiatives without permission, suggesting another dimension of dependency and loss of autonomy.

> The hardest thing was not being able to buy what you wanted. Asking
> for permission was unimaginable at first, but then you have no choice
> but to get used to it. (Caline, p.39, l. 566-568)

As both Amy and Caline represent the same country, Caline also described her lack of freedom as the 'hardest thing'. Her use of the word 'unimaginable' highlighted how she first perceived the irrationality of this rule. However, Caline seemed to have come to terms with it as she recognized the absence of choice and the extent of her powerlessness.

> We lived in the consulate, and you sleep there but it's not your stuff!
> The bed is not yours, the bathroom is not yours, the kitchen is not
> yours. Nothing was yours! I mean how stupid is that?! (Caline, p. 40, l.
> 573-576)

Although Caline seemed at times to have accepted the situation as it was, she found herself further in the interview expressing her anger at the situation. Her exclamation at the end of the first sentence portrayed her fury and her attempt at explaining her sense of rootlessness was accentuated by the enumeration of the rooms in the house, and the repetition of 'is not yours'. While affirming that 'nothing was [hers]', Caline seemed to experience insecurities, given her lack of belongings. Ownership seemed to hold a significant meaning for her and experiencing her house as not her own appears to affect her ability at creating a basic attachment to it. Her rhetoric question and use of the word 'stupid' showed her anger, discomfort and confusion about the situation.

> The most difficult thing was for my husband and I to understand that
> everything that we had belonged to the job and not to us. Like one
> minute you have a team that comes and picks you up from the airport
> with flags on your car, and the other minute you are left alone, figuring
> out how to take the tube and commute your way in [Major European
> City]. (Louise, p. 48, l. 732-735)

Here, Louise portrayed a sense of awareness that came once her husband had retired from the diplomatic life. She expressed realizing that everything they owned and every service that was offered to them 'belonged to the job' and not to them, suggesting a lack of sense of ownership.

On the other hand, Elan's sense of dependency was also felt through her inability of committing to any professional opportunities given her attachment to her husband's postings.

> My university offered me to do my masters because there was a need
> for special need children and pay for it but that would mean that I
> would be bonded to them for five years and I knew that we needed to
> leave for his first posting, so I had to turn it down. (Elan, p. 5, l. 72-76)

Elan described needing to leave with her husband at the expense of her own academic and professional growth. This suggested another level of dependency where her academic and professional growth could have only happened when diplomatic postings were in lined with her professional opportunities. Her experience seemed to show how bounded she was to him and diplomatic postings.

The aspects of this sub-theme have illustrated how WOD experienced the transition between a life where they had a sense of control and autonomy, to a new life where the control belonged to someone else and depended on luck. In the next sub-theme, we will explore how WOD's intellectual potential was affected by their presence in diplomatic assignments.

3.2.3 Wasted Intellectual Potential

As mentioned, most WOD met their husbands in professional settings and their intellectual and professional identities played a role in their self-concept prior to diplomatic postings. Hence, becoming the WOD highly impacted their views over their intellectual potential, as their identity felt threaten by the absence of their own professional identity.

For some, this experience was mainly driven by regrets and loss of personal potential, while others compared their intellectual demands to their husband's.
Here, Elan spent time describing what she could have been if she had stayed in her home country. She appeared many times to have experienced a waste of intellectual potential that she could have used in different areas in her life. At times, being the WOD seemed to have held some regrets for her:

> *(Looking down)* Well the biggest disappointment was not being able to
> do my masters. (Elan, p. 38, l. 558)

Several times during the interview, Elan expressed, both verbally and non-verbally, a disappointment in herself for not having the chance to pursue her studies. She explained that as a result of becoming a WOD, her academic growth had to stop, leading her and others to feel like she wasted an opportunity.

> Euhm, well the thing is that my family really thought I would end up
> being somebody very successful in her job and become somebody
> important in which ever field because I really had potential. So for
> them, for me to do this was like 'Oh my God, what is she doing with
> her life? It is such a waste'. (Elan, p. 18, l. 255-258)

Elan's experience of being a WOD was one that she initially started with remorse and guilt. Her family's perception seemed to be one that she carried heavily with her. In thinking 'Oh my God, what is she doing with her life? It is such a waste' seemed to have unvalued Elan's identity and role as a WOD in the eyes of her family. Being seen as a waste of talent appeared to be a belief that Elan understood and approved of, as she was conscious that she 'really had potential'.

Additionally, Sarah reflected on her past year in her current assignment and said:

> I sometimes think about that myself as well. And where did I, what did
> I do during the last year? Euh, what did I do that was intellectually
> challenging or meaningful? (Sarah, p. 37, l. 495-497)

Sarah appeared to question her last year's accomplishments. Her self-reflection suggested that it was as if this last year was not meaningful enough given the lack of intellectual challenges she encountered.

Marta described similar views the first time her husband advised her to engage in social activities during their first posting.

> When I finished my paper after 1 year, I became very upset because I
> did not have anything else to do other than reading the newspaper.
> So my husband told me "why don't you do like the other wives do, and
> go learn a new activity like mahjong or bridge?" I was so angry with
> him for telling me that because I had just finished writing a very
> important article that was going to be published in one of the biggest
> economic journal and for him to tell me that, it felt like an insult.
> (Marta, p. 19-20, l. 218-223)

Marta asserted here the unsettling nature of her experience. She hinted at a sense of disappointment towards her husband who advised her to become 'like the other wives'. Marta's quote suggested that she had a personal opinion towards WOD and felt like her professional accomplishments could not be replaced by games. Her anger was justified by her self-image and ideal-self being insulted, as she felt that she went from being a highly regarded professional to a bored WOD.

This experience of Me VS Them was also experienced by Ava who compared her intellectual expectations to her husband's.

> He had to mingle with the other man and I had to mingle with the
> other wives. He had to talk politics and I would talk about irrelevant

things like recipes and curtains (laughs), oh my God, such irrelevant
topics. (Ava, p. 20, l. 285-287)

For Ava, being a WOD required her to mingle and socialize with other WOD. The structure and tone of her quote suggested a real sense of separation between herself and husband. She suggested that her husband was expected to talk about serious and meaningful topics while she was asked to talk about 'irrelevant' topics that emphasized her role as a WOD. Her laugh and exclamation of 'oh my God' seemed to show the lack of seriousness she experienced within herself and high levels of denial that her intellectual potential was being wasted on such topics.

Louise shared similar views on the intellectual deterioration she was experiencing.

We are not allowed to work, because we are made to be social and
go to tea parties, which I had to do, but it wasn't me (Louise, p. 37, l.
542-543)

Louise poignantly expressed her intellectual potential not being challenged enough, as she was not allowed to work as a WOD. Her expression of 'we are made to' referred to other's expectations of her role in diplomatic assignments, and how the context around her was molded in a way that did not give her the agency to do as she wished.

I remember once when we were in [important North American city], I
told my husband, I feel like I'm regressing, and that my mind is
shrinking, you know. I am feeling that I am stupid, that I am going
backwards. (Caline, p. 13, l. 185-188)

Here, Caline draws a picture of how it felt for her to be the WOD on their first assignment. Her analogy of her mind 'shrinking' made her feel 'stupid and going backwards', suggesting that she did not recognize herself anymore.

I was afraid of being empty…intellectually empty (Marta, p. 5, l. 55)

Marta reflected on her fear of being intellectually empty, suggesting that her intellectual abilities and professional role were important elements that defined her identity.

94

This sub-theme focused on one of the facets that led WOD to feel a loss of self. Their inability to fully express and experience their intellectual selves had impacted their quality of life and the lens in which they perceived themselves. In this final sub-theme, WOD explored how they felt like they were losing a part of themselves as they were embarking on a very lonely journey.

3.2.4 Alone in the Crowd

Most of the participants explained that being on diplomatic assignments felt like living an isolated life, as they were alone most of the time. Some WOD referred to losing parts of their identities, as they were not being able to find their place in these assignments. Ava described diplomatic assignments as a place where she felt lonely.

> The reality is loneliness. You are at home alone. You don't have
> family. You are alone. (Ava, p. 37, l. 534)

Ava's sense of loneliness was emphasized by the repetition of the word 'alone'. Her paralinguistic and tone at this specific moment conveyed real sadness in the awareness that it was a lonely world for her. Her use of the word 'reality' suggested that other's perception of diplomatic assignments was different than what the reality was. Caline provided an explanation for why she felt lonely during diplomatic assignments.

> There's not enough time to develop profound friendships. Maybe in
> your community, but it stays very superficial. You don't get to know
> someone very deeply in 2-3 years, so most of the time you feel alone.
> (Caline, p. 37, l. 541-544)

Caline made sense of why it was difficult to build friendship and belong in an unconditional and genuine social group in diplomatic assignments. Her sense of belonging seemed to be superficial and insufficient.

> Until you build your own environment with people who share the same
> concepts, you feel quite alone. This was a bit hard (Sarah, p. 12, l.
> 136-137)

Similarly, Sarah suggested that not having a sense of belonging made it harder to be in diplomatic assignment. It seemed to her that looking for others who shared similar 'concepts' was an important element that prevented her from feeling alone.

Although this process may be difficult given the short length of their stay, Elan explained the importance of having a good relationship within yourself, as diplomatic assignments are a solitary process.

> You must learn to enjoy yourself because it gets lonely and it gets
> difficult, and you need to have a good relationship with yourself to be
> able to handle these moments. (Elan, p. 41, l. 652-653)

Elan highlighted the importance of being congruent and enjoying her own presence as diplomatic assignments were difficult. She linked loneliness and difficulty together, suggesting that her lack of belonging affected the quality of her life in diplomatic assignments.

In this sub-theme, WOD's accounts on loneliness suggested that a sense of belonging was important in order to fully experience themselves while accompanying their husband's on diplomatic assignments.

This master theme focused on the way WOD experienced themselves when being on diplomatic assignments. Their loss of self was one of the main determinants to the quality of the lives they lived and the way they felt about their self-identity. The next master theme will explore the role they occupy in these assignments, and how they experience their presence as central.

3.3   Master Theme 3 – My Presence is Essential

Many participants reflected on the role they occupied when accompanying their husbands, firstly by the person they decided to be in these assignments and secondly by the burden they had to carry. In the first sub-theme, 'My Attitude is Central', WOD described how their attitudes and perceptions over diplomatic assignments affected the experience of diplomatic postings for husbands and children. The second sub-theme,

'Being a Mother: A Two-Way Guilt' focused on both the impact of being a mother during diplomatic assignments and the guilt that is associated with it. In the last sub-theme, 'Pressure to Create a New Home', WOD reflected on the duty they had towards their families to create a new home during every diplomatic assignment.

3.3.1 My Well-Being is Central

Most WOD referred to their well-being being an important element in the quality of the assignment. They explained how their attitudes and perceptions in regards to diplomatic assignments affected their well-being and explained how it was the way they decided to take on this experience that mainly helped their husbands go through and succeed at assignments. Caline explained this in her interview:

> My husband says 'you're the balance'. And I realize that I am not
> allowed to think a lot or to feel anything. Because if I don't do well or
> don't feel well, the family will collapse. Like even now, I think he is
> very stressed whenever he feels that I am stressed. (Caline, p. 32, l.
> 502-504)

Here, Caline described how she experienced her role in her family as a pillar that supported the whole. She seemed to not allow herself the luxury of thinking and feeling, suggesting that she would numb her sentiments in order to preserve balance in the family. In a way, Caline felt the pressure of being the centrality of her family as any given imbalance in herself could have resulted in destruction of the family system.

> You know, holding it all together for the sake of the children and my
> husband…that was difficult. (Louise, p. 37, l. 502-503)

Louise expressed similar feelings in regards to her role in the family. She painted a picture of needing to hold 'it all together', suggesting that if she hadn't, major consequences could have followed.

Also, Lina talked at length about how she felt about the importance of WOD in assignments. She argued and gave examples of times where she witnessed the impact of an un-happy WOD.

> You know, if the woman does not understand and is not engaged with
> the job, then it's a huge headache. I remember a colleague of us was
> a very good diplomat but his wife did not like any of it. So she kept on
> nagging nagging nagging because she wasn't happy and he had to
> resign from this posting. He took on a different job in their country.
> (Lina, p. 18, l. 272-276)

Here, Lina attempted at proving the importance of the WOD's well-being. She acknowledged that assignments do not only depend on diplomats, but that spouses' satisfaction was as crucial. Lina seemed to refer to the un-happy WOD as someone who did not understand the job and hence, led her to disengage from it, suggesting that diplomatic postings depended on these two elements. She further explained how these dynamics can be affected while on diplomatic duties.

> One of the most important factor is the wife's wellbeing. Because if
> the wife is not happy, the children are not happy and the dynamics
> are affected. (Lina, p. 19, l. 277-278)

Lina provided another consequence of being an un-happy WOD, while suggesting that her well-being was at the centre of her family's. She referred to dynamics being affected, suggesting that her well-being should be taken into consideration and valued by others. Lina continued by explaining how and why a WOD should try to have a good attitude towards these assignments.

> It's not easy. You have to like the lifestyle and on top of it, you have to
> accept that you keep changing: habits, friends, homes. If you are not
> crazy about this kind of life, it's not an easy life. (Lina, p. 46, l. 521-
> 525)

When asked about what advise Lina would give future WOD, she first acknowledged that adopting a positive attitude was difficult. She then explained how the most important element was one's ability to 'like the lifestyle'. Lina seemed to be aware that constant change was the most difficult factor in diplomatic assignments and WOD needed to be able to accept and embrace it.

Both Caline and Louise also explained how adaptability is of high importance when accompanying your husband in assignments.

> I think I have a good quality, which is adaptation. I am a Gemini
> (laughs). So I get adapted very easily (Caline, p. 3, l. 31-32)

> I mean my own flexibility really helped. I am very adaptable. I'm sure
> it's a lot of my character too (Louise, p. 14, l. 202-203)

Both appeared to praise themselves for having this great quality. They seemed to refer to their ability to adapt to change as a way of connecting and engaging further in diplomatic assignments.

> So yeah like I used to go for every assignment with him with an open-
> mind and with an idea that we have to succeed. And this is why we
> were a team. (Ava, p. 18, l. 265-267)

Ava described her attitude at the beginning of each assignment as her way of engaging and embracing them. She referred to her ability to start each with an optimistic 'open-mind', leading her to connect further with her husband and express her closeness to him.

> I was ready to learn and to do what was best for him and to make him
> look good. (Amy, p. 13, l. 198-199)

Amy referred to her willingness to be there for her husband by learning the different things she needed to do as a WOD. Her attitude seemed to be of high importance as she portrayed great motivation to 'make him look good' and be the best version of herself, for him.

This sub-theme illustrated how a WOD's attitude and mindset was perceived as an important element to the well-being of the family and the quality of diplomatic assignments. The next sub-theme deals with the role participants had as mothers and the impact of it on their well-being.

3.3.2 Motherhood: A Two-Way Guilt

All participants who have children talked at length about their role as mothers in diplomatic assignments. For them, being a mother was the biggest challenge they faced while on these postings, as they experienced great difficulties in balancing their roles as WOD and mothers. Most of them referred to never being able to make the right decision as they always felt like they were caught up in a dilemma.

> It's complicated to be a mother and a spouse. So, you have one foot here, and one other foot there. So, in some assignments with my husband, especially the one in [Major Middle Eastern City], especially this one, I had to be here and there…(pause)…It's not easy to have…the most, maybe, the most difficult part is to have children abroad. (Ava, p. 5-6, l. 69-82)

Ava described the two main roles she occupied on postings as conflicting. She portrayed an image of being caught up between two places that needed her attention. While Ava referred to one assignment specifically where her presence was particularly more important, she took a long pause: during this moment of silence, Ava looked down and seemed to have been carried away, suggesting that she remembered a memory that made her sad. She confirmed her sadness by explaining that the most difficult challenge she experienced during diplomatic assignments was to be a mother.

Similarly, Amy explained her difficulty in juggling between both her roles.

> If you have this kind of double life it's difficult because you are always in the wrong place, you have the bad conscience if you are too much with your husband then you are not enough with your kids, if you are with your kids, you are not supporting your husband enough. You are not hosting this and this event, you are not going to this and this dinner invitation. (Amy, p. 33, l. 438-443)

Amy referred to having a double life, suggesting that she experienced herself as two different people. Her reality was one of constant 'bad conscience', signifying that whatever decision she took, she would still be neglecting another area. Amy's inability to

please both parties appeared to create a sentiment of guilt, which Lina talked about in her experience of two-way guilt.

> Guilt, guilt, guilt always guilt. If you go to a dinner and you know they
> are at home watching TV, you feel guilty because you left them.
> Especially when you just arrive in a new post, because when you
> arrive there you want to succeed and to succeed you have to be out
> there. (Lina, p. 22, l. 314-317)

Lina's repetition of the word guilt highlighted the pain she experienced from being both a WOD and a mother. She attempted at explaining her guilt by giving an example of times she felt this guilt vividly. Lina referred to the beginning of diplomatic assignments as an important time for her husband, given the importance of succeeding. However, she seemed to also be aware that the newity of an assignment was a difficult period for the children, in which the presence of their parents was equally crucial.

Additionally, many WOD also experienced high levels of guilt when making decision in regards to their children's education.

> The most difficult thing for me was that in [Central West African
> country] they did not have high schools for my first son, so I had to
> leave him in a boarding school, (*looking down)* so that was really hard
> for me. (Marta, p. 10-11, l. 113-115)

Here, Marta described her two-way guilt by referring to one of the hardest decision she had to make when she embarked on this journey. Having to leave her so behind, Marta looked down and avoided eye contact with me, suggesting that her feelings of guilt were maybe combined with a sense of betrayal towards her son. She seems to have experienced this dilemma, as the choice to stay with her son or accompany her husband was both irreconcilable demands.

Diversely, Lina, whom decided to take the children with her, also experienced great remorse when reflecting on the decisions she took on behalf of her children.

Ow! Up to know it affects me, (slower pace) up to know it affects me.
When I think about when we arrived here and there with three
children, knowing no one, and their first day of school, this was the
hardest part. It affected me and it's affecting me until now… (Lina, p.
23, l. 331-333)

Lina highlighted the immense impact of imposing her lifestyle on her children through the repetition of 'it affects me'. Lina became emotional when remembering the first moments her children experienced in diplomatic assignments, suggesting that change of school and lack of friends were 'the hardest part'.

(*Tears in her eyes*) when I think about it, until now I get affected by it.
Until now my son is 27, my daughter 26 and the small one 22, they
are grown up kids and successful. But up to know, when I see them, I
see this in their eyes. The children of diplomat are the one who make
the diplomatic life difficult, in that sense. Yeah, this was the most
breaking thing for me. Diplomatic life is okay until you think about this.
(Lina, p. 23, l. 334-339)

Although Lina's husband was retired at the time of the interview and her children permanently based in different countries, her reflection of the past brought tears in her eyes as she empathized with her children's experience. Lina's pain felt so present and so great that I found myself putting my hands on my heart as she referred to the pain of her children still being visible through their eyes. Her statement at the end of the quote suggested an awareness on the main difficulty of diplomatic assignments. Even though she faced many challenges throughout her journey, the only challenge that 'broke' her was being a mother on diplomatic assignments. She explained this further:

Guilt again, and re-questioning things. […]You know, like children can
have problems even if they stay in the same school and they don't
change countries. But when you take them and they start having
problems, you feel guilty. Like if I had stayed in [home country] maybe
he wouldn't face all these problems. So children are the biggest
stress. (Lina, p. 34-35, l. 495-504)

Lina seemed to take a big part of the responsibility as she acknowledged that her lifestyle had been imposed on her children. Although she projected an awareness that any type of children can experience problems at school, she seemed to infer that she will never know if her child's problems were related to their moves or not. Hence, her guilt was a result of her self-questioning that emerged from the doubts she had in regards to her choices.

> Children are sensitive and sensible and euh you know you impose
> this life on them so you feel guilty and this breaks you. If you have
> some breaking moment, this is a breaking moment. When your
> daughter comes from school and has issues in her social life, this is
> the real issue with what we do. Even if you are with Obama during the
> day and the afternoon you come and you child has an issue like that,
> you forget absolutely everything. You are breaking, you break. This is
> the issue, the children. (Lina, p. 22, l. 323-329)

Here, Lina used the word 'break' to reflect how it felt for her to impose these difficulties on her children. Her example portrayed that no matter the amount of success one can have as a diplomat and a WOD, the most important aspect will always be one's children. Her paralinguistic suggested that every positive accomplishment had the power to become banal when the essential happiness of her children was not met.

> Another worry was most specifically about the kids. Were they okay?
> Were they happy? What was best for them? And these questions
> haunted me. (Louise, p. 46, l. 674-676)

Louise's enumeration of questions showed the intensity of her worries in regards to her children. Her use of the word 'haunted' suggested that she was tormented by these questions and that her children occupied a central part in her quality of life.

Elan, on the other hand, described a different kind of guilt when acknowledging that she was educating her children differently from how she was personally brought up.

> It was a tough decision, because you know everything was permanent
> for me, so how am I going to raise my children in this transient life? I

103

felt so bad for not giving them the same stability that I had. (Elan, p.
13, l. 190-192)

Elan expressed a sense of guilt when thinking about her own life prior to having a family. She referred to decisions as being 'tough' as she tried to find the right way to bring up her children in this 'transient' environment. In fact, it seemed as though she was experiencing an internal struggle between how she was raised in a environment that was permanent, and how she was going to raise her children in a life that was based on constant change. The unpredictability and uncertainty of the 'transient life' appeared to worry Elan, as she expressed fears of not being able to provide them what they needed.

I realised after moving from [home country] that everything felt
temporary for them, against to how I was brought up. And its bad
because relationships are short, and I was afraid that they would grow
up to become adults that can't commit to long-term things, like
degrees, relationships. (Elan, p. 32, l. 474-477)

Elan appeared to be aware of some of the consequences of experiencing a lack of stability. She expressed fears of not providing her children a healthy environment in which they could potentially develop into healthy adults, as they seemed to lack the notion of long-term commitments. This sense of temporality seemed to preoccupy Elan's mind, as she realised how permanency and stability were important factors that helped her develop into the woman she was.

You know, we decided to put them in this situation, so the least we
could do is to make sure they are taken care of well and that their
needs are met at all time (Elan, p. 46, l. 682-683)

As a mother, Elan took responsibility for the situation she had put her children in. She appeared to work very hard in making amends to them, as her sense of responsibility seemed to carry an element of culpability.

As expressed by most participants, this sub-theme showed how being a mother during diplomatic assignments was the main challenge WOD face. Their deep sense of guilt and constant self-doubt were at the root of how they felt about themselves and their

104

experiences. The next sub-theme describes how participants felt that their presence in diplomatic assignments was crucial and central as they experienced an external pressure to create a new home.

3.3.3 Pressure to Create a New Home

Throughout their interviews, many WOD talked at length about their duties towards their families. It often seemed that many of the administrative roles would fall on them, as well as their responsibilities to create a new home in every country, for their selves and their children.

For instance, Lina talked about the different responsibilities she had in her first diplomatic assignment.

> It was difficult to manage all of this. Like learning about [important
> North American city], manage the children, do activities, make sure to
> find the right doctors. So like the administrative part was very
> demanding. And it's like that (slower pace) **every time we move**
> (Lina, p. 27, l. 391-393)

Here, Lina seemed to experience difficulties in managing the different duties she had. She understood that her role was of high importance as her children depended on her. However, Lina appeared to highlight two important elements that differentiated her from other mothers, namely the importance of learning about their new host country, and the fact that she had to repeat all these duties every time they were assigned to a new host country. The last part of the quote was said in a very slow and monotone tone, suggesting fatigue and boredom in repeating these tasks.

In the same way, Amy described her administrative duties when her and her family would start a new assignment.

> The husband goes straight to work, and for him it was very clear you
> have something on your table to eat, and he has a job schedule,
> whereas for me I need to know where to shop, which school to put
> them, learn the language and the traditions of the country, know who

105

to contact to organize the events, train the staff, take care of my

children **AND** be there with my husband. (Amy, p. 22, l. 321-326)

Amy emphasized on the difference between her husband's role and hers when moving to a new country. She described her husband's perception of his duties as going to work and making money. When comparing his duties to hers, she enumerated a series of responsibilities she needed to attend to when starting a new assignment. Each duty also seemed to be about taking care of her children, her husband '**AND**' the job, suggesting that little space was left for self-care.

Elan also talked about how it mentally felt to be a part of these postings. She explained that diplomatic assignments were extremely demanding as a WOD, as everybody needed a part of her.

And it's like ouf how much can I teach my children our culture, and how much can I be there for my husband, and do my work, and host haha it seems like a lot to do! (Elan, p. 37, l. 550-553)

Elan's pressure to achieve different things was felt through the use of enumeration and the 'and' repeated four times. She started her list with an onomatopoeic reaction 'ouf' illustrating her overwhelming responsibilities. She followed this onomatopoeia with a rhetorical question 'how much can I' in order to illuminate the difficulties in conducting every tasks in a perfect way. Elan's nervous laugh 'haha' and comment 'it seems like a lot to do!' illustrated how unreasonable the demands were for her to be able to perfect all of them.

The diplomatic life is already unstructured, and our government is unstructured, and in all of this, they ask of us that we be structured and stable. They ask for the impossible, but we have to manage anyway. (Caline, p. 30, l. 439-442)

This quote went to the center of Caline's experience of being a WOD as she is greatly affected by the fact that represented a country that was political, economically and socially unstable. She referred to the diplomatic world and to her government as unstable and chaotic, suggesting that as a WOD she was only bound to feel unstable and chaotic herself. However, she highlighted the irony of her role by showing how

other's expected from her to always remain 'structured and stable', while not allowing her to fall down.

> You have to keep a structure somewhere but at the same time you
> are completely torn apart. (Caline, p. 31, l. 448-449)

Caline emphasized on the 'structure' she had to keep in order to let others believe that everything was under control, while in reality she was 'completely torn apart'. This fake façade seemed to be affecting her quality of life, suggesting that she was suffering in silence.

Some WOD described how their role was essential by explaining the importance of their ability to make decisions that helped the family feel comfortable and safe in these new environments.

> But you know the children and my husband left for me to choose,
> again. 'You choose, you decide which school we should go to'. So
> again the burden fell on me. (Elan, p. 32, l. 472-474)

> The burden falls again on me every time. (Elan, p. 33, l. 480-481)

Elan described how both her husband and children relied on her to make one of the most important and difficult decisions when being on diplomatic assignments, namely choosing the right school. This decision seemed to hold a lot of stress as many factors came into play. Elan referred to this decision as a 'burden', suggesting that it had a mental heaviness to it.

In other instances, Elan felt the need to create a family environment for her children. She explained her decision as:

> In every assignment, I always made the decision that we surround
> ourselves with people from our country. I told me husband that I want
> our children and ourselves to feel like a part of our country is here
> with us. So we would invite our friends all the time, like even now,
> after the interview my husband is bringing an officer to have lunch

107

here. I like that. I created that thing so they always felt also that there
are always people in our home. So I created that family environment
everywhere we went. (Elan, p. 41, l. 610-616)

Elan's attempt at creating a family environment suggested the profound need she had to
compensate for the lack of familiarity and permanency she talked about earlier. Her
decision to create a family abroad and having people from their home country in their
house showed Elan's willingness to create a sense of home everywhere they went. She
appeared to have created and instilled traditions that she practiced in every assignment,
leaving her family to experience a sense of sameness.

I decided that we needed to meet people from [home country] who
had children the same age as mine. So few couples we became
closer because of the children and we had like our little family in
[Important North American City]. (Amy, p. 26, l. 380-383)

Similarly, Amy felt a need to meet other families of similar background. Her active
decision to help her children and husband develop profound relationships with others
seemed to stem from her need to provide them with an extended family, one they would
usually have in their home country. Amy also experienced this need given the emphasis
that her culture puts on family and community ties.

Other participants, such as Marta, discussed practical ways they instilled this sense of
sameness for themselves and their families.

For each assignments, I decided to bring some furniture with me, so I
have euh to feel at home, I have some tips like my bed with this
picture, in my house, behind these sofas, I put exactly these two
paintings, doesn't matter where I am in the world, it is the same. So
that whenever we come home and open the door, we see these and
say "Ah ok I am home!".and not feel like we are in a hotel (Marta, p.
29, l. 327-331)

Marta's decision to follow a specific routine when moving houses seemed to have left
her and her family with a sense of relief. Her quote suggested that she easily felt

homesick on postings as her home was not her home. However, her practical 'tips' appeared to have brought her and her family comfort, safety and stability.

This master theme dealt with the way WOD perceived their role in their family during diplomatic assignments. Their ability to have a positive attitude has been at the center of their journey and has allowed them to cope with the expectations of others. However, this section also highlighted the different challenges and demands that are put upon them and how it affected their quality of life.

The next and final master theme will deal with WOD's confusing identities and their ability to make sense of their presence in these postings.

3.4 Master Theme 4 – Making Sense of Who I Am and Who I Want to Be

This last master theme focused on the evolution of WOD throughout their diplomatic journey. It seemed to reflect on the one hand the loss of the person they were and on the other hand, the person they had strived to become. In the first sub-theme, 'Who Am I in this New World?', WOD appeared to reflect on their new identities as WOD and what it initially meant for them. The second sub-theme, 'Making Sense of my Presence', focused on the different ways WOD made sense of their new identity and how it came across. In the final sub-theme, 'the Need for Personal Success', WOD seemed to have come to the conclusion that their role in these assignments was important and recognition was crucial.

3.4.1 Who Am I in this New World?

Some participants experienced an identity threat in which they were not able at first to understand who they were in these diplomatic assignments. This confusing transition left them with many doubts and questions, as expressed by Elan:

> It was so difficult for me to understand this. I asked myself why are
> you here? In what capacity are you here? The reason? You are not

here in holidays, you are not a tourist, you are here on a diplomatic
passport, representing your country. (Elan, p. 26, l. 381-384)

Elan's intense self-questioning showed her active process of reflection. Indeed, she tried to understand in what capacity was she in this new country. As she attempted to make sense of her presence, she seemed to have reflected on her residential status, suggesting that it helped her deal better with her confusion. As she identified her diplomatic passport as the main reason for her presence, she understood that her capacity in this new country was one of pure representation.

Moreover, becoming the WOD was a new identity that came with feelings of doubt about who she really was. Elan commented that before becoming the WOD, she held a clearer and more solid sense of herself. This changed drastically, leading to a deep sense of loss of identity.

When we went in [south Asian country], I thought I was going to study
and it didn't work out, so I was thinking what am I going to do, what is
my role, my future? He had his life set but it was mine that was
unknown. (Elan, p. 36, l. 530-532)

Elan highlighted her self-doubt and loss of identity after leaving her home country. She explained having embarked on this journey with a plan, and perhaps the possibility of coming to this first assignment with the same sense of self that she had back home. Her experience of losing her identity brought many questions about who she was now that she was not the other Elan. As her husband experienced his self-identity in a more stable way, Elan tried to make sense of the doubts she was having.

I decided to join him but it never occurred to me if I could do this so I
went through a difficult period, I'm just a wife, can I do this all my life?
What's going to happen to me? (Elan, p. 36, l. 532-534)

This account demonstrated Elan's ability to make sense of her presence in these missions. The use of 'I decided to join him, but' showed her ability at recognizing that although she took an intentional decision to join her husband in these missions, her

110

choice was not one that was fully informed. Moreover, Elan experienced some identity threat as she did not know if she would ever be able to 'just be a wife'. Her use of the word 'just' illustrated her own perception of what it was for her to be a WOD. She seemingly undermined the role of being a wife, as many facets of her new identity were still hidden from her. The fear of this new identity threat was also felt through her question of 'what's going to happen to me' illustrating her insecurity in regards to her self-concept.

Elan later tried again to make sense of her identity, which resulted in an attempt at understanding who she was.

> With us like we are not tourists, we have residents, not for too long,
> but still we live there. And when you are an expat or diplomat, you
> know it's for a little while, you learn that the bad things will be over
> when you leave, and the good things you try and make the most out
> of it… So it's a good thing, because you take what's good and leave
> what's bad. (Elan, p. 34, l. 496-500)

Elan still expressed a certain puzzlement in regards to her identity, as she lived in a foreign country under specific residency terms. She was not a tourist and nor was she a long-term resident, which seemed to make her confortable with the fact that she was there 'for a little while'. In thinking 'you take what's good and leave what's bad' she appeared to be able to make sense of the good and difficult aspects of her short-term stays. Her use of the word 'us' and 'we' in her first sentence suggested a sense of belonging, to which she acknowledged to be a part of.

Participants who married men from different nationalities expressed the need to let go a part of their own identity, in order to let another one in.

> I am [South American Country], I had to learn this new culture and act
> like [my husband's nationality] myself, because I was in [Central West
> Africa] representing [husband's country], not [own country]. So I had
> to learn about the culture, the language, the people, and do like the
> [husband's country] do. I feel like my [own] nationality had to

disappear a little so I can make place for this new me. (Marta, p. 10, l. 109-113)

Here, Marta explained how being a foreign spouse meant that she had 'to let go' of her own national identity in order to assume a new one. Marta's replacement in national identities seemed to be a challenging one as she was asked to represent a country that was not hers. She referred to her new national identity as part of a 'new [her]', suggesting that a part of her had to change as she became a WOD.

I have no more the [middle eastern] passport because when I married my husband, he has the [European nationality] and in his country you cannot have two different nationalities, so I had to give up mine in order to take his because I am representing his country now, not mine. (Ava, p. 3, l. 34-36)

Similarly, Ava described having to physically give up her passport and her nationality in order to take on her husband's. Her use of the words 'his' and 'mine' show how different both Ava and her husband are, and yet, how similar they need to be when representing [European Country] abroad.

Other WOD spoke about the difficulty in understanding their identity once their husbands retired and their status of WOD disappeared.

A very difficult thing is when you move back to your home country […] It's as if for years you have taken on a role and then poof! When your husband retires, it's as if you become nobody when you go back to your home country. It's difficult. (Louise, p. 46, l. 685-690)

Here, Louise referred to the difficulty of transitioning from WOD to the wife of an ex-diplomat. It seemed as if her whole identity depended on her husband's profession, and once his profession ceased to exist, her identity was threatened. Her onomatopoeic reaction 'poof' illustrated the disappearance of a pioneering element to her identity.

Likewise, Amy described coming to her home country as one of the most difficult challenges she had to experience.

112

> Coming back to [home country] was so depressing for me. For all
> these years I had a role and I was doing something. I then came back
> when my husband retired and found myself not working, not doing
> anything…(pause)…I never tell anyone this but I was not doing well at
> all at the time because I couldn't cope. (Amy, p. 43, l. 601-604)

Amy's confession seemed to be one that was difficult to admit. By referring to her husband's retirement, her paralinguistics informed me that something bad had happened to her as she lost her identity of WOD. It seemed as if her self-identity had been threaten again, suggesting that she needed to find herself again. Her long pause showed the difficulty of admitting the extent of this challenge, as she 'couldn't cope' with these feelings of emptiness.

While this sub-theme dealt with the different identity threats WOD experienced, the next sub-theme will focus on the different ways participants made sense of their presence and coped with their roles as WOD.

3.4.2 Making Sense of my Presence

This sub-theme dealt with the various strategies WOD used in order to accept their presence and role in diplomatic assignments. For some, making sense of their presence was experienced through their sense of usefulness in diplomatic duties.

Lina, for example, raised awareness on the way she diplomatically mattered in her husband's work. She explained that:

> I was friends with very important people, wives of important
> people. And you know, this is how you help your husband. You
> help by befriending others and building important and strong
> relationships. Because when you do that, you then invite the wife
> and husband, and then help your husband in networking and
> meeting important people. And I mean, this is how the diplomatic
> world works. It works by having contacts and doing change. And
> how can you do change when you don't know anybody. So by

being friends with the wives, you help both husbands build a
relationship. And this is what I did. (Lina, p. 10, l. 148-155)

Lina seemed to have experienced her presence with her husband as an essential
element in his diplomatic career. She conveyed an understanding of what diplomatic
assignments are for her, namely networking and 'doing change', and explained that
these activities can only be done when knowing others. Lina described her sense of
triumph by recognizing the importance of her role in helping her husband meet important
people and creating the network he needed to conduct his work. From her language and
non-verbal communication, Lina seemed proud of her accomplishments, as she
understood what her purpose was in these assignments. She praised herself for
knowing 'important people' and being able to provide an added element to her
husband's work by networking in a way that he wouldn't be able to do on his own.

I gave my 100%, and at the time I also felt that by doing this I
would help my husband climb the ladder, because the wife plays
an important role by pleasing the people and showing that you
are a good host and that I could take care of others in that sense
(Ava, p. 19, l. 269-272)

Similarly, Ava experienced her role as needing to 'please' others in order to
diplomatically help her husband. She seemed to link her contribution and involvement in
diplomatic assignments as a direct element to help her 'husband climb the ladder'. Ava's
willingness to please others and proving them that she was good appeared to directly
affect her sense of purpose and experience of her role. By acknowledging that 'the wife
plays an important role', she emphasized on the concept of usefulness and experienced
her role as complementary to her husband's, suggesting that her absence would have
affected the assignment.

Sarah also explained how her role became diplomatically important:

We hosted big cocktails but it is your responsibility to make sure
that everybody's happy, and drinking and make conversation
with everyone. So while others are having fun, I am on duty.
(Sarah, p. 21, l. 296-298)

114

Here, Sarah acknowledged that hosting cocktails was a team effort. However, she seemed to specify that it was mainly her responsibility to assure other's happiness and enjoyment of the party, suggesting that it was only then that she felt that she became diplomatically useful. The end of her quote suggested that although others were there for leisure, for her, it was part of her diplomatic duties.

In other instances, some WOD experienced their diplomatic duties by meeting other's expectations of their role.

> The wife of the ambassador expected so much from me because it was such a busy city for us. Every month we would receive ministerial delegations and like we had to host all the time the wives of the prime minister and other ministers. [ ] I had to make sure that breakfast went accordingly, wait for them at 8h in the morning for them to come down, take them shopping to the best places, make sure they were happy, and you know, even if I had my own life going on, and my children, everything needed to be put on hold because it was my duty to attend to their needs. (Elan, p. 23, l. 338-347)

Elan's experience of needing to meet other's expectations was one that came with great diplomatic pressure. She expressed this pressure by enumerating the different tasks she was given when she was on duty. Although Elan's experience seemed to emphasize on the different roles she had to play to make others happy, the real emphasis was on the obligation she experienced of having to put her life on hold for diplomatic reasons. Her comment suggested that no real importance was given to her or her needs when diplomatic expectations were put upon her.

> In [North American Country] the wife of diplomat is supposed to play a role. People expect that from her. So like in her husband career and his life. So for me that role was social, cultural mainly. (Lina, p. 3, l. 34-36)

115

Here, Lina also described the expectations that locals had from her. Her tone at the time suggested that she felt like she did not have a choice and that being involved in her husband's work was the only way her identity could be validated by others.

Diversely, other WOD described the need to go the extra mile in order to make sense of their presence. Some experienced personal aspirations in regards to their own personal lives and decided to either merge them or split them from their husband's postings. Caline, for instance, decided to merge her passion for teaching with her diplomatic duties.

> I really tried to mix my passion for teaching in our assignments,
> like when we were in [North America] I decided to put in a
> program where we would teach children the language, the
> culture, our national anthem, and you know, this helped me feel
> like I had a purpose. I am of use and that was important for me.
> (Caline, p. 28, l. 408-412)

Caline described feeling useful as she brought an element to the diplomatic assignments that resonated with the person she was before diplomatic postings. In fact, Caline taught languages in a prestigious university and expressed throughout the interview her love and success in teaching languages. She talked at length about the worries of her community, as they were complaining about their children's unfamiliarity with the home country's official language. It seemed that in a way Caline felt it was her duty to help local children re-connect with their native country while serving her community.

Similarly, Louise found herself merging her love for writing with diplomatic assignments.

> This wife had a really bad time during their posting and she told
> me that I should use my passion and write about our
> experiences as trailing spouses. So that's what I did and I wrote
> two books about my experiences as a trailing spouse and they
> became bestsellers! And you know…I couldn't have done that
> without my husband's postings. (Louise, p. 21, l. 302-305)

Here, Louise seemed to be grateful to have taken part in diplomatic assignments. She confessed that her success wouldn't have been possible and that diplomatic postings gave her an opportunity to become a successful writer. In her experience, she described having met woman who confided in her and gave her the responsibility to give WOD a voice. Given Louise's background in journalism, she seemed to have been able to find her vocation and merge her love for writing to her role in the diplomatic world.

Likewise, Sarah experienced instances where she was able to find her place in diplomatic assignments.

> With this blog and these articles that I had been writing from an anthropological perspective…also from the [Middle East], I think my motivation is to spread knowledge about the Middle East to [Home Country], because so little is written and it's always about the same issues, the negative things, so I kind of want to give euh perspective and feelings from the ground. (Sarah, p. 20-21, l. 272-276)

Sarah appeared to have been able to merge her anthropological interests to diplomatic postings. She used her exposure to raise awareness and 'spread knowledge', suggesting that she perceived her presence in diplomatic assignments as an opportunity to educate others. Having a goal and an interest seemed important for Sarah, as it helped her make sense of her presence.

On the other hand, both Sarah and Marta also described how they aspired to become the people they wanted to be by separating themselves from diplomatic assignments. In fact, although Sarah found herself at times merging both, she also felt the need to have her own separate identity through activities she would do.

> I wrote about our life, where we went, like this, more like cultural things, posting nice photos, but never about my husband's work because I made the decision that this is not about the embassy or diplomatic or the guests of the ministers who are visiting from [Northern European country] but this is about my life (Sarah, p. 20, l. 261-265)

117

Sarah appeared to make the separation between the person she was in diplomatic postings and her own person. Her creation of a personal blog in which no diplomatic material was posted showed a need to separate herself from it. This blog may also have been a way to show others that her identity did not reside solely as being the wife of a diplomat, but that she defined herself as a wife, a traveler and a writer.

Marta also expressed during our interview how she made a lot of efforts to separate her diplomatic duties from the person she aimed to be.

> At the beginning, it was a sacrifice, but since I discovered the bridge and I had to study it with a partner, it was no longer a sacrifice. It became a challenge and that's what I wanted […] I remember taking the bridge as a challenge and I made a lot of friends through this from inside and outside embassies (Marta, p. 21, l. 236-243)

Repeatedly, Marta expressed how taking on bridge first felt like a sacrifice, but then shifted to being her personal challenge. Her decision to dedicate herself to bridge suggested a great need to have her own personal challenge during these diplomatic assignments. Also, not only did bridge become a personal challenge, but it also became the vessel that helped her create her social circle, suggesting that through bridge, she felt like she belonged.

> I look at this as a job, not as my life. My life is the bridge, the GRS, my children and my marriage. (Marta, p. 39, l. 450-451)

Marta further explained how she perceived her diplomatic role as a separate entity to her identity. She saw diplomatic posting as part of her life, rather than her life. She went on by enumerating the most important things that form her life and her identity, suggesting a sense of thriving through each posting.

Ava also talked about the importance to have a separate identity that was complementary to being the WOD.

> This is very important. This is very important…to have, especially
> now. Before it was easier for a woman to be only with her
> husband, but now no. Now her identity needs to be different. She
> needs to work and have her own identity. (Ava, p. 13, l. 180-183)

Ava's repetition of 'this is very important' seemed to highlight the significance of having a separate identity. She compared women from different generations to show the shift in the importance for an independent self-concept, suggesting a recognition that self-actualisation is more important for today's generation.

On the other hand, some WOD made sense of their presence in each assignment by striving at their role, rather than thriving. Elan, for instance, talked at length about the way she felt that she did not have the possibility of disappointing others, leading her to make sense of her presence and to perfect her role.

> So when I realised that they were disappointed and felt like it
> was a waste, I decided that if this is what I'm going to do, then I
> will perfect at it and give it my best. (Elan, p. 17, l. 243-244)

Elan referred to her parent's disappointment in her for 'just being a wife'. As a result, she decided to take on this role and strive at it as it was the only way she could prove to others and herself that her identity as a WOD was valid. She goes on by providing another detailed account of a situation where her performance needed to be faultless.

> When it's the president's wife or the minister's wife, you can't say you
> don't know, never say that because then it seems like you are not
> doing your part. You have to know. (Elan, p. 17, l. 251-253)

The way Elan talked about the absolute necessity to 'know' indicated what appeared to be an element of fear of not knowing and a need to strive. She commented saying 'never say that', which suggested the possibility of severe consequences such as being labeled as 'not doing your part', suggesting a threat to her WOD identity. Moreover, Elan stood somewhat in a position in which her marriage also depended on the way she made sense of her presence.

I will perfect at it and give it my best. I'll make the best out of it and
only then I realised that if I want to keep my marriage from breaking, I
have to be like this and embrace the diplomatic life (Elan, p. 18, l.
266-268)

Elan suggested that the only way to have a healthy and stable marriage was to embrace
her duties as a WOD and base her identity upon it. Here, she seemed to understand that
accepting the need to strive was the only way to cope with the lifestyle and keep her
marriage from 'breaking'.

Equally, Amy explained how striving came naturally for her given that she admired her
husband's job.

I liked his job. I wouldn't chose it for myself, but I liked what he was
doing, and how he was doing it, so I admired what he did. So maybe
that was my motivation to get more engaged with him and be really
really good. So this is why it felt natural for me. (Amy, p. 31, l. 443-
445)

Amy explained how her motivation at striving as a WOD came from her admiration of her
husband and her likings of the diplomatic field. It seemed like her choice to engage was
one she made intentionally, suggesting a congruency in her identity. Amy developed
further on the power of choice and explained how it impacted her views on her presence.

Because at the beginning it was I am doing this for you, but then it
was not fair, because it was my choice to join him, he never forced
me to join, I decided to. And I realised that if I keep on thinking that I
am doing this for him and his career, our marriage will not last long
because it is very detrimental. (Amy, p. 35, l. 509-512)

Amy's understanding of her active decision-making seemed to have helped her make
sense of her presence. By highlighting the power of choice, she appeared to have
shifted her views on why and for whom she was doing all these efforts, and understood
that these negative feelings could have potentially impacted her marriage.

> This is also making the choice that if you have chosen this then
> concentrate on the positive things and of course be aware of the
> negative things. (Sarah, 48, l. 702-704)

Equally, Sarah explained how having a choice helped her have an optimistic attitude towards her role in this journey. Her quote also suggested the way she was coming to terms with her presence and coping by focusing on the positive things.

Louise explained this further by explaining how she managed the difficulties.

> I just kept in my mind the funny things, or the things I most liked
> (laughing), but that's it. So I always managed to…I think so. (Louise,
> 58, l. 675-676)

Louise referred to humour as a good way to manage the difficulties. Throughout the interview, Louise would laugh about stories or difficult moments she experienced in the past suggesting that she was able to see the good in these experiences and learn from the bad.

> I also saw it as an opportunity and like I knew that it was just for a few
> years, so I really tried to enjoy it as much as I can and have fun in
> every posting. (Amy, p. 52, l. 702-704)

While reflecting, Amy explained how she tried to make sense of these postings and how her perception of them as opportunities helped her manage the difficult times. Her awareness that this lifestyle was only temporary helped her enjoy it further, as the concept of ending seemed to be vivid in her mind.

Other WOD talked about shifting their perception on diplomatic postings. Both Ava and Caline mention this change:

> I think that's how I managed mostly, by knowing that I was doing
> things for the both of us, because his success equaled my success.
> (Ava, p. 54, l. 784-785)

> At the beginning it was 'I'm doing this for you and only for you' it felt
> like I was sacrificing myself for him. But with time the 'doing it for YOU
> became doing it for US'. (Caline, p. 40, l. 580-584)

Both WOD expressed how their sense of togetherness helped them come to terms with their presence in diplomatic assignments. Their notion of success seemed to be anchored in the we-concept, and actions that were once perceived as solely done for him were now conducted for their joint success.

Elan and Sarah, on the other hand, explained how being congruent within themselves helped them manage the diplomatic life.

> You need to be your own best friend. As you move, you will have a lot
> of friends, but you will not have this one best friend. […] So you need
> to be your own best friend. At night you face your own conscious so
> you need to be friends with yourself, love yourself. So find ways to
> enjoy yourself and to take care of yourself. (Elan, p. 44, l. 642-646)

Elan described how being in harmony within herself was crucial in order to make sense of her presence and get through this journey. She referred to being her own best-friend, suggesting that she was at peace with her self-image, and that self-care was highly important.

Similarly, Sarah explained how her need to prove herself was not a priority anymore.

> I'm old enough, I made already a long career, I had many demanding
> jobs in [home country], I think I didn't need to prove anymore that I
> can make it so I could afford to jump to being just a wife (Sarah, p. 11,
> l. 138-141)

Sarah also expressed how congruent she was with herself as she had let go of this need to prove herself. Her quote suggested that her self-esteem was quite high, as she was not affected by others perception of her as 'just a wife'. In a way, her life long career seemed to have helped her form the base for a solid identity that appeared to not be easily affected by others.

In drawing the various strands of this sub-theme together, it appeared that participants' experiences of making sense of their presence were interpreted in ways that have profound implications for how they experienced their role and identity throughout diplomatic postings. As all WOD found themselves diplomatically involved, some embraced their duties and role and used these to construct their identity, while others viewed it as only a part of whom they are. In the final sub-theme, WOD explored their thoughts and feelings as they realised the importance of personal successes.

3.4.3 The Need for Personal Success

In this sub-theme, WOD appeared to reflect on the importance of having some form of personal success from diplomatic assignments. Some expressed a national pride in representing their country abroad and experienced their role as a dedication to their country. The recognition of their efforts helped WOD understand who they aspired to be in diplomatic posting and facilitated the process in which their identities changed.

Sarah, who referred to herself as a civil servant during the interview, explained how she viewed her role in regards to her country.

> I also value the work of diplomats, […] so it's my personal expression
> of course that I'm willing to give my years, not my life, but my years to
> serving my country and I really think that I am serving my country as
> well, even though I'm not paid for this (Sarah, p. 55, l. 740-744)

Here, Sarah showed her dedication to her country. It seemed as if she perceived her duty towards her country as independent of her husband's profession and showed willingness to offer some 'years' to her country. The end of her quote showed how Sarah drew on a similarity with her husband by the use of 'as well'. Her interjection of 'even though' showed a sense of inequality as Sarah did not get paid for representing and giving her years to her country, compared to her husband.

> You know, I work so hard for my country. I don't care who is in my
> country governing, but I did it for my country. (Lina, p. 10, l. 134-135)

123

Lina expressed a pride in representing her country and working for it. During the interview, her paralinguistics suggested a real sense of accomplishment when she stated that she did all of that for her country. Similarly to Sarah, Lina also appeared to experience this duty towards her country independently from her husband's profession, as her national involvement was also highlighted by her dissatisfaction of who governed her country.

Varyingly, other WOD talked at length about the importance of being recognized by others. Their need for recognition seemed to be anchored in their desire for validity and acknowledgment that their presence did make a change.

> At the end of the day, you want recognition because you were part of the success. (Louise p. 52, l. 721)

Louise reflected on how her role in these postings engendered success. She affirmed wanting to be appreciated for her efforts, suggesting that it was only then that her role was validated.

Equally, Lina explained this further:

> I think as a woman, if you don't make them feel your presence, you have to make sure to remind them that you are here and that you exist and that you are doing many things. I mean as a woman, euh they always have to take you into account. Your husband, your children and other people always have to make sure that you are here. You always have to remind them not to take you for granted in what you are doing. Reminding them that you know I did this, I did that, because sometimes they like to take the credit and you are in a men's world don't forget, so you always have to remind them where the credit belongs. (Lina, p. 29, l. 413-420)

Lina took a stand while explaining her need for recognition. She referred to the importance to do so as a woman, given her experience of women being un-recognized and needing to constantly fight for the acknowledgment of their accomplishments. She referred to being present in a 'men's world', suggesting that she was aware that all forms

of power and dominance belonged to them not only in the diplomatic world, but also in her family system and culture. However, Lina expressed the need to fight this patriarchal system, suggesting that a part of her felt like the narrative needed to change and her place in workforce needed to be clear.

> At the end of the day, you want to be recognized because you were
> part of the success. (Lina, p. 29, l. 428)

Lina re-affirmed her position by simply explaining why her need for recognition was important. Her coherent logic seemed to convey the clarity and simplicity of a cause-effect situation in which being 'part of the success' should only result in appreciation for the efforts put in place.

Amy, on the other hand, expressed a sense of achievement through the way diplomatic assignments made her feel about herself.

> I mean I became a lot more confident. I mean this is where I realised
> how much I can do. I felt like I am capable of doing many things. Like
> before assignments I was working but it was very narrow so it didn't
> give me the confidence that I needed. But in these assignments I
> discovered more my skills and realised that I can d many things that I
> am good at. (Amy, p. 16, l. 238-241)

Here, Amy described how diplomatic postings increased her self-esteem in terms of capabilities. She experienced a different version of herself, suggesting that the diplomatic context helped her grow and develop her personal potential. Her realization of 'how much [she] can do' seemed to be a crucial element to how Amy experienced her sense of self. Also, as this statement was said at the end of the interview, it can be assumed that this is how she made sense of whom she became through these postings and what she took from these experiences in regards to her self-esteem.

Finally, Elan expressed how she experienced her sense of achievement:

125

> I want to feel that I have achieved something in 20 years. I feel good
> about myself now because I know I have achieved. And I did not have
> to do any of it I did it for my own initiative. (Elan, p. 31, l. 453-455)

As Elan reflected on her sense of self, she expressed having reached a state where she felt 'good about [her]self', suggesting that pride and contempt were at the center of her experience. Looking back, Elan stated that she 'now' felt good about herself as she came to the realization that all of her achievements were self-driven by the potential she had, suggesting that perhaps she felt like she had reached a state of self-actualisation.

This final master theme has explored WOD's sense of self by first questioning their own personal identities and then coming to terms with the woman they each aimed at becoming. Although there was a rich contrast and divergence in the accounts within these sub-themes, all WOD expressed needs for striving, thriving, achieving and/or mattering, suggesting a desire to become congruent with their ideal-selves.

3.5   Brief Summary of Findings

To summarize, WOD seemed to experience a continuous process of making sense of their presence and their identity while accompanying their husbands on diplomatic assignments. It felt like their togetherness and partnership with their husbands became a solid ground that allowed them to manage their loss of self. Indeed, within the walls of their stable and supportive marriages, they experienced a great identity threat to which they spent great amount of time trying to make sense of it and come to the conclusion of who they truly are as WOD. However, this process felt quite circular at times as many obstacles, such as raising their children in a transient environment, were experienced throughout their journey, leaving WOD to experience constant threat and re-construction of who they are and what their purpose is.

Chapter 4- Discussion

In this section, I will provide a tentative model of the inter-relationship between themes and present an overview of the analysis, creating a 'bird's eye view' of WOD's experiences. Then, I will consider the main findings in terms of their relations to the existing literature and theory. The following section will critically appraise the research in terms of quality markers for qualitative research and transferability, which the reader should bear in mind when evaluating the significance of this project. I will also consider the contributions the findings make to the field of Counselling Psychology in terms of research and practice. Lastly, I will highlight some future areas for research and present some concluding notes and reflections.

4.1 Overview of the Analysis

In an attempt to understand what is the experience of being a WOD, the participants engaged in a process of self-exploration and reflection touching upon this phenomenon. The analysis strived to capture and bring to light this detailed exploration; figure 2 represents a diagrammatic depiction of this thematic model (see Appendix O for a summary of the master themes and subthemes).
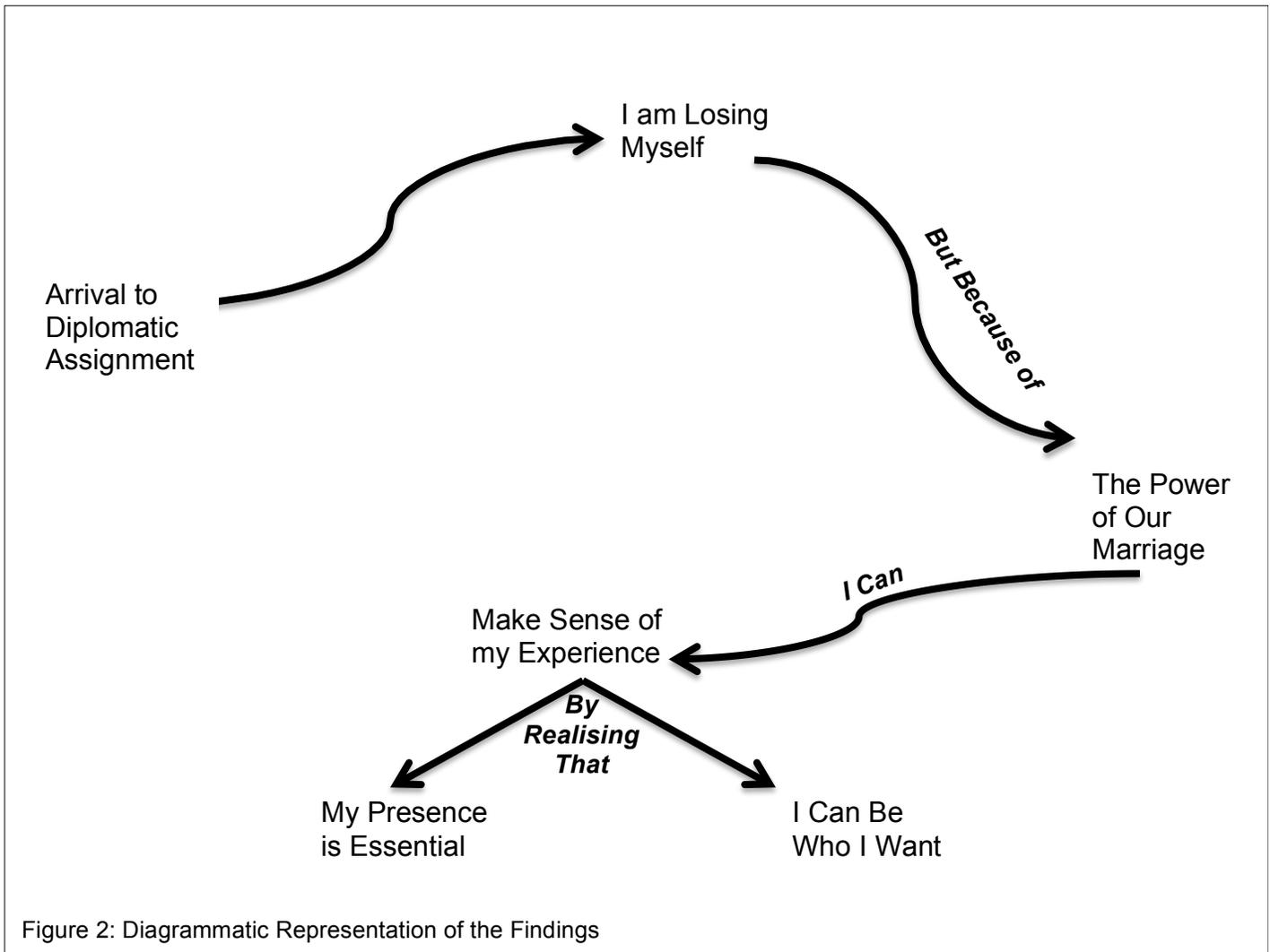
Figure 2: Diagrammatic Representation of the Findings

The diverse sociocultural backgrounds of the participants (Middle Eastern, European, South Asian and South American) and their husband's country of origin and employment status have all contributed to the different experiences of WOD. Nevertheless, as shown by the master themes discussed previously, all eight participants shared many common features in relation to their experiences. I will provide an overview of these similarities and contrasts, and attempt to show how they all interlink.

For all participants, it seemed that having a good and stable marriage felt absolutely crucial in their experience. They described their love for their husbands as the one and

main reason for embarking on this journey. Many described how love was not only a trigger but also the main reason to stay in diplomatic assignments and to attend to some of the activities as a couple. Some WOD talked at length about their experience of being part of a team with their husbands. This sense of togetherness felt quite important, as it helped them feel that they were side-by-side with their husbands, rather than standing behind. This sense of belonging to the job was also experienced by some WOD who described their husband's emotional support as crucial to their well-being, as it provided them a sense of being understood and accounted for.

Most WOD described life during diplomatic assignments as challenging, especially during the first postings, with some even referring to a loss of self. Some experienced a sense of alienation as they realised that their lives was going to be centred around their husband's career, leading them to doubt their identity and sense of purpose. These doubts and confusions in regards to who they are now, seemed to have created a strong internal threat due to the core nature, salience and importance of this identity. This possibly means that in their search for a new purpose, they were faced with negative and frightening feelings about what their life was going to be.

In their attempts to make meaning of this experience, some participants displayed many non-verbal cues suggesting outrage at their inability to have control over major life decisions, such as choosing the next host country. Being the WOD, from this perspective, seemed to imply a fragile, and sometimes even absent sense of presence, with little or no place to be their full selves.

In addition, the question of choice and control over the decision to embark on this journey seemed to be a very important factor in the way WOD interpreted and perceived their situations. All of them reported that it was their decision to assist their husbands, although many did not know what to expect from this new life. Their ability to take responsibility for the life they chose seemed to allow them to accept the challenges they experienced in face of this transient life.

This sense of choice and control was, unfortunately, not experienced when seven WOD discussed their roles as mothers of diplomatic children. Their helplessness was amplified when it dawned on them that they had imposed this lifestyle upon their children. This

129

situation held many implications for their sense of self as they experienced guilt and remorse when thinking about their inability to be constantly there as a mother while wanting to be present with their husbands on a full-time basis.

One marked consequence of holding multiple identity components was a sense of doubt, guilt, confusion and ambivalence. These feelings of instability were not only expressed explicitly, but were also insinuated through participants' non-verbal communication during the interview, particularly when a difficult experience was being shared and participants were not able to articulate properly some of their feelings. Some WOD engaged in a back-and-forth process, in which they expressed good feelings and optimistic views, and at other times expressed negative feelings for similar situations. These conflicted notions and feelings could possibly suggest that one key components of being a WOD is this lack of solidity or 'solid ground'. Interestingly, WOD experience their lifestyles in the same manner they expressed their meaning-making, namely as an unstable, ambivalent and conflicting experience.

Moreover, some WOD mentioned the difficulty in belonging in a society where diplomats and spouses were perceived to be different. Some stated that diplomats were asked to talk about serious topics and to use their intellectual abilities in conversations, whereas spouses were asked to always engage in superficial topics, which made them intellectually regressing. This separation affected many WOD's intra-psychic levels, leading them to feel like their presence was shallow and even irrelevant at times, as they did not have any space to be themselves.

As a result, participants used different ways in their attempt to manage these experiences. On the intra-psychic level, WOD seemed to find it useful to redefine the concepts that laid at the core of the identity struggle, namely their role and purpose in these postings. This possibly implied a major shift in the way they made meaning of major elements of their experiences as WOD, which allowed them to have the possibility of revising their identity. These were mainly experienced as striving or thriving in diplomatic assignments. Some WOD decided to become perfect at their role, while others accepted that it was part of their husband's job but that their lives were about other activities.

These strategies could mainly be seen as an attempt to create positive distinctiveness and self-esteem by changing the meaning WOD attached to their status and experience of the self. Nonetheless, these attempts were partially successful, with some WOD experiencing doubts, guilt and uncertainty. Indeed, some of these attempts at managing their identity felt circular, as WOD seemed to experience themselves differently depending on theirs children's well-being, the proximity of the host country to the home country, the quality of life and levels of busyness in the host country.

Finally, other attempts at management included avoidance and absence, which some participants described as an oxygenation period in which they would travel to a different city or country in order to breath and re-energized before coming back to the posting. Some WOD also explained taking some years off, by not accompanying their husband to a certain posting, so they could focus on themselves or on their children.

4.2 Significant Findings and Contributions

In this section, the project's findings will be located within the existing literature and theory in relation to the themes discussed in chapter three. First, I will discuss how the analysis and findings add to the current literature for WOD. I will then explore how the findings apply to the theories of identity that were discussed in the first chapter, with a specific focus on Identity Process Theory and Theory of the Self. I will utilize these two theories to provide a useful framework in order to understand how being a WOD is experienced. In the following sections, I will develop on the different ways in which these contribute to the field of Counselling Psychology and the potential implications they could have on the fields of research and practice.

4.2.1. WOD and the Literature

In the introduction, it was revealed that WOD struggle from frequent relocations, as it is an inherently and uniquely stressful way of living. They have reported feeling lost, unimportant and anxious about their future (Arieli, 2007; Cangià, 2018; Collins & Bertone, 2017). In the context of these experiences, Cangià's (2018) recent study indicated the unpredictability of the diplomat's posting destination as a source of uncertainty, leading women to experience feelings of insecurity and precarity. She

explains further that the transition to unemployment, particularly, destabilizes the accompanying spouse's identity, as she needs to reconsider her self-concept in this new environment (Cangià, 2018). Cangià (2018) finally explains how spouses can reconfigure their identities in the couple in order to make sense of their sense of self and their precarious feelings.

This study supports Cangià's (2018) claim that the first channel for identity reconfiguration is within the couple, as found in the first master theme *The Power of Marriage*. Indeed, all WOD confirmed that their marriage gave them the space and confidence to experience an identity threat, as they were loved and supported by their partners. However, the findings here appear to add to Cangià's (2018) study the dangerous consequence of having a non-understanding and non-cooperative husband, claiming that husbands' willingness to understand and empathize with their wives was the most important element of their experiences. The WOD's reflections suggest that their husband's readiness to include them in the diplomatic process made them feel as if they were part of a team who was discovering the world of diplomacy together, rather than alone, as reflected in the subtheme *Togetherness*.

The importance of having a healthy and stable marriage in which WOD felt equal to their husbands was the only finding common to all participants, regardless of their age, employment status, country of origin and education levels. These findings are consistent with McNulty's (2015) study on the two main causes of divorce among expatriate couples. Indeed, McNulty (2015) found that expatriate divorce is mainly due to one or both of the spouses being "negatively influenced by the expatriate culture to such an extent that" one may neglect the other, or when the couple experienced core issues in their marriage prior to assignments (McNulty, 2015, p. 106).

WOD's reflections on being part of a team was important for them as it allowed them to make meaning of their presence in diplomatic postings, as shown in the master theme *Making Sense of Who I Am and Who I Want to Be*. Drawing upon Papanek's (1973) concept of 'two-person single career', many WOD felt that as a couple they had the same purpose, namely to make the most out of the diplomatic assignment. As a result of this inclusion, most participants perceived their presence in diplomatic assignments as important in terms of soft power, here described by Joseph Nye (1990) as the "co-optive

behavioural power of getting others to do what you want through the resources of cultural attraction, ideology and international institutions" (p. 188). Indeed, many WOD took on great responsibilities for organizing and hosting social functions, while negotiating their networks in diplomatic postings. As Domett's (2005) study on soft power showed, WOD experienced these acts as "opportunities for exerting soft power in global politics, demonstrating how norms have important constitutive effects in shaping attitudes and therefore actions, and ultimately have material effects in shaping the processes of global politics" (p. 298).

Moreover, although unofficial, the WOD in this study felt that they were part of the performative and ritualistic facets of diplomacy, engaging in what Constantinou (1996) described as 'important global play', as shown in the sub-theme *Making Sense of My Presence* and sub-section *I Diplomatically Matter*. They perceived their role in international diplomacy as taking place in a social environment of reciprocity and cordiality, in which key cross-cultural relationships ought to be nurtured (Domett, 2005). As a result, WOD's position as social hostess in this social realm was experienced as being key actors in the global diplomatic play, defined by Riordan (2003) as a process of cultural exchange characterized by social groupings and communities interaction, rather than merely state-to-state negotiation. However, it feels important to note that although Domett's (2005) study found some differences in terms of levels of incorporation between mature and younger spouses of diplomats, the findings here show no difference across the age norm of participants. This could be mainly justified by the fact that all of the participants' husbands were ambassadors, or retired ambassadors, at the time of the interviews. Indeed, Domett (2005) claims that it is unclear to what extent the spouses' ages can be separated from the seniority of position of diplomats. Consequently, spouses of junior levels diplomats are not as exposed to representational entertaining as spouses of senior levels diplomats are, and it is yet uncertain whether their levels of involvement are triggered by any of these factors.

Interestingly, none of the WOD mentioned a desire to receive any financial remuneration for their input in diplomatic postings, suggesting perhaps that they have succumbed to the system. Another explanation would defend that receiving any form of financial salary for their unofficial work would transform the voluntary basis of their work into an official duty, removing the element of choice (Hendry, 1998).

With a more specific focus on the WOD's role enactment during diplomatic postings, the women's comments suggested that being a WOD during postings felt quite overwhelming given their different responsibilities, as shown in the master theme *My Presence is Essential*. These findings seem to resonate with the work of Davoine et al. (2012), which revealed the different expectations set on spouses of diplomats, namely supporting the diplomat, representing the home country and acting as resource manager. However, the current study appears to add to these findings the struggle of managing these roles while being mothers on diplomatic assignments. The WOD's accounts, confirmed in the sub-theme *Motherhood: A Two-Way Guilt*, show that their biggest challenge was to balance their roles as wives and as mothers, and to attend to their children's needs while being present on the diplomatic front. Their reflections suggested that feelings of guilt affected greatly their experiences, as children were at the center of many important decisions, such as moving away or staying in the home country far from the husband.

In regards to the way social media may have affected WOD during diplomatic postings, this research has not found any potential psychological effect. Indeed, the only time social platforms had been mentioned throughout interviews was when all eight participants explained how social media and technology helped them feel connected to their friends and families throughout diplomatic assignments. In fact, all participants explained how Facebook and Whats'app (a communication application) helped them maintain relationships, become part of experiences through picture sharing and commenting, and belong to specific groups (Nadkarni & Hofman, 2012; Tosun, 2012), all of which were nearly impossible at the early stages of their husbands' careers. A potential explanation for why social media has not affected WOD as it was shown in section 1.2.6, is the participants' ages. Indeed, social media came at a time where most participants did not feel the need to engage in upward social comparison (Vogel et al., 2014). Their self-concept was more coherent and stronger as opposed to teenagers who were in the midst of establishing their identities. Furthermore, the content which they followed at this specific age was usually linked to previous interest, such as cooking, home décor, etc. Teenagers, on the other hand, were more likely to follow celebrities and role models, with the aim of resembling them (Woods & Scott, 2016).

Finally, with only three participants to draw on this study, conclusions relating to repatriation experiences must necessarily be tentative. Some WOD stated that their husband's retirement greatly affected them, as some felt like strangers in their own home. They explained the difficulties in transitioning from WOD to simply wives once they came back to their home country permanently. Similar to spouses of expatriates, this shift was for many accompanied with feelings of uncertainty, loss and confusion, leaving WOD to undergo a similar process of adjustment to that first experienced in the diplomatic posting (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010).

4.2.2 Theory of the Self

By using the theory of the self to frame the process of becoming a WOD, it becomes possible to see how WOD experienced and perceived diplomatic assignments as they first joined their husbands on this journey.

In his writings, Mead (1934) used the notion of game and players as an analogy for how individuals must internalize the attitudes of all members of their group in order to make meaning, have a concept of the self, and learn how to act and react. As the self has a subject and object side, the social self needs to experience itself as object, in order to see how others see the individual. This process takes place in two important ways, namely by obtaining the attitudes of all other members of the group and by organizing those in what Mead (1934) called the 'generalized other'. Mead (1934) suggests that these help individuals develop their most moral, fullest and self-conscious selves, allowing groups and communities to function accordingly given their shared general attitudes. Although this theory was developed by understanding how children play games, Mead (1934) explained how the professional world is a simple continuation of this game for adults.

Here, WOD found themselves part of a game that they formally joined. Mead (1934) explained how each game involved a more complex form of role-playing, requiring players to internalize the roles of all other players. It is only when individuals can view themselves from the standpoint of the generalized other that self-consciousness can be fully attained. However, as these women became WOD through the process of marriage, they were expected to internalize the demands of the role, while joining a game to which

135

they did not understand the rules. It feels important to highlight that the less rules are explained, the more disempowered WOD become as they are not given the right amount of information to contest the game. Moreover, to some extent, it could be argued that Foreign Services have no duty to explain the 'rules of the game' to WOD, as the ministry did not employ them. As such, husbands are the one that explain the rules of the game to their wives, making their interpretation of the rules crucial to WOD's understanding of the game.

In reaction to having only one source of information, many WOD explained in the sub-theme *This Is Not About Me* how their presence in postings was ignored and undervalued by Foreign Services. Consequently, most of the participants expressed worries about the uncertainty of diplomatic assignments, as they did not know what was expected from these postings and what their role intended. Their failure to understand the rules translated into participants experiencing distress while attempting to make sense of their presence and purpose.

Indeed, the findings of the current research argue that the fundamental challenge mainly lies in their failure to understand the game. Many WOD expressed the element of choice of utmost importance as it helped them accept and make sense of their status of WOD. However, when thinking about the real choices presented in front of them, namely being with or without their husbands, we can understand the dilemma presented before them. As such, making the decision to stay with their husbands was one that did not undergo intensive analysis, leading many WOD to accept the uncertainty of what awaited them, regardless of the consequences.

However, in relation to Mead's (1934) standpoint on temporality of action and emphasis on the importance of problematic instances in human experience, this research found that what WOD's experience at this point has the utmost existential significance. Indeed, an individual exists in relation to a world and it is essential that she experiences herself in harmony with this world. If this proves to be difficult or impossible, the individual is thrown in what Mead (1934) called a 'crisis'. Here, WOD did experience a 'crisis' in the master theme *Loss of Self*, as they were separated from their world and thrown into a context where loss of freedom and autonomy were first experienced (Cangià, 2018; Mead, 1934), as shown in the sub-theme *Loss of Agency*. Consequently, when

encountering a crisis in their process of life, some WOD felt paralyzed and 'stuck' in a situation, becoming patient rather than agent of their lives.

However, many women in this study have understood through crisis that learning and internalizing the rules of the game was their only solution. Indeed, their experiences of crisis led many WOD to deepen their sense of self and to experience these as a turning point in their individual existence (Mead, 1934). These critical moments can be experienced negatively, with some WOD having their continuity in and with the world threatened (sub-theme: *Who Am I in the New World*); or positively, with WOD foreseeing opportunities to redefine, deepen and broaden their sense of selves and the world to which they belong (sub-theme: *The Need for Personal Success*).

The findings here show that although crises may have destabilized WOD's sense of freedom and autonomy, they also constituted opportunities in other areas of their lives. Indeed, the discontinuities in their experiences have pressured WOD to make decisions as to 'what they are going to do now', leading them to find creative ways of transforming potential break-downs into break-throughs. Examples of such have been experienced by Marta who took on bridge professionally, Caline and Elan who started community schools in their postings, Sarah who created a blog and worked intensively with refugees, and Lina who started a charity for a children's hospital. These opportunities show how freedom denied in one aspect of experiences can be rediscovered at another level.

4.2.3 Identity Process Theory (IPT)

This research project can also be located within the field of identity as the participants' struggles and obstacles throughout diplomatic assignments have clearly affected their sense of self. As a result, the findings can be linked with Breakwell's (1986, 2010) Identity Process Theory (IPT), and this section will provide a framework for the integration of the personal and social aspects of WOD's identities during diplomatic postings. Indeed, keeping in mind the key identity principles of distinctiveness, self-efficacy, continuity, self-esteem (Breakwell, 1986, 1993), belonging, meaning (Vignoles et al., 2006; Vignoles et al., 2011) and psychological coherence (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010), IPT sheds light on the processes that women experience as WOD. As such, I will

first consider how the status of WOD during postings has threatened and impacted their sense of self, and will discuss the different coping strategies they have employed in order to alleviate these identity threats.

An important moment when WOD experienced a threat to their identity was illustrated at the time diplomats received information about their first diplomatic posting as a married couple. At this moment, changes took place as many WOD had to resign from their profession, leaving behind years of career building. This first change of status seemed to have threatened their professional identity through all key principles of IPT, as shown in the sub-theme *Wasted Intellectual Potential*. Indeed, valued role identities are linked to a sense of esteem and efficacy (Ervin & Stryker, 2001) as the association of oneself to a profession is an important source of pride, confidence and well-being (Caza & Creary, 2016). As such, professional identification played an important role on the personal level, and loosing the latter resulted in great confusion in terms of purpose and meaning (Cangià, 2018), with many WOD expressing a fear of being intellectually empty. Others also referred to their resignation process as a loss of their social environment and their sense of self, as they became different from their surroundings. While distinctiveness is generally considered a requirement for a positive sense of self, Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010) explained that when this uniqueness is predominantly negatively evaluated, here by the lack of belonging to a certain group of people, it can result in a threatened identity and self-esteem.

These threats are further experienced when diplomats and their spouses arrived in their first posting and WOD experienced, through boredom mainly, the void of their professional identity. These findings can be linked to Jaspal and Cinnirella's (2010) principle of psychological coherence, an identity motive that established feelings of compatibility among individuals' inter-connected identities. Their state of transition and fluidity of identity frightened many, as they were unable to recognize themselves as WOD on postings, again shown in the sub-theme *Loss of Self*. To a certain extent, this research study established a strong link between the processes of identity and the sense of self, as for many participants the more time they spent reflecting about their life-purpose, the more they felt disoriented, uncertain, hopeless and frustrated in regards to their future.

This seems to echo Cangià's (2018) study, which revealed the decision to embark on this diplomatic journey to have several implications on the ways WOD perceive themselves, especially for those who have made substantial investments in their education and career development. Her findings also resonate with the WOD in this study, given that unemployment and the decision to stop working in order to accompany their husbands translated into a sense of feeling powerless, as they transition from a stable working life to a transient unemployed life. This powerlessness was also characterized by WOD's transition from financially independent women to financially dependent wives, having both their continuity and self-efficacy removed from them.

Breakwell (1986, 2014) explained that individuals should manage threats to their identities by putting in place intra-psychic, interpersonal and intergroup coping strategies, which WOD have evidently done (sub-theme: *Making Sense of My Presence*). Breakwell (1986) discussed the range of coping strategies by categorizing them as deflecting or accepting. In this study, many WOD experienced strategies of deflection during their first diplomatic assignment, as they tried to avoid or deny the existence of these threats. They rejected the idea that they were 'just wives' and experienced great discomfort in social situations when having to refer to themselves as 'the wife of…' instead of their own name or profession.

These coping strategies negatively impacted their marriage as they confronted and blamed the source of these threats, namely their husbands, which Rosenbusch and Cseh (2012) described as the trigger for marital problems. Indeed, these deflecting strategies were associated with statements of blame where WOD viewed their presence in assignments as a self-sacrifice, leading them to psychologically withdraw their presence from postings (Berry, 2003). As a result, many WOD understood that a change of coping strategy needed to take place if they wanted to save their marriage, as maintaining strategies of deflection obstructed and hindered their adjustment process in the host country (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998) and created many marital conflicts (Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012).

Hence, many WOD experienced what Breakwell (1986, 1993) called a re-evaluation of the principles of identity change, and understood that 'strategies [should] be used to cope with threats and that once acceptance and changes to identity are made, a threat

will fade away' (Breakwell, 1986, p. 96). The relevance of identity change in regards to expatriate spouse adjustment was first emphasized by Shaffer and Harrison (1998) who found that the experience of expatriate spouses was oriented 'strongly towards a loss and then a reclarification or reestablishment of identity' (p. 250).

This was confirmed in this research by WOD's attempts to prioritise more positive identity components and/or redefine key identity concepts. Indeed, some WOD prioritized their roles as full-time mothers, socially implicated WOD and companion to their husbands. Others redefined their role and presence in diplomatic assignments by replacing their professional identity with personal projects, such as writing books or joining clubs. In terms of diplomatic implication, participants experienced either a sense of striving or thriving across postings, both serving the same purpose of giving their lives meaning. This sense of meaningfulness became the channel to acceptance of their status as WOD, which helped them develop new aspects of their identity. The findings here provide evidence that resisting change and trying to maintain existing identities in the face of change and threats can damage the WOD' psychological well-being and negatively impact the rest of the family.

Breakwell (1986) explained how the reconstrual and reframing of certain facets of one's experience when identity is being threatened is a common way of managing the impact of it. However, some participants here struggled with the re-construal of their identities as many moved back and forth across the border (Howard, 2000) of two identities given that they eventually go back to their previous roles and way of life once repatriating. Indeed, given the nature of diplomatic assignments, many diplomatic families go back to their home country for approximately two years between each posting, resulting in WOD's ability to work again during these repatriation periods. However, the findings of this study showed how difficult it was for them to 'go back to their old lives' as previous/future employers were reluctant to hire them on a temporary basis. As a result, many expressed the great difficulties of repatriation, explaining that going from one assignment to the other would be an easier process than to deal with a new set of different adjustment layers.

In accordance to this, studies focusing on identity constructions among expatriates have provided some evidence of a range of adjustment strategies, focusing mainly on the

cultural adjustment of this population (Kohonen, 2008; van Bochove & Engbersen, 2015). However, the findings in this research show that cultural adjustment was not an important issue for WOD, for two reasons. First, WOD ought to maintain a strong sense of national identity given their status of WOD. Although unofficial, they represent their country abroad and are expected to speak its language and practice its customs even abroad, leading their national identity to remain safe from threats. Domett (2005) justified this strong identification as a 'desire for identity, caused by perpetually moving countries, which tends to heighten nationalistic feelings towards one's home country' (p. 299). Second, the short period of time spent in each host country does not provide the time and space for WOD to adopt acculturation strategies (Berry, 2003) and replace their own national identities with the host countries', as opposed to immigration or single long-term expatriation assignment.

However, some threats of national identity have been found among WOD who married diplomats of different nationalities. Within this research project, both Marta and Ava married men from different countries and explained having to let go of their own nationality in order to make place for a new one. As suggested by Breakwell and Lyons (1996), principles of IPT, which are applied to personal identities, can also be applied to social identities such as WOD's national identities.

4.3 Strengths, Limitations and Transferability

In order to consider the transferability of this research project, I will revisit issues of research quality and consider the limitations of this study by reflecting on the methodological, procedural, personal and epistemological challenges I faced. This section will end with a clear statement of transferability.

4.3.1 Methodological Reflexivity

This research project aimed at following the principles for 'good practice' (Elliott, Fischer & Rennie, 1999) while conducting qualitative research. Some of these principles can be conceptualized as usefulness, rigour and quality of the research, and have been addressed in the Methodology Chapter. A number of additional criteria should be considered in this section.

Qualitative research has been accused of lacking scientific rigour (Silverman, 2013) with some criticizing it for lacking generalisability, objectivity and reproducibility (Evans, 2017; Krahn & Putnam, 2003). Indeed, concepts of validity and reliability are understood differently in qualitative research and some researchers claim that in cases of qualitative research reliability should be grounded in the context of the epistemological position that the research project undertakes (Madill, Jordan & Shirley, 2000). In this case, the epistemological position (see Section 2.4) implies that there is no attempt whatsoever to reach reliability in the positivistic way, as one can argue that objectivity is a myth and that any efforts to be impartial to any research will fail (Flick, 2009).

Instead, my epistemological position argues that 'diverse perspectives can provide a fuller understanding of social psychological phenomena' (Madill et al., 2000, p. 17), and that it is therefore better for researchers to be transparent and upfront about their subjectivities and assumptions, allowing readers to draw their own conclusions about any interpretations made (Austin & Sutton, 2014). Also, Madill et al. (2000) explain that it is important to state clearly the epistemological position the researcher takes and to conduct the study in an epistemologically consistent way. Hence, I tried to channel my epistemological stance in the second chapter, as well as demonstrating transparency about my relationship with the data and by grounding the findings in WOD's personal accounts, as suggested by Yardley (2008).

However, although all four of Yardley's (2008) principles were carefully followed, I do not claim that the findings are the only credible accounts that could have emerged from these interviews (Smith et al., 2009). I do recognize that there are alternative interpretations of the same data and that another researcher may come to different conclusions. Moreover, I also recognize that another researcher could have generated different data from the interviews, and that if WOD were interviewed at a different time or day, different meanings and understandings of their experiences could have emerged. Consequently, this research project solely claims to report the understandings and experiences of these eight WOD, although it maintains and believes that the findings presented above are novel, important, potentially relevant to other women, and some men, who share salient characteristics with these WOD.

With regards to IPA more specifically, my reasons for using this approach were previously discussed in the Methodology chapter (see section 2.5); however, its use in this study is not without limitations (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Some researchers have criticized IPA for its dependency on the validity of language, thus requiring participants to be highly articulate and able to communicate clearly the meaning they make of their experiences (Willig, 2008, 2013). As a result, extensive attention has been paid to the role discourse and language played in shaping WOD's experiences and understanding the phenomena under investigation. Furthermore, in her book, Willig (2013) argues the suitability of participants' accounts by suggesting that IPA should only be used when participants can adequately and sophistically articulate the 'rich texture of their experiences' (p. 67). All of the participants in this study were motivated to talk about their experiences, as they were self-selected, and most had at least an undergraduate degree. Also, although all participants had English as their second or third language, they were all fluent and were able to articulate and communicate their perceptions, feelings and thoughts in words. I do acknowledge that the decision to conduct the interviews in a language, which was not their mother tongue, could have maybe limited their ability to freely and fully express themselves. However, the material that emerged was still found to be significantly rich.

Keeping in mind that my main aim was to provide WOD an individual voice through this approach, I decided to put emphasis on the kind of communication they used, rather than to ignore some aspects of it. Indeed, within the analysis, careful attention was given to the way they communicated their meaning-making and focused extensively on the expressions and metaphors they used, which has brought many interesting insights about the phenomenon. Additionally, as IPA has been crtised for over-focusing on cognition (Willig, 2012) with a focus on meanings, processes and thoughts, IPA researchers do acknowledge that embodiment of the phenomenon can be as important (Smith et al., 2009). Hence, careful attention was given to any type of embodied expressions, feelings and non-verbal communication, leading the analysis to not only be focused on the 'deliberate, controlled reflections' (Smith et al., 2009, p. 189), but also to the pre-reflective experiences. As a result, there have been moments during interviews where I highlighted these non-verbal cues and aimed to elaborate on them. However, I felt that some participants were not comfortable with this approach, as they felt perhaps challenged by my detections of different meanings. Consequently, I decided to not voice

these non-verbal cues and to instead annotate them in my interview journal once the interview ended, resulting in what I hope a richer analysis of the data.

4.3.2 Procedural Reflexivity

Participants were selected in the order to which they replied to my e-mails, removing concerns about researcher bias. Two WOD agreed to take part in the study, but withdraw their participation before the interview, stating that they did not feel mentally prepared to discuss their experiences. These two WOD attracted my attention further as I speculated that the diplomatic lifestyle may have been the reason for their un-readiness to share their experiences. The little contact I had with both WOD affected my initial assumptions about this population in general, leading me to think that this lifestyle negatively affected them. Through reflection, I had to remind myself that many reasons, diplomatically related or not, could be at the centre of their decisions and that it was my ethical responsibility to not interpret them.

Moreover, whilst the sample was homogenous in terms of women all married to diplomats, it was heterogeneous in terms of age, husband's employment status, sociocultural backgrounds and place of living. Such heterogeneity added to the diverse experiences of being a WOD, but also ran the risk of complicating the data. Indeed, given that each country has its own laws and agreement on spousal rights, some important variation resulted in different experiences in terms of quality of life. However, despite their countries of origin, all WOD shared many common experiences, with minor variations, leading the data to have plateaued.

Upon reflection, I feel that any additional depth or width of analysis that may have arisen when choosing a more homogeneous sample would have been offset given that there was no research data to support choosing a more homogeneous sample. I feel that the novelty of this particular topic in the psychological field was a rational reason to chose a heterogeneous sample and a good starting point to signpost for further research in the field. Notably, the relatively heterogeneous nature of the sample may have benefitted the extent of transferability of the findings to other women who share key features of the participants, such as multiple relocations and military wives (Storms, 2014), international executives wives (Hochschild, 2005), and two-person single career couples and

politician wives (Gill & Haurin, 1998; Rifkind, 2000; Todd, 1995). I do believe, however, that this sample is unique and that few wives share all common characteristics.

In regards to the interview process, I was acutely aware of the potential different power dynamics. Indeed, I remained mindful of how participants may experience my position as a researcher and how their important political status might impact me. Indeed, on one hand I found myself at the beginning of every interview slightly intimidated by the formality of the encounter, as I traveled to their diplomatic or private residences, interacted with staffs and even sometimes met the diplomat. I paid great attention at remaining professional and not come across as intruding or invading the diplomat and his family's privacy. On the other hand, I was keen on giving WOD the space they needed in order to feel comfortable to share their experiences and be non-judgmentally heard. In an attempt to put off the pressure, participants and I engaged in small talks prior to interviews, in which they would ask me questions about my interest in the topic or about our mutual contact. Before starting the interview, I also made it a point to remind the WOD's rights of confidentiality and her choice to opt-out of any question.

As mentioned in Section 2.11.6, after each interview, I made the decision to turn off the audio-recorder, as all WOD expressed an interest in engaging in *off the record* conversations. During these informal conversations, many WOD shared difficult moments they had experienced in regards to their husbands and/or children. Some of their revelations accentuated the difficulty in talking about these issues when any formalities were taking place (in this case, the audio-recorder). Consequently, I consider this to be one of the limitations of using solely semi-structured interviews with this specific population as they could have been regarded mostly as another formal encounter. For the future, I would consider additional forms of data-gathering that would enhance trustworthiness such as diaries or multiple interviews at different point in time, hence creating a more complex picture of the participant's experience.

In terms of conducting the interviews, I found myself allowing for different data to come up for participants. Indeed, initial interviews were long (my first interview lasted three hours) as a result of my openness and urge to give participants the space they needed. This translated into a significant amount of data to analyse, and given my commitment to being thorough and rigorous in my analysis (Yardley, 2008), it became exceptionally

time-consuming and occasionally dreadful and stressful. With time, I believe I became better at managing the balance between giving WOD space to talk about certain topics, and focusing on the interview schedule and the flow I had set up. Although this resulted in a great amount of data to transcribe and analyse, I believe that my attempts to empower these women were well received, which may have allowed them to open up further during our informal conversations. Surprisingly, I thought that my status of trainee Counselling Psychology was going to challenge me into wanting to fall into 'therapist mode'. However, I found myself knowing where the limit was set and being congruent with my role as a research interviewer, rather than a trainee Counselling Psychologist.

4.3.3 Personal and Epistemological Reflexivity

Being a trainee has unsurprisingly affected some choices in regards to the research study. My choice of IPA, for instance, is one that sat well with the ethos of Counselling Psychology and the kind of focus it puts on participants. Reflecting on the epistemological standpoint that I take in this study, I realize that as WOD described different contradictions and/or directions of the same experience, the project itself also held some epistemological tensions. These tensions mainly resided between (1) a need to stay as close as possible to the participant's experiences while providing definitions, theoretical explanations and meaning-making; (2) analyzing the data by finding the right balance between describing and interpreting the participants' experiences; and (3) being curious and giving a voice to a minority, while staying as open and neutral as possible. Larkin, Watts and Clifton (2006) also highlight these tensions in IPA by explaining how attentive the researcher needs to be when describing and interpreting the phenomenon in question, while acknowledging the role of the participants and researchers.

Although the first two tensions mentioned above have always been on my mind, it is the third tension that I mostly struggled with, hence influencing the first two. Indeed, reflecting back on the research process, I am aware that I was in some sense moving back and forth between my initial interest in the topic based on anecdotes, and the [lack of] theoretical evidence in regards to the phenomenon. Since the beginning, this topic triggered a flame in me that fed on the sense of injustice I was seeing among WOD. In fact, it was during the beginning of this project that I realised how close-minded and one-

sided my perception of the phenomenon was. I had taken on board anecdotal accounts and concluded what I thought at the time was the only experience of being a WOD.

I soon understood that my investigation was doomed to fail if a serious change of perspective did not occur. As a result, my personal experiences and involvement in the research took a serious turn when I became aware of my assumptions through the writing of the interview schedule. In fact, my first interview schedule draft (Appendix C) revealed clear epistemological incongruency as many of my questions alluded to my personal assumptions on WOD. With the help of my supervisor, I quickly understood that I needed to distance myself from my assumptions and realise that I did not know anything of the phenomenon in question. Consequently, I actively sought to remain mindful of this pitfall throughout the data collection, analysis and write-up processes, and kept beside me a reflective diary throughout the process to ensure a proper balance between what is said in the data and was is based on my assumptions. Additionally, the inclusion of the first and final draft of my interview schedule in this research felt important, as I wanted to show the readers transparency on my development as a researcher.

Additionally, I spent time reading examples of IPA studies in order to familiarize myself with the necessary mixture of description and interpretation requested when analyzing the data. Nonetheless, as a novice researcher, I found myself sometimes not courageous enough to carry out an interpretation and sought refuge into a middle ground that I could follow. Upon reflection, I realised that my fear in interpreting the findings rooted from my apprehension in appearing somewhat assumptive of WOD's experiences. It was at this point that I understood how bracketing or Epoché was not always possible, but instead that awareness of my pre-existing beliefs and a re-examination of them were needed (Halling, Leifer & Rowe, 2006).

A helpful way to find this balance was by presenting a Tedx Talk on WOD and prepare a power point presentation for the annual conference of the European Union of Foreign Affairs Spouses Association (EUFASA). As I was preparing both these talks, I was reminded of the different spouses of diplomats that would listen to my content and agree or disagree to some extent with it. Consequently, I have carefully considered my

interpretations, as I did not want to impose any unwarranted conclusions about their experiences.

This has been a burden that I carried throughout this research project, as I knew that my findings were telling only one side of the story. Indeed, during my presentation for the EUFASA conference, I understood quickly that my findings could vary completely depending on the nationality of WOD, as every Foreign Service has its own laws and rights. As such, I became more aware of the multitudes of different experiences WOD could have, and aimed at being sensitive to them by acknowledging that my findings may or may not resonate with some spouses of diplomats. Moreover, I have paid great attention on the way I interpreted my findings and always found myself asking the question "What would my participants think of this sentence, if they were to read this project?".

On a more personal level, I feel that during the process of this research I have experienced some of the uncertainties that I discuss throughout the study. As an international student, my time in the UK is coming to an end and the next steps for my future are soon to be decided. Although a part of me feels the need to go back to my home country and establish my professional identity there, I am put in a position similar to my participants, as my partner may need to relocate in a country different from our home country. All these uncertainties and transitions brought me to re-evaluate and question some of my identity components by asking myself questions such as 'Who do I want to be?'. These personal experiences, together with the experiences of the many spouses of diplomats I have met, had an impact on me: It has strengthened my passion for social justice, community psychology and feminism. Whilst I have been able to have little exposure in the outside world, through the Tedx Talk and the EUFASA conference, I am very excited to see how my passion for raising awareness about prejudices and injustices will shape my future.

4.3.4 Conclusion

Although this research project has its own limitation and only proclaims to report one of the different findings on the experiences and understandings of eight WOD, its novel themes and significant insights are considered to have implications, relevance and

transferability to other, men and women, who share salient characteristics with the participants.

4.4 Relevance to Counselling Psychology and Implications for Practice

This research project sheds light on a population that is under-researched, rarely seeking help, afraid of judgments and socially isolated. Consequently, this study can be used as a valuable source for mental health professionals, including Counselling Psychologists and other psychological practitioners, who work with clients who are experiencing difficulties in their expatriation.

Indeed, an important facet, which practitioners should keep in mind when working with women in similar contexts, is the multiplicity of levels of identity threats experienced in expatriation and repatriation. Mental health practitioners should explore in great depth the meanings held for each identity component, while paying careful attention at how their sociocultural and personal contexts influence their processes. Moreover, great focus should be given on the range of coping strategies used to deflect or accept (Breakwell,1986) their new situation, and to explore the impact these may have on their well-being.

All of the participants who took part in this study expressed gratification in speaking about their experiences, with some even mentioning that it was the first time that the attention was on them instead of their husbands. Many WOD shared that the interviews were a rewarding process, suggesting that it felt good to reflect on the many years spent serving their countries alongside their husbands, while gaining a new perspective and understanding of their experiences.

These comments disclosed how valuable and important it is to talk about one's experiences, as many WOD reflected on the therapeutic benefits of doing so. In fact, during our off the record conversations, some WOD revealed resorting to anti-depressants and/or alcohol abuse, as they did not have anybody to talk to while being on postings. They explained that language barriers, short amount of time spent in host countries, and fears of being judged or exposed made it difficult for them to seek

psychological therapeutic help, but that they definitely saw the benefits of it. As a result, Counselling Psychologists are encouraged to understand the importance of letting clients talk as freely and openly as possible about their understanding of their experiences (Harrist, 2006), as doing so outside the therapy room can feel relatively threatening.

Also, the diversity in WOD's experiences emphasized the importance of assuming a 'not-knowing' and curious stance in the therapy room. In fact, admitting how stereotypical, powerful and misleading social representations of diplomats and their 'glamorous' lifestyles can be, therapists are to be aware of these assumptions and to reflect on their own perceptions and understandings of this minority. As it is important to do so with any client walking in the room, mental health practitioners have the responsibility to reflect on their biases and not impose any of them on their clients. Hence, this study can help enhance the awareness of practitioner psychologists and neutralize any potential biases in regards to this minority.

On another note, it feels important to highlight that almost all participants described not knowing what to expect from this new journey, leaving them feeling insecure about their future. Many experienced a sense of uncertainty about their role and professional future, prior, during and post diplomatic assignments. Elan, for example, expressed in her interview attending diplomatic trainings. She explained that these were helpful in terms of knowing what to practically expect from postings and what her role intended. However, she expressed regret in not having the facilitators of the training address the mental health issues that spouses were to face, with many WOD resorting to personal contacts in order to anticipate what their life was going to be like. Consequently, it seems important when working with women who are accompanying their spouses to reflect on their understandings of being a WOD, to consider their hopes and expectations, and to reflect on the different challenges that might impede or stop them from being realised. This can be an opportunity for Counselling Psychologists to join these trainings and address these issues through individual or group sessions.

Additionally, this study calls for family and couple therapists to pay careful attention to issues of control and agency for expatriate spouses, especially the ones who lose their professional identity in the process and become financially dependent on their spouses.

Hence, therapists should focus on the shift in the relationship dynamic and help couples and family make sense of these changes, especially that quality of marriage has been found to be one of the leading factors in the quality of diplomatic assignments (McNulty, 2015).

With so much attention put on diplomats, very little is being paid on the spouse, which in light of this study seems vital. Therapists are encouraged to help these women think about what happens to them once on diplomatic postings. Indeed, many Foreign Services simply ignore the presence of the spouse or take her presence for granted, leaving her disempowered, while expecting her to make sense of who she is without any support. Indeed, it is an ethical responsibility for Foreign Services to provide the necessary support to help accompanying spouses make sense of their transition and raise awareness about the conflicting issues they may experience. Undeniably, developing clients' awareness can significantly improve WOD's psychological wellbeing and help them reach a certain sense of acceptance of their new situation, all by promoting therapeutic change in their perception and understanding (Greenberg & Watson, 2006; Robbins & Jolkovski, 1987).

Additionally, for clients to reflect on, it may be relevant for Counselling Psychologists to share some of the obstacles WOD experience, especially if they are struggling to foresee any potential threats. In line with Breakwell's (1986) work, therapists should also encourage and invite their clients to consider how they might manage the existent or potential threats and difficulties. They may also keep in mind that many WOD may be excited and grateful for this opportunity. Nonetheless, therapists should take the opportunity to introduce some of the meanings, assumptions, stereotypes and connotations associated with the labels of being an accompanying spouse (also sometimes referred to as trailing spouse), inviting clients to re-evaluate these in order to accept their novel and ambivalent identity.

One way to do so is by following Harrist's (2006) claim that the best way to manage ambivalence and confusion is to develop a great sense of awareness and flexibility in the ways in which this uncertainty is experienced and dealt with. Clients are then encouraged to develop a sense of acceptance and appreciation for the complexity of their situation, emotions and meanings (i.e. seeing them as adventures, or chances of

spending more time with their children), and use them as opportunities of growth, rather than potential regressions. By facilitating this process and educating clients on the ways becoming a WOD might affect them, therapists engage, to a certain degree, to what Miller (1969) called the "give Psychology away". By "giving Psychology away", psychologists help clients have a better perception and understanding of who they are, the choices they have, and who they can be, all inquiries that can lead them to have further control over their own lives (Banyard & Hulme, 2015). Although one could argue that these are patriarchal solutions, it is important to remind ourselves that WOD do unfortunately still live in a patriarchal society where choices of management are limited.

Consequently, this research aims to combat these patriarchal norms by providing WOD more support and protection. Indeed, whilst it feels quite grandiose to suggest this given the relatively small scale of this research project, there appears to be a need to promote the establishment of family offices in Foreign Services that would be entirely dedicated to diplomatic spouses and their families. Many European Countries have already seen the advantages of such institutions (European Union of Foreign Affairs Spouses Association, 2018), and highly recommend their creation, as it is a way of not only acknowledging the family's presence in diplomatic postings, but also recognizing their importance in them. These institutions could use the psychological knowledge formed around the impact of being an accompanying spouse of diplomat and petition for new laws and rights that would protect and support spouses, such as individual allowance, divorce procedure and pension rights. Additionally, this study's findings suggest that putting in place further bilateral agreements between countries would allow accompanying spouses to work. By allowing WOD to have a professional identity, this diplomatic society could foresee a change from patriarchal norms to a more balanced and equal society.

Moreover, in his antidotes for arrogance, Kelly (1970) claimed that psychologists should broaden their definition of therapy, expand their criteria for what makes a competent helper, become participants in their community and change their time perspective, in order to help build 'a psychology of the community' (.p. 524). His redefinition of the psychologist's role calls for a deeper exploration of what the responsibilities of Counselling Psychologists are, with Fassinger and Morrow (2013) and Rafalin (2010) explaining that we have a duty to advocate for social justice. Although many members

are still failing to do so (Palmer & Parish, 2008), this study's main desire is to transform the world that we are a part of, by promoting 'equity and equality for individuals in society in terms of access to a number of different resources and opportunities, the right to self-determination, and a balancing of power across society (Cutts, 2013, p. 8).

As the British Psychological Society (2017) expects accredited Counselling Psychologists to be able to 'effectively communicate clinical and non-clinical information from a psychological perspective in a style appropriate to a variety of different audiences' (p. 15), Counselling Psychologists are encouraged to communicate these issues and inspire the responsible parties to dedicate a part of their resources to the accompanying spouse. Such support can take the form of trainings for diplomats and their spouses, both in groups and individually. Their aim would be to increase their awareness on the difficulties they may encounter as their identities shift, and the different ways research, rather than anecdotes, suggests they could manage these difficulties and transitions.

In addition to these, practical training could be given, such as language courses and protocol guidance that would help accompanying spouses accustom to each new host country. Furthermore, the women's experiences suggest such training should focus on giving appropriate support to WOD who are mothers in order to minimize the struggles that are associated to it. Such support could take the form of ready-packages in which spouses could find all the relevant information, such as doctor surgeries and schools with international programs.

As a final point, this research project has implications for future psychological research and scholarships. In the introduction chapter, it was mentioned that psychology has relatively ignored this minority of women on the basis that they seem powerful and privileged. It is, however, hoped that this study's findings and discussion will allow psychologists and other professionals to be more sensitive and aware of their own assumptions and biases in regards to different minorities, and will actively avoid implicating these in their research and clinical work.

4.5 Areas for Future Research

In light of the significant gap of literature on the experiences of WOD who accompany their spouses on diplomatic postings, this study can be perceived as a preliminary starting point for further research. Given the heterogeneity and size of the sample, it is arguably clear that the next step should be to conduct a similar research study on a larger and/or more homogeneous sample size of WOD who represent the same country abroad. In fact, given that each country differs in their own rights and laws, it would be worth looking at how these impact the experiences of accompanying diplomats and see whether a phenomenological exploration of their experiences would yield similar perceptions and understandings of the phenomenon.

Moreover, a study that explores how each law and right granted to spouses of diplomats affect their experiences as accompanying spouse would provide greater understandings and a fuller picture of how WOD experience themselves. More specifically, given that Estonia is the only country to provide a monthly salary of 1000 Euro to the accompanying spouse's direct bank account (EUFASA, 2018), it would be extremely valuable to study the potential impact that this financial incentive has on the spouses of diplomats' experience.

Additionally, it feels important to note that this study was conducted on WOD who stayed married to their husbands throughout diplomatic assignments. Hence, only one side of the story has been told, this of married WOD. It would be extremely interesting to hear the experiences of ex-wives of diplomats who divorced or separated from their husbands during diplomatic assignments. Considering the impact of the power of marriage on WOD experiences, it feels natural to ask the question of how this experience changes once the power of marriage is not present anymore and WOD do not feel supported by their marriage.

Alternatively, this study focused on WOD rather than other partners of diplomats as it felt like a great starting point to understand this phenomenon. However, in light of the increasing growth in the diversity of diplomats, further research into the experience of accompanying partners from a phenomenological point of view is needed, focusing on male spouses, non-married partners and same sex spouses/partners. Considering the impact that gender identity has on the experience of accompanying a diplomat, these

new focuses would help engender a new (hopefully, non-patriarchal) wave of roles and expectations. These can take the form of attending tea parties for instance, which are not only set by the Foreign Services (unofficially, of course) but also by the diplomatic and national community.

Also, given this research's interest in transferability, it would be helpful to conduct a comparative research between different groups that share particular common aspects with WOD such as Army Wives. These studies could help draw out the particular and unique experiences of WOD, while investigating the similarities with both groups.

Another area of research that was highly suggested by the participants was the impact that the diplomatic life had on their children. In fact, many wanted to know if the life they had put upon their children negatively or positively affected the latter. Perhaps their curiosity stemmed from the guilt many felt in regards to their children, and my inability to answer their questions served as reassurance. Consequently, it seems evident that researching children of diplomats is an important element that would add to the literature on spouses of diplomats and diplomats.

In relation to therapeutic practice, very little literature has been found on the ways this population should manage their identity threat. Hence, additional research focusing on clients who lack agency and control could be highly beneficial, especially when experiencing identity threats.

Lastly, most of the accounts of diplomatic families and their struggle with mental health have been anecdotal, rather than scientific. A very large gap in the literature is currently present when attempting to first, understand the psychological consequences of frequent mobility, and second, the place mental health has on diplomatic families, prior, during and post diplomatic assignments. Consequently, it would be highly beneficial to gain a perspective on mental health in diplomatic assignments, leading to the potentiality of Counselling Psychologists finding a place for themselves in the Foreign Service.

4.6 Conclusion

This research study has advanced and developed our understandings of the experiences of WOD across diplomatic assignments. It attempted to show how the open exploration of this minority provided valuable and novel insights into the exploration of meaning and identity processes in the world of accompanying spouses. Its findings have significant implication not only for the accompanying spouse herself, but also for the Foreign Services and the field of Counselling Psychology.

Following Domett's (2005) statement that diplomatic spouses have always exerted soft power in public diplomacy, this study believes that spouses have been made invisible by gendered ideology, structures and power, which has kept them in the background for a very long time (Davoine et al., 2013). It is from this ideology that as a researcher I took interest in giving these spouses a voice to share their experiences and transform them into an academic piece of writing.

As I am approaching the end of the doctorate training, I am experiencing a rush that goes against Agaoglu's (2013) claim that doctorate candidate leave their research to 'simply sit on the shelf at the university gathering dust' (p. 1). In fact, my passion for this topic has only grown further and my intention to include it in my professional mission is one that I take seriously. I truly believe that this research project matters and I am fully committed to share these findings through seeking publications in an academic journal and working closely with Foreign Services and/or embassies in order to promote the mental health of diplomatic families. I truly hope that further research will shed light on the different facets of this phenomenon and will help spouses of diplomats in general live fuller lives. In fulfillment of this aim, I hope to always be able, as an individual professional, to look in the mirror and say that I am proud of what I see, and to continuously engage with actions that reflect my talk (Rafalin, 2010).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Segment from Reflexive Diary

<u>Prior to Conference</u>

Today is my first conference ever. I finally feel like I am approaching the end of the doctorate. I also realize that this is the kind of things I want to do in the future. I really enjoy doing workshops, seminars and giving presentations and believe that I should use this 'strength' to my advantage, like Courtney and Jacqui said.

I am presenting my findings for the first time today in front of the EUFASA although it is my first draft. There will be more than fifty spouses of diplomats, which is quite scaring! Last night I was thinking that I should make it clear and explicit, as Yardley said, that my findings are only one of the many different interpretations of the data and that not everybody is going to relate to everything I say and that is okay!

<u>Post-Conference</u>

So I did my presentation and I am so happy I did. I still haven't sat through a viva to know how stressful it is but I know that sitting in front of 50 spouses of diplomats who all have a different experiences was the hardest thing I ever had to do! Some agreed with my findings, silently nodding to what I was saying, and others explicitly told me that they could not relate to my findings, mainly when presenting the master theme "Loss of Self".

One even attacked upon this master theme saying that she had not lost herself, that her identity stayed intact throughout and that she always felt like she had a sense of agency. I felt like this encounter felt like a good practice for the future as I was not defensive at all of my findings, but actually extremely open and collaborative to her views and input.

Indeed, her comments were very interesting for the research as I first realised that the main reason she was not able to relate to this theme was because of the country she was representing. In fact, this WOD represented a country where spouses of diplomats had the right to work, a secure job for repatriation and received compensation, through

their husbands, for their presence in diplomatic assignments. This allowed me to understand further that the support she received from her home country affected greatly her sense of self and was an important element in her experience.

Second, I found it extremely interesting to see other's reaction to this WOD, which went hand-in-hand with my experience of on/off record conversation. In fact, many did not agree with this WOD opinion as they experienced a loss of self. However, no one 'dared' to say it out loud and expose themselves in front of other spouses. As a result, when I finished my presentation, I received some written notes from some spouses saying that they could relate to everything I was saying and that my findings captured very well the difficulties they had encountered. Other spouses waited for the coffee break and lunch to take me on the side and share how they experienced a loss of self. Many justified the other WOD's opinion saying that she comes from a privileged country, in terms of rights and salaries to spouses of diplomats, but that it is not representative of the whole.

During my talk, many spouses of diplomats also referred to diplomatic assignments as opportunities to spend more time with their children. They explained that if they had stayed in their home country and worked full time, they wouldn't have had the opportunity to see their children grow up and be part of their lives as much. Many finally shared that although this was an extremely difficult experience, they would do it all over again as they felt that they gained more than they lost in these postings, although some spouses discretely disagreed with this.

As a researcher, this conference was very fruitful as it allowed me to gain more perspective into a world that I admit is still unknown to me. In my attempt at understanding what their experience is like, I realised how much I have developed throughout my journey. Although I do acknowledge my assumptions, I feel very confident and comfortable to put them aside and focus on what my participants and audience were saying.

Appendix B: Research Flyer

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

Are you a Woman Accompanying her Husband on Diplomatic Assignments?

Would you like to share your experience with me?

My name is Nicole Nasr and I am looking for volunteers to take part in a study on

How Does the Experience of Being a Wife of a Diplomat Shapes How They Feel About Themselves and Their Relationships Across Diplomatic Assignments?

You would be asked to participate in 1 interview session of approximately 90 minutes.

For more information about this study, or to take part,
please contact:
Nicole Nasr, Counselling Psychologist in Training or
Dr George Berguno, Senior Lecturer & Registered Psychologist

Psychology Department
at
or

Email:

Appendix C: Preliminary Interview Schedule

Hi (participant's name). I would like to thank you again for coming in today and agreeing to participate in this interview. Just before we start, I would like to remind you that the interview will be recorded, but that your identity will be kept confidential. Your real name will never be used during the research project, as I will replace it with a pseudonym. Before we start, I'd like us to fill in some background information about yourself on this questionnaire here (share questionnaire and give time for the participant to complete it). Thank you for completing the form (make some introductory comment if appropriate).
I wanted to start the interview by asking you what prompted you to take part in this research project.

Can you tell me about yourself?
- Where did you grow up?
- What did you want to be when you were growing up?
- What did you study at university? (If applicable)
- Were you working before becoming a DFP?
- Was any of your family members a diplomat? If yes, to what extent did it affect you?

Can you tell me about your partner and his profession?
- How did you meet your partner?
- When you married him (if applicable), were you aware that you would be joining him in diplomatic assignments?

Can you tell me about the diplomatic assignment(s) specifically?
- What did you know about diplomatic assignments? Did you have an idea of what your role was going to be?
- How was your first assignment?
- Were there any challenges?
- How did you explain these assignments to your children? (if applicable)
- How do you feel when approaching the end of an assignment? (if participant has experienced more than one assignment)
- Can you tell me about the transition? (if participant has experienced more than one assignment)
- What was different in the second assignment from the first one? The third one from the second one? (Etc.) (if participant has experienced more than one assignment)

To what extent have these assignments impacted the way you perceive yourself?
- How do you describe yourself?
- How do you feel about yourself?
- As a woman, how does it feel?
- How did you cope?

To what extent have they impacted who you are as a wife/partner?
- Tell me about your relationship with your partner?
- How does it feel to be in a relationship with a diplomat?
- How did you cope?
- Has your relationship planned out as you had envisaged it to be?
- To what extent it has been affected by your partner's profession?

To what extent have they impacted who you are as a mother? (if applicable)
- What did your children/partner expect from you?
- What are the challenges you faced?
- How would it have been different if you did not have children?
- How did you cope?

To what extent have they impacted your social relationships?
- To what extent were you able to maintain relationships with others?
- How does it feel socially to move countries quite often?
- How did you cope?

To what extent have they impacted who you are as a (name profession)? (if applicable)
- How does it feel to have non-paid work during these assignments? (if applicable)
- How was the transition (if applicable)?
- How did you cope?

How does it feel now that this is coming to an end? (If participant is in last assignment);
How does it feel now to be done with this chapter? (If participant's partner has retired);
How does it feel now to know that you still have a couple of assignments left before your partner retires? (if participant's partner has other assignments);

- Would you do it again? Was it all worth it?
- What would you do differently?
- What advice would you give to other diplomatic female partners who have just started alongside their partners?

How was the interview?
- Is there anything that you would like to add that we haven't covered?
- Was there anything about the discussion that you found helpful or unhelpful, or particularly distressing talking about?
- How do you feel about your partner?
- Do you have any questions?

(Overall guide: I will elicit both positive and negative responses, and allow for ambivalence.)

Appendix D: Revised and Final Interview Schedule

Hi (participant's name). I would like to thank you again for coming in today and agreeing to participate in this interview. Just before we start, I would like to remind you that the interview will be recorded, but that your identity will be kept confidential. Your real name will never be used during the research project, as I will replace it with a pseudonym. Before we start, I'd like us to fill in some background information about yourself on this questionnaire here (share questionnaire and give time for the participant to complete it). Thank you for completing the form (make some introductory comment if appropriate).
I wanted to start the interview by asking you what prompted you to take part in this research project.

Can you tell me about you and your partner?
- How/Where did you meet?
- How long were you together before you settled down?
- Do you have children?
- Can you tell me about your understanding of his work, in the early stages of your relationship?
    - What was the impact of his profession on the early stages of your relationship (before settling down)?
    - How did that make you feel?
    - How did you manage how you felt?

Can you tell me about your first diplomatic assignment?
- Can you tell me about preparation that you did in terms of understanding your role and responsibilities?
- Were you given any support? If yes, can you tell me about that?
- Can you tell me about anything you found difficult?
- Can you tell me about anything you found particularly positive or enjoyable?
- Can you tell me about your expectation about your role?
- At that time, did you feel there were any specific expectations upon you? If yes, can you tell me about that?
    - What do you think they were
    - Where do you think they came from
    - How did you feel about that?
    - How did you manage that?

During this first assignment, how did this experience impact on how you felt about yourself/your relationship with yourself?
- How did this impact make you feel?
- How did you manage how you felt during this period?
- How did this make you feel as a woman?

Can you tell me about how/if this first assignment impacted upon your relationship with your partner?
- How did it impact upon how you feel as a wife?
- Can you tell me some moments that you remember?

187

- How did you manage the impact/how you felt?

Can you tell me how having children impacted/played a role upon this experience? (if applicable)
- How did you feel about that?
- How did these feelings impact upon your relationship with your children?
- How do you feel this experience impacted on how you felt as a mother?
- How did you manage all of this?

Can you tell me about the impact of this first assignment on your relationship with your wider family?
- How did you feel about that?
- Can you tell me some more about that? (if given short answer)
- How did you manage?

Can you tell me about the impact of this first assignment on your relationships with friends?
- How did you feel about that?
- Can you tell me some more about that? (if given short answer)
- How did you manage?

During this period did you continue working or did that change (if indicated a profession on questionnaire)
- How did that make you feel
- How did that impact on your relationship with yourself? With your partner? With your children?
- How did you manage how you felt?

I am wondering how or if your experiences have changed over the course of the other diplomatic assignments?
- Have other assignments raised different/similar issues?
- Can you tell me some more about that?
- How did these issues impact you?
- How did you manage how you felt?

What guidance would you give to other WOD who have just started alongside their partners?

How was the interview?
- Is there anything more you would like to say about your experience of being a diplomatic female partner?
- Was there anything about the discussion that you found helpful or unhelpful, or particularly distressing talking about?
- Do you have any questions?

Appendix E: Pre-Prepared Telephone Schedule

This telephone interview will be the first point of contact with the interviewee.
The researcher will cover all of these following points, and allow the interviewee to ask questions at any time.

- o Thank you very much for calling me about this research project. Is it possible to know how did you hear of it?
- o As you probably saw from the advert/heard from X, my name is Nicole and I am doing my Doctorate in Counselling Psychology at City University of London.
  I guess you would like to know a bit more about this research project. (I will pause and allow the interviewee to ask questions at this point)
- o I am very excited to hear about your experiences as a wife of a diplomat. During the interview, we will look at things such as how you met your partner, how you were introduced to diplomatic assignments, and what is your role during these assignments.
  This subject has never really been researched before, and I would be very keen to look at how you feel about it.
- o As a participant, you will have to meet with me for an informal interview of approximately 1.5 hour. I also would like to tell you that the interview will be audio recorded, so I can make sure that I have all the details right. I understand that confidentiality might be a big issue, however, when transcribing the interview, I will make sure that anything that might identify you be removed from that record, so that you remain anonymous.
  I am happy to meet with you anywhere that feels convenient for you to get to.
  Would you like to ask any questions at this stage?
- o In order for me to get some idea of you before we meet, can I ask you a few questions?

  What name do you like to be known by?
  How old are you?
  Are you in a relationship with a diplomat?
  Do you have a fluent level of English? (if any doubts about proficiency)
  Could we fix up a time and a place to meet?
  Can I note down your telephone number so I can contact you in case of any problem? Would you like me to text you the details tat we have arranged?
  Is there any reason you believe that you might be harmed in any way by participating to the study?
  Is there anything else you would like to ask?

  Thanks for your help. I really appreciate it.
  I look forward to meeting you on FULL DATE, at HOUR in LOCATION.
  See you then. Bye!

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

Information Sheet

My name is Nicole Nasr and I am carrying out this research project as part of my doctorate in Counselling Psychology at City, University of London.

I would like to thank you for considering participating in this research project entitled "What is the Experience of Being a Wife of a Diplomat across Diplomatic Assignments?" which is being supervised by Dr. George Berguno, Research Supervisor and Registered Psychologist.

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 the 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.

The purpose of this research project is to investigate the experience of diplomatic female partners in diplomatic assignments. It wants to understand what it means to them to be accompanying their partner in these assignments and if any significant impact are present. Given that very little research has been done on the topic, this research project wants to address this gap in the field of counselling psychology.

You have been invited to take part in this study as you are in a relationship with a diplomat and have experienced at least one diplomatic assignment.

Your participation will last for approximately 2 hours. You will be asked to fill in a short questionnaire at the beginning of the interview, in order to gather some background information about yourself, and then participate in a face-to-face interview with myself. During this interview, we will look in some detail at your experiences and how you have managed them over the years. I will also make an audio-recording of the interview so that I can later transcribe it accurately. Some short extracts from the transcript will then be used in the final report, in order to illustrate your views or experiences.

To protect your confidentiality, no personally identifying information (e.g. name, location of assignments) will be used in any write-up of this research, or in any later journal publication. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym, and the name of your partner will be kept confidential, as well as your children, if applicable.

The interviews will be carried out in any location of your choice, at a time that is convenient for you. The important things to be aware of are that (1) taking part is voluntary, (2) you can withdraw from the research project at any point before the

analysis phase, (3) you do not have to answer questions that you don't want to, and (4) your confidentiality will be protected at all times.

Your role as a participant should not involve you in any greater risk of physical or mental harm than you experience in your daily life.
At the end of our interview, you will have the opportunity to ask questions, and I will have the chance to ask you on your experience as a participant. I will finish the interview by giving you some further information on how to get support should you want it.
Once the research project will be completed and appraised, I would be happy to send you a copy of it, if you request one.

I would like to thank you again for considering taking part in this project. Your help would be highly appreciated, as it would help psychologists understand the experiences of diplomatic female partners.

If you have any further questions or concerns that you want to discuss, please contact me:

> Researcher: Nicole Nasr
> Telephone: ███████████ or ███████████
> E-mail: ███████████████

> Supervisor: Dr George Berguno
> E-mail: ███████████████

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: The Experience of Wives of Diplomats and Their Self-Identity Across Multiple Expatriations
You could also write to the Secretary at:

<div align="center">

Anna Ramberg
Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee
Research Office, E214
City University London
Northampton Square
London
EC1V 0HB

</div>

Email: ███████████████████
Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix G: Informed Consent

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

Title of Study: What is the Experience of Being a Wife of a Diplomat across Diplomatic Assignments?

Ethics approval code: [*16/17 133*]

Please initial box

I agree to take part in the above City University of London research project. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read and understood the participant information sheet, which I may keep for my records.	
I understand that I will be interviewed by the researcher.	
I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.	
I understand that all of the identifying information about me in the transcript will be altered and a pseudonym will be used in place of my name in any written material.	
I understand 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.	
I understand that no identifiable personal data will be published and that any identifiable data will not be shared with any other organisation	
I understand that these records will be destroyed once they are no longer required for the academic appraisal of the research project.	
I understand that this information will be held and processed to answer the researcher's research project question.	

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 up to the analysis stage, without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.	
I understand that the written report of this research project will be submitted as part of the researcher's Doctoral course in Psychology at City University of London, and may also be submitted for journal publication.	
I agree to City University of 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.	
I agree to take part in the above study.	

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Signature   Date

Nicole Nasr_____   _____   _____
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.

Appendix H: Background Demographic Form

Background Information

I would like to ask you a few questions in order to get some basic background information about you.

This will be a useful way to show readers of this research information about the cross-section of diplomatic female partners that it studies.

None of the information will ever be used to identify you, as the research project is completely confidential and anonymous. However, if you don't feel confortable answering any of the questions below, please feel free to skip them.

Thank you for taking the time to do this.

How old are you?	
What is your current legal marital status	Please tick as appropriate
Single	
Living together – Cohabitation	
Married	
Civil Partnership	
Divorced	
Separated	
Windowed	
Other: Please Specify	

Do you have children?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, how many children do you have? How old are they?	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.
What is your highest level of education? **Examples of qualifications**	Please tick as appropriate and specify subject.
GCSE's, Brevet, BTEC Diplomas level 1 and 2	
A Levels, French Baccalaurate, International Baccalaureate, BTEC Diplomas level 3	
Certificates of Higher Education, BTEC Professional Diplomas, NVQ level 4	
Higher National Diploma, Other higher Diplomas	
University Undergraduate degree	
University Postgraduate Degree	

Masters, Certificate	
University Postgraduate Degree PhD, Doctorate	
Other: Please Describe	
Are you currently employed?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, what is your current occupation	
If no, have you been employed in the past?	
Yes	
No	
If yes, what was your previous occupation?	
What is your nationality? Please state all if more than one	1. 2. 3.

	4.
How many diplomatic assignments have you done?	
In what countries?	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.
In what country is most of your family living? (Parents, siblings, and extended family)	

If you need to get in touch over any other aspect of this, please e-mail Nicole on

██████████████

Thank you!

Appendix I: Debrief Information Pack

DEBRIEF INFORMATION

Thank you for taking part in this interview. I would like to express my gratitude for your participation in this research project, and for letting me listen to your experiences. Now that it's finished I would like to tell you a bit more about it.

The aim of this interview has been to allow you to discuss your experience as a diplomatic female partner. You will have been asked about topics, which were important for you, both positive and negative.
The purpose of this research project is to gain a more in depth understand of women's experiences of being a diplomatic female partner, and will help psychologists understand some of the most common themes that women consider important when engaging in their partners' diplomatic career. Your input will also show the diversity of experiences that diplomatic female partner have that may be individual to them.
Your contribution, views and feelings on this topic have been highly valuable, especially considering how little research has been conducted regarding the psychological impact of diplomatic assignments on female partners. You have been a valuable part of helping to increase the understanding of these experiences.

I will send you a copy of the final research project once it has been written up, if you asked for one. If not, you can always get in contact with me and request one later.

If you have any additional questions to ask about the research project, you can me on
████████████ , ████████████ or ████████████████

If there is anything you would rather discuss with someone else regarding the research project, or the way it has been conducted, feel free to contact my research project supervisor:
Dr George Berguno, Research Supervisor and Registered Psychologist.
The Department of Psychology, School of Social Sciences.
City University of London, Northampton Square, London, EC1V 0HB
Telephone: ████████████

At the end of our interview, I asked you how it had been for you to talk about these experiences, and if it had raised any difficult issues. If you are experiencing any feelings of discomfort, either now or in the future, such as emotional distress, uneasiness or negative feelings about yourself, please have a look at the list provided below.

This list will give you details of organisations that you can contact in order to get professional help. Many people have found it useful to contact these organisations and talk over personal issues on a confidential basis.

I would like to thank you again for taking the time to help with this research project!

Ethics approval code: *[16/17 133]*

Counselling and Psychotherapy Services in London

As a first step, you could ask your GP or NHS 111 for help. You could also contact the British Psychological Society (BPS) or the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) for help in choosing an accredited therapist specialised in certain areas of therapy.

General Mental Health

NHS 111

NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. When calling 111, you will be able to speak to a highly trained adviser that is supported by healthcare professionals. They will ask you a series of questions to assess your symptoms and immediately direct you to the best medical care for you.

Telephone: 111
Website: www.nhs.uk

British Psychological Society

BPD can help you find a psychologist with experience in particular areas of mental health.

Telephone: 0116 254 9568
Website: http://www.bps.org.uk/psychology-public/find-psychologist/find-psychologist
E-mail for general enquiries: enquiries@bps.org.uk

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

BACP will help you find a suitable counsellor in a particular area.

Telephone: 0145 5883 316
Website: www.bacp.co.uk

Mind, The Mental Health Charity

MIND provides advice and support to empower people who are experiencing mental health problem.

Telephone: 020 8519 2122
Website: www.mind.org.uk

North East London Foundation Trust

NELFT provides an extensive range of integrated community and mental health services for people living in the London boroughs of Barking & Dagenham, Havering, Redbridge and Waltham Forest, and community health services for people living in the south of west Essex areas of Basildon.

Telephone: 020 8215 9200
Webiste: www.nelft.nhs.uk

Women and Mental Health

Woman's Trust

Woman's trust is a counselling service for women who experience any sort of domestic violence.

Telephone: 020 7034 0303
Website: www.womanstrust.org.uk

Women and Girls Network

WGN is a specialist therapeutic service leading in developing and delivering innovative and effective counselling services for women and girls who have experienced all forms of gendered violence and/or discrimination.

Telephone: 020 7610 4678
Website: www.wgn.org.uk

Women's Therapy Centre

The women's therapy centre offers psychotherapy to women whose needs might not otherwise be met elsewhere, and has a commitment to working with women who would not usually have access to therapy.

Telephone: 020 7263 7860
Website: www.womenstherapycentre.co.uk

Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation

IKWRO is a specialist charity that offers counselling support for women of middle eastern origin.

Telephone: 020 7920 6460
Website: www.ikwro.org.uk

Couple and Family Therapy In UK

Tavistock Relationships

Tavistock relationships offer clinical services to couples and parents throughout London.

Telephone: 020 7380 8288
Website: www.tavistockrelationships.ac.uk

Harley Therapy

Harley therapy believes in encouraging couples to talk openly about difficult topics and explore their individual history.

Telephone: 084 5474 1724
Website: www.harleytherapy.co.uk

Couple Works

Couple works offers couple, individual counselling, psychosexual therapy and premarital counselling.

Telephone: 078 8406 4041
Website: www.coupleworks.co.uk

Families in Focus

Families in focus enables parents to support their children to lead healthy lives and grow into socially and emotionally responsible adults.

Telephone: 014 4221 9720
Website: www.familiesinfocus.co.uk

Counselling, Psychotherapy and Psychiatric Services in Lebanon

Medical Institute for Neuropsychological Disorders

M.I.N.D. is a collaborative mental health clinic that works with psychiatrists, psychologists and clinical assistants. They offer services for children, adolescents, adults and elderly.

Telephone:
Ras Beirut Clinic 01 748 000
St Georges Hospital University Medical Centre 01 575 700
Ashrafieh Clinic 01 449 499
Website: www.mindclinics.org

American University of Beirut Medical Centre

AUBMC has an outpatient private clinic that offers psychiatric and psychological help for children, adolescents and adults. AUBMC also offers family and couple therapy.

Telephone: 01 350 000
Website: www.aubmc.org/patientcare/dep_div/Pages/psychiatry.aspx

Keserwan Medical Centre

KMC delivers treatment on an inpatient or outpatient basis, and works closely with both psychologists and psychiatrists.

Telephone: 09 857 300
Website: www.kmc.com.lb

Hotel-Dieu de France

Hotel Dieu works with numerous psychiatrists and psychologists who aim at providing the best treatment, for individuals, children elderly and/or families.

Telephone: 01 615 300
Website: www.hdf.usj.edu.lb

Bellevue Medical Centre

Bellevue offers individual patient counselling, daily support groups, psycho-educational workshops, nutritional support and various therapeutic activities and services.

Telephone: 01 682 66
Website: www.bmchcs.com

Appendix J: Segment of Transcribed Interview

90		bother because we get paid in different ways sometimes you receive a treatment, a
91	I	friendship, or just a hug, and that's enough for me.
92	I	That's very nice. Can you tell me about your preparation before doing your first
93		assignment?
94	M	At the time it was very hard because I we only could speak to the people that were
95		leaving the embassy there so like give me some information, or what I should bring
96		with me, just things like.
97	I	So you were in contact with the wife of the previous person
98	M	Yes yes so even when I come here I also became in contact with the wife that was here.
99	I	And did you know what your responsibilities were going to be?
100	M	Well, at the time we were the 2 smallest embassies in Gabon, and euh I really was not
101		worried about that, I was worried about doing something I was interested in. Also I had
102		my article to write so I was just really thinking about that. And spend some time
103		writing.
104	I	Ok, so did you have to do anything within the embassy that was new for you?
105	M	Yes of course because when the ambassador left, I had to organize dinners, lunches, and
106		our national day was the first time I organized it, but I had seen others and we have
107		traditions and euh, we use the same suppliers, and also we cannot change much from
108		the things we do in Argentina, like we have to do empanadas and dulce de leche and
109		because I am Brazilian, I had to learn this new culture and act like an Argentinian
110		myself, because I was in Gabon representing Argentina, not Brazil. So I had to learn
111		about the culture, the language, the people, and do like the Argentinian do. In a way
112		sometime I feel like my Brazilian nationality had to disappear a little so I can make
113		place for this new nationality. But the most difficult thing for me was that in Gabon they

Appendix K: Segment of Analysis of Transcribed Interview

did not have high schools for my first son, so I had to leave him in a boarding school, so

that was really hard for me.

I   Wow I am sure it was. How old was he back then?

M   13. So we left him i   l in a boarding school near my family

I   How was that for you?

M   It was not comfortable. No not comfortable. But he knew that, but also when we got

married i   sent him in a exchange in th   ecause I said to him that I don't it's

difficult to have someone in the house when it used to be just the two of us. It will be

hard but I felt that it was better for me to adapt to my husband on my own, so I sent him

to th   nd he was like 'Yey! I'm going to   ughs). So he went there for a

year, and when he came back I had already arranged the house so that it could be good

for everybody, so he came in and was able to see our way of living because he came

Handwritten annotations (right):
- Son left behind very difficult
- Son far, & Son young
- Not comfortable
- Child has present up in boarding school.
- New step-father
- Adapt to husband first
- Son was excited
- Changes had place when son was away.
- Son had to adapt to new life

Handwritten annotations (left):
- i) Difficult decisions (children)
- Unavoidable decisions
- Took decisions to & accept to adapt first
- Adapting to new lifestyle had place independently

11

was made easier for him
Simplified Transit?

Simplified transition for children

back from I ` ~~~ So he almost at the time forgot how it was before, so it was like 2 transitions in 1.

So when you left fi   n you had to leave him in Brazil so you did long-distance with your son. How did you manage?

Travelling as a coping mechanism

elarged by travelling but t faith   at

M   On vacations, he would come to l   ad between every time, I would be t least twice.

I   Can you tell me about something you found difficult in this first assignment?

Cultural Shock
Practical ≠ Theoretical
Friends are unstransferable
Need to build own environment
Felt quite alone

Cultural Shock
Theoretical if practical differ
Friends are unstransferable
Build your own env.
At first feels quite alone

M   I think it was a cultural shock. Buhm I wasn't expecting although I heard a lot about Africa, but it's completely different when you are there. So let' say until you get in touch with foreigners, because friends are the only thing that you cannot transfer from the previous wife, so until you build your own environment with people who share the same concepts, you feel quite alone. This was a bit hard because the culture is very very

Appendix L: Segment of Emergent Themes in Vignettes

Theme	Text	Reference
89. Torn between 2 perceptions / Seeing the good and the bad	I was a top assignment for my husband. I was very happy for him, and us and my son who went to college there, and my daughter who was suppose to prepare her college years. It was a great opportunity for us. But it was hard for their personal and social life. It was hard.	Lina, p. 34, l. 490-493
90. Doubting my intention/decision / Guilt / Creating bad environements	guilt again, and re-questioning things. Especially my youngest son, he had ADHD, and he had issues studying. And we went there and the issues grew bigger. And euh you know when you are a young boy and you want to be integrated, you take on any friends. Even bad friends. So this was also an issue. Who are your friends? Like yeah, it was the whole package. You know, like children can have problems even if they stay in the same school and they don't change, but you know, the move made, if you are here, putting them at school and they have problem, you say okay. But when you take them and they start having problems, you feel guilty also. Like if I had stayed in [home country] maybe he wouldn't face all these problems. So children are the biggest stress. Maybe this is why so many diplomats don't get married.	Lina, p. 34-35, l. 495-505
91. Children: source of conflict	So children are the biggest stress I mean in [North American Capital] we used to fight a lot about the children. You know, why you did this to me, why you accepted and not accepted. You know. Issues about children….	Lina, p. 35, l. 504; l. 509-511
92. Strong couple	love is important because it keeps you together, it keeps the couple strong, the couple should be very strong to go through all the changes, you know. It's not easy.	Lina, p. 36, l. 519-521
93. Accepting the diplomatic lifestyle	It's not easy. You have to like the lifestyle and on top of it, you have to accept that you keep changing: habits, friends, toppos. If you are not crazy about this kind of life, it's not an easy life. You know, people think that diplomats are invited everywhere, they are treated so well, ok but this is not the reality. I am telling you	Lina, p. 46, l. 521-525
94. Reality is loneliness	The reality is loneliness. You are at home alone. You don't have family. You are alone.	Lina, p. 37, l. 534

Theme	Text	Reference
4. Giving credits where it belonged / Finding my place / Being fair / Accepting my limitations / Making sense of my presence in this world	it's his job, not mine. And if he wasn't there, I wouldn't be as well as successful. So I couldn't do what I did of he wasn't there.	Lina, p. 31, l. 451-453
5. Being a guilt-free mother	then we moved to [Mediterranean European country] and the house was great with a pool so they were very happy. So this move was easy. The move from [Mediterranean European Country] to [home country] was easy because all the family was there, so it was easy. The eldest one just had finished school, so he went straight into college there so he was lucky.	Lina, p. 32, l. 469-473; l. 474-475
6. Creating unstability for children / Guilt	children were small, so it was easy part for the children, like 2,3,4. Like an ice cream would do. But like when we left [important North American city] they were 8,6 and 4. And you know, they cried so much when we left. I wonder why. Maybe they thought about insecurity. It came very sudden for them, we didn't have time to prepare them. The decision arrived in July, and we had to move in September The difficult part was from [home country] to [North American Capital] because they were teenager.	Lina, p. 32, l. 464-469; l. 473-474
7. Inducing unwanted pain on children / Guilt	My daughter was in the last year of school, and you know it's in those years that you make friends and all, and it was very hard for her. The youngest one was 12, it was hard and not hard, and then it became very hard. And I think he is suffering until now. I think so. Yes (sadly, looking down), this is the most difficult. It was very hard. This move was so hard on them. My daughter, imagine, 16, telling her to leave all her friends and go to a new city. And I think at this age, it's very hard	Lina, p. 33, l. 475-478; l. 480-483
8. Becoming the helper / Making it better for children	in the first 2-3 months, the weekends she wouldn't go out, so we became the friends, taking them out. It was hard.	Lina, p. 33, l. 486-487

Appendix M: Example of Creation of Clusters During Analysis
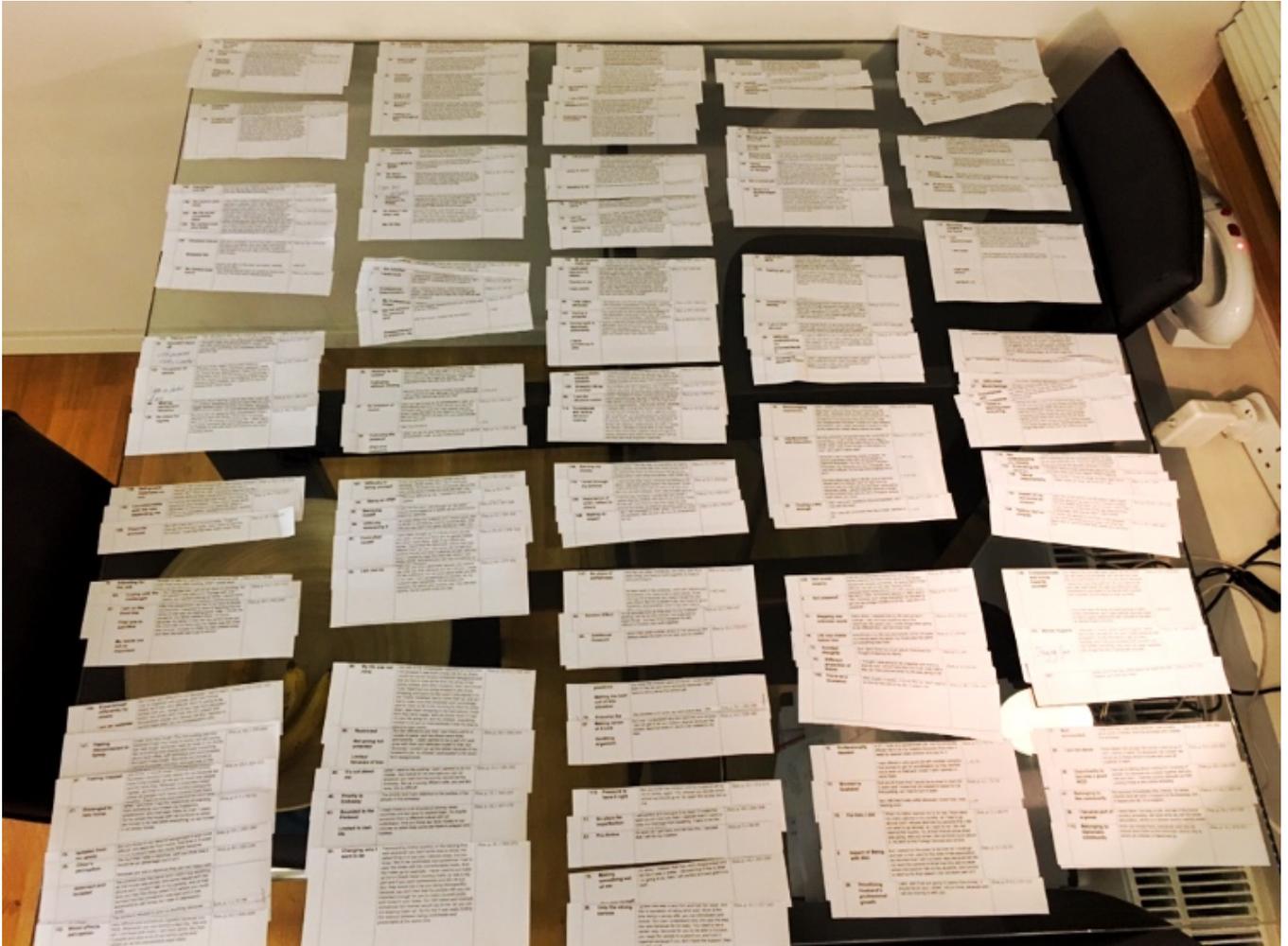
Appendix N: Segment from a Participant Summary Table

1. Stepping Into His World
    1.1. Attached To Him
        1.1.1. I Depend on Him
        1.1.2. I am Bounded to my Husband
    1.2. Limited
        1.2.1. Limited by the Protocol
        1.2.2. Stepping Into an Unknown World
        1.2.3. Powerless
    1.3. My Husband: a friend and an enemy
        1.3.1. We are a Team
        1.3.2. Me VS Him
2. It's Not About Me
    2.1. Me, Myself and the Job
        2.1.1. Self-Sacrifice
        2.1.2. It's Not About Me
    2.2. No Permanency
        2.2.1. Constant Change
        2.2.2. Lack of Stability
        2.2.3. Disconnected from Family
    2.3. I Wanted More For Me
        2.3.1. Wasted Intellectual Potential
        2.3.2. Remorseful Decisions
3. Diplomatic Assignments: Mental Challenge
    3.1. Mental Exhaustion
        3.1.1. Mental Fatigue
        3.1.2. Overwhelming Pressure
        3.1.3. Needing to be Perfect
    3.2. The Struggling Mother
        3.2.1. Challenged Mother
        3.2.2. Pressure to make it Right by Children

Sub-Theme	Themes and Emergent Themes		Participant, page, line	Quotes
Stepping Into His World	Attached to Him	I Depend on Him	1. Elan, p. 36, l. 535-537 2. Elan, p. 37, l. 540-541 3. Elan, p. 39, l. 571-574	1. "Not having an income that was tough, you know, to depend on your husband. I have never never never depended on someone in my adult life, when it came to my education, I worked on holidays, worked on scholarships." 2. "But still it was part of my personality. Tough to change like that and 'gosh, now I have to ask him for money', eugh like that was really tough thing." 3. "even if I did it and worked with it the money increase wouldn't be good enough, whereas with him, it would. But I told him that I wanted to help him do the course work so that I could learn from it as well. But unfortunately he didn't have the time to do it. "
		I am Bounded to my Husband	1. Elan, p. 3, l. 32-35 2. Elan, p. 5, l. 66-70 3. Elan, p. 5, l. 70-72 4. Elan, p. 5, l. 75-77 5. Elan, p. 5, l. 72-74 6. Elan, p. 5, l. 77 7. Elan, p. 8-9, l. 119-121 8. Elan, p. 20, l. 290-294	1. "But I waited for the exam to be over so I could go and talk to him, and for the sake of the association, we decided that I will not teach also because we did not want the parents to think that this was a place where the teacher hits on the students, and rumors to start so for that reason I did not teach part of it" 2. "When my father wanted me to do law, there were not many options in my country, so I had to go abroad and I refused and told my parents that I did not want to go abroad, so I said no no I am not leaving the country. So at that time so know what was going, well you know I did not think much about it, he went to the Foreign Service and ok fine." 3. "in 97, I took up a government

				job, but my university offered me to do my masters because there was a need for special need children and pay for it" 4. "I was offered a very good job with another company that wanted to get an accreditation so they wanted me to work on that and I loved it and I wanted to work there" 5. "that would mean that I would be bonded to them for 5 years and I knew that we needed to leave for his first posting, so I had to turn it down" 6. "but I felt that it was unfair because I knew that I was leaving soon" 7. "I said, well if we are going to spend this money, it should be on your career, not on mine, because well I will be moving in with you" 8. "But the difference was that I was there just for a couple of years, and the others were there permanently. I really wanted to be a part of it and grow with them and dedicate myself to that, but obviously I couldn't go up the ladder because of my husband's job, so instead I participated in the short-term assignments."
	Limited	Limited by the Protocol	1. Elan, p. 8, l. 105-109 2. Elan, p. 11, l. 150-154 3. Elan, p. 11, l. 175 4. Elan, p. 11, l. 155-156 5. Elan, p. 12, l. 167-170 6. Elan, p. 12, l. 177-179 7. Elan,. L. 376-378 8. Elan, p. 23, l. 329-333	1. "the fact that I was a diplomat, well you think that it would be an advantage but it isn't. Because you are a diplomat they are not happy with your presence because some things might get exposed." 2. "when you are in post as an ambassador's wife, you automatically become a chair-person and then the consulate wife is under the chair-person and you know it goes like that, so you have to, you cant say that you don't want to be part of it, you automatically become

				3. "Yes! You HAVE to"
				4. "when you go on post, the first thing you do is call the ambassador's wife, as part of the protocol."
				5. "I mean there is a lot of protocol among Asian countries and we have to respect them. So maybe someone from a different culture will not understand. And you know we have royalty in our cultures so when they come we have to prepare and hostess."
				6. "Because I went for the pre-posting course, I knew what to expect. I was okay with it. Of course it was put in such a way that this is how it is, everybody does it and you can't fight the system. That's why I understand how and why she was like that."
				7. "the only thing that I have to accept strongly although I don't approve is that, although you are a diplomatic spouse, you cannot say what you feel"
				8. "you know, in [south Asian country] and [central European country] it was easier for me because we were living outside, so we got to meet new people and be more free. Whereas in [important Asian capital], we lived in a [home country] compound where all [people from home country] lived there together. There is pros and cons but for me it was more cons."
		Stepping into an unknown world	1. Elan, p. 4, l. 51-53 2. Elan, p. 4-5, l. 59-62 3. Elan, p. 5, l. 62-63 4. Elan, p. 5, l. 65 5. Elan, p. 5, l. 65-66	1. "We met in 1990, he finished degree in 1993, and in 1997 I finished and I knew that when he decided to get into the foreign ministry in 93-94, I was like not prepared." 2. "that's when I realised that my life was going to change. I did not know anything about the diplomatic life, good Lord. I knew

			6. Elan, p. 40, l. 585-589 7. Elan, p. 40, l. 590-591	things were going to be different but I did not know how." 3. "I thought I was going to be a teacher and marry a teacher and I would have this 9 to 5 job, even half a day, so I had pictured what my life was going to be." 4. "But I didn't think too much about it because the thought of leaving my family" 5. "Everything in my life was permanent, so for 19 years my friends were the same, my house was the same, so everything was fixed." 6. "it felt like an extended honeymoon because in [home country] we were never alone in the house, always with people and family. So going there it was different, we are on our own, having dinner, because back home dinners are with others, so it was like honeymoon for some time. Like even at the beginning it was nice, waking up late, not having anything to do, so really felt like a vacation" 7. "after couple of weeks, it hit me like no I don't want to do this for the rest of my life. It wasn't me."
		Powerless	1. Elan, p. 43, l. 632-635 2. Elan , l. 637-640 3. Elan, p. 44-45, l. 654-657 4. Elan, p. 46, l. 671-674 5. Elan, p. 46, l. 678-679	1. "I had some health problems that I discovered here, and saw a dietician. And I was telling her that its difficult to restrict myself or do a diet because I don't have control over what I eat. We are invited and I cannot refuse the food because it is a sign of lack of respect. So if you cant adapt, its difficult for everyone. 2. "the weather was difficult, I hated the cold. The toughest thing is your health because your body takes a toll everytime. Every assignment things change, the food, the weather, the conditions, pollution… 3. "You are most of the time, not in control of the situation, as a

				diplomatic spouse, most things are out of control. The countries you go to, how you dress, what you say, the dinners, the food, you don't have a lot of space to make big decisions and you have to be okay with that. 4. "the living conditions affect your health like when we were living in [important Asian capital] the pollution was so bad that people would tell me that I lost 2 years of my life because of it. So it affects you. 5. "the thing is that we have no control to where they send us. We cant even request anything.
	My Husband: a friend and an enemy	We are a team	1. Elan, p. 8, l. 116-119 2. Elan, p. 10, l. 147 3. Elan, p. 27, l. 397 4. Elan, p. 37, l. 539-540	1. "My husband asked me to find an alternative, and the alternative was to find a different university in our city and I found one but it cost 25 000$ at that time to attend and do masters in management. So my husband said 'ok go ahead' 2. "you make an understanding with your husband" 3. "that was really tough, but my husband did stand by me" 4. "it was difficult but luckily he did not make it difficult to give the money. He was always generous.
		Me VS Him	1. Elan, p. 3, l. 40-42 2. Elan, p. 10, l. 144-146 3. Elan, p. 17, l. 241-243 4. Elan, p. 17, l. 243-244 5. Elan, p. 22, l. 321-324	1. "husband when I met him he was going to finish his degree and went in to do a bachelor of arts. He majored in history and international studies. But then he decided to do that 1 year of diploma education. After which he got a posting. 2. "even though the government does not pay us a salary, but if your husband goes there as a single person he gets a certain salary but if he goes with wife and children, he gets different amount. But there is no money just for the wife

				3. "the thing is that husband are safe because when they meet among each other, the topics discussed are quite formal like economics and politics and topics that are work related so no extra effort.
				4. "when it comes to us, it can be anything and everything and then it occurred to me that I have to know everything.
				5. "because the father goes straight to work, and for him it was very clear you have something on your table to eat, you have job schedule, whereas for me you need to know where to shop, which school to put them, and my role in the association
It's Not About Me	Me, Myself and the Job	Self-Sacrifice	1. Elan, p. 6, l. 78-80 2. Elan, p. 6, l. 85-87 3. Elan, p. 20, l. 295-299 4. Elan, p. 21, l. 311-315	1. "I decided to take on a government job because that meant that every after posting, when I came back home I would still have a job. So that was the only reason. 2. "and I started tutoring English to students. But that only lasted for 1 year because in '98 we had our first posting in [South Asian Country]. 3. "After this assignment, we had to go back to [home country] and I expected to work in teaching but my father-in-law was not feeling good. After 1 month we moved in, my father passed away. It's funny because my father-in-law had the perfect body but the mind was not there and my father was the other way around. Anyway in 2006 my dad passed away and then the kids had to go to school. 4. "So I decided that I will not go back to teaching, but of course it was difficult to manage with only 1 salary, so I started tutoring at home. I would send the kids to school, do morning classes at

					home, have a short break, and then again in the afternoon, and then 6 to 10 with my children and nephews. So full job at home, and also helping with everything else
		It's not about me		1. Elan, p. 11, l. 162-163 2. Elan, p. 13, l. 180-183 3. Elan, p. 16, l. 230-234 4. Elan, p. 23-24, l. 338-347 5. Elan, p. 25, l. 364-373	1. "The priority and main objective is the welfare of the people in the embassy 2. "when I went to the posting I said I wanted to do my master, she looked at me and said you can do whatever you want but the priority should be the embassy. But as a young officer's wife, you are like 'wow, this is difficult'. 3. "most of them are permanently based in [south Asian country], so they don't worry about moving and leaving everything behind, they just enjoy themselves. For us it's a lifelong career, so it's very important to us that people feel happy and well received because it's not for our pleasure, it's our job. 4. "the wife of the ambassador expected so much from me because it was such a busy city for us. Every month we would receive ministerial delegations and like we had to host all the time the wives of the prime minister and other ministers. And I don't know if you heard but our prime minister's wife loves shopping and luxury so like even if she stayed in 5-star hotels, breakfast had to come from us, and so I had to make sure that breakfast went accordingly, wait for them at 8h in the morning for them to come down, take them shopping to the best places, make sure they were happy, and you know, even if I had my own life going on, and my children, everything needed to be put on hold because it was my duty to

				attend to their needs.
				5. Representing [home country], in the training they said whenever you don't know how to dress, the safest thing is to put your national dress, but you know I like to be confortable but sometimes I had to wear the dress with the uncomfortable heels. And like make up for example, I never used to put make up but in [South Asian country] make up was a big part and if you went somewhere and did not put any, they would see it as you being disrespectful, because you don't feel that the people with you are important enough for you to make yourself pretty and invest in your looks. So I felt naked and shamed sometimes hen women would say to me 'ah you are not wearing make up'. So for me it was really finding this balance between being confortable and presentable at the same time.

Appendix O: Detailed Table of Master Themes

1. Power of Marriage

    1.1 Love

    1.2 Togetherness

    1.3 Emotional Support

2. Loss of Self

    2.1 This is not About Me

    2.2 Loss of Agency

        2.2.1 Betraying Myself

        2.2.2 Instability and Uncertainty

        2.2.3 Luck

        2.2.4 Limited

        2.2.5 Bounded to Him

        2.2.6 Not Yours

    2.3 Wasted Intellectual Potential

        2.3.1 What I Could Have Been

        2.3.2 Me VS Him

        2.3.3 Going Backwards

        2.3.4 Fear of Intellectual Emptiness

    2.4 Alone in the Crowd

        2.4.1 Loneliness

        2.4.2 Lack of Real Friends

        2.4.3 Not Belonging

3. My Presence is Essential

    3.1 My Attitude is Central

    3.2 Being a mother: a Two-Way Guilt

        3.2.1 Never in the Right Place

        3.2.2 Constant Guilt

        3.2.3 Worried About Children

        3.2.4 Responsibility Towards Children

    3.3 Pressure to Create a New Home

Appendix P: Ethics Approval and Form

Psychology Research Ethics Committee

School of Arts and Social Sciences

City University London

London EC1R 0JD

14th March 2017

Dear Nicole Nasr and Deborah Rafalin

Reference: PSYETH (P/L) 16/17 133
Project title: The Experience of Diplomatic Female Partners Across Diplomatic Assignments

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   Richard Cook
Course Officer   Chair
Email:▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮   Email:
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222

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? *For each item, please place a 'x' in the appropriate column*	Yes	No
Persons under the age of 18 *(If yes, please refer to the Working with Children guidelines and include a copy of your DBS)*		X
Vulnerable adults (e.g. with psychological difficulties) *(If yes, please include a copy of your DBS where applicable)*		X
Use of deception *(If yes, please refer to the Use of Deception guidelines)*		X
Questions about topics that are potentially very sensitive *(Such as participants' sexual behaviour, their legal or political behaviour; their experience of violence)*		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 psychology.ethics@city.ac.uk 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 psychology.ethics@city.ac.uk. 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? *Please place a 'x' in the appropriate space*	
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)	

1. Name of applicant(s). (All supervisors should also be named as applicants.)

Nicole Nasr

2. Email(s).

████████████████

3. Project title.

The Experience of Diplomatic Female Partners Across Diplomatic Assignments

4. Provide a lay summary of the background and aims of the research. (No more than 400 words.)

Diplomacy is known to be one of the oldest forms of expatriate assignment. As diplomats have started uprooting their nuclear family, the increase demand for long-term diplomatic and consular mobility has created new issues for the diplomat and the family, leading them to re-question their own personal, social, professional and national identity. While residential and cultural change are recognized as stressful and demanding transitions in life, multiple relocations often results in the loss of community ties, social capital, habits, and behaviours, and most importantly the change of one's self.

Supporting this conclusion is evidence that diplomatic moves are often linked to higher rates of depression and marital conflicts, as well as great amount of pressure on both diplomat and long-term partner (Boyle, et al., 2008; Cullen and Solomon, 2013; Magdol, 2002). While diplomats are occupying a new professional role, building their social capital and establishing their new identity (Gillispie, 2015), diplomatic female partners (DFP), on the other hand, are expected to play a variety of roles ranging from child-rearing, to maintaining the household and attending social events independently or with the partner (Chiang, 2015; Davoine et al., 2013). Their transition is thus more complex and demanding than their partners', and their identity undefined.

Given the scarcity of research in this particular area, this research project aims at addressing this gap by exploring how DFP make sense of their experience during diplomatic assignments.

References:

Boyle, P. J., Kulu, H., Cooke, T., Gayle, V., & Mulder, C. H. (2008). Moving and union
dissolution. Demography, 45(1), 209-222.

Chiang, M. (2015). Sojourning in the margin: Living as wives of international students.
Dissertation Abstracts International Section A, 76,

Cullen, S. W., & Solomon, P. L. (2013). Family community integration and maternal mental
health. Administration And Policy In Mental Health And Mental Health Services
Research, 40(2), 133-144. doi:10.1007/s10488-011 0386-4

Davoine, E., Ravasi, C., Salamin, X., & Cudré-Mauroux, C. (2013). A "dramaturgical" analysis of spouse role enactment in expatriation: An exploratory gender comparative study in the diplomatic and consular field. Journal of Global Mobility: The Home of Expatriate Management Research,1(1), 92-112.

Gillespie, B. J. (2015). Residential Mobility and Change and Continuity in Parenting Processes. Journal of Research on Adolescence, 25(2), 279-294.

Magdol, L. (2002). Is moving gendered? The effects of residential mobility on the psychological well-being of men and women. Sex Roles, 47(11-12), 553-560.

5. Provide a summary of the design and methodology.

As this study adopts a philosophical standpoint that puts human meanings and experiences at the centre, it will conduct a phenomenological investigation.
A qualitative methodology will be adopted to study this topic, more specifically an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), given its ability to explore in great depth each participant's experience (Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 2004).

This research project will involve eight DFP living in London, United Kingdom, or Beirut, Lebanon. This hard-to-reach population will be recruited through the researcher's personal contacts, both in London and Beirut, and through flyers.
Participants will engage in a telephone interview (see Appendix 1) with the researcher: they will receive a brief explanation of the research project, and will be given the chance to ask any questions. Participants who agree to take part in this research project will be sent an electronic version of the information sheet on their e-mail address. This information sheet will mainly touch on the aim of the research project, the way data will be collected, and their rights as participants. On the day of the interview, participants will first be asked to sign a consent form in which confidentiality and other important points will be reviewed. Each participant will then be interviewed once for approximately 90 minutes and will be audio-recorded. These semi-structured interviews will then be transcribed verbatim and analysed thoroughly using a thematic approach. The data will then be interpreted and included in the final report.

References:

Smith, J. A., Jarman, M., & Osborn, M. (1999). Doing interpretative phenomenological analysis. M. Murray & K. Chamberlain (Eds.), Qualitative health psychology (pp. 218-239). London: Sage.

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

Participants will be asked to complete a background information questionnaire (see Appendix 2). This questionnaire will give the researcher and readers of the research project an idea about the participant's background demographics, so that they could contextualise the sample. In this questionnaire, they will be asked about their age, marital status, education background and diplomatic history. Following, participants will be asked to engage in face-to-face semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 3). These interviews will be conducted in English and will last approximately 90 minutes. They will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

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.

During interviews, participants may disclose past psychological distress that they might have experienced during one of the diplomatic assignment.
In order to provide participants with the appropriate resources, contact details of local counselling services and relevant resources will be given after the interview (see Appendix 4). Additionally, participants will be reminded that they do not need to answer any question that might trigger any sort of distress.

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

This study will investigate the experience of eight diplomatic female partners who have experienced at least one diplomatic assignment. Participants will currently be on duty with their partner, or permanently living in their country of choice, if the partner has retired.
As this research focuses mainly on the impact of their experience during diplomatic assignment, it will exclude DFP who have decided to stay in the original country and engage in long-distant relationship with their partner.
Moreover, participants will need to have good command of the English language, as interviews will be conducted in English.

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

This research project will rely on a convenience sampling technique and select the participants from London, United Kingdom and Beirut, Lebanon given their accessibility and proximity.

Participants will be selected and recruited via two recruitment strategies.
First, a flyer will be produced and posted on a Facebook group (see Appendix 5), namely the Diplomatic Spouses' Association of Lebanon. The same flyer will be advertised in the Embassy Magazine, in order to target the Diplomatic Spouse Club of London (DSCL).
Second, participants will also be selected and recruited through the snowball technique. This technique will be used as an informal way to recruit a hard-to-reach population. Two points of contacts will be used to help recruit participants: one in Beirut and another one in London.

10. Will participants receive any incentives for taking part? (Please provide details of these and justify their type and amount.)

Participants will not receive any financial incentives for taking part in this study. However, they will be able to contribute to a new field of research by enhancing the understanding of the general public, and more specifically psychologists. Moreover, these women will be given an opportunity to have a voice and share their unique experience.

11. Will informed consent be obtained from all participants? If not, please provide a justification. (Note that a copy of your consent form should be included with your application, see question 19.)

Informed consent will be obtained from all participants (see Appendix 6) prior to the interviews. The consent form will provide a clear description of what the study explores and what they can expect from it. Finally, the form will clearly state the participant's rights in regards to confidentiality and their right to withdraw from the study, which will also be verbally emphasised before the interview.

12. How will you brief and debrief participants? (Note that copies of your information sheet and debrief should be included with your application, see question 19.)

Participants will be briefed through an information sheet (see Appendix 7) given before the interview-day. They will be sent an electronic version of the information sheet on their e-mail. This information sheet will invite participants to take part in this research study, explain the purpose of it, and why they have been chosen. Moreover, participants will receive information regarding their implication in the study: they will be informed of what they need to do, the advantages and disadvantages of taking part in the study and how their information will later be used. This information sheet will finally inform every participant of their confidentiality and withdrawal rights in regards to the study.

Participants will be debriefed once the interviews will have been conducted. They will be asked about their experiences in conducting the interview and if it had any negative impact on them. They will be reminded of their right to withdraw from the study at any point up to the analysis phase. Participants will be given the chance to ask questions to the researcher and will be given a post interview participant information sheet (see Appendix 4), along with a resource list. This resource list will inform participants of nearby services that offer individual, couple and family therapy in the UK and in Lebanon.

13. Location of data collection. (Please describe exactly where data collection will take place.)

The data will be collected in two different cities: London, United Kingdom, and Beirut, Lebanon.

13a. Is any part of your research taking place outside England/Wales?

No		
Yes	**X**	If 'yes', please describe how you have identified and complied with all local requirements concerning ethical approval and research governance.

The Lebanese Psychological Association has been made aware of my research. They will need to see my ethics approval from City, University of London.

13b. Is any part of your research taking place outside the University buildings?

No		
Yes	X	If 'yes', please submit a risk assessment with your application or explain how you have addressed risks.

Interviews might take place in participants' homes. In order to minimize the risk, a ''buddy system'' will be used to inform the researcher's whereabouts during the interview (see Section 15). If the researcher fails to contact the ''buddy system'', the ''buddy system'' will try to contact the researcher several times on her mobile. If the researcher is unreachable, the ''buddy system'' will be asked to contact authorities and make them aware of the situation.

13c. Is any part of your research taking place **within the University buildings?**		
No		
Yes	X	If 'yes', please ensure you have familiarised yourself with relevant risk assessments available on Moodle.

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.

There are no main potential risks for the participants.

Psychologically, the only possible mild risk on the participant would be the potential emotional reaction to the questions. In this case, the interview will be terminated and the researcher will make herself available to discuss the participant's reaction, and find a short-term solution (i.e. go to the ER, book an appointment with GP, or book an appointment with a therapist). In order to limit severe emotional reaction to the interview, the researcher will conduct a pilot interview in order to test the questions and ask for feedback.

Physically, the journey to meet the researcher (if interviews are not conducted in the participant's home) may involve a small risk, but no more than that which is normal in day-to-day life.

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.

Given that interviews may take place in participants' homes, the researcher will be entering the homes of people who are effectively strangers. This could lead to a small potential risk, should a participant have intentions to harm the researcher. Although this is seen as a risk, it is outweighed by the potential benefits of the research project, once the right precautions have been put in place. In fact, the researcher will use a "buddy system": someone who will be made aware of when and where the researcher has gone to undertake the interview and when she will contact them to assure of her safety. If the researcher does not contact them at the given time, the ''buddy system'' will be informed of the procedure to follow (see Section 13b).

If the interviews are taking place elsewhere, the researcher will make sure to familiarize with the safety procedure in case of fire or other causes.

16. What methods will you use to ensure participants' confidentiality and anonymity? (Please note that consent forms should always be kept in a separate folder to data and should NOT include participant numbers.)

	Please place an 'X' in all appropriate spaces
Complete anonymity of participants (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.)	
Anonymised sample or data (i.e. an *irreversible* 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.)	
De-identified samples or data (i.e. a *reversible* process whereby identifiers are replaced by a code, to which the researcher retains the key, in a secure location.)	
Participants being referred to by pseudonym in any publication arising from	X

228

the research	
Any other method of protecting the privacy of participants (e.g. use of direct quotes with specific permission only; use of real name with specific, written permission only.) ***Please provide further details below.***	

17. Which of the following methods of data storage will you employ?	
Please place an 'X' in all appropriate spaces	
Data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet	
Data and identifiers will be kept in separate, locked filing cabinets	
Access to computer files will be available by password only	**X**
Hard data storage at City University London	
Hard data storage at another site. *Please provide further details below.*	

18. Who will have access to the data?	
Please place an 'X' in the appropriate space	
Only researchers named in this application form	X
People other than those named in this application form. *Please provide further details below of who will have access and for what purpose.*	

19. Attachments checklist. *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.*

Please place an 'X' in all appropriate spaces

	Attached	Not applicable
*Text for study advertisement	X	
*Participant information sheet	X	
*Participant consent form	X	
Post Interview Participant Information Sheet	X	
Copy of DBS		X
Interview Schedule	X	
Telephone Interview	X	
Background Information Sheet	X	

20. Information for insurance purposes.

(a) Please provide a brief abstract describing the project

This research project will focus on the experience of diplomatic female partners during diplomatic assignments.
It will use a qualitative approach, more specifically an Interpretative Phenomenological Approach, in order to fully grasp these women's experiences. Participants will be recruited from London, United Kingdom, and Beirut, Lebanon for convenient reasons. The researcher

will interview 8 diplomatic female partners. These audio-recorded interviews will then be transcribed verbatim, and analysed using a thematic approach.

	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) <u>Excluding</u> information collected via questionnaires (either paper based or online), is any part of the research taking place outside 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 insurance@city.ac.uk, <u>before</u> 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…05/JAN/2017………………

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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. <u>Final checks.</u> Before submitting your application, please confirm the following, noting that **your application may be returned to you without review** if the committee feels these requirements have not been met.

Please confirm each of the statements below by placing an 'X' in the appropriate space	
There are no discrepancies in the information contained in the different sections of the application form and in the materials for participants.	X
There is sufficient information regarding study procedures and materials to enable proper ethical review.	X
The application form and materials for participants have been checked for grammatical errors and clarity of expression.	X
The materials for participants have been checked for typos.	X

---

23. 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 application.	X
I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research that may arise in conducting the project.	X
I understand that **no** research work involving human participants or data can commence until ethical approval has been given.	X

	Signature (Please type name)	**Date**
Student(s)	███████	12/01/2017
Supervisor	Dr Deborah Rafalin	13.01.17

Reviewer Feedback Form

Name of reviewer(s).
Jessica Jones Nielsen

Email(s).
████████████

Does this application require any revisions or further information?		
Please place an 'X' the appropriate space		
No Reviewer(s) should sign the application and return to psychology.ethics@city.ac.uk, ccing to the supervisor.	**Yes** Reviewer(s) should provide further details below and email directly to the student and supervisor.	X

Revisions / further information required
To be completed by the reviewer(s). PLEASE DO NOT DELETE ANY PREVIOUS COMMENTS.
Date: 01/03/2017 Comments: There is minimal risk for this study and no major concerns are being raised at this time. However, it should be noted that data will be collected outside of the UK and will require the supervisee to implement appropriate health and safety protocols in place when and if she engages participants in one-to-one interviews. I bring this to your attention because I believe international insurance coverage will need to be requested by the researcher and her supervisor and that an appropriate risk assessment form will need to be completed and submitted with the final version of the ethics application.   The interview questions and procedure around completing the basic demographic questionnaire may take longer than 90mins. Will the questions/interview be piloted?

Applicant response to reviewer comments
To be completed by the applicant. Please address the points raised above and explain how you have done this in the space below. You should then email the entire application (including attachments), with tracked changes directly back to the reviewer(s), ccing to your supervisor.
Date: 10/03/2017 Response:

First, data will be collected outside the UK, consequently the international insurance coverage has been granted by the university's insurance (see Section 20). Additionally, given that the researcher will engage in one-to-one interviews with participants, the appropriate health and safety protocols have been implemented (Appendix 8).

Second, as the interview questions and procedure around completing the basic demographic questionnaire may take longer than expected, I changed the duration of participation to approximately 2 hours, instead of 90 minutes. This information has been modified in Appendix 1, Appendix 5 and Appendix 7. Moreover, in order to revise my interview schedule, I will consult one of my points of contact, who is a DFP herself, and ask for feedback on my interview questions. Consequently, I will not conduct a pilot interview with her, but instead will verify with her whether the questions are appropriate and if any other important areas are being overlooked.

Reviewer signature(s)
To be completed upon FINAL approval of all materials.

	Signature (Please type name)	**Date**
Supervisor		
Second reviewer		01/03/2017

5. PART TWO: PUBLISHABLE PAPER

The Lived Experience of Wives of Diplomats: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

5.1 FOREWORD

The journal of *Feminism & Psychology* was selected for many reasons. Firstly, the article below discusses a topic that puts women in the forefront. Indeed, it is interested in providing insights into the gendered reality of Wives of Diplomats (WOD) across diplomatic assignments, and show how it is shaped by the patriarchal values of the diplomatic world. Secondly, this journal is interested in research that raises awareness about the different dimensions of difference, privilege and inequalities women in this community face. This article presents the latter as it allowed WOD to share their perceptions of these dimensions. Finally, as this journal has a global audience and high impact factor, it is hoped that it will promote this phenomenon among practitioner psychologists and affect their work with clients, and encourage their presence in community psychology and stance on social justice.

It is important to note that this article is composed and formatted in line with the journal's requirements and guidelines; a copy of the submission criteria can be found in Appendix Q.

5.2 ABSTRACT

This paper presents an outline of the main findings from a research study exploring the experiences of Wives of Diplomats (WOD) across diplomatic assignments. Data were collected from eight participants using semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The analysis suggested that despite the fact that each country has its own laws and rights for spouses of diplomats, all participants experienced their role as WOD in a similar fashion, explaining that many lose their sense of self and autonomy, especially in the first diplomatic posting. It appeared that the strength and connectivity of their marriage allowed WOD to make sense of their experiences by understanding that their presence is essential for the

diplomatic posting and that they have the possibility of choosing who they want to be. Implications for psychological practitioners are discussed in terms of their clinical work and their responsibility to advocate for social justice. Suggestions for future research are also made.

Key Words: Wives of Diplomats, Diplomatic Assignments, Identity Process Theory, Social Justice.

5.3 INTRODUCTION

Diplomacy is known to be one of the oldest forms of expatriate assignment, and in light of the rapid growth for globalization, mobility and expatriation, researchers have advocated for the re-examination of identity (Easthope, 2009; Hardwick, 2003; McHugh, 2000; Silvey & Lawson, 1999). Diplomats and their families undergo an identity shift as they experience frequent relocations resulting in diverse changes in their selves. As such, the experience of change in social identity has been found to have far-reaching implications on the psychological well-being of people, as it threatens their self-concept (Davis, 2011). Following Nicholson's (1984) theory of work role transitions, diplomats tend to follow the replication adjustment strategy as they make some adjustments to their identities in order to fit into their roles. Although they experience different countries at each assignment, their overall social role stays the same, hence fewer impacts on their self-identity. By contrast, the spouse's identity is deeply affected by frequent relocations as she usually leaves behind many social identities, such as a professional one, in order to take on a new backstage identity (Arieli, 2007; Collins & Bertone, 2017; Davoine et al., 2012; De Singly & Challand, 2002).

Diplomatic and consular professionals are considered to be higher civil servants who have high level of qualification and a highly mobile workforce with different levels of responsibilities. The regular international assignment rhythm is between two and four years in international postings, with optional periods of two years in the home country between each posting. Diplomatic assignments are initiated by the ministry of Foreign Affairs, which appoints diplomats on a temporary mission in a variable location, making their assignments usually unpredictable in both timing and location.

International relocation stress has been defined by Wilkinson and Singh (2010) as 'a psychological state that develops when an individual faces a situation that taxes or exceeds internal or external resources available to deal with that situation' (p. 169). They referred to three major components of stress: lack of control over situations, uncertainty concerning outcomes, and ambiguity concerning expectations. Hence, 'by their very nature, overseas assignments are characterized by uncertainty, lack of control and ambiguity' (Wilkinson & Singh, 2010, p. 169). When considering the Holmes and Rahe (1967) stress scale, at least half of the 40 most stressful life events can be directly or indirectly related with diplomatic families uprooting from their home country and

engaging in diplomatic mobility. These life events include a change in financial status (15th on the scale), change or new line of work (17th of the scale), spouse starting or stopping a job (25th of the scale), and changes in residence (31st of the scale), school (32nd of the scale) and social activities (34th of the scale).

Subsequently, frequent mobility may pose a threat to identity by violating one or more of the guiding principles of identity, as proposed by the Identity Process Theory (IPT) (Breakwell, 1986). These key principles are defined as distinctiveness, self-efficacy, continuity, self-esteem (Breakwell, 1986, 1993), belonging, meaning (Vignoles et al., 2006; Vignoles et al., 2011) and psychological coherence (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). Indeed, diplomatic assignments take place in different social, national and developmental domains, hence influencing diplomatic families' inner selves, social relations and life choices (e.g. leaving a career, choosing a university major): All of which have implications on the construction of their separate identities. These threats have been a result of the families' transitions and their experience of precarity, characterized by the unpredictability of the next diplomatic assignment, and the instability and change of occupational identities (Cangia, 2018).

Indeed, the rise of couples with dual careers and the awareness of having a professional identity have recently become an issue, as WOD are becoming more concerned about having a professional identity independent of their partners' (Andreason, 2008; Simosi, Rousseau, & Daskalaki, 2015). Unfortunately, many countries have traditionally banned spouses of diplomats from working while on diplomatic postings, as that they do not get local work authorizations given the potential conflicts of interests. Although some nations (e.g. Sweden) have begun forging bilateral pacts with other countries to allow diplomatic spouses to seek outside employment, the majority of countries still interdict it. However, even in cases of bilateral agreement between countries, a WOD's potential for a successful career may be limited due to frequent moves and unstable experience (Finch, 2012; Pahl & Pahl, 1971).

Accompanying a spouse in diplomatic mobility has long been associated with the image of a dependent and nonworking wife (Fechter, 2010) whose domestic work has been incorporated into the corporate ideologies (Callan & Ardener, 1984). In one important study conducted by Schaller (1995), a drop of personal career among Swiss WOD was

found to be higher than expected, with only 16 percent of spouses of diplomats who worked prior to their first posting returning to work and pursuing their chosen professions. Concerns over career prospects were also reflected in a study conducted by the Austrian researcher Wille-Romer (1992) who found that 75 percent of participants who had completed a professional training were not exercising their professions due to diplomatic assignments.

Given WOD's loss of professional identity, many have experienced a shift in their efforts and dedication from their personal career to their partner's career (Arieli, 2007). These shifts are especially acute for WOD whose husband's career or types of postings entail expectations on them to perform tasks and/or fill roles that serve the diplomatic assignment. Feminist sociologist Papanek (1973), who wrote about American middle-class women married to professionals, termed this professional concept a 'two-person single career'. In her study, she suggested that this term served as a mechanism of social control that kept wives in their place by channeling their personal career aspirations into supporting their husbands' careers, resulting in a psychological cost for women (Papanek, 1973). Papanek (1973) described this cost as a destruction of women's self-esteem as they were expected to conduct tasks they were reluctant to do, while their time and efforts went undervalued. In spite of the decades that have passed since her work, similar phenomena have been found in studies of wives of professional baseball players (Ortiz, 1997), clergymen (Frame & Shehan, 1994), executives (Hochschild, 2003), prefects (De Singly & Challand, 2002), and college and university presidents (Reid, Cole & Kern, 2011).

The complexity and difficulty of describing roles and relationships within a marriage has led us to think that married partners are rarely equal in terms of responsibilities, power and status (Dryden, 1999). These inequalities are results of the construction of role, which is based on societal norms in regards to gender and the expectations that are set on each. For women, these norms impacted greatly their independent identities as many internalized the notion of limited agency and the importance of self-sacrifice (Beers, 1992; Dressel, 1992). Although these views were generally held by society for a long time, one can argue that these norms are somewhat outdated in light of the current shifts in women's rights and personal aspirations. However, despite these more or less recent developments, many diplomatic accompanying spouses, once referred to as 'trailing

wives', still face these traditional norms and experience great amount of pressure to attend to specific expectations (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley & Luk, 2001).

As a result of entering a social structure that is more patriarchal, accompanying wives are more likely to have chronic strain and a lower sense of mastery (Nolen-Hoeksema & Davis, 1999). Given their lack of financial contribution, WOD are chiefly responsible for childcare and childrearing, and will tend to subordinate their own needs in order to maintain their relationships and reduce the risks of dissolution (Valor-Segura, Exposito, Moya & Kluwer, 2014). Ultimately, this 'silencing of the self' leaves wives feeling 'unheard, undervalued and under-appreciated' in their marriage (McBridge & Bagby, 2006, p. 187).

This study seeks to close the gap in the outdated literature and advance our knowledge in regards to the investigation of WOD by asking the question 'What is the experience of being a WOD during diplomatic assignment?'. The aim of this research is to give a voice to a minority of women who until now have been ignored. This study also hopes to generate findings that readers and other professionals will be able to use in their experiences (Smith, 2008). Finally, it is aimed for the findings to enrich the work of psychological practitioners, Foreign Services and other professionals that may be involved with diplomats and their families.

5.4 METHOD

5.4.1 Participants

Eight WOD were recruited via snowballing technique. All WOD were married to a diplomat and been on at least two diplomatic assignments. Although IPA encourages the homogeneity of the sample, this research study takes into consideration the fact that WOD constitute a minority, which narrowed down the pool in selecting research participants. This population qualified as "hard-to-reach" and made it arduous to recruit a sample that had little variation. Moreover, no proper rationale was found to privilege a certain group of WOD, or to prevent any participant the opportunity to come forward and share her experience. Instead, this study gave space for any WOD who wanted to say something about her experience and come forward. However, this study does not

suggest that this sample is one that is representative of all WOD, as the sample was self-selected and rather small. Nonetheless, the sample size allowed the study to shed light on the wider context and not limit the ability to make associations and transferability (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, by drawing from a broad pool of participants and keeping the research question open, a more heterogeneous sample was created than in most IPA studies.

Demographic characteristics of the participants were as follows. Eight WOD aged between 46 and 78 (M 62) took part. Three WOD identified as European, three as Middle Eastern, one as South American and one as Asian. Seven of these had between two and three children aged between 12 and 41 years old. Seven participants had university degrees and five had further postgraduate qualifications. Three WOD's husbands were retired from the Foreign Services at the time of the interview. The number of diplomatic assignments ranged between two and nine (M 5.5). All participants worked prior to becoming a WOD, with two working as freelancers during postings. Pseudonyms were used throughout to protect WOD's confidentiality.

5.4.2 Procedure

Ethical approval was granted from City, University of London. The research was conducted in line with BPS and HCPC codes of ethics. After participants made contact, they were sent an information sheet and were asked to sign a written consent on the day of the interview. The first listed author collected data using semi-structured face-to-face interviews, which were audio-recorded. An interview schedule guided the process, while keeping the questions open and flexible for any input participants felt necessary to share. Questions were kept neutral and phrased as 'can you tell me about' in order to help participants share detailed accounts of their experiences in their own way (Smith et al., 2009). Interviews lasted between one and three hours, with an average of one hour and forty-five minutes. The research study aimed to adhere throughout to Yardley's (2000) criteria for ensuring quality of qualitative research.

5.4.3 Analysis of the Data

In IPA, interpretation is described as involving a 'double hermeneutic' as the researcher aims to make sense of the participants' sense making (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 53).

The aim of this analysis was to move from the particular of one participant's experience to a shared experience between all eight WOD. This process of analysis involved numerous iterations, as every transcript was transcribed verbatim, including verbal and non-verbal cues, and analyzed line-by-line. Then, emergent themes gradually started grouping into sub-themes. Each interview consisted of initial notes about the researcher's impressions, insights and ideas on the right hand side margin. The second step involved the development of emergent themes that would capture some of the essence of the initial codings made prior, grouping them after into themes and sub-themes. The process would be repeated across all participants' sub-themes, which eventually developed into a set of master themes. These master themes attempted at capturing the essence of this shared experience while at the same time allowing for some divergence to remain.

5.5 FINDINGS

Four master themes have emerged from an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the data. A diagrammatic depiction of this thematic model is presented in Figure 1, below.

Figure 1: Diagrammatic Representation of the Findings

240
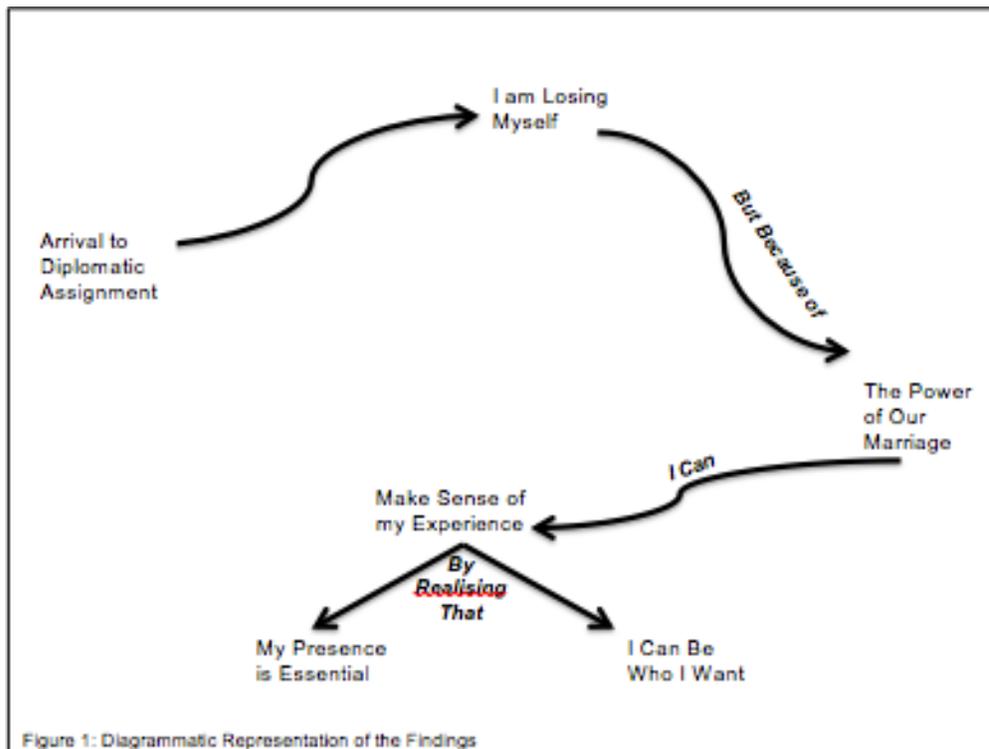
The diverse sociocultural backgrounds of the participants and their husband's country of origin and employment status have all contributed to the different experiences of WOD. Nevertheless, as shown by the master themes discussed below, all eight participants share many common features in relation to their experiences. These experiences have been organized in a manner that allows the reader to consider the impact of diplomatic assignments on WOD. As mentioned, pseudonyms are used to protect confidentiality and key information, such as home and host countries, have been altered.

5.6.1 Power of Marriage

Most participants described 'Love' as being the central element of their marriage, and regarded it as the initial reason for agreeing to go with their husbands on diplomatic assignments. As most of them met in professional environments, they all described needing to love unconditionally the other in order to 'leave' what they had initially construed, and embark in this new journey. For example, Amy described meeting her husband, falling deeply in love with him and needing to be with him at any cost:

> I was anxious and nervous, but I mean I loved him so much that I wanted
> to be with him at any price. I am telling you, the love is the most important
> thing to be able to go through all this. (Amy, p. 25, l. 356-358)

Amy's vivid recall of feeling anxious and nervous about this new life showed how she could not have moved away from her home if it was not for the genuine love she had for her husband. Her use of 'I am telling you' seemed to suggest that she is absolutely convinced of what the power of love can do to people, and how 'love' was the most important element that allowed her to 'go through all this'. It is as if she painted an image of herself as finding the strength to embark on this life through the need of being with him 'at any price'.

Moreover, it seemed that husbands' inclusion of their wives in diplomatic postings was another important element that contributed to the state of their marriage, as stated by Louise:

> You know my role was not official, or like people couldn't see exactly my
> input in his work, but behind the door, we were working together (Louise,
> 27, l. 349-350)

It appears that the very experience of working with her husband 'behind the door' influenced her sense of belonging in a team. Although these assignments were officially for the diplomats, the inclusion of the wife in the official process seemed to have increased her sense of usefulness and understanding of what her purpose was, allowing her to find her a place both in the assignment and in her couple. Louise did not seem to be pre-occupied by others seeing her 'input in his work', which emphasized her sole need to be a team player with him. Louise seemed to link the unofficiality of her role to others' ability of seeing what she was doing, suggesting that only their perception could have officialized it.

The findings of this study also emphasise the importance of the husband's support and understanding of the WOD's transition. For instance, Elan talked extensively about the difficulty of becoming financially dependent on her husband:

> But he knew I was like that, so every time we had to host a dinner, he
> would ask how much would it be if we catered the food, so this amount
> will go to me instead since I was doing everything. And I think it's also the
> type of person I am because I didn't want to just ask for the money itself, I
> wanted to feel like I worked for it. That was tough. (Elan, p. 37, l. 542-546)

Elan explained that one of the biggest challenges she faced when she embarked on this journey was becoming financially dependent on her husband. As she highlighted her concern, she experienced her husband as an understanding man who 'knew [she] was like that' and created a system that would entitle her for a compensation of her efforts. Elan seemed to feel supported by him as he showed cooperativeness and appreciation for her efforts. Most importantly, it did not seem that Elan was asked to change, as she was able to stay true to herself while finding creative ways with her husband to do so. This need to feel worthy is one that she experienced as 'tough', but was alleviated by her husband's support.

5.6.2 Loss of Self

In this master theme, WOD reflected on their experiences as individuals. The participants described diplomatic assignments and the impact it had on their sense of self. They also expressed how this experience made them lose an aspect of themselves,

as they rapidly realised that had no control or place to share their personal opinions and worries about these assignments. Indeed, the impact of becoming a WOD was first experienced as the realization that they were embarking on a journey that was not about them. Therefore, WOD needed to accommodate to the demands of these assignments, which led them to lose a part of themselves in the process.

> The only thing that I have to accept strongly although I don't approve is
> that, although you are a diplomatic spouse, you cannot say what you feel,
> because you are not you. [ ] In my case, I am representing my country, so
> my husband said 'remember, it's not about you anymore, it's about your
> country now. You are your country. So be careful what you say'... It was
> so difficult for me to understand this. (Elan, p. 26, l. 376-382)

It appears that the very experience of finding out that she was a symbol and a representation of something bigger led Elan to conclude that she was not able to completely and fully be herself. The oxymoron of 'you are not you' brought much confusion into understanding this new identity that she needed to adopt in the eye of the public. Similarly, Lina explained:

> But euh sometimes you get into trouble if you don't control yourself. So it's
> like a responsibility to not be yourself. It's a pressure, but you know it's for
> political reasons and also other things, like you cannot comment on euh
> things you don't like to hear. It's like you can't share your opinion, or if you
> want to, if you have to think 10 times before you speak…it's exhausting.
> Because at the end of the day, you just want to be yourself. You want to
> be able to say whatever comes to your mind and have no boundaries; you
> just want to be free. (Lina, p. 15, l. 209-216)

Lina talked about needing to control herself and to 'think 10 times' before she spoke in order to avoid being in 'trouble'. Having to control elements of her personality was an exhausting pressure that she needed to apply every time she was in presence of others. Her use of the words 'boundaries' and 'free' suggested that she may have felt imprisoned in the body of a person that she did not recognize, as she had the 'responsibility to not be [her]self'. Lina described that for political reasons, her personal opinion could not be shared, as her opinion represented her country.

Moreover, many WOD experienced a transition of control over their lives as they accompanied their husbands. They felt that their sense of agency and autonomy were taken away from them, handing all forms of self-control to other entities, such as the Foreign Service. Louise explained this further:

> You are most of the time, not in control of the situation…as a trailing wife, most things are out of control. The countries you go to, how you dress, what you say, the dinners, the food, you don't have a lot of space to make big decisions and you have to be okay with that. (Louise, p. 46, l. 654-657)

This quote went to the very heart of how Louise experienced herself in diplomatic assignments. First, she referred to herself as a trailing wife, suggesting that she perceived herself as solely following her husband in diplomatic assignments, although this was the terminology used when Louise's husband was a diplomat. Second, her life seemed to be dictated by her diplomatic duties and role, implying that there was little space for her to experience her true self. However, Louise appeared to have made sense of the challenges that diplomatic assignments convey, and understood that the only way to go through them was by accepting them. Her initiative at accepting and not refuting these 'out of control' scenarios allowed Louise to accept, to a certain extent, the loss of herself.

Many WOD, such as Marta, experienced a loss in terms of intellectual and professional identity:

> When I finished my paper after 1 year, I became very upset because I did not have anything else to do other than reading the newspaper. So my husband told me "why don't you do like the other wives do, and go learn a new activity like mahjong or bridge?" I was so angry with him for telling me that because I had just finished writing a very important article that was going to be published in one of the biggest economic journal and for him to tell me that, it felt like an insult. (Marta, p. 19-20, l. 218-223)

Marta asserted here the unsettling nature of her experience. She hinted at a sense of disappointment towards her husband who advised her to become 'like the other wives'. Marta's quote suggested that she had a personal opinion towards WOD and felt like her professional accomplishments could not be replaced by games. Her anger was justified by her self-image and ideal-self being insulted, as she felt that she went from being a highly regarded professional to a bored WOD.

5.6.3 My Presence is Essential

Most WOD referred to their well-being being an important element in the quality of the assignment. They explained how their attitudes and perceptions in regards to diplomatic assignments affected their well-being and explained how it was the way they decided to take on this experience that mainly helped their husbands go through and succeed at assignments. Caline explained this in her interview:

> My husband says 'you're the balance'. And I realize that I am not allowed
> to think a lot or to feel anything. Because if I don't do well or don't feel
> well, the family will collapse. Like even now, I think he is very stressed
> whenever he feels that I am stressed. (Caline, p. 32, l. 502-504)

Here, Caline described how she experienced her role in her family as a pillar that supported the whole. She seemed to not allow herself the luxury of thinking and feeling, suggesting that she would numb her sentiments in order to preserve balance in the family. In a way, Caline felt the pressure of being the centrality of her family as any given imbalance in herself could have resulted in destruction of the family system. Lina explains this further:

> One of the most important factor is the wife's wellbeing. Because if the
> wife is not happy, the children are not happy and the dynamics are
> affected. (Lina, p. 19, l. 277-278)

Lina explained a consequence of being an un-happy WOD, while suggesting that her well-being was at the centre of her family's. She referred to dynamics being affected, suggesting that her well-being should be taken into consideration and valued by others. Lina continued by explaining how and why a WOD should try to have a good attitude towards these assignments.

It's not easy. You have to like the lifestyle and on top of it, you have to
accept that you keep changing: habits, friends, homes. If you are not
crazy about this kind of life, it's not an easy life. (Lina, p. 46, l. 521-525)

When asked about what advice Lina would give future WOD, she first acknowledged
that adopting a positive attitude was difficult. She then explained how the most important
element was one's ability to 'like the lifestyle'. Lina seemed to be aware that constant
change was the most difficult factor in diplomatic assignments and WOD needed to be
able to accept and embrace it.

Both Caline and Louise also explained how adaptability is of high importance when
accompanying your husband in assignments.

I think I have a good quality, which is adaptation. I am a Gemini (laughs).
So I get adapted very easily (Caline, p. 3, l. 31-32)

I mean my own flexibility really helped. I am very adaptable. I'm sure it's a
lot of my character too (Louise, p. 14, l. 202-203)

Both appeared to praise themselves for having this great quality. They seemed to refer
to their ability to adapt to change as a way of connecting and engaging further in
diplomatic assignments.

Moreover, all participants who have children talked at length about their role as mothers
in diplomatic assignments. For them, being a mother was the biggest challenge they
faced while on these postings, as they experienced great difficulties in balancing their
roles as WOD and mothers. Most of them referred to never being able to make the right
decision as they always felt like they were caught up in a dilemma.

If you have this kind of double life it's difficult because you are always in
the wrong place, you have the bad conscience if you are too much with
your husband then you are not enough with your kids, if you are with your
kids, you are not supporting your husband enough. You are not hosting

this and this event, you are not going to this and this dinner invitation.
(Amy, p. 33, l. 438-443)

Amy referred to having a double life, suggesting that she experienced herself as two different people. Her reality was one of constant 'bad conscience', signifying that whatever decision she took, she would still be neglecting another area. Amy's inability to please both parties appeared to create a sentiment of guilt, which Lina talked about in her experience of two-way guilt.

> Guilt, guilt, guilt always guilt. If you go to a dinner and you know they are
> at home watching TV, you feel guilty because you left them. Especially
> when you just arrive in a new post, because when you arrive there you
> want to succeed and to succeed you have to be out there. (Lina, p. 22, l.
> 314-317)

Lina's repetition of the word guilt highlighted the pain she experienced from being both a WOD and a mother. She attempted at explaining her guilt by giving an example of times she felt this guilt vividly. Lina referred to the beginning of diplomatic assignments as an important time for her husband, given the importance of succeeding. However, she seemed to also be aware that the newity of an assignment was a difficult period for the children, in which the presence of their parents was equally crucial.

Throughout their interviews, many WOD talked at length about their duties towards their families. It often seemed that many of the administrative roles would fall on them, as well as their responsibilities to create a new home in every country, for their selves and their children.

> In every assignment, I always made the decision that we surround
> ourselves with people from our country. I told me husband that I want our
> children and ourselves to feel like a part of our country is here with us. So
> we would invite our friends all the time, like even now, after the interview
> my husband is bringing an officer to have lunch here. I like that. I created
> that thing so they always felt also that there are always people in our
> home. So I created that family environment everywhere we went. (Elan, p.
> 41, l. 610-616)

Elan's attempt at creating a family environment suggested the profound need she had to compensate for the lack of familiarity and permanency she talked about earlier. Her decision to create a family abroad and having people from their home country in their house showed Elan's willingness to create a sense of home everywhere they went. She appeared to have created and instilled traditions that she practiced in every assignment, leaving her family to experience a sense of sameness.

5.6.4 Making Sense of Who I Am and Who I Want to Be

This last master theme focused on the evolution of WOD throughout their diplomatic journey. It seemed to reflect on the one hand the loss of the person they were and on the other hand, the person they had strived to become. Indeed, some participants experienced an identity threat in which they were not able at first to understand who they were in these diplomatic assignments. This confusing transition left them with many doubts and questions, as expressed by Elan:

> It was so difficult for me to understand this. I asked myself why are you here? In what capacity are you here? The reason? You are not here in holidays, you are not a tourist, you are here on a diplomatic passport, representing your country. (Elan, p. 26, l. 381-384)

Elan's intense self-questioning showed her active process of reflection. Indeed, she tried to make sense of her presence in a specific country. As she attempted to make sense of her presence, she seemed to have reflected on her residential status, suggesting that it helped her deal better with her confusion. As she identified her diplomatic passport as the main reason for her presence, she understood that her capacity in this new country was one of pure representation.

Other participants, who married men from different nationalities, expressed the need to let go a part of their own national identity, in order make place for another one.

> I am [South American Country], I had to learn this new culture and act like [my husband's nationality] myself, because I was in [Central West Africa] representing [husband's country], not [own country]. So I had to learn about the culture, the language, the people, and do like the [husband's

country] do. I feel like my [own] nationality had to disappear a little so I
can make place for this new me. (Marta, p. 10, l. 109-113)

Here, Marta explained how being a foreign spouse meant that she had 'to let go' of her own national identity in order to assume a new one. Marta's replacement in national identities seemed to be a challenging one as she was asked to represent a country that was not hers. She referred to her new national identity as part of a 'new [her]', suggesting that a part of her had to change as she became a WOD.

All WOD had to find various strategies in order to accept their presence and role in diplomatic assignments. For some, making sense of their presence was experienced through their sense of usefulness in diplomatic duties. Lina, for example, raised awareness on the way she diplomatically mattered in her husband's work:

I was friends with very important people, wives of important people. And
you know, this is how you help your husband. You help by befriending
others and building important and strong relationships. Because when you
do that, you then invite the wife and husband, and then help your husband
in networking and meeting important people. And I mean, this is how the
diplomatic world works. It works by having contacts and doing change.
And how can you do change when you don't know anybody. So by being
friends with the wives, you help both husbands build a relationship. And
this is what I did. (Lina, p. 10, l. 148-155)

Lina seemed to have experienced her presence with her husband as an essential element in his diplomatic career. She conveyed an understanding of what diplomatic assignments are for her, namely networking and 'doing change', and explained that these activities can only be done when knowing others. Lina described her sense of triumph by recognizing the importance of her role in helping her husband meet important people and creating the network he needed to conduct his work. From her language and non-verbal communication, Lina seemed proud of her accomplishments, as she understood what her purpose was in these assignments. She praised herself for knowing 'important people' and being able to provide an added element to her husband's work by networking in a way that he wouldn't be able to do on his own.

Diversely, other WOD described the need to go the extra mile in order to make sense of their presence. Some experienced personal aspirations in regards to their own personal lives and decided to either merge them or split them from their husband's postings. Caline, for instance, decided to merge her passion for teaching with her diplomatic duties.

> I really tried to mix my passion for teaching in our assignments, like when
> we were in [North America] I decided to put in a program where we would
> teach children the language, the culture, our national anthem, and you
> know, this helped me feel like I had a purpose. I am of use and that was
> important for me. (Caline, p. 28, l. 408-412)

Caline described feeling useful as she brought an element to the diplomatic assignments that resonated with the person she was before diplomatic postings. In fact, Caline taught languages in a prestigious university and expressed throughout the interview her love and success in teaching languages. She talked at length about the worries of her community, as they were complaining about their children's unfamiliarity with the home country's official language. It seemed that in a way Caline felt it was her duty to help local children re-connect with their native country while serving her community.

Others have found ways to separate their identity as WOD and their own person, such as Marta:

> At the beginning, it was a sacrifice, but since I discovered the bridge and I
> had to study it with a partner, it was no longer a sacrifice. It became a
> challenge and that's what I wanted […] I remember taking the bridge as a
> challenge and I made a lot of friends through this from inside and outside
> embassies (Marta, p. 21, l. 236-243)

Repeatedly, Marta expressed how taking on bridge first felt like a sacrifice, but then shifted to being her personal challenge. Her decision to dedicate herself to bridge suggested a great need to have her own personal challenge during these diplomatic assignments. Also, not only did bridge become a personal challenge, but it also became the vessel that helped her create her social circle, suggesting that through bridge, she felt like she belonged.

Although there was a rich contrast and divergence in the accounts, all WOD expressed needs for striving, thriving, achieving and/or mattering, suggesting a desire for congruency within themselves.

5.6 DISCUSSION

In the introduction, it was revealed that WOD struggle from frequent relocations, as it is an inherently and uniquely stressful way of living. They have reported feeling lost, unimportant and anxious about their future (Arieli, 2007; Cangià, 2018; Collins & Bertone, 2017). In the context of these experiences, Cangià's (2018) recent study indicated the unpredictability of the diplomat's posting destination as a source of uncertainty, leading women to experience feelings of insecurity and precarity. She explains further that the transition to unemployment, particularly, destabilizes the accompanying spouse's identity, as she needs to reconsider her self-concept in this new environment (Cangià, 2018). Cangià (2018) finally explains how spouses can reconfigure their identities and make sense of their sense of self and their precarious feelings.

This study supports Cangià's (2018) claim that the first channel for identity reconfiguration is within the couple, as found in the first master theme *The Power of Marriage*. Indeed, all WOD confirmed that their marriage gave them the space and confidence to experience an identity threat, as they were loved and supported by their partners. However, the findings here appear to add to Cangià's (2018) study the dangerous consequences of having a non-understanding and non-cooperative husband, claiming that their willingness to understand and empathize with their wives was the most important element of their experiences. The WOD's reflections suggest that their husband's readiness to include them in the diplomatic process made them feel as if they were part of a team who was discovering the world of diplomacy *together*, rather than alone, as reflected in the subtheme *Togetherness*.

The importance of having a healthy and stable marriage in which WOD felt equal to their husbands was the only finding common to all participants, regardless of their age,

employment status, country of origin and education levels. These findings are consistent with McNulty's (2015) study on the two main causes of divorce among expatriate couples. Indeed, McNulty (2015) found that expatriate divorce is mainly due to one or both of the spouses "negatively influenced by the expatriate culture to such an extent that" one may neglect the other, or when the couple experienced core issues in their marriage prior to assignments" (McNulty, 2015, p. 106).

The WOD's reflections on being part of a team was important for them as it allowed them to make meaning of their presence in diplomatic postings, as shown in the master theme *Making Sense of Who I Am and Who I Want to Be.* Drawing upon Papanek's (1973) concept of 'two-person single career', many WOD felt that as a couple they had the same purpose, namely to make the most out of the diplomatic assignment. As a result of this inclusion, most participants perceived their presence in diplomatic assignments as important in terms of soft power, here described by Joseph Nye (1990) as the "co-optive behavioural power of getting others to do what you want through the resources of cultural attraction, ideology and international institutions" (p. 188). Indeed, many WOD took on great responsibilities for organizing and hosting social functions, while negotiating their networks in diplomatic postings. As Domett's (2005) study on soft power showed, WOD experienced here these acts as "opportunities for exerting soft power in global politics, demonstrating how norms have important constitutive effects in shaping attitudes and therefore actions, and ultimately have material effects in shaping the processes of global politics" (p. 298).

Moreover, although unofficial, the WOD in this study felt that they were part of the performative and ritualistic facets of diplomacy, engaging in what Constantinou (1996) described as 'important global play'. They perceived their role in international diplomacy as taking place in a social environment of reciprocity and cordiality, in which key cross-cultural relationships ought to be nurtured (Domett, 2005). As a result, WOD's position as social hostess in this social realm was experienced as being key actors in the global diplomatic play, defined by Riordan (2003) as a process of cultural exchange characterized by social groupings and communities interaction, rather than merely state-to-state negotiation. However, it feels important to note that although Domett's (2005) study found some difference in terms of levels of incorporation between mature and younger spouses of diplomats, the findings here show no difference across the age

norm of participants. This could be mainly justified by the fact that all of the participants' husbands were ambassadors, or retired ambassadors, at the time of the interviews. Indeed, Domett (2005) claims that it is unclear to what extent the spouses' ages can be separated from the seniority of position of diplomats. Consequently, spouses of junior levels diplomats are not as exposed to representational entertaining as spouses of senior levels diplomats are, and it is yet uncertain whether their levels of involvement are triggered by any of these factors.

Interestingly, none of the WOD mentioned a desire to receive any financial remuneration for their input in diplomatic postings, suggesting perhaps that they have succumbed to the system. Another explanation would defend that receiving any form of financial salary for their *unofficial* work would transform the voluntary basis of their work into an official duty, removing the element of choice (Hendry, 1998).

With a more specific focus on the WOD's role enactment during diplomatic postings, the women's comments suggested that being a WOD during postings felt quite overwhelming given their different responsibilities, as shown in the master theme *Me Presence is Essential*. These findings seem to resonate with the work of Davoine et al. (2013), which revealed the different expectations set on spouses of diplomats, namely supporting the diplomat, representing the home country and acting as resource manager. However, the current study appears to add to these findings the struggle of managing these roles while being mothers on diplomatic assignments. The WOD's accounts confirmed in the sub-theme *Motherhood: A Two-Way Guilt,* that their biggest challenge was to balance their roles as wives and mothers, and to attend to their children's needs while being present on the diplomatic front. Their reflections suggested that feelings of guilt affected greatly their experiences, as children were at the center of many important decisions, such as moving away or staying in the home country far from the husband.

Finally, with only three participants to draw on this study, conclusions relating to repatriation experiences must necessarily be tentative. Some WOD stated that their husband's retirement greatly affected them, as some felt like strangers in their own home. They explained the difficulties in transitioning from WOD to simply wives once they came back to their home country permanently. Similar to spouses of expatriates,

this shift was for many accompanied with feelings of uncertainty, loss and confusion, leaving WOD to undergo a similar process of adjustment to that first experienced in expatriation (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010).

5.7 IMPLICATION FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL PRACTIONNERS

This research project sheds light on a population that is under-researched, rarely seeking help, afraid of judgments and socially isolated. Consequently, this study can be used as a valuable source for psychological practitioners who work with clients who experience difficulties in their expatriation.

Indeed, with so much attention put on diplomats, very little is being paid on the spouse, which in light of this study seems vital. Therapists are encouraged to help these women think about what happens to them during diplomatic postings. Indeed, many Foreign Services simply ignore the presence of the spouse or take her presence for granted, leaving her out for a great amount of time, while expecting her to make sense of who she is without any support. Indeed, it is an ethical responsibility for Foreign Services to provide the necessary support to help accompanying spouses make sense of their transition and raise awareness about the conflicting issues they may experience. Undeniably, developing clients' awareness can significantly improve WOD's psychological wellbeing and help them reach a certain sense of acceptance of their new situation, all by promoting therapeutic change in their perception and understanding (Greenberg & Watson, 2006; Robbins & Jolkovski, 1987).

Additionally, for clients to reflect on, it may be relevant for Psychologists to share some of the obstacles WOD experience, especially if they are struggling to foresee any potential threats. In line with Breakwell's (1986) work, therapists should encourage and invite their clients to consider how they might manage the existent or potential threats and difficulties. They may also keep in mind that many WOD may be excited and grateful for this opportunity. Nonetheless, therapists should take the opportunity to introduce some of the meanings, assumptions, stereotypes and connotations associated with the labels of being an accompanying spouse (also sometimes referred to as *trailing*

spouse), inviting clients to re-evaluate these in order to accept their novel and ambivalent identity.

One way to do so is by following Harrist's (2006) claim that the best way to manage ambivalence and confusion is to develop a great sense of awareness and flexibility in the ways in which this uncertainty is experienced and dealt with. Clients are then encouraged to develop a sense of acceptance and appreciation for the complexity of their situation, emotions and meanings (i.e. *seeing them as adventures, or chances of spending more time with their children*), and use them as opportunities of growth, rather than potential regressions. By facilitating this process and raising awareness on the potential impacts of being a WOD might affect them, therapists engage, to a certain degree, to what Miller (1969) called the "give Psychology away". By "giving Psychology away", psychologists help clients have a better perception and understanding of who they are, the choices they have, and who they can be, all inquiries that can lead them to have further control over their own lives (Banyard & Hulme, 2015). Although one could argue that these are patriarchal solutions, it is important to remind ourselves that WOD do unfortunately still live in a patriarchal society where choices of management are limited.

Consequently, this research aims to combat these patriarchal norms by providing WOD more support and protection. Indeed, whilst it feels quite grandiose to suggest this given the relatively small scale of this research project, there appears to be a need to promote the establishment of family offices in Foreign Services that would be entirely dedicated to diplomatic spouses and their families. Many European Countries have already seen the advantages of such institutions (European Union of Foreign Affairs Spouses Association, 2018), and highly recommend their creation, as it is a way of not only acknowledging the family's presence in diplomatic postings, but also recognizing their importance in them. These institutions could use the psychological knowledge formed around the impact of being an accompanying spouse of diplomat and petition for new laws and rights that would protect and support spouses, such as individual allowance, divorce procedure and pension rights. Additionally, this study's findings suggest that putting in place further bilateral agreements between countries would allow accompanying spouses to work. By allowing WOD to have a professional identity, this

diplomatic society could foresee a change from patriarchal norms to a more balanced and equal society.

5.8 LIMITATIONS AND IDEAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In light of the significant gap of literature on the experiences of WOD who accompany their spouses on diplomatic postings, this study can be perceived as a preliminary starting point for further research. Given the heterogeneity and size of the sample, it is arguably clear that the next step should be to conduct a similar research study on a larger and/or more homogeneous sample size of WOD who represent the same country abroad. In fact, given that each country differs in their own rights and laws in regards to spouses of diplomats, it would be worth looking at how these impact the experiences of accompanying diplomats and see whether a phenomenological exploration of their experiences would yield similar perceptions and understandings of the phenomena.

Moreover, a study that explores how each law and right granted to spouses of diplomats affect their experiences as accompanying spouse would provide greater understandings and a fuller picture of how WOD experience themselves. More specifically, given that Estonia is the only country to provide a monthly salary of 1000 Euro to the accompanying spouse's direct bank account (EUFASA, 2018), it would be extremely valuable to study the potential impact that this financial incentive has on the spouses of diplomats' experience.

Alternatively, this study focused on WOD rather than other partners of diplomats as it felt like a great starting point to understand this phenomenon. However, in light of the increasing growth in the diversity of diplomats, further research into the experience of accompanying partners from a phenomenological point of view is needed, focusing on male spouses, non-married partners and same sex spouses/partners who decide to embark on this diplomatic journey. Considering the impact that gender identity has on the experience of accompanying a diplomat, these new focuses would help engender a new (*hopefully, non-patriarchal*) wave of roles and expectations. These can take the form of attending tea parties for instance, which are not only set by the Foreign Services

(*unofficially, of course*) but also by the diplomatic and national community in which diplomatic families live in during diplomatic postings.

Another area of research that was highly suggested by the participants was the impact that the diplomatic life had on their children. In fact, many wanted to know if the life they had put upon their children negatively or positively affected the. Perhaps their curiosity stemmed from the guilt many felt in regards to their children and sought reassurance. Consequently, it seems evident that researching children of diplomats is an important element that would add to the literature on spouses of diplomats and diplomats.

5.9 CONCLUSION

This research study has advanced and developed our understandings of the experiences of WOD across diplomatic assignments. It attempted to show how the open exploration of this minority provided valuable and novel insights into the exploration of meaning and identity processes in the world of accompanying spouses. Its findings have significant implication not only for the accompanying spouse herself, but also for the Foreign Services and the field of Psychology.

Following Domett's (2005) statement that diplomatic spouses have always exerted soft power in public diplomacy, this study believes that spouses have been made invisible by gendered ideology, structures and power, which has kept them in the background for a very long time (Davoine et al., 2012). It is from this ideology that this study aimed at giving WOD a voice, and educate the general public about this under researched population.

Finally, practitioner psychologists have a duty to expand their role by becoming participants in their community and help build a "psychology for the community" (Kelly, 1970, p. 524). Although many members are still failing to do so (Palmer & Parish, 2008), this study's main desire is to transform the world that we are a part of, by promoting 'equity and equality for individuals in society in terms of access to a number of different resources and opportunities, the right to self-determination, and a balancing of power across society (Cutts, 2013, p. 8).

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Appendices

Appendix Q: *Feminism & Psychology submission guidelines*

Manuscript Submission Guidelines: Feminism & Psychology

This Journal is a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics

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Back to top

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Back to top

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Back to top

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Back to top

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Back to top

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