

**DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING OF PEOPLE'S
EXPERIENCES OF USING TRACING SERVICES TO
SEARCH FOR MISSING FAMILY: A QUALITATIVE
INVESTIGATION**

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ABSTRACT

Research suggests family separation, particularly prolonged and forced or involuntary separation, can have a negative impact on individuals as well as on relationships between family members. It is suggested ambiguous loss can incur from family separation and a family member being considered missing. People's experiences of searching for missing family members, and also more generally missing people or disappearances, have been largely neglected in previous research.

A grounded theory approach was used in this study to explore the experiences of individuals who had used a tracing service. Participants were recruited from the British Red Cross' International Tracing and Message Service. Semi-structured interviews were used with 10 ex-service-users. A grounded theory of 'A path towards finding missing family and beyond' was developed, consisting of 10 categories: 'Background', 'Living in Britain prior to finding family', 'Finding out about the tracing service', 'Using the tracing service', 'Communicating with found family', 'Implications and consequences of finding missing family', 'Language', 'Hope', 'Expectations' and "Waiting". The findings and limitations of the present study are discussed in relation to implications for future research, the British Red Cross and clinical practice.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BRC: British Red Cross

ITMS: International Tracing and Message Service

ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross

RFL: Restoring Family Links

RC: Red Cross

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

PTSD: Post traumatic stress disorder

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter aims to discuss and critique the current literature on family separation and its impact generally but also in the context of refugees and asylum-seekers¹. Searching for missing family members and finding them alive or receiving bad news will also be explored. Psychological theories related to family separation will be explored. The rationale for exploring the experiences of individuals using a tracing service will be outlined.

An initial literature review was undertaken during the early stages of the research, in order to develop a research proposal and aid the development of the research question. Strauss and Corbin (1998) argue that the use of the literature can be helpful in formulating research questions. Glaser and Strauss (1967) advocated postponing the literature review until after completing the analysis, which is supported by Charmaz (2006). This was so as to avoid importing preconceived theoretical ideas or frameworks and imposing them on the data and in so doing encouraging the researcher to articulate their ideas. Willig (2008) suggests caution when carrying out a literature review and highlights the importance for the researcher to maintain “a certain distance from such literature” (p. 41). Strauss and Corbin (1998), however, acknowledge that researchers will most certainly bring to the research a considerable background in literature related to their profession or field. Charmaz (2006) emphasises that the literature review provides a place to engage ideas and research in the areas that the developed grounded theory addresses by analysing the most significant works in relation to what has been addressed in the grounded theory. In line with grounded theory methodology, this chapter was written after data was generated and analysis commenced to support findings and to extend or challenge dominant ideas in this area.

¹ Only four participants described their status as ‘refugee’ at the time of the interviews, however seven sought asylum upon arrival in Britain. Participants talked about this during their interviews therefore it was deemed important to discuss some of the literature on this particular population.

1.2 Search strategy

A literature search was carried out using the search engines 'Ingenta Connect', and OvidSP to search the electronic database PsycINFO (1980-2012). Keywords relating to the experience of searching for missing relatives were used. The keywords were eventually narrowed down to: family separation; missing people; family reunion/reunification; family and loss; hope and family separation; receiving bad news; ambiguous loss. The titles and abstracts of the articles, reviews and books identified were then examined. The references cited in the articles found were also cross-checked manually for additional articles.

1.3 Family

The word 'family' can have different meanings but generally defines a group of people whom an individual can count on to meet a range of needs including practical and emotional needs (Boss, 1999). It may refer to family of origin or family of choice (i.e. whether related by blood or marriage). The composition of families is constantly evolving and changing over time. In addition, family structures can vary immensely (Bonnerjea, 1994a). In different cultures, extended families can play very important roles, and 'family' may also include close friends. Thus culture and ethnicity contribute to the definition of family composition and where family boundaries are located (Robins, 2010).

In addition to meeting needs, families are thought to be beneficial to a child's development, acquisition of social skills, protection, and long-term sense of identity (Bonnerjea, 1994a). Moreover, good mental health and resilience are promoted by cohesive and supportive family networks (Farwell, 2001). This highlights the important role the family can play in a person's life.

1.4 Family separation

Family members can become separated under a range of circumstances. These include separation or divorce, children going into foster care, children given up for adoption, people-trafficking, migration and people going missing. Within the family life cycle, separations also occur during transition points (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999).

The literature on family separation is wide-ranging but in recent years there have been many studies on this topic in the context of migration. Many families are involved in migrations worldwide. Families may undergo significant changes within the process of migration that can often be complicated by extensive periods of separation – from both nuclear and extended family (Suárez-Orozco, Todorova & Louie, 2002). The migration process can be voluntary (i.e. immigration to another country in the hope of achieving a better life, usually resulting from a long decision-making process) or involuntary (i.e. as a result of war, political conflict or natural disasters). Some individuals may choose to leave their families for employment reasons. For example, those in the military, journalists and aid workers can leave their families behind on a recurring basis. They may however expect to reunite with their families soon (Suárez-Orozco, Bang & Kim, 2011). Separation may also be part of a family's survival strategy. In the process of immigration, parent-child separation in particular can occur at a very high rate (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002).

Family members can also separate when people go missing or disappear, which is relevant to this study, yet limited research was found. People may go missing intentionally (choosing to leave without informing family of where they are going) or unintentionally (Biehal, Mitchell & Wade, 2003). Disappearances occur worldwide and the impact of the disappearance not only affects the individual but also their family and their community (Blauuw & Lahteenmaki, 2002). People disappear in many different circumstances such as missing in action, in the context of natural disasters, kidnappings, armed conflict or internal violence. In those circumstances, a break in contact arises. Besides the uncertainty about the fate of their relatives, family members usually also have to cope with economic, social and legal problems, thus making the problems they face complex and possibly overwhelming (Blauuw & Lahteenmaki, 2002). The loss ensuing from the disappearance of a family member prevents appropriate mourning because of the possible ambiguity surrounding the disappearance (Boss, 2004). According to Busuttil and Busuttil (2001), the most extreme kind of separation is one where

families are separated under threat of death or where the status of the missing person cannot be resolved quickly.

Whatever the context of the separation, contact between family members may be disrupted and possibly broken. Members of a family may be considered missing in the eyes of those trying to make contact as a result of loss of contact. This can lead to ambiguity about the fate of family members.

1.5 Ambiguous loss

The term 'ambiguous loss' has been defined by Boss (2004) as "a situation of unclear loss resulting from not knowing whether a loved one is dead or alive, absent or present" (p. 554). Boss has described two types of ambiguous loss. 'Ambiguous absence' can occur when a family member is physically absent but remains psychologically present as the fate of this person remains unclear (Boss, 2004). 'Ambiguous presence' can occur when a person is physically present but psychologically absent (e.g. Alzheimer's disease, other chronic illnesses) (Boss, 2004). Uncertainty may render this type of situation particularly stressful, and Boss (1999) claims that ambiguous loss is the "most distressful of all losses" (p. 6).

Ambiguous absence seems relevant to circumstances when, following separation, communication between family members may have ceased and therefore individuals do not know whether their loved one is alive or dead. It has been suggested that family separation can be considered an ambiguous loss (Rousseau, Rufagari, Bagilishya & Measham, 2004).

According to Boss (2004), ambiguous loss can cause two types of problems – structurally if it leads to boundary ambiguity (a state of uncertainty about roles and tasks undertaken and who is part of the family system) (Boss & Greenberg, 1984); but also psychologically in that it may predict symptoms of anxiety, depression, and family conflict (Boss, 2010). Ambiguous loss can also block the grief process, and symptoms akin to traumatisation and complicated grief can incur from not finding a loved one (Boss, 2004). Symptoms resulting from

ambiguous loss however may go unnoticed or may be misdiagnosed (Boss, 1999). According to Boss (2006), ambiguous loss is intrinsically traumatic because “the inability to resolve the situation causes pain, confusion, shock, distress and often immobilization” (p. 4). Its similarity with the trauma causing post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Boss, 2010) may explain possible misdiagnoses.

A clinical theory of ambiguous loss has been developed demonstrating that mental health and well-being are affected by the stress of ambiguity, depending on the resilience of individuals and families (Boss, 2006). This theory is presently under investigation with many studies applying this concept to missing persons, brain injury, military families, foster children and families of children with autistic spectrum disorders among others (Kean, 2010; O'Brien, 2007). Six therapeutic guidelines for working with those affected by ambiguous loss have been put forward (Boss, 2006): finding meaning, tempering mastery, reconstructing identity, normalising ambivalence, revising attachment and discovering hope. The ambiguous loss model's approach emphasises seeking meaning regardless of not having information and ongoing ambiguity, as well as finding ways of living well regardless of not knowing (Boss, 2007).

There is some evidence to suggest that across cultures this phenomenon may be distressing (Boss, 2006; Boss, Beaulieu, Wieling, Turner & LaCruz, 2003; Robins, 2010). In a qualitative study investigating the impact of disappearance on 160 families in Nepal, Robins (2010) found that 80% expressed ambiguity about the fate of their loved one. The disappearance of a family member also led to some reported psychological difficulties as well as issues at the family and community level. Although data were reported for men and women, most of the disappeared in Nepal were men. According to Robins (2010), the ambiguous loss model may be useful to understand the impact of disappearance and the concept of ambiguous loss may be beneficial when designing interventions with families who may not know the fate of their loved one. However, research on ambiguous loss is predominantly western-based and limited with regard to different cultural contexts and populations including refugees who often face this (Rousseau et al.,

2004). The relatively recent use of the term ambiguous loss in clinical research may explain the scarcity (Boss, 1999).

Ambiguous loss appears to impact negatively on people's well-being. If family separation is considered an ambiguous loss, separation may therefore negatively affect family members. The following section will discuss some literature on the impact of family separation and ambiguity.

1.6 The impact of separation and ambiguity

1.6.1 Impact on individuals

Depending on the circumstances and contexts of the separation, a variety of outcomes have been observed. Temporary feelings of loss and sadness in adults and children as well as psychological problems in children (e.g. depression) (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002) seem to incur from separation from parents as well as extended family. Family members may not be considered absent during the separation as individuals may be thinking about them. Poor psychological health (e.g. depression, anxiety and somatisation) is associated with concern for family (McDonald-Wilmsen & Gifford, 2009), which may increase during separation. At the time of separation, momentary destabilisation can be expected, but other factors can impact on the experience of separation including trauma arising from a family tragedy (e.g. the death of a loved one) or warfare (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002).

Busuttil and Busuttil (2001) found in a review of the literature that repeated, recurring separations and those enforced under threat of death impacted negatively on the psychological health and function of families and their members. They particularly focused on those left behind in the context of military families in western countries and most of the studies they drew on were published between the 1960s and early 1990s.

In the context of family members disappearing, Robins (2010) found that half of his participants experienced "intrusive and repeated thoughts and dreams about the missing person, disturbed sleep, and sudden feelings of anxiety" (p. 259).

These symptoms overlapped with a diagnosis of PTSD, however they were considered distinct from the diagnosis as they related to the missing person, which was not perceived as a single event (Robins, 2010). The loss of a missing person could however be considered a single event.

Because of the negative impact on people's well-being associated with loss of contact through separation, re-establishing contact between family members is a primary intervention in the context of disasters and mass trauma (Hobfoll et al., 2007; Ommeren, Saxena & Saraceno, 2005).

1.6.2 Impact on relationships

Separation or loss, such as results from voluntary or involuntary migration, may give rise to a relationship pattern of 'disrupted attachment'. Some research has suggested a negative effect of long separations on parent-child relationships (Bowlby, 1973; Smith, Lalonde & Johnson, 2004). However, a connection between length of separation and psychological symptoms has not been supported by others (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002). Bowlby (1973) found that separation often led to detachment upon reunion. He noted that children's coping responses also depended on the care they received during the mother's absence and parent-child relationships before and after separation (Bowlby, 1973). However, Bowlby viewed parents and the mother in particular as the main caregivers. The effects of separation may be different in a culture where caregiving responsibilities are not solely provided by a child's parents but are shared amongst the child's siblings and other members of the extended family (Luster, Qin, Bates, Johnson & Rana, 2008). Thus culture may mediate the impact on the parent-child relationship in the context of separation.

Parent-child relationships are not solely affected by family separation. In the context of disasters, for instance, children separated from their parents may lose their complete social infrastructure including the security of others in their wider support network (e.g. extended family, neighbours and teachers) (Bonnerjea, 1994b). Despite the apparent negative impact of separation, resilience has been observed in children. It seems that how children interpret the situation of

separation will impact on the adjustment process (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002). This may also apply to adults separated from their families.

Having contact information and communicating with family in the context of separation can ease worries and facilitate reunion (Walsh, 2007). When communication between separated family members is not possible because someone is missing, worries may remain.

1.6.3 Impact of disappearance and ambiguity

In the context of disappearances, ambiguity about the fate of loved ones can affect families as well as individuals. As Boss (2004) noted, ambiguity may have consequences on how families deal with the loss. Families may need support in living with ambiguity while keeping hope (Walsh, 2007). There are no traditional rituals to give comfort to those who are seeking answers about the fate of their relatives (Luster et al., 2008). Confirmation or proof that the person is dead is required to perform a ritual in many cultures (Robins, 2010). People deprived of proper mourning may thus be unable to grieve effectively (Blauuw & Lahteenmaki, 2002). An inability to mourn and conduct rituals as a result of someone disappearing can have a psychological and emotional impact across cultures (Blauuw & Lahteenmaki, 2002), and may also lead to stigmatisation of individuals by families as well as stigmatisation of families by communities (Robins, 2010). A spouse disappearing can impact on the spouse left behind, with regards to their role in the family and the community. The disappearance of a family member may have consequences emotionally, psychologically, economically and socially (Blauuw & Lahteenmaki, 2002).

Many refugees and asylum-seekers experience separation and loss of contact with family. The following section explores some of the literature in relation to refugees and asylum-seekers.

1.7 The impact of separation, exile and resettlement in the context of asylum-seekers and refugees

Refugee families often face significant losses, including leaving family behind, and experiences of physical and psychosocial trauma, which they need to surmount (Miller & Rasco, 2004; Mock, 1998). They also face adapting to a new culture and way of life (Mock, 1998). In 2009, approximately 30,000 asylum applications were made in the United Kingdom (UK) (UNHCR, 2010a). Asylum is granted under the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees to a person fleeing persecution from their own country (UNHCR, 2010b). The Convention defines refugees as people who have left their country due to "a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (p. 14).

1.7.1 Family separation, ambiguous loss and mental health

Many refugees have been separated involuntarily from their families, including by force (e.g. Roth, Ekblad & Agren, 2006). In the UK, many refugees who are in contact with Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs) in London do not know the current whereabouts of their family members (McColl & Johnson, 2006). Separation may be considered one of the most painful aspects of living in exile by refugees (Miller, Muzurovic, Worthington, Tipping & Goldman, 2002).

Continued separation from spouse and/or children was found to have a stronger correlation with self-rated distress than severity of psychiatric disorders in a group of Vietnamese refugees who had previously resettled in Norway (Hauff & Vaglum, 1995). Feelings of disorientation, indecisiveness and inability to adapt to new environments were reported by some refugees who were still separated from their families in a quantitative and qualitative investigation of 113 refugees from Latin America and Africa in Montreal (Rousseau, Mekki-Berrada & Moreau 2001). The findings suggest that when trauma and separation occurred jointly these significantly impacted on refugees' emotional distress, with extended separation from family members serving as a "continuing link to an unbearable past" (Rousseau et al., 2001, p. 41). However participants were recruited from community organisations providing services to refugees or immigrants, thus this

group may not be representative of the whole refugee population. There is also ambiguity around interpretation and translation in this study.

Individuals may experience feelings of guilt and shame, as well as worries about leaving the family in a difficult or dangerous situation, which may add to their suffering (Fox, Cowell & Johnson, 1995; Hauff & Vaglum, 1995; Walsh, 2007). This has been referred to as 'survivor guilt'. Refugees may feel that they may never see their families again. Wondering whether family members are alive or dead can cause distress (Fox et al., 1995) but remembering missing family members can also serve to attenuate the pain of their absence (Rousseau et al., 2004). For example, Sudanese refugee youths resettled in the United States of America (USA), who had been separated from their families during childhood, reported distress, difficulties coping with the impact of ambiguous loss (depression, loneliness, feelings of sadness), fear, worry and frustration (Luster et al., 2008; Luster, Qin, Bates, Johnson & Rana, 2009). Experiencing these emotions was reported as better than knowing that their parents were dead. Yet, this finding contradicts ambiguous loss theory. A variety of individual coping strategies were used by the youths including avoidance and distraction, trying to get information about their families, religion to "find meaning in their loss" (p. 209) and accepting their situation to help focus on the future (Luster et al., 2009). The average time period between separating from their family and speaking to a family member on the phone was approximately 14 years. Therefore it is possible that the accuracy in recalling emotions and coping strategies during the time of separation may have been affected by this length of time.

The absence of one or more members of a family may also impact on family dynamics. A reconfiguration of roles within the family may occur (Rousseau et al., 2004). Others, external to the family, may also provide support. Relationships with elders and peers facilitated the Sudanese youths' ability to maintain a sense of family, often by forming an alternative "family" and encouraging them not to give up hope of family reunion (Luster et al., 2009). Changes in the configuration of families are most certainly not limited to refugee families – they could apply to all families who experience separation.

The family appears to play a key role as an “anchor of emotion and identity” in refugees (Rousseau et al., 2001, p. 40), as well as in the process of adaptation to forced relocation (Steinglass, 2001) and immigration. Ambiguous loss may explain the overall consequences of family separation and family members going missing (Robins, 2010).

1.7.2 Epidemiology of mental health difficulties and pre- and post-migration stressors

Within the refugee and asylum seeking population, research has focused mainly on the epidemiology of PTSD and other western psychiatric diagnoses. Refugees resettled in the West are up to ten times more likely to have PTSD than aged matched counterparts according to a systematic review of the prevalence of ‘serious mental disorder’ in approximately 7,000 refugees in seven western countries (Fazel, Wheeler & Danesh, 2005). Mental health difficulties (e.g. depression, anxiety and PTSD) can persist over time (Hauff & Vaglum, 1995; Lie, 2002), even after treatment (Carlsson, Mortensen & Kastrup, 2005), with only a few studies suggesting improvement (e.g. Steel, Silove, Phan & Bauman, 2002). Evidence also suggests that mental health difficulties may increase over time, even after resettlement (e.g. Roth et al., 2006).

Research has reported a number of risk factors associated with mental health difficulties including PTSD. These include trauma, specifically the amount and severity of trauma (Lie, 2002; Yehuda, Kahana, Schmeidler, Southwick, Wilson & Giller, 1995), torture (Roth et al., 2006) and exposure to political violence (Fox & Tang, 2000; Miller et al., 2002). A recent UK-based study does not however support the association between number of traumas and psychopathology (Carswell, Blackburn & Barker, 2011). Having a profound and firm belief system can help traumatised refugees deal with their traumas more effectively, indicating it may be a coping factor (Brune, Haasen, Krausz, Yagdiran, Bustos & Eisenman, 2002).

Experiences of dislocation and exile are increasingly recognised as highly stressful (Miller, 1999). They can reduce a person's ability to cope and their resilience (Lie, 2002). Arriving in western countries, asylum-seekers and refugees can experience stress related to access to work, health care, insecurity about future domicile (Roth et al., 2006) and the asylum application process (Brune et al., 2002; McColl & Johnson, 2006). This is likely to impact on their mental health and well-being (McColl & Johnson, 2006). Present life in exile with unemployment, lack of social contacts and unresolved family reunion was found to be a risk factor for PTSD in a non-clinical sample of resettled refugees in Norway (Lie, 2002). Exile-related stressors including social isolation, separation from family, loss of community and valued social roles, poverty and inadequate housing were expressed by 28 adult Bosnian refugees in Chicago in a qualitative investigation, all of which represented sources of distress for many participants (Miller et al., 2002). Similar experiences have been highlighted in clinical samples of refugees in the UK with post-migration stressors associated with poor mental health (Carswell et al., 2011; McColl & Johnson, 2006). Proximity to family appears to facilitate the process of settling into a new society (Ager & Strang, 2008). No longer experiencing anxiety about the safety and whereabouts of family members may thus facilitate the process of post-migration adaptation.

The combination of several post-migration factors, as well as pre-migration factors can lead to psychological difficulties in some individuals (Carswell et al., 2011), and exacerbate pre-existing difficulties (Silove, Sinnerbrink, Field, Manicavasagar & Steel, 1997). However in the UK, many refugees experience difficulties accessing health care and expressing their health needs (Burnett & Peel, 2001). Communication with health professionals may be complicated by language difficulties (Ager & Strang, 2008). The combination of the lack of proficiency in the host country language and health services' lack of use of interpreters could render communication an obstacle that may further limit refugees' access to mental health services (Miller, Martell, Pazdirek, Caruth & Lopez, 2005; Tribe, 1999). Ignoring cross cultural factors and a lack of interpreters within healthcare services may also mean that many refugees

resettling in western societies risk receiving inappropriate psychiatric diagnoses (Summerfield, 2000).

1.7.3 Critique of western psychiatric diagnoses and concepts

Most of the research on refugees and asylum-seekers has been carried out in the West which explains why western psychological concepts of trauma and distress dominate the literature on this population. The applicability of western diagnostic instruments to non-western populations has caused much debate in psychiatric research. Thus studies relying solely on symptom scales can be questioned. In addition, many methodological issues (e.g. the translation of test measures, making a diagnosis in another culture) can arise in studies of psychiatric disorders carried out in a transcultural context therefore caution is required interpreting results (Hauff & Vaglum, 1995).

There may be wide cultural variations in the ways emotional distress is experienced or expressed (Fox et al., 1995). This diversity may impact on the way individuals interpret and respond to events such as separation and trauma according to ethnic identity (Keyes, 2000). Collective frameworks may also contribute to their interpretation and response (Shapiro, 1995). Summerfield (2000) suggests “every culture has its own beliefs and traditions which determine psychological norms and frameworks for mental health” (pp. 233-234). This can explain the critique of the cross-cultural relevance of trauma-based approaches (Mezey & Robbins, 2001; von Peter, 2008). Consideration of the political, historical and cultural settings in which traumatic events occur in addition to the personal, family and collective meanings attached to these are postulated (Rousseau et al., 2001). The term ‘cultural bereavement’ has been suggested as a better explanation than PTSD for those whose “condition may be a sign of normal, even constructive, rehabilitation from devastatingly traumatic experiences” (Eisenbruch, 1991, p. 678).

1.8 Hope and resilience

Many negative effects have been reported for individuals and families as a consequence of separation, trauma and loss. However, during times of uncertainty, hope and resilience may be present.

Many definitions of hope exist. For example, Snyder (1994) defined hope as the perceived ability to create pathways to desired goals, together with the motivations to begin and maintain movement toward those goals. It involves an orientation to the future, as well as wishes, dreams and ambitions (Borg & Kristiansen, 2004). It has been positively associated with psychological well-being (Shorey, Little, Snyder, Kluck & Robitschek, 2007). People with experiences of mental health difficulties have reported hope to have helped getting through their day-to-day lives, especially during the more difficult times, with professionals viewed as helping to keep hope alive (Borg & Kristiansen, 2004). Hope is a key component of recovery (Walsh, 2007). A connection between hope and resilient outcomes has been found in adults facing ambiguous loss (Boss, 2006). For example, hope of seeing and being reunited with family members gave strength to young refugees during difficult times (Luster et al., 2008). Discovering hope is also an aim of Boss' (2006) recommended therapeutic guidelines for working with those facing ambiguous loss.

The term 'resilience' is used to describe individuals' ability to endure the impact of traumatic events. In the psychology literature, resilience has been defined as "an outcome following a highly stressful event" (Mancini & Bonanno, 2009, p. 1807) and reflects "the ability to maintain a stable equilibrium" (Bonanno, 2004, p. 20) or 'bounce back' after excessive stress (Agaibi & Wilson, 2005). Resilient individuals are seen as being able to continue functioning by managing difficult experiences in such a way that they do not interfere (Mancini & Bonanno, 2009), and live well despite them (Boss, 2006). Psychological resilience is connected to resilience at the family, community and societal level (de Terte, Becker & Stephens, 2009). The literature discussing resilience in the context of conflict and bereavement/loss is vast (e.g. Bonanno, 2004; Mancini & Bonanno, 2009). Through meaning-making, reaching out to others and making active coping efforts, people use

resources they may not have done otherwise and gain new skills and outlook on life (Walsh, 2007). In the face of ambiguity, resilience results from the recognition and management of ambivalent feelings (Robins, 2010). Some factors such as reconstructing one's identity and accepting new roles and responsibilities; personal or cultural beliefs about mastery (e.g. control over certain things); thinking about the missing person; preserving relationships and religious or spiritual beliefs to find meaning have been associated with resilience (Boss, 2006).

1.9 Looking for missing family

Searching for missing relatives can be carried out by individual means (e.g. use of technology, asking people who may have been in contact with the missing relatives) or through an organisation (e.g. Red Cross, Salvation Army). For instance in Luster et al.'s (2008) study, Sudanese refugee youths described using both types of methods in their search for their families – what they described as 'formal' and 'informal' strategies. Whilst some attempted to send letters via the Red Cross (formal method) with only two receiving a reply, others asked newly arrived refugees in the camps where they were based if they had seen their family (informal method). The authors do not however specify how many attempted one or both of these methods. Bonnerjea (1994b) suggests that most families will search for their children employing whatever methods they can in that situation. The search for family can thus be viewed as an active coping strategy.

There are a number of organisations that offer tracing services in the UK and worldwide. In the UK, organisations such as Missing People, the British Red Cross and the Salvation Army offer their services in the search for missing relatives. For example, the British Red Cross (BRC) is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the world's largest independent humanitarian network. The Movement consists of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and 188 national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies around the world. In 2010, over 832,000 enquiries were made to the ICRC relating to missing persons and their protection and it handled over 305,000 Red

Cross messages allowing restored contact between family members separated by hostilities and other crises (ICRC, 2011). All national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are mandated to offer tracing services. The British Red Cross, through its International Tracing and Message Service (ITMS), offers to undertake tracing enquiries on behalf of people living in the UK who have been separated from their relatives as a result of conflict, disaster or migration.

Searching through the literature yielded no results on the use of tracing services in looking for missing family members. However, a Masters dissertation carried out an impact analysis of tracing and message service-users' psychosocial and physical well-being prior to and since accessing those services (Straw, 2011). Semi-structured interviews were conducted in England and Ethiopia with five participants who had fled to escape conflict. The impact of the tracing and message services (ITMS and Restoring Family Links²) was found to be positive. This was even greater for service-users put back in contact with their families. Symptoms of 'psychosocial dysfunction' were reported to have decreased once service-users had accessed the services, and decreased further if contact was re-established with family members. However, there are some issues arising from this piece of research. Firstly, the study was conducted without ethical approval. This has implications for the duty of care of participants who may have been upset by their participation in the research (at the time or afterwards) given the sensitivity of the issues discussed. No measures to support participants were reported to have been considered. Secondly, information on the qualifications of the interpreter used for one interview was not provided. Although it is important to hold conversations with people who speak languages other than English (Temple & Young, 2004), methodological implications arise. Thirdly, little information was provided about how participants were recruited. Fourthly, although the study looks at psychological aspects of tracing and message service-users, it was not conducted from a psychological background. Nevertheless this study highlights benefits of re-establishing contact with family members. The following section

² Restoring Family Links (RFL) represents a range of activities including aiming "to restore and maintain contact among families and to clarify the fate of persons who have been reported missing" (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2009, p. 15).

explores the literature on finding missing family alive and reunification, as well as receiving news of death.

1.10 Finding missing family

Searching for missing family members can result in a number of outcomes. Prior to receiving any news of the search, people may have to wait, which can sometimes be the most difficult part (Sweeny & Cavanaugh, 2010). Sought family members may be found alive, and subsequent attempts to reconnect and reunite may ensue if they are willing. Individuals may receive news of the missing family member's death, or only receive partial information. Missing relatives may not be found, either by individual or formal means, and thus the uncertainty remains.

1.10.1 Finding missing family alive

Reconnecting with family members can bring joy and relief (Luster et al., 2008) and a need to re-establish some continuity (Rousseau et al., 2004). It may also lead to attempts at reunification. For refugees in particular, family reunification can often be seen as "an event that will put a happy end to a long series of losses" (Rousseau et al., 2004, p. 1096). Family reunion is the term given to the process of bringing separated family members across from another country for the purpose of reunification (Staver, 2008). In the context of war, family reunion can be an "urgent priority" (Summerfield, 2000, p. 234). Although reuniting with family members after a lengthy separation can be joyous, it may also bring challenges (Luster et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2004).

Reunification of the entire family may in itself be a difficult task to accomplish and may take many years. Even after reunification, the absence of family members may never really be erased, which in turn may cause difficulties dealing with the gaps created (Rousseau et al., 2004). Therefore the concept of ambiguous loss can be helpful when considering prolonged separation and the reunification process, particularly for refugees (Steinglass, 2001). Following a lengthy separation, adjustments may be required (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002). Roles may need to be redefined, accounting for both the past and the present

(Rousseau et al., 2004), as well as new family roles adopted such as young people becoming providers (Luster et al., 2008).

In the context of migration and exile, additional difficulties may occur when resettling in a different culture to that of origin. Individuals may have changed as a result of being in a different culture which may affect interactions with family members (Luster et al., 2008). Language may become an additional barrier, particularly in the case of children and young people who are separated from their parents and families at an early age. The young Sudanese in Luster et al.'s (2008) study expressed difficulties understanding certain meanings and not feeling as well understood by their parents as their friends who had experienced similar separation and resettlement.

Children who have been separated from their families may have settled into their new living situation and formed new relationships and bonding with peers and parent substitutes (Bonnerjea, 1994b). Reunification with parents may lead to a further separation, which can be difficult and painful (Bonnerjea, 1994b). A group of women from the Caribbean, whose mothers had left them as children in the care of extended family to come to Britain, expressed feelings of failure to get close to their mothers following reunion and of being less loved by their mothers compared to siblings born in Britain (Arnold, 2006). These women also spoke of additional difficulties (e.g. trust, being mocked) resulting in shame, low self-esteem, sadness and depression which led them to seek therapy (Arnold, 2006). Psychiatric difficulties (mainly depression) were also observed in one-fifth of individuals reunited with family members after four decades of separation due to civil war (Tseng, Cheng, Chen, Hwang & Hsu, 1993). Family disintegration can occur from the stress linked to separation and reunion, which may lead families to seek help from mental health professionals (Smith et al., 2004). In addition, 'emotional detachment' may occur at the time of reunification (Bowlby, 1973).

1.10.2 Receiving news of death

Another possible outcome of the search for family is receiving news of death, which may be viewed as a form of 'bad news'. Ptacek and Eberhardt (1996)

described bad news as the resulting “cognitive, behavioural or emotional deficit experienced by the person receiving the news that persists for some time after the news is received” (p. 496). However there are degrees to which news is perceived as bad. This perception is subjective and depends on “an individual’s life experiences, personality, spiritual beliefs, philosophical standpoint, perceived social supports and emotional hardiness” (Fallowfield & Jenkins, 2004, p. 312).

Most of the literature on communicating and receiving bad news has come from medical settings, particularly oncology and paediatrics. It has been critiqued for its limited empirical basis (Parker, Baile, de Moor, Lenzi, Kudelka & Cohen, 2001; Ptacek & Ptacek, 2001). The literature available has focused greatly on the professionals’ perspective and on providing guidelines to physicians on how to communicate bad news (Ptacek & Ptacek, 2001; Vandekieft, 2001). It highlights the importance of the physical and social setting in which bad news is delivered as well as the timing of the news.

Ptacek and Eberhardt (1996) suggested that receiving bad news will always result in some level of discomfort; however there may be huge variations in the intensity and duration of these feelings. The individual’s psychosocial context (Vandekieft, 2001), expectations, previous experiences and personality traits (Fallowfield & Jenkins, 2004) can influence how bad, difficult and sad information is received. The way in which the news is delivered may also be important. Vandekieft (2001) has suggested that this should be individualised by the professional.

Recommendations to professionals include ensuring individuals or families understand the news but also considering the way in which the news is delivered (e.g. empathic delivery) so as not to exacerbate the discomfort associated with the news itself (Ptacek & Eberhardt, 1996).

Some studies have explored patients’ perspectives to receiving bad news (Ishaque, Saleem, Khawaja & Qidwai, 2010; Salander, 2002). A questionnaire survey asking deceased patients’ family members to rate the importance of 14 items related to being given bad news found that the most important features were the attitude of the person who gave the news, the clarity of the message,

privacy and the newsgiver's ability to answer questions (Jurkovich, Pierce, Pananen & Rivara, 2000). Bad news communicated well can help understanding, acceptance and adjustment; however if done badly, confusion, long-lasting distress and resentment can result therefore a sensitive approach is needed (Fallowfield & Jenkins, 2004).

Nonetheless, much of the research on breaking bad news in medical settings has been carried out in western countries. There may be differences across cultures in terms of what one might perceive as bad news, how this type of news is delivered as well as the content of the information provided. For instance, Tse, Chong and Fok (2003) suggested the careful use of language when communicating news about death, fatal illness or cancer to Chinese individuals and their families, and demonstrating cultural sensitivity in breaking bad news.

In cases of missing persons in the humanitarian context, news is often bad and giving news of death is a difficult task (Sassòli & Tougas, 2002). However it may come as a relief to those unaware of the fate of their loved ones. Receiving news of death, young Sudanese refugees expressed that "even bad news brought resolution of ambiguous loss" (Luster et al., 2008, p. 451). However it may be important to note that the dead did not include their parents. Receiving news of death may resolve any difficulties encountered in respect to social roles by ending uncertainty.

Boss (1999) suggests that in order to make the loss real, most people will need to see the body of a loved one who has died. This may not be possible in the case of people receiving news some time after the death, and could have consequences on how they deal with the loss (Boss, 1999), particularly in terms of the grieving process.

Most research available on delivering or receiving bad news has focused on the time at which the news was shared. However, little is known of the long-term effects on individuals of receiving bad news (Ptacek & Eberhardt, 1996), and

within contexts other than medical settings. The aims of the current study will now be outlined.

1.11 Rationale and aim of the current research

The literature reviewed above indicates that there may be psychosocial consequences for those who experience family separation and ambiguous loss, as well as receiving news about family members (good or bad) and family reunification. Research on refugees and asylum-seekers, who often face such experiences, has mainly focused on the negative sequelae, with very few studies conducted in the UK. Although some studies indicate various methods used by individuals to search for their missing family, there is very limited research available on the process of searching for missing relatives and the impact of finding family, particularly when using formal search methods. The present study thus aimed to explore the experiences of individuals who have used a tracing service in searching for missing relatives³.

The main research question was:

How do people who have used a tracing service talk about the experience of the process and impact of doing so?

³ The term “relatives” in this study refers to people related by blood or marriage.

CHAPTER TWO: METHOD

Grounded theory was chosen as the most appropriate methodology to use for the current research. The following section contains a rationale for using grounded theory, an explanation of what it is and the criteria for assessing quality in qualitative research. It is followed by an outline of the procedure for gathering data. The final sections focus on the specifics of data collection and data analysis.

2.1 Rationale for methodological choice

2.1.1 Rationale for a qualitative approach

Marshall (1996) emphasises that the research question should determine the choice between quantitative and qualitative research methods. A qualitative approach may be most useful for answering 'why?' and 'how?' questions and as such will be aimed at providing an understanding of the complex social processes likely to be involved in the phenomena under study (Marshall, 1996). A qualitative rather than quantitative approach was also deemed appropriate for this study as there is limited research which focuses on the process of searching for missing relatives, and a hypothetico-deductive strategy would not be appropriate.

2.1.2 Grounded theory and epistemological position

2.1.2.1 Grounded theory

Grounded theory originates from sociology and is linked to symbolic interactionism which claims that meaning is negotiated and understood through interactions with others (Dey, 1999). It was developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At the time, Glaser and Strauss aimed to describe an approach to social research and the generation of theory which differed from the then dominant paradigm, that of testing hypotheses drawn from already-formed theory.

The grounded theory approach attends to the complexities of participants' lived experiences rooted in unique social contexts (Fassinger, 2005). Its aim is to develop a model of basic social processes, studied in the environments in which they occur, with the resulting analysis being 'grounded in the data' (Barker, Elliot & Pistrang, 2002). This model is developed by collecting data, for instance

through the stories participants tell about a particular area of interest to them and the researcher, where issues of importance to participants are shared (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006). Grounded theory methodology provides a set of procedures which promotes the development of a theory about the phenomenon investigated (Chamberlain, Camic & Yardley, 2004) through the development of abstract ideas about the research participants' meanings, actions and worlds (Charmaz, 2008b). As the analysis is grounded in the data, this makes it relevant to the participants and those interested in their experience (Chamberlain et al., 2004).

Grounded theory shares many of the features of other approaches to the analysis of subjective experience (particularly phenomenological analysis). However phenomenological analysis (including Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, IPA) is more concerned with capturing the meaning of an experience or event through individual experience (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007), and takes a view "from the inside out" rather than "from the outside in" (Charmaz, 1995, pp. 30-31). Moreover, grounded theory provides a more explicit, systematic set of procedures for interpretative analysis, although these may be used with some flexibility (Charmaz, 2008a). Many of the research techniques found in grounded theory methodology can be used from a variety of epistemological positions (Chamberlain et al., 2004). Finally, grounded theory can be adopted to analyse practically any kind or combination of qualitative data (Chamberlain et al., 2004).

2.1.2.2 Epistemology

Qualitative research is not a homogeneous field – there are a number of epistemological positions and many different methods of analysis a qualitative researcher can use. Epistemology is a branch of philosophy which is concerned with assumptions about the basis for knowledge (Willig, 2008). Within qualitative psychology research, commonly used epistemological positions range from radical relativist to naïve realist (Madill, Jordan & Shirley, 2000).

Grounded theory, as originally conceived by Glaser and Strauss (1967), was rooted in positivism. A positivist epistemology implies that the research goal is to

produce knowledge that is objective (Willig, 2008). Therefore the researcher is considered to be a neutral observer, simply deriving theory from the data (Chamberlain et al., 2004). However, the positivist or realist version of grounded theory has been criticised for not addressing satisfactorily questions of reflexivity (Willig, 2008), a criticism also possibly applicable to IPA. However, researchers can analyse data by using a grounded theory method from different stances.

Grounded theorists using a social constructionist (or constructivist⁴) approach, such as that proposed by Charmaz (2006), have adopted a more reflexive stance and suggest that there are 'knowledges' to be understood rather than simply 'knowledge'. Perception and experience are not considered to be a direct reflection of the environment as it is mediated by historical, cultural and linguistic factors (Willig, 2008). Within this approach to grounded theory, the researcher is considered to be engaged in the interpretation and construction of the theory (Chamberlain et al., 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus the whole research process is an interactive one and the resulting theoretical analyses are viewed as interpretations of a reality, not objective portrayals of it (Charmaz, 2008b). Charmaz (2008b) argues that a social constructionist approach to grounded theory can be particularly helpful when considering social justice studies, in order to investigate how processes become institutionalised practices. Data analysis under Charmaz' approach to grounded theory can be undertaken from a completely relativist stance (Madill et al., 2000). This study does not take such an extreme position, rather it assumes that the phenomena under focus are 'real' – it is the understandings of them that are acknowledged as 'multiple'. It has therefore adopted a critical realist epistemological stance. According to Oliver (2011), critical realism "marries the positivist's search for evidence of a reality external to human consciousness with the insistence that all meaning to be made of that reality is socially constructed" (p. 2).

Rigour is essential when evaluating qualitative research studies. In order to achieve rigour, the researcher should defend the choice of approach through

⁴ Differences have been claimed between the two terms. This study will employ the term 'social constructionist' throughout.

adherence to evaluative criteria for carrying out qualitative research (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992). The following section focuses on the adherence to evaluative criteria.

2.2 Assessing quality in qualitative research

Qualitative research has been criticised for neglecting issues of reliability and validity. Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) suggest that there should be broader discussion around reliability and validity when considering qualitative rather than quantitative methodologies. Yardley (2000) has identified four headings to describe the criteria by which the quality and rigour of qualitative research should be judged: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance. Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) recommend the use of a number of practices for assessing the quality of qualitative psychological research put forward by qualitative researchers. Some grounded theory techniques mentioned in relation to the application of the suggested practices will be discussed in greater detail in the discussion chapter.

2.3 Procedure for gathering data

2.3.1 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was granted for this study by the School of Psychology's Ethics Committee at the University of East London (Appendix I). As the participants were ex-service-users of the British Red Cross' (BRC) International Tracing and Message Service (ITMS), thus outside of the National Health Service (NHS), ethical approval from an NHS committee was not required. The British Red Cross however granted its approval for this study.

No harm should come to participants from research. In psychological research, harm may be most likely to arise from "stirring up painful feelings or memories" (Barker et al., 2002, p. 191). Researchers should be aware that this may occur. In clinical psychology, researchers should draw upon their clinical skills in both identifying signs of distress and responding appropriately (Barker et al., 2002). This was important in the present study. In addition, participants were informed prior to commencing the interview that if I was concerned for their safety or the

safety of others close to them at any point during the interview, confidentiality would be broken and I would inform a member of the BRC. A sheet including sources of support that operate nationally was given to each participant at the end of the interview (see Appendix II).

2.3.2 Criteria for participation

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed in collaboration with the British Red Cross' ITMS.

2.3.2.1 Inclusion criteria

In order to take part in the research, participants had to have used the ITMS to search for a missing relative. Only individuals aged 18 or over and for whom the search for their lost relative resulted in a 'successful trace' – the relative was found living or deceased – were considered. In addition, given the sensitivity of the topic investigated in this research, only individuals who had received news about the outcome of the trace and whose case had been closed by ITMS for at least six months were contacted to reduce the risk of re-traumatisation.

2.3.2.2 Exclusion criteria

As interviews would only be conducted in the UK, individuals whose last known address available to the BRC was overseas were excluded. In addition, if the BRC lost contact with a service-user during the tracing process or a service-user was seriously ill at the time the BRC found out the results of the trace and was therefore unable to give the news to these users were excluded from the research. Finally, service-users who were subsequently found to be deceased or who had previously stated they did not wish for any further contact with the BRC at the time their case was closed were also excluded.

2.3.3 Recruitment and sampling

Once ethical approval was granted, ITMS was approached to commence recruitment. Purposive sampling was used for this study. A list of potential participants identified and approved by a Senior Case Worker was given by ITMS. For the most part, the list was made up of successful cases where the sought

relative was found alive. Individuals whose relative was found alive had given permission to be contacted for publicity purposes. The list of potential participants originally included 18 cases where the missing family member was found to be deceased.

Prior to the individuals listed being approached, three members of the ITMS UK-Office contacted local BRC area branches to obtain information about the possible language needs of potential participants as well as any concerns they may have about these individuals being contacted for this study. Individuals who were deemed unsuitable by local case workers were not approached. Some ITMS area coordinators also put forward additional cases to be considered for the study. These were again checked by a Senior Case Worker at ITMS. The majority of potential participants were recruited retrospectively (their tracing case being closed at the time of recruitment). A few of the most recent cases (still open at the time of commencing recruitment) were recruited prospectively – individuals whose tracing cases were closing and put forward for publicity were contacted by the service and asked whether they agreed to be contacted again in the future to take part in research.

Letters were sent in batches to 34 individuals meeting the inclusion criteria from July to December 2011. Letters were sent to 24 individuals whose trace had resulted in their family member being found alive and 11 to those whose relative had died (one individual received two outcomes from his trace). Letters included a cover letter and the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix III). As telephone numbers were not available for some individuals listed, two versions of the cover letter were designed (Appendix III). For those potential participants for whom the BRC had a telephone number listed on their records, telephone calls were made within two weeks of the letter being sent. During the telephone conversation, potential participants were asked if they had any further questions and if they wanted to take part in the study. Eleven individuals agreed to take part but one individual later dropped out. Interviews were arranged at a place convenient for participants.

All 34 letters inviting individuals to take part in the study were sent in English as specific language needs had not been reported by local BRC caseworkers for these particular individuals. Individuals were not excluded on the basis of not speaking 'good enough' English as interpretation could have been arranged via ITMS. However, it is possible that individuals' confidence in fluency in spoken English may have influenced participation in this study, with those individuals feeling more confident speaking in English being more willing and accepting to participate.

2.3.4 Participants

Ten participants were recruited from across England and Wales. All had used the British Red Cross' tracing service in the past. Their tracing cases were closed between 2005 and 2011, with four closed in 2009. Prior to commencing the interview, demographic information⁵ was collected. These data are presented in Table 1. The age range of the participants was 32 to 83 (mean age was 49.7 years old but a median of 41 years old). The countries of origin of participants were Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, France, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda and United Kingdom.

⁵ See Appendix IV for Demographic Information Sheet

Table 1: Participant demographics

Name (changed to preserve anonymity⁶)	Gender	Ethnicity	Residency status	Occupation	Relationship to traced family member and outcome of trace
Pamela	Female	White British	British citizen	Retired	Cousin found alive
Oscar	Male	White British	British citizen	Semi-retired; part-time domestic assessor	Father found dead; cousin found alive
David	Male	Black African	British citizen	Support worker	Wife found alive
Paul	Male	Black African	Refugee	Full-time student	Wife found alive
Haja	Female	Black African	British citizen	Full-time social care assistant	Daughter found alive
Jerry	Male	Black African	Refugee	Unemployed	Wife found alive
Degaule	Male	Black African	Refugee	Full-time domestic assistant	Wife found alive
Adam	Male	Black African	Refugee	Full-time IT support	Wife found alive
Joy	Female	Black African	British citizen	Part time support worker	Husband found alive
Bernadette	Female	White French	British citizen	Retired	Niece found alive

2.4 Data collection

2.4.1 Resources

Interviews were recorded using a digital audio-recorder. An additional telephone pick-up cable (Olympus TP7 microphone) connected to the recorder was used to record telephone interviews (see below for interview locations). A British Red Cross volunteer was present during the interview carried out in the participant's home. A private room in a BRC office or a partner organisation (Welsh Refugee Council) was made available for all other face-to-face interviews.

2.4.2 Interview process

Data was collected in two waves of semi-structured interviews (five participants in the first wave, five participants in the second wave). Eight interviews were carried

⁶ Participants chose their own pseudonyms at the time of the interview.

out face-to-face and two interviews over the telephone to suit the participants although the latter was not the preferred method of collecting data. Telephone interviews are an accepted way of collecting interview data (Novick, 2008; Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Kwong Arora & Mattis, 2007); however issues of engagement and understanding should be attended to given the inability to see or use non-verbal cues to guide the interview (Suzuki et al., 2007). Telephone interviews can produce data that is of the same quality as face-to-face interviews if these issues are attended to sufficiently (Novick, 2008). Telephone conversations with both participants had taken place on two occasions prior to each interview. This enabled the development of some rapport with the participants. Further attention was paid to possible signs of distress at the time of the interview, however as in both cases the sought relative was found alive and for the first telephone interview conducted the participant's tracing case had been closed for a number of years, the likely risk of distress was deemed low.

One participant was offered the option of having an interpreter for his interview as the area coordinator who had dealt with the trace had highlighted the participant may feel more comfortable speaking in his own language. The participant however declined the offer.

2.4.2.1 Consent

Prior to the interview commencing, participants were asked if they had any questions regarding the information sheet they had previously received in the post and read before agreeing to meet with the researcher to be interviewed. Participants then read and signed the consent form (see Appendix IV). For the telephone interviews, the consent form was sent to participants by post prior to the interview taking place. It was returned by the participant in a provided stamped, self-addressed envelope.

2.4.2.2 Interviews

In order to have the flexibility to explore the range of ex-ITMS service-users' experiences, a semi-structured interview schedule was used. The interview schedule was discussed with the Head and Development Officer of ITMS. In

grounded theory, interviews are a common source of data and are viewed as a “directed conversation” (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996, p. 89). Eliciting the participant’s story is the aim of the interview. Intensive interviewing allows an in-depth exploration of a particular topic or experience (Charmaz, 2006). In grounded theory research, when research interviews are used as a method of data collection, ensuring these are not overly directive will allow following interesting theoretical leads (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996). Thus, participants were given time and space to provide their answers and the interview schedule was used flexibly.

One face-to-face interview was conducted in the participant’s home in the presence of a BRC volunteer as per the organisation’s home visit guidelines. All other face-to-face interviews were conducted in a private room in a BRC local office or a partner organisation, in different locations across England and Wales. Interviews lasted between 19 and 90 minutes, with an average of 54 minutes. After each interview, some time was spent recording first impressions or reflections in a reflexive diary as suggested by Charmaz (2006).

2.4.3 Transcription

The researcher transcribed all interviews verbatim using transcription conventions adapted from Silverman (2001); Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (1994), and Potter and Hepburn (2005). Chamberlain et al. (2004) suggest that, generally, working from a complete account of what was said (with some indications of pauses and breaks but not the timing of pauses and silences) is sufficient when using grounded theory methodology. These were deemed sufficiently detailed for the level of analysis required in grounded theory (see Appendix V).

2.4.4 Translation

Although none of the participants required ‘live interpretation’, some participants during their interviews said some words in their first language, French. French words were translated into English within the transcripts. The sentences where

the words occurred were checked by a French-speaking person⁷ to check for accuracy.

2.5 Data analysis

2.5.1 Procedure for analysis

The grounded theory method provides “guidelines on how to identify categories, how to make links between categories and how to establish relationships between them” (Willig, 2008, p. 35). Questioning the data and its interpretation is seen as key throughout the phases of analysis (Chamberlain et al., 2004). Although some flexibility can be used, following some of the guidelines provided is recommended (Charmaz, 2006). Those followed in the current study are described below.

2.5.2 Coding

An important feature of the grounded theory method is coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It involves interacting with the data in order to develop concepts to represent the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Categories are identified through this process (Willig, 2008). Coding links data collection with the development of an emergent theory to explain these data (Charmaz, 2008a). Different levels of coding were used in the analysis, becoming increasingly more theoretical with the progression of the analysis. The guidance of Corbin and Strauss (2008) and Charmaz (2006) was used to carry out coding at different levels: initial open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

Initial open coding was completed through reading the interview transcripts and coding line-by-line. As suggested by Charmaz (2006), each line of the data was named with the processes or occurrences that seemed to be taking place, specifically looking for actions or events in the data. ‘In-vivo’ codes (words or phrases provided by the participant) were used as much as possible, as suggested by Willig (2008), to make sure the analysis was truly ‘grounded in the data’ (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Keeping close to the data at this initial stage therefore ensured that higher-level categories emerge from the data (Willig, 2008). Initial open coding for sections of the first interviews was reviewed within a

⁷ A French female who has a degree in English and German from a French University.

workshop with two other researchers and my second supervisor for this study. The transcripts of two interviews were also exchanged with the same researchers to check for similarity in coding and completeness.

Focused coding was then conducted, where initial significant or frequent codes were synthesised, integrated and organised to produce categories. This was followed by axial coding. Axial coding was used to relate lower level concepts to broader ones, at a dimensional level (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Axial coding looks at relationships within categories using the paradigm model. According to this model, relationships can be sorted within categories in terms of contexts (why, where, how); responses (interactions, actions, emotions); and consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Charmaz (2006) contends that axial coding provides a frame for researchers to use but warns that it may “limit your vision” (p. 61). However, Mills et al. (2006) argue that axial coding is a “tool for reconstructing a grounded theory that is both dense and significantly analytical, as well as representative of structure and process” (p. 6). Therefore the paradigm model was used flexibly for the analysis, in a way that was judged appropriate to the data.

For example, I assigned the initial open codes ‘Seeking asylum’ and ‘Going to the Home Office’ to sections of data from interview transcripts during line-by-line coding. Through writing memos and moving across interview transcripts comparing participants’ experiences, actions and interpretations (i.e. constant comparison – see below), I constructed the focused code ‘Arriving in Britain’ to synthesise and explain larger amounts of data. Through developing my focused codes and writing memos on them, I constructed categories and looked at the relationships between them. Categories explain ideas, events or processes in the data (Charmaz, 2006). Sub-categories are also categories but they belong to a category giving it further clarification and specification by answering “questions about the phenomenon such as when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequences” (Strauss & Corbin, p. 125). Through axial coding, I developed the sub-category ‘Coming to Britain’ pertaining to the category ‘Background’, which indicates the context, encompassing the focused code ‘Arriving in Britain’.

Selective coding involves the integration and condensing of major categories to generate a theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The term 'selective' is employed because the researcher has to select one aspect as a core category to focus upon (Punch, 1998). The core category is also known as the central category and it represents the principal theme of the research.

2.5.3 Constant comparative analysis

The constant comparative method is an essential part of grounded theory. Comparisons are made between data and data, data and categories and category and category (Charmaz, 2008b). The aim of constant comparative analysis is to “link and integrate categories in such a way that all instances of variation are captured by the emerging theory” (Willig, 2008, p. 36). Line-by-line coding was completed for the first five interviews before the next wave of participants was interviewed. This enabled constant comparative analysis as well as allowing exploration of additional areas of interest in the following interviews. The initial interview guide was adapted on several occasions with further questions added as suggested by Charmaz (2008a) (see Appendix VI for copies of the initial interview schedule and the final version used during interview 10). For example, during the third interview, David suggested I should ask future participants not originating from Britain how they came to be in this country. He also spoke about expectations, which was added as a follow-up question.

2.5.4 Theoretical sampling and saturation

Additional data is collected in light of categories that have emerged from earlier stages of analysis – this is known as theoretical sampling (Willig, 2008). Participants with differing experiences of a phenomenon are recruited in order to explore multiple dimensions of the social processes investigated (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Grounded theory thus relies on theoretical sampling. Analysis of data and recruitment of new participants were carried out simultaneously in the current research.

One way of achieving ‘theoretical saturation’ is through theoretical sampling. Theoretical saturation is reached when collecting more data does not add further variability to categories. The meaning of saturation and whether saturation should be an aim of grounded theory research has been the object of disagreement amongst grounded theory researchers (Charmaz, 2006). Willig (2008, p. 37) posits that theoretical saturation acts “as a goal rather than a reality”. The term ‘theoretical sufficiency’, which allows for more flexibility, has been proposed as an alternative to saturation (Dey, 1999). Aiming for ‘theoretical sufficiency’ instead of ‘theoretical saturation’ implies researchers can generate categories which explain the data sufficiently without forcing data into predetermined frameworks (Charmaz, 2006). The idea of sufficiency was therefore adopted in the current analysis.

2.5.5 Memo-writing

An important aspect of the grounded theory method is memo-writing. The researcher keeps a written record of theory development throughout the process of data collection and analysis (Willig, 2008). There is no ‘correct way’ of memo-writing. However, Charmaz (2006) suggests that, common to all researchers, the use of memos should develop codes into categories and consecutive memos should increase the conceptual level of categories. In parallel to the coding process, memo-writing encouraged reflection on ideas about coding at different stages of the analysis as well as the development of categories (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996). It was an essential part of the research process.

2.5.6 Reflexivity

Reflexivity requires researchers to be aware of their part in the construction of meanings throughout the research process, as well as acknowledge that they cannot remain ‘outside of’ their subject matter while conducting research (Willig, 2008). As Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) note, “the researcher and researched are characterised as interdependent in the social process of research” (p. 106). Corbin and Strauss (2008) acknowledge that researchers’ emotions are conveyed to participants and that, in turn, participants react to the researcher’s responses.

Acknowledging and, where appropriate, explicitly reflecting on the influence of the researcher's own perspectives within the analysis of qualitative research is viewed as important (Chamberlain et al., 2004). According to Willig (2008), there is no set format for addressing reflexivity; however she highlights the importance of including reflections on the researcher's role in the research. Charmaz (2006) specifically suggests keeping a reflexive journal. Therefore a reflexive journal was kept throughout the process of the research to monitor my own assumptions as well as increase self-awareness of my own position in relation to the research. My position is discussed in greater detail below.

2.6 The researcher's position

In acknowledging the interaction between researcher and participants, the following section outlines my background, beliefs and assumptions in order that they are situated in context and their interaction with the data and analysis can be fully considered (Elliott, Fischer & Rennie, 1999; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992; Stiles, 1993).

I am a white British and Chilean female who is bilingual in English and French. As a person who was born and raised in countries different from the nationalities I hold, I was interested in the broad topic of families and migration. I have not experienced separation from and loss of family members that people who use tracing services have. However, I have grown up hearing family stories about separation, loss, family members disappearing and being reunited. This has most certainly influenced my beliefs and assumptions, therefore discussing my interview schedule with people working at ITMS and involved in the tracing process was important to monitor and minimise my assumptions.

Through my reading of the current literature on ambiguous loss, family separation and family reunion, I considered this an area worthy of investigation.

CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I will discuss the analysis of the 10 interviews carried out for this study. I will provide an overview of the critical realist grounded theory of 'A path towards finding missing family and beyond'.

3.1 Categories and codes

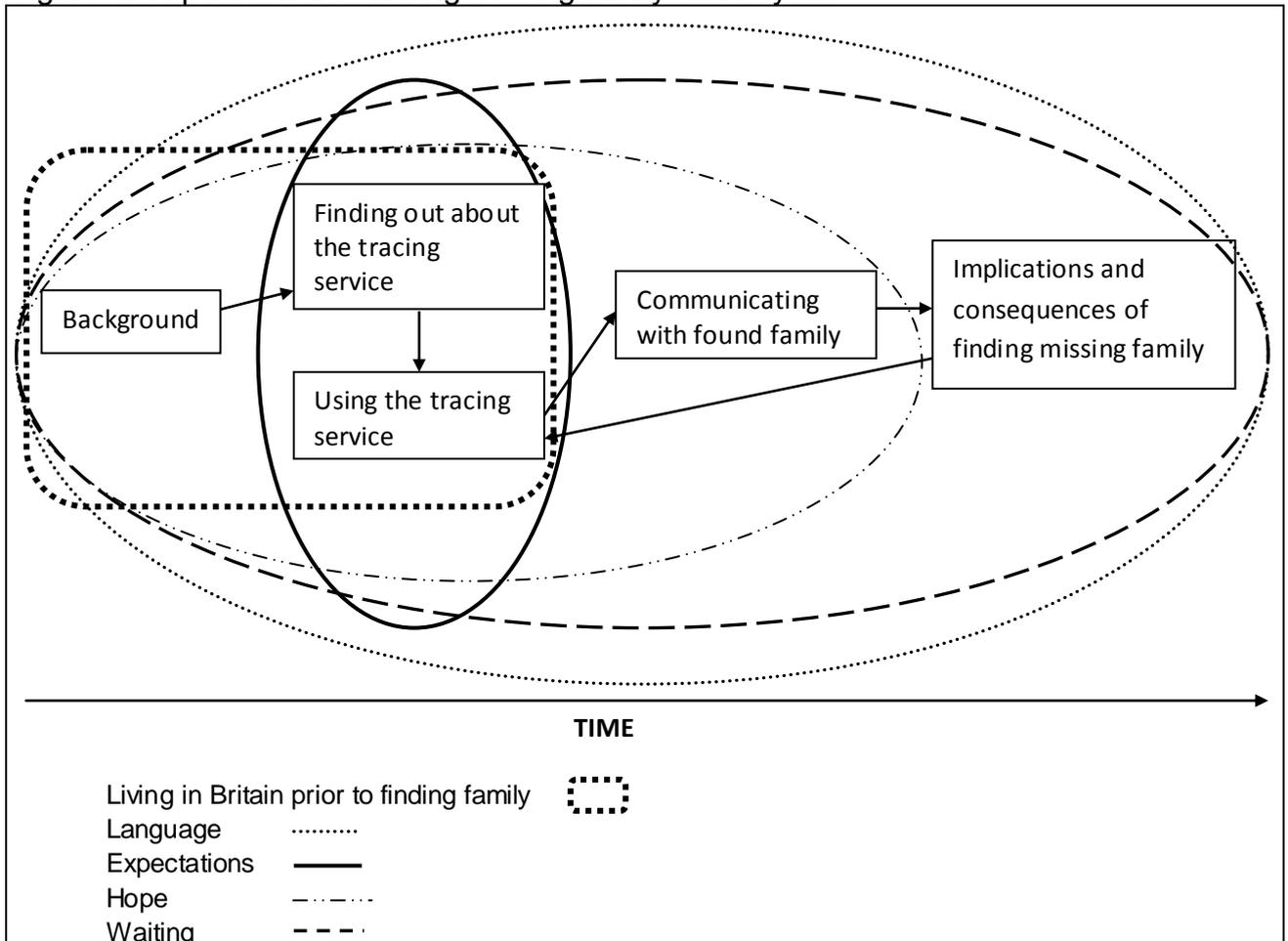
Six categories were constructed. In addition, four categories that interacted with each other as well as across the other six categories were constructed. During the analysis process, I did not feel however that any of these categories could function as the central category. Following Corbin and Strauss' (2008) process of selective coding, the core category of 'A path towards finding missing family and beyond' was constructed. This core category denotes the main theme of the research.

3.2 'A path towards finding missing family and beyond'

Through my analysis, I constructed six categories – 'Background', 'Living in Britain prior to finding family', 'Finding out about the tracing service', 'Using the tracing service', 'Communicating with found family' and 'Implications and consequences of finding missing family'. I constructed four additional categories: 'Language', 'Hope', 'Expectations' and "Waiting"⁸ that were discussed in relation to the other six. These categories make the resulting grounded theory 'A path towards finding missing family and beyond' (see Figure 1 for model).

⁸ Double quotation marks will be used for all direct quotes and in-vivo codes, and single speech marks used for the other codes and categories.

Figure 1: 'A path towards finding missing family and beyond'



Five categories depicted in rectangular boxes, and each representing a step in the process, follow a linear sequence which reflects the temporal progress both of participants' experience of searching for their missing family member(s) as well as the way most told their story. Participants talked about the context and what they had tried prior to having contact with ITMS ('Background') which led them to find out about and then use the tracing service ('Finding out about the tracing service' and 'Using the tracing service') which resulted in communication with their found relatives ('Communicating with found family') and having wider implications ('Implications and consequences of finding missing family') including the use of the tracing service to conduct another search. Participants spoke about their experiences of living in Britain upon arrival in the country but also once they had made contact with the tracing service and up until their missing relatives were found, therefore the category 'Living in Britain prior to finding family' is

represented in a rounded rectangle to highlight the timeframe in relation to which this category was discussed by participants.

The four additional categories 'Language', 'Expectations', 'Hope' and "Waiting" were not steps in the process but seen to impact on the process. They were spoken about by participants in relation to different time points in their narratives therefore they are pictured as ovals in the model above to represent the period of time they were discussed in relation to by participants. 'Language' seemed to be related to participants' reported experience of coming to Britain and communicating with ITMS and their found family members and thereafter. 'Expectations' appeared to be related to their experience of finding out about and of the ITMS service and the outcome of this. Similarly 'Hope' seemed to be directly related to their reported experience of uncertainty about the fate of their missing relative prior to contacting the ITMS service, as well as their experience of the service and the outcome. Finally, "Waiting" appeared to be related to their reported experience prior to contact with ITMS, their experience of ITMS and the outcome of this as well as the outcome of the family reunion process as a consequence of finding missing family. Some inter-connections amongst these four categories were also observed (for example between "Waiting" and 'Hope' before receiving news about the outcome of the trace). I will now provide a brief description of the four additional categories but they will also be explored within the analysis of the other categories.

3.2.1 'Language'

'Language' was discussed by participants with regards to their own fluency in the English language upon arrival in Britain, its impact on communicating with found relatives, as well as its impact on found family members' integration into British life upon reunion. It therefore was present across most categories.

3.2.2 'Expectations'

Participants' expectations were discussed throughout the tracing process, from the time they contacted the BRC's tracing service to the time they received news about the outcome of the trace. Overall expectations were "high". Participants

discussed others' influences on their expectations as well the BRC managing their expectations.

3.2.3 'Hope'

Participants talked about hope in terms of its presence and 'holding on' to it, as well times when they felt there was no hope. Five participants also highlighted their religious beliefs and practices in relation to hope. Discussion about hope featured prominently in participants' narratives before and during contact with the tracing service, as well as once communication with their found relatives had commenced.

3.2.4 "Waiting"

"Waiting" was another theme running through participants' narratives. It featured prominently in their discussions around the time of receiving news about the outcome, where they expressed their experiences of "waiting" in greater detail.

3.3 Structure of the detailed analysis sections

I will discuss each category in temporal sequence, with the exception of 'Living in Britain prior to finding family'. For the purpose of this chapter, I will discuss this category as a whole after discussing 'Background'. 'Language', 'Expectations', 'Hope' and "Waiting" will be considered within the other categories. Extracts from interviews are presented in order to support and illustrate the categories and codes (see Appendix F for additional quotes). The quotes⁹ used will be identified by the name chosen by the participant, the quote, and then the line numbers from the transcripts.

⁹ Notes on quotations from transcripts: For ease of reading, verbal fillers (e.g. "erm", "er") have been removed from the quotations used in this chapter. Three dots in square brackets [...] represent omission of text to help understanding.

3.4 'Background'

This category was characterised by the context leading to participants' later making contact with the tracing service.

Table 2: Category 'Background' with sub-categories and focused codes

Category	Sub-categories	Focused codes
Background	Trauma and loss	
	Coming to Britain	Reasons for leaving home country
		Leaving home country
		Arriving in Britain
	Separating from family	Circumstances of the separation
		Timing of separation
		Consequences of separation
	Not being in contact	Being in contact
		Losing contact
		Perception of loss of contact
		Significance of losing contact
	Uncertainty about relative	Uncertainty about relative's fate
		Uncertainty about relative's whereabouts
		Impact of uncertainty about relative
	Searching for missing relative	Making own enquiries
	Failing to find missing relative	Unsuccessful own attempts
		Experience of not being able to find relative

3.4.1 'Trauma and loss'

Participants discussed a number of experiences of trauma and loss, including witnessing people being killed, raped, relatives being killed, as well as being arrested, imprisoned and tortured themselves. It seemed that for many participants, these experiences were a factor in their separation from family members and leaving their home countries. Paul spoke in great detail about his experience of imprisonment and torture prior to leaving his country.

Paul: they would use a lot of treatment like you know pushing some you know they use some batons like

you know electric batons you know for you to say things (L108-L111)

Although Pamela, who originates from Britain, also talked about experiencing some trauma in her life, she stressed this was unrelated to losing contact with her cousin:

Pamela: I've had many many more highly life-death situations [...] I've had a very traumatic, funny life (L189-L194)

3.4.2 'Coming to Britain'

'Language'

Eight of the ten participants originated from another country and for most of them, English was not their first language.

Paul: I was learning little bit English but not you know not good (L904-L905)

The majority of those participants spoke about leaving their respective home countries and coming to Britain, "seeking asylum". Most of the participants had arrived in Britain in the last decade; however Bernadette came during the Second World War.

Bernadette: we left xxxx in a Red Cross boat during the war (L5-L6)

Bernadette: When the Second World War came through Belgium into xxxx, in Northern France they arrested my father and put him in a concentration camp [...] We were interned [...] the end of the War came and we

had a chance to come to England, so we came in a Red Cross boat (L12-L19)

Most participants came to Britain as a way of seeking safety from the trouble arising in their home countries.

David: I believe this is a secure country, there is no like all this problems, is more secure compare to where I come from is far far much better, and also they have got human rights which is really...to me is very good (L585-L589)

Degaule: I came escaping like everybody escaping trouble in the country. (L649-L650)

Jerry spoke about his personal difficulties with the government that led him to flee.

Jerry: back home I got some problem with a...how can I call government (L62-L65)

Paul and Jerry also talked about the implications of leaving their home countries. They left their family and friends behind, as well as their businesses.

Paul: How you can leave all your family, leave your friend, you know is not easy, is not easy you leave everything where you were born, there, all your family all your friends everything all your business and you go somewhere you start from the beginning from nothing you know so that's no good (L1387-L1392)

Other participants also described the positions or professions they had had in their home countries which they did not have here. It seemed they had had to leave behind certain roles in coming to Britain.

The sense of insecurity experienced in their home countries also seemed present once they had arrived in Britain. For instance, Haja and Joy spoke explicitly of choosing not to tell their family and friends where they were going, possibly out of fear.

Haja: I didn't go and tell them I'm going to London. Okay you don't tell people where you're going when you're scared you just escape, leave the country (L600-L602)

Being in Britain was described by two participants as a "miracle", as captured by David:

David: to be in this country, like country like Britain, honest is like a miracle to my life. (L437-L439)

3.4.3 'Separating from family'

Most participants had experienced separation from their families. Separation was an important feature of the narratives of the participants who had come to Britain. The circumstances surrounding the separation were similar for all – war or political upheaval. For instance, Paul and his wife were separated during a political protest:

Paul: we went out, me with my wife and then we separate during when the police was, you know, like they want to arrest us, so we try to run. (L47-L50)

Two participants could still remember the exact date they were separated from their spouse and/or child, possibly highlighting the significance of the separation event. Haja was separated from her daughter the day of an attack:

Haja: that day I will never forgot the day of the attack was March, March I think is the first of March, is it nineteen ninety three, March ninety three. (L312-L314)

For some participants, separating from their families appeared to have other implications with regards to providing for one's family. African males in particular highlighted their role as the family's breadwinner (see section 3.8.5) and the impact of separation, as illustrated by Jerry below.

Jerry: when you get married is mean that you get a daughter for someone, a house even though you gonna provide the person everything but now you are not there. (L383-L386)

Separation was not only a feature for those born outside of Britain. For instance, Oscar spoke of discovering the identity of his birth father who had left shortly after his birth, during the Second World War.

Oscar: I'd known for some time that my dad wasn't my father and that principally because of my middle name. I was told as a child that it was usual during the Second World War to give your children a funny middle name, so you believe it don't you (L2-L7)

Oscar: he disappeared off the scene from when I was born in nineteen forty four he last saw me when I was about ten days old (L122-L124)

3.4.4 'Not being in contact'

The majority of participants expressed that they were no longer in contact with their families. For most of those participants who had left their home country, they had not had contact with their families since their departure.

Jerry: I seek asylum, they send there I reach in this country in two thousand and three, it was third of January two thousand and three, yeah since that date I didn't got contact with my family. (L84-L87)

Two participants, one of whom came from overseas, had been in contact with their relatives until the contact stopped "suddenly".

Degaule: before we lose the, we lost contact I used to phone them every day. (L85-L86)

Pamela: I had been in contact with her until you know then (L103-L104)

For Degaule, the loss of contact triggered concern and fear for his family given the political context in his country of origin.

Degaule: As we were a close family, a happy family, a close one, loving each other, I should be concerned watching media, the war's happening in xxxxx (country of origin) (L25-L27)

The impact of not being in contact as well as separation may depend on the "closeness" of family members, as well as the family context. Jerry also talked about the importance of his wife and son given he had previously lost his parents and siblings.

Jerry: my wife and my son was the only thing I've got precious in...in this world (L290-L292)

3.4.5 'Uncertainty about relative'

Seven participants expressed uncertainty regarding the fate of their family members. Most did not know where those family members were, as captured by Joy who did not know where her husband was:

Joy: I didn't know where he was, I didn't know, ah
but I was just praying to God (L344-L345)

Being unaware of a person's location or whereabouts may give rise to uncertainty about their fate. A few participants shared their thoughts that their relatives may have died, whilst others believed they were still alive.

Pamela: I thought maybe she's dead (L23-L24)

Others expressed many different things that could have happened to their relatives.

Adam: you don't know if your family like if somebody
died, somebody's injured, somebody's being lost
(L142-L144)

However, Haja spoke of "giving up" and believed her daughter had died after spending time looking for her in her home country:

Haja: I thought my daughter is not alive anymore
(L219-L220)

'Hope'

The thoughts expressed by participants about the fate of their relatives appeared to be connected to hope – whether participants still had hope or had "given up", felt there was "no hope". Some participants spoke of their religious beliefs and practices, which appeared to help them maintain hope.

Paul: one last hope maybe I can see her, but I have such a strong faith I say maybe I'm gonna meet her one day. I was feel like she's I mean she's not die or she's somewhere (L140-L148)

Many participants talked about the impact of uncertainty. For most, not knowing what had happened to their family members had a negative emotional impact. Some participants, like Paul, expressed "concern". Jerry also expressed that thinking his family may have died also made him question not only his role but possibly also to some extent part of his identity.

Jerry: You lost everything, you are not a person. Before you was a person you was a dad, you was a father now you are just like I don't know. (L371-L374)

3.4.6 'Searching for missing relative'

Prior to contacting the BRC's tracing service, all participants attempted to look for their missing relative(s) through their own means. They employed a range of ways of making their own enquiries – trying to contact their missing relatives directly, asking other family members, asking friends, "contacting people", contacting refugee camps, contacting different organisations, looking in certain places.

Oscar: long short of it was I wrote a lot of letters off to different institutes in London (L43-L44)

Adam: I tried to like contact people in certain parts of xxxx (African country), if they've got any contacts (L28-L31)

After being separated from his wife and prior to coming to Britain, Paul's circumstances restricted his ability to find his wife, although he spoke of asking his uncle.

I: And had you tried other ways of finding your wife before you met this woman on a bus and she gave the information about the British Red Cross?

Paul: ... No I didn't try before because you know before me to come in UK I was in jail in prison.

(L52-L57)

The length of time participants spent looking for missing relatives varied from a few months to years, although it seemed they had tried all the avenues possible, as Bernadette puts it:

Bernadette: And I'd tried everywhere (L200-L201)

3.4.7 'Failing to find missing relative'

Participants' own attempts proved unsuccessful, whatever means they employed.

Haja: we went to all the refugee camps in xxxx xxxx (country of origin) but there is no trace of her before I left (L9-L10)

Jerry: I was trying with some friends, some our country man who was going back home, and come here, I was saying "can you please because...tell the area I was living if they can try"...was not successful yeah. (L42-L46)

Given the context of their home countries, the instability may have contributed to their failed attempts as David suggested:

David: before I did try to send letters back home, where I came from in xxxx (country of origin) and then I didn't have any reply because there was all this civilian wars going there and there was really chaos and then I it was quite impossible for me because I keep sending letters no reply (L8-L13)

David also spoke about the experience of not being able to find his wife as a "horrible" one. This feeling was possibly shared by many others.

David: it was quite horrible experience because there was no way I can find her. I couldn't find her. (L56-L58)

3.5 'Living in Britain prior to finding family'

Many participants spoke about their experiences of living in this country, both prior to and whilst using the tracing service, particularly those who had come to Britain within the last decade.

Table 3: Category 'Living in Britain prior to finding family' with focused codes

Category	Focused codes
Living in Britain prior to finding family	"Struggling"
	Life going on
	Having external support

3.5.1 "Struggling"

Seven participants who had come from overseas spoke about the struggles they faced living in Britain. Most participants found themselves in a foreign country without friends or family around them – no support system. This highlighted a sense of loneliness.

David: when you live some self you are insecure, is like you, there is, you are like unbalanced you don't know especially if you are foreign in a

country. You don't have someone or you don't have even relative. (L439-L446)

Joy spoke of the difficulties she experienced being in a new country - not knowing people and not having an understanding of the system. At the time she was "waiting" to hear about the outcome of the trace.

I: How did you experience that period of time?

Joy: Oh very hard, struggling in a new country, you don't know the people, you don't know how things work (L220-L221)

Four participants discussed the implications and restrictions of their legal status – asylum-seeker. Some described the "stress" of dealing with the Home Office. Paul and Adam were both "moved" by the Home Office and relocated to other cities. Both also had their cases "rejected" and thus needed to appeal. Others, the women in particular, talked about "not being allowed to work" as well as fear of being deported.

Joy: I knew any time they were going to deport me and I'd go back to the same problems again I faced [...] that was the main stress. You've come here you don't know the people, you're telling them your story, they say your "what your telling us is...we don't believe what your telling us" that was the stress I had in my head (L332-L339)

Their narratives highlight the seeming control the Home Office and the immigration system had on their lives.

3.5.2 'Life going on'

Four participants discussed life events occurring prior to as well as once they had contacted the tracing service to find their missing family member. This included

marriage, divorce, moving, having children and going to university. Oscar spoke of life events impacting on the speed of his own attempts to look for his father:

Oscar: I feel I've been lazy over the years in not pursuing things fast enough but then I've been working, I've been I've had, I can use this as excuses, bringing a family up, getting divorced, getting re-married, move homes, set businesses up, God knows what. (L993-L998)

Haja, who believed she had lost her daughter, had another child.

Haja: until I met somebody and had a child so I was just thinking at least I've lost a daughter I've been blessed a child, yeah. (L33-L35)

3.5.3 'Having external support'

A few participants discussed finding other people in the same situation as themselves and described the support they received from others. This support was described as helpful and participants highlighted the importance of speaking to people who "understood". There was also a sense of relief that they were not the only ones in this situation. Jerry spoke of talking to friends who were in a similar situation and therefore he felt they understood:

Jerry: The only good thing is some people who understand, who understand you what happened to you, they are very every time they come and just give you you know they don't leave you alone [...] so any time they just come and see you try to be with you most of the time. (L374-L380)

Two participants mentioned accessing health services for additional support. Both went to see their General Practitioners.

“Waiting”

Degaule talked about accessing further support from mental health services, both psychiatry and psychology, as primary care level support was insufficient. This took place whilst he was still “waiting for any reply” from his wife after contacting the tracing service.

Degaule: Yeah I went to see a specialist doctor, Dr. xxxx, and we have many many appointments. [...] He prescribe me some higher level medicines, antidepressives, and he said “you are facing a post traumatic stress disorder”, because I have been traumatised...and he said “I’m going to book for you an appointment to see a psychologist (L143-L151)

However this support could not help whilst uncertainty about his family remained:

Degaule: medicine only, cannot solve the problem. The key of the problem should be solved before you can feel better. (L214-L216)

Whilst this category has been placed here, it also relates to the following two categories.

3.6 ‘Finding out about the tracing service’

Table 4: Category ‘Finding out about the tracing service’ with sub-categories and focused codes

Category	Subcategories	Focused codes
Finding out about the tracing service	Finding out about the tracing service	Finding out through hearsay
		Finding out by chance
		BRC contacting them
	Knowledge of the RC and its services	Some knowledge versus no knowledge
	Beliefs about the RC	Internal beliefs
External influences on beliefs		

3.6.1 'Finding out about the tracing service'

Participants found out about the BRC's tracing service¹⁰ in different ways. Half of the participants explained they had found out about the service through other people – friends, strangers or other services. For instance, Bernadette had been doing some gardening outside when a man started talking to her:

Bernadette: I was outside one day and a gentleman came along and he was talking to me, and he said his friend was Polish and he'd been in England ever since the war, and he got in touch with the Red Cross and I thought that "well it would be a good idea if I did that" (L26-L31)

'Expectations'

Other people suggesting the BRC's tracing service also seemed to influence participants' expectations.

David: And then you think that what they help that guy hundred percent they will me hundred percent as well. [...] So you see how my expectations was really really everything will be fantastic, one hundred percent. (L341-L350)

Two participants discussed how they came across information about the tracing service somewhat by chance.

Oscar: finally I'm going through the websites on the internet and you know as you do and you go to ask about tracing and that and I came across the Red Cross (L66-L69)

¹⁰ All participants used the term "Red Cross" and some also used the term "British Red Cross" when talking about the tracing service. I have used those terms as well as ITMS interchangeably.

For Degaule, by volunteering for the British Red Cross, his “curiosity” found a leaflet about tracing for “people who lost contact with their family”, which was the situation he was in.

‘Language’

As mentioned in section 3.4.2, English was not the first language for the majority of participants. The importance of language for communication and understanding is illustrated by Degaule choosing to read information in his first language:

Degaule: I pick the French one to understand what they're talking about into the leaflet (L40-L41)

‘Hope’

Finding out about the tracing service also allowed Degaule, like a few others, to hold on to hope:

Degaule: Okay so I read the leaflet, so okay now I can focus all my hope on that and to do all I can do, maybe one day can become another reality thing (L408-L415)

However, unlike other participants, Haja explained that the tracing service contacted her to give her information about her missing daughter. She expressed her surprise at receiving a call from the BRC. Although she had registered her daughter as missing with the Red Cross in her home country, she had not informed them that she was coming to Britain:

Haja: they called me, they said “can you please come down here...we got a message for you.” [...] I said “oh why is British Red Cross calling me?” Because

I've never, since I came I've never come to here to tell them about anything, about I've lost my daughter I've lost my husband. (L337-L342)

3.6.2 'Knowledge of the Red Cross and its services'

Most participants did not indicate prior knowledge of the BRC's tracing service. In fact Jerry explained that his knowledge of the BRC was limited to the international work it carries out overseas, and suggested others from Africa may share the same limited awareness.

Jerry: honestly before I didn't know that Red Cross can help me to find my family because I was, we usually in Africa you just know Red Cross is there only when there are disaster in one country, there are accidents somewhere, you don't know that for family matter they can help people to get together with their family yeah. (L138-L143)

This may explain why a few participants suggested the BRC should increase its publicity and raise awareness. Three participants put forward some specific suggestions: using different "community" groups through which the BRC can "pass the information" to friends and family and create a "chain"; continuing to publicise through the flyers they have produced. Bernadette also suggested they should advertise on television to increase awareness:

Bernadette: there's a load of people in this country that still needs to know where their families are, and I don't think know really where to go. I think it should be adver, I think they...they should have an advertisement on the television about it sometime, yeah. (L173-L177)

3.6.3 'Beliefs about the Red Cross'

A few participants expressed beliefs they had about the BRC. Beliefs were also connected to participants' expectations of the tracing service.

'Expectations'

Expectations as mentioned above were, for some, influenced by what others told them about the BRC or their experience of it. David and Pamela discussed their beliefs that the BRC might help, which influenced their decision to contact the tracing service:

Pamela: I don't know what made me think of the Red Cross or what I think I just thought "the Red Cross maybe they would help me?" (L83-L85)

David also spoke about talking to a friend of his who had received help himself from the BRC when he had been in a refugee camp. His friend's positive experience seemed to have influenced his belief and expectation that the BRC would help him.

David: one friend of mine [...] told me how British Red Cross they help me when he was in the camp and then I just see like it's a good way for me to go to the Red Cross and approach them and talk to them if they can help. (L13-L18)

Paul and Joy explained that other people had told them the BRC could help them to find their family.

Joy: so she said "okay I'll take you to people who'll help you" so she brought me to Red Cross (L23-L26)

3.7 'Using the tracing service'

Table 5: Category 'Using the tracing service' with its sub-categories and focused codes

Category	Sub-categories	Focused codes
Using the tracing service	Procedure	Initial contact with the BRC
		Further contact with the BRC
		What the BRC does
		Challenges to tracing
	Experience of using the tracing service	Experience of the initial interview
		Putting trust in the tracing service
	Lack of awareness and uncertainty	Lack of awareness
		Uncertainty about the tracing process
	Receiving news	Different ways of receiving news
		Receiving different types of news
		Responses to receiving news

3.7.1 'Procedure'

All participants discussed their initial contact with the tracing service. Contact with the service was made in different ways – by telephone, by letter or by coming directly to a BRC office, although the majority made a phone call and arranged an appointment for an interview. Adam and Haja, however, did not approach the service directly. For Adam, a refugee service arranged an appointment for him, and Haja highlighted that the service had contacted her. Most participants met with a member of staff in their local Red Cross office although Bernadette talked about two people coming to visit her at her home:

Bernadette: so I...got in touch with the xxxx (local area) Red Cross and the ladies came to see me (L31-L32)

Participants talked about giving “all the information” during their interview with someone from the tracing service so that the service could help them. The BRC

wrote “down all the detail”. Adam, however, described the difficulties he experienced with giving information, feeling that he was not giving the information clearly:

Adam: giving information sometime I hesitate about the information because I don't know, [...] I wasn't giving like all the information as straightforward, I had to be asked more and more, every time. [...] you're not giving the information exact, as clear as you want. (L226-L238)

At the time of the initial interview, two participants were asked to write a message to send to their missing families.

Degaule: they ask me to write a kind of open letter with explanation about the policy, the letter should be open, no money inside, no political issue inside, and then I wrote the, a small letter, explain that “I'm still alive, I want to re-contact you” (L66-L70)

'Expectations'

Participants also discussed the way in which the tracing service managed their expectations - saying they will “do their best” whilst not making any guarantees with regards to the outcome of the trace.

Bernadette: Well they told me not to get too excited it could be one year, two years, maybe three or four years, maybe never, they'd never find 'em for me (L106-L108)

Three participants discussed challenges in tracing their family members connected to geography and transport access in their countries of origin. Jerry

and Degaule explained that they were unable to provide detailed information about their relatives' location because of a lack of postcodes or detailed maps.

Jerry: the problem was she told me "in your country is gonna be difficult" because in my country there is no postcode, you know it's not like here, if you say you are living this area you can give the postcode, for our country is different (L196-L201)

Participants also described some of the activities carried out by ITMS as part of the tracing process including communicating with other national Red Cross societies throughout the world, as well as other agencies (such as the Home Office) but also of sending a Red Cross "representative" to find the missing family member. In addition, those participants that were "moved" by the Home Office talked about the tracing service "sending" their case to another BRC area office.

Following the initial interview, participants had further contact with the tracing service. Half of the participants reported the tracing service had contacted them whilst they were "waiting" for news about the outcome of the trace, with varying frequency, by phone or by letter.

Paul: every time they call me 'cause they explain to me, they say "Paul we are in this stage so we are looking for her (L1056-L1058)

Three participants spoke of also trying to contact the service themselves to get updates with regards to the progress of their case, but this was not always easy.

Jerry: it was very difficult for me to phone, every time when maybe I got some friend who got phone who can give me some time with his phone now yeah.
(L219-L220)

Participants made some suggestions with regards to ITMS developing some of its procedures: using speedier processes and further collaboration with other agencies (e.g. “immigration”, “refugee camps” and “other organisations”). For instance, Adam suggested the use of technology:

Adam: if there's any new way you know, for example now there's e-mails, there is phones you know it'll be easier than just you have to send hand-to-hand message which is take a long time. (L523-L527)

3.7.2 'Experience of using the tracing service'

Six participants commented on their experience of the initial interview with the tracing service, which was mixed. This was the “first time” they had used this service and two participants commented that they did not know what the “process normally is”. Some participants viewed the first meeting as positive. Both Jerry and Adam found it “okay” and Oscar reported it “helped me put things in perspective”. Although David thought the staff had listened to him carefully and had taken “notice to my problems”, he expressed he had not had time to prepare everything he needed to meet all the “requirements” because it had been “the first time”.

Participants' legal status as well as their mental state may have impacted upon their experience of the initial interview as suggested by Adam. Although he was told the service would keep the information “confidential”, he expressed concern about what the BRC would do with the information he gave them, whom they might share it with because he did not “understand how the system works”.

Adam: if you are an asylum seeker ... psychologically you'll be agitated, you are sometimes you are not sure what you are talking about, [...] sometimes you feel nervous, sometimes you feel all this information may go to government hands, all those kind of things. (L87-L97)

The fear about who might have access to this information may be related to the reasons participants sought asylum in Britain and why they did not tell others where they were.

As some service-users, particularly asylum-seekers, may have “fear” and be “traumatised”, Adam recommended the service use a “psychological approach”, highlighting the importance of reassurance that staff can give, as well as more information about confidentiality.

Adam: I know the tracing service it's just for tracing but there is some psychological effect sometimes you know you feel his information not clear, or he's hesitating [...] I would have like a psychological approach to this type of people, by like, I know the ITMS they can visit you at home, which is very good idea, or when you go to see them, they can ring you more, or you can go to see them more, it just give you some reassurance (L206-L216)

'Hope'

Participants also discussed the hope given by the BRC personnel as well as their hope being maintained through other people reuniting with their families.

Paul: They try to give me hope and I was think like maybe they can do something for me (L1061-L1063)

After the initial interview, a few participants indicated that they “left them to it” and highlighted the “trust” they placed in the tracing service to look for their family members. This trust may have been facilitated by the fact the participants had themselves done everything they could to find their relatives, as expressed by Pamela.

Pamela: I left them to it then. I'd done all I could that's why the Red Cross. (L121-L122)

3.7.3 'Lack of awareness and uncertainty'

Some participants commented on their lack of awareness regarding a number of aspects of the tracing process. Those aspects included how the BRC obtained consent from the found family to be contacted by their relatives who had requested the trace, the way the BRC approached found relatives, whether all Red Cross societies "work exactly in the same manner", and access restrictions.

A few participants also expressed some uncertainty about the tracing process. Two participants spoke of their uncertainty about the speed of tracing.

Degaule: I was still waiting for any reply because I wasn't sure that it's coming next week or next month (L71-L73)

Two participants highlighted uncertainty about the outcome of the trace, if the missing family would be traced and whether they would be found alive or dead, as captured by Oscar:

Oscar: And I think you don't know what the outcome's gonna be, you don't know whether it's gonna actually find the relative you're looking for alive (L966-L968)

3.7.4 'Receiving news'

"Waiting" and 'Hope'

Before receiving "news", participants were "waiting" for between a few months to a couple of years. Their experiences of this "waiting" time were mixed. Some participants talked about being "patient" whilst others were "impatient". Others spoke of having "peace of mind" and being reassured knowing that the "experts"

were looking for their relatives. Some participants described the “waiting” as a difficult time for them. Bernadette experienced it as “very depressing” and also “nerve-racking”. Degaule managed to hold on to hope despite feeling “sad” and “psychologically disturbed”:

Degaule: I was feeling like being sad but the same time keeping hope (L711-L712)

Participants also commented on their perception of the length of this “waiting” time. Some, like Adam, found it “long”:

Adam: But it took long time, it took about maybe six seven, about eight months to hear back from them (L57-L58)

However Pamela did not perceive the wait as that long:

Pamela: it wasn't that long, a few months I think, and they found her (L86-L88)

Participants received “news” in different ways – three participants received it by letter, most by phone. The majority of participants received “good news”, where their family member was found alive, as illustrated by Bernadette who received a phone call around Christmas time:

Bernadette: well the lady rung me up and said “I've got some good news to tell you, we've found your niece”. (L109-L111)

However Oscar spoke of receiving a letter informing him that his father had died, although he also discovered the existence of a cousin.

Oscar: I got the letter back from the, copy letter from the Red Cross in xxxxx identifying the details about my father, what had happened to him in terms of the fact he was dead (L76-L79)

Joy initially received “no news”. The tracing service had not been able to find her husband.

‘Hope’

Telling Joy the BRC would pursue with the tracing gave her “hope” that they might “come with the good news”:

Joy: when they went, they bring they didn't they brought nothing, no news, so but they said “we'll keep on tracing, we'll keep on checking a look and we'll be in touch” (L66-L69)

She later received “good news” although the circumstances were different. Her husband, who had seen a leaflet for the tracing service which had her photograph on it, travelled to Britain from Africa and presented himself to the tracing service where she started the tracing enquiry.

Participants depicted many responses to receiving “news”. They described a range of emotional responses: happiness, satisfaction, relief, surprise, “denial”, disbelief, regret and guilt. For instance, Oscar who received both the news that his father had died and that he had a living cousin expressed both regret for the loss of the father he never knew as well as happiness. He also discussed the possible “shock” for his cousin and his family. Despite news of death, Oscar articulated that he would “rather know” than not know.

Oscar: You know to some extent the Red Cross have opened Pandora's box but having said that, if they

hadn't it, one would pursue it but then any lengths
(L248-L250)

Some participants also expressed not being able to concentrate on anything else and needing to know more about the news. For instance, Jerry went straight to the tracing service office after he received a phone call telling him they had “good news”. Degaule asked for the reply from his wife to his message to be sent to him as soon as possible as he “wanted to make sure” of his wife’s handwriting and could not wait the suggested length of time as it was “very far for me”.

‘Expectations’

Participants also discussed their expectations upon receiving news. For instance, Jerry spoke of expecting to see his family at the ITMS office following their phone call; Oscar’s expectations were related to what would happen next in terms of communication with his newly found relatives.

3.8 ‘Communicating with found family’

Table 6: Category ‘Communicating with found family’ with its focused codes

Category	Focused codes
Communicating with found family	BRC facilitating contact with relatives
	“Starting communicating”
	Restoring communication
	Difficulties with communication
	Immediate impact of communicating with found relatives

3.8.1 ‘BRC facilitating contact with relatives’

Four participants discussed the tracing service’s involvement in facilitating communication with their found family. For most of them, the BRC helped to facilitate initial contact with their found relatives through different ways. For some participants this was in the form of receiving replies to the messages they had sent via ITMS. Paul and Haja spoke of the tracing service contacting them, asking them to come to the office and being passed the phone to talk to their family members:

Paul: At two o'clock I went, I went out in Red Cross, so you know they didn't tell me anything they just talk on the phone and they give me phone and they say "can you speak with her?" and I was like "hello?" and I hear my wife's voice (L1081-L1085)

For others, like Joy and Jerry, the service provided them with specific information on where their relatives were such as an "address" or a "map". Their family members were both in the UK, which may explain the type of information given.

However, Haja highlighted the part the BRC played in facilitating ongoing contact with her daughter.

Haja: Every week they will call me to come straight to the office if they receive a message for me yeah. (L79-L80)

3.8.2 "Starting communicating"

Participants discussed how they "started talking" with their found family members. Although for some participants, their first contact was in the form of a written message, most participants discussed the first time they spoke to their relative. For the majority, this was done by telephone, however the first time Jerry spoke to his wife was when he visited her in London the day after the tracing service told him where she was:

Jerry: I go to London, I see my wife (L246)

Not all participants' initial attempts to contact their found family members proved successful as Oscar and Joy highlighted:

Oscar: once I got the letter I tried phoning, no joy (L225-L226)

Joy: I went to his address he wasn't there so I just left a note in the letterbox and my phone number (L182-L184)

'Language'

Although Oscar subsequently managed to speak to his cousin, as a result of not speaking enough of each other's respective language to "hold a conversation" "the phone went dead". This prompted him to seek help from an ex-neighbour in order to start communication.

Based on his experience, Oscar put forward some suggestions to the tracing service with regards to the initial contact with found relatives. He suggested the BRC could inform traced relatives about the enquirer's search experience as a way of possibly increasing family member's receptiveness for future contact. Moreover, he asked whether the BRC could help service-users with how to make the initial contact as well as with the content if one were to write a letter or message.

Half of the participants talked about their reactions to contact with their found relatives. They expressed their happiness, feeling "over the moon" and three participants also articulated relief knowing that their families were "alive", "safe" and knowing they still had family. Speaking to family also gave participants like Haja "hope". For Adam and Degaule, the messages they received seemed to have a deeper meaning. They appeared to act as a representation of their family members.

Degaule: I receive the first reply. Ah that was the happiest day I ever I never ever had. I thought that everything was wonderful around me, and I gave a big hug to the letter like I'm embracing my wife physically. (L173-L177)

Adam: when they rang me and said "we've got some information" and I went to [[here or hear]] and I receive this message from my family, I felt like they were in front of me (L144-L146)

3.8.3 'Restoring communication'

The majority of participants discussed "keeping in touch" with their families after these were found by the tracing service. They explained they communicated with their relatives by telephone, others by e-mail or letters, or a combination of these different communication modes. Some participants discussed how they were initially buying telephone cards to call and subsequently their families purchased a mobile telephone or they were sent one by the participants. Participants' financial circumstances seemed to play a part in the frequency of their calls to their family members, for most as a restricting factor. Degaule expressed how he prioritised saving money to buy phone cards to call his wife and his eight children, as this was his way of feeling "present", to "feel close" to his family despite the distance:

Degaule: I can have money but I can't go to spend money in the pub, drink something like that, I prefer to spend them buying enough cards we have time to talk to every one of them. (L96-L99)

Frequency of contact was not only determined by finances. For Oscar, another restricting factor seemed to be his new found relatives' reticence for contact with him. The contact he had had was mostly with his cousin's wife and it had become increasingly infrequent – a card at important holidays (e.g. Christmas and Easter).

Oscar: he's far less, far more reticent about having any contact with me and he's controlling his wife's contact as such. (L717-L718)

For some participants like Pamela, restoring communication with family members was a way of “going on like before”. As expressed by David, communication thus appeared to be “key” – in maintaining closeness as well as reducing or possibly even removing uncertainty about the fate of family members and reducing participants’ level of anxiety.

3.8.4 ‘Difficulties with communication’

Three participants discussed difficulties they experienced with communication. For two participants those difficulties were mostly of a practical nature in relation to phone access and coverage. For instance, Degaule spoke of his wife being unable to call him as she was living in an area that was “out of network phone”. Adam on the other hand had been given a phone number to contact his family in a refugee camp but as it was a “satellite phone”, it could not be accessed from any phone.

Oscar discussed the influence of the historical and political contexts as possible explanations for the limited communication with his relatives overseas:

Oscar: You know I mean he lived under a Soviet regime you know where everyth everybody’s under suspicion all the time, I can understand their reluctance to be too open with me all for the communi, for the dialogue to be continuous (L741-L746)

3.8.5 ‘Immediate impact of communicating with found family’

As a result of communicating with their family members, participants discussed sending money to their relatives and finding out about other family members. Two participants spoke of starting to send money again to their families, money they had started to “save” from the little they were earning. This echoes the implications of being separated from family with regards to some participants’ roles as breadwinners which was highlighted at the start of this chapter (see section 3.4.3). This was captured by Degaule:

Degaule: And then I started again to send them money because they were depending financially depending hundred percent on me. I started again to send them money through Western Union and then they could move from that house to take another house (L197-L202)

Participants also received news about family members. Two participants found out from their found relatives about the loss of other family members. Until Bernadette contacted her niece by telephone, she did not know that her sister and brother-in-law had died whilst she had been trying to contact them, and this came as a shock initially:

Bernadette: xxxx my second eldest sister she stayed over there 'cause she married a xxxx (country of origin) man and...I didn't know she'd died until xxxx (niece) told me her mum had died. I couldn't get over it you know for a bit. (L503-L507)

On the other hand, David found out from his found wife about his three younger brothers who had also left their home country. He expressed he had had contact with them since.

David: through my wife now I find even my brothers (L644)

For Oscar, finding a cousin overseas and communicating with his cousin's wife allowed him to find out more information about his biological father who was the person he had originally asked the BRC to trace.

Oscar: my cousin's wife had been in communication and initially was very forthcoming in terms of information about my father's background in terms of

not so much his military background but his life after he'd come back to xxxx (father's country of origin) after the War and what had happened to him and you know, he'd developed cancer and died, at a fairly good age (L194-L201)

He expressed mixed emotions about the information he received about his father – anger, sadness but also pride. This information may have helped him to deal with this loss after receiving news of his father's death.

Thus, the outcome of the trace seemed to have wider repercussions on participants, which will be explored further in the next section.

3.9 'Implications and consequences of finding missing family'

All participants, except Oscar, found their missing family alive (although in the process, Oscar found a previously unknown living cousin).

Table 7: Category 'Implications and consequences of finding missing family' with its sub-categories and focused codes

Category	Sub-categories	Focused codes
Implications and consequences of finding missing family	Reuniting with family	Applying for family reunion
		Factors facilitating reunion
		Challenges to the family reunion process
		Emotional responses to seeing relative when reuniting
		Impact of reuniting
	"Moving forward"	Living life
		Wishes and plans for the future
	Perception of the Red Cross	Positive views of the Red Cross
		Red Cross' constraints
	Showing appreciation	

3.9.1 'Reuniting with family'

Of the eight participants who had been separated from their immediate family overseas, seven discussed reuniting with their found family members. Bernadette spoke of her wish to visit her niece soon. For the remaining two participants, one had already visited her cousin, and the other was considering visiting his newly found relatives.

Of the seven participants who reunited with family, five had applied for "family reunion". They described it as "another process" or "another procedure" to tracing. This was a difficult process for participants, with "many rocks on the way". Degaule and Haja spoke of "fighting" to bring their relatives over.

Participants applied through different routes. Three participants applied through the BRC. Joy applied to bring her children over to Britain through the Home Office:

Joy: I had to write to the Home Office and we had to process the visas and all that, they had to check their DNA if they are my children, then they had to bring them. (L205-L209)

Adam initially contacted the BRC but he was told the family reunion scheme was suspended as "there's no funds".

Adam: So I talked to some people at the United Nations HCR, they said I can go and apply for family reunion through a solicitor. (L332-L334)

For all of these participants, applying for family reunion was contingent on their legal status, as described by Haja below. However, for many, this implied not being able to apply for a prolonged period of time, and thus more "waiting". Adam spoke of applying for family reunion "five years" after his family had been traced and he was communicating with them.

Haja: They say well because of my situation is in the Home Office they've given me four years I can apply to bring her (L102-L104)

Participants discussed both factors facilitating and impeding the family reunion process. Receiving help and advice was identified as one of the main facilitative factors. Haja and David spoke of receiving advice from the BRC after their family members had been traced, whereas Degaule received support from the tracing service with the application itself:

Degaule: He (ITMS area coordinator) helped me to make application form, for travel assistance (L349-L350)

Some participants received help from others (friends, solicitors and refugee services) as well as a combination of these. A few participants also had financial support through the travel assistance programme for the transport of their family members to the UK. This support was viewed as essential as they would not have been able to afford it otherwise as captured by Adam:

Adam: I don't think I would be able to afford like to organise their travel and bring them here if the service wasn't here. (L393-L395)

In addition to their legal status and money, participants also highlighted a number of other challenges they faced going through this second process. These included issues with obtaining passports and visas for family members, mistakes being made on forms resulting in delays as well as the time limits of the travel assistance programme, which was described as dependent on the United Nations "funding that programme". Degaule spoke of the difficulties he and his family faced in getting passports for all of them.

Degaule: I applied for passport, it took time and it was very hard because in xxxx administration is not organised like here. You can make an application and for just one word they can make you going coming going even for two three weeks. (L264-L269)

For Adam, there were difficulties up until the point of reunion with his family members being held at the airport:

Adam: They came to the airport but they hold us in the airport for about two hours. Then I had to ring the IOM¹¹ and the IOM said "the changes process going on" and after hanging around they came out. (L358-L362)

At the time of reunion with family, participants described a range of emotions. Most expressed happiness, for some it was also "surprise", relief and gratitude. However, although Haja was "so happy" that she had found her daughter, she described sadness at the way her daughter looked and being "really stressed" about what her daughter had gone through, once she was reunited with her:

Haja: when I saw her I was really stressed when she came, when she told me what she went through, oh I was crying every day I have to take off work just to be with her (L178-L181)

Haja: she came like a stick and now it was horrible when I saw her I have to cry at the airport. (L201-L203)

Participants discussed the impact of reuniting with family. Both Haja and Jerry described it as life changing.

¹¹ International Organization for Migration

Jerry: my life change changed...being a person, a father, husband and one day everything just stopped for you, when I see my wife, everything changed because at the time I was like I don't know where I'm going what I'm doing. (L287-L294)

Joy and Degaule expressed being “back together again”. Jerry and Degaule also discussed the impact on themselves, particularly the changes to their mental well-being, describing themselves now as “happy” people. For two participants, there was still some disbelief that their families were now here with them as illustrated by Adam:

Adam: I just hire a taxi and took them, bring them home and for about week I didn't believe you know they're sitting in front of me. (L366-L368)

Some participants also discussed certain life events taking place since reunion. For instance, Joy and her husband got married last year. Both Joy and Jerry shared they had had more children, and Haja became a grandmother.

3.9.2 “Moving forward”

Half of the participants discussed their present circumstances and how they were living their life at present. Most had reached some stability and spoke of “managing life”. Two participants talked about legal status – for themselves and for their relatives. Although Jerry was still “waiting” to hear about his legal status, he expressed feeling content “as long as my family is happy”. It seemed that his legal status and current circumstances were not a major preoccupation now that he was with his family.

Jerry: I'm not working, my wife not working, she going to college, we live in her benefit with very small little but we are happy. (L349-L351)

Since finding their family members, there was no longer a need to worry, as captured by David:

David: now is peaceful, and I live my life now,
[...] because what I need I got it, what I need is
what I got already (L540-L543)

Integration into British life was highlighted through some participants talking about accessing education (themselves or their children) and “having a British passport” or acquiring British “citizenship”.

‘Language’

David spoke of his wife’s attempts at integration and explained how language can be a barrier to integration through being unable to work.

David: we really move forward in a way we she’s
trying now to integrate herself. She has to go to
learn English ‘cause English is not her first
language, and also because lack of English therefore
you can’t have a job. (L499-L502)

Participants expressed their individual wishes and plans for the future: Haja spoke of her aspirations for her daughter, Jerry his wish to “go to college”, Paul his wish to return to his home country one day to “work in my government”, Oscar expressed his plan to visit his father’s grave within the next couple of years whilst he is still “fit and able”. Both Oscar and Bernadette discussed wanting to “find out more” about their families. Bernadette was using the tracing service again:

Bernadette: But they’re still trying to find out the
camp I was at. That’s the only thing that I don’t, I
was a child, so I can’t remember the camp. (L208-
L211)

3.9.3 'Perception of the Red Cross'

All participants expressed positive views of the BRC such as they do a “great job”, their work is “effective” and “efficient”. Paul and Bernadette also described the staff at ITMS as having “experience” and knowing “exactly what to do”. Most participants described it as “helpful” – not only referring to the help they received with searching for their missing family but also the staff and volunteers they were in contact with and the environment itself.

Degaule: it was a very very good, a very helpful environment, facing people, meeting people facing the same case, around staff who can psychology support [[psychologically support]] you (L450-L453)

Although Oscar found out that his biological father had died, he still expressed that using the service had allowed him to know more:

Oscar: and the help the Red Cross had given and...it is a help because I know more (L300-L301)

Whilst some participants appeared to be referring to the organisation at a more global level; others seemed to be talking specifically about the tracing service itself.

Two participants discussed constraints the BRC has in their view. Haja expressed differences in power between the BRC and the Home Office with regards to bringing family members, such as her daughter, over to reunite. The BRC was viewed as powerless in the face of the Home Office. David similarly expressed that the BRC has to abide by British immigration laws in this matter.

Haja: they (BRC) don't have the power to say to the Home Office “we have to bring xxxx (daughter)” (L533-L534)

Degaule talked about dependency and his understanding that the BRC depends on other organisations, financially as well as possibly in other respects:

Degaule: they need a lot of support from different organisms because the Red Cross on its self can't do everything, I understood that they depend on some funders, they depends on some other organisation sisters (L726-L729)

3.9.4 'Showing appreciation'

Many participants showed their appreciation of ITMS and the BRC by thanking them for their help. Some participants spoke of going back to see the person who had dealt with their case or contacting that person to "say thank you". Others appeared to use the interview as a way of giving their thanks to all of those who helped:

Degaule: the British Red Cross, through the tracing messages and services. It was very...good remembrance for that. I give a big thank for everybody who pushed the boat to go through the water, that I can say. (L361-L365)

Many participants expressed their gratitude, as well as "praise" and admiration. Some participants spoke of promoting the tracing service and the BRC to others. For instance, Bernadette talked about the BRC when she was interviewed by her local newspaper. Joy, on the other hand, brought to the tracing service her friends who were in a similar situation.

Joy: I had to bring my friends...to British Red Cross and then I don't know how far they've gone, but at least they've been here, they've been to the

Red Cross and I think they've helped them. (L485-
L488)

A few participants also discussed giving something back to the BRC by helping others in a similar situation to the one they had been in to show their appreciation. Whilst some spoke of their intentions to do so, Degaule explained that he had started doing "outreach" work as a BRC volunteer, helping others to complete forms, but that his wife and children had also started volunteering for the BRC:

Degaule: Now, my wife as well has started, has become a volunteer with British Red Cross because she faced how good a job they did for her (L682-
L684)

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

4.1 Overview of the discussion

In this chapter, the findings of the research will be discussed in the context of the existing literature. A critical review of the methodology will then be provided, followed by a consideration of the implications of this study for research, the BRC and beyond. Finally, a reflexive account of the research process will be given.

4.2 Discussion of the research findings

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of individuals who have used a tracing service to search for missing relatives. The main research question was:

How do people who have used a tracing service talk about the experience of the process and impact of doing so?

The findings are explored within the following detailed discussion of the categories in the context of the existing literature, presented in the same order as in the Analysis chapter with 'Language', 'Expectations', 'Hope' and "Waiting" discussed¹² after the other categories.

4.2.1 'Background'

Within this study, participants discussed the broad context that led them to use a tracing service. The majority of participants originated from another country and had come to Britain for safety reasons, seeking asylum.

Most participants discussed experiences of trauma and loss. For some, these were connected to the social and political context in their country of origin and formed the basis of their decision to leave that country. High levels of exposure to trauma have been found in displaced populations (Hauff & Vaglum, 1995). It is interesting that two participants who did not seek asylum also discussed experiences of trauma during their interviews. In one case this was connected to family separation, but in the other the traumatic experience was considered more

¹² Although these four categories are placed under separate headings they are also discussed within other categories in which they featured.

“dramatic” than the loss of contact with family. There seemed to be a connection between prevalence of traumatic experiences and use of a tracing service in this sample; however this requires further research amongst other tracing service-users.

As a result of their decision to leave their countries, many participants were separated from family members. As indicated by Mock (1998) and Miller and Rasco (2004), many refugee families experience significant losses. Leaving family members behind can result in separation. Some participants highlighted the significance of the separation event which may reinforce the depth of the loss separation represented for them. “Closeness”, as suggested by one participant, to family members was a contributing factor. This echoes Miller et al.’s (2002) Bosnian refugee participants’ description of separation from family members as the most painful aspect of living in exile.

Not being in contact and/or losing contact with family members created fear and “concern” as well as considerable uncertainty regarding the fate of those family members. Distress following separation linked to not knowing whether family members are alive or dead has been reported in other studies (Fox et al., 1995; Luster et al., 2008, 2009). Poor psychological health (e.g. depression, anxiety and somatisation) has been associated with concern for family (McDonald-Wilmsen & Gifford, 2009). Participants did express some psychological difficulties although these may have also resulted from traumatic experiences.

In this study, all participants spoke of how they kept their absent family members in their thoughts which links to Boss’ (1999) concept of ambiguous absence, where a family member is physically absent but psychologically present. This finding lends support to the evidence that ambiguous loss is applicable cross-culturally (Boss, 2006; Boss et al., 2003; Robins, 2010) given the variety in participants’ ethnic and cultural backgrounds. However given the small sample size further research would need to be conducted to support this.

Separation from family members and going into exile was connected to the loss of certain roles (e.g. family breadwinner, husband, and father) and occupations, particularly for the male participants from the African continent. Miller et al.'s (2002) study on Bosnian refugees resettled in the USA showed that, for the men, going into exile implied leaving behind a range of social roles causing distress – the loss of their role as providers as well as the loss of status and recognition that came with occupational achievements in their home country. In this study, despite the ambiguity about their relatives' fate, the male participants appeared to hold on to these core responsibilities and roles, as observed at the time of reconnecting with their families.

Using the Red Cross for tracing is generally a last resort. Prior to contacting the BRC's tracing service, the majority of participants searched for their missing relatives using a wide range of informal methods over differing lengths of time. The methods used appeared to be connected to the resources available to participants.

4.2.2 'Living in Britain prior to finding family'

Those participants that sought asylum discussed a number of struggles living in this country, which may indicate difficulties feeling 'settled' in Britain (Ager & Strang, 2008). Difficulties experienced by most participants were related to a lack of social support, issues with the asylum system, living on very little income, not being able to work, unfamiliarity with the British people and system, separation from family members and uncertainty about family members' fate. The Home Office and their interaction with it were described as a great source of stress for many participants, which was likely to impact on their mental health and well-being. The findings of the present study are consistent with those on exile-related/post-migration stressors (Brune et al., 2002; Carswell et al., 2011; Lie, 2002; McColl & Johnson, 2006; Miller et al., 2002; Palmer & Ward, 2007).

Research into boundary ambiguity has found that talking to people whom individuals feel understand their situation is a positive coping strategy (Boss, 2004; Faber, Willerton, Clymer, MacDermid & Weiss, 2008). Only a few

participants in this study expressed this which links to the lack of social support described by most. Given the value of talking to others, greater opportunities to share their experiences with others in similar situations are required, which has implications for tracing and other services.

It is interesting to note the relative absence of PTSD or other diagnosed difficulties in this study given that most participants were asylum seekers at some time. Symptoms of PTSD have been reported in numerous studies with refugee populations (Fazel et al., 2005; Lie, 2002; McColl & Johnson, 2006; Roth et al., 2006). In this study, only one refugee participant discussed in great detail the psychological difficulties he had experienced, including receiving a diagnosis of PTSD. The loss of contact with his family combined with the trauma experienced in his country of origin led to psychological difficulties, as described by him. Rousseau et al. (2001) suggest that trauma and separation occurring jointly has a considerable impact on emotional distress. Given the resemblance between trauma causing PTSD and trauma connected with ambiguous loss (Boss, 2010), the appropriateness of the diagnosis of PTSD seems questionable.

Although exposure to political violence has been associated with an increase in the risk of developing both acute and chronic post traumatic stress reactions (Fox & Tang, 2000; Miller et al., 2002), many people exposed to violence do not however develop enduring psychological trauma (Miller & Rasco, 2004). It has been suggested that the presence of certain factors, including a range of coping strategies and the meaning made of their experiences, may protect individuals against the effects of potentially traumatic experiences (Miller & Rasco, 2004). Although other participants in this study also expressed some psychological difficulties such as difficulties with concentration, as well as physical issues which seemed related to their psychological state (e.g. eating and sleeping), they did not refer to a particular label. The fact that this was a non-clinical sample could explain this. Only a small minority of the participants talked about accessing health services for support, including mental health services. Burnett and Peel (2001) have highlighted difficulties refugees may have accessing health services which may apply here. Cultural variations in the way emotional distress is

experienced and expressed have also been reported (Fox et al., 1995). Summerfield (2000) claims “there is no such thing as a universal response to highly stressful events” (p. 232). The relative absence of psychological difficulties impairing functioning can highlight participants’ coping and survival skills, through hope and religious beliefs and practices, indicating their resilience, but further research is needed to ascertain this.

4.2.3 ‘Finding out about the tracing service’ and ‘Using the tracing service’

Participants found out or heard about the service in a variety of ways although mostly through other people (e.g. friends, strangers, services). This highlights both the importance of word of mouth as well as the limited awareness about the Red Cross and the services it offers. It is interesting that after contact with the tracing service, some participants still expressed a lack of awareness with regards to the functioning and the work carried out by the BRC and other national Red Cross societies although they held beliefs that the service would help them. This is contradictory and requires further investigation.

Whilst participants endeavoured to give as much information as possible to ITMS at the time of their interview, for some this proved to be challenging as a result of psychological and physical difficulties. This shows a link between participants’ experience of the interview with the tracing service and their psychological and physical state at the time of the interview. This finding has implications for tracing services, requiring consideration in relation to interviews with service-users. In her study on ITMS and RFL service-users in England and Ethiopia, Straw (2011) found that the majority of her sample revealed some levels of ‘psychosocial dysfunction’ which she hypothesised were attributed to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. In this study, despite expressing psychological difficulties, most participants talked about having hope rather than the absence of hope.

Participants expressed mixed experiences of using the tracing service. They described positive experiences but they also expressed unfamiliarity with the process, and concern in relation to the issue of confidentiality. This finding shows the importance of communication and information in managing service-users’

anxieties about the way the service operates and the tracing process. Participants nevertheless expressed trust in BRC personnel. The participants in Straw's (2011) study on ITMS and RFL service-users also highlighted the importance of trust when using the tracing service. Trust may therefore be a necessary condition to cope with waiting.

Through conveying hope and managing service-users' expectations, BRC personnel appeared to be offering a "holding environment" (Winnicott, 1965). This was particularly important during the wait for news of the trace. Sweeny and Cavanaugh (2010) suggest that during difficult waiting periods, managing expectations can help ease anxiety. Participants highlighted the value of being kept informed about the progress of the trace at different times. This may have provided them with some sense of control during a time of continued uncertainty as well as feeling that they had not been forgotten by the service. Some participants talked about contacting ITMS themselves for updates. This may have been a way of coping with the incessant worry, even anxiety, for the safety of missing family members. Straw (2011) reported that the level of worry and concern reduced after the participants in her small study contacted the tracing service. In the present study, worry and concern was still observed after initial contact although levels may have reduced. Prospective research would enable further exploration of changes in service-users' levels of worry and fear.

Upon receiving news, participants described a range of emotions although mostly happiness. According to Maynard (2003), the delivery of news has this 'final' and 'at last' feature as it ends a state of not knowing. This was the case for most in this study, although one participant described her experience of receiving "no news" initially and expressed her disappointment for not receiving "good news". Expectations thus affected the way in which she received the news. Fallowfield and Jenkins (2004) suggest that expectations can impact on how bad, sad and difficult information is received.

In this study, only one participant received news of death. As mentioned in the introduction, most of the literature on receiving 'bad news' comes from the

medical literature with a specific focus on factors to be considered when communicating bad news (Ishaque et al., 2010; Ptacek & Eberhardt, 1996). In this study, the participant spoke of receiving details about his relative's death by letter however the medical literature describes patients receiving bad news verbally and predominantly in person (Parker et al., 2001; Ptacek & Ptacek, 2001). ITMS expressed that "ITMS training and guidance on delivering news is that it is always done in person, but this case was a very regrettable anomaly" (ITMS, personal communication, 2nd May, 2012). Fallowfield and Jenkins (2004) stress the importance of a sensitive approach as an insensitive one may increase people's distress and have a lasting impact on their ability to adapt and adjust. Therefore the way in which service-users receive bad news can have an impact on their well-being. The participant in this study did not comment on the way he received the news. Further research into receiving news of death and its impact is required given that only one person in this study received this type of news.

4.2.4 'Communicating with found family'

ITMS' role in facilitating communication with found family, both directly and indirectly, was highlighted. Receiving messages and speaking to family members triggered feelings of happiness and relief, and hope. Sassòli and Tougas (2002) point out that Red Cross messages are the most frequently used medium for family news but other more modern forms of communicating are also used. The young Sudanese in Luster et al.'s (2008) study also described feelings of joy and relief after reconnecting with family members. Recent communication with family members who had remained in the country of origin brought happiness and increased support to a young refugee who had come to Australia alone (McMichael, Gifford & Correa-Velez, 2011). Communication with found family members in this study was found to maintain closeness and reduce anxiety levels by removing uncertainty about their fate and whereabouts. Therefore re-establishing contact with family members had a positive impact on individuals' well-being. Guidance on early social interventions in the context of disasters or mass trauma suggest locating relatives and re-establishing contact may reduce stress, anxiety and the likelihood of psychological illness and promote recovery (Hobfoll et al., 2007; Ommeren et al., 2005).

After initial contact with found family members, participants reported maintaining communication. Luster et al. (2008) reported regular contact by phone was maintained between their participants and their families following initial conversations. Difficulties were however expressed by some participants in the current research where financial circumstances restricted the frequency and length of communication. These seemed related to the status of asylum-seeker which would have prevented them from working at that time. Another important restricting factor expressed by one participant was his found relatives' reticence for contact connected to lack of awareness of his existence. Moreover, not speaking the same language as well as the influence of historical and political contexts appeared to add further complications to maintaining regular communication. Language and context are likely to be essential factors when considering communication. These have implications for service-users facing similar situations. Not being able to communicate as frequently as desired could create or add to existing psychological difficulties. Supporting tracing service-users once contact has been established may therefore be equally as important for their well-being.

In this study, restored communication enabled participants to resume their roles and responsibilities as family breadwinners by sending money to their families overseas, and to receive news about the fate of other family members, including news of loss, similarly found in Luster et al.'s (2008) study.

4.2.5 'Implications and consequences of finding missing family'

Under current UK legislation (UK Border Agency, 2012), individuals with refugee status or humanitarian protection may apply to be reunited with members of their immediate family who formed part of their family prior to fleeing (spouses or civil/unmarried/same-sex partners and children under 18). Those with indefinite leave to remain may also apply dependent on meeting certain requirements with regards to the provision of maintenance and accommodation. These requirements were highlighted by one participant in this study who expressed

needing to bring all the necessary evidence and delays occurring with the application process as a result of insufficient savings.

All participants in the current study who had separated from their families overseas within the last decade had reunited with them. Since 2010, family reunion has become a target for the BRC with a specific allocation of funds (White & Hendry, 2011). This can partly explain the high proportion of participants in this study going through the process of family reunion particularly through the BRC's Family Reunion Travel Assistance Programme¹³. Some had reunited with their families prior to 2010, however, many participants expressed that without this programme they would not have been able to finance their families' travel to the UK, highlighting the importance of financial support.

The process of family reunion is complex and difficult. In a recent British Red Cross investigation on the issue of family reunion for refugees in the UK, 36% of individuals interviewed by telephone described the process of family reunion as difficult (White & Hendry, 2011). In this study, participants talked about the many difficulties they experienced in the process of applying for family reunion, up until the point of reunion (e.g. lack of finances, issues with getting visas and passports for family members). Participants also expressed that the help and advice given by the BRC facilitated the process. These findings show the lengthiness of this second process and its contingency on participants' legal status leading to further waiting.

According to White and Hendry's (2011) report, a great majority of refugees in the UK are unable to exercise their rights to family reunion unless they have some support to do so. Moreover, they highlight that the support provided to refugees is inadequate with regards to its coverage and content. The amount of help reported by participants in this study was variable. This may be related to the nature of the relationship between service-users and their tracing case workers and the availability of personnel.

¹³ In partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA)

Reuniting with family members was associated with predominantly positive feelings. The literature on family reunification has shown difficulties arising from reunification including the reunion itself being tense (Arnold, 2006) and the development of psychiatric complications (Tseng et al., 1993). In addition, adjustments (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002) and changes in family members' roles, including taking on new roles, may occur (Luster et al., 2008; Rousseau et al., 2001). After prolonged separation, emotional detachment (Bowlby, 1973) may also arise. None of these were expressed by participants in this study although adjustments may have occurred initially. Family reunion had a positive impact on participants' well-being and on the family unit, enabling further life events to take place including marriage, and the birth of new family members. Further research on the impact of reunification, with a focus on changes and adjustments occurring within the family are required.

Proximity to family has been found to play an important part in refugees feeling 'settled', influencing integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). According to Ager and Strang (2008), employment, housing, education and health are considered key features of integrating into a new society. In this study, many participants were working and/or in education at the time of the interviews highlighting integration into British society. Language was linked to integration as not speaking the language of the host country constitutes a barrier to integration with regards to being unable to access employment as expressed by a participant in this study. Participants also expressed achieving some stability and no further concerns about the fate of their relatives. Therefore psychological difficulties reported by participants prior to finding family may have reduced and even disappeared by the time of the interviews in light of these findings as well as the negative psychological impact associated with concern for one's family (McDonald-Wilmsen & Gifford, 2009) and the positive reactions expressed by participants after re-connecting with their families. Further research looking at the effect of reconnection and reunification on psychological well-being is needed to support this.

Reconnecting and reuniting with family members through the tracing service was valued by participants who expressed their gratitude. Re-establishing contact with family or being informed of the loss of a family member gave rise to the removal of uncertainty allowing a focus on the future. At the time of the interview, participants expressed their wishes and plans for the near and distant future. For instance, the participant who received news of death spoke of wanting to visit his father's grave in the near future. Boss (1999) suggests that in order to make the loss real, most people will need to see the body of a loved one who has died. Seeing a family member's grave may similarly allow making the loss real.

4.2.6 'Language'¹⁴

Upon arrival in Britain, some participants who sought asylum expressed limited knowledge of the English language. According to Miller and Rasco (2004), refugees' proficiency in the language of the country they settle in is often inadequate. Learning the language of the host country is perceived as an essential aspect of mastering the environment for many refugees (Miller et al., 2002) as insufficient proficiency can then become an obstacle to accessing a range of services, including health services and employment (Ager & Strang, 2008; Miller et al., 2005; Tribe, 1999). Participants in this study did not however express such difficulties with respect to their proficiency in the English language. Participants had been in the UK for a number of years and learned the English language therefore it was probably not a salient issue at the time of the interview which could explain issues with language not being discussed. Further exploration of this area is required.

4.2.7 'Expectations'¹⁵

In addition to beliefs, participants in this study described expectations about what the service would be able to provide, which bolstered their hopes. Their beliefs and expectations were seen to be influenced by other people's positive experiences of the tracing service and beliefs that the BRC might help them. This highlights the importance of social network and information.

¹⁴ Language is discussed in sections 4.2.4 and 4.2.5 in relation to communication with found relatives and integration.

¹⁵ Discussion about expectations was also featured in section 4.2.3.

In the face of uncertain health news, Sweeny and Cavanaugh (2010) suggest that people manage their expectations in two ways – by “bracing for the worst” thus lowering their expectations or “embracing hope or optimism” (p. 5). Participants in this study expressed high expectations and hope, thus indicating preference for the second way of coping. Having an awareness and understanding of service-users’ coping strategies can help tracing service providers in their relationships with service-users.

4.2.8 ‘Hope’¹⁶

Hope was a salient feature of participants’ discussions. Many participants expressed beliefs that their relatives were still alive. Hope is viewed as essential for recovery from mental health difficulties (Walsh, 2007) and in the context of ambiguous loss (Boss, 2006; Luster et al., 2008). Hope, as well as religious or spiritual beliefs, has also been linked to resilience (Boss, 2006). A study of 141 refugees receiving therapy found that having a profound and firm belief system can be a coping factor for individuals who are dealing with trauma (Brune et al., 2002). In this study, religious beliefs and prayer were used by some participants (from the African continent) as a way of maintaining hope and coping. In their study on refugee families from the Democratic Republic of Congo in Montreal, Rousseau et al. (2004) noted the importance of God, with those who had experienced major trauma turning more frequently to prayer.

4.2.9 “Waiting”

Waiting for news can be the hardest part (Sweeny & Cavanaugh, 2010). It has been described by patients suffering from cancer as a stressful time (Salander, 2002). In this study, whilst some participants expressed relief at having passed on the task of searching to ITMS, others described it as emotionally trying. A connection between a person’s negative experience of and the length of the wait was highlighted. The participant who described this time as both “depressing” and “nerve-racking” appeared to have “waited” the longest. Further investigation of this connection is needed to support this finding.

¹⁶ Hope is featured within discussions for most of the previous categories.

Having waited for news about the outcome of the trace, some expressed no longer being able to wait to receive the news once they had been informed of “good news”, highlighting a desire to bring a complete end to uncertainty. Even in the context of bad news, Ishaque et al. (2010) found that nearly a third of their respondents wished to know news immediately. The participant in this study who received news of death expressed that despite it being difficult to hear, he preferred to know rather than not know. Luster et al. (2008) suggest that receiving news of death can bring an end to uncertainty, and thus resolution to ambiguous loss. Receiving good or bad news may therefore put an end to ambiguity about a family member’s fate or whereabouts and alleviate any related distress.

4.3 Critical review

4.3.1 Limitations of the study

The sample was small and the study conducted only with individuals who had used the BRC’s tracing service, meeting the inclusion criteria. It is possible that if this research had been conducted with people who had used a tracing service other than the BRC’s ITMS, their experiences may have differed.

This study was retrospective with potential participants approached at least six months after their cases were closed. It was also limited to individuals who had received news that their missing family member was found alive or dead as interviewing those who are currently awaiting news may have caused greater stress. Nevertheless their responses may have differed had they been interviewed whilst awaiting news or soon after receiving news about the outcome. Participants’ recollection of the events may have been affected by time. One participant recalled being contacted by ITMS; however the service’s records indicated that she was the one that contacted them initially. Participants’ memory as well as the outcome itself may have influenced their perception of their whole experience.

All the participants in this study found family members alive (with the exception of one participant who also received news of death). The outcome of the trace may have influenced their recollection of their experience of using the tracing service.

Many participants in this study had shared their experiences with the BRC or others (e.g. newspapers), on their own initiative or being approached by the BRC for publicity; therefore they may represent a particular group of ex-service-users.

Difficulties were encountered contacting potential participants for this study. A few letters sent to individuals were returned undelivered and many attempts to contact individuals by telephone were unsuccessful due to line disconnection and incorrect numbers. It is possible that the service held more up-to-date contact information for these individuals compared to others with similar experiences as most may have been contacted by the BRC for publicity purposes since their tracing case was closed. Difficulties contacting potential participants may have been connected to the often transient nature of ITMS service-users and some not having telephones.

Timing was another issue. I spoke very briefly to one individual before she handed the phone to her daughter, as she did not speak much English. Her daughter explained the timing of my contact coincided with the anniversary of them receiving news of family members' death and that this was still "raw", therefore they did not wish to take part at this time.

A number of other factors may have influenced what participants discussed and may have impacted on the interview process (Rapley, 2001). These included cover letters sent to potential participants on BRC headed paper, the location of interviews and presence of BRC personnel during interviews, and recording of interviews. Five of the ten interviews were conducted in a BRC office. One interview was carried out in the participant's home where a BRC volunteer was present in the room during the interview. Participants may have felt constrained by these factors.

Interpretation was offered to one participant who declined it. All participants were fluent in English, however those for whom English was their second language may have experienced greater difficulty expressing themselves and some subtleties and nuances may have been lost. Whilst not using interpretation can lead to misunderstandings, participants may conversely be anxious about “using another person as their voice, who may not represent them correctly or accurately” (Tribe, 1999, pp. 568-569). One participant explained at the end of his interview that no longer requiring interpretation had been an important step for him.

4.3.2 Quality of qualitative research

The quality of this study will now be evaluated using Henwood and Pidgeon’s (1992) criteria as outlined below.

Keeping close to the data

Through the use of grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), including open, axial and selective coding and memo-writing, I attempted to stay close to the data. The participants’ language (‘in vivo’ codes) was used as much as possible in the labelling of coding process as evidenced in the previous analysis section. In addition, initial open coding was reviewed within a workshop with two other researchers as a way of checking similarity in coding and completeness.

Theory

In this study, the data was analysed at a high level of abstraction through the construction of a theory grounded in the data rather than providing descriptive material (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Within grounded theory, a number of definitions have been put forward with regards to what constitutes a theory, as stated by Charmaz (2006): “1) an empirical generalisation, 2) a category, 3) a predisposition, 4) an explanation of a process, 5) a relationship between variables, 6) an explanation, 7) an abstract understanding, 8) a description” (p. 133).

Reflexivity and documentation

As suggested by numerous authors (Charmaz, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Willig, 2008), reflexivity was developed through the use of memos and a reflexive diary. The reflexive diary allowed me to think about my beliefs and assumptions and how these might impact on the research. Extracts of analysed data, memos, and the reflexive diary are documented in Appendix VIII. These serve as documentation of the analytic procedures employed. I have also included a self-reflexive critique in section 4.6.

Theoretical sampling and negative case analysis

In the current study, theoretical sampling was carried out through the simultaneous collection and analysis of data. Adopting a constant comparison approach to data analysis enabled me to identify divergent opinions both within and between participants' accounts. Examples of this can be seen in the analysis section, where diverse views are presented.

Sensitivity

In order to achieve "sensitivity to negotiated realities" (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992, p. 107), a summary of the results was distributed to all participants to seek feedback (see Appendix IX). At the time of submitting this thesis, I have received no responses.

Transferability

Henwood and Pidgeon's (1992) final criteria is transferability – the extent to which the research findings have a more general significance outside of the research context. A hypothesis would be that the findings of this study are transferable to other individuals using tracing services in Britain but also possibly worldwide, but further research would be needed to confirm this. A critical realist approach acknowledges that the meaning made of external reality is socially constructed; therefore context would have influenced the way in which participants' experiences were constructed.

4.4 Implications and recommendations for research

Given the findings of the present study, the scarcity of research in this area and in light of this study's limitations, further research would be beneficial.

- The findings of the present study indicate the majority of the sample reported traumatic experiences. Further research exploring whether there is a connection between the prevalence of traumatic experiences and the use of a tracing service might be helpful.
- The concept of ambiguous loss, particularly ambiguous absence, appears to be applicable to those individuals searching for missing relatives through a tracing service. Further research is needed to add to the evidence base for ambiguous loss, particularly on its appropriateness cross-culturally.
- The importance of trust was highlighted after service users made contact with the tracing service. Future research could explore whether trust is a necessary condition to cope with waiting. In addition, the findings of this study suggest that there may be a connection between a person's experience of and the length of the wait for news (i.e. the longer the wait, the more negative the experience). Further research with tracing service-users is needed to explore this.
- Family reunion was found to have a positive impact on participants' well-being and on the family unit which challenges some of the findings reported in the literature. Further research focusing on changes and adjustments occurring post-reunion as well as on tracing service-users and their found family members' psychological well-being would be helpful.
- Researching this topic from different perspectives would add to the literature. Future research exploring the views and experiences of more service-users from the Red Cross network, of those who use other tracing services, of family members who have been found, and friends or family of those who have requested a trace is needed. As most of the participants in

this study had been or were asylum seekers/refugees, further investigation of individuals who do not belong to this particular population as well as greater variety in terms of ages could provide a broader view of the experiences of those using tracing services. This study was also limited to those searching for family members; research looking at individuals searching for people not related by blood or marriage is another area of investigation. Greater awareness of service-users' experiences would serve to improve service-delivery.

- How news is delivered and its impact is an area for further exploration. A specific focus on service-users receiving news of death (i.e. bad news) would add to the literature base from a non-medical perspective.
- Other areas for further research include the experiences of service-users who are currently using the tracing service, the impact of the trace over a longer period of time and the impact of associated experiences on the tracing process. Prospective research could explore people's experiences as they go through the process. Quantitative research to look at specific variables (such as hope or expectations) would also be useful.

4.5 Implications and recommendations for the BRC and beyond

The resulting theory provides family tracing providers with an understanding of the perspectives of service-users on their journey towards and following finding missing family. The results of this study have been shared with my external advisors, the Head and Development Officer of ITMS. The results will also be circulated within the BRC and the Red Cross International Movement and particularly amongst ITMS personnel across the UK. The findings will be used in service-delivery improvements including routine gathering of outcome data.

4.5.1 Recommendations to ITMS and the BRC

During the interviews, participants put forward a number of suggestions to ITMS and the BRC which were briefly outlined in the analysis section and are now included within the following recommendations.

- Offer support to service-users with regards to making initial contact with found relatives, as well as recommending translation services in the event that the enquirer and sought person do not share the same language to facilitate communication.
- Inform traced family members about the enquirer's search experience. Where an individual has been searching for a relative for a prolonged period of time, ITMS could provide an explanation about this to the found individual(s).
- Collaborate further with other agencies. Greater collaboration with immigration services in the UK would assist service-users with the family reunion process.
- Raise awareness and advertise BRC services more widely – through different community groups (e.g. “Ghanaian”, “Nigerian”), increased use of flyers, and advertising on television or in newspapers.
- Use quicker processes making use of technology (e.g. telephone, e-mails) rather than sending hand-written messages.
- Use a “psychological approach” or psychosocial approach. Offer support and consider increasing the frequency of contact during the tracing process (in person or by telephone).
- Repeat questions if service-users' answers seem unclear. This may be an effect of experiencing psychological difficulties.
- Provide more explanations about how the service operates and its confidentiality policy given that some service-users may be fearful that this information may be passed on to others and cause “trouble” for family and friends in their home country. It is further recommended that written materials be produced in a range of languages that can be left with service-users to refer to.
- Update the service-user during the waiting period. Some individuals may require more frequent contact for “reassurance”; however, they may not have the financial means to contact the service as frequently as they might wish to therefore this should be considered within the casework approach.
- Provide a continuation of and integrated assistance post-trace. Participants emphasised the importance of an integrated service, particularly with the Family Reunion Service. Tracing was viewed as one part of participants'

whole experience of connecting with family. There is a need for greater consistency such as through the use of a casework pathway.

- Signpost service-users to other services, particularly to mental health services if difficulties with concentration, low mood or any other signs of psychological difficulties are observed and/or expressed by service-users.
- Given the inability to bring all the necessary information/documents to the interview and difficulties with concentration expressed by some participants, the service could consider carrying out the initial interview over two appointments, if this is not already the case.
- Facilitate opportunities for service-users to meet and share their experiences if possible (e.g. peer support groups run in a BRC area office).

4.5.2 Recommendations for clinical psychologists, other therapists and across services

Within NHS and non-NHS services, it is likely that clinicians and other professionals will come across individuals who are currently separated and/or disconnected from their families. The findings of this study show the importance of the need for people to be connected with their families. Supporting individuals in finding and reconnecting with their families is important. Signposting individuals towards ITMS or the Salvation Army here in the UK for instance according to particular criteria could be a step towards facilitating this. However, some individuals may choose not to approach a tracing service possibly out of fear of family members not being found. Awareness of the potential impact and exploration of this decision may be helpful in the context of therapy.

The findings also highlight the significance of ambiguous loss and its impact on individuals in similar circumstances, as well as the importance of hope in order to cope with uncertainty and waiting. Greater understanding and use of the concept of ambiguous loss is required within psychological services with interventions adequately reflecting this, and helping people to increase resilience and tolerate ambiguity. In addition, psychological and other services should help to promote or discover hope, either at an individual or group/community level as suggested by Boss (2006) and Hobfoll et al. (2007).

Support was highlighted as an important factor in coping and has also been found in the literature; however variability in support offered was found. There is a need for greater availability and consistency of support offered, including signposting individuals towards services and/or community groups. Having this support may reduce individuals' sense of loneliness whilst waiting and also facilitate the process (whether in relation to tracing, family reunion or the asylum system for instance).

4.6 Personal reflections on the research process

Willig (2008) has highlighted the importance of researchers' reflecting on their role in the research process. Keeping a reflexive diary and discussing my biases, beliefs and assumptions with my supervisors and peers helped me to try to remain curious about participants' experiences.

I was aware of the dual role I had whilst meeting with participants – the role of volunteer for the BRC which I acquired for the purposes of this study, as well as trainee clinical psychologist. I was aware that participants might view me as a member of ITMS, since cover letters were sent to them on BRC headed paper. I wondered how much of an impact this may have had on participants sharing their experiences of using the BRC's tracing service – whether this dual role would hinder them sharing any difficulties or negative experiences they may have had.

I was also particularly aware that I was sensitive to participants' stories of loss and the struggles experienced by those who had sought asylum and become refugees in this country. These echoed some similarities to my own family's stories. As participants who had sought asylum represented the majority of my sample, I was aware of the possibility of omitting the voices of those that did not, and tried hard to represent all voices in my analysis.

After each interview, I reflected on the process, the questions I had asked, areas I could have explored further and my feelings coming away from it, particularly the sense of not having done a 'good enough' job. In an extract from my diary in

Appendix VIII, I reflect on my assumption about the quality of an interview with regards to its length.

Whilst coding the data, I was conscious that some of the categories I constructed bore resemblance to my interview questions, particularly my category 'Using the tracing service'. I felt, however, that this label was most representative of all the different aspects of participants' accounts of being in contact with the tracing service and their experiences of it. Categories were thus intentionally left broad as a way of capturing a variety of experiences of tracing service-users.

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APPENDIX I

Ethical approval

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dean: Professor Mark N. O. Davies, PhD, CPsychol, CBiol.
uel.ac.uk/psychology



Doctoral Degree in Clinical Psychology

Direct Fax: 0208 223 4967

June 2011

Name of Student	Laura Salvo
Title of Research Project	Developing an understanding of people's experiences of using tracing services to search for missing family: A qualitative investigation.

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to confirm that the above named student is conducting research as part of the requirements for the Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. The Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, University of East London has approved their proposal and they are, therefore, covered by the University's indemnity insurance policy. This policy should normally cover for any untoward event provided that the experimental programme has been approved by the Ethics Committee prior to its commencement. The University does not offer "no fault" cover, so in the event of untoward event leading to a claim against the institution, the claimant would be obliged to bring an action against the University and seek compensation through the courts.

As the above named is a student of UEL the University will act as the sponsor of their research. UEL will also fund expenses arising from the research, such as photocopying and postage.

Yours faithfully,

Kenneth Gannon PhD
Research Director

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Tel: +44 (0)20 8223 4966 Fax: +44 (0)20 8223 4937 MINICOM 020 8223 2853
Email: mno.davies@uel.ac.uk



APPENDIX II

Sources of Support Sheet

Some sources of support for you:

- **SAMARITANS**

The Samaritans provides confidential, non-judgemental emotional support, 24 hours a day, for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Telephone number for the UK: 08457 90 90 90 (many local branches across the UK have a local phone number which you can call at a local rate. Please visit their website: www.samaritans.org

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Address if you prefer to write: Chris, P.O. Box 9090, Stirling, FK8 2SA

- **NHS Direct**

NHS Direct responds to any health concerns or queries on a wide range of health topics, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This service also has a confidential interpreter service, available in many languages (simply say the language you wish to use when they answer your call).

Telephone number: 0845 4647

Website: www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

- **SANEline**

SANEline is a national out-of-hours telephone helpline offering emotional support and information. It aims to give you the time and confidential space to explore your situation, without judging or telling you what to do.

SANEline is part of the charity SANE, and is run independently of any NHS or other statutory services. If your first language is not English, they can provide interpreters via the Language Line translation service.

National telephone helpline: 0845 767 8000 (open between 6pm and 11pm every day)

Website: <http://www.sane.org.uk/SANEline>

- **Rethink**

It is the largest charity for severe mental health problems in England and it runs 13 regional helplines.

Address: Rethink, 89 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7TP

Telephone numbers: 020 7840 3188 or 0845 456 0455

email: info@rethink.org

web: www.rethink.org

- **General Practitioner (GP)**

If you are registered with a GP practice in the UK, please book an appointment with your GP to find out about other local sources of support.

APPENDIX III

Cover letter for potential participant – telephone number available



British Red Cross
44 Moorfields
London EC2Y 9AL

Date

UKO Reference number

Dear (participant's name),

The British Red Cross is keen to learn from your experience so that we can improve our work and support to people. Laura Salvo, a Trainee Clinical Psychologist will be carrying out a study looking at the experiences of using tracing services, as part of her doctoral degree for the University of East London. We fully support this work.

The British Red Cross believes this study can really help us to help others, and your views will really count.

We hope it will not disturb you if Laura phones you within the next two weeks on the last known telephone number we have for you. She would like to talk to you about the possibility of interviewing you as part of the study. The interview would take approximately an hour, at a place to suit you. Any travel expenses will be covered by the British Red Cross. If you prefer, you can leave a message for Laura on 020 7877 7341, or a text message on 075 3446 3739 and she will call you back.

We have enclosed some information about the study and Laura will be happy to answer any questions you may have when she contacts you.

Understanding your experience and views is really important to us and your help would be much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Nev Jefferies
Head of the International Tracing and Message Service (British Red Cross)



Cover letter for potential participant – telephone number not available



British Red Cross
44 Moorfields
London EC2Y 9AL

Date

UKO Reference number

Dear (participant's name),

The British Red Cross is keen to learn from your experience so that we can improve our work and support to people. Laura Salvo, a Trainee Clinical Psychologist will be carrying out a study looking at the experiences of using tracing services, as part of her doctoral degree for the University of East London. We fully support this work.

The British Red Cross believes this study can really help us to help others, and your views will really count.

Laura would like to talk to you about the possibility of interviewing you as part of the study. As we do not have a current telephone or mobile number for you, please contact Laura by e-mail on LauraSalvo@redcross.org.uk, leave a message on 020 7877 7341 or send her a text message on 075 3446 3739 if you are interested in participating and Laura will call you back. The interview would take approximately an hour, at a place to suit you. Any travel expenses will be covered by the British Red Cross.

We have enclosed some information about the study and Laura will be happy to answer any questions you may have when she contacts you.

Understanding your experience and views is really important to us and your help would be much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Nev Jefferies

Head of the International Tracing and Message Service (British Red Cross)

Participant information sheet

University of East London
Stratford Campus, Water Lane,
London E15 4LZ
Telephone Number: 020 8223 4174

School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee. If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate, please contact the chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, Dr. Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Stratford Campus, London E15 4LZ (Tel: 020 8223 4493, Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk)

Information sheet

My name is Laura Salvo and I am a Trainee Clinical Psychologist from the University of East London. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study.

Developing an understanding of people's experiences of using tracing services to search for missing family: A qualitative investigation.

This study, which is supervised by Dr. Martyn Baker, aims to find out what it is like to use tracing services, such as the British Red Cross' International Tracing and Message Service, in searching for missing relatives.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You will then meet with me for approximately one hour to share your experiences, at a place to suit you. The information you give will be useful to others as it will help us understand what it is like using tracing services at the British Red Cross.

All interviews will be audio-taped to help me remember what we talked about. The tape recording will be typed to make a written account of our conversation. This information, along with the information from interviews with other participants, will then be analysed and written up in a report. This report will form part of the assessed work towards my Doctoral Degree in Clinical Psychology. Any details which may identify you will remain confidential. A different name to your own will be used in the report.

The tape recording and the written account of your interview will be stored in a locked box to protect your anonymity and confidentiality. The tape recording of the interview will be destroyed at the end of the study and the written account of the interview will be stored securely for five years before being destroyed.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. During the interview, you may choose to take a break or stop the interview and withdraw consent without having

to give a reason, at any time. I will provide you with the contact details for national sources of support for you to keep.

You will receive a summary of the findings for comment. If you would like, I will also send you a summary of the report. The results will be shared with the British Red Cross.

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

Researcher's contact details: Laura Salvo
E-mail address: LauraSalvo@redcross.org.uk
Telephone: 020 7877 7341

APPENDIX IV
Participant Consent and Agreement Form

Developing an understanding of people’s experiences of using tracing services to search for missing family: A qualitative investigation.

Please tick (✓) the following boxes and sign where appropriate:

I have received, read and understood the information sheet for the above study.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my interview will be audio-taped for the purposes of this study only.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that any personal information about me will not be passed onto anyone else and that the audio-tape will be anonymised by using a different name to my own.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that the audio-tapes will then be typed to produce a written account of my interview.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that the written accounts of my interview and the audio-recordings will be stored in a locked box until the end of the analysis and the distribution of the results. The audio-tapes will then be destroyed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I give permission for small passages from my interview (where I am not identified) to be used in the final report and any additional write-ups of the research (e.g. articles).	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that I can stop taking part in the study at any time without giving a reason.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree and consent to take part in this study.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Participant’s Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant’s Signature

.....

Researcher’s Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Researcher’s Signature

.....

Date:

Entirely optional:

I would like to receive a copy of a summary of the research when completed

Participant Demographic information

Interview details

Date:

Location:

Language (Interpreter?):

Participant pseudonym:

Background Information

Age:

Gender: Male Female

Ethnicity:

White	White British <input type="checkbox"/>	White Irish <input type="checkbox"/>	White other <input type="checkbox"/>
Mixed	White and Black Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/>	White and Black African <input type="checkbox"/>	White & Asian <input type="checkbox"/>
Asian/Asian British	Indian <input type="checkbox"/>	Pakistani <input type="checkbox"/>	Any other mixed background <input type="checkbox"/>
Black/Black British	Bangladeshi <input type="checkbox"/>	Any other Asian background <input type="checkbox"/>	Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/>
Other groups	African <input type="checkbox"/>	Any other background <input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese <input type="checkbox"/>
	Any other ethnic group <input type="checkbox"/>	Not stated <input type="checkbox"/>	

Country of Origin:

.....

Residency status:

.....

Occupation:

.....

APPENDIX V

Transcription conventions

...	Short pause
.	Stopping tone of voice
,	Continuing tone of voice
?	Rising tone of voice, question
[]	Square brackets mark the start and end of overlapping speech
“ ”	Examples of speech by participant
[laughter]	Laughter during the interview
<u>Underlining</u>	Signals vocal emphasis
()	Empty parentheses indicate the transcriber's inability to comprehend what was said
(text)	Additional comments from the transcriber e.g. context
[[word]]	Word inserted by transcriber

Adapted from Silverman (2001), Banister et al. (1994) and Potter and Hepburn (2005)

APPENDIX VI

Initial interview schedule

Start audio recorder

1. Who were you hoping to find when you contacted the British Red Cross?
2. Had you tried other ways to find this person(s)?
3. Tell me about your experience of using the British Red Cross to search for a family member?
 - How was the initial contact?
 - How did you find the process?
 - How long did the process take?
4. Have there been any changes for you since receiving the outcome of the trace?

What (if any) consequences have the experience of receiving news about the fate of the person you were looking for presented for you?

- Has there been an impact on you emotionally, on how you feel?
 - Has there been an impact on your relationships with other people, on your social life?
 - Has there been a financial impact?
5. (If family member(s) found alive) Have you attempted to contact that person since receiving the news that they are alive?
6. Do you have any observations or reflections now, looking back, of using the British Red Cross?
 - What, if anything, might have made the process easier for you?
7. I have come to the end of my questions, but I'm wondering if there is anything else that you feel it's important to talk about?
 - Are there any questions that you wish I'd asked you that I didn't?
 - I am meeting with other people to explore their experiences of using a tracing service like the British Red Cross. Are there any questions that you think are important to ask the next participants I speak to?

I will be typing up all the interviews I do and explore what people have said to try and find out whether there are similarities and differences between people's experiences. As explained in the cover letter you received, the findings will be made available to the British Red Cross to help further develop its services.

Thank you for taking part, I really appreciate your help. Before we finish, have you got any questions you'd like to ask me?

Turn off audio recorder.

Revised Interview schedule

Start audio recorder

1. Who were you looking for when you contacted the British Red Cross' tracing service?
2. Had you tried other ways before to find this person (s)?
 - What had you tried?
 - How did you hear about the BRC's tracing service?
 - Why did you contact the BRC's tracing service?
 - What were your expectations when you first contacted the BRC's tracing service?
3. Tell me about your experience of using the British Red Cross' tracing service to search for a family member?
 - How did the tracing process begin?
 - How did you find the first meeting?
 - How did you find the overall process?
 - How long did the process take?
 - How did you experience the time between meeting with the Red Cross and receiving news?
 - How did it end?
 - How did you feel after you received the outcome of the search?
 - Has the experience of using the BRC's tracing service had an effect on you? What has been the effect?
4. Looking back now, what do you think about using the British Red Cross's tracing service?
 - What could have been done differently?
 - What, if anything, might have made the process easier for you?
5. What has happened since receiving the outcome of the trace?
 - Have there been any changes for you since?
6. (If family member(s) found alive) Have you attempted to contact that person since receiving the news that they have been found?
7. (For those not born in the UK) How did you come to be in this country?
8. I have come to the end of my questions, but I'm wondering if there is anything else that you feel it's important to talk about?
 - Are there any questions that you wish I'd asked you that I didn't?
 - I am meeting with other people to explore their experiences of using a tracing service like the British Red Cross. Are there any questions that you think are important to ask the next participants I speak to?

I will be typing up all the interviews I do and explore what people have said to try and find out whether there are similarities and differences between people's experiences. As explained in the cover letter you received, the findings will be made available to the British Red Cross to help further develop its services.

Thank you for taking part, I really appreciate your help. Before we finish, have you got any questions you'd like to ask me?

Turn off audio recorder.

APPENDIX VII

Some additional quotes illustrating categories, subcategories and focused codes

'Background'

'Trauma and loss'

David: So and you saw this guns you cross on the street and someone is dying there, women they're being raped, children. (L635-L637)

Degaule: go to Medical Foundation when where they take care for people who have been tortured and traumatised something like that. I went for many many appointments there, and they made the conclusions about traumatised people they confirm the post traumatic stress disorder from the psychiatrist as well. (L155-L161)

Bernadette: I had a brother who was eighteen and he was shot uh. He's older than me, and I had a brother named xxxx, little baby brother who was born after me, he died... (L461-L464)

Adam: So on the twenty...twenty first of January the government bombarded our village, and it killed, our seventeen people from...my tribe, from the xxx tribe, that include one of my, my brother and one of my cousins (L454-L458)

'Coming to Britain'

'Reasons for leaving home country'

Haja: we hearing that the rebels are going to come into the city, they gonna reach here, so yeah I said you know what () was going to xxxxx about doing some stuff, all those things I've lost you know, so I said you know what before I stay here let me leave this country first [...]" (L315-L320)

Jerry: we just make a petition [...] in protestation yeah. During the protestation the police come to disperse people and there was a storm...something like that so they start now track everyone who was involved in the protest that's how my problem started in my country and I leave the country. (L76-L83)

Degaule: we are victims of that kind of unfair war in xxxxx (participant's country of origin) (L625-L626)

'Leaving home country'

Jerry: more than four year in this country I was very very down. Sometime I can just see is like I'm lost yeah, I was just getting lost you know I was very good in my country I was shop owner, get shop big shop not I inherit the shop from my dad, and one day everything just go down. It was, I was getting lost (L337-L342)

'Arriving in Britain'

Adam: I come I...smuggled by a ship to a port and then I came to England by lorry, back of lorry (L397-L398)

Haja: so I just fly to London, seek asylum here...yeah. (L321-L322)

Jerry: I seek asylum, they send there I reach in this country in two thousand and three, it was third of January two thousand and three (L84-L86)

Degaule: And I apply for asylum, I seek for asylum like every everybody (L650-L651)

Adam: two police officers stop in front of us, and they caught us and took us to immigration that was on the fifth of June two thousand and four. They said erm "this is illegal immigrant we find them walking on the highway". Er they start ask us questions and "where you are coming from, and why we are here", they took our fingerprint and they took all our details and they took us, they send us to hostel (L401-408)

Paul: he show me "you see the place is there, you just go there, just go inside" you know it was the Home Office, so...I just went there, just go inside with my bag and then I start look at people "I don't know what I have to do?" (L899-L903)

Adam: so then they organise, then they arrange for an appointment to go for an interview in the Home Office, and after a month I went for an interview (L408-L410)

Joy: But that friend told him that he'd heard that your family went, your wife went to the UK but we also we haven't seen him [[her]], we haven't heard from them so, it was like very hard, hard situation for both us, me and him, 'cause even me I didn't want them to know where I was, and him didn't want to know where he was because you never know you know who you're talking to. (L363-L370)

Paul: And I stay there over an hour just, I couldn't you know I couldn't sleep and it was like a miracle for me, "I'm here", you know, so... (L938-L940)

'Separating from family'

'Circumstances of the separation'

Degaule: We used to live together in a big family, and it was by circumstances I had to leave with that situation. (L247-L249)

David: you become refugee in your own country because you run here and let's say you are a family, war is started, someone is running this way, another is running this way. (L620-L623)

Joy: when I escaped I left the children, I didn't take anything, [...] so the neighbours had to take the children to her (participant's mother-in-law)." (L433-L436)

Paul: we separate during demonstration [...]. We went out for, you know to do demonstration against the government (L36-L39)

Jerry: when you got a protestation they arrest me that day and you it's very difficult in xxxxxx if you got arrested and...in your family there [[is]] no one who is maybe a big person in the army to facilitate [[facilitate]] the visit so it was difficult for her yeah. (L113-L118)

'Timing of separation'

Paul: we separate during demonstration in xxxxx in two thousand five, I think the fifth of June. (L35-L37)

'Consequences of separation'

Jerry: when I was with my community I would just say "oh it's now maybe two year I didn't see my son, I didn't see my wife" all the time I was like crying (L132-L135)

'Not being in contact'

'Being in contact'

Degaule: I try to phone them (family) because at the beginning we used to talk by phone (L10-L11)

'Losing contact'

Bernadette: Well, long time after I wrote to xxxx where my sister was and her children and the letters kept coming back. I wrote to my niece and her letters kept coming back. (L20-L23)

David: war is started, someone is running this way, another is running this way. So, there is a gap, you can't communicate, you don't know what to do and you don't know what is happening...and you just find your way. (L622-L626)

Paul: Yeah 'cause I stayed in that place for I think at least six months without get any contact with my family (L153-L155)

'Perception of loss of contact'

Pamela: 'cause I had been in contact with her until you know then suddenly for about three years never heard nothing and before then she had visited me the year before" (L103-L106)

Degaule: at the beginning we used to talk by phone, but it arrived one time...I lost all contact (L11-L12)

Pamela: it seemed very strange that I didn't hear anything so I guess something untoward had happened to her (L106-L108)

'Significance of losing contact'

Pamela: I've had a very traumatic, funny life so that is really isn't impacting on me that greatly, other things have far more impacted this doesn't relate to me. (L184-L196)

Degaule: The only way was talking by phone and as it was cut off, it was like I was cut off from the world, it was like living in Iceland and there is no contact, no boat nothing. (L382-L385)

Degaule: I'm like gone, like absent (L709)

'Uncertainty about relative'

'Uncertainty about relative's fate'

Pamela: I didn't know whether she was dead or alive obviously (L24-L25)

Joy: the mother in law as well his son he's, because he [[she]] was crying every day when I would talk to her, she was in tears, she only had two boys, and the other one, he was had gone missing and the other one, you know, when you have like a few children so it was saying "I just wish I knew where my son was, I don't know if he's still alive or dead". So it was in tears every time I would speak to her (L418-L425)

Haja: "well I got my daughter and my husband I've lost them", I said "I think they've died (L273-L275)

Paul: I thought like maybe she died because they was killing some people you know (L96-L101)

Jerry: when you when you lost when you'd lost someone when you can't see someone and in your head you know that the person is not die because you just wake up one morning, get out, don't come back home, that person, you just think about that person, what he's thinking, are you pass away? Or what happen to you? And you same you are thinking about that person (L359-L366)

Bernadette: I thought "that's it I've lost them all you know" (L71-L72)

Haja: I went to the police station, all those areas just to, to look if I can found her find her so I can't so I just think I've lost her totally so that discouraged me and I left the country. (L21-L25)

'Uncertainty about relative's whereabouts'

Paul: so the woman was just close there and then he [[she]] heard I speak Lingala and then you know she start speak to me, and...she asking me "where is his mum?", I say "no I don't know, I don't that's a long story" and (L7-L11)

Bernadette: there's a load of people in this country that still needs to know where their families are (L173-175)

'Impact of uncertainty about relative'

Paul: my big concern was because she was pregnant, I think like for three months or something like that, and I was you know I was concerned about her you know (L132-L135)

Jerry: it was very difficult to leave a woman with your son, without contact, you don't know where if, they're eating or not, if they're sleeping or not, once you know it was many things was came in my mind yeah. (L106-L111)

Adam: I was gloomy and I don't know exactly, you know when you are totally...you don't know that happened to them and, it was very difficult situation (L149-L152)

Jerry: you can't do nothing, you are not going up you are not going down, you are just...bit lost. (L388-L389)

'Searching for missing relative'

'Making own enquiries'

I: Okay and for how long did you send letters to your wife for?

David: Honest to tell you it was quite a while, I can assume at least seven months seven months time (L37-L40)

Paul: I ask him (uncle) about my wife, he say "we have no idea (L366-L367)

Pamela: I'd got in touch with people in xxxxx (European country) (L6)

Oscar: So I went to Somerset House 'cause I was in uni then, I went through all the records and I couldn't find my birth certificate properly but I wasn't registered properly when I should have been in nineteen forty four...and I went through the marriage records (L680-L687)

I: [...] so during those four years did you try anything?

Jerry: Yeah I was trying with some friends, some our country man who was going back home, and come here, I was saying "can you please because...tell the area I was living if they can try" (L40-L45)

Pamela: then I thought maybe British embassy, oh I don't remember who I phoned, I had a big phone bill anyway." (L116-L118)

Bernadette: I did write to xxxxx (town in European country) and xxxxx sent me quite a few documents about my family but they were all like birth certificates and things like that (L56-L59)

'Failing to find missing relative'

'Unsuccessful own attempts'

Pamela: and I couldn't seem to get anywhere with it" (L22-L23)

Oscar: I did contact the xxxxx consulate but they told me I needed his proper name, his date of birth and his place of birth. (L27-L30)

Oscar: I can only get so much information out my mother" (L58-L59)

David: some of the people I used to talk to used to live in neighbouring country which called xxxx is close to xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx of xxxxxx, and then they said they couldn't find my wife (L52-L55)

Haja: There is no way to be found so, and the village that we go we are in free town is because of the that situation I went to the village, the village is empty, nobody is there (L227-L230)

Jerry: I was trying with some friends, some our country man who was going back home, and come here, I was saying "can you please because...tell the area I was living if they can try"...was not successful yeah. (L42-L46)

Jerry: It was only by friend, calling some friend back home family, that's only the way I was using. It was not, I didn't got any response (L51-L53)

Adam: they (United Nations) send me an e-mail back they said they don't forward this information (L17-L18)

Bernadette: it was the xxxxx embassy that told me to write to xxxxx, to that birth certificate place which I did, and they sent me quite a few things but they weren't what I wanted to know about, if I got any family still alive. (L78-L82)

Bernadette: I couldn't find where they were. (L26)

David: I thought maybe because of, I believe because major problem because there was war going on and everybody people they split everywhere and so there was like no post office working, there's no post or all this type of problems so quite a while at least seven months I was keeping sending sending and no reply. (L41-L47)

Haja: later on they said "oh people they are running from xxxx xxxxx to xxxxxx" but my daughter was around eight years [[old]] you know because I went there I said all the people they catch there they brought my daughter was not among them so I just think because you know when the war is coming they just shoot bomb coming down you don't know yeah you're dragging on the floor trying to escape you know so (L231-L239)

'Living in Britain prior to finding family' ***"Struggling"***

David: to live overseas on your own and no family, is really such terrible experience of life (L144-L146)

Degaule: I never experience to live lonely it's not African culture. We used to live together in a big family (L246-L248)

Degaule: Sometimes was in tears in my eyes, the most if I'm lonely, far from friends (L706-L707)

Joy: in this country you have no friends, and I, my friends were in xxxxxx, and I live far away from xxxxxx so I had nobody to help me (L229-L232)

Joy: I was struggling because I had nobody to help me, all my friends were in in xxxxxx this side so and I'm living in South xxxxxx, so it was very hard for me. (L246-L249)

Haja: Well my experience was very hard because when I came here I seek asylum at the airport, I enter the country so I was here I'm not allowed to work I was really stressed (L29-L33)

Joy: you know when you're an asylum seeker you have no friends, you have no family, you have no nothing, anything you want you are talking about was "when will I see my family? Will I ever see my family?" and now what are these people gonna say, so like you know your head would be like thinking of your family then the stress from the Home Office and other, (L274-L280)

Joy: we didn't have money at that time, we were not allowed to work, we were given thirty five pounds a week, I had to buy bus pass, food, clothing, so it was hard, [...]" (L451-L454)

Paul: So I speak to Red Cross, you know give them everything, all the detail, and then two months' time, they you know Home Office move me in [[to]] xxxxxx (L1019-L1022)

Paul: I went in court for my case because they was refused my case (L1123-L1124)

Adam: the Home Office they rejected my case and I appealed against that decision, and after in November December the court accepted my case but the Home Office appealed against again and that took about four, about five years, it took to the court to this to get a decision but then I got it the decision and near two thousand and nine. (L411-L417)

Haja: there the time when they ask you to leave the country said "the country settled now you have to go" so I'm thinking "who am I going to go back? I've lost my husband" so and so, so all those things you are thinking (L456-L460)

Adam: But before this they, before my appointment to go and see them, they... moved me from London to xxxxx (L39-L41)

'Life going on'

David: By the way, I graduate, I graduated in two thousand and seven. I had my degree in chemistry and then there was no job I didn't mind so I started going as support worker and then now I afford to pay my rent (L485-L491)

Joy: then I was granted (leave to remain), I started college (L318)

'Having external support'

Degaule: I used to find many people having the same case, say "how I'm not the same in this country, in this world", first thing they said the same case losing contact families, people coming for, from Ivory Coast, from Sierra Leone, from everywhere going Afghanistan, Iraqi. Different places in the world, but the same case (L420-L425)

Degaule: But where I used to meet people having the facing the same case, I could say myself "okay it means this happens it can happen to everybody, I'm not the only one". That was a little like something a little one can make relax a little bit, "it's okay we are many in the case." (L441-L446)

Oscar: I made contact with a number of different people that had been looking for their relatives as well. (L424-L426)

Haja: I was having support and help from my GP (L32-L33)

'Finding out about the tracing service'

'Finding out about the tracing service'

Paul: And then...she say "okay I know Red Cross Red Cross in xxxxxxxx, they can help you because you know they've got a tracing service you know you can give all your details for your for your wife and so they will they will check for you know for you. You know I can't guarantee you know you can find her but as far as you know I know there are those who are used to doing the job for". This is where I hear about Red Cross. (L23-L31)

Jerry: my friend just, was just telling me like a joke it was just he say "ah can you, did you try...British Red Cross?" but honestly before I didn't know that Red Cross can help me to find my family (L135-L139)

Joy: when I went to a friend's house, and I met a lady from the British Red Cross so my friend told her about myself and my story so she said she would bring me to people who'd help me so that's when I go to the British Red Cross. (L8-L12)

Adam: when I sought asylum, I went for some service called refugee service called xxx xxxx service in London and I told them that I would like to trace my family and they said they said "okay we're going to ring the British Red Cross" (L34-L39)

'Knowledge of the Red Cross and its services'

Bernadette: these people that you know are desperate to find, if only they knew the Red Cross was there. (L549-L551)

Haja: I even register myself to the Red Cross that I've lost my family and this and that so I like every week you go [...] I explain to them that I've lost my daughter, they said that so they advise me please well you know they got list like when they found people they put names there my daughter name is not to be found there (L255-L262)

Bernadette: Mind you, usually if it's war time, I think they've got a good idea because the Red Cross was everywhere during the war, I mean...they were just everywhere (L553-L556)

'Beliefs about the Red Cross'

David: I hoped to find my wife therefore I went to contact British Red Cross for them to help me. (L3-L5)

Pamela: that was a route, direct route to possibly finding out what had happened to her. (L39-L41)

Paul: So the next day I went there, and then see them, try to explain you know explain to them the situation. Because the woman say... "you know those people they can help you, you know they can help you" (L989-L993)

'Using the tracing service'

'Procedure'

'Initial contact with the RC'

Oscar: so I made a phone call to the xxxxx office and I spoke to someone there" (L69-L71)

David: I book an appointment for first place and then when I went to see this woman (L114-L116)

Haja: I went to the old office the Red Cross office, I was interviewed (L66-L67)

Oscar: and I gave her a load of information (L72-L73)

Adam: she said "we can trace your family if you give us some information" so I give all the information (L51-L53)

David: they ask me so many questions I in connection to immigration papers if you have got a right or all this, and then I explained to them (L69-L72)

Jerry: when I come I saw the lady and I speak with her, she...write down all the detail everything (L186-L188)

'Further contact with the BRC'

Paul: they didn't find anything but you know every time they call me 'cause they explain to me, they say "Paul we are in this stage (L1056-L1058)

Joy: they kept in touch, 'cause I've got all the letters from them, I've kept them (L481-L482)

Adam: I like sometimes like every two three weeks I ring them, ask them "is there, is there, is there", if they've got any contact and, and they said no, if there's any contact they're going to call me (L130-L132)

'What the BRC does'

Adam: they...moved me from London to xxxxx, so then the Red Cross in London contacted the Red Cross in xxxxxxx, to go and see them, then I went to see them. (L41-L44)

David: they just said that is fine because they have got Red Cross there they will communicate (L96-L98)

Paul: they say "can you sign this thing to allow us to contact the Home Office or different agency who work with us, our partners so you know if they can help us?" I say "that's fine" (L1027-L1030)

Degaule: And she saw one day, somebody knocking in the door wearing Red xxxxxxxxx Red Cross uniform asking about bla bla bla you know this man I want to meet this lady named named bla bla bla. (L491-L495)

'Challenges to tracing'

Degaule: But the thing was, they needed a map for my country, but we don't have a general map of for the xxxxx, a general one, we don't have a detailed one like in xxxx you can find every street in single detail that was the limiting factor for me to provide a detailed map for xxxxx my town where I left my family. (L51-L57)

Adam: they told me "no there is no, the transport, there is no like good roads between the camp and the Red Cross office and it is difficult to get access to these areas (L171-L173)

'Experience of using the tracing service'

'Experience of the initial interview'

Oscar: It helped me put things in perspective as well in terms of trying to understand what had gone on and the sequence of events (L276-L278)

I: And how did you find that first meeting?

Adam: Yeah I found it...I found it okay (L85-L86)

Adam: I've been told you know this information is, it is it is confidential and it will be kept by the British Red Cross, but you know as an asylum seeker you have got, you don't understand how the system works, you don't, some people they don't know what the Red Cross exactly do and, and...and sometimes you're concerned "oh I will tell this and" you're concerned about the Home Office, you're concerned about you know your situation back in xxxx, you don't know where this information, how it's gonna serve them, I all this kind of thing (L102-L112)

Patricia: I'd never done it before so I didn't know what the process normally is (L18-L19)

'Putting trust in the tracing service'

David: And then, from there she said "just leave now with me and then I will contact you as soon as I hear something from the other Red Cross overseas". Then I leave everything (L131-L134)

David: I put my trust on them (L154)

Degaule: I can trust them to trace where I left them, and that then they can contact the neighbours around as in xxxxx we know each other at least (L57-L60)

'Lack awareness and uncertainty'

'Lack of awareness'

Oscar: whether they've got his consent for that I don't know. Did the xxxx Red Cross have his consent to give that information? His address and his contact telephone number I don't know. (L708-L711)

Oscar: I don't know whether the Red Cross in xxxxx work in exactly the same manner as the Red Cross in the UK or not, I don't know. (L813-L816)

Haja: well maybe is different, the communication between here and the way they work down there is different (L592-L594)

Adam: I didn't realise some areas they are not able to access (L164-L165)

'Uncertainty about the tracing service'

Oscar: I think with the Red Cross it's something when you don't know how quickly things are going to materialise, how quickly someone's going to be found, the people are going to be traced, how receptive they are (L695-L699)

Paul: I haven't got idea that they can find her here in UK you know (L1034-L1035)

'Receiving news'

'Different ways of receiving news'

Oscar: I got the letter back from the, copy letter from the Red Cross in xxxx (European country) identifying the details about my father, what had happened to him in terms of the fact he was dead and I had relatives over there, at least one who'd given them his contact details, their address" (L76-L81)

Jerry: After maybe...I wanna say maybe six months, I got a phone call, and they say "British Red Cross got a good news for you". (L28-L31)

'Receiving different types of news'

Joy: when they went, they bring they didn't they brought nothing, no news, so but they said "we'll keep on tracing, we'll keep on checking a look and we'll be in touch" (L66-L69)

Degaule: he said "okay I have good news for you, I have a reply letter from your your wife (L166-L167)

'Responses to receiving news'

Pamela: I'm happy I found her (L149)

Bernadette: I'm so pleased that they found my family (L410)

Degaule: I say I'm satisfied. I have received the response that I was expecting to receive. That's it. I'm satisfied, very satisfied." (L832-L835)

Oscar: The only important thing for me is I wish I'd seen my father alive which I can't do. (L959-L960)

Haja: I was down the time they said they found her because I was in denial (L93-L94)

Haja: if I knew he [[she]] was alive I should have come to the Red Cross so "please I'm gonna put my daughter's name if they found her". So I didn't, my head it didn't come to that side so all I was guilty of it, when they found her (L241-L245)

Jerry: when they said that I can not get nothing in my head, the only thing is to go there (L228-L229)

Degaule: xxxx phoned me, he said "okay I have good news for you, I have a reply letter from your wife and then I can bring it to you...on Wednesday as we have open day in xxxxx Project in xxxx". But for me that day was very very far for me I thought "no just send by phone by post because I want to see to make sure that it's the really my handwriting, my wife's handwriting". And he did the best, he posted and I receive the first reply. (L165-L173)

'Communicating with found family'

'BRC facilitating contact with found relatives'

Joy: when I went there, when I left a note I had to ring xxxx (area coordinator) that "I've left a note for him but if you can arran, contact him and tell him that if we could meet here so maybe" that's how we started, we met, we organised, we met here. (L258-L262)

Jerry: Yeah so then give me all the...the map how I gonna contact her, that's how I get in touch with my wife. (L36-L38)

"Starting communicating"

Haja: I'd started communicating with her (L81-L82)

Degaule: And since that time, we started talking each other, even my last daughter (L216-L218)

Oscar: when I got the letter and all the details, one of my ex-neighbours was xxxx (nationality) in xxxx (city) and I went to him and he picked the phone up for me 'cause I'd tried I couldn't get through, and he actually spoke to my cousin in xxxxx (country) (L158-L162)

Joy: he phoned me [laughter] I couldn't believe it [laughter], I was just over the moon (L183-L185)

Degaule: I receive the first reply. [...] And from that time I make sure that they're alive somewhere. (L173-L178)

'Restoring communication'

Pamela: we're in touch. I phone her at the retirement thing. (L151-L152)

David: I did send her mobile phone and we talk talk, we keep talking on phone (L459-L461)

Adam: So this friend he bought three cards for me, so I just start using this card from phone box to ring them, so we've been in contact at all the time, I ring sometimes you know talk to the kids very quickly (L281-L284)

Adam: It was about a month, every month, I will talk to, talk to her (wife) about for ten minutes and then cut off. (L299-L300)

Pamela: we just go on like we did before. (L167-L168)

David: communication is the key so is very important to keep communicating (L481-L482)

'Difficulties with communication'

Degaule: It was very very very hard to re-keep calling each other because the area was not covered by any network, phone network (L188-L190)

Adam: they send me a phone number, for the camp where she is, they said "you can ring this phone here" but the phone is satellite phone, you cannot able to access it from any phone (L245-L248)

Oscar: you're not only dealing with the different country a different family environment but also a different regime that they'd been subject to and obviously could be very suspicious of my motives in making contact with them. (L305-L310)

'Immediate impact of communicating with found relatives'

Adam: I said "I'll try to send you money to the nearest city called xxx, by Western Union so I start to, you know, I used to get () seven pounds from March so all the time I try to save some of that money, after three four weeks I would send them about forty fifty pounds to that nearest city (L288-L293)

Adam: she (participant's wife) was telling me they're okay they're safe and we lost some of our cousins, and one of my uncle's who she was telling me about that (L269-L271)

'Implications and consequences of finding family'

'Reuniting with family'

'Applying for family reunion'

Degaule: I say okay now I can apply for family reunion because I can't still living alone here. Whatever we're talking now by phone but it's not the same as living together, it's not the same thing because I never experience to live lonely it's not African culture. We used to live together in a big family (L242-L248)

Adam: after five years I receive my status after five years, refugee status, because the Red Cross told me if I've got my refugee status they can help me to bring the family (L323-L325)

'Factors facilitating reunion'

David: the next step they really ask me, they give me very good advice and guidance, and said "now you need this if you want her to come in the country, there is another procedure you have to follow for your wife to come to this country." Then, through them, I really received good knowledge (L374-L379)

Haja: they (RC) bought the tickets, they pick her up from the, with a helicopter to the airport (L158-L160)

Degaule: I had some help from somebody who could pay for two people. (L346-L347)

'Challenges to the family reunion process'

David: they look at my bank statement and there wasn't enough money. So I have to work hard to take delays (L244-L246)

Adam: So they went there, they stayed there for about two weeks, they went and they applied for their visa but there was problem with the document, their document there is some mistake on the documents, so the embassy contacted the United Nations HCR and they told them they had to change the document 'cause there is some mistake so this drag for about one and half years to complete everything (L344-L350)

Degaule: recently they started again the (travel assistance) program because the UN is funding that program through Red Cross like an executive organisation. (L340-L342)

'Emotional responses to seeing relative when reuniting'

I: And when did your children come over then? Joy: In two thousand six.

I: And what was that like? Joy: [laughter] It was like I just something, part of my body was brought back to me [laughter] yeah but I was happy (L223-L228)

Paul: to meet you know like with my wife, [...] but I was surprised (L1095-L1097)

Adam: after hanging around they came out. I was very grateful to see my wife and my kids. (L362-L364)

'Impact of reuniting'

Haja: Well when she arrived yeah everything changed (L177)

Joy: now we're back together again after all those years. (L267-L269)

Jerry: when I see my wife, [...] now I'm a good person, I'm laughing, [...] I'm positive in my head so I know that when I go back at home my wife is there, my children is there they are there, I'm happy person, a happy person. (L292-L302)

“Moving forward”

‘Living life’

David: it’s still really we are managing our life. We don’t we’re so proud ‘cause we can afford to live, we can pay our rent, we can pay our food, we can pay our, we can pay, we can buy whatever we want is not just millions but least we live our life in a way, we don’t beg another person (L508-L514)

Haja: is okay I’m fine with it, I’ve got my kids them, I’ve got a job I’m doing, I even I’ve got a mortgage I’m managing to pay so I’m fine [laughter] yeah. (L547-L550)

Paul: I’m just studying you know I, I did the same subjects in my country I did business accounting but in a different way because you know the systems a little bit different. (L1364-L1367)

David: Living in a country freely and having a British passport, honest really, I don’t know what to say it’s really my life is done (L563-L565)

Haja: I got my citizenship (L420-L421)

‘Wishes and plans for the future’

Haja: I want her to learn something, to do something for herself because what he [[she]] has gone through (L196-L197)

Jerry: I’d like to go to college because the school I do in my country, I do mechanic at school (L443-L444)

Bernadette: I’m gonna get it all put together so my son can have it, and then he can give it to his son and remember you know, yeah. (L399-L402)

Oscar: Me going to xxxx (European country) to see my father’s grave would be a strong possibility, I wanna do it within the next couple of years...before I get to old, while I’m fit and able to take on board the journey (L395-L399)

‘Perception of the Red Cross’

‘Positive views of the RC’

Paul: it was such a you know a great job the Red Cross was doing for me and...I know Red Cross they are very very good people, they help people around the world, and they’ve got like strong service that it work very hard you know (L1087-L1092)

David: Honest British Red Cross is very good so not just because I say this for someone to hear or it’s like glorifying this organisation but to me was very very good. It’s a very good organisation really. (L169-L173)

Adam: I think it’s great service to have you know...you’re helping somebody to...to get in touch with his, with his family and to reassure somebody it’s very good service. (L190-L193)

'Showing appreciation'

David: the manager who helped me, to do all this, I ring them back to said if I can talk to her, just to say thank you for all the effort and all this, all the effort by the way (L409-L413)

Jerry: the thing if I've got something to say I gonna thanks all the people who...give their time...who working with British Red Cross or all the Red Cross in the world can see all these people give all their time to make...another people who is in the trouble to feel well to regain confidence, have just to thanks all those people who put who put their life to save a lot of people in those circumstance, yeah. (L554-L561)

Haja: what the Red Cross has done for me I don't mind to work for them just so I'm able to help somebody else the way they help me that's yeah. You're always grateful anyway (L211-L214)

Bernadette: there's a piece about, in my, you know from xxxx paper, I wrote about the Red Cross in that and that was printed as well in xxxx so anybody in the section of xxx and xxxx area and read it, would have read it, about me and I hope that that will help them to find if they want to find somebody. (L317-L322)

Haja: I just think one day I will [[be]] able to pay back, I got somebody else I will help the way they help me (L521-L522)

'Language'

Paul: I was learning little bit English but not you know not good, I can say "hello". I was like "hello, I'm Paul" and you know I tried speaking in French erm "I'm Paul". (L904-L907)

Oscar: one of my ex-neighbours was xxxx (nationality) in xxxx and I went to him and he picked up the phone for me 'cause I couldn't get through, and he actually spoke to my cousin in xxxxx (country) but obviously I couldn't understand what they were talking about (L159-L165)

Oscar: I did actually speak to him, 'cause I did, I made the phone call and I got it right once but he didn't speak English and I didn't speak any xxxx (other language) as such to hold a conversation so the phone went dead. (L794-L798)

Oscar: And then I got an e-mail, which was in, obviously in xxxx (other language) I got it translated on the internet using google translate (L467-L468)

'Hope'

Pamela: I thought this is my last hope. (L21)

Paul: from where I come from and in the UK now, now I'm in the UK, so I didn't have any hope [[that]] one day I can meet her (L1097-L1100)

Haja: When I wrote when I receive the letter from my daughter, then when I spoke to her if I believe and they send some of the pictures to me, I get her pictures there yeah, that give me the hope (L95-L98)

Adam: you are always like hopeful (L130)

'Religious beliefs and practices'

Degaule: as a Christian I was still praying for that because in some case, something supernatural only can do something when you are you're blocked (L459-L462)

Haja: when they found her, was thank God (L245)

'Expectations'

Adam: I felt my expectations like you know, I felt oh they're going to like ring directly to the nearest branch and that branch, they're going to go direct and through like go direct to refugee camps or, or I felt they are able to access in (L160-L164)

Jerry: I was expecting to come and see my wife [[in]] this office, that is the first thing. (L229-L231)

'BRC managing expectations'

Jerry: she tell me that she they're gonna try their best and see what they gonna do, that's what she told me. (L201-L203)

"Waiting"

Jerry: Before I contact the British Red Cross I didn't have any contact with my wife it was going about it was...I think...four year, four year yeah I didn't got any contact with my wife, my children (L5-L8)

Joy: they say "we'll keep on trying" but I was just waiting (L197-L198)

Oscar: And I, what I do is I wait until I've had their card, then I send them one. (L259-L260)

Haja: I was always waiting for message (L132)

I: And how long did it take for her to come over after you'd heard that she'd been found by the British Red Cross?

David: It take another, another...it take another two years, it take another two years, it really take another two years." (L385-L390)

Jerry: with my case I'm still waiting but I don't get my...my mind's not focused in there. As long as my family is happy for me everything is okay. Yeah so it's not something, because some people here when they don't have their status it's like they're going they're going mad, it's not it's nothing for me, it don't mean nothing, it's not life, yeah. (L414-L420)

APPENDIX VIII

Extract of a transcript with open coding and focused coding

Example of a memo

Extracts from reflexive diary

Extract of a transcript with open coding and focused coding

	Open coding	Focused coding
032 contact mmm. As a volunteer with the British Red Red	Volunteering for the BRC	Finding out about the tracing service
033 Cross since erm two thousand seven until now I'm doing	Finding some leaflets	
034 my job as a volunteer to the Red Cross, I find some	Interest in leaflets	
035 leaflets on the table, talking about the displaced family,	Similarity of circumstances	Language
036 which one have experienced like erm disaster from his	Picking a leaflet	
037 home country. I came across that that leaflet and I was	Choosing a language	
038 interested because I was in the in the same case [I:	Language for comprehension	Initial contact with the RC
039 mmm]. I pick just the the French one because there are	Leaflet having something of interest	
040 many many languages, I pick the French one to	Writing to people	
041 understand what they're talking about into the leaflet and	BRC opening a file	What the RC does
042 there was about people, displaced people, who lost	BRC contacting other RC offices	
043 contact with their family, and I said "oh look, I can find	Problem; BRC needing a map	
044 something interesting in this leaflet" where I I read, and I I	No detailed maps existing for home country 'limiting factor'	Challenges to tracing
045 write to erm Fxxxx and erm Exxxx who are er leading the	Trusting RC to trace family	
046 the xxxxxxx project in xxxx. "So okay we can open a	RC to contact neighbours	
047 file for you and to try to contact the the Bri British Red	Giving previous addresses	Putting trust in the tracing service
048 Cross in the xxxx, in London first and then we can go	Knowing family has moved for safety	
049 through your er local Red Cross, xxxx (local) Red Cross	Giving all the preliminary information	
050 and then they can try to take contact where they can find		Initial contact with the RC
051 them". But the thing was, they needed a map for my		
052 country, but we don't have we have a general map of of		
053 for the xxxxx, a general one, we don't have a detailed one		
054 like in xxxx you can find every street in the single in the		
055 erm in single detail that was the the the limiting factor for		
056 me to to provide er a detailed map for for for xxxxx my my		
057 town where I left my family. So okay but I can trust them		
058 to trace where I left them, and er that then they can contact		
059 the neighbours around as in xxxxx we know each other at		
060 least you can know your neighbour and around I think in		
061 one street you know ten or twenties of a families. I gave		
062 them the previous address because I know that the they		
063 had to move from the first address to the second one,		
064 from the second to the third one for their own safety and		
065 when I gave all that pre preli preliminary information and		

Example of a memo

Memo on “waiting” (dated: 17/03/2012)

“Waiting” seems to run through participants’ narratives. It seems predominant following their initial contact with the tracing service before hearing about the outcome of the trace, with differences in participants’ experiences of “waiting”. However some participants also talk about “waiting” at other time points. It seems that various participants were in a sense waiting prior to contacting the tracing service. They were waiting to see whether they could find their relatives through their own means or for their relatives to contact them somehow. The length of time they continued to wait seemed to depend on when they found out about the British Red Cross’ tracing service. Whilst in contact with the tracing service, some participants also talked about “waiting” for their legal situation to be settled. Some participants were also “waiting” to hear from relatives once the communication had started. Participants then had to wait again during the process of family reunion. Their accounts highlight a lengthy period of “waiting”. Some factors appear to have facilitated their wait, including hope, and religious beliefs and practices discussed by some. “Waiting” may also have impacted on participants’ expectations. Their ability to endure the wait may be a reflection of their resilience.

Extracts from reflexive diary

Reflexive diary entry: August 2011

I have come away from my first interview feeling I have not done a ‘good enough’ job. I am now questioning my interview schedule in terms of whether it needs to be changed to encourage future participants to tell me more, but I suppose every interview will be different.

Having met with some of the trainees in my cohort yesterday evening and sharing stories of the research process and listening to their experiences of their initial interviews, I have probably come to this first interview with the expectation that it will last about an hour as this seemed to be others’ experiences. My disappointment may therefore be more a reflection of the comparison I am making between myself and other trainees, as well as my assumption that the length of an interview reflects its quality.

Reflexive diary entry: March 2012

I am currently in the middle of my analysis. I am feeling quite overwhelmed with the amount of data. I am also feeling quite confused about the difference between codes and categories. Re-reading over textbooks explaining about how to do grounded theory does not seem to help clarify this any further! Sometimes I wish I had done quantitative research as it might not have felt so confusing, but then qualitative research is a new and challenging experience.

APPENDIX IX
Summary for participants

20/04/2012

Dear [participant name],

RE: Research study – Developing an understanding of people’s experiences of using tracing services to search for missing family: A qualitative investigation.

Thank you for taking part in this study and talking to me about your experiences of using the British Red Cross’ tracing service. I am very grateful for your time and for sharing your thoughts with me. At the time of our meeting, you said you would like to receive a summary of my findings. I am writing to you to share these with you.

Within this type of research, participants’ comments on the findings are valued. Therefore any comments you may have on this summary are welcome and greatly appreciated as these will help to add validity and strength to my findings.

I interviewed 10 individuals between August 2011 and January 2012 who had used the British Red Cross’ tracing service from a variety of different countries of origin and ages.

‘Background’

Participants discussed the context that led them to be in contact with the tracing service.

- Many had experienced trauma and loss, separation from family members and leaving their home countries to come to Britain. For many participants, these experiences appeared to be related to each other.
- Participants described leaving many things behind by leaving their home countries and coming to Britain.
- Not being in contact with relatives seemed to create uncertainty about the fate and the location of family members – being uncertain whether they were alive or dead – which appeared to have a negative emotional impact on people (for e.g. worry or “concern”).
- Participants talked about hope in relation to uncertainty about their relatives.
- Prior to going to the Red Cross, most participants attempted to look for their family members using a range of different approaches (for e.g. asking friends, contacting different organisations) but these were all unsuccessful.

‘Living in Britain prior to finding missing family’

- Many participants talked about their experiences of living in Britain before being in contact with the tracing service as well as during.
- Those that came from overseas talked about the struggles they faced being in a foreign country without family or friends and dealing with the implications and restrictions of their legal status.

- A few participants spoke about finding other people in the same situation as themselves with regards to having missing family, and receiving support from friends and/or services.
- Some participants talked about some life events (for e.g. marriage, moving, having a child) taking place before contacting and whilst in contact with the tracing service.

‘Finding out about the tracing service’

- Most participants did not have prior knowledge of the Red Cross’ tracing service and found out about it in different ways – mostly through other people, but also by chance or the service contacting them.
- Being told about the service from others appeared to influence participants’ expectations and beliefs about what the service would be able to do.

‘Using the tracing service’

Many aspects of using the tracing service were discussed by participants.

- **Procedure:** Participants made contact with the tracing service in different ways. They expressed trying to give as much information as possible at the time of their interview, which appeared to be challenging for some. Participants also highlighted challenges in the tracing of their relatives connected to geography and transport access.

- **Experience of using the tracing service:** Participants expressed positive experiences but they also talked about unfamiliarity with the process, concern with regards to what the service would do with the information gathered and who might have access to it. The tracing service appeared to manage expectations by saying they will “do their best” whilst not making any guarantees with regards to the outcome.

- **Lack of awareness and uncertainty:** Participants expressed not being aware of the functioning and the work carried out by the Red Cross in Britain and in other countries, and uncertainty about the speed of tracing and its outcome.

- **Receiving news:** After waiting for some time, participants received news about the outcome of the trace. They received news by telephone and letter. Most received “good news” (where the family member was found alive), one received “no news” before also receiving “good news”, and another was informed their relative had died in addition to finding new relatives. Participants described a range of responses, particularly emotional responses (for e.g. happiness, relief, surprise, regret).

‘Communicating with found family’

- Nearly half of the participants discussed the role of the Red Cross in facilitating communication with their found relatives, primarily with regards to the initial contact, through messages and telephone. The Red Cross also provided maps and addresses.
- Participants spoke of starting to communicate with their found relatives. Some described their first attempt as unsuccessful because they did not speak the same language or the person was away at the time; however they later made contact with their found relatives.
- Many expressed happiness and relief after communication had commenced.

- Most participants kept in touch with relatives from then onwards but difficulties were described with regards to financial circumstances and family members who did not want contact, phone access and coverage, and the historical and political context in the country where family members were found.
- The immediate impact of communicating with found family appeared to be sending money to their relatives and finding out about other family members.

'Implications and consequences of finding missing family'

- Most participants spoke of reuniting with family, primarily in the UK but also visiting relatives overseas.
- Half of the participants had applied for family reunion, seen as a separate procedure to tracing, through different routes.
- Family reunion appeared to depend on individuals' legal status and was seen as a long and difficult process with some factors helping (for e.g. receiving help and advice) and others not helping (for e.g. money, issues obtaining passports and visas) the process.
- A range of emotions were expressed at the time of reunion although mostly happiness.
- Reuniting with family members seemed to impact on participants' themselves but also on their family.
- At the time of the interviews, it appeared participants were "moving forward" with their lives. Achieving some stability and no longer needing to worry about their relatives was expressed. Participants talked about integration to British life, as well as their wishes and plans for the future. Some participants wished to find out more information (by using the tracing service again for example).
- All participants expressed positive views of the British Red Cross and its tracing service.
- Participants talked about differences between the Red Cross and the Home Office with respect to family reunion; and a view that the Red Cross financially depends on other organisations.
- Participants showed their appreciation of the Red Cross and the tracing service by thanking them for their help as well as discussing giving something back to the Red Cross.

'Language'

Participants who came from another country talked about not speaking English very well when they arrived in Britain. Participants also discussed the difference language made to how they communicated with found relatives, as well as on how found family members' integrated to British life after they reunited in this country.

'Hope'

Participants talked about hope in terms of its presence and 'holding on' to it, as well as times when they felt there was no hope. Religious beliefs and practices which seemed connected to hope were also expressed by a few participants. Participants talked mostly about hope in relation to a) before contact with the

tracing service ('Background' and 'Finding out about the tracing service') b) during contact with the tracing service, and c) once communication with their found relatives had started.

'Expectations'

Participants' expectations were discussed throughout the tracing process, from the time they found out and contacted the Red Cross' tracing service to the time they received news about the outcome of the trace. Expectations were overall "high" despite the Red Cross trying to manage participants' expectations. Participants discussed other people's influences on their expectations.

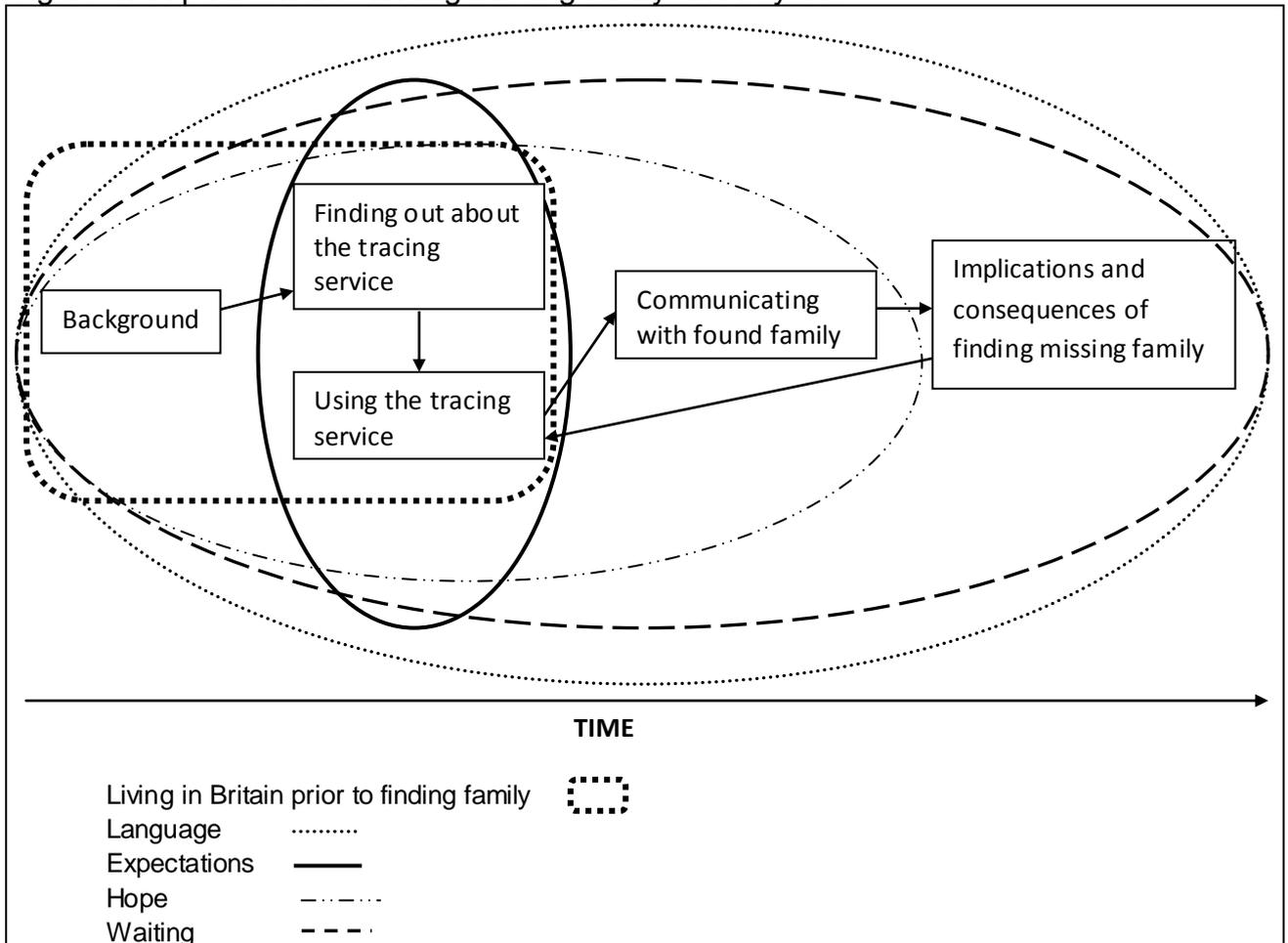
"Waiting"

Participants seemed to be waiting throughout the process although they mostly talked about waiting for news about the trace. Participants talked about their experiences of waiting for news in great detail. For some this was a more difficult time than for others, and it appeared to be connected to how long people had to wait for and hope.

Grounded Theory Model

The proposed model (see Figure 1 below) shows how the different categories were felt to link together to contribute to participants' experiences of using a tracing service. The model follows a linear sequence (starting with 'Background' and ending with 'Implications and consequences of finding missing family', although one participant used the tracing service again after this). This sequence reflects the progress of participants' experience of searching for their missing family member(s) in relation to time. Each category in the rectangular boxes represents a step in the process. However, participants talked about 'Language', 'Hope', 'Expectations', "Waiting" and 'Living in Britain prior to finding family' in relation to different time points in their journey, and these categories were discussed in relation to some (i.e. 'Expectations' and 'Hope') or all (i.e. 'Language' and "Waiting") of the steps in the process which is why I have chosen to represent them in circles. There was also some interaction between the categories in the large circles (for e.g. between "Waiting" and 'Hope' before receiving news about the outcome of the trace).

Figure 1: 'A path towards finding missing family and beyond'



Thank you again for participating in this study.

Best wishes,

Laura Salvo
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P.S. Please send any comments you wish to make on this summary to me by e-mail preferably at: LauraSalvo@redcross.org.uk, or by post to: Laura Salvo (c/o Emily Knox), ITMS, British Red Cross, 44 Moorfields, London EC2Y 9AL. I would be happy to send you a copy of the analysis chapter should you wish to read this. Please let me know if you do (by e-mail, text message on 075 3446 3739 or leave a message for me on 020 7877 7341).