The Lived Experience of Second-Generation, Indian,

Hindu Women in a Cross-Cultural Romantic Relationship:

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Professional

Doctorate in Counselling Psychology of London Metropolitan University.

by

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September 2019

Declaration

I hereby declare that the work submitted in this thesis is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated.

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Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to thank my supervisor Dr Angela Ioanna Loulopoulou for her unwavering support throughout the doctorate, and, particularly, during the research process. Your wisdom and encouragement have been invaluable. I am so grateful for all your guidance and everything I have learnt from you.

To my parents and sister who have been my biggest source of endless love and encouragement. I will be forever indebted to you all and I will never be able to express how thankful I am for everything you have done and continue to do for me. This journey would have not been possible without you. Not forgetting my little Benji, whose company has been very much appreciated during the long hours spent writing my thesis.

To Moo, I am so thankful for all the much-needed breaks. You have been a big part of this journey and I could not have asked for anyone better to have shared this with. You have helped me in every way possible without question, and for that I am eternally grateful.

Thank you also to everyone in my cohort, it has been a great privilege to share this journey with you. The encouragement, motivation and support all of you have provided has been much appreciated.

I would like to extend my appreciation to the women who gave up their time to participate in this study. This research would not have been possible without you; thank you for sharing a part of your world with me.

Glossary

Abbreviation

CCRR   Cross-Cultural Romantic Relationship

CP   Counselling Psychology

DA   Discourse Analysis

GT   Grounded Theory

IH   Indian, Hindu

IPA   Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

LMU   London Metropolitan University

UK   United Kingdom

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Abstract

Background/Aim: Preserving cultural lineage is paramount within the Indian culture, and extant literature has highlighted the challenges second-generation, Indian women endure, particularly in the context of romantic relationships, where cultural values differ between the second-generation and their parents. Consequently, engaging in a cross-cultural, romantic relationship (CCRR) may be perceived to threaten cultural continuity and such decisions can have an impact on the women's psychological wellbeing, their romantic relationship and their relationship with their families. However, although existing literature has focused on Indian culture, little is known specifically about the Indian, Hindu (IH) community where traditions around marriage have derived. Given the prevalence of these challenges and the limited research within the field of Counselling Psychology (CP), this study aims to explore the experiences of second-generation, IH women living in the United Kingdom (UK) who are in a heterosexual CCRR, to elicit an in-depth understanding of their experiences.

Design/ Method: Participants were seven, second-generation, IH women aged between 24 and 40 who have been in a CCRR for a minimum of three months. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and the data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Results: From the analysis, three superordinate themes emerged: '*Predetermined Identity'(*which explores how the women experience their identity, and is the basis of the challenges encountered from engaging in a CCRR), *'The two worlds don't meet'* (which explores the decisions the participants make and must consider due to their contrasting cultural value systems), and *'Enduring challenges' (*which explores how the women navigate the challenges they face and the subsequent impact on their relationship and personally).

Conclusion: The findings highlight the challenges second-generation, IH women who are in a CCRR may endure, particularly within their familial, societal and romantic relationships. These findings hope to support existing research in CP and within cultural and relationship research. The research discusses implications of the findings for clinical practice.

Reflexivity Part I

Reflecting on the elements driving my interest to explore and understand the experiences of second-generation, IH women in a CCRR; two experiences stand out in particular - the first being my own.

As a second-generation, Indian, Catholic woman in a long-term CCRR, our relationship was kept a secret from our families for some years due to both our cultural backgrounds. As our relationship started during our adolescent years, the novelty of being in a relationship and enjoying each other's company took precedence. However, transitioning into young adults, and with our relationship continuing to develop, a wealth of emotions loomed over us. Feelings around whether our relationship would be allowed to develop into marriage, the guilt from defying cultural traditions and questioning how long we would keep our relationship a secret were always at the back of our minds.

I felt this struggle was due to the two contrasting cultures I was socialised within which often left me feeling like I was living two separate lives. Whilst my parents had encouraged socialisation within British culture, the idea of having a boyfriend was not as welcomed. This was due to the fear of a relationship being a distraction from my education as well as fears that a CCRR would diminish cultural continuity should it progress. It was assumed that I would marry within my own cultural background as per tradition. While I see my Indian heritage as a big part of my identity, being born and raised in England, I also value my British identity and navigating between the two cultures never felt problematic until I engaged in a CCRR.

Talking about my interest in this topic and reflecting on my own experience in personal therapy, I became aware of the strain I had experienced emotionally, psychologically and physically. The distress caused from being torn between my loyalty towards my familial traditions and being in a relationship that goes against this was overwhelming. Whilst both our parents were eventually accepting of our relationship - his more quickly than mine, due to his gender and cultural permissibility, I often wondered how this strain would have been exacerbated if this had not been the case, and who could I have talked to?

I questioned this support further during my undergraduate years when I became aware of others in a similar position - my friends, who were second-generation, IH women in a CCRR. These women were either hiding their relationship or involved in an ongoing dispute with their families, with many feeling like their relationship would never progress due to the importance of endogamous marriages. Collectively remarks such as "If they ain't Indian and Hindu, forget it" and "no-one understands the struggles of being Indian and Hindu" were continuously reiterated. I witnessed first-hand the psychological distress these women experienced and began to understand how prominent this issue is.

My interest in women stems from the explicit gender inequality evident in mate selection within the Indian culture. Why, in my experience, was it more acceptable for Indian men to have autonomy in selecting a partner of their choice? Recently, the media has portrayed the limits of love for women in cultural communities where honouring culture is paramount through films such as 'Bend it like Beckham' (Chadha, 2002) and 'Murdered by my Father' (Welch, 2016). These films present a snapshot of the challenges South Asian women from Muslim and Sikh religious backgrounds may experience today.

Exploring my interest in this topic further through relevant literature I noticed the prevalence of these challenges among second-generation women who engaged in dating experiences or CCRRs, and the discord evoked within their community and/or family. However, what I found most intriguing was the limited research conducted in the UK, particularly as Indians are the largest Asian ethnic population (ONS, 2011). Furthermore, I was surprised by the limited attention paid to the IH culture given the importance of marriage.

My personal experience of this journey, observing and sharing similar experiences with my friends, and research into this topic, has driven my interest in this research. Although my experiences were by no means easy, my relationship was eventually accepted. I am aware this may not be the case for everyone, and it was certainly not the case for my peers. Therefore, through this exploration, I hope to gain an insight into the experiences of second-generation, IH women living in the UK, engaging in a

CCRR. I also hope to create greater awareness of the various struggles these women may face and provide them with an opportunity to let their voices be heard. I am hopeful the findings from this research will inform practitioners when presented with this population and to some extent, clients facing similar experiences.

Considering my personal relationship with this topic I was mindful that I may hold particular biases and assumptions. On reflection, I noticed I was initially searching for evidence supporting my own experiences when developing the critical literature review. However, acknowledging and reflecting on my biases and emotional involvement within this topic, I attempted to contain these in my personal journal and through discussions in supervision. These processes enabled me to develop a balanced view of the literature and ensured I remained open to varying possibilities, thus creating some distance from any preconceptions held.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 The Beginnings of Relationship Research

Romantic relationships have been a topic of interest among theorists for centuries due to the agreed understanding that relationships are a central feature of human experience and can provide a great source of psychological support (Worell & Goodheart, 2006). Over the years, different schools of thought in psychology have proposed an understanding of the nature and role of romantic relationships.

Around the beginning of the 20th century, theorists such as Sigmund Freud (1923) and Erikson (1963) developed theories of personality. These theories were based on a developmental perspective proposing that early childhood relationships with primary caregivers are central driving forces of personality development (Simpson, Collins & Salvatore & Sung, 2014). It is these early social interactions which shape personality and can explain behaviour in later relationships (Simpson et al., 2014). Developing these ideas further from an object relations perspective came a rise in infant-caregiver attachment, observational work from theorists such as Bowlby and Ainsworth (Bretherton, 1992). Bowlby (1969) theorized that one's internal working model is

represented in emotional relationships with important others such as romantic partners. These ideas have played a significant role in understanding dynamics in romantic relationships.

Traditionally, attachment theorists postulated that romantic partners in adulthood assume the primary attachment figure, with parents therefore assuming a secondary position (Bowlby, 1969). However, this research has primarily been conducted within western cultures, and researchers questioned this transition across cultures, particularly in cultures high in collectivism and family allocentrism (Hofstede, 1991). A recent study (Flicker, Sancier-Barbosa, Afroz, Saif, & Mohsin, 2019) examined the transfer of attachment among a population of Bangladeshi women who were in an arranged or couple-initiated marriage. In brief, findings from the research highlighted that the participants considered either their mother or father as their primary attachment figure, regardless of whether their relationship was couple-initiated or arranged. These findings highlight cross-cultural differences in attachment styles and emphasise that it is not always the case that partners take the role of primary attachment figure. However, although this research supports existing literature of attachment in non-western cultures and furthers knowledge around the plasticity of attachment hierarchies, this research only included women from Bangladesh. Therefore, findings are somewhat limited and may not be generalised to males and other collectivist cultures.

In response to the psychoanalytic approach in the 1960s, humanistic theorists such as Maslow (1968) and Rogers (1959) stressed the importance of reaching self-actualisation through personal growth and fulfilment in one's life (Strong, DeVault & Cohen, 2010). Maslow (1968) developed a hierarchy of needs which he described as levels humans are required to progress through to fulfil their potential and maintain psychological wellbeing. He suggested that once individuals fulfilled their basic needs, they would then progress towards fulfilling their psychological needs. The first psychological need being 'love and belonging' (Maslow, 1968). According to Maslow (1968), individuals should engage in romantic relationships and develop friendships, as feeling loved and a sense of belonging are essential in facilitating one's psychological wellbeing and self-esteem.

More recently from around the 1970s onwards, social and cognitive psychologists have investigated the contribution of cognitions and emotions in mate selection (Miller & Todd, 1998). Social scientists are particularly interested in individual's attraction to potential partners and the environmental and cultural factors that guide decisions to engage in romantic relationships (Miller & Todd, 1998).

These schools of thought have contributed to understanding romantic relationships, and early theories proposed by Freud (1923), Bowlby (1969) and Maslow (1968) are used to inform therapeutic intervention today. Similarly, research in this domain is growing given the central role relationships have in one's life however, research has predominantly obtained data from observations, self-report questionnaires and neuroimaging. It is therefore imperative to understand from a CP perspective the influence of romantic relationships in one's life, taking into consideration cultural contexts.

1.2 Defining Cross-Cultural Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships are a significant aspect of one's life, particularly during adolescence and early adulthood, when romantic relationships typically begin to be explored (Meier, Hull & Ortyl 2009). However, within literature, romantic relationships have been conceptualised in a myriad of ways due to differences in perspectives, culture and experiences. Furman, Brown & Feiring (1999) suggested romantic relationships cannot be constrained to one specific definition however, they do encompass unique features which differ from friendships.

Whilst some researchers have considered 'dating' inclusive within the definition of a romantic relationship, Furman, Low & Ho (2009) described dating as a romantic 'experience'. Consistent with this idea, Rose & Zand (2002) suggested 'dating' is associated with little commitment and provides an opportunity for individuals to get to know one another to explore the potential for a committed relationship.

For the purpose of this study, romantic relationships have been defined as mutually acknowledged, ongoing, voluntary interactions, commonly marked by expressions of affection and current or anticipated sexual behaviour (Collins, Welsh & Furman,

2009). It is also suggested fundamental to romantic relationships is commitment (Surra and Hughes, 1997).

To understand how CCRRs are experienced, the concept of culture must be understood. Culture comprises shared values and beliefs that manifest in particular ways of thinking and behaving (Ladhari, Souiden & Choi, 2015). Within the context of romantic relationships, cross-cultural relationships encompass individuals from diverse contexts, inclusive of, but not limited to, ethnicity, educational background, religion, socio-economic status and language (Silva, Campbell & Wright, 2012).

1.3 Historical and Cultural Context for Understanding Romantic Relationships

Cultural values are significant in understanding how one defines themselves and relates to others. It is therefore important to consider how romantic behaviours are understood and practiced (Dion & Dion, 1993) across cultures. Throughout history and culture, beliefs, values and traditions held vary broadly, and individualism and collectivism are two systems which separate the Eastern and Western cultures. The difference in these value systems have been emphasised particularly in the extant literature on cross-cultural relationships.

Western societies such as the United States, Britain, Australia and Canada, (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2001) are considered individualistic societies. In such countries, autonomy is encouraged, and the needs and desires of the individual are prioritised (Dion & Dion, 1993). Accordingly, mate selection is a process of greater self-expression and independence and individuals typically engage in dating experiences and romantic relationships to select a marital partner (Dion & Dion, 1993). The initiation of romantic relationships and marriage tend to be formed on the intrinsic desire of love and interpersonal attraction (Levine, Sato, Hashimoto & Verma, 1995).

During the late 18th century and early 19th century in America and Europe, courtship between a man and woman was a formal process involving parents (Lamanna, Riedmann & Stewart, 2014). Arrangements were made for men to visit marriageable women's homes under parental guidance (Lamanna et al., 2014). This allowed families to have some control over their daughter's marriage based on practical, and economic factors such as political, social and religious similarities (Coontz, 2005;

Ryle, 2016). The beginning of the 20th century however saw a shift in mate selection in that 'love' was considered an important factor preceding marriage. With women starting to work and attending further education, it created greater socialisation opportunities amongst the sexes (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). Dating experiences became more prominent and were associated with more privacy in that interaction between the couple occurred outside of the family home. Today, the process of dating and romantic relationships is more open whereby individuals engage in dating relationships without marriage always being the end goal in mind. Contact between couples has also become more regular through increasing access to technology and the internet. The internet has been commonly used for initial interactions through dating websites, chat rooms and apps (Boase & Wellman, 2006). Furthermore, developments in the economy mean individuals travel abroad for work and leisure which have created greater opportunities for long-distance and CCRRs.

Whilst some traditions may still exist in some westernised cultures, generally the dating process has become less formal and more focused on the desires of the individual.

In contrast, Asian, Latin-American and African cultures are considered collectivistic in nature (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2001) and incorporate a hierarchical structure whereby individuals align themselves with gender role expectations and obligations stemming from familial desires, religion and upholding community values (Madathil & Benshoff, 2008). These beliefs and values have been maintained for centuries and continue to be practiced today. In such cultures, dating experiences are typically considered a taboo (Manohar, 2008) and romantic relationships rarely exist due to parental fears of sexual activities and cross-cultural marriages (Dugsin, 2001). Although selecting one's marital partner may be desirable, familial and societal obligations tend to override the interests of the individual (Goodwin & Cramer, 2000). Families often contribute to selecting a marital partner to ensure cultural traditions are maintained (Dion & Dion, 1993). Although dating has become more acceptable in recent years in some collectivist countries, a partner is still typically selected based on characteristics such as religion, occupation and caste. This may be due to what is perceived culturally acceptable to avoid familial shaming but may also be a result of who is available for the individual to socialise with (Dion & Dion, 1993).

1.4 India and Hinduism

Eastern cultures encompass a number of countries, values, traditions and religious beliefs. However, for the purpose of this study the focus will be on the IH culture to contextualise the participants' experience and allow for a more in-depth understanding.

India comprises 28 states which incorporate a variety of languages, customs, traditions and religions (Medora, 2007). Although there are commonalities amongst Indian states with regards to collectivism, the caste system, marriage and gender roles, these have derived from, and are engrained within, the traditional values of Hinduism (Dasgupta, 1998). Across India, religion is an influential aspect of an individual's life, and is seen to guide daily behaviour (Medora, 2003). The most prevalent of these religions being Hinduism which is practiced by 80% of India's population (Medora, 2007).

As one of the most collectivistic cultures worldwide (Buss et al., 1990) attachment and responsibility to the family is fundamental. The family unit is patriarchal, tight and interdependent (Medora, 2003) typically with several generations living under one household. Children are encouraged to protect the family honour due to fears of community judgement (Medora, 2003). Consequently, they may face restrictions to minimise behaviours deemed to dishonour the family name such as, socialising with the opposite sex and excessive time spent outside of the familial home (Inman, 2006). It is within this familial context that one begins to develop a sense of identity with their heritage culture.

Preserving cultural lineage is essential within IH tradition and is executed through marriage which is considered a union between two families (Madathil & Benshoff, 2008). Marriage is perceived as a religious duty and obligation and is commonly arranged by family and community members (Medora, 2003). Arranged marriages make-up around 90% of marriages in India (Gautam, 2002) and remain common among Indian immigrants (50%), (Buunk, Park & Duncan, 2010). However more recently there appears to be more consultation between more educated parents and their children whereby there is an opportunity to decline potential suitors , although this appears more prominent for sons (Medora, 2003).

Various methods are employed to select a spouse such as newspaper adverts, caste directories, and Indian matrimonial websites which allow families to select relevant

information such as caste, religion, region and horoscopes. The caste system dominates societal structure and, although now to a lesser extent, castes remain essential in mate selection due to societal pressures (Dhar, 2013). Hindus believe that all individuals are born into the caste system which comprises four classes (Varnas) and the structural distance between the castes are determined in terms of language, region, education and occupation (Medora, 2003). Selecting an appropriate spouse is particularly essential due to Hindu beliefs that lives are predestined (Medora, 2003). Therefore, engagement in CCRRs would threaten cultural traditions.

1.5 Gender Role Socialisation

Gender is a social construct characterised by "the duties, rights and behaviours a culture considers appropriate for males and females" (Wade & Tavris, 1999, p.16). Adhering with the Hindu tradition of "Dharma", socialisation between sons and daughters differ and are clearly defined and reinforced by family members and the community (Saraswathi & Ganapathy, 2002).

Although religion is used to guide gender norms, a paradox appears in the religious and societal representation of women in India. Whilst Hinduism promotes femininity as women are considered to complete their male counterparts and Hindus worship goddesses who are represented as powerful leaders, paradoxically within society, women face significant discrimination compared to males (Dasgupta, 1998). Although there have been some developments to the status of women in Indian society in terms of education and employment, typically women do not possess the same rights and privileges as men, particularly in relation to decision making processes (Medora, 2007).

From a young age, daughters are indoctrinated with the virtues of marriage and are expected to prepare for their role as a wife, mother and daughter-in law. Therefore, they are raised with greater restrictions, to be obedient and chaste and are responsible for transferring traditional values and religious practices to their offspring (Saraswathi & Ganapathy, 2002). Sons, on the other hand, are typically raised to acquire an education, be autonomous, and contribute to the family income (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000) thus receiving a greater degree of freedom.

Contrastingly, in western cultures gender roles are more fluid and since the feminist movement equal opportunities in society and women's rights are of significant value (Beechey, 1979; Bhopal, 1999; Ahmad, Modood & Lissenburgh, 2003). Subsequently, after migration to a new country ethnic and religious identities become more salient for immigrants, (Kurien, 2005) who typically attempt to enforce cultural values on their children; particularly daughters. Research has acknowledged the gender bias in socialisation within the Indian community in western cultures whereby daughters still experience greater restrictions compared to sons, particularly during situations involving dating, romantic relationships and marriage (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000; Dasgupta, 1998).

An understanding of how second-generation, IH women experience their contrasting cultures and associated traditions such as gender role expectations may offer an insight into how they experience their CCRR.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Acculturation and Bicultural Identity

In psychological literature, identity is primarily explored in relation to belonging and the importance connections to a specific group are to the overall sense of self (Cameron, 2004). It seems paramount to consider identity in this literature review for various reasons. Firstly, the study aims to explore the experiences of second-generation, IH women, who are defined for the purposes of this study as women born in the UK, and whose parent/s were born in India (Ballard, 2003). The second-generation have received increased attention in the literature of identity due to the two culturally diverse social value systems in which they live and have internalised; these being within the family system and in the mainstream culture through socialisation with peers (Dasgupta, 1998). Additionally, the cultural pressures IH women face in relation to gender role socialisation may impact how one shapes their identity. Given the multiple aspects of one's identity that can influence behaviour, it is important to

comprehend how these women manage their identities in order to understand how CCRRs are experienced.

During the late 20th century, a number of Indian families migrated to England and since then, many have had children and grandchildren and make-up 1.3% of the UK population, 1.5% of whom are Hindu (ONS, 2011). The process of migration from one country to another may create several challenges, particularly as immigrants hold a variety of cultural norms, values and attitudes which differ from the mainstream culture (Inman, Howard, Beaumont & Walker, 2007). Indian parents often fear their children will become too westernised and aim to maintain ties with their heritage culture through language, food, clothing, religion (Naidoo, 2007), attendance to cultural events and regular visits to their homeland (Dasgupta, 1998).

Berry (2005, 2001) suggests the second-generation and their parents have to negotiate between how much of their heritage culture they wish to maintain and the degree to which they wish to acquire the values and practices of the dominant culture. This process is known as acculturation, which is characterised by an adaptive process of change that occurs on a cultural and psychological level due to the interaction between different cultures (Berry, 2005; Hunt, Schneider & Comer, 2004). Although a number of acculturation models have been developed, unidimensional models are considered too simplistic as they assume acculturation occurs in one exclusive direction, whereby heritage values are replaced with the mainstream cultural values (Phinney, 2003). However, this does not account for individuals such as the second-generation who are considered bicultural (Berry, 2005).

Alternatively, Berry's (2001) bidirectional model encompasses four processes of acculturation. These being: assimilation; whereby individuals adopt the values and beliefs of the mainstream culture entirely, separation; whereby individuals reject the mainstream culture and identify with the heritage culture, integration; which is the process of selectively combining aspects of both cultures, and lastly marginalisation which is the rejection of both cultures (Berry, 2001). The integration approach is commonly allied with increased psychological wellbeing and reduced acculturative stress (Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006; Berry, 2005) due the ability to be able to successfully navigate between two cultures. Literature has indicated that within the Indian community acculturation differs between the second-generation and their

parents, with the second-generation primarily preferring integration whilst their parents tend to favour separation, even after years spent in the host country (Segal, 1991; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). It has been suggested that since socialisation occurred in India for immigrant parents, Indian values are internalised, and they may feel some reluctance to adapt to values from the mainstream culture. However, for the second-generation, the pressure to fit into both cultures may be greater (Varghese, 2007).

Accordingly, research (Rahim, 2014) indicated that among immigrant parents, changes such as the use of English language, clothing, and sharing household duties have been accepted, whereas cultural values and beliefs around mate selection, dating and gender role socialisation have been preserved. This finding supports literature which suggests changes to behavioural aspects are welcomed more readily than changes to core values (Inman et al., 2007).

Robinson (2009) highlighted differences in acculturation based on ethnicity and religion in the UK in that second-generation, Pakistani, Muslim participants preferred separation strategies whereas Indian, Sikh and Hindu participants adopted the integration strategy. The author explained these differences in terms of the perceived animosity towards Muslim cultural practices and the socio-economic status of Pakistanis (Robinson, 2009). This study identified the willingness to integrate into the mainstream culture for second-generation Indians. However, one limitation of Robinson's study (2009) is that Sikhs and Hindus were grouped under one category. As the two religions hold differing values and beliefs this may have reduced any differences in the data between the religions to one outcome and minimised the experiences of these individuals.

A theoretical framework considered the grounding for the developments in cross-cultural research was developed by Markus and Kitayama (1991,1994). The researchers built on Hofstede's (1980) work in helping to further understand cultural selves and postulated that socialization across different cultural contexts influence one's behaviour. The way one negotiates interpersonally and intrapersonally between their differing cultural selves can in some way be understood through the self-construal theory. The self-construal theory outlined two distinct self-construal

orientations; independent and interdependent self-construal to explain these relationships.

The independent self-construal is defined by autonomy and pursuing one's desires. Individuals often from western cultures are seen to construe and construct the self as separate from their social context (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Alternatively, the interdependent self-construal, suggests that individuals primarily from eastern cultures tend to adopt a self-construal that is connected to their social context whereby their actions thoughts and feelings are often viewed in the context of their relationships with others. These individuals often prioritise maintaining harmony and seek acceptance from their in-group (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). Research (Lam, 2006; Tawa & Suyemoto, 2010) has indicated, to various extents bicultural individuals hold both independent and interdependent self-construal's and may develop these by engaging in cultural situations that reflect being both independent and interdependent. Individuals behave in a way that is deemed appropriate for certain situations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Yum, 2004). However, although this may work in some cultural contexts, the impact this may have particularly in situations where there may be tension between one's self-construals may have significant consequences on individuals.

A recent study which employed bicultural participants found that when individuals were primed with an independent self-construal, they were more likely to experience perceived intragroup marginalisation from family members for not preserving cultural traits. This was consequently associated with poor psychological adjustment and bicultural identity conflict (Ferenczi, Marshall & Bejanyan, 2015). This research highlights the tension that may arise in situations where in-group decisions and values may not be considered.

The concept of self-construal has become increasingly popular in psychological research. However, there has been some criticism of the constructs from researchers who felt the self-construal constructs in research studies that provided evidence for the constructs were based on one's national culture rather than constructs of the self-construals itself (Matsumoto, 1999). However, further developments in this area of research have demonstrated the developments of scales which have confirmed the authenticity of the constructs (Singelis, 1994; Cross, Hardin & Swing, 2009)). Further

studies have also temporarily primed either self-construal in response to relevant stimuli (Morling & Lamoreaux, 2008; Ferenczi, Marshall & Bejanyan, 2015).

Existing literature has reported the second-generation may experience a culture value clash due to simultaneous socialisation within two cultures that hold opposing values (LaFromboise, Coleman & Gerton, 1993; Kwak, 2003; Rahim, 2014). However, it is important to note this may not be the case for all aspects of an individual's life and many individuals are able to successfully develop a bicultural identity, whereby they are comfortable and proficient in both their heritage and mainstream culture (LaFramboise, et al., 1993). As cultural identity is driven by context, it is argued that the second-generation engage in a process of cultural frame switching; a theory suggesting individuals shift mindsets depending on what is considered socially appropriate at the time (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000). Consistent with this idea, research among the South Asian population has demonstrated that the second-generation behave accordingly to the values promoted within their home environment where ethnic and religious identities are more apparent and adapt their behaviour when in public where British identities are more salient, to avoid familial conflict (Giguere, Lalonde & Lou, 2010).

Although switching between identities may work in some situations, in contexts such as dating and exerting autonomy in mate selection, particularly when this process is considered a community affair, the fulfilment of one identity is often at the expense of the other (Giguere et al., 2010). This was highlighted in Benet-Martinez and Haritatos's (2005) research whereby a second-generation Indian woman stated that given both her cultures' differing views on dating and marriage "you have to choose one or the other". In these instances, negotiating between cultures which hold incongruent expectations can evoke a bicultural value conflict (Inman, Ladany, Constantine & Morano, 2001) resulting in psychological distress due to the fear of parental and community reactions (Giguere, et al., 2010).

This bicultural value conflict has predominantly been reported among second-generation women due to gender differences in socialisation manifested in the pressure to maintain gendered patriarchal behaviours, (Dion & Dion, 2001; Inman et al., 2001), and who are often discouraged from developing autonomous identities, independent from their family (Inman et al., 2001). Not only do these women experience greater

restrictions compared to males, but also to their British female counterparts (Shams and Williams, 1995). These restrictions South Asian women in the UK face due to gender specific roles have increased vulnerability to self-harm and suicide (Raleigh, 1996; Bhugra, 2003). They are also more likely to resist traditional values and employ various strategies to exert autonomy particularly in contexts such as dating activities and romantic relationships which can lead to intergenerational cultural conflict (Manohar, 2008; Dion & Dion, 2001; Dasgupta, 1998).

The social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) can be employed to help further understand perhaps *why* bicultural individuals may experience a cultural conflict. The theory posits that an individual's sense of self is manifested through knowledge and understanding in relation to their membership and affiliation to a specific group. According to this theoretical framework, one's identity is reflective of an internalization of a social group into one's self (Abrams & Hogg, 1999). An individual's sense of identity is therefore perceived to be constructed through their sense of belonging to a group, which as a result is influential in one's self-esteem and self-concept (Kawakami & Dion, 1993). Turner (1999) further suggested that the view of the self is context-dependent and therefore the nature of the individual's identity as part of a social group is dependent on aspects of the social context. Research has demonstrated that belonging to several cultural groups may negatively impact on one's psychological well-being and feelings of belonging particularly when these social identities are experienced as conflicting (Navarrete & Jenkins, 2011).

Identity development is fraught with complexity. Thus, second-generation women have learnt to employ strategies to manage two opposing cultures in which they live. However, in dating experiences and romantic relationships this may be challenging, as they attempt to manage their own desires whilst negotiating traditional cultural and religious obligations. Cultural expectations of women within the Indian community is influential in the development of their identity, which may determine how relationships are experienced. Literature has highlighted the identity conflict and tension that can occur among second-generation women particularly in the area of romantic relationships. However, there is currently no research in the UK exploring the lived experience of the second-generation in romantic relationships such as CCRRs given the conflicting values in this area.

2.2 Intergenerational Conflict

Extant literature on second-generation and their parents highlight a range of intergenerational conflicts that may occur across cultures, given differences in cultural values. These conflicts have primarily been reported in the form of pressure from parents on their children to exceed academically, attain a good career and due to differing expectations in contexts such as dating, mate selection and socialisation outside of the family home (Dugsin, 2001; Dasgupta, 1998).

One of the most salient intergenerational conflicts reported in literature between immigrant parents and their children underpinned by the process of acculturation is centred on dating activities and mate selection (Manohar, 2008). Research predominantly conducted in America and Canada has highlighted shared concerns and fears within the migrant population in relation to dating behaviours (Lalonde & Uskul, 2013; Chung, 2001; Dasgupta, 1998). These concerns stem from the perceptions held by parents of what dating activities entail based on westernised media representations (Durham, 2004) which contradict traditional cultural practices for mate selection, condones exogamy, pre-marital sex and undermines religious values (Luo, 2008; Dasgupta, 1998). However, it is important to note that not all immigrant parents share this view, and some aim to minimise the gap between the host and heritage culture by allowing their children to date (Stuart, Ward, Jose & Narayanan, 2010). This is predominantly the case if parents are less religious, highly educated, more assimilated to the host culture or if their heritage culture condones dating activities (Nesteruk & Gramescu, 2012).

Although intergenerational conflicts around dating and mate selection have been noted across cultures, there appears to be a wealth of research within the Indian community (Manohar, 2008; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000; Dasgupta, 1998). This may be due to the strong cultural and associated religious values towards mate selection within the Indian culture. Research has highlighted parental attempts to prohibit dating activities from occurring such as minimal conversations around dating and sex to avoid drawing attention to these concepts, particularly amongst daughters (Manohar, 2008). However, Aravamudan (2003) emphasised when conversations do occur, women reported their parents were more likely to directly relay the message of dating being unacceptable to them compared to men.

Although conversations around dating vary, IH parents are inclined to be open to these conversations when they felt their daughters were of an appropriate age for marriage; this being adulthood (around 22-24) (Saraswathi & Ganapathy, 2002). Families experience some pressure to ensure their daughters are married as it heightens the family status (Medora, 2003) and unmarried women around the age of 30 are perceived negatively (Saraswathi & Ganapathy, 2002). This highlights the pressure on Indian families given the importance of marriage to protect daughters from dating and romantic relationships.

Parental beliefs and behaviours to discourage dating and relationships have reportedly led to acts of secrecy and lying (Dugsin, 2001). Manohar (2008) reported second-generation, Hindu, Indian-American adolescents described managing a dual cultural identity by keeping their relationship a secret from their parents, which enabled them to maintain their relationship. Even though the participants were in a relationship with a partner from the same cultural background, they reported lying about dating due to fears of parental repercussions such as creating conflict, greater restrictions being imposed, generating worry around academic interference or criticism. Many of the participants also discussed referring to their partners as friends when in the company of their parents to avoid pressures to get married. Behaviours such as lying evoked feelings of discomfort (Manohar, 2008). Similarly, a South Asian woman in Ralston's (1999) study discussed the difficulty of being subjected to rules and restrictions around socialisation and discussed the anxiety experienced when having to date in secret.

Lying and secrecy appears to be common among the Indian community and is an example of how individuals negotiate their identity between their two cultures. The impact of concealing one's relationship was highlighted by Larson and Chastain (1990) who proposed a model of self-concealment. Research highlighted self-concealment is associated with psychological distress such as symptoms of anxiety and depression (Kahn & Hessling, 2001). Though these acts allow for some autonomy in line with westernised culture, the impact on one's psychological wellbeing is significant and also leaves fewer sources of support (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Larson & Chastain, 1990).

Although maintaining cultural values and traditions through sons and daughters is salient to immigrant parents, there appears to be increased pressure on women to

uphold the family reputation by remaining chaste until marriage and abiding by cultural norms (Kallivayalil, 2004). This is due to eventually being judged as potential marital partners and therefore parents aim to protect their daughters from premarital activities until they are married (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). Given the close nature of the Indian community, women have reported fears of developing a social life when surrounded by Indian peers in case their behaviours were reported back to their parents (Kallivayalil, 2004). As the behaviour of daughters is perceived to impact on the family's reputation, girls reported experiencing greater parental control and intergenerational conflicts than boys (Dugsin; 2001; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000; Dasgupta, 1998) and have reported experiencing distress related to the double standards that prevail (Srinivasan, 2000).

As reported, the double standards between second-generation men and women within immigrant families is apparent, with more pronounced pressures on women to conform and maintain cultural traditions. This may explain researchers' predominant focus on Indian women. However, it should be noted that studies including Indian males have also reported parental discouragement from dating and emphasised education being a priority (Kumar, 2014). One participant in Kumar's study (2014) disclosed engaging in dating behaviours regardless of his parent's views, however when his parents found out, described a dispute occurring. Though both men and women have reported parental restrictions in relation to dating, culturally the pressures and restrictions faced by women are still reportedly greater. Although this research may be deemed somewhat biased as it only considers the perceptions of the second-generation, a study from the perspective of Indian parents, supported their daughters accounts and highlighted the mother's acknowledgements of the restrictions on dating placed on their daughters over their sons (Inman et al., 2007).

The aforementioned literature has been fundamental in providing an understanding of the impact intergenerational conflicts can have on the second-generation and the strategies employed to manage areas such as dating and romantic relationships where cultural conflict may arise. The conceptualisation of dating varies across existing studies and has been based on the participants' interpretations of the concept. This makes comparisons across research ambiguous and difficult to generalise. However, it is clear this aspect of second-generation Indian women's lives is highly complex and can be an emotionally heightened experience. Qualitative research has gone so far as

to acknowledge these tensions in relation to dating experiences through exploring the various intergenerational conflicts that arise. However, no existing literature exclusively explores the lived experiences of women engaging in CCRRs.

2.3 Cross-Cultural Dating and Relationships

Mate selection has been a topic of interest for several years among social scientists particularly given the increase in cross-cultural relations, which challenge the traditional principle of endogamy (for more information see Hollingshead, 1950). These studies have primarily been conducted from a sociological perspective and have focused on the increase of CCRRs (Wang, 2012), the characteristics of those engaging in these relationships and the reasons behind these decisions (Lewis, Yancey & Bletzer, 1997; Yancey, 2002). However, little attention has been given to the lived experiences of individuals engaging in romantic relationships and the psychological impact this may have. Early studies in this area of research have primarily focused on black-white interracial couples given the historical tension between these two groups (Foeman & Nance, 1999; Kalmijn, 1993), however around the late 20ᵗʰ century since the second-wave of immigration there has been increased literature among the immigrant population.

There is greater acceptance of CCRRs in the UK, and an increase in these relationships over the past decade particularly among individuals aged 16-49 (ONS, 2011). Research, however, among the immigrant population has acknowledged cross-cultural dating and relationships to be an emotionally heightened and complex area, particularly for second-generation women. This is due to the reported conflict these relationships can cause among relatives, the community and friends as well as between the couple (Inman, Altman, Kaduvettoor-Davidson, Carr and Walker, 2011; Dasgupta, 1998). With the second-generation having greater opportunities to integrate into the western culture, primarily within the education system and place of employment, greater opportunities exist to date and engage in romantic and marital relationships outside of one's cultural heritage.

Across cultures, attitudes towards cross-cultural dating and relationships are influenced by various factors and differ across generations. Quantitative research has indicated that those who identified more with the mainstream culture expressed greater

willingness towards engaging in cross-cultural dating experiences (Uskul, Lalonde & Cheng, 2007; Mok, 1999) and more openness in attitudes was expressed by the younger compared to the older generation (Wang, 2012).

Nesteruk and Gramescu (2012) extended research in this area through qualitative analysis and explored mate preferences and dating experiences among second-generation men and women from diverse cultures. In line with previous research, the findings indicated that immigrant parents hold endogamous expectations for their children (Dugsin, 2001), and the majority of the second-generation shared this preference due to a strong affiliation with their ethnic identity. The authors also highlighted the influence of religion on attitudes towards a preferred partner and, similar to existing research (Inman et al., 2007), acknowledged restrictions on women's dating experiences. Although this study emphasised aspects of culture which influence preferences for a potential partner, a limitation of this study is the inclusion criteria, in that the researchers included participants who were child immigrants as well as those born in the mainstream culture whose parents are immigrants. This limits generalisability and comparisons to other studies of second-generation mate preference and dating experiences and may also explain some participants' preference for an exogamous relationship. Given the methodological nature of the study, specific conclusions are not able to be drawn from the data, and as acknowledged by the researcher, exclusive focus on one culture would be beneficial to understand culture specific experiences (Nesteruk & Gramescu, 2012).

Prominent in some individuals' cultural practice, values and beliefs is religion (Van Tubergen & Maas, 2007), which literature has portrayed can influence the decision to engage in cross-cultural dating or relationships. Studies have illustrated that greater religious affiliation and family connectedness leads to reduced openness in attitudes towards engaging in cross-cultural marriages or dating experiences (Cila & Lalonde, 2014; Brown, McNatt, & Cooper, 2003). In a recent study (Yahya & Boag, 2014) amongst a diverse cultural group of participants who identified as Christian, Muslim or Jewish, was the influence of their parents or their social groups who emphasised cultural preservation. Due to the perceived parental reactions, participants felt maintaining CCRRs would be challenging and reported feeling reluctant to engage in these relationships. Although some participants were open to CCRRs they were aware of creating potential disputes within the family, and therefore avoided them. However,

some participants reported being in cross-cultural relationships and described a willingness to face any tension to maintain their relationship.

The aforementioned studies provide an insight into the factors which contribute to engaging in CCRRs, although studies have primarily focused on the attitudes towards inter-faith marriages within Islamic, Christian and Jewish faiths in Canada, America and Australia. This may be due to the prominence of these religions in these countries, however, given the cultural diversity of the participants, the findings are not generalisable to all cultures. Furthermore, the focus on participants' 'attitudes' lack a sense of realism. These studies have primarily employed a quantitative method of analysis and as a result, the data is restricted to predefined variables and lacks in-depth exploration or knowledge in this area. The existing qualitative studies have aimed to capture social processes among a broad cultural population and consequently, employed a heterogeneous sample such as 'South Asian' participants. Although there are similarities among South Asian communities, there are also marked differences (Bhopal, 1997) and given the unique characteristics defining the IH culture the current study would enable a more comprehensive exploration of this population rather than reducing the data to make wider generalisations.

Inman et al., (2011) acknowledged the increase in Asian, Indian/white marriages in America and addressed the gap in literature by exploring the lived experiences of these couples. Corresponding with existing research, participants reported experiencing opposition from immediate family members towards their decision to marry cross-culturally, owing to fears about their families' social status and transmission of cultural values to their children. One participant described the initial reaction from her parents learning of her interest to marry cross-culturally as "world war three, four, five and six"; highlighting the complexity associated with the nature of these relationships within the Indian culture. Additionally, the participants also reported receiving negative reactions from within their communities, whereby greater disapproval of the couple was evident in conservative communities.

Inman et al's., (2011) study was essential in providing an understanding of the tensions that can arise towards Asian Indian/white marital couples in America. These tensions were reportedly more salient for the Asian women in the study due to familial pressures to maintain Indian values. Where Inman et al., (2011) focused on the Indian-

white couple's experiences of being in a cross-cultural marriage, the findings are difficult to generalise to Indian couples in other cross-cultural relationships. However, existing research has complemented Inman et al's., (2011) study.

Thiagarajan's (2007) qualitative study complements Iman et al's., research (2011) as she explored the lived experiences of Indian women in America in cross-cultural marriages. The results support Inman et al's., (2011) findings, and highlight the challenges Indian women experience when pursuing the decision to marry cross-culturally, the difficulty in managing dating and relationships due to the reactions of their family and community and the importance of social support. Although Thiagarajan's (2007) study focused on marriages across cultures, her study touched on women's experiences of dating Indian men. Many of her participants discussed feeling "restrained or disempowered" due to the pressure of having to uphold the role of Indian women. Conversely, these women reported having a more positive cross-cultural dating experience, as they felt a sense of excitement and freedom away from the expectations of Indian women. These findings support existing literature in illustrating the oppression and difficulties women appear to face due to the gender role expectations of them within their heritage culture.

Both studies acknowledged the influential role of religion in the participants' experiences in relation to external reactions and in the upbringing of their children. One participant in Thiagarajan's (2007) study suggested her parents were more lenient with her decision to marry cross-culturally due to being Christian and acknowledged this may not have been the case in the IH community particularly among women. This demonstrates the awareness of the challenge's women may face within the IH culture and highlights the need to explore and further understand these experiences among this population. Although both studies employed participants the majority of whom were affiliated as Hindu, making generalisations among all participants reduces one's experiences and limits the understanding from one culture.

Prevalent in both studies among Indian women was the negative reactions received from the community and both sides of their family. These experiences evoked feelings of distress, hurt and disappointment due to these reactions and the lack of support received (Thiagarajan, 2007). The support and approval received from spouses, family

and friends was extremely valued among participants who reported having someone to share their experiences with (Thiagarajan, 2007).

Both studies have contributed to an understanding of how Indian women experience engaging in a cross-cultural marriage in America and highlight the psychological distress evoked. However, the participants recruited for both studies were a mix of first and second-generation participants whose experiences will be different to those of second-generation participants in non-marital relationships in the UK.

A recent study (Mehan, 2017) in the UK investigated the lived experience of second-generation IH women in secret romantic relationships. In line with existing literature (Manohar, 2008) the findings highlighted that a way in which the women managed their contrasting cultures was to keep their romantic relationship from their parents. This was due to the fear of feeling pressured to marry their partner or romantic relationships being perceived as a defiance of the traditions of the Indian culture. The researcher illustrated the psychological distress induced given cultural differences in values between the participants and their parents (Mehan, 2017).

Due to the methodological nature of Mehan's (2017) study, the findings can be understood to be relevant to a particularly unique and restricted population. The participants within the study were all at university and aged between 20-22 years, which considers the experiences of these women within a specific context and timeframe in their life. For the participants, university was influential in their experience of initiating and maintaining their relationship and also in acquiring some autonomy (Mehan, 2017). Therefore, findings cannot be generalised to IH women who are not at university and those older than 23 years who may experience romantic relationships differently due to their age and social context. The researcher also recruited women only in secret relationships and therefore the experiences of IH women who may find engaging in a romantic relationship challenging but may not be in a secret romantic relationship are not understood.

The participants discussed selecting partners they felt would be accepted by their parents - those from the same cultural background. The researcher explained this decision as the participants attempt to maintain ties with their heritage culture to minimise intergenerational conflict (Mehan, 2017). Consequently, a gap in the

literature exists within this population as there appears to be little knowledge of the experiences of women who make decisions that steer away from their heritage culture, such as those engaging in CCRRs. These findings combined would allow for a greater understanding of the factors which contribute to second-generation IH women's decision to engage in particular relationships.

All the participants recruited were IH and, although the researcher stated this was due to a snowballing effect, the findings highlight the challenges encountered among this population when decisions are made which challenge cultural traditions (Mehan, 2017). Taking this into consideration, the current research project can therefore be considered an extension of Mehan's (2017) research, as it aims to explore an alternative phenomenon such as those engaging in a CCRR.

Overall, a wealth of quantitative literature has investigated the attitudes towards cross-cultural dating experiences, however these studies have not provided one clear conceptualisation of what dating entails, such as negotiating levels of commitment. Therefore, leaving this to the participants' interpretation poses problems for generalisability and comparisons between studies. Extant research has also highlighted the attitudes towards, and experiences of, cross-cultural marriages. The studies which have employed the term 'romantic relationships' have included participants who are cohabiting or married, which involve different experiences to those who are not married or cohabiting. It therefore seems vital to fill the gap in the literature, particularly in the UK, as most research has been conducted in America. Furthermore, existing qualitative studies have predominantly focused on married couples, whose experiences will be different to those engaging in romantic relationships. By limiting these qualitative studies to the experiences of individuals in cross-cultural marriages, romantic relationships are overlooked.

In the UK, the Indian population is reported to be the least likely to engage in CCRR (12%) among the South Asian community (ONS 2011), which may be reflective of the strong endogamous views held among this population. It also highlights the importance of exploring this population independently of other South Asian cultures. There is little research among the IH population exclusively and given cultural expectations to marry within one's culture it would seem vital to explore the lived

experiences of the IH women who do engage in CCRRs in the UK and the meaning of these experiences for the individuals.

2.4 Relevance to Counselling Psychology

The core premise of CP is grounded in a humanistic value base centred on respect and values the subjective lived experience of clients (Woolfe, Dryden & Strawbridge, 2003). As a prominent, yet relatively under-researched area, a qualitative study would allow for a richer understanding of the challenges IH women who seek to navigate a CCRR endure. This research would therefore make a valid and unique contribution to the field of CP by informing practitioners of how psychological distress may be experienced. Though this is a unique population, counselling psychologists are equipped to work with diversity and with a range of presenting issues away from protocol led treatments. Given the humanistic and pluralistic ethos of CP, practitioners may draw on methods available within counselling and psychotherapeutic literature as well as therapeutic possibilities that exist in the wider culture, within which the clients live (McLeod, 2011).

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Overview

This section will discuss the rationale for using a qualitative method of inquiry and the methodological approach adopted: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). It will outline the epistemological framework that underpins the research and its compatibility with the philosophical stance of CP. The recruitment process, ethical considerations, participants, procedure and process of data analysis will conclude this section.

3.2 Choosing a Qualitative Methodology

Given the critique of relevant existing literature and the exploratory nature of the research aim to understand the lived experience of second-generation IH women in a CCRR, quantitative methods of analysis were not considered suitable.

Quantitative methods of analysis focus on testing pre-determined hypotheses (McLeod, 1997) and gaining a measurable and macro-level understanding of reality (Willig, 2001). By contrast, qualitative approaches emphasise the "quality and texture of experience" as opposed to "the identification of cause-effect relationships" (Willig, 2001, p.9). As the aim of this research is to seek meaning and gain an understanding of a particular phenomenon, it was felt that personal experiences would not be captured and understood adequately with a quantitative approach. Therefore, a qualitative methodology was deemed most appropriate for investigating the research question.

3.3 Ontological and Epistemological Position

At the core of all research is a set of assumptions grounded in philosophy and is based on the nature of the world and the objects under investigation (Willig, 2008). Researchers adopt an ontological and epistemological stance which are grounded in these assumptions (Willig, 2008). Finlay (2008) recommended researchers embrace an ontological and epistemological stance which they identify with through reflection on one's own values, interests and beliefs in addition to academic and disciplinary demands.

Ontology is the philosophical study concerned with what there is to be known about the nature of reality and existence (Willig, 2008). This study adopts a relativist ontological approach, as it is concerned with the women's personal and subjective experiences of the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). From this perspective, it can be understood that reality can be seen to be a finite, subjective experience and therefore it is assumed that nothing exists outside of our thoughts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Reality is therefore not thought of as separate to one's subjective experience of it. In line with this, a relativist approach is not concerned with how 'true' descriptions of phenomena are but suggest that there are "multiple realities because reality is constructed subjectively in the mind of each person depending on context" (Khalil,

2014, p 42). Therefore, within the current research, a relativist approach is interested in the multiple realities and truths within the subjective experience of the participants and how they experience being in a CCRR as a second-generation, IH woman living in the UK.

Epistemology is philosophically connected to ontology and is the branch of philosophy concerned with how one knows what they know (Finlay, 2006). With this in mind and in line with this research's phenomenological grounding, the study adopted an interpretivist stance which is centred on the individual's understanding of their social world (Kaplan, 2015).

This approach dismisses the idea of there being one objective reality, but instead advocates that multiple interpreted realities exist (Kaplan, 2015). Within this frame of reference, researchers seek to understand the lived experiences from the view of those who live them and how they construct meaning through their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Therefore, knowledge is relative to particular circumstances and can be seen to be socially constructed through history, culture and subjectivity. Individuals assign their personal meaning to events and situations which is influential in their narrative (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Furthermore, interpretivism posits that the findings from research are always influenced by the perspective of the researcher. However, in being reflexive the researcher can make some attempt to identify and create some awareness of their own assumptions and values. In this way, this epistemological position bears some resemblance and is connected to aspects of phenomenology and hermeneutics; central components of IPA.

3.4 Rationale for Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Several qualitative methodologies exist which differ in how they investigate human experience. However, IPA, developed by Jonathon Smith in 1996 (Smith & Eatough, 2007), was deemed the most preferred phenomenological qualitative method of analysis for the current research. This is due to its principal focus on subjective experience and meaning making (Smith & Eatough, 2007) which I feel has been overlooked within this area of research. Furthermore, IPA is congruent with the humanistic values of CP which emphasises subjectivity, diverse experience and context (Willig, 2013). To date quantitative research has highlighted some tension

between the second-generation and their parents in relation to romantic relationships, however, research has not explored how these individuals feel, particularly when they are in a CCRR, e.g. what the experience is like for these women, and what is significant to their experience.

3.5 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The primary premise of IPA is to explore and gain a detailed understanding of how individuals make sense of their world and the meaning they attribute to their experience (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Participants are considered experts of their own experiences. IPA is primarily influenced by three theoretical underpinnings, these being: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

3.5.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a philosophical method of enquiry. It posits that human experience is diverse and explores how individuals experience a particular phenomenon, and the meanings they ascribe to their experience (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Satre were considered influential contributors of phenomenological philosophy and were interested in the way human beings make sense of the world and what we observe to be in our worlds (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). An emphasis is placed on human experience and on how one's personal and cultural history can determine how we understand and perceive things in our world (Loewenthal & Snell, 2003).

Husserl (1982) suggested that in order to nurture a phenomenological positioning, we need to 'bracket' any assumptions we may hold to allow for a focus on the perception of the world we experience (Finlay, 2014). Engaging in a process of bracketing will remove us from prejudices and enable us to experience things without presuppositions (Finlay, 2014).

3.5.2 Hermeneutics

The hermeneutic component of IPA entails an interpretative approach, with a focus on the individual's subjective experience and how they make sense of it (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). IPA recognises that direct access to individuals' lived experience is not possible and suggests we access our experiences of others and the world through interpretation (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Just like the individual, it is acknowledged that the various interpretive stances a researcher can adopt is dependent on their own personal views. Researchers are therefore influential in the research process as they attempt to make sense of their participants' narratives as the participants themselves attempt to make sense of their experience. This process is defined as double hermeneutics and is iterative in nature as the analysis moves back and forth through the data (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

3.5.3 Idiography

The last key element of IPA is idiographic in nature and is centred on exploring the specifics of a particular phenomenon at an individual level as opposed to making more universal claims (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Therefore, IPA utilises a small sample size to ensure attention is paid to the individual's experiences in depth. Taking these characteristics into consideration and in line with the current research aims of the study, IPA was therefore deemed an appropriate method of enquiry for this study. This method would allow a deeper understanding of these women's lived experience.

Morrow (2007) suggested the skills employed when using IPA are congruent with the skills counselling psychologists draw upon to work with clients. Both IPA and counselling psychologists are concerned with developing relationships, exploring and understanding the meaning-making of an individual's subjective experience, and acknowledging the importance of one's values and beliefs (Morrow, 2007).

3.6 Consideration of Alternative Qualitative Methods

This section provides a rationale for why IPA was deemed most appropriate to investigate the research question and will discuss two alternative methods of enquiry that were considered during the process of selecting a method of analysis.

Grounded theory (GT), is typically considered an alternative methodological approach to IPA as it focuses on exploring the experiences of individuals in the context of their world (Willig, 2013). Although there are various forms of GT, the central aim is to construct a conceptual model and build theories based on social processes to explain a particular phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As the research did not look to develop a model or theory, IPA was deemed a more appropriate method as it considers the idiographic lived experience of the individual. Given the limited research in this area with this aim, I felt it was important to give a voice to these women.

Discourse Analysis (DA), is concerned with how individuals make use of language in the construction of reality, develop relationships and understand their role in society (Starks, Brown & Trinidad, 2007). Although understanding how people interact with others and the use of language is important in IPA enquiry, particularly when analysing transcripts, discursive psychology does not adequately address notions about subjectivity and one's sense of self (Starks et al., 2007). Furthermore, DA primarily employs focus groups to gather data which would limit the focus and understanding of the meaning-making of the women's individual lived experience (Smith & Eatough, 2007).

As well as considering alternative qualitative methods of analysis, it was also important to consider alternative hermeneutic phenomenological methods to determine the most suitable approach to address the research question. Although there are many similarities between phenomenological methods of enquiry, the most significant being its aim to understand and explore in-depth the lived experiences of individuals, there are also key differences. Several phenomenological methods of analysis exist; however, I will discuss why Max Van Manen's (1997) hermeneutic approach and critical narrative analysis (Langdridge, 2007) were considered possible alternative approaches.

Like interpretative phenomenological analysis, Van Manen's (1997) approach is interpretative in nature and recognises the role the researcher has in co-constructing the meaning of the participants narrative (Langdridge, 2007). However, contrastingly Van Manen's approach does not place an emphasis on the individuals account, but instead looks for universal themes within the particular (Langdridge, 2007). It is important to acknowledge that IPA goes beyond traditional phenomenological

approaches through its distinct commitment to idiography (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). This enables an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the unique and diverse experience of the particular which was deemed significant when thinking about the aim of the research study. It should however be noted that IPA also considers to some degree the shared experience of participants and therefore can be seen to be concerned with both the universal and the particular in one's experiences. Furthermore, unlike IPA, Van Manen (1997) seems to adopt a somewhat flexible approach to the analytic process. Given the researchers limited experience with qualitative research, a more structured approach (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) which has been widely used in research within the field of psychology including counselling and psychotherapy (Malcolm & Golsworthy, 2020 ; Davies, 2019; Pascoe, 2020) was deemed most appropriate. Therefore, taking these points into consideration, IPA was therefore considered the most appropriate framework at this stage.

Critical Narrative Analysis (Langdridge, 2007) which was also considered has its philosophical roots in hermeneutic phenomenology, drawing on the works of Heidegger (1985) and Ricoeur (1970). The approach is idiographic in nature and adopts an inductive approach to research- much like IPA. Langdridge's (2007) approach differentiates from other narrative analytic approaches in that it incorporates a 'critical moment' whereby the researcher engages in imaginative hermeneutics of suspicion to question their way of viewing the topic and the narratives employed by the participants (Langdridge, 2007). Although narrative is a relevant aspect in the context of one's experiences, a narrative which incorporates a beginning, middle and an end seems to imply an 'event'. As the research is not concerned with a specific event or events but is more concerned with how the participants experience engaging in a CCRR and the emotions associated with this 'non-event', this method of analysis did not feel appropriate to use given the aim of the research study.

3.7 Method

3.7.1 Participants

In accordance with the principles of IPA, purposive sampling was utilised to ensure homogeneity of participants for whom the research question had personal and significant relevance (Smith & Eatough, 2007). The sample size was guided by Smith

and Eatough (2007) who recommended recruiting between four to eight participants to interview for a doctoral research study. Accordingly, seven participants were recruited. See Table.1 for participant demographics.

Table 1. Summary of the participants and their partners demographics at the time of the interview

Participant	Age	Background	Partners background	Length of relationship
Anisha	29 years	North Indian Hindu	European Catholic	6 months
Isha	36 years	North Indian Hindu	European	2 years 8 months
Meera	40 years	North Indian Hindu	South American Catholic	2 years
Priya	24 years	North Indian Hindu	South Indian Jain	6 years
Sonal	24 years	North Indian Hindu	South Indian Hindu	2 ½ years
Nalini	28 years	North Indian Hindu	European	8 months
Avni	33 years	North Indian Hindu	Caribbean	6 months

3.7.2

Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

The research question informed the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The decision to only include second-generation, IH women living in the UK was informed by a gap in the literature. These women are typically children of the post 1965 Indian immigrants who are adults or are entering adulthood (Sekhon & Szmigin, 2005). Accordingly, participants were to be aged between 18-40 years old. Participants were required to be in a cross-cultural, heterogeneous, romantic relationship for a minimum of three months at the time of interview; a timeframe commonly used within the literature of romantic relationships (Montesi, Fauber, Gordon & Heimberg, 2010; Campbell, Lackenbauer & Muise, 2006). Although Sonal and Priya's partners were of an Indian origin, Sonal and Priya's families originated from north India, whilst their partners' families originated from states within south India. There are distinguishable social, and cultural differences and values held between north and south India (Medora, 2007) which can evoke challenges in terms of inter-state romantic relationships. Women who

were in a homosexual CCRR were not considered for this research as they may experience engaging in a CCRR differently to those in heterosexual CCRRs. Furthermore, in line with IPA in keeping a homogenous sample, only women in heterosexual relationships were considered.

3.8 Procedure

3.8.1 Recruitment

Participants were recruited from Facebook pages catering for Asian women and through shared Facebook posts of the recruitment poster (Appendix A). Potential interested participants were initially contacted by email to confirm they met the inclusion criteria. Participants who met the inclusion criteria, were sent an email including the participant information sheet (Appendix B) and the consent form (Appendix C). All participants were made aware there would not be a financial incentive for their participation, however they would be reimbursed for their travel expenses. An interview date, time and location were agreed with these participants.

3.8.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Data was collected using face-to-face semi-structured interviews which lasted approximately between 50 to 90 minutes. All interviews took place over the period of eight months at the London Metropolitan University (LMU) library and a library in central London.

Semi-structured interviews are primarily recommended as the optimum method of data collection in IPA research (Willig, 2013). Open-ended questions utilised in semi-structured interviews enable the opportunity for in-depth responses and discussions between the participant and researcher (Willig, 2013). It also allows the participants to elaborate upon areas most meaningful for them.

3.8.3 Interview Schedule

The interview schedule (Appendix D) was developed to answer the research question and meet the proposed aims of the study. Questions were based on existing theoretical knowledge and relevant literature (Smith, 1996), and were discussed and developed in

supervision and peer reviewed with two counselling psychology trainees. This was to ensure questions were non-directive and would allow for a conversational dialogue to occur about the phenomenon under investigation. The interview schedule was used as a guide during each interview and occasional prompts were employed to encourage participants to elaborate on their experiences (Smith, 1996).

After each interview, I noted down any thoughts and emotions that arose in my reflexive journal. This allowed me to become aware of my own experience and reactions to the narrative of each participant and be mindful of my personal biases.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

3.9.1 Ethical Approval

Ethical approval (Appendix E) for this research was obtained by LMU Research Ethics Review Panel prior to participant recruitment.

3.9.2 Informed Consent and Confidentiality

In line with the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct (2018) and the Code of Human Research Ethics (2014) ethical implications were carefully considered prior to, during and after the interviews. Participants were informed that anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained and themselves and their partners would be assigned a pseudonym in the write-up. No deception was involved. Prior to the interview all participants were provided with the informed consent form which reiterated the limits of confidentiality and were informed of the right to withdraw at any stage during the interview. Participants were informed the data being collected was part of a doctoral thesis and should they no longer wish for their data to be used in the study, they were able to withdraw 4 weeks post interview. They were advised a copy of the completed thesis will be available in LMU library for students and staff to access. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and all participants requested to access a copy of the completed thesis, which they were told would be emailed to them once completed. All material containing identifying information such as consent forms and participant material were stored securely in a locked draw. These were kept in a separate locked draw from the printed transcripts used for the analysis process. The interviews were audio-recorded on a digital recorder and were stored

securely on an encrypted file on a password protected laptop following each interview. Only the researcher has access to these materials. In line with the BPS (2014) guidelines, all participant information, recordings and transcripts will be deleted and destroyed after five years.

3.9.3 Potential distress

Participants were informed verbally and on the consent form that participation was voluntary. Following this they were advised they were under no obligation to answer any of the questions during the interview and should they feel distressed they could terminate the interview at any point. As participants were discussing potentially emotive experiences, they were provided with the distress protocol (Appendix F) to safeguard their wellbeing. As a trainee counselling psychologist, my clinical experience has allowed me to work with clients in distress and I felt able to identify and respond appropriately to any perceived distress. Once the interview had finished, participants were offered some time to discuss any concerns that were evoked during the interview and were encouraged to contact support organisations or my supervisor whose details were provided on the debrief sheet should any concerns arise (Appendix G).

3.10 Validity of Research

Yardley (2000) suggested a guideline of four principles to assess the quality of qualitative research. These being; *sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence and impact and importance.*

3.10.1 Sensitivity to Context

Shinebourne (2011) postulated that sensitivity to context is essential throughout the research process. Consequently, I immersed myself with relevant existing literature to ensure sensitivity to the context of research. Whilst this may influence one's interpretation (Yardley, 2000) I was mindful of bracketing any assumptions and prior knowledge to ensure findings were grounded in the data. I was also aware of my own characteristics as a second-generation, Indian woman may have influenced the interview process (addressed in reflexivity part II).

3.10.2 Commitment and Rigour

Yardley (2000) emphasised the importance of systematic and thorough data collection, analysis and reporting. I achieved this by recruiting a sample size within the recommended range to attain a rich level of data (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). As suggested by Smith and Eatough (2007) the data was analysed using a systematic approach. Research supervision was utilised to make sense of the data by further analysing and discussing my interpretations and allowing for new interpretations to arise. The excerpts provided in chapter four demonstrate how the findings were grounded in the data.

3.10.3 Transparency and Coherence

Transparency and coherence were obtained from the initial stages of the research process from outlining my interest in this area (Reflexivity part I), providing a range of extracts from the transcripts and a detailed description of how the data was interpreted. I was also mindful of creating consistency between the research question, choice of methodology and my philosophical stance, to achieve coherence.

3.10.4 Impact and Importance

One way Yardley (2000) suggested impact and importance can be achieved is through the contribution the research makes to the relevant field. As evidenced in the literature review, there is currently limited research on the topic of enquiry and therefore it is hoped this research will fill a gap in the literature of CCRRs, facilitate a greater understanding of the experiences of this population and inform clinical intervention of counselling psychologists and therefore better meet client needs.

3.11 Process of Analysis

Each interview was transcribed individually verbatim and was analysed following Smith, Flowers and Larkin's (2009) guidelines and structure for IPA analysis. The interviews were analysed in line with the following steps.

Step 1: Reading and Re-reading

I immersed myself in the data by reading and re-reading each transcript in detail numerous times to familiarise myself with the data. This allowed me to work line by line, with each transcript and acquire a phenomenological understanding of the participants' experience though the transcript (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). It was helpful to listen to the audio recording simultaneously as it allowed for a deeper connection with the data (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). I noticed each reading produced new insights into each experience.

Step 2: Initial Noting

The second step entailed making detailed notes in the right-hand margin (Appendix H), remaining close to the original data. I used free association to make notes on what I felt was significant throughout each transcript. To ensure an exploratory attitude was maintained, data was extracted gradually and tentatively (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The comments consisted of descriptive comments such as the content of what the participants were expressing, linguistic comments such as repetition, humour, tone, pauses and metaphors and lastly conceptual comments, (Smith, Flowers & Larkin. 2009). These were colour coded in order to identify them. I found it useful to refer to the notes taken during the interview such as non-verbal language, facial expressions and gestures as this supplemented the comprehensive notes.

Step 3: Developing Emergent Themes

During this step, the initial notes were used to develop emergent themes, presented on the left-hand margin on each transcript (Appendix H). This step is considered a higher level of psychological interpretation developed from the preceding step and is aimed to demonstrate the "psychological essence of the piece and contain enough particular to be grounded and enough abstraction to be conceptual" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The emergent themes were reduced, and more concise phrases adapted from the initial notes which reflected the women's own words coupled with my interpretation of what I felt they were communicating (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Step 4: Connecting Across Emergent Themes

This step involved clustering similar emergent themes within each transcript together based on conceptual similarities. Firstly, a chronological list of emergent themes was compiled (Appendix I). I found it helpful to print and cut out the emergent themes for each interview as this allowed me to observe and explore patterns across the themes. I noticed patterns such as themes that were recurring, consequential to each other and others that related to each other. A few themes were discarded if I felt they had little significance to the research question and the aims of the study (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The researchers highlighted analytic strategies such as abstraction, contextualisation, polarisation and function which were employed to develop a list of preliminary superordinate and subordinate themes. Once I felt satisfied these themes adequately captured and represented the meaning of the participants' experiences, I generated a visual representation of each superordinate theme, its associated subordinate themes and corresponding participant quote with the relevant line numbers (Appendix J).

Step 5: The Next Case

After completing the first four stages for the first transcript, I repeated this process for the remaining six transcripts, as Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) highlighted it was important to treat each transcript as a separate entity. In accordance with the idiographic commitment to IPA each transcript was reviewed completely before analysing subsequent transcripts. Additionally, Smith & Eatough (2007) suggested the researcher is required to bracket emerging themes in previously analysed data to encapsulate the unique nature of subsequent transcripts. Although this proved challenging initially, my awareness of this enabled me to attempt to allow for new themes to emerge.

Step 6: Patterns Across Cases

To facilitate the final process of looking for connections of themes across all transcripts. All the printed themes that emerged from the transcripts were laid out to help identify any meaningful connections amongst themes (Appendix K). I continued to sift through the data until a collection of master themes emerged (Willig, 2013). The aim of this process was to reflect the experiences of all the women in "ways in

which participants represent unique idiosyncratic instances but also shared higher order qualities" (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p.101).

This analytic process was finalised by developing a table of superordinate and subordinate themes, along with corresponding quotes which I felt best represented the themes. This was subsequently taken to supervision to talk through my thinking around each theme's development.

Chapter 4. Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings developed from analysing the transcript. In line with IPA, the analysis does not draw on psychological theory or existing literature at this stage but aims to accurately convey an interpretative and descriptive representation of the participants' accounts. The analysis aims to represent the women's experience through three superordinate themes, each consisting of three subordinate themes, (Table 2) and an overarching theme of an '*ongoing process'* which seemed to permeate through the participants narratives. Relevant quotes from the participants are included to illustrate the nature of the themes and to keep the women's voice alive.

The results are presented in a way which seems to reflect a sequential order of processes that capture the women's experience of being in a CCRR. The first theme portrays how the women make sense of their bicultural identity given the expectations of them from their heritage culture which contrast the values they hold. The subsequent theme illustrates the significant processes they need to consider and negotiate given this discord between their two cultural communities. Finally, the impact of navigating their two worlds is explored in the final theme.

Table 2. Summary of superordinate and subordinate themes with relevant quotes

Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme	Relevant quotes/ extracts
1.Predetermined Identity	Expectations of The Indian Girl	*"...We want girls to study and become the best and become doctors and become all of this only so that we can get married and become housewives in the end..". Sonal, Line 456-457*
	"They (mothers) Don't See Us as Separate Beings"	*"...She doesn't see me how I actually am she sees me as you know her daughter and therefore a projection of her". Nalini, Line 255-256*
	"I'm Not What He Expects and He's Not What I Expect"	*"..If I was dating a brown guy I would compare myself to a typical brown girl..". Anisha, Line 451*
2. "The Two Worlds Don't Meet"	Questioning Decisions	*"..I was ..worried about what they would think and that was constantly going through my head and it impacts your relationship because you're constantly second-guessing it....". Nalini, Line 721-723*
	Telling the Family	*"...I'd hated having to mix two worlds...". Anisha, Line 188*
	The Wait for Acceptance	*"...The concern and the worry grows over time…". Sonal, Line 45-46*
3. Enduring Challenges	Lying, Hiding and Secrecy	*"It's such a conflicting feeling because on the one hand it feels so good to be with my partner and spend time with him ...and on the other hand I feel so guilty because it's kind of like I don't want to lie to my parents". Sonal, Line 217-220*
	Impact on The Relationship	*"It does have an impact because you know there's things he wants to do with me that we can't do…"Nalini, Line 556-557*
	Feeling Isolated	*"I do feel a bit isolated in who I can talk to". Meera, Line, 767-768*

The themes developed aimed to answer the research question:

How do second-generation, IH women living in the UK, experience being in a CCRR?

4.2 Superordinate Theme 1: Predetermined Identity

All participants, upon reflecting on their bicultural identity, expressed feeling like their identity is an ongoing process of negotiation between their desires, and the expectations from their families to maintain cultural tradition. This negotiation highlights the contention that can arise when individuals are simultaneously raised

within the contrasting individualist and collectivist cultures. Accordingly, this theme aims to encapsulate how the participants experience the predetermined expectations of them as IH women and the three subordinate themes selected to capture the essence of this theme are: *Expectations of The Indian Girl, "They (mothers) Don't See Us as Separate Being"' and "I'm Not What He Expects and He's Not What I Expect".*

4.2.1 Subordinate Theme: Expectations of the Indian Girl

The female identity differs according to each culture's values and customs. However, the western cultural values the participants have internalised differs significantly from the gender role expectations they feel the traditions of the IH culture determines for them. Sonal describes how she makes sense of these conflicting cultural expectations:

> *"...We want girls to study and become the best and become doctors and become all of this only so that we can get married and become housewives in the end… it just doesn't make sense…like why would you want me to waste all my money all my time dedicating myself to my education developing myself for me to only become a housewife in the end and not work and look after the baby and clean the house … my potential is so much bigger than ….what they're boxing it in to be…".* (**Sonal, 456-460**)

Sonal's words convey a strong sense of frustration which seems to derive from the contradictions she perceives the traditions of her heritage culture prescribe for girls. In her phrase, *"We want girls to study and become the best and become doctors[…] only so that we can get married and become housewives in the end",* she seems to question the irony that women are encouraged to become successful and prosperous, *"to only become a housewife…".* Her emphasis and tone when she says "*only*" implies Sonal may find the role of a housewife as somewhat limited and constraining and perhaps desires more for herself than residing in a domestic role. This was further highlighted as she voiced; "*my potential is so much bigger than what they're boxing it in to be".* Sonal may feel these prescribed gender role expectations are incongruent with her identity and perhaps fears a loss of her sense of agency and the identity she has invested in *"developing".*

Meera echoes Sonal's frustration towards the prospect of her future being dictated to her:

> *"...I don't want to be told by a prospective mother-in-law 'I'll allow you to work...' fuck off (laugh)... you're not appreciating where I come from, you are imposing what you want... but you're not appreciating that I was born in the UK and been brought up... with many different cultural yes I am adaptable I've immersed myself into Indian classical dance which I have and you know respect... my background very much and I take what I want from it on my terms".* **(Meera, 373-377)**

Meera's statement; "*I don't want to be told by a prospective mother-in-law, 'I'll allow you to work'"*, suggests she may feel *"a prospective mother-in-law"* may take it for granted that she could exert control over her. Meera's strong emotive response to this possibility; *"Fuck off"*, implies she refutes the idea that others can dictate how she lives her life. It seems Meera feels like there would be little consideration from an IH family of her bicultural identity and perceives there would be an expectation of her to adopt a submissive role whereby she must listen to her in-laws. This contradicts how she experiences her identity as she implies, she is in control of taking what she wants from her background on her terms. Her feelings were further illustrated as she expressed; *"you're not appreciating where I come from, you are imposing what you want"*. A sense of this imposition was felt through the emphasis she placed on the words "you/'re" and "I", which seemed to depict the discord Meera perhaps feels between herself and the expectations she perceives would come from marrying into an IH family.

While Sonal and Meera described these expectations of them as adults, Isha explained how the cultural expectations of her to adequately fulfil her future role as a wife was prominent from an early age:

> *"...every time you're growing up, you know, learning house chores stuff like that getting told, you know.. what you gonna do when you get married you have to learn to do this you have to be able to do this".* **(Isha, 186-188)**

Isha repeatedly articulated that *"learning house chores"* is something *"you have to"* do, indicating that these tasks were imperative for her to learn to become a proficient housewife. The seemingly predetermined nature of Isha's identity suggests she had little autonomy over her own development as her narrative evokes a sense of restriction

and a pressure to fulfil these criteria to be 'good enough' for marriage. These feelings become more apparent when she compares the expectations of IH girls in relation to the expectations she perceived her family has for her male relatives:

> *"If you're a boy, you know, it's okay if you don't listen but if you're a girl youhave to listen to everything... which is quite erm... when you get to sort of mid 30s and you think 'wow'." **(Isha, 202-204)***

Isha's narrative implies she feels boys are given the autonomy to develop their identity in their own way which juxtaposes her experience growing up. She describes a sense of leniency towards boys as she states; *"it's okay if"* they *"don't listen"*. Contrastingly, as a girl *"you have to listen to everything",* depicting a sense of powerlessness and a pressure to be indisputably obedient. I wonder whether this extreme range in allowances felt difficult for Isha to observe as perhaps she was conforming at the expense of her own desires. Noticeably, although Isha is referring to herself and her brother above, her narrative feels detached as she spoke in the third person. Perhaps Isha felt detached from this experience as a child and had little understanding of these expectations of her. However, in adulthood, perhaps as a result of developing a sense of self away from these cultural traditions, her reflection on the magnitude of these gender differences was illustrated by her expressive comment *"wow"*. With this expression it feels like Isha is in disbelief that these gender inequalities exist, and she had been taking it for granted for so long.

Gender differences have been commonly reported in various aspects of the women's lives and as many of the participants' voices are prevalent within the process of mate selection. Anisha elaborates:

> *"...there's a big difference in the way that boys are perceived, and girls are perceived in Asian families, so my mum must have probably always thought that I would meet sort of a handsome Indian doctor… and marry him and he would meet my family before he even gets to know me…". **(Anisha, 113-119)***

For Anisha, the *"big difference"* she expressed in the way boys and girls are *"perceived"* seemed to indicate that, as a girl, Anisha was expected to follow cultural tradition and marry someone from within her heritage culture as she said; *'my mum must have probably always thought...".* Her statement implies assumptions made

based on limited conversations with Anisha regarding marriage, perhaps as an expectation pre-exists based on cultural tradition. It seems as a girl, Anisha may have limited input in the process of selecting a partner as she says; *"...he would meet my family before he even gets to know me".* This illustrates the influential role her family may have in the process of selecting a partner whereby the decisions of Anisha's family seem to be prioritised over Anisha's desires.

The limited autonomy described by Anisha in the process of selecting a partner is similarly voiced by Sonal:

> *"With a girl it's kind of like 'no we need to make the decision for you'... but for guys it's much easier. My brother could bring home whoever he wants, and they'll probably accept her". (Sonal, 430-433)*

Sonal's narrative depicts a strong sense of powerlessness, as it seems her family holds some control over decisions made regarding her future partner as captured by her words, *"...we need to make the decision for you".* Her words here imply a future determined for her and perhaps an exclusion from making decisions about a significant aspect of her life. Sonal acknowledges it is *"much easier"* for men, highlighting the challenges she experiences as a bicultural woman compared to her brother who *"could bring home whoever he wants".* In the context of her current romantic situation, this must be difficult for Sonal to experience given her partner may not be so easily '*accepted'.* Sonal subsequently stated in the interview that this inequality feels *"frustrating"*, perhaps a feeling evoked from her awareness that traditions are hard to change and that she feels as capable as her brother to make decisions about her life.

4.2.2 Subordinate Theme: "They (mothers) don't see us as separate beings"

This theme encapsulates how the women experience their mother's expectations of them to follow in their footsteps, particularly in relation to their choice of partner. The participants described feeling like their mothers want for them what they had for themselves in a marriage - someone from within their heritage culture who takes care of them. Contrastingly, all the women expressed the attributes they hold important in a partner is someone who is *"emotionally supportive".* The difference in these values desired reflect the generational and cultural differences between the women and their mothers and Priya describes how she makes sense of these differences:

"...I feel like that she's so far from today's culture..." (**Priya**, *1097-1098*)

Priya's statement conveys a sense she feels her mother has not acculturated to "*today's culture*" and may be holding on to her traditional mentality. Her words "*so far*" quantify the immense distance she feels between herself and her mother culturally, which may explain why she feels her mother perhaps has little understanding of her desires. Accordingly, Priya may feel like the expectation her mother has for her to marry someone from within the IH community is therefore unreasonable.

Nalini similarly shared feeling like her mother had little understanding of her bicultural identity as she said :

> *"...who she wants for me is someone that she would choose ... potentially for herself, someone who's religious, someone who's...you know Indian, someone who's very involved in our culture and I'm not like that".* (**Nalini, 251-253**)

The specific criteria for a husband Nalini's mother desires for her seems to be based on her mother's traditional cultural values which hold religion and culture as important attributes. Nalini's words, *"who she wants for me",* suggests she may feel an expectation from her mother to follow tradition and marry someone from within the IH culture. However, these criteria contrast the characteristics Nalini is perhaps looking for in a husband as she asserts; "*I'm not like that".* Her declaration here suggests she may not affiliate as strongly as her mother with the IH culture and may feel there is more to engaging in a relationship than just similarity in culture. Nalini goes on to provide a valuable interpretation of the nature of her mother's beliefs:

> *"...she doesn't see me how I actually am, she sees me as, you know, her daughter and therefore a projection of her".* (**Nalini, 255-256**)

Nalini's identity seems to be defined by her role as a daughter. Her narrative encompasses how her identity is perceived as a 'we-self' with her mother as opposed to an 'I-self'. Nalini conveys this notion through her description which depicts an enmeshed sense of self with her mother as implied by her perception that her mother perceives her as a *"projection"* of herself. Though this may indicate a sense of relational closeness, contrastingly Nalini seems to feel her mother is unable to see her for who she *"actually"* is, implying she may feel her identity and individuality is

overlooked and dismissed. The identity assumed for Nalini by her mother whereby there seems to be an expectation to follow in her footsteps, may create some tension between the pressure to be the person her mother wants her to be and the person she wants to be - unconstrained by her mother. This relational dynamic may explain why it is difficult for many of the participants to communicate with their parents about their individual desires which steer away from the IH culture.

Individuality is important for the women as indicated within their narratives. However, the lack of understanding from their mothers of the participants' individual desires seems to create some relational tension. This was particularly apparent within Meera's excerpt:

> *"She said, you know, 'even if you say now, I'll find someone for you' (laughs)..I..I feel angry.. because I feel quite you know I feel my… my individuality isn't being respected… my…my desires and my wishes".* (**Meera, 332-333**)

Meera's mother does not seem to acknowledge her individualistic decisions which veer away from the traditions of the IH culture, particularly her CCRR as she tells Meera, "*even if you say now, I'll find someone for you*". Perhaps like Nalini's mother, Meera's mother may "*find someone*" she would choose for herself and perhaps not someone Meera "*desires*". The emphasis and repetition of *"my"* seemed to stress the little thought she felt her mother had of her *"desires" and "wishes"*. This dissonance seems to generate a profound sense of anger towards her mother as perhaps she feels cultural expectations are prioritised over her *"individuality"*. I wonder whether Meera's laughter here was perhaps employed to manage the strong emotions this reflection evoked for her.

4.2.3 Subordinate Theme: 'I'm Not What He Expects and He's Not What I Expect'

This subordinate theme encapsulates the participants' reasoning behind selecting a partner who is not the IH man their parents desired for them. The women expressed making a conscious decision to avoid engaging in a relationship with someone from within their heritage culture; their decisions appear influenced by various experiences. Priya explained:

> *"...they all perceive one image.... to like family... then you see them doing all sorts and you're like what is going on but obviously your mum's not ...your mum's not aware of these things right? ...and I'm like, 'you don't even know what this guy's done' like I just... I just... so that that for me I'm like 'wow' like that's going in into something ...blind but because they're a Shah that's okay...".* **(Priya, 1103-1113)**

Priya implies that the men within her culture and of her generation conceal *"all sorts"* of behaviour and may not be a true representation of who the first-generation perceive them to be. It seems it is these concealed behaviours Priya is aware of that evoke some caution about entering a relationship solely based on cultural similarity, which is highlighted by her suggestion of "*going into something blin*d". For Priya, knowledge about her partner's characteristics beyond his culture is important for her. However, this seems to contrast the views of her parents as she suggests because *"they're a Shah [IH surname] that's okay"*, implying that because they are IH, her parents may overlook certain behaviours to preserve cultural lineage.

It seems Anisha's first-hand experience of dating men from within her culture influence her decisions:

> *"...when I dated people from completely different cultures, I enjoyed myself more, there wasn't a uniform personality to compare myself to ... 'cos if I was dating a brown guy I would compare myself to a typical brown girl...".* **(Anisha, 447-453)**

Anisha's narrative appears to convey she feels there is an expectation to behave in a certain way when dating a "*brown guy*". In doing so, she expressed she would *"compare"* herself to the "*uniform personality*" of the "*typical brown girl*". This conveys a sense that she may feel a pressure perhaps from a partner or from herself to conform to a certain way of being, contradictory to how she may perceive her sense of self. Contrastingly, Anisha's experience of dating men *"from completely different cultures"* meant she *"enjoyed"* herself *more",* implying a more positive romantic experience. It may be that one-way Anisha felt she could be herself is through engaging in a CCRR, as this may have provided a platform whereby she can navigate her relationship with her partner away from cultural expectations and values not congruent with her own.

Isha, who was married to an IH man, shared this contrasting relationship experience:

> *"It's quite liberating there's none of that expectation (laugh)[…]... erm I find...
> that I'm not sort of...I'm not tied to all these rules and regulations"*. (**Isha, 11-
> 15**)

Isha's tone and facial expression revealed a sense of happiness upon reflecting on her CCRR which she described as *"liberating"* and with no "*expectations"*, conveying a sense of feeling empowered in her current relationship. This appears to be a stark contrast to having felt *"tied to all these rules and regulations"* in her past marriage which portrays a sense of helplessness and subjugation to her role as an IH wife. Isha's comparison of her two relationships depict an image of being freed from a world and identity where she appeared bound by the expectations of her heritage culture.

It seems for Anisha and Isha, their relationship with men from within their heritage culture seemed to provide a context outside of their familial world where they would be faced with similar cultural expectations. In these instances, the women may have perceived this as a threat to their western identity and values. Although for three of the participants' their relationship experience with IH men has been somewhat discouraging and consequently influenced their subsequent relationship decisions. Avni contrastingly expresses a different perspective on her experience of her relationships with IH men:

> *"... I have dated Indian guys, but erm again it's, you know, since then... but
> it's not worked ...and it doesn't mean because they are Indian it didn't work it
> was just then as people it just didn't work erm dated people who are not Indian
> again didn't work... so*
> *it's just a case of the person itself not the race or the culture…".(**Avni, 242-
> 247**)

For Avni, her experience of IH men did not seem to impact negatively on her decision to date men from within her heritage culture. Avni expressed it is personal characteristics that have impacted negatively on her relationship and not the influence of the IH itself. It could be in Avni's past romantic relationships the traditional

expectations of the IH culture may not have played a significant role as much as it seems to have done in the other women's experience.

4.3 Superordinate theme 2: "The Two Worlds Don't Meet"

This superordinate theme captures the psychological, emotional and physical impact the women experience having made the decision to engage in their CCRR. In holding a bicultural identity, the women express feeling like they live in two contrasting worlds: their world at home, defined by traditional IH values; and their social world, defined by western values. Engaging in a CCRR seems to heighten this sense of duality in their lives as they must navigate and manage the contrasting cultural values of their two worlds. The themes which aim to capture the essence of this theme are: *Questioning Decisions, Telling the Family and The Wait for Acceptance.*

4.3.1 Subordinate theme: Questioning Decisions

Entering a romantic relationship is typically a positive experience however, for three of the participants, this experience appeared to be consumed with feelings of doubt and worry. Avni reflected on the dilemma she encountered during the initial stages of her CCRR:

> *"... I went on the date and was like 'oh okay' he was, he's half black, okay this might be a bit difficult but I'll just go on the date anyway...". (Avni, 580-581)*

Avni's initial concerns arose due to her partner's race which she acknowledged; "*might be a bit difficult*". The difficulty she anticipated was perhaps due to the racial prejudice many of the participants' discussed was held towards "black people" within the Indian culture. Avni disclosed in the interview that her parents had been accepting of her previous boyfriends who were of "white" backgrounds and therefore it seems her experience may have been different and less "*difficult*" if her partner was not "*black*". Her decision to *"go on the date anyway"* could be interpreted in multiple ways, and it may be this decision was a combination of holding on to hope that engaging in this relationship "*might*" not be as difficult as she anticipated and perhaps acknowledging that her desires succeed what may be culturally expected of her. The

extent to which her partner's race impacts on the decisions she makes will be further discussed in the following theme.

This initial process of contemplation was an experience shared by Sonal:

> *"I was thinking 'shall I actually get into this relationship?' … and actually a part of me was thinking 'maybe I shouldn't' just to save… I suppose the heartbreak in the long term …erm erm but then I kind of had like a moment like a switch like a light bulb moment where I was like 'do you know what?' This is my life…". (**Sonal, 607-609**)*

For Sonal, the prospect of engaging in a relationship with her partner seemed to evoke an internal battle between her two cultural identities as implied by her rhetorical question, *"...shall I actually get into this relationship?"*. The *"part"* of her that felt resistant to enter her CCRR may have been the IH part of her identity encapsulated by the traditional expectations of her to find a partner within her heritage culture. It could be that Sonal's initial reservations developed from a need to protect herself emotionally from the potential consequences of defying tradition as depicted by her emotive language *"save… the heartbreak in the long term".* Her words here suggest she felt she may be unable to develop her CCRR further into marriage. However, experiencing *"a light bulb moment"* leading to her realisation; *"this is my life"* was powerful, as it conveyed a strong sense of ownership and empowerment over her life which is significant for Sonal, who feels disempowered by cultural rules and expectations at other times. Sonal's final decision seemed to outweigh her initial fear associated with the consequences of her decision to engage in a CCRR.

Whilst Sonal and Avni's reservations about engaging in a CCRR were prominent in the initial stages of their romantic relationship, Nalini's reservations appeared enduring:

> *"...I was anxious and I was...worried about what they would think and that was constantly going through my head and it impacts your relationship because you're constantly second-guessing it...". (**Nalini, 721-723**)*

Nalini previously explained that she was the first in her family to engage in a CCRR, however, her decision to do so resulted in a preoccupation with how her parents would

feel. It seemed going against her heritage cultural tradition led to feelings of uncertainty and anxiety, which was exemplified when Nalini expressed "*constantly*" thinking about what her parents would think and "*second-guessing*" her relationship. It seems in having these reservations Nalini cannot entirely be at peace in her relationship. She repeatedly used the word "*constantly*" to perhaps reiterate the ongoing rumination and seemingly exhaustive emotive and cognitive cycle of uncertainty she experienced.

4.3.2 Subordinate theme: Telling the Family

All the women discussed the contrast within the western culture whereby there are no prescribed guidelines for when a partner is introduced to the family, compared to the Indian cultural tradition where a partner is only introduced to the family when "*you're really serious about someone*" and ready for marriage. Although five of the women reported not being at a stage in their relationship where they were ready for marriage, they were all either thinking about telling their parents about their relationship or had told them. Both situations evoked feelings of anxiety for the women as they were integrating two opposing worlds which they felt crossed a cultural boundary they had not crossed before.

Avni and Sonal who had not yet disclosed their CCRR to their parents initially stated this was due to being in the process of wanting to explore their relationship and its permanency further. However, upon reflection it became apparent that the women were holding back from disclosing their relationship to their families due to the worry and apprehension about their parents' reaction. One wonders whether the women felt some shame around keeping their relationship a secret and therefore initially held back from disclosing this in the interview. Avni's concerns about having this initial conversation with her parents stems from the perceived racial prejudice within the Indian culture:

> "…although he's half black I think that that's still very much it won't be..seen as him being white it's only half…(sigh) he will be seen as he is black…". (**Avni**, **470-473**)

Within Avni's narrative, her pauses and sigh portrayed a sense of hopelessness from her situation as she anticipated her parent's opinion of her partner may be negatively

skewed due to an aspect of his race. Avni stated, "*…although he's half black….(sigh) he will be seen as he is black",* suggesting her parents may magnify an aspect of his identity they hold some prejudice towards. The sense of hopelessness felt here may derive from Avni perhaps feeling she is unable to change her parent's cultural prejudice. Perhaps keeping her relationship from her family may be an attempt to protect her relationship and her partner from the stereotypes her parents hold and the perceived potential consequences she anticipates which she discusses below:

> *"…like I'm not doing it maliciously it's not a mal..I'm not doing it to be malicious towards my parents I'm not doing it to erm hurt anybody it's just me it's just a case of being able to handle it.. erm carefully it's being able to know and figure out how to do this in such a way that it doesn't erm... it doesn't... it doesn't have a massive impact or blow up in your face". (Avni, 539-542)*

Avni suggests her decision to keep her relationship from her parents is not to be "*malicious"* but is perhaps a way to buy herself some time to prepare for having this conversation. In describing having to "*handle it… carefully"* she highlights the sensitive nature of the situation and seems to anticipate possible ramifications due to her partner's race. This is further exemplified in her description that the situation could *"blow up"* which evokes a powerful image of destruction and accentuates Avni's perception of this being a risky situation with a potentially catastrophic outcome. Listening to Avni, I wondered whether she felt holding back from telling her parents may be the only way she can spend time with her partner and maintain her relationship. I also imagine the thought process involved in deciding the best way to manage this situation must be an emotionally exhausting experience for her.

Like Avni, Sonal shared her concerns about telling her parents about her partner:

> *"… If I introduce him to my parents and then it turns around and we break up they are going to be like why have you…why have you introduced him to us then?...clearly he's not that great that like… clearly your opinion of what a good guy is maybe ain't right...so maybe they wouldn't trust my future opinions…". (Sonal, 269-275)*

It seems a greater need for certainty is required for Sonal about her relationship before she can tell her parents about her partner. Sonal appears to express an explicit sense

of worry about losing the "*trust*" to choose a partner in the future should her relationship end. Her worry about her autonomy potentially being compromised may be because Sonal values having control in selecting her own partner. It therefore seems for Sonal, there is an added pressure and worry to be certain about her relationship and to prove he is 'good enough' to her family compared to the usual process individuals may experience in a relationship within the western culture.

Both Avni and Sonal seem to fear a sense of loss in the event of telling their parents about their CCRR. For Avni, this may be her relationship with her family and for Sonal it seems her autonomy in making future decisions may be compromised. Contrastingly, Nalini kept her relationship from her parents for some time, however made the decision to speak to her mother a few days before this interview. Her decision to take this step emerged from some pressure from her partner to tell her parents and due to feeling tired of "*lying*" to them. She described the lead-up to having the conversation with her mother as "*terrifying*", and reflected on her experience of this conversation:

> "...it was, it was, it was really scary kind of when I it felt a bit out of body it... it was kind of like words were coming out but I wasn't really erm there". *(Nalini, 176-177)*

Nalini's narrative portrays an explicit state of distress when reflecting on her conversation with her mother as evidenced by her tone, repetition and hesitation in her speech which perhaps suggests this experience continued to have an overwhelming impact. She describes a "*really scary*" experience encapsulated by an emotional and physical disconnection seemingly due to the apprehension and fear of her mother's reaction. Nalini's description of feeling "*like words were coming out but I wasn't really erm there*", depicts a dissociation between her mind and body and is perhaps parallel to the dissociation she experiences between her two incongruent worlds in which she lives.

Like Nalini, Anisha's decision to tell her family about her relationship was due to some pressure from her partner. However, in doing so Anisha seemed to experience some discomfort in this decision as she explained:

"...I was riddled with anxiety it was such an anxious day for me..and it wasn't the normal kind of anxious it wasn't anxiety 'cos I was worried they won't like him because I knew they'd like him.. but it was anxiety because it was the first time I had ever done that... the first time I'd ever introduced a boy... the first time I'd ever talked about a boy to my family...". (Anisha, 89-96)

The pressure to bridge the cultural gap between the Indian world where having a boyfriend is *"a notion that doesn't really exist'* and the western world in which they do, left Anisha *"riddled with anxiety".* Her repetition and the vivid description of the *"anxiety"* she experienced depicted an embodied feeling of fear, perhaps of the unknown, as she was revealing a part of her identity and world to her family which she had always kept separate. Unlike the other participants, Anisha's anxiety seemed to stem less from the worries about being in a CCRR, but more from it being *"the first time I'd ever talked about a boy to my family".* This highlights the psychological impact evoked from intergenerational and cultural differences which appears to impede on the women opening up to their families about aspects of their lives.

4.3.3 Subordinate Theme: The Wait for Acceptance

Within the Indian culture, familial approval of a partner is vital for a relationship to progress, and for many of the women the uncertainty of whether their CCRR will be accepted was an experience which infiltrated throughout the participants narratives. Irrespective of whether the participants had disclosed their relationship to their parents, acceptance of their CCRR seems to be a source of anxiety and an ongoing process of worry and concern as they think about their future. These feelings were described and experienced as endless and burdensome emotions to hold. Though the women have made an autonomous decision about their choice of partner, ultimately, they still value and seek their family's approval.

Nalini's reflected on her mother's response towards her CCRR:

"...my advice to you would be to keep it as a friendship and not anything more'... erm she said, you know, 'you might call me closed minded but... err the more similarities you have the... the greater the likelihood of something working out' and she's right... she is right you know". (Nalini, 147-150)

Nalini's narrative portrayed a sense of rejection and helplessness as she seems torn between her mother's advice and her own desires. Her mother's advice to keep her romantic relationship a "*friendship*" seemed to be a clear message of non-acceptance, which may have emerged from Nalini's mother's traditional cultural beliefs around marriages as she states; '*the more similarities you have the... the greater the likelihood of something working out".* However, in giving this advice perhaps Nalini's mother is disregarding any feelings Nalini has towards her partner. As Nalini repeatedly stated *"she's right"* in response to her mother's advice, the tone of her voice lowered which appeared to convey a sense of defeat. Perhaps this advice was difficult for her to contemplate. Furthermore, Nalini's response felt incongruent given previously stating in the interview, *"I'm not like that",* suggesting that she identifies less with her IH identity. One wonders whether Nalini felt a sense of guilt and therefore it might have been emotionally easier for her to agree with her mother.

Like Nalini's mother, Meera's mother's cultural values and beliefs influenced her views towards her daughter's CCRR; Meera revealed:

> *"...even recently she said 'there wouldn't have been any shortage of guys for you…' and I said 'well mum it's not a conveyor belt' (laughs)… it's...it's also about what you know what is meaningful to me...and what makes sense to me and what works for me…"* (**Meera, 315-317)**

Although Meera has been in her relationship for two years, her mother's suggestion that "*there wouldn't have been any shortage of guys"* may indicate some disapproval and perhaps a lack of understanding of her CCRR. Meera likens her mother's suggestion to a "*conveyor belt*", which invites an image of an abundance of men, all of whom are characteristically identical, all IH. It appears this type of man would be considered more acceptable. Contrastingly, Meera seems to want someone she can connect with, perhaps on a more personal level as this may be more "*meaningful"* to her. Although Meera laughs when she speaks, there seems to be a sense of sadness around her mother's comment which she may experience as not only a rejection of her relationship but also of her desires. Her laugh may serve as a protective function from this
sadness.

Whilst Nalini and Meera reflected on their experience of non-acceptance of their CCRR, some of the women reflected on what not receiving acceptance of their relationship would mean for them.

Sonal, who has not yet disclosed her relationship to her parents, describes the psychological and emotional impact stemming from the anticipated wait for acceptance:

> *".. it's amazing but it's a concern, it's still [a] worry until I get that approval almost It's kind of like I'm on edge almost because it's kind of like I'm treading the water almost, you know, like I'm in this relationship, I'm really happy with him, but I've still got a barrier up because what happens if my parents don't accept you?...".* **(Sonal, 118-122)**

Sonal's narrative is paramount in highlighting the contention between the two worlds in which she lives. Her words seem to depict a paradoxical relationship whereby her experience with her partner is *"amazing",* however seems to be short-lived as the psychological impact of waiting for "*approval"* overrides this. Sonal describes feeling like she is "*on edge"* and *"treading the water"*, conveying a sense of anxiety from perhaps being unable to move past the anticipation and inherent uncertainty about the future of her relationship. This seems to result in Sonal creating a "*barrier"* in her relationship, suggesting she may be holding back from giving herself fully to her partner, perhaps to protect herself from the unknown, as she questions; "*what happens if my parents don't accept you?"*. Sonal continues to reflect on the consequence of her partner being rejected:

> *" I imagine that if they say no, and I decide that I'm going to listen to them which I don't know if I would do right now, ...I'd be thinking...I'd be kind of mourning our happy relationship……..".* **(Sonal, 296-299)**

The challenge Sonal faces in potentially having to negotiate her parent's values and her own desires are depicted within this excerpt. Her words illustrate a sense she perhaps feels torn and uncertain about whether she would listen to her parents should they reject her relationship, as she states; "*I don't know if I would"* listen to them. Sonal acknowledges that listening to her parents may result in a sacrifice of her own happiness as she describes she would be *"mourning our happy relationship"*. Her

emotive language here depicts an expression of undesirable sorrow and loss. Sonal pauses for some time during this narrative and I wondered whether she was reflecting on this potential loss.

Avni similarly elaborated on what not having her relationship accepted would mean for her:

> *"To not be accepted it would hurt me… I think it would mean that I would not be accepted if that makes sense …like a part of me not being accepted". (**Avni, 847-852**)*

Avni's narrative is significant in highlighting the psychological distress the women may endure in the event of their CCRR being rejected. Avni describes the "*hurt*" she would feel from the possible rejection of her relationship, which she perceives would ultimately mean she *"would not be accepted"*. This implies she may feel a rejection of her decisions and perhaps internal qualities. The *"part"* of Avni that may not be "*accepted*" by her parents could be the part of her identity allied with her values in line with the western culture, which are seemingly incongruent with her parents'.

Not only did many of the women express concerns around their CCRR being accepted by their families, two of the participants also voiced their concerns about being accepted by their partners' families:

> *"… Like will the families get on?... What will my mum make of him? […] erm ...would they understand where we come from? Would they accept it?".* (**Meera, 293-297**)

> *"...particularly with his dad he's… he's someone that I'm slightly a little bit concerned about erm although concerned may be a little bit strong, but you know 'cos he just has no idea about the Asian cult...the Indian culture...".* (**Nalini, 543-545**)

The joining of two families when a couple unite is essential within the IH culture, and therefore a good relationship between families is paramount. Both Meera's and Nalini's partners' families originate from individualistic cultures which may explain the concerns the women held about whether their partner's families will "*understand*" and "*accept*" the nature of the IH culture. For these participants, it seems an additional worry stems from a possible discord between their partners' heritage culture and their

own, which they may perceive as a potential difficulty for their relationship. Meera's worry was explicitly conveyed in her narrative through her stream of rhetorical questions. One wonders about the isolating and detrimental consequences the women may encounter from not receiving acceptance from both families.

4.4 Superordinate Theme 3: Enduring Challenges

Given the challenges endured around receiving acceptance of their CCRR, the women describe how they consequently navigate maintaining their relationship with their families and their partner and the subsequent impact this has on their relationship and personally. The three subordinate themes which aim to encapsulate the women's experiences are: *Lying, Hiding and Secrecy, Impact on the Relationship and Feeling Isolated.*

4.4.1 Subordinate theme: Lying, Hiding and Secrecy

Whether the participants' families were aware of their CCRR or not, many of the women resorted to various degrees of lying, hiding and secrecy of their relationship from their family. The women's narratives depict an image of a tug-of-war between their relationship with their families and their partner. Nalini describes what navigating her two relationships was like for her:

> *"When I'm going out to see him I'm still having to lie because... I'm finding it difficult to ... I don't know... I think I'm finding it difficult to ...say I'm going to see him because mum said my advice to you would be to stay friends".(**Nalini, 207-209**)*

Nalini's excerpt highlights the contention she experiences between doing what she wants and what is acceptable for her family. Though Nalini confided in her parents about her relationship, it appears her situation does not seem to have changed as she is *"still having to lie"* to them. When Nalini spoke I got the sense she felt like she was fighting a losing battle, in that as much as she tried to be open with her parents and normalise being in her CCRR, the *"difficulty"* she seems to experience in doing this is due to her mother's *"advice",* which appears to be present at the back of her mind. This conflict seems to result in Nalini concealing a part of her life from her parents,

which seems to be the only way she can maintain her relationship, whilst keeping the peace with her family. Concealing aspects of one's life seems to be something Priya also resorts to:

> *"...it's really hard to say to your parents 'do you know what I'm spending this time with this person' not because they're my boyfriend and not because I'm trying to pick between two sides this is the thing... like my mum used to hate it when I say oh I'm going to see...I'm going to see Nikhil because she would say 'oh you never spend time with us'... and I used to get that a little bit but not anything drastic I mean, like, whatever if anything I just didn't tell her when I was seeing Nikhil".* (**Priya, 272-277**)

Priya's experience seems to evoke a sense of feeling trapped between both her worlds whereby she is trying to navigate seeing her partner whilst managing her mother's projection of her emotions onto her. Priya describes it being "*really hard*" to communicate to her parents why she wants to spend time with her boyfriend, as it seems her mother may feel as though she has picked her boyfriend over her, as she would say "*...oh you never spend time with us*". Perhaps this reaction is evoked from her mother's fear of losing her daughter to a world unknown to her. Priya suggests her mother's reaction to her going to see her partner is *"not anything drastic, I mean, like, whatever",* which seems to minimise the impact this has on Priya and portrays a sense she was not fazed by her mother's guilt tripping. However, this appeared incongruent with her narrative throughout the interview and her tone here as she seemed evidently angry about having to navigate her relationship through concealing her whereabouts from her parents. This may be an avoidant strategy adopted by Priya as it may be easier for her to navigate both relationships in the way she does by not acknowledging it has an impact on her.

Though both Nalini and Priya's parents were aware of their CCRRs, they felt communicating to their parents about their desires to socialise with their partner was difficult. This difficulty could be attributed in part to their parents not approving their relationships. However, for Anisha, the difficulty she experienced in communicating to her mother about who she was with differed:

> *"... I couldn't tell my mum I was dating... I...I'd say I was hanging out with a friend 'cos dating is not a thing in Indian culture ... it wasn't a thing when she was growing up ...". (**Anisha, 227-229**)*

For Anisha, keeping the initial stages of her relationship from her mother was due to the intergenerational and cultural differences in understanding the notion of "*dating*" as she implies; "…*dating is not a thing in Indian culture ...*". It therefore seems through concealment, Anisha is able to manage bicultural identity, by separating her two worlds, parts of which are not understood by her mother.

Sonal, on the other hand reflects on how she feels having to simultaneously navigate both of her relationships, given that her family are unaware of her CCRR:

> *"...It's such a conflicting feeling because on the one hand it feels so good to be with my partner and spend time with him ..and on the other hand I feel so guilty because it's kind of like I don't want to lie to my parents".* (**Sonal, 217-220**)

Sonal's paradoxical feelings of having to hide her relationship and "*lie*" to her parents captures a profound sense of sadness from the disparity she experiences. She enjoys spending time with her partner which is something that feels so natural and "*so good*" but at the same time wrong as she thinks about her parents and expresses; "*...on the other hand I feel so guilty*". Sonal's extract conveys a solemn state of pain as perhaps she experiences life as a battle against her own desires. Her desire to integrate her two worlds and be honest with her parents does not feel possible for her and consequently the only way to navigate both relationships is to lie which she also does not want to do.

Avni described how she experiences maintaining a distance between her family and her partner:

> *"I felt bad... I did feel bad because part of me was, like, it would be nice if, you know, when they come over that he is there but also bearing in mind that this is also - it's still only six months so for me it's like I don't wanna, you know... sort of involve him just yet too much... erm also my flat's too small to have everybody there (laughs)".* (**Avni, 295-298**)

Avni's narrative conveys a sense that she seems to begrudge having to keep her CCRR from her family as she repeatedly expressed feeling *"bad"* about hiding her relationship, which seems to suggest perhaps she felt some guilt in going against her family's values. This was further emphasised when Avni stated; *"it would be nice if, you know, when they come over that he is there",* depicting her idealised scenario of the integration of her two worlds. As this idealised situation is not viable, her focus seems to be on making a conscious effort to keep her two worlds apart which may be a physically and emotionally tiring experience. Avni seems to maintain this distance by suggesting that her relationship is still in the early stages; *"it's still only six months"* and through her suggestion; *"my flat's too small to have everybody there (laughs)".* Perhaps in maintaining these reasons, she is able to justify her decision and creates some protection from keeping her two worlds from colliding.

4.4.2 Impact on the Relationship

For some of the participants, having to navigate their way around maintaining their CCRR seems to come at a price due to the precautions they employ and little understanding of this from their partners. Sonal and Nalini both described feeling uneasy when in public with their partners due to the possibility of being seen by someone in the community who may relay this information back to their parents. Sonal describes the impact the measures she employs has on her relationship:

> *"…He gets so wound up about it and like … and I get it… like in the .. like one time I remember he said 'it's just so annoying that we can't even do something as simple as holding hands in London..".* **(Sonal, 761-763)**

For Sonal, *"holding hands"* represents intimacy and something she cannot be seen doing for the fear of being caught. It seems the only way to negotiate spending time with her partner in public is to behave as if they were friends. This facade however, limits the couple from seemingly normal forms of behaviours employed when in a romantic relationship. Although for her partner *"holding hands"* is *"simple"* suggesting something minimal and normal, it seems to hold a greater and more hazardous meaning for Sonal. Sonal acknowledges her partner's annoyance and feelings of being *"so wound up"* by the restrictions on their relationship, and her words

"I get it" suggests she may share these feelings as she may want to reciprocate this affection with her partner.

Nalini identifies with Sonal's experience of intimacy being compromised in her CCRR:

> *"...I don't think he's... he's necessarily been affected by it I think I'm affected by it more ..'cos you know I'm the one that kinda jumps, erm, a meter away from him when I see an Indian person that I think I could recognise on the street d'ya know? Erm. but it's, it's hard because you're trying to negotiate not making him feel shit and, you know, like, he's like someone I don't want to be seen with and also trying to explain to him that sometimes I'm not going to be able to be, like hold your hand..."*. (***Nalini, 570-576***)

Nalini's narrative is invaluable in understanding the predicament some of the women face when wanting to spend time with their partner but not wanting to be seen with them, which consequently has an impact on their relationship. Nalini states; "*I'm the one that kinda jumps, erm a meter away from him when I see an Indian person that I think I could recognise",* highlighting the fear she feels from the potential implications of being caught and the precautions she employs to keep her two worlds apart. She expresses this being "*hard"* for her as she seems to have to be constantly on alert, and perhaps is unable to be completely present in her relationship and enjoy spending valuable time with her partner. Nalini also expressed having to deliberate "*trying to negotiate not making him feel shit"* which highlights the multiple aspects of her relationship she must consider and manage.

Nalini looked for validation from me as a second-generation, Indian woman, as demonstrated by her question *"d'ya know".* I noticed Nalini employed these questions of confirmation several times throughout the interview, and perhaps she felt she was able to connect with me given my background. I wonder whether Nalini would have been able to have this level of openness with someone from a different background. I nodded in agreement, because I did know what it felt like to be hypervigilant. However, I recall feeling sad for Nalini as my partner shared this understanding coming from a similar background, whereas Nalini seems to have the added pressure to "*explain"* to her partner who cannot relate to these behaviours why she behaves in the way she does.

Although Nalini initially suggests that she is most affected in her relationship by the hiding, she later reflected on the impact it has on her relationship:

> *"...It does have an impact because, you know ,there's things he wants to do with me that we can't do, like we can't just go away on holiday at the drop of a hat or we can't, I can't just stay round at his if we're going to a gig or something like that, like I would have to find ways of like making it okay at home...".* (**Nalini, 557-559**)

There seemed to be a clear undertone of frustration and a sense of feeling restricted in Nalini's narrative as she lists several things she "*can't do...at the drop of a hat*" that she seems to feel she should be able to do in her relationship. It seems like doing things with her partner involves a thought-out process for her whereby she must "*find ways of, like making it okay at home*". For Nalini, this process seems to involve more lying and secrecy from her parents in order to be able to be with her partner. Nalini may feel that not being readily available for her partner given the barriers she must primarily overcome has an impact on her relationship as this is something she highlights in the interview is not something her partner has been used to in his past relationships.

For another participant, the differences between her heritage culture and her partners culture evoked some worries due to how her partner was received by her family:

> *"....is... is the other person gonna stick around ...[...]... like ... I.. I always think to myself how would I feel in his shoes. I've not done anything wrong, I've given nothing but respect and I've... I've not even got a chance to get to know these people because they just don't want to get to know me".* (***Priya, 127-131***)

Priya thinks about what it is like from her partner's perspective, given that he has "*not done anything wrong*". There seems to be a cultural boundary her parents seem to maintain to distance themselves from her CCRR as she states from her partners perspective; "*they just don't want to get to know me*". The impact of this relational dynamic results in Priya questioning whether her partner will "*stick around",* and it seems like Priya is caught between her parents' attitude towards her partner and the worry about how long her partner will continue to endure this treatment.

4.4.3 Feeling Isolated

A sense of feeling isolated in their experience of engaging in a CCRR seems to be prevalent within the women's narrative. Paradoxically, it appears although the women are part of a cultural community that advocates the importance of family unity and closeness; they are unable to communicate and receive the support they desire from their families. For Sonal, not having her sisters to confide in would have left her feeling *"unbelievably trapped"*. This illustrates the potential difficulties the women may endure in situations where adequate support and understanding of their experience is unavailable. It appears having someone who understands her experiences was valuable as it lessened the emotional burden for Sonal as she expressed; *"they relieved some of that pressure"*. Contrastingly, Nalini's experience of confiding in her sibling differed:

> *"I think initially I was quite hurt because... she didn't offer much in the way of advice. I mean her first reaction to me saying 'Maya I'm going to tell mum and dad' was 'good luck'... and that was it". (**Nalini, 694-695**)*

When Nalini attempted to seek *"advice"* from her sister there appeared to be a lack of validation of her feelings and advice given towards the dilemma she faced. Nalini paused before stating *"and that was it"* in relation to her sister's response of *"good luck"* which seemed to imply Nalini was perhaps not expecting this reaction and had hoped for more from her sister. I sensed a feeling of isolation and perhaps that she felt let down, and unsupported emotionally in this situation. Nalini described feeling *"quite hurt"* by her sister's response and perhaps this was due to feeling like her sister's limited response may have been a rejection of her relationship. One wonders whether Nalini's sister's words *"good luck"* to her suggestion of telling her parents about her relationship, could be an insinuation that this would not be received well. Consequently, this may have exacerbated the anxiety Nalini expressed she felt when she spoke to her mother about her CCRR (*Theme- 'telling the parents'). N*alini continued to speak about the familial sources of support she felt were missing:

> *"Sometimes getting a mum's perspective on something can be quite useful there are times where... they just don't get it, you know, 'cos they're just not Indian they're not from the culture, they don't fully understand why I can't be open"* (**Nalini, 1000-1002**)

Although Nalini confides in maternal figures at work about her CCRR she feels *"they just don't get it cos they're just not Indian"*, portraying a sense that the support she received is limited to some extent given the difference in cultural understanding. Nalini feels the support she requires is from someone *"from the culture"* who would have a specific understanding of her situation. It seems her mother would be someone she would like to confide in as she states; *"...sometimes getting a mum's perspective on something can be quite useful"*, however a cultural barrier seems to impede on this relationship and the support she desires. Nalini therefore seems to be left managing a challenging aspect of her life alone as she is unable to share her difficulties with those closest to her. Priya shared her experience of having to face difficulties in her relationship alone:

> *"If I had a fight with Nishil I wouldn't be able to tell them .. so you're dealing with stuff like that on your own, which is really hard especially without support ... erm, but I guess it makes you a bit stronger, so".* ***(Priya, 1619-1623)***

The support Priya yearns for from her mother is emotional support and validation during challenging times with her partner. As Priya initially stated her partner was her biggest support, arguing with him and not having the support of her mother feels like she is *"dealing with stuff like that on your own which is really hard"*. Priya highlights the impact and strain of not having her mother's support in times where she felt she may have benefited from sharing these problems. Contrastingly, Priya alludes to there being a positive aspect to not receiving support from her mother, as she implies she has developed some resilience from having to deal with difficult situations on her own as she states, *"I guess it makes you a bit stronger"*. However, her words *"I guess"* conveyed a level of uncertainty and I wonder whether thinking in this way acted as a defence and protective factor towards feeling isolated from her mother during these difficult periods with her partner.

Meera's sense of isolation differs from the other women in that it seems to stem from not knowing anyone with experience and knowledge of the Colombian society and from feeling like an "outsider" to the Colombian culture as she describes:

> *"I do feel a bit isolated in who I can talk to"*. (**Meera**, **767-768**)

Meera describes feeling like she is alone in her experience, despite in the concrete sense she is not. Perhaps the little understanding others had about her partner's culture meant she was unable to talk to anyone about the specific situations she endured. Her words *"a bit"* implies, although she may be able to speak to others about her experience, it may not be to the extent she desires. Having someone with knowledge about the dynamics within a specific culture seems important for Meera to help validate her experiences. This seems to be something Anisha also feels is missing in her support system:

> *"They don't understand any of the family drama … none of my friends are Indian"*. (**Anisha, 535**)

Like many of the other women experienced, this extract illustrates the extent to which Anisha feels limited with who she can share her experiences with as none of her friends are Indian and consequently "*they don't understand"*. Having someone she can talk to from the same culture may enable them to *"understand"* her experiences, and perhaps normalise and help her to make sense of them.

4.5 Overarching theme: Ongoing Process

Through discussions in supervision of the themes which emerged from the analysis, it was noticed within the women's narrative there was a sense that aspects of their experience of being in a CCRR appear to be ongoing processes. For example, negotiating aspects of their bicultural identity, processes around acceptance of their relationship and navigating relationships with their family and their partner. These processes may be seen to continue through various stages of the women's relationship.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter will discuss the findings from this research in relation to the research aim and question. I therefore aim to contextualise and discuss the findings from the analysis within relevant existing literature. An evaluation of the research and

recommendations for future research will be detailed, in addition to clinical implications and considerations for practitioners.

5.1 Overview of Research Findings

The study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of second-generation, IH women who are in a CCRR. This was achieved through the analysis of seven, semi-structured interviews using IPA. From the analysis, three superordinate themes and an overarching theme were identified which capture the women's experience (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Depicts three interconnected superordinate themes and an over-arching theme of an 'ongoing process'.
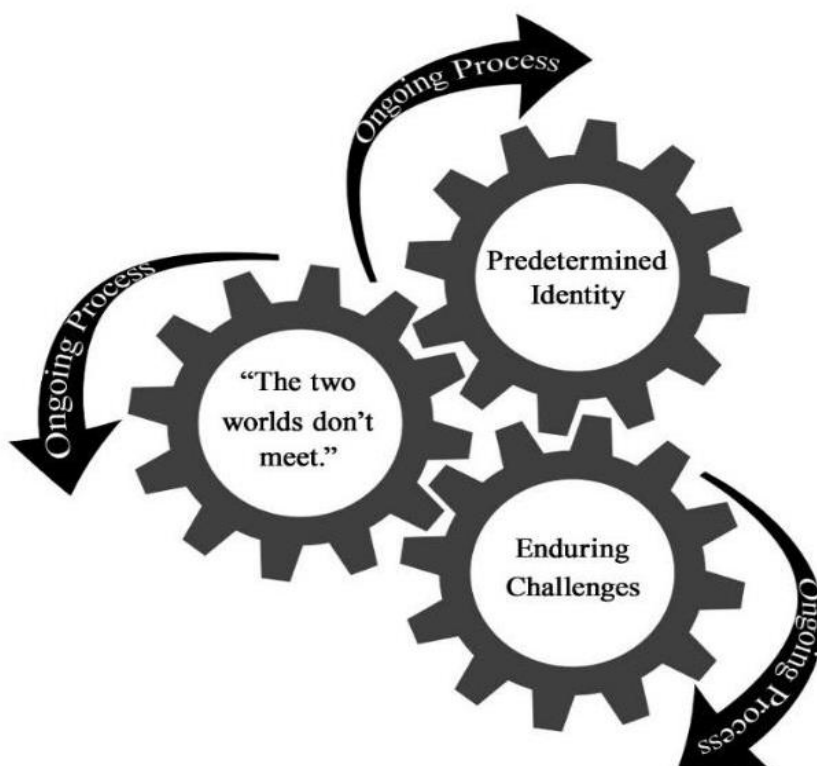
Although the super-ordinate themes are represented in a way which illustrates a somewhat sequential process of the women's experience (*Chapter 4: Analysis*), it was

noticed that all three themes are interlinked. The diagram (Figure 1) is useful in capturing how these processes interplay and convey an understanding of the participants' experience of being in a CCRR as a second-generation, IH woman. How the women experience and navigate their bicultural identity appears to influence the decisions they make and must consider due to their contrasting cultural value systems. This seems to have an impact on the women's relationship and personally. It seems the women's psychological distress is a by-product of these challenges. The ongoing process depicted by the revolving cogs encapsulates the continuation of various aspects of these processes throughout the women's experience.

5.2 Superordinate Theme 1: Predetermined Identity

The participants were asked about their experience of being in their CCRR, which they did through describing their upbringing within an IH household as a basis for understanding their experience. This reflection evoked a plethora of feelings as the women expressed what they want for themselves and their future based on socialisation in the UK, which contradicted the expectations they feel are predetermined for them by their IH culture. How the participants experience their bicultural identity, given simultaneous socialisation within these two cultural systems, was captured by Meera as she expressed, "*I take what I want from it on my terms*", suggesting the women select values and beliefs from both cultures that "*make sense*" to them. These findings are consistent with Berry's (2001) bidirectional model which postulates that the second-generation typically acculturate through the process of integration by which they selectively combine and internalise aspects of both cultures to form their bicultural identity. The process of integration has been suggested to increase psychological wellbeing, and reduce acculturative stress (Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006; Berry, 2005). However, research has indicated this is not always the case, particularly concerning decisions around a romantic partner.

An influential aspect of the women's experience are the challenges they face due to their gender. The female identity and perceived role of women differs across cultures based on each culture's beliefs, values and customs. Accordingly, the patriarchal nature of the IH culture differs significantly from the UK, which promotes gender equality (Ahmad et al., 2003). The importance of the family and marriage within the IH culture results in the endorsement of gender role socialisation from an early age

(Dagupta, 1998). However, explicit within the women's accounts were feelings of frustration and resentment evoked from the expectation from their families to conform to these traditional gender roles as this was experienced as oppressive. This tension could be understood within the constructs of self-construals. This being, the conflict between the participants independent self-construal whereby they value their autonomy and wish to live in line with their own desires and their interdependent self-construal whereby they may feel they may need to meet the expectations of their heritage culture. Furthermore, the frustration the women voiced appeared exacerbated by a sense of powerlessness and the limited sense of agency they felt they have in making decisions about their lives in comparison with their male relatives. These findings support literature in highlighting the distress experienced given these explicit gender inequalities (Srinivasan, 2000; Bhardwaj, 2001). Such differences were particularly evident in processes around mate selection, where similar to other studies (Manohar, 2008), men were experienced to have greater autonomy in mate selection processes.

How the participants experienced the traditions of the IH culture seemed to influence their decision to steer away from endogamous relationships. For Anisha and Isha, engaging in an endogamous relationship seemed to provide a context outside of their familial world where they would be faced with similar cultural expectations of them. Isha likened engaging in a relationship with an IH man with being "*tied to rules and regulations*", whilst Anisha stated; *"When I dated people from completely different cultures I enjoyed myself more"*. These findings corroborate with Thiagarajan's (2007) findings whereby many of the participants discussed feeling *"restrained or disempowered"* due to the expectations of having to uphold their role of an IH woman. Given the similarities in these experiences from the participants within the current study, and the first-generation participants within Thiagarajan's (2007) research, it could be suggested these feelings may derive from socialisation within a western culture which promotes equality, independence and a sense of agency. Therefore, engaging in a CCRR may have allowed the participants in the current study to feel empowered and provide them with an opportunity to exercise their own identity away from the traditional gender role expectations. It could be that engaging in a CCRR was not just a more positive romantic experience, but also a way the women were able to create a balance between their two identities.

These findings from the current study, coupled with existing literature, could indicate the way the women experience their bicultural identity influences the decisions they make regarding their choice of partner. Whereas the participants in a recent study (Mehan, 2017) were seen to make some compromises around mate selection to maintain aspects of both their Indian and British culture (Mehan, 2017), the participants within this study did not, and their decision to engage in a CCRR appeared to veer away from their heritage culture.

Several hypothetical conclusions may be drawn from the differences in findings between both studies. Firstly, the participants within Mehan's (2017) study were still at university and residing with their parents, therefore they may have been dependent on their parents (Mehan, 2017) and felt more inclined to maintain aspects of their heritage culture. Contrastingly, many of the women within the current study appeared to be more independent from their parents, with many living outside of the family home and all working, some of whom were running their own business. Therefore, the women in the current study may have felt less inclined to conform to the traditions of the IH culture as their lives provided some sense of independence from their heritage culture. Furthermore, the women in the current study may have identified less with their heritage identity, which supports quantitative research illustrating that those who identified more with the mainstream culture expressed greater willingness towards engaging in cross-cultural dating experiences (Uskul, Lalonde & Cheng, 2007; Mok, 1999) whereas individuals who had a strong affiliation with their ethnic or religious identity (Cila & Lalonde, 2014; Brown, McNatt, & Cooper, 2003) preferred endogamous relationships.

This study contributes to existing quantitative literature in illustrating that a greater affiliation with one's mainstream culture particularly in relation to attitudes towards mate selection may increase the likelihood one may engage in a CCRR. However, the expectations from their family to maintain cultural values go some way in explaining the challenges they experienced due to prioritising their individual desires over their family expectations and will be discussed below.

5.3 Superordinate Theme 2: "The Two Worlds Don't Meet"

Extant quantitative research has highlighted the intergenerational conflict evoked between the second-generation and their parents, particularly in relation to romantic relationships and dating practices due to the differences in how these are perceived (Wakil, Siddique & Wakil, 1981). However, there has been little qualitative research and developing knowledge in this area. Therefore, the current research goes some way in adding to existing studies which allows for a greater understanding of the participants' lived experiences by highlighting the specific processes which may contribute to an intergenerational cultural conflict.

Throughout the participants' narratives, parental desires and expectations of the women to marry someone from within their culture was explicitly expressed. For example, Nalini's mother stated; *"the more similarities you have the greater likelihood it will work"*. This corresponds with the collectivist nature of the IH culture which holds endogamous views to mate selection (Dasgupta, 1998), due to the fear of divorce and jeopardising cultural continuity. Therefore, engaging in a CCRR is not only considered taboo but perceived as threatening to the familial system. Consequently, it seems the decisions many individuals make in relation to their partner choice is greatly influenced by how they perceive it will be received by their families (Allendorf, 2013, Mehan, 2017). In one study (Mok, 1999), participants expressed a reluctance to engage in a CCRR as they felt maintaining these relationships would be a challenge due to their perceived familial reactions. Therefore, individuals have typically reported selecting partners they feel have a greater chance of being accepted by their parents (Mehan, 2017) to minimise intergenerational conflict. For these individuals a partner is selected with the values of the family in mind, which contradicts the individualist process of selecting a partner based on one's desirability.

Contrastingly, the participants in the current study's decision to engage in a CCRR may be seen to have been made at the expense of their heritage culture. Although a culturally informed view from the women's heritage culture is that marriage is necessary. Cultural integration may have informed a view that marriage is not a specific goal. Accordingly, the women's decision may be a clear statement of the sense of agency they value in the decision-making process around mate selection. For example, Sonal stated, *"this is my life"*, highlighting the priority given to one's personal desires over cultural expectations. This desire for autonomy in the decisions made about one's partner has been well documented across cultures in America, when

participants were asked about hypothetical situations in relation to engaging in a CCRR (Berry et al., 2006). However, the current research goes a step further as findings are based on the lived experiences of participants who in fact exercised their autonomy in this area of their life. It could also be inferred the women's decision in selecting their own partner was perhaps as a strategy employed to position themselves as equal to their male counterparts. It could therefore be suggested the way in which these women perceive their identity and the values important to them influence their decision to engage in a CCRR.

However, this decision led three participants to experience an intrapersonal conflict in the form of *"second-guessing"* or *"worrying"* due to fears around the reactions of their family or worries about *"disappointing"* them. The internal conflict the women experience could be attributed to the Indian aspect of the women's identity and values they have internalised as Sonal describes *"a part of her"* was initially reluctant to engage in her CCRR. These initial reservations highlight the psychological distress evoked from intergenerational differences in values around romantic relationships which quantitative studies have reported (Lalonde & Uskul, 2013; Chung, 2001). Furthermore, it could be suggested that the intrapersonal conflict could perhaps be explained within the framework of the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For example, the conflict between the participants' two cultural identities could be reflective of the investment they have in their heritage culture and their mainstream culture. Thus, as will be further discussed below, to maintain positive aspects of their group membership, although the women make the autonomous decision to engage in their CCRR which is not received positively within their heritage cultural group, they consequently make the decision to keep their CCRR from their heritage cultural group to perhaps convey they are behaving in line with the expectations of their heritage cultural group. For these women deviating from the group norm may have implications for them as they discussed a fear of discord within the family.

If autonomy in partner selection is permitted, introductions to the family are essential and occur when the prospect of marriage is imminent. However, many of the participants disclosed their CCRR to their parents due to no longer wanting to lie to them and may have been an attempt to minimise the cultural gap between themselves and their parents. Perhaps in the hope that they would no longer have to feel like they

were having to live in two separate worlds. Nevertheless, due to the intergenerational cultural differences associated with dating and relationship practices (Dasgupta, 1998), the women described experiencing a significant level of anxiety associated with the process of engaging in this initial conversation. Similar feelings were echoed by the participants who were thinking about how this conversation would unfold.. These findings support existing literature (Lee, Su & Yoshida, 2005; Manohar, 2008; Dion & Dion, 2001), which highlighted the intergenerational cultural conflict that can occur between the second-generation and their children whilst also providing a unique contribution to existing literature in identifying the specific processes which contribute towards this cultural gap and tension experienced.

Added to the participants' worry and anxiety was gaining approval of their partner, as in the IH culture, acceptance is necessary for determining the viability of one's relationship (Inman et al., 2001). Although the participants exercised their autonomy in selecting a partner, they still desired acceptance from their family. This could be a way in which the women navigate their bicultural identity in that they made an autonomous decision about their choice of partner, a value aligned with the western culture, whilst maintaining ties with their family through seeking acceptance. Although acceptance was a predominant theme across the participants narratives, the role acceptance had varied within each experience. For example, although Meera's parents were aware of her CCRR, she discussed the messages of non-acceptance she received from her mother. On the other hand, for Sonal the anticipated hope for acceptance encapsulated her narrative. However, a common theme amongst many of the women was the reported uncertainty around whether their relationship would be entirely accepted and the perceived consequences if this was not the case. This uncertainty was associated with reported symptoms of anxiety, worry and hurt and as one participant expressed "*the concern and worry grow over time*". It could be inferred that having little control over this situation contributed to the psychological distress the participants expressed experiencing. This supports existing literature which illustrates that an impaired sense of control can result in symptoms of stress, depression and anxiety (Abramson, Metalsky & Alloy, 1989; Chorpit & Barlow, 1998).

Furthermore, acceptance can be attributed to a sense of belonging which is essential for one's wellbeing and, as identified by Maslow, (Maslow, 1968), is a basic human need. The participants' sense of non-acceptance of their relationship, would mean they as a person, would not be accepted. It is therefore understandable that many of the participants experienced a sense of sadness and anxiety around the uncertainty of the acceptance of their relationship, as rejection may be perceived as a loss of support from their IH culture and family which provides a sense of belonging. For the women who had not yet disclosed their relationship, the anticipated fear of not receiving acceptance of their CCRR led to strategies employed to minimise the risk of getting hurt. For example, Sonal described maintaining a "*barrier" to* protect herself, whilst Avni described withholding telling her parents about her relationship.

The women's experience of living in "two worlds that don't meet" was characterised by psychological distress which appeared to derive from a feeling of uncertainty and a sense of limited control in contexts they faced with their families. How the women manage these challenges and the associated impact is discussed below.

5.4 Superordinate Theme 3: Enduring Challenges

The notion that the second-generation feel 'torn' between their two worlds has been commonly reported within literature (Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2005). This is due to the challenges the women face in navigating the values and traditions from their heritage culture with the differing values from the western society. Within existing literature, the second-generation have typically kept their romantic relationship secret from their parents due to relationships being perceived as a distraction from one's education, concerns around premarital relations (Manohar, 2008; Mehan, 2017) or due to the pressure to get married (Mehan, 2017). Such strategies are employed to enable the second-generation to maintain aspects of their lives their families may not agree with and to avoid familial conflict (Manohar, 2008; Dion & Dion, 2001; Dasgupta, 1998).

Contrastingly, within the present study, secrecy and hiding techniques were employed for some women due to not receiving acceptance of their CCRR, others feared the consequences of telling their parents about their CCRR whilst other participants spoke

of the intergenerational and cultural differences in understanding romantic relationships. Unique to this study is the fluid nature of 'secrecy'. The extent to which the participants kept their relationship a secret from their families differed with each participant, however all reasons stem from the fear of disapproval and feeling unable to communicate openly with their parents. For example, this ranged from Priya's parents who were aware of her CCRR, but hid times she would see her partner to Avni whose relationship was entirely secret from her parents. Although the women can be seen to be exercising some autonomy in their decision to engage in CCRR, this autonomy is somewhat compromised by having to keep aspects or their entire relationship from their parents. The secrecy strategies employed by these women can be understood and explained using the self-construal theory (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; 1994; 2010). For example, it could be suggested that by engaging in their CCRR the women may feel they are not conforming to what is prescribed by their heritage culture and therefore in line with the women's interdependent self-construal the women may hide their CCRR to maintain intragroup harmony and perhaps to avoid intragroup marginalisation (Ferenczi, Marshall & Bejanyan, 2015). These behaviours are reflective of how the women navigate their relationship with their families due to the conflict between their independent and interdependent self-construal. Furthermore, these results also draw some resemblance to the premise of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), in that it could be suggested that if the individuals were not invested in their IH culture then they would not experience the difficulties and tensions that they report such as keeping their CCRR a secret and thus having to navigate between their two worlds to maintain their relationship.

The behaviours adopted by the participants support the theory of cultural frame switching (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000). In this way the participants' discussed strategies such as when within the context of their heritage culture, the women would not discuss their relationships with their parents, regardless of whether their parents were aware of their relationship. Although this process of switching was advantageous to some extent in allowing the women to maintain their relationship with their parents and their partner, having to do this had a significant psychological impact on the women.

Negative emotions such as "*guilt*" and feeling *"bad"*, evoked from the various extents of self-concealment of the women's CCRR was prevalent within the participants'

accounts and could be explained through the dual-motive conflict urges (Larson & Chastain, 1990). This conflict entails the urge to reveal or be more open about their relationship to their parents versus concealing their relationship; the latter of which is associated with psychological implications such as symptoms of anxiety and depression. Whilst the participants within this study enjoyed being in their relationship, they nonetheless expressed the anxiety and negative emotional impact experienced when having to navigate their CCRR in a way that would minimise the chance of a potential conflict with their families. The participants who had initially kept their relationship a secret from their parents, revealed that disclosure of their relationship was a relief from no longer having to lie.

This research found that the participants appeared to go through an added stress within their relationship, compared to perhaps couples who can be more open about their relationship. For example, meeting in areas they would not be recognised, regulating their behaviour to minimise being affectionate with each other and fabricating details of their whereabouts and who they are with. Research has indicated (Rusbult, 1983, Lehmiller, 2009) these situational constraints are associated with a decrease in relationship satisfaction, and an increase in the burden experienced within the relationship, which consequently affects the relational dynamics between the couple. This corroborated the findings within this research to some degree whereby the women described the frustration and annoyance their partners and themselves experienced towards these restrictions on their relationship.

Existing literature has identified the various difficulties that may emerge between the couple given fundamental differences in beliefs and values that may be present from each individual's culture. Interestingly, although the women were asked about if there are any challenges, they face from engaging in a CCRR, the participants discussed the tensions experienced from external pressures such as from their families. This may be due to perhaps what felt most challenging for the women at this time in their relationship, and one wonders whether this may change if their living circumstances change and as their relationship continues to develop. However, future research could take this into consideration and explore the tensions that may emerge within the couple's relationship given the cross-cultural differences.

Given the various and unique challenges the women reported they experienced from engaging in their CCRR, they discussed the limited understanding and support they had in sharing these challenges with others, and thus felt alone in their experience. This is understandable as receiving social support can act as a buffer to stressful situations (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Sonal explained that if she was unable to confide in her sisters she would feel '*unbelievably trapped' and* questioned how long she would be able to continue in her relationship. This conveys the significance of receiving social support for their experiences and was highlighted in existing literature as being useful, particularly in the absence of parental support (Mehan, 2017). The participants explained they felt they would have liked someone from the same cultural background, or their partner's background, who would be able to understand the challenges they face. This is understandable given the basic need of humans to feel like they belong (Maslow, 1968) to a group, particularly one that holds a shared understanding (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

The apparent tension between the women's self-construals seem to reflect the conflict between the basic human drives of the desire for both individuation and a sense of belonging. It seems the desire to select their own partner appears to impact on their sense of belonging to some extent with their families. For three of the women a sense of isolation and a lack of support seemed in part to derive from hiding their CCRR from their parents to various degrees. These findings suggest that even though many of the participants' parents were aware of their daughter's CCRR, they were unable to confide in their parents about the challenges they endured within their relationship, despite a desire to. As suggested by researchers, (Larson, 1993; Felmlee, 2001) and experienced by the participants, the impact of self-concealment from families is disruptive to the support they can receive for these relationships, particularly to those closest to them. Feeling unable to confide in their parents about their relationship may feel like a threat to their sense of belonging to their family. In line with the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982) social groups are perceived to be incorporated as an aspect of one's identity and are significant in the individual's psychological wellbeing as they provide a sense of belonging. Feeling somewhat isolated from their heritage cultural group may impact on one's wellbeing.

5.5 Conclusion

5.5.1 Evaluation and Suggestions for Future Research

As identified in the methodology chapter of this research, care was taken throughout the research process to ensure I worked in line with the BPS (2018) good practice guidelines. Furthermore, I took care to ensure the methodology met the criteria for rigour and validity according to Yardley's (2008) proposed criteria. However, limitations of this research study exist and will be addressed.

A strength of the research could be attributed to the nature of the study given the detailed focus on the individual meaning of the women's lived experiences. IPA allowed for a rich understanding of the experience of the participants' sense of being bicultural, and their experience of engaging in a CCRR and the associated challenges and psychological distress encountered. Consequently, the gaps in existing quantitative and qualitative research were addressed through the findings in this study.

The study required participants to be aged between 18-40 years which includes a diverse range of second-generation, IH women, all of whom were based in different areas across London. The diversity amongst the participants can therefore be seen to be representative of experiences across a wide age and geographical range.

Furthermore, all participants were in a CCRR at the time of the interview, meaning their experiences and feelings were current. Therefore, retrospective accounts of experiences were minimal, supporting the accuracy and reliability of the women's experiences. As all the participants in the study contacted me and were under no obligation to partake in the research, it highlighted they felt they had experiences they wanted to voice and support others going through similar experiences. Although each narrative and experience is unique, many similarities were drawn from the research. However, the similarities found within this research may not be representative to all second-generation, IH women who are in a CCRR who did not take part in the research.

The purposive sampling employed within the study, could be deemed a limitation of the study. Although recommended by Smith & Eatough (2007) for IPA research, the

homogenous nature of the participant's means that generalisation of the findings is limited. However, it could be argued that, it was not the aim of the research for the findings to be generalisable like quantitative studies, but to give this under-researched population a voice and to create an awareness of the challenges these women may experience. However, I believe significant insights emerged from the women's narratives, aspects of which may be relevant to some extent to bicultural individuals in CCRR's from various cultures and this may be relevant when thinking about implications for clinical practice.

It should be noted that Isha's narrative differed to the other participants in that, where the other women spoke of some of the challenges, they encountered from engaging in a CCRR, Isha spoke of the difficulties she had experienced previously engaging in a homogenous relationship, and the ease for her engaging in a CCRR. Consequently, fewer excerpts from Isha's interview were used compared to the other participants, particularly in relation to discussions around their CCRR.

This study provides the opportunity for future research in this area to develop from. During the recruitment process, I was contacted by numerous second-generation women from within the Indian culture who identified as homosexual or who affiliated with a different religion, all of whom were either in a CCRR or married. This demonstrates the need for more understanding and research within this culture in the UK. It would be valuable to understand the similarities and differences between women from the Indian culture who affiliate with an alternative religion to Hinduism, in order to develop research in this area and understand aspects significant to each religion within the Indian culture.

Research has indicated that one's level of acculturation and education status has been shown to influence how parents respond to CCRRs (Medora, 2003). Anisha implied in the interview as her mother is educated and a doctor, she is 'open-minded' about concepts such as CCRRs. Consequently, Anisha did not worry about acceptance in the same way as the other participants. As levels of acculturation were not measured in this study, future research could measure levels of acculturation of first-generation immigrants to gain a wider understanding of the implications this may have on their children's attitudes towards CCRRs and how this influences their experiences.

The study attained rich data from a 'snapshot' of these individuals' experience. A follow up study to further understand the 'ongoing' process of the women's experience and any changes in how they experience being in their CCRR may be useful. Furthermore, although many of the women discussed how they perceived their partners felt being in a CCRR, research could benefit from gaining an in-depth understanding of both individuals in their CCRR. The results from which could further inform systemic couples therapy when working with this population.

5.5.2 Implications for Clinical Practice

My dual role as a practitioner and a researcher enabled me to consider how the challenges experienced by second-generation, IH women who are in a CCRR may be worked with in a therapeutic context. The findings from this study have contributed to existing literature in the field of multicultural and social psychology. Additionally, new findings from the study have emerged which may have significant implications for practitioners when working with this population. There is a paucity of research amongst this population, particularly within the field of CP and though this is the second study in the UK to focus specifically on the experiences of second-generation, IH women in romantic relationships, this research study offers a significant contribution to understanding those in CCRRs and is therefore the first research study to do so. Based on the findings of this study, possible interventions have been identified for practitioners such as counselling psychologists who may work with these individuals, the couple and their families.

Exploring the phenomenon in this research study through a bicultural perspective has highlighted the tensions these women encounter. The women's experiences can be further understood within the framework of cultural and relationship research. Due to the remit and aim of the research, the participants levels of acculturation and self-construal were not empirically measured however, the results from this research through the women's narratives may provide some insight into why the women chose to engage in a CCRR, against the values of their heritage culture and also the consequences of making this decision. Although the women made autonomous decisions about their choice of partner, a characteristic in line with the western culture, they expressed feeling some initial uncertainty about their decision due to the impact this may have on their families. Many of the women further expressed the discomfort

and psychological impact induced around not receiving acceptance of their relationship and for many they expressed the added impact of having to keep their relationship a secret from their parents. The women also stressed the isolation they felt within their experience. These experiences can be seen to be a result of the incompatibility of the women's cultures within this context. As highlighted earlier, in line with the social identity theory perspective, the tensions the women experience and the strategies they employ to manage both their cultures is reflective of the affiliation and sense of belonging the women have to both their cultures. The implications from this research contribute to our understanding of bicultural identity within romantic relationships as it highlights the perhaps unique tensions amongst bicultural women within the IH community. These tensions seem to arise from how the women identify with each of their cultures, the decisions they make based on this and the associated consequences and impact on them due to intergenerational and cross-cultural differences.

In the context of the findings from the current research, cultural awareness around the central role of marriage within the IH community and the role and responsibility of women within this culture to maintain cultural continuity through marriage would be helpful. This would provide a basis for understanding the potential difficulties these women may face, particularly when these expectations differ from their own desires. Additionally, having some knowledge of how CCRRs are perceived within this culture and the conflict and tensions that arise internally and externally would be helpful. The paradox experienced within the women's internal world have evoked feelings such as frustration, guilt and anger from feeling a sense of disempowerment from their heritage culture as a woman whilst on the other hand feeling happy and a sense of empowerment having made the decision to engage in their relationship. Therapy could provide a space for the women to identify and process their experiences, thoughts and feelings around the nuances of navigating their bicultural identity and familial tension which engulfs their experiences, and thus find effective ways of managing these to help reduce this internal conflict.

Although the interviews did not offer any therapeutic intervention, many of the women expressed having a greater understanding of their difficulties, a sense of relief and felt empowered post interview. For many participants, this was the first time they had discussed their CCRR in detail. Considering this, person-centred therapy may be an

appropriate option for many women as this non-directive approach offers a space in which clients can engage in leading discussions towards the discovery of their own solutions (Casemore, 2011). This may provide a sense of empowerment particularly in situations where an internal conflict arises and individuals are faced with conflicting emotions. Furthermore, there seemed to be a perceived lack of acceptance in that the women felt they were not seen for who they are: bicultural. This may be understood as a lack of unconditional positive regard from their families. Working with the humanistic underpinnings of CP (Willig, 2013) providing unconditional positive regard through modelling acceptance to the client may provide them with feelings of acceptance and value they may feel they have not received from significant others (McLeod, 2011). This may enable a basis for them to work through their difficulties and allow them to reach self-actualisation (Rogers, 1959). Central to many of the women's narrative was the uncertainty around the future of their CCRR. Cognitive-behavioural interventions associated with tolerating uncertainty may be effective in helping the women to manage the symptoms of anxiety they expressed from their experience.

It is essential for practitioners to demonstrate cultural sensitivity and be aware of their own cultural biases, as this may have detrimental implications for the therapeutic relationship and the development of appropriate goals (Sue & Sue, 2019). Greater cultural awareness could be achieved through reflective practice, group supervision and doctoral teaching programmes whereby case vignettes are discussed relevant to working with specific cultures and religious belief systems. Practitioners can also engage in relevant and recent research in the Division of CP journal; 'Race, culture and diversity' and by attending CP led groups such as the 'Black and Asian Counselling Psychologists Group (BACPG). This is a platform used for understanding and promoting an awareness of various cultures and identities in the UK. The participants voiced that it was important for them to be able to speak to someone from within the IH culture who would understand the influential role of culture in their experience. As clients may not be matched culturally with their therapists, if practitioners are familiar with culture-specific conflicts that may arise, individuals may feel more understood in their experience.

Literature has highlighted the multiple aspects which may influence one's experience, and the IH culture can be considered a lens through which participants view and experience their world. Though researchers have commonly grouped Indian subcultures together when conducting research, differences across Indian states were highlighted within this research with two participants whose partners originated from a different Indian state to their family. The women discussed the differences in values and beliefs held between the couple. It is imperative practitioners acknowledge the diversity across Indian states (Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994) and religious affiliation, as this may uniquely inform one's values, customs and beliefs. Furthermore, the women expressed that holding a bicultural identity meant they have internalised and maintained aspects of both their cultures - all to varying degrees. Consequently, this will influence how their CCRR is experienced and therefore it is important for practitioners to understand how their clients identify culturally by exploring areas such as the values and beliefs they hold important to them, their family's acculturation, their levels of acculturation and their role as a woman. When working with the couple, eliciting the same information from the women's partners would also be valuable, to gain a wider understanding of the presenting problem.

A prevalent experience among the participants' narratives was the discord they experienced between themselves and their parents due to the differing values and beliefs held. The participants felt that their families had little understanding of them which consequently made conversations such as telling their parents about their CCRR difficult. Secrecy and hiding strategies were employed to minimise any potential dissonance which consequently resulted in feeling isolated. It could be suggested that a systemic based approach may be useful as these difficulties stem within the familial context (Krause, 2012). This approach may enable both the women and their family to develop a shared understanding of each other's views, needs and experiences and allow participants to explore their feelings and improve communication within their family, in a non-judgemental environment. Enabling a greater understanding and allowing for open communication may minimise symptoms of fear, worry and anxiety the women expressed when having to integrate their two worlds. However, where a systemic based approach to therapy may work in some instances, as the Indian community is considered tight knit, difficulties and problems are often not discussed outside of the family. Additionally, research has highlighted the resistance amongst

this population to seek therapeutic help (Shariff, 2009). Therefore, practitioners may therefore also consider working within community centres to deliver psychoeducational talks to this cultural group on the experiences of bicultural stress and its implications on one's mental health. Activities which allow all generations involved to share their cultural beliefs and values in the context of their upbringing may be helpful to reduce assumptions made and allow a space for a shared understanding. As many of the women expressed feeling like their parents did not understand their western identity (Superordinate theme 1), this psychoeducation may act as a mediator in some way as it could provide some understanding to previous generations about the lived experiences of bicultural individuals and the various identities they assume having been socialised within two cultural communities. Furthermore, these interventions may empower IH women to validate their feelings within their specific context and empower these individuals to seek and create opportunities for support through organisations and support groups.

The findings from this research are essential when thinking about the couple in counselling. The nature of romantic relationships are inherently complex however, added to this complexity may be the merging of distinct cultures, which shape a couple's relationship in a way different to endogamous romantic relationships. The participants' CCRR seemed to be defined and limited by the expectations of them from the IH culture. The women described the impact on their CCRR due to their experiences with their families and the limited understanding their partners had of their culture and why they employed certain behaviours. In line with the social constructionist stance adopted in this study, it could be suggested practitioners could draw on a postmodern approach to therapeutic intervention. As such, narrative therapy may be useful when working with this population as it is an effective approach employed when working with intercultural couples (White, 2007; Silva et al., 2012). This approach adopts a respectful and non-blaming therapeutic stance, which will enable the couple to externalise their difficulties and recreate their life story through encouraging new perspectives to emerge. This new perspective enables the couple to consider their presenting problem as separate from their identity (White, 2007). Through techniques employed from narrative therapy, the couple will develop cultural awareness within their relationship through understanding how each individual experiences eachother's, and their own, culture. Working within the framework of

narrative therapy, the practitioner is encouraged to take a collaborative and curious approach and be mindful of validating both individuals' positions as correct given their cultural context.

It should be noted, although generalisations should not be made across cultural contexts, second-generation individuals in a CCRR who may experience similar challenges to the participants in this study with their families and within their relationship could be worked with using the aforementioned suggestions.

The participants appeared to seek CCRRs over endogamous relationships. However, The London Intercultural Couples Centre acknowledges that it is these differences that may evoke difficulties between the couple. From my own experience of working on placement in services across London, there appeared to be little knowledge amongst practitioners of services such as The London Intercultural Couples Centre which may have been an appropriate onward referral for many clients. Therefore, it seems valuable for practitioners working in a therapeutic setting and other health care professionals involved in the individual's care to be aware of such specialist services.

Reflexivity Part II

This reflexive statement concludes this thesis by providing my reflections and insight into the processes that arose from the methodology and analysis stages.

Reflecting on the double hermeneutic nature of IPA (Smith & Eatough, 2007), I acknowledge my personal identity as a second-generation, Indian woman in a CCRR may have influenced the interpretation of the data and an alternative researcher may have constructed the interview questions and interpreted the data differently. However, throughout the research process I have acknowledged my role in the research and aimed to remain open and curious to understand the participants' unique experiences.

While my preconceptions to some degree inevitably influenced my research, it could be argued my understanding of the participants' experience was developed through my dialogue with the women and immersing myself within the data. For example, I

initially assumed the participants' relationships would either be kept entirely secret from their parents or they would be completely open about their relationship. However, from the first interview and as I engaged deeper into the analysis, I became aware the women's experiences were not as clear cut as I had initially anticipated, and the meaning of 'secret' was a more fluid concept in this context. On reflection, perhaps this was my attempt to seek validation for my own experiences.

Furthermore, I noticed when initially compiling the interview questions, I included questions which seemed assumptive and leading in a direction that reflected some of my own experiences. In taking my questions to supervision, the nature of my questions were discussed and revised to reflect a less assumptive and more curious stance towards the phenomenon under study. I noticed my criteria for the participants' age was initially restricted to women between 18 and 30 years old. On reflection, I wonder whether I had chosen this age range as it fitted in with the age my own experiences had roughly occurred, and I assumed that perhaps women around this age would experience similar challenges. Similarly, through a discussion in supervision about the rationale behind my initial criteria selected for the participants' age, I recognised the presumptions I had made and subsequently extended the criteria to include a wider age range of second-generation women.

Employing semi-structured interviews, which are a central feature of IPA, was useful in establishing a rapport between myself and the women. Open-ended questions allowed for a natural lead into discussions and provided a more reliable sense of how the participants experience their CCRR. This style of interviewing allowed me to feel less anxious about the interviewing process. Although I had talked through the interview questions with peers prior to the participant interviews, I still felt I held some initial anxiety about interviewing the participants 'correctly'. I noticed, as the number of interviews progressed, I felt more comfortable in conducting the interviews and relied less on the order of the interview questions but engaged in what felt natural.

Initially engaging in this research, I worried about how a difference in religious backgrounds between myself and the participants may impact on my understanding of their experience. However, it was these differences which allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of Hinduism and engage with the data with an open mind. I was also able to minimise any preconceptions I held about Hinduism and use these differences

as a learning experience. Despite the religious differences there were various aspects of the participants' experiences that resonated with my own, particularly the worry about acceptance of one's partner. I therefore kept a reflexive journal to create a space where I would be able to capture my own processes not only in the role of the researcher and a trainee counselling psychologist, but also as an individual who had been through a similar experience.

Central to both IPA analysis and my work as a trainee counselling psychologist is working towards exploring and gaining an understanding of the individual's world. I was aware of maintaining appropriate boundaries during the interview process by following the women's lead and being mindful about my responses. I often felt moved by the women's narratives, particularly hearing them talk about the worry and anxiety they experienced around telling their parents about their relationship and the possible acceptance of their partner. At times, I found myself wanting to normalise their feelings or explore these feelings further, however I was aware of the limits of my role as a researcher which was listening and developing an understanding of the narratives and not to provide therapy. I was aware that my similar gender, age and cultural identity may have contributed to instinctively wanting to empathise with the women.

At times during the interview, many of the participants used phrases such as "you know..." or "you must get it". Although the women were aware that I was of an Asian, Indian background and appeared to be around the same age as many of them, they seemed to assume that I may have been Hindu or that our experiences may have been similar. This was particularly evident in discussions around traditional cultural expectations for women to get married and become housewives. I kept my responses of validation short such as nodding or 'mmm', as I felt it was important to validate their experiences, but at the same time I did not want to move the focus away from exploring their experience. On reflection after these interviews, I wondered whether the women felt I would be able to empathise with their experience given their perceptions of my cultural background. Reflecting on my role as a second-generation, Indian woman interviewing second-generation, Indian participants I felt I was able to build and maintain a good rapport with the participants. This allowed for a great degree of openness about their experiences- an intimate and challenging aspect of their lives. This was later confirmed after the interviews had finished and many of the women

communicated that it had felt good to talk about something that was prominent in their life as they had not really talked about it with people who "understand".

To conclude, I found interviewing my participants and analysing the data an interesting process and learning experience, particularly in my understanding of how second-generation, IH women experience being in a CCRR. I felt honoured that these women shared a significant aspect of their life with me and it was an honour to be able immerse myself within their experience and to provide this under researched population with a voice in literature. The analysis provided in-depth detail of the participants experiences and on reflecting on my role as a clinical practitioner, I believe the rich data from this study will influence the way I think about and work with second-generation IH women in CCRR's and to some extent, second-generation women in CCRR's facing similar difficulties. For example, in terms of thinking about how one experiences their identity, the possible impact of living within contrasting belief systems, coping strategies employed and the dynamics between the couple, within the family unit and externally. I also hope these findings will provide valuable insight and contribute to the existing knowledge of other clinical practitioners and researchers.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Poster

Appendix B: *Participant Information Sheet*

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Appendix M: *Example of Organising Literature for The Critical Literature Review*

Women needed!

Are you in a romantic relationship with someone from a different culture to your own?

I would like to hear your story!

If you are:
- ✓ Second-generation* Indian
- ✓ Hindu
- ✓ Hetrosexual
- ✓ Aged 18-40
- ✓ In a cross-cultural, non-marital romantic relationship for at least 3 months
- ✓ And willing to share your experiences

Participation will involve an informal interview at a location that is convenient for you. Interviews will be confidential and your identity will be protected.

If you are interested in taking part or want any more information, please contact me:

Philomena Da Silva (Trainee Counselling Psychologist):
phd0083@my.londonmet.ac.uk
Tel: 0794-772-8563

*Second generation is defined as those born in the UK, whose parent/s were born abroad

Title of Study: *The Lived Experience of Second-Generation, Indian, Hindu women in a Cross-Cultural Romantic Relationship: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*

Researcher: *Philomena Da Silva*

Research Supervisor: *Dr Angela Ioanna Loulopolou*

You are being invited to take part in a research project. This information sheet will provide you with the information regarding the researcher and the purpose and nature of the research. Please read the information provided below carefully before deciding whether to part take in the research.

The researcher and the research

I am a Counselling Psychologist in Training at London Metropolitan University. As part of the course requisite I am required to conduct a piece of research. The research aims to explore the experiences of second-generation, Indian, Hindu women in cross-cultural romantic relationships. Currently, there has been no research conducted in this area in the UK and it is hoped that the results from this study will increase knowledge and understanding for practitioners engaging with population and will also provide a foundation for future research. It is also hoped that the results from this study will provide a voice for the women who feel they are unable to or are alone in communicating their experiences.

What is involved?

If you have agreed to participate in the study, you will be asked to sign a consent form and you will be invited to attend an interview to discuss your experience of being in a cross-cultural romantic relationship. An agreed location, date and time will be agreed on together. The interviews will last approximately 60-90 minutes and will be audio-reordered in order to allow the data to be transcribed and analysed at a later stage. During the interviews, if there are any questions that you find difficult, distressing or intrusive you are not obliged to answer. You will be allowed to take a break or can ask to stop the interview if required. After the interview, you will be debriefed and there will be an opportunity for you to ask any questions or discuss any concerns you may have.

Confidentiality

All information provided by participants will remain confidential. Confidentiality will however be breached, and relevant parties contacted if you disclose you feel you are at risk to yourself or to others. In the event of this occurring, I will aim to discuss this with you first. The recordings will be saved on password protected devices and stored in locked compartments which only the researcher will have access to. During the write up, all names and identifiable information will be anonymised. All data collected will be destroyed on completion of the research project. Due to the academic requirements of the research project, research supervisors and academic assessors will have access to the interview data which will be anonymised.

Can I change my mind?

Participation in the research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw participation from the study up until a month after the interview date; in this instance, all data will be destroyed. You will not be penalised in any way should you wish to withdraw from the study at any point during the interview process or within the given time frame.

Expenses

All travel expenses incurred will be reimbursed by the researcher on the day of participation in the research study.

Can I access the results from the study?

The data gathered from the interviews will be analysed and presented in the form of a Doctoral thesis. Upon completion of the research study, if you wish to obtain a copy of the study please use the contact details provided below to request this.

What happens if I am unhappy or concerned about my experience?

If a problem or concern develops during the research process, or you wish to make a complaint please contact my research supervisor on: a.loulopoulou@londonmet.ac.uk.

If you are interested in taking part in the study, or have any further questions, please contact me on phd0083@my.londonmet.ac.uk or call: 07539849654.

Thank you for taking the time to read the Participant Information Sheet

Appendix C: Participant Informed Consent Form

Research Project Title: *The Lived Experience of Second-Generation, Indian, Hindu women in a Cross-Cultural Romantic Relationship: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*

Researcher: Philomena Da Silva

Research Supervisor: *Dr Angela Ioanna Loulopolou*

Description of procedure: During the audio-recorded interview, you will be asked a number of questions about your experience in relation to the topic area outlined above.

Please indicate by ticking the boxes below, if you agree with the following statement

♦ I can confirm that I have read, and I understand the information sheet, and have been given the opportunity to ask questions that have been answered.

♦ I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, and that I am able to withdraw my data within 1 month of the interview date without providing a reason for doing so.

♦ I understand that I will be taking part in a one to one, face to face interview that may last up to approximately 90 minutes. I understand that I can take a break and/or terminate the interview if needed. I understand that I am not obliged to answer questions that may be difficult for me.

♦ I consent to the interview being audio-recorded and understand that the excerpts may be used within the write up of the research. I understand that all information will remain confidential and any identifying information will be anonymised.

♦ I understand that the anonymised data will be accessed by academics during and after the research is completed.

♦ I understand that I have the right to request the results from the study and I can find information about how to do this on the information sheet.

♦ I understand that confidentiality may be breached if I am at risk of causing harm to myself or to others.

♦ I understand that the researcher will act in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and will ensure that all data collected will be securely stored separately and will be password protected. I understand that all data will be destroyed on completion of the research project.

Signature of participant…………….   Signature of researcher……………

Print name…………………   Print name…………………

Date: …………………   Date: …………………

Appendix D: Interview Schedule

General Introduction

- Introduction to the study and myself
- Go through Information sheet
- Ensure consent form has been signed
- Explain the right to withdraw

I am now going to ask you about your experience of being in a cross-cultural romantic relationship.

1) What does a cross-cultural, romantic relationship mean to you?

2) Could you tell me a little about how your cross-cultural relationship started and has developed?

Possible prompts

- *Can you tell me more about this?*

3) How would you describe your experience of being in a cross-cultural romantic relationship?

Possible prompts

- *Can you tell me more about that e.g. How has this experience been for you? If any, what challenges have you faced? How does this make you feel?*
- *What has this meant for you? Feelings, emotions?*

- *Family, friends, community?*

4a) Can you describe the sources of support you have drawn on if any during this experience which you may have found helpful?

4b) What advice would you give someone else going through a similar experience?

5)How have you found the interview today? Is there anything you would like to add that you feel is relevant that we haven't touched on in relation to your experiences?

Possible prompts
- *Is there anything else that feels important to you?*
- *Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?*

Appendix E: London Metropolitan Ethical Approval

Protocol to follow if participants become distressed during participation in the study:

This protocol has been devised by Cocking, (2008) to deal with the possibility that some participants may become distressed and/or agitated during their involvement in the current research study on the exploration of second-generation, Indian, Hindu women's' experiences of engaging in cross-cultural romantic relationships. If distress were to occur during participation in the study, the researcher Philomena Da Silva is a counselling psychologist in training at London Metropolitan University and has experience in managing situations where distress may occur. Outlined below is a three-step protocol detailing signs of distress that the researcher will look out for, as well as the necessary action to take at each stage. It is not expected that extreme distress will occur, or that the relevant action will become necessary and participants are advised to inform the research should they wish to take a break or stop the interview.

Mild distress

Signs to look out for:

1) Tearfulness

2) Voice becomes choked with emotion/ difficulty speaking

3) Participant becomes distracted/ restless

Action to take:

1) Ask participant if they are happy to continue

2) Offer them time to pause and compose themselves

3) Remind them they can stop at any time they wish if they become too distressed

Severe distress

Signs to look out for:

1) Uncontrolled crying/ wailing, inability to talk coherently

2) Panic attack- e.g. hyperventilation, shaking, fear of impending heart attack

3) Intrusive thoughts of the traumatic event- e.g. flashbacks

Action to take:

1) The researcher will intervene to terminate the interview/experiment.

2) The debrief will begin immediately

3) Relaxation techniques will be suggested to regulate breathing/ reduce agitation

4) The researcher will recognize participants' distress, and reassure that their experiences are normal reactions

5) If any unresolved issues arise during the interview, accept and validate their distress, but suggest that they discuss with mental health professionals and remind participants that this is not designed as a therapeutic interaction

6) Details of counselling/therapeutic services available will be offered to participants

Extreme distress:

Signs to look out for:

1) Severe agitation and possible verbal or physical aggression

2) In very extreme cases- possible psychotic breakdown where the participant relives the traumatic incident and begins to lose touch with reality

Action to take:

1) Maintain safety of participant and researcher

2) If the researcher has concerns for the participant's or others' safety, he will inform them that he has a duty to inform any existing contacts they have with mental health services, such as a Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) or their GP.

3) If the researcher believes that either the participant or someone else is in immediate danger, then he will suggest that they present themselves to the local A&E Department and ask for the on-call psychiatric liaison team. If the participant is unwilling to seek immediate help and becomes violent, then the Police will be called and asked to use their powers under the Mental Health Act to detain someone and take them to a place of safety pending psychiatric assessment.

(This last option would only be used in an extreme emergency).

Appendix G: Participant Debrief Form

Debrief Form

Thank you for your participation in this study, your contribution is invaluable and will aid in contributing to the understanding of the experiences of second-generation, Indian, Hindu, women engaging in cross-cultural romantic relationships. The information you provided in the interview will be transcribed and analysed and will contribute to the researcher's doctoral research project.

As stated in the information and consent forms, all information provided will remain confidential. All interview audio-recordings will be saved on an encrypted device and all transcriptions and identifying information will be anonymised.

If you have any questions, queries or concerns that many arisen from the interview, or if you wish to withdraw participation from the study, which you will have a month to do so, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at phd0083@my.londonmet.ac.uk or via phone on 07539849654.

Alternatively, if you would prefer to contact my supervisor, this can be done via email: a.loulopoulou@londonmet.ac.uk

You may be contacted again if you agreed with the researcher to be contacted for clarification in relation to the interview today.

If you feel that after participation in this study you would benefit from some support, you may wish to contact your GP to access free counselling for psychological support or alternatively you may wish to contact the organisations listed below.

Helplines

The Samaritans (tel. 0845 90 90 90; www.samaritans.org). The Samaritans is a national helpline, which is open 24 hours a day for anyone in need.

Counselling

 Mind (0300 123 3393; www.mind.org). Mind is a national organisation with local branches in boroughs all over the UK. Mind provides individual counselling sessions for a small fee. Mind also has helplines that are open Monday to Friday 9 am – 6 pm.

BPS: The British Psychological Society provides a directory of chartered psychologists. On the BPS website, click on the 'Psychology & the public' tab and follow the link to 'find a therapist'. Tel: 0116 254 9568 / Website: www.bps.org.uk

Appendix H: Examples of Three Participants Transcripts with Initial Noting and Emergent Themes

Anisha

Transcript excerpt (lines 67–99):

67 R:yeah
68 M:ermm so that was the first one, but besides that err there are small things like I'm still not
69 comfortable with him staying over at my house
70 R:okay
71 M:.. 'coz staying over at a girls house for a guy is not a thing that just happens in India unless your
72 husband
73 R:yeah
74 M:so for me to have a man in the house while my mum is around is weird.. it feels like a breach or a
75 divide between two separate worlds
76 R:yeah
77 M:my home life and my social life..which.. which is why I was so keen on helping you out because I've
78 just been through this for the last 6 months and I was like there's nothing on the internet about this
79 (laughs) I don't know how to deal with this, this is weird.. so ermmmm yeah that… that was definitely
80 odd so we're now in the process of working on him staying over
81 R:okay
82 M:I told him I'm going to make it happen you just have to give me time (laughs)
83 R:mmm
84 M: because it's a big change for me and my mum so we'll have to see how that goes
85 R:okay and does your mum live with you at the moment?
86 M:yeah, yeah yeah
87 R:okay and how did you I guess you introduce him to the family earlier then you wanted, how was that
88 for you?
89 M:oh it was riddled with anxiety
90 R:mmmm
91 M:it was such an anxious day for me and it wasn't the normal kind of anxious it wasn't anxiety 'coz I
92 was worried they won't like him because I knew they'd like him
93 R:mmmm
94 M:but it was anxiety because it was the first time I had ever done that
95 R:okay
96 M:the first time I'd ever introduced a boy the first time I'd ever.. *talked* about a boy to my family
97 R:yeah
98 M:before that it was just something they didn't ask about and I didn't talk about
99 R:okay… what was the I'm not asking and I'm not talking about kind of thing about?

		Exploratory comments
Wanting to keep worlds separate	232 wouldn't have been against it ..I know she wouldn't have disowned me or you know done anything 234 extreme .. 235 R:yeah 236 M:because we're not that strict I just didn't want to have the uncomfortable conversation with her 237 because you know when you're dating someone you don't know if it's going to be serious 238 R: yeah 240 M:so I didn't want to say I'm dating someone and then two weeks later say I was dating someone else 241 R:okay .. yeah 242 M:because that's just not my relationship with her and its okay to not have that relationship 243 R: yeah absolutely 244 M: so I just wanted to keep it separate … so that… that's part of the reason all of that together that 245 was why it was extremely uncomfortable for me 246 R:I can imagine 247 M: which is why I made it happen when my brother was also there – brother source of support 248 R: okay.. that made it I guess that made it a little bit easier for you to have your brother there who 249 who'd been through it you you know your mums reaction she was okay with it	Seems to have considered worst case scenarios. 'not that strict'. seems to suggest some openess with culture uncomfortable conversation – don't know if it is going to be serious. ↳ seems to reflect not liking change ↳ also something perhaps about what this might say about her? ↳ saving face? ↳ uncertainty herself perhaps? Justification of her relationship with her mother. uncomfortable – keep two worlds seperate double life? conflict between Eastern vs. Western cultures? culture clash. introduction to family seems to take a lot of planning / consideration + is riddled with anxiety.
Stigma around relationships not working	250 M:and also there is always a fear of … ok if… I lived away from my family and I was in a relationship 251 with someone who wasn't Indian then it would be easier to deal with the natural fear that everyone has 252 of what if it doesn't work out 253 R:mmmm 254 M: but with Indian parents and Indian family all of a sudden not working out is not even something that 255 occurs to them 256 R: yeah	'fear' – seems as though she has to think about what others think – what would this say about her? – what would this mean for her family? easier to deal with – being around Indians, there seems to be an added pressure . – saving face?
anxiety to be certain about partner	257 M:so there's added anxiety of telling your family about someone you've only known and at that time I 258 had only known him for four months 259 R: yeah 260 M:because it opens up the possibility that a year from now your gonna tell them that he did something 261 doochy and ran away and that another vulnerability I don't like showing to my family so it opens up all 262 of these possibilities that are new, – change. 263 R:absolutely yeah 264 M:and .. that … that was also part of the anxiety 'coz I don't yet know I mean I've become more and 265 more certain with time – as the relationship progresses she has become more certain – allowing herself to understand relationship for herself 266 R:yeah	Indian values / ways of thinking seems to perpetuate anxiety when facing these experiences. Psychological impact + pressure of making the right choice. Don't like showing vulnerability – perhaps a trait you don't show in Indian culture? ↳ perhaps due to upbringing? ↳ breaking up not in-line with Eastern values. Everything seems to moving quickly for her – pressure to be certain about relationship.

Seems to be a battle between Eastern values / beliefs vs. personal values beliefs.

Difficult process/uncomfortable feelings?

Emotional pain		
	40	S: so it is a difficult thing so like it's difficult because .. have... if I was with someone who was exactly you know Indian.. Hindu
	41	Gujarati and religious → rigid, somewhat strict criteria
Worry about Acceptance	42	R: yeah
	43	S: and di... and met all the criteria I wouldn't have to worry about whether they're going to get accepted
	44	R: mmmm
	45	S: whereas in this situation as time goes on between mine and my partners relationship ...the kind of concern and the worry
Fluctuation	46	grows over time as well Growing concern & worry about future?/Acceptance
Parental/ Societal Expectations	47	R: yeah
	48	S: because it's kind of like .. I've been with you for so many years and I'm gonna be with you so many years will you be
	49	accepted in the end
Holding back / Hiding / Secrecy	50	R: yeah
	51	S: because I've not introduced him to my parents still
	52	R: okay
	55	S: but that's still a massive concern for me ermmm ...but when it does come to the time that I introduce him to my parents it's
	55	gonna be that whole question of what is he..
	56	R: mmmm — unfamiliar & newness to family → not so easily accepted.
	57	S: ...and we'll have to think about it.. almost
Acceptance	58	R: yeah
	59	S: and even if my parents accept it it's my extended family members that will be like do they accept it will I accept it
	60	R: mmmmm
	61	S: soooo
	62	R: and what does it.. what would it mean to you if it wasn't accepted
	63	S: ...if it wasn't accepted... I think that for me would mean it's kind of like an ultimatum at that point ..
	64	R: mmmm — pauses - seems to be reflecting on the consequences
	65	S: and I would never want to think of it to get to that stage ... but erm.. it would be like a kind of ultimatum .. kind of like who do I
Who do I Choose?	66	choose in this situation → some hope that this → thought about won't get that far worst case scenario
	67	R: mmmm
	68	S: do I choose my family who I love dearly.. or my partner who I love dearly like — wonder about the psychological impact of this potential ultimatum? Seems to be regular thoughts about this?
	69	R: mmmm acknowledges consequences for her → her wishes are important
	70	S: like ..where.. what happens to me now ...like if it every came down to it like I wouldn't know what I would do .. it'd be like
	71	heart break and confusion for me
	72	R: mmmm — her life with her partner seems planned out -sees a future together. — seems to be a sense of being torn → dilemma
	73	S: because it's such a difficult situation to be in
	74	R: yeah — some avoidance of thinking about the potential consequences
	75	S: that... I wouldn't even want to imagine it almost
	76	R: yeah absolutely
	77	S: yeah so.... What was the question again sorry ... what would it — seemed lost in her thoughts & perhaps caught up with the associated emotions
	78	R: yeah
Emotional pain	79	S: yeah so .. yeah it would kind of.. it would it would feel like heartbreak and it would feel like confusion and heart break
	80	R: okay repetition of B/break → reiterates how difficult it would be for her sense of loss & sadness
	81	S: yeah
	82	R: ... so can you tell me a little bit about how your relationship started and developed?

Right-hand annotations:

Difficult x 2 - repetition highlights the impact of and cultural strain.

Worry about Acceptance
Expectation / Criteria
Lack of autonomy - choice in partner
repetition of concern - psychological impact.

Seems to be questioning how life/relationship will be accepted.

Seems difficult to navigate relationship because of cultural expectations.

Secrecy
Seems like the unknown is perpetuating her worry & concern

Parents will question cultural background

Acceptance is an extended family decision

Many layers/processess to go through

Introducing a potential partner → whole family/community involvement.

Ultimatum - seems to stem from the pressures/expectations put on by the Indian/Eastern culture → choosing between two worlds

Seems hard for her to integrate two worlds easily without coming up against some barriers.

Internal conflict

Perhaps the unknown & expectations & pressure from the Eastern culture lead to some avoidance of thinking about consequences → self-protection? → unbearable feelings?

highly emotive language to describe consequences

This current situation caused due to two differing worlds/values & expectations.

Sonal

Left margin annotations (top to bottom):
...nve ...periences ...relationship
Self-discovery
Supportive partner
Eastern vs. Western cultural practices
Introduction to family means marriage
hiding/ secrecy/ holding back
pressure to be certain about partner
Compensating/ building case for partner
hiding/ secrecy
Harder to accept cross-cultural relationship
psychological impact → 'on edge all the time'?

Transcript:

125 R: absolutely yeah
126 S: and hopefully it never gets to that but that's still gonna be something that's at the back of my mind but excluding them it's
127 amazing I love being in this relationship I've learnt so much about myself... and he's massively supportive and.. we get on so
128 well we which is really nice
129 R: mmmm
130 S: erm and different so yeah
131 R: yeah that sounds really nice
132 S: yeah
133 R: so kind of not excluding your family what's that been like how... how have you managed a cross cultural relationship and
134 your family
135 S: so firstly being in a relationship and having my family there is something in itself like.. in other cultures I know that you know
136 you can introduce your guy to your family – cultural differences across cultures
137 R: yeah
138 S: and it's no big deal and if you break up with them no big deal and if you introduce someone else no big deal .. with my family
139 if we're ever going to introduce someone to the family that is your be all and end all, – sense of having to make the right decision
140 R: yeah
141 S: that means that this is the person that you're going to marry this is the person who you see your future with
142 R: mmmm
143 S: so...... first of all being in a relationship I kind of have to hide it all little bit
144 R: okay
145 S: ermm like for instance if I'm going to meet him I'd have to say I'm meeting with friends – lying/secrecy → perhaps to protect herself?
146 R: mmm
147 S: ermmm that's because one I'm kind of just ermmm ...one I'm just kind of erm at..at even though it's been two and a half
148 years I'm still seeing how it's going seeing if he's the one which I do believe he is – holding back perhaps due to cultural pressures?
149 R: yeah
150 S: ermm and two.. I wanna be able to ...spend time with him and spend that time building a relationship with him and getting to
151 know him inside out both of us
152 R: yeah
153 S: so that when it does come to the time of introducing him to my parents erm I can see look I know him
154 R: mmm
155 S: he knows me.. he's really supportive and kind of like build him up almost – due to cultural pressures, perhaps there is a need to 'sell' him?
156 R: yeah
157 S: to my parents..and so yeah at the moment, being in a relationship with him I have to hide it
158 R: mmm
159 S: just being in a relationship and being in a relationship with someone whose cross cultural I have to hide it even more → highlighted
160 R: yeah
161 S: erm... because like I said the whole acceptance thing
162 R: yeah
163 S: so it's kind of like I'm hiding it so I'm like a little bit on edge all the time if that makes sense
164 R: yeah
165 S: erm... not as in I'll have such a bad repercussions if they find out that I'm in a relationship but I would rather it come from me
166 and I'm 100% certain that this is what's going to happen

Annotations (handwritten, around transcript):
hopes against worst case scenario
sounds like a constant state of uncertainty/ unsettled perhaps?
→ perhaps his support has made it easier in some sense to manage the relationship?
Amazing – reunions – enjoyment of being in relationship
→ positive + emotive language used. – paradoxical feelings?
self-discovery/ identity development
Supportive partner · understanding
Comparison to other cultures. other cultures seems easier. no big deal x 3 – emphasis on how easy it may seem
More emphasis on partner in Indian culture
Eastern vs. Western differences in partner screening process.
Emphasis on marriage in Indian culture
hiding/ secrecy / lies / two lives → due to cultural expectations + differences
exercising western values / identity – a way of managing her bi-cultural identity.
hiding part of herself/ identity?
in line with western practices / values → wanting to get to know him → given that
space + time to do that.
→ has to be right before introducing him?
things that are important to her → meeting others' expectations
Exercising some western practices – perhaps for family?
managing 2 worlds
wanting to be able to enjoy time together without being perhaps 'pushed'? into marriage?
sense of still wanting to get to know eachother
Not being accepted even more so
Sense of building a case for him?
due to cultural pressures, having to navigate two worlds
protecting self/relationship
Sense of having to have even more precautions
Sense of having to please parents
having to hide it even more → highlighting the importance parents in Indian Hindu culture to marry within → Not acceptable
Sounds even more difficult. because of relationship being cross-cultural
pressure on individual due to cultural expectations.
protecting self/ relationship
Acceptance brings uncertainty
two worlds don't mix
psychological impact due to expectations?
→ trying to leave it to fate/ and to worlds
→ uncertainty / unknown
→ respect for parents

values clash?

Cultural values Clash	599	**R:** yeah	Cultural clash
	600	so there's a clash between… my erm… ways of living and their criteria definitely	
	601	**R:** mmm …yeah and kind of getting into this relationship with Jay did you ever think about what your parents would think I	
	602	guess you naturally fell into this relationship	
	603	yeah	
Holding back	604	**R:** but was there any thought about and what was that like if there was or wasn't	remembering her values/identity — important to her
	605	yeah so in the beginning when me and Jay got together… when we officially got together a part of me was almost resistant	some holding back initially
Splitting self	606	**R:** mmm	
Thinking about future	607	I was thinking shall I actually get into this relationship… and actually a part of me was thinking maybe I shouldn't just to	going against Indian cultures save @ break values
	608	save… I suppose the heart break in the long term …erm erm but then I kind of had like a moment like a switch like a light bulb	sense of holding back from what she wants due to
Focus on own 'desires'	609	moment where I was like do you know what this is my life … like regardless of how this turns out I'm enjoying being with him	cultural expectations → the influence of the Indian
	610	…and I want to be with him so I'm gonna live my life right now and I know there might be repercussions in the future… but I	culture.
Impact of cultural expectations	611	guess I'm going to have to persevere and push through them to enjoy what I have right now	British identity
	612	**R:** yeah	managing both cultures
	613	so… it's sad I had to consider.. not being with him	making difficult decisions
	614	**R:** yeah	contemplated relationship
	615	yeah but like I said my parents luckily aren't as …its gonna sound silly but as devilish as other parents like they're not so strict	cultural control
	616	where they'll strike him off immediately they'll listen but other parents they'll say no from the get go without even wanting to	
	617	meet the guy	
Negotiating with parents	618	**R:** yeah	
	619	the first thing they'll want to know or ask is what is he's background what is he's religion if there's if it's anything outside of	some negotiation
	620	Hindu.. Indian they'll strike him off immediately at least my parents will sit him down.. talk to him get a feel of what he's like and	parents curious
	621	then make a judgement.. and make a decision	Judgement
	622	**R:** yeah	Approval / Acceptance
	623	so… yeah I'm lucky in one sense but still there's a lot of adapting that they need to do yeah	
	624	**R:** yeah okay and knowing this is to come how does that make you feel now?	
	625	what is to come sorry?	
	626	**R:** like this you said your persevering for now but there could possibly be repercussions at the end how does that make you feel	
	627	now wha… what kind of impact does that have on you or does it not really	
Anticipation & worry about future	628	to be honest I try not to think about it but if I was to think about it right now… having being asked that question I would say	some avoidance – perhaps too hard to think?
	629	there was a bit of anticipation in the future… erm… and maybe a bit of worry but.. I know that this is the situation that's why I try	sense of uncertainty maybe
	630	not to think about it much	psychological impact?
Avoidance	631	**R:** yeah	worry
	632	because if I do think about it too much it will most definitely impact our relationship even more	seems to be aware of the impact it may have on relationship
	633	**R:** mm	newness for parents
	634	erm in the sense that I will ..I could even start holding back I could even try and pull away from the relationship and I don't	Aware of the impact expectations may have
	635	want to do that… so erm yeah so I'm kind of not trying to think about it	
	636	**R:** okay and can you describe any of the sources of support you may have drawn on during this time	friends – source of support
	637	erm I'd say definitely my friends	
Sisters → Shared understanding	638	**R:** yeah	
	639	but even more so my sisters… simply because they understand they get the family dynamics they get the background they	siblings – similar background/ understanding
	640	even get the whole Indian.. Hindu.. Gujarati thing erm and they get me they know me they understand our relationship so them	understand her?

Splitting → identity/values clash? – Indian part?

feels she shouldn't have to go through this? – managing two worlds? / sense of autonomy

doesn't seem to agree with cultural expectations/limitations

expectations seems to be at the back of her mind

aware of possible consequences

some sense of hopefulness?

decision lies with parents? → relationship is a family process

still not going to be an easy process

uncertainty / unknown

impacted on relationship already?

sense of feeling torn?

avoidance – self-protection?

Having to choose between two?

understanding seems important as a source of support

Left margin annotations:
- Aware of cultural prejudice
- own desires vs. parental expectations
- Anticipates hard discussions
- Considering partners feelings

Line	Transcript
36	A: and that that's just how it is
37	R: okay
38	A: erm so that has been that that's that was very recent
39	R: okay
40	A: erm.. err the other difficulty I think was the fact that becasue he is of cz he is half black half white
41	as well so erm.. you don't want race to come into a situation when it comes to your family.. and that
42	that's something that's very difficult.. to deal with
43	R: okay can you tell me a bit more about what's been difficult to deal with..?
44	A: erm I think when it comes to erm.. (sigh) a Indian people and dating someone who's of colour
45	especially if they're black erm it's frowned upon.. and that can be very difficult
46	R: mmm
47	A: to deal with because you just want your family to see the person for who they are not for the
48	colour or the race
49	R: yeah
50	A: erm because you know that at the end if you're happy that person makes you happy you don't
51	want that to be.. erm an aspect that your parents or your family.. erm hone in on
52	R: absolutely yeah... how's that made you feel having to manage that?
55	A: well at the moment because I cz it's still fairly new it's not been something I've had to confront just
55	yet but you know it's something that you have to discuss or talk about and it's quite it is hard it is a
56	hard discussion to have because you don't want that person to feel erm.. that because of the way
57	they are as a person for their colour or the race the religion anything like that you don't want them to
58	feel erm.... I suppose small
59	R: yeah
60	A: as a person because that sho.. in in the same way I'm a coloured person I wouldn't want someone
61	to to do that to me
62	R: absolutely
63	A: so in the same way I don't want somebody to and and the worse part of it is is that you know that's
64	that could happen within your family and that's not.. that's hard that is the hard aspect to actually deal
65	with
66	R: yeah
67	A: you're in a relationship because at the end of the day it is two it is just the two of you
68	R: absolutely
69	A: so
70	R: okay and can you tell me a bit more about how your relationship started and developed
71	A: erm we met at a wedding
72	R: okay
73	A: erm my cousins wedding it was his best friends sister's wedding erm I was single and is as at a
74	point where I was just sort of like ahh whatever erm heee asked for my number and then you know

Red annotations:
- previous example sounds like it was a difficulty
- recognising Indian cultural dynamics
- seen negatively
- (sigh) meaning has now difficult it has been for her
- worried about acceptance?
- sense of family being traditional perhaps?
- cultural differences
- want family to see what she sees
- Differences don't need to be highlighted / brought to attention
- cultural tensions highlighted
- Thinking about future conversations
- differences in cultural values/expectations
- seems like she is worried about their reaction?
- hard to deal with cultural attitudes?
- individualistic attitude?
- two people in a relationship
- mutual setting
- He unmarried trying to progress relationship.

Right margin annotations:
- Eastern vs. Western culture
- generational differences
- cultural differences
- Difficult
- Doesn't want race to be an issue
- Race may be a problem for family?
- Indian culture
- black people - frowned upon
- cultural tension
- evokes feelings of being difficult for her
- Individual not colour or race
- Sense of being difficult to deal with two words
- Importance on happiness
- race/culture shouldn't be an issue that's highlighted.
- anticipates it will be a hard discussion
- thinking about partners feelings
- Doesn't want cultural attitudes to make partner feel small
- anticipation / thinking about future seems hard for her
- Aware of Indian mentality/ attitudes
- repitition of 'hard'
- Perhaps some avoidance introducing partner because of her worries re: cultural differences / How family might react / attitudes

Avni

Left margin themes:
- Worry + fear about acceptance
- it's upsetting and hard
- It's not impossible
- Negotiating with parents
- psychologically + Emotionally hard
- Worried about partners feelings

Transcript (lines 467–504):

467 worry and that is that is something that you do fear and because and it's one thing not being and like
468 I said it's the fact that he's it's I don't want to come across as being racist erm but I think within the
469 Indian culture you know I don't think being someone whose black is very accepted at all erm.. I mean
470 although he's half black I think that that's still very much it won't be seen as him being white it's only
471 half
   ↳ Indian attitudes/mentality   ↳ not considering his 'white' side
472 R: mmm
473 [A] he will be seen as he is black erm.. and that and I know I've done it myself I'm not gonna lie like
474 you know when I was younger I did do that you know when you see an Indian girl and a guy you
475 think oh my God erm.. yeah but as you grow older you can't I just think whatever it's fine it's not an
476 issue
   ↳ perhaps adopting Indian attitudes when younger   ↳ develop own values/sense of identity/attitudes
477 R: mmm
478 [A] but it's you know it's a case of whether like I said it's it's the relationship is valuable enough to to
479 endure that — go through the anticipated difficulties | endure- sense of it not being easy or going to be easy
480 R: mmm is this something you think about a lot? The what if's?
481 [A] yeah it's something I do and it's something I discuss with my sister more than anyone because
482 you know it's.. you know she plays the devil's advocate and is it's upsetting it is upsetting and it is
483 hard - hard to think about the negatives?   Things about 'what ifs'   sister tries to get a balanced view   seems to be a source of support
484 R: mmm
485 [A] but I think like I said it's if it's... that if it's that important enough and if that person makes you
486 happy if you think this is worthwhile then I think it's doable — fight for it   important enough you persve + worthwhile
487 R: absolutely what are you finding hard? And can you tell me what was going through your
488 mind when you are thinking about this relationship and whether your parents are going to accept it?
489 [A] I think it's it's what I've realised is my parents will go well we won't ever talk to you again which I
490 don't think they would do I think it would be a case of ...just really... I think it.. it is something ermm
491 ...I think it's more of you know that you don't want to disappoint them — managing her wants vs. Parents expectations
492 R: yeah   her worst case scenario   ↳ managing two worlds   ↳ sense of managing/negotiating 2 worlds
493 [A] you don't want them to feel disappointed of embarrassed in any way but then I have to think and
494 then it's me having to say well if I'm happy then it.. then it has to be and I think as a person you've   be strong enough to have conversation/negotiate   nothing wrong
495 got to be a strong enough person to be able to .....get them to see erm.. that it's okay   reflection   what will the community think?   with it
496 R: yeah what's that like going round and round.. on process   psychological impact
497 [A] like I said it's upsetting erm.. you fear it.. you.. you it it turns your stomach in knots and   some sadness   physical impact
498 sometimes it's something you don't want to bring up with your partner because you don't want to
499 upset them and you don't want them to feel well because of the way I am your parents aren't going to   managing everyones expectations/feelings
500 accept me..erm because I know I've been in a relationship where I had (laugh) an ex-boyfriends
501 grandparent you know say to him oh she's a bit dark isn't she ..so it's not... it you you know it's not   evokes upsetting feelings + fear
502 nice it's not something you want to endure and you don't want that person to endure either – worried about how partner will be perceived
   – worried about partners feelings
503 R: no and it sounds like from your experience you don't want that
504 [A] well look we are you know the fact of the matter is we are Indian.. or you are with a coloured
   ↳ doesn't want partner to think it is 'him'   psychological physical impact of managing two worlds – two relationships   Seems like past experiences have made her aware of what might potentially be to come

Right margin annotations:
- evokes feelings of worry + fear of not being accepted.
- Being with someone whose black isn't accepted
- perhaps this is what makes it harder for her
- Some sense of prejudice around dating black people!
- Family will only focus on him being black
- Fight for relationship if it's valuable enough
- seeks support in sister
- Some affirmation/upsetting, upsetting repeated → to think about perhaps worst case scenario
- Not easy to think relationship won't be accepted.
- Worried about → disappointing parents
- managing parents feelings/expectations
- bi-cultural identity
- Don't want parents to feel disappointed or embarrassed
- worrying about parents perceptions
- Negotiation with parents
- Physical impact of thinking about it
- Strong enough to have a conversation with parents   ↓ due to cultural landing uncertain uncertain
- evokes upsetting feelings + fear
- Seems like past experiences have potentially be to come

Appendix I: Example of an Initial List of Emergent Themes (Priya)

Emergent Theme	Line numbers	Transcript
Merging two cultures	3-4	P3
Challenging	6	P3
Learning from each-others culture	7	P3
Sharing values		P3
Making compromises	15-16	P3
Respecting each-others culture	18	P3
Integrating two cultures	28-30	P3
Making compromises	36-39	P3
No-one will be good enough	66-67	P3
Unique romantic connection	76-77	P3
Long wait for acceptance	80-83	P3
Cultural checklist/parental expectations	85	P3
Ultimatum	89-90	P3
Parents fears/anxieties	100-101	P3
Cultural similarity important to parents	103105	P3
Maintaining traditional values	115-116	P3
You question yourself a lot	126	P3
Considering emotional impact on partner	127-128	P3
Acceptance from partners family	133-134	P3
Open communication with partners parents	137-138	P3
Difficult dynamic with parents	142-144	P3
Negotiating with parents	146-147	P3
Attempting to integrate worlds	149	P3
Parents anxieties/worries	159-160	P3
Independent decision-making	173-174	P3
Rejecting romantic relationship	184-185	P3
Questioning own judgement	187-189	P3
Parents worries/anxieties	198	P3
Parents feel a loss	204	P3

Acceptance from those that matter	217-220	P3
Autonomous decision making	228	P3
Feeling pulled between two sides	232-234	P3
Support from partner	235-237	P3
Making the fight harder	241-242	P3
Doing this journey alone	249-250	P3
I want someone emotionally supportive	261	P3
Emotional manipulation from parents	272-275	P3
hiding/secrecy	276	P3
Sense of autonomy in decision making	286-287	P3
Open about relationship	294-295	P3
Parents compromising	308-309	P3
Giving an ultimatum	321-322	P3
Paradoxical feelings	345-350	P3
Sense of relief from acceptance	353-354	P3
Values parents support	359-360	P3
Eastern VS. Western in relationship practices	362-366	P3
Advice from others with similar experiences	381-385	P3
Approval important from those that matter	395	P3
Feeling understood	405-407	P3
Approval important from those that matter	415-417	P3
Cultural values clash	439-442	P3
Avoiding discussions	449	P3
Upholding an image	450-451	P3
Cultural prejudice	453-455	P3
Cultural similarity easier	461-463	P3
Harder to merge differences	467-479	P3
Extreme behaviours employed to receive acceptance	481-485	P3
Psychological impact of feeling pulled between two cultures	494-497	P3
Feeling hurt	505-506	P3
Questioning parents' motives	516-517	P3
Ready to be more open with parents	548	P3

|		
Holding back/lying	557-559	P3
Perceived judgements/assumptions from parents	565-570	P3
No expectations	574-579	P3
No expectations	585-589	P3
Better together than apart	609-610	P3
Managing two worlds/ secrecy	615-618	P3
Rebelling	622-623	P3
Seeking normality	640-641	P3
Parental anxieties/worries	667-668	P3
Forced to compromise	690-692	P3
Difficult thinking about future	698-699	P3
Societal judgements	723-725	P3
Stereotypical parental expectations VS. own desires	741-742	P3
Parental judgement/ questioning relationship	759-763	P3
Parents values/desires VS. own desires	778-779	P3
Doesn't meet cultural criteria	796-800	P3
Relationship worth the fight	803-804	P3
Relationship being tested	806	P3
Planning for the future	859-861	P3
Hard creating a balance between two worlds	889-891	P3
Supportive partner	907-908	P3
Blinded by the fear of losing daughter	928	P3
The 2nd generation recognise the power of love	937-939	P3
Hard creating a balance between two worlds	958	P3
Feeling dismissed	966-967	P3
Parents not open to integrating two cultures	976	P3
Intergenerational/cultural conflict	999-1003	P3
Build-up of emotions	1033-1036	P3
Sense of relief	1047-1048	P3
Own desires VS. Parental expectations	1068-1069	P3
Questioning parents' decisions	1076-1080	P3
Parents removed from today's culture	1097	P3
Anticipated difficulties integrating families	1116-1118	P3

Parents holding onto cultural traditions	1123-1125	P3
Parents worry about future	1129-1131	P3
Relationship not fully accepted	1138-1140	P3
Telling people that matter	1159-1161	P3
Affirmation of relationship from friends	1215-1223	P3
Using each-other for support	1228-1229	P3
Support from those that understand you/situation	12230	P3
No-one will ever be good enough	1247-1248	P3
External familial support	1257-1260	P3
Partner given a chance	1272	P3
Challenges from family	1287-1288	P3
Partner received support	1290-1292	P3
If it's worth it don't give up	1298-1300	P3
Perceived an on-going battle with family	1306-1308	P3
Fighting for love	1327-1329	P3
Managing parent's feelings VS. own feelings	1331-1334	P3
Starting to integrate two worlds	1348-1349	P3
Parents feel a loss	1356	P3
Parents maintaining traditional views	1373-1374	P3
Love is not a checklist	1424	P3
Making compromises as a 2nd generation	1429-1930	P3
Conforming growing up/meeting expectations	1439-1443	P3
Exerting a sense of autonomy in decision making	1450	P3
Conforming/Meeting expectations	1455-1456	P3
Scared to mix two worlds	1460-1462	P3
Questioning being open	1467	P3
Regret	1468	P3
Holding back	1479	P3
Protecting good memories	1495	P3
Uncomfortable integrating worlds	1527-1532	P3
Parents keeping worlds apart	1545	P3
It's been a difficult process	1560	P3
Protecting self/relationship	1581	P3

Learning from own experiences	1583-1584	P3
Be willing to compromise	1598	P3
It hasn't been easy	1604-1605	P3
Feeling isolated	1621	P3

Appendix J: Example of Searching for connections across themes (Meera)
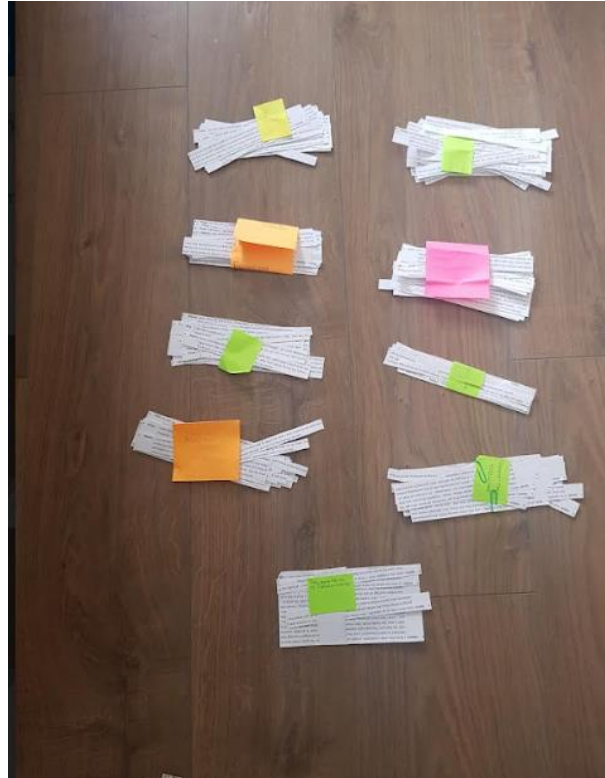
Appendix K: Looking for Patterns Across Individual Cases- Example During the Process

Appendix L: Demographic Questionnaire Form

Participant Demographic Information Sheet

Please can you answer the following questions. The answers to these questions will be used to inform the research data and for no other purpose. They will be stored and disposed of in the same way as all other data as is outlined in your information sheet

Name _____-

What is your age? 20-30 ♦ 31-40 ♦ 41-50 ♦

How long have you been in your current relationship for?_____