DEVELOPMENTAL CRISIS IN EARLY ADULTHOOD: A COMPOSITE QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Submitted by

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Thesis submitted in total requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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January 2008

Abstract

Previous research has suggested that adult development can be punctuated by periods of developmentally formative crisis (e.g. Erikson, 1968; Levinson, 1978). While the presence of such crises in adulthood is acknowledged, the nature and processes of these crises have received little empirical attention, with crises in early adulthood (ages 22-40) being a particularly marked vacuum of research. This investigation aimed to study the dynamics, phenomenology and implications of crisis in early adulthood, using an interview-based form of data collection and a composite form of qualitative data analysis. The sample was demographically homogenous; all individuals were recruited within London, via university communication channels or external advertisements. 8 of the final 22 participants were current mature students at Birkbeck College.

This thesis is composed of three empirical studies. The first study used a sample of 16 cases, each of whom was interviewed about a past episode of crisis experienced between the ages of 25 and 40. The second study used a single case-study to illuminate, open and expand concepts from Study 1. The third study involved a sample of 6, each of whom were interviewed twice about a past crisis in the same age range, in order to further develop the concepts from the previous two studies.

A recognisable four-phase pattern was found in almost all of the early adult crisis episodes sampled. The first of these phases is characterized by a constrictive and unsatisfying life structure, and a sense of false obligation or passive acquiescence to remain in a domestic and/or occupational role which is no longer wanted or desired. The second phase is characterized by separation from that role or roles, and also by intense negative affective upheaval. The third phase involves time out from commitment for exploration of new intrinsically motivated activities, and consideration of new possibilities within the self. The fourth phase involves commitment to a more integrated, intrinsically motivated life structure, in which self and role are in greater equilibrium than before. Loss of a dysfunctional persona and a growing sense of personal agency and assertiveness were found to occur over the course of these four phases alongside substantial changes in occupation and relationships.

It was concluded that these findings might indicate a common, life-stage specific, dynamic to early adult crisis. To overcome limitations of sample and recruitment in the current study, more empirical work is needed on crisis in this area of the human life cycle.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Jonathan Smith for his patience, time, alacrity, candour and incisive guidance throughout all stages of this thesis. I would like to thank those persons who were kind enough to be interviewed by me and tell me about their lives frankly, openly and insightfully. I have learnt a lot through them. And thanks to Nollaig Frost, Helen Brewer, Bahar Tanyas and Polona Curk, who all shared an office with me over the last three years and helped keep me sane. Thanks also to Lyn Robinson, Philip Robinson and Tania Noble, who kindly helped with proofreading the thesis in its final stages.

Declaration

No other person's work has been used, paraphrased or quoted without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

Neither the thesis, nor any part of it, has been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other institution.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics Safety Committees.

Contents

1.
The Development and Structure of the Thesis

1.1 Development of the Thesis: A Reflexive Prologue

This thesis is a qualitative investigation into the nature and implications of crisis episodes experienced during early adulthood. The project has taken four years; I started at the age of 27 and am writing this age 30. It has been a time in my life during which my worldview, my aspirations and my understanding of the theories and methods of psychology were changing. Correspondingly, the research endeavour has developed in ways that I could not have anticipated when I initially set out to do a doctoral thesis. I was initially taken on by Birkbeck College to write a thesis on the phenomenology of stress, particularly focusing on anticipatory stress – the stress brought on by an anxiety-inducing event that is yet to occur. While researching this area I came across a book which suggested that stress might precipitate development in some circumstances (Aldwin, 1994), by leading to a stronger self and to new forms of coping. This was a view that I had not encountered before in the literature on stress and I found myself drawn to investigate it further. I then encountered Taylor's work on the way in which individuals retrospectively reflect on serious illness and personal trauma in positive ways, considering them a stimulus for development (Taylor, 1989). This further fuelled my growing interest in the developmental outcomes of stress, of stressful episodes, and of illness.

I then undertook a pilot project in which I interviewed two persons about past periods of serious illness, in order to establish how they coped with it, what the long-term effects were on them, and how they developed or changed afterwards. Both described their illness episodes as profoundly difficult and stressful, but also as catalysts for learning, change and development, particularly in a sense of improved personal control, responsibility and balance between self and environment.

After the pilot work, my attention turned for the first time towards the lifespan development literature, including the work of Daniel Levinson, Gail Sheehy and others. Lifespan development is a peripheral area in British psychology, hence I had not covered it in my five years of study in psychology prior to undertaking the thesis. In this new area of literature, I found a whole new consideration of stress and development under the rubric of crisis. The stress that occurs within crisis is

considered to be a constructive part of the developmental process, for example Gail Sheehy wrote:

> "If I've been convinced by one idea in the course of collecting all the life stories that inform the book, it is this: times of crisis, of disruption or constructive change, are not only predictable but desirable. They mean growth." (Sheehy, 1977, p.31)

Researching this literature led me away from a consideration of physical illness, which has a large amount of empirical research attached to it, towards developmental crisis, which does not. I could find no satisfactory answer in the literature to *why* crisis may have a transformative effect, or lead to growth. Extant literature suggested that this change occurred in the cognitive self, such as in enhanced self-understanding, or a greater sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy. This then led to a deep and extensive review of the literature on the self, as it is dealt with in social psychology (e.g. Markus, 1980), in humanistic theory (e.g. Rogers, 1961) and in social cognitive theory (e.g. Bandura, 1978).

It was clear there was a lack of empirical work on the processes of crisis, with a particular paucity of research on crisis occurring in the 20-40 age band of "early adulthood" (Levinson, 1978). There is almost nothing to be found on the nature and processes of crisis in this age group since Levinson's work in the 1970s. I therefore settled upon studying the nature and developmental repercussions of crisis in early adulthood, in order to fill this perceived niche.

During the process of data collection and analysis of the data in the thesis, several new theoretical constructs were brought in to help interpret aspects of the data that did not seem to be comprehensible within the scope of the original literature review. These new constructs were *the persona* (or false self), *materialism* and *intrinsic/extrinsic orientation*. Rather than incorporate these later developments into Chapter's 2 literature review and so imply that they were *a priori* constructs, they are introduced in the thesis during the discussions of Chapters 6, 7 and 8, in order to emphasise to the reader that it was the emerging data that suggested their inclusion, rather than their presence shaping the data from the outset.

1.2 Methodological Developments

While my theoretical ideas and research questions were developing, my methodological ideas were developing too. I had been intending a qualitative project from the start, as I had been working as a qualitative researcher in the commercial

domain for several years prior to commencing the PhD and wanted to play to my strengths. When I started out on designing the thesis, my intention was to use Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Upon reviewing the various other qualitative approaches available, which was done in exhaustive fashion in the early stages, other methods such as Grounded Theory and Miles and Huberman's Interactive Model also presented attractive features that could play a useful role in this project. In the tradition of methodological monism, I initially transferred allegiance to Miles and Huberman's approach. I then moved to the possibility of a composite analysis approach, and so innovated a composite methodology that draws on both Smith's IPA and Miles and Huberman's Interactive Model. This composite approach is described in detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The next chapter, Chapter 2, sets out a review of the existing literature on crisis, development, self and the challenges of early adulthood. In Chapter 3, the focus then digresses to the philosophical foundations of the project, and a "middle-way" epistemology is described. Chapter 4 sets out the components of the composite qualitative method, and its sources in the qualitative movement. Chapter 5 then outlines first how this method was applied generically across the thesis and then specifically to Study 1. In Chapter 6, the findings from the first empirical study are reported within a set of four phases that define a common crisis dynamic. It was during analysis of Study 1 data that I first encountered the work of Laing on the false self and Jung on the persona, which aided in interpreting the data. Study 2, described in Chapter 7, was an intensive case study. Here I decided to focus on the strands of development occurring across crisis. Study 3, reported in Chapter 8, was conducted in order to develop ideas from Study 1 and Study 2 in more detail.

A retrospective analysis of all the data gathered during the project was undertaken in order to develop Chapter 9, which is an overall synthesis of the findings into a conjectural four-phase model of crisis. This model takes into account findings from all three studies. Finally in Chapter 10 there is a general discussion that integrates theory and data, highlights limitations and issues of validity, and suggests steps for future research.

This is a thesis that sits precariously between established domains. Theoretically, it draws on concepts from lifespan development, social cognitive

models, psychodynamic theory, social psychology, systems psychology and personality theory. Methodologically it sits between Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Miles and Huberman's more structured Interactive Model. Philosophically, it walks the road between idiographic and nomothetic forms of research, while attempting to balance inductive and hypothetico-deductive logic and to bridge realism and constructionism. This is because I find that it is in between defined domains and polarities that the most fertile locations for innovation and synthesis are to be found. Despite the inevitable difficulties, I believe it is worth the effort.

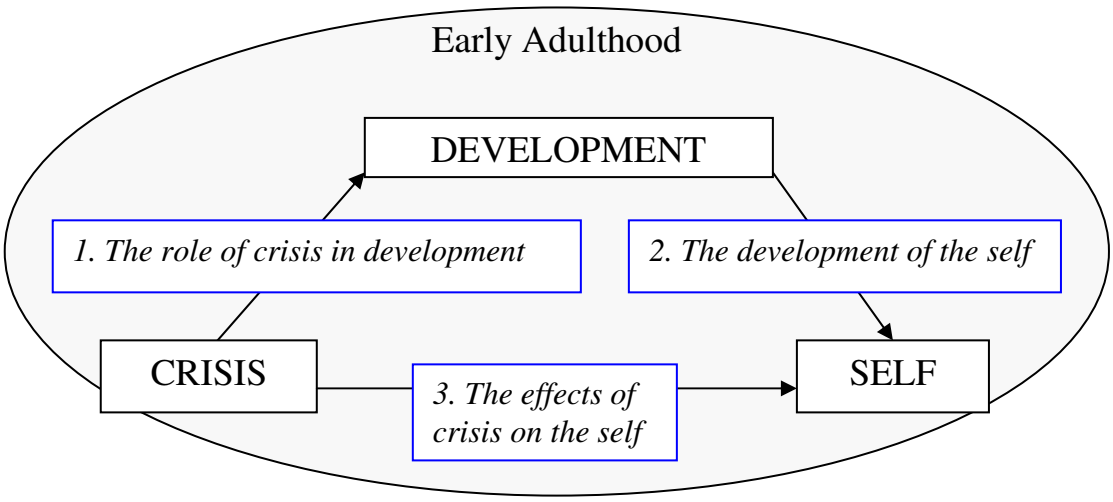
2.
Review of Existing Theory and Research

2.1 Introduction

Science is a cumulative and communal enterprise. The ideal in any science is that a global community of researchers creates an integrated body of work that cumulatively adds to itself, corrects itself, fills in prior blanks, and develops from the foundations laid by great thinkers into a self-supporting and integrated body of knowledge (Fleck, 1979). A researcher must therefore aim to become part of a larger corpus, to embed their work in a superordinate system of knowledge. This epistemological point underpins the rationale of the literature review in a scientific investigation, and the practice of referencing within scientific papers. Both the literature review and referencing to prior work pin an isolated research project into the corpus of science from whence it emerges and to which it aims to return.

The first purpose of this literature review is to present clear definitions and conceptualisations of key constructs to order to create a working framework for later data collection, interpretation and analysis; these constructs are crisis, development, self and early adulthood. All these conceptualisations will be open to revision based on the data that emerge in later chapters. The second purpose of this literature review is to do a reconnaissance of prior work that considers how crisis, development and the self relate to one another. Thirdly I shall review the research that has been done by lifespan developmental theorists on the phase of early adulthood. The conceptual focus of the literature review is summarised graphically in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual Coverage of Literature Review



This literature review will act as both a contextual framework within which the results of my investigation may be understood and interpreted, and will also illuminate the process by which initial ideas and concepts were developed into actionable research questions.

2.2 Development

In attempting to understand a construct, etymology can often provide opening clues. The word development comes from the Latin suffix "de" meaning "out of" or "from", and the Latin word "velo" which means cover or hide. It literally means to bring out of hiding. In etymological terms, although rarely used as such, it is the antonym of "envelopment", which means to hide or cover in. This suggests that what emerges during the course of development is lying latent, hidden, in a potential or ideal state. Development cannot occur down an arbitrary or random trajectory, for to say that something has developed is to say that it has *improved* in some way, or come closer to an ideal state (Sugarman, 1986). Change can happen in many directions, both developmental and regressive, and to label change in a person as "development" requires a judgment that the observed change has moved a person closer to some reference point that defines what 'developed' should be (White, 1975). This judgmental aspect of labelling development is probably clearer on a socio-economic level – to call one country "developed" and another country "developing" requires an explicit set of criteria against which to make this judgement, and an ideal that constitutes a developmental endpoint or developmental direction. Development, then, is characterised by change in a definite direction, and for the developing human being the direction can be conceived of as proceeding along two parallel lines, which run harmoniously in the same direction, one implicating the other. The first is toward *complexity*, and the second is toward *equilibrium*.

Development of the human being moves toward complexity by way of two interacting processes operating on a physical and psychological level: differentiation and integration (Allport, 1961; Lewin, 1931; Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, Bronfebrenner, 1979, Deci and Ryan, 1991). Differentiation involves an undifferentiated fused unity breaking into units separated by boundaries, so that an internal structure emerges. Integration refers to the co-ordination of these separate units into functional groupings or systems (Von Bertalanffy, 1969). In biology, the developing embryo starts as one cell that then differentiates into a blastocyst of cells, which carries on until it reaches

the adult human form of around ten trillion cells. Integration involves collating these units and organising them into functional groupings; organs and systems. In the psychological realm, development occurs by:

a) The progressive differentiation and integration of knowledge schemata, both paradigmatic and narrative (Bruner, 1987). Starting with an entirely undifferentiated oneness in infancy, without even self-world distinction, the world is parsed into frameworks of interpretation or "schemata", which are the psychological parallel of cells in the body. They may be integrated into systems of understanding, which are further integrated into a worldview or belief system (Graves, 1970).

b) The progressive differentiation and integration of affect from simple pleasure/pain to the diverse array of adult emotions (Bridges, 1932; Labouvie-Vief, Hakim-Larson, DeVoe, & Schoeberlein, 1989).

c) The differentiation and integration of action sequences from simple reflexes through to circular reactions (Piaget, 1967), to means-end strategic problem-solving (Newell and Simon, 1972) through to the pursuit of, and co-ordination of, life goals (Buhler and Masarik, 1968; Inhelder and Piaget, 1958).

Development towards higher states of complexity by way of differentiation and integration can only take place in an open system, for an open system can assimilate information, energy and matter from the environment to fuel its upward growth to more complex forms (Allport, 1961). The ascent to higher forms of complexity is driven by an inherent force within organisms to seek equilibrium despite the disequilibrating effects of this incoming information, energy and matter.

Equilibrium can be defined as a state of rest and balance "when whole and parts are in a state of harmony." (Piaget, 1918, p.178). It is clear that in the inanimate world all things move towards equilibrium over time – a landslide will stop when the hill has found a new equilibrium and a new resting place, a volcano eruption will finish when a new equilibrium is found in the earth's crust, a storm ceases when the atmospheric pressures come to equilibrium, a chemical reaction stops when the molecules recombine into a new steady state. This inherent move towards rest and balance in the inanimate world is called the second law of thermodynamics by physicists, and it leads to the reduction of structure through increasing entropy; all suns burn out, all buildings return to dust. In development, equilibrium is achieved in the opposite direction; through increasing complexity and order and the creation of

stable structures, by the assimilation of energy, information and matter from elsewhere. Piaget postulated a process within living beings that actively drives development toward these higher states of complexity and called it the "marche vers l'équilibre" or "march towards equilibrium" (Piaget, 1967).

Developmental equilibrium is always temporary, for new information, energy and/or matter gets introduced into an open system, and throws it out of kilter. It is this temporary nature of equilibrium that makes it a driving force for development, as there is no point of arrival and improvement is always possible. Cognitive or affective equilibrium is inevitably overturned as new information from the world is assimilated that contradicts or extends what was previously known. In order to accommodate the new information, *a higher level of equilibrium must be sought* to accommodate the new information and the new understandings. For Piaget, the search for equilibrium is synonymous with activity – all action, thought and feeling is a part of the search for the elusive goal of balance (Piaget, 1967).

While a person is developing, the social and physical systems of which he or she is a part will also be developing, and the interplay of these dynamics over time is mutually formative – individuals influence social development and vice versa. While we may be singular and whole individuals, we are also *parts* of larger systems, and so are "embedduals" (Kegan, 1982). Social and ecological systems develop by way of differentiation and integration, just like human beings, and on this higher scale we are the parts that must be differentiated and then integrated into groups and systems. Leonie Sugarman, in her book on life span development, uses a graphic analogy of a river to describe the incessant mutual shaping of person and environment throughout the lifelong course of development:

> "An informative metaphor sometimes used to depict the life course is the image of a river. A river, whilst having a force and momentum of its own, is also shaped and modified by the terrain over which it flows. In turn, the river exerts its own influence on its surroundings. Indeed, it is somewhat artificial to separate the river from its habitat; a more accurate picture is obtained when they are considered as a single unit. Nonetheless, for ease and clarity of conceptual analysis they may be treated as separate entities. The results of such investigations only reveal their full meaning, however, when returned to the wider perspective of the river + surrounding units. So it is with the individual life course. We can concentrate our attention on either the person or the environment as the focus of the developmental dynamic. However, we will gain only an incomplete picture of life span development unless we also consider the interactions between the two." (Sugarman, 1986, pp.6-7)

This person-environment interdependence is evident in the 'ecological' theory of Bronfennbrenner (1979), which postulates how human systems develop in a nested way, and that the psychological development of a person can only be comprehended in the context of the systems of which that person is a part. Bronfenbrenner breaks super-ordinate systems into four key layers: the *microsystem*, which is the immediate sensory environment of a developing person, the *mesosystem*, which is the wider setting that a person lives in, including work, home and leisure environments, the *exosystem*, which is the larger social system which is beyond immediate day-to-day contact, such as a community as a whole, and then the *macrosystem*, which is a name for the culture and ideology in which someone is situated. All actively influence the development of an individual person and are reciprocally influenced in return. Bronfenbrenner emphasises the importance of *roles* in development, for it is a person's role that links him or her to a super-ordinate social system. A role actively embeds a person in a social system, for it specifies where and how he/she may make a functional contribution to that social system. How a person inhabits their role dictates how a social system and that person mutually affect one another.

Development is not a linear progression of gradually increasing complexity and wholeness. In biology, the evolutionary development of species demonstrates periods of morphological stability interspersed with sudden periods of chaotic change and evolutionary progression. This pattern is referred to by evolutionary biologists as 'punctuated equilibrium' (Eldredge & Gould, 1972). Social systems show evidence of punctuated equilibrium in their development too. Kuhn's theory of scientific development hypothesized periods of stable inertia interspersed with periods of scientific revolution and crisis (Kuhn, 1996). Marx's theory of social evolution refers to stable forms of societal organisation interspersed with unstable revolution (Marx and Engels, 1848). The psychology developmental theorists whose work has influenced this investigation also concur that development oscillates between periods of stable calm and times of disequilibrated turbulence (Combs, 2003; Erikson 1968; Graves, 1970; Levinson, 1978; Loevinger, 1976; Kegan, 1982; McAdams, 1993; Piaget, 1967; Sheehy, 1977).

Wherever one looks, on whatever scale, development involves periods of stability while a system provides inertia and stability in the face of further advance, and vertiginous transitions as old structures are left behind but new ones are yet to be fully formed. There is no ultimate endpoint for development, it is not teleological in a

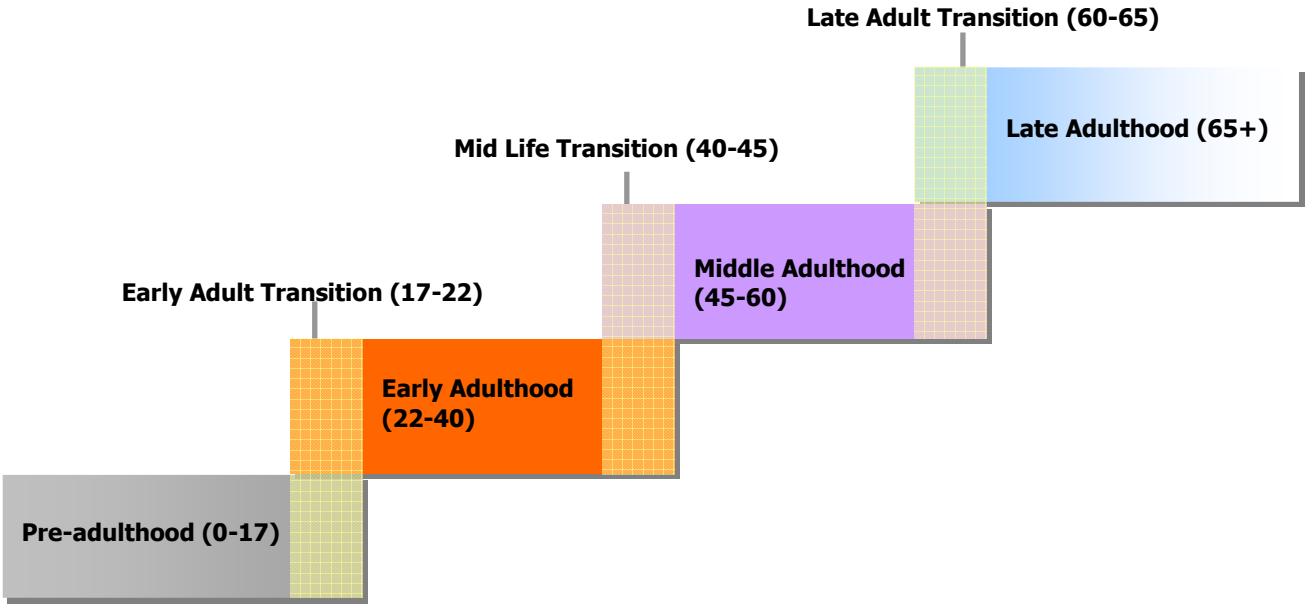
goal-directed sense, but there is a definite, non-random, direction to development – towards more complex levels of internal equilibrium, and toward greater unity in diversity.

New equilibrated phases of development manifest qualitatively new emergent properties, the appearance of which cannot be predicted by the content or structure of the previous stage, i.e. *development leads to novelty and emergence*. This is what led theorists including Piaget (1967), Graves (1970), Levinson (1976), Loevinger (1976), Kohlberg (1984) and Erikson (1968) to propose stage theories of human development, for each stage reflects a qualitative change in overall mental development. Each new phase is not a change in amount, but a change in kind; a "caterpillar-to-butterfly" moment in the developing person. The new structures that emerge with a new stage are more complex than before – they transcend and include prior stages, so that developmental stages retain features of the prior ones and build on their foundation (Graves, 1970). Lifespan developmental is therefore not a long plateau of steady maturity, but is a series of alternating phases of stability and transition.

An influential theory that captures this oscillatory dynamic in adult development is Levinson's theory of adult life stages. The theory was based on intensive qualitative studies of men (Levinson et al. 1978) and then women (Levinson, 1996). It has been further validated by a variety of other researchers who have used the Levinsonian framework to investigate a variety of lifespan developmental issues (e.g. Bridges, 2004; Dunn & Merriam, 1995; Fagan & Ayers, 1983; Kittrell, 1998; Walker, 1983). Like all the development theorists considered in this literature review, Levinson found that human development consisted of qualitatively different stages of development punctuated by unstable transition periods. The stable periods, called 'seasons' are for building and consolidating a 'life structure', while the 'transitions' are for changing or replacing that structure. The two twin pillars that hold a life structure stably in place are *work* and *relationships*. At all points the life structure involves an integration of these two intertwining yet independent factors. More focus on one generally means less focus on the other, so a relative weight must be found and a balance must be struck at all times.

The main phases of the model are shown schematically in Figure 2. The phases are shown as overlapping in the diagram because during transition phases both termination of a prior structure and commencement of the new structure occur concurrently.

Figure 2. Levinson's Life Structure Phases and Transitions



The first phase of the model is *Pre-adulthood*, which subsumes childhood and adolescence until the age of around 17. The *Early Adult Transition* (17-22) is the phase that gives birth to the next life season, *Early Adulthood*, which is the focus of the present study. This phase terminates at approximately age 40. After early adulthood comes the *Midlife Transition* (40-45) and then *Middle Adulthood* lasts until around age 60. The phase of late adulthood then starts and carries on through to the end. There are specific developmental tasks to be addressed at each stage, which relate to the creation and maintenance of a coherent life structure appropriate to one's season of life. The ages for the onset and termination of each stage are averages, and may vary by up to five years depending on the person.

Levinson understood adult development as a purposive process that is often directed towards bringing about an ideal vision of one's future. He called this ideal future self 'the Dream'. This Dream is a motivating and energising conception of how one could be; it may be a picture of an ideal career or an ideal family life, but whatever its form it excites and energises those actions that helps to bring it about. The Dream changes as development does, but retains its existential importance. If it is rejected for too long by a life structure that has no relation to it, 'major shifts in life direction' may occur to bring it back into focus at certain life transitions:

> "Where such a Dream exists, we are exploring its nature and vicissitudes over the life course. Major shifts in life direction at subsequent ages are often occasioned by a reactivation of the sense of betrayal or compromise of the Dream. That is, very often in the crises that occur at age 30, 40, or later a major issue is the reactivation of a guiding Dream, frequently one that goes back to adolescence or the early 20's, and the concern with its failure. We are also interested in the antecedents and consequences of not having a Dream, because the Dream can be such a vitalizing force for adult development." (Levinson et al, 1976, p.23)

Levinson considered the model that he developed to be a conceptual aid to understanding structural regularities in a life course in modern day Western society, but added that each life is unique and that individuals could violate the sequence completely if they desired, but might have to extract themselves from conventional society so to do. Life seasons and life structures, Levinson considered, are cultural templates to which we can adhere or not. Life's regularities are created as much by the opportunities afforded to us in society as our own maturation or personality.

The life structure concept includes both inner and outer structures, which evolve in harmony during stable phases, and are dissonant or in conflict during transitional phases. An emphasis on the mutually formative development of self and world, and the interdependence of inner and outer changes, distinguishes his model from phase theories such as those of Piaget or Kohlberg, the phases of which relate to the development of internal structures only. In line with this, Levinson has a particular take on the process that Jung called individuation. He saw individuation as the aim of development, but was clear that an individuated state is not a purely internal affair, but is rather an optimal balance of person and world. He put forth an extensive description of individuation, which I shall leave in his own words:

> "Individuation is often regarded as a process occurring solely within the self. In my view it is broader than this: it involves the person's relationship both to self and to external world. With greater individuation of the self, we have a clearer sense of who we are and what we want. We draw more fully on our inner resources (desires, values, talents, archetypal potentials). We are more autonomous, self-generating, and self-responsible. The self is more integrated and less wrent by inner contradictions. Individuation occurs as well in our relation to the external world. With more individuated relationships, we feel more genuinely connected to the human and natural world. We are more able to explore its possibilities and to understand what it demands and offers. We give it greater meaning and take more responsibility for our personal construction of meaning. We are capable of *mutual* relationships, without being limited to a narrowly "selfish" concern with our own gratification or to an excessively "altruistic" concern with the needs of others." (Levinson, 1996, p.32)

2.3 Crisis and Transition

The first to write extensively about psychological crises was the lifespan development theorist Erik Erikson (1950). A crisis for Erikson is a period when the "wholeness" of a person is compromised, leading to inner and outer fragmentation. He stated that crises were a normal part of the developmental process, and that they were formative in development. Caplan looked at crisis more closely, within the context of "preventative psychiatry". He hoped to prevent mental disorders by helping people who were experiencing a crisis to use it constructively for personal growth. He considered that a crisis was a time which could hold the potential for constructive change or for deterioration:

> "Every crisis presents both an opportunity for psychological growth and the danger of psychological deterioration. It is a way-station on a path leading away from or toward mental disorder. The outcome of the crisis depends on the resolution of a complex of conflicting forces during the period of the disequilibrium." (Caplan, 1964, p.53)

He postulated two distinct types of crisis. Firstly there are "accidental crises", which are brought about by sudden external events such as bereavement or job loss and are not internally triggered, and secondly there are "developmental crises", which are precipitated by a transitional period between stable life structures (Erikson, 1968; Caplan, 1964). He suggested that it is the latter that the preventative psychiatrist is interested in, as they are more predictable than the former, and have a more powerful impact on development. All crises of both types, he suggested, follow a *four phase* trajectory that gives a basic shape to any crisis episode. To describe each phase, Caplan uses the language of stimulus, response and mechanism. The phases are summarised in Table I. The essence of the model is that crisis involves a rise in tension, and the requirement to innovate new problem-solving responses and coping strategies to handle the gradually increasing tension. This can lead to a breakthrough in new ways of behaving and a new way of being, or can lead to breakdown and disorganisation if the new responses employed do not succeed in alleviating the problem. Caplan's 4-phase model, although not based on any explicit empirical research, has been influential. Applied books on crisis that have been written since have assimilated this four-phase model as a framework for investigation (e.g. Murgatroyd and Woolfe, 1982).

Table I. Caplan's Four Phases of Crisis

Phase 1	An initial rise in tension from the impact of the stimulus calls forth the habitual problem-solving responses of homeostasis.
Phase 2	Lack of success in the initial problem-solving attempts and continuation of the stimulus is associated with rise in tension and the experience of upset and ineffectuality.
Phase 3	Further rise in tension takes it past a threshold when it acts as a powerful internal stimulus to the mobilization of internal and external resources. The individual uses novel methods to attack the problem. He may gradually define the problem in a new way, so that it comes within the range of previous experience. He will employ problem-solving techniques which were previously neglected as irrelevant.
Phase 4	If the problem continues and can neither be solved with satisfaction nor avoided, the tension mounts beyond a further threshold or its burden increases over time to a breaking point. Major "disorganisation of the individual" then occurs.

Models of life transitions are related to crisis, for lifespan development theorists state that it is in developmental life transition that crisis occurs. Two phase models of "transitions" consider the nature of transition periods between life structures. The first model of transition, devised by Hopson and Adams (1976), defines transition in a similar way to how Caplan defines crisis. They suggest that a transition is a period of discontinuity in life during which new behavioural responses are required to meet new challenges. Their phase model of transition has seven phases, and is summarised in Table II.

The second model of transition was developed by O'Connor and Wolfe (1987). These researchers used a qualitative grounded theory approach to study midlife transitions, and developed a five-phase model from the data. They conducted 64 interviews with people between the ages of 35 and 50, and found across the whole sample that a five-phase structure was apparent; *stability*, *rising discontent*, *crisis*, *re-direction* and *re-stabilising*. Each of these phases is briefly described in Table III.

Table II. Hopson and Adams' Model of Transition

Phase 1	*Immobilisation* The first phase is defined by a sense of being overwhelmed and immobilised, of being unable to make plans and unable to understand or reflect on the problematic life situation that one is in.
Phase 2	*Trivialisation* Despite a need for change due to stress, cognitive attempts are made to minimise, avoid or trivialise it.
Phase 3	*Depression* As the person faces up to the need for change and makes that change, depression is a common reaction. This is the most negative emotional period of the transition.
Phase 4	*Accepting reality for what it is* This phase involves a process of detaching from the past and of accepting the situation. A more proactive attitude leads to acknowledgement of new goals and new means.
Phase 5	*Experimentation* The person becomes much more active and starts testing possible new situations, trying out new behaviours, new life styles, and new ways of coping with the transition. This is a time of high energy.
Phase 6	*Search for meaning* Following this 'burst of activity and self-testing', there is a more gradual shifting towards becoming concerned with seeking meanings for new life goals and values.
Phase 7	*Internalisation* At this stage the new meanings and new behaviours that have emerged during the prior two phases are incorporated into the self. This signifies the end of the transition.

Table III. O'Connor and Wolfe's Model of Transition

1. Stability	The first phase refers to the stable life structure in which a person resides prior to their life becoming disequilibrated. It is characterised by established roles and relationships, and the strategic pursuit of selected purposes.
2. Rising Discontent	In this phase, a new and critical voice is emerging and leading to dissatisfaction, frustration and discontent. There is a desire to change without knowing exactly how and without a realistic grasp of the consequences. Old aspects of the self are finding less satisfaction in the current state of affairs and previously ignored or neglected parts of the self (often in conflict with the current structure) begin to demand attention and energy.
1. Crisis	The third period of transition is called crisis. It is a time in which an old life structure and its constraints still have a hold over the person in question, but new directions are lacking. The crisis episode calls into question important parts of the self including beliefs, values, self-worth and ways of behaving. Crisis is in all cases the period of peak uncertainty and emotionality for that person, with findings suggesting a cocktail of negative emotions: "In this process, deep emotions are usually evident: anger, depression, anxiety, grief (loss), confusion, despair, boredom, and alienation." (1987, p.806)
4. Re-Direction and Adaptation	This is a time of searching for a new direction and a new structure. It is a time of making choices and of creating tentative experiments in change. According to O'Connor and Wolfe, crisis provides "the shock, the motivation, the frame breaking, and the unfreezing necessary for change to take place." (1987, p.806). But growth is not inevitable. If growth is to take place, they say, one must "actively pursue the new directions that may have brought on the crisis, or create tentative experiments to adapt to the changing conditions of self and circumstance." (1987, p.806)
5. Re-stabilizing	Phase five is the conclusion of the transition, in which a person limits the process of experimenting so that they can find some life stability and can find a new direction in life. It is a time for permanent commitments again, but the new commitments are those that are derived from the insights into identity that have been imparted by the transitional phases. Subjects at this point report becoming more in touch with values and feelings, and finding life a more authentic and coherent experience.

As a generic part of their model, O'Connor and Wolfe employ Levinson's concept of life structure to describe the overall thrust of midlife transitions. They state that midlife transition is "a time to address the imbalance inherent in and created by the life structures of the twenties and thirties." (O'Connor and Wolfe, 1987, p.809). This implies that crisis occurs in order to bring about a resolution to developmental imbalance, and therefore can be seen as part of the aforementioned developmental drive towards equilibrium and balance, and part of the oscillation between stability and instability.

Both O'Connor and Wolfe's and Hopson and Adams' models concentrate on individual factors and changes in developmental crisis, whereas Dallos' (1996) analysis of transitions emphasises the social changes that occur during them. He emphasises how changes in roles and social networks are crucial dimensions of transition, and how transition can lead to crisis. From a social perspective, not only might transitions involve the need to develop new coping responses, but might also bring about a need to re-negotiate rules and power balances within social systems (Dallos, 1996). Dallos focuses on how this is true of the transition to parenthood, but the same point can be applied to all transitions; when you are dealing with an episode of the lifespan, social and individual elements are inseparable, and crisis resolution is not simply about intra-individual reorganisation, but is about rebalancing social systems.

2.4 Crisis, Trauma, Stress and Development

Crisis and development are intimately linked in the developmental literature, with a host of theorists concurring that crisis is a necessary, if difficult, aspect of the developmental process (Combs, 2003; Erikson, 1968; Forer, 1963; Hopson and Adams, 1974, Levinson, 1978, 1996; King, 2001; Sheehy, 1976). For example Forer, in his paper *The Therapeutic Value of Crisis* concludes:

> "My position will include the unpopular notion that crises for both individuals and groups *are* inevitable and that they are a prerequisite for growth. It will imply that the person and the society that do not suffer and expect crises and even, perhaps, create them during static periods can only stagnate and deteriorate." (Forer, 1963, p.276)

Daniel Levinson also found that crisis is a non-pathological part of the developmental process, the denial of which may stunt growth:

> "Having a crisis at the time is not in itself pathological. Indeed, the person who goes through this period with minimal discomfort may be denying that his life must change, for better or for worse. He is thus losing an opportunity for personal development." (Levinson, 1978, p.26)

> "Finally, a developmental crisis is not solely negative. It may have both benefits and costs. The potential costs involve anguish and pain for oneself, hurt to others, and a less satisfactory life structure. The potential benefits involve the formation of a life structure more suitable for the self and more viable in the world." (Levinson, 1996, p.35-36)

Gail Sheehy (1977) also links crisis to development. She conducted over a hundred eight-hour interviews in order to gain the data that informed her lifespan development theory. She sees psychological growth as a risky process that requires the intentional cessation of safe, familiar patterns of behaviour and thought. She has a forthright conclusion on the place of crisis in development:

> "If I've been convinced by one idea in the course of collecting all the life stories that inform the book, it is this: Times of crisis, of disruption or constructive change, are not only predictable but desirable. They mean growth." (Sheehy, 1977, p.31)

None of the writers on crisis suggest that crisis is necessary, but Levinson goes so far as to say he has never met a single person in his research or personal who has avoided one by the age of 65 (Levinson, 1996).

A phenomenological study of the effects of crisis on people's lives found three effects of crisis transitions on the persons involved (Denne and Thomson, 1991). Firstly, it was found that after the crisis the individuals changed from a sense of external control to a sense of internal control and agency, and thus developed a more proactive and self-reliant approach to life. A second shift was an acceptance of the less positive aspects of the self, while accepting previously suppressed emotions into consciousness. Thirdly a move towards congruence between inner sense of self and lifestyle was found, in an effort to live without a schism between self and world. This led to what the authors termed "a progression towards a balanced relation between self and world." (1991, p.123)

Two psychological concepts that are closely related to crisis, *trauma* and *stress*, have also been linked to developmental repercussions. Crisis differs from the related concept of trauma, in that trauma is an acute, externally triggered event whereas crisis is an episode with both inner and outer precipitating factors (Lazarus, 2000). Stress refers to the state of unpleasant tension due to high levels of

environmental demands, but has no particular time-bound nature; it does not refer to a life episode (Lazarus, 2000), but can be developmentally formative nonetheless.

The research into *post-traumatic growth* has found extensive evidence of the positive developmental impact of traumatic events. Linley and Joseph reviewed the research on post-traumatic growth and found that depending on the study, between 30% and 90% of respondents report some developmental growth following trauma (Linley and Joseph, 2002; Linley and Joseph, 2004). Post-traumatic growth is seen in three main areas:

1. Firstly, relationships are enhanced and valued more, while compassion and altruism is increased toward others. Empathy for people in suffering is enhanced, and personal disclosure is more forthcoming (Linley and Joseph, 2004; Tedeschi and Calhoun, 1995).
2. Secondly, survivors develop an altered self-concept; they see themselves as stronger, more self-reliant and more resilient, but also with a greater acceptance of vulnerabilities and limitations (Linley and Joseph, 2004; Tedeschi and Calhoun, 1995). Realisation of vulnerability can lessen risk-taking or damaging behaviour and so can be a positive change (Tedeschi and Calhoun, 1994).
3. A third area of post-traumatic change is a shift in life philosophy towards way from material and status-based values to those emphasising enjoyment, interest and relationships, while finding a new appreciation for each new day and confronting the inevitability of death. Often trauma promotes the development of a "spiritual" dimension to life philosophy, which involves replacing the notion that life's aim is gain and acquisition with the notion that life's aim is to promote peace, to experience love and to fulfil one's purpose or calling (Tedeschi and Calhoun, 1994).

Theory and research on psychological stress originated with Hans Selye, a biologist who was investigating the effects of the mind on the immune system. He considered stress to be a potentially positive or negative phenomenon, therefore distinguished between "eustress" (positive, enhancing stress) and "distress" (negative, destructive stress) (Selye, 1974). Despite this original formulation, eustress has had little consideration in the literature; stress is almost always considered as a purely negative phenomenon that should be removed or at least managed. Some theorists and researchers have defied the orthodoxy and further speculated on the positive developmental repercussions of stress. Aldwin (1994) considered the positive repercussions of stress in four main areas:

1. Undergoing stressful experiences may lessen the distress caused by the expectation of or the experience of future trauma. This may be due to both an increase in the individual's coping repertoire that results from dealing with a past stressful experience and enhanced self-perceptions of personal strength and resilience.
2. Change in perspectives and values may result, with the new perspective that serious trauma and stress brings. It may make everyday hassles no longer seem so important and so reduce day-to-day worry and tension.
3. Collective stress bringing people closer together and so strengthening social ties and relationships.
4. The development of self-understanding may result, as previously ignored aspects of self are made apparent at times of life crisis, so that inaccurate self-conceptions and life patterns may be given up and replaced with more adaptive and productive schemas.

Some researchers on stress such as Taylor (1989) have suggested that stress-reduction interventions that do not give consideration to development and growth may nullify the potential for insight or growth and so be potentially detrimental in the long run. Taylor writes that many of life's most rewarding and challenging experiences involve stress, and therefore stress should be not avoided, but should rather be transformed into positive, growth-focused experiences.

The various psychologists who have concluded on the importance of crisis, trauma and stress in human development are echoing what many secular and religious philosophers have written across the centuries; that periodic suffering can facilitate growth and development in a person by refining and strengthening character. Christian philosophy has had at its heart the importance of suffering in this life, in order to build strong character. Hence we find passages such as the following in the bible:

> "But we all boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us." (Romans, 5:5)

In philosophy, Kierkegaard and Marcus Aurelius talked of the power of suffering to improve the human character. Neitzsche was probably the most famous of the philosophers to dispute we should be aiming for happiness. He wrote:

> "You want if possible – and there is no madder 'if possible' – to *abolish* suffering; and we? ...Well-being as you understand it – that is no goal, that seems to us an *end*! A state which soon renders man ludicrous and contemptible – which makes it

> *desirable* that he should perish! The discipline of suffering, of *great* suffering – do you not know that it is *this* discipline alone which has created every elevation of mankind hitherto? That tension of the soul in misfortune which cultivates its strength, its terror at the sight of great destruction, its inventiveness and bravery in undergoing, enduring, interpreting, exploiting misfortune, and whatever of depth, mystery, mask, spirit, cunning and greatness has been bestowed upon it – has it not been bestowed through suffering, through the discipline of great suffering?" (Neitszche, 1973, p.155)

In light of the findings of the life-span development researchers, Neitszche's statement makes some sense. Researchers have found that psychological growth and development requires times of disequilibrium, which correspondingly entail discomfort, stress and suffering. Therefore without suffering there would be no growth, no confrontation with the limitations of one's current way of being, no movement up to higher levels of complexity, integration and individuation.

2.5 The Self System

William James (1890/1999) described two sides of the self that exist in a dialectical relation. The "I" is the subject of awareness, the source of attention and the source of will. It is a hypothetical entity that cannot be observed, for it is doing the observing – Kant called this the transcendental ego. The "me" self, on the other hand, is the observable and verifiable sum total of self-knowledge, including any information on personal background, personal roles, group affiliations, preferences, likes, aptitudes, goals, desires, interests and key life events. The "me" self has been referred to using many different terms in psychology, including self system (Bandura, 1978), self-schema (Markus, 1980), self-representation (Harré, 1998), ego-identity (Lazarus, 1991), composite self (Erikson, 1968) and proprium (Allport, 1961). Harré describes it as a "unitas multiplex" (Harré, 1998) – an entity composed of many parts that together make a composite and singular whole. But all the parts are cognitive, in that they are all elements of self-knowledge. Markus developed a cognitive theory of self based on the Piagetian concept of *schema*. Schemas are meaningful knowledge structures that develop over time as a result of experience and learning. Schemas are the providers of all cognitive order and structure, without which "no perception or thinking would be possible." (Markus, 1980, p.106). Schemas of the self develop across a lifespan, based on observation and categorisation of one's *own* behaviours, affects and thoughts, and combine in totality to create the "me" self, which integrates this knowledge into an organised system of selfhood.

The store of self-knowledge provides the basis for self-evaluation. Any self-schema may be evaluated, and the process involves using a linear scale on which to judge a self-schema. The schema of one's body may be evaluated on the linear scale of thin—fat or beautiful—ugly. One's performance in a job may be judged on the scale of success—failure or good—bad. One's interpersonal actions may be evaluated on the scale of good—evil or moral—immoral. There are *limitless* dimensions upon which to judge the self, and innumerable possible reference groups against which to compare oneself (Mischel, 1981), therefore self-evaluation can be manipulated in order to cast oneself in a positive or negative light. It is from our self-evaluation processes that the appraisals of self-esteem and self-efficacy emerge (Carver and Scheier, 1998). Self-esteem designates an evaluation of *worth*, while self-efficacy relates to evaluations of *competence* (Bandura, 2001). To have extremely low confidence or efficacy is to feel *useless*, to have very low self-esteem is to feel *worthless*. Both emerge from dimensions of self-evaluation, and both are affectively charged.

Sources of self-esteem are culturally embedded, for example evaluations of one's body are usually based on a cultural ideal of body image and can have a strong impact on self-esteem (Hoare & Cosgrove, 1998). Self-esteem will also be based around evaluations in culturally defined areas of skill, intelligence and talent (Fleetham, 2006). While a cultural framework will impart an inter-subjective context to self-evaluations of worth and competence, this does not negate the fact that all self-evaluations are relative. There is nothing absolute about *any* self-evaluation – none are more correct than any other in an absolute sense. All self-evaluations, being value-judgements made against a subjective standard, are all interpretative and open to alternative reformulation (Albright, 1994). Linville (1985; 1987) found that people who have greater self-complexity and therefore have more self schemas to self-evaluate, are less prone to self-esteem decrease after failure, for when things go badly in one domain they can identify with positive evaluations on other dimensions to buffer their self-worth.

Beyond the schemas and evaluations of our actual self are hypothetical schemas about who we could become as persons. Piaget and his colleagues found evidence that during adolescence children develop the ability to contextualise reality within a context of possibility, and when they apply this to the self they develop a set of "possible selves" (Inhelder and Piaget, 1958). Markus and Nurius (1986)

researched the nature and function of these possible selves and found an array of such cognitive structures, from better selves to worse selves, to hoped-for selves, to feared selves, to ideal selves, to ought selves. They concluded from their research that it is the knowledge of our potential selves that differentiates self-knowledge from knowledge about others; when we reflect on ourselves we see who we are *and* who we might become (Markus and Nurius, 1986). The number of possible selves decreases with age, as the self becomes more integrated (Cross and Markus, 1991).

A key possible self is the *ideal self* - a schema of how one could be given the possibility of surpassing one's current limitations and being exactly how one would like to be (Tory Higgins, 1987). The ideal self is, when in awareness, a goal state for the self system, and the attempt to become more like one's ideal self is the process of *self-actualisation* (Rogers, 1961). This process to become closer to a more ideal self and so to improve the self is in conflict with the motive for *self-consistency* – we are motivated to maintain a consistent self-concept that is continuous and predictable over time (Lecky, 1961; Rogers, 1961). As the need for self-consistency and the process of self-actualisation are omnipresent, there is a dialectic tension at the very core of the process of self, which energises the self with a disequilibrated tension between change and stability, always seeking resolution and always in opposition (Rogers, 1961).

2.6 The Narrative Self

Bruner (1986) differentiates two kinds of schema that the mind uses to organise experiences and facts about the world and ourselves; *narrative* and *paradigmatic* schemata. Paradigmatic schemata are structures that describe and explain facts without recourse to time or sequence. Narrative schemata are knowledge structures that organise knowledge and experiences into time-based episodes, and are organised according to the principles of emplotment (Ricoeur, 1985). Narrative episodes have a beginning steady state followed by a middle state of instability, then action aimed at solving the instability, followed by a rebalanced or resolved end state. Each part of an episode is linked to the whole by its place in either hindering or contributing to the realisation of the end state which signifies resolution. It is this sense of progress and regress towards an end state that gives a narrative its recognisable dramatic tone (Booker, 2005). Narrative is reported on a 'dual landscape', with both an outer landscape on which external events and actions unfold and also an inner world of interpretation, motive and affect (Bruner, 1987). Narrative

has, according to Booker (2005), evolved over millennia to capture some of the most crucial dimensions of the lived human condition within a complex structure of inter-relations and meanings, and therefore is ideally placed to bring the narrative self to light. MacIntyre similarly states that narrative is not imposed on time, but is a structure that is present in human life:

> "Surely human life has a determinate form, the form of a certain kind of story. It is not just that poems and sagas narrate what happens to men and women, but that in their narrative form poems and sagas capture a form that was already present in the lives which they relate." (MacIntyre, 1981, p.153)

Self-schemas can be paradigmatic or narrative. The aforementioned self-defining categories, self-descriptions, self-evaluations and possible-selves are paradigmatic. The narrative self, on the other hand, is the cognitive space in which all past life episodes that are defining of the self are stored and organised by time. Those episodes that are selected from the whole life course to have prominence in the "life story" are referred to by McAdams as "nuclear episodes", and are generally either "high points, low points or turning points." (McAdams, 1993, p.296). Neisser suggested that autobiographical memory is highly selective, and that in order to tell a life story, a person "must gloss over vast empty spaces" (Neisser, 1994, p.15). Autobiographical information must be stored in the selective schemas of the self system, selectively encoded, selectively retrieved, selectively made available to awareness and selectively disclosed to others.

Nuclear episodes are structured using narrative structures (McAdams, 1993; Bruner, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1988). While narrative structure facilitates the organisation of a huge amount of information into meaningful episodes, it also acts to limit these memories and potentially distort them. Human beings are motivated to create a coherent and meaningful life narrative and so may adapt life episode narratives to fit into the overall dramatic theme of the life story (Cohler, 1980; Freeman, 1984; Handel, 1987; Hankiss, 1981). Smith (1994) conducted a longitudinal study on the transition to motherhood, and found that when contemporaneous and retrospective accounts of pregnancy were compared, mothers had changed their retrospective account in order to emphasise the positive elements of the experience, a sense of self-development and improvement, and also a sense of order and continuity. His findings suggested that the women used the selectivity of memory to enhance and support an idealised story of motherhood in their life story.

Taylor (1989) also found evidence that illness episodes are re-interpreted in retrospect so that they contribute positively to the life story.

Seeing life episodes through the filter of memory and narrative does bring some benefits. The partiality of a retrospective memory may be an advantage for it may throw the underlying pattern of a past event into clearer relief, by leaving out extraneous detail. The benefit of hindsight also brings with it knowledge of effects and outcomes that is not present in concurrent accounts.

In sum, narrative memory of the self brings benefits and pitfalls. In its selectivity, a narrative may hide, or partially obscure, a life episode or a life story. Details may be overlooked and interpretations may be twisted to fit into plotlines. Yet simultaneously narrative facilitates the very possibility of meaningful life episodes, by combining the huge number of inner and outer factors in human experiences into temporally integrated and discrete wholes. Narrative opens the door to understanding the meaning of human experiences, but then leaves it tantalisingly ajar. That is its nature; both facilitator and limiter in explicating human lives.

2.7 Development of the Self

All schemas develop and change, and narrative and paradigmatic self-schemas are no exception. We can make several assumptions already about the development of the self from the knowledge of what development *is*, set out on page 6. The healthily developing self will become more internally *complex and coherent*, by way of *differentiation* and *integration*, and head towards progressively higher states of *equilibrium* by way of *qualitatively different* phases interspersed with *disequilibrated transition periods*.

This is exactly the path that McAdams suggests the narrative self follows. His research finds that life stories become more coherent, differentiated, integrated, coherent and open throughout adulthood (McAdams, 1993). Also, Bruner finds regular reports of a "new self" emerging at turning points in autobiographical narratives, which may signify qualitatively new phases of selfhood (Bruner, 1994).

This same trajectory also describes how the paradigmatic self develops over times. Labouvie-Vief et al. (1995a, 1995b) investigated how self-representations develop over the whole life span. The method they used was to analyse paragraphs that participants of varying ages wrote to describe themselves (Labouvie-Vief et al., 1995a). They then analysed these and established levels of self-representation, each

of which represents a more complex representation of the self. They found advances in the complexity of self-representations as cognitive ability develops. The highest levels of self-representation were reached around the age of 50. All five levels are summarised in Table IV.

Table IV. Labouvie-Vief et al.'s developmental levels of self-representation

Level 1	Concrete Presystemic	Simple and concrete descriptors. Traits are seen as global. No references to goals or psychological processes.
Level 2	Interpersonal Protosystemic	Evaluations are made that reflect the values of the immediate social group. Emphasis on features of the self that make for in-group acceptance
Level 3	Institutional Intrasystemic	Clearer sense of individuality within a group. Traits become more self-directed and goal-directed. Conventional goals, roles, values.
Level 4	Contextual Intersystemic	Descriptions are critical of convention, involve an awareness of how traits change, and give a sense of individuals with their own value system.
Level 5	Dynamic Intersubjective	Roles and traits are described at a complex level and reflect underlying motives that may be unconscious. Reference is to multiple dimensions of life history and an emphasis on process, becoming and emergence.

Kegan (1982) also proposed a theory of the developing self which leads to qualitatively new, more complex, stages of self. In his formulation, the self reaches six successive new equilibriums, each one bringing a temporary balance to selfhood. Each successive stage is oriented towards being either independent or attached.

The developmental sequence starts with the *incorporative self*, which corresponds to Piaget's early sensori-motor period. Being prior to a self-world distinction, it is prior to any preference for being autonomous or attached. Next emerges *the impulsive self*, which is oriented towards inclusion in the mother-baby dyad, and there is no assertion of independence as yet. It is only with the command of one's own impulses, through toilet training and early concrete operational thought that the *imperial self* is reached. Here we see the first push for independence away from parents. The imperial self is transcended by the *interpersonal self* with the onset of the formal operational period. This brings a new push for inclusion and popularity with adolescent peers. The *interpersonal self* then is replaced by the *institutional self*, which replaces the malleable interpersonal self with a more solid identity that maintains coherence across context, and is defined by roles that link the person to stable institutions. The *interindividual self* is the following stage, which once again swings back to inclusion and belonging, but in relationship to, rather than included in,

the social system in question. Each transition involves a successively more complex and integrated resolution between independence and inclusion in favour of one, but none is perfect, and so the evolution of the self continues upwards toward higher levels of equilibrium.

Rogers' (1961) humanistic theory of the developing self stated a clear direction for the development of selfhood. The developed self over time becomes less static and more fluid. A mature self is a self-in-process. A self that is willing to be a process, and so to continuously develop is less bound by labels and roles, and so is more individuated and less dependent on external circumstances. Rogers felt that therapy should aid the development of the self towards becoming a process, and allow patients to move beyond static, constructed selves toward more spontaneous process-selves (Rogers, 1961).

Robert White, in his book *Lives in Progress* (1975), looked at the development and direction of self, and concluded quite differently that the mature self is stable and solid, not flexible and changing. He pointed out that development must have a direction, and the direction that identity moves in, when successfully developing, is in the direction of stability, clarity, consistency and freedom from transient influence:

> "As ego identity grows more stably autonomous, the person becomes capable of having a more consistent and lasting effect upon his environment. The more sure he becomes about his own nature and competence, the more solid is the nucleus from which his activity proceeds." (White, 1975, p.337)

Rogers and White give us two distinct pictures of the developed self. The developed self in Rogers' theory is a dynamic process, open to continual changes and shifts in direction, and able to hold within itself contradiction. It is a wistful, unconventional and fluid entity. Yet for White the mature self is stable, secure and has a solid role and place in society. Dickstein (1977) addressed this conundrum by suggesting that *both* kinds of mature self are valid "alternative endpoints" of the developmental process. One person may become a united and organised self, while the other may keep themselves "open to the vagaries of existence" (p.139), and both may benefit from their position.

In summary on the cognitive self, both narrative self schemas and the paradigmatic self schemas of the mind are integral parts of the self system. The self system does *not* exist in cognitive isolation, but develops in and is explicable only in the context of others, in group, social and cultural schema. The self is therefore not an

isolated set of me-facts but is deeply inter-connected and relational (Andersen and Chen, 2002), and is in fact better conceived as "self-with-other" knowledge. The self system is also bound up with the reconciliation of dialectical opposites, between which it must locate itself or move sequentially between over development, e.g. autonomy vs. connectedness (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996). Much of adult development of the self and the life story involves reconciling these opposites, while moving to more integrated states of self-being and self-knowledge (Erikson, 1968).

2.8 The Effects of Crisis on the Self

Lifespan development literature mentions ways in which crisis (or related concepts of trauma or severe stressful episodes) can influence the self (Nidorf, 1965; Thurnher, 1983). The disruption of life caused by crisis leads to a reflection on both of the questions that Rogers (1961) suggested we are continually attempting to answer and re-answer throughout life: 'who am I?' and 'who shall I become?'. Becker (1997) suggests that people are more likely to question who they are when they are confronted with a disruption to life. She emphasises that the self is a theory and a simplified abstraction. When life gets difficult, it is a theory that comes under fire, for it clearly didn't predict the crisis, or the crisis would have been avoided (Taylor, 1989). While Erikson suggested that identity crises were the preserve of adolescence, Marcia et al. (1993) found that throughout adulthood intermittent periods of moratorium occur that permit higher levels of integration and individuation to be sought, and permit separation from earlier commitments that might have been appropriate for an earlier life structure but had become outdated. So for Marcia, the discovery of self and identity is a lifelong task.

Porter, Markus and Nurius (1986) investigated the link between crisis and the development of possible selves. They found that those that recover from a crisis and those that do not recover develop a different set of possible selves. This is evidence of a mutually-implicating relation between the self system and crisis episodes. Becker (1997) concludes similarly that disruption can bring about renewed efforts at self-discovery and concern about the interpersonal self. Marcia et al. (1993) also conclude that a defining aspect of crisis is exploration of one's identity through a moratorium in which commitments are put on hold and possible selves are explored.

People report having become aware of previously suppressed aspects of themselves during and after crisis, both positive and negative aspects (Denne and

Thomson, 1994). For example, the self is appraised after experiencing crisis or trauma as stronger, more resilient, but also more vulnerable and fragile (Aldwin, 1994; Linley and Joseph, 2004; Tedeschi and Calhoun, 1994). What might bring about this new clarity of self-perception? Taylor considers in her book *Positive Illusions* that the self is habitually plagued by distortion and bias in favour of positive self-regard and a heroic self-narrative. A difficult episode "can shatter these perceptions of personal invulnerability and alter the assumptions about the world on which these beliefs are based." (Taylor, 1989, p.163).

2.9 Discourse and the Relational Self

The above review of the 'me' self assumes its nature is an internal cognitive construction. An alternative theoretical position sees the self not as an internal cognitive schema, but as a fluid property of situated human interaction. This alternative view, originating in a social constructionist philosophy, has manifested in psychology as the *relational* self (Chen, Boucher and Tapias, 2006) or *dialogical* self (Hermans and Kempen, 1993). These theories view the self as a property of dialogical exchange between persons within socially contextualised discourses, rather than as an individual mental property; it exists *between* people. The social constructionist position generally rejects the notion of inherent individual mental properties, instead preferring to view psychological terms such as 'self', 'crisis' or 'development' as elements of socially formed discourses which provide sense-making frameworks for persons and cultures. These discourses are formed in the socio-political sphere and may have power agendas and implied social and gender relations, which makes their adoption a political as well as psychological act (Gergen, 1995). Social constructionism views the self as more interpersonal than personal, and more embedded process than internal entity. This interpersonal emphasis becomes salient in later chapters, as data analysis presented in Chapters 6-8 presents a challenge to the idea of the internal self-system as described in sections 2.5 – 2.7 of this chapter.

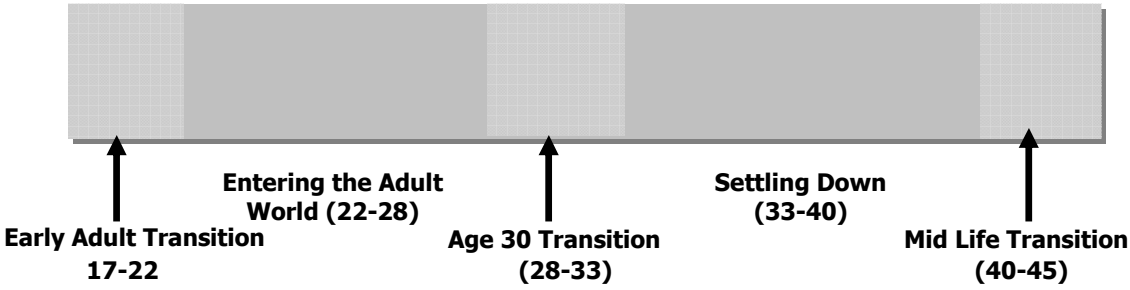
Social discourses that influence ideas of identity and self are not insulated from psychological theory, but rather are strongly influenced by psychological theories that reach the mainstream. Ideas from psychoanalysis such as *complexes*, *ego*, *fixation*, *narcissism*, *persona* and *the unconscious* have become major contributions to the discourse of self-definition in the twentieth century, and ideas from humanistic theory such as *self-actualisation* and *human potential* have become widely accepted

terms. These kind of popularised theoretical terms are highly likely to emerge when individuals are spontaneously asked about their own sense of identity and changes therein. This inter-relation of theory and lay self-definition is in evidence in the data presented in Chapters 6-8 of this thesis, and demonstrates the importance of shared discourses in the process of describing crisis and the self.

2.10 Early Adulthood

The constructs of crisis, development and self, and their inter-relationships, will be investigated within the context of the early adulthood lifestage in this thesis, and it is to this specific segment of human development we now turn. Early adulthood is one part of Levinson's tripartite division of adulthood into *early adulthood* (20-40), *middle adulthood* (40-60) and *late adulthood* (60+). This three-way division has now become standard in lifespan development psychology, with key textbooks in the field such as those of Santrock (2006) and Boyd and Bee (2006), being organised according these life stages. Each lifestage is broken down further into a set of substages. In Levinson's model (1976), early adulthood has two main stable phases, one mid-stage transition and two boundary transitions (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. The Substages of Early Adulthood



Life up until early adulthood is an open field of alternatives, many of which are pursued ephemerally in adolescence. A teenager or student can entertain visions of an ideal partner, ideal house and ideal job. All this can be done without having to make any committed choices that may restrict his life or turn wistful potentiality into dull actuality. He/she can flout routine, structure and convention and in so doing can develop autonomy and a unique identity (Marcia et al. 1993). While passionate commitments may be made, these are often temporary and in no sense provide a long-term restriction on activities.

The *Early Adult Transition* (17-22) is the transition phase that straddles adolescence and early adulthood. It involves the first tentative consideration of adult roles and expectations, and the initial testing of career and relationship prospects. This substage is not early adulthood yet, but rather is a boundary phase that maintains some experimental features of adolescence but imports some more committed aspects of early adulthood. After this transition is over, *Entering the Adult World* (22-28) commences. The main task of this period is to fashion a coherent, self-supported life structure of occupation and family for the first time, away from the protective gaze of parents. If commitments are made too early, without sufficient self-examination, a person may find themselves in a pattern that Sheehy (1977) calls "locked in". However, if a person continues to explore but never commit, then they may skip from job to job, and from relationship to relationship, in a pattern which Sheehy (1977) terms "transient". While Sheehy focused on both commitment and experimentation as active forces in one's twenties, Lidz wrote more of the challenges of commitment, such as marriage and parenthood. This investment requires the renunciation of alternatives:

> "Now, more than ever, alternative ways of life must be renounced to permit the singleness of purpose required for success and to consolidate one's identity; and intimacy becomes reserved for a single person to make possible meaningful sharing with a spouse." (Lidz, 1976, p.377)

After *Entering the Adult World* comes the *Age 30 Transition*. This period can frequently bring crisis and emotional difficulty. But it is a transition that Sheehy and Levinson concur must be moved through if we are not to get stuck in the mode of life that defined our 20s. In Levinson's studies the majority of men and women had some form of crisis around age 30, and Sheehy puts equal emphasis on the link between this time and crisis. 90% of Levinson's career women had a crisis at this stage, finding the combination of work and family responsibilities too stressful. Some decided to go back to family life or became disillusioned with the competitive world of business. Homemakers look to compensate in the other direction – re-finding a career or a life beyond family, which they had compromised or lost during their twenties. Divorce is a frequent response to this transition in those that find themselves in the 'locked in' pattern after their twenties.

After the age 30 Transition, the *Settling Down* (33-40) period involves creating a structure to life that is less provisional and more self-determined. It also

involves genuine integration of competing polarities. The masculine/feminine dichotomy is navigated for the first time in an intra-psychic sense, so that men may get in touch with their more feminine side, and women may allow their masculine side out. This is the consequence of the upheaval of the Age 30 Transition and the new equilibrium that is developed as a result. For many men, the 30s are focused on "the ladder" – striving to advance in rank, income, power, fame and contribution, and their focus on family is as much for a sense of successful provision as a sense of intimacy and inclusion. The "settling down" period then culminates in the Mid-Life Transition between 40 and 45, which again brings the potentiality of crisis, as the neglected parts of the self rise to the surface and seek expression through a new and adapted life structure.

Sheehy (1977) considers the development in early adulthood involves an interplay between the "Seeker Self", which seeks separation, exploration and individuality and the "Merger Self", which seeks closeness and attachment to another. If the Merger Self is over-emphasised, it can lead to excessive conformity, however it is the same self that enables us to love intimately, share unselfishly and experience empathy. If the Seeker Self predominates excessively, it will lead to accomplishment, but also to a self-centred existence in which "efforts to achieve individual distinction are so strenuous that they leave us emotionally impoverished" (1977, p.52). It is only by getting the two sides to work in concert that eventually a person becomes capable of both individuality and mutuality in early adult relationships.

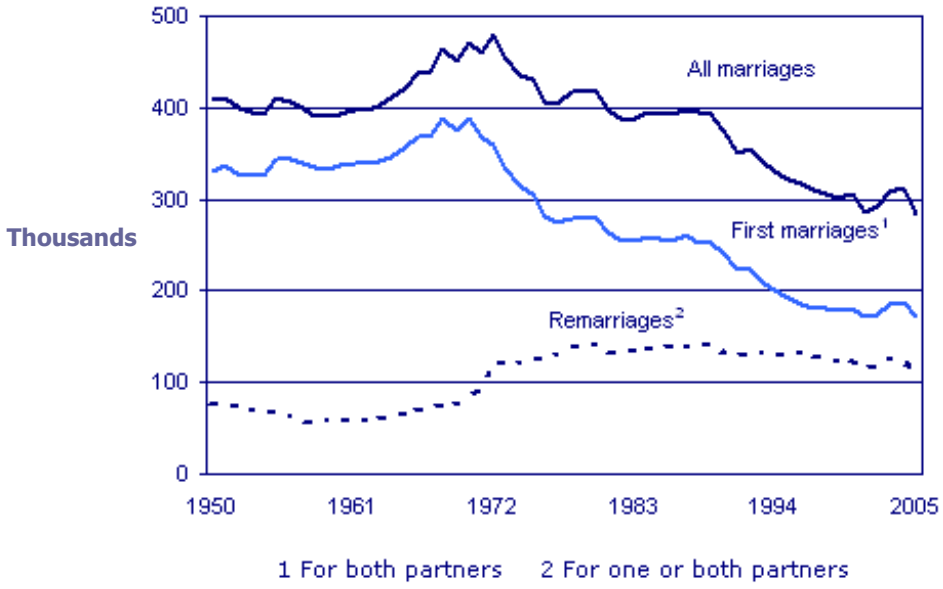
In summary, Levinson, Lidz, White and Sheehy wrote that the domain of early adulthood involves a particular predicament – if a young person is to bind into the adult world, he/she must renounce some of his hard-won adolescent independence and make commitments to a single career or single partner. However, it should be pointed out that these theories of early adulthood were developed in the 1970s. The intervening decades have seen changes in cultural norms with respect to partnership, parenthood, occupation and gender identity that have substantially changed the social context in which young people experience early adulthood. These changing challenges have been discussed in some psychology and sociology literature and have been clearly charted by National Statistics.

2.11 The Changing Challenges of Early Adulthood

Young adults now have a wider array of culturally accepted paths to take through early adulthood than in the 1970s, meaning that many conventional options have lost in popularity. Marriage, for one example, has shown a steady and consistent decline as a lifestyle preference since a rise in popularity during the 1970s from almost 500,000 a year in 1973 to less than 300,000 in the year of 2005 (see Fig.4)

Early adulthood is still the principle age group for those who do still opt for marriage. In 2003, 72% of men who got married did so between the ages of 20 and 40, while 78% of women who got married did so in this same age group[1]. Also in the same year of 2003, 51% of divorces were before the age of 40, illustrating that dealing with the break up of marriage is also now a component of the early adult phase for many[2].

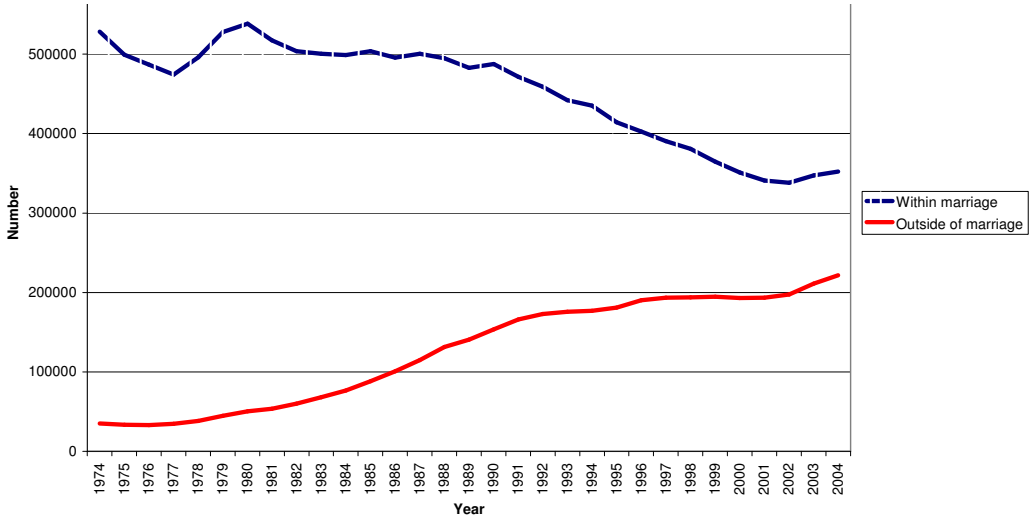
Figure 4. Numbers of marriages per year in the UK (1950- 2005) [3]



The diminishing popularity of marriage is mirrored in the changing ratio of births occurring within and outside of marriage. Figure 5 shows the stable trend over thirty years from 1974 to 2004 in numbers of births outside of marriage and numbers of births within marriage.

[1] http://www.statistics.gov.uk/STATBASE/xsdataset.asp?More=Y&vlnk=5307&All=Y&B2.x=86&B2.y=12
[2] http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/Table3_Divorces_Sex_and_age_at_divorce.xls
[3] Taken from: www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=322

Figure 5. Births within marriage and out of marriage to women in 20-40 age range, 1974-2004



The change has been constant and substantial; births outside marriage have increased and births within marriage have decreased. If this trend continues, then births outside marriage will overtake those occurring within marriage within a decade. Related to this statistic, the percentage of children living in a lone-parent family has increased from 7% in 1972 to 25% in 2004 [4].

Alongside the changes in family structure and partnership have been changes in gender roles. Traditional conceptions of masculinity have been revised over the past three decades and challenged by a new politics of masculinity in which some men develop a masculinity away from the mainstream macho image (Connell, 1987). This involves new codes of conduct for treating women, e.g. not pushing for control within families and not demanding the initiative in sex. It means new responsibilities for caring for children and opening up emotionally to other men. It has meant "shifting the focus of life from careers and money to human relationships and from the mechanical world to the natural world" (Connell, 1987, p.19).

Corresponding to this, the Office of National Statistics cites a rise in the number of stay-at-home fathers who take primary child-rearing responsibility, from being not even statistically registered in the 1970s, to 118,000 in 1993 to 194,000 in 2006.[5] Cabrera et al. (2000) chart that in the USA there are now more single mothers than in the 1970s, but for those fathers who do live with their children, there has been a *doubling* in the amount of time spent with their children since the 1970s. This

[4] http://www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=1163&Pos=6&ColRank=2&Rank=320
[5] http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/lmsuk0407.pdf

suggests a changing role for the father, from 'breadwinner' to 'co-parent'. Meanwhile in further education, gender changes have been substantial, with the numbers of women in higher education overtaking men. In 1975, for every 100 men at university in the UK there were 56 women. In 2000, for every 100 men there were 120 women (Floud, 2006).

Alongside changing gender roles and expectations, cultural norms for sexual orientation and gender identity have shifted substantially since the 1970s, providing a changed social context for the early adulthoods of gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans-sexual men and women. In 1973 homosexuality was still a recognised psychological disorder, and was only partially de-criminalised in 1967 in the UK. The intervening thirty years have seen substantial changes in attitudes and policies towards same-sex relationships. There has been a growth in the discussion of and openness to non-traditional family structures such as those with lesbian or gay parents (e.g. Tasker, 2005). Changes in attitude in the UK have recently been translated into a key in social policy; in 2005 civil partnerships for same-sex couples were introduced in the UK, leading to 15,672 civil partnerships being formed in the UK between December 2005 and the end of September 2006.

Alongside changes in family structure, gender roles and sexuality expectations, the nature of work and occupation has changed over the last thirty years. In 1975, White wrote that entry into an occupation is a key stabilising emphasis on early adulthood:

> "One type of event that often contributes to the stabilizing of ego identity is placement in an occupational status or in some other socially recognized position. Social roles provide us with a means of establishing identity. They also provide us with opportunities for action whereby we further define and stabilize ourselves." (White, 1975, p.339)

This kind of fixed occupational identity has become less common over the decades since White was writing. Lifelong professions are giving way to portfolio careers, freelance roles, part-time work integrated with childcare, short-term contracts and multiple professional roles. To illustrate this, national statistics in the UK show a rise between 1991 and 2001 in part-time occupations for both males and females. There is also a growing female presence in the workforce; since 1991 there has been a 13% increase in part-time employment of women, and a 7% increase in full-time employment. Part-time employment amongst men in the UK has increased over the same ten year stretch. In the USA, Cabrera et al. (2000) report that largest job growth

recorded by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics is in jobs which involve night and weekend shifts.

Early adulthood as a life stage is shaped by the cultural and historical context, and in the current climate of social change this is clearly apparent. Social trends such as increased female employment, increased father involvement, fewer marriages and more flexible work portfolios have provided new challenges and opportunities for individuals in their twenties and thirties. This contemporary change towards a more pluralistic and ambiguous approach to early adulthood may mean that the more structured formulation of Levinson's model, with its assumptions of a structured cultural template for early adulthood, is simply out-of-date. This issue will be reconsidered in the light of data in the final chapter.

What is irrefutable and unarguable, no matter whether from Levinson's perspective or taking into account contemporary changes, is that for both men and women, early adulthood is full of profound lifestage-specific challenges and changes, which make its relative absence from psychological literature hard to explain.

2.12 From Literature Review to Research Questions

Based on the above review of literature on crisis, development, self, early adulthood and the inter-relation of these constructs, three simple research questions were developed, finding the answers to which is the aim of the thesis. The first two research questions address the phenomenology and morphology of crisis itself, and are phrased:

1. What does early adult crisis involve as an experience?
2. Is there a common process underlying differing manifestations of early adult crisis? If so, what?

The third research question actively seeks for the links between crisis, development and the evolving self in early adulthood:

3. Do early adult crises have a formative role in development of the self? If so, why?

In the following three chapters, this project sets out an epistemological foundation and an exhaustively described composite methodology that provide a transparent demonstration of how the above research questions will be empirically investigated. This commences in the following chapter with the description of a 'middle way' epistemology.

3.
An Epistemological Middle Way

This chapter sets out an epistemological foundation for the qualitative method described in the following chapter. Different forms of qualitative research have different solutions to epistemological problems such as the function of theory, the process of induction, the nature of scientific knowledge and the role of the individual case. Given this diversity and lack of consensus, it is important to make qualitative epistemology explicit, for it affects all aspects of research design. The approach described here seeks a "middle way" between three polarities:

1) Idiographic vs. nomothetic method
2) Inductive logic vs. hypothetico-deductive logic
3) Realist vs. constructionist knowledge

3.1 Beyond the Idiographic / Nomothetic Divide

Idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychology are traditionally considered to be alternative methods for researching the mind and behaviour. While the received idiographic/nomothetic definition has occasionally been questioned (e.g. Rosenzweig, 1986; Silverstein, 1988), it continues to be a key part of mainstream psychological epistemology. The words come originally from the German philosopher Windelband (1894/1990). In Windelband's meaning, "idiographic" knowledge is that which is concerned with describing a specific event or person, but not with general theory, and his example is historical knowledge. "Nomothetic" knowledge, on the other hand, is concerned with the goal of deriving or testing theories, models or laws, and is gained through the natural sciences.

It was Gordon Allport who brought the idiographic / nomothetic distinction from German philosophy into mainstream American psychology in the 1930s (Allport, 1937). Allport wanted to conduct personality research on individual cases and considered that the concept of "idiographic knowledge" would justify the kind of knowledge derived from such research. He conversely used the term nomothetic to refer to quantitative large-sample research that employs aggregated

> group data and statistical analysis. Nomothetic psychologists are therefore seen to be unconcerned with particular instances in their search for generic laws, while idiographic researchers are seen to have little concern with theory and general law in their portrayal of individuals; theory is seen to swamp the uniqueness of individuality while individuality undermines the uniformities of theory (Holt, 1978).

This idiographic/nomothetic distinction does not fit well with qualitative research, because most forms of qualitative research simultaneously inform general theory in a nomothetic sense *and* highlight individuals in an idiographic sense. This can be done within three kinds of research problem; *case-by-case theory generation, case-specific theory testing* and *theory exemplification*.

Case-by-case theory generation involves generating a theory that applies to all, not to most, individuals within its remit. Such a theory can be a very abstract theory, if the remit is human beings in general, or very local if the remit is a specific demographic group or specific type of person. When developing theory in a case-by-case manner, there can be no averaging, no probabilistic statistical relationships, but instead there must be analysis of each individual case in order to find those patterns, structures or processes that hold for all. Individual cases are often presented within these forms of report, allowing idiographic illumination to occur alongside the search for theory. Therefore this kind of research is *both* nomothetic *and* idiographic; it seeks laws and commonalities while highlighting the individuality of the persons within the sample that inform the theory. In fact this case-by-case form of theory development is arguably more nomothetic than traditional quantitative research, for it applies to all individuals within its remit, rather than to the majority or the average of a group (Lamiell, 1998).

Grounded Theory is probably the best known approach that focuses on this form of research problem (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Miles and Huberman's (1994) approach attempts to strike a similar balance between theory and case. Newell and Simon (1972) developed their theory of human problem-solving using protocol analysis, which takes each individual as indicative of, and informative of, the developing theory. Another example of case-by-case theory development is Czikszentmihalyi's theory of flow (Czikszentmihalyi, 1990). He gathered thousands of descriptions of optimal experience episodes and analyzed them qualitatively to

derive a theory that applied to *all*. Czikszentmihalyi presented not only a general theory in his book on flow, but also many idiographic individual stories too which encapsulate aspects of the theory.

Case-based theory exemplification is another form of research that includes nomothetic and idiographic elements. It involves demonstrating a theory's main concepts within a specific concrete example. McAdams and West (1997) state that theory exemplification is a traditionally accepted function of the case-study, and that the goal of theory exemplification is not to create *or* test theory, but rather to *illustrate* and *demonstrate* theory in a particular instance. It creates a valuable bridge between abstraction and particular. It is not confined by the need for generalisability or representativeness, and therefore can be done using a sampling approach that seeks typical, exemplary or information-rich cases (Miles and Huberman, 1994). A recent example of the use of theory exemplification is in McAdams' book *The Redemptive Self* (2006). McAdams found six common themes in the life stories of generative American adults: early advantage, awareness of the suffering of others, moral depth and steadfastness, redemptive episodes, power versus love and future growth. In order to exemplify these themes within a concrete instance, McAdams used a case from his data set, Deborah Feldman. She is described in some idiosyncratic detail over many pages, but simultaneously emerges as an exemplar of the theory of the American redemptive self. This case-based function is both heavily theoretical, therefore drawing on the nomothetic tradition, but is also case-specific and idiographic.

Case-specific theory testing can be conducted on theories that are developed in the above manner. A theory developed case-by-case is considered to apply to individuals within its remit, not merely to apply to the majority of the group, and will also be able to make predictions about and aid descriptions of individuals. Therefore the theory can be tested on individual cases, for to demonstrate just *one* well-documented case that does not conform to the theory's predictions and patterns is to challenge the theory, to limit its scope or potentially to falsify it (McAdams and West, 1997). The objective is to test whether the theory can predict or explain one, or a small number, of the phenomena to which it applies (Mook, 1983). When testing a theory, the researcher is *starting* with a generality, and looking to see whether it works in a specific instance, rather than starting with specific data and looking to generalise. Such case-specific theory-testing was exemplified by Festinger's test of

cognitive dissonance theory on a single UFO cult in Chicago who predicted global cataclysm on a specific data (Festinger, Riecken & Schacter, 1956). He predicted, based on his theory, that when the event did not occur, the members of the cult would not give up their beliefs, because the cognitive dissonance would be too uncomfortable, and may even strengthen their beliefs. His predictions were borne out and so the theory was supported. While describing this group within the nomothetic context of theory-testing, much idiographic detail emerged too and was reported in extensive detail.

In sum, this thesis does not accept the traditional position that individuality and theory are antagonistic, but rather sees individuality and theory as complementary, and employs case-by-case theory generation, case-specific theory testing and within-case theory exemplification in order to grasp the nature of early adult crisis in its theoretical *and* individual forms.

3.2 Between the Inductive / Hypothetico-Deductive Polarity

The hypothetico-deductive approach to science is dominant across most forms of science, thanks to Karl Popper, whose influential philosophy is widely considered to be a gold standard for scientific investigation (Popper, 1959; Popper, 1972). Popper was attempting to solve the philosophical problem of scientific induction, which is the problem of how one can rationally justify jumping from particular observations of a limited sample to general conclusions for a larger population or universe of phenomena. He concluded that you can't – it is a leap of faith, but that there is a way around it by the use of a *hypothetico-deductive* approach to science. In this approach one starts with a hypothesised prediction, and proceeds to test this hypothesis with data. One is then not working with the difficulties of induction, instead all one has to do is to make a deduction as to whether the hypothesis is supported or not. If the hypothesis is shown to be false, the theory is undermined. If repeated hypotheses are falsified, then the theory is rejected.

Qualitative methods in the social sciences have been opposed to using the hypothetico-deductive approach to science, having found problems in its application. Much qualitative work is undertaken in an exploratory and open fashion on domains that are not well charted and understood, precisely in the theory-generation area that Popper overlooked. Popper had little to say on how theory was actually generated in order to extrapolate hypotheses for testing, other than stating it was through a process

of "bold conjecture" (Popper, 1972). He did not discuss the process of empirical theory development, which is at the very heart of much qualitative research. In exploratory qualitative research, hypotheses are neither possible nor desirable, so open-ended research questions are often used instead, and the knowledge development process works according to a more inductive process. Some qualitative approaches, e.g. Giorgi (1985) and Glaser (1992) suggest that qualitative research should avoid prior theory completely in order to work in a purely inductive logic from particular to theory. However this prevents the possibility of theory testing, and it prevents the use of prior theory in shaping research questions and analytical frameworks. For example, Glaser (1992) suggests having no literature review at all in Grounded Theory research. This inductive extreme is roundly rejected by the current thesis, and instead a middle-way between induction and deduction is sought. The middle-way approach is well described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Miles and Huberman (1994) in their sourcebooks on qualitative method. Both of these sourcebooks describe how qualitative research involves a dialectical interplay of induction and deduction. Their position is that inductive logic in analysis needs to be combined with the inevitability of some deductive logic based on existing mental constructs. While it is important to inductively move from the specific case up to the general when developing theory, all analysis and interpretation of data must be done from the basis of a "personal conceptual universe" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.155) that includes knowledge of existing theory, philosophical assumptions about the nature of knowledge and life, and personal experience. For Strauss and Corbin, "an interpretation is a form of deduction" (1998, p.136), therefore no interpretation of data can be done without some kind of deductive inference from a-priori knowledge.

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that a research project should be explicit about existing frameworks and about the knowledge base that shapes analytical interpretations, rather than aiming at impossible inductive purity. However the researcher can *also* maintain an inductive focus in analysis by working up from individual cases to general statements in order to prevent rash deductive inferences, and can commit explicitly to over-turning or rejecting any existing theory if it does not fit with data. If both of these sides are integrated, then induction and deduction work together in conjunction. There will be differential emphasis as a researcher cycles through theory-creation (at which point induction is emphasised), theory-

testing and theory-exemplification (at which point deduction is emphasised), but at all points *both* are employed in differing balance.

3.3 Reconciling Realism and Constructionism

One of the key dimensions that qualitative researchers disagree on is whether our interpretations are based on an observer-independent real world, or whether the world is subjectively constructed in the act of thought, language and interpretation. The first of these is the position of realism; that things *do* in some sense exist, and that things exist independent of any observer. The second is the postmodern or constructionist position, which states that there is no given state of affairs and no absolute, only personal or group interpretations.

There are of course many variants within this polarity. There are many different forms of realism, all of which consider that reality is to be found somewhere, but disagree on where to find it. Naïve realism is a term that is often used to describe an unquestioned "common sense" philosophy that both the material world of particulars and theoretical abstractions are real in an unmediated and external sense. The philosophies of Plato and Aristotle represent distinct, more nuanced, forms of realism. Both believed in a real world, made of real entities, but for Plato, it was *abstract ideas* such as love, force, harmony, goodness, beauty, truth, that are the ultimately real things, given an ontological status above and beyond any individual instance. The world of particularity for Plato is imperfect and dreamlike. His brand of realism is therefore 'transcendental realism' – reality is not the concrete everyday here-and-now, it is the realm of nature's laws and ideas. For Plato it was *reason, mathematics and logic* that would take you to this transcendent reality, therefore Platonic scholarship is what we now call philosophy.

Aristotle suggested conversely that reality is not in the realm of abstract form, but in the here-and-now world of direct experience. He said it is the world of particular entities that is real, while ideas and concepts are mental extrapolations from these real things (Armstrong, 2001). His doctrine was reformulated as 'entity realism' by Hacking (1983). The Aristotelian realist is an empiricist – the way to reality is through *observation* of particulars. Aristotle was in this sense the first scientist, for he paved the way for the notion of knowledge gained by sensory interaction with the real world. He was also arguable the first constructionist, for he introduced the idea that

ideas, laws and abstractions are inherently human constructs, rather than transcendent forms.

Realism is given another slant in the idealism of Hegel, Kant, Berkeley and Schopenhauer. Like Aristotle, idealism asserts that there is an immanent and present reality, but that this reality is a mental one, not a physical or material one. The universe is better conceived as a mind rather than a great collection of material entities. Entities are not objects but are ideas, and therefore the "real" world is within conscious experience. Kant and Berkeley said that beyond the world of conscious experience we cannot know what the world is like, so there is merely the unknown – the 'noumenon'. We cannot know if space, time, objects and so on, are found beyond the experiencing mind, because we cannot observe what we cannot experience. Some physicists such as David Bohm support this position by suggesting that space and time are relative to an observer and are not inherent in a universe beyond consciousness (Bohm, 1980). Phenomenology is the 20th century inheritor of the idealist viewpoint, founded by continental philosophers such as Husserl and Heidegger. Similar to the idealists, phenomenologists argued that things exist within experience, and reality should be conceived as the contents of experience, not as a hypothetical, non-experiencable world. In his commentary on Husserl, the philosopher Kohak summarises the phenomenological position concisely:

> "The notion of a non-experienceable world, whether we conceive of it as a "noumenal" alternative to phenomenal experience or as a distant star, is necessarily empty. Any real world, even a possible real world, is necessarily an experienceable world, and, as such, ordered by subject experience." (Kohak, 1978, p.88)

The phenomenologists therefore emphasised that we should study the contents of consciousness to understand reality, but like the idealists before them, did not reject the notion of an absolute reality. They merely changed its location to one that is structured by a subject. The possibility of an ultimate subject remained (Kohak, 1978).

While phenomenology is about putting reality in experience, postmodernism is about putting reality in context. Postmodernism emphasises that a fact is only a fact within a cultural and personal context, and that there are ever-receding layers of contexts. There are therefore no context-independent facts, theories or truths. There are multiple cultural reference points, socially and historically mediated facts and

human agendas that shape knowledge. Nothing is discovered as such, but is constructed in the act of interpretation (Potter, 1996).

The postmodern impulse has manifested in psychology in a number of ways. Firstly it emerged as critical psychology – the endeavour to demonstrate how there is no such thing as knowledge independent of power and therefore theories and psychological vocabularies have a power mandate and a dominant party with vested interests who protect these interests. It also manifested in feminist psychology, whose agenda is to challenge the male-centric nature of psychological theory and research, and thirdly in social constructionism, whose aim is to demonstrate how psychological theory is shaped by the historical and social relations of the researcher rather than an independent reality, and that knowledge is therefore only accurate or true within a given social and historical context (Gergen, 1985).

All of these three postmodern strands have had a positive effect on psychology, in that they have exposed genuine phenomena of power agendas and biased theory in psychological theory and knowledge. However, if taken to the extreme, postmodernism can lead to a kind of impasse of relativism, for it tends towards the nihilistic position that nothing is more right or wrong than anything else outside of its context. Postmodernists have been criticised for turning relativity and plurality into a rigid dogma:

> "Ironically, in this way postmodernists are often the mirror image of the Enlightenment universalists they challenge, making of difference – especially Derrida's difference – an absolute as rigid as unitary identity or universalism is to their enemies. And if positive, unitary identity is a form of violence against difference, so absolutized difference is a form of violence against intersubjectivity or, more specifically, the human will to bridge the gap between people, traditions, cultures." (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000, p.175)

While postmodern social constructionists and quantitative realists lie at opposite poles in psychology, there is a middle ground that is growing in influence in qualitative psychology, which asserts that there is a reality but our interpretations of it are imperfect and our perceptions are selective. This view says that as humans we are bound by the limits of our cognition and perception, but can know reality partially and can communicate it imperfectly. This middle way is often called 'critical realism' (Bhaskar, 1997; Bhaskar, 1998), and it is to this philosophy that the current thesis is most closely aligned. Critical realism is the philosophy that some of our sensory data and cognitive structures can represent external objects and events, while other sensory data are non-representative and constructive. It therefore acknowledges a knowable

reality while acknowledging the role of interpretation and cognition in understanding and theorising about that reality. A central tenet of critical realism is that science cannot be considered as just another myth or story; there is an experienced reality that science is constantly returning to, using the process of research (note the cyclical nature of the term re-search), to ground concepts and theories in actuality. Another key tenet is that the world is constantly changing and in a state of flux, which makes constant re-search all the more important. For critical realists, reality is not merely in particular entities or in abstractions, but in the ongoing and interactive conjunction of the two in experience (Bhaskar, 1993; Chesni, 1987), and science must strike a dialectical balance between the two to access that reality.

3.4 Summary

The philosophy described in this chapter cuts a middle way path between idiographic and nomothetic research; inductive and deductive logic and realist and constructionist knowledge. Modern qualitative philosophy sometimes rejects those aspects of the above polarities that are associated with quantitative research; i.e. nomothetic method, hypothetico-deductive logic and realist knowledge. The epistemology described here suggests that what is needed is not to reject these aspects, but rather to bring them into creative conjunction with the opposite side of the polarity. The next chapter attempts to provide a further integration of polarities and competing alternatives at the level of methodological protocol and process.

4.
A Composite Qualitative Methodology

In this chapter, I present a composite qualitative methodology that employs techniques and procedures from several existing qualitative methods, and combines them into a synthesised form that will be used as the methodology for this thesis. I shall first provide a brief historical reconnaissance of qualitative methods in psychology, to provide a context for what I am attempting to do.

4.1 The Qualitative Impulse in Psychology

Qualitative research has existed in psychology as a peripheral alternative to quantitative research since its early days as a discipline. To name a few classic examples, James wrote *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, a qualitative investigation, in 1902; Freud's texts used a qualitative form of analysis and reporting (e.g. Freud, 1909); Piaget's early work in the 1920s used a qualitative approach to analysis (e,g. Piaget, 1928) and Lewin's approach to psychology in the 1930s was qualitative (e.g. Lewin, 1931). In the 1950s and 1960s there was qualitative work done by influential researchers including Festinger, Riecken and Schacter (1956), Ainsworth (1967), Erikson (1968, 1969), and Murray (1962). The above examples have the hallmarks of qualitative inquiry: data collection is not concerned with measurement but with the finding of patterns, processes, structures, relationships and meanings; data are not aggregated into group parameters but rather are maintained at the level of the individual; analysis involves parsing textual or observational data into meaningful parts and synthesising these parts so that relationships and meaning can be shown.

In each of the above examples, qualitative methods were innovated to meet the needs of a specific research problem, for at the time there were no formal methodological protocols, guidelines or sourcebooks for qualitative research. The change towards qualitative research being a recognised and formalised methodology in psychology came from sociology, where in the late 1960s Glaser and Strauss developed the procedures of Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This was arguably the first clear set of protocols and procedures for conducting robust qualitative inquiry, and started to be found in psychology journals from the 1970s.

The humanistic psychology movement gave another impetus to qualitative methods in the 1970s. Humanistic psychology emphasised holism, human agency, existential concerns such as love and the search for meaning, goals and motivation, empathy and subjective experience. It viewed quantitative methods as better suited to an atomistic, mechanistic approach, unable to grasp the systemic wholeness and context of being human, and so roundly rejected them:

> "Traditional mathematics and logic, in spite of their unlimited possibilities, seem actually to be handmaidens in the service of an atomistic, mechanical view of the world." (Maslow, 1954, p.236)

In the early 1980s the humanistic movement spawned a methodological sourcebook, *Human Enquiry* (Rowan and Reason, 1981), which set out a humanistic philosophy and set of techniques for qualitative research. Humanistic research is a realist approach to psychology in that it assumes a real human world beyond text and develops theories at all levels of generality, including theories about human beings in general, for example Rogers' universal motive for self-actualisation (Rogers, 1961), or Maslow's universal dynamics of motivation (Maslow, 1954).

In the mid-1980s, qualitative research took on more of an established identity in psychology, but also, somewhat paradoxically, became more divided and heterogeneous (Hammersley, 1996), as it separated into different epistemologies and techniques. Three of the main types of qualitative approach that emerged in the 1980s were 1) empiricist/realist, 2) phenomenological and 3) discursive (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1994).

1) The empiricist/realist approach

The origins of this approach is often linked to the sourcebook of Miles and Huberman (1984). This method is generally considered to work according to the same basic epistemology of the natural sciences; researchers are simply documenting and discovering a real, un-interpreted world 'out there' with our senses (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1994). However, this is not the actual epistemological position described in Miles and Huberman's original sourcebook, and is further removed from their 1994 revised sourcebook, for in both books they openly admit to the hermeneutic challenges and interpretative 'quagmires' of research and theory building. Miles and Huberman's approach is a major influence on the composite method used in this

thesis, and I shall later in this chapter describe why, despite its criticisms, it is still one of the most valuable and comprehensive methodologies available.

2) The Phenomenological Approach

In 1985, Giorgi (1985) produced a seminal reader on applying phenomenological method to psychology. Phenomenology was a continental philosophical movement that had been developed by Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau Ponty in the 1930s. It emphasised the study of direct experience, the avoidance of speculative theoretical systems, thick description of the contents of consciousness or 'the lifeworld' and the 'bracketing' of a-priori theoretical assumptions when researching. Giorgi's application of phenomenological principles to empirical research in psychology brought all these principles to qualitative inquiry.

3) The Discursive Approach

In 1987, Potter and Wetherell published *Discourse and Social Psychology*, a book that crystallised postmodern and post-structuralist philosophical tenets into an actionable empirical method. Post-structuralism was a philosophical movement based substantially on the work of Foucault and Derrida. Foucault stated that it was impossible to step outside discourse to view a situation objectively, and Derrida emphasised that all text has ambiguity, therefore the possibility of a final and complete interpretation is impossible. Derrida also thought that text actually structures the world, and therefore that language shapes us. Potter and Wetherell's method correspondingly focused on the way in which life is shaped by text, by ambiguous textual meanings and by social influences such as power agendas or prejudices.

Alongside these three emerging qualitative types, Grounded Theory remained a popular option in psychology. Grounded Theory can been used and interpreted according to different philosophical positions; it is sometimes considered to be post-structuralist and constructionist (e.g. Henwood and Pidgeon, 1994; Charmaz, 2000), for others it is more phenomenological (Rennie, 2000) and for others a more realist methodology (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), and for one of its founders it is none of the above (Glaser, 1998). This adaptability of Grounded Theory, and its generic use

across the qualitative movement, arguably provided a common thread that helped to bind the emerging qualitative school together.

In the early 1990s, Smith first developed IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis), which became a widely-used technique of qualitative analysis in psychology. Its success and popularity can be attributed to the fact that it cuts a middle-way between the three main qualitative schools of discursive, phenomenological and realist, honouring key tenets of each but combining them into a practical set of methodological injunctions. Like the discursive school, IPA accepts that the research process is deeply hermeneutic, with both researcher and participant engaged in interpretative acts, and accepts contextual and socio-political influences on the knowledge-gathering process. Like the phenomenological school, it asks for a researcher to move past text to study the experiential lifeworld of participants, and to connect with individuals in a direct way rather than through the veil of their prior assumptions and categories. Like the realist school, it accepts the reality of a world which is independent of our cognition, against which we can evaluate our interpretive schemes to assess their quality and validity. IPA is sometimes linked with a critical realist philosophy (Fade, 2004), which suggests that it fits well with the epistemology set out in Chapter 3.

Since 2000 the qualitative momentum has continued in psychology, with more textbooks appearing, more conferences being arranged, more qualitative journal articles being produced and there is now a journal dedicated to the discussion and use of qualitative techniques in psychology. Despite this continued growth, qualitative techniques in psychology are still peripheral and still shunned by much of the establishment. Many mainstream journals will not publish qualitative research, and many undergraduate courses barely touch on the methods involved. The reason that qualitative methods have remained peripheral is arguably political. It can be argued that orthodoxy prefers the exclusive use of quantitative methods, as it is a way of maintaining the status quo. Quantitative research uses the hypothetico-deductive model and is therefore suited to testing theory that has already been developed. If you can only test hypotheses from existing theory, you have little chance of finding a new theory, and so the status-quo is reinforced. Qualitative methods, on the other hand, are tools for exploration and for the development of new ideas; they can generate new questions, new theories and new models, so are inherently subversive (Parker, 2005).

Nonetheless it could also be argued that the qualitative methodology camp has contributed to its ongoing peripheral status by continued internal debate and arguments within itself. Discourse analysis, grounded theory, IPA, narrative analysis and other qualitative methods are often seen to be opposed; differences are magnified and reified while the inherent similarities that these methods share are lessened or ignored. Indeed there are even strong debates about the nature of each qualitative method, for example Glaser and Strauss' ongoing disagreements about the nature of Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1992). This sense of opposition in the qualitative movement has fuelled inward-looking debates on the nature of knowledge, theory and analytical process, which has been undoubtedly valuable, but it may also have prevented a more outward-focused voice of the qualitative movement as a whole, leading to a lack of uptake of the new ideas across the discipline. Encouragingly though, a report in *The Psychologist* on the qualitative section of the 2007 British Psychological Society conference quoted a number of psychologists calling for a drawing together of qualitative psychology. Dr. Lucy Yardley described the importance of using qualitative methods in combination through a "composite analysis" approach and so moving towards qualitative integration. Prof. Robert Elliott stated that all qualitative analysis involves the same basic activities and that researchers should concentrate on the commonalities rather than differences. Prof. Jonathan Smith was also quoted at the same conference as describing how methodological exclusivity in qualitative psychology can be counterproductive, and that researchers can judiciously combine approaches to best serve the research problem in question (Haywood, 2007).

In this spirit of continuing the ongoing evolution of qualitative methods and following the trend towards methodological synthesis, a composite qualitative methodology is attempted in the current investigation. In biology there is a phenomenon called *hybrid vigour*, which describes the increased strength in offspring when two different breeds or sub-species are combined. It is hoped that something similar will be achieved here; by bringing the respective strengths of two different but compatible methods into a composite, the result is hoped to be a strong and adaptable hybrid. These two source methods are described below.

4.2 Sources of the Composite

The composite methodology is created by combining features from two different qualitative methods. The first is the *Interactive Model* of Miles and Huberman (1994), which continues to be one of the top-selling qualitative sourcebooks due to its popularity in the educational and social sciences, but is not a major method within psychology. The second is *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (Smith, 1991; Smith and Osborn, 2003), which is one of the most established qualitative methods in contemporary psychology.

Miles and Huberman's sourcebook (1994) provides a systematic and pragmatic guide for the whole qualitative research process from research problem to final report, including sampling, data collection, analysis, data display, memoing, reporting and validation. Their approach is called the *Interactive Model* because all stages of research are seen to interactively affect one another in feedback loops. Research involves "shuttling among data reduction, display, and preliminary and verified conclusions. New data enter the picture, new display forms evolve, conclusions get bent and revised. All of these will have back effects on each other, effects that are crucial to the evolving analysis." (1994, p.310). Some commentaries have contrasted Miles and Huberman's approach with Grounded Theory, but when compared with Strauss and Corbin's formulation (1998) they have many important and striking similarities, including an interplay of induction and deduction, a pragmatic approach to method, a judicious use of a-priori theory to shape analysis, an analytical focus on both process and structure, an emphasis on insights and 'aha' moments, and the use of diagrams, matrices and memos to aid the analysis process. These and other similarities between Strauss and Corbin's (1998) Grounded Theory and the Interactive Model (1994) are illustrated with representative quotes from respective sourcebooks in Appendix E.

IPA has become a popular and widely used approach within qualitative psychology due to its clear and unambiguous protocols for data collection and analysis. IPA starts with the kinds of open research question that fit very well with the current thesis:

> "IPA studies are more often than not concerned with big issues, issues of significant consequence for the participant either on an ongoing basis or at a critical juncture in her or his life. These issues are frequently transformative, often they are about identity and a sense of self, because thorough, in-depth, holistic analyses of individual accounts of important experiences or events almost always touch on self and identity." (Smith and Eatough, 2006, p.327)

IPA can employ any written data source from which the experience and lifeworld of the individual in question can be inferred. This inference occurs by way of a 'double hermeneutic', in which the researcher interprets an individual's own interpretations of their experience (Smith and Osborn, 2003). An inductive mindset is paramount throughout an IPA project; it emphasises that findings and conclusions emerge from the data, rather than being imposed on it. Case-intensive analysis should be employed to prevent rash interpretation or inappropriate theorising (Smith, 1991). Theory can be questioned by research, but is subordinate to individual cases at all times.

IPA and Miles and Huberman's approach have methodological and philosophical parallels that make the composite synthesis possible. Theory/model generation is a valid research aim in both the Interactive Model and IPA. Both agree that one can develop some kind of pattern, process or structure that holds for multiple cases. Miles and Huberman seek explanatory and causal theory, whereas IPA is far more focused on descriptive and experiential models.

Both take a middle-way approach to the realism–constructivism polarity. They agree that all science is interpretative, constructive and imperfect but based on a real world nonetheless. As was earlier mentioned, Miles and Huberman's approach is sometimes criticised in psychology for being almost positivist; it seems to imply that we can discover a real world independent of our own mental and linguistic apparatus. Yet like IPA theirs is clearly a *critical realism*; they consider that we are limited by our interpretive apparatus to know the real world imperfectly, and that in research we try to transcend our personal biases and prejudices to grasp real patterns and processes:

> "We agree with the interpretivists who point out that knowledge is a social and historical product and that "facts" come to us laden with theory. We affirm the existence and importance of the subjective, the phenomenological, the meaning-making at the center of social life. Our aim is to register and "transcend" these processes by building theories to account for a real world." (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.4)

For both methods, data analysis starts with an intensive examination of a single case, no matter how many in the sample. Miles and Huberman say:

> "It is crucial to have understood the dynamics of each particular case before proceeding to cross-case explanations. Without that, superficiality sets in." (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.207)

Transcripts are considered essential in the analytical process for both methods, as dealing directly with raw data gives the analysis a solid grounding in the empirical material. Analysis proceeds in a similar way in both methods, with the creation of units of meaning to account for recurrent or salient segments of data. In IPA these units are called themes and in the Interactive Model they are called codes. These themes/codes are then organised into higher-level units (IPA – superordinate themes, Interactive Model – pattern codes), to bring order to these analytical elements. Both cite the importance of linking codes to illustrative passages of text so that the particular-abstraction link is made explicit. Finally, the creators of both approaches sanction the further development of their methods, therefore giving some warrant to the kind of composite attempted in this thesis:

> "We have tried to bring together a serviceable set of resources, to encourage their use, and, above all, to stimulate their further development, testing and refinement." (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.3)

> "There is no single, definitive way to do IPA. We are offering suggestions, ways we have found that work for us…as you proceed, you may find yourself adapting the method to your own particular way of working and the particular topic you are investigating." (Smith and Osborn, 2003, p.52-3)

Of course, IPA and the Interactive Model have their key differences too, which allow them to bring specific strengths to a research endeavour. In the next section, the components of the composite will be described and explicitly attributed to their location in one or both of the source methods.

4.3 Components of the Composite Methodology

Case Definition and Sampling

Case definition is a part of Miles and Huberman's method and is a component of the composite. It involves setting the boundaries to investigation by creating a-priori definitions of the key constructs that are under investigation. It makes research more controlled and more conceptually clear, while aiding recruitment of persons by providing inclusion and exclusion criteria for those who are eligible to participate in the study.

The process of case definition feeds into determining the boundaries of the "sample universe" – the total group of individuals who are valid for participation, and hence from which individuals can be selected. Studies involving IPA are

recommended to use a homogenous sample universe; either a "closely defined group" or "individuals with similar demographic / socio-economic status profiles." (Smith and Eatough, 2006, p.329). This then maximises the chance of cross-case comparison, of common patterns and of generalisation to others within this defined sample universe. The recommended number of participants in an IPA study is put at between 1 and 15, with the standard being 6 to 8. More than this number may prevent adequate attention on each individual, while less will limit the possibility of cross-case themes emerging.

Finding and selecting the right persons for participation from within a sample universe requires a flexible set of purposive sampling approaches. Miles and Huberman list seventeen possible approaches, all of which are valuable for certain kinds of research problem, and should be chosen/combined in a problem-focused manner:

1. Maximum variation
2. Politically important cases
3. Homogenous
4. Random purposeful
5. Critical case
6. Stratified purposeful
7. Theory based
8. Criterion sample
9. Confirming or disconfirming case
10. Opportunistic sample
11. Extreme or deviant case
12. Combination or mixed
13. Typical case
14. Snowball or chain
15. Information-rich case
16. Comprehensive

For a full description of these different strategies and their uses, the reader is directed to Miles and Huberman's original text (1994, p.28), or for a brief description to Appendix J. The approaches are not mutually exclusive, so can be used in conjunction with one another.

In the current composite methodology, all of Miles and Huberman's purposive sampling strategies are considered to be valid options, and with the further influence of IPA, homogeneity of sample universe is emphasised where possible and sample numbers are maintained within the suggested parameters of 1 to approximately 15.

Data Collection

Qualitative data in the composite method can be gained from any source of written material, from historical documents to interviews, or observational material such as field notes. IPA is open to multiple data sources, but specialises in the use of semi-structured interviews and focus groups, particularly the former. In a recent IPA sourcebook (Smith and Osborn, 2003), the authors set out protocols for developing

schedules of questions for semi-structured interviews and for conducting interviews. The process of creating an interview schedule involves a theoretical and rational review of the substantive topic, which leads to a list of questions that cover key areas. These questions are developed and re-developed to emphasise clarity, direction and comprehensiveness.

In conducting an IPA interview, empathy and flexibility are emphasised. The schedule should start with easy-to-answer questions that allow rapport and relaxation to be developed. As the interview progresses, the sequence of questions on the schedule will change as the questions are adapted to the participant's own comments or story. Even how a question is phrased can be adapted to the person in question (Smith and Eatough, 2006).

Transcript Notation

Notation of data transcripts is the first analysis process in the composite method, in line with both the Interactive Model and IPA. Their protocols for doing this are very similar – remarks are made in the margins of the transcript, and in so doing the first analytical insights and categories emerge in direct contact with the data. Miles and Huberman suggest that pre-analytic remarks should be in the margin on the right, and codes should be noted on the left. Smith (1991) suggests that the left hand margin can be used to note "anything of interest" while the right hand margin is used to note themes.

Memos and Case Summaries

Memos are written notes that provide an ongoing repository of insights and ideas during analysis. They can be written in any way, but should be dated, so that analytical developments can be tracked in retrospect by auditors or readers via the list of memos. They are used in the composite method for recording spontaneous insights, visual summaries and developments in coding schemes. Memos are an analytical aid to which Miles and Huberman give great priority. They insist that ideas should be committed to memos immediately and without censorship:

> "Always give priority to memoing. When an idea strikes, STOP whatever else you are doing and write the memo. Your audience is *yourself*. Get it down; don't worry about prose elegance or even grammar. Include your musings of all sorts, even the fuzzy and foggy ones. Give yourself the freedom to think. Don't self-censor." (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.74)

Case summaries are another written analytical aid suggested by Miles and Huberman that are employed in the current methodology. They are short summaries of each individual interview or data-collection event, written either directly after the interview itself, or directly after transcribing the interview. They provide a useful short gestalt of each participant's narrative, and like memos provide an insight into the early hermeneutic processes of the researcher.

Developing Codes/Themes

The development of codes/themes is the foundation of analysis in the composite, following both the Interactive Model and IPA. Miles and Huberman describe codes as "tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study." (1994, p.56). The text that informs the theme can be a phrase, sentence or whole paragraph, and should be supported at all times by relevant textual segments. Themes are combined into lists that are revised and clarified in a continuous process.

In order to provide a very general a-priori framework for data-led coding, *general domains* for codes are an option within the composite methodology used here. These are non-content-specific high-level categories that provide an initial way of categorising codes:

> "A second main coding alternative, partway between the a priori and inductive approaches, is that of creating a general accounting scheme for codes that is not content specific, but points to the general domains in which codes can be developed inductively." (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.61)

In the composite, a-priori general domains are an option that can be used to aid early analysis, but can equally be avoided if the research aims to avoid being shaped by existing theoretical categories. IPA, being a case-focused and phenomenological form of analysis, is sensitive to the possibility of imposing inappropriate themes from prior theory or assumptions on an individual case, and so cautions at all stages that existing theory can get in the way of an empathic and honest connection with a participant's narrative and experience. This caution is heeded in the composite model, but the option of using a-priori theory to shape early analysis is also an option. The choice provides an added point of flexibility.

Developing Superordinate Themes and/or Pattern Codes

IPA and the Interactive Model are in agreement that it is through hierarchical arrangement of themes that analytical progress is achieved after initial themes are created. They have similar techniques for combining themes into higher units of organisation. In IPA these higher units of meaning are called "superordinate themes" and in the Interactive Model they are called "pattern codes". Superordinate themes or pattern codes hierarchically subsume and group the lower-level themes or codes. It is through this process that synthesis occurs and meaningful relationships emerge from qualitative data.

In IPA, to establish superordinate themes, themes are clustered together into meaningful categories that have a common core or common denominator. A list of these superordinate themes is created for each case first, then for groups of cases and then for the sample as a whole. The final list of super-ordinate themes is the result of an iterative process of moving between within-case and cross-case modes of analysis (Smith and Eatough, 2006).

In Miles and Huberman's approach, "pattern codes" are created to subsume the lower order units of meaning into more generic categories and constructs, by a similar process of clustering and grouping:

> "*First-level coding* is a device for summarizing segments of data. *Pattern coding* is a way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of sets, themes, or constructs." (1994, p.69)
>
> "Pattern codes are explanatory or inferential codes, ones that can identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation. They pull together a lot of material into more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis. They are a sort of meta-code." (1994, p.69)

Clustering Cases

Clustering of cases is another process that can be used in the composite model, based on Miles and Huberman's approach (1994). Case clustering involves sorting individuals into groups that have commonalities, and can provide an intermediary level for cross-case analysis; after each individual case is analysed, clusters can then be analysed before the whole sample is attempted. Clusters can be established a-priori if one is doing confirmatory research, but in the case of exploratory research such as this thesis, clusters can emerge from contact with the data, after within-case analysis, but before intensive between-case analysis. Members of a cluster can be similar on one dimension, on several dimensions or on a general configuration. The

similarities that bind clusters together should be made explicit in order for the validity of the cluster to be assessed.

Data Display – Matrices and Diagrams

Miles and Huberman's approach to data analysis includes the use of matrices and diagrams to illustrate relationships between themes, cases or parts of a model.

Matrices involve a set of rows and columns in which can be linked data codes, cases, quotes, summaries or paraphrases. A two dimensional grid can be used in a variety of ways to present data concisely, visually and accessibly. Rows or columns can represent segments of time, of an event, different cases, different pattern codes or superordinate themes. Miles and Huberman present an array of possibilities for constructing matrices, including *time-ordered, case-ordered, concept-ordered* and *event-ordered*. The key is to make sure that matrices display coded data in a form that is relevant to research questions, and takes one step toward synthesis.

Diagrams link themes in visual networks of *nodes* and *connectors*. Nodes are circles, ellipses or boxes, and may represent any unit of information that emerges from the analysis. Connectors are lines or arrows that link the nodes and represent semantic, reciprocal, causal, contextual, temporal or hierarchical relationships. Examples of possible networks that Miles and Huberman describe are *event networks* (which chart complex events unfolding over time or the complex relations in a narrative plot), *causal networks* (which illustrate cause-effect relationships), *context charts* (which display key information about the context of an event or conceptual issue), and finally *hierarchical networks* (in which a hierarchical arrangement of ideas can be displayed – each higher layer subsuming the lower layers). Diagrams can be informal, if used just to aid analysis for viewing codes in relational and visual combination, or formal, if used as part of a final report.

4.4 Validity and Quality Criteria

IPA and the Interactive Model both agree that qualitative research can be assessed to establish *validity* and *quality*, but not by quantitative research standards. Miles and Huberman (1994) and Smith (2003) both outline processes specific to qualitative research that promote validity, quality, trustworthiness and credibility. Smith's validity framework is based on articles by Yardley (2000) and Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (1990). An integration of criteria from these sources is summarised in

Table V, and each criterion is described in more detail below, with its source made explicit.

Table V: Composite Validation Criteria

a) Credibility	i) Transparency of processes
	ii) Audit and mini-audits
	iii) Feedback from participants
	iv) Generalisability or specifiability
	vi) Reflexivity
b) Coherence	i) Coherence of design
	ii) Coherence of findings
	iii) Coherence of report
c) Sensitivity	i) Sensitivity to context
	ii) Sensitivity to participants
	iii) Sensitivity to individual differences
d) Applicability / Impact / Resonance	i) Applied implications and impact
	ii) Theoretical implications and impact
	iii) Resonance with the reader

a) Credibility

There are a number of steps that can be taken to enhance the *credibility* of the findings and conclusions in a qualitative research project. The first benchmark of credibility is *transparency* (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Smith, 2003; Yardley, 2000). This is enhanced by making philosophical position, theoretical framework, methodological processes and analytical steps *explicit* to the reader, offering the possibility of study replication and making conclusions more credible. Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (1990) also promote transparency of analysis through the grounding of all abstractions in examples, so that connections between cases and theory are clear.

There are a number of active checks in which a researcher can engage to improve the quality of their analysis and to improve the credibility of their report. Yardley (2000) and Smith (2003) suggest that an *audit* can be conducted in which an independent person checks through tapes, transcripts, analytical documents, memos and reports to gauge the validity of the steps from research questions to conclusions (e.g. Smith, 1994). Smith (2003) also suggests ongoing "*mini-audits*" which involve a supervisor or colleague providing ongoing checks on method, analysis and reporting while the research is happening.

Another check that adds to the credibility of conclusions and to the inductive validity of analysis is the process of gaining feedback from participants on

conclusions and findings in order to assess whether the participants consider that they have been accurately represented and whether a model or abstraction reflects their experience in an unbiased way (Yardley, 2000; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Further credibility assessments are research-problem specific. If the aim of the research is a *generalisable* theory or model, then credibility is enhanced by the quality of the sample; an appropriate range, number and diversity of instances should be sampled in order to add inductive strength to any statement of generality (Elliott, Fischer & Rennie, 1990). General statements should also be pitched at the right level of generality to avoid unfounded claims, while limitations to generality should be acknowledged. Generalisability can also be enhanced by systematic comparison of findings with existing studies in the same area (Yardley, 2000). If, on the other hand, the aim of the research is to specify or illuminate an individual or specific event or case then such issues of generalisation do not apply. Instead, credibility and legitimacy are enhanced by a sufficiently thick, deep and systematic study of that person or phenomenon (Elliott, Fischer & Rennie, 1990).

Reflexivity is the process of self-referencing and self-reflection in a research endeavour, carried out in order to bring the researching agent into focus rather than to render them invisible. In the composite model, reflexive sections of the report are included to highlight the human process of the research, but also to allow the reader to be aware of potential bias and therefore better placed to assess credibility of findings. The assumption is that in empirical research we may grasp something in the world that is larger than ourselves and our own limited viewpoint, which can therefore contribute to knowledge that lasts and has relevance to others in theoretical and applied senses. The reader is in the best position to assess whether this has been achieved if the researcher is visible, rather than invisible.

b) Coherence

Yardley (2000) and Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (1990) both cite the *coherence* of research design, results and the final report as a benchmark of quality. For Yardley, this is principally about the "fit" between research questions, philosophical perspective, method, form of analysis and report. A coherent report is one which has a narrative flow, a clear use of language, a lack of contradictions and a good symmetry between literature, findings and discussion. For Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (1990) coherence is achieved by the integration of all codes and categories into a

summary model or diagram, and organising the report around a "rich, memorably-named core category or constitutive feature" (p.223). Coherence should lend results and report clarity and parsimony. A parsimonious analysis is one that does not multiply constructs unnecessarily, and integrates data within the most elegant and conceptually simplified solution. However, a caveat on the issue of coherence is given by Miles and Huberman. They point out that contradictions, confusions and impasses are also indicators of valid and proper qualitative research too, for the world of human beings and human relations is full of such complications:

> "We believe that methodological quagmires, mazes, and dead ends are not necessarily a product of researcher incapacity, but of qualitative data themselves. Like the phenomena they mirror, they are usually complex, ambiguous, and sometimes downright contradictory. Doing qualitative analysis means living for as long as possible with that complexity and ambiguity, coming to terms with it, and passing on your conclusions to the reader in a form that clarifies and deepens understanding." (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.309)

It is therefore important not to strive for coherence to the point that contradictions in the data are glossed over in favour of neat parsimony. A balance must be found between order and chaos in any qualitative work, and the right balance is very much project-specific.

c) Sensitivity

Acknowledgement of and sensitivity to the multiple contexts of qualitative research is a key benchmark of quality for both IPA and Miles and Huberman. Yardley (2000) suggests that good qualitative research is sensitive to theoretical and philosophical context. Smith (2003) promotes the importance of situating research in the socio-cultural milieu in which it occurred and to which it applies in order to show sensitivity to this context. Elliott et al. (1990) ask for sensitivity to the individuality of the people participating in the study. This can be done by describing the background and demographics of participants, and allowing individual nuances to be maintained alongside the search for commonalities. There is also the sensitivity of the data collection itself, with the issues of the relationship between researcher and participant, and the importance of being sensitive to the needs of participants during the process of data collection. The presence of all these sensitivities improves the quality of a research project, and improves the depth and quality of data.

d) Resonance / Impact / Applicability

The final dimension of validity and quality appears in all the approaches to validity mentioned above, and relates to the overall salience of the project. Elliott et al. (1990) refer to the concept of *resonance* – the experience for the reader of being struck by, interested by, and engaged with, a piece of research, due to the insightfulness, novelty or empathic connection with, the findings. Yardley (2000) and Smith (2003) both argue for the *impact* of a piece of research as an indicator of validity. This involves a consideration of theoretical impact, practical impact and socio-cultural impact. Miles and Huberman (1994) focus on the practical impact of a research project as a sign of validity. They look at the extent to which a finding is useful and *applicable* in real-world contexts, and can therefore be translated from theory into action. This is verifiable by assessing whether there are possible applied recommendations or implications within the findings, and ideally by actual application of findings or theory within an applied or clinical setting.

5.
Generic Method and Study 1 Specifics

5.1 Introduction

Having described the sources and components of the composite methodology in the previous chapter, I now set out how the method was applied to this thesis. As stated in Chapter 2, three research questions provided the focus for the research:

4. What does early adult crisis involve as an experience?
5. Is there a common process underlying differing manifestations of early adult crisis? If so, what?
6. Do early adult crises have a formative role in development of the self? If so, why?

While these research questions remained constant and stable, the design of the empirical studies constantly evolved. Three empirical studies were conducted in total, the second and third of which were designed after completion of the preceding study, in order to focus on the most pressing and interesting findings from that prior study while addressing any limitations. The first half of this chapter presents those aspects of the method that were constant across all empirical work, and the second half presents methodological points that were specific to just the first empirical study, the findings of which are presented in the next chapter.

Generic Method

5.2 Ethical Concerns

Ethical concerns were taken into account at all stages of the research process, to protect and respect the needs of participants and researcher. The project received departmental ethical approval prior to commencement of data collection. The research was aligned with the *British Psychological Society Code of Conduct* (March 2006 version) and took into account the following points:

1. Confidentiality was rigorously maintained; name and place identities on transcripts were changed and details of the respondent were kept in a confidential, locked location (article 1.2 in BPS Code of Conduct).
2. The participant was given an information sheet that communicated the nature and purpose of the research prior to acceptance of participation (article 1.3 in BPS Code of Conduct) (see Appendix B).

3. A consent form detailing the key ethical issues involved and the voluntary nature of participation was signed by respondents immediately prior to data collection (article 1.3 in BPS Code of Conduct) (see Appendix C).
4. The participant was not required to discuss any topic or answer any question that they found distressing or considered too sensitive, and could withdraw consent to participate after commencement of the interview or after the interview was finished (article 1.4 in BPS Code of Conduct).
5. Audio recording was conducted only with the express consent of those being recorded (article 1.3 in BPS Code of Conduct).
6. The proposed research methodology required the discussion of sensitive material and so empathy and a sense of unconditional positive regard from the researcher was emphasised (article 3.1 in BPS Code of Conduct).
7. The availability of counselling services in the event of possible distress caused by the interview process was made explicit to participants at the end of the interview (article 3.4 in BPS Code of Conduct). The London-based counsellor recommended was Claudia Nielson, 38 Denning Rd, NW3 1SU, phone 020 7431 1177. (UKCP, BSECH and CPPC registered).

5.3 Case Definition of Early Adult Crisis

In order to sample and recruit participants within some defined parameters, a provisional definition of early adult developmental crisis was needed. This was provided from a review of existing texts on crisis (Caplan, 1964; Hoff, 1978; Lazarus, 2000; Murgatroyd and Woolfe, 1982; Parry, 1990; Slaikeu, 1990) and a synthesis of definitions. Caplan's (1964) separation of "developmental" and "accidental" crises was firstly employed. A developmental crisis emerges out of ongoing life-stage-specific problems, while an accidental crisis occurs as the result of an unforeseeable event such as a bereavement, chronic illness or natural disaster (Caplan, 1964). In this thesis, only developmental crises are included in the sample, as only they are specific to early adulthood as a life stage. Post-natal crises are omitted as they are often mixed with biologically influenced depression (Kumar et al., 1997), so are arguably a clinical condition combined with a crisis. The case definition process led to the following inclusion criteria for recruitment:

1. There is *chronic stress* and *negative emotion* experienced during the episode.
2. There is a sense of being *out of control* during the experience.
3. It lasts at least a month, and can last up to several years.

4. The person involved *personally reflects on* the period as one of crisis.
5. It must be considered a discrete *episode* in life that is over, rather than an acute trauma event.
6. The episode must have found resolution *at least a year ago*, so that the person is able to reflect on the developmental effects (or lack thereof) that have occurred since the episode.
7. The onset of crisis must have occurred between the ages of 25 and 40. Early adulthood lasts between 22 and 40, but the lower threshold of this age group was raised to 25 in order to avoid those still in full-time university education.
8. The episode is not triggered by bereavement, illness, accident or other uncontrollable events.

These case definition criteria are not overly specific, but it was hoped that by allowing participants to define much of what they consider crisis episodes to be, a clearer definition would emerge over the course of the research.

5.4 Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited for the interviews from four sources. The first source was group email within Birkbeck College; emails were circulated to administrative staff in academic departments in humanities, arts and sciences, which were then circulated to students. Birkbeck caters mainly for mature students doing part-time degrees, which means that most students have passed through a substantial part of early adulthood and many are in middle or late adulthood. There were therefore a large number of potential participants for the study within the various departments. Over the course of the three studies this recruitment strategy brought in eight participants. Three participants were found this way for Study 1 (Camilla, George, Jack) and five participants were recruited this way for Study 3 (Victoria, Mark, Frank, Claire, Lilly).

Secondly, the psychology department at Birkbeck has a "participant panel" email database. This is a resource of names and contact details of individuals who are not part of the college but have registered their names as being interested in participating in psychology studies. This brought in six participants: five individuals in Study 1 (Angela, Violet, Dan, Lynne, Gemma) and one individual in Study 3 (Rob).

Departmental emails and participant panel emails read:

Dear all,

I am currently in the 1st/2nd/3rd year of doing a PhD at Birkbeck College, University of London. My PhD is investigating experiences of crisis between the ages 25 to 40, and I am currently looking to interview participants. Have you experienced a crisis in your life between those ages that you would be willing to talk about? If so, then I would be very interested to interview you.

If you are happy to participate, or know someone who you think would, then please reply to the below email address and I will send you further information. Interviews can be done here at Birkbeck or in a location of your choice. It takes just 45 minutes. I give you £10 for your trouble, as a small token of thanks. I can guarantee total confidentiality – all names are changed.

I look forward to hearing from you.
Best wishes,

Olly Robinson
o.robinson@psychology.bbk.ac.uk

Thirdly, advertisements were also posted in Central London in certain non-university locations. This brought in two participants in Study 1 (Frances, Neil). Individuals replied to a dedicated and anonymous email account. The advertisement was worded:

HAVE YOU HAD A CRISIS IN YOUR LIFE BETWEEN 25 and 40? We always hear about the "midlife crisis" that happens around the age of 40, but have you a crisis in your life either in your **late twenties or thirties**? Would you be willing to share your experience in a short interview, and so contribute to a university study? The study is confidential and ethically approved, and by participating you would be contributing to a greater understanding of how people cope with crisis.

If you are interested in helping, please email: **crisis_study@hotmail.co.uk**

Fourthly, recruitment by referral was used via friends and acquaintances, which led to the sourcing of individuals known by them but not known by me. Six individuals in Study 1 were found in this way (Mary, Leon, Rachel, Guy, Ben, Vern), one of whom became the case study participant for Study 2 (Guy). The numbers gained from these four recruitment sources are summarised in Table VI.

Table VI. Recruitment Sources across all 3 Studies

Recruitment Source	**Study 1**	**Study 2**	**Study 3**	**Total**
Email circulars within Birkbeck	3		5	8
"Participant panel"	5		1	6
Non-university advertising	2			2
Referral from non-university source	6	1*		6
				22

* Participant in Study 2 was also in Study 1

After a person expressed interest after reading a recruitment advertisement or email, they would be emailed an Information Sheet (Appendix B) which outlined the full criteria for participation. All participants were informed of the nature of the study and were told that they could withdraw at any time, or refuse to answer any questions. They were given assurance of total anonymity and data protection. If they fitted the criteria and consented to participate having being given the full information, an interview would be scheduled. All were offered £10 for their participation.

5.5 Sample Universe

Theoretically speaking, the sample universe for this project includes all those individuals who have experienced a crisis between the ages of 25 and 40. This is of course a potentially very heterogeneous group. The actual sample universe was substantially homogenised by the recruitment process, which meant that it was composed of London-based individuals who have some connection with further education and who have had a crisis between the ages of 25 and 40. This led to a sample group who were within a fairly narrow demographic: across the three studies all participants were Caucasian, all except one were employed, all except for two lived in London, most were middle-class, eight of the twenty two were currently studying part-time at Birkbeck College, while nine of the twenty two had a connection with psychology having studied it at some level. Therefore the sample was in actuality a demographically and culturally homogeneous group. This permitted cross-case comparison in a way that a highly heterogeneous sample would not, because the early adult challenges and life structures of this group were comparable. The homogeneity of the group limits generalisation to other socio-economic groups or culturally defined groups but on the other hand provides for a model that has stronger applicability within its demographic parameters, and has a definable socio-cultural context in which to situate the findings.

5.6 Choosing a Data Source: Semi-Structured Interviews

A number of forms of data collection were given consideration. Analysing accounts of crisis in autobiographies was considered but rejected on account of the fact that published autobiography is a source of narrative data that is particularly prone to rhetorical and dramatic hyperbole. A written report/essay of crisis was also considered. When reflecting on a past episode in their lives, people often need time to

accurately restructure the events, and a written report gives respondents time to portray what occurred without the chance of error or confabulation that a more spontaneous form of data collection can have. However, the shortcomings of a written report are that they take a long time for participants to produce, maybe many hours, and this will strongly reduce motivation to participate, and so jeopardise getting sufficient sample. A further disadvantage is that a written report is monological rather than dialogical - it gives no chance for the researcher to investigate or probe into interesting areas with a series of his/her own questions, and therefore may lack depth and dynamism.

The chosen data type for Study 1 was the semi-structured interview. In such interviews, key questions are listed on an "interview schedule" that the interviewer uses to maintain focus and direction but can digress from in order to uncover emergent areas. Probing into initial responses with additional follow-up questions in order to establish hidden or implicit layers of meaning is essential. The less structured nature of the interview permits a more engaged and sensitive form of researcher-participant interaction than structured interviews, which in turn allows a more open and empathic relationship to be formed between researcher and participant (Smith and Osborn, 2003). Over the course of semi-structured interviews, individuals reveal information about themselves that questionnaires or even written reports are unlikely to surface.

5.7 Practicalities of Data Collection

Participants were given a choice for the location of the interview, including the option of an interview room at Birkbeck College. The university room option was taken by half the participants, and the other half specified alternative locations such as their home or a quiet café. A minidisk recorder or tape recorder was used to record the interviews. Prior to conducting the interview, individuals signed a consent form that reminded them of anonymity, confidentiality and audio recording (Appendix C). They were reminded that they could withdraw at any point and that they did not have to answer any question they did not wish to. After concluding an interview, the recorded tape was kept in a locked drawer to maintain data protection, and a full written transcript was made from each tape by the interviewer.

5.8 Memos

Memos were used throughout the empirical stages of this project to record analytical thoughts, insights, themes or relational patterns. The approach in the current study was to write most memos directly into a Word file on a computer, if the insight emerged with a computer close to hand (which it often did). A few others were written on scrap pieces of paper. A collection of memos made over the duration of the project is available in Appendix D. These serve as part of an "audit trail" for the reader to trace the logic or sequence of analytical developments as they occurred.

5.9 Within-Case Analysis

Analysis in all studies was firstly conducted on the level of each individual case. The aim of this within-case analysis was to develop person-specific themes, superordinate themes, key relational dimensions between themes, and also to develop an overall holistic analysis of the case as a totality. Each within-case analysis led to the creation of three case-specific documents:

a) *A list of themes and superordinate themes*

This document summarised and presented the list of themes and superordinate themes found in the transcript.

b) *A case summary*

This document provided a brief, accessible and concise holistic narrative summary of the case.

c) *A document linking themes to illustrative quotes for each participant*

This document provided a source of quotes that gave evidence of the theme's basis and location in the interview data.

For some particularly rich, complex or unusual cases, a within-case diagram was also created that visually summarised key relationships between analytical themes. An example of all these four within-case analysis documents for Gemma's case from Study 1 is shown in Appendix F. Each of these documents had reciprocal influence on one another and evolved together.

5.10 Between-Case Analysis

After within-case analysis of individuals, cases were compared and contrasted to search for the themes, superordinate themes, processes and structures that applied for multiple cases. This was first done within gender-specific clusters of cases, then

for the whole gender, and then within the sample, and then finally on all cases combined across all three studies. This movement up from individuals to clustered groups of progressively increasing size promoted an inductive focus in the emerging model to complement any deductive inferences made from prior theory, and ensured that the participant's voices and experiences were retained in the model which was developed. The processes of clustering and between-case analysis are described in more detail in the Study 1 Specifics section below.

5.11 Data Display: Matrices and Diagrams

Data displays are employed in a number of ways during analysis and reporting. Informal displays were used to aid brainstorming and exploratory analysis (see pp.123-124 in Chapter 7 for examples). Diagrams are used to encapsulate key relations in single cases of crises (e.g. Appendix F). Diagrams are also used to portray case clusters (shown on p.75 in this Chapter). Matrices are used to present participant details, and to present case-ordered data in summary form (see Appendix H). Finally, a matrix/diagram hybrid is used to summarise the overall model (p.171 in Chapter 9).

Study 1 Method Specifics

Having described those methodological processes that are common across all three studies, this section of the chapter now presents those points that were specific to the first empirical study.

5.12 Study 1 Sample

The recruitment processes, case definition and demographic parameters in Study 1 were as described in sections 5.3 to 5.5 of this chapter. The sample size was initially set to 20. A purposive form of sampling was employed to seek an even balance of men and women and a diverse representation of ages within early adulthood. This involved a *stratified sample frame* that crossed two age bands with gender to create four cells. The resulting sample frame is shown in Table VII. The target was to find five participants in each of the four cells of the sample frame.

Table VII: Target Sample Frame: Gender and Age of Crisis Onset (N=20)

	Male	**Female**
25 – 32	5	5
33 – 40	5	5

Corresponding to this target, 20 people were initially recruited and interviewed. Early analysis of these interviews established that 5 of the 20 did not qualify for inclusion based on the criteria described in section 5.3. Two of these exclusions were made as they were about post-natal crises; two were excluded for the reason that their crisis episode was triggered and sustained by health problems; one crisis did not qualify on the criterion of time, for the crisis was less than the minimum duration of a month.

After making the above exclusions one more interview was conducted in order to bring the sample to 16, with 4 in each cell. This was considered sufficient for analysis based on the high quality of data gathered and so no further sample was acquired. Table VIII shows the achieved sample frame after the five exclusions and one addition.

Table VIII: Achieved Sample Frame after Exclusions (N=16)

	Male	**Female**
25 – 32	4	4
33 – 40	4	4

Pseudonyms of the participants, occupations at the time of interview, age at time of crisis, and the course they were doing if a student, are listed in Table IX below.

Table IX. Details of Study 1 Participants (in chronological order of interviewing)

Name	**Age at Time of Crisis**	**Current Occupation**	**Currently Studying**
Rachel	25	Retired	N.A.
Mary	38	Lecturer	N.A.
Lynne	39	HR Consultant	N.A.
Angela	34	Art teacher training	Art teacher training
Gemma	31	Primary care advisor	N.A.
Dan	34	Film lecturer and plumber	Plumbing Course, PGCE
George	29	Trainee teacher	Psychology BSc
Camilla	25	Professional carer	Psychology BSc

Neil	30	IT manager	N.A.
Violet	36	Artist and mother	Art Degree
Frances	29	Teacher and volunteer	N.A.
Vern	31	IT consultant	N.A.
Leon	34	Market Researcher	N.A.
Guy	36	Business Consultant	N.A.
Jack	26	Unemployed	Chemistry degree
Ben	35	Retired Academic	N.A.

5.13 Study 1 Interviews and Transcripts

I myself conducted all sixteen of the interviews. Each one lasted approximately 45 minutes and was recorded on minidisk. The interview question schedule was created based on existing literature, and is shown in full below.

Study 1 Interview Schedule

Introduction and explanation of approach

- Ensure confidentiality
- Describe and explain research approach
- Deal with questions, concerns etc
- Build rapport and relaxed atmosphere
- Ask if respondent can introduce self – name, age, occupation, family
- ***What do you understand by the term 'crisis'?***
    - Personal definition

Facts about episode

- How long ago did the episode occur?
- How long did it last?

Background

- Could you tell me a bit about the events and circumstances in your life leading up to the specific incident that we are here to talk about, that set the scene for what happened?
    - What was going on in your life before it happened?
        - Probe for relationships, jobs, social situation, moods, health, living arrangements, belief system

The episode in process

- Could you tell me about the …….. event, starting at the beginning, in your own time as it unfolded….
- Probe for ecological circumstances, including social players
- Probe for role
- Keep it running until resolution

(check time scale of occurrences as they are related)

Emotions and feelings

- How did it make you *feel at the time*?
- Can you relate how the emotions you experienced changed over time?
    - Probe for negative *and* positive emotions
    - Also more generic feelings, such as trapped, out of control, despair

Stress - Was the event stressful?

- In what way did it cause you stress?
- Did you feel conflicted?

- What was stressful about it? (look for compromised key goals and key values)

Coping - How did you *deal with it/cope with it* at the time?

- How did you cope at the time?
- Did you ever think that you might not cope with it?
- Did you see a therapist or a specialist during the time?

Meaning and appraisal – What did the event *mean* to you at the time?

- Why do you reflect on the time as one of crisis?
- What goals or values were compromised by the experience?
- How did it affect you sense of self at the time?
- Did it affect your confidence and self-esteem? What did? Why?
- What parts of life that are important to you as a person were compromised or lost at the time?

SELF – process and structure

Sense of personhood

1. Did the experience change you as a person in any way? How?
    a. Was this change enduring or temporary?
    b. Did you take up anything new? Give up anything?
    c. Metamorphosis? Looking back, were you before the episode and you after different in any way?
    d. Do you see the you before and you after as different people?
    e. Describe you before the crisis
    f. And you after…
    g. Did your goals change at all? What do you want out of life?

Self-understanding

2. In retrospect, did you learn anything about your*self* from the episode?
    a. Do you think you know yourself any better now?
a. What parts of you were you not free to express?
    b. What do you know about yourself that you did not know before?
    c. How did the way you perceive yourself change from during the episode to now?

Beliefs and attitudes

3. Did the event / episode / experience change the way you perceive the world?
    a. Probe for a change in perspective
    b. Relative unimportance of everyday hassles
    c. Did it affect your belief system?
4. Did you learn anything from the episode about other people or the world in general?
    a. What and why?

Life and Lifestyle

5. Did your lifestyle change as a result?
6. In what ways is your life different now to what it might have been if you had not gone through the episode?
7. Did your relationships with other people change as a result?

CRISIS AND DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY

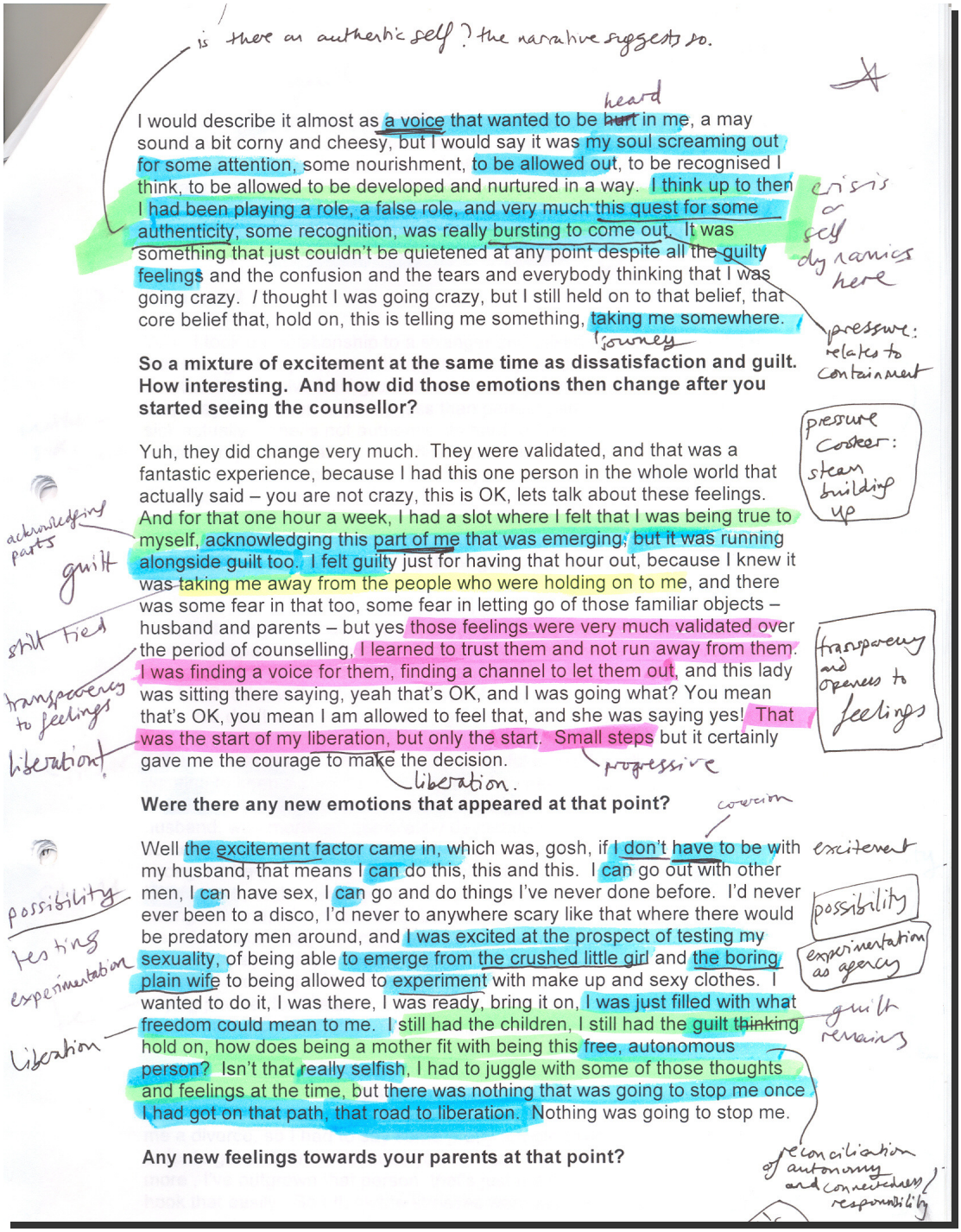
a. Do you think that the ideal life is a life without crisis?
b. In sum, what part do you think this crisis played in your development as a person?

During the interviews, many participants related crisis narratives which had a temporally ordered form that provided a natural structure to the interview, and many

areas were covered spontaneously as the participants told their stories of crisis. Therefore interviews were often not structured in the above sequence, but the interview question schedule was essential nonetheless to check that all areas had been covered over the course of the interview. Full written transcriptions were made of each individual interview from the recordings, and were then used as the raw data for analysis. The first step of analysis was adding annotated notes and comments on transcripts. General analytical remarks were written on any part of the transcript in an emergent and spontaneous initial exploration of the meanings in the text, and then the right hand margin was used to note down emerging themes. This can be viewed in the extract in Figure 6, taken from Gemma's transcript.

Figure 6 also shows the use of highlighting on the transcripts; this was used to visually link text to four a-priori domains of analysis. These were: 1) Background Information (blue), 2) The Crisis Process (yellow), 3) Development and Effects (pink) and 4) Self (green). This process of colour-coding helped to create some categorical order in the early analysis. These domains were changed as the data-collection process progressed, and were replaced by more grounded, emergent categories in Studies 2 and 3.

Figure 6. A noted page from a Study 1 transcript (female)



The superordinate themes in Gemma's case are based on the four a-priori domains mentioned above; background to crisis, the crisis process, self and development. One theme did not fit into these four areas, "ubiquitous pressure to conform". This was given a separate superordinate theme of 'Other Learning', and is in fact an early

indication of important developments in later analysis. The themes and superordinate themes, along with other within-case documents, are also shown in Appendix F.

Themes and superordinate themes from Gemma's interview

1. Background and Contextual Environment

a) Concealment of inner world
b) Under parental control
c) Introjected goals
d) Bored to death as mother and wife
e) Playing a false role
f) Post-natal depression
g) Fantasies of freedom

2. The flow of crisis

a) Misery
b) Continued external search
c) Assertiveness and inner awareness
d) Emotional release
e) Opening to the inner world
f) Embarking on a quest
g) Separation and liberation
h) Guilt and self-blame
i) Excitement and experimentation

3. The Dynamics of Self

a) Empty former self
b) Search for self
c) Self-validation
d) Separation from old self
e) New self from crisis
f) Strength and vulnerability in new self
g) Building Self-Esteem

4. Other Learning

a) Ubiquitous pressure to conform

5.14 Clustering and Early Between-Case Analysis

In order to help establish cross-case regularities, clusters of cases were sought. These were to provide a focus for initial cross-case comparison before the analysis of the whole sample. A number of clustering approaches were considered: one was to cluster according to the kinds of development experienced over the crisis. A provisional clustering typology that was developed included:

1. *Metamorphosis* "I am a changed person, a new person now"
2. *Value shift* "I see the world differently, I am a lot less hard on myself"
3. *Fluidity shift* "I see my identity as an unfolding process now"
4. *Evaluation shift* "I am more confident now"
5. *No shift* "I don't think it changed me in any particular way"

This form of clustering was felt to be too difficult to establish upon early analysis, and it was complicated by the fact that a number of individuals showed a combination of these effects.

A more simple clustering approach was then considered based on the life areas in which the crisis initiated and were correspondingly most disrupted by it. This was relatively easy to establish and led initially to three clusters:

1. *Work and finance problems*
2. *Relationship and home life problems*
3. *Both work and home problems*

It was then decided to apply this three way typology to each gender separately. The outcome of this was the women being divided into two clusters: "*Domestic Crisis*", which subsumed those crises originating in domestic lives, and "*Career-Woman Crisis*", which included the crises originating in stressful career lives. Analysis of the male cases led to three clusters being created: "*All Consuming Crisis*", "*Marriage Crisis*", and "*Career Crisis*". The members of these clusters are shown in Figures 7 and 8.

Figure 7. Female Clusters

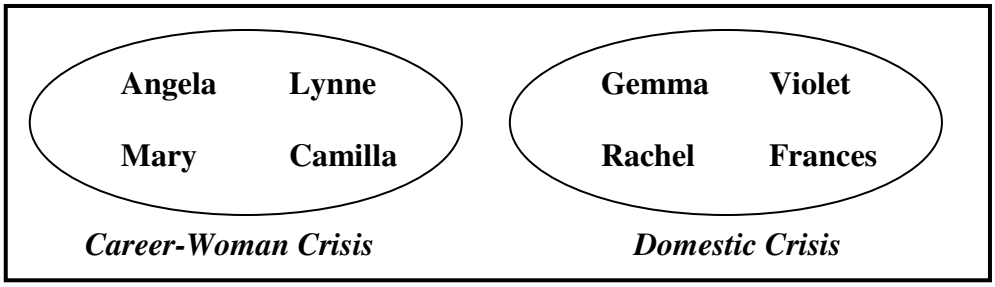
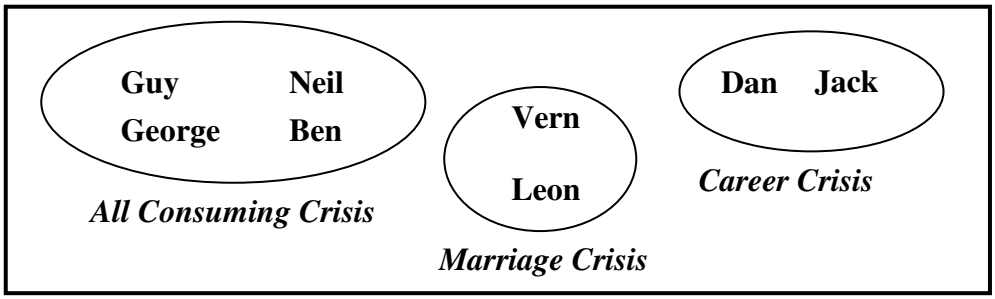


Figure 8. Male Clusters



Cluster-based analysis involved the systematic comparison of cases within a specific cluster to search for common themes. Each cluster was analysed in turn,

starting with female clusters and then moving on to male clusters, and for each cluster a list of superordinate themes was developed. Cluster-specific superordinate themes for all five clusters are summarised in Table X below.

Table X. Clusters and Cluster-Specific Superordinate Themes

Cluster	Theme List
Female Domestic Crisis: Themes	• No Escape • Passivity and Depersonalisation • Suppression of Passion and Vocation • Psychological Separation • Physical separation • Experimentation and Further Study • New vocational role • Developing a stronger self
Female Career-Woman Crisis: Themes	• Like Rats in a Cage • Out of Control • Shelving Passion for Practicality • Saying No: A Growing Assertiveness • Physical Separation from Work Role • Paring Back the Layers of Self • Back to Study: A Statement of Agency • Beyond the Corporate Self • New Life Role: Passion in Action
Male *All Consuming Crisis: Themes*	• In The Pressure Cooker • Living in a Straightjacket: The Constrained Self • Falling Apart: The Demise of the Pre-Crisis Life Structure • Looking Round for Alternatives: Moratorium • A New, Flexible Life Structure • Transformation: An Expanded, Evolving Self
Male Marriage Crisis: Themes	• Trapped by a Sense of Duty • Resignation and Passivity • Severing the Rope of Duty: Separation and Transition • Bringing the Self into Focus • Resolution in Remarrying
Male Career Crisis: Themes	• Stuck! Buried Under Work • Sacked and Solitary • Exploration of Alternatives • Back to Study • Enjoyment: The Focus of a New Life Structure

5.15 Between-Case Analyses beyond the Clusters

After conducting analysis on the clusters, cluster coding lists were combined and synthesised to search for any higher common patterns. Firstly, clusters were combined into genders to search for gender-specific patterns, and then were combined into the total Study 1 sample group. Analysis did elicit a common four-phase common process to the crises in Study 1. These phases appear in an invariant sequence in participants, with one or two exceptions on specific phases that will be made explicit in the following chapters. Table XI presents cluster themes within this

common set of phases. The phases were at this point labelled “Locked In”, “Separation and Escape”, “Exploration and Moratorium” and “Resolution”.

Table XI. Themes presented by phase across all 5 respondent clusters

	Phase 1 Locked In	**Phase 2 Separation and Escape**	**Phase 3 Exploration and Moratorium**	**Phase 4 Resolution**
Cluster 1 Female **Domestic Crisis**	• No Escape • Passivity • Suppression of Passion	• Psychological Separation • Physical Separation	• Experimentation • Further Study	• Developing a Stronger Self • New Career-focused Role
Cluster 2 Female **Career Woman Crisis**	• Trapped At Work • Out of Control • Shelving Passion for Practicality	• Growing Assertiveness • Separation from Work Life	• Self Exploration • Back to Study: A Statement of Agency	• New Life Role: Passion in Action • Beyond the Corporate Self
Cluster 3 Male **All Consuming Crisis**	• High pressure Existence • The constrained Self	• Falling Apart • Separation from Partner and Job	• Self-exploration and moratorium	• Towards a New Life Structure • An Expanded and Evolving Self
Cluster 4 Male **Domestic Crisis**	• Trapped by A Sense of Duty • Control from Without	• Separation and Transition	• Exploration and Moratorium	• Towards a New Life Structure • Bringing the Self into Focus
Cluster 5 Male **Career Crisis**	• Stuck	• Hitting Rock Bottom	• Exploration of Alternatives	• Enjoyment: The Focus of the New Life Structure

In the following chapter, the results from Study 1 will be reported for each of the five clusters, using this phase dynamic to structure the presentation of themes. Firstly findings from the two female clusters will be outlined, followed by findings from the three male clusters.

6.
Study 1 Results: An Emerging Crisis Dynamic

In this chapter, results from Study 1 are presented within each of the five clusters described in Chapter 5, before the four-phase crisis dynamic that is common to all clusters is summarised. The chapter concludes with a discussion that draws existing theory and current findings together.

6.1 Female Cluster: "Domestic Crisis" (N=4)

This cluster is composed of four women. Their crises emerged in problematic and stressful home arrangements, having chosen domestic responsibilities over a career prior to their early adult crisis. *Rachel* is 25, a housewife and mother when she experiences crisis. *Frances* is 29, in a relationship with a drug addict and is out of work. *Gemma* is 30, a housewife and mother of two, when she finds herself in crisis. *Violet* is 36, in a relationship with a man who has serial affairs, has two children by him, and is not working. They are four different stories with distinctive common themes that can be presented within four phases; early crisis, mid-crisis, late crisis and post crisis.

Phase 1 – Early Crisis: Locked In

The first phase of crisis in this cluster is characterised by inhabiting a domestic role that has become unsatisfying, unwanted and claustrophobic, and is also defined by an inner sense of passivity, loss of control and depersonalisation.

No Escape

The precipitating pre-crisis life situation for all four women in this cluster is the predicament of being within a domestic social system that is no longer wanted, and has become a source of entrapment. Firstly, Rachel felt locked into an upper-class culture and a marriage that did not sanction independent-thinking in a woman. She had married as she had been "programmed" by her culture to do so. She describes her life using the metaphor of being a gerbil on a wheel, with *no escape*:

> "I guess the image that comes to my mind is of a gerbil running around on a wheel endlessly. No escape. Constantly running." (p.3)

Gemma was also unhappy and dissatisfied in the role of housewife and mother, and she longed for a more independent life. She described feeling "absolutely stuck in the worst place I could imagine." (p.3). She married out of pressure from her parents to the son of a family friend, who she does not love. She has one child by him.

Frances was in a relationship with a charismatic but emotionally volatile man. Coming back from a short trip abroad, she found that he was using their house to grow marijuana. The crisis emerged while living in this house and constantly arguing; they were living in the one room of the house that wasn't used for growing marijuana. She felt controlled by her boyfriend, and was deeply unhappy. She referred to "living in literally this bubble of misery. Just horror basically." (p.5). She says that she "felt trapped" (p.4) and had thoughts of suicide.

Violet was in an unsatisfying and difficult relationship, but didn't feel she could leave because of the two children they had had together. When she was in her early twenties, she became pregnant by him by mistake. She stayed with him as a duty to the child, despite having no emotional attachment to him. The relationship continued without marriage, but became increasingly distressing for Violet over that time, for she came to despise him – she described him as selfish, difficult and a classic "passive aggressive". She becomes more and more worn down by being in the role of a home-bound mother. She feels locked into the relationship:

> "I was aware at the time that it was really a nightmare, and I didn't see the way out." (p.3)

Violet's sense of being trapped and powerless in this oppressive relationship is encapsulated by a story that she tells of her boyfriend impinging on her personal space in a way that she finds particularly upsetting:

> "I always have a bath before I go to bed, and my ex-partner used to go out a lot in those evenings, surprise, surprise. If he was in, this was a couple of nights a week, he always needed to go to the loo when I was in the bath, and strangely couldn't wait, could wait 15 minutes, couldn't wait before I went. So I would bring myself out of my lovely, relaxing bath and leave him to it. And what he really needed to do was a shit, so he would ruin my bathroom experience, but more than that, there were many times when he was so insistent, he would be – if you disagree to this you are being so unreasonable. He…it's horrible…he came into the bathroom while I was in my bath and did it while I was in my bath; when I was in the room. Now I know some couples do that sort of thing, but I don't like it, I never liked it. Basically the guy shat in front of me against my will, and no protest was enough. Any protest was unreasonable. He would do this thing, he knew I hated it, *hated* it, I felt it was totally unnecessary – what grown man urgently needs to do that. And it was a terrible, terrible invasion, it's just horrible." (p.7)

This vignette is illustrative and indicative of Violet's sense of being controlled and trapped – she is unable control and avoid this situation despite wanting to, which represents the sense of entrapment and passivity she experiences in her life before the crisis.

Passivity

Being passive, and a corresponding sense of helplessness to change the situation, is shown in the narratives of all four women. The self is cast as an object rather than as an active initiator of action. Rachel used the phrase of being "programmed in a direction", (p.2) implying an almost robotic like passivity – she unquestioningly followed out that programming. She suggested that it is a passive and weak gender-role that underlies her passivity:

> "I did not consider myself a strong woman, the first time anyone said to me I was a strong woman, I thought to myself no, no I don't want to be a strong woman, women are supposed to be weak." (p.7)

Similarly, Frances described feeling like a victim in her relationship, being unable to control circumstances:

> "Nothing was in my grasp, I got well and truly entrenched in victim status. I think I had decided that I was a victim, therefore I was going to behave like a victim, and just let circumstances bat me down." (p.4)

She described herself at the time as being "just like this worn out pale little blob that used to sit in the corner." (Frances, p.8). This metaphor conveys the depersonalised nature of her pre-crisis situation. Both Frances and Gemma used the same phrase of being a 'non-person' to describe a sense of not fully being a person:

> "I think I would have said I was a non-person, I don't think I had any impact whatsoever." (Frances, p.8)
>
> "They would have seen me as quiet, shy, fairly lacking in personality, certainly not assertive, they would have seen me as fairly malleable and easy going, but probably quite empty, and a bit of a non-person actually." (Gemma, p.9)

Suppression of Passion and Vocation

All four women described a long held passion or vocation, which had been hidden away due to its perceived inappropriateness to the domestic environment that they existed in. These passions and vocations are career-focused, rather than home-focused and so are dissonant with the current domestic role. Violet's passion and vocation was to be an artist, and says she had to suppress her desire to be a painter in

order to make the family work. Frances had always had a strong desire and calling to travel and to teach, but she had to lose these desires during her time in the destructive relationship. Rachel from a young age had felt a strong desire to learn and to think deeply, to work at a university, but this was not a sanctioned activity by her immediate culture and family, so she had to hide it and read in secret. Gemma felt a less specific, but no less passionate, desire to explore life, to open up to what she calls a "zest" that she had to hide from her parents even as a child – a desire to explore herself and the world:

> "What I felt was something that I clutched on to from really quite early in my childhood, and that's a sense of my own self, a zest for life and a desire to survive and get through come what may. And this kind of enthusiasm, this energy, that I knew I always had, I had to hide that from my parents" (p.2)

Phase 2 – Mid Crisis: Liberation

The mid crisis phase of crisis in this cluster is defined by separation from the domestic pre-crisis role. Separation from the domestic life structure involves both psychological and physical changes, and brings with it high levels of distress, and also a sense of liberation and excitement at new prospects.

Psychological Separation

In order to prepare for physical separation from their domestic role and partners, these four women had to develop a belief that an existence beyond their constricted and dissatisfying status quo was possible, and that they could identify with something other than the dutiful wife/mother role.

For Rachel, this separation came with getting a part-time job as a teacher. This new empowering work led her to imagine an autonomous life beyond her husband, and this aided the gradual disidentification from her domestic life.

Gemma went to assertiveness classes, and went into therapy too, despite opposition from husband and parents. In therapy she realised that she lacked self understanding or indeed any self-knowledge, and that she felt false in her life as wife and mother. It is through therapy and the assertiveness classes that she finds the resolution and resilience to leave her husband.

Frances's boyfriend was put in prison for six months when the police found out about the drugs. During his time away, she developed a newfound assertiveness and so moved out of their house. At this point, she realised that she wanted to escape:

> "By the time I moved into my own flat, the only thing on my mind was escape, escape, just get out of here. I wanted to get out of England." (Frances, p.8)

In Violet's case, psychological separation was precipitated by her boyfriend's admission that he had had serial affairs throughout their relationship. This caused intense emotional upset, but was also the point at which she is able to realise that she could live without him:

> "When he told me that there had been all these affairs, it was like uh, now I know, now it's over, this is the end line, because I had still been trying to work it out, because I didn't know. When I knew that, I thought well there is nothing to save, and it was like a turnaround – it's me and the children." (p.2)

Physical separation

All four women physically separate from their husband or partner, and the three who have children take them with them. Gemma divorced her husband and distanced herself from her parents. Frances left her boyfriend and left the UK, for that was the only way she was sure he would not follow her. Violet and her partner split, and Rachel divorced her husband.

This actual separation is the peak of the emotional component of the episode, with the women reporting a variety of negative emotions around the separation, such as guilt, anxiety and sadness:

> "And feeling so guilty, it never occurred to me that me and the children should stay in the family home. So I moved out and took the children. Terrible guilt – women did not do that in those days. Husbands left their wives, but wives did not leave their husbands." (Rachel, p.3)

> "But there was guilt and bad feeling, it wasn't wonderful, believe me, but it was there." (Gemma, p.8)

> "I felt horrible, I felt guilty, I felt as though I was being the most horrible, abandoning person in the world, but I was beginning to pull it back together again." (Frances, p.7)

Gemma describes how this process of physical separation amounted to breaking through to a new sense of freedom:

> "I think there has to be a complete breakdown of everything in order to break through into a new sense of being and freedom. The word freedom means you are breaking down over something which is holding you, which is never going to be easy or pain free." (p.9)

Phase 3 – Late Crisis: Exploration and Moratorium

Late crisis is the period after separation during which, once the negative emotions have receded to a manageable level, the women start to search for new activities, relationships and roles, and search inwardly for a better understanding of themselves.

Experimentation

Following the emotional period of separation from partner and domestic role, three of the four women in this cluster experiment actively with new possibilities and activities. Gemma is excited at this new opportunity to experiment:

> "Well the excitement factor came in, which was, gosh, if I don't have to be with my husband, that means I can do this, this and this. I can go out with other men, I can have sex, I can go and do things I've never done before. I'd never ever been to a disco." (Gemma, p.6)

After separating from her husband, Rachel starts experimenting openly with her intellectual side – she regularly meets with a group of people including psychiatrists who she can discuss ideas with. After leaving her boyfriend, Frances moves to Turkey, to start again, gets a temporary teaching position and makes new friendships. She considers her options for the future. Violet is more reflective than experimental, but she starts to actively consider options for her future career.

Further Study

The first step in building towards a post-crisis life structure for all four women is going back to study. This is an active step to a life that is based around wants and dreams, but it precedes any commitment to a new life structure so is still in the exploratory period.

Violet enrolled on a BA in Fine Art to follow her dream of being an artist, Rachel started a PhD at Berkeley to follow her dream of being an academic, Gemma did a course in counselling to try to move towards a job in mental health. Frances did a PGCE in teaching to move towards her aim of being a teacher.

Phase 4 – Post Crisis: Resolution

The fourth phase involves the gradual resolution and termination of crisis and transition as new commitments are made and new self-understanding is integrated into life roles that are more suited to personality and vocation.

New vocational role

In Phase 4, crisis is resolved when a new role is adopted that is based on a visible expression of what these four women had said was their hidden passion when they were young. Gemma's deeply held desire to explore leads to taking a role in the national health service and aiming for a career in counselling. Rachel's desire to read and learn leads her to academia, where she becomes a lecturer. Frances becomes a teacher, first in Turkey and then back in the UK, while also working with helping refugees. Violet finishes her BA in Fine Art and becomes an artist. She expresses her new sense of empowerment and vocation in the following quote:

> "I think I have a mission to integrate all those things that interest me. I mostly deal in photography and film, and all these other areas. In a way my mission is to get my integrated voice together so that I make my statement in the world. Just to be part of the fantastic chorus, I suppose." (p.8)

Developing a stronger self

The crisis for all four in this cluster is a turning point from living passively and being controlled by others, to making one's own decisions and controlling one's own direction through life so that it is based on desire and passion, rather than on duty and the demands of others. This leads to a new sense of personal strength. It is a shift in the polarity of control from external to internal, as choices are now felt to be self-determined. And with a newly found internal locus of control comes a new belief in personal power and personal efficacy:

> "I had a job as a consultant then, and in the corporate world I started to feel very strong then…It took achievement, that was the only way for me." (Rachel p.7)

> "I've got a stronger sense of my own identity and my sexuality. I can play around with my power and my control. I never thought I had any power, I didn't know what that word meant in my twenties, so just the complete opposite." (Gemma, p.9)

> "In a real nutshell, it made me stronger, and I think it's made me less wishy-washy. I stand up for myself now; I am not ever going to let myself get into the position of being the victim again. I always had victim tendencies, but I would never really voice if I was not happy about something…And now I just stand up for myself more." (Frances, p.13)

6.2 Female Cluster: "Career Woman Crisis" (N=4)

Cluster 2 is called "Career Woman Crisis" and subsumes Mary, Angela, Lynne and Camilla. These four had developed a career-focused life structure prior to the crisis, in contrast to the domestically-focused cluster described above. Prior to crisis, *Mary* was a partner in a corporate law firm, *Lynne* was a high level HR

executive, *Angela* was an office administrator and *Camilla* was working in the print industry. None had had any children at the time of interview and only Lynne has been married.

Phase 1 – Early Crisis: Locked In

Like with the prior cluster, early crisis is defined by pressure, constriction, dissatisfaction, a loss of control and a loss of a clear sense of self. But in this cluster the over-riding source of the problem is work, not home.

Shelving Passion for Practicality

All four women in this cluster described a passion which they had long held, but had not been expressed for many years due to their all-consuming career. Mary's passion was philosophy, but she was persuaded to study and pursue law as it was a more practical qualification. Angela's passion was art. This went unused in her job as an office administration assistant. The fire of this passion was initially dampened during a hard time at secondary school when she lost all confidence in her artistic abilities and failed her Art O-Level. She cites this sense of failure as the reason why she didn't pursue her art and go to art college, but instead took an office job. Camilla described having always been fascinated in caring and psychology, but up until the crisis had never pursued this fascination in any active sense. Lynne's passion had been poetry, but she never had time for it in her HR executive role.

Like Rats in a Cage

Before her crisis, Lynne was in executive HR, in a high-level international role for a large company, which she describes as the "job from hell". To add to this, she starts an affair with one of her colleagues in her immediate team at work, while being married. Her crisis emerges in her late thirties. She describes her situation, with all the pressures of the job and the affair, as being "like rats in a cage" (p.4).

Angela was an administrative assistant at a textile company as her crisis emerges. Problems start when a new aggressive director starts bullying her. The rest of her team leave due to the difficulties of working with this new director, but she stays in this highly pressured and confrontational environment. This brings on a crisis at age 34. Angela said that the office she was working in started to feel "like a prison" (p.4), and that she felt as if she was "suffocating".

As Mary's crisis emerges in her late thirties, she feels more and more constrained and stressed by the role of being a finance lawyer. She describes feeling "suffocated" in the job, and describes how her identity was defined but constrained and "held together" (p.11) by the role and the executive pride of the lifestyle.

Camilla was forging a successful career in the print industry, while partying frequently with her friends. She moved within her company to help set up a new business venture, but after a few months in this new role, she was demoted at work and started an affair with her married boss. Her once easy-going life suddenly is now full of concealment and deceit, and a crisis episode occurs age 26. After starting the affair, Camilla's work environment felt like a place in which she was trapped:

> "So that was a real worry and I was caught up in feeling trapped because I was working for him, even though he didn't exert that much power over me at work because I was in a different department. I was working for him, it was a big secret." (p.2)

Out of Control

All four members of this cluster felt out of control as their crises developed. Control is experienced as from without – they feel pushed around by circumstance, convention and constraint. Mary says that prior to the crisis she felt "very spaced out and not in control" (p.4). She was "passive and bemused", and felt that things were "happening to me." (p.4). She cites "circumstances" as the cause of her staying in the job despite wanting out for so long.

Lynne also felt out of control at work in the run up to the crisis, as "the workload was absolutely impossible." (p.3). Her boss was a bully and used her as a scapegoat if things went wrong. When the affair with the member of her work team breaks down, she almost loses control completely, feeling totally at the mercy of what was happening to her:

> "Almost out of control, I kept not crying or weeping, but tears would just start dribbling down, like leaking, they just all of a sudden, and I'm not crying, I'm not sobbing, but it was a feeling of being out of control." (p.10)

Angela's work life is emotionally fraught because her boss starts "being horrible and aggressive" (p.7). It is in this context that the highly emotional crisis period starts. She said she had "no control over anything at all" (p.3), she felt that "chaos was starting to take control" (p.7). Angela uses several metaphors to describe her feeling of being controlled. She says she felt like "a fly to be swatted" (p.9), or "this little puppet being in the middle of it." (p.9). She also used an analogy of being

treated like a machine: "He would talk to me like I was a machine and I felt he didn't think I was good enough." (p.4), suggesting depersonalisation.

Camilla's boss and now lover proves to be a very controlling man, and in the course of the affair tries to restrict her movements and to whom she speaks. She says her boss "became quite controlling." (p.2). Camilla's sense of being out of control brought a sense of reduced freedom – she felt couldn't do what she wanted to do:

> "I couldn't express anything, I couldn't speak freely, I couldn't have fun, I couldn't do what I wanted to do, I couldn't even move forward. I couldn't go anywhere so I was totally stuck. It's freedom to have the choice, not to do whatever I want to do, I couldn't do anything that I wanted to do really." (p.6)

Phase 2 – Mid Crisis: Separation and Escape

For this group, separation and escape is not from partner, but is from job. They all leave the work role that has become problematic and constrictive.

Saying No: A Growing Assertiveness

The women in this cluster all start to rediscover a sense of control, which brings a new sense of empowerment. Lynne admits to lacking assertiveness in her job. In trying to prove herself in her career, she had not known when to say no, and so protect herself from excessive workload. She was not ready to defend herself against the demands of others. She describes herself as being too "pliable" (p.9), and too afraid of saying no to people at work. One of the major changes she cites that occurred during the crisis was becoming "more assertive." (p.9).

Mary reports that in the period leading up to resignation, she "became much tougher" (p.5) with colleagues and clients about what work she would take on and what she would decline to protect herself from being overburdened. She would not say yes by default, which she used to in the past. She had confrontations as a result of asserting herself more: "I stood up to them [partners and clients] rather than sacrifice my health." (p.5).

Having been controlled by her boss during the affair, Camilla decides she must stand up to him after allowing herself to be passively controlled:

> "I tried to break up with him saying you cant tell me what to do, stood up to him and told him to piss off. I dealt with it by getting tough." (p.4)

Angela similarly learned to stand up for herself, but it was after the physical separation that this occurred. As with Anne and Mary, she says the key is *not* saying yes to every demand that is made of her:

> "So I just know that I wouldn't say yes to anything, which is what I used to do. I would say what I thought other people wanted to hear." (p.14)

Physical Separation from Work Role

A turning point in the four crises of this cluster is the moment of separation from job and company. This separation from a steady career path, and from the financial safety net of the corporate world, leads to a period of profound emotionality and opens up the possibility of change.

Lynne leaves her job and her affair at the same time. She describes the separation period, particularly the ending of the affair, as the "really, really painful period" (p.10). She describes the experience of various negative emotions:

> "Yeah, gut-wrenching grief. Loneliness. Not being appreciated. Not being valued. The more you did, the worse it became. Of course I was exhausted, physically exhausted. And this sort of feeling of what's the point? There was a huge depression." (Lynne, p.11)

Angela gets fired from her job. She had wanted to resign for some time, as she was being bullied by her boss, but did not have the confidence. She was afraid of being out of work. At the time of leaving her job, she reports feeling anxious, angry and upset.

Camilla separates from her job and from an affair with her boss. She moves out of the house where she is living in secrecy with her boss and leaves the print industry. She left after three years in the job and she says that "as soon as I left it just changed totally." (p.3). She reports that the stress dissipated after leaving the job, and that although the transition to starting afresh was not easy, the sense of being trapped had gone.

When Mary finally leaves her job in the law, she finds herself confronted with an intense emotional reaction to the separation, including "hysterical grief and anger and frustration and tears**"** (p.7). The greatest challenge for Mary was the sudden transition from a structured life where every minute was accounted for, to a complete lack of structure:

> "But suddenly the complete lack of structure having worked in an *incredibly* intense way for eighteen years, the complete lack of structure was somehow *terrifying*.

> Literally second by second sometimes it was terrifying, in a way that I can't really describe." (p.7)

Phase 3 – Late Crisis: Exploration

Like in the prior cluster, after separation comes a period in which new activities and new roles are tried, alongside active attempts to develop better self-understanding.

Paring Back the Layers of Self

Angela found that she was motivated to understand why the crisis happened to her. She tries a variety of self-help tools and techniques to understand herself better:

> "I've really tried to pare back the layers and find out who I was originally, when I was younger. I have looked into self-help things on the Internet, I have done psychometric tests, I have done personality tests. I know you can't go by tests but because I can't afford to pay people to do these things, I've tried to do it myself, I've bought books on it and things to try and find out who the hell I am, and why this happened to me." (p.10)

Lynne went to see a therapist after leaving her job and her affair. She described sitting with him, unsure why she was there, and then "bursting into tears" uncontrollably for an hour. This started a process of self-examination, in which she attempts to develop new self-understanding and to search for a more fulfilling life structure.

Camilla moves house, and starts seeing her friends more. She experiences much guilt for the affair with her boss, and starts to reconsider life in a corporate role. She starts her exploratory period with a trip to Romania, and works in an orphanage there. She reflects extensively on herself, her goals, her strengths and her weaknesses, and decides that she wants to move towards a job in professional caring.

Mary found that after the separation, her sense of self did not settle but kept evolving. She did not know what she was going to do next when she left her job in the law, so found it necessary to consider a variety of options before settling on a new direction. She was open to a host of possibilities, as she put it, "there were *many* other things I could do in life." (p.5).

Back to Study: A Statement of Agency

All four go back to study in some capacity. Mary does a Masters in transpersonal psychology, Angela trains as an art teacher, Camilla goes back to

university to do a degree in psychology, while Lynne takes a more informal approach by going to writing classes to develop her poetry and prose writing skills.

Further study may be partially a functional step towards a new career, but it is also an expression of empowerment. Angela in the following quote revealingly says that university doesn't just happen *to* you, it has to come from one's own committed personal decision. For Angela, studying art is a statement of personal control, as well as a positive move toward a new career:

> "It doesn't just happen to you – university doesn't tap you on the shoulder. You have to go out and try things and do things and find out what is right for you, so that is what I am doing." (Angela, p.5)

Camilla says it was a decision that she could take that her partner could not veto:

> "I took up a diploma level psychology course…I wasn't getting much freedom because there were less and less people who I could see without getting grief, so I thought well I'll do something that I can study and he can't say anything about that, and I wouldn't feel bad about doing something like that." (p.7)

In all cases these new programmes of study link to the earlier passion which had been sidelined for the pre-crisis practicalities of being a career woman.

Phase 4 – Post-Crisis: Resolution

In this cluster, the crisis does not lead to a newly adopted domestic role that the women had lacked in their career roles. Balance and resolution is found in a new career that reflects their own sense of self, and that allows a more balanced, equilibrated lifestyle, alongside nourishing leisure activities and friendships.

Beyond the Corporate Self

Prior to their crisis episodes, the members of this cluster gained much of their identity from the structure of a corporate role, and from proving themselves through performance in this role. Self-worth was indexed by promotions and raises. The corporate self that these women constructed to adapt to the workplace was limited to the corporate domain, therefore minimal identity or value was invested in non-work activities or home life. Over the course of crisis, all four described a change away from this corporate self, to a new kind of identity with a wider range of expressions.

Lynne reminisces about her career-obsessed years and concludes she was continually trying to prove herself. She says that she was "being this kind of striving little girl trying to please everybody… I think I had got to a point in my life where I

had been striving, striving, striving" (p.7). Lynne says that in her career woman days she was "seen as the cash cow" (p.9). She was a "career woman" (p.8) in every sense of the word – her work fuelled her being, and her life was devoted to the challenges of corporate life. The self was focused on striving and on proving itself:

> "The old Lynne was striving, task-orientated, ambitious, my sister-in-law would say that I was quite uptight. Very much working to lists, I'd have lists for work and lists for home, plans and schedules about what we were going to do, and who we were going to see, organised out of all existence almost. And not very colourful, you know, a kind of black and white, and not probably very interested in people." (p.9)

After resigning from her job, going freelance and joining a poetry club, Lynne described a life that "feels less driven, and it feels more connected to lots of bits of me and lots of bits of my world." (p.12). The new self that emerges from Lynne's trying time is "more rounded", as though the corporate self had become narrow and emaciated in its exclusive focus on career:

> "So what the point is now is that I am far more rounded as a person. I think the sides of me that were pushed aside when I was in corporate life have now been given a chance to grow – the poetry, the writing, and I do nice things, I'm learning to ride a horse (laughs), which is very scary, but great fun. I do nurturing things for me, and new friendships that are much more satisfactory, fulfilling, equal, than a lot of relationships I had in the past." (p.11)

Angela described creating a false corporate self prior to her crisis: "I tried to tailor myself into this corporate person for so many years, the executive type." (p.11). She comes to the realisation after her crisis that she is not suited to this life and role:

> "I am not going back into the office world, I don't think it suits me, I am training in something genuinely creative now, so that they can't suddenly give me spreadsheets and accounts work and credit control as part of my job description 'open to change', I want something specific, a title that I do." (p.5)

She describes realising that under the layers of corporate persona that have been built up, she is sensitive, "a bit like a little hippie really" (p.10). She loves the country, horses, the outdoors, animals, art, writing, and all things creative. She now realises her actual self is not the corporate woman she tried to be:

> "I tried to be the corporate woman and it's been disastrous so more quite a sensitive type of soul really." (p.11)

Mary describes herself prior to the crisis: "The *me* had always been the striving, the directional, the in-control." (Mary, p.6). She further describes how her role defined her:

> "I had no idea how much I had been held together every day, every hour, and every minute by the daily routine of sitting at my desk, the foot high inbox and the endless meetings in glass prisons at the top of merchant banks. These were part of the fabric

> of my building, heated through by intellectual pride, chauffeur-driven cars and over charged clients." (p.11)

She says how when she left the job, she sees exactly how much her corporate self relied on the structured routines and accolades of the job. She describes how the shift was towards a less structured, more fluid form of identity:

> "I can't say that I have replaced that identity – the identity of the corporate finance lawyer – with something else. I don't think that's the point. The point of the second month was learning to live without an identity, in such a definite way." (p.9)

New Life Role: Passion in Action

After separation from a career-focused life, and after exploration of new alternatives, these four women do not swing the work/home pendulum in the opposite direction and look for the family life they never had. The change for these four is *not* from work to home, but from a career motivated by "should", "ought" and by striving for visible achievement and money, to a career that is motivated by really "wanting" to do it, that is more flexible, and leaves more time for intimate connections with friends and family. All four have latent passions from earlier years that surface once again and are expressed through a new form of vocation.

After finishing the Masters degree, Mary moved out of London, which she realised she hated, and moved close to the sea. She started lecturing in business and philosophy and gradually built a new life structure that is based on her passion. She takes a role with an organisation that investigates the interaction of science, philosophy and spirituality.

Lynne finds a new life balance in which career dominates less and friends and relationships get more time and space. She takes up poetry and joins a poetry club. The material goals of a career cede to a desire for genuine and authentic relationships. There is a new life structure, based on a flexible freelance career, so that her new self can be more "connected" to the parts of her that previously didn't get nurtured. She says:

> "I'm in a different position now because I have made real attempts to nurture friendships that are good for me and good for them – good quality friendships. I don't think I was very good at that before. I think that was part of the issue – I would drown myself in work – work was my life." (p.8)

Angela develops a new life structure after her separation from her corporate job that for the first time is something she *wants* to do – become an art teacher. This

heralds a major shift from a self dominated by what she felt she "should" do, to a more agentic self that heeds the call of an inner, previously suppressed, passion:

> "Now with the art, that's not detrimental to me obviously, because that's what I always loved. I'm finding it very exhausting, because it is intensive, but I think that I am actually doing something now for the first time in my life that I always wanted to do, since even before I was ten." (p.12)

Camilla, having made the separation from job and affair, is able to re-assert control over her own life, start seeing her friends again, and plan a new career. She starts a new job as a carer and continues her studies in psychology. She reflects on a much improved life since the crisis:

> "I'm going back to college, I'm doing a degree, I am doing positive things, this is where I want to be. My career is just perfect at the moment, I couldn't ask for anything else, so its changed me for the better." (Camilla, p.8)

6.3 Male Cluster: All-Consuming Crisis (N=4)

The men were divided into three clusters – "All Consuming Crisis", "Marriage Crisis" and "Career Crisis" (see Chapter 5, p.73). "All Consuming Crisis" includes those crises that emerged out of difficulties in work *and* relationships, leading to a complete, rather than partial, demise of the previous life structure.

Neil, Guy, Ben and George together compose the cluster "All Consuming Crisis". They all described crisis episodes that involved becoming trapped in, and then breaking out of, work environments *and* home environments that had *both* become dysfunctional and stressful. Neil was an engineer, Guy a banker, Ben an academic and George a social worker. All change their profession over the course of crisis, and three of them divorce too. George, who is gay, loses his circle of friends, rather than a partner.

Phase 1 - Early Crisis: Locked In

In this cluster, Phase 1 is described by narrative portrayal of intense pressure, of restricted movement and a gradual degradation of marriage and/or social relationships.

In The Pressure Cooker

Prior to their crises, all four in this cluster were living highly pressured lives. Neil was an engineering executive and was married with no children; Guy was

married with two children and was a high-ranking executive at a major bank, Ben was a part-time academic, PhD student and was married, and George was single, gay, and a full-time social worker.

Guy's executive role for a bank meant that he worked fourteen hours a day, six days a week. He had a wife and two children whom he rarely saw. He referred to it as life in "the pressure cooker." (p.4). He would frequently leave the house at six in the morning, and not get back until midnight. He describes how he was "so locked in to" (p.10) this life, that he could not conceive of an alternative. He says: "I was taking headache tablets the whole time because I was under constant pressure. I was going a million miles an hour straight into a brick wall." (p.5)

Neil was an executive at an electrical engineering firm who had been working in the same organisation since he left school. He married his long term girlfriend only to find that the relationship degraded until it revolved around constant arguing. He spent many weekends of the year abroad, worked extremely long hours, and was committed to his work, while his wife was neglected. He struggled on for many years in this manner, unable to break the routine, and describes his life as "stuck in a rut"(p.8).

After coming out as gay at age 27, George developed a lifestyle that he reflects on as "very self-destructive" (p.2). He developed the habit of using drugs, particularly ecstasy and cocaine, to help him relate with other men. He was going out clubbing and taking drugs almost every night, and suggests he was spending six hundred pounds a week on ecstasy, cocaine and clubbing. His life is a constant rush:

> "My life had been a rush for the last two years with the amphetamines and the drugs, and I was out clubbing six out of seven nights a week, so I was just high all the time." (p.4)

Ben was abroad with his wife for eight years, teaching at universities in Canada and Singapore. During this time they have two children. They decide to return to England so that Ben can finish his PhD, but this puts strain on marriage and job, and he has problems providing financially for his children and wife. Ben takes a part-time job at a polytechnic, and puts his energies into completing his PhD. Ben felt he was neglecting his wife to complete his PhD, and was becoming increasingly stressed.

Living in a Straightjacket: The Constrained Self

For Guy and Neil, prior to their crisis, the sense of self was defined by their role in business. Guy is adamant that he did not give the issue of identity any further consideration than the job he occupied within the bank:

> "Who was I? I was this network director for Parnell Bank." (Guy, p.2)[6]

He is explicit that at this point he was being controlled by cultural expectations, not by his own motives:

> "It was expectations, I think it was just cultural issues that were pushing upon me that this was success." (p.2)

He uses an analogy of being on autopilot to convey this sense of being "programmed":

> "Every step that I took seemed like stepping stones that were placed in front of me, and that this was the way to go. I don't think there was ever a conscious thought about the implications and consequences of what I was doing at the time. So I was on autopilot." (p.2)

Neil defined himself by being a successful businessman, a conventionally well-trodden route to success and respect, and self-worth for him was imparted by status and position. Neil describes feeling constrained, as this self was a façade. He describes this as a form of protection:

> "I was never really brought up to talk about my feelings very much. It wasn't something I was very familiar with at all, and I found it difficult." (p.2)
>
> "I think there was a bit of a façade there." (p.10)

George defined himself by the role he has constructed for himself in the gay club scene. It is an "image or persona" that he had adopted:

> "I think there was this image or persona that I went around with, around club land where I would attract people because at the time I was able to do that. But there was something quite superficial about it. I didn't like that aspect of myself." (p.6)

To convey the notion of how this self was constrained, George uses the metaphor of the self being in a straightjacket:

> "The self that I remember back then was almost in a straightjacket, I felt very trapped, and rigid." (p.8)

This constrained self is not able to explore new possibilities, for it is 'incapable of being expansive' (p.7), so George felt trapped in the drug habit and the unwanted life, with a "fear of being me, because I didn't think that I was going to be

[6] Parnell is a pseudonym for the bank in question

acceptable." (p.8). George was living according to the expectations of the gay sub-culture of which he was a part, rather than his own inclinations. He explains that he felt "a pressure on me to conform" (p.7) to the gay stereotype of being promiscuous, despite wanting a stable relationship.

Ben said of his marriage "we played the standard roles, perhaps to a fault." (p.6), and reflected that his self had not fully developed. His early crisis phase is defined by a lack of self-knowledge: "All I can say is a lack of substance and assurance that I was somebody." (p.5). He described the restricted and constrained nature of this self using the adjective "tight" several times. In response to being asked what other people would have said he was like at the time, he said: "A bit tight, a bit inhibited. A bit unforthcoming. Nice, but doesn't know quite where he is." (p.7)

Phase 2 - Mid Crisis: Separation and Escape

As with the female clusters, the centre of crisis is separation from the ensnaring role of Phase 1. For this cluster, this includes separation at home and at work.

Falling Apart: The Demise of the Pre-Crisis Life Structure

The pre-crisis life structures become increasingly dissatisfying and problematic for the individuals concerned. George was building huge debts, due to his expensive and physically destructive drug habit, and so found his life 'falling apart':

> "It was getting to the point where everything was falling apart. I had no money, the friends that I had were all to do with alcohol, clubs and drugs. There was no substance to the friendships and relationships I was having. I lived in a crumby bedsit and things weren't going well at work…And I think what happened, I would identify it as a crisis because I think it's the moment where I hit rock bottom." (p.1)

This led to a suicide attempt at the age of 31 – George tried to take his own life with an overdose. He failed in this attempt to take his own life, and was rushed into hospital the next day. He describes a new clarity, lying in his hospital bed, with a new resolution that things "had to change" (p.4). So upon leaving hospital, he left his job and left his group of friends in the club and drugs scene behind, and attempted for the first time to get some permanent housing. While this was an exciting time for George, it was also suffused with sadness: "there were periods of huge deflation and feeling very, very sad." (p.2)

George described the phase around separation as being like "a huge implosion" (p.6). He further says that that it was a "huge slap" that woke him up from a drug-fuelled path of possible self-destruction:

> "I'm thinking it was crucial for me to go there and to be close to death almost. I had to hit rock bottom and I had to have that crisis experience, in order for me almost to be debilitated and to be forced to take time for myself, to be reflective and to think gosh, I was very close there to things almost ending, and to recognise, so it was a huge slap, a huge explosion or implosion, and then it seemed to me that I could have gone two ways, and one could have been more self destruction but I gladly went the other way." (p.6)

For Neil, separation from job and marriage happened at almost the same time. He talked to his wife about their relationship, and both admitted they were very unhappy. When his marriage ended, the motive to stay in his job, which was not fulfilling him, ebbed away, so that both work and relationship come to an end together, age 34. He described his life structure as "broken" when he lost his job and his marriage ended. He says he felt "damaged", as the supports and structures that lent him a sense of self-esteem are no longer there, but new structures are yet to be found which may provide an alternative sense of worth.

Both Guy and Ben found their life structures falling apart when their wives tell them they are having an affair and want a divorce. They were both 35 at the time. Guy describes feeling "pole-axed" by this news, while Ben described himself as being "absolutely demolished." (p.2). At the same time as their marriages fall apart, Guy is demoted, and Ben's PhD is rejected.

Around nine months after his wife's admission of having an affair, Guy in the end initiates the divorce proceedings with his wife and so separation from his home life is brought about. His job changes concurrently to a far less important position within the bank, which was perceived as a "failure" by others at his work place. Guy reports feeling anger, sadness and depression at this time, and Ben experiences emotions including anger and sadness. Guy finds himself crying a lot, and admits to considering suicide at the time. He says at this point he experienced "this almost total annihilation." (p.4), as though he felt like his identity had disappeared.

Six months or so after his wife's admission of her affair, Ben formally separates from his wife. He describes a sense of "just floating, and not knowing where I was." (p.2). Having had little in the way of self-belief up until the crisis, this gives a sense of profound failure:

> "You know, I'd failed, it was the sense of failure. She was quite a remarkable woman, a very beautiful woman, and to lose her was a loss of prestige, at a superficial level." (p.2)

Phase 3 - Late Crisis: Exploration

The inner and outer search that was found in the female clusters after the separation period is also found in this male cluster, in similar form.

Looking Round for Alternatives

In response to the emotional upheaval of separation from the old life, positive but tentative new steps are taken towards building a new life structure. Prior to any firm new commitments, this is a period of experimentation with lifestyle and self in which the person may engage in therapy, may go back to study, and may attempt various new activities in an endeavour to better understand who they are and what they want out of life. The mindset of the experimental phase is one of possibility, which is in stark contrast to the mindset of obligation that dominates in Phase 1:

> "So I think I've mellowed out with those thoughts and recognised that there are lots and lots of ways one can live one's life. There was a pressure on me to conform, well I might be gay but that doesn't mean I can't have a long term relationship." (George, p.7)

George explores a number of new possibilities after leaving his group of friends and his job, leading to a new outlook on relationships and a new part-time degree in psychology.

With the new sense of freedom that Neil experienced upon leaving his wife and job came a period of experimentation, which he was happy to admit was a kind of "second adolescence" (p.16), having missed out on experimentation in his twenties. For Neil this involved a simultaneous inner "opening" of two different parts of him: a hedonistic self and a generative self. The hedonistic phase involved buying two new houses in quick succession, buying a Porsche, crashing it, and having a number of short relationships with women.

> "To start with it was a bit hedonistic. I paid my own air fare just to have two nights in Tokyo going crazy. I lived in Reigate, I ate out most nights and I bought myself two houses, I bought a house and it just didn't work out, so I just took the keys back to the estate agents. I bought a Porsche, and managed to crash it on Frimley Road." (p.12)

Simultaneously, and in some contradiction to this new hedonistic self-indulgent impulse is a concurrent new desire to work with people and to "give something back"

to the world, which manifests as becoming a Samaritan's volunteer. The experience of working with the Samaritans leads to a reappraisal of ideal vocation, and a desire to develop a new career. Neil decides to train to become a life coach, which involves a two-year course of monthly modules.

Ben describes the period after his wife and children left as chaotic, as though he was "thrashing around". It involved counselling, workshops and trying out meditation. He refers to it as a process of self-examination:

> "So there was a lot of that going on – a process of self-examination, trying out this, trying out that." (p.5)

He goes on to describe that he was "looking round for alternatives":

> "I was looking round for alternatives. I got involved in green ideas, and they made me think, perhaps I could go and live in a commune, or start a self-help organisation." (p.4)

This period, for Ben, is explicitly one of exploring and developing the self:

> "Well it enabled me to explore myself much more fully and provoked me into developing aspects of myself that otherwise I would not have done. It forced me into reflection and action, because I did a lot of things as a way of coping with the situation, and I think this enabled me to discover a lot of things about myself that I could do – my potential, and all that sort of stuff." (Ben, p.10)

Guy also had a clearly demarked period of exploration, and actually referred to the period after the separation as being in "exploratory mode." (p.8). This mode involved writing poetry, anger-release workshops, growing his hair long, going to expressive dance classes, getting involved with Kabala spirituality and also reading a lot - up to six books at one time on both science and spirituality.

Guy describes how this exploratory search was a breakthrough as it was the first time in his life that he had tried "to find out who I was and why I acted the way that I did." (p.3). Prior to the crisis and during early crisis, the self was a closed structure, defined by his role as a bank executive, but now it was an open question, full of potential answers. By embarking on a period of exploration, he could start to reconstruct a new self and a new life structure:

> "I could start to rebuild and reconstruct myself, create a new life for myself." (p.3)

Phase 4 – Post-Crisis: Resolution

After a period of experimentation comes re-commitment to new roles, to new beliefs and new relationships, while retaining much of the exploratory emphasis of Phase 3.

A New, Flexible Life Structure

Guy develops a post-crisis life structure that is based on a new freelance career, in which he tries to provide help to people in turbulent and stressful organisations. He develops his allegiance to Kabala spirituality and finds a new, fulfilling relationship with a woman in America. He focuses far more attention on his children than he did prior to his crisis.

After training in life-coaching, Neil develops his own practice, which provides a people-focused outlet that balances a part-time career in IT. He decides to do IT for three days a week, and to take 60% of his salary, so that he can develop the life-coaching practice.

Ben spends several years experimenting with alternative possibilities for himself and his career, before finding resolution in his work life. He realises that a post in academia is for him after all, and so comes back to what he was doing originally:

> "And eventually I got the feeling this is what I want to do all my life. I didn't need to look somewhere else, I am actually doing it. But it took me a long time to get to that point." (p.7)

Reflection on Development: An Expanded, Evolving Self

Guy feels strongly that the crisis he related was a watershed between two fundamentally different forms of self. He referred to his pre-crisis self as "my previous incarnation" (p.5), implying an experience of rebirth through crisis. Rather than settling on a new static identity, Guy's sense of self is evolving and changing:

> "I guess part of it is that the new Guy is constantly evolving, I know that I am not defined by what I do." (p.8)

Neil's retraining in life coaching brings in a new focus on relationships and giving that weren't manifest clearly in the determined, resilient engineer of several years before. One of new dimensions to Neil's life is a spiritual side to himself:

> "It came from within me; it is a spiritual part of me, a part that wants to understand why we're here. It sees my life as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. It's all about what I can do in the world, rather than what the world can do for me." (p.13)

This new spiritual exploration culminates in going on a retreat in Spain, which he describes as run by "a kind of wacky, new-age woman." (p.13) Neil interprets his transformation as changing towards being an open and expanded version of the self that existed before the crisis:

> "I am the same person, just an expanded version with a different dimension to me. I think people would say the same thing of me, I'm the same Neil at my core, just reaching now into other parts of me, a fuller Neil perhaps." (p.19)

Neil contrasts this to the constrained role-based identity that he had before the crisis:

> "Yes, much less defined by my position, far more defined by what I am doing rather than what position I have. It is a less constraining form of identity. You don't have to worry about what the role is or what the title is. It does change, it's continuing to move on and develop. It's almost like you get comfortable being uncomfortable. You get comfortable with not knowing what comes next." (p.19)

George felt like he 'came home' after the crisis, in creating a more settled, more studious, less self-destructive life. What he learnt from the experience is that the jovial club persona that he developed was a false self, and that his authentic self emerged only as a result of a being close to death. The self that was constrained is now open to life's possibilities:

> "I think what occurs to me is that I was very rigid and very stiff and incapable of being expansive. I was very single-minded and it is interesting as I look back to it how tight and constrained that I felt and that's changed." (p.7)

Ben refers to "my previous self" (p.7) when referring to himself before separation with his wife. He concludes that the crisis was a turning point from one form of personhood to another: "I think I became a different person." (p.7). He says: "I had been able to become myself" (p.7).

6.4 Male Cluster: Marriage Crisis (N=2)

The two men in this cluster are Leon and Vern. They both described crisis episodes which were precipitated by oppressive and problematic marriages. Vern is 32, has one child by a woman whom he does not love but has married in order to be father to the child. Leon is married with one child, and is 33 when the crisis occurs. Neither changed their line of work, or altered the work dimension of their life structures as a result of the crisis. The crisis revolves very much around their problems at home.

Phase 1 – Early Crisis: Constriction

In this cluster, the constrictive force characteristic of Phase 1 is the bind of a sense of duty and obligation to wife and child, and the growing passivity they experience in this situation.

Trapped by a Sense of Duty

Leon's reason for marrying in his early twenties was, he recalls, a sense of moral duty to the girl concerned. He had doubts about their suitability having been together for several years, but felt obligated to marry her after her father's death. He said:

> "It just *seemed* the thing to do, this is obviously the next stage, we'd get married…I felt a kind of, it sounds awful to say it, but a kind of moral duty almost, to repay the kind of support that she had given me through that final year [of his studies], and I wanted to look after her and that became something that absolutely sealed the idea that this marriage would take place, and we married a few months later." (p.2)

Leon explained how this sense of duty came from his working class moral code, which he defines as built on moral imperatives of duty to support one other. He uses the phrase often used in Phase 1 of crisis that of feeling *trapped*, for with his focus on duty, he could see no way out of the marriage:

> "So I had to do it, and the fact that I was married and I had given this undertaking, so there was a feeling of being trapped, which carried on through right until the end of that phase." (p.10)

Vern also ends up "trapped" (p.5) in a relationship out of his sense of duty, rather than out of desire or want. After a number of failed relationships, he is seven weeks into a relationship with a girl when he finds out that she is pregnant. The initial emotional reaction was one of panic. The affluent, carefree lifestyle to which he had been accustomed was inconsistent with the prospect of a family. As with Leon, it was Vern's sense of *duty* that kept him in the relationship, and obligated him to marry her. Vern uses a powerful analogy of being hanged by a rope to describe the constriction which this sense of duty brings:

> "And I suspect there is a mixture of societal imposition, family expectations and what you as an individual have actually thought out for yourself. Which is the driver, I don't know, but the three twisted together is a very strong rope and I almost hanged myself with it. When you have that sense of duty it's incredibly difficult to tease it apart and go 'hang on a minute, why am I doing this?' It got to the situation where I thought I am doing no good to anybody." (p.7)

Resignation and Passivity

Vern describes how his sense of duty over-rode his own motives and desires, leading to a mindset of passivity and resignation:

> "The thought process I was going through was one of – I didn't take decisive action. What I did was just go with the flow, so someone else was taking control of what was going on. She was pregnant, she wanted to buy a house, she wants to stay with me. So I put up some resistance, but never really that much. My thought process was very much one of resignation to the situation which I found myself in. There was a sense that there is nothing I can do about this." (p.5)

For Leon, duty to others also seems to result in the self being a passive entity. He talks about making decisions according to "the prescription for life" (p.6), showing that he was living according to a received template rather than his own active decisions. He describes tasks such as getting a job and making money as "those cringe-worthy male things that get put upon one." (p.3). By describing these tasks as 'put upon' him, he depicts himself as a passive object, rather than an active subject.

Phase 2 – Mid Crisis: Separation and Escape

The common core of Phase 2 for all clusters is separation, and for the two men in this cluster, separation is from the marriage that has become so dissatisfying.

Severing the Rope of Duty: Separation and Transition

Vern and Leon both remain in their relationships for years, despite wanting out, as they feel duty-bound to their partners and their children. Vern relates the moment when he first made the decision to separate from his partner, as a realisation of re-taking control over his life:

> "That was when I thought *I am going to have to take control over this situation*, and it took me two weeks or a month, I forget how long, to precipitate the crisis to an extent where I could actually walk out, but I think that is when the decision was taken." (p.6)

Not long after this psychological separation comes actual separation. Vern actually recalls the moment of leaving his wife as one of 'escape', which emphasises his prior sense of being locked in:

> "I mean, I think there was a feeling of I've got away, I've got out, I've escaped!" (p.8)

He continues the analogy of the "rope" of duty, describing it as now being severed:

> "It's quite liberating when you go, I don't care, I'm going to do it anyway, you just cut the rope" (p.8)

In his early thirties, Leon finally starts to question his life and his marriage. He feels like his "batteries had run down" (p.4). He and his wife go to a marriage counsellor, the result of which is that he decides to move out of the house for a while. He is then able to see that he wants out of the marriage. The time of separation, as with so many cases, brings both positive and negative emotions:

> "One is that having finally decided that I would have to split from Samantha, and I felt emotionally wrung out, desperately sad about having to do this, and it was like failing in life, it was painful, there was a lot of misery that surrounds it." (p.8)
> "Its all to do with feeling a) a sense of relief, because finally decisions can be made, and it's the difficulty of making the decision that adds so much to the stress, and coupled with that it brings a sense of optimism that you can go on and build something new that would be better than before." (p.8)

Phase 3 and 4 – Late Crisis and Post-Crisis: Towards Equilibration

In this cluster, resolution and exploration of new activities occur interactively as the two men moved towards a new relationship and a new, more personally directed, life structure.

To Search or Not to Search

Leon's crisis was an emotionally very painful time, but he says that as a result of it, he has enhanced understanding of himself. He has "a better appreciation of where I am, why I am the way I am, and what the limits are of what I am." (p.9). Beyond this fact, little was learnt about any inner transformation that Leon experienced. It may have been that an intense work life, possible problems with child access after the marriage and his wife's new boyfriend, prevented any genuine time for exploration or self-searching. It may however have been simply due to lack of disclosure during the interview.

Vern was more forthcoming about the changes in his sense of self. After separation from his partner Naomi, Vern turns his attention on himself:

> "What happened with the Naomi situation was one in which I said right you need to think about this quite a lot, and from that moment I began the process of dismantling this façade that I'd been building and asking exactly *who…are…you?*" (p.10)

He goes into therapy to help this process. He temporarily moved to Cambridge during this exploratory period, but finds this exacerbates the sense of post-separation loneliness, so moves back to London again. The period for Vern was principally a time of internal exploration, rather than external exploration, a time he describes as "navel-gazing":

> "Leaving Jimmy's mum probably precipitated a degree of navel-gazing and internalising." (p.9)

Vern reflected that his pre-crisis self was based on role-playing:

> "I think there is quite a lot of role-playing for a lot of people, certainly for me, you act up to a particular expectation. There is no doubt in my mind anyway that I was thrust into a role which I wasn't necessarily psychologically suited to." (p.10)

The key developmental change is away from living behind a façade and away from playing a role, toward being more expressive:

> "The point is now I am always who I am, I don't play games any more, I don't play a role. I am quite comfortable with someone going – he's a tosser. Well OK, take it or leave it. In common with many, almost everybody, is you are worried about what people think about you." (p.10)
> "I just stopped myself being what I didn't want to be. I think I was actively dismantling the façade rather than trying out different personalities. I think I knew who I was, and it was a case of just trying to be that, rather than trying to *find* who I was." (p.11)

The crisis acted developmentally as a catalyst toward a life that is closer to what he terms his "natural personality" (p.2).

Resolution in Remarrying

Vern finds a new partner who is more suited to him, several years after the crisis, and finds himself in a new, rewarding relationship. He later marries this new girl, whom he loves. Leon also finds a new relationship with a woman whom he feels more connected to than he did with his previous wife. Both individuals resolve their crises, not in permanent equilibrium, but in a more balanced state than they lived in prior to crisis. Vern describes now having a better relationship with his son than he had during his first marriage, and Leon also described a positive relationship with his son since the crisis.

6.5 Male Cluster: Career Crisis (N=2)

This final cluster is composed of two respondents, Dan and Jack, both of whom had crises that arose from being fired from their jobs. Dan is 34 when the crisis emerges, works in making corporate films, is married with a baby, and Jack is 26, single, and working as an accountant.

Phase 1 – Early Crisis: Locked In

As with the *Career Woman Crisis* cluster and the *All Consuming Crisis* cluster, Phase 1 for this cluster involves being in a highly-pressured, but motivationally stagnant, work life.

Stuck: Buried Under Work

Jack described his life before the crisis as "the path of least resistance" (p.8). He became an accountant in his early twenties, but found himself getting more and more worn down by life. He described his life situation as "stagnating, very stagnant." (p.2), suggesting a lack of dynamism and growth. He was just "going through the motions" (p.3), feeling flat, and without ambition or goals:

> "I didn't really seek things out in life that much. I didn't have ambitions, or I didn't have set goals, even in my work, that was a bit of an accident." (p.7)

He uses a metaphor of feeling dead, or like a ghost:

> "I did feel a little bit dead, a bit like a ghost sometimes. I remember sometimes I would go for a walk around, or a little wander around, I wouldn't really be feeling anything, I wouldn't feel like I was even there." (p.3)
>
> "I think it felt a bit like stepping out of life a little bit, and sometimes it felt like I didn't have feelings. It was like being a ghost." (p.3)

Dan was working in the city making promotional films for large companies. He worked long hours and weekends. He also had recently had his first child with his wife Belinda. Belinda gave up her job in order to look after the child, but gets post-natal depression, which makes childcare very difficult. He describes a difficult, stressful period:

> "So I became a dad, changed career, our disposable income went down by a third, so it was quite a tough period." (p.1)

Dan's work is taking up so much of his time that he has little time for family or friends. He said "I just buried myself in the work." (p.1), and reflected on this as being caught up in the rat race:

> "I've never been particularly materialistic, but I was getting caught up in that rat race of proving myself." (p.9)

Phase 2 – Mid Crisis: Separation and Escape

In this cluster, the two men get fired from their jobs, which results in mid-crisis starting suddenly, without warning, and without prior mental disengagement.

Sacked and Solitary

Dan was sacked when the marketing budgets of his clients were cut. He felt shocked, betrayed and angry. He received a pay-off, which allows his family to keep afloat financially for several months, but he feels "an utter failure" (p.4), and "quite desolate" (p.2). He then has six months without any work at all. After these months without finding more work and financial problems mounting, Dan breaks down and describes hitting rock bottom:

> "A couple of times I broke down and was crying, in that room. It just got too much for me, not straight away, just eight or nine months in, I couldn't get a contract job…It was pretty desperate times, I've never been so desperate in all my life…I did hit rock bottom." (p.4)

He finds himself having suicidal thoughts, and further describes experiencing pain like he had never previously experienced, and a sensed complete *lack of control* over his life:

> "It's that pain that I never experienced before, I didn't think you could experience it before. It was a complete lack of control that I had over my own life, a complete sense of worthlessness and emptiness, no sense of direction, no help from any direction that I felt could help me, it was just that blackness that I saw in front of me." (p.8)

Like Dan, Jack is also sacked. He didn't expect it, as he thought he had been doing satisfactory work as an accountant. He reacted with minimal emotion initially. At the time of the separation he said:

> "I didn't think about what I was doing, what I was going to do with the rest of my life. It was like I'd retired already. Every day was very similar. I didn't really have a concept of finding something to do, or retraining, or looking for another job." (p.2)

He says that the months after the sacking were devoid of any significant memory, almost as though he had been sleeping. Then an event occurs which brings the crisis to a head, and acts as a very sudden and profound turning point in his life – a car crash. The car crash acts as a stimulus for change, as Jack's confrontation with mortality shakes him out of his ghostly, inactive stupor into a sudden awareness of the feelings that had become muted and morbid:

> "It felt like the physical impact and the injuries forced me to feel a lot more than I had been feeling – it forced a lot of my feelings through, and they took a long time to resolve and to work out." (p.2)

Phase 3 and 4: Exploration and Resolution

For Jack and Dan there is change from being stuck in a post-sacking malaise towards a new, more proactive approach to building a new life, which leads to resolution in a new, more satisfying career and home life.

Exploration of Alternatives

The car crash has an immediate impact on Jack. After recovering from his injuries, he changes from the static, uninvolved life that he was living before, and instead embarks on a dynamic process of finding new activities to appreciate and of understanding himself, almost as if he has been jolted awake, or back to life:

> "I think there was a desperate need to find more ways to appreciate life, I think, and I found quite a lot of new friends. I started doing things that I hadn't done before like going round to friend's houses to cook, and to go out a bit more." (p.5)

He describes being on a quest to understand himself:

> "I think I started to have a bit more of a quest really, in understanding other people and understanding myself, and studying, and I started to get much more involved." (p.6)

He goes to see a counsellor, he starts reading psychology books, and he describes how enhanced self-knowledge is the aim of quest:

> "I read a lot of psychology books, basically Freud. I remember one book that had a profound effect on me was his *Interpretation of Dreams*. I was reading things, and something in my mind was applying his theory to my dreams and how I felt, and just reading things about biology, mostly scientific disciplines. It just felt so kind of important. It felt like it was important to know yourself. I felt quite strongly that I could do it." (p.6)

Dan starts to explore alternative career avenues, when his situation seems hopeless. Up until this point he has been looking for the same kind of work as he was fired from. Now he sees the possibility of *alternative* careers. He sees an advert in the local paper advertising for film lecturers at the local college, and initially gets just one day a week, which gradually increases. The lecturing experience he actually *enjoys*, and for the first time appreciates the importance of enjoying work, rather than gaining merely money and status from it.

Back to Study

Jack goes back to study within a year of the car crash. He initially goes onto a psychology degree, but then changes his mind and does a chemistry degree. He says:

"studying after that incident was a completely different experience." (p.6). His prime concern was to find a degree that he enjoyed.

Dan retrains as a plumber, and also enrols on a PGCE, to get a teacher qualification and so consolidate his growing career as a lecturer. His idea is that by having two careers, both of which he enjoys, he will prevent the possibility of finding himself out of work again, and so secure his future.

Enjoyment: The Focus of a New Life Structure

As the crisis receded, Jack focused on finding a career that he enjoyed. He was focused on not being held hostage to some imagined future, but on enjoying the present moment. He was certain about not going back into accountancy. He was yet to commit to a new role when he was interviewed, but he was still in the process of questing and finding new and exciting activities. His new priority, as with Dan, was being happy and enjoying life. He says of his new life, that he is "trying to be happier, trying to be more involved in everything, to have more of a flow in life instead of being stuck." (p.10)

Dan's life structure had developed from being exclusively based on career, towards a balance between enjoyment, friends and family, as well as vocation. He chooses to build a more flexible career based around two jobs – being a plumber and being a part-time film lecturer. Job satisfaction and being happy are key priorities for him now:

> "In terms of a recognised high profile job, the lecturing that I am doing probably isn't recognised as being high profile, but I get a lot more out of it than I ever did working in other jobs, so I suppose no, the salary I am on now is a third of what I was earning. It's not the money, but I am far happier, *far* happier, than how I was before." (p.8)

What makes Dan happy, he realises, is less career and more relationships and family:

> "Financially we are just keeping our heads above water, but far more important is the quality of life is much better. I've got a better relationship with Belinda now…I see more of my children, I have more time for myself, and I'm retraining which I am thoroughly enjoying – retraining to be a lecturer and a plumber, I am enjoying it as it is stretching my mind again. It seems to be working out OK." (p.8)
>
> "I spend far more time with my son, I now have a job where I can be reading him a book in bed, which I never did before. I appreciate my children far more now." (p.7)

He considers that he is 'calmer' than he used to be, more focused on what he already has, and more focused on human relationships than career and money.

6.6 Summary of the 4-Phase Pattern

This study suggests that crisis does occur in early adulthood for some, and that it has a definable form. Results from all five clusters show an invariant process of four phases in the crisis episodes sampled. These four phases are not discrete, distinct chapters, but are more like four clear emphases in the flow of a crisis narrative; they overlap and interact, but appear in a definable sequence:

1. *Phase 1: Locked-In*

   The crisis starts with committed roles at home and/or at work that are constricting, dissatisfying and conflictual, but are not questioned or open to change. This leads to a sense of feeling trapped in, or locked in to, the relationship and/or job in question. The self is described as being hidden behind a role-based façade, while self-understanding is described as limited.

2. *Phase 2: Separation and Escape*

   Phase 1 is followed by rising discontent and by more conscious consideration of leaving. This leads to an emotionally fraught period of separation from the Phase 1 roles and the people linked to those roles. Individuals lose a clear identity in this transitional and difficult process as they leave the role-based self behind but do not replace it.

3. *Phase 3: Exploration and Moratorium*

   After separation and the emotion surrounding it has been coped with, a period of exploration and noncommittal experimentation occurs. This involves trying new activities, new relationships and new aspects of self, and often going back to study, or going into therapy. It may involve reconnecting with earlier interests and dreams.

4. *Phase 4: Resolution*

   The crisis terminates with new role-based commitments that are more enjoyable, more self-determined, more flexible and more integrated. An open-ended identity is established that is felt to be more authentic and in control. There is sometimes a description of a "new self" emerging as crisis comes to a close.

6.7 Discussion

In this section results are integrated with existing theory in order to help interpret the emerging crisis dynamic. Features from all four phases are considered through the lens of theory on; motivation, locus of control, persona, self, depersonalisation, transition, moratorium and development.

Pre-Crisis Commitments and Pre-Crisis Motives

The pre-crisis predicaments in this sample are situations where a career and/or relationship has been undertaken for the wrong reason and has become dysfunctional. These problematic pre-crisis commitments are motivated by a similar pattern of "extrinsic" motives in all cases (Deci and Ryan, 1991). In some cases commitments are motivated by a need to *conform* to the demands of others and to cultural standards, and in some we find reports of *obedience* and *compliance* to spouses, parents or society. Conformity and compliance are both examples of what Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser and Deci (1996) refer to "externally regulated" motivations, in which the reason for action is not felt to be internal to the self, but rather belongs to others. These conformist or obedience motives can appear on the surface to be noble or agreeable. Rachel and Gemma both described living according to the external dictates of what a "nice girl" should be while living up to the expectations of spouse and parents. Vern, Violet and Leon described the sense of duty which led to a marriage or long-term relationship that they did not want, but was done out of consideration for their spouse or child. When such commitments are made in a relationship or in forming a marriage, the end-result is what Sternberg (1998) called "empty love" – a relationship which has commitment, but lacks intimacy and passion. Gemma described her "empty existence" in a loveless marriage and how she was "dying inside".

Alongside these socially compliant motives, we also find in the career-related clusters (career-woman crisis, all-consuming crisis, male career crisis) a pre-crisis set of motives to gain money, prestige, status and self-aggrandisement through career role and also through their relationship. These materialistic motives lead to commitments in lucrative but unfulfilling jobs. Materialistic and socially conformist motives can inter-relate, as some participants show both (e.g. Guy, Lynne). Both of these motivations; conformist/compliant and materialist are examples of "extrinsic motivation" (Deci, 1971), where action is carried out for later reward and for obligation rather than for ongoing satisfaction, enjoyment and fulfilment.

Growing Crisis: Loss of Control and Passivity

A sense of personal control is subtly undermined by conformist, compliant and materialist motives. In cases of conformity, goals and reasons for action are felt to belong to other person or persons who are being conformed to. Materialistic motives

can also subtly undermine personal control, by creating pressures on a person to achieve, to acquire, to put in longer working hours, to embellish status and to "prove oneself". The materialistic person becomes, through their own complicity, controlled by targets, image and money (Kasser, 2002).

To lose control is to lose the experience of oneself as an active, choice-making, self-determined being. Conversely, to have control is to experience being an initiator of actions and to self-endorse those actions, rather than being just an effect and a responder to the orders and imposed goals of others. It is just such a sense of personal control which is diminished in so many of the pre-crisis life structures described in this study, leading to a sense of passivity, a sense of being the "victim", or a sense of being an inanimate object subject to external forces.

Pre-Crisis Persona and the Split Self

In many cases the participants described an early aspiration or vocation that was rejected as an appropriate focus for adult life, as it was considered in some way "inappropriate". For example, Mary has a passion for philosophy but feels that there is no career in philosophy, Angela loves art but feels that she should get a stable career in an office, Dan loves being a father but sacrifices time with his children for a demanding corporate job, while Guy's interest in science and human behaviour is ignored so that he can make money as a banker. The inclinations and interest that drove the early aspiration, along with other "unacceptable" aspects of personality, are hidden behind a public front that is socially approved, conventional and validated by the cultural mores.

This means that the pre-crisis self is *split* into a public version and a private version. Such a condition is well explained by Jung's concept of the persona. Jung described how all people must develop a "persona" – a public, socially acceptable front to human personality (Jung, 1966). This persona evolves in order that a person's identity may conform to society's demands, roles and expectations. It is an intentionally manufactured, controlled, public self that is designed to make an impression – to look right, speak right, wear the right clothes, smile at the right time, hide destructive emotions and attitudes, and to "domesticate" the growing person into a groomed unit of society (Jung, 1966). For Jung, and post-Jungian theorists such as Hopcke (1995), the development of a persona is a natural stage for the growing self in adolescence and early adulthood, for it facilitates the development of a character and

set of aspirations that is acceptable to peer groups and to social or organisational standards (Hudson, 1978). It is part of developing the necessary social "act" that Erving Goffman (1967) talked of as necessary in much formal human interaction.

The persona develops as *part* of the self, used for formal social interaction. It is in the making from early childhood, from the moment parents scold socially unacceptable behaviours, such as masturbation or theft, and praise socially acceptable actions, such as good performance at school, thereby drawing personality and habits in a socially appropriate direction. The persona develops more fully during adolescence, as the adolescent is confronted with the new challenge of inclusion and acceptance in peer groups, via the adoption of group-appropriate habits and behaviours. It is during adolescence that the persona is at its adaptive primacy. Come early adulthood the persona is adapted to the professional and/or domestic role that a person takes on. Each profession has its own kind of persona (Jung, 1959); it is by the adoption of such personas that a person adopts the necessary language, habits and social pleasantries that are central in corporate life. Stevens, in his book on Jung, refers to early adulthood as a time when one must "polish up one's persona" (Stevens, 1990, p.145) and so gain success in a professional world where eccentricity is not given much tolerance or credibility.

In the cases of crisis in the current study, we find examples of what Jung described – a self that is split into a hidden self and a constructed public persona. For example, Rachel found herself living in accordance to her parents wish for her to be an obedient wife and mother, despite knowing that it wasn't in line with her own desires, therefore hiding her inner inclination to read and think. Gemma reports the contrast of an outer false and an inner self wanting to burst out:

> "I had been playing a role, a false role, and very much this quest for some authenticity, some recognition, was really bursting to come out." (Gemma, p.6)

Mary, Lynne, Neil, Dan, Vern and Angela all developed corporate personas that are oriented towards success and pleasing work colleagues:

> "The kind of person *I had to be* to be a corporate finance lawyer was increasingly grating with me. I was finding it increasingly awkward." (Mary, p.3)

> "I tried to tailor myself into this corporate person for so many years, the executive type…I tried to be the corporate woman and it's been disastrous so more quite a sensitive type of soul really." (Angela, p.11)

> "From that moment I began the process of dismantling this façade that I'd been building and asking exactly *who…are…you?* I'm still going through that process, I'm sure." (Vern, p.10)

George developed a party-guy persona that fits in with the London party gay scene, and actually uses the term persona in describing it:

> "What did I learn about myself? I think I learned that I was quite deluded. I think there was this image or persona that I went around with, around club land where I would attract people because at the time I was able to do that. But there was something quite superficial about it. I didn't like that aspect of myself." (George, p.6)

Frances suppressed her own personality in favour of one that is oriented to pleasing her aggressive boyfriend, and describes her true self as being buried under this persona:

> "I really did feel that the lights were on but I was buried deep down inside there somewhere." (Frances, p.4).

Depersonalisation and the False Self

R.D.Laing (1965) was one of the post-Jungian proponents of the persona, and he termed it the false self. The false self is constructed as a protective barrier of acceptability, but while it prevents the inner world getting out, it prevents the outer world from getting in, and can lead in dysfunctional cases to a sense of detachment, depersonalisation and derealisation. Depersonalisation is a sense of feeling trapped in a body that is not one's own and an unreal world. In Laing's words:

> "This dissociation is characteristically associated with such thoughts as 'this is like a dream', 'this seems unreal', 'I can't believe this is true', 'nothing seemed to be touching me', 'I cannot take it in', 'this is not happening to me', i.e. with feelings of estrangement and derealization. The body may go on acting in its outwardly normal way, but inwardly it is felt to be acting on its own, automatically." (Laing, 1965, p.78)

Depersonalisation is described in the clinical literature as an experience of feeling less alive, less real, like a machine or like the inert product of a mechanism outside of one's control, and correspondingly not feeling fully human (e.g. Simeon and Abugel, 2006). A number of cases in this study seem to describe an experience of depersonalisation in their pre-crisis life situation:

> "I did feel a little bit dead, a bit like a ghost sometimes. I remember sometimes I would go for a walk around, or a little wander around, I wouldn't really be feeling anything, I wouldn't feel like I was even there." (Jack, p.10)

> "They would have seen me as fairly malleable and easy going, but probably quite empty, and a bit of a non-person actually." (Gemma, p.9)

> "I think I would have said I was a non-person, I don't think I had any impact whatsoever, I was just like this worn out pale little blob that used to sit in the corner." (Frances, p.8)
>
> "I had been living in this non-reality which had been incredibly difficult." (Violet, p.2)
>
> "I had been programmed in a direction, and under the stress of the situation I reverted to that programme." (Rachel, p.2)
>
> "He would talk to me like I was a machine and I felt he didn't think I was good enough." (Angela, p.4)

This evidence of depersonalisation in pre-crisis predicaments supports Laing's prediction that living behind a persona can bring about a sense of depersonalisation.

Turning Points and Separations

Phase 2 of the crisis dynamic is characterised by growing distance from the constrictive roles, personas and obligations of Phase 1. This brings about a psychological separation in which the person no longer *identifies* with the role they are in at work or at home, and can conceive of life outside of it, and then this leads to a physical separation, where the person actively leaves job, partner or both, and leaves the pre-crisis life structure behind. In certain cases, physical separation is involuntary (e.g. being fired from a job or being asked for a divorce), in which case psychological separation occurs after physical separation.

This period of separation is the *peak of crisis*. Emotions described in this phase are a mix of positive and negative. Grief at the loss of a relationship and/or job is common, and anxiety is reported due to facing an uncertain future. But these negative affects are paradoxically mixed with positive affects including relief, excitement and hope. This mix of positive and negative affect is a reflection of the dual nature of mid-crisis, in which an ending is mourned while a new beginning is opened. O'Connor and Wolfe, in their model of transition, find a similar central phase of emotional upheaval and confusion, characterised by anxiety, grief and nervous expectation (O'Connor and Wolfe, 1987).

During this phase the person is renouncing their role-structured sense of self, in which they defined themselves by their position in occupational and/or familial structures. Kegan (1982) called this the "Institutional Self". Preliminary strikes of experimentation and exploration may be underway to develop a new

sense of self, but meanwhile the self is a "floating" self, without stability or clear form, and this compounds the anxiety and confusion of mid-crisis. Combs, in his research on crisis, also found this in-between identity, which he called a "liminal state":

> "To be in a liminal state is to be at the threshold between two conditions, yet fully inhabiting neither. Liminality is experienced when we make transitions between periods in our lives…Liminal states are often stressful and disorienting. The familiar is dissolving and a new place to stand has yet to be found…. Liminal states hold great possibilities and also real dangers, because in them we are bound by neither the past nor the future, and our fate is open-ended." (Combs, 2003, p.249-250)

Moratoria - Revisiting the Old and Reaching for the New

Phase 3 of the emerging dynamic is a time of both inner reflection and outer exploration, reigniting the growth that was felt to be stifled prior to crisis. This involves attempting to differentiate personal wants and goals from those that originate from controlling or influential others, and were adopted out of social compliance, not out of wilful choice. The search in Phase 3 is to find activities which feel "self-authored"; this search for self-determination promotes a sense of intrinsic motivation. Intrinsically motivated are enjoyable and fulfilling rather than instrumental or obligated (Deci, 1971).

Phase 3 has characteristics of a 'moratorium'; an episode during which a person takes a sanctioned time-out to explore new alternatives in life, including roles, attitudes, relationships and meanings. Moratorium was initially thought to be an adolescent phenomenon, but Marcia gave support to the possibility of moratoria at all life stages; he found that *all* crises contain some non-committal exploration through alternative solutions and alternative identities (Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer & Orlofsky, 1993). McAdams also found them described throughout life stories (McAdams, 1993), and suggested a retrospective element to moratorium occurs alongside a consideration of future possibilities. Correspondingly, there are examples in the current study of individuals who not only explore new facets of the self, but also search through earlier aspects of themselves that they have lost on the path to adulthood and social integration. There are reports of re-finding passions and interests, such as art, science or poetry, which were favourite pastimes when young but disappeared under the weight of job and family obligations.

For around two thirds of participants, Phase 3 involved commencing a course of further study, in order to constructively build towards a new life

without yet committing to a new role. This supports the findings of Mezirow (1991) and Horton (2002), who both found that further study in adulthood is often used as a transformative tool and is linked to significant life change.

A New Flexible Life Balance and an Evolving Self

In order to create a new life structure, the individual must once again take on the challenge of commitment, of role and restriction, but this time with the fruits of an extended period of self-examination, experimentation, enhanced self-understanding, and a renewed intrinsic orientation. Post-crisis roles are different from those of pre-crisis. New relationships taken on are more reciprocal and less controlling, and new jobs are less all-consuming and more closely aligned with interests and identity. Almost all individuals moved from their moratorium to commit to new roles, and this brought a new life structure equilibration (arguably Jack, Angela and Violet still showed ongoing evidence of being in Phase 3).

Pre-crisis, there was typically a split between these two sides of self, with various descriptions of "hiding" interests, of living behind a "façade", playing "a false role" or suppressing true feelings. After the crisis, passions, interests, and private dimensions of self are more closely aligned with actions and careers, leading to a more integrated life structure, or what Denne and Thompson called a "more balanced relation between self and world" (1991, p.123). The self after crisis changes from being role-defined to being open to development than before; identity is no longer a static role-based label, but an ongoing, open-ended process of opening to potential, and exploring possible selves. Many of the respondents, such as Mary, Rob, Guy and Jack, explicitly say that they now live *without* a solid identity, but continue to let themselves grow and change. This is congruent with Rogers' conception of how the self develops and matures:

> "Thus to an increasing degree he becomes himself – not a façade of conformity to others, not a cynical denial of all feeling, not a front of intellectual rationality, but a living, breathing, feeling, fluctuating process – in short, he becomes a person." (Rogers, 1961, p.122)

6.8 Summary and Reflections

This chapter has not only introduced a substantial amount of data, but has also introduced new theory, in the form of the persona / false self. This theoretical construct was first considered in real time *after* data collection and during the analysis

process in order to help account for regularities in the data (such as reference to disparity between inner and outer selves) that could not be explained within the theoretical scheme of the literature review. The report was correspondingly structured to reflect this real-time post-hoc interpretive change, rather than imply a theoretical scheme that was unchanged from the outset. This evolving analysis is further explored and discussed in Chapter 10.

In summary, the crises in this study have a definable phase-based form and relate to a variety of constructs that exist in the literature. A strength of this study has been the integration of multiple-cases into generic themes and common patterns, and the identification of an underlying crisis dynamic. A corresponding limitation has been that the study has given little attention to the within-case chronological and developmental flow of individual crises. In the following chapter, this limitation is addressed by the presentation of a single case study.

7.
Study 2: Rescuing the Hijacked Self – A Case Study

7. 1 Aims

There were three aims in conducting Study 2. The first aim was to gain rich and detailed information on one single case of early adult crisis, which would complement the between-cases presentation of Study 1 with within-case wholeness and thick description. The second aim was to explore in more depth the issues of persona, moratorium, intrinsic and extrinsic motives that had emerged from Study 1, particularly in relation to developmental changes. The third aim was to actively develop new insights, possible themes and avenues for further exploration in Study 3.

7.2 Method

Design and Sample

This study employed a single participant case-study design. The goal of this case study was to dig down into existing results, rather than to start searching in a new sample area, so the initial recruitment pool for the case study was provided by the men who participated in Study 1. It was decided that the participant should be a man rather than a woman, simply for originality's sake; there is more literature on early adulthood amongst women (e.g. Sugarman, 1982; Reinke, Holmes & Harris, 1985) than on men. Selection of the single participant from the men was conducted using a "random purposeful" design (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This strategy involves selecting an informant rich subgroup of participants and then selecting randomly within that. From the 8 men interviewed in Study 1, a subgroup of 4 were selected for giving high quality accounts of the inner and outer dimensions of a crisis episode, and therefore most likely to give the kind of in-depth information that was required in this case study. From the 4 men considered appropriate, the individual was then selected randomly. The first random selection was Neil. He was asked if he would be happy to participate in further interviewing, and declined. The second selection, Guy, was happy to participate, and so was selected.

Data Collection

In order to gain sufficient in-depth information for the case study, the participant was interviewed twice, and this was followed by further questions and answers on email. The first interview was 45 minutes long, and was conducted as part of Study 1, using the Study 1 interview guide shown in Appendix A. The participant was given a copy of the written transcript of Interview 1 to read before participating in an hour-long second interview. Much of the second interview involved probing into issues that were unclear or only half divulged in the first interview, and therefore a bespoke interview guide was used that discussed issues from the first interview. This is shown in full in Appendix A. A third phase of data collection was conducted via email, in a question and answer format where I would email questions and Guy would respond with answers. All questions from the email exchange are also shown below and in Appendix A.

Analysis Processes

Interview transcripts and email transcripts were analysed using the procedures of transcript notation, theme development and superordinate theme development described in Chapter 4. The analytical outcome was a single within-case analysis.

This initially led to the creation of four meta-themes, which organised the large number of themes into a four phased structure akin to the phases of Study 1. The original meta-themes developed in the current study, with their respective subordinate themes, are listed below:

1. Background and lead up to crisis

- Early passion for science
- Pressure Cooker Work Life
- Fighting hard – life as a fight
- Conventional – intolerant of eccentricity
- Conforming to "male" stereotype
- Following expectations
- Materialist Escalator Theory of Life
- Dysfunctional Home Life
- Moods and temperament before crisis
- A passive receiver – programmed from without
- Totally defined by role

2. Onset of peak crisis

- Sudden start of crisis: POLE-AXED as wife asks for divorce
- Annihilation of Self – wallowing in an amorphous state

3. Searching and becoming conscious

- ***the searching self***
- Stepping off the treadmill
- sideways demotion at work
- Becoming conscious
- Gaining perspective
- Poetry and the inner self
- Removal of "the scaffolding"
- Exploration of new avenues
- Dancing
- Questioning

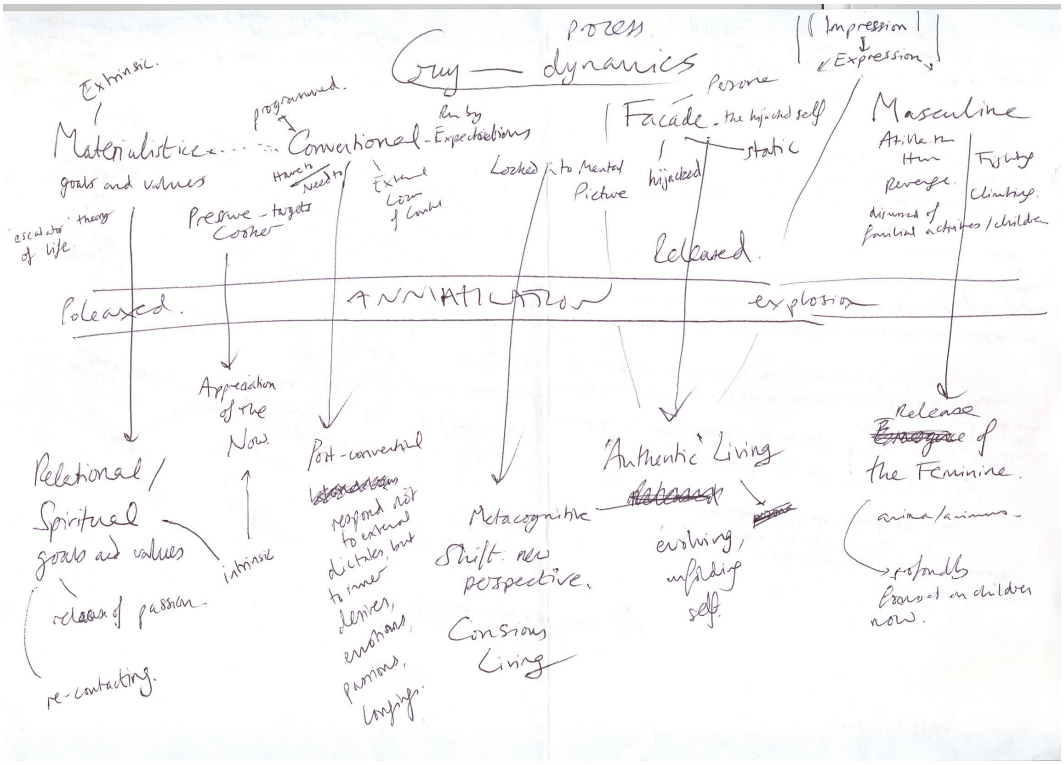
4. Transformation

- BREAKING OUT – the wilful removal of the false self / façade
- My previous incarnation
- Emergence of the new me – acorn metaphor
- Shedding of the façade
- "Released"
- Appreciation of "magical" moments
- Becoming authentic
- The new Guy – evolving and exploratory
- Freelance work
- From materialist self to relational self
- Emergence of the feminine self
- Changes and constants in the self
- No longer hijacked by expectations of others

After developing this theme structure, a mini-audit of the analysis with the project supervisor was conducted, and it was agreed that a re-analysis would be suitable in which the emphasis would be changed to search for new categories that were not present in Study 1, rather than using an analytical theme structure similar from Study 1. The following two diagram-style memos were created during this time of searching for a new thematic structure.

Brainstorm memo #1 – "Guy: process themes brainstorm"

Brainstorm memo #2 – "Guy: process dynamics"



The above memo shows the emergence of an analytical framework based more on areas of developmental content. The meta-themes that resulted from this secondary analysis encapsulated five areas of change across crisis, each of which has "before" and "after" elements for comparison:

Meta-Theme 1: From materialistic goals and values to relational and spiritual goals and values

Before:

"Escalator theory" of life
Little time or quality with family
All about success
Wanting to be "like those shits up there"

After:

Time with family
Importance of children and quality of relationships
Importance of spiritual life
Success not material but personal

Meta-Theme 2: Pressured, target focused -> appreciation of the present moment

Before:

Pressure cooker lifestyle
Target driven
Work-focused

After:

Feeling in control of one's own life
Not bashed around by the expectations of others
Notices moments of beauty

Meta-Theme 3: Locked into Cognitive Set -> Meta-cognitive Shift "Becoming Conscious"

Before:
Narrow-mindedness and stereotypes
Problem-focused and target driven mindset
"No perspective"
No consideration of effects of life on his family
After:
Conscious of actions and effects of those actions
Conscious of family and relationships
Able to observe the self, its nature and its development

Meta-Theme 4: Masculine Imbalance -> Release of the Feminine

Before
Atilla the Hun
Had become a tyrant
Stereotype of "what men do"
No expression of weakness
After
Opening to emotions
Poetry…the emergence of the anima
Dancing as expression of the anima
Admission of vulnerability
More female friends

Meta-Theme 5: Persona and façade -> search for authenticity

Before
Programmed by society
External dictates
The push for normality
Façade to conform to role
After
Feeling real
Activities that are reflection of interests > feel authentic
A new state of being
"Broken down" the facade

Meta-Theme 2 was later removed from this list, as further analysis suggested that its subordinate themes could be accounted for within Meta-themes 1, 3 and 5. The final four meta-themes provide the section headings of the results section this chapter. These are:

1. *Rescuing the Hijacked Self: Persona and Pressure*
2. *Unlocking the Locked Mind: Developing Self-Reflection*
3. *Reaching Beyond the Culture of Materialism*
4. *From "Attila the Hun" to Dancing School: The Emerging Feminine*

Results

7.3 Summary of Key Events in Guy's Crisis

Guy was 46 at the time of interview. In 1996, age 36, he was successfully established as global network manager for a major bank (referred to here as X Bank), with a wife and two young children. He had 700 staff under him and a budget of many millions of pounds for which he was responsible. He often spent fourteen hours a day at work, seeing his wife and children very little, and often had to work through weekends. His health was suffering, and he was becoming more aggressive and difficult at home and at work. He didn't fully notice his wife's sense of neglect, until one day in March 1996 she asked Guy to come with her to a counsellor and then told him, out of the blue, she wanted a divorce. He recounted how everything that he thought was important "suddenly evaporated". He was left in a "state of total shock", which soon turned to depression. Guy took six weeks off work, in order to try to come to terms with his confusion, grief, and anger, and in order to try and establish how things had gone so wrong. When Guy returns to work, he finds that he has been taken off his job and has been moved to a new sector within the company, with a fraction of his previous budget and far less line responsibility than he had before. He then finds himself in a period of self-reflection, self-doubt, depression and so instigates a search for new ways of coping with life and new ways of discovering aspects of himself. After leaving wife and job, he ends up in a new relationship, a freelance consultancy role and actively involved in Kabala spirituality.

7.4 Rescuing the Hijacked Self: Persona and Pressure

Guy's narrative contains evidence that suggests the existence of a work persona that had developed over the many years of his intensive "pressure cooker" work life as a banker. He refers to the sense that before the crisis there was "a façade that I had been cloaking myself in." (p.12). Jung uses similar terminology of a "barricade", a "mask" or "false wrappings" to refer to the persona. The goal of the professional persona is to impress with success, position and power (Jung, 1959), and this is true of Guy:

> "Therefore I would say for a period of about fifteen, sixteen years, no longer than that, for twenty plus years, I was running a career that was about being successful, it was about getting power and doing those things… I was making more money, I had

> more position, more power, I was being able to influence what was going on and to me that is how I had been programmed." (Interview 2, p.1)

A persona is generally formed due to live up to the expectations of others, to adopt the goals and values that others suggest or demand of you, rather than develop those in line with one's own inclinations and passions. Guy several times suggests that before the crisis, he was motivated in such a way:

> "My life before the crisis was about conforming to the rules and what was expected of me by my wife, children, parents, work colleagues etc. There was little space for me to be who I truly was." (Emails, p.1)

> "Prior to the crisis, my first actions were always about pleasing others. As a consequence, I would find myself visiting with so-called friends on a Saturday night not wanting to be there but pleasing my wife. I would spend the afternoon at my parents and being bored out of my mind because it was expected. I didn't do things to please myself." (Emails, p.1)

Guy describes this experience of his self being commandeered by the demands of others, using the graphic metaphor of his self being "*hijacked"* (Interview 2, p.10). When I asked Guy what he meant by feeling like his self had been hijacked, he replied that it came from feeling like he his identity had been hijacked by the demands of others, by conforming to the expectations of wife, parents and work colleagues, which meant that "there was little space for me to be who I truly was." (Emails, p.1)

Guy also cites elements of his background that may have influenced his developing self. His parents had always inculcated in him the importance of material success and hard work, and he had introjected these as values too. He suggests that his father's intensive work-focused lifestyle may have been a role model for his own:

> "I thought it was natural to feel exhausted when you come home from work. My father used to do that, so what other role model did I need to have? You go out to work, you bring in the money, you fall asleep, your wife gets pissed off with you and argues with you, yeah, I had seen it played out beforehand, so why should I think there is anything wrong with that?" (Interview 2, p.13)

Guy's persona, borne of the need to adapt to his professional role and the various social pressures he was experiencing, had become all-consuming. There is evidence that Guy came to over-identify with his work role to the point where the job was no longer something he *had*, but something he *was*:

> "Who was I? I was this network director for X Bank." (Interview 1, p.2)

> "That's a realisation looking back, I was Guy Broadhurst, I was network director of X Bank, I was responsible for in excess of 700 people, I had a budget of £120 million. That's what defined me before all this happened, when I finally cracked, all of that didn't add up to a row of beans." (Interview 2, p.2)

In living up to the expectations of his family, his company, his religion and to a materially-focused society, Guy finds himself losing his individuality, and becoming more and more akin to some vague concept of normality, while correspondingly dismissive of those who didn't conform:

> "I think for me when I was in it, I was just normal, this is what you do, this is the way that life is led, this is what we are told is being successful. I was a good, upright citizen. I paid my taxes, I tried to save, I was thinking about my kid's education and trying to do the best that I possibly could for them. In fact I saw anybody else who was slightly off-kilter and thought they were really, really strange." (Interview 2, p.6)

When his wife asks for a divorce and he is demoted at work, Guy experiences a sense of being in an "amorphous state" (Interview 2, p.8), because he had little concept of who he was other than his role-defined professional persona. He finds himself experiencing a "total annihilation" of his sense of self:

> "I defined myself by what I did and what I did really didn't matter. When I realised that it didn't matter, I effectively didn't exist. I didn't have a model of myself by which I could define myself. So I had effectively annihilated myself as I knew myself, and I had nothing that replaced it." (Interview 2, p.7)

Over the course of losing his job and his wife, Guy becomes depressed and withdrawn. After this period, he embarks on a period of exploration of new activities and behaviours. These involve interests from Guy's past, such as science, reading and spirituality, and entirely new endeavours such as expressive dance and poetry. Guy describes this phase as an "uncorking", and as an "unpeeling" (Interview 2, p.12), suggesting the experience of bringing something that was inside to the outside, which further suggests the gradual loss of a persona. The exploratory period involved immersion in new exploratory activities while simultaneously searching back into aspects of his less conformist younger self:

> "They [the three new activities – dance, science and spirituality] were the ingredients that went into the pot that allowed the new me to emerge, and it was very much an emergent process. It also included going back, it had the rebellion phase where I grew my hair, the only senior executive in X Bank with hair down half way to their backside." (Interview 2, p.8)

These new areas of dance, science and spirituality connect Guy with his own interests again, and provide a focus for new elements of self and life structure:

> "So I was being active in those three critical areas, which allowed me to put the pieces of the jigsaw back together again, but constructed in the way that I wanted it constructed, and not the official, smarmy, chocolate box picture that was on the box originally." (Interview 2, p.8)

The "official, smarmy, chocolate box picture" mentioned here seems to refer to the persona, with its conventional, impression-focused and unoriginal nature. Guy is unequivocal that the self that emerges after the crisis is more "authentic" (p.9). Guy's definition of authenticity shows that for him it is about having the courage to buck convention, and so to prevent the formulation of a sterile persona:

> "Authenticity for me is a state whereby senses, emotions, and thoughts are all in sync with one another. It is a state of "being" not "doing". It is a sense of drawing from the innate wisdom to know that what I am doing is right for me in any particular setting and not just attempting to please others. It is not being afraid to reject the collective behaviours and not feel isolated." (Emails, p.3)

The transformation over the period of crisis leads to a sense of a new identity. After the crisis Guy no longer feels role-defined, and so can explore and evolve his sense of self fluidly, without the need for an institutional role to define it. This *evolving* sense of self is the keystone of his new identity and life structure:

> "The new Guy is constantly evolving, I know that I am not defined by what I do. I went through one stage where I would meet new people and they would ask what do you do? And I would say I breathe, I fart and lots of other bodily functions, is that the answer you really want to this question? I was putting the pieces together and was happy being in this exploratory mode. To a certain extent that is the definition of myself, because I am an explorer." (Interview 1, p.8)

He further says that as a result of the crisis he has stopped allowing himself to be hijacked by other's expectations, and this leads to a feeling that he is in control again, because he is acting in accordance with his own motives, not those of others:

> "I've stopped allowing myself to be hijacked, so I feel in control of what's going on." (Interview 2, p.10)

7.5 Unlocking the Mind: Developing Self-Reflection

Concurrent with the above change in identity is a change in mindset from a narrow, automatic, task-focused mindset, in which work tasks are accepted unquestioningly and robotically, to a more reflective and open mindset, in which actions and thoughts are monitored and observed to assess whether or not they are in tune with emotions, with self and with the needs of others. There is evidence that

before the crisis Guy had lost the full use of this reflective faculty. He describes his pre-crisis mindset as being "locked in to my mental picture of how life is and how it should be" (p.10). He describes how the only thing he could see was the task at hand:

> "I guess I was so focussed on delivering what I thought I had to do, that I wasn't necessarily seeing there was anything else." (Interview 1, p.1)
>
> "The *only* thing that was important was to do the task at hand." (Interview 1, p.7)

The combination of a frenetic pace of life and being in this automatic mindset leaves no room for questioning any course of action; he has no spare capacity or time to observe and monitor his actions and the effect they have on himself and his family. His job was to hit the targets that were given to him, no matter what the cost. He described how before the crisis he had no time or ability to witness and reflect on his actions:

> "I'd get in, in the morning, and I would have a pack on my desk which would have all my meetings which had been set up, all of the papers that I needed for those meetings, and at the end of the day I would scribble all over those and make notes and drop it on my secretary's desk. She'd take the actions and I would pick up my next pack and off I went. So that's what I meant by autopilot. I wasn't in control of my destiny. And I guess it's the concept of witness. I had no witness, no chance to stand back and say what the hell are you doing?" (Interview 2, p.4)

> "I think the whole issue is about not having the ability to see what is going on around us. Up until the point where it happened, there wasn't a problem…That really is the point - we don't see it, we are in it, in the midst of it. Until we can actually step out and take that external perspective, so that we can witness what is going on, that we can have the mindset which says there has to be a better way." (Interview 2, p.13)

Guy uses a number of verbs and adjectives to describe his pre-crisis actions that suggest a mechanistic, automatic form of functioning. For example he described that he was controlled by a kind of "programme" that he was executing:

> "I think it was just the way I had been programmed." (Interview 1, p.2)
>
> "As I mentioned before, I was programmed and executing the instructions day in and day out." (Interview 2, p.14)

He also uses metaphors such as being on "autopilot", to emphasise this sense of not consciously deliberating on his actions:

> "Every step that I took seemed like stepping stones that were placed in front of me, and that this was the way to go. I don't think there was ever a conscious thought about the implications and consequences of what I was doing at the time. So I was on autopilot." (Interview 1, p.2)

The crisis throws this automatic mindset into confusion. At the centre of the crisis, when Guy's wife tells him she wants a divorce and he takes six weeks out of work, he says he was forced to question the choices he had made and the decisions he had taken, for the first time in many years. He was forced to actually reflect on his own behaviour, and so engage the self-reflection process:

> "It was just trying to make sense of what happened, and the question underneath it all was – how could I have been so wrong? How could I have believed that what I was doing was the right thing? From the perspective of now being able to look back on it, it is totally obvious that it wasn't the right thing to be doing. I weighed about sixteen stone, I was taking headache tablets the whole time because I was under constant pressure." (Interview 1, p.7)

After six weeks away from work, Guy is demoted to a less demanding job in his company. At the same time, he starts two therapeutic relationships, one with a work counsellor and one with a psychosynthesis counsellor, which aid the process of turning his attention on himself and on the effects of his actions. He describes a breakthrough as this reflective process grows:

> "Until then I had never thought about counselling or trying to find out who I was and why I acted the way that I did. It was really the breakthrough at that point." (Interview 1, p.3)

In comparing his present mindset with that of pre-crisis, Guy contrasted a new sense of perspective with his prior sense of acting automatically:

> "I think looking back on it now I can give a perspective, but at that stage as I mentioned in there it was almost as if I had been programmed." (Interview 2, p.1)

And then in discussing his life after the crisis, he described how he learnt to reflect on his work life, and to monitor himself if he fell into a habit or a pattern, and to change it if necessary:

> "So I could see things differently, I could question things, and if I was starting to do things that fell into an old habit, I could justify to myself why I was doing it where as before I was just doing it automatically." (Interview 1, p.7)

7.6 Reaching Beyond the Culture of Materialism

Jung (1966) wrote that psychological problems mirror the problems and conflicts of the society in which they emerge. A persona is an identity that is formed in line with social expectations - in order to relinquish this persona, it is necessary to also reconsider the cultural and/or familial conventions that shaped it. Guy implicated the influence of culture in his crisis predicament by suggesting early in his first interview that his intense pre-occupation with his work was due to "cultural issues

that were pushing upon me that this was success." (p.2). His acceptance of the conventional status quo meant that he had, in his early adulthood, been living according to the materialist ideology. He outlines the basic tenets of this life philosophy in the following passage:

> "I had some fanciful ideas that I was going to work to save humanity but I decided that money was much better. Therefore I would say for a period of about fifteen, sixteen years, no, longer than that, for twenty plus years, I was running a career that was about being successful, it was about getting power and doing those things. So I wasn't somebody who worked in one company and saw themselves being there for life, I was opportunistic, I saw opportunities that would arise and further me and that through those steps I was becoming more and more successful, or what was perceived to be successful. I was making more money, I had more position, more power, I was being able to influence what was going on and to me that is how I had been programmed, so therefore I had a reconciliation in myself that doing fourteen hours a day, six and a half days a week is what it takes to be successful." (Interview 2, p.1)

Guy calls this approach to life the "escalator theory of life" (Emails, p.2). This is the belief that acquisition of *more* money, *higher* position and *more* status was the key to a good life. He justified this to himself by the material benefits his family were gaining, not realising the emotional losses they were also experiencing:

> "I could justify what I was doing because I was doing it so that we could have a nice car, a nice house, go on holidays, and therefore it was about giving to the family all the material things in the world that I could earn for them but being totally bereft on the emotional side. That just wasn't there, that's what I had a wife for. She took care of that, I took care of the other stuff." (Interview 2, p.3)

Guy's focus on material gain and the pressures of his job meant that other areas of his life were neglected; for example he felt he did not really know his children:

> "I had three great kids who I didn't know because I was never there for them, and to a certain extent they saw me as this scary person who used to come into the house, was extremely tired, emotionally drained, mainly because I had been suppressing the emotions as opposed to merely expressing them, and would just lash out. (Interview 2, p.2)

This materialistic mindset is one of the key areas of change over the duration of crisis and transition. Guy refers to the transformation in his values over the crisis period, particularly highlighting the lessening importance of materialistic values:

> "The way that I approach life and embrace life is very, very different. I am not motivated by money, I am not driven by money, I don't have to have large houses. And I have been tested on that because I happen to be in a community in New York

> which is very much money-orientated, but it doesn't worry me, *that's not who I am*. That is very, very different. I seek out people far more than I did beforehand." (Interview 1, p.9-10)

Guy related the following story that encapsulated his transformation from a money-focused, target-obsessed banker to a person who is more aware of the present moment and of the value of small things:

> "One example was in Seattle, when I went out there for a study tour. I got to Seattle, it was late at night, and the rest of the group didn't turn up until about two or three hours later. So I walked into town, to the local mall to get some presents to take home, and as I walked out what I realised was the Rocky mountains, and I just turned round and it was just an absolute sublime moment when I became one with them, so I stood on this pavement probably for about twenty minutes being one with mountains. And everyone was walking past me, looking at me and wondering what was going on, and it was just the most magical experience on earth. And I know that six months earlier, I would have gone, oh yeah mountains, and carried on walking. The stripping away makes it so much easier, and that still exists today. Just the other day I was driving up to Norwich and the sun was shining and it was raining, and there was a rainbow, so I stopped the car and looked at the rainbow. I appreciate these moments which I saw but could not appreciate in the past." (Interview 2, p.11)

This story and its description of a sense of connectedness stands in contrast with Guy's descriptions of a pre-crisis predicament in which he was target-obsessed, while being alienated from himself, his wife, his children and his interests.

7.7 From "Attila the Hun" to the Emerging Feminine

The last key theme in this case study is a shift away from a self dominated by the cultural stereotype of masculinity towards a release of more feminine dispositions and feminine activities. In his pre-crisis job, Guy describes himself abiding by the "Attila the Hun" school of management, a turn of phrase that portrays an aggressive and forceful approach to his job. He uses the belligerent language of "fighting" and of "retaliation":

> "A lot of people who worked for me, who weren't within that inner cordon, were frightened of me. There is no doubt about it. I came from Attila the Hun school of management, I didn't suffer fools gladly. I would fight hard, it was an environment in which you had to fight hard, and I knew that that wasn't me" (Interview 2, p.9)
> "I was very much an advocate of the Attila the Hun school of management, which was basically, "I'm right, you're wrong, and even when I am wrong, I am not going to admit to you that I am wrong." (Interview 2, p.7)

Guy relates this behaviour to his social conditioning that specified a masculine agenda. He says:

> "Pre-crisis, I acted the way that I had been conditioned to think that "real men" act." (Emails, p.3)

During the crisis, at the most difficult and most emotional time, he finally breaks down to the point where his traditionally stoic masculine resilience no longer works, and his suffering leads him to ask for help from a work counsellor, a therapist and from his rabbi. He said he had never asked for help before. When I asked him why he had not asked for help before, he answered:

> "Because men don't do that. That's a sign of weakness! And the whole environment that I'd come up through was that if you demonstrate any form of weakness, then somebody is going to attack you for it." (Interview 2, p.6)

Again here he links his form of pre-crisis behaviour to the fact of his masculine gender identity, which is linked to a protective persona that is constructed to provide a defence against attack.

Then after leaving his wife, during Guy's exploratory period, one of the first activities that he decides to take up is dancing; a particular form of expressive, freeform dancing called Five Rhythms. He said that before the crisis he would *never* dance. He related this to an early experience in his developing gender identity:

> "I also remember when I was about 8 my sister started ballet classes and they wanted some boys for a performance. I volunteered, and was lambasted by my mother that "real boys" don't dance." (Emails, p.3)

Dancing is a new activity that is completely out of character with his prior persona. Through this activity he finds a new group of female friends. He says that it gave his feminine side a chance to come to the fore, released from behind the banker persona:

> "I would never have discovered dancing if the feminine side wasn't so present at that time." (Emails, p.3)

Guy also speaks of becoming "softer" in his relationship with family and society, and of allowing himself to become aware of emotions. This is a contrast to the hard-edged nature of the persona that he described before:

> "I think I brought to the fore in a much softer way the whole thing about family. So those bases that I had before are reinterpreted, but they are still there, so family is important, society is important, but I approach them in a much softer way to how I have previously." (Interview 2, p.10)

> "Emotionally I am much more prepared to allow my emotions to come through and I am now up to a point where I can recognise a feeling as it's coming through and I can decide what I want to do with it." (Interview 2, p.10)

7.8 A Metaphor for Transformation: The Acorn and the Oak Tree

In order to portray his experience of how crisis related to the development that he experienced over the same period, Guy used the metaphor of how an acorn must be destroyed in order for the shoot that is inside of it to blossom out of it:

> "The new me started to emerge. It's like how the acorn drops from the oak but then turns to mulch and just when it looks like its destroyed, then something blossoms out of it, that to me seems like a very strong metaphor, because everything had to break away, everything had to be washed away and then the new me could emerge out of it." (p.7)

Guy suggests in this metaphor that there had to be a breaking away, a washing away, of the previous life structure, for the new one to take root. Positive growth simply couldn't occur in the pre-crisis life structure, which is portrayed as the hard restrictive acorn in the metaphor. This had to be removed, and with it the narrow institutional identity that he had developed, for growth to happen in a directional sense. The evolving self that he experiences after the crisis is the blossoming tree in the metaphor. The metaphor demonstrates clearly that Guy perceives his crisis retrospectively as a developmentally formative episode with positive effects.

7.9 Discussion

Persona, Derealisation, Depersonalisation and Control

Several metaphors used in Guy's narrative relate to Laing's theory of the persona/false self. Firstly, the metaphor of the self being "hijacked" is exactly the kind of phrase Laing suggested would be used to describe the experience of adopting a false self. A false self is constructed in accordance with the demands of others, therefore it is experienced as being under *their* control, leading to the strange experience of feeling as if the self has been "invaded" by an external force (Laing, 1965). This then makes the self feel like it is controlled from without, leaving the person feeling he or she lacks a sense of self-determination. There is strong evidence in this narrative that the loss of the persona and a re-emerging sense of personal control are related. Guy links his post-crisis self that is no longer hijacked by the demands of others with a greater sense of personal control:

> "I've stopped allowing myself to be hijacked, so I feel in control of what's going on." (Interview 2, p.10)

Laing also suggested that a person may experience "derealisation" when living behind a false self as the actual self lives at one remove from reality, unable to interact with other people and with the world because it is hidden behind a façade. Correspondingly, after shedding his hard-nosed banker persona, Guy has the experience of suddenly feeling "real" after the crisis:

> "I was real, I knew that I was real, even though that looked to be surreal to everyone else within X Bank." (Interview 2, p.11)

Masculinity, Anima and Crisis

A renegotiation and reconsideration of gender identity was a clear developmental transition for Guy over his crisis. His pre-crisis identity had become masculinised, while after crisis a new feminine side to identity emerged. In Jung's theory, the persona construct cannot be considered independently of the issue of gender, for the persona is an inherently masculine part of the mind, constructed along masculine criteria of impressiveness, successfulness and strength (Jung, 1966). For Jung all human beings have both masculine and feminine dispositions, and a key psychological task during adult development is to balance the masculine and feminine within the single personality. The female side of personality he called the *anima*, while the masculine side he called the *animus*.

The anima is a hypothetical category that subsumes all those motives, interests and preferences that are considered "female" in a conventionally accepted sense. Qualities that Jung associated with the anima are spontaneity, sensitivity, emotional awareness, caring, a sense of gentleness and a sense of intuition (Jung, 1959; Jung, 1966; Jung, 1968). He suggested that repression and suppression of the anima is necessary for younger men, as its qualities may be inimical to developing a socially approved masculinity in early adult life. As adulthood progresses, the results of repressing the feminine side become more problematic, particularly with the onus of rearing children and the emotional needs that this responsibility brings. If a man's anima is kept behind a purely masculine persona, the result is "premature rigidity, crustiness, stereotypy, fanatical one-sidedness, obstinacy, pedantry, or else resignation, weariness, sloppiness, irresponsibility, and finally a childish petulance with a tendency to alcohol" (Jung, 1959, p.146). Jung placed a high developmental

value on incorporating the feminine into the self during male adult development, and research on gender identity since has shown that a balance of male and female characteristics is associated with a number of positive outcomes in adulthood (Bem, 1974). The goal is transformation of the anima from troublesome adversary that impinges on a one-sided gender identity, into a consciously developed, more caring and sensitive aspect of the masculine personality.

Guy's story unfolded in a clear direction away from a rigid and aggressive masculine persona, describes as aggressive, intolerant and pushy, towards a self that had the values of caring, sensitivity and openness which Guy himself considers to be manifestations of a more feminine self. This is reflected outwardly in a new focus on dancing, emotional expression and parental caring. We also see an integration of male and female in Guy's behaviour, suggesting an integration of the animus and anima:

> "I became mother & father to the children." (Emails, p.3)

Materialism and Extrinsic Motivation

In Study 1, a number of the participants (Mary, Lynne, Angela, Guy, Neil, Dan) described a form of pre-crisis value orientation which was dominantly materialistic, but became markedly less so after the crisis. This suggested the possibility that there may have been something about a materialistic focus that precipitated crisis, or something about resolving crisis which may have required the renunciation of a materialistic focus. This possibility was further explored in Study 2 and was considered sufficiently central to the crisis narrative to be given a dedicated developmental theme.

The area of research and theory on the psychological outcomes and limitations of materialism was overlooked in the original literature review, as the literature does not link explicitly to early adult crisis, but clearly does have relevance. Csikszentmihalyi was one of the first to start this domain of research, when he presented evidence that human wellbeing is poorly correlated with material wealth. Evidence therefore suggests that the increasing material affluence of Western society is *not* bringing the hoped for rise in happiness and wellbeing (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Kasser, 2002). Brickman, Coates and Janoff-Bulman (1978) studied a group of lottery winners and found that despite their sudden increase in wealth, their happiness was no different from that of people struck by blindness or paraplegia. This may be

because an over-riding life emphasis on material gain compromises other valuable aspects of life, such as friendship, art, literature or religion, so that "a person who only responds to material rewards becomes blind to any other kind and loses the ability to derive happiness from other sources." (Csiksentmihalyi, 1999, p.823). Exclusively materialist goals tend to mean less time given to relationships, which means that family life can suffer. A materialist mindset can also lead to the atrophy of other kinds of appreciation, such as the appreciation of natural beauty, as the mind is focused on later reward rather than the present moment.

Csikszentmihalyi claims that materialism is the dominant cultural ideology of our age, and it places the acquisition of material gain or symbols of that gain as the apogee of life and the benchmark by which human quality is measured. It works by equating human quality with wealth so that "the worth of a person and of a person's accomplishments are determined by the price they fetch in the marketplace." (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, p.823). This ideology has a "virtual monopoly" on contemporary society (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, p.821), because "our culture has progressively eliminated every alternative that in previous times used to give meaning and purpose to individual lives." (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, p.823).

Kasser and Ryan call materialism "the dark side of the American dream" (Kasser and Ryan, 1993, p. 410), as they conclude that it paradoxically seems to lessen, not augment, wellbeing. In *The High Price of Materialism* (2002) Kasser summarised a decade of research which suggests that materialistic values lead to fragile self-worth, poorer interpersonal relationships, a lack of intrinsic interest in life and ultimately anxiety and insecurity. Kasser considers materialistic aspirations to be a form of "extrinsic" motivation. Extrinsically motivated actions are not in themselves rewarding, indeed may be considered onerous, boring or stressful, but are undertaken for later gain. In extrinsically motivated actions the action is a means to a later end, often a financial one, and the action will be bypassed if at all possible, for it is not fulfilling in itself. The opposite of extrinsic motivation is intrinsic motivation, which is action that is fulfilling and enjoyable in itself, therefore is its own reward. Intrinsic motivation is promoted and shown by the presence of *interest* in the activity (Deci and Ryan, 1991)

Deci and Ryan focus on three other central determinants of intrinsic activity; a sense of *relatedness*, a sense of *self-determination* and a sense of *competence*. *Relatedness* does not simply mean having other people around during an activity, but

rather refers to a sense of being purposively connected to others during an activity and contributing as part of a collective to a higher goal by one's actions. A sense of *competence* comes from tasks that are optimally challenging – demanding and testing while demonstrating good ability. *Self-determination* relates to the phenomenological sense that an activity was undertaken of one's own accord, out of no coercion or pressure, but on one's own terms, from a *choice* (Deci and Ryan, 1991).

The various problems associated with materialistic goals were found in Guy's story. Time with family and friends had depleted radically, his ability to find fulfilment in his family and non-work activities had lessened and he had lost an appreciation of small things. The recapture of the enjoyment of small things after the crisis was encapsulated by his experience in the Rockies, during which he felt at one with the beauty of the mountains. After a lessening of his materialistic pre-crisis values, the activities that Guy takes up in the latter stages of the crisis transition, such as dancing, reading, walking, spending time with his children, are enjoyable and rewarding in themselves and are therefore intrinsically motivated. These had been sidelined in Guy's pre-crisis extrinsically-focused quest to make money and to climb the corporate ladder. So over the period of crisis there would seem to be a clear shift away from an extrinsic orientation towards intrinsically motivated activities. When intrinsic motivation is very strong, it is also expressed as a "passion" for an activity (Amiot, Vallerand & Blanchard, 2006) and may lead to "passionate involvement" (Waterman et al., 2003). Guy correspondingly describes "pursuing with a passion" (Emails, p.2) his new career of applying spiritual principles in the workplace.

Inter-Relating Findings from Study 1 and Study 2

From Study 1 emerged a pattern of phases, which cut across the flow of a crisis episode to divide a crisis into four definable segments. Phase 1 was referred to as "*Locked In*" and described the early crisis experience of being trapped and frustrated at home and/or at work. This was followed by separation and upheaval in Phase 2, called "*Separation*". Phase 3 is "*Exploration*", in which a search for new ideas and experimental activities occurs, and finally a new "*Resolution*" is found in Phase 4. This phase structure holds for Guy's case in the current study, but this is not further validation of the model as his was one the cases from which the model was derived. In this study, developmental themes were developed to organise codes into a structure run alongside time, rather than across it, and so represent domains of

transformation and development, rather than temporal slices of crisis. These represent four key domains of development;

- The development of self and identity away from a persona towards a more integrated and open form of being
- The development of cognition in the direction of self-reflection and cognitive flexibility
- The development of a more balanced gender identity
- A renegotiated relationship with materialism as an ideology and a lessening of extrinsic motives

These developmental themes inter-relate with the phases found in Study 1, for some of them are particularly characteristic of a Study 1 phase. These inter-relations are represented in Table XII below; the life structure features of Guy's case are to be found in the middle column, while the self-related features with which these experiences correlate are in the right hand column.

Table XII: Inter-Relation of Study 1 Phases and Study 2 Developmental Meta-themes in Guy' Case

Phase	**Life Structure**	**Self**
1: Early Crisis	In executive role Married with two children	Masculinised and hard **persona** **Materialistic**, **conventional** values Aggressive temperament
2: Mid Crisis	Wife asks for divorce Changes role within bank	Sense of being annihilated and pole axed Forced to question life
3: Late Crisis	Less time at work More time with children Exploratory activities including dancing	Developing **femininity** Developing sense of **self-reflection** Developing sense of presence
4: Post Crisis	Freelance consultancy New relationship Better relationship with children	Evolving, open sense of self **Balanced gender identity** **Losing persona**, leading to more authentic relationships

The *persona*, the *materialist mentality*, *masculinity* are *lack of self-reflection* are all defining of Phase 1. In Phase 2, development is less salient, as resources are focused on dealing with the emotional trauma of separation, loss and uncertainty, therefore no themes particularly correspond to this phase. Phase 3 is a period of exploration into self and here we see the emergence of a new expression of *femininity*,

intrinsically motivated activities and a growing capacity to *reflect* on the self and on the effects of actions. Phase 4 represents consolidation in new roles and relationships, as an *authentic*, *less persona-based* life structure is adopted and a more balanced gender identity is found. In Chapter 9, this integration of developmental themes with the phase model will be taken further, in order to present a conjectural model of crisis that takes into account all empirical work from this thesis.

Evaluation and Limitations of Study 2

As with Study 1, the data of Study 2 required new constructs to aid in their full and parsimonious interpretation. Issues of materialism, gender identity and persona were central to understanding this case study but were given little consideration in the literature review and so were briefly reviewed during this chapter. These developments demonstrate that the study's interpretive structures were open to accommodating new data, insights and concepts as the thesis progressed.

The data collection strategy in Study 2 involved two interviews and a discursive email exchange in order to develop a more detailed picture of crisis and development within a single case. While this strategy did indeed manage to gain deeper information than was achieved on each individual in Study 1, there was still much scope for added depth and alternative forms of data collection. Another interview would have been useful, however circumstances did not permit it – Guy had to leave for America after the second interview. It would also have been informative to have spoken to third parties in Guy's crisis, such as his ex-wife or ex-colleagues, in order to compare their perspectives on the episode. This would have been a way of assessing the inter-subjective validity of his memories, as well as potentially unearthing important pieces of extra information.

The depth of material that is gained in case-study brings invaluable data into an empirical investigation such as this thesis. The case-study method is not merely an illustrative or descriptive tool, but is also a way of developing and refining theory. Analysis of this case has provided theoretical insights that add subtlety and depth to prior findings, as well as suggesting directions and aims for Study 3.

8.
Study 3: Crisis, Persona and the Limits of an Extrinsic Orientation

8.1 Aims

Study 3 continued the theory development process. Study 1 suggested a phase structure to early adult crisis and gave evidence of developmental changes that occurred over the course of the episodes. Study 2 provided deeper insights into developmental shifts occurring over the course of early adult crisis, such as changes in values, loss of persona, shift in gender identity and developing a more self-reflective mindset. Study 2 was confined to conclusions about the single participant of the case study, and so the first aim for Study 3 to open up the investigation of the Study 2 concepts to other individuals. A secondary aim was to continue developing and testing the phases that emerged from Study 1. A third aim was to move towards an integration of findings into a provisional model of early adult crisis.

8.2 Method

Sample and Participants

The sample was composed of 6 individuals; 3 men and 3 women. In order to promote cross-case comparison between the six respondents, individuals were recruited within only one of the three clusters that emerged in Study 1, the "All Consuming Crisis" cluster, which subsumes crises originate in problems at home *and* at work. Guy in Study 2 was also from this cluster, and so it promoted comparison of cases in this study with his. Crises in this cluster are often the most substantial crises and so are the most likely to show transformation and change, which is a major focus in this study.

Recruitment for Study 3 used two strategies. 5 of the 6 participants were recruited via email circulars within Birkbeck College, and 1 by way of the "participant panel" (refer to Chapter 5 for more on these recruitment sources). Table XIII summarises the professions, current age, age at onset of crisis and form of further study for the 6 participants.

Table XIII. Details of Study 3 Participants

Name	Age at interview	Age at Crisis	Job	Course
Frank	36	32	Lawyer	Philosophy MA (PT)
Rob	34	30	Children's Charity	N.A.
Mark	43	36	Student	Organisational Psychology PhD (FT)
Claire	50	30	Hotel Consultant	Philosophy BA (PT)
Victoria	36	30	Food Importing	Linguistics BA (PT)
Lilly	29	26	Marketing	Psychology BSc (PT)

Data Collection

Data collection was achieved through semi-structured interviews, as in the previous two studies. Each person was interviewed twice in a location of their choice, having been given the option of an office at Birkbeck College. The first of the two interviews focused on the phases of the crisis episode, and lasted around an hour. The interview guide used for this first interview was standard for all six respondents, and is shown in Appendix A. The second interview guide was carried out around a week later to probe specifically into the areas of persona, self-reflection, material values and gender identity. Each one was designed to be bespoke for each person, so that interesting themes, un-discussed areas are semi-covered areas from the first interview could be followed up. The following interview schedule is an example; it was created for the second interview with Rob.

Rob – Second Interview Schedule

How long ago? How old were you?

Timescale of…

- Going to Russia, Coming home, Leaving job, Marriage breaking up, Going to MindStore, New things

Persona

- When you were at work, in the marketing role, did you feel like yourself?
- Did you feel like you were playing a role?
- What was that role?
- The desire for salary and prestige and so on, where did that come from?
- When you say "I know its just not me", what do you mean by that?
- What aspect of your self image was not being manifest?
- Did you feel as if the successful businessman was a self that you had constructed to get on in the world?
- Did it feel genuine, that it was a true reflection of you?

- **Wh**y do you think you developed this false / persona self?
    - Probe for:
        - Parental pressure

        - Peer pressure
        - Need for social acceptance
        - Fear of personal desires and aspirations
- What were you hiding behind this façade?

- What happened to this façade/persona/false self during the time when you separated from your old life?
    - Was it still up? Did it come down in pieces or at once?
- What happened to this self during the time when you were exploring through new ideas and potential new life steps?
- What is being "authentic" all about?
- What does living "authentically" mean to you?
- Do you think its just a subjective thing, or where does it come from?
- When did you first notice that you were living authentically, or that you were being true to yourself?

Value Shift – Beyond Materialism

- How would you describe your aims in life before the crisis?
- Were you motivated by
    - Money?
    - Status?
    - Position?
    - Power?
- If so…What did you hope those things would bring?
- Where / who do you think you had got those values from?
    - Probe for: culture, parents, peers, business world, social pressures etc.

- Would you consider yourself at the time to be a materialistic person?
- Are you still as driven by money as you were then?
- Has there been a change in this value set?

- What are you aiming for now?
- What is important to you now?
    - Probe for:
        - Relationships and family
        - Positive contribution
        - Spiritual aspect of life

Metacognition / Self-Reflection

- Did you feel that you had lost perspective in your life before the crisis?
    - In what sense?
    - Lost perspective on what?

- Did you feel that you were living consciously?
- Did you ever feel that you were on "autopilot"?
- Did you ever feel that life had become an automatic routine?

- Did you know yourself and who you were as a person clearly?
- Were you aware of the impact your life was having on those around you?
- Did you even think about leaving your life? When did that start?

- When did you start to be able to stand back on your situation and get some perspective on it?
- How did that new perspective come about?
- How would you compare your mindset now with before the crisis?
    - What do you have perspective on now?

Gender Identity: Animus and Anima

- Before crisis, would you have described yourself as "in touch" with your masculine / feminine side?
- Were you aware of it?
- How would you describe your masculine side?
- How would you describe your feminine side?
- Why do you think it had remained latent/hidden before the crisis?
- How did you feel / think when it started to become more apparent?

    - Did it worry you at all?
- What was your first reaction?
- How did the new masculinity / femininity express itself?
    - Did it make you act / think differently?
    - Friends / activities?
- Did you become more aware of your own emotions and feelings?
    - Was this linked to the change in sense of your femininity?

Transformation

On the last page of the transcript, you say, "I have been rebirthed as the new me".

- How would you describe the old Rob?
- What attributes and goals did he have?
- How would you describe the new Rob?
- What attributes and goals do you have now, which you did not then?
- What role did the crisis of losing job and wife play in the process of uncovering the new Rob?
- What do you identify with now?

A dramatic impact on my life – why do you think it took a crisis to bring about the transformation?
Do you think that the ideal life is a life without crisis?

Second interviews were of variable length, lasting between 40 minutes and an hour depending on how forthcoming the participant was. All second interview schedules are shown in Appendix A.

Analysis

Analysis of the interviews in this study was conducted using the processes of the composite model described in Chapter 4, but was more explicitly influenced by existing theory and by analytical constructs from the two previous studies. Three key section headings in the results section below are based on three ways in which the persona can become dysfunctional. These are based on theory-influenced super-ordinate themes that emerged during the analysis. There are other sections in the results that relate strongly to the intrinsic-extrinsic distinction in motivation and personality. These also relate to existing theory, but are believed to clearly and parsimoniously reflect patterns in the data. Although this study is still engaging in the theory-development process, it is also testing and challenging the theoretical postulates that have emerged so far, and this is why the analysis has a more clearly theory-focused agenda.

8.3 The Six Individuals

The pseudonyms of the three men in the study are Frank, Rob and Mark. The pseudonyms of the three women are Victoria, Lilly and Claire. All experienced crises that disrupted both home and work life.

At the time of the crisis, *Frank* was a lawyer and was married to another lawyer, but felt a strong desire to follow his youthful ambition of being a writer, and to get out of an oppressive marriage. He left both wife and job to start again, only to later return to law after an experimental and chaotic period of self-exploration.

Rob was a business executive, specialising in advertising and marketing, and was married. He found a growing disillusionment with his profession and a gradually deteriorating marriage, and so left both to start again. After working freelance for a while, searching spiritually and doing part of a psychology course, he ends up working for a children's charity.

Mark was a financial consultant who was married. He found after many years of successful promotion that he did not want to work in finance, but stuck with it because he had become intoxicated by the status and money. His marriage deteriorated during this time. During the crisis, he finally leaves his job, and his marriage is stretched but in the end survives. After resigning, he goes freelance, then starts a new life as a cook, then gives that up to train in organisational behaviour.

Victoria was profoundly dissatisfied with her life as a hairdresser in rural Italy, and she fantasised of breaking out from the conventional pressures to stay near home, in order to go to university and explore the world. She finally left home and moved with her boyfriend to England. She does go to university and finds a new job and a fulfilling relationship.

Lilly was living with her boyfriend and is working in PR when her crisis occurred. She described how her relationship, her job and her living conditions were suffocating her. She splits up with her boyfriend and tries to take her own life. When she recovers, she moves to London to start again, finds a new job and embarks on a degree in psychology.

Claire described a two-peak episode of firstly leaving a career in management consultancy that she found artificial and constricting, then the breakdown of a marriage several years later. She is forced to go back into the work field she was in previously, to provide for her children, and this prevents any satisfactory resolution of crisis for over ten years before she follows her passion for philosophy.

8.4 Early Intrinsically Motivated Aspirations

A key finding in Studies 1 and 2 is that individuals report changes in behaviour from being motivated by the extrinsic rewards of conventional approval

and/or money, to being more intrinsically motivated. As described in the previous chapters, intrinsically motivated action is its own reward due to its ongoing satisfaction of needs and a sense of interest, fulfilment and fun. A "Dream" is a related concept from Levison's lifespan development theory – it is an enduring, idealised, intrinsically motivating conception of what one could be or do in life.

There is a pre-crisis commonality among all six participants in terms of intrinsic orientation. All six describe having had a vocation-based Dream when young which is thwarted at some point in their teenage years so that they give up on it as a realistic aspiration.

Claire as a teenager loved reading and learning, and she had the aspiration to become an academic. Her Dream was "becoming a philosopher, becoming a brilliant academic and going into the ivory towers of Cambridge." (p.15). But when she applied to Cambridge for a degree, she didn't get the scholarship she needed, and her parents couldn't afford to pay for her to go, so she went to secretarial college instead, which meant her aspiration was thwarted.

Victoria's Dream in her small village in rural Italy was simply learning English and going to university:

> "Yes, one of my dreams was to go to university, and the other was to learn English…but it was something that I was fantasising, but I couldn't believe I could change my life so much." (p.2)

As Victoria emphasises, at this stage the Dream is an unrealistic fantasy. This aspiration to go to university was thwarted due to the pressure to take care of her mother, the conformist atmosphere in her village, and also due to her lack of confidence.

Lilly's Dream as a teenager was to become a psychologist, inspired by her psychology teacher at school. She applied to study psychology at university, but didn't get in, as she underperformed in her A-Levels due to problems at home. She ended up going through clearing, and doing a course in Linguistics instead.

Rob's youthful Dream was also to study psychology, and like Lilly his goal was thwarted when he failed to get the grades to study it at university:

> "My first love was psychology, and I wanted to go to St Andrews to study psychology in the child psychology unit. I was particularly taken with that, that is what I wanted to do, and I didn't get the grades to get in. I was a bit gutted." (p.3)

Frank's young Dream was to become a writer. This aspiration was thwarted by his move to the USA from Mexico. In the USA he had to learn a new language and lost his confidence in his writing abilities:

> "When I was a kid in Mexico, I really felt that I wanted to be a writer. I started when I was 8 – I used to write in Spanish, and I used to read a lot, I loved literature, so I always thought I wanted to be a writer…Moving to the US age 14 was a bit of a blow because suddenly I wasn't that great at writing. I eventually developed the skills and then it was one of one of my fortés , but not the sort of natural, artistic writing." (p.4)

Mark's youthful aspiration was to become an architect. He described how this Dream was thwarted when as a teenager he went to see a career counsellor who advised him against it and suggested going into finance instead. He heeded the counsellor's advice and gave up on architecture as a realistic goal.

8.5 Pre-Crisis Extrinsic Orientation

Despite these early intrinsically-motivated Dreams, all six individuals enter careers in early adulthood that have little or no intrinsic interest attached to them. The three men took executive roles which served the extrinsic goals of money, success and status. Success in this pre-crisis role was scaled objectively by money, position and influence. Mark said of his choice to go into financial consulting: "It was very conventional, it was about having this status and this reputation that came with money" (p.10). He described the money and status that came his way as "infatuating" and "intoxicating" (p.9). He described the identity that came with this as: "external, narrowly defined, conventional, status, board room." (p.16). Frank cited a similar materialist mindset: "I chose law because at the time frankly I was impressed by the money you could make…the quid pro quo was just material well-being, simply that," (p.5). Rob had the same goal of money - when I asked him what his aim was when he went into business, he replied: "Money. What else is business about? I actually have a very different answer to that now, but then it was all money." (p.14)

For Lilly, Victoria and Claire, early adult life structures were also extrinsically motivated, and lacked interest and enjoyment, but for more conformist, rather than materialistic, reasons. Lilly said she had "traditional" aims involving more money and progression through the "rungs" of adulthood. At this time she equated success with money, much like the three men:

> "I think I was more concerned with money, and thinking I want to get into a big agency, because I will be earning more money and that is more successful." (p.15)

In Victoria's case, the extrinsic motivation behind her life was to look after her aged mother and the social pressure to conform. She was working as a hairdresser in the same village as her mother, feeling unhappy, controlled by the culture and citing religious pressure as one source of control:

> "I grew up in a farm with a Catholic family. There are a lot of things that are implied – you shouldn't do this, you shouldn't do that, and you grow up with these things, they control you. I think that religion has a big part in it in the culture I came from." (p.17)

Claire was a single mother throughout most of her twenties, as her first marriage ended when she was just 23, leaving her to bring up two children by herself. The extrinsic goal motivating her career as a businesswoman through her twenties was to provide financially for her children, despite this meaning having to work in a job she did not enjoy. As a single mother she *had to* work to provide, which was a strong extrinsic bind:

> "Well, because I was driven by necessity, I had never really elected to go into work. I wanted the money to feed, clothe and educate my children." (p.3)

8.6 Developing a Dysfunctional Persona

Alongside the development of an extrinsically-oriented life structure in early adulthood, all six describe the development of a persona to fit into the roles they had adopted. Rob actually uses the term "persona" itself (p.16). Mark described having developed a "façade" (p.15), while Frank uses a metaphor of "walls of ice" around him (p.18). Victoria referred to having developed a "façade" (p.20), Claire refers to an "artificial, hard-nosed personality" (p.4) and Lilly referred to a "shell" around her (p.9).

Jung described how personas are potentially adaptive and healthy, but are also potentially dysfunctional and damaging. The personas in this study can be seen to have developed into *dysfunctional* facades. The dysfunctions in question are threefold, and are *inner-outer dissonance*, *over-homogenisation* and *over-identification*. These will be described in turn, with illustrative quotes, below.

a) The Dissonant Dysfunction: The Sense of Living Falsely

A persona can become dysfunctional if it takes a form that is in actual conflict with inner goals, values and aspirations. The persona in this dissonant condition feels "*false"* or *"artificial"*, and behaviour in accordance with this identity feels like a

sham or an act. This dissonant dysfunction between actual self and persona may develop if a person values social acceptance highly yet feels that their actual goals, values and dreams are socially unacceptable. In this dissociative condition, the inner self, locked away in a protected domain, is the "true" self. Life acted out as the false self becomes merely "playing a role" or "going through the motions". Jung referred to this state as *self-alienation*. In this study, there is much evidence of inner-outer dissonance. The three men all refer to a professional identity that did not fit their inner sense of self, using words implying a sense of falsity:

> "I mean the word that leapt into my mind there was living a lie." (Mark, p.9).
>
> "So I felt fake because I felt I am having to conform, and I had a conception of being a non-conformist." (Frank, p.17)
>
> "The whole industry is about that and creating a false image of self, packaging it and selling it. So I think I became the industry that I was working in, but I knew it wasn't really me." (Rob, p.14)

For Mark and Frank the sense of inner-outer dissonance springs from the discrepancy between the capitalist values required for their work and their personally held values. Mark finds himself seeing "huge and problematic excesses in the capitalist system" that he considered "quite repugnant" (p.2). When I asked him what he found repugnant, he answered:

> "Well this whole attitude of capitalist everything. That we are just pawns in this great capitalist mechanism – the chance to make money is far more important than your employees – this whole mentality." (Mark, p.2).

Frank similarly said "When I started being jaded it was resentment against the capitalist system." (p.5). He goes on to describe a dichotomy between actions and self – a lucid description of the dissonant condition:

> "There was this huge dichotomy between what I was doing and what was in my head. I was pretty damn radical in my head. I was pro-Fidel communist, at the same time working at the heart of the capitalist establishment." (p.5)

Rob meanwhile is trying to prove himself in business, but is aware that this does not suit his personality, so requires a persona:

> "It was - got to be successful, got to be the best, got to demonstrate that I am Allen Sugar's apprentice - and I am not." (p.13)

The three women also show this inner-outer discrepancy between private self and persona behaviour. Victoria described the sense of dissonance between her pre-crisis life in the Italian village and a sense of that being dissonant with her self:

> "I know a lot of people are content with living in a village, getting married, living near their mums. I don't know, at a certain point I realised it wasn't me, I was there doing that, but there was something in the back of my mind telling me this is not my life, this is not what I really want, its not me." (p.4)

Victoria described this as a "façade" of being "nice", and when I asked her what she was hiding behind this façade, she said: "I was just hiding myself. I was just hiding myself, the real me." (p.18)

Lilly had also developed a public persona, which she referred to as a "shell." It was only Lilly's boyfriend who had seen past that façade:

> "It was like Quinn [her boyfriend] broke through this façade that I had around me, and that's another reason why it was so awful when we broke up, because he was the only person that I told the innermost secrets to, for a long time." (p.8)

She refers to the self behind the persona as the "underneath bit":

> "Quinn was my best friend as well as my boyfriend so it was quite hard because he was the only person who had seen the underneath bit. (p.17)

She reflects that her façade was a self-protective device, and uses a metaphor of a beetle's shell to describe this:

> "Its almost like beetles have shells. You can't just go; here you go, have all of this, until you know that they are not going to tread all over you. It's like…it's a self-protection thing." (p.9)

b) The Over-Homogenising Dysfunction: Conformism at the Expense of Individuality

A persona develops in order to facilitate a socially typical and conventional way of behaving (Jung, 1966). Therefore, in its very nature a persona promotes similarity and lessens individuality. The conventional homogeneity that a persona brings can become dysfunctional in the situation where it leads to extinguishing one's individuality and sense of unique personhood:

> "So long as the persona persists, individuality is repressed, and hardly betrays its existence except in the choice of its personal accessories – by its actor's wardrobe, one might say." (Jung, 1966, p.297)

This repression of individuality can lead to a self that lacks autonomy and is merely a passive reflection of cultural norms, rather than an agentic expression of personhood. This is a condition that Jung referred to as "soullessness" (Jung, 1966, p.155).

Corresponding to this homogenising dysfunction, Frank described his time at the law firm as one of rigid conformism where a standardised persona was essential:

> "It was conformism. To be really good and to advance, you have to submit. You *absolutely* have to submit to the ways of doing things – the dress code and so on. It's military, almost. You have to be, in a sense, an obedient soldier and you progress up

> the ranks. Nobody tells you that you have to and you could deviate and people get away with deviations. If you get your hair cut in a certain way and wear your clothes in a certain way, that's the standard." (p.17)

Frank further said that he had always prided himself on not benignly accepting authority and being different when he was young, on, and yet as a lawyer finds himself losing his sense of individuality:

> "At that age I just thought my goodness, I am going to be a boring old lawyer like a million others. And I found it particularly depressing. In New York, you may be wearing a fancy suit that outside of that environment makes you feel special, but once you get on the tube, the subway there, and you see *thousands* of people wearing similar suits and heading in the same direction, and it seems a little absurd." (p.15)

Mark similarly talked of the need for an act of conformity in his city consultancy, and the sense of "claustrophobia" that that induced:

> "When you are going into a boardroom, there's an awful lot of acting up, from the trivial conformity with dress codes up to sounding impressive, I suppose. There was a certain claustrophobia to it, but I was the claustrophobic who wouldn't even attempt to open the door!" (p.17)

Mark's summary description of this professional persona was: "the city clone who sounds impressive" (p.15). This metaphor of a clone illustrates the sense of homogeneity that a persona can lead to, for clones are identical replicas of one another.

Amongst the women, Victoria and Lilly speak of conformism and link it to the developing persona that was designed to fit in. Victoria reflects that the culture of rural Northern Italy was very conformist, and like Frank highlights the uniformity of dress as a manifestation of this:

> "Its like you have to conform to everybody else, you have to be like everybody else is, to wear the same kind of clothes, the fashion – everybody is dressed in the same way…When you go to a high street in small towns like the town near the village I come from, its got about 30,000 inhabitants, and you really notice that everyone is dressed in the same way. If you are not, you feel almost out of place." (p.14)

Concurrent with this, Victoria develops a persona in order to conform:

> "It wasn't feeling me. It was playing a role to pretend to be nice, to conform to everybody else there." (p.9)

Lilly reflects that she had developed a "façade" that was in line with her conventional goals, but was concealing a seemingly abnormal interior. She said it was like "trying to be normal, when I wasn't." (p.6). This simple phrase perfectly epitomises the homogenising function of the persona – the aim is to outwardly normalise a sense of inner abnormality or difference.

c) The Over-Identified Dysfunction: When Persona Takes Over

A third way in which a persona can become problematic is if it turns from a functional exteriority to the self, used sparingly for impression management and role-based interaction, into something that becomes the whole self. In this condition one no longer *has* a persona, but *is* that persona, and identity therefore becomes an act. The commandeering of the self by the persona can lead to an atrophy of the inner self, with all its personal and idiosyncratic preferences, values, goals and aspirations. In this over-identified condition, violation of conventions puts the self's existence in jeopardy, for the self now exists in those conventions that shape the persona. This leads to a very rigid sense of self that is intolerant of non-conformist or eccentric behaviour.

Mark implies this over-identified dysfunction by suggesting his pre-crisis identity was defined by his work role: "When I was at RSPG it was very clear, when people said 'who are you?' I would say 'I am an RSPG consultant'." [7] (p.18)
Frank also implies an over-identified persona by using a metaphor of walls of ice around him which he could not get out of:

> "I didn't know how to get out of it. I didn't know how to get out of the walls of ice, because they were too thick. At that point it is just force of habit – you just don't know how to relate naturally to people." (p.18)

Several quotes from marketing executive Rob lucidly portray the over-identified dysfunction, in which self becomes subsumed by persona until the persona is all that there is left:

> "So the persona you build up *becomes all of you*, so it's completely consistent with marketing and false advertising. Unconsciously I chose a career that allowed me to create a completely false image of myself." (p.16)

> "Now, yeah, of course, I think that false advertising, the whole industry is about that and creating a false image of self, packaging it and selling it. So I think I became the industry that I was working in. Then *I was completely immersed* in what I was doing, and that is where I got my sense of identity from." (p.14)

Claire described her persona as "this façade of success and reliability." (p.3)
Her analogy for this was "a dressing-up box", from which she would create the right artificial appearance:

[7] Compare this with the similar phrase from Guy in phase 2: "Who was I? I was this network director for Parnell Bank." (p.2).

> "What I often refer to is a dressing-up box. I used to make sure that my appearance was top-notch, my personality was certainly different when dressed for work than when I was wearing jeans and t-shirt with the kids." (p.3)

After many years of living behind this professional façade, she described getting lost in her dressing-up box, metaphorically indicating an over-identified dysfunction:

> "I think there is a point where the dressing-up box started to become part of my life…I started to have ambitions towards power and money, but I think it was more revenge at my loss of something else – my substitute. It was very difficult to wake up many years later to realise I had got lost in the dressing-up box." (p.17)

8.7 Masculine Personas: An Adaptation to Male-Dominated Environments

All six individuals in this study were questioned with regard to how they felt their sense of masculinity and femininity was affected by the crisis. A very common pattern emerged. All six participants referred to their persona as a masculine construct, used for adapting to "macho" or masculine environments. They described finding themselves before the crisis in environments that were promoted stereotypically masculine attributes such as competitiveness, superiority over women, proving strength, ruthlessness, hierarchy and status-seeking. Victoria, for one, described the culture in rural Italy as "macho":

> "Yes, it's still a very macho place, you know, women are still considered below men." (p.3)

> "I would say it's a very macho society, now it's less, but women are meant to do certain things, still obey their men. I have girlfriends, some even younger than me, and they are married with men who are very controlling." (p.8)

Correspondingly, Victoria attempted to craft male characteristics in the hope that she would feel more empowered. She said that she attempted to take on a more masculine identity because she envied the authority that the men had in her patriarchal society:

> "Probably when I was in Italy I remember that some time I was kind of masculine in the sense that, it's difficult to explain, outside I wasn't assertive at all, but I remember thinking I wanted to be a man. I remember thinking I would like to be a man for a day because a man is someone with authority, someone who is very assertive, and that was something I wasn't able to be. So in some way I was trying to be as strong as a man. I wasn't able to say what I wanted, but I had this side of me that wanted to show that it was strong, so it was at times kind of aggressive and a little bit masculine probably." (p.19)

Mark also described the culture at his financial consultancy as "macho":

> "The women who did survive there were described as having more balls than the guys. I would say the atmosphere was macho." (p.15)

Mark's adaptation to this was a masculinised persona. When I asked Mark to describe the façade he spoke of at work, he used a resoundingly masculine metaphor:

> "Um…well I suppose a good description is the big swinging dick. That image of the city clone who comes in, sounds impressive, seems to know what they are doing, competent." (p.15)

So Mark's façade is an image of masculine potency and virility. Mark reflects on the inauthenticity of this persona:

> "It has taken me all this period, and we are getting on for a decade, to accept that the status of being a big swinging dick in the city is not what I am about." (p.9)

Rob said that the management-level of the industry he was in was male-dominated, and the macho work ethic manifest in "work hard, play hard. Long hours, lots of flirting, and after work drink and drugs." (p.21). Both Mark and Rob describe their masculinised workplace as having a lack of opportunity to be *caring*, a value which they later associate with an emerging femininity:

> "Just attitudinally – it's about caring. For some reason I connect with caring, I don't know why I am saying that now, but it's almost like there is a compassion in me that I didn't see in others and certainly within that industry." (Rob, p.12)

> "I think that was the part of the problem, that the caring was there but there was no outlet for it." (Mark, p.16)

Lilly's work environment was very male-dominated. There was only one other woman in the whole sales force, and the rest were men. She found herself with mostly male friends, doing things that are typically male such as watching rugby and drinking beer. She had been a tomboy as a teenager, and found it comfortable to hang around with boys, but this required becoming more masculine in the way she socialised. Lilly described how she adopted a male style of behaving. She described how she and her male friends would "slag each other off" and so she would "get a bit thick skinned". She found herself "drinking lots of beer, just generally acting a bit like a bloke, laddish sort of person…I used to go and watch cricket at Lords with the guys. I still go and watch the rugby." (p.13). She stated that this was to fit in with her sales mates, she also said that her masculinisation may have been due to emulating her father after her parent's divorce:

> "I think it was more to do with the fact that I hero-worshipped my dad. My dad got the easy end of the whole divorce and stuff, because it seemed not to be hard for him, but it was hard for mum. So probably I spent time trying to be more like my dad." (p.17)

Claire described the business world she was working in as a "male culture which has got a male mindset to what progress or productivity is" (p.20). She described this male mindset as follows:

> "It was about proving who was the strongest, it's not about proving who is the wisest or the most considerate. Doing something that produces the required results no matter what the sacrifice to other people may or may not be, it's not what I would call doing one's best. It's thuggery, beautifully-groomed thuggery but nonetheless thuggery." (p.3)

Claire said that such an environment was "extremely damaging" to her sense of femininity. She went on to controversially say that male-dominated workplaces *inevitably* masculinise women:

> "I think any woman placed in a male dominated workplace is going to become a sort of abomination, she is going to become more and more male-orientated in the way she does things, because she is in a community of people who do things a certain way." (p.20)

8.8 Separation from Extrinsically-Controlled Life Structure

All six participants leave the roles and relationships which they have developed personas to fit in to, and upon leaving these roles can gradually drop the persona act too. Frank and Rob were 30 when they separated from their old life structures, and Mark was 36. All three lived according to the dictates of an extrinsically controlled career for their early adulthoods up until this turning point of the crisis – sacrificing enjoyment and satisfaction for money, status and safety. There is now profound disillusionment with work. Mark for one now "hates" his job. Rob now thinks advertising is just "dressed-up exploitation" (p.2), while Frank said:

> "I felt that my job was absolute bullshit and that whole system was just cheating people out of a good life, and that marriage was hypocritical, and I just absolutely stopped caring." (p.12)

Mark went to see a career counsellor, and said of this counselling: "I think a few things did come out of that session, but I think the most significant is that it gave me permission to open the door to the broader options." (p.6). He came to realise that "money and status, yeah, they are great, but they are not really me." (p.5).

Rob also had the dawning realisation that success and money haven't brought satisfaction:

> "I realised that it wasn't about money, it's that success/satisfaction conundrum. I had all the success in the world, but it just wasn't delivering satisfaction for me." (p.14)

He decided to resign from his post and goes freelance, in the hope that he could find a new and better life balance. His marriage also ends at the same time, leading to grief, anxiety and confusion, but also to an "awakening" to the possibility of a better life.

Frank also has the same realisation that he had made the wrong decisions in life in aiming at extrinsic, materialistic goals:

> "So somehow I had made the wrong deal – I had sacrificed the ability to have intellectual satisfaction, and changed that for having money and status, and it was the wrong equation." (p.2)

He reflects critically on his life as a result:

> "Yeah I was very confused, I felt the world was shit, I just felt that the world is about structure and rules, but they are inhuman and it's a big deceit. Everything is deceitful, I felt that my job was absolute bullshit and that whole system was just cheating people out of a good life, and that marriage was hypocritical, and I just absolutely stopped caring – completely nihilistic." (p.12)

This realisation and the increasing cynicism precipitated an "urgent" separation from his wife, whom he never really loved, and he was fired from his work at about the same time, leading to a clear separation from his old life structure, both at home and at work.

The crises of Victoria and Claire reach their peaked at age 30, while Lilly's crisis peaks earlier at age 26. All three left their pre-crisis jobs and relationships at the peak of crisis due to growing dissatisfaction and frustration. Victoria reached a point where she "hated" her job at the hairdresser, and she described holding back all her negative emotion towards the clients. Her boyfriend suggested they move to London, and despite her mother's protestations, she decided to go. She said she still feels guilt about leaving her mother, even now. As soon as she was in the UK, there is a substantial change away from feeling controlled and constrained to feeling a sense of positive potential:

> "I was thinking wow I *can* do this, *I* can do that, I *can* do whatever I want. I don't have things controlling me and myself stopping me from doing things." (p.17)

When Lilly had started in PR she enjoyed her work; she was swept up in the glamour, the money and she liked her colleagues. But when she was moved to Newhaven, a town that she described as "horrible", her relationship was stretched and she and her boyfriend decided on a separation. She used a metaphor of being smothered to describe her feelings at the time:

> "It was like being smothered, smothered with a pillow really. I am quite claustrophobic anyway. I find London claustrophobic, but Newhaven is like being in

> a cellar, it's really suffocating…So it was like everything was coming in, but there is this bit of you that wants to explode. So there is pressure out too." (p.7)

Lilly was so depressed by this situation that she attempts to commit suicide. She is found by her flatmate passed out the floor, having consumed a bottle of painkillers, and is taken to hospital, where she has her stomach pumped out. When she recovers, she resigns from her job and moves to London to be with her friends. She moves back in with her mother.

Claire resents and dislikes her job as a management consultant, which she feels duty-bound to stay in for her children. Then after a whirlwind romance she marries, and she is finally able to leave her job to look after house and children. She stated that the reason for getting married was that she felt it was the last opportunity she would get to be at home with her kids. She put aside her intellectual aspirations of becoming an academic for the "chocolate box" aspiration of domestic motherhood. She indeed did find the time she spent with her children fulfilling, once in the new marriage, yet in her vicarious aspirations for her children, she was still extrinsically motivated. Despite the fulfilment of spending time with her children, she still feels like a "frustrated academic" (p.18), and feels as if she is living for her children, more than for herself. Then her husband becomes violent, jealous and aggressive and after one particularly brutal episode she leaves him, leading to another separation and a profound sense of loss, grief, self-doubt and pain.

8.9 Dissolution of the Dysfunctional Persona and the Emerging Feminine Self

After leaving the pre-crisis job and/or relationship, rather than replace the dysfunctional persona with another, all six individuals make an attempt to find an identity and a role which reflects their sense of private self (i.e. their interests, dreams and passions) and so avoid constructing another false front. This rebalanced self is in all cases more open to *feminine* values and virtue than their pre-crisis self. There are reports of opening to a more emotional, caring, sensitive, nurturing and relational, as the dysfunctional and masculinised persona that defined their pre-crisis life structures is shed.

Victoria described how she wanted to be a man when she was in Italy, because this meant responsibility and power, and this led to an occasional masculine persona. She described the change over crisis from a dissonant persona to a more harmonious relation of self and behaviour, and links this to emerging femininity:

> "I did feel in the past much less feminine than how I feel now. Now I am more realised as a person, I feel more feminine. I got in touch with my femininity more than before. I don't know why, it's difficult to explain this process. When I was young I was quite masculine, I used to have short hair and be quite a tomboy. That was a façade of being a little bit masculine was trying to prove myself because I couldn't find any other way." (p.12)

Victoria further described the mending of the rift that a dissonant persona creates within the self as an experience of inner/outer harmony:

> "Now I give an harmonious aspect of myself. [*Int: That's really interesting. What do you mean by harmonious?*] Probably what I feel inside is showing outside. So there's a harmony within and without." (p.12)

Lilly also experienced a more feminine self after her crisis. In the following quote Lilly actively links being in a masculine environment with her prior lack of feminine activities, and talks of adopting behaviours since the crisis that allow her to access her femininity:

> "I also learnt how to just be girly with the girls, instead of going to the pub or bar or whatever - just sitting around painting toenails and dyeing someone's hair. Because I had always lived with men after leaving home I hadn't really done that and its actually very therapeutic being with people who always support you because you are the same sex." (p.21)

She also spent more time with women after the crisis. Her move to London led to being closer to her female friends, who before the crisis she rarely if ever saw:

> "So I think now it is more about that I am closer to my girlfriends, I have had more intimate relationship with my girlfriends. We have ongoing current jokes, and when I came back to London, you get back into those more intimate relationships with women." (p.19)

Lilly equated her feminine side with openness and the admission of vulnerability, in contrast to the "toughness" that she valued prior to her crisis:

> "I used to find it really hard to ask for help from anyone, and after my crisis I learnt how to and when to, even though I still don't like it! I see that as a more feminine trait - how many men will ask for directions? I also found it hard to say if I was hurt or if someone upset me, and I hated to cry because I thought it was weak. I learnt to cry a lot during and after my crisis, which some people might think is more feminine, and how to ask just for a hug or just for cheering up." (p.20)

Claire described how going back to being a wife and mother was a recapturing of her sense of being a woman – looking after a house and children was an expression of her femininity. However, after this marriage failed, she was forced to go back into a male-dominated workplace and she had to re-assemble the same masculinised persona she had before. It took her another ten years at least to get out of that work

environment, during which time she described having "lost" herself. The dissimilar features of Claire's crisis will be discussed later.

Amongst the men, the same masculine to feminine shift can be found. After leaving his job and wife, Frank described his new philosophy as one which is based around the importance of emotionality. He said that he was finding a new depth to relationships with other men:

> "Yeah, a relationship between two guys can be a beautiful thing, it can be a very nice thing. It can be very open and it can be emotionally vulnerable." (p.18)

Frank is the only one to actually link an opening to his feminine side to sexual activity:

> "And because I was maybe rediscovering that feminine side, that open side, or not feeling threatened by closeness with other guys, there was one situation where I kissed a guy. I didn't like it but at least I tried it, and I thought why not. I was experimenting with everything at that stage, drugs and everything else, so yeah." (p.18)

Although Mark discussed the issue of gender markedly less than the other participants, he does link his emerging desire to do something more caring in his career with his emergent sense of femininity. The lack of outlet for this sense of caring was one of the major problems in his old job, and his new self now has that outlet:

> "Yeah, it's more caring, alert to others. It was a permission to show it, and I think that was the part of the problem, that the caring was there but there was no outlet for it. (p.16)

When Rob was asked if he had developed in his awareness of his feminine aspect over the crisis period, he replied:

> "Yeah, definitely. It's something that….how can I articulate this…I spent last summer wearing sarongs. There is a physical manifestation of getting in touch with my feminine side. I think that there is an emergent feminine side. I am very aware of my feminine aspect." (p.18)

Rob said that his feminine aspect "comes out through sensitivity." (p.18). He goes on to say that while this new femininity has emerged, he had also tried to express his masculinity in a healthy and "noble" way:

> "Yeah. I am really proud to be a man, and I am really proud to understand what being a man means. I don't think I understood that before, I think I abused my power, physical and mental, and manipulated. Yet I can really see what role masculinity has in the world, and I value that. Now, I am getting a chance to explore that. So while I am aware of my feminine side, and I think that's important, I am more interested in developing a noble, strong, dignified man, and harnessing his power and strength and his own qualities." (p.18)

8.10 Re-Finding an Intrinsically Motivated Core to the Life Structure

Resolution of the crises involves recommitting to a new life structure after a period of trial-and-error exploration through new alternatives. Five of the six individuals base that new commitment on the early intrinsic career aspiration that they described as preceding their extrinsically-focused early adult life structure.

Victoria's early Dream was not tied to a specific career, but was simply to get to university and to study languages, and to explore the world beyond where she grew up. After the peak of crisis that is what she does. She enrols at university to study English. With the loss of the extrinsic constraints of her old life, and the growth of an intrinsically motivated activity, comes the loosening of materialist values:

> "I'm definitely less materialistic…I don't care about having a car or a fantastic house or possessing expensive objects or having a highly paid job, I don't want any of these things, I just want to be happy with what I am, I want to experience the world, and yes, if I have to spend money for that it's fine." (p.21)

Frank's early Dream was to be a writer. After the crisis, Frank starts participating in a poetry group, which allows him to express his creative and poetic side. However he does not pursue this as a career – he returns to his original profession of law. It is the activities outside his work that provide a new intrinsically motivated focus and a new sense of growth:

> "I made a compromise, for example with work, I try to do a good job, I try to be responsible, but by the same token what's extremely important is my extra-curricular activities, hence my philosophy degree. I play football every week, I play classical guitar, I figure my 30s are a period of resumption of growth. When I started turning the corner, I felt hang on, I don't want to waste my 30s, I want them to be a resumption of growth, because that's what I really believe in." (p.13)

Rob's early Dream was to go into child psychology. After the crisis, in search of an intrinsically motivated and meaningful career, he undertakes a course in psychotherapy, hoping to re-ignite his early fascination with psychology, and finds that this brings a sense of intrinsic enjoyment. At the time of the interview, eighteen months after his divorce and his resignation from full-time work in marketing, Rob had completed his course in psychotherapy, and was working for a children's charity. The new job was congruent with his self-concept, as he had an outlet for those aspects of himself that were dormant in his executive job – integrity, caring, helping and a sense of purpose. He was also in a new stable relationship that he described as "wholesome" and "authentic". He was enjoying his work, enjoying his relationship,

and is no longer so concerned with money and status, as summed up in the following quote:

> "Before I wanted to be successful. That meant being rich and famous. Now there's a more wholesome edge to my ambitions. Look at the evidence - I work for a children's charity now and I earn half as much as I once did. I still want to be a success, but how I measure that success will be different. I'd take the money if it was offered, but I'm not prepared to sell my soul to get it. If it comes, it will come as a consequence of my making a positive impact on the world...To bring about change for the better in some capacity. And if I'm going to be famous, it'll be for that reason too." (p.21)

Lilly's early aspiration was also to become a psychologist, before she ended up in PR. After her crisis, she embarks on a new job for a medical regulatory body in their sponsorship department and undertakes a degree in psychology, with the aspiration of later working in psychology in some capacity:

> "In my dream world I would like to do clinical psychology, because I have been working in a clinical environment for 2 years and its what I wanted to do originally. On the realistic side of things, I would have to be so broke if I had to go and be a PhD student." (p.11)

Before the crisis, Lilly's aims "were kind of traditional, you know, do what you are supposed to do, middle-class thing really", and success was simply "earning more money" and climbing a career ladder. She suggests that before the crisis she was "much more materially-orientated", aiming at "nice house, clever-sounding job, a 'catch' -type boyfriend, nice stereo, posh bars." Now she is aiming at "work-life balance, intellectual stimulation, love and laughter." Like Victoria, Lilly stated that she is less concerned about money since the crisis. She said that before, success was gauged through money and power. But now success is about being happy and doing what one wants:

> "Now success is about being happy and doing what you want to do. Now it's like having a basic amount of money, being happy and everything else." (p.15)

When Mark left his job during the crisis, he started as a freelancer in the same consulting industry, but found this did not bring the satisfaction that he hoped for. He then made a radical career break, and went to chef school, aiming to train in running a restaurant. After finishing the chef school, he did more freelance work for a while before deciding to do a Masters degree in organisational behaviour. After that, he started a full-time PhD, and took on some teaching commitments, with the intention of going into academia. He was still doing the PhD when I interviewed him, and he said that he is now committed to an academic career. There was, he said, no chance

of reverting to his old life as a financial consultant. He had not renounced his desire for success, but now it is a personal success as opposed to the conventional success that he was aiming at before. Unlike conventional success, personal success is accompanied by enjoyment, demonstrating a shift to an intrinsic orientation:

> "I do still have this notion of being successful in an academic career, and would want to achieve that. So that side is still there, on the other hand, in the actual work, I am present and enjoying it." (p.20)

The later stages of Claire's crisis differ to the pattern shown in the other participants of this study and the earlier two studies. Resolution to Claire's crisis is delayed for many years – hers is a more tragic story, in that she described being consumed by unhappiness and self-doubt for ten years after the peak of crisis. Resolution does *eventually* occur ten years later, but that is too long to be linked to the events of the crisis. She eventually find a new relationship and this brings the chance to embark on a philosophy degree. Her Dream was so energising that despite decades of it being a purely personal fantasy, she does eventually follow it, and aims at becoming an academic philosopher, and in doing so she finds the intrinsic motivation she was looking for. In her words: "I had *always* been a frustrated academic, always." (18). She in fact uses a metaphor similar to the metaphor used by Guy in Study 2, to describe the developmental effect of crisis on her life. Guy's metaphor was that it was like an acorn which had to be destroyed, turned to mulch, before an oak tree could spring forth. Claire's metaphor is of a rosebush needing to be pruned to grow:

> "However you prune a rosebush will to a greater or lesser extent dictate how the rosebush grows thereafter. There are certain organisms that don't flourish unless they are pruned quite radically, and I think there are certain elements of awareness, consciousness, strength, determination, that are not realised unless you are given enough of a hard time to wake up. There is a natural entropy in us that doesn't respond well to too easy a life." (p.14)

8.11 Discussion

This study complements and adds incrementally to the findings of the previous two. Three theoretical discussion points have emerged from these findings. The first is that the renegotiation of gender identity is a key aspect of early adult crisis in this sample. This is an area that was neither questioned nor probed in Study 1, but did emerge in Study 2. The second is that three dysfunctions in the persona are *all* manifest in the early crisis predicaments of this sample, adding strong weight to the importance of the persona construct in

understanding early adult crisis. The third key finding is that in all cases a Dream was manifest in pre-adulthood life, followed by an a clearly extrinsic orientation, followed by resolution finding an intrinsically motivated career based on some version of the Dream.

Gender and Persona

A persona is built in order to adapt identity to the demands and standards of others, and these standards often revolve around expectations of what a *man* or *woman* should be or do; it is therefore inevitably a gender-related construct. These cultural expectations are often stereotyped, even regressive, concepts of gender (Cyranowski et al., 2000); the man should be virile and success-focused, while the woman should be loyal and "nice". It is these stereotypes that inform the pre-crisis identities in this sample and despite their varying expectations it was in adopting a *masculinised* persona that they felt they were best positioned to adapt. In five out of six cases this was an adaptation to the masculine world of business. In the sixth case, Victoria adopted masculine traits because she was reacting to a macho rural Italian culture in which only masculine traits imparted control and self-esteem. Research does suggest that an androgynous or a masculine sex-role identity is associated with higher self-esteem among both boys and girls in young adults (Bem, 1974), which supports the findings here of adaptation through masculinisation.

The masculine nature of the persona in these six cases would have been predicted by Jung. He equated the persona with the masculine "animus", while the hidden inner personality was the feminine "anima":

> "We can, therefore, speak of an inner personality with as much justification as, on the grounds of daily experience, we speak of an outer personality. The inner personality is the way one behaves in relation to one's inner psychic processes; it is the inner attitude, the characteristic face, that is turned towards the unconscious. I call the outer attitude, the outward face, the *persona*; the inner attitude, the inward face, I call the *anima*." (Jung, 1971, p.467).

Transformation over the course of crisis was in all six cases in the same direction along the gender polarity – towards the feminine. This mirrors Jung's belief that the anima will surface from behind a masculine persona. Levinson (1978, 1996) also would have predicted the gender-focus of crisis in this age group, for he concluded that the masculine/feminine dichotomy is navigated for the first time in a

psychological sense around and after the age 30 transition, so that men may get in touch with their more feminine side, and women may allow their masculine side out.

The Limits of an Extrinsic Orientation

The extrinsic-intrinsic construct was initially formulated to understand motivated action. It has been extended to consider stable differences in personality. An *intrinsic orientation* is a general disposition to undertake activities for the enjoyment of the task, for appreciation of the present moment and for fulfilment, and such an orientation permeates most of life's activities at home and at work. An *extrinsic orientation* is a general disposition to act for later reward and to conform to the wishes of others at the expense of one's own. Kasser (2002) has found that extrinsically orientated individuals are generally materialistic, status-focused, concerned for social approval and interested in ego-enhancement through fame or renown. Money is almost always a pre-occupation of the extrinsically orientated person, and actions are often initiated to maximise its gain. Intrinsically oriented individuals are more focused on enjoyment of work and home life, while relationships, community involvement, individuality and self-expression are also main concerns.

Personality researchers have found a variety of outcomes related to the intrinsic-extrinsic orientation trait. Intrinsically oriented individuals are more "personally expressive" (Waterman et al., 2003), more "growth-focused" (Raymond Knee et al., 2002), have a more integrated sense of selfhood, greater life satisfaction and a greater sense of well-being (Sheldon, Reis & Ryan, 1996). In contrast, extrinsically motivated individuals show less life satisfaction, show less consistency between self and behaviour (Waterman et al., 2003), have more conflictual relationships (Sheldon, Ryan, Deci & Kasser, 2004), and have a more fragile sense of self worth (Arndt, Schimel, Greenberg & Pyszczynski, 2002). Kasser (2002) has also shown that materialistic individuals have on average worse mental and physical health than those who value the opposite.

The findings of this study suggest that an extrinsic orientation may have fundamental limitations that may predispose an individual to crisis, *if* that person has a pre-existing intrinsic sense of vocation. An extrinsic orientation produces an equilibrium of lower quality than an intrinsically driven life structure if the person in question shows early signs of an intrinsic aspiration or passion, because

it leads to a lack of inner-outer balance. This presents the possibility of a reverse crisis; an extrinsically orientated person who chooses an intrinsically orientated life structure. However, this was not found in this study or indeed in any of the prior cases of crisis from Study 1 and Study 2, which suggests that there is something more unstable about an extrinsic orientation that may predispose to crisis. Deci and Ryan (1991) state that all individuals are born intrinsically orientated – that we naturally act in line with our wants and interests, but that this is sometimes socialised out of us to act extrinsically, therefore an early adult crisis may be a process of reverting to our natural mode of behaving. An extrinsic orientation is an approach to life that comes on only due to social and cultural pressures, and therefore it may be something that, like the persona, is removed over the course of successful adult development. What we can conclude is that this research suggests that the experience of crisis in pre-midlife adulthood is intimately linked with confronting the limitations of an extrinsic orientation, and suggests that personality change is possible along this dimension, but that such change requires considerable inner and outer reorganisation of life before it can be achieved.

Two kinds of extrinsic orientation were described as characterising the early phase of crisis episodes. Firstly there was a materialistic form in which desire for material and status-based outcomes override involvement in intrinsically satisfying activities. The second was a conformist motive where intrinsically satisfying activities are foregone in favour of conforming to conventions and social pressures. Both of these forms of motivation lead to activities that may bring later reward but may at the time be unfulfilling. These two sides of the extrinsic motivation phenomenon are tacitly suggested in the existing literature on extrinsic orientation, for there are two very different measures devised for assessing extrinsic orientations. Firstly, The Aspiration Index (Kasser and Ryan, 1993) equates being extrinsically orientated with materialistic aspirations. Secondly, the General Causality Orientation Scale (Deci and Ryan, 1985b) equates extrinsic orientation with being controlled by the demands of others. So both elements of the extrinsic orientation found in this study are measured by conventional research instruments, and both sides are found in the current study.

The Dream and Intrinsic Motivation

A concept from Levinson's theory of early adulthood is the idea of a "Dream" (Kittrell, 1998; Walker, 1983). The Dream is very similar to the concept of the "ideal self" that Rogers (1961) and Tory Higgins (1987) developed. It is an imagined future state or lifestyle that generates excitement and vitality as well as a plan to bring it about. It may take a dramatic and heroic form: the great artist, the business tycoon, the athletic superstar performing magnificent feats and receiving special honours, or it may take mundane forms that are gently inspiring and sustaining: the excellent craftsman, the devoted husband-father, the highly respected member of one's community (Levinson et al., 1978). Levinson suggested that the Dream is formed and clarified during early adulthood, and that to clarify it is a critical task for the person passing through this life stage. He found that those who build an early adult life structure around their Dream have a better chance of attaining personal fulfilment. Those whose life structure is a betrayal of their Dream will be less fulfilled and more unstable.

The current study did support the importance of the Dream, as some kind of early vocation was found in all six cases, and this was shown to be based on an activity or career which was intrinsically motivated. Not only is the Dream a vision of the future, it is a strong expression of intrinsically motivated activity. The crisis is resolved by building a life structure around this activity, which then opens the possibility of the Dream. This idea of connecting with a passion or an interest is close to Robert White's notion of a *deepening of interests* in early adulthood (White, 1975). White was also the first to refer to intrinsic motivation (White, 1959). In making a decision on which career or work to pursue he stated one should go with what one finds *interesting*; the clearest phenomenological sign of intrinsic motivation:

> "This deepening of interests has a great deal to do with effectiveness and happiness in one's occupation. A person may want to become a doctor for many reasons: prestige, social status, money, identification with the white-coated heroes of the moving picture screen, a zeal to banish suffering, perhaps even a private mission to conquer the disease that has prematurely taken away a beloved relative. These can be powerful motives, but in themselves they do not make a good doctor. Granted a sufficient level of ability, the crucial thing is the possibility of becoming more and more deeply interested in the detailed subject matter and daily activities of medicine. Whatever the initial motives, they will not produce a good doctor unless

> they can be channelled to support a deepening interest in the details of a doctor's arduous life." (White, 1975, p.354)

White's idea of nurturing and deepening interests in early adulthood fits with the repeated examples of individuals in this study who look to find that interested and enthusiastic involvement in an activity.

One key variable that brings a sense of intrinsic motivation is a sense of competence (Deci and Ryan, 1985). This is a continual challenge, because as one learns, tasks become easier and bring no challenge or sense of competence. Therefore if one is living according to an intrinsic orientation, one is motivated to increase the difficulties of tasks in order to maintain that sense of competence. This means that intrinsic motivation *requires* growth (Raymond-Knee et al., 2000). Correspondingly, in the current study we find after crisis, when an intrinsic focus has been redeveloped, that growth once again becomes a dominant concern, with individuals looking to stretch themselves through new endeavours, new challenges and new study programmes.

Explaining Claire's Case

Claire is a case of crisis which leads to a prolonged period of unhappiness and imbalance rather than bringing about the positive change and growth that others experience in the wake of crisis. There are specific and unique systemic constraints on Claire's life that may explain her particular pattern and negative outcome. When Claire comes out of her crisis she is immediately pressed to find income to pay for her children's education (they are both at private school), therefore she did not feel she could take time out for that crucial exploratory and experimental phase of crisis that characterises the post-separation period in almost all others. With these continued extrinsic constraints, she enters the same field of work that made her so unhappy before the crisis. The other five in this sample do not have any children at the time of crisis and so are free to take time out to explore new possibilities. The only other participant in the three studies who did not show much evidence of an exploratory period was Leon in Study 1, also had a child. However Guy, Rachel and Gemma had children too and their crises did include an experimental and exploratory period. Another difference that is unique to Claire and may have compounded her difficulties is that she is the only participant in all three studies who had *already* been through one divorce in early adulthood prior to the crisis in her late twenties that we discussed

in the interview. This may have led to cumulative grief and emotional upset, which she described in nature to "borderline bereavement" that was perhaps more intense and debilitating that the distress in other crises. She described being consumed by grief and self-doubt for years after the second divorce. This chronic grief and self-doubt debilitated and precluded exploration or renovation. There was no sense of liberation or renewal in breaking out of this second marriage, just a sense of intense loss. She cited this as the key reason why she was unable to move on and develop a new life structure for so long.

Claire shows that the course of crisis is by no means *necessarily* towards growth and enhancing change – it is not some natural law. There can be systemic constraints in life that can lead crisis down negative and even tragic paths, where the growth and change that is required for resolution never occurs. It is hard to say what proportion of crises end up this way, for it may be that such experiences are less likely to be relayed to a psychology researcher. But the nature and causes of unresolved crisis are issues that will continue to hold my attention as my research continues over the forthcoming years.

9.
A Conjectural Model of Early Adult Crisis

9.1 Introduction

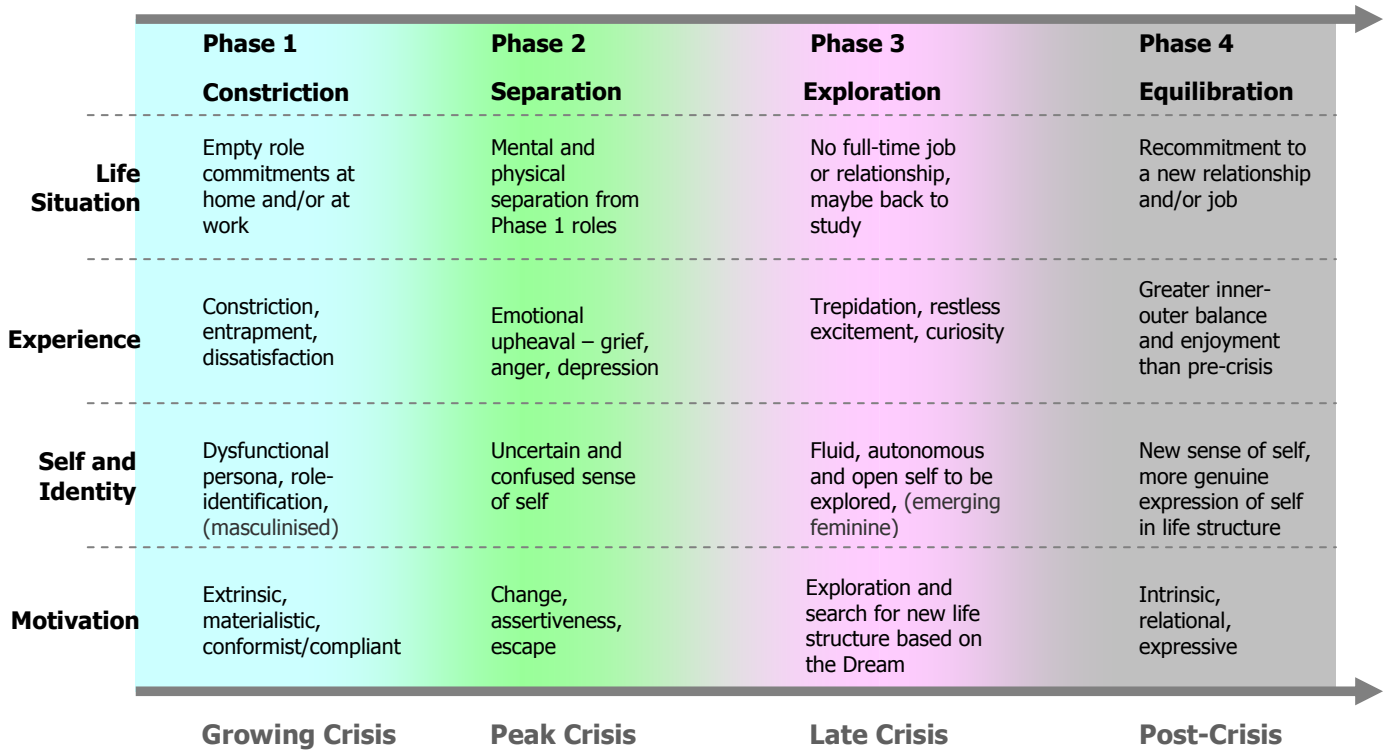
The current chapter presents an overall synthesis of the findings from the three studies, by encapsulating key common features of early adult crisis within a four phase model. This model is a framework for the summarising the findings, and is also a conjectural general model of early adult crisis, which is offered for validation on different samples. The model takes into account phases of crisis and developmental themes and integrates them into a process-based whole.

The data that contributed to the model from the three studies were collected and analysed over a period of two years, and in order to produce the synthesis in this chapter it was necessary to re-analyse transcripts and codes from all three studies. This was done by re-reading transcripts, re-reading within-case analysis documents, re-reading cluster analysis documents, by the creation of numerous provisional diagrams (see Appendix L for an example), by the creation of case-ordered summary matrices (see Appendix H) and by continuing to edit the reports of the three studies in the prior three chapters.

9.2 The Model

Behind the multi-dimensional complexity and variety of the crises encountered in this study, an invariant sequence of four phases was found, each of which has defining features in four key areas: 'life situation', 'experience', 'self and identity' and 'motivation'. Figure 9 overleaf gives a graphic depiction of the model as a whole. The model is necessarily a simplification; boundaries between phases are not discrete but overlap and haze into one another, and data on metaphors and descriptions of transformation are not included. The model is a framework for understanding the early adult crisis process, and in the same way as a map is not the territory it represents, the model is not to be confused with the complicated domain that it represents (Korzybski, 1948). Extra detail linking cases to the four phases is given in Appendix H; there are matrices given for each of the four phase describing how that phase manifests in all 22 participants.

Figure 9. A Graphic Depiction of the 4 Phase Model



Phase 1: Constriction

Life Situation: Empty role commitments at home and/or at work
Experience: Constriction, entrapment, dissatisfaction
Self and Identity: Dysfunctional persona, role-identification
Motivation: extrinsic, materialistic, conformist / compliant

All early adult crises recounted across the three studies started with a definable life situation. This is the predicament of being in a committed role at home and/or at work that has become stultifying and stressful. At home, a relationship or marriage may be devoid of passion or intimacy, or at work, a job may have become an instrumental activity without fulfilment, interest or enjoyment, and may be actively disliked. However at this point leaving this role or roles is *not* considered a possibility. There may be pressure to achieve, a lack of confidence, a sense of obligation or material goals that prevent the possibility of separation from being entertained, apart from in fantasy. The experience of being in this situation is described in many ways and by metaphors implying a sense of *constriction*, such as being trapped, being held in, being suffocated, being in a straightjacket, being in prison, or being strangled. There may also be conflict with spouse and/or work colleagues due to the growing frustration.

The motivation for entering into these Phase 1 roles comes from a common source. In all cases, the commitments are taken on for extrinsically motivated reasons. The belief has been adopted since entry into the adult world that an extrinsic orientation is the most adaptive approach to adult life; this means ignoring earlier passions, interests and vocational calling in favour of money and status or social approval or duty to others or a passive acquiescence of the demands of others. There is almost always evidence of a Dream and an intrinsic motivation preceding the extrinsic focus that is adopted in early adulthood. This then re-emerges later in the crisis episodes.

The extrinsic orientation of Phase 1 can have *materialistic*, *conformist* or *compliant* characteristics, or a mixture of all of these. The materialistic aspect involves focusing on money, prestige, status, financial security and material wealth rather than fulfilment or relevance to self. In Study 1, Dan, Jack, Neil, Lynne, Mary, in Study 2 Guy, while in Study 3, Guy, Rob, Mark, Lilly, Frank and Claire all show clear pre-crisis materialistic orientations; they went into the professions they did to make money, to get status and to improve material well-being.

The conformist and compliant aspect of extrinsic orientation involves conforming to the implied expectations of a group or complying with the orders of a controlling, authoritative person. The reward that comes from this is social approval, and self-worth is indexed by the comments of others. Like the materialist motivation, conformist/compliant motivation conspires to suppress or deny an outlet for the expression of intrinsically motivated interests and fulfilling activities. Such adherence to social demands at the expense of one's own wants and needs occurs due to *passivity* or a sense of *duty/obligation* to a certain person or group. Passivity is the loss of personal agency that comes with acquiescence to a controlling or didactic source of authority. The individuals who manifest this are Camilla, Frances, Rachel, Gemma, George, Victoria. A sense of duty or obligation to a person or group of persons is found as the key source of conformism in several participants. Violet, Leon and Vern describe staying in their pre-crisis relationship out of a sense of moral duty to spouse and/or child.

Guy, the single case in Study 2, is a good example of both sides of pre-crisis extrinsic motivation. Here he describes conforming to social rules and social expectations:

> "My life before the crisis was about conforming to the rules and what was expected of me by my wife, children, parents, work colleagues, etc. There was little space for "me" to be who I truly was." (p.24)

And here he describes being motivated by money, success and power:

> "Therefore I would say for a period of about fifteen, sixteen years…I was running a career that was about being successful, it was about getting power and doing those things… I was making more money, I had more position, more power, I was being able to influence what was going on and to me that is how I had been programmed." (p.11)

Alongside an extrinsic orientation, a *dysfunctional persona* is a key feature of Phase 1. Twelve of the sixteen participants in Study 1, and all of the cases in Study 2 and 3 showed evidence of having developed an artificial persona to adapt to the role or roles that they inhabited. A persona is an identity that is constructed to conceal the inappropriate parts of self and to fit in to a home role and/or work role. For example, Mary, Lynne, Neil, Dan, Vern and Angela all developed corporate, working personas that are oriented towards success and pleasing work colleagues. Gemma, Rachel and Victoria created "nice girl" personas to fit into their position as passive wives and/or daughters. George developed a party-guy persona that fitted in with the London party gay scene.

The personas created prior to crisis become dysfunctional over time in the three ways outlined in Chapter 8. The first of these dysfunctions is *inner-outer dissonance*, in which the persona actively contradicts an inner sense of self. The second is the *over-homogenising* dysfunction, in which individuality and idiosyncrasy is compromised in favour of conformity and similarity. The third dysfunction is *over-identification*, in which the persona becomes the whole self, rather than being used sparingly by the self, leading to a superficial, false, role-based identity that is confined to a conventional form and cannot grow into new forms over time.

Studies 2 and 3 suggest that these personas are formed to emphasise stereotypically masculine traits in order to adapt to male-centric environments, but it was not possible to establish this for Study 1 by retrospective analysis, because there was no explicit questioning on gender, so the persona-gender relationship remains a provisional and potential inclusion in the model that may be fully included after further research is conducted.

Phase 2: **Separation**

Life Situation: Mental and Physical Separation from Phase 1 Roles
Experience: Emotional Upheaval: Grief, Anger, Depression
Self and Identity: Uncertain and Confused Sense of Self
Motivation: Change, Escape and Renewal

The constriction and stress of Phase 1 leads to a growing motivation to make changes and to separate from the oppressive role(s). Separation, in the form of resignation, redundancy and/or leaving a relationship, is the central component of Phase 2. It involves both a mental and a physical distancing from the life structure that defined Phase 1, and is the most distressing part of crisis for all participants. It is initially precipitated by a growing assertiveness and agency, bringing with it a belief in the possibility of life outside of the roles in which they have existed for so long, and a growing motive to change, escape and break free. In Frances' words:

"The only thing on my mind was escape, escape, just get out of here." (p.8)

Separation may be initiated by oneself or others. For those who initiate separation on their own terms, Phase 2 will be shorter as they have partially adjusted to the prospect of separation prior to the physical act. For those who are forcibly separated, for example being fired or a partner leaving them, Phase 2 will be more prolonged and distressing, and there will be a post-separation phase of adjustment and depression. For the "all-consuming crisis" cluster there will be two separations from both partner and job in Phase 2. For most these occurred within several months of each other (e.g. Rob, Neil, George, Lilly) but for some there was a period of limbo between the two separations, which prevented clear movement into Phase 3 (e.g . Victoria, Claire).

In all cases, the experience of Phase 2 is one of profound emotional upheaval and upset. Just prior to separation, emotions that are experienced in this period are predominantly anger, resentment, frustration and tension. Then once the person has separated and left, emotions are typically guilt, grief, sadness and anxiety. Guilt is often felt because the person may consider that they have transgressed an imperative to do their duty and stay in a relationship or job. Grief and sadness will be felt due to a sense of loss, while anxiety or in some cases even terror will be a result of an uncertain future, an uncertain identity and a lack of clear life structure.

The self in Phase 2 is released from the external obligations and structures of Phase 1 roles, but is yet to develop a more autonomous and flexible adult identity. As a result individuals reported experiencing a sense of "total annihilation" (Guy, p.4) or feeling "absolutely demolished" (Ben, p.2) in this phase. Mary described this as a

"loosening" of association between self and job, as she developed a less role-based identity:

> "There had been a gradual teasing apart of me and my job as a law partner. There had been a gradual loosening. First of all I had identified with it, therefore everything had to be done for that job, then there had been a gradual loosening in the period up to making the decision, and finally during that month there was a letting go of that connection between the job and my identity as a person, I would say. I didn't *have to* do it in order to exist." (Mary, p.9)

This separation from the persona-based identity precipitates the possibility of a more fluid identity, but the focus in Phase 2 is in coping with the immediate challenges of job loss, unemployment, divorce, child custody, and in some cases severe depression or anxiety. It is not until this emotion and difficulty subsides to manageable levels that the more future-focused, self-reflective and open-ended nature of Phase 3 can begin.

Phase 3: Exploration

> *Life Situation: No full-time job or relationship, time for further study*
> *Experience: Trepidation, restless excitement, curiosity*
> *Self and Identity: Fluid, autonomous and open self to be explored*
> *Motivation: Exploration and search for new life structure based on the Dream*

There may have been tentative forays into self-exploration and experimental activity prior to and during separation, but it is only after separation and after the emotional upheaval has subsided that a person may have a dedicated moratorium from committed roles to actively explore, experiment, study and search for new parts of the self and a new life structure.

The experience during Phase 3 contrasts itself with the restriction and lack of control that characterises Phase 1. Here, the sense is one of expansive possibility and experimentation. As Frank in Study 3 said; "I was experimenting with everything at that stage." (p.18). Activities that are found in this phase are multifarious and may link back to an earlier sense of self or some interest that has not been explored before. Further study, therapy, self-help books, spiritual practices and creative activities such as poetry, painting, music or dance are common in this period. Alternatively, and in some cases concurrently, one finds a hedonistic element in drug taking, drinking, clubbing and cars.

17 out of 22 participants went back to study in Phase 3, to help build a new career and a new life direction while building confidence and a sense of self-esteem. Courses engaged in by the participants included a BA in Fine Art, an art teacher

training programme, a philosophy degree, psychology degrees, a languages degree, a Masters in organisational behaviour, a training programme in plumbing, a PGCE teaching qualification, a chemistry degree and a course in creative writing.

Therapy or counselling is engaged in by 11 of the 22 participants during Phase 3. Amongst the men, Vern and Rob go into therapy after separating from their partners, George restarts an old therapy programme, and Neil goes into therapy too. Jack gets counselling, and Ben starts Jungian therapy. Mark gets counselling and Guy spends time in therapy at this point. Amongst the women, Rachel, Gemma and Lynne went into therapy after separation.

Phase 3 sees trial-and-error attempts to enhance self-understanding through internal reflection and external experimentation. The motivation in Phase 3 is sometimes to understand why crisis happened to them. In Vern's words:

> "What happened with the Naomi situation was one in which I said, right you need to think about this quite a lot, and from that moment I began the process of dismantling this façade that I'd been building and asking exactly *who…are…you?*" (p.10)

The process of self-examination is a past-focused process and a future-focused process, involving a nostalgic search through past interests and relationships as well as a consideration of future alternatives. Angela describes the past-focused element as follows:

> "I've really tried to pare back the layers and find out who I was originally… I remembered that I loved the country, I loved horses, I loved the outdoors, I loved animals, I loved art, I loved writing – poetry and stories – creative things, you know, a bit like a little hippie really, but that's just me." (p.10)

Others start entirely new activities and directions, like Guy's dance classes or Frank's partying and taking ecstasy. The search for intrinsically motivated activities in this period of crisis shows an attempt to reconnect with an earlier Dream; prior to crisis they had sacrificed this idealised and motivating future vision in favour of adult pragmatism or the demands of others, and now they are trying to re-find it and re-find the intrinsic self and intrinsically motivated activities that are attached to it. All the elements of Phase 3 improve self-understanding while suggesting what a new life structure should entail.

Several participants show no particular evidence of a Phase 3. Claire is unable to have a time of self-exploration as she has to continue working to pay for her children's private education. Leon also shows no particular evidence of a time of self-exploration or experimentation after his marriage finishes. A time of self-exploration,

study and therapy is a luxury, and it may be one that some cannot afford, due to financial or systemic constraints that require immediate and continued attention after the peak of crisis. But for the remainder, it is an integral part of resolving the transition to a new equilibrium.

Phase 4: Equilibration

Life Situation: Recommitting to a new relationship and/or job
Experience: Greater inner-outer balance and enjoyment that pre-crisis
Self and Identity: New sense of self, more genuine expression of self in life structure
Motivation: Intrinsic, relational, expressive

Phase 3 may be brief or may last in some cases up to several years. Crisis is part of a transition between adult life stages, the full course of which is not complete until a new career and/or new relationships are found. The new life structure differs from the pre-crisis life structure in key ways. Firstly it is more flexible and open than the previous structure – roles are less constrictive, and experienced as controllable. In the work sphere, freelance careers seem to fit the new desire for flexibility. In Study 1, Neil becomes a freelance life coach, Vern and Dan go freelance rather than take fixed jobs, Mary becomes a freelance lecturer, Lynne becomes a freelance HR consultant, Leon becomes a freelance market researcher, while Violet becomes a painter working for herself. In Study 2, Guy becomes a freelance business consultant after being a full-time banker. In Study 3, all the three men, Rob, Mark and Frank, work as freelancers for a while after the crisis. Freelance careers provide a structural and vocational role with less possibility of getting into the kind of constricting, oppressive role that precipitated the crisis.

The new life structure also differs from the previous one in that it is more focused on the person's interest(s) or passion(s) and is therefore intrinsically motivated. The chosen life path is genuinely *wanted*, not merely expected by others. By using a passion or interest as a focal pillar for the new life structure, the intrinsic self is reflected in day-to-day behaviour, leading to a greater sense of inner-outer balance and the lack of a dysfunctional persona. The passion or interest that provides the intrinsic focus of the Phase 4 life structure is described as existing prior to early adulthood, and then is resurrected in the wake of crisis. The new life structure is less based on compliance to others, and correspondingly feels more self-determined and autonomous. This may cause conflict with those who disapprove of the new direction and whose demands have been rejected. In the pursuit of a vocation and ongoing enjoyment of life, there is less concern with money for many of the participants. Dan, who was in corporate video promotions prior to his crisis, describes this new focus as follows:

> "But I am going for jobs for different reasons now, for security in terms of there being a need for that kind of profession, I think there will always be a need for lecturers, and also a need for plumbers. But also to do something that I get a lot out of, other than money. Obviously lecturers don't get paid an awful lot of money, but I thoroughly enjoy the job. The people I work with are decent people as well, they are generally kind and decent people…I *enjoy* going to work." (p.6)

The affective experience of Phase 4 is one of feeling happier, more satisfied, more genuine and more fulfilled. With the new-found intrinsic orientation comes the experience of enjoyment and happiness in the day-to-day role-based activities.

The self in Phase 4 is frequently described as having metamorphosed from the pre-crisis self. With the benefit of hindsight, individuals often report a sense of separation from an old self:

> "The person of that period and the person now are different people and it was a tremendous learning experience." (Rachel, p.8)

> "I would say that we are two completely different people, I've separated from that person." (Gemma, p.9)

> "I think I became a different person." (Ben, p.7)

Rob uses the term "rebirth" to describe the change, saying "my desires and focuses have completely changed" (p.9), while Guy refers to himself prior to his crisis as "my previous incarnation." (p.5), suggesting an experience of rebirth too. The inner developments that do occur as a result of crisis are generally reported in positive terms, and involve an appraisal of enhanced inner strength, empathy and generosity. A typical synopsis of these developments is given by Camilla:

> "I'm a much better person for it, as well, I think I have got a lot more substance to me, I'm no longer a flighty, happy-go-lucky, fun-time girl, I've got a lot more insight into real life and I don't know, what doesn't kill you makes you grow, kind of thing. I'm going back to college, I'm doing a degree, I am doing positive things, this is where I want to be. My career is just perfect at the moment, I couldn't ask for anything else, so it's changed me for the better." (p.8)

Frances says she thinks that living through crisis brings a more "generous" nature, along with a new "toughness". George says it made him "stronger":

> "I've moved on as a person, and grown through that. And it's not something you can read in a book, I had to go through that for that sort of strength, for that courage, I suppose." (p.6)

Claire expressed a similar sentiment by way of metaphor:

> "And crisis is a great gift because it throws you out of it [a narcissistic mindset], and you stand stark naked in the freezing wind, and you go wooh, shit! I don't like that. But you are still alive, and you start to discover that you have got inner strength that is going to get you through. So you start to dig deeper and you end up with a broader

> nature, I think, if you are lucky enough to be able to cope. If you don't, then you are not being made stronger by the experience." (Claire, p.22)

This stronger self is less anxious, more assertive, more autonomous, and more in control. It is a developmental progression from the pre-crisis self; it is not just different but *better*. Not all of the participants interviewed had reached the equilibrium and new commitments of Phase 4. Jack and Angela were still in the latter throws of Phase 3 when I spoke to them, as they were still studying for a new career, and had yet to start the intended role, while Mark and George were committed and post-crisis, but still studying towards a new career. The remaining majority were speaking from places of new balance and equilibrium, which were not ideal or final, but were better and more balanced than before the crisis.

9.3 Eight Theoretical Precepts on Crisis in Early Adulthood

The dynamics of the model can also be encapsulated in the following eight precepts:

1. A key developmental challenge in early adulthood is *commitment to stable roles* in social groups or pairings that integrate a person into society. Roles require adoption of role-specific behaviours and social conventions.
2. A role may be taken on due to *extrinsic* motives such as social approval, financial gain or status, which may be in conflict with a person's interests and sense of self.
3. When such an extrinsic role is taken on, an artificial persona must be developed to integrate and inhabit that role successfully.
4. Over time such a persona may become dysfunctional, leading to a sense of dissonance between inner life and outer behaviour, and conformism at the expense of individuality.
5. The process of breaking out of that role, *if* such a transition occurs, may be experienced as crisis. This involves:
    a. Mentally disengaging from the role
    b. Physical separation from the environment
    c. Emotional upheaval and upset
6. Before resolution of crisis is complete, a person may have to search internally and externally for alternatives to the old life structure, and this may involve trial-and-error, further study, a search back into the past, and projection into the future.
7. Resolution of the crisis, if found, is achieved through in:
    a. Activities and commitments that have intrinsic motivation
    b. Dissolution of the dysfunctional persona
    c. Consistency between self, beliefs, values and actions
8. Such resolution involves significant transformation in patterns of self and behaviour, and if completed can bring about a developmental progression to a more integrated and individuated state of being.

10.
General Discussion and Critical Reflection

Chapter 2 reviewed existing literature on a set of key guiding constructs; *development*, *crisis/transition, self (paradigmatic and narrative)* and *early adulthood*. In this final chapter, I shall relate these constructs as they were described in Chapter 2 to the findings on early adult crisis from Chapters 6-9, in order to look for areas of congruence and support as well as areas of conflict and dispute. I shall then engage in a critical consideration of the validity and quality of the project based on the criteria set out in Chapter 4, before concluding with suggestions for future research.

10.1 Development and Early Adult Crisis: Reflections

The first construct that the literature review aimed its spotlight on was *development*. The lengthy definition of development that was set out included several key elements. The first was that development has a distinct direction; it moves a person towards progressively higher states of complexity that are more differentiated and more integrated than the previous state. This is a "journey towards wholeness" (Erikson, 1968) that can be referred to overall by the term "individuation" (Levinson, 1996). A theoretical corollary of the process of individuation is a person becoming more uniquely individual as they reach more complex and differentiated states (Levinson, 1978).

Based on this, it can be stated that if development did occur over the crisis episodes, then there should be evidence not just of change, but of change towards integration, complexity and individuality. On examination of the evidence, the data are indeed suggestive of this direction. The enhanced sense of post-crisis integration is demonstrated by the common descriptions of feeling more rounded, more whole and more balanced, while the enhanced complexity is shown in more complex and nuanced descriptions of self that are less based on static and institutional roles as well as a more varied array of activities, roles and goals. There is also evidence that over crisis there is a move toward greater individuality. Laing (1967) and Jung (1966) both state that the persona is a hindrance to development and to lead to conformity and

homogeneity. For Jung, the removal of the persona and the expression of greater individuality is the actual aim of individuation:

> "The aim of individuation is nothing less than to divest the self of the false wrappings of the persona." (Jung, 1966, p.174)

Over the crisis there is a gradual lessening of the use of the persona and its conformist act, leading to a more open expression of personal opinions, values and goals, which in turn brings about greater individuality.

Another key dimension of Chapter 2's description of human development is that development is embedded in social systems (e.g. social groups, relationship dyads, families) that are also developing interactively. Developments across early adult crisis do indeed show an interaction with social developments. The socio-cultural changes surrounding the period of early adulthood were discussed in Chapter 2. In the 1970s early adulthood was seen as being a time of limiting and narrowing one's life structure to committed and institutionalised channels at home and at work (Lidz 1976, Gould 1978, White 1975; Levinson, 1976), but demographic trends and more recent research (e.g. Cabrera et al, 2000) suggest that now this structured set of expectations has been increasingly complemented by alternative approaches to early adulthood, characterised by a flexible integration of job, relationship, parenting and leisure, a lessening importance of marriage and/or a permanent, full-time job and a less stereotyped and traditional sense of gender identity.

The results of the study show that the trajectory of individual early adult crisis mirrors this larger social development. Pre-crisis young adults are generally in traditional and stable roles and are gaining the plaudits that surround success in these roles. Post-crisis the change is invariably in the direction of flexible or non-conventional alternatives, often non-marital relationships and often multiple or freelance career roles. There is also a suggestion of developing a less stereotyped gender identity over the course of crisis, further extending the parallels to social developments. This isomorphic relation between the directions of individual development and social development supports Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). He suggested that social systems and individuals develop in synergistic ways so that changes at one level of scale are created by, and reciprocally influence, changes at other levels.

10.2 Early Adult Crisis and the Self: Reflections

The self was conceptualised in Chapter 2 as a cognitive system of paradigmatic and narrative schemas that fit together to define "me". Limiting this review to the cognitive self was not an intentionally partial move – it was a reflection of the social and cognitive psychology literature upon which the review was based. What this literature did not cover, and what the thesis correspondingly initially lacked, was the idea of a *public* self, manifest not in cognition but in characteristic patterns of behaviour. This is probably because this area is dealt with under the term 'personality' rather than 'self'. The limitation became clear in Study 1, when there was repeated mention of a cognitive inner self and a behavioural outer self. To deal with this fact, the Jungian construct of the persona was imported into the analysis. The persona proved to be a complementary construct to the cognitive self. It accounts for the shaping of a public front to self, while the cognitive self accounts for the private realm of self-knowing. It helped to account for a host of pre-crisis features including pre-crisis masculinisation, conformist homogeneity, inner-outer dissonance, a sense of passivity and loss of control and a sense of depersonalisation.

Another result of not initially taking into account the public self was a lack of consideration of the false self or its counterpoint the authentic self. The phenomenological salience of the experience of being false or authentic was such that it necessitated some interpretative framework. Fortunately, the persona provided for an understanding of the experience of being false or genuine, as described by Laing (1967). If an inner self (i.e. one's own values, desires and interests) is expressed in outer-self behaviours, then one feels genuine. If the inner self is not expressed, because it is thought to be socially inappropriate, and instead outer-self behaviours are based on the demands of others, then the behaviour feels false.

The data and the construct of the persona point towards a self that has more than cognitive components. It has public layers, expressed through action, and also private layers found in thought and affect. The process of self-disclosure and self-expression involves the bringing of private layers to the public layers and brings with it a sense of authenticity. This occurs over the course of crisis, and is a major source of integration and equilibration. The loss of a persona also brings a sense of control and

assertiveness, for to act in accordance with one's own inner conception of self brings a feeling of empowerment and a sense of being self-determined (Shea, 2003). Some theorists suggest that the self is inherently relational and interpersonally defined (e.g. Hermans and Kempen, 1983) but the results from this thesis suggest that such an interdependent self is a developmental achievement rather than a necessary state of selfhood, and can be severely hampered by the persona, which increases self-alienation and a sense of isolation from others.

The post-crisis self further reflects two descriptions of the mature self that were contrasted in Chapter 2. The developed self in Rogers' (1961) theory is a dynamic and open process, open to continual changes and to unfolding shifts in direction. On the other hand, for White (1975) the mature self is stable, secure, centred and has a solid role and place in society. Dickstein (1977) suggested that *both* kinds of mature self are valid developmental outcomes of self-discovery, and the adaptive value of each depends on the context in which it occurs. The current findings back up Dickstein's compromise position, suggesting that both may be possible in combination. The self described post-crisis is clearly more dynamic and more open to exploring potentials within itself, yet at the same time, resolution of the crisis is found in re-securing some kind of vocational role and/or relationship that offers solidity and embeddedness alongside this new openness and dynamism.

10.3 Early Adult Crisis and Narrative: Reflections

A person's life story was described in Chapter 2 as being formed of a coherent combination of 'nuclear episodes' (McAdams, 1993). Nuclear episodes start with a steady state, which is then breached leading to instability, and is followed by a sequence of actions to bring a new steady state about. In line with this, the crisis narratives started with a stable but problematic state (phase 1), then moved to instability (phase 2), then to new actions to sort the instability out (phase 3), then finishing and resolving with a new steady state (phase 4). This would suggest that the episodes are structured in a classic narrative sequence. This then presents a question - if the crises were narratively structured, is the phase pattern of crisis in fact an imposed narrative sequence, rather than an actually lived sequence? The answer I propose is both, for one does not preclude the other. The philosophy of narrative that this thesis abides by is similar to that of Ricoeur (1985), Booker (2004) and MacIntyre

(1981) – narrative is seen to be structured to fit the vicissitudes of human experience and shapes of human development, not vice versa. All narratives portray the challenges of human life and development, and the very nature of development is progression through punctuated equilibrium; steady states interspersed with turbulent transitions. Narrative mirrors this form; stories move from a starting steady state to instability and dramatic actions to an end with a new steady state in order to represent the basic dynamic of development and human growth (Booker, 2004). Therefore the crisis phases represent both a developmental pattern and a narrative pattern.

A further feature of autobiographical narrative mentioned in Chapter 2 was its proneness to distortion and inaccuracies. So we must ask how much of the crisis narratives told by participants was distortion and how much was an accurate representation of what happened during the periods that they recounted? To this very important question, my answer is that I cannot be sure. It is possible that the participant's reflections of transformation, change and identity were glossed up, re-ordered or changed after the event to fit into their life story, and this is an issue that I take up in suggestions for further research later in this chapter. But as I described in Chapter 2 there is also the possibility that retrospective narratives improve understanding of events by giving extra information that a concurrent report does not have. The philosopher Kierkergaard (1838) said that life must be lived forwards, but can only be understood backwards. By this he meant that a retrospective view gives us information on form, outcomes, context and effects of a life event that is essential to its understanding and is not present until the story is told later.

If you will excuse a brief and rather non-scientific digression into metaphor, I will describe how I view the nature of nuclear-episode narratives, which is undoubtedly an optimistic one, but a defensible one. I see an autobiographical narrative as being like an impressionist painting of a past episode. In impressionist paintings details are glossed over, broad brush strokes sweep across the canvas, and artistic licence is employed to bring out the essence of a scene and to edit out less aesthetic elements. The human involvement in an impressionist painting is thoroughly apparent, but the great impressionist paintings bring a representational quality, a wholeness of composition and a sense of mood that a truly accurate photograph cannot produce. As it is with crisis narratives; the sense of human construction, the lack of systematic detail and the artistic selectivity are in evidence

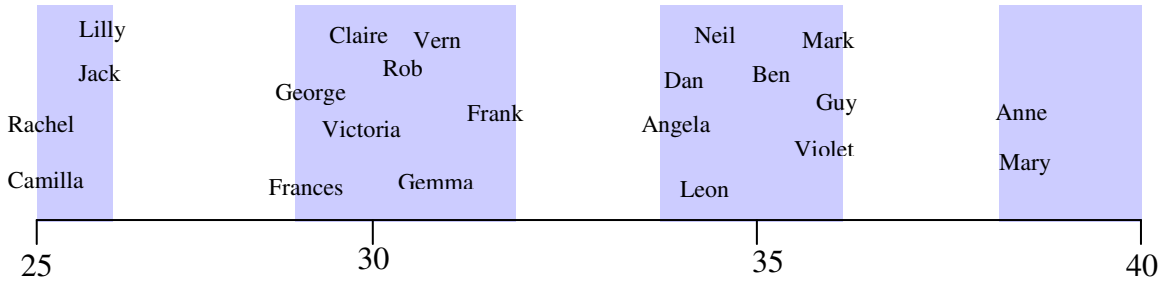
throughout, and while this may gloss over some of the hard facts, it brings a sense of wholeness, underlying structure, coherence and meaningfulness that is unique to retrospective stories. In sum, impressionist paintings and narrative are both representative *and* interpretative.

10.4 Crisis and Levinson's Theory of Early Adulthood

Levinson's theory of lifespan development suggests that crises occur not just in the more documented periods of adolescence and midlife, but also during the early adult period (Levinson, 1978; 1996). The findings from this thesis support Levinson's assertion. Levinson also suggested that a crisis or transition in this age group may be related to the rejection of the Dream (Levinson et al., 1976). This again is supported by the findings from this thesis, for many participants described having renounced a passionate direction or vocation or interest in order to adapt to the constraints of early adulthood, and further described how this had contributed to crisis. They then went on to described how the Dream was recaptured or clarified as crisis receded in new intrinsically motivated activities and a new direction of growth, which is in line with what Levinson found.

Levinson's theory predicts three periods when crisis is likely to occur within early adulthood. The first is during the *Entry Into the Adult World* transition around the age of 18-22 (which is below the sampled age range of this study). The second is between the ages of 28-33 in what he called the *Age 30 Transition*, and the third is at the end, as the *Midlife Transition* starts. The crises of the participants in this thesis partially conform to this pattern, but also suggest two other crisis-prone periods. The ages of the twenty two participants from the three studies were distributed across the sampled fifteen year age band as shown in Figure 10. The diagram shows the ages that the *peak* of the crises episodes manifested (which generally were the ages at which separation from spouse and/or job occurred).

Figure 10 – Ages of 22 Participants at Peak of Crisis



The above diagram shows four identifiable age groups at which crisis emerges and peaks:

1. 25-26: Camilla and Rachel are both 25 when their crisis peaks, Lilly and Jack are 26.
2. *29-32*: George and Frances are 29, Victoria, Rob and Claire are 30, Gemma and Vern are 31, Frank is 32.
3. *34-36* (Angela, Neil, Leon and Dan are age 34, Ben is 35, Mark, Guy and Violet are 36)
4. *38-40* (Mary and Anne are 38).

8 of the crises sampled fall between the ages of 29 and 32, which gives support to Levinson's assertion about the relationship between crisis and the Age 30 Transition (ages 28-33). It also supports other empirical studies that have also found the Age 30 Transition to be a prominent period of crisis in early adulthood (Reinke, Holmes and Harris, 1985; Fagan and Ayers, 1983). The two crises at age 38 fit into the early stages of the midlife transition, and so are also predicted by Levinson's model. But the other two groups are not predicted by Levinson's model, and they point to two other crisis-prone periods that Levinson did not highlight. There is a period around ages 25-26, and another around 34-36, both of which are indicative of "mid-season" crisis – the first in the middle of the *Entering the Adult World* period, and the second in the *Settling Down* period. The 34-36 period has as many cases as the 29-32 period and is a span of just two years. This suggests that crisis is spread across the early adult phase more diversely than Levinson may have predicted, and that there is a mid-twenties or mid-thirties transition for some as opposed to an age-30 transition. Given the numbers in the sample, the distribution is no more than suggestive of a general age distribution of early adult crisis; it may still be that with a larger sample a random distribution would have emerged. However the age distribution is suggestive of a non-random pattern nonetheless and warrants further investigation.

10.5 The Nature of Crisis: Reflections

What can be said with some confidence given the data from this thesis, is that crisis occurs within the context of a culture, the context of an individual

lifespan and the context of relationships, families and jobs. It is deeply ecological in nature. This version of crisis is what Slaikeu (1990) suggested would be a step forward from Caplan's theory of crisis. Caplan's four phase model of crisis, which was summarised on page 15, is intra-individual and does not consider the changing relationships of person to social groups during crisis. Slaikeu hypothesised, without research to back his claims up, that crisis may not just be a process of coping with stressful stimuli but may rather be a systemic process involving shifting relations with family, work organization and cultural expectations. Slaikeu suggested that research and intervention on crisis should take into account both external and internal factors, and he suggested that this could be achieved using Levinson's concept of the life structure, which integrates internal and external factors in a developmental framework (Slaikeu, 1990). This research fulfils Slaikeu's vision for crisis research and theory, for the crisis process is empirically found to be intimately social, and employs Levinson's theory to aid interpretation. Crisis starts with a social system such as a work group or a relationship dyad or a family that is felt to be oppressing the individual. Then there is a change as separation occurs from this social system, followed by a moratorium away from social commitments and embeddedness. The fourth phase sees resolution in a healthy and balanced social ecology in which a person is functionally involved in multiple social systems, but does not feel in any sense constrained or negated by his or her involvement in them.

Crisis was given an a-priori definition, in order to recruit individuals to be interviewed for this project (see page 74). The basic defining criteria were sparse; they included a presence of negative emotion, stress, a sense of being out of control, a crisis duration of one month or more, a personal sense of the time being one of crisis and a conclusion at least a year ago. It was mentioned on the same page that at the end of the project a clearer definition of early adult crisis would be possible. The eight precepts of early adult crisis at the end of Chapter 9 provide that new definition, but for the sake of ever greater parsimony, they can be further condensed into a one sentence definition. An early adult developmental crisis is…

> …An episode during which relationships and/or jobs that are dissatisfying and dissonant with the self are ended, leading to emotional upheaval and loss of identity followed by

a proactive exploration through inner and outer alternatives for a new, more coherent, more autonomous, more balanced life structure.

10.6 Comparing Current Model with Models of Transition and Clinical Change

In the literature review of Chapter 2 several models of 'life transition' were presented; those of O'Connor and Wolfe (1987), and Hopson and Adams (1974). These models of transition provide points of comparison for the model of early adult crisis described in Chapter 9. O'Connor and Wolfe studied the process of the midlife transition. Their sample age band was 35-50, so compared with the 25-40 age band of the current research there is a five-year age overlap. They developed a model with five phases; *Stability*, *Rising discontent*, *Crisis*, *Re-direction and Adaptation* and *Stabilisation* (see page 15 in Chapter 2 for more detail on these phases). Hopson and Adams' model is a more general model of transition, which they claim is a predictable sequence of reactions to any major life disruption. It has seven phases; *Immobilisation, Trivialisation, Depression, Acceptance, Experimentation, Search for Meaning* and *Internalisation* (see page 14 in Chapter 2 for more detail).

The phases of the three models are compared in Table XIII, with those that share commonality represented in the same horizontal row. Four of the five phases of O'Connor and Wolfe's model do map onto the four phases of Chapter 9's model, while some of Hopson and Adams' phases also correspond in content and sequence.

Table XIII. Comparing Phases of the Current Model with Two Models of Transition

Chapter 9 Model	**O'Connor and Wolfe**	**Hopson and Adams**
	1. Stability	
1. Growing Crisis: Constriction	2 .Rising Discontent	1. Immobilisation
		2. Trivialisation
2. Peak Crisis: Separation	3. Crisis	3. Depression
		4. Accepting reality for what it is
3. Late Crisis: Exploration	4. Re-Direction and Adaptation	5. Experimentation
		6. Search for Meaning
4. Post-Crisis: Equilibration	5. Re-stabilizing	7. Internalization

The first commonality is between the current model's first phase of "*Constriction*" and O'Connor and Wolfe's second phase of "*Rising Discontent*". In

both phases there is the description of growing dissatisfaction, a stifled desire for change and a life structure that is no longer attuned to one's needs. Hopson and Adams' first phase of "*Immobilisation*" parallels the experiential aspect of Phase 1 of the current model, as it relates to the description of being trapped and frozen. They also describe a phase of "*Trivialisation*", in which the need for change is trivialised and minimised in order to accept the status quo. This same kind of resistance to change is also shown in Phase 1 of the current model.

"*Separation*" in the current model is the phase during which a person experiences emotional turmoil and separation from job and/or relationship. O'Connor and Wolfe describe a phase that is very similar and which they call "*Crisis*". They describe this as the moment of a turning point in which the person leaves the pre-crisis life structure but finds no replacement. It is also a time of intense negative emotions including "anger, depression, anxiety, grief, confusion and despair." (O'Connor and Wolfe, 1987, p.806). Hopson and Adams also describe a phase which has a peak of negative emotion, which they call "*Depression*". As the name suggests they concentrate on the experience of depression as the characteristic experience of the reaction to change, which does not correspond with the far more complex and varied affective reaction shown by participants in this thesis. Hopson and Adams mention another phase at this point called "*Accepting Reality for What It Is*", which involves the cognitive acceptance of the need for change and growth, and corresponds to the psychological separation part of Phase 2 of the current model.

Then comes an important commonality in all three models; towards the end of crisis, after the main peak of emotional disruption but before any resolution, there are phases characterised by searching and experimentation. "*Exploration*" in the current model involves exploration, self-examination, experimentation and a search for new direction and new intrinsically motivated activities. In Hopson and Adams' model there are two similar phases; "*Experimentation"* and "S*earch for Meaning"*. These are the penultimate phases to their seven phase model, as is the "*Exploration"* phase the penultimate phase in Chapter 9's model. In O'Connor and Wolfe's model, there is a similar penultimate phase called "*Re-direction and Adaptation*", in which there is also an emphasis on experimentation and trial-and-error. They say of this phase:

> "If growth is to take place, however, one must actively pursue the new directions that may have brought on the crisis, or create tentative experiments to adapt to the changing conditions of self and circumstance." (O'Connor and Wolfe, 1987, p.806)

All three models agree that in order to emerge successfully out of a crisis and/or transition, a new balance must be found and a new life structure must be built. The current model's fourth phase of "*Equilibration*" is defined by new commitments, new intrinsically motivated activities which are more self-determined, and a new sense of balance and authenticity. O'Connor and Wolfe's corresponding final phase is called "*Re-stabilising*" and in it they describe new "permanent commitments to a particular life structure" (1987, p.807). Hopson and Adams describe a final phase, called "*Internalisation*", in which a person comes to develop a sense of inner control over their new life, relating to the current model's theme of enhanced agency and personal control.

In sum, the three models of transition and crisis conceive of a dynamic trajectory of change involving rising discontent and constriction, an emotionally fraught ending of a life structure, then an experimental search followed by a new beginning. They divide this temporal process up differently but the commonalities are clear. The similarities of these phase models suggest that the current model may be generalisable to other samples and even other ages, in whole or in part.

Denne and Thompson's (1991) paper on the experience of transition is also worth mentioning for some striking parallels. The researchers interviewed ten young adults about their experience of transitions and reported certain invariant constituents in all cases. All cases involved turning points around which life was reorganised. There were changes described by all participants from living passively according to social convention, towards living proactively and freely, which mirrors the change in the current study from passive persona-based living to more self-determined action and intrinsically motivated action:

> "All ten participants also restructured their lives from living reactively according to the expectations and demands of society or other individuals to living proactively according to experiential awareness of their own values and uniqueness." (Denne and Thompson, 1991, p.119)

There were also descriptions of depersonalisation and self-alienation in the pre-transition state due to living according to the demands of others, which is a mirror of the findings in many crisis in all three studies in this thesis:

> "In order to make commitments to self-responsible, proactive living most of the ten needed first to come to greater awareness of their own unique selves rather than being exclusively aware of external factors. For example one man believed he had been "just a bunch of walking habits and reflexes," with no "identity apart from what my parents thought" and not "the faintest idea who I was." (Denne and Thompson, 1991, p.120)

All the transitions described in Denne and Thompson's sample led to what they described as "a more balanced relation between self and world" (p.124), which echoes the change towards integration and balance found in the data of this thesis.

Clinical models of change also exist that have clear parallels with the current model. Prochaska and DiClemente's (1982) integrative model of change has six phases; *Pre-contemplation, Contemplation, Determination, Action, Maintenance and Relapse*. The phases are not seen as a linear progression, but more of a dynamically interacting set of components through which the individual will cycle a number of times when attempting change. This model points towards the necessity of lasting change in *all* kinds of therapy, and has parallels with the current model. The phases of *Pre-contemplation* and *Contemplation* link to the rising consideration of change that characterises Phase 1 in the current model, while *Determination* involves a determined effort to create change and so relates to the major transition period and so links to Phase 2. The *Action* phase links to the proactive nature of Phase 3 of the current model and *Maintenance* links to the need for enduring balance that characterises Phase 4. A key difference between Prochaska and DiClemente's clinical model of change and the current model is that their clinical change process ends in relapse. Relapse is seen as being a normal part of change within a clinical context and reinitiates the change process so that progress occurs in a spiral with relapse being a natural part of the process. Perhaps the difference between a transformative crisis and a clinical state of mental ill-health is that individuals who are transformed by crisis do not get drawn into a cycle of relapse but are able to create a robust new state of being. While in the crises of this thesis there are temporary relapses into old patterns and failed false starts in Phase 3, these are blips on an overall upward trajectory of transformation.

Another clinical model of change is the Assimilation of Problematic Experiences Model (Stiles, 1996). Here we have a sequence of change phases

that once again provide parallels with the current model. There are 8 stages to this model; *Warded Off, Unwanted Thoughts, Vague Awareness/Emergence, Problem Statement/Clarification, Understanding/Insight, Application/Working Through, Problem Solution, Mastery*. This model presents its own version of how an individual must work through steps from denial, to realisation, to action, to solution and to stable maintenance. Both models of clinical change are compared with the current model in Table XIV.

Table XIV. Comparing Phases of Current Model with Two Models of Clinical Change

Chapter 9 Model	**Transtheoretical Change Model**	**Assimilation Model**
	Pre-Contemplation	Warded Off
1. Growing Crisis: Constriction	Contemplation	Unwanted Thoughts
		Vague Awareness/Emergence
2. Peak Crisis: Separation	Determination	Problem Statement/Clarification
		Understanding/Insight
3. Late Crisis: Exploration	Action	Application/Working Through
		Problem Solution
4. Post-Crisis: Equilibration	Maintenance	Mastery
	Relapse	

As can be seen from the above table, the three models agree that change moves from *internal* issues of thoughts, contemplations, fantasies and feelings of dissatisfaction, through a turning point towards more *external* issues of action, assertion, problem-solving, exploration and rebalancing. This demonstrates a key change that characterises clinical change and crisis; it is a change away from ruminative passivity towards proactive behavioural coping that brings a new sense of active participation in the world and a new sense of mastery.

10.7 Critical Reflections on Method and Sample

The aim of this thesis was to find an innovative area of research and also to develop an innovative methodology with which to investigate this area. The composite model that was created was a synthesis of Miles and Huberman's

Interactive Model and Smith's Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). These two methods brought their respective strengths to the research design and together created a robust, problem-focused hybrid. IPA's key contributions to the method were its injunctions for developing topic guides for semi-structured interviews and its protocols for handling raw narrative data, transcripts and early code-based analysis. The Interactive Model's key contributions were its multi-faceted approach to purposive sampling, its focus on memos, and its use of matrices and diagrams to help synthesise and present data. There are few points of conflict between the two sources of the composite. A criticism could be that IPA is an inductive model and that it is being used in an approach which combines both deductive and inductive elements. This is true, but the basic tenets of IPA data collection and data analysis lend themselves well to this slightly altered philosophy, and indeed give them wider applicability, for they may be used in theory testing as well as theory development. An additional benefit of combining methodologies is in demonstrating the similarities that exist between qualitative methods, rather than the traditional focus on difference between competing qualitative camps (Haywood, 2007).

Gaining sample for the project was contingent on individuals replying to adverts or emails and volunteering; thus is was to some extent a 'self-selecting' sample. We can therefore reflect on the possible reasons and motivations individuals might have had for answering the advertisements and participating in the study. It may have been a chance to help externalise and fully develop a narrative of transformation surrounding a painful past episode; to have a quasi-therapeutic interaction with a 'psychologist'; or to admit past transgressions in an anonymous context (several admitted to clandestine affairs that occurred during the crisis). It is clear that all participations had *recovered* from crisis and considered themselves to have grown as a result of the episode, even if the solution was a long time in coming. However the clinical literature describes individuals who do not recover from crisis and become trapped in a chronically unstable state, perhaps because they cope maladaptively with crisis and get caught in a destructive cycle of repeat and relapse rather than an upward trajectory of resolution, so one must ask – why did the maladaptive crisis copers not come forward to discuss their crises? There may have been a selective attrition of this group in recruitment; it may be that these individuals did not come forward to participate for three possible reasons. Firstly, they may end up

as part of the psychiatric care system with a diagnosed mental health 'illness', and therefore no longer see their problem as a crisis reaction to life's developmental vicissitudes, but rather as a chronic disorder. Secondly such persons may not emerge from the episode with a clear end point and so be able to reflect on it in retrospect, which was a criterion for participation. Thirdly, such persons simply may not be motivated to talk about their episode to a researcher, as the story does not cast them in a positive, transformative or generative light, but is simply a story of decline.

It is therefore a safe assumption that those who came to speak to me were constructive crisis copers – they had found the internal and external resources to move through crisis. A valid criticism of the study is therefore that it is looking at only one side of crisis; the positive side when crisis becomes a stimulus for growth and change. However such a collection of reports of constructive crisis coping is empirically powerful in its own right. The clinical literature is full of reports of descent into chronic suffering or destructive behaviour after major stressful life events. The current thesis provides a counterpoint to this; it presents a group of stories showing what crisis and adversity can be if navigated through successfully; it shows how suffering can be transmuted into discourses of liberation, expansion and transformation. It suggests that individuals *can* turn suffering into growth by making real and substantial changes that allow them to pursue coherence, assertiveness, purpose and authenticity, and therefore might suggest a therapeutic path for coping with life crisis. This therapeutical application is discussed later in the chapter.

Generalisability is a key dimension of validity in research that aims to generate a theory or model such as the current thesis. Generalisability is not just improved by the diversity or quality of sample, but is also affected by the population to which generalisations are attempted. The more abstract the population parameters, the more tenuous the generalisation. In this study, the sample was found from amongst the British white urban middle classes, and I do not attempt to generalise past this population group. All were Caucasian (including one Italian, one Mexican and one American), and all were middle class (arguably except for Frances, who was a waitress living with a drug dealer at the time of crisis). In different socio-economic groups and different cultures one will surely find different features of crisis. For example, young people in lower socio-

economic groups get married earlier, start parenting earlier, have fewer financial resources and start work earlier, which will likely lead to different crisis patterns. They may also not have the material and social resources for a moratorium, which is essential for active growth from crisis. The current results are specific both to historical and social context in which the research was conducted, and may be specific to the demographics of the sample. This lends the study both limitations and strengths. Contextual embeddedness is a limitation to any statements of generality, but it is also a strength in that it demonstrates that results are not just abstract constructs divorced from the real and changing world, but have a clear relation to the culture and locale from which they were gathered.

10.8 Validity Checks

At the end of Chapter 4, validation criteria were described that together provide a comprehensive framework for assessing qualitative studies. By combining the criteria of Miles and Huberman (1994), Elliott, Rennie and Fischer (1990), Yardley (2000) and Smith (2003), four key benchmarks of validity were established; *credibility*, *coherence*, *sensitivity* and *resonance*. Assessment of these standards includes a variety of checks that contribute to an overall validation and the first that will be considered is credibility.

In accordance with the protocol described by Smith (2003), ongoing and invaluable "mini-audits" on method, data collection, analysis and reporting were provided by the project supervisor. This facilitated numerous developments and enhanced the validity of all steps of the research. There were teething problems in formulating the composite methodology correctly, so numerous substantial mini-audits were required with the supervisor before its formulation was finalised. There were also times when analytical themes or meta-themes were challenged by mini-audits, leading to important clarifications and revisions. A list of key mini-audits is shown in Appendix M.

Sensitivity is one of the four validation criteria set out in Chapter 4. It involves using sensitivity as a modus operandi for the whole research endeavour; a sensitivity to context, to the needs of the participants, to new insights and analytical steps, to differences between individuals, to commonalities, to one's own needs as a researcher, to one's potential readers, to others in the research process such as supervisor. I hope that the participant feedback exercise shown below provides some

evidence that participants were treated with sensitivity and their reports were analysed in ways that held true to their original accounts. Although the project was principally focused on abstract psychological constructs, I hope that the consideration of contemporary cultural factors gives the project a sensitivity to socio-cultural issues. A very important part of the epistemology that was outlined in Chapter 3, which I hope the reader will feel has been upheld in this project, is the balancing of illuminating individual differences and theoretical commonalities. The aim has been to present cases whose predicaments and crises are clearly unique but also correspond to a pattern. The inclusion of a case study has I hope allowed the idiographic to be balanced with the nomothetic task of seeking a model of crisis.

Creating coherence in a qualitative project involves alignment of philosophy, theory, design, findings and report. Such coherence has been a goal of the project throughout – philosophy, theory, method, analytical approaches and reporting style have been designed specifically so that the thesis would hold together as a whole. Chapter 9 was included very much in line with what Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (1990) consider essential in developing coherence. They suggest that strong and well organised themes that hold the findings and analysis together bring coherence, and further suggest using an integrated summary of analysis or a summary diagram to bring together analytical strands. This kind of summary allows the diverse elements of an analysis, which can spew out in all directions in qualitative projects, to be tied together and integrated into a memorable whole.

There were limitations in the coherence of this final report that relate to the evolving design used. Certain analytical areas emerged from the data a little too late to present them as generic aspects of crisis. In Study 2 and Study 3 it became increasingly apparent that a key part of crisis is how gender identity develops over the course of crisis, particularly in terms of an emerging feminine self. However, re-analysis of Study 1 did not extract any spontaneous discussion of gender that could have implicated it across the whole sample. Therefore 15 participants had no direct evidence of gender development through crisis, and correspondingly it was not inductively possible to conclusively include this in the general model. This is a clear limitation to the overall coherence of the project.

The Participant Feedback Exercise

Yardley (2000) and Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that a participant validation exercise can enhance both credibility and sensitivity of a qualitative research project. In line with this advice, an exercise was conducted towards the end of the duration of the current project. Participants were given the opportunity to give feedback on whether they considered the final model to reflect their episode of crisis or not. A version of Chapter 9 with names and direct quotes removed was sent to all 22 participants as an attachment to an email, with questions about it directly embedded into the email. Email was chosen as it was up to two years since some interviews were given and the location of participants was uncertain. It was also considered that it would get a higher response rate than a short interview as it would be a quicker and easier process. Also, email perhaps allow an extra candour and time for consideration than face-to-face interaction.

14 participants out of 22 gave feedback. Violet responded to say that she did not have time to fill out the feedback as she was in the middle of her first solo art exhibition and was extremely busy. A follow up email several weeks later elicited no response. There was no email response at all from the remaining participants.

Questions that were in the email are listed in Appendix G. These questions were aimed at gaining both categorical and more in-depth information on how the participants felt about the model in relation to their own crisis. The document and email were explicit that this was a *provisional* model that was open to change and disputation. Question 1 was a question that asked for an overall appraisal of the model in reference to their experience:

1. To what extent do you think the model works as a summary and simplified representation of your experience of crisis?

   Strongly agree ---- agree --- disagree --- strongly disagree (please delete as appropriate)

The responses to this question were positive, with 8 individuals rating *Strongly Agree*, 6 individuals rating *Agree*, and 0 participants rating disagree or strongly disagree.

Question 2 then asked whether each of the four phases of the model applied to their experience of crisis, with a simple yes/no answer for each phase.

2. There are four phases in the model. Please say whether you think each one applies to you.

   First Phase: commitment, constriction, frustration, extrinsic motivation (Yes/No)

Second Phase: separation and emotional upheaval (Yes/No)

Third Phase: exploration, experimentation, search for self-understanding (Yes/No)

Fourth Phase: recommitment and finding new balance (Yes/No)

The results of the responses are show a unanimous agreement with Phase 2 and Phase 3 – all participants replied "Yes" showing their agreement with the description of these phases in reference to their own experience.

12 replied "Yes" to Phase 1; there were 2 "No" responses.

13 replied "Yes" to Phase 4 with 1 "No" response.

Vern from Study 1 did not feel that Phase 1 applied to his case, and this may have been due to a misreading of the model. He complained that his Phase 1 had no relationship to materialist issues. He was under the impression upon reading the document that a materialistic element is a necessary part of Phase 1, when it is not, for often an extrinsic motive is one of duty or conformity rather than a material motive. This may have been the result of some unclear wording, so this section was altered to make this point clearer. Another complaint with Phase 1, made by Ben, is that although his life prior to his wife leaving him was pressured and difficult, both at home and at work, it was not necessarily extrinsically motivated and it was in many ways intrinsically motivated until the break up of the marriage. However, Ben agreed with the other descriptions of Phase 1.

Victoria was the one participant who did not think phase 4 applies to her crisis. She actually *did* describe a clear resolution to the crisis during her interview, but had found that *since* the interview she had been precipitated back into an unstable state after resigning from her job. She said:

> "In general, apart from what I said about finding new balance, I'd say the model is very accurate. The most accurate aspect is about the going back to study in the Exploration phase and the new sense of self in the post crisis. I now wonder if I never got out of this crisis, because of what it's happening to me at the moment, or if my life has been one crisis after the other, because I still had periods of depression lately, it was just before handing in my resignation, but I must say that these periods last less and less compared to years ago." (Victoria, feedback email)

It was described in Chapter 2 how developmental equilibrium in humans is inherently transitory and will always lead to another disequilibrated state. Victoria is an example of this; her feedback emphasises that equilibrium found after a crisis is a temporary step forward and can be thrown out of balance by new challenges and problems.

Question 3 asked whether the model omitted or contradicted an aspect of the person's experience of crisis:

> 3. Do you think that the model contradicts or omits any key aspects of your experience of crisis? Yes / No. If yes, please elaborate

To this question, 5 individuals responded *yes* and 9 individuals responded *no*. Those 5 who responded yes to this question were further asked what had been omitted or contradicted. Three wrote that while all four phases were present in their crisis, they did not precede in the linear order that the model describes, but rather overlapped and cycled back on one another. For example:

> "For me Phases 3 & 4 have not been sequential; they overlap and their duration is unclear. I could argue that I'm still in Phase 3, though certainly there are elements of Phase 4 in evidence in my life. To my mind the 4 Phases of the model can be further split into 2 key stages by grouping Phases 1 & 2, and 3 & 4." (Rob, feedback email)
>
> "I think the model overly simplifies my experience…My case was far more complex than this. Furthermore the phases did not happen sequentially. There was significant merging and some repetition of phases. For me therefore the model lacks some flexibility." (Lynne, feedback email)

This fits with the point made in Chapters 6 and 9 that the phases of the model are by no means absolute, and may haze into one another and cycle around on one another in some cases, but also may point to the fact that the model has simplified the trajectory of crisis in order to promote coherence and parsimony. As described in Chapter 4, a qualitative project must balance coherence/diversity and simplicity/complexity in presenting findings, and this balance perhaps could have been better in this project to more strongly emphasise diversity. It may well be that in continued research into crisis, I find a way to develop and portray the crisis model that better honours the nonlinear and cyclical nature of crisis more than the current phase model. The feedback from this participant validation exercise has given further motivation to develop the model in this less linear direction.

One other participant described in response to Question 3 how the model did not fully capture the transformational aspect of crisis, which is a valid criticism, as certain data on transformation are not included in the model of Chapter 9. The issue of transformation metaphors and descriptions has had less attention than the basic dynamics of crisis and could be given more intensive attention in further research. Another participant said that the model did not capture the spiritual dimension of her

crisis enough, which is a fair criticism, as the research probed little into areas of spiritual change.

Question 4 was an open-ended question which asked:

> 4. Please do give your thoughts on which aspects of the model you found most accurate or inaccurate, or any other response to reading the document.

A selection of quotes from the responses to this question is described below, which provide some reassurance that data collection and model creation was conducted in a sensitive way:

> "The model not only seemed spot on for me but was also so well expressed. Brilliant." (Mary, feedback email)
>
> "Thank you Olly, it was a fascinating experience and such an interesting study which can help people and those around them to make sense of their situation. Many times the attitude is 'onward and upward', 'you'll survive' and similar, or blaming outside influences, but at the time these platitudes don't really help. A study to read can give people hope." (Angela, feedback email)
>
> "Firstly I would like to congratulate you on formulating this model – it clearly accentuates the key stages of my crisis. What particularly comes across is the crescendo effect of phase one - this incredible pressure to break free from constriction." (Gemma, feedback email)
>
> "Overall I felt it was a fair representation and the key is, I believe, the psychological dissonance experienced by intrinsically conscientious people who find themselves in situations which end up being unbearable (although thought to be okay)." (Vern, feedback email)
>
> "This is a very insightful piece of work and I wish you every success in the future." (Frank, feedback email)

Question 5 in the email asked for the participants' evaluation of the "eight precepts" that were described on the final page of the summary document, and are shown on page 194 of Chapter 9. The question was phrased:

> 5. Do the eight precepts of crisis apply to your episode? Please specify which do and which don't.

Of the 10 respondents who answered this question, 9 stated that *all* apply to their crisis, and 1 participant stated that all apply except precept 5, which was described as over-simplistic. This shows an excellent and encouraging level of congruence between participant perceptions and the eight precepts.

10.9 Reflexive Considerations: The Researcher and the Final Model of Crisis

There is little doubt that another researcher who had encountered the data on crisis in the three empirical studies would have interpreted it in a different way and emphasised different elements, according to their own theoretical orientation and their experiential make-up and learning. The model of crisis that emerged in Chapter 9 is the outcome of a dialectical interaction between my own framework of reference and the participants' accounts of crisis, and reflects both. The model was carefully tied to the data, and the participant exercise has shown that the participants were strongly in agreement with the model as a satisfactory interpretive summary of their crises. But on the other side of the dialectic, how does the theory relate to me as a person?

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, I am someone who tries to synthesise ideas and theories, and correspondingly tend to work between established paradigms and theories. The eclectic nature of the thesis is clearly a result of this trait, and the integrative nature of the Chapter 9 model (it has social, motivational, identity and experiential elements) is also a reflection of this desire for synthesis. I have always been interested by the big questions of psychology – what is the mind? What is suffering? What is an explanation? What is psychosocial 'adaptation'? What is development? It was this tendency that led me to ask the generic question 'What is crisis?' that underpins this thesis. I am aware that some qualitative psychologists prefer to maintain a local focus, but I believe that psychology as a discipline should not shy away from what postmodernists might call "meta-narratives" – larger ideas that link local ideas together. I think if we leave generic conceptual issues out of our range of focus we leave them implicit and unchallenged.

I am also an amateur student of philosophy and help run a philosophy book group in my spare time. This undoubtedly influenced my choice of topic; the thesis in many ways can be seen as an empirical look at an age-old philosophical idea that can be traced back to the Stoics; that it is through experiencing adversity that we grow to become fully human.

On the personal side, I have had my own experience of crisis. Prior to studying for the PhD I was working as a research executive in a market research consultancy just south of London. Over the two years I was there, I became deeply unhappy with myself and the lifestyle I was leading. I felt like I felt like I was disappearing into a hole of corporate mediocrity. I didn't like the idea that all my efforts were in the end orientated towards one end only – the profit of our clients. My

life and world started to take on an almost tangibly grey hue, and I found that I was tense a lot, and my physical health was poor. The office had nylon carpets everywhere, so I would get electric shocks of everything metal, which added to the sense of Pavlovian punishment! I think I may have been a bit of a dark cloud in the office, which meant that my colleagues were not particularly enamoured with me. This led to a sense of isolation. Meanwhile, I was unable to find romance in my life, and I was still hurting over leaving my girlfriend earlier that year. I felt a growing need to write at the time, and starting writing a book on psychology in my free time – spending weekends in the British Library, and evenings at my computer in bedroom. I was planning to leave and had made my intentions known to my boss when the company went into receivership. I was fired, with the majority of other workers. That day felt like a release and my colleagues couldn't understand why I was so happy. After being fired, I set up a freelance business in market research, which covered me financially for six months before I managed to get a place to do a PhD. The crisis was a personal example of how hard times can be a profound and important stimulus for meaningful change; it allowed me to connect with my vocation in psychology.

Could it be that this episode acted as an unconscious template both in collecting and analysing the data? It could be that that is the case. However, I hope the reader will feel, given the participant feedback and the carefully evidenced empirical findings, that the data collection process and the data analysis did not distort the data, and that what is presented is an honest and logical hermeneutic. The positive side of this personal experience of crisis is that it may have helped gain an empathic connection with the lifeworlds of my respondents; a valuable commodity in rapport building, interview direction, question probing and analytical interpretation.

10.10 Impact, Resonance and Potential Application

A key criterion of validity in qualitative research is potential impact and implication of research findings, in theoretical and practical terms. Research should not just be rigorous, transparent, credible and sensitive, but should *make a difference* to knowledge and/or applied settings, or have the potential to do so.

The research has a potential contribution to make to theory on adult development and crisis. It is, as far as I am aware, the only empirically grounded theory of early adult crisis there is. My research over the last four years located other

work that suggested crisis does occur during development (e.g. Combs, 2003; Erikson, 1968; Forer, 1963; Levinson, 1978, 1996; Sheehy, 1976), but little that dug down into crisis to establish what was going on during crisis episodes. Caplan's (1964) model is the best known theory of crisis dynamics, but is not grounded in empirical data and is mechanistic in its language and formulation. In this strangely barren context, this study potentially represents a contribution to understanding:

- the role that early adult crisis plays in the course of adult development;
- the role that the persona and extrinsic motivation play in the genesis of crisis;
- the importance of turning points in shaping the adult self;
- the determinants of an intrinsically motivated life structure.

But any general statements at the moment would be premature. Due to the specificity of the demographics and the limited sample, current conclusions are no more than suggestive of a general crisis pattern that can only be established by continued empirical initiatives.

The applied potential of this study lies in using the model as a guide for therapeutic practitioners to help with clients who are developmental crisis. Were this model replicated and shown to be a general pattern, a therapist may be able to apply it when appraising a client in crisis, for many of those in crisis do seek therapeutic help. If a therapist upon talking to a client who was in their late twenties or thirties considered that they were in a developmental crisis, they would be able to apply the Chapter 9 model to identify which phase the client was in, and by doing so might be able to provide stage-appropriate help to aid the person's negotiation through the transition. Making links with applied concepts and models is a valuable process, but I must emphasise the tentative and speculative nature of these suggestions at this stage of the theory development process.

This model, applied in a clinical context, would provide a multi-level model of change that clinicians could use to help understand concurrent changes in motivation, identity, experiences and life situation during periods of life stress and transition. The following are suggestive examples for how a general model could be applied within a therapeutic setting.

Stage 1 Therapeutic Context

Elements of the aforementioned Assimilation Model may aid in Stage 1. This model emphasises the importance of making clear and unambiguous statements about

a problem that exists before it can be consciously and controllably recognised and dealt with. In Phase 1 the presence of a life problem is not fully appreciated and understood – this must be fully addressed before any therapeutic or lifestyle change can be made (Stiles, 1996).

Many in Stage 1 feel out of control and correspondingly feel that control is external to the self. It is by the building of a sense of agency, wilfulness and assertiveness that a person begins to resituate the locus of control back within the self. Therefore a therapist could help a client who was in Phase 1 by the application of popular cognitive-behavioural assertiveness techniques, such as fogging, broken record, negative assertion and negative inquiry (Paterson, 2000).

If the client seems to have developed a protective persona, which is very common in Phase 1, then aspects of self will be hidden and may be even out of conscious awareness. In order to deal with this the therapist could focus on providing a supportive and unconditionally non-judgemental atmosphere for the client to disclose information about their inner self that they have hidden behind that persona. In this way the therapist-client relationship will act as a corrective interpersonal experience for individuals to develop open and honest interaction. This will correspondingly lessen the experience of depersonalisation and derealisation that occur in Stage 1, which occur as a result of a self split into public and private (Laing, 1965).

Phase 1 also tends to involve the loss of a dream or sense of intrinsic motivation. The therapist may facilitate reflection on life before the oppressive roles were taken on in order to search for the nature of the Dream or ideal self that has been rejected in adulthood thus far. This may help in surfacing discussion of the inner self, and to disclose key aspects about its nature, while helping develop self-understanding.

Suffering that is encountered in Phase 1 can only be made sense of within the context of the social systems that surround that person; for it is within problematic relationships, oppressive jobs and family problems that the crisis process and emotional distress emerges. Therapy should therefore incorporate a social emphasis and *not* work under the assumption that the emotional problem is an internal illness in need of an internal cure (Dallos and Boswell, 1993). The therapist could allow a client to focus on their roles and motives in relationships at home and at work, and on where the conflicts and problems may lie. There may be the need to consider how early relationships affected the development of later relationships. In some cases it

may be of benefit to bring others into the therapeutic process, such as spouse or partner, for the problem in Stage 1 is as much in the social system as in the person, and may require changes from partners as well. Without an active focus on solving these problems in the interpersonal setting, positive change in Phase 1 is unlikely.

Stage 2 Therapeutic Context

If the client is in Stage 2 and is ready to consider separation from the work life and/or home life that has provided the source of the crisis, the therapist could provide strategies for dealing with the inevitable emotional trauma of separation (the therapist of course should not use the model to encourage separation!). Anxiety, guilt, anger and depression are all reported around the period of separation, and cognitive interventions could be employed to lessen the distressing affective feelings, but it would be important for the therapist to realise that the client is going through an inevitably distressing turning point and that the affective reactions are normative and important components of the transition, which should not be removed or lessened at all costs. Immediate solutions to distress such as medication should be treated with caution as they may lessen the perceived need for change that fuels the actions of Stage 2.

Stage 3 Therapeutic Context

The self during the period of separation is ambiguous and unanchored, which provides much concern and distress, for the identity that defined them pre-crisis has gone, and no new identity has been yet found. The move into phase 3, which brings about the active search for that new identity, can be brought about by the practice of therapy itself (many participants described the importance of opening up and self-exploring through therapy in phase 3). The therapist could also help with the provision of self-exploratory exercises, and the suggestion of taking up activities that ally with the person's interests, intrinsic motivation, passions or Dream (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992).

This period of self-exploration can become quite chaotic and can involve both constructive and destructive activities, both trial *and* error. If the person engages in false starts or new roles that also prove to be problematic or a continuation of the past self, they will have further mini-crises on the way to resolution, which the therapist can help with by providing assurance of progress and by maintaining a focus on

growth and continued search, and by also pointing out how the new crises relate to past habits of behaviour. This is essence is 'relapse management'. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Prochaska and DiClemente's model of change sees relapse as an integral part of changing old habits and ways of life, and they see a spiral of change as relapses are coped with on the way to resolution (DiClemente, Prochaska and Gibertini, 1985). This basic principle of spiralling progression with setbacks and steps forward alternating can be applied to understand and help individuals in the experimental Stage 3 of a life transition, with the further assumption that in non-clinical crises the relapses are temporary and that enduring change is possible.

Stage 4 Therapeutic Context

Out of the cases in this thesis, individuals who went into therapy during crisis had finished it by the time they had found the new life structure that defines Phase 4 and crisis resolution. So it may be that the therapeutic relationship comes to an end naturally at this point. For those who do stay in therapy in Phase 4, the process can be engaged in without the concerns of pressing change and transition; this may allow a longer-term focus and will negate the need for a transitional framework to aid the process of counselling.

This perspective of framing therapy within the context of transitions supports the position of Caplan (1964), Bridges (2004) and Kegan (1982), who all assert that mental distress and life problems should be understood within a developmental framework. Bridges (2004) criticises much therapy for being based on a mechanical metaphor similar to fixing a car. In this paradigm, a person who goes for therapy has a fault that needs fixing, for example fixing their maladaptive thoughts, or maladaptive/conditioned behaviours. Bridges points out that this approach is deficient because while cars are static objects that do not develop after they have been constructed, human beings are forever being challenged to develop and grow, to accommodate new life challenges and life stages. For him, psychological suffering other than that caused by an organic lesion should be considered as *resistance to growth*, and the corrective measure for a suffering human being should be the facilitation of growth and sometimes navigation of a transition or crisis. Kegan takes the same position, and states that the job of the counsellor is "offering the client a culture to grow in." (Kegan, 1982, p.276).

In sum, the current study provides support for developmental, social and socio-cultural components in therapeutic counselling. Emotional suffering may be part of a socio-developmental crisis transition that must be confronted and crossed if adult development is to progress in a healthy and positive manner. The crisis will only be resolved by making changes to the self and the life structure that permit that onward step to be made. The Chapter 9 model, with further research and development, could help therapists and those going through crisis navigate this complex and formative process.

10.11 Possible Directions for Future Research

The clearest need for further research is in continuing to use the same method and age group, but on new sample groups and sample demographics. This will help to establish generalisability and further develop the model. I intend to carry out this research myself over the next few years. Beyond this, there are a number of possible directions that would entail an abridged methodology. As described earlier in this chapter, retrospective interviewing leaves room for doubt over the accuracy of memory and interpretations of the event in question. Future developments in research design could address the question of the veracity of narrative accounts of crisis, by triangulating data with reports from significant others who were also involved or implicated in a crisis, such as a spouse or work colleague. This would give multiple perspectives on the same episode and could illuminate consistency or disparity in each narrative. This is logistically complicated, but it would certainly help in establishing the clarity and accuracy of the memories, particularly chronology, external events, behavioural reactions and changes in the life structure. This would not help in validating the more interpretative aspects of crisis, such as the experience of constriction or transformation in the self, which in its very nature is subjective and interpretive, so would not be illuminated by the reports of others.

Longitudinal studies of crisis would be beneficial to assess how retrospection and memory change the reports of crisis. Smith's study of pregnancy and becoming a mother (Smith, 1994) used multiple interviews at specific times during pregnancy and after birth to compare and contrast descriptions of the process. Such a procedure is difficult with the subject of crisis, as the markers of onset are not as clear as with pregnancy, and thus finding

suitable participants would be a profoundly tricky business. This is not to say it would be impossible. One could recruit from a company that was about to fire a large number of workers, or from marriage counsellors whose patients were having marital problems. By interviewing a certain number of people undergoing these transitions, individuals who do enter crisis and those that do not could be compared longitudinally.

The sample used in this project was insufficient to answer the quantitative question of what proportion of young adults experience a crisis. It also alluded to an interesting distribution of crisis episodes across early adulthood. To answer these kinds of question there is the possibility of using a large-N questionnaire-based quantitative study, however I am unsure as to whether this would be a sufficiently sensitive tool for investigating crisis. Crisis is emotionally charged subject matter and self-disclosure is not immediate. In the interviews conducted for this study, critical but sensitive aspects of crisis only emerged towards the end of an interview, as a person became more relaxed and more rapport had built up between participant and interviewer. In follow-up interviews disclosure would often deepen. I am not sure whether questionnaires would be sensitive enough to establish salient facts about crisis. I think that despite the inevitable time requirements, continual interviewing in different demographics and locations is the best way to build up sample numbers and to assess the extent, form, outcomes and age distribution of crisis in early adulthood.

I feel, having conducted almost thirty interviews and having transcribed and analysed hundreds of thousands of words, that I have just got started. As the project has progressed, it has felt like I have entered a vast room, and the more I have learnt the better my vision has got of this room, and the better my vision has got, the more I am able to see its vastness, for I still cannot see the walls. In the realm of knowledge and science we never reach our goals, but we keep going nonetheless in the spirit of enquiry and human curiosity, because as Karl Popper said, it is the quest for knowledge, not its possession, which makes a scientist.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW TOPIC GUIDES

STUDY 1 Interview Guide

Introduction and explanation of approach

- Ensure confidentiality
- Describe and explain research approach
- Deal with questions, concerns etc
- Build rapport and relaxed atmosphere
- Ask if respondent can introduce self – name, age, occupation, family
- ***What do you understand by the term 'crisis'?***
    - Personal definition

Facts about episode

- How long ago did the episode occur?
- How long did it last?

Background

- Could you tell me a bit about the events and circumstances in your life leading up to the specific incident that we are here to talk about, that set the scene for what happened
    - What was going on in your life before it happened?
        - Probe for

Relationships, jobs, social situation, moods, health, living arrangements, belief system

The episode in process

- Could you tell me about the …….. event, starting at the beginning, in your own time as it unfolded….
- Probe for ecological circumstances, including social players
- Probe for role
- Keep it running until resolution

(check time scale of occurrences as they are related)

Emotions and feelings

- How did it make you *feel at the time*?
- Can you relate how the emotions you experienced changed over time?
    - Probe for negative *and* positive emotions
    - Also more generic feelings, such as trapped, out of control, despair

Stress - Was the event stressful?

- In what way did it cause you stress?
- Did you feel conflicted?
- What was stressful about it? (look for compromised key goals and key values)

Coping - How did you *deal with it/cope with it* at the time?

- How did you cope at the time?
- Did you ever think that you might not cope with it?
- Did you see a therapist or a specialist during the time?

Meaning and appraisal – What did the event *mean* to you at the time?

- Why do you reflect on the time as one of crisis?
- What goals or values were compromised by the experience
- How did it affect you sense of self at the time?
- Did it affect your confidence and self-esteem? What did? Why?

- What parts of life that are important to you as a person were compromised or lost at the time?

SELF – process and structure

Sense of personhood

8. Did the experience change you as a person in any way? How?
    a. Was this change enduring or temporary?
    b. Did you take up anything new? Give up anything?
    c. Metamorphosis? Looking back, were you before the episode and you after different in any way?
    d. Do you see the you before and you after as different people?
    e. Describe you before the crisis
    f. And you after…
    g. Did your goals change at all? What do you want out of life?

Self-understanding

9. In retrospect, did you learn anything about your*self* from the episode?
    a. Do you think you know yourself any better now?

b. What parts of you were you not free to express?
    b. What do you know about yourself that you did not know before?
    c. How did the way you perceive yourself change from during the episode to now?

Beliefs and attitudes

10. Did the event / episode / experience change the way you perceive the world?
    a. Probe for a change in perspective
    b. Relative unimportance of everyday hassles
    c. Did it affect your belief system?
11. Did you learn anything from the episode about other people or the world in general?
    a. What and why?

Life and Lifestyle

12. Did your lifestyle change as a result?
13. In what ways is your life different now to what it might have been if you had not gone through the episode?
14. Did your relationships with other people change as a result?

CRISIS AND DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY

c. Do you think that the ideal life is a life without crisis?
d. In sum, what part do you think this crisis played in your development as a person?

Thank participant for taking part and close

STUDY 2 - Second Interview Schedule

Question 1
p.1 "I was leavdng life as I believed life needed to be led"
Could you expand a bit more on that – how did you believe life needed to be led?

Question 2
p.1 "And that was success, or what *I believed* was success."

Tell me more about your view of what success was in those days. What did it mean to you?

Was "success" what your life was predominantly about in those days?

And further…
p.2 "I think it was just cultural issues that were pushing upon me that this was success."

Question 3
p.1"I was so focussed on delivering what I thought I had to do"
Where did this sense of necessity, compulsion, come from?

Question 4
p.2 "I was on autopilot" – what do you mean by that? Where did it come from?

Question 5
You describe your life situation as a pressure cooker
p.4 "So there was a new opportunity to break out of the pressure cooker of what I had been doing"
Can you say in retrospect what you meant by that metaphor?

Question 6
You used a phrase to refer to your time at Parnell as 'frenetic inactivity'
Can you say more about what you meant by that?

Any anecdote or story that represents that time at Parnell or you at the time?

Question 7
P.3 "And then for the first time in my life I turned to someone and said can you help me?"
Why do you think you hadn't asked people for help in the past.

Question 8
Any idea what led to starting to write poetry?

Question 9
You describe the peak of the crisis as an "almost total annihilation"
Could you say what you meant by that?
Did you feel like your sense of self had been annihilated?

Any anecdote or story that represents the time between March and September where you were in this really difficult phase?

Question 10
"I started to explore three avenues which were fundamental to me – first was new science..second was the spiritual side…third was dancing"
Where did this exploration come from?
In what sense were these three areas fundamental to you?

Question 11

"Dancing became absolutely phenomenal. In the January afterwards I went for a full weekend's workshop in Bristol, and that was absolutely…it just completely broke me down."
What was it about dancing that helped "break you down"?

Any particular moments or particular experiences/events that represent this time of trying on new ideas and exploring yourself?

POST CRISIS

Question 17 (if not already covered off)

How would someone at Parnell have described you?
How would your wife have described you at the time?

How would someone you work with now describe you?
How would your present partner describe you?

Which aspects of yourself have remained the same through this whole process?
Which aspects have remained the same?

p.10 "I think there were valuable lessons in the old Guy. And there are some foundations that are still there." What are those foundations?

Question 18: ***Anecdote – staring at mountains***

"One example was in Seattle, when I went out there for a study tour. I got to Seattle, it was late at night, and the rest of the group didn't turn up until about two or three hours later. So I walked into town, to the local mall to get some presents to take home, and as I walked out what I realised was the Rocky mountains, and I just turned round and it was just an absolute sublime moment when I became one with them, so I stood on this pavement probably for about twenty minutes being one with mountains. And everyone was walking past me, looking at me and wondering what was going on, and it was just the most magical experience on earth. And I know that six months earlier, I would have gone, oh yeah mountains, and carried on walking."

In what sense is that incident indicative of the transformation over the crisis?

Question 19
You refer to the time at Parnell as "my previous incarnation" (p.5), what do you mean by that?

Question 20
"When you become authentic, people gravitate to you automatically. They say, how do I get some more of this. They may not like the answers but there is a real desire to get a life-work balance and its not happening."

What is becoming "authentic" all about?

Did you feel that over the crisis period in question, you became more "authentic" ?

Question 21
Page 10: *"did it require a crisis, do you think?"* It wouldn't have happened otherwise. I was so locked in to my mental picture of how life is and how it should be, I had to have the rug pulled out from underneath me, there is no doubt about it. I would have had a crisis eventually, it would have probably been a health crisis. If I was going to change, and if I was going to survive, something fundamental had to happen. Now I know that we all have to go through what we have to go through."

What particular aspects of the crisis were instrumental in unlocking you from your old "mental picture"? Was there a particular moment that you can remember breaking out?

Question 22

Metaphor: page 7
“the acorn drops from the oak but then turns to mulch and just when it looks like its destroyed, then something blossoms out of it, that to me seemed like a very strong metaphor, because everything had to break away, everything had to be washed away and then the new me could emerge out of it.”
Why did the old have to be washed away before the new could emerge?

STUDY 2 List of Email Questions

1. You said in the interview on page 20: “It was like a different life. It really was a rebirth in many ways.” In what ways FOR YOU was before the crisis like "a different life"? What brought about this sense of rebirth?

2. You said on page 20, final paragraph “I’ve stopped allowing myself to be hijacked”. What did you mean by that interesting phrase?

3. ***How would you describe yourself now? Could you give me a quick sketch describing yourself as you are now?***

4. It seems like the Keith before the crisis was typically "male" in lifestyle and values. Do you see the crisis as "getting in touch with your feminine side" at all? If so, in what sense? Was this relevant to the episode?

5. How does one know when one is living authentically? What were the signs for you (inner / outer) ?

6. What is the "escalator theory of life" that you are no longer locked in to?

7. Why do you think it was that you would never dance prior to the crisis?

STUDY 3 - First Interview Schedule

Introduction and explanation of approach

- Ensure confidentiality and anonymity
- Describe and explain research
- Deal with questions, concerns etc
- Build rapport and relaxed atmosphere
- Ask if respondent can introduce self – name, age, occupation, family

Background

- How long ago did the episode occur?
- How long did it last?

- Could you tell me a bit about the events and circumstances in your life leading up to the specific incident that we are here to talk about, that set the scene for what happened
  - What was going on in your life **before** it happened?
    - Probe for
      - home life
      - relationships
      - jobs
      - social situation
      - moods
      - health
      - living arrangements

The episode in narrative

- Could you tell me about the …….. event, starting at the beginning, in your own time as it unfolded….
- Use the following to help aid and probe into narrative

(check ***time scale*** of occurrences as they are related)

Early Crisis (before turning point, first sense of a problem)

WORK

- Can you tell me about your work life at the time
  - Probe: pressure / easy, satisfying / not satisfying, stressful / unstressful
  - Did the job suit you as a person?
  - What was a typical day in your work life?
  - How do you remember *feeling* in the office?
  - Do you remember any specific incidents that stand out in that job as very good or very bad?
  - What were you aiming for in that job?
  - Did you have a perspective on your job and yourself?
    - Did you feel at all *trapped* / held back / hindered at work?
    - Did you ever consider leaving?
    - How were you coping at the time?

b. How do you think a work colleague might have described you at the time?
c. How would you have described yourself at work at the time?
d. How did your work life affect your home life?

HOME

- Were you in a relationship in the period leading up to the crisis?
- Were you married?
- How would you have described that relationship?
- What do you think you got out of the relationship?
- How did your relationship affect your work life?
- What sort of things did you do with your other half?
- What did you have in common?

- Why do you think you got into the relationship?
- How do you think your partner would have described you?

SELF

- Do you think you were being "true to yourself"?
- Do you think you knew yourself well at this point?
- Was there any aspect of your life that felt false?
- What were the values you lived your life by at the time?
- What your goals and aspirations?
- What were your priorities?
- How did you relax? Unwind? Holidays?
- Did you feel in control of your own life? Was it you making the decisions?

Mid Crisis (Separation, or peak of crisis)

- Can you pinpoint the turning point in the whole story – the point where things really started to change….
- Relationship: Who made the decision to separate? Why?
- Work: Who made the decision to leave work? Why?
- Which was made before? Did one lead into another?
- What emotions did you feel at this time? (at the point of separation)
- Can you relate how the emotions you experienced changed over time?
- Did you blame anyone?
- Did anyone help you in that condition?
- What were your next steps after you…
    - Left work – next steps
    - Left the relationship – next steps
    - How did this affect your sense of self?
- How was your self-esteem at the time?
- Did you feel your sense of self changing?
    - Probe for assertiveness and agency issues

- Did you feel any relief at the time of separation?

Late Crisis – exploration / post split

- If there is a period of exploration and experimentation, probe for:
    - Different avenues of exploration
    - Sense of self during experimental phase
    - How long it lasted for
    - Any therapy?
        - Why?
    - Any further study?
        - Why?
    - What new activities taken up?
        - Why?
    - Any spiritual searching?
        - What form – what hoping to get out of it?

- What were you searching for?
- Did it feel like a second adolescence?
- Did you take any time out?

Post-Crisis

- When did the exploration come to an end? Why?
- New job / vocational role?

- How would you describe your new job?
- What does this one have that the previous job did not?

- New relationship?
- New activities?
- In what ways is your life different now to what it might have been if you had not gone through the episode?
- How do you think you are different now to how you were before?
  - Probe for: authenticity, perspective, values (materialism)
  - What do you think the point of life is?

Sense of personhood

15. Did the experience change you as a person in any way? How?
    a. Was this change enduring or temporary?
    b. Did you take up anything new? Give up anything?
    c. Metamorphosis? Looking back, were you before the episode and you after different in any way?
    d. (if not mentioned spontaneously) Do you see yourself as "a new person" since the crisis?
        i. What do you mean by that?
    e. Describe you before the crisis
    f. And you after…
    g. Did your goals change at all? What do you want out of life?
    h. What roles are most important to you now?

Self-understanding

16. In retrospect, did you learn anything about your*self* from the episode?
    a. Do you think you know yourself any better now?

c. What parts of you were you not free to express?
    b. What do you know about yourself that you did not know before?
    c. How did the way you perceive yourself change from during the episode to now?

e. Do you think that the ideal life is a life without crisis?
f. In sum, what part do you think this crisis played in your development as a person?

Thank participant for taking part and close

STUDY 3 - Bespoke Second Interview Schedules

- Frank
- Rob
- Mark
- Victoria
- Lilly
- Claire

Frank Interview 2 Schedule

Pre-Crisis

- When you were talking about how you felt working in Wall Street, you described the work as 'dry and mechanical', and you also mention that there was a 'predictability' about it, being on a 'repetitive treadmill'. What I am curious about is what was about the sense of predictability that turned you off.

Persona and Pressure

- During the last interview, you said "I think I felt a huge sense of urgency to what I wanted to be." So what I was wondering is if it wasn't your own wants and desires driving your behaviour, what was it?

- Was there any parental pressure to get married at the time?

- So do you think in retrospect – do you think that she as a person was suited to you?

- You used the phrase of her having "a lot of ice" around her.

- Then when you said you were at the law firm, you said "I felt like I could fake it very well', and that it 'felt very false'. Can you explain by what you meant of feeling false?

- Back to the marriage, you described it as very role-orientated. Can you explain what you meant by that?

Gender and Emotion

- you talk about this discovering emotional openness, when after the marriage you were partying hard and there was ecstasy involved and there was that opening up period. What do you think had prevented you from discovering this emotional openness before?

- One can say that everybody has masculine and feminine qualities to differing degrees. Certainly emotional openness is often considered a more feminine trait while emotional stoicism is considered a more masculine trait. At the time when you were opening up to emotionality, did it feel like you were getting in touch with the feminine side of yourself?

- Did it manifest any other way, did you undertake any other activities that weren't so traditionally male?

- You mentioned searching and experimentation. What was the search undertaken to find?

Materialism

- How do you think your experience of crisis affected your attitude to money?
- How about where it sits in your list of priorities?

- If I had asked you when you were at Wall Street for your list of aims and aspirations, what would you have said?

- You mentioned that status was important to you then and is still important to you now. Could you describe if there are any differences or if they are the same?

- What are you aiming for now?
- What is important to you now?
    - Probe for:
        - Relationships and family
        - Positive contribution
        - Spiritual aspect of life

Metacognition

- Did you know yourself and who you were as a person clearly?
- Were you aware of the impact your life was having on those around you?
- Did you even think about leaving your life? When did that start?

- When did you start to be able to stand back on your situation and get some perspective on it?
- How did that new perspective come about?
- How would you compare your mindset now with before the crisis?
    - What do you have perspective on now?

Role of Crisis / Transformation

- You also said at one point "if I hadn't had the crisis, I would be in much worse shape than I am now". What did you mean by that?

- Some people over crisis change their lives considerably, start a new career path. While you have described all the inner stuff that has gone on, you have come through it and you are still working in a law firm. How do you reconcile that?

Rob – Interview 2 Schedule

Chronology – the order of events

How long ago?
How old were you?

Timescale of…Going to Russia, Coming home, Leaving job, Marriage breaking up, Going to MindStore, New things

Persona

- When you were at work, in the marketing role, did you feel like yourself?
- Did you feel like you were playing a role?
- What was that role?

- The desire for salary and prestige and so on, where did that come from?
- When you say "I know its just not me", what do you mean by that?

- What aspect of your self image was not being manifest?

- Did you feel like the successful businessman was a self that you had constructed to get on in the world?

- Did it feel genuine, like it was a true reflection of you?

- **Wh**y do you think you developed this false / persona self?
    - Probe for:
        - Parental pressure
        - Peer pressure
        - Need for social acceptance
        - Fear of personal desires and aspirations
- What were you hiding behind this façade?

- What happened to this façade/persona/false self during the time when you separated from your old life?
    - Was it still up? Did it come down in pieces or at once?
- What happened to this self during the time when you were exploring new ideas and potential new life steps?

- What is being "authentic" all about?
- What does living "authentically" mean to you?
- Do you think it's just a subjective thing, or where does it come from?
- When did you first notice that you were living authentically, or that you were being true to yourself?

Value Shift – Beyond Materialism

- How would you describe your aims in life before the crisis?
- Were you motivated by
    - Money
    - Status
    - Position
    - Power
- If so…What did you hope those things would bring?
- Where / who do you think you had got those values from?
    - Probe for: culture, parents, peers, business world, social pressures etc.

- Would you consider yourself at the time to be a materialistic person?

- Are you still as driven by money as you were then?
- Has there been a change in this value set?

- What are you aiming for now?
- What is important to you now?
    - Probe for:
        - Relationships and family
        - Positive contribution
        - Spiritual aspect of life

Metacognition

- Did you feel that you had lost perspective in your life before the crisis?
    - In what sense?
    - Lost perspective on what?

- Did you feel that you were living consciously?
- Did you ever feel that you were on "autopilot"?
- Did you ever feel that life had become an automatic routine?

- Did you know yourself and who you were as a person clearly?
- Were you aware of the impact your life was having on those around you?
- Did you even think about leaving your life? When did that start?

- When did you start to be able to stand back and look at your situation and get some perspective on it?
- How did that new perspective come about?
- How would you compare your mindset now with before the crisis?
    - What do you have perspective on now?

Gender Identity: Animus and Anima

- Before crisis, would you have described yourself as "in touch" with your masculine / feminine side?
- Were you aware of it?

- How would you describe your masculine side?
- How would you describe your feminine side?

- Why do you think it had remained latent/hidden before the crisis?

- How did you feel and think when it started to become more apparent?
    - Did it worry you at all?
- What was your first reaction?

- How did the new masculinity / femininity express itself?
    - Did it make you act / think differently?
    - Friends / activities?

- Did you become more aware of your own emotions and feelings?
    - Was this linked to the change in sense of your femininity?

Transformation

Q – On the last page of the transcript, you say, "I have been rebirthed as the new me".

- How would you describe the old Rob?
- What attributes and goals did he have?

- How would you describe the new Rob?
- What attributes and goals do you have now, which you did not then?
- What role did the crisis of losing job and wife play in the process of uncovering the new Rob?
- What do you identify with now?

A dramatic impact on my life – why do you think it took a crisis to bring about the transformation?

Do you think that the ideal life is a life without crisis?

Mark Interview 2 Schedule

Pre-Crisis and Early Life

- So firstly, something which I didn't ask at all last time, a little bit on your childhood. What were you like as a child?
- How did you react to authority when you were a child? Were you rebellious?
- What sort of things fascinated you as a child?
- Were you quite an academic child?
- Do you remember how the decision was taken to go into consulting?
- You mentioned that over the time at KPMG, you developed a reputation as a serious player in the industry.

Persona

- After a while did you feel a need to act up to that reputation?
- Did it necessitate having to put on a front occasionally?
- Did you find yourself identifying with the façade you created to be that person at KPMG.
- Describe the façade to me.
- You mentioned this phrase "living a lie". Obviously it's a nice little axiom, but if you were going to summarise for me, what was the lie?
- Again, this is a phrase that is used a lot, "its not really me", and you say here "money and status, yeah they are great, but they are not really me." Now what I'm curious about is how do you know its not you?
- Would it be then fair to say that a lot of your story is about moving beyond convention?

Gender

- Is it quite a masculinised environment?
- How did that have an affect on you over the time?
- A number of people I have spoken to have said that the transition away from their old life was a chance to contact the more feminine parts of themselves, parts that have been locked away in a corporate context. Does that resonate with you at all?

Materialism

- You mentioned that there was a shift away from being money focused to being more people-focused. Does that tie in?
- Clearly that aspect of you that is people-focused and caring was a mismatch between you and the environment. Any other parts of you that you felt didn't have an outlet at KPMG?

Metacognition

- You mentioned a couple of things. You said "you are not registering what is wrong, you are not getting beyond it", then you said "I needed space to get out of it, and get out of my confusions", and you said "I now have a clearer perspective on it". They seem to relate to this notion of when you were there, not having a clear perspective on the situation. Is that the case?

- Did it feel like your horizons constricted to the walls of KPMG?

- You mentioned issues of exploring yourself. Has it been more exploratory since KPMG?

Transformation

- Briefly, the CAT, did you start that while were you still at KPMG? Do you consider that as instrumental in the process?

- I have to say that in the interview last time when you said you went from this to cooking, I didn't see that coming, that was a good surprise, because it is such as big decision. So where did that come from?

- What were you hoping it might bring?

- Again, in summary, what is it about academia that you prefer to your old life as a consultant?

- Does it relate to either living for the present moment, against living for an aspired-to point in the future. Do you feel more present?

Thank participant and give debrief form

Victoria – Interview 2 guide

Pre-Crisis

- So, firstly a little bit more about life in an Italian village. One thing you said was that "you are not free to do what you want to do, or to be what you want to be." Could you tell me a little bit about that.

- So in principle the pressure to conform is greater than it is here?

- How do you find most people react to that pressure to conform? How would most people react to this pressure to conform?

- Why do you see them as trapped?

- And do you look back and consider that when you were there you didn't grow psychologically?

- Do you think that a situation where someone can't grow psychologically, is that a good or bad situation?

Persona and Control

- OK, I am going to jump back again. You mentioned "yes I did feel controlled, not only by parents, but also by the society and the culture there", so that's quite clear. How do you think culture exerts control over people like you?

- OK, back to Italy. You said at a certain point I realised "it wasn't me". It's very interesting, because it comes up a lot in interviews. What does it mean?

- So there are these two parts of you. How would you call these parts?

- Now at the time when you were leaving Italy, if I could transport myself back in time and have a little chat with Vicky then, and I say to her can you describe yourself, how do you think she would have described herself then?

- You said "it did feel like a façade…" when referring to life in Italy. I guess the question is what were you hiding behind the façade?

- Why do you think you felt the need to hide it?

- So is the façade the conformist self?

- Certainly, in your story and many others, at the bottom of the story is the move from living a false life behind and façade to a life where one is being true to oneself and living according to one's own wants and aspirations. That sort of development seems to be in the direction of what's called authenticity, or a sense of being real or true to oneself. If the façade comes from society, where does the real self come from?

- When you were there and you said "poor me…victim…" Where do you think this victim mentality came from?

- When do you recall the first time that you started to take charge of your life? Do you recall any particular moment that you decided to become more assertive?

- Do you think your level of assertiveness as opposed to victim mentality, do you think it grew over the crisis?

- Did you manage to break free of your victim mentality as soon as you arrived?

Gender and Femininity

- You said you feel more feminine now than you used to (p.12). Can you explain in what ways you feel like this?

- Lets do it another way round. In what ways before the crisis were you not able to express your femininity?

- I am wondering if you can determine when during the crisis was the change in your sense of femininity.
- You mentioned a growth in your feminine side since before the crisis. Have you experienced a balancing of your masculine and feminine sides? If so, how has that manifest?

Materialism

- Are you more or less materialistic since the crisis?

Self-Reflection

- Do you think at that time that you knew who were as a person?

- Do you remember the exact moment where you thought right I'm going?

- What did it feel like being away from your parents?

- How long do you think it took to feel liberated from that sense of being controlled?

- And then with regards to that, you said "I started to opening up to different things." What sort of things did you open up to?

- Well did you open up to new aspects of yourself?

- That's interesting you refer to it as "listening" to this real part of you. What do you have to listen out for?

Transformation

- Clearly your life changed a lot over the crisis, would you say that your personality has changed?
- Since the crisis, do you feel more aware of your faults?
- Do you feel more aware of your emotions?
- Do you feel more aware of what you want out of life?
- Do you know yourself better?
- Do you see Vicky before and Vicky after as different people?
-
- p.12 – harmonious aspect – what mean?

- Do you think that change is permanent? Do you think that you may go back to how you were?

Claire – Interview 2 guide

Pre-crisis

- Did you dream of what you wanted to be or do when you were a child? What about as a teenager?

- Going into the business world,
  "It was about proving who was the strongest, its not about proving who is the wisest or the most considerate. Doing something that produces the required results no matter what the sacrifice to other people may or may not be, it's not what I would call doing one's best. It's thuggery, beautifully groomed thuggery but nonetheless thuggery. I found that very tough, but I developed an artificial, hard-nosed personality as a result."

Why did you do it? Was it really only to pay for your children? There are lots of other ways to work. Were you hoping for success / prestige / praise?

- Do you think that towards the end of the career in your twenties, when you were looking to leave your job and go back to spending time with your children. You said:

  "I felt exhausted. I felt lonely, depressed, when I gave myself time to think about it….Working 18-20 hours a day, and any free time I had was with the kids. The first period I held down two jobs, because I had no financial support from the children's father. Um, and it was very, very tough. "

- Did you feel that there was no way out of this intense work life?

- Do you think that period before the marriage was a mini-crisis in itself?

- How do you think it relates to the marital crisis? Did one feed into the other?

Marriage

- When you started the marriage, and were spending more time at home, did it feel like you were making up for lost time?

- You mentioned that when working you had to develop a "hard-nosed, masculine" façade. Did you find that when you left work, and went to be a mum at home, that façade left? Are you sure?

Gender

- How did this affect your sense of femininity, of being a woman?

Persona and Gender

- You talked about being "on show" all the time?
- "your home is on show, your children are on show, and you're on show."

- "The house was immaculate, the flowers were immaculate, the children were immaculate, you name it, I did it."

- Why was everything on show all the time?
- Making the right impression?
- Was it important to impress people?
- Was it easy to relax?

- What about the "superwoman complex" – was that designed to impress people? Was that a new façade?

Materialism

- One of the things I am interested in is how crisis around this age affects people's attitudes to money. How do you think your experience of crisis affected *your* attitude to money? How would you describe your attitude to money now?

  Probe…….

Transformation

- "What we perceive as dignity, and what we invest in dignity is an illusion. Somehow certain types of tragedy strip you of that illusion, and you desperately want to put the illusion back on like a stripped dressing gown, you get used to living without the dressing gown and after a while you realise what did you want the dressing gown for in the first place?"
- Can you explain that for me please?!

- "I think I grew up big time, and I find being with what I call arrested development adults quite difficult."

- "It cured me. It really, really cured me of me thinking that I was the centre of the universe."

- What was it about this experience that made you less self-centred?

- Did it make you feel stronger?
- More vulnerable?

Transformation analogy

- "However you prune a rosebush will to a greater or lesser extent dictate how the rosebush grows thereafter. There are certain organisms that don't flourish unless they are pruned quite radically, and I think there are certain elements of awareness, consciousness, strength, determination, that are not realised unless you are given enough of a hard time to wake up."

- What aspects of you only flourished after it was "pruned" by the crisis?

- "There are parts of me that are weakened and parts of me that are strengthened." – what is strengthened and what is weakened?

Resolution

- You said initially that the crisis lasted ten years. When did it start for you and when did it finish? What brought about the closure of this episode in your life?

- Was it any changes to your lifestyle that brought closure?
- Or was it time healing the past?
- Or was it a kind of "reinterpretation" of things gone by – recasting the past in your mind?

- When did you meet you current husband? How long after this crisis?

- Most crises that people tell me about are in general at most 3 years long, this is a long one. Why so long, do you think?

Lilly – Interview 2 Schedule

Pre-Crisis

- What did you dream of doing as a child, when you grew up?
- Then when you were a teenager?
- Did you have any strong interests or fascinations?

Persona / Authenticity

- Did you feel suited to the roles you were in?
    - Door-to-door salesperson
    - Marketing job
- Do you think that Quinn was suited to you as a person?

- Did you have to adapt your personality to the role?
    - Did it feel like a mask?
- How was your health at the time?

- Were you proud of your work achievements?
- Was your self-esteem affected by your work performance?

- Were there any ways in which before the crisis you weren't being fully yourself?

- Did you feel trapped at all, down In Newhaven?

- How much of that phase of life in Brighton and Newhaven do you see as due to the fact that you didn't get a place to read psychology, and so had to try a different route?

- You mentioned a façade – how would you describe that façade (i.e characteristics)
    - Can you recognise a time or a period where that façade started to come down?
    - Did the time spent living with your mum help?
    - How long before you started working again?

- What happened to this façade/persona/false self during the time when you separated from your old life?
    - Was it still up? Did it come down in pieces or at once?
- What happened to this self during the time when you were exploring through new ideas and potential new life steps?

- What is being "authentic" all about?
- What does living "authentically" mean to you?
- Do you think its just a subjective thing, or where does it come from?
- When did you first notice that you were living authentically, or that you were being true to yourself?

Metacognition

- Did you feel that you had your life in perspective?
    - In what sense?
    - Lost perspective on what?

- Did you feel that you were living consciously?

- Did you know yourself and who you were as a person clearly?
- Were you aware of the impact your life was having on those around you?
- Did you even think about leaving your life? When did that start?

- When did you start to be able to stand back on your situation and get some perspective on it?

- How did that new perspective come about?
- How would you compare your mindset now with before the crisis?
    - What do you have perspective on now?

Value Shift – Beyond Materialism

- How would you describe your aims in life before the crisis?
- Were you motivated by
    - Money
    - Status
    - Position
    - Power
- If so…What did you hope those things would bring?
- Where / who do you think you had got those values from?
    - Probe for: culture, parents, peers, business world, social pressures etc.

- Would you consider yourself at the time to be a materialistic person?
- Are you still as driven by money as you were then?
- Has there been a change in your attitude towards money?

- What are you aiming for now?
- What is important to you now?
    - Probe for:
        - Relationships and family
        - Positive contribution
        - Spiritual aspect of life

Gender Identity: Animus and Anima

- In the first interview, there is a sense that when you were younger, you were a bit of a tomboy, ie. cricket and rugby, and also hanging out with boys. Would you say that's fair?
- Before crisis, would you have described yourself as "in touch" with your feminine side?
- How would you describe your relationship with your femininity?

- How would you describe your masculine side?
- How would you describe your feminine side?

- Why do you think it had remained latent/hidden before the crisis?

- How did you feel / think when it started to become more apparent?
    - Did it worry you at all?
- What was your first reaction?

- How did the new masculinity / femininity express itself?
    - Did it make you act / think differently?
    - Friends / activities?

- Did you become more aware of your own emotions and feelings?
    - Was this linked to the change in sense of your femininity?

Development

- You mentioned that you see yourself as constantly changing – that the self now is different from the self then and will be different from the self in ten years.

APPENDIX B

INFORMATION SHEETS

Information Sheet for Studies 1 and 2

School of Psychology
Birkbeck College
University of London
London
WC1E 7HX
0207 7631 6520

PhD investigation: Crisis, Development and the Self

Information Sheet

The PhD investigation that I am conducting studies the developmental effects of crisis episodes on people's lives between the ages of 25 and 40. Have you had an experience that you would be willing to discuss or do you know someone who has? For an episode to qualify it must meet the following criteria:

- It must be considered a time of crisis
- It was at least a month long
- It originated in problems at work, at home, or both
- It occurred at least a year ago
- You experienced significant and prolonged stress during it
- You felt out of control at times
- It did *not* involve a bereavement
- It did *not* involve a chronic or life-threatening illness or health condition on your part

If you can determine such an episode in your life, and you would be willing to confidentially discuss this episode, then I ask that you contact me on my phone number or email address below. Interviews are 45-minutes long, and are conducted in the comfort and privacy of your home or in my office at Birkbeck.

Your name would not be attached to any published material – the process is completely confidential. While interviews will be taped for analysis purposes, only the researcher will hear the tape and all names will be changed. Dr. Jonathan Smith is supervising the project.

Feel free to contact me to discuss any issues further.

Olly Robinson

Phone: 07939 158686
Email: o.robinson@ psychology.bbk.ac.uk

Information Sheet for Study 3

School of Psychology
Birkbeck College
University of London
London
WC1E 7HX
0207 7631 6520

PhD investigation: Developmental Crisis and the Self in Early Adulthood

Information Sheet

This PhD study is investigating the nature and developmental effects of crisis episodes experienced in early adulthood. I have already conducted two rounds of interviews, and this is the third and final study. Dr. Jonathan Smith (ja.smith@bbk.ac.uk) is supervising the project.

For an episode to qualify for inclusion it should meet the following criteria:

- It must be considered *by you* as a time of crisis
- It occurred between the ages of 27 and 37
- It lasted between several months and several years
- It disrupted both work life and home life
- It occurred at least a year ago
- You experienced significant and prolonged stress and emotional difficulty during it
- It did not involve a bereavement
- It did not involve a chronic or life-threatening illness or health condition on your part

If you can determine such an episode in your life, and you would be willing to confidentially discuss this episode, then please contact me on my phone number or email address below. Interviews are 45-minutes long, and are conducted in the comfort and privacy of your home or in my office at Birkbeck. Participation requires two such interviews.

Your name would not be attached to any published material – the process is completely confidential. While interviews will be taped for analysis purposes, only the researcher will hear the tape and all names and place names will be changed. Feel free to contact me to discuss any issues further.

Regards,

Olly Robinson

Phone: 07939 158686
Email: o.robinson@ psychology.bbk.ac.uk

APPENDIX C

School of Psychology
Birkbeck, University of London

Consent Form

PhD Investigation: "Developmental Crisis and the Self in Early Adulthood"

Researcher: Oliver Robinson

I have been informed about the nature of this study and willingly consent to taking part in this interview. I agree that the interview can be tape-recorded.

I understand that anything I say and the results of the interview will be kept confidential. My name will not appear in the interview transcript, nor in any subsequent publication.

I also understand that I may refuse to answer questions put to me that I do not wish to answer and that, if I wish, I may withdraw from the study at any time.

I am over 21 years of age.

Signed

……..

Date

……..

Appendix D

Memos

Memos are an important part of the method used in this study. This appendix lists all the memos in chronological order, written over a two year period. They record insights, thoughts, analysis schemes, pattern codes or typologies which at the time seemed of interest. These memos were recorded directly into a dedicated memo folder on the computer, and provide a record of evolving analysis and interpretation. They are shown exactly as they were written, with the date that they were written.

Within-Case Study 1 Memos

Camilla memos

1/2/05
Camilla sets the scene for her crisis by painting a picture of her early twenties as one of freedom, partying, drinking and having a great time. She says that in those days she was 'out of control', although in a very different sense to the way in which 'out of control' has been such a feature in the crisis narratives. By having too much freedom, and just doing 'what she wanted' she was out of control. So by having too much freedom, too much detachment from the society in which one is embedded, one can also experience a kind of tyranny in the individualistic solipsism which is such a feature in modern life. We are very good on rights but not on responsibility. So it would be fair to say that crisis is not just about liberation from constraint, it is about finding a balance between one's own desires and passions and one's responsibilities to others and to the society in which one is nurtured. Mill says later in his book (find quote, that despite our responsibility not to blindly conform, we also have a responsibility to the social structure into which we fit. A balance between opposites, as is so often the case, must be found.

1/2/05
There are moral implications in all the crises so far – other people are involved, get hurt, get left, or get used, and this inevitably causes guilt. In fact 'morality and guilt' would be a good section in the write-up. Gosh, this is really exciting. This is a genuinely fascinating and insightful project, I am learning about human beings! Real human beings!

1/2/05
The trap for Camilla, the pressure situation was being in a controlling affair relationship with her boss and being at work with people isolating her, whispering about her, not being able to tell anyone, his wife working there. That is quite a little pressure cooker. The pressure is released when she leaves the job and leaves him. Although she does come back to him considerably later.

1/2/05
on page 9, Camilla concludes that having consideration for others via considering as widely as possible the consequences of your actions, is part and parcel of her development. There seems in her mature self to be a balance of autonomy and integration with the world around her. Thus we connect with the issue mentioned above of a balance between separateness and connectedness.

Society as a game of control. You try and control it for your ends, it tries to control you for its ends. Meet in the middle, be subverted completely or get the hell out. The former is the healthy option. It's the part/whole tension.

3/2/05
Camilla before the crisis was free in that she could do what she wanted to do, but she was directionless,

and so there was unused freedom. Lots of freedom from but no freedom to. This is terribly inarticulate, because I don't know exactly what I am saying, but in the lack of a direction, somehow the freedom was a bit meaningless. And she was still yet to develop the assertiveness that allows her to remain upright despite being pushed around.

Angela memos

11/2/05
Its 4.30pm on Friday 11th February 2005 and I am knackered. But just one more thing before I pack it in for a four day holiday. Angela is in a job with people she doesn't like and a boss who psychologically bullies her. She should get out, but she doesn't. This is the case in many of the narratives so far. And why doesn't she get out? Because "my confidence had gone by then". She doesn't believe in her ability to bring about effective change, and this is surely a cause of the stasis. If you don't believe you can improve your lot, you don't. Simple as that really. Lack of efficacy = stasis.

16/2/05
Angela's interview is rich with material. It is another articulate account of finding expression of an authentic self, finding a harmony of self and environment and of navigating the dialectic between independent expression and autonomous activity and societal or familial expectations, conformist pressures and obedience to authority. The data are suggesting quite clearly that this existential challenge is far from being exclusively the domain of the adolescent, but is in fact an antecedent of much crisis in adult life too. This fits with Mill's philosophy and with those who see society as a straightjacket as well as a facilitator. This would of course include Freud.

16/2/05
Interesting that, like Mary, Angela describes her mind as becoming fuzzy:
"My head was very fuzzy" p.7
When she is coming to a realisation that she cannot do the job.

16/2/05
In Angela there is an impression vs expression theme. Impression is an superordinate intentional/attentional mode in which the self-as-object, the "m" is central – the key cognitive evaluation is "how might I appear?" or "what might others think of me and of my action?" . Expression is one in which the self-as-subject, the "I" is central – the key evaluation is "what do I want?", "what do I desire?", or even "what does that other person genuinely desire?" (as opposed to – what might that person think of me if I do something for him?")

16/2/05
Before the crisis, Angela used to say yes to everyone and everything, rather than resist and follow her insights or impulses. Same with Mary, same with Gemma, same with Rachel, same with Camilla (I think), same with Lynne. This is an interesting thing, and again relates to agency and assertiveness. In the write-up, I am going to have to link assertiveness and agency very carefully.

Frances memos

28/1/05
This a narrative of being trapped in a relationship, of taking a victim role and of completely losing all sense of agency, despite having been a fairly independent twenty something before that, having travelled a lot and so forth. So it is not like Gemma who never really had an adolescence. This is a question of being put in a relationship with someone who is sufficiently controlling to essentially abuse Frances and turn her into a passive 'blob' of a human being – a 'non-person'. (fascinating that both Frances and Gemma use this term – this is more than just coincidence).

28/1/05
As soon as I start reading Frances's transcript, I am struck by how, just like the three other transcripts I have read so far, the crisis begins with Mandy in a situation where her actions are heavily constrained

in that she is part of a dyadic relationship, and part of a drug-dealing circle as a result. She is passive, not acting from her inner world but for Pete, the other. Its not that she's never had agency or autonomy, but in this relationship it becomes utterly subdued under the force of Pete, the forceful, unpredictable and profoundly emotionally unstable other half.

31/5/04
Frances is passionate about travelling and waitressing. She is clearly someone who gets enthused by the world, and knows what she enjoys doing. She loses all joy during the trapped crisis episode, and stops travelling. Indeed Pete makes her feel very bad about travelling – he berates her for going to India at the beginning of their relationship. When she finally emerges from the relationship, her first desire is to re-contact herself, and the way she does that is by going away again, getting out of England. It is time to find the passion again. Remove the coercion, find the desire.

31/1/05
Frances shows a typical metamorphic self-dynamic in the narrative. She has a naïve old self, loses the self during the trapped period as her autonomous being is fatally compromised to the point of losing all character. Hew new self is a mixture of recontacting the old self but integrating into a new, different being who is more realistic, less confident and more aware of the dark possibilities within her. It is a transcend and include movement – a systems view might get to the heart of this, I can envisage a diagram of concentric rings.

31.1.05
Frances does try to leave Pete several times, tries to escape from the controlling force of the relationship and the drug-dealing, but tries and fails several times before finally escaping. This is also true of Mary who tries to escape from law a number of times before finally managing to make the severance.

31.01.05
Guilt is an omnipresent emotion in the crises so far. Perhaps this is because when the liberation starts the social imperative that is transgressed is still in place.

Gemma memos

4/02/05
Gemma's narrative moves from a number of phrases that denote her as object, and as a passive object in the narrative, to the active agent. The crisis is all about agency.

4/02/05
The language that Gemma uses to refer to herself in the first part of the narrative, pre-crisis, portrays herself as a malleable, passive object, whose goals are not derived from her own desires, and whose main concern, following her parents, is with impression, not expression. The first order code of 'empty self' refers to this vacuum of authentic character. Passivity manifests in being 'nice' and 'accepting' at the expense of strong willed or authentic. Goals are introjected – they are societal roles and expectations, not personal aspirations, and this is coded by 'do as others do'. Passive malleability is a key part of the narrative, in its stark contrast with the expressive and agentic language she uses to describe herself post-crisis.

5/02/05
A key theme in building an explanatory and historical context for the crisis episode is the repressive and controlling influence of Gemma's parents right up until the crisis itself. Gemma hid and concealed her feelings, her authentic self, and her desires, in response to parental control and their desire for conformity

5/02/05
Gemma describes the 'smooth transition' from being her parent's daughter to her husband's wife, all the while playing roles. This is in stark contrast from the shift that constitutes the crisis, which is anything but.

5/02/05
As the crisis progresses, Gemma continues to search externally for a cause to her suffering, and this is the 'continued external search'. This is followed by 'assertiveness and expression' which is a key phase of opening to begins to become more aware of inner feelings and her own desires. This is a prelude to the release of the pressure valve…

6/02/05
Gemma, despite some resistance, goes and sees a counsellor. This is a major turning point – a release of emotion, thoughts, concerns and a surfacing of the inner self. At this point, there is a sense of quest, journey, path, in the narrative, which suggests that the release moment releases something fluid and open-ended, rather than something static and pre-constructed.

6/02/05
Gemma separates, liberates, and encounters the full range of emotions from terrible guilt to excitement to fear. There seems to be an interesting co-occurrence of positive and negative emotions..

Mary Memos

11.05.2005
A key opening part of the narrative is about how Mary came to choose law as a profession. 'Law' later in the narrative becomes the bond from which she must set herself free.

11.05.2005
The contextual environment in which the crisis unfolds is described here – secure, competitive and all-subsuming

The crisis is a long time in coming – the final pressure build up and release is the culmination of at least five years of doubt about her life and lifestyle. The realisation of possibility of separation is a realisation of possibility within herself – the change is away from the rigidity of her self-concept toward one in which possibility and alternatives could manifest.

12.05.2005
Memo: Mary's Fairground Ride
It was telling that during the emotional period just after separation, Mary finds that it is a small child playing on a fairground ride who acts a teacher. She relays the following story:

> "There was a family staying with me, and there was a 12 year old who was crazy to go on a fairground ride here, I don't know whether you know, but it goes faster and faster and faster and it tips up, and there is nothing to stop you falling in apart from the centrifugal force, and I would never ever normally have gone on anything like that, I hate those rides, terrified of them. She was desperate to go on the ride, I was still feeling this minute to minute terror, and I thought there is nothing to be afraid of, anything to fill a minute will be fantastic, so off I went on this ride and loved it with this girl and of course loved every minute of it – a fantastic filling of those minutes with huge adrenalin. She and I, like two junkies, went on this ridiculous fairground ride again and again. She was another person who really helped me out – her desire to go on this was in fact my saving grace." (p.7-8)

It doesn't seem like a huge hermeutic leap from this story to suggest that what Mary was trying to find again upon leaving her job is what children spontaneously have – the ability to just *be*, and correspondingly the ability to just *be yourself*, rather than the frenetic need to prove self all the time.

Rachel Memos

25.01.2005
Rachel refers to her time before the crisis as embedded into social expectations of what a girl should and should not do. She followed the lead that was set for her by her contemporary peer group, and submitted to external pressures to be and act a certain way. This might suggest that in so doing she would be integrated and feel connected with her milieu and her society. But she says the despite this, she felt very isolated, far out from how others ran their lives. This isolation was deepened post-separation and only was really dampened and lessened when she got involved in the civil rights movement. The isolation is due to her hidden internal desires and feelings that are not validated by others as right or sane, but are there nonetheless – a desire to read, to discover, to be autonomous and free-thinking.

25.01.2005
This is remarkably similar to Gemma, in fact the whole narrative is remarkably similar to Gemma.

25.01.2005
I get the feeling that 'nice' is used to mean benign and accepting of one's circumstances, submissive to what one is duty-bound to do. Nice is not being true to oneself. Nice is being true to others, to the tyranny of the majority.

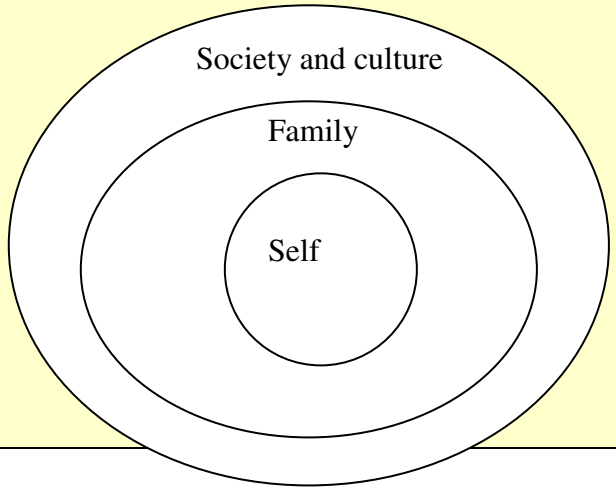
25.01.2005
This interview also shows the change from a surpressed inner world, and at that point a lack of expressive agency, toward a stronger being who can tie their inner desires and outward actions and goals into an integrated unity.

25.01.2005
It is most interesting that the word 'nice' is used in a derogatory sense by both Rachel and Gemma. I agree! There is nothing as insipid as being a 'nice' person. All it means is that you are weak and compliant. Nice girls don't think for themselves, they do what they are expected to do. The husband is 'nice seeming' too.

25.01.2005
"Since I became me." - I love this quote on final page – bringing the subject and object self closer together – bringing consciousness and self-as-object together. Almost could be a title for the book.

25.01.2005
Rachel does say that she feels more cohesive, as though she has more of a core than she did before. This links into the inner-outer cohesion, which is manifest in the narrative.

Given the importance of culture and family in some of these, would it be an idea to present, as an analytic framework, a kind of Bronfrenbrenner nested systems thing.



Violet memos

09.02.05
Once again we find with Violet a narrative of liberation – an escape from a constraining, false life replete with lies and duplicity. The position she was in she was maintaining out of a sense of 'duty' – an obligation to others, rather than to herself.

Crisis is defined by negative symptoms in thought, imagery, feeling and body. There are thought patterns that ruminate over all sorts of weird things. There are intrustive images, negative emotions from anger to guilt to grief and physical symptoms of illness. Not necessary all concurrent, but they are all there.

It is interesting that a number of the interviewees go back to study directly off the back of the crisis – as though the release of constraint gives them the opportunity to develop themselves again, and that study gives them the opportunity to develop themselves – to grow, rather than remain static.

On Page 8 Violet uses a nice analogy – she wants to get her integrated voice together, and wants "to be part of the fantastic chorus." This shows the dialectical interplay of individuation and collective togetherness. Being part of a chorus is all about being involved in something bigger than you, but only by sticking to your line and playing your part. If you wander off and just do what everyone else is doing, there will be no harmony and the chorus won't work.

Supressing feelings was a way of making it (the dyad) work – for her desires were not in line with the maintenance of the status quo. Repression as adaptive within the confines of a social system that is not questioned.

Memo – page 2 – interesting use of 'non-reality' – reminds me of 'non-person'

"So suddenly being a single parent I realised that I had been a single parent for years." This quote sums up something profound – upon release away from the holding system, the individual realises that he or she was isolated before. Thus separation has perhaps happened a lot earlier mentally, but the body remains trapped, out of obligation, and then gets brought into the space where the mind has been for a while – outside, independent, with new possibilities for the future.

Between–Case Memos

17.01.05

Crisis types (or crisis elements??)

- Liberation
- The last straw
- Hitting rock bottom
- What's wrong with me?
- I've blown it.
- Who am I?
- Trapped
- Its all too much
- Bullied

17.01/05

Issues of crisis and therapy

Difficult to tease out what is crisis effect and what is therapy.
Perhaps its better not to think in terms of a cause and effect, but rather of setting into sequence a train of events which leads to better self-understanding and better balance. Think process not discrete cause-effect links.
Deal with psychology and common sense, because inevitably having to use the psychology of everyday life, of personal reflection and introspection.

25/1/05

Just a thought, but all the crises I can think of, bar one or two externals, were about agency – moving from should and external control to want and internal control / autonomy.

26/1/05

There is a separation theme in MANY of the interviews, and with that a moving from external control to internal control – establishing agency and a new form of being.

The crisis either side of the separation takes on a different character. There is a period of difficulty and negative emotion before the split, then the split itself, which is accompanied by a window of relief and hope, then another period of difficulty as the whole new challenge of life without the old comfortable supports kicks in. This may be anxiety, terror, guilt, isolation, lack of confidence, but it is a second peak.

27/1/05

On page 4 Mary talks about how she couldn't operate, and that it was hard work operating. This is an interesting choice of word and suggests an automaton or robot who is there in body but not in spirit.

27/1/05

After the separation, there is this second period of difficulty, which is characterised by guilt and grief

27/1/05

Whether from family, a spouse or work, many of the interviews relate a story of separation from a social system (anywhere from a dyad to a corporation) that exerts an oppressive force on the protagonist of the narrative. This oppressive force prevents autonomy and prevents inner desires and aspirations from manifesting as action and goal-directed activity. Instead the protagonist hides the inner world, and acts in accordance with what he or she feels compelled to do by the forces and constraints imposed on him or her. This results in externally 'playing a role' – empty actions that occur because they are supposed to, without passion or desire. This creates a disjunction between the inner real self and the outer actual self, which is a 'derelict house' or an 'empty self'. At some point there is a trigger that permits the protagonist to open to the possibility of change, often involving another person to whom she or he can open up the inner world without fear of punishment or judgment, and so start the reconciliation of inner and outer. This leads to a separation from the social system in question, and a quest for autonomy so that the authentic self, or hidden passions, can manifest. This entails a process of experimentation in which possible selves and possible activities are tried on for size, and a gradual opening to a calling, a freely chosen cause or goal, and gradual acceptance into a new social system that better fits the inner self.

In all three interviews I have done so far, the issue of possibility, and the opening of possibility, or the

acceptance of genuine possibility, and therefore of a free future in which there is more than one path. (for freedom is nothing more than having more than one path available into the future). This is an interesting commonality, and perhaps is bound into the issue of autonomy that rears its head so often too. Is the move through the crisis from the confines of necessity to the flourishing bloom of possibility?

Something else is that the move from necessity to possibility requires a separation of some variety. So far it has been from husbands or job. Necessity is what is moved from, and necessity must be impinged on the person in question by something or someone. Someone or something must be doing the coercing, or must be perceived as that which one is obliged to commit to or stay with.

1/2/05

Deci and Ryan's typology of regulation and control – external, introjected, internal, etc, might be a good way of looking at issues of control and want vs should.

16/2/05

I would say that a number of persons I have spoken to – Mary, Violet, Angela, Jonathan, Gemma, and others, are fairly unconventional, or at least creatively orientated and not conventionally aspirated. So for them conventional roles will compromise the self, while for other more conventionally wired up people appropriating and inhabiting socially or corporately defined roles will present less of a problem. It is always *from* procedural and structured *to* creative and fluid, the developmental process through crisis, not vice versa.

17/2/05

Dan focuses less on being a career person – like Lynne, like Mary. But there is more of an emphasis on provision for the family, on the financial side of crisis, like Patrick. Being a career person meant career-based aspirations, for self-concept feeds goals and vice versa.

Crisis as catalyst – something that is worth mentioning in analysis as its own theme.

His new life is more balanced, less lucrative, more stable. Probably the most interesting feature of the interview is the clear shift away from proving himself by corporate milestones and working every hour god sends, to a more relaxed life with more time with family, more control over his career and more alternatives if things go arse over tit, more identification with relationships rather than with career. On page 8 he implies that proving self comes from having a recognised high profile job, high salary, and high other things upon which human beings are consensually ranked to ascertain 'status'.

18/2/05

"If it wasn't for the crisis, I wouldn't be the person I am today, because I would probably have gone on the road of least resistance, if you like, I probably wouldn't have been aware of the other talents and strengths that I had. So the crisis did help me in that respect in that I am a much stronger person now than I was then, *much, much* stronger." 9 (Patrick/Steve)

This reminds me of Neitzsche in many ways – the diamond and charcoal analogy. The importance of suffering for refining the human being to a sharp and hard point. Might be worth digging out the diamond and charcoal analogy.

For diamonds are forged under immense pressure. And it also links into the transparency thing. It also links into the hardness thing (assertiveness).

18/2/05

A circumstance conspires to block key desires and goals within a person. This creates a sense of being trapped, blocked, pressured, so that the tension to actualise the desires grows and grows. When the tension is released, at some key juncture or moment, then the stored up energy, like the steam in pressure cooker, comes whizzing out which gives the energy for taking initiatives that might have taken longer to get to otherwise.

How inarticulate is that!

18.2.05

Thoughts: lack of financial amongst ladies may be due to the selective nature of narrative, in which people prioritise certain aspects of the story to tell, or it may be that financial crisis is something that a man encounters more often than a woman.

18.2.05

Clearly a number of narratives bring in the issue of society itself, and the crisis as being partly a reaction to the way in which society is set up, what it advocates and what it prohibits. Although none of the crises, perhaps with the exception of Rachel, are explicitly causally linked to society, in the case of Angela, Henry, Gemma and others, there is some part of the interview which sees the crisis as stemming from society itself, and that some part of the resolution was a rejection of that aspect of society. This is done by suggesting that the problem in question in the marriage or in the job was in some sense a culturally sanctioned practice more generally, and therefore was in some sense the responsibility of society.

14.4.05

I'm thinking that trapped could be illustrated in the same way as Bronfrenbrenner does, with one of the super-ordinate systems impinging and trapping the person in a current, undesired state. Thus one could establish where the oppressive force is coming from, or is appraised to be coming from.

Feeling trapped is an interesting one. Trapped by circumstance. But in the end, other than being in prison, being held hostage or other such coercive situations, we invariably do have a choice, and so are willing co-conspirators in our own trapping.

Anyway, what does trapped mean? Not being able to head in the directions that you want and you intend. Not being able to forge the future that is line with your values, concerns and goals.

29/4/05

Re accidental vs developmental

This distinction isn't holding up in my research – its more hazy than that. It seems that no event is entirely without influence of the subject in question, bar perhaps bereavement, which I am not including. Being fired, a divorce, post-natal stuff, having an affair, lusting over someone you can't have. There are external issues yes, but there are volitional, un-coerced choices being made by participants in question too, which contribute to the situation. And those experiences that come from internal build up are related to external events too, which act as catalysts for change or turning points or key benchmarks in the story. It is far more messy than Caplan would ever have imagined.

28/4/05

Going back to study either during or after the crisis:
Mary, Camilla, Scarlet, Angela, Kathy, Rachel, Violet, Dan, Neil, Lynne, (sort of – starts poetry and joins a poetry club), Frances, George

All these ladies and gents went back to university to do a part time or full time course in something, directly off the back off the crisis.

This is surely more than a coincidence. It could be an artefact of the recruitment.
Or it could be that in refinding their passions, and wanting to pursue something they want, rather than something they are forced to do, they must retrain.

It is an act of agency – Camilla referred to how it was an assertion of her individuality that her controlling boyfriend could not veto. Alison suggests that it was an active choice.

Often they speak of wanting to do some course for many a year, but only having the will and the courage now.

So basically, I am seeing this as part of the agency theme – part of contacting the authentic self, and *developing, growing* as a human being, rather than being stuck in a rut, or trapped in a hole.

Include quotes re retraining, or studying here:
There is an entire study in this – looking at the relationship of those who have gone back to study and crisis. And there is funding there. Definitely. From Adult Education council or something…

29/4/05

Re beginning and end
The lifecourse is a continuum with a definite beginning and end but without any absolute boundaries within it. Society, to take control over the chaotic progression of time, stamps its own benchmarks onto the flow of life, in order to create chapters – weddings, birthdays and annual celebrations give order to the flow of time and cycles of nature. A crisis is a period that someone incises out of their past as a "nuclear episode" of their life narrative. But what is clear is that the crisis is far from a discrete, self-contained event, but is a peak, or a section, of a wave that begins perhaps even in childhood, or certainly for a long time, and tapers off over a long period. The crisis is always a "crisis of wholeness" as Erikson said, but the fractures in the whole can have been laid for a long time, and often the respondents spontaneously give me a developmental story starting in childhood that lays the context for the episode in question.

9/5/05
Levinson's dream:

"In its primordial form, the Dream is a vague sense of self-in-adult-world. It has the quality of a vision, an imagined possibility that generates excitement and vitality. At the start it is poorly articulated and only tenuously connected to reality, although it may contain concrete images such as winning the Nobel Prize or making the all-star team. It may take a dramatic form as in the myth of the hero: the great artist, business tycoon, athletic or intellectual superstar performing magnificent feats and receiving special honors. It may take mundane forms that are yet inspiring and sustaining: the excellent craftsman, the husband-father in a certain kind of family, the highly respected member of one's community." (Levinson et al., 1978, p.91)

Those who build an initial adult life structure around their Dream have a better chance of attaining personal fulfilment. Those whose life structure is a betrayal of their Dream 'will have to deal with the consequences'.

This links to re-finding the dream at, or after, times of crisis….searching back into childhood for what one really wants to do. Recovering the lost dream.

11/5/05

when things are happening *to* someone, and they lose agency and control, is the summation of not

acting from their emotions – the emotions move you to act, your feelings are sources of information, and if they are subverted in favour of external pressures for too long, then the inner world will become unconnected to action, and action will not feel like it is coming from the self.

a sense of non-agency: a product of forces on self-as-object, not of desires

12.5.05

Ought Self – Ideal Self

Two self-guides. Definite push in the direction of the ideal self away from the ought self guide at the time of crisis.

6/5/05 - *Changes in the Self*

1.
From
self-as-object: external locus of control
"It happens to me"
To
Self-as-subject: internal locus of control
"I make it happen"

2.
From
Self-as-static structure: identity as job or family
To
Self-as-process: self as latent potentials unfolding in the present – possible selves

3.
From
Proving oneself – competitive, relative self, impression key
To
Being oneself – developing sense of inherent worth, expression key
(linked to self-as-object, and self-as-subject)

4. – "Peeling back the layers"
From
Surface selves – persona
To
Core self – the "I"

16/5/05

MEMO

ESCAPE CRISIS – wanting out of something – not really knowing where to go next.

APPROACH CRISIS – really wanting something specific but no knowing how to get it, if going to get it, or being rejected.

31/5/05

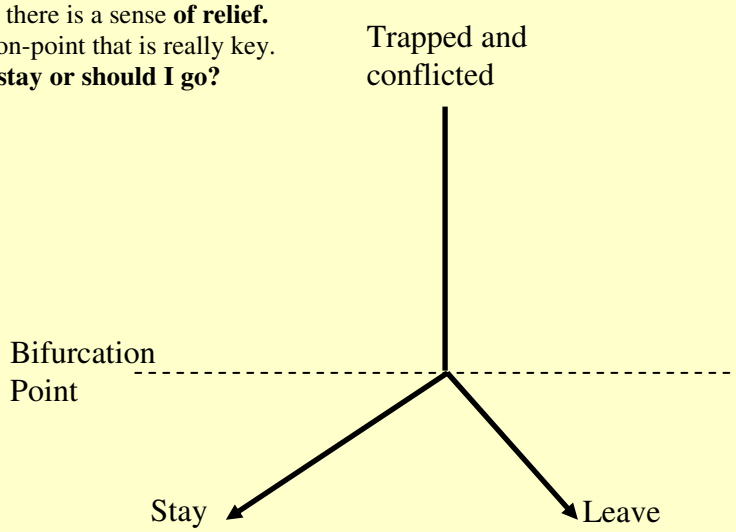
The narratives start with the suppression of the inner world, so the dual landscape is very apparent with a hidden inner life and a "going through the motions" life of action. This inner/outer rift is slowly healed as the narrative progresses, so that they are living authentically by the end, expressing the inner world, rather than impressing with false bullshit

29/6/05
Build into the emerging model and theory the importance of loneliness and isolation that may

accompany the post-partition state. There is no holding system, no role, and no natural support. There is new-found independence, but the potential for being sidelined or solitary.

18/07/05
A key learning the Gemma gained from the experience is that there is resistance to change, growth and individuality built into the very fabric of society. John Stuart Mill, in his treatise 'On Liberty' argued the same point – he called it the 'tyranny of the majority'. The pressure to conform is a form of coercion that forces individuals to succumb to the authority of the collective, rather than to a tyrant or despot. Thus within a democratic society there is still the propensity for submerging the possibility for genuine autonomy under the weight of public opinion, pressure for status, conformity and toeing the line.

20.9.05
Crises as 'bifurcation points'
When the decision is made, there is a sense **of relief.**
It is the two-fold life decision-point that is really key.
It is in all cases: Should I stay or should I go?



05/12/05

Is adolescence developing a conventional self – a self that is in line and integrated into a peer group and is dictated by norms and oughts. It is appearance-focused.

Developing a Post-Conventional Self

Self before crisis: conventional self; takes its shape by the role that is "expected" and "given" by society

Self after crisis: post-conventional: less concerned by external dictates, more concerned by emotions and wants, by feelings, by helping others, by a sense of "calling" or "vocation", more creative as it has removed the shackles of convention and the power of "should"

10/12/05

The research seems to support the telic theory of stress – it is blocked desires, not excessive demands that surpass coping capacity, that cause stress. This fits with Lazarus' view of stress.

Rob for example – page 3. It is the uncertainty over whether he will achieve his goal of getting together with the girl that causes him stress – to say that his coping resources have in some sense been exceeded, makes little sense. It is his desire that is killing him, not insufficient coping resources.

10/12/05

The model holds, but for the gents phase 1 takes differing forms depending on the cluster. There is not a consensus on being trapped in some proverbial prison, but a variety of stressful predicaments that lead to untenable situations, which in turn lead to separations.

Only Guy, Vern, Leon, George, really talked about being trapped. Trapped is not the point here. Perhaps it is stasis. Is phase 1 stasis: whether trapped or not, life has come to a standstill. Frenetic inactivity, to use Guy's phrase.

The common denominator for the blokes in phase 1 is not being "trapped", but being highly pressured.

Being out of control is critical too.

I think this is the common denominator of the male and female groups in phase 1. The issue of passivity is here, of not standing one's ground, of duty.

The separation, the emotion peak, the experimentation, the exploding self, possible selves, final resolution in a role built on purpose, enthusiasm and the Dream.

10/1/2006

OK, in my head at the mo:

Early adulthood is a time about making commitments and limiting choices, putting restrictions on life so that depth and stability can be found and an adult life structure can be built.

If this is done before an ego identity, or self-understanding, or adult agency, or separation from family, is complete, then this commitment may cause a crisis predicament.

24/3/06

There are two kinds of loss of agency, at least, I think:

Loss of surgency

There is the passivity born of a lack of self-belief, self-worth, a fundamental lack of surgency, a victim mentality, having a controlling partner or boss that pushes you around.

Loss of spirit

Then there is the loss of agency that involves not being able to say no, to feel compelled not to bring one's own agenda to life because of forces being exerted on you,so that the emotional, inner part of life disappears. The surgency is there, but the spirit is not.

Both lead to a sense of being out of control, of being controlled from without

27/03/06

Kinds of Phase 1:

Stuck in a rut: inertia of habit and foreclosed commitments, lack of confidence to get outs.

Out of control: relationship with controlling / volatile other, very high pressure at work, problematic / controlling boss

18.7.06

Just writing up Claire's interview, it is apparent how differently one has to react to crisis if one has children. One cannot take several years out to ponder, rediscover, explore and so on, due to the responsibility of providing financially and materially for the children. I get the feeling that Claire's story, which is decidedly different from the others in terms of a complete lack of phase 3, is due to the

lack of available time to pursue and explore alternatives. She had a year out between marriage break up and taking up work again, but this was in no sense a branching out or a moratorium, as far as I could see.
Also, a thought is: crisis as empirical proof of vulnerability, weakness but also strength. Strong evidence for the empirically determined nature of self-attributes. David showed this quite clearly.

21.7. 06
Passion extinguished

Claire fails her ballet exams
Frank's writing talent is quashed
Victoria – isn't able to go to university and learn
Rob – moves away from psychology by failing entrance exam!!
Lilly – doesn't get in to do psychology due to poor A-Levels

WAYEY!

31.7.06

Personas to conform - motive is to fit in, to adapt to a role and to social conventions.
Personas to protect – motive is to prevent people from getting to close, from knowing too much.

31.7.06

In terms of the phase morphology of study 3 interviews, the stand out difference is phase 3 of the model – the post separation period. This manifests very differently in the different individuals, indeed one (Clare) misses it out completely.

This will be an interesting discussion.

14.08.06
Check out Kasser / Ryan et al..
Is the persona / materialism and gender thing about moving from an extrinsic to an intrinsic orientation? Do they relate to this basic meta-theme?

Appendix E

Comparing the Interactive Model and Grounded Theory

The following two tables compare the philosophical and methodological similarities of Miles and Huberman's Interactive Model and Strauss and Corbin's approach to Grounded Theory. Each table cell gives a quote from the original textbook that illustrates the similarity.

Table XIV – Philosophical Similarities

	Grounded Theory – Strauss and Corbin (1998)	**Interactive Model – Miles and Huberman (1994)**
Interplay of induction and deduction	"The concept of induction often is applied to qualitative research. Our position on the matter is as follows. Although statements of relationship or hypotheses do evolve from data (we go from the specific case to the general), whenever we conceptualise data or develop hypotheses, we are interpreting to some degree. To us, an interpretation is a form of deduction. We are deducing what is going on based on data but also based on our reading of that data along with our assumptions about the nature of life, the literature we carry in our heads, and the discussions that we have with colleagues…In fact, there is an interplay between induction and deduction (as in all science)." p.136-137 "many people mistakenly refer to grounded theory as "inductive theory" in order to contrast it with, say, the theories of Parsons or Blau. But as we have indicated, all three aspects of inquiry (induction, deduction, and verification) are absolutely essential." (Strauss, 1987, p.12)	"Then, too, we should not forget why we are out in the field in the first place: to describe and analyze a pattern of relationships. That task requires a set of analytic categories…Starting with them (deductively) or getting gradually to them (inductively) are both possible. In the life of a conceptualisation, we need both approaches – and may well need them from several field researchers – to pull a mass of facts and findings into a wide-ranging, coherent set of generalizations." (1994, p.17) "So induction and deduction are dialectical, rather than mutually exclusive research procedures. The constructivists inductions are informed by a personal conceptual universe; the conceptualist's a priori frameworks contain more empirical data than at first meets the eye." (1994, p.155)
Theory-influenced research process	"Knowledge of philosophical writings and existing theories can be useful under certain circumstances…If the researcher is interested in extending an already existing theory, then he or she might enter the field with some of the concepts and relationships in mind and look for how their	"Finally, as researchers, we do have background knowledge. We see and decipher details, complexities, and subtleties that would elude a less knowledgeable observer. We know some questions to task, which incidents to attend to closely, and how our theoretical

	properties and dimensions vary under a different set of conditions." p.50 "Whether we want to admit it or not, we cannot completely divorce ourselves from who we are or from what we know. The theories that we carry within our heads inform our research in multiple ways, even if we use them quite un-self-consciously." (1998, p.47) "As professionals, most of us are familiar with the literature in the field. Literature can be used as an analytic tool if we are careful to think about it in theoretical terms. Used in this way, the literature can provide a rich source of events to stimulate thinking about properties and for asking conceptual questions." (1998, p.47)	interests are embodied in the field. Not to "lead" with your conceptual strength can be simply self-defeating." (1994, p.17) "We believe that better research happens when you make your framework – and associated choices of research questions, cases, sampling and instrumentation – explicit, rather than claiming inductive "purity." (1994, p.23)
Pragmatism and Pluralism	"We know that readers will treat the material in this book as items on a smorgasbord table from which they can choose, reject, and ignore according to their own "tastes" - and rightly so." p.9	"Its right to say that qualitative data analysis is a craft – one that carries its own disciplines. There are *many* ways of getting analyses "right" – precise, trustworthy, compelling, credible – and they cannot be wholly predicted in advance." (1994, p.309) "Rather, we have tried to bring together a serviceable set of resources, to encourage their use, and, above all, to stimulate their further development, testing and refinement." (1994, p.3)

Table XV: Methodological Similarities

	Grounded Theory – Strauss and Corbin (1998)	**Interactive Model – Miles and Huberman (1994)**
Controlled selectivity from the start	"Another important aspect of the research question is setting the boundaries on what will be studied. It is impossible for any investigator to cover all aspects of a problem. The research question helps narrow the problem down to a workable size." p.40	"That's why we think conceptual frameworks and research questions are the best defence against overload. They also reflect a point we made earlier: that data collection is inescapably a *selective* process, that you cannot and do not "get it all" even though you might think you can and are." p.56
Focus on both Process and Structure	"Why would one want to relate structure with process? Because structure or conditions set the stage, that is, create the circumstances in which problems, issues, happenings, or events pertaining to a phenomenon are situated or arise. Process, on the	"In the "process" mode, we'll be likely to assemble chronologies, pay attention to time, and look for connections within the big picture. In the "variable" mode, we'll be able to code small chunks of data, retrieve them, and look for similarities and conceptual patterns, with less regard

	other hand, denotes the action / interaction over time of persons, organizations, and communities in response to certain problems and issues…If one studies structure only, then one learns why but not how certain events occur. If one studies process only, then one understands how persons act / interact but not why. One must study both structure and process to capture the dynamic and evolving nature of events." (1998, p.127)	to setting, sequence, and the passage of time. Clearly, both stances will be needed at different points in a study. The issue is being aware of your analytic assumptions and acting on them appropriately, moving back and forth between story and concept modes to deepen each." p.147
Use of diagrams and matrices to aid synthesis	"There are times when, either through preference or because the analyst is more of a visual person, diagrams are more useful than storytelling for sorting out the relationships among concepts." p.153 "Diagrams can be valuable tools to integration." p.153	"The displays discussed in this book include many types of matrices, graphs, charts and networks. All are designed to assemble organized information into an immediately accessible, compact form so that the analyst can see what is happening and either draw justified conclusions or move on to the next step of analysis the display suggests might be useful." p.11
Insights and Memos	"Through these alternating processes of data collection and analysis, meanings that often are illusive at first become clearer. Immersion in the analysis leads to those sudden insights, "aha" experiences so familiar to those of us who do qualitative research." p.47 "Also important for analysts to remember is that insights about how concepts relate can come at any time and place – in the middle of the night, while reading a newspaper, or while talking with colleagues. Keep a pencil and paper handy, jot down these "aha" experiences," and bring them into the analysis." p.142 "Memos are a running log of analytic sessions. They are a storehouse of ideas…They also contain the clues to integration, especially if the analyst has systematically identified the properties of concepts along with their dimensions." p.153	"As qualitative researchers we work to some extent by insight and intuition. We have moments of illumination. Things "come together." p.254 "Always give priority to memoing. When an idea strikes, STOP whatever else you are doing and write the memo. Your audience is *yourself*. Get it down; don't worry about prose elegance or even grammar. Include your musings of all sorts, even the fuzzy and foggy ones. Give yourself the freedom to think. Don't self-censor." p.74 "Memoing contributes strongly to the development/revision of the coding system." p.74 "Memo writing is fun. And it often provides sharp, sunlit moments of clarity or insight – little conceptual epiphanies." p.74
Importance of moving past description to explanation	"Theorizing is the act of constructing (we emphasize this verb as well) from data an explanatory scheme that systematically integrates various concepts through statements of relationship. A theory does more	"Multiple cases are extraordinarily helpful in both generating explanations, and testing them systematically. In a real sense, they are our best resource for advancing our theories about the way the world works." (1994, p.207)

	than provide understanding or paint a vivid picture. It enables users to explain and predict events, thereby providing guides to action." (1998, p.25) "Once concepts are related through statements of relationship into an explanatory theoretical framework, the research findings move beyond conceptual ordering to theory." (1998, p.22)	"Given the idea that explanations, including explanations of causality, in human affairs are not monolithic but always involve a complex network of conditions and effects, the key problem is how to draw well-founded conclusions from *multiple* networks…We need a theory that explains what is happening – but a theory that does not forcibly smooth the diversity in front of us, but rather uses it fully to develop and test a well-grounded set of explanations." (1994, p.207)
Cyclical and iterative nature of research	"In fact, in many ways, research may be conceived of as a circular process, one that involves a lot of going back and forth and around before finally reaching one's goal." p.30	"We might look for a more "circular" linkage between research questions, methods, data collection, and interim analyses, as each analysis opened up new leads." p.23

A Note on Differences between Grounded Theory and the Interactive Model

Given the above similarities between Grounded Theory and the Interactive Model, the reader may be left thinking how the two methods distinguish themselves as distinct methods. The key differences are in the *emphasis* given to various components. Miles and Huberman (1994) place great emphasis in their sourcebook on the use of tables and diagrams, to the point where many researchers identify their method with the use of these graphic devices. They describe at length the varieties of tables and diagrams, their various uses at different stages of the research project, while presenting a host of examples throughout the sourcebook. It is almost as though they are implying that is in the judicious use of tables and diagrams that a qualitative study lends itself clarity, quality and validity. On the other hand, Strauss and Corbin's Grounded Theory (1998) only mention tables and diagrams briefly, as one of many ways of bringing order to parsed data. They have a more diverse set of data ordering processes. They put more emphasis on rigorous "microanalysis" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.65), which involves detailed line-by-line analysis of data to generate categories, and also emphasise the importance of asking rhetorical *questions* and making *comparisons* among data codes in the process of analysis. Other methods they suggest include *axial coding*, the *flip-flop technique* and *central categories*, which are given minimal consideration in Miles and Huberman's approach.

Appendix F

Within-Case Analysis Documents (Gemma, Study 1):

- **List of Codes**
- **Case Summary**
- **Codes-Quotes matrix**
- **Within-case flow diagram**

List of Codes

1. Background and Contextual Environment

h) Concealment of inner world
i) Under parental control
j) Introjected goals
k) Bored to death as mother and wife
l) Playing a false role
m) Post-natal depression
n) Fantasies of freedom

2. The flow of crisis

j) Misery
k) Continued external search
l) Assertiveness and inner awareness
m) Emotional release
n) Opening to the inner world
o) Embarking on a quest
p) Separation and liberation
q) Guilt and self-blame
r) Excitement and experimentation

3. The Dynamics of Self

h) Empty former self
i) Search for self
j) Self-validation
k) Separation from old self
l) New self from crisis
m) Strength and vulnerability in new self
n) Building Self-Esteem

4. Other Learning

b) Ubiquitous pressure to conform

Gemma
Interview 10
Case Summary

Gemma's crisis episode is a three year long process to find a sense of authenticity and partial autonomy away from a life under the oppressive influence of controlling parents and an ill-suited conventional husband, during her 20s. Having missed out on an adolescence in which she could forge some autonomy, her life had developed according to a mould that was set for her by others, particularly her parents, and so she was passive, malleable and accepting, and hid her true fantasies and hopes. The parents, in control of their daughter, set her life agenda, which Gemma unquestioningly followed. She says 'my every action was controlled by them.' Her parents are characterised as oppressive and narrow minded in the narrative – bigoted, controlling, neurotic, unhappy. The narrative has a Cinderella feel to it.

She has one baby and gets terrible post-natal depression, but the desire for change or breaking free remains latent, and so while this is a period of unhappiness, it is not defined as crisis. The crisis arrives after the second baby, and she starts to make changes – to build a social life and go to assertiveness classes, and starts to see a counsellor. The counsellor gives her permission to feel what she feels and be what she is. Gemma says to the counsellor through tears 'I don't even know who I am', suggesting an empty self – an identity that has been so manipulated from without that she does not know her real character. This is the moment when she releases her inner feelings and thoughts, and in the narrative a sense is given of a pressure that had been building up for many years of hidden feelings, fantasies and thoughts, that finally gets released. It was a catalyst for learning how to explore identity and self to develop a connection with her feelings. She learns to trust her feelings, rather than 'run away from them'. This, she says, was the start of her liberation. The process shows a fluid development of self – from labelling self as 'selfish and horrible' to having a stronger self-esteem and opening to her weaknesses rather than shutting them out. The development in self-concept suggests a metamorphosis in self-schematic content – a stark shift in personhood, from one person to another person, separated by the period of cognitive re-organisation during the crisis. Bruner talks of how in order to maintain coherence within the self-concept, change in the self often happens in a landslide manner, from one equilibrium state to another. Self-esteem is strengthened by effective interaction with others and effective career progression.

The crisis shows a curious parallel manifestation of negative emotions and positive ones, pretty well simultaneously. Guilt is a significant phenomenon, in feeling that she has transgressed a moral imperative. One of the biggest stressors, interestingly, is not the demands or exceeding 'coping mechanisms', it is her parents not being able to tell anybody that she and Tony were divorcing. When the divorce does happen there is the co-occurrence of relief and guilt. Gemma says that she doesn't believe her transition would have been possible without negative emotion, stress and a crisis. The crisis was of 'paramount importance' to her development as a person. She feels that after there is a parallel sense of both strength and vulnerability. And after exploring her self, then she finds her attention drawn to finding meaning in life beyond the self – to develop a spiritual understanding. She wanted to find out why life can feel like a 'living curse'. Effects of the crisis involved a move from stasis and acceptance to experimentation, trial and error, trying out subpersonalities, opening to feelings and so on, she learns about the world and herself.

Bruner says that all narrative is portrayed in a dual landscape – inner world and outer world. In Gemma's narrative the inner world of desire, thought, fantasy, urge, emotion starts hidden and radically detached from a cold, boring, unemotive world of imposed marriage and stringent parental control – the inner world is 'hidden', 'concealed', while the outer person is passive and malleable, for there is no outward expression of personally held intentions and goals, and therefore little opportunity for personal agency or volitionally chosen direction. The paradox is that this juxtaposition of internal and external leads Gemma to feel 'isolated' despite being outwardly welded carefully and conventionally into society, for she thinks she is

alone in feeling the way she does. During the later narrative, the inner and outer worlds weld together, so that outer action and talk is a manifestation not of outward control, but of desire, feeling and thought. As autonomy builds, agency builds, in other words, as individuality and trust in self grow, the ability to assert self and make active, volitional life decisions increases.

There is a hidden part of Gemma's self during early life, which in the end requests its manifestation powerfully – it was 'a voice that wanted to be heard'. It is 'a zest for life and a desire to survive.' A propensity for 'growing and exploring'. The crisis, she is adamant, was not triggered by an external event, but by her own inner conflict, her desires and her need to be fre: "So environmentally everything was perfect, but the misery went on of course, because it was *in* me." During the marriage 'a gradual unfolding of the desire to be free' developed – an internal pressure for change, growth and development, which had always been present but hidden. And so the overbearing characteristic of the narrative is one of 'liberation' – that particular word being used by Gemma numerous times to describe her path from oppression to freedom.

In the interview there is a powerful theme of growing agency – moving from controlled, passive being to active, empowered, decision-maker. The early part of the narrative is dominated by verbal statements in which she, the protagonist, is passive. With regards to entering into marriage, there is no sense that it came from an active choice, but that "he was foisted on me" by the parents. Initially the 'mode of thinking' – one could say her superordinate schema, is 'to repeat my parent's life'. The words that characterise this are 'safe', 'dead', 'boring', 'an empty existence'. The crisis brings in a less static mental schema which has its heart a quest for meaning, purpose and authenticity, far less constrained, if at all, by parental and societal expectations. After the split, Gemma reflects on her wonder at the prospect of experimentation and possibility. Her language changes from one pre-crisis in which uses verbs that suggest co-ercion such as 'had to' and 'forced to' and 'made to', to the use the word 'can'.

Coding Frame and Quotes

1. ***Background and contextual environment***

1st Order Codes with Illustrative Quotes

Codes	Illustrative quotes and phrases
1a) Concealment of inner world	"I had had a very repressed childhood from my parents" p.1 "What I felt was something that I clutched on to from really quite early in my childhood, and that's a sense of my own self, a zest for life and a desire to survive and get through come what may. And this kind of enthusiasm, this energy, that I knew I always had, I had to hide that from my parents" 2 "Developing, growing or exploring. Those are things that have always been my key words, but with my background they've been key words that have kept under wraps." 1-2
1b) Under parental control	"their hold over me." 2 "in their clasp" 2 "they [the parents] were very controlling, very much focused on me becoming the perfect daughter, a very high achiever." P.1 "my every action was controlled by them [parents]" p.2 "So I was put into a good school, encouraged to perform and make my unhappy parents happy." 2 "they themselves were deeply unhappy in their marriage and their existence and they were looking to external factors – ie. me." P.2 "I moulded myself into being my mother's perfect daughter – keeping her happy." p.1 "Altogether it was a smooth transition to being my parents' daughter to being my husband's wife." Re marriage: "We were kind of thrown together" 2 "He was foisted on me." 2 "My parents wanted me to marry him" 2
1c) Introjected goals	"as I should have a boyfriend as this is what people do." 2 "I was still in the mode of thinking that I am just going to repeat my parents life." 3 "I was aiming for the same thing as my parents, I guess. To have a long, healthy, happy marriage with children. The usual society expectations that you get married, you have children, you have this existence. That was my goal – to be a wife and a mother. There was no goal for myself." 11
1d) Bored to death	"He was just boring." 2 "It was all very safe, and something cosy and idyllic about it, but it was dead." 3 "About eighteen months after we married, it did reach a point where I said to my husband – is this it then? Is this it for the rest of our lives? This is like boring, I can't do this, let's have some change here." 3 "My poor husband, what's this doing to him, he just wants to stay where he is and have a boring, quiet life, he just wants me to shut up…" 5 "It was all very safe, and something kind of cosy and idyllic about it, you know, but it was dead, it was empty and devoid of any passion or spark or enthusiasm, any *zest* for opening up or exploring life or anything outside of that cosy little existence. So whilst I had the safety and I new that bought into very much how I had been brought up, be with a man, let him look after you, be safe, I was dying inside, I could feel that little flame of optimism in me just dying." 3

1e) Playing a false role	"I kind of had a go at playing housewife, I had a go at cooking meals like my mum does for my husband when he comes home." 3 "I had been playing a role, a false role, and very much this quest for some authenticity, some recognition, was really bursting to come out." 6 "An empty existence" 3 "Certainly, I just felt that my role was wife and mother and being the best I could be in that role." 11
1f) Post natal depression	"I chose the baby thing and got pregnant, had my baby and was *miserable*, really really very unhappy, depressed, I think the post-natal period really homed in on everything. I felt isolated, despairing, I've got this bundle of joy in inverted commas in front of me, but it was actually this screaming baby, and I was isolated in this little house out of town. I was at my wits end, I used to walk the streets with my pram, with my baby screaming, round and round the streets, same old paving stones, absolutely stuck in the worst place I could imagine." 3 "I sensed that hold on I have this baby, isn't this supposed to be what all women want, isn't there this biological need to have a child where all your womanhood comes out and you can be your perfect wife and mother. No way did that happen to me, at no point did I really bond with my baby or feel that it added to any sense of completeness in me. It certainly didn't do anything for the relationship." 3
1g) Fantasies of freedom	"I sense that there was no particular trigger other than within me a gradual unfolding of a desire to be free – to be free from the existence of the marriage, to be free from the relationship I was in with my partner, my husband." P.1 "I had dreams and fantasies to be free, I allowed myself to look outside the marriage, and imagine myself to be free, what might I do, how might things be different for me? I only *allowed* them to be fantasies and dreams, not reality." P.11

2. ***The flow of the crisis – events, emotion, cognition and actions*

Codes	**Illustrative Quotes**
2a) Misery	"I was at my wits end..absolutely stuck in the worst place I could imagine." P.3 "Um, I then said to my husband I am deeply, deeply unhappy, not sure what the future could hold for me in terms of making me happy…I feel really, really unloved." 4
2b) Continued external search	"I kind of voiced my unhappiness, I said there is something making me really unhappy here and I don't know what it is – I've got this crying baby, maybe the house is too small, maybe it's the size of the house and I am in this little village and I'm bored, maybe I need to go and live near my mum, she can help me, we'll have a bigger house, which we did. We moved to a lovely house in Leigh on Sea, which is where I am living now, its very, very lovely." 4 "I then said to my husband I am deeply, deeply unhappy, not sure what the future could hold for me in terms of making me happy. I said give me another baby, that will be something to love me, I feel really really unloved. Give me a baby which will love me unconditionally, and maybe that will help me get through this." 4 "So environmentally every thing was perfect, but the misery went on of course, because it was *in* me." 4
2c) Assertiveness and expression	"I started doing things like going to assertiveness classes, which was another big catalyst for me realising that there was something really badly dysfunctional *in* me and something very bad about staying with my husband." 4 "And something that was changing in me – something that he was trying to crush and something that my parents noticed and they

	were trying to crush it too." 4 "When I had my second child I think there started to be an inner awareness that some change was occurring within me, but the change wasn't altogether a good feeling, it was disturbing, unsettling" 5 "At that point I had started to build up a social life for myself, started to develop a little bit more as a person at that point. That was then the trigger for some change occurring." 4
2d) Emotional release	"I found the courage to see a counsellor because I sensed that I just needed someone to hear me, and I wasn't sure what I wanted to say, but I just knew I wanted to talk to somebody" 4 "I remember I sat there and this lady said how can I help you and she was really motherly and lovely and I just burst into tears, and I said I don't know how you can help me because I don't know what I want. In fact *I don't even know who I am*. There started a very long process of actually finding out who I was, of giving me some sense of identity that wasn't part of my mother and really coming to the realisation that I had to divorce myself from my parents, which was a big shock at the time, and then divorcing Tim seemed kind of natural after that. It was just the next thing to do." 5
2e) Opening to the inner world	"there was a lot of pressure on me to keep this stuff down, but it was very there and it was very, very much making itself known." 5 "I would describe it almost as a voice that wanted to be heard in me." 6 "It was something that just couldn't be quietened at any point despite all the guilty feelings and the confusion and the tears and everybody thinking that I was going crazy." 6 "I was finding a voice for them [feelings], finding a channel to let them out, and this lady was sitting there saying, yeah that's OK, and I was going what? You mean that's OK, you mean I am allowed to feel that, and she was saying yes! That was the start of my liberation, but only the start. Small steps but it certainly gave me the courage to make the decision." 6 "I learned to trust them [feelings] and not run away from them." 6
2f) Embarking on a quest	"Yeah, a feeling of two things happening – two feelings running alongside. That was a feeling of discontent and general unhappiness, a general feeling of being unfulfilled, or just generally very unsettled, but running along side that there was kind of an excitement too in terms of – this means something, if I can stay with this I am going to find out what it is that's going on." 5 "I had feelings of confusion or what does it mean? Where is it taking me?" 5 *"I* thought I was going crazy, but I still held on to that belief, that core belief that, hold on, this is telling me something, taking me somewhere." 6 "I was always looking for people who could teach me something, and I still do actually, it's a bit of quest for me, I'm always looking to find guidance and advice. I'm always open to learn something new, I will never feel this is it, I've learnt everything." 11
2g) Separation and liberation	"Straight after Tim left, the actual separation, from when he left the house, there was a massive feeling of relief, and with the relief came a sense of liberation." 8 "Wow, I'm me, I can do whatever I like, I'm free" and there was that instant feeling, but obviously that was clouded by having unhappy kids around me, and the guilt and working out the payments and money, and Tim being miserable and giving me a pretty hard time about it all. But the mounting excitement that I was free couldn't be quenched really. But there was guilt and bad feeling, it wasn't wonderful, believe me, but it was there." 8 "For a long time after they couldn't bring themselves to tell

	anybody that Tim and I were divorcing. That was very stressful in itself, realising that they were wanting to keep a secret something that I so needed to happen and wanted to be out in the open. That was one of the *biggest* stresses of all. "7 "that crisis was my path to liberation, definitely." 9
2h) Guilt and self-blame	"I felt guilty just for having that hour out, because I knew it was taking me away from the people who were holding on to me, and there was some fear in that too, some fear in letting go of those familiar objects – husband and parents." 6 "I still had the guilt thinking hold on, how does being a mother fit with being this free, autonomous person? Isn't that really selfish, I had to juggle with some of those thoughts and feelings at the time." 6 "There was guilt…much, much guilt." 7 "The bottom line was I had to carry this label of being an appallingly bad person – a selfish, horrible person." 7
2i) Excitement and experimentation	"Well the excitement factor came in, which was, gosh, if I don't have to be with my husband, that means I can do this, this and this. I can go out with other men, I can have sex, I can go and do things I've never done before. I'd never ever been to a disco." 6 "There was no clear path ahead. It really was just experimenting, making new friends, dropping bad friends, learning from people." 11 "And that's how I got through that muddled period of finding the direction I was going to take. It was very much trial and error, talking to people, allowing myself to perhaps be directed, and usually it was in the wrong direction, and I'd come back again." 11

3. Self

Codes	**Illustrative Quotes**
3a) Empty Former Self	"they would have seen me as fairly malleable and easy going, but probably quite empty, and a bit of a non-person actually." 9 "Just very accepting of everything, putting up with my lot really." 9 "very much needing to be a good girl" p.1 "I was characteristically nice, and would never upset anyone." P.9 "They would have seen me as quiet, shy, fairly lacking in personality, certainly not assertive, they would have seen me as fairly malleable and easy going, but probably quite empty, and a bit of a non-person actually. I was characteristically nice, and would never upset anyone…I was like my mother really. Just very accepting of everything, putting up with my lot really." 9
3b) Search for Self	"I think the process of searching for myself, although I didn't know that's what I was looking for, started when I first sought out the counselling, in the later part of my marriage. I just had a sense that something was not right, that something did not fit, did not work. I didn't realise what I was searching for. Well I did actually, I sat in front of that therapist and said '*please, I don't know who I am'*. I think that was very much a cry for – help me find myself, you know, I'm lost. I think that's where it began. Its still going on." 10 "I was excited at the prospect of testing my sexuality, of being able to emerge from the crushed little girl and the boring plain wife to being allowed to experiment with make up and sexy clothes." 6 "I did start going out, and experimenting with myself being a sexy woman, wearing short skirts. I suppose I did that. Whether that was to offset the stress or not, or whether that was just experimenting with my new identity or my liberation, I am not sure. Gosh. I don't know." 8
3c) Self-validation	"And for that one hour a week, I had a slot where I felt that I was being true to myself, acknowledging this part of me that was emerging." 6 "I felt I was celebrating some sense of self in me, I'd validated

	something in me that was very, very important, and that was a very, very powerful feeling. I've never, ever felt up to that point, so powerful. And I don't mean powerful as in reducing another human being to a quivering wreck, that wasn't nice, but it was a sense of what I'd done for myself – I'd validated myself" 13
3d) Separation from old self	"I would say that we are two completely different people, I've separated from that person." 9 "I would say it [the crisis] was of paramount importance for my separation, certainly for my separation from my previous self." 9 "I think there has to be a complete breakdown of everything in order to break through into a new sense of being and freedom. The word freedom means you are breaking down over something which is holding you, which is never going to be easy or pain free." 9 "I was very, very aware that there were conflicting aspects of myself – enough to make me think that I was going quite crazy." 8
3e) New self emerging from crisis	"The opposite of all those things in all ways, just developing more as a person, learning to be more assertive, to believe and trust in my intuition. I didn't even know I had intuition back then. I've got a stronger sense of my own identity and my sexuality. I can play around with my power and my control. I never thought I had any power, I didn't know what that word meant in my twenties, so just the complete opposite." 9 "I wouldn't advocate having to go through terrible trauma and crisis, but its absolutely awful, at the time you think you could never go through that again, its so awful, but the gain from it in terms of my sense of self and I wouldn't eradicate that for a second." 13
3f) Strength and vulnerability in new self	"I was quite vulnerable then, even though I was liberated. I was vulnerable because I was still a very underdeveloped person, very naïve, no sexual experience, and was very much open to predators." 11 "The strength – there is a personal empowerment. Maybe you just get that when you get what you want anyway, and it is what I wanted, but it was more than that…but yes there was this accompanying vulnerability, in that I had let go of some attachments in separating, and I did have to stand up on my own two feet, and I did have to rely on myself, and I realised that I was very much still a child, that I was very underdeveloped as a person, yet I was 31 years of age, yet I had to go out into the world and be a mother for my children, and start to build up this new person who I was, and I was made very aware of my vulnerability, many times." 13
3g) Building Self-Esteem	"That just developed gradually by my own experiencing I guess, by gradually doing self-esteem boosting things…I got back into work, I developed my career, I made new friends, had different relationships, they all kind of added something, and while they could detract from my self-esteem as well, but there was always a plus to it. It was basically experimentation – things that felt good, things that felt bad, just building up a sense of self-reliance." 10 "My self-esteem could be fairly well inflated by someone else praising me or giving me some external validation." 10

4. *Learning*

Code	Illustrative Quotes
4a) Ubiquitous pressure to conform	"And what I learnt when I look around is there is resistance everywhere to growth – its been my biggest hurdle that when I am in a relationship, or even with friendships, there comes a resistance from everyone around you to go any further, and that's been my biggest problem. Resistance – cultural, societal, and even one to one, there tends to be a pressure to conform or to not grow, to not go any further in your levels of thinking." 12

Appendix H

Summary Case-Ordered Matrices of 4 Phases of Model

The following tables give a detailed case-by-case summary information on how each phase of the 4 phase model manifests in each case. In the middle column is a brief description of the life situation of the individual in question. In the right hand column is a brief description of experiential features including affect, motivation and self.

Table XVI – Case Ordered Matrix of Phase 1 Features

Name	Phase 1 Life Situation	Phase 1 Experience and Identity
Rachel	Housewife, married, 2 children.	Feels false, hides desire to do a degree and think deeply, feels depressed.
Mary	Partner of major law firm, single, no children.	Hugely stressed, takes time off work for stress, work is "killing" her, but she cannot see a way out.
Lynne	HR Consultant, married, no children, affair with work colleague.	Describes being a "cash cow" – corporate persona has become her whole life. Extreme job stress and pressure.
Angela	Office Assistant, single, no children, bullied by boss.	Hates her job, feels "suffocated" and like she is "in prison". Her confidence is very low.
Violet	Housewife, long-term relationship, 2 children, partner has serial affairs.	Long-term partner cheats on her, she fantasises about injuring him, feels hemmed in and morbid.
Frances	Waitress, long-term partnership, no children, bullied by boyfriend, drug taking.	Feels like a "worn out blob" and a "non-person" – doesn't feel fully alive, and feels passive.
Camilla	Printing Executive, single, no children, has affair with controlling boss.	Feels totally out of control after affair with boss precipitates terrible stress and loss of contact with friends.
Gemma	Housewife, married, 2 children, extremely unhappy and depressed.	Feels "completely stuck", like the marriage is an oppressive force in her life, she fantasises about leaving husband.
Dan	Corporate filmmaker, married, 1 child, high level of job stress.	In a high stress job in corporate film. Wife has post-natal depression, but has no time to spend with her. Feels out of control.
George	Social worker, gay, single, heavy drug taking, destructive lifestyle.	Feels like has a false persona, out of control, is broken hearted after experience of rejection.
Neil	Engineer, married, no children, frustrated and major marital difficulties.	Work stress is extreme. Has major differences with boss which cause conflict and argument. Marriage is devoid of emotion. Feels "stuck in a rut".
Vern	IT Executive, married, 1 child, major marital problems.	Living for money, married because of pregnancy and sense of "duty" but now desperately wants out.
Leon	Market Researcher, married, one son.	Living according to a "prescription". Married out of a sense of duty, has an affair. In a "mad, intense job".
Guy	Banker, married, 3 children, extreme job stress and neglect of home life.	Intense job pressure, no time with wife and family, has turned into a "tyrant", physical health is poor.
Ben	Doing a PhD, has long-term partner, no children, problems with cashflow.	Has recently failed a viva, is looking to build a career as an academic, neglecting wife.
Jack	Accountant, single, no children, major sense of anomie.	Feels "like a ghost", not fully alive, loss of interest in life, no romantic involvement.
Victoria	Hairdresser, living with mother in rural Italy.	Feels trapped in a patriarchal and narrow-minded culture, parental pressure, very low self-confidence.
Clare	Works as management consultant, which she hates, then ensnaring marriage .	Is compelled to work in full-time corporate consultancy to provide for her children. Is anxious and depressed. Has an artificial work persona.
Lilly	Working in PR, living with boyrfriend, problems with relationship	Feels "smothered" by deteriorating relationship, antisocial flatmate and job in location she despises
Frank	Working as a corporate lawyer, married, no kids,	Feels false at work, doesn't feel like a lawyer, marriage lacks intimacy,
Mark	Works as financial consultant, married, no	Hates his job, dreams of getting out, feels like he is "living

	kids	a lie"
Rob	Working as advertising executive, married, no kids, wife anorexic	Profound sense of disillusionment at work, marriage problems and very little physical contact with wife

Table XVII – Case Ordered Matrix of Phase 1 Features

Name	**Phase 2 – Life Situation**	**Phase 2 – Experience and Identity**
Rachel	Leaves husband, king children with her	Considers suicide, is deeply depressed, anxious and physically unwell prior to separation
Mary	Takes time out from work through stress, and then leaves job as law partner	Hysterical grief, confusion and tears. Terror at the prospect of building a new life.
Lynne	Leaves consultancy job and finishes affair	Affair finishing leads to experience of intense grief. Stress prior to leaving job is intense.
Angela	Fired from job as admin assistant	Extreme stress prior to redundancy then sense of betrayal
Violet	Partner admits infidelities, so leaves him	Intense anger and frustration at partner, also sense of liberation
Frances	Leaves boyfriend after he goes to prison	Considers suicide. Feels guilt and anxiety and confusion
Camilla	Leaves affair with boss and leaves job at print company	"Angry" about affair and controlling boyfriend, feels "really sorry for myself", but mood changed totally after she left him
Gemma	Leaves husband, takes children with her	Feels "stuck in the worst place imaginable", soon feels liberated but anxious after separation
Dan	Fired from job in corporate film	Stress prior to redundancy, sense of betrayal at time of redundancy, and anxiety directly after
George	Leaves job after suicide attempt	Attempts suicide after becoming depressed. Feels a new clarity after recovering
Neil	Leaves wife, moved internally at company, then leaves company	Frustrated, angry, fearful of what would happen to him and his wife, fear of what others would think
Vern	Leaves wife and job, moves to new city	Feels guilt and relief, and then sadness and loneliness as misses son
Leon	Leaves wife, and son lives with wife	Feels "desperately sad", "emotionally wrung out", "heart-wrenching
Guy	Wife asks for divorce, then changed job internally before leaving company	Shocked by wife's request for divorce. Feels "a sense of total annihilation", feels anger and sadness.
Ben	Wife leaves him, with little warning, asks for divorce	Felt "absolutely demolished", felt worthless, contemplated suicide, felt a total failure
Jack	Leaves job, after being in a car crash	Feels miserable and angry, and very nervous after the crash
Victoria	Leaves job and family at the same time	Feels guilt and confusion, as well as excitement about possibility of new life
Clare	Leaves job then husband – two separate Phase 2s, with several year interval	Feels liberated after leaving job, but then intense grief after leaving husband
Lilly	Relationship ends, suicide attempt, leaves job several months later	Depressed by failing relationship, suicidal thoughts, and anxious about future when leaves job after recovering from suicide attempt
Frank	Leaves wife, then fired from job six months later	Feeling frustrated and unhappy before leaving wife, and then feels excited after leaving job
Mark	Colleague attempts suicide, leaves job	Intense job stress and confusion prior to leaving job, then a new vitality after leaving
Rob	Leaves job and wife, almost simultaneously	Highly unhappy prior to separation from work and hom

Table XVIII: Case Ordered Matrix of Phase 3 Features

Name	**Phase 3 – Life Situation**	**Phase 3: Experience and Identity**
Rachel	Moves out of home, works as a teacher, then moves to California to do a PhD, joins the civil rights protests at Selmo	Feels she has found a cause, a meaning, and is moving towards a new direction for life
Mary	Takes time out to do a Masters in Transpersonal Psychology at Liverpool, takes up a variety of new ventures that reflect her passion for philosophy	Realisation of possibility in life and self
Lynne	Goes into therapy and joins a poetry group, starts to explore herself and her emotions	Feels open to new parts of herself and more creative
Angela	Reads self-help books and reviews her life so far in order to search for a future	A sense of "paring back the layers" of herself to discover who she was
Violet	Firstly tries to make sense of her past, and then registers for a BA in Fine Art, while reading a lot	Reviewing her life, developing intuition and contact with feelings
Frances	Trains as an English teacher, moves to Turkey, re-ignites old friendships	Rebuilding confidence and independence
Camilla	Gets onto a psychology degree and trains for a marathon	Growing sense of productiveness and assertiveness
Gemma	Does counsellor training to pursue her passion for people and for the career she never had, explores her sexuality	Experience of possibility and experimentation, sense of hope
Dan	After severe six months of depression, does a course in plumbing and trains to be a teacher	Sense of new balance, new hope and new focus on the future, as well as family
George	Does a psychology degree to follow passion of being a psychologist, moves away from old friends and old hedonistic life	New focus on balance, meaning and vocation
Neil	Trains to become a life coach, hedonistic period, spiritual search	Sense of irresponsible fun, then replaced by spiritual search
Vern	Goes into therapy, failed fresh start in new job, seeks self-understanding	Dismantling the façade
Leon	N.A.	N.A.
Guy	Starts dancing regularly and reading science, explores spirituality and Quabbalah	Trying to express himself, a sense of hope and excitement
Ben	Explore his passions for art and music, considers career as art historian.	A sense of thrashing around
Jack	Goes into therapy, reads Freud, seeks self-understanding and a "new world"	A sense of embarking on a "quest"
Victoria	Moves to the UK, takes up courses in English, explores new foods and travels	Initially held back by boyfriend, but then experimental opening
Claire	N.A.	N.A.
Lilly	Questions self and aims, decides she wants more than conventional family and job. Works on relationship with mother	A sense of "navelgazing" and self-reflection, and a desire for harmony
Frank	Hedonistic phase, takes up writing, starts own business, explores self and gender, emphasis on emotional openness	A sense of "screw the rules" and hedonistic fun, focus on emotion
Mark	Goes freelance, then does a chef course, then does a masters in organisational behaviour	Oscillation between excitement and disappointment, as new ventures are started and fail
Rob	Intense period of examining self, does freelance work, therapy, starting psychotherapy course, spiritual searching	A sense of "awakening" to new potentialities within him, searching for meaning

Table XIX: Case Ordered Matrix of Phase 4 Features

Name	**Phase 4: Life Situation**	**Phase 4: Experience and Identity**
Rachel	Works as an academic,	Builds new confidence as she sees she is an "excellent lecturer"
Mary	Works as lecturer on an MBA programme and film-maker	Is happier, less stressed and more fulfilled than before, more aware of present moment
Lynne	Freelance Consultancy	Happier, feels more "rounded" than before, has closer friendships, more in tune with feelings
Angela	*In latter throws of Phase 3 at time of interview – still training as an art teacher*	
Violet	Artist and mother	Happier, more independent, more fulfilled
Frances	Teacher, refugee volunteer	Builds new confidence and feels stronger
Camilla	Carer for disabled people	Feels more fulfilled, happier and more self-aware
Gemma	Works in NHS surgery and aims to be a counsellor	Feels happier and more fulfilled, feels stronger but also more vulnerable
Dan	Lecturer in film and plumber, spends more time with family	Feels far happier, calmer and more connected to his family, focused on a work-home balance and being in control
George	Working towards being a psychologist, no drugs, settled life	Feels happier, more fulfilled and stronger, has a new long-term outlook
Neil	Life coach and IT executive, happily married	Feels more mature, stronger, more passionate, more focused on making a difference
Vern	Remarries, goes freelance in IT profession	Feels authentic, not compromised, open and happy
Leon	Stays in market research, remarries	Feels more interesting, stronger, more appreciation of present moment
Guy	Freelance consultant, new relationship, spends lots of time with children	Happier, more fulfilled, aware of feminine side, more caring, more connected to children
Ben	Works as academic, no new relationship	"Vastly expanded" person in terms of interests, experience and potential
Jack	*Still exploring at time of interview, yet to commit to new career or relationship*	
Victoria	Gets new job in import company, new relationship with Englishman	Finds a new "harmony" in herself, where outer and inner are in synchrony, rather than out of balance
Clare	N.A.	N.A.
Lilly	Starts new job in London in sponsorship, spends more time with friends	More open to unconventional success, more feminine, happier, more self-aware
Frank	Commits to new relationship, gives up hedonism, seeks to balance emotionality with rationality, more balanced life structure	More growth-focused, "far better" self-knowledge, more focused on relationships, more open to feminine side
Mark	Decides upon pursuing an academic career, and undertakes a PhD full-time.	More interesting, more caring, a "nicer" person, more satisfied
Rob	Starts new career in the charity sector, finds a new stable relationship, more balanced integration of values and life structure	More awake, more compassionate, more fulfilling relationships, more self-aware, happier

Appendix J

Sampling strategies for qualitative researchers

(Miles and Huberman, 1994)

Sampling Technique	**Procedure**
Variation sampling	This is an approach to selecting as diverse a selection of variants within the sampling universe as possible, in order to investigate the possibility of a wide ranging common theme and to look for potentially disconfirming cases.
Homogenous sampling	This strategy selects a group with homogenous demographics, in order to intensively study a local phenomenon in detail and to generalise to that group only
Critical case	This approach selects an individual or cases that exemplifies a main finding – for example the great hypnotherapist Milton Erickson was studied in great detail by many researchers to uncover his methods for relieving psychological distress.
Theory based sampling	The researcher samples incidents, slices of life, time periods or people on the basis of their potential manifestation of important theoretical constructs. The guiding theory can be a priori or it can be emergent.
Confirming and disconfirming cases	This approach looks for disconfirming, or simply confirming cases, of a theory. These may be extreme or unusual manifestations of the phenomenon. Theories are ousted in science when sufficient exceptions to a rule or conceptual link can be found, and this may be attempted this way.
Typical case	While critical case sampling looks for an intense manifestation of something, typical case sampling looks for typical examples of a phenomenon, in order to illustrate its normative manifestation.
Random purposeful	A random sample within a purposively defined group that is information-rich in the area that is being studied.
Stratified purposeful	Stratification is used to divide a sampling universe into bands or groups, when those different groups may manifest potentially differing data and a full diversity of responses is required, or if there is an objective to compare groups.
Comprehensive	This involves sampling all possible cases within a sample universe. This may be possible if your sample frame is very small.
Snowball or chain	A snowball or chain strategy is one in which participants give leads to others. It may be useful if the kind of person and case is hard to find.
Convenience	This sample is confined by the issue of convenience and practicality, for time and resources are limited in most research projects.