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ADOLESCENT AND PRE-ADOLESCENT MIGRATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR IDENTITY

A growing number of individuals experience multiple international relocations during childhood (Cockburn, 2002). One such group are 'third culture kids' (TCKs). TCKs spend *"a significant part of (their) developmental years outside of the parents' culture"*, typically because a parent's employer required them to undertake an overseas posting (Pollock & van Reken 2009: 13; McCaig 1992). Research has established that TCKs share distinct skills and challenges (Gerner et al., 1992; Cottrell & Useem, 1994).

Confusion over loyalties, sense of belonging, personal and cultural identity in adulthood is frequently cited as a challenge for TCKs (Downie, 1976; Pollock & van Reken, 2009; Fail, Walker & Thompson, 2004). TCKs often use their parents' nationality to define their cultural identity. They accept their 'foreignness' during sojourns overseas and expect to 'fit in' upon repatriation. Instead, many find their identity challenged. Discovering that the place thought of as 'home' feels foreign and confusing is distressing (Gaw 2000; Huff 2001). Some claim repatriation is more traumatic than migration (Fry, 2009; Hill, 2006). Repatriated TCKs often feel misunderstood, or socially marginalized (Huff, 2001). Both depression (Downie, 1976) and suicide (Schubert, 1986) in this population have been attributed to identity issues, such as feeling unable to fit in following repatriation. Some struggle with their identity throughout adulthood (Fail et al. 2004).

Many individuals, such as former child migrants, associate with TCK identity struggles (Pollock & van Reken, 2009). Accordingly, Pollock and van Reken (2009) introduced a new term: 'cross-cultural kids' (CCKs) for individuals who

'lived in – or meaningfully interacted with – two or more cultural environments for a significant period of time during childhood' (2009: 31). The CCK taxonomy proposes nine groups, children who: frequently relocate within their own country (domestic TCKs); have multi-racial, or multi-cultural parents; are from a minority cultural group; live on frequently crossed national borders; are schooled abroad or attend schools that operate in a different culture to their homeland; international adoptees; child refugees; and child migrants.

CCK identity struggles may be influenced by *"the age or ages when (migration and cross-cultural exposure) occur"* (Pollock & van Reken 2009: 147). Research with child migrants suggests that the age at which a child migrates influences their acculturation process (Richman et al., 1987; Virta, Sam & Westin, 2004). Child migrants commonly experience initial adaptation difficulties, but those who form good relations with both their parental and adopted cultures are less likely to experience long-term emotional or psychological disturbance (Aronowitz 1984; LaFromboise et al. 1993; Coatsworth et al., 2005;). Considering that concepts of nationality, ethnicity and culture become more salient in adolescent thought, and language acquisition becomes more difficult, integration is likely to be more difficult for adolescent migrants (Cross 1987; Phinney 1989; Kroger 2000). Research into whether age-related factors in migration influence the likelihood of identity struggles is not currently available and may be of significant value.

STUDY AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTION

This study sought to explore the identities of seven individuals who migrated multiple times during childhood, but did not have the 'traditional' TCK experience of living within expat enclaves overseas. It aimed to offer a new method for investigating identity in this under-researched demographic and discern any underlying age-effects that might explain why some struggle with their identity and others do not:

RQ: Does age at migration influence the likelihood of identity problems in seven individuals, now aged between 22 and 30?

METHOD

This research is underwritten by social constructionist epistemology. The methodology combined narrative psychology, symbolic interactionism and thematic analysis, enabling it to explore individual differences whilst remaining consistent with social constructionism.

The narrative approach sees participants construct their identities within discourse, explicitly and latently, through the information they choose to recount (Sarbin, 1986; McAdams, 1988; 1996; Burr, 2003; Murray, 2008). Semi-structured interviews were used, enabling participants to recall experiences in their own words, without interruption or imposition of ideas from the researcher (Mishler, 1986). To obtain rich data about childhood migration experiences, an 'episodic' rather than 'life' interview approach was chosen (Flick, 2002; McAdams, 1988).

The interview schedule had a two-part format, consistent with Mead's conception of 'the I' and 'the me' (1934). The first part encouraged participants to talk in the 'I' form. Through recollection and disclosure of information, participants established past social and personal circumstances and latently constructed their past identity. The second part required participants to talk about their identity explicitly, to obtain information about the 'me' – how they understand their identity.

The study's exploratory nature warranted the use of data-led thematic analysis. Analysis involved interpretation, to extract both semantic and latent themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Analysis was guided by the application of established social psychological theories on group membership and identity (Mead, 1934; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Reflexivity was given high importance, to ensure analysis was firmly rooted in the data (Etherington, 2004; Murray, 2008).

Participants

Participants were two female and five male graduate students from Cambridge University and London University, aged 22 to 30 (Figure 1). Purposive sampling, whereby researchers select the *'most productive sample to answer the research questions'* was used (Marshall, 1996: 523). Each participant migrated at least once between the ages of 4 and 14, attended school in a new culture and remained in one country throughout the rest of adolescence. These criteria maximised the possibility of making inter-participant comparisons. Migration experiences could be compared across a similar time-frame and background, and subsequently be assessed, in terms of how they influenced identity.

Participants were fully informed about their right to withdraw from the study, its aims, procedures and the minimal risk involved. Ethical considerations ensured that interview questions were meaningful and sensitively posed. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured by allocating participants random initials (BPS, 2009). Participant 'S.P.' requested that one country he lived in be anonymised. Hence, it is referred to as 'Xxxia'.

Table 1.

Participants' backgrounds

	Name (sex)	Age	Age at migration & school transitions	Migration or country of residence during school transition	School Type (University)	Language knowledge before starting school	Parents' nationality	Siblings
1	I.E. (M)	24	6 years 9 years 13 years 18 years	Pakistan – England England England England	State State Public University	None Competent Fluent Fluent	Pakistani	1 older sister 2 younger brothers 1 younger sister
2	K.G. (F)	23	18 months 7 years 8 years 9 years 18 years	Sweden – Pakistan Pakistan Pakistan – Sweden Sweden England	n/a British Bilingual International University	n/a Some Competent Competent Fluent	Pakistani	3 older brothers
3	M.M (M)	22	3 weeks 4 years 5 years 6 years 8 years 18 years 22 years	Greece – Canada Canada – France France – Hungary Hungary – Canada Canada – Greece Greece – Scotland Scotland – England	n/a n/a n/a State International University University	n/a n/a n/a None Some Fluent Fluent	Yugoslav & Italian/ Hungarian	n/a
4	C.T. (F)	30	4 years 6 years 9 years 18 years 21 years	Venezuela – England England – Spain Spain – U.S.A. Vermont – Boston U.S.A. – England	Play group State State University n/a	Competent Competent Fluent Fluent Fluent	Venezuelan & English	2 older sisters 1 younger brother

	Name (sex)	Age	Age at migration & school transitions	Migration or country of residence during school transition	School Type (University)	Language knowledge before starting school	Parents' nationality	Siblings
5	A.G. (M)	26	9 years 10 years 12 years 14 years 19 years	Russia – Spain Spain Spain – England England England	n/a State Independent Independent University	None Some None Fluent Fluent	Russian	1 older brother 1 younger brother
6	T.L. (M)	26	10 years 12 years 14 years 19 years 23 years 25 years	China – USA California – Ohio Ohio – New England New Eng.–Rhode Island USA – China China – England	State State Private University n/a University	None Competent Fluent Fluent	Chinese	1 younger brother
7	S.P. (M)	27	10yrs 11 years 12 years 20 years 23 years 24 years	Russia – 'X' 'X' 'X' 'X' – England England – USA USA – England	State State State University University University	None Some Competent Proficient Proficient Proficient	Russian	n/a

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews were conducted in English, recorded using a Roland Corporation, Edirol R9 mp3 device, and transcribed immediately afterwards. Interviews took place in the participants' residences, to maximise their comfort. Each lasted 45 to 60 minutes.

In adherence with Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines, analysis included: familiarisation with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes, defining and naming themes; and producing the report. Both semantic and latent themes were extracted.

Quality Assurances

Reflexivity was tested by sharing data with external auditors, asking participants to content-check their transcripts and review themes in follow-up interviews (Smith, 2003). The interviewer (first author) has a similar background to the participants; the second author does not, each audited the other's perspective and modified the study's design to reflect as balanced an interview protocol and analysis as possible. Two adjudicators assessed the work to highlight any shortcomings in design, analysis or unintended bias.

FINDINGS

Five main themes were identified. For the purpose of clarity these are presented under two headings – 'the I' and 'the me'.

'The I' – participants' migration and school narratives

Narratives ranged from positive to rather negative, demonstrating that individual differences are paramount in migration experiences. Analysis produced three inter-related themes: language acquisition, peer attitudes and peer-group cohesion. These factors can potentially explain the variation between participants' experiences.

Table 2.

Quotations characterising participants' narratives

No. Age	Name (Sex)	Age at migration	Country	School	Representative Quotation
1. (24)	I.E. (M)	7 9 13	England Same county Different county	State (homogenous) State (mostly Asian population) Public/boarding (international)	'In my first school, I got teased for being the only Pakistani guy in the class' 'That second school was absolutely fine because I was part of the system now. I had a history, kids knew me, I had friends, we all went to the same junior school' 'I was picked on more at this school than any other school because it was very English, very male and very old.'
2. (23)	K.G. (F)	8 9	Sweden	Bilingual International	'It was difficult at first (...) I was very confident as a young kid (...) I didn't have any problems myself'' 'I remember having a lot of fun, especially 3rd, 4th, 5th grade, it was like the best years of my life'.
3. (22)	M.M. (M)	6 8	Canada Greece	State International	'I loved it. Yeah. I got along really well in school there and y'know, I lived really close to my best friend' 'In the beginning, not pleasant. I didn't like it. (...) but then afterwards, and I remember the last 4 years of school, I enjoyed it. I had a good time.'
4. (30)	C.T. (F)	5 7 9	England Spain U.S.A.	State State State	'I don't remember feeling a massive transition, I think I was too young' 'I completely settled into life in Spain, loved it, you know, my friends and school' 'I do not have a bad memory of, I mean that period of my life, I think of it now as one of the happiest'
5. (26)	A.G. (M)	10 12	Spain England	State (homogenous) Public	'My memories of Spain are very sunny, happy and unproblematic' 'I spent 7 years at that school, I'm not in touch with anyone there, I think that speaks for itself.'

Table 2.

No. Age	Name (Sex)	Age at migration	Country	School	Representative Quotation
6. (26)	T.L. (M)	10 12 14	U.S.A (California) Ohio New Hampshire	State (diverse) State (homogenous) Private/boarding	'I felt like an outsider because I didn't speak the language, because I didn't feel comfortable with the culture' 'In Ohio, that's when the realisation became a lot clearer that I'm an outsider again (...) because of how I look' 'It wasn't as painful as my adjustment to Ohio but it definitely made me realise, I guess, it made me feel inadequate to a certain extent'
7. (27)	S.P. (M)	9 11 12	Country X Province X Province X	State (homogenous) State State	'I remember only happy thoughts, I dunno, it was a really relaxed life, Like everyone was friendly' 'Well then it was difficult (...) in the gymnasium people really didn't like the fact that you do well in school'

Language Acquisition

Participants who acquired several languages through migration reported second language acquisition (SLA)being quicker and easier at a younger age (M.M., A.G., K.G., S.P.). This is consistent with the 'critical period hypothesis' which states that SLA is minimally effortful for young children, however, neurobiological changes at puberty make mastery of a second language harder (Lenneberg, 1967; Penfield & Roberts, 1959). Analyses of the evidence for a 'critical period' show that age is not as relevant to success in SLA as motivation and opportunity to interact (Singleton & Lengyel, 1995; Robertson, 2004). However, the sample data show that both motivation and opportunity to interact were influenced by age-related social factors.

Accented speech evoked teasing, reducing the number of interactions participants wished, or had the opportunity, to have in their new language. K.G. remembered being teased for her pronunciation but claimed she was too young to be affected. Those who encountered teasing at an older age were upset by their experiences. I.E. recalls being teased, aged seven and again aged thirteen, for *'not speaking English properly'*. T.L. claimed peers *'made fun'* of his accent. A.G. reports *'being the victim of bullying for having an accent'*. However, this only began after his second migration, aged 12: *'in Spain the accent wasn't much of an issue but in England it became an issue, like people would make fun of my accent'*. This may be age-related, because younger children's tolerance of difference is higher than that of adolescents (Colley, Berman & van Millingen, 2005). Although adolescents can master a second language, an accent can stifle SLA. S.P. and A.G. accept that they still have slight accents in English. This may be because they started learning English as their third language aged 12, whereas M.M. and K.G. began learning their third languages aged eight and nine respectively.

T a b l e 3.

Participants' linguistic trajectories

Participant Number	Sex	Name	Age of Second Language Acquisition	Age of Third Language Acquisition
4.	F	C.T	Bilingual from birth	
3.	M	M.M.	6 years	8 years
1.	M	I.E.	7 years	
2.	F	K.G.	7 years	9 years
7.	M	S.P.	9 years	12 years
5.	M	A.G.	9 years	12 years
6.	M	T.L.	10 years	

Lenneberg (1967), Oyama (1976) and Scovel (1988) assert that a native accent in one's second language becomes nearly impossible to achieve after adolescence. A foreign accent can create difficulties for immigrants who assimilate their new culture and present their identity as such. Categorisation into a national identity relies upon fluent use of that nation's language, a linguistic discrepancy will raise questions about the categorisation (Fiske, Neuberg, Beattie & Milberg, 1987). Accent may also be significant for domestic TCKs and migrants whose move does not require SLA. C.T. recalls trying to speak with an American rather than English accent in her US school. Accent betrays difference, which can complicate acceptance amongst peers.

Peer Attitudes

Each participant except C.T. recalled incidents of teasing or bullying. The data showed a difference between the things pre-adolescent and adolescent migrants were teased about. T.L. recalls being teased for *'not being able to speak the language properly, having small eyes, not interested in sports,(…) growing up as a kid in elementary school those are some of the things that it was tough to look past (…) at that time it did mean a lot when people were saying that stuff.'* Most instances of teasing before adolescence were based on perceivable differences, such as looking different (T.L., I.E.,), having different table manners (I.E.), speaking differently (T.L., I.E., K.G.) and acting differently (T.L., S.P.). Perhaps this is because young children tend not to stereotype based on material in the media and form their impressions of others at an individual level (Cameron et al., 2001; Colley et al., 2005).

During adolescence teasing based on national stereotypes became prevalent, as expected (Phinney, 1989; Cross, 1987; Colley et. al., 2005). A.G. claimed migrating to England aged 12 was harder than migrating to Spain aged 10, because he encountered a *'much harsher environment, much more hostile (…) the Russian clichés would just come out'*. S.P. and T.L. also recalled the use of negative stereotyping. Around adolescence people begin exercising their *'capacities for reflecting on the past and future (and) develop a greater interest in one's own ethnic background'* (Kroger, 2000: 127). They become more involved with national media and learn about constructs such as nationality, ethnicity and culture. They discover new ways of characterising themselves and others. Differences become more salient. Incomplete knowledge about these constructs may lead adolescents to stereotype. Social constructionism posits that mental representations of cultural groups are informed by prevailing discourse about those groups; the prevalence of negative discourse will produce a negative construct (Burr, 2003).If a society holds negative views about an immigrant group, adolescents may latently inherit those views through enculturation.

Discrimination against immigrant groups strengthens native group boundaries, making membership seem less achievable (Verkuyten & Reijerse, 2008). It reduces opportunities for interaction with the native group, potentially stifling SLA. Furthermore, it makes a sense of pride in belonging to one's native cultural group difficult to establish (Chavira & Phinney, 1991).

Peer-group Cohesion

Following their pre-adolescent migrations M.M., C.T., K.G., S.P. and A.G. had few problems and claimed their peers were *"friendly"*. Participants claimed that their younger siblings had than fewer difficulties than themselves (C.T., I.E., A.G.), whereas older siblings had more difficulties (C.T., K.G., I.E.,). K.G. states: *'the eldest one, he got into 7th grade and people at that age are not very nice, so I think he had a more difficult time adjusting in terms of, you know, the trends and learning the lingo and just trying to fit in (...) we were all at the same school and I think he was definitely bullied for a while because he didn't really fit in,'*. I.E. and C.T present similar accounts. A.G. migrated to England aged 12. I.E. moved to boarding school aged 13. T.L. migrated within the US at the age of 12 and again at 14. S.P. migrated within 'Xxxia' aged 11 and 12. It was these transitions that they found most difficult. Adolescents, who have been at the same school for some time, are likely to have formed groups which are difficult for newcomers to join. Due to this social cohesion, peer acceptance was harder for adolescent migrants.

To conclude, participants who relocated during adolescence recalled more negative social experiences than pre-adolescent migrants. Three factors made migration harder for adolescents: language acquisition, awareness of ethnic and cultural differences, and peers' more longstanding, less permeable social groups.

'The Me' – How participants conceptualise their identities

Two themes were identified: distress and no distress regarding identity definition. Participants who migrated during adolescence experienced more distress over their cultural identity in adulthood. Individual differences could be accounted for by the degree of acceptance or rejection participants encountered from others, both in their native and adopted countries (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Mead, 1934).

Table 4.

Representative quotations about participants' identities

No. & Age	Name (Sex)	Representative quotations about how the participants currently conceptualise their identities	Parents' nationality	No. of migrations	Identity
1. (24)	I.E. (M)	*"I see myself as very equal. I think I have the best of both. I like to think that I've taken the best of being Pakistani and the best of being English and it's a new kind of identity, new kind of culture that I've created, you know; which I'm going to pass on to my children, and hopefully they pass it on to their children, (…). I can't renounce me being Pakistani any more than I can renounce me being English… they're both exactly the same. To me, I'm very proud of being English, if England is playing football or they're playing cricket I do support them, the same with Pakistan. And if they're both playing together I support both of them, you know, then in that sense I don't lose"*	Same	1	Mixed – No Distress.
2. (23)	K.G. (F)	*"I've thought quite a bit about it actually (…) moving away from home was sort of my way of finding my identity on my own, separate from the family environment"* *"I think I'm neither or…"*	Same	3	Mixed – No Distress
3. (22)	M.M. (M)	*'I think I'm still working on that, I think I have a relatively poor conception of what identity is.'' "I'd like to feel that I am, that I have selectively absorbed things from a variety of cultures"*	Different	7	Mixed – No Distress
4. (30)	C.T. (F)	*"I just feel like a mix"* *"I feel like a different person in different circumstances (…) I'm a different person with my family and a different person um, in the theatre or…"*	Different	5	Mixed – No Distress

No. & Age	Name (Sex)	Representative quotations about how the participants currently conceptualise their identities	Parents' nationality	No. of migrations	Identity
5. (26)	A.G. (M)	*"Definitely Russian. Yeah, for sure, like there's no two ways about it in my mind. Anglicised… westernised, that's the word for it, not as much Hispanicised, but certainly anglicised"* *"People still put me down in their phones as 'Russian A.G.'"*	Same	2	Mixed – Minimal Distress
6. (26)	T.L. (M)	*"When I'm in China I feel American. But then, when I'm in America I feel less American. I don't feel Chinese, which is interesting I think. And when I'm in England, for example, I'm American"*	Same	5	Mixed – Some Distress
7. (27)	S.P. (M)	*"I still feel like I'm half Russian half 'Xxxian' but, its more useful to tell people that you're Russian"* *"I've been in England for 8 years now, so it will be wrong to say these are the only 2 things, I am partly becoming British as well"*	Same	6	Mixed – Some Distress

No distress

I.E. has lived in England most of his life. He is involved with the Pakistani community and has visited family in Pakistan several times. I.E..'s narratives suggest that he is truly bicultural, identifying with both of his cultures equally and being equally accepted in both. He claimed: *"in Pakistan I embed myself back into my old culture; it feels as though I never left. So, I stop speaking English completely, (…) back there I always wear Pakistani clothing, um, I always speak the language, I try to behave like they do, I basically become…Like if you looked at me in Pakistan you wouldn't be able to tell whether that guy is from England or not."* He discussed two incidents intended to demonstrate how 'native' he is to both cultures. At school he remembers having *"an altercation with a group of guys"* where he defended himself and his Pakistani roots. Subsequently, he became captain of the football team, and part of the basketball and cricket teams. Despite his initial difficulties I.E. gained acceptance amongst British peers and became a central member of his social group. However, a 'British-Pakistani' identity is relatively common within Britain, I.E. may not feel as unusual as some of the other participants.

M.M., C.T. &K.G. identified characteristics which they associated with their different cultures but could not articulate their identity in cultural terms. C.T. and M.M. have parents of different nationalities, and M.M's mother is a TCK. Having an *"international identity"* was normal within their homes. Like many TCKs, M.M and K.G. attended international schools where having a mixed identity was common (Fail et al., 2004). Both tried to identify with mono-cultural peers from their native and host countries, without success. K.G. recalls realising *"hmmm, I do not have anything in common with these people"* (Pollock & van Reken, 2009). However, neither had difficulties with being accepted by native peers, and have been mistaken for natives. K.G. claimed *"because I speak Swedish really well, so I sound Swedish, like a Swede, (…) people think they can relate to me"*. Even though both M.M. and K.G. do not fully identify with peers from their respective cultures, they can switch between different cultural scripts. Unlike many TCKs, they have secure membership in each of their cultures, meaning they do not find the inability to pin down a specific cultural identity distressing. C.T. believes she can connect with most people. She recalls an incident when she was working at a Californian health-club with mainly English-speaking clientele: *"you'd kind of be yourself, and then one of the cleaners would come round and speak to you in Spanish and suddenly like this other part of you comes out, it's bizarre (…) I don't know if you're more yourself or a different self, like it surprises me (…) like, 'oh my god!', you know, 'I'm this person too!'"*. Her acceptance within multiple cultures makes it is difficult to identify with just one. C.T. claimed to sometimes envy mono-cultural peers who have very

clear ideas about their identity but does not find her lack of identity definition distressing.

Distress

Both T.L. and A.G. experienced difficult transitions at age 12 and 14. A.G. visited Russia nine years ago and *"felt like a complete foreigner. A couple of people said I had an accent in Russian which I didn't realise at that point. Yeah, I felt, I hadn't been for a while and I felt definitely disconnected from the culture."* Even though he did not feel Russian in Russia, he claimed he was *'definitely Russian'*. A.G. was asked about this inconsistency during a follow-up interview. He replied that his idea of what *'being Russian'* means is specific. He associates being Russian with his *"family and their friends (...) my idea of Russia is limited to classical musicians."* Although A.G. understood that Russians perceive him as foreign, he is accepted as Russian within his family and their network of friends. Within the 'I' section of his interview A.G. disclosed that university peers still identify him as Russian. His efforts to gain native group membership at school were countered through teasing and exclusion. His membership in English culture is still challenged, possibly because of his accent. However, he has secure membership in a small subsection of Russian culture, and so self-identifies as Russian.

T.L. returned to work in China at the age of 23. Discovering that he did not feel 'at home' was painful: *"when I went back people treated me not as Chinese but as an American and so, <u>again</u> I was becoming an outsider, to a place that I've called home. (...)they behave, I think, differently around you, and in reaction you behave according to how they treat you, right? So, they treated me like a visitor and I felt like a visitor."* Throughout the 'I' section of the interview, T.L. frequently mentioned being treated like an outsider in America, he claimed: *"I think I failed to convince people I was one of them"*. Native's responses in both of T.L.'s cultures suggest he does not have full membership in either, leading him to feel like an outsider in both. Pollock and van Reken report that TCKs often experience identity problems upon return to their native country (2009). They realise they do not have membership in the group they always thought they belonged to, but are equally aware that they do not have membership in their previous host cultures. This makes it difficult to determine where they belong. Perhaps T.L.'s struggles stem from being treated as a foreigner in each of his cultures.

S.P. has not visited Russia since he left, aged 10, but prefers to self-identify as Russian in conversation because it is *"easier"*. At school, when native 'Xxxians' asked where he was from he replied *"'I'm 'Xxxian', but then they would say 'no, no, where are you really from?' so there was a strong tendency (...) to*

become 'Xxxian' to integrate, to learn the language so you cannot be recognised by your accent". After gaining 'Xxxian' citizenship S.P. started university in England. There he told people he was a dual-national but met similar questioning responses. Peers failed to understand why he called himself *"half-'Xxxian'"*. They were only satisfied when he mentioned Russia, because that coincided with their identification of him: *"you tell them 'I'm Russian' and everyone's 'oh yeah, you're Russian, we figured"*. He claims *"recently I had this moment of enlightenment that it's much easier to tell people I'm Russian and not to mention 'Xxxian'"*. Frequently encountering challenges to the identity he projected led S.P. to identify as Russian in discourse, even though he feels this does not reflect his identity. He feels he is *"becoming more British"* but English peers still ask where he is from. S.P. has good relationships with all three of his cultures, but does not have full membership in any. He is the only participant who explicitly mentioned identity crises: *"major difficulties because you don't know who you are, where you belong to, like, you have this identity crisis and you have to resolve it somehow at some point."* Considering the similarity between T.L. and S.P.'s experiences, it is possible that their identity struggles were caused by not having full membership of any of their cultures.

To summarise, participants who received inclusive feedback from native members of their different cultures gained membership in those cultures and did not find their lack of identity resolution distressing. Conversely, participants who tried to establish membership in various cultural groups, but were rebuffed or treated by prototypical members of the group as outsiders, did not achieve full membership of that culture. They could not identify themselves as being from that culture. A.G associated his identity with the culture in which he had acceptance, whereas T.L. and S.P. did not have this option. Without full membership in any culture at the close of adolescence, they had difficulties determining where they belonged. Identity definition was not only difficult for these participants, but also relatively distressing.

DISCUSSION

This study sought to examine whether age-related factors in migration influence the likelihood of identity struggles. The main findings are as follows:

1. Pre-adolescent migrants experienced fewer difficulties in their new school environments than adolescent migrants:
   ➢ Adolescents found SLA more difficult and did not achieve native accents.

> ➢ Stereotype-based teasing was more prominent in adolescent social contexts.
> ➢ Adolescents found admittance to friendship groups harder to attain.

2   Being accepted as a native by members of one's cultures improved the likelihood of a positive single or mixed identity:

> ➢ Participants with full membership in more than one native group were unsure of their cultural identity but did not find this distressing.
> ➢ Those without full membership in any of their cultural groups reported having struggled with their identity.

3. Age at migration influenced the likelihood of identity problems in the sample:

> ➢ Secure membership of at least one cultural group was necessary to avoid identity problems.
> ➢ Pre-adolescent migrants gained group membership in each of their cultures, whereas adolescent migrants did not.

It appears that age at migration did influence the likelihood of identity struggles within this sample. The findings suggest that identity problems stemmed from being perceived as a foreigner in each of one's cultures. The younger a child migrates, the easier they assimilate their new culture. If they maintain their native language and culture they can become bicultural or multicultural. In adolescence, slower SLA, greater awareness of difference, and less permeable group dynamics impede the process of establishing acceptance. Accordingly, adolescents find it harder to assimilate their new culture. This may detract from the maintenance of their native culture, or cause the attribution of less value to membership of it. If the native culture is maintained but membership of the new culture is not achieved, the individual may be left with a sense of inferiority about their identity. If the native culture is not maintained, and membership of the new culture is not achieved, the individual is likely to encounter identity struggles. If they come to acknowledge that they are perceived as foreigners in each of their cultures, trying to answer the questions 'who am I?' and 'where do I belong?' may be distressing, because the answers do not come easily. Thus, membership in at least one culture, as well as value attributed to that membership, are necessary to avoid identity problems.

Figure 5 integrates findings from this study with features of Berry's acculturation model (1997), and the social identity approach (Tajfel et al., 1971, Tajfel & Turner, 1986, Tajfel, 2010; Turner, 2010). It explains the participants' acculturation pathways.

Significance of the study

This study addressed a gap in the literature on age-related factors in child migration, and their implications for identity. Despite its small size, its

contribution is significant. The findings suggest that participants found being 'different' at school difficult. Schools might be able to help immigrant children de-emphasising differences and promoting an atmosphere of multiculturalism. Furthermore, the findings showed that language was highly significant. Parents considering migration might be well advised to ensure their adolescent children acquire basic knowledge of the destination culture's language before migrating. However, the most significant implication of this research is that adolescent migration may have more negative implications for wellbeing later in life than pre-adolescent migration.

Affordances and limitations

The study tested the application of established social-psychological theories of group membership against the more recent backdrop of a social constructionist approach. It successfully bridged these methods by employing a novel methodology, which proved effective in exploring both social factors and individual differences in acculturation and identity. However, a general criticism of the narrative approach is that, due to the reconstructive nature of memory, recollection is sometimes inaccurate (Neisser & Harsch, 1992). The argument that adolescents find it harder to gain the acceptance of native peers is partially based on the testimony of three participants who claimed their adolescent siblings experienced considerable difficulties following migration. Interviewing older and younger siblings might have improved the reliability of the data.

Another limitation of the study its small size. Participants were carefully selected to represent a breadth of experiences: encompassing both pre-adolescent and adolescent transitions. The study intended to gain a thorough understanding of these individuals' experiences and identities, which necessitated rigorous and prolonged involvement with the data, content-checking, member-checking and external auditing (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Flick, 2002; Smith, 2003; Silverman, 1993). To meet these requirements and ensure the data's credibility, a small sample size was appropriate. When evaluating the transferability of findings it is important to consider that the participants were postgraduate students at Cambridge University or London University. Individuals who experienced severe difficulties at school, or significant identity problems, may not have progressed to university[1].

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[1] The homogeneity of the sample in terms of the participants' academic success is intentional. These individuals were selected because they successfully navigated migration without falling behind academically, their strategies for negotiating school environments were explored in a different as part of the study to see if they could be recommended to other immigrant students for replication. These findings will be reported in a forthcoming article.

Figure 1.

Participants' acculturation and identity pathways

L1: native language; C1: parental culture; L2: new language 2; C2: new culture
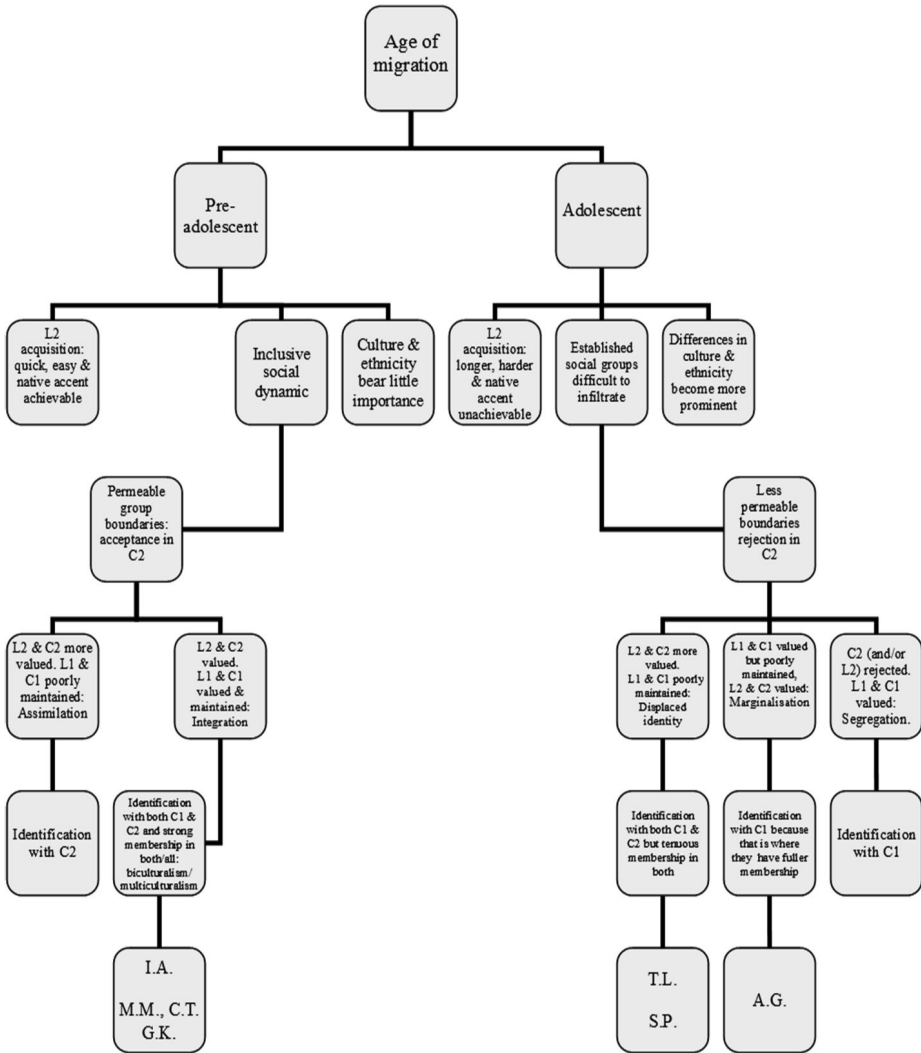
These two developmental routes increased the likelihood of identity struggles within the sample.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrated that identity is influenced by acculturation, and that acculturation is influenced by social factors, such as opportunity for interaction, acceptance or rejection by peers. These factors were shown to be different in pre-adolescent and adolescent school environments. Age at migration influenced how easy or difficult participants found it to integrate their new culture. Pre-adolescent migrants encountered fewer identity struggles in adulthoods than adolescent migrants. Based on initial findings, adolescent migration complicates the process of building a peer social-support system, which is essential in establishing a sense of belonging. Further research could facilitate the formalisation of acculturation as a developmental pathway for immigrant children. This is currently lacking and is a promising area of investigation that has the potential to help a growing, yet under-researched demographic.

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