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Michelle Daggett
Self-shock: The Experience of
Individuals Relocating Within the
United States

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the experience of relocation on self-identity. More specifically, this study focused on the concept of self-shock, the idea that being in a foreign environment impacts an individual's ability to maintain a consistent identity. This research was based on 12 interviews that were conducted via video-conferencing call or in-person with individuals who have relocated domestically for the first time within the United States. The findings of this study suggest that individuals relocating domestically within the United States can and do experience self-shock.

One reason for conducting this study is because relocating is commonplace within the United States due to professional and educational opportunities. As relocating can be stressful for many reasons, individuals in this transition may seek out professional support. This research helps to identify ways that an individual reacts to changes associated with relocation and how practitioners can assist in normalizing an individual's reaction and struggle to change.

**SELF-SHOCK: THE EXPERIENCE OF INDIVIDUALS RELOCATING WITHIN THE
UNITED STATES**

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2016

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to answer the following questions: “Do individuals relocating to different regions within the same country experience self-shock, and if so, in what way?”. Additionally, “What protective factors influence the degree to which a person may experience self-shock?”. This research focuses specifically on individuals who are relocating to different regions within the United States.

Oberg (2006) believed that regardless of how open-minded an individual entering a new environment might be, culture shock to some extent was inevitable due to a loss of familiar cues. This was particularly interesting to me as culture shock applied to the way in which an individual is overwhelmed by external factors and I wondered if and how a new environment might challenge internal factors such as self-identity. The concept of self-shock was originally formulated by Zaharna (1989) to describe the effect that being abroad can have on the way individuals maintain consistent and recognizable identities. This study is interested in assessing the individual experiences that people have in moving from one defined area to another and determining whether or not the concept of self-shock can be applied to individuals relocating within the same country.

According to Erikson’s theory of identity formation, an individual with a strong ego identity may be better equipped at navigating change (Levesque, 2011). This study pulls from

Erikson's theory and examines the way in which aspects of identity may serve as protective factors.

One reason for conducting this study is because much of the current literature around the concept of self-shock has involved the experience of individuals abroad. I have not yet been able to locate any research that has been done on how this concept can be applied to individuals who relocate domestically and the effect that domestic relocation may have on self-identity. Self-identity is defined in this research as one's recognition of their qualities, including but not limited to racial identity, communication style and gender roles.

In addition to better understanding how individuals experience self-shock, this study plans to analyze what kind of protective factors aid in an individual's ability to be interpersonally successful (i.e. the ability to interact and communicate with others) as well as the implications on physical and mental health for individuals with limited protective factors. For the purposes of this study, the term protective factors is defined as a variable that may contribute to an individual's ability to thrive. Protective factors include factors that may promote social inclusion and competence and any and all conditions that may serve to mitigate the effects of stress on an individual.

This study focuses on assessing experiences of individuals who have relocated to different regions within the United States. Relocate will refer to a move that is or was expected to last for a minimum of one year. Region will be defined by geographic position and will align with the classification system used by the United States Census Bureau. This system recognizes four regions (Northeast, Midwest, South, East) with nine divisions (New England, Mid-Atlantic, East North Central, West North Central, South Atlantic, East South Central, West

South Central, Mountain, Pacific). For the purposes of this study, region will refer to these nine divisions:

- **New England division:** Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont;
- **Middle Atlantic division:** New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania;
- **East North Central division:** Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin;
- **West North Central division:** Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota;
- **South Atlantic division:** Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia;
- **East South Central division:** Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee;
- **West South Central division:** Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas;
- **Mountain division:** Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming;
- **Pacific division:** Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington.

I conducted this study by interviewing twelve individuals who have relocated from one region within the United States to another for the first time. Participants were recruited through posts that were advertised on the social network Facebook as well as through snowball sampling. I developed my own interview guide to collect data with the questions being informed by the literature review as well as the overarching research question.

While relocating can be stressful for many reasons, this study was interested in what factors contribute to internal conflicts that occur due to this transition. This research is beneficial to the field of social work as individuals experiencing relocation crisis may seek out professional

support. It could be beneficial for clinicians working with these individuals to be aware of the affects that relocating can have on one's self-identity and how that can in turn affect their ability to successfully transition to a new environment.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This literature review will focus on research that shows the effects found on individuals who relocate and what factors tend to put them at risk and to protect them from experiencing distress due to the relocation. The concept of self-shock will serve as the foundation of my research as I hope to gain a better understanding of how identity is affected by relocation. As the current literature that I have found around the concept of self-shock focuses on the experience of individuals who have relocated from one country to another as opposed to in-country relocation, I will mainly be using country-to-country literature.

This chapter is divided into three sections. Section one defines and differentiates between personal identity and cultural identity. Section one also explores threats to identity and elaborates on the concepts of culture shock and self-shock. Section two will focus on relocation and the effects of relocation on identity. This section will also discuss protective factors and risk factors around relocation. Section three will summarize the strengths and limitations to the current literature around the topic of self-shock.

Identity

As mentioned in the introduction, *self-identity* for the purposes of this study will be defined as one's recognition of their qualities, including but not limited to racial identity, communication style and gender roles. Identity formation is significant to this study as identity is what provides individuals with a sense of who they are. Identity is what "gives meaning to

experiences, directs behavior, and helps people know how to behave and what to expect” (Angulo, 2008, p. 15).

Personal identity

Coté & Levine (2014) borrow from Erik Erikson’s theory of identity formation and talk about the way in which an individual’s identity is stabilized by the “interplay between the social and the psychic” (p. 16). Consistent with that theory, when an individual is able to establish an identity within a society based on that society’s values, ideals, and beliefs, their character and behavior then become stabilized (Coté & Levine, 1987). Erikson referred to this stabilization of character and behavior as ego identity. According to Erikson, a strong ego identity helps an individual to better tolerate and navigate any changes in personal or situational factors (Levesque, 2011). If an individual has a strong ego identity, they have a sense of who they are and what they believe in. This serves as a protective factor as it allows for an individual to acquire a feeling of control and confidence in their ability to live by society’s standards and expectations (Cherry, 2015). Erikson believed that ego identity played a critical role in an individual’s development and identified the end of adolescence as the time in which ego identity should be obtained (Levesque, 2011). Having a strong ego identity by the end of adolescence prepares an individual for the challenges of adulthood (Levesque, 2011).

Cultural identity

In thinking about what factors contribute to the formation of one’s self-identity, it is important to acknowledge the role that culture plays. Culture allows for an individual to make certain assumptions about what choices are available to them in their given society. These choices may include relationships, values and careers. Societal expectations then work to

influence the process of identity formation as they dictate how appropriate it is to explore certain choices (Grotevant, 1987).

Cultural identity can then be defined as “the collective self-awareness that a given group embodies and reflects” (Adler, 1998, p. 227). Cultural identity differs from personal identity in that there is an emphasis on the group and the shared traits of the group. These traits can include everything from values, beliefs, and views on family to the “unconscious patterning of activities” that we engage in in our everyday lives (Adler, 1998, p. 227). Many of these values and beliefs are ingrained in us and transmitted both consciously and unconsciously through the interactions that we engage in from the time of our birth. This means that everyone is to some extent culturally bound (Adler, 1998). It is through culture that one is able to establish a sense of personal identity and simultaneously attain a sense of “we”, allowing us to feel a part of a specific group.

While culture and our cultural identity play a role in the way that we make sense of the world that we live in, it is not necessarily fixed or unchangeable. A multicultural person may use their cultural identity to maintain their relativity, but they are also able to modify their needs and expectations to fit the context of their environment (Adler, 1998).

Threats to Identity

Culture shock

Kalervo Oberg (2006) first defined culture shock as anxiety that an individual experiences due to a loss of familiarity in one’s social intercourse. According to Oberg (2006), we carry various cues in our unconscious awareness related to language, customs, beliefs, facial expressions, and gestures that we depend on for peace of mind. Oberg (2006) believed that regardless of how open-minded an individual entering a new environment might be, culture

shock to some extent was inevitable due to a loss of familiar cues. Kim (2001) also believed this and felt that an individual finding themselves in an unfamiliar environment was bound to be challenged by having to acclimate to a new milieu and modify ingrained cultural habits. Adler (1975) attributes this difficulty to the fact that “most individuals are relatively unaware of their own values, beliefs, and attitudes” (p. 14). Because of this, when an individual finds themselves in a new environment, there is a tendency for this new environment to bring awareness to their cultural predispositions (Adler, 1975).

Upon entering a new culture, Oberg (2006) identified various reactions that individuals were likely to experience beginning with feeling frustrated and anxious to then rejecting the new environment and then entering a phase that he labeled as regression. In the regression phase, Oberg (2006) identified the home environment as becoming extremely important to the individual who has relocated. This individual may be likely to reflect fondly on home, not taking into consideration any of the difficulties that the home environment may hold. “To an American everything American becomes irrationally glorified” (Oberg, 2006, p. 142). Similarly, Taft identified various reactions to cultural dislocation including but not limited to psychological and physiological responses such as irritability and insomnia, a sense of loss, feeling rejected by the members of the new milieu, and helplessness around not being able to effectively navigate this new environment (Kim, 2001).

Regardless of the degree of cultural difference, Adler (1975) acknowledges that “transitional experiences of any sort will always be more negative than positive” (p. 21). With that in mind, Adler (1987) contends that culture shock can also be a cross-cultural learning experience that stimulates growth and self-awareness, not a “disease for which adaptation is the cure” (p.29). Adler (1975) believed that transitional experiences have the potential to provoke

both feelings of frustration and growth and that “the transitional experience is a movement from a state of low self- and cultural awareness to a state of high self- and cultural awareness” (p. 15). As an individual is confronted with a new environment and culture, they are also simultaneously confronted with the degree to which one is a product of their own culture (Adler, 1975).

While Oberg (2006) asserted that all individuals go through some form of culture shock when entering a new culture, he was also able to identify that many of the negative consequences that may result from this cultural dislocation are a result of an individual’s inability to effectively communicate. Without language, it may be difficult for an individual to develop a sense of confidence in the new culture and gain a true understanding of the cultural meanings of the new environment (Oberg, 2006). Kim (2001) also emphasizes the importance of communication to human learning and the ways in which our understanding of both verbal and non-verbal cues aid in our ability to come to terms with our environment. It is through these “culturally sanctioned communication patterns, people perceive themselves, and are perceived by others, as socially “normal” or “healthy” individuals” (p. 49).

Adler (1975) also asserts that an individual can experience culture shock within their own country. Adler (1975) identifies a myriad of transitional experiences including entering college and divorce that may result in an individual experiencing culture shock in one’s own culture. However, Adler (1975) believed that although one may experience conflict in this transition, there is also room for “authentic growth and development” (p. 14).

Self-shock

The term self-shock was originally coined by Zaharna when she was describing the effects of sojourner adjustment on identity. Her research attempted to explain how and why identity confusion and anxiety occur when an individual comes into contact with a different

Other. This research explored self-identity formation and maintenance as well as the way in which intercultural dynamics play a role in self-identity processes (Zaharna, 1989).

Zaharna (1989) defines self-shock as the “intrusion of inconsistent, conflicting self-images” (p.501) that an individual experiences with the Self when in a foreign environment. Culture shock which has been defined as anxiety and a sort of disorientation that one might experience when encountering cultural norms and behaviors that differ from their own is an example of the way in which confusion with the Other may be experienced. Culture shock may result from the need that an individual might feel to “rapidly understand and demonstrate appropriate role behavior in the given host culture” (Arthur, 2001, p. 42). The stress associated with severe culture shock has been shown to manifest in both psychological and physiological responses. These responses can include everything from depression, social withdrawal and loneliness to insomnia and gastrointestinal problems (Arthur, 2001).

While a certain level of adjustment is expected to be made when an individual is put in a situation in which they must encounter cultural norms and behaviors that differ from their own, the concept of self-shock attempts to address the ways in which these things affect self-identity. Although there is an abundance of literature on cultural identity and identity formation, there is very little that has addressed identity development beyond the formation of the primary identity during the formative years (Kim, 1994). Research on the formation and maintenance of adult identities could add to knowledge in this area.

Zaharna (1989) has defined self-shock as encompassing three dimensions. The first dimension is the loss of communication competence. Previous research with individuals who were spending time abroad has shown that self-shock could occur as a result of an individual’s “decreased ability to communicate about who they are, as well as the decreased ability to

understand others' appraisals of them" (Angulo, 2008, p.7). Zaharna (1989) refers to this as a double bind, stating that "unshared meanings for behaviors increase one's need to confirm self-identities; however, unshared meanings for behaviors decrease one's ability to do so" (p. 501).

The second dimension of self-shock is the distorted self-reflections in the responses of others. This dimension focuses on the need for an individual to feel as though the response of the Other confirms the individual's self-identity. This can be challenging as an individual's perspective is derived from their primary culture and therefore may not accurately reflect the perspective of the Other (Zaharna, 1989). This means that an individual may experience or interpret a response by the Other in a manner that was unintended. This inability to accurately understand the perspective or the behavioral responses of the Other leaves one questioning their identity as the Other is not able to confirm the individual's self-identities (Zaharna, 1989).

The third dimension of self-shock is the challenge of changing identity bound behaviors. As an individual attempts to acclimate to a new environment and or culture, they will likely try to modify their behaviors to better fit the context of their new environment. Zaharna emphasizes the link between Self and behavior and how the behaviors that we may attempt to modify in new environments are not just culture-bound but identity-bound as well. The challenge of this third dimension is how one can go about maintaining the consistency of Self when one is in the midst of making behavioral changes.

While researching American Peace Corps Volunteers in Paraguay, Schillaci's (1997) research was able to support and validate aspects of Zaharna's theory of self-shock and its contribution to acculturation stress. In testing Zaharna's theory of self-shock, Schillaci (1997) identified increased levels of distress in Peace Corps Volunteers in Paraguay within their first 15 months. Schillaci (1997) was able to determine that "self-shock was able to explain

approximately one-quarter of the variance in distress among Volunteers over and above that which can be explained by prior levels of distress” (p. 118).

Schillaci’s (1997) research also indicated self-observation as a significant predictor of self-shock and did not find “reflected appraisal nor the contribution of confidence in reflected appraisal to the prediction of self-shock as statistically significant” (p. 95). Although Schillaci (1997) did not find reflected appraisal significant in her study, she was able to acknowledge that this limitation may be a result of the unique characteristics of the country that she was doing her research in. For example, Schillaci (1997) found that in contrast to other cultures, Americans generally did not find Paraguayans “hard to read”. Therefore, negative reflected appraisals may have been less likely for Peace Corps Volunteers in Paraguay whereas negative reflected appraisals may be more significant in other countries (Schillaci 1997). Schillaci (1997) was also able to identify that reflected appraisal may be less significant for Peace Corps Volunteers in general as these individuals tend to report high levels of self-esteem, potentially allowing for their self-esteem to be less dependent on whether or not others view them positively.

Relocation

Effects of relocation on identity

Relocation requires an individual to undergo various changes including changes in environment and social relationships. These changes may require major readjustments in daily living that can at the very least be stressful to the individual (Heller, 1982). Fried (1963) elaborates on some of the feelings of grief that an individual may experience including, “feeling of painful loss, continued longing, general depressive tone, frequent symptoms of psychological, social, and somatic distress, sense of helplessness, occasional direct and displaced anger, and a tendency to idealize the lost place” (p.151). Hausman (1991) states that relocating can be

considered a traumatic event as it forces an individual to find a way to cope in a novel situation. This can induce feelings of anxiety or helplessness as one's usual coping skills may prove ineffective, disrupting their sense of well-being (Hausman, 1991).

In a crisis situation or traumatic event, it may be hard for one to maintain a sense of security. An individual's sense of security typically stems from the feeling that they have some sort of control over what is going on in their life (Kelly, 1963). When that sense of security is threatened and the coping skills that an individual typically relies on are not effective, an individual may experience both psychological and physiological distress. Heller (1982) identified four different areas that she believed influenced an individual's reaction to relocation: "(a) individual differences in capabilities and resources, (b) individual perceptions and expectations, (c) degree of environmental change, and (d) the quality of the old and new environments" (p. 488).

Protective factors

As the effects on an individual's response due to relocation can vary, it may be useful to examine further the variables that may contribute to an individual's experience of relocating. These variables may include how an individual copes with stressful events and what emotional and physical supports they may have available to them. Bolan (1997) suggests that the motivation behind relocating may serve as a protective factor. Whether or not the individual had a choice in relocating and their rationale for relocating are elements that Bolan (1997) identifies as important in terms of whether or not the individual is able to interpret relocating as a positive or negative experience.

Heller (1982) refers to various cognitive mediators that factor into a person's ability to successfully navigate a new environment including psychological preparedness. As unfamiliar

events and environments can induce reactions such as anxiety and stress, information that may serve to increase predictability about the new environment may aid in mitigating psychological distress (Heller, 1982). Carlisle-Frank (1992) also believed that preparedness played a significant role in an individual's ability to adapt. Carlisle-Frank (1992) identified other protective factors that influenced an individual's adjustment to transition, including not having to make a change in social class and having low pre-location attachments.

In addition to the aforementioned protective factors, Shklovski (2006) found that individuals who have strong social relationships were better equipped to manage challenging life events. Similarly, Carlisle-Frank (1992) felt that individuals with strong social supports such as friends, family, or religious groups aided in the transition process. Shklovski's (2006) research also indicated that having local ties or knowing people in the new location helped ease the loss of the relationships from the previous location.

In Angulo's (2008) research on identity change in students who study abroad, she found that there was evidence to support identity change in students who studied abroad and that one of the factors that contributed to this change included personal characteristics. More specifically, Angulo (2008) found that an individual's ability to see themselves as open to experiences was significant in predicting personal growth and personal change. Angulo's (2008) research showed that "people who saw themselves as open actually did experience more change, so their experiences were consistent with their self-views" (p. 78).

Risk factors

According to Heller (1982), individuals with fewer resources such as education, friends, and finances may be extremely challenged by having to acclimate to a new environment. Heller also notes that age contributes to an individual's ability to successfully acclimate, referring

specifically to the elderly and the difficulties that many of them may have in embracing change (Heller, 1982).

Magdol (2002) researched more specifically the differences in psychological well-being between men and women and found that there may be aspects to relocating that tend to threaten a woman's sense of identity in a way that differs from a man. Magdol (2002) supported this notion by stating that social relations have been found to have a greater significance to a woman's gender identity and having to relocate likely disrupts those relations. Magdol (2002) reported that her research found that women were more likely to experience negative psychological effects in response to relocation.

Summary

As most of the current literature applies to the experiences of individuals living abroad, there is a lack of information on how the concept of self-shock may apply to individuals relocating within the same country. While relocating domestically may allow an individual to have certain expectations of general similarities, (i.e. language, currency, political parties) there may also be considerable differences (i.e. language, culture, food). This research hopes to better understand how these differences contribute to an individual's ability to be successful.

Future research might also add to current knowledge on the effects of involuntary versus voluntary relocation may have on an individual's experience and ability to be successful. As it is likely that most people will experience some degree of difficulty with having to relocate, the implications for practitioners working with individuals or families who seek professional help is to be mindful that the distress that an individual in this situation might be experiencing does not necessarily indicate psychopathology. This research aims to identify ways an individual reacts to

changes associated with relocation and how practitioners can assist in normalizing an individual's reaction and struggle to change.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to better understand how self-identity is affected by relocation. In order to do this, this research has focused on answering the following questions: *“Do individuals relocating to different regions within the same country experience self-shock, and if so, in what way?”*. Additionally, *“What protective factors influence the degree to which a person may experience self-shock?”*. This study focused specifically on individuals who are relocating to different regions within the United States.

In order to answer the above questions, a qualitative study was conducted. Qualitative strategies such as interviewing allowed for a greater level of detail and insight into individual experiences (Anastas, 1999). As a search of the literature has shown that the concept of self-shock has not been studied previously with individuals who have relocated domestically, an inductive process was used. This process allowed for data collection and analysis to be completed preceding theory. Questions asked in the interview revolved around the following themes: the extent to which interviewees have experienced symptoms of distress around relocation, including self-shock; self-identity; and protective factors. This study attempted to assess the ways in which protective factors or a lack thereof play into the way that an individual may experience self-shock.

Sample

Participants in this study met the following criteria: were at least 18 years old, relocated within the United States from one region to another as classified by the United States Census

Bureau and have relocated for the first time within the United States. Initially, I had considered limiting my study to include individuals who had relocated within the past 5 years as I hypothesized that their experience would be fresh in their minds and that they may still be going through some sort of adjustment period. However, I chose not to exclude participants based on the length of time that they have lived in their current location to allow for a greater range of participant experiences. At the suggestion of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee, I also considered narrowing the scope of my study to individuals that chose to relocate voluntarily as opposed to involuntarily. I ultimately decided that excluding either group could hinder my ability to find a sufficient number of participants. Additionally, although this study drew on a limited number of participants, I hoped to discover if there were differences between those individuals who chose to engage in domestic “voluntary relocation” versus “involuntary relocation”. Individuals were excluded from this study if at the time of data collection, they 1) were not at least 18 years of age, 2) have relocated from one region to another within the United States on more than one occasion.

Recruitment

Prior to recruiting participants for this research study, this study protocol was reviewed and approved by the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee. Initial efforts in recruiting participants were done by this researcher through social media websites such as Facebook (Appendix A). This researcher made posts on Facebook notifying friends and acquaintances of the study and asking them to refer interested individuals who meet study criteria. All posts that were made on Facebook clearly stated that friends and family of this researcher would be excluded from this study. Some individuals referred to my study were acquaintances of friends and family and were only enrolled as participants in the study after it

was confirmed that they met study criteria and after this researcher reviewed the consent document (Appendix B) with them to ensure that they understood that there was no pressure or obligation for them to participate in the study. In addition to using social media, I also attempted to solicit participants through snowball sampling, i.e., asking those individuals who responded to my post to refer other individuals that they felt would meet the criteria for my study. Snowball sampling is a method that is often used in qualitative, interview-based research, that allows for a researcher to obtain participants where there may be few in number or where a certain degree of trust may be necessary in order to initiate contact (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). One of the benefits of using this type of sampling is the level of trust that can easily be established as referrals are typically made through acquaintances (Atkinson & Flint, 2001).

Any individuals who contacted me with interest in participating in the study were screened to assure that they met criteria. This screening was done over the phone at which time I was able to explain and answer any questions about the study as well as review the consent form. If at this point the individual agreed to participate in this study, this researcher mailed two copies of the consent form (Appendix B) and asked the interested participant to keep one copy and sign and return the other copy to me. If an individual did not return the consent form to me, I contacted them by email to see if they were still interested. If so, I sent another consent form. If both attempts to obtain a signed consent form returned via post mail were unsuccessful but the individual indicated that they were still interested in participating in the study, I accepted an electronic signature. Only after the consent form was signed and returned to me were they added as study participants. After receiving signed consent forms, this researcher contacted the study participants via telephone and arranged for a video conference interview. Prior to the interview,

participants were reminded that they could choose not to respond to any questions and withdraw from the study any time before May 1, 2016.

Potential biases that may have affected the results of this study include my recruitment techniques. By using social media to elicit participants and video conferencing to conduct interviews, there is a chance that individuals who are less familiar or comfortable with electronic communication were inadvertently eliminated. In addition to recruiting individuals through social media, I used snowball sampling. This technique may have contributed to a smaller network of people who knew each other as opposed to a more random assortment of participants.

Ethics and Safeguards

Protection of confidentiality

Due to the nature of this study, anonymity could not be assured. It is also true that this researcher is made every attempt to maintain each participant's confidentiality to the best of her ability. All interviews were individual and conducted in a setting that allowed for privacy. Further attempts to maintain confidentiality included identifying study participants with an assigned number and separating signed consent forms from any notes, audio recordings or transcripts. Because participants age, race, gender and geographic location will be included in the study, as a means to protect the confidentiality of participants, this researcher will be the only one who will have access to the informed consent documents containing identifiable information such as names and addresses. All research materials including audio recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a locked file cabinet for three years in accordance with Federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed and then destroyed. All electronically stored

data has been password protected and will be securely stored for three years until no longer needed and then destroyed.

Risks and benefits of participation

As the intent of this study was to assess the ways in which an individual's self-identity is affected by relocating, potential risks involved with participating in this study included having to discuss experiences that may be emotionally distressing. This researcher was mindful of this when conducting interviews and monitored participant's verbal and non-verbal cues in an attempt to avoid causing the participant distress. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner and participants were informed that they had the opportunity to choose not to respond to any question or to end the interview at any time for any reason.

A benefit of this study is that it will add to the limited research available in the field of self-shock and how this concept may apply to individuals relocating domestically. This research aimed to identify in what ways individuals react to this change and how practitioners can assist in normalizing an individual's reaction and struggle to change. Individuals participating in this study may benefit from having a platform to share their experiences. As self-shock may not be a widely understood term, participants may also gain some insight into and a sense of normalization to experiences that may have left them feeling isolated.

Data Collection

I conducted semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions in an attempt to elicit multiple perspectives and allow for each participant to discuss their individual experiences (Anastas, 1999). Semi-structured interviews allowed for me to create a general structure for the interviews, but it also provided interviewees a certain amount of freedom in what they wanted to talk about and how they wanted to express it (Drever, 1995). By utilizing a design that involves

interviewing, I was able to gain a better understanding of a concept that has not been previously studied or has been poorly understood (Anastas, 1999, p.353). Additionally, I chose to do a qualitative study that utilized interviews because I was interested in understanding peoples' lived experiences and the ways in which they find meaning in those experiences (Seidman, 2013). Seidman (2013) states that unlike other methods such as observations or questionnaires, interviews allow for the researcher to get a closer understanding of an individual's experience.

Prior to conducting interviews, interview questions were pre-tested on two family members who have experienced domestic relocation and met the study criteria. Family members were not used as actual study participants but rather were used to gauge whether or not the proposed interview questions were interpreted in the manner intended. This proved helpful as a few questions seemed to need further clarification and in an attempt to minimize the risk of misinterpretation, those questions were modified and reviewed with my thesis advisor. After submitting the interview guide to the Smith College Human Subjects Review Committee, the suggestion was made to further clarify and reword one of my questions. After making the appropriate changes, the interview guide was resubmitted and approved.

The interviews varied in length but took anywhere between 30-60 minutes. Although consent forms were signed prior to the scheduling of interviews, each interview began with a brief explanation of the study and what the interview process would look like. Participants were then given an opportunity to ask any questions before the tape recorder was turned on. At this time, interviewees were once again reminded that they could choose not to answer any of the questions and end the interview for any reason at any point in time. The interview then began with some demographic questions including the participants' age, how they identified racially as well as how they identified with their gender. The open-ended questions asked in the interview

revolved around the following themes: the extent to which interviewees have experienced symptoms of distress around relocation, including self-shock; self-identity; and protective factors. While all interviews were conducted using the interview guide, follow-up questions were asked when necessary in order to clarify interviewees' responses.

All interviews were conducted either in-person, through Skype, or through FaceTime, both of which are video conferencing tools, and were audio recorded using a Sony digital voice recorder. Informal notes were also taken during and after the interview to record observations that this researcher made of the participant's non-verbal cues including but not limited to body language and facial expressions. This researcher kept a log sheet that recorded these notes along with any personal reactions noticed during the interview.

Audio recordings and transcriptions of each of the interviews were password protected and saved on this researcher's computer. All identifying information including names were stripped and replaced with assigned numbers prior to being saved.

Data Analysis

In analyzing my data, I chose to use Thomas' (2006) general inductive approach as this approach allowed for me to be less technical and more straightforward as it does not require the researcher to utilize the technical language that is typically used in most traditional approaches. Thomas (2006) describes the inductive approach as one that is convenient and efficient for analyzing qualitative data as it allows for the researcher to avoid many of the restraints that are often imposed by more structured methodologies such as having to learn and adhere to certain data analysis procedures. Thomas (2006) states that "the purpose for using an inductive approach is to a) to condense raw textual data into a brief, summary format; b) establish clear links between the evaluation or research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw

data; and c) develop a framework for the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the raw data” (p. 1).

The process that I followed is detailed below.

1. All interviews were transcribed by this researcher in a common format including font style, font size, margins and ordering of questions. All interviews were printed and then password protected and saved on this researcher’s computer.
2. Each transcription was then read in detail, multiple times, and segments of the text were analyzed for emerging categories and themes. According to Thomas (2006) this is a critical step in the inductive method as it is crucial for repeated readings of the interview transcripts to be done in order for the researcher to create categories that accurately represent the interviewees experience. Thomas (2006) suggests that at this stage a researcher may expect to develop between 30-40 categories.
3. Categories that this researcher found to have similar meanings (e.g. loneliness and loss of familiar social support) were then combined and organized around themes that I was exploring. Some segments of text were assigned to more than one category and may have represented more than one theme. In order to reduce overlap in categories, Thomas (2006) states that a researcher should attempt to refine their findings to 15-20 categories.
4. Categories were then further refined by using quotes and direct statements from the interviews in an attempt to convey the core theme of each category. Thomas (2006) suggests that one should aim to refine their findings into 3-8 categories that the researcher assesses as the most important themes according to the research objectives. Any and all quotes that were used remained anonymous and participant confidentiality was maintained at all times.

5. A model was then created that highlighted the most significant themes.

In order to enhance the credibility of my findings, I performed stakeholder checks. Thomas (2006) states that stakeholder checks help to establish the credibility of the research as it allows the research participants to comment on and assess a researcher's interpretations. Upon completion of my data analysis, I conducted stakeholder checks by contacting four of my study participants via email and asking them if the themes and categories that I ended up with were consistent with their experience. All four participants agreed that the themes identified by this researcher aligned with their experience.

Chapter IV

Findings

Purpose of Study

This chapter documents the findings from twelve semi-structured interviews with individuals who have relocated for the first time within the United States from one region to another, as classified by the United States Census Bureau. The purpose of this study is to answer the following questions: “*Do individuals relocating to different regions within the same country experience self-shock, and if so, in what way?*”. Additionally, “*What protective factors influence the degree to which a person may experience self-shock?*”. This chapter includes a brief summary of the demographics of the participants before expanding further upon the major themes that emerged from participants’ experiences. Participant interviews were coded using Thomas’s (2006) General Inductive Approach and the following themes emerged - *Initial Experience, Protective Factors, Risk Factors, Distress, and Identity*. A more in-depth analysis of how these findings relate to the concept of self-shock will follow in the Discussion Chapter.

Demographics

Twelve participants were interviewed for this study. Close-ended questions were used to obtain participants’ demographic data. The racial demographics of the participants in this study include five participants who identified as Asian, three who identified as White, one who identified as Black, one who identified as Latina and two who identified as Mixed. Participants were asked how they identified with their gender and 33% identified as male while 67% identified as female. The range in age of my sample was 23 years old to 61 years old with the

mean age of participants being 32 years old. The amount of time between relocation also varied from one participant living in their current city for as little as four months and one participant living in their current region for 12 years. It is also important to note that five out of the 12 participants interviewed relocated from the state of Hawaii to the Continental United States while the other seven participants were a mixture of moving from one geographic region within the Continental United States to another. Three participants relocated from the Middle Atlantic Region to the South Atlantic Region, one participant from the Pacific Region to the Middle Atlantic Region, one participant from the Pacific Region to the South Atlantic Region, two participants from the Pacific Region to the Mountain Region, one participant from the East South Central Region to the South Atlantic Region, one participant from the West South Central Region to the South Atlantic Region, one participant from the East North Central Region to the Mountain Region and two participants from the Pacific Region to the Pacific Region. While the criteria for this study included having to move from one distinct region in the United States to another, this researcher chose to include participants who relocated from the state of Hawaii to another state in the Pacific Region in the Continental United States. Justification for including these participants will be explored further in the following chapter.

Themes

Interview questions were designed as semi-structured and open-ended to allow for each participant to discuss their individual experiences. Participants' responses were analyzed by this researcher resulting in the following themes—*Initial Experience, Protective Factors, Risk Factors, Distress and Identity*.

Initial Experience

The category of *Initial Experience* includes the subcategories: (1) met expectations, (2) did not meet expectations, (3) exceeded expectations, and (4) culture shock. Participants were asked to reflect on how they felt about moving to their current city, prior to relocating, and then asked how that compared to their initial experience of living in their current city.

Met expectations. Five participants stated that they felt the expectations that they had for relocating aligned with their initial experience of relocation. These expectations included anticipating feelings of homesickness, understanding that they did not have an established social network, and wanting a better quality of life. It is also true that two of these participants expressed that while certain expectations such as what they thought their new location would be like were met, other factors such as financial burdens felt unexpected and distressing.

Participant #2:

I would say in general what I expected is what I experienced...I had realistic expectations like I knew it was going to be hard. I knew going into it that I didn't know anyone, you know I knew going into it that I'd probably only get home like once a year.

Participant #9:

I think it did meet my expectations. I feel pretty much comfortable living here. As I mentioned, I did transfer for work and that was harder for a while to get used to...but as a living condition, I'm satisfied.

Exceeded expectations. Out of the twelve interviews conducted, two participants voiced feeling that their initial experience of relocating exceeded their expectations. Both participants referenced having a better quality of life and anticipating prior to moving that certain aspects of living in a new city such as finding a job would be more challenging than it was. One participant

attributed feeling as though his expectations were exceeded because he had unjustified concerns about the quality of life and potential racism and discrimination in his new city prior to relocating.

Participant #4:

It's been, I want to say what I thought or better. I found a great job within the first to the day it was 2 months after I moved here umm and that job led me to doing even better things in my industry than I ever thought possible at my age. Ummm and my living situation is great. I went from not being able to afford rent anywhere and still having to live with my parents to owning a house. Umm and I've just met a lot of really great people out here too that have helped me personally and in my career so I want to say everything that I was looking for I've pretty much found.

Participant #11:

I think it's been more positive than I expected. Like I haven't encountered any crazy weirdness so far and the whole cost of living and less time commuting has been nice.

Did not meet expectations. Five participants voiced feeling that their expectations were not met. These participants spoke about wanting a more noticeable change in their environment as well as having higher hopes for their quality of life.

Participant #6:

Well I think at first it was harder than I expected umm mostly because of our living condition but also making the adjustment was hard. At first it was, it was really bad. It was worse than I thought it would be.

Participant #7:

It was difficult at first. It did not meet my expectations initially...people were still country! There was a bunch of people who walked around that dressed the same umm kind of sounded the same but that was just my initial experience.

Participant #10:

I think it was a shock for me. It was definitely very very different if I consider I went to a public school in Hawaii, predominantly Asian, I was at the top of my class, to going to a sort of seemingly elitist, predominantly White private school in Los Angeles. The population of people were different and I think that I identified as an other as a result. Socially, I struggled a lot initially. Academically, I did really well and I was probably surprised by that just because I think I expected the opposite.

Culture shock. All twelve participants expressed some degree of culture shock, generally referencing anxiety or distress around the loss of familiarity in their social intercourse (Oberg, 2006). According to Oberg (2006), we carry various cues in our unconscious awareness related to language, customs, beliefs, facial expressions, and gestures that we depend on for peace of mind. Oberg (2006) believed that regardless of how open-minded an individual entering a new environment might be, culture shock to some extent was inevitable due to a loss of familiar cues. Regardless of whether or not their expectations were met, all twelve participants in this study expressed that some degree of culture shock was a part of their relocation experience.

Participant #4:

Realizing I didn't really know the customs here on the mainland I'm like okay do you do potluck style like in Hawaii, what do I bring? Umm and then having to if you show up some place, having to meet family and you're meeting an entire new group of people and

you sit down to like a sit down dinner, it's not like in Hawaii where it's kind of like potluck, you grab your food and and sit outside on like the lanai. That and also the first time I went to a funeral up here I also was like do people, I gave a sympathy card with a check in it. Because in Hawaii that's pretty normal to do that to help pay for funeral costs and the person who I gave the envelope to was pretty surprised and was asking why, why would you give money? And I'm like oh it's to help pay for funeral costs or you know any debt or to you know that type of thing. And they were like oh wow! People don't do that here I guess. So I found myself asking like how do you guys throw baby showers up here? Do you know what I mean? And having to ask people stuff like that.

Participant #9:

Of course culturally, it is different. Encountering communities of people that I didn't face in my old place, moving somewhere different gave me this whoa feeling.

Participant #10:

Culturally maybe a little bit like you would just encounter things in having a roommate which is essentially the modern arranged marriage where you're randomly paired with someone and you have to live with them and get along and my default roommate on day one was not someone I ever thought we would gel umm a lot of just like customs that I'm used to and it's not necessarily like Hawaii customs but Japanese customs adopted by Hawaii. Taking your shoes off when you enter a place like that was not something my roommate understood.

Protective Factors

A main focus of this study was to better understand what protective factors contribute to an individual's ability to successfully acclimate to a new environment. During the process of

data analysis, various themes emerged and within the category of *Protective Factors* are the subcategories: (1) positive feelings around relocating, (2) relationship to former city, (3) social network, (4) purpose for move, (5) community, and (6) quality of life. Three participants mentioned protective factors which are not included as subcategories but are worth noting. One participant stated that faith was an essential part of her ability to acclimate. Two participants mentioned that their previous experiences relocating internationally prepared them for the stress of relocating domestically.

Positive feelings around relocating. When asked to describe how they felt about the idea of having to relocate, 11 out of the 12 participants expressed having positive feelings. One participant voiced feeling indifferent. While one participant mainly attributed their positive feelings to the city that they were moving, all 11 participants who expressed having positive feelings around relocating generalized their positive feelings to wanting a change and looking forward to experiencing something different. They did not ascribe their positive feelings to where they were moving as much as they did to why they were moving.

Participant #2:

For me it was kind of a dream come true actually like it was very surreal that it was happening. I was nervous but I wasn't really sad to leave Hawaii so I was more excited about like what was going to be in store.

Participant #3:

I was, I was excited for a change. Umm I was nervous, anxious but in a positive sense.

Participant #10:

I was excited. I was nervous. It was a change it was going to be a challenge. I think it was the idea of moving away and experiencing something new and challenging myself in terms of education because that was really important to me.

Relationship to former city. In examining what factors contribute to an individual's ability to acclimate, the participant's relationship to their former city was a factor that was consistently mentioned. Five participants expressed a desire to leave their former city and how that served as motivation to be successful in their new city. Three participants also identified proximity to their former city as a protective factor. They suggested that having the ability to return home frequently as well as knowing that their larger social network was nearby helped them to feel settled.

Participant #4:

I felt trapped in Hawaii to be really honest. I felt trapped.

Participant #7:

I wanted to get away from Mississippi for one... Where I was living in Mississippi it seemed like very monotone everyone was the same, but I always felt different. And so I felt like moving to a different city would allow me to be different without the pressure of like my family's name. And having to live up to that expectation.

Participant #9:

All I know is the previous place which is Honolulu I was not going to be able to live there for the rest of my life. You know financially, everything, the economy there, just so many reasons. So you know it kind of determined, it was okay, it was easier for me to accept.

Participant #8:

I think Atlanta gave me some peace of mind cause it was closer to Texas so, and it was right in the middle between family like my parents and my brother in Texas and my sister in Florida.

Social network. Having a social network, the support of other individuals, was something that all 12 participants referenced as aiding in their ability to acclimate. This included feeling that friends and family supported their choice to relocate as well as having an established network of friends or family in the city that participants were relocating. The category of social network also includes the relationships that participants were able to form in their new city.

Participant #2:

Well I think being in graduate school definitely helped me acclimate. A lot of people were in similar situations where they left wherever they were living to come to New York and like me it was their first time living here so we identified in that way. Like we were living in New York for the first time and wanting to move to New York was also something that like I bonded with people and I got to explore the city with them.

Participant #3:

I had several high school classmates that were already attending the university, so there was a level of comfort there that if I were to move and still go to school I'd have pieces of home or comfort there to help ease that transition.

Participant #5:

When I finally felt like I had like a solid friendship with some of the girls in my program that helped too cause then we all realized we're all going through the same thing and we're all new.

Participant #9:

Instead of living on the island of Oahu in the state of Hawaii as far as in the US mainland be able to see all my children more often than before because all of them are living in the mainland so that really helped me. But some of my friends introduced me to different things and places because geographically I had no idea. So when they showed me that, that really helped for me to get familiar, familiarize with this, this part of this town.

Purpose for move. Having a purpose for relocating is something that all 12 participants referenced at some point during the interview. Purpose was brought up as a form of motivation and determination. Eight of the participants in this study cited pursuing a higher education or professional pursuits as their reason for relocating. Two participants indicated that they relocated because their significant other had a purpose for moving and two other participants referenced relocating for a better quality of life.

Participant #1:

I moved for school. I had something a purpose for being there it wasn't just like I was dropped off at this place and had no idea where to go or what to do so that helped to have a purpose.

Participant #2:

I actually wanted to move to New York for quite a while umm but I'm not the type of person that can just pick up and move so I needed a reason. Graduate school for my masters was that reason so I applied to school in New York City got in and then ever since.

Participant #5:

I kind of was like Hopkins is Hopkins. I don't know how I could turn that down.

Participant #9:

My job transferred. When this location became available, then I mean I did apply to move to this particular location.

Community. For the purposes of this research, community refers to feeling a sense of belonging. This is not in respect to an individual's ability to form and maintain individual relationships but rather whether the individual is able to find similarities with groups in terms of identity. This may include the prevalence of certain racial communities, cultural and ethnic diversity as well as membership in organized or unorganized groups.

Participant #1.

I think consistency because I was on the swim team as well and I was surrounded by the same people every day. So that helped they kind of became my second family. Umm I think I would've had a harder time if I didn't already have that built-in social network of people that were like you know there to support there for you because if I wasn't if I didn't have that I would probably feel a little bit like lost.

Participant #3:

In Eugene, at the U of O there is a strong Hawaii community of fellow students who have left the islands to attend school. So having people share the same type of feelings uhh emotions and being displaced from what they're comfortable in was something that helped to ease that transition and I made a lot more friends from that because we all shared that common theme of leaving the islands and going to the mainland. So that is probably what made it best and my roommate is also currently still my best friend so that also made it easier for me to have someone inside my house that was from Hawaii as well.

Participant #4:

Las Vegas is a little different. It's called the 9th island for a reason. There is such a big population of people that move here from Hawaii so that really helps. There is a lot of people that you just run into at the grocery store and you can hear them talking Pidgin English umm there is a lot of grocery stores here that sell Hawaiian food products, I can get lau lau anywhere you know at a lot places so that really helps.

Participant #7:

I would definitely say like the African history. Umm cause my father was very big on that too. And then coming up here and there's so much Black culture to be appreciated and found so that definitely for me kind of felt like homey. Because it was something that I was very passionate about while I was at home in Mississippi. A very cultured state.

Participant #8:

Atlanta is such a big music place. The music part and the art part, like the cultural piece of everything also helped me acclimate uhhh something as simple as going and having Colombian food and listening to Spanish you know, soccer playing at the back some salsa going on at the same time and like that helped me acclimate... The life it has and, and also it's kind of like a social justice-y city too. So that you know, it has certain things that vibe with me and it made me like actually want to explore it more.

Quality of life. Participants in this study identified aspects of their new city that helped them to acclimate such as the cost of living, the convenience of living, transportation, the climate and the types of food that are accessible.

Participant #6:

And then I guess Baltimore is more affordable so I could do more like I could go out more and like see more of the city.

Participant #9:

You know getting old and climate and all the, I shouldn't say all, climate and the food you know for the living, it's easier to live in this city than other cities. There are so many different Asian communities here. And also, not to go out to eat but to cook at home, you will be able to purchase the ingredients. That is important. Climate wise, it won't get too cold or snowed in. It's very movable, active. And uhh the economy here is affordable. And the dry climate is good for my health.

Participant #11:

Yeah just like money and I guess and so we're not commuting or anything. So me and my wife umm we both had commuting jobs so we were spending like an hour to an hour and a half each way commuting and the cost of living was just kind of outrageous. So mostly the job stuff, the money stuff and it's a plus that my wife really likes warm weather too I guess.

Risk Factors

In addition to exploring protective factors, this study also examined factors that may impact an individual's ability to successfully acclimate to a new environment. The category of *Risk Factors* includes the subcategories: (1) lack of social network, (2) significant life events, (3) community, and (4) quality of life.

Lack of social network. Three of the participants in this study stated that they relocated with their partner or spouse while the other nine participants interviewed stated that they

relocated by themselves. This researcher found that even participants who had an established network of social support, i.e., friends or family in the area to which they were relocating, often felt challenged by the loss of their larger social network in the city they left. Social network for the purposes of this study refers more specifically to the individual relationships that a participant was able to form or maintain.

Participant #7:

Making friends was difficult cause I was different, way different ...and I mean not having that communal support was challenging. Umm being away from my family was challenging.

Participant #9:

As far as the socialization, it's uhh it's negative. It's no, because in Hawaii, I had so many, I mean compared to now, more acquaintances and friends so uhh the circle of socialization was much bigger.

Participant #11:

And then as far as like making new friends we definitely haven't made any good new friends yet. And we kind of talk about that like are we ever going to make good friends out here? And I don't know if it just comes along with moving all the time or what but uhh it hasn't been that long either so I guess we have time. But that's definitely a concern of ours.

Significant life event. Another factor that five participants identified as affecting their ability to acclimate included significant life events. This category includes any event that may have been sudden, unexpected or unplanned.

Participant #3:

And I think that I went through several times in my close to 10 years here where I've had personal thoughts of moving back because of how detached you feel from the rest of your family in times of need...I've lost two of my grandparents during the time I've been up here and I've also gone through my mom dealing with cancer which is another struggle so I think those types of things make it hard for someone umm being on the mainland and being not be able to do something in the immediate because all you can do is lend emotional support at that point.

Participant #5:

I went through a break up at the end of October and then once we broke up everything just like kind of crumbled and I was like oh my god wait I don't know people here, I don't have friends here, where am I? School is stressful oh I need to find a job so kind of that kind of kept me floating and then when that ended I kind of was like wait I have no idea so it was actually really hard.

Participant #9:

I do have more personal reason, my sibling is ill, terminal, so that really put me more headache. It put me down.

Community. As defined under Protective Factors, community speaks to an individual's ability to feel as though they belong. To be categorized as a risk factor, the individual indicated a sense that they stand out or feel like an outsider. Rather than referring to the individual relationships that participants may form, community addresses the extent to which participants see themselves as a part of the larger community in their new location. A lack of racial

communities with which to identify, a lack of familiarity with certain racial communities and not feeling a sense of belonging with the community were all considered as risk factors.

Participant #6:

Not that many people live downtown. It's mostly students and it's mostly transplants so I feel kind of like an outsider.

Participant #8:

At work you know it was predominantly White. Actually yes, all people were White and also it was a different community. Uhh and then I just racially like I had to, I faced a lot of things here which is very surprising actually... Yeah I don't identify as Black or White and that becomes very prevalent because in Houston it was different. Cause the Latino population like I said before, it's just big. Here it's just more of... whoa, where are the other Latinos at?

Participant #10:

It was definitely very, very different if I consider I went to a public school in Hawaii, predominantly Asian, I was the top of my class, to going to a sort of seemingly elitist, predominantly White private school in Los Angeles, the population of people were different and I think that I identified as an Other and as a result, socially I struggled a lot initially.

Participant #11:

Like just cause it's definitely less diverse so there's like a whole lot of like I don't know just White people. And I did talk to my wife though shortly after we got here and she's like so I definitely feel, I guess I definitely feel like, I understand or feel that I am Black more here than in Chicago. The lack of diversity is weird too cause in my, in like Peoria

where I originally came from and in Chicago I mean, I feel like I didn't have a majority of like White friends I guess if that makes sense. Umm I had like lots of different friends and I don't, most of the people aside from my wife's brother who is Black, most of the people we meet are generally White I guess. So that is weird in a way just moving from having a diverse set of friends to like not being able to find that as easily.

Quality of life. Seven participants identified various factors that negatively affected their quality of life. Some of the variables that were included when analyzing quality of life as a risk factor included the cost of living, lack of convenience or access to resources, transportation, climate and food.

Participant #5:

I was like living alone in a studio umm by the Hopkins campus which there was obviously undergrads around but it wasn't really like I don't know kind of the young professional adult scene...I didn't really have money because I'm a grad student so I wasn't just going to always Uber down to where the fun was all the time...I wasn't near anything and parking is the worst and so I just wouldn't go many places.

Participant #6:

One thing that I don't like about this region that I miss about where I came from is I think the food isn't as good. Umm there is like one or two restaurants that I like here. Where I'm from it's like the food is good almost everywhere...umm there is there is like Italian people here but the Italian food sucks for some reason to me. The pizza is terrible umm sub shops are terrible like all the food is terrible to me.

Participant #9:

I keep moving, changing the doctor as well as dentist, I just really don't trust and that is no good...as I mentioned, after living so many years in one place, you, I mean I got the good doctors in Hawaii and also you know the longer it goes you get a good relationship because the doctor will know you and you will know the doctor. But here, if you don't, even including the dentist, if you don't get the good doctors, you don't feel comfortable.

Participant #11:

Like it was really expensive to move and like the way we had to like the, the really best we could do was get like a tiny Uhaul box and we kind of had to stuff everything in there and then sell some of our things so we kind of came with less than we had, I guess...And we actually didn't have a car for a while so they don't have great public transit either so that was a little difficult.

Distress

All 12 participants in this study expressed some degree of distress due to relocation. This distress varied across a spectrum and the theme *Distress* includes the subcategories: (1) physical symptoms and (2) emotional and psychological symptoms.

Physical symptoms. Physical symptoms include but are not limited to feelings of fatigue, difficulty concentrating, agitation and insomnia. Six participants reported physical symptoms of distress, with all of them reporting increased agitation and four participants reporting disruptions with sleep.

Participant #7:

I was a little bit defensive...because I was so used to people in Mississippi treating me a certain way and when I came up here I was a lot more closed and defensive and kind of kept to myself...Just like sleeping the days away for the most part so yeah

Participant #8:

I'd be pissed off. But more because I was sad....I usually like to take care of myself like you know work out and eat healthy that's part of who I am. I would eat bad. I wouldn't even care and I would try to like at least keep those things in tact but sometimes it's just, you're just like I don't, I don't care and you do but you don't. And then you just get into this weird cycle of I do and I don't and then I feel like crap. Umm that lack of sleep. I didn't, I struggle with sleeping a lot. Like I would wake up and okay I guess I have to shower cause this is good and and get my days going cause it's good.

Emotional and psychological symptoms. Emotional and psychological symptoms include but are not limited to feelings of guilt, hopelessness, anxiety, withdrawing from others, feeling disconnected and feeling sad. Eleven participants described some degree of emotional or psychological distress, with a majority of participants recounting feelings of sadness and a tendency to withdraw or isolate.

Participant #4:

I feel guilty. I have guilt for leaving my family at home. Umm going home for you know funerals and weddings, it's, it's been rough having to you know you go home when someone is sick or you know that type of thing.

Participant #5:

I would just like cry all the time. Which was also what was really upsetting is because that's just not me. I'm like all for crying if I'm sad and upset but I just, I'm just like not, I was just so negative about everything. The constant negative thinking...It just sucked while I went through it cause again me crying made me cry more because I don't usually cry so I was like oh my god this is so sad that I'm so sad.

Participant #7:

It was, it wasn't rewarding like being alone so I avoided trying to go out...I wanted to go home. I mean you get withdrawn into yourself umm there were actually two occasions when my mother actually had to make me come home to kind of get my bearings because I found myself feeling depressed all the time and not wanting to leave the house and just you know not being hopeful about anything so yeah absolutely. I was crying. A lot. I'm not a crier.

Participant #11:

Yeah I definitely have found myself being pretty hermit like. And I mean there would be weeks I just like I don't really want to do anything and after work I'll just read and and I don't know study some things and it's good to have time to read and do that stuff but also, I feel like uhh yeah after a while it's just like man I need to talk to people and get out and socialize and stuff like that. I don't know umm yeah it definitely made me...feel more reclusive for a little while. I feel much more introverted now I guess. Like sometimes I want to, but I don't feel the need to socialize. And when I do feel the need to I feel like it's something in me that's like hey this is something you're supposed to do you know not like umm not like always a genuine wanting to go out and socialize. I don't

know like I uhh feel a little more social anxiety I guess. Like I, I uhh feel more conscious of what I'm doing when I'm around people and like how like they react to things I say or things I do I guess. Usually probably with like a pessimistic outlook on that.

Identity

A major focus of this study was to better understand if and how relocation affects identity. Interview questions were designed to allow for participants to reflect on various aspects of their identity including their personal and cultural identity. As our identity helps us to make sense of the world that we live in, it is important to this study to understand how individuals' perceptions of a change in their environment contributes to their perception of self. The theme *Identity* includes the subcategories: (1) perception of self, (2) perceived perception by others, (3) self-confidence, and (4) culture.

Perception of self. This subcategory refers to the way that participants view themselves. All 12 participants were asked various questions (Appendix C) that were developed to understand the participant's perception of self, prior to and following relocation. Participants touched on aspects of their identity such as their personality, racial identity, feeling of belonging and their sociability. At times, participant's responses had to do with the way that they perceived themselves differently depending on the context of their environment. Participants identified moments in which their new environment prompted them to question their abilities and how they self-identify.

Participant #2:

I would say on like a day to day basis here I don't feel out of place. I don't feel like I don't belong. The only thing I can really think of in that sense is that among other Asians I actually don't feel Asian enough. If anything, it's like very odd. Umm like any Asian

friend that I have or had in New York like they can speak the language umm they're very connected to their culture so I could not identify with them on that end so I always felt like I was Asian but not Asian enough when I was around them...In those instances, I would actually identify more as like from Hawaii rather than Japanese.

Participant #5:

I just wouldn't go out as much and I just am a very social person. And I, that just was kind of really weird to me that I would spend a lot of Friday/Saturday nights just like watching movies by myself which is fine, but that's not always fulfilling to me. It was just like really sad and negative umm which is just not like me but again, a lot of nights I was like alone with my thoughts which is killer.

Participant #7:

Where I was living in Mississippi it seemed like very monotone everyone was the same, but I always felt different. I was just a different animal from my siblings. I didn't, I didn't really fit you know it's like I always describe it as a puzzle piece. Where it's the last piece of the puzzle and you're like jamming it in to that spot even though it doesn't go there. I always feel like I was that puzzle piece. Umm I was an individual when everybody else was just a glob of the same person.

Participant #10:

Well identifying as mixed race is just a factual thing. Like that is not debatable. That is what I am. Growing up in Hawaii where it is predominantly Asian, I was the White girl. I was the White girl in my group of friends. I would do things and people would say oh you're so White you're so White and then moving to this part of LA where there were not nearly as many Asians as there were in Hawaii by default I became the token Asian. So it

was, oh my god look at you eating with chopsticks like let's get you a Hello Kitty pillow like that sort of thing. And not in a malicious way, and I didn't take it that way but I had to play that role and I WAS the Asian girl in my group of friends there and that was the role that I played.

Participant #11:

I did do stuff on the weekend with some people so I was, I think I, from Peoria to Chicago to Phoenix my socialness, I don't know, went down slowly I guess if that makes any sense. When I was living in Peoria I would've described myself as pretty social, I knew like quite a few people there and I would go to different places and meet people on the weekdays, on the weekends, all the time. I would read and study but I'd do it with other people, I don't know. I feel much more introverted now I guess. Like I uhh feel a little more social anxiety I guess. Like I, I uhh feel more conscious of what I'm doing when I'm around people and like how like they react to things I say or things I do I guess. Usually probably with like a pessimistic outlook on that...I was kind of questioning like am I like really like socially awkward now can I even if I go meet people can I even make friends with them now?

Perceived perception by others. Six participants expressed distress or an inconsistency with how they felt others perceived them and with how they perceived themselves. All six participants were racially identified minorities and their perceived perception of others generally focused around how they felt that others racially or ethnically identified them.

Participant #1:

How people saw me was different than how I view myself because I didn't really see myself any differently from like the girl next door, but I was. So yeah they thought like I

was very different from them and they were very different from me but then everyone saw us together and it was like one of those things.

Participant #12:

I think people from the mainland identify me as Asian based off my features but when I go back home because I don't have, I guess I never really have no tan umm people from Hawaii identify me as more white and I am both but people identify me more as being someone from the mainland and vice versa in the mainland, people identify me as being Hawaiian or Asian.

Participant #4:

Also, I guess it's interesting that people usually, my co-workers will describe me as Hawaiian. They'll say oh she's Hawaiian which is true, like culturally I'm Hawaiian, ethnically I'm not. So I'll usually kind of clarify that and be like ethnically I'm like Asian, you know I'm Korean. Umm but yeah, culturally like I'm from Hawaii and I know a lot of Hawaiian values but I'm not ethnically Hawaiian. That's the only thing that's kind of come up. I'm kind of having to correct people about that sometimes. Because they're like oh well you speak Hawaiian, I'm like not really, no. I don't know I guess it's usually like I take it positively so it's not uncomfortable. And probably because I do identify with Hawaii culturally maybe that's what doesn't make it so odd either. But it's a little weird because I know that if I was in Hawaii I would never identify myself as Hawaiian because it's not right to claim an identity that isn't mine if you know what I mean. Like that would be me saying I was White when I'm obviously not.

Participant #6:

Well I think being in being in Baltimore, well when I was living in Tacoma Park I felt kind of bad about myself because I felt like I was like, like dirty and unhealthy and everyone around me was like going to to co-op and like drinking you know green drinks with kale and things like that and I was like smoking and people were looking at me weird, I thought people were looking at me weird, I was paranoid.

Participant #10:

Yeah I think it was confusing for me, I think it made me feel less confident to have social interactions with folks because I was hyper cognizant of external like perception and how I was believed people identified me like oh there's that Asian girl...I felt if I was in a room and I was the one Asian person, I felt like all eyes were on me and people judging me thinking, who brought the Asian girl.

Self-confidence. All of the 12 participants in this study reported an increase in self-confidence as a result of relocating. This increase in self-confidence was often generalized to how they feel about their experience of relocation at the current moment, with participants often referencing any hardships that they may have successfully endured. When asked to elaborate further, 10 of the participants interviewed explicitly stated an initial decrease in self-confidence attributed mainly to factors such as a lack of social network and or culture shock.

Participant #2:

Yeah I think my self-confidence increased after relocating here for sure. Umm I think just knowing that I've been able to make it here has been a boost in confidence. Just knowing that like I didn't, I didn't crack or go home or give up.

Participant #5:

Since I have had a lot more professional opportunities I would certainly say that just my professional skills and abilities have really strengthened a lot and have kind of really solidified my passions and everything and so in like that sense I'm just really proud of all that.

Participant #7:

Because when you're constantly being told that you, that you're wrong for this or you can't do that it affects how you feel about yourself. So umm when you are in an environment where you're allowed to be whatever and do whatever and say whatever, you feel good about yourself. So when I moved up here, nobody's watching me, nobody's telling me what I can and can't do and it just all came out and folks loved it so yeah.

Participant #10:

When I first moved to Los Angeles there was a decrease in self-confidence and that was across the board. That was in terms of intelligence and social abilities and, and all of that which was difficult because coming from my experience in Hawaii I was cool. I had the cool friends. I did the best in school and so it was definitely like hey, wake up. Now you are elsewhere and things are different. I think over time, I progressively became more comfortable with myself and my environment and there are a lot of things that play into that and some of it is the environment itself and some of it is just like age and maturity and experience.

Culture. Participants also identified aspects of their culture that were related to their identity and the ways in which that was highlighted by their relocation. This included customs,

language and cultural/societal expectations of their given community. Participants mentioned not understanding the customs of the new region and not being able to speak the language that they speak at home as variables that affected their ability to feel a sense of belonging. Another participant talked about feeling less confined by expectations she felt were set in her home region.

Participant #4:

It's almost like people are surprised by how nice I am by my customs. Umm like anytime I go to somebody's house like you know you bring food or drinks or something or you're always umm you know the fact that I would give a check or something at a funeral or offer to bring you know a platter of food to Thanksgiving like uhh people were surprised but so welcoming and so nice.

Participant #7:

I was allowed to be an individual. I was encouraged to be an individual. It didn't matter that I dressed differently or I spoke differently or I was interested in like really weird things that you know was not really seen as like something that a girl or a woman should be doing down South. Like uhh accepting me for who I was. Umm nobody was telling me girls don't sit like that or girls don't wear pants or you know, you know girls don't curse. It was like hey, me too, fuck yeah. It was like it was a thing. So you know, I feel like I found where I belong. My desires, my passions, like who I am as a person to the core of me. Umm it's just like in the South people are expected to like for women to just shutup and be quiet. Umm always speak prissy and your legs are crossed and you watch what you say and if there's other people in the room you be quiet, but that was never me. So like here, it was always me internally but I was never allowed to externalize that.

Participant #8:

Spanish. Damn that was hard. Not being able to come back home and speak you know your like you come back home and you're still on so something that you know going back to a question that you asked like what helped me even though my family and my friends were away, talking in Spanish on the phone, being able to express myself fully of of like my full 100% self. Not having that here, umm damn that was hard. It's still hard. That's one of the things that I miss the most is going back home and speaking my own language. Like even sometimes going out with some friends and speaking in Spanish you know umm damn I think I'm gonna get a little choked up because I miss it. I miss, I miss taking Spanish and listening to it as much as I, I would. That, that made it very, that still makes it I don't know. I get emotional about it. It makes me sad.

Summary

These findings represent the perspectives of 12 individuals who have experienced domestic relocation. Participants in this study described their initial experiences of culture shock, the factors that assisted them in relocating, factors that impacted their ability to feel established in their new location, any distress that was prompted by relocation and the ways in which all of these things contributed to the way that they viewed themselves. Biases and limitations of this study along with implications for future research and practice will be addressed further in the following chapter.

Chapter V

Discussion

The objective of this study was to better understand if and how relocation affects self-identity and the way in which protective factors contribute to an individual's ability to maintain a consistent identity. This study focused on the concept of self-shock, a term originally coined by Zaharna (1989) to describe the effects of sojourner adjustment on identity. While the term self-shock has historically been used in research that examined the ways in which international relocation affects self-identity, this study explored whether self-shock could also be experienced by individuals relocating domestically. This researcher found that most participants did report experiences that aligned with the concept of self-shock and this chapter describes how protective factors and risk factors identified by participants contributed to their ability to successfully acclimate to their new environment. This chapter discusses the findings in the following order: 1) key findings and their comparison to results found in the previous literature; 2) implications for social work practice; and 3) recommendations for future research.

Key Findings: Comparison with the Previous Literature

This section will explore the major themes of this study and how they compare to previous literature. It has been divided into the following subsections: initial experience, protective factors, risk factors, distress, and identity.

Initial Experience. The initial experience of participants was categorized into four categories: met expectations, did not meet expectations, exceeded expectations, and culture

shock. Oberg (2006) believed that no matter how open-minded an individual entering a new environment might be, culture shock was inevitable to some extent. This appeared to be consistent among the participants in this study. Regardless of whether their initial expectations were met, all of the participants identified some degree of culture shock, often referencing a difference in customs and interactions with new racial and ethnic communities.

In terms of expectations, something interesting to note is that those who identified their initial experience as exceeding expectations were the individuals who voiced concerns or fears about the city to which they were relocating. Heller (1982) speaks to the way in which psychological preparedness may help to mitigate the anxiety and stress that often accompany being in an unfamiliar environment. One might hypothesize that not having high expectations for their new environment allowed for those participants to be more open and realistic about the experience of relocating.

Protective Factors. Participants mentioned various factors that contributed to their ability to feel settled in which the following themes emerged: positive feelings around relocating, relationship to former city, social network, purpose for move, community, and quality of life. A common variable that participants in this study referred to as motivation to be successful in their new environment was their desire not to return to the city from which they relocated. This was consistent with the literature as Bolan (1997) suggested that the motivation behind relocation may serve as a protective factor. It is also true that Bolan (1997) referred to having a choice and reason to relocate as motivation while participants spoke more specifically that they were motivated by not wanting to return to their former city.

Also consistent with the literature were participant reports on the ways in which social networks aided in their ability to acclimate. Shklovski (2006) found that individuals who have

strong social relationships were better equipped to manage challenging life events. Similarly, participants cited forming relationship with individuals in their new city as something that aided in their transition process. This also is supported by Shklovski's (2006) findings that having local ties or knowing people in the new location helped ease the loss of relationships from the previous location.

While previous research (Angulo, 2008; Carlisle-Frank, 1992; Heller, 1982; Shklovski, 2006) mentioned the ways in which established or newly formed relationships in the new city may contribute to an individual's ability to successfully acclimate, I have not found literature that specifically speaks to the importance of community. Community for the purposes of this research referred to feeling a sense of belonging and finding similarities with groups in terms of identity. For many participants, this included having access to similar racial and cultural communities. A majority of the participants in this study, including all of the participants who identified as people of color, cited ethnic and racial diversity within their new community as a factor that positively affected their feeling of belonging.

Risk Factors. Participants also made note of factors that they felt impacted their ability to successfully acclimate to their new environment. This researcher analyzed the interviews and divided participant responses into the following categories: lack of social network, significant life events, community, and quality of life.

Something that the literature did not mention was the role of significant life events and how they affected an individual's ability to acclimate to their new environment. Five participants in this study reported unexpected life events such as a death, illness or the end of a romantic relationship as something that impacted their level of distress as well as their ability to feel settled in their new environment.

While the research (Carlisle-Frank, 1992) did cite the ways in which social supports such as friends, family, or religious groups aided in the transition process, I did not find literature that spoke specifically to community. As with protective factors, community referred to an individual's ability to feel as though they belong, including but not limited to similar racial communities, a lack of familiarity with new racial communities, and not feeling a sense of belonging with the community. Some participants were able to identify their ability to form a social network in their new environment and still reported distress around not feeling a part of the larger community and feeling like an outsider.

Distress. All of the participants in this study indicated some degree of distress due to relocation. This was consistent with the relocation literature (Fried, 1963; Hausman, 1991; Heller, 1982; Kelly, 1963) with individuals identifying experiencing feelings of grief around having to relocate. The literature (Fried, 1963; Heller, 1982) found that feelings of grief can manifest in a variety of ways including physically and psychologically. This was again consistent with my findings with six participants reporting physical symptoms such as agitation and sleep disturbance and 11 participants reporting psychological and emotional symptoms such as isolating and feelings of sadness.

Magdol (2002) reported that she found women were more likely to experience negative psychological effects in response to relocation. My research did not support this and found that both male and female identified participants reported some degree of emotional or psychological distress. This distress may have generally been expressed differently amongst the male and female participants in my study with female participants more likely to cite emotional distress and behaviors associated to that such as crying and male participants more likely to identify behaviors such as isolating and withdrawing. This is something that researchers may want to

pursue further as it may indicate acceptable expressions of emotion and distress of males and females in American society.

Identity. This study focused largely on understanding if and how relocation affects identity. Interview questions (Appendix C) asked participants to reflect on the ways in which they view themselves and their responses were assessed and put into the following subcategories: perception of self, perceived perception by others, self-confidence, and culture. According to Erikson, an individual with a strong ego identity has a sense of who they are and what they believe in which ultimately serves as a protective factor as it allows them to feel a sense of control and confidence in their ability to live by society's standards and expectations (Cherry, 2015). This was not consistent with my findings. Participants in this study who reported feeling as though they had a strong ego identity seemed to have higher expectations about the relationships that they would be able to form upon relocating. Additionally, they seemed to experience a higher level of emotional and psychological distress, with many of these participants mentioning that they questioned aspects of their identity such as their ability to socialize with others.

The concept of self-shock was earlier defined as the “intrusion of inconsistent, conflicting self-images” that an individual experiences with the Self when in a foreign environment (Zaharna, 1989, p. 501). Self-shock attempts to address the ways in which the different aspects of a foreign environment including cultural norms and behavior may affect self-identity. Participant responses in this study do appear to support that individuals relocating domestically can and do experience self-shock.

Zaharna (1989) has defined self-shock as encompassing three dimensions. The first dimension refers to the loss of communication competence. This means that an individual may

find themselves with a decreased ability to understand how others are perceiving them, as well as a decreased ability to communicate with others about who they are (Angulo, 2008). This was consistent with the findings in my study with many participants referring to distress around how they did not feel that their behaviors aligned with others in their new environment and how that then led to feelings of paranoia about how others perceived them.

The second dimension of self-shock is the distorted self-reflections in the responses of others. This refers to the way in which an individual may not accurately be able to perceive the perspective of the Other. This inability to understand the perspective of the Other ultimately leaves one to question their self-identity as their self-identity is not being confirmed by the Other. This was particularly consistent in my study with participants of color and their perceived perception of how they felt that others racially or ethnically identified them.

The third dimension of self-shock is the challenge of changing identity-bound behaviors. In an attempt to acclimate to their new environment, an individual may try to adjust behaviors that are not just culture-bound but identity-bound as well. This dimension focuses on how an individual is able to maintain a sense of Self while having to make behavioral changes. This was also consistent with participants in this study with some participants referring to feeling a strong sense of loss and grieving over not being able to engage with others in the way that they are accustomed. This included cultural customs as well as language.

Limitations and Biases

The motivation and interest in this study came from this researcher's own experience of relocation. This interviewer was mindful of her motivation for this research and actively worked throughout this process with her thesis advisor to minimize the effect of her bias on the findings. However, reliability and validity must be considered as this researcher designed the interview

questions and my personal experiences with relocation may have allowed for a certain amount of bias to be involved. Additionally, this researcher conducted the interviews and analyzed the data which could have also contributed to potential bias in the findings. In an attempt to address these potential biases, prior to conducting interviews this researcher piloted interview questions with two family members who have experienced domestic relocation and met the study criteria. Family members were not used as participants in this study but were used to gauge whether or not the proposed interview questions were interpreted in the manner intended. This researcher also consulted prior literature on the topic of relocation and self-shock to guide the development of the interview questions.

Another factor that is important to note is this researcher's choice to include participants who relocated within the Pacific Region. One of the criteria for this study included moving from one defined region in the United States to another region as defined by the United States Census Bureau. My sample included six interviews with participants who relocated from the state of Hawaii to the Continental United States. One of these participants relocated from the state of Hawaii to California while another relocated from Hawaii to Oregon. After consulting with my thesis advisor, we agreed that although these participants relocated within the same region, their experience of relocation from outside to inside the Continental United States was unique and relevant. As this study focused on better understanding aspects of both cultural and self-identity, my thesis advisor and I agreed that relocating from the state of Hawaii to anywhere in the Continental United States could be viewed as a significant transition that might contribute to an individual experiencing self-shock.

Another potential bias that may have affected the results of this study include my recruitment techniques. By using social media to elicit participants and video conferencing to

conduct interviews, there is a chance that individuals who are less familiar or comfortable with electronic communication were inadvertently eliminated. This technique may have contributed to a smaller network of people who knew each other as opposed to a more random assortment of participants. In regards to the assortment of participants, an additional limitation may be that six participants in this study identified relocating from the state of Hawaii. The experience of relocating from Hawaii may include variables that may or may not be generalizable to individuals relocating from within the Continental United States, and is something that may have affected the results of this study.

Implications for Social Work Practice

As relocation is commonplace within the United States due to professional and educational opportunities, it is likely that most people will experience relocation and potentially have some degree of difficulty with having to relocate. The implications for practitioners working with individuals or families who seek professional help is to be mindful that the distress that an individual in this situation might be experiencing does not necessarily indicate psychopathology. This research helps to identify ways that an individual reacts to changes associated with relocation and how practitioners can assist in normalizing an individual's reaction and struggle to change.

Recommendations for Future Research

As previous literature (Magdol, 2002) explored the differences in the ways that males and females experience distress around relocation, this may be something that future research may want to examine further. Practitioners in the field of social work could benefit by better understanding why males and females experience distress in these situations differently as well

as recognizing the cultural implications around the expression of emotion and distress in American culture.

As many of the individuals in this study expressed the importance of racial and ethnic diversity in communities, further exploration of the ways in which diverse communities or lack thereof impact successful acclimation, especially for people of color, could contribute to this area of research. Future research might also benefit from gaining knowledge around the effects of involuntary versus voluntary relocation and the ways in which that may affect an individual's experience and ability to be successfully acclimate.

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Appendix A

Hi friends!

As some of you may know, I am a student at Smith College School for Social Work and am working towards getting my master's degree. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting a study that will look into the effects that relocation has on an individual's identity. This study will focus specifically on individuals who have relocated within the United States. I am looking for individuals who will agree to participate in either an in-person or video conference interview and talk about their experience. Interviews are expected to take no more than an hour. It is important for me to note that in order to conduct responsible, ethical research, I am not allowed to interview friends or family. I am however hoping that friends and family might be able to direct individuals who meet the study criteria my way. If you know anyone that may be interested in participating or if you would like more information about the study, please feel free to email me at mdaggett@smith.edu . Thank you!

This study protocol has been reviewed and approved by the **Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC)**

Appendix B



2015-2016

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Smith College School for Social Work • Northampton, MA

.....

Title of Study: Self-shock: The Experience of Individuals Relocating Within the United States

Investigator(s): Michelle M. K. Daggett, Smith College School for Social Work

.....

Introduction

- You are being asked to be in a research study of individuals who may have experienced distress as a result of relocating to a different region within the United States.
- You were selected as a possible participant because you are over the age of 18 and have relocated for the first time from one region in the United States to another region, as defined by the United States Census Bureau.
- We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study

- The purpose of the study is to better understand how self-identity is affected by relocation.
- This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my master's in social work degree.
- Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences.

Description of the Study Procedures

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: consent to be interviewed individually by the researcher for 30 minutes-hour, sign and return one of the two informed consent forms that will be sent to you, and be available for either an in-person or video conference interview. The interview will be audio recorded and written notes may be taken by this researcher. Interviews will be transcribed. All transcriptions and written material will be kept in a secure and encrypted location.

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study

- The study has little foreseeable risk. However, the intent of this study is to better understand the ways in which an individual's self-identity is affected by relocating, therefore you will be asked to discuss experiences that may have been emotionally distressing. If you are at all uncomfortable with any of the questions that are being asked, you may decline to answer or even ask to end the interview early.

Benefits of Being in the Study

- The benefits of participation are having the opportunity to share one's personal experiences of acclimating to a new environment and things that they found helpful as it might relate to others in a similar situation. Participating will also contribute to an underdeveloped area of research.
- The benefits to social work/society are: to provide information for future research and to bring awareness to practicing clinicians of the psychological affects that relocating can have on an individual.

Confidentiality

- Your participation will be kept confidential. Although you will be asked your age, race, gender and geographic location for the purposes of this study, this researcher will be the only one privy to identifiable information such as your full name and address. When possible, in-person interviews will be conducted, otherwise interviews will be done via video-conferencing. Interviews will be individual and will be audio recorded. Written notes may also be taken. These notes and audio recordings will be labeled using pseudonyms so as to protect the confidentiality of participants. This researcher will be the only person who will have access to the audio recordings and notes.

- All research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period. We will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

Payments/gift

- You will not receive any financial payment for your participation.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* up to May 1, 2016 without affecting your relationship with the researchers of this study or Smith College. Your decision to refuse will not result in any loss of benefits (including access to services) to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely up to the point noted below. If you choose to withdraw, I will not use any of your information collected for this study. You must notify me of your decision to withdraw by email or phone by May 1, 2016. After that date, your information will be part of the thesis and final report.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Michelle Daggett at mdaggett@smith.edu. If you would like a summary of the study results, one will be sent to you once the study is completed. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at (413) 585-7974.

Consent

- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep.

.....

Name of Participant (print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher(s): _____ Date: _____

.....

[if using audio or video recording, use next section for signatures:]

1. I agree to be audio taped for this interview:

Name of Participant (print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher(s): _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

Interview Guide

How old are you?

How do you identify yourself racially?

How do you identify with your gender?

*

*

*

*

1. What city and state are you living in now?

2. How long have you been living in (current city)?

3. What city did you move from?

4. Why did you move from (former city) to (current city)?

5. Did you move by yourself?

6. Can you describe how you felt about the idea of moving to (current city)?

7. How did that compare to your initial experience of living in (current city)?

8. What, if anything, helped you to acclimate to (current city)?
9. What experiences, people, situations helped you to acclimate?
10. What, if anything, made moving to (current city) challenging for you?
11. What about those things felt challenging?
12. Do you feel like these challenges impacted your functioning in any way? (i.e. your ability or desire to socialize, your mood). If so, please provide examples.
13. What was happening that made you notice a change in how you felt about yourself?
14. How would you have described yourself before moving to (current city)?
15. Did you experience a change in your self-confidence after you relocated?
16. Would you describe yourself in the same way now? Why or why not?
17. Were there things going on around you that influenced the way that you felt about yourself?
18. Is there anything else you'd like to add about your experience of relocating?

Appendix D



School for Social Work

Smith College

Northampton, Massachusetts 01063

T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

February 2, 2016

Michelle Daggett

Dear Michelle,

You did a very nice job on your revisions. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Congratulations and our best wishes on your interesting study.

Sincerely,



Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.

Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Kathleen Deal, Research Advisor